

PAST FORWARD

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Summertime
by the
Canal

£2

Wigan and Leigh's local history magazine

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FRONT COVER

Postcard showing the Leeds-Liverpool Canal at Gathurst

Letter from the Editorial Team

Welcome to PAST Forward Issue 85.

We're delighted that in spite of the pandemic and lockdown, your local history research has not stopped and we've plenty of fascinating stories to share in Past Forward.

Yvonne Eckersley continues her exploration of the journey taken towards political influence by Ashton-in-Makerfield's miners, from the pits to Parliament. Charlie Guy examines 'Death's Dictionary' with a fascinating overview of the use of symbols on nineteenth century graves.

Brian Joyce looks at the tragic events at Dan Lane Mill in September 1911 and Karen Lynch investigates the evidence for the Observatory at Haigh Hall.

We're pleased to announce that our Past Forward Essay Competition will continue as normal this year, thanks to the kind sponsorship of Mr and Mrs O'Neill. Please see opposite for full details about how you can enter.

With one eye on the future and one on the last few months, we launched the Wigan Borough COVID-19 Archive. We all have a story to tell about how the pandemic has altered our lives and we want to preserve and document our lived experiences for future generations. Everyone can play a part and get involved. For more information please see page 13.

Revealing Wigan and Leigh Archives

The Leigh Town Hall project is reaching the end of our construction phase as we work towards the re-opening of the building and new facilities for visitors and researchers at the Archives & Local Studies.



The shells of our new strongrooms – the vaults as we're calling them – are nearly complete. These spaces occupy the basement and ground floor of the former shop units on the Market Street elevation of the building. Environmental control systems are now installed, alongside fire suppressant systems to help safeguard collections. Once we have new racking systems in place we'll be close to returning the archives to their new home.

On the upper floors of the building decoration work is nearly completed and conservation in the historic council chamber is underway with restored plasterwork and paintwork.

Copy Deadline for Issue 86 – Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday, 16th October 2020.

Information for contributors, please see page 21

Our exhibition designers, Creative Core, are working hard with the Archive and Museum team to polish text for the exhibition and finalise image panels and interactive displays. We're working with a group of volunteers to decide on who will feature on our Famous Faces window, celebrating contributions to our history from every part of our communities.

We are pleased to have successfully recruited to our team two project officer posts. The new postholders have a wealth of experience and knowledge in the sector and will be getting to work very soon to support the delivery of activities, educational workshops and volunteering for the duration of the National Lottery Heritage Fund supported scheme (until March 2023). We'll be asking them to introduce themselves in the next edition of Past Forward.



New spaces at Leigh Town Hall: exhibition entrance from foyer; exhibition space on Market Street.

Write 1000 words - Win £100!

Do you have a passion for local history? Is there a local history topic that you would love to see featured in Past Forward? Then why not take part in Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network's Local History Writing Competition?

Local History Writing Competition

1st Prize - £100

2nd Prize - £75

3rd Prize - £50

Five Runners-Up Prizes of £25

The Essay Writing Competition is kindly sponsored by Mr and Mrs J. O'Neill.



Winners from the Past Forward Essay Competition 2019

Criteria

- Articles must be a maximum of 1000 words.
 - Articles must focus on a local history topic within the geographical boundaries of Wigan Borough.
 - By entering the competition you agree to your work being published in Past Forward. The winning article will be published in Past Forward and other submissions may also be published.
- If selected for publication the Past Forward Editorial Team may edit your submission.

How to enter

- Articles must be received by e-mail or post by Tuesday 1 February 2021.
- Electronic submissions are preferred although handwritten ones will be accepted.
- You must state clearly that your article is an entry into the Local History Writing Competition.
- You must include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if applicable). We will not pass your details on to anyone.

- It will not be possible for articles to be returned.
- You are welcome to include photographs or images however they cannot be returned.

Submit to

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

OR

Local History Writing Competition,
Past Forward, Museum of Wigan Life,
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

Out of the Pits and into Parliament: Part 2

Winning hearts, minds and votes.

By Yvonne Eckersley

The 1894 Local Government Act introduced elected councils and working men were able to enter local government. Miners Stephen Walsh and Edward Walkden were elected on to the first Ashton Urban District Council.

From the outset Ashton councillors, mainly mine owners, managers, colliery officials and large factory owners, were obstructive. At the council's inaugural meeting their hostility was particularly marked. Acting out of step with nearby councils, they rejected Stephen Walsh's request that meetings begin at the end of the working day, voting instead for mid-afternoon.

The election of men like Walsh and Walkden was helped by the Act's abolition of plural voting in municipal elections. Plural voting, whereby a vote was attached to a piece of property, meant a man could vote in every constituency that he owned property; something that remained in place for Parliamentary elections. After the 1895 General Election James Moon, defeated Liberal Parliamentary candidate for the Newton Division, (in which Ashton was a township) and popular among miners, claimed the 'wishes of the residents were overridden by plural voters.'

At this election Sam Woods and Thomas Aspinwall, both Liberal-Labour candidates supported by the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation (LCMF), were defeated by Conservative candidates, Colonel Blundell at Ince and F S Powell in Wigan. In hard fought campaigns, opposition to the miners' candidates led at least one man to publish malicious untruths. During the Ince

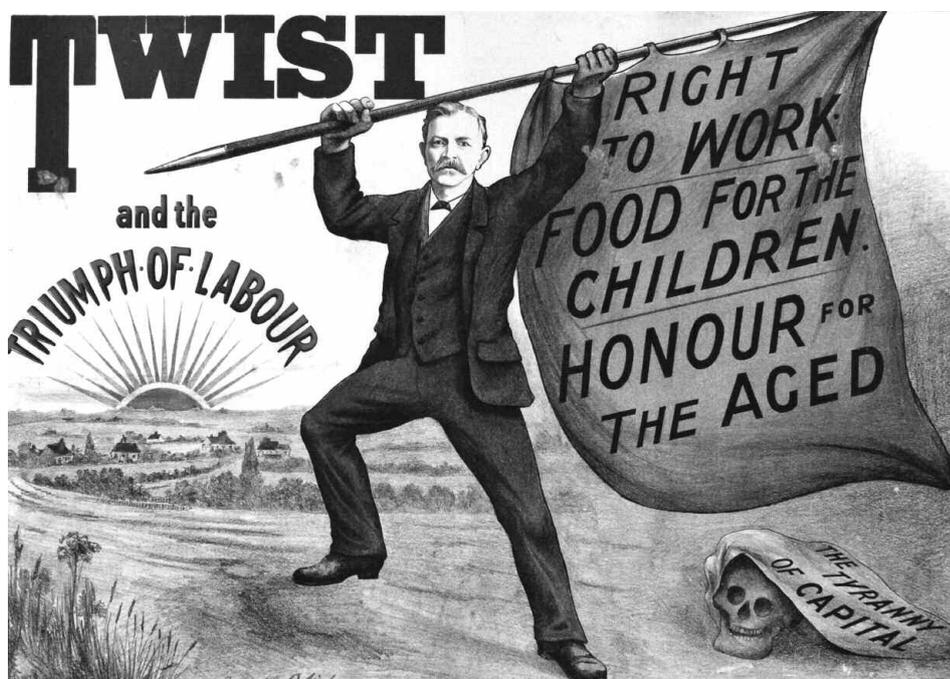
campaign James Keen, manager of Moss Hall Colliery, accused Sam Woods of misappropriating public money during strikes and lockouts. Sam Woods instigated a successful libel action. Keen was found guilty and fined £5.

