

LEISURE & CULTURE NEWS

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LIBRARIES, HERITAGE AND INFORMATION

Libraries Conference 2005

On 6th June, the Trust launched its new vision for Wigan Borough's libraries at the 2005 Libraries Conference, held at the Turnpike Centre. The highlight of the event was the official inauguration of celebrated writer and broadcaster Stuart Maconie as Wigan Borough's first Patron of the Library Service.

Stuart's knowledge of Wigan and the historical significance of libraries, together with the fact that he is a revered writer, make him the perfect candidate to take on the role.



"This is a fantastic honour for me. I really believe in the power of libraries and have personal experience of how important they are to communities such as Wigan and Leigh; in fact I would not be where I am today without them," said Stuart enthusiastically. "The vision I have witnessed being presented today has really impressed me. The borough's libraries are clearly evolving and, as a source of information, whether it be for research or purely for fun, they are fundamental to the fabric of our society."

Key aims of the vision for 2005-15 include:

- Improving the community's ability to use the library as a source for knowledge.
- Ensuring that libraries are a successful source of general information for the public.
- Providing a range of learning opportunities.
- Creating and sustaining community networks.

These aims will be achieved by investing in additional books, CDs and DVDs; programmed activities including reading and learning groups; longer opening hours and better IT resources.

Contact: Ian Bancroft, Executive Director for Libraries, Heritage and Information on 01942 828513.

COMMERCIAL SERVICES

Leisure Venues

Once Upon A Success Story

'Once Upon A Time In Wigan', the national touring show chartering the golden era of Wigan Casino, played to packed audiences at Lowton Civic Hall in May.

More than twelve hundred people enjoyed the show over five nights from Tuesday 24th to Saturday 28th May.

Brian Yates, Leisure Venues Manager said, "It was great to see Lowton Civic so busy, both the Friday and Saturday evening shows sold out. The most important thing is that the play was seen by many people who would normally not go to the theatre."

Contact: Brian Yates, Leisure Venues Manager, on 01942 486953.

COMMUNITY REGENERATION

ARTS AND FESTIVALS

Turnpike Gallery

Objects of Desire was the title for this year's Wigan Artists Open exhibition, shown at the Turnpike Gallery during May. Featuring the work of 40 artists from across the borough of Wigan, the 70 works in this selected exhibition ranged from painting, sculpture and textiles, to photography and video.

Artists were invited to submit works on the theme of '*objects of desire*', linking with national Museums and Galleries Month during May. For some, this provided the impetus to explore personal memories, using objects from a variety of sources in their work. For others, the artwork itself is an object of desire.

The exhibition presented a range of ideas in traditional and non-traditional ways and provided a fascinating insight into the variety of artists, both professional and amateur, working across the borough today.



1500 visitors came to see the show, including over 300 children and young people on schools' workshops. Artists who had work in the exhibition led these sessions; pupils gained a unique understanding and experience of art works at first hand.

The annual Open exhibition provides a way for any artist living or working in Wigan to submit art works for display at the Turnpike. Next year's is already planned for 8th April to 20th May.

Contact: Martyn Lucas, Visual Arts Officer, Turnpike Gallery on 01942 404469.

Haigh Festival Success

On the glorious, sunny morning of Sunday June 19th, thousands of Wigan's devoted music fans descended on Haigh Hall for the 7th annual Haigh Hall Music Festival.

The event, organised by the Trust's Festivals Team, in co-operation with the Wigan Music Collective, has this year come into its own, away from the Arts For All event, and proved to be a huge success.

Lowton's The Randoms kicked things off in grand fashion, embracing the sunshine with their bouncy pop-rock melodies. Things took a turn for the worse when torrential showers threatened to bring proceedings to an early anti-climax, yet not even the rain could dampen festival goers' spirits as the likes of Hatemale, Audiorush and heavy metal band Strain entertained the masses with top performances.

Overall, despite the ever-changing weather, the day was an enjoyable experience for all involved, from the organisers, the bands and the faithful fans, who, with enormous hangovers and soaking wet clothes, are already looking forward to next year's event!

Contact: Chris Wyatt, Community Regeneration Manager (Arts and Festivals) on 01942 486929.