During the 1895 campaigns, women's political activism was considered newsworthy. We learn that Wigan's Ladies Primrose League, the 'Colonel's Amazons', were actively disrupting Aspinwall and Woods' campaign meetings. At meetings in Newtown, Poolstock and Goose Green, groups of 'girls' constantly heckled the speakers. In Scholes, Liberal women and children were involved in fracas with groups and individual Conservative voters on their way to vote. At one point anyone wearing a blue rosette was pelted with horse manure and dirt, and had red cloths and green cabbage leaves waved in their faces. The Observer reported that the newly established Wigan Ladies Liberal Association stressed their advocacy of

women's suffrage (which local Conservative MPs, F. S. Powell, Lord Balcarries and Colonel Blundell voted against in Parliament) and as soon as they got the municipal franchise, women nominated candidates.

Harry Twist

Harry Twist was born in Platt Bridge in 1870, and went to Platt Bridge Wesleyan School. At eight he was orphaned and went to live with his sister in Billy Gore's Row, Plank Lane, before moving to Golborne, Bamfurlong then Ashton. He studied for his engineering articles under C.F. Clarke, managing director of Garswood Coal and Iron Company's Colliery near Bryn Gates, and at Leigh Technical School. He moved to Yorkshire, initially to Oaks Colliery, Barnsley, then to Lofthouse Colliery where he was the general manager's assistant for over four years. In 1893 he went as second engineer to Colonel North's Arauco Nitrate Mining Company in Chile, South America.



Then he returned to Bryn Gates and Bamfurlong.

In 1897 the huge Ashton and Haydock Miners' Federation, in which Bamfurlong had branches, affiliated to the reorganised Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation (LCMF). By 1899 Harry Twist was their checkweighman at Cross Tetley's Mains No. 1 Pit in Bryn Gates. A year later he became the pit union's president. By 1903, living at 6 Lily Lane, Platt Bridge, he was a trusted and influential man committed to the development of trade unionism and labour politics.

As secretary of the LCMF's Bamfurlong Miners' Association (with 5,000 miners in three branches) an opportunity arose for him to fuse the two. In April 1903 he officially and successfully proposed to the LCMF that they join the LRC (Labour Representation Committee - forerunner of the Labour Party). Soon after the Wigan LRC was formed. With Harry Twist as Vice President it affiliated to the Wigan and District Trades Council.

The LRC was not its most powerful group but it did have a definite political agenda. Its aim was to unite working people behind the policy of putting working men on councils, and in Parliament as a bulwark against direct attacks on trade unions. Employers had formed the National Free Labour Association, a strike breaking organisation, and the Employers' Parliamentary Council, a powerful anti-union lobby. From 1901, the Taff Vale judgement enabled employers to sue unions for money lost owing to strike action. This was reversed by the Trades Disputes Act of 1906.

This fusion of trade unionism and politics did not meet with every miner's approval. Many resented union involvement in politics, especially when that involvement included financially supporting the infrastructure needed to build a powerful organisation. One man in particular, Richard Dixon, neighbour and checkweighman at Cross Tetley's Bamfurlong Pit, and unsuccessful competitor of Harry Twist during the 1903 elections for secretaryships of the Bamfurlong Miners' Association and the Bamfurlong Agency for the Wigan and District Miners' Permanent Relief Society, became bitter. He vociferously accused Harry Twist of appropriating money paid into the Bamfurlong Relief



fund for personal gain. He also postulated that the weekly levy of one penny per member to provide funds to fight elections and pay MPs' salaries should be spent to help individual miners.

Given that Dixon's accusations could fuel distrust and dissent among miners, in 1905 Harry Twist, supported by the LCMF, sued Dixon for slander. Their priority was the union's reputation rather than compensation. The trial, reported in the Wigan Observer, offered a platform to reassure sceptical miners that their contributions were being used on miners' behalf. It also suggested Dixon may have been motivated by personal jealousy, as much as his aversion to LCMF's financial support of Parliamentary candidates James Seddon (Newton) and Stephen Walsh (Ince), and the payment of expenses to delegates attending LRC, trades council, Labour meetings and demonstrations.

Miners and Women

Miners' attitudes to women's right to work and suffrage was ambiguous. In 1866, 1885, 1886 and 1911 miners' leaders called on Parliament to ban women working on pit brows. As miners' unions refused to admit women members until 1918, pit brow women, with the help of women's industrial and suffrage organisations, organised themselves. Their battle was on two fronts: with miners' union leaders and in Parliament. These battles were successful, and the women kept their jobs.

On the vexed question of women's suffrage, the century began well. In 1901 Wigan Trades Council, with a high number of miners' delegates, passed a resolution of support. In 1904, when the Wigan Weavers Association, in conjunction with the Lancashire and Cheshire Women's Textile and Other workers Representation Committee, chose Hubert Sweeney to run in Wigan as Britain's first Women's Suffrage candidate no objection was raised.

In 1905 Christabel Pankhurst addressed a trades council meeting chaired by Harry Twist. When she asked for them to support Hubert Sweeney as Wigan's Women's Suffrage candidate in the 1906 general election, they were supportive. Yet strangely, after Hubert Sweeney stepped down, they refused to support his replacement.

Thorley Smith was Wigan's Trades Council's treasurer, Wigan's first working man councillor, very active in labour politics and someone who vowed to support Labour policies in Parliament. Interestingly it was a miner's union delegate who tabled the motion not to support him. However, miners may have had sufficient supporters to pass their resolution, but they did not have overall control. Many Trades Council Unions declared their intention to vote for him. And many did. With 2,205 votes Thorley Smith pushed the Liberal candidate into third place.

Women and Wigan Labour politics

The Labour Party manifesto of January 1910 pledged to support women's suffrage. During his 1910 election campaign Harry Twist put this pledge into practise. He allocated five minutes of each campaign meeting to women suffrage workers as they advertised the collection of signatures for their pro-suffrage petition at polling stations. He also worked closely with prominent women activists.

During his election campaign he, as LRC candidate, and Bruce Glasier, national leader of the ILP, shared a platform with Wigan ILP politician Helen Fairhurst (Silcock). Helen had been active in trade union and labour politics from at least 1895 when she worked with the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) to unionise Wigan's weavers. When the SDF affiliated to

Wigan's LRC in 1903, Helen's political trajectory led her to work actively with the LRC.

1905 found Helen as chair at a Liverpool LRC meeting. As President of the Wigan Weavers' union she was a prime mover in the promotion of Wigan's Women's Suffrage candidate. In March 1907 Wigan's newly formed Independent Labour Party replaced the SDF on Wigan's LRC. From then Helen worked continuously for the ILP. Her journey took her from singing at its first social evening to becoming its vice president in 1913.

The role women like Helen played in winning the hearts and minds of potential Labour voters was increasingly recognised. Speaking at the 1908 Railway Servants' Women's Guild Conference in Wigan, Stephen Walsh called on Wigan's women to be missionaries for trade unionism and political activism at work, in society and within families.

At that meeting the first Wigan branch of the Women's Labour League (WLL) was formed. The WLL was established in 1906 to support the campaigns of municipal and parliamentary Labour candidates. At the beginning of October 1909, during the weekly meeting of the Independent Labour Party, Women's Labour League organiser, Dorothy Fenn, stated her intention to hold recruitment meetings among groups of women workers. Many women responded and by 1910 Wigan had three branches. The WLL branches held weekly or fortnightly meetings and offered programmes of lectures in the Weavers Union Rooms.

Their trade union and political activism was acknowledged at the huge annual Labour Demonstrations at Haydock Park. These annual Labour



Demonstrations attracted working people from local towns. In impressive displays of unity, each year at least 10,000 people marched behind bands and banners to Ashton's market square, continuing in procession along Gerrard Street and Warrington Road to Haydock Park. These were not viewed favourably by all. Traditionally, local working men's political allegiance was to the Liberal or Conservative parties. Many thought that there was no need for a third. Yet the evidence could not be ignored.

Conservative Opposition

In the general elections of 1906 and 1910 Labour's James Seddon had defeated Conservative Parliamentary candidates Richard Pilkington and Roundell Palmer (Viscount Wolmer). And Labour's successes seemed set to continue. In 1909 the Miners' Federation of Great Britain joined the Labour Party and pledged financial support to municipal and parliamentary candidates, using money raised by a membership levy. After the Osborne Judgement of December 1909 made this illegal, trades unionists contributed voluntarily.

Ashton's Conservative Association identified the popularity and power of the LCMF and local leaders as the driving force of Labour's successes. They sponsored ten branches of their Constitutional Labour Union. By offering conservative miners an alternative, they hoped LCMF would be weakened.

Furthermore, in 1910, with four members' compliance, they attempted a legal challenge to restrict LCMF's power. Initially Harry Twist was their target. In Parliament, on 27 March 1911, Viscount Wolmer asked the Attorney General to instruct the Director of Public Prosecutions to instigate a criminal prosecution against him. He accused Twist of threatening and intimidating four of their members in an effort to insist they join the LCMF. After some discussion, the Attorney General refused. He saw nothing to warrant him directing the Director of Public Prosecutions to institute a prosecution.

Then, on 12 July 1911, they targeted the LCMF leaders. Solicitors for three

of the four men appeared before the Vice Chancellor of Lancashire to request an injunction to restrain Thomas Greenall, Thomas Glover, Thomas Ashton (General Secretary) and Harry Twist from threatening or interfering with the men or their employers. The owners of Bamfurlong Colliery had been warned that if the men continued to work at their colliery as members of a rival union, then the LCMF members would not work with them and the pit would close. The Vice Chancellor did not agree that the law had been broken and refused their application.

Undeterred, on 22 July they tried again. They requested permission to appeal against the decision of 12 July, slightly differing their complaint. This time they included the accusation that the LCMF was diverting part of their members' subscriptions for political purposes, something the Osborne Judgement had made illegal. This was not proven and the request for an appeal was dismissed. And the movement continued.

The January 1910 General Election

In the weeks immediately before the election, the national battle between the Liberal and Conservative Parties dominated Wigan's campaign. There was, however, a very significant difference in Wigan. Wigan had no Liberal candidate. Wigan's battle for representation was between the Labour and Conservative candidates. As the election result showed, sufficient hearts and minds had been won, and had been transformed into 4,803 votes for Labour's Harry Twist. With 510 more than his Conservative opponent, Reginald Neville, Harry Twist had moved from pit to parliament to become Wigan's first Labour MP.

Main Sources.

Wigan Observer 1895-1910 - at Wigan Archives; Raymond Challinor - The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners; The Common Cause - Manchester Archives; Women's Labour League Records - People's History Museum

References.

*Wigan Observer - 1881-1893
Raymond Challinor, 'The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners'*

WHAT'S IN A NAME? TRACING MYLES STANDISH

BY JOHN O'NEILL

This year marks the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's voyage from Plymouth across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World. The ship, captained by Christopher Jones, was often used in the Anglo-French line trade, and set sail on the 6 September 1620, weighing anchor 66 days later on 11 November at what became New Plymouth, on the shores of Cape Cod, New England.

There were just over 100 passengers on board, referred to as 'pilgrims', seeking to practise their extreme protestant faith in peace.

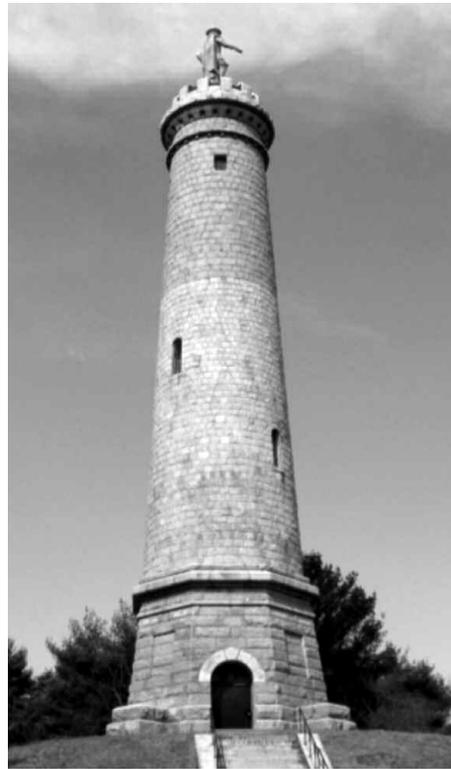
All were English, a number of them coming from Leiden, Holland where they had been living in order to escape religious persecution under King James I (1603-1642) and had, whilst there, made a meagre living in the cloth industry.