WOW Festival Launched as Wigan gets Hot on the Streets

On Saturday 25th June at the Turnpike Gallery, Leigh, an exhibition of Carnival by Liverpool-based arts promoters, Brouhaha International, entitled 'Crossing Waters', marked the official launch of this year's Wigan One World (WOW) multicultural festival. The exhibition, running until the 6th August, was officially opened by Andy Burnham, MP.

Saturday's event reflects the carnival atmosphere of the main WOW Festival event that takes place in Mesnes Park, Wigan, on Sunday August 7th. The Turnpike Gallery was alive with the sound of the full-on Brazilian drumming of the WOW Carnival band and the colourful activity of children from the 'Little Branches' group from Westleigh, who paraded their own array of carnival costumes. The creative work of the 'Little Branches' group is a direct result of the community work of the WOW Festival.

Michael Rycroft, the Trust's Festivals Manager said: "The WOW festival creates a platform for international performance, local community

involvement and cultural collaborations. It is a fun way to bring people together, foster mutual respect and encourage a greater degree of understanding of the borough's multicultural landscape."

Meanwhile, the first chapter in the 'Hot On The Streets' calendar took place in Wigan town centre from Wednesday 1st June to Friday 3rd June. Dancers, comedians, circus acts and musicians from both the professional circuit and the local community collaborated to create three fun-packed days of street entertainment providing laughter, thrills, spills and fantasy.

Over three thousand people witnessed the festival over the three days, despite the rain. Stars of the free outdoor street show were the *Black Eagles* an amazing troupe of tumbling acrobats from Tanzania; *Jason Maverick* the award winning mesmerising mime act or the magnificent and the *Splott Brothers* and their infamous 'cocktail of comedy'.

Contact: Chris Wyatt, Community Regeneration Manager (Arts and Festivals) on 01942 486929.

YOUTH AND COMMUNITY

Kick Racism Out Of Football

England's latest football heroes have given their support to Wigan Borough's Kick Racism Out Of Football campaign for 2005. Star midfielder Katy Chapman and England coach Hope Powell praised the Wigan campaign and urged children aged seven and eight from across Wigan and Leigh to sign up for the football festival on August 7th at Mesnes Park.

"This is a really important campaign and it's great to see that in areas such as the Wigan Borough it is going from strength to strength. Anything that promotes diversity in football is really important," said Hope. "The more people are aware of this cause the better and of course it's also important for children to have fun when playing football."



The campaign in Wigan is organised by the Trust, with the support of a wide variety of groups from across the borough. As well as August's fun festival for children there are two adult fun festivals planned for October in Leigh and Wigan. There will also be competitive tournaments for school pupils in November; an historical display at the Turnpike Gallery; art workshops and cultural learning provisions.

Contact: John Hesketh, Community Regeneration Manager (Youth and Community) on 01942 486916.

PLAY SECTION

Regeneration Manager Appointed

Deborah Freeman has been appointed Community Regeneration Manager (Play and Early Years). Many readers will know Deb as the Trust's Senior Play Officer. For the last eleven months she has been acting up into the role she has now been appointed to.

The underpinning ethos of Deborah's role is the 'child's right to play and have fun!'

It is Deborah's job to make sure the play areas are of the highest quality and that the outreach team facilitates play opportunities across the borough.

The role involves managing a team of 20 staff who all share a strong sense of purpose for this important service area. The team has strong support links to the voluntary sector, especially Wigan Play Association and the Adventure Playground in Norley Hall.

Deborah can be contacted on 01942 486919.

New Equipment for Young People

A celebration was held on the 1st June for the installation of new play equipment in Walmsley Park, Ince. Local children from two primary schools and an after school club were involved in choosing the exciting new kit.

Money from the Neighbourhood Road Safety Initiative resulted in four state of the art new pieces of play equipment being installed.

Meanwhile, Medway Walk has had a new BMX track installed. The play area at Norley Hall has been in existence for over 15 years and was in need of

redevelopment. With the help of local Councillors, children and their families, a new set of plans were drawn up to redevelop the play area.