The voyage had been funded by the Merchant Adventurers Company, hoping for improved commercial prospects following a number of disappointing earlier ventures.

They placed the protection of the vessel, crew and passengers under Myles Standish, from Lancashire, as the military commander. He had come to that company's notice when on the continent in the service of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) on campaigns against Spain in the early 1600s.

It was thanks to the skill and courage of Myles, and the Pilgrims' leader, William Bradford, that saved the new colony that had been established from annihilation in the face of sickness, and the hostility of the native Indians; although only half of the pilgrims survived the first winter there.

In 1632 the colony moved to a more suitable location on the northern side of Plymouth Bay and named the site Duxbury, after a branch of the Standish family line living in the Chorley area of Lancashire.



The monument to Myles Standish, Duxbury, Massachusetts

Despite many set-backs they established one of the earliest colonies in North America and ultimately contributed to the foundations of the United States of America. Duxbury itself became the last resting place of Myles Standish on 3 October 1656 where, in honour of his memory, a granite shaft 116 feet high, surmounted with a 14 foot bronze statue of Myles, was erected in the 1870s.

It was a belief held locally for years that Myles was descended from the principal branch of the family, the Standishes of Standish Hall. It was thought these connections went back to William the Conqueror through men who received grants of land from William following the Norman Conquest, including Warren de Bussel, the Spielman and Leising families. These lands included the manor eventually referred to as Standish. With subsequent marriage settlements and transfers of land the inheritors adopted the name

Standish themselves between 1190-1220, beginning with Radulphus de Standish.

The name 'Standish', as described by E.Ekwall in his 'The Place Names of Lancashire' (Manchester University Press, 1923) is derived from the old English 'stan' meaning stony and 'edisc' meaning a park or enclosure for cattle.

Branches of the Standish family gradually spread across Lancashire over the centuries to include places such as Ormskirk, the Isle of Man and Duxbury, together with a number of cadet branches, which included Shevington and possibly Crooke.

For years the antiquarian, Thomas Cruddas Porteus, vicar of St John the Divine, Coppull, who spent much of his leisure times researching and writing about many elements of local history including: Captain Myles Standish - his lost lands and Lancashire connections (1920); A History of the Parish of Standish, Lancashire (1927); A Calendar of Standish Deeds, 1230-1575 (1932), endeavoured to prove that Myles Standish had claimed in his will that he was born in Standish Hall and therefore directly descended from the Standishes of Standish Hall.

However, unable to prove that, Porteus finally followed up rumours which led to the Isle of Man but was unable to determine that Myles was definitely born there. Since then, however, according to Lawrence Hill (Gentlemen of Courage, Magnolia Publishing Company, 1987), documents have been found, including the will of John Standish, father of Myles, which demonstrate that all the evidence points to the irrefutable conclusion that Myles was the son of John Standish of Ellanbane, Lezayre, Isle of Man and that he was born at the ancestral home there.

Lancashire Lads in Lincoln's Army

BY JOHN UNSWORTH



Union troops in Virginia. Well fed and well equipped. (Library of Congress)

It must have seemed to private Henry Broadhurst that he had a charmed life when the knapsack he was carrying took a direct hit from an enemy bullet. The bullet was meant for him, but luckily the only casualties were his pocketbook and a letter he had penned for his father Isaac, a cotton carder in Leigh, Lancashire. Henry had literally dodged a bullet, and in a spirit of bravado, pride and maybe a tinge of gratitude to the gods of war, he sent the missive on to his family. After receipt of the battle-scarred letter Isaac, probably in the same spirit, forwarded it on to the editor of the local newspaper, the Leigh Chronicle. War news is always good copy and the editor duly printed a short item in the paper under the headline - A Narrow Escape. The date was 2 July 1864. Henry was 3,000 miles away in Virginia, fighting in a foreign war, a recruit in the Union army battling its way to Richmond, the capital of the Confederate States of America.

Henry was not alone. Ignoring Queen Victoria's Neutrality Proclamation and the Foreign Enlistment Act forbidding British subjects to bear arms in the conflict, an estimated 150,000 Britons enlisted to fight. Their choice, whether for the North or South, depended on a number of reasons: abhorrence of the institution of slavery; opposition (if they opted for the Southern cause) to what they regarded as the belligerent and bullying attitude of Lincoln's government; and, for those Brits who were already domiciled in the States, patriotism towards their adopted country or region. And money. Both sides offered cash bounties upon enlistment that in some cases was the equivalent of a year's wage. And in this conflict of high ideals and outraged morals it was one of the less noble, but more practical, incentives for lining up as potential cannon fodder.

There were also those, as in any war, whose actions were anything but noble. One of these was James Taylor from Manchester. According to the Leigh Chronicle James signed up as a substitute for one Samuel Corliss, a draftee from New York City. This meant that, for a sum of money, anyone who had been drafted into the army could pay a 'substitute' to serve on their behalf. It was a common practice in both the Union and Southern armies. James would take Corliss's place in the ranks. However, James Taylor had other plans, and they didn't include being shot at by the enemy. Accompanied by the Provost guard he and a few other enlistees went into a local restaurant for refreshments. As they sat down at the table James took the opportunity to bolt for the nearest exit. One of the guards, as the Chronicle reported, who had him in charge, was too quick for him and discharged a pistol as he fled. The ball passed through Taylor's wrist, broke a nearby chair and tore into a dress coat draped over it. The 'deserter' was taken to the US General Hospital where, according to the newspaper, it is 'understood he will lose his arm'. Whatever became of him is unknown. With that grim prognosis James passed into history.

Henry's motivation for enlisting is unknown, but as he was from the predominantly working class North of England we can hazard a guess that he felt some solidarity with the heavily industrialised Northern states. On 5 February 1864, in Philadelphia, he had mustered in with the rank of private with a Pennsylvania regiment, the 72nd, before transferring to the 183rd. He saw action during the final stages of the war when Union forces were closing in on the rebel capital. Southern resistance was intense, and in his letter he expresses the hope they may yet reach Richmond. He may even have encountered another Lancashire lad, James Battersby from Lowton, who was stationed in the same combat zone.

James had also written a letter that had ended up in the columns of the Leigh Chronicle. In it he mentions the daily hazards experienced by him and his comrades as they had to be constantly on their guard against rebel sharpshooters who 'use English ammunition, which is superior to ours and at long range they can pick off their man at every shot'. He goes on to describe an artillery barrage directed at the Confederate positions in and around the city of Petersburg, likening it to the fireworks display he had witnessed at Bellevue Gardens, Manchester, representing the siege of Sebastopol.

In all likelihood, even though James and Henry were stationed on the same front and were both from the same corner of South Lancashire, due to the erratic nature of war, chances are they never actually met. However, the War Between the States certainly did throw up some remarkable coincidences. Like all civil wars it was called a brothers' war because the deeply emotive issues involved tested and, in some cases, snapped the threads of family loyalty. Brother literally did fight with brother – and, in some cases, father with son. And this wasn't solely from an American perspective. English born Confederate Captain John L. Inglis was ordered to storm and capture a Federal artillery battery. The mission was accomplished and Captain Inglis dutifully accepted the flag of surrender from the Federal Captain - his brother James.

Henry's regiment, the 183rd Pennsylvania, went on to experience some of the fiercest and bloodiest fighting of the conflict as the Federal troops fought their way to the Confederate capital: the Battle of the Wilderness, 5-7 May; Spottsylvania, 8-12 May; Cold Harbor, 1-12 June; Siege of Petersburg, 16 June; Strawberry Plains, Deep Bottom, 14-18 August; Ream's Station, 25 August; Hatcher's Run, 27-28 October; and the Appomattox Campaign, 28 March-9 April, 1865. The regiment lost during service, four Officers and 92 Enlisted men killed and mortally wounded. Disease claimed the lives of two Officers and 89 Enlisted men.

The war came to its foregone, but no less bloody, conclusion in April of 1865 when Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, cornered at last, surrendered to Union general, Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House. With the coming of peace scores of Union and Confederate regiments and fighting units were disbanded. The 183rd mustered out on 13 July 1865. The nation now had to look to the long and difficult task of rebuilding the fractured Union. The many thousands of soldiers who had taken up arms now had to adapt to peacetime. For those who survived it was about trying to pick up the lives they had known before the start of hostilities. Maybe James Battersby was one of these. In Henry's case though, peace was short lived. Suffering from ill health, two years after the war's conclusion, he passed away in Ward Nine of the Soldiers' Home in Philadelphia. He was interred in the Mt Moriah Cemetery, where you can still see the plain marble tablet that marks his final resting place. He was 32 years old.

Death's Dictionary

By Charlie Guy

A Guide to 19th Century Gravestone Symbolism

Close your eyes and take a stroll through a seventeenth century graveyard. It is likely that you have just pictured a yard of crooked stones, and heaving earth; however, in the seventeenth century a gravestone for a common soul was a rarity. The dead were seen as their own community - once a wooden marker had worn away with time it was not replaced, and the dead were left in peace. Your stroll would likely have taken place through a quiet, green churchyard; essentially a mass grave, with the names of the sleeping dead lost to time and memory. Fast-forward a couple of hundred years, however, and we see an architectural revolution.

The nineteenth century was a time of unprecedented change, and must have been a time of thrill, inquisition and terror in equal measure. The people of the long nineteenth century were the first to ride a bicycle (the original title of 'velocipede' being far superior), taste ice cream, and have a picture taken. Who can comprehend what it must have been like to see a photograph produced, for the first time? Was it a scientific wonder, or had you just risked a portion of your soul? Despite having shuffled off this mortal coil long before our lifetime, the people of the nineteenth century have so many stories to tell us - if only we remembered how to listen.

The Industrial Revolution brought with it not only technical innovation and opportunity, but also increased death rates, overcrowding and disease, while science heralded a new age of understanding which shook the foundations of Christian religion. As a result, mourning and grief became not only a way to memorialise the dead, but a means of comfort - a way of holding on to times better understood. While earlier symbols had usually depicted occupations - for instance, a lathe and a hammer would represent a woodworker; a scalpel a surgeon - in the Victorian era, gravestone symbolism became as much about fashion as it was about function. One graveyard can therefore look vastly different to another, and yet - uncannily - the same.

Here follows a guide to some common nineteenth century gravestone symbolism found across Britain; and all of them should be able to be found within the graveyards and cemeteries of Wigan. How many will you see, when next you walk among the dead?

Anchors

The depiction of an anchor may be occupational for a sailor; however, anchors also denote hope, steadfastness and eternal life. Many

anchors were combined with symbols of the cross, therefore also representing religious faith.

Angels and Cherubs

God's messengers, sent to watch over the grave and guide the soul of the deceased. Angels are usually depicted in poses of grief, often with heads bowed, or weeping. Cherubs traditionally mark the grave of a child and are set to guide the infant soul on its journey into paradise.

Animals

Animals on gravestones often represent personal attributes of the deceased. For instance, a lamb or sheep represents piety and religious faith; foxes depict cunning, knowledge and intelligence; and an owl is representative of wisdom.

Birds

The dove of peace is a commonly seen symbol. A bird on a gravestone represents not only peace but also the flight of the soul, and the fleeting nature of human life.

Interestingly, the common belief that the appearance of a robin means that a departed loved one has returned to watch over the family is one which evolved alongside the increased capabilities



Anchors



Angels and Cherubs



Animals



Crosses and Celtic Crosses

of medicine in the late nineteenth century, and as a response to the grieving of the lost war dead in the early twentieth century. Prior to this, the robin had been viewed as a bringer of death.

Boats and Ships

Like anchors, boats and ships can also be occupational symbols; however, a boat can also represent the journey of the soul to paradise – the crossing of the River Styx.

Books

Books may be representative of religion and the Book of Life, indicating piety and trust in God, or knowledge. A person whose monument depicts a book may also have been a scholar, or a writer. Books on later graves may represent scientific thought, and the triumph of science over religion.

Butterflies

The butterfly was popular throughout the Victorian era, being symbolic of resurrection, eternal



Boats and Ships

life, and a new life for the soul in paradise. The dragonfly was also used in this manner, representing change, transformation and joy.

Chains

A chain represents the links and bonds of family, with a broken link being representative of the deceased. The loss of the deceased has left a permanent break in the family they have left behind.

Circles

Representative of eternity and the circle of life. Often depicted alongside a cross, a circle has no beginning and no end, and may also represent the Christian promise of resurrection.

Crosses and Celtic Crosses

Obvious indicators of Christian faith, piety and religion; with the Celtic cross being particularly fashionable during the Celtic revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The deceased has been taken into the arms of Christ.



Books

Flowers and Plants

Flowers and plants are common symbols, popular in the Victorian era, and each type has a different meaning.

A daisy, for instance, symbolises youth – the occupant of the grave died young. Similarly, lilies represent virtue, chastity and innocence, becoming a popular Victorian funeral flower as they represent the soul's return to purity.

Ivy and oak leaves represent steadfastness, immortality and strength, with ivy also representing friendship and fidelity. The depiction of roses on a grave denote everlasting love, and the religious symbol of a palm can tell us of piety; as well as standing for peace, victory and the triumph of eternal life over death.

Many other flowers represent the seasons, rebirth, new life, hope and love – for example the daffodil, snow drop, and wheat.

The presence of a thistle signifies that the deceased was of Scottish



Circles



Flowers and Plants



Grapes



Hands

descent, while a Tudor rose marks English heritage.