A team of experts came especially from Germany to install the BMX ramps, and an open day is currently being planned.

Contact: Diane Winnard, Play Development Officer, on 01942 886780.

Refugee Week Fun with Play Team

During 'Refugee Week' (w/c the 20th June), the outreach playworkers were very busy supporting and providing a number of different exciting activities. The team delivered numerous sessions around the borough to promote this event and to also promote the benefits of welcoming refugees into our country.

The team designed a special play package to teach children playground games from the countries that refugee children have had to leave behind. The children have been playing games such as Gradi - Ki - Deo (one legged rabbit) and Kaipsak (spinning tops). The children really enjoyed learning new games from other countries.

The team also delivered an art project entitled 'Freefall' to a group called Rafiki and Junior Motswako. The project involved children designing and creating a piece of work to decorate a play parachute. Once the parachute has been decorated, the children will then learn and play lots of fun parachute games.

Contact: Dianne Winnard, Play Development Officer, on 01942 886780.

National Play Day

This year the Playsection is running a National Play Day event at Pennington Flash Country Park. National Playday celebrates children's right to play and we will be taking part in activities, as will thousands of other children and young people across the country. The theme for this year is 'Fit for play'. Activities, as always, will be fun and active. The plan is to build a giant volley ball court and have a massive aerobics session with lots of inflatable fun!

To be a part of the National Play Day event, either as a guest or as a volunteer, contact the Playsection.

Contact: Christopher Hayes on 01942 870032.

SPORT AND HEALTHY LIVING

ACTIVE LIVING

LEAP project

The Active Living Team provides a range of sport and activity taster sessions, courses and ongoing activity sessions through the nationally funded LEAP project. The LEAP project aims to find out what works in getting people over the age of 50 to become more active.

Included in the project are:

- Four Crown Green Bowls courses
- Two Golf Taster sessions and three 5 week courses
- Three Tai Chi classes



The Crown Green Bowls courses ran from May to June for six weeks in conjunction with the Green Spaces rangers and the British Crown Green Bowls Association. Fifty-five people attended the courses at Mesnes and Pennington Parks and all participants thoroughly enjoyed the courses.

Taster golf sessions were held during May at Haigh Golf course, in conjunction with the golf professionals there, and full courses have started in June. Twenty people attended the taster sessions and most have gone on to attend the courses.

Tai Chi sessions are taking place at Howe Bridge Sports Centre, Robin Park Sports Centre and the Dorset Road Community Centre, Hag Fold, over the summer.

Sessions are priced at £1.50 per visit and are ideal for people wanting to reduce stress, improve body awareness, posture and balance. Over five hundred people are attending the sessions so far this year.

Contact: Carol Southern, Principal Manager, Active Living Team, on 01942 488481.

ACTIVE LIFE

New Look for Hindley Pool

On Monday 23rd May, Hindley Pool was officially re-launched by Lord Smith of Leigh. The pool is now a centre providing specialist facilities for swimmers with disabilities, thanks to a £110,000 investment.

The refurbishment included:

- The creation of a changing room for those with severe disabilities, including hydraulic changing beds, showers and toilet facilities.
- Installation of track hoist direct from the changing room into the small pool.
- A brand new reception area and the refurbishment of the entrance area and corridors.
- The improvement of the family changing areas.

These improvements are in addition to the two pool lifts already in use at the pool. Together, they offer a complete solution to transport, changing and transfer problems in the water activity cycle. One carer can now safely manage pool access and exit routines for sitting and recumbent users.

Paralympians Jennifer Coughlin, who is a World Championship gold medalist and Anthony Stephens, who won four medals at the Athens Paralympics in 2004, were guests of honour at the re-opening.



"This is great news for all people with disabilities that want to enjoy or begin swimming. It is a fantastic sport and it's one that anybody can participate in. I am really honoured to be asked along by the Trust to be a part of the re-opening and I'm thrilled that Hindley Pool can now offer these facilities," said Jenny.

Lord Smith of Leigh, Leader of Wigan Council, is justifiably proud of the work that has taken place. "One of the main reasons we launched the Trust was to provide sports facilities that are accessible to all members of the community. The transformation at Hindley is really exciting and is indicative of the path we are taking towards providing high-class facilities for all," said Lord Smith.

Contact: Albino Ferro, Community Sports Manager, on 01942 253142.

Borough's Stars Shine at GM Games

Young people from across Wigan and Leigh have yet again proven that the borough is a real hotbed of sporting talent. Following the success of the Trust's Sports Development Unit, who picked up three out of six awards at the Greater Manchester Sports Awards in March, the borough's young sporting stars picked up six team gold medals at the Connexions Greater Manchester Youth Games, held at Bolton.

More than four thousand youngsters represented Greater Manchester's ten boroughs in 16 sports this weekend. With over three hundred young people in attendance, Wigan Borough had the largest number of competitors.

Jane Bent, Sports Development Officer for the Trust, is delighted at the results. "It's a fantastic achievement for the young people of Wigan to be held in such esteem among their sporting peers from across Greater Manchester. For the Sports Development Team the most important thing is the number of youngsters we had involved and the wide array of sports they competed in," says Jane.

One of the most notable successes for the borough was the gold medal victory in new age curling. The outstanding performances of Anthony Burgoyne (Hope school), Zak Farghaly (Mere Oaks) and Danielle Dawoud (Mere Oaks) have resulted in them being asked to represent England in an upcoming friendly against Scotland.

The triumphant trio are all members of the Multi-Sports Skills Club run by Sports Development Officer Darren Birch. Darren is suitably proud of the team's performance. "I am so pleased for the team, they've worked really hard and should be really proud of themselves. Their win is great testament to the club."

Contact: Lindsay Randall, Sports Development Manager, 01942 404981.

Silver Six for Summer Fun

The 'Silver Six' pass is being offered exclusively to anyone aged 14 to 18. The pass allows use of any Profiles Fitness Suite across the borough. The pass lasts for the entire summer holiday period.

Robin Park Sports Centre Manager, Mike Woodruff, commented: "This low price gym membership is a fantastic opportunity to get active this summer. We pride ourselves on providing a high quality fitness experience suitable for all age groups and fitness levels under the supervision of fully trained and enthusiastic fitness professionals."

Profiles Fitness Suites are situated at Robin Park, Hindley, Howe Bridge, Wigan International Pool and Ashton Leisure Centre.

In addition to Silver Six, the Summer Sizzler pass is also available throughout the month of July. This allows six months gym membership for only £99.

Contact: Mike Woodruff, Robin Park Sports Centre Manager, 01942 404957.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Haigh Hall

Haigh Celebrates Past and Present

The sun was shining in June for two of this year's big events in the Haigh calendar.

The Haigh Music Festival has become a major event for Wigan's young gig-goers and, this year, the day showcased over 20 live acts to a staggering crowd of almost 5,000 people.

Traditionally, this event has been known as 'Arts in the Park', covering a range of interactive visual arts activities with workshops, displays, dancing and live performances. This year's event focused purely on music, as the arts element has been separated out to make a more targeted 'Arts for All' family event, taking place on July 3rd.

In total contrast to the Music Festival, the past was brought to life at Haigh on 21st and 22nd June with the production of Shakespeare's 'Merry Wives of Windsor'. The outdoor production was well received by all who attended. It was the first time in many years that such an event has gone ahead.



Ian Sturzaker, Deputy Manager at Haigh Country Park, commented: "The Haigh Country Park Estate, including the Stables Courtyard and Walled Gardens, lend themselves well to the interpretation of this historical piece of theatre. One of the Trust's key objectives is to bring cultural events to the people of Wigan, and this event has added to our diverse and action-packed events programme throughout the summer."

Contact: Tim Sharratt, Haigh Hall and Country Park Manager, 01942 832895.

Development Team

Exciting project in Tyldesley

The Trust's Development Team has been helping the early growth of an exciting project in Tyldesley at a site known by some as 'the Cabbage Club'. A vacant allotment plot is being transformed into an information and skills facility to improve the health of local families. Based at the Tyldesley Allotments site, a whole new concept is being developed to help local people to help themselves.