Despite now being associated more commonly with the war dead, the poppy has long been a symbol of death and eternal sleep, due to the associations it has with opium, and its sedative qualities.

Grapes

With their roots in ancient Greece, grapes represent prosperity and fertility; the lush abundance of the afterlife.

Hands

Hands are often used to denote piety, particularly when held in prayer, and there are three more common variations used.

Clasped hands represent the exchange between life and death, and are an acknowledgement of a life well lived.

A hand pointing upward represents the soul's ascent to heaven, while a hand pointing downward... represents a sudden death – the hand of God descending, come to choose a soul. What else?



Veiled Urns



IHS

IHS

Common on gravestones throughout the North West, this is a monogram symbolising Jesus Christ, being derived from the first three letters of the Greek name for Jesus – Iota-eta-sigma. The appearance of this symbol marks the deceased as being at one with Christ. First appearing in the 1760s, this symbol came back into fashion in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Sand timers

Displaying the inevitable passage of time, a sand timer reminds the living that they are always travelling toward death. Time waits for no man. A sand timer standing upright indicates that the individual died at the 'right' time, having lived a full life, while a sand timer on its side is usually indicative of a death at a young age – a life cut short.

Skulls and Bones

Memento mori – remember you will die. Along with shovels, pickaxes and coffins, morbid symbols of death and decay serve as a literal message from



Trees



Skulls and Bones

the dead to the living. We all end up the same – take care of your soul, while you still can.

Stars

Stars are indicative of eternity, immortality, and divine guidance. A pentagram – or five-pointed star – represents the wounds of Christ.

Trees

The depiction of a tree is representative of eternal life, strength and protection. A tree-stump symbolises a life cut short.

Veiled Urns

A popular nineteenth century symbol of grief, a veiled urn tells us that the deceased is deeply mourned. The veil, covering the funeral urn, distancing it from the living, represents the veil between life and death – through which we all must pass.

Winged Heads

A slightly earlier symbol, these 'soul heads' represent the soul of the deceased taking flight to the afterlife and were popular during the Regency period.



Winged Heads



Everyone in our community has been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19)

We will all have a story to tell about how the pandemic has altered our lives. Our lived experience now is something people will want to understand in the future. But how much will we remember? And how will we tell future generations what life was really like?

Once the restrictions are lifted, we may forget, or choose not to dwell on the everyday experiences that make this period in history so unique. We'll have newspapers and websites to look at, but we want to capture the voices of normal people.

We want to hear from YOU.

We're asking you to record your experiences of life now, as it is happening. We'd love to receive COVID-19 diaries (currently being written) and photographs. The experience of every member of our community is relevant.

We'd like you to record how you are being affected - family life, work, school, shopping, neighbourhood support networks, or any details of life at the moment.

Everyone can play a part and get involved - young and old, school children and adults, workers and those self-isolating at home.

How can I contribute to the COVID-19 Archive?

Keep a diary - make a daily or weekly record of life in your local area during the pandemic. This might include photographs and could be digital or on paper.

Create a scrapbook - include photographs, newspaper cuttings, notes and cards from friends and family, any leaflets you've received relating to coronavirus, your own notes and observations. Don't forget to add dates where possible. This is a particularly good idea for children who may have created a lot of artwork during lockdown - see diary ideas for kids.

Take some photographs or record a video - capture something unique about the impact of COVID-19 on your local area. This might be the view of your street taken from your garden or from a flat or top floor window. If you're a key worker, maybe capture something you see while travelling around the borough. Please remember to do so only within government guidelines.

Songs, poems and sketches - this is a great way of recording your personal experiences. Many stories from

generations ago were passed down through songs and storytelling.

Collecting leaflets and other ephemera - this may be something through the door about a local restaurant delivering meals to the vulnerable, or an email from your local church about the Easter service. Anything local recording the changes to our lives is potentially important for future historians. They're all valuable and we'd like copies, whether digital or paper.

3D objects - you might work for a local firm who switched production to medical PPE supplies and have a design sample, or have created a banner in support of NHS workers. Please let us know what you have.

How do I submit my contribution to the Archive?

You can submit your contributions to Wigan and Leigh Archives by:

- Emailing archives@wigan.gov.uk
- Post or in person, once restrictions on movement are lifted. Keep checking this page for address details.

How will we use the Archive?

Building the Archive will give future generations an insight into our lives, but we'll be keeping in touch in a few ways, including sharing new content with you through our social media pages on a weekly basis.

Over time we'll be working with our volunteers to decide which material to permanently include in the Archive and thinking about how we can share the Archive more widely, online at Wigan and Leigh Archives or through our venues at The Museum of Wigan Life, Archives and Local Studies and The Fire Within.

For more information on guidelines for submissions, please see <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/COVID19Archives> email us at archives@wigan.gov.uk

Terms for submissions

When you contact us or send any material, we'll get in touch to explain the terms by which we accept any material into the Archives. This allows us to record any wishes you have for the material and ensure everything is properly documented.

A HIDDEN FLAW

An Atherton Tragedy

BY BRIAN JOYCE

In late 1911, Ernest Boardman was forced to make far reaching decisions. He gave up his home in Mosscrop Street in Leigh and, with his two infant children, moved in with his widowed mother in Windmill Street. She already shared her four roomed house with three unmarried adult children. At the same time, Boardman gave up his job at a nearby colliery to return to his previous occupation as a railway platelayer which, at about £1 per week, was better paid. Ernest had no real choice because, at a stroke and without warning, his family had lost more than a third of its income. His wife Emily's weekly wage of 16s 10d had died with her when she was scalded to death at work.

Emily was a cop winder, 'doubling' spun yarn to strengthen it for the weaving process. She and several hundred other workers were employed at Dan Lane Mill, the premises of the Lee Spinning Company in Tyldesley Road (formerly Dan Lane) in Atherton. By 1911, the company had become part of the Fine Cotton Spinners and Doublers Association, a conglomerate formed in 1898 which became the largest spinning concern in the country.

The Association's Secretary was Claude Blair, who had risen to the position in 1909, having managed Dan Lane Mill for several years. His son, also named Claude, took over as mill manager. The Blairs' extended family continued to reside in Southbank, an 11 roomed house adjacent to the mill.