The Development Team at Atherton Town Hall, has been working with partners Ashton, Leigh and Wigan Primary Care Trust, Shakerley/Tyldesley SureStart, Groundwork Wigan and Chorley and The Workers' Education Association to promote health through the 'grow it, eat it' initiative. Volunteers will be taught how to grow and harvest fresh food and then take fun courses on how to cook it.

The Trust, together with their operating partners, Tyldesley Allotment Association, donated an unused plot rent-free. Last year the site was cleared and new topsoil brought in.

At present the site is a blank canvas, but designs have been produced to give the volunteers some

options. There is a wish list for the site, including wildflowers, a children's patch, a sitting area, vegetable beds, a shed and a flowering arch.

The project could be a pilot for similar schemes, and it is hoped that everyone involved will get healthier by eating five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.

Contact: Andrew Howarth, Development Manager, on 01942 404858.

Parks and Countryside

New Tots Plot Opened

Exciting times are on their way for all toddlers, parents and carers living in the Shakerley, Tyldesley and Astley areas of the borough! A new 'TotsPlot' play garden on Parkfield Avenue, Astley, that has been under construction for the past few months, has been officially re-opened.

The venture is a partnership between the Trust and Sure Start Shakerley/Tyldesley. It aims to provide an area of safe play for children aged five and under. It also presents the ideal opportunity for youngsters to be involved with issues such as the importance of green spaces and health.

The garden provides a mix of structured activities such as flower painting and growing fruit and vegetables, and all equipment is provided. Special events and days out will be programmed into the annual calendar to make the area a real hub of fun and activity.

"After quite a wait the team is now chomping at the bit and can't wait to get the project up and running. If it's as successful as other similar projects in other parts of the borough, then this community will benefit greatly," said Project Manager and Parks Community Liaison Officer, Mike Berry.

Contact: Mike Berry, Parks Community Liaison Officer, on 01942 828904.

Tourism

Wigan in the Premiership

Wigan Athletic Football Club will, in 2005/06, participate in Europe's largest, most coveted and media covered football league. The Premiership League season will commence on the weekend of

13th/14th August and will see the JJB Stadium host visits from 19 Premiership clubs. This is a wonderful opportunity for both the club and the borough of Wigan.

Wigan Athletic's success will be shared with the borough as a whole. There will be international media coverage, an estimated additional 200,000 visitors and a massive boost to the local economy, with primary income alone estimated to be worth over £10m.

It was recognised early on that the borough needed to examine the opportunities for harnessing this potential. The first meeting of a working group took place on Friday 27 May, led by WLCT.

The primary aims of the group are to examine and develop opportunities that will exploit the success of Wigan Athletic in the Premiership, under the headings of: Image of the Borough; Tourism Development; Economic Development & Regeneration; Town Centre. The secondary aim of the group is to look at ways of improving the welcome and overall experience of visitors.

- ❑ A proactive media campaign selling the borough and its attractions will be put in place targeting local, regional and national sports press.
- ❑ A national media familiarisation visit of Wigan and its attractions, jointly hosted by Wigan Athletic and WLCT/Wigan Council is to take place at the end of July.
- ❑ A new piece of print is to be published. *Wigan – Premier Town* will form the main element of a direct mail campaign to Premier Club Supporter Associations, travel companies, the media, tourist information centres and transport providers.
- ❑ Wigan Council Inward Investment is to host a familiarisation visit to the borough (coinciding with a Premiership fixture) of developers and investors.
- ❑ Engineering Services Department is to erect 3 gateway signs (Wigan – Home to Premiership Football and Super League).
- ❑ Transport providers and highways managers will work together to minimise transportation disruption during any Premiership fixture,

including the launch of a supporter car share website.

- ❑ Web site links between Virgin Trains Supporter Information and Destination Wigan website.
- ❑ Wigan TIC has opened an Accommodation Desk in partnership with Hotel Network.
- ❑ Town centre retailers and pubs are to put together packages and incentives for visitors.
- ❑ Taxi drivers and other direct transport providers are to receive Wigan in the Premiership information packs.
- ❑ Wigan Athletic and other working group members are to maintain close working links, share information throughout the season, and provide merchandise, and Latic's players are to support ongoing PR opportunities.