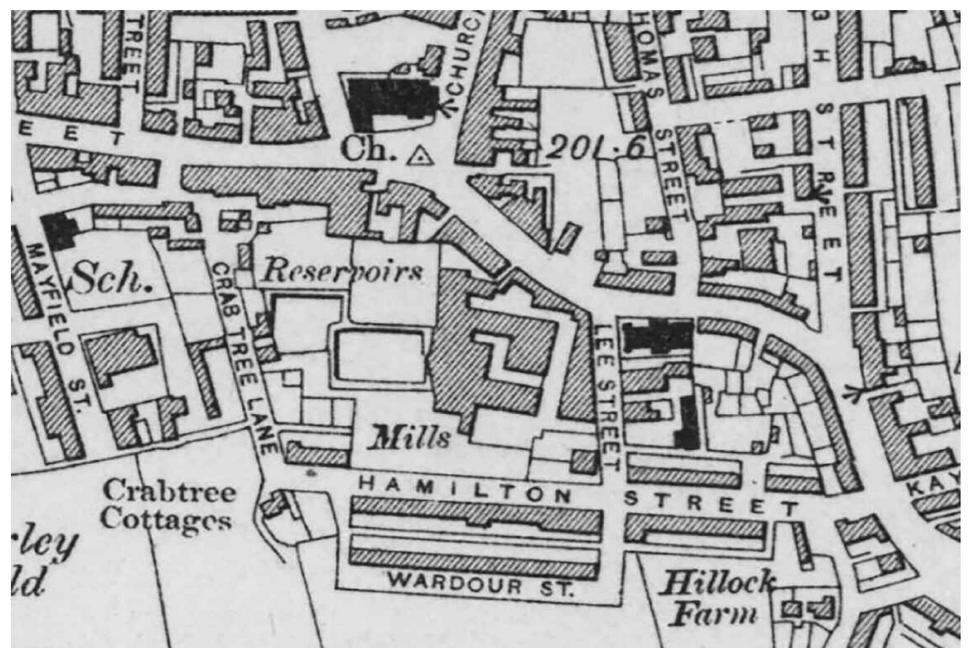
One assumes that Thursday 21 September 1911 started like any other. Emily and her co-workers, drawn not only from Atherton but from as far afield as Leigh and Hindley, started their usual morning shift in Room 17 - the 'cop warehouse'. At 12.30pm, Walter Melvin, the mill's assistant engineer, stopped the machinery and the women went for their dinner. At 1.30pm, they returned and Melvin restarted the engine, which operated smoothly for 17 minutes. Then disaster struck.

A range of overhead pipes took steam under great pressure from the boilers to the machinery operated by the cop winders. Suddenly, and without warning, one of the pipes fractured and burst through its lagging, sending jets of boiling steam onto the startled women 10 feet below. The shattered pipe was adjacent to the room's main exit which was

now impassable. The screaming women stumbled blindly towards another, rarely used doorway obscured with a sacking curtain. To reach it, they would have to climb onto a wooden platform two feet above the floor. They failed.

One of the women stumbled and fell while trying to climb to the exit. Others collapsed on top of her, blocking the doorway.

Barnett Clark, the cop winders' overlooker was standing in a neighbouring room when the calamity occurred. He, and others, including the mill's manager Claude Blair Jnr, rushed into the seething cauldron to drag the scalded women out. Meanwhile the mill's engineer, Thomas Carr Johnson, was still on his dinner hour at his nearby house. He was disturbed by frantic banging at the door and dashed round the



Dan Lane Mill, Atherton, 1909

corner to help Walter Melvin shut down the boilers.

Three local doctors hurried to the mill to examine the prostrate women. They rushed the nine most badly scalded, including Emily Boardman, to Leigh Infirmary by ambulance and in cabs. Given the ever present risk of accidents in factories and collieries, the hospital had taken the precaution of reserving spare capacity for such an emergency. By the time the vehicles clattered to a standstill nurses, led by Sister Annie Louth, were waiting to receive the casualties. All of the women had suffered severe scalding to their faces, necks and arms.

Three of the nine were eventually discharged, scarred but alive. Two, 15 year old Beatrice Kay and Alice Landers who was 25, died on the day and 18 year old Margaret Tickle on the Friday. Emily Boardman's agony lasted until she succumbed the following day. Hannah McCool clung to life until the Sunday. At 47, the oldest of the six was Elizabeth Spires. She was the last to die, her suffering lasting until Monday. At their inquest, the cause of death of each was given as a combination of bronchitis and shock.

The inquest jury also heard evidence from Claude Blair Snr, the secretary of the company, and Thomas Carr Johnson, its engineer. They both described how a new engine and accompanying pipework had been installed in 1902. On entering the cop warehouse after the explosion both men had immediately spotted that the broken pieces of pipe lying on the floor varied in their internal diameters. The pipe had split along a nine to ten foot length at the point at which it was thinnest internally. Blair believed this to be a flaw in the pipe's casting, claiming that: "I should not have allowed that pipe to be put up or used if I had known it was in that condition".

Thomas Carr Johnson emphasised that he was new to the firm and

had not been the mill's engineer when the new pipework was installed. He had never had reason to doubt its stability. Both men emphasised that the flaw was hidden internally and could not have been spotted by an external examination.

Following the Coroner's recommendation, the inquest jury returned a verdict of accidental death. In the fullness of time a Board of Trade enquiry would definitively establish exactly what had happened.

The first funerals were those of Alice Landers and Beatrice Kay, who were laid to rest in adjacent plots at Atherton Cemetery. Claude Blair and his son attended both funerals, as did representatives of the mill's workforce and women from the Johnson and Davies bolt works in Atherton. Hannah McCool and Elizabeth Spires were also buried at Atherton later. Contemporary accounts indicate that the town came to a virtual standstill during these occasions. Margaret Tickle and Emily Boardman were interred at Hindley and Leigh respectively.

As well as being a lasting tragedy for the families of the deceased women, their deaths caused an immediate threat to their financial survival. A woman's wages often provided a vital component of the family's income, as seen in the case of Ernest Boardman outlined above. Not only was income lost but additional expenditure was

often incurred on child minders and housekeepers by husbands used to having unpaid domestic chores undertaken by their wives. Remarriage after a respectable period of mourning was a preferable option for many widowed men. There is some evidence that Ernest Boardman had this consolation after a few years.

The Workmen's Compensation Act provided a cushion of sorts by establishing the automatic right of dependents to seek compensation from the employers of the deceased. Employer negligence did not have to be proved; the mere occurrence of an accident was sufficient. The bereaved families of the Atherton cop winders had no need to wait for a Board of Trade enquiry to assign blame.

Five of the six took their cases against the Lee Spinning Co to Leigh County Court in late January 1912. Contemporary accounts do not mention a claim being made by the family of Hannah McCool. They were certainly entitled to compensation: perhaps they settled out of court. Judge Henry Stanger, who presided over the hearings, was a former Liberal MP sympathetic to female suffrage and listened to the claimants' arguments favourably.

William Craston, the solicitor for Ernest Boardman, explained the financial consequences of Emily's unexpected death: that he had



The remains of Dan Lane Mill

been forced to seek a better paid job, that he and his infant children had been forced to move into his mother's already overcrowded house and so on. Ernest and Emily had pooled their incomes, so he had been partially dependent on his wife's earnings. He was claiming £150 in compensation. Rhodes, for the Lee Spinning Co, accepted that Ernest had been partially dependent on Emily but, using a complicated formula, suggested that £35 would be more appropriate. At one point, Rhodes claimed that Ernest might well remarry, 'and then his loss would cease'.

Judge Stanger would have none of this, insisting that the figure Rhodes was offering was totally inadequate. Ultimately Ernest was awarded £75 for the loss of Emily's income.

Forty seven year old Elizabeth Spires had earned, on average, 12s 8d per week as a cop winder. Her husband, John, was a pit brow labourer for a reported £1 weekly. The couple had no children, but they paid 2s 6d towards the support of his aged father. Since Elizabeth's tragic death, John needed to pay a total of 4s a week to a housekeeper for cleaning the house and doing the washing. Rhodes, for the company, denied that John had been dependent on Elizabeth's income and so did not merit much compensation, but Judge Stanger disagreed. Three people had lived off their pooled incomes. Elizabeth's 12s 8d had disappeared and yet household expenditure had risen. John Spires was awarded £40.

Margaret Tickle had shared her six-roomed house in Leigh Road, Hindley Green with her husband Richard, a miner, and nine of their eleven children, five of whom were working and paying keep. Nevertheless, four were either infants or at school. Over Rhodes' objections, Judge Stanger awarded Richard £30 for the loss of Margaret's 11s a week.

Another Hindley Green family was that of Thurston Landers who, like Tickle, was a coal miner. Again, five of his seven children were working and contributing to the family budget, but when his daughter Alice was scalded to death at the Dan Lane Mill it was reduced by about 13s weekly. Once more, Rhodes attempted to minimize the amount of compensation, but the judge awarded Landers £35.

The largest award went to the family of one of the youngest victims. Beatrice Kay was 18 years old when her lungs were scorched with boiling steam. Her 64 year old father, a former collier, had been laid off three years previously due to his age. He now earned a maximum of 2s 6d a week doing odd jobs when he could. Beatrice's mother kept their house in Atherton and brought in no income. While her older sister worked in a bolt works, for which she earned 10s 6d weekly, Beatrice had been the mainstay and might have continued to be so. As the family's solicitor, Thomas Dootson observed: "There was for three years a prospect of the girl doing a lot more, and even after that time, she might have been able to help her parents, as some good married girls in this district did". By the standards of the time, Mr and Mrs Kay were elderly. The loss of Beatrice's 12s to 15s weekly was a serious blow so the family were awarded £100.

It took more than 12 months for the Board of Trade enquiry into the Atherton tragedy to meet at Manchester Town Hall. The initial observations made by Claude Blair and Thomas Carr Johnson during the victims' inquests were shown to be substantially correct.

When the Fine Cotton Spinners and Doublers Association took over Dan Lane Mill, three boilers had been in situ. One of them was replaced in 1902. This project had been theoretically managed by a director of the firm named Forrest, the head of the Fine Cotton Spinners engineering department.

Musgrave's of Bolton supplied and fitted the new installation. Musgrave's engineer was told to fix the boiler's new pipes to what remained of the old ones, even though nobody knew who had installed them or how long they had been in place. When Musgrave's man objected to this instruction as contrary to normal practice, Richard Rogers the mill's own engineer, presumably under Forrest's orders, had told him to go ahead anyway. Both Forrest and Rogers had since died, as had Rogers' immediate successor.

Under questioning at the enquiry, Vernon Bellhouse, the present head of the Fine Cotton Spinners engineering department, admitted that he had started as a cotton spinner, picking up what engineering knowledge he had in the mechanics' shop. As reported in the Leigh Chronicle he admitted that: 'It was emphatically his practice not to make calculations in his (the engineering) department but to depend upon the persons who executed the work to make calculations'.

AA Hudson KC, the barrister presiding over the enquiry, was shocked. The Leigh Chronicle reported this exchange:

'It was an extraordinary state of things. Mr Bellhouse was throwing over all his duties as engineer and leaving someone to perform his duties. Mr Bellhouse said cotton spinners were not engineers and they really depended upon the people from whom they got their plant to do what was required'.

Hudson: "What is the good of the engineering department?"

Bellhouse: "To keep an eye on what is going on. To look after the financial part of the business".

Hudson: "You will admit that it is quite misleading to call it the engineering department"?

Bellhouse: "It is the wrong name for it".

A Board of Trade surveyor examined the broken pieces of the old pipe as part of the enquiry. He

ATHERTON MILL EXPLOSION.

SOME OF THE VICTIMS.



Miss ALICE ANN FAIRCLOUGH
249, Leigh-rd., Hindley
Green.



Mrs. ELIZABETH SPIERS,
12, Factory-st.,
Atherton.



Mrs. ANNIE BOARDMAN,
5, Messeropp-st.,
off Brown-st., Leigh.



Miss HANNAH MAKINSON,
GD,
91, Leigh-rd., Hindley
Green.



Miss BEATRICE KAY ID.,
101, Bolton Old-rd.,
Atherton.

Photo from the Leigh Journal showing some of the women who were killed or injured in the Dan Lane Mill disaster

found them to be very poorly cast internally, the internal thickness of the metal varying from three quarters to three sixteenths of an inch. At one point the pipe was only a sixteenth of an inch thick.

For a few years after the installation of a fourth boiler, the system worked at a pressure of 160lb to the square inch, before being reduced to the 145lb it was under on the day of the disaster. These years of sustained pressure, plus the constant expansion and contraction of the pipes due to temperature changes, led to metal fatigue and eventually caused the old, imperfectly cast pipework to fracture.

The eventual judgement of the Board of Trade enquiry was that the disaster had been caused by the use of badly cast old pipes with incompatible new ones. The enquiry exonerated Musgrave's from responsibility.

'They had come to the conclusion that Messrs Musgrave would never have erected a composite range of pipes unless they had received some special instructions from the persons employing them. The Court was satisfied these instructions in some form must

have come from the Company [i.e. Fine Cotton Spinners]...No responsibility attaches to Messrs Musgrave'.

At first, the enquiry appeared unequivocal as to where responsibility actually lay.

'The Court were inclined to find the Fine Spinners Association company responsible. Setting aside the introduction of these pipes in 1902, they increased the pressure of steam in 1905 without any proper precautions being taken, and for that they were clearly responsible. Further, they made no proper examination of the pipes nor did they insure them and thus secure inspection'.

However, there was then some comfort for Fine Cotton Spinners which may well have outraged the husbands and parents of the victims.

'Inasmuch however as the actual cause of the explosion was the defective pipe, put in in circumstances beyond the knowledge and control of the present company, the Court had decided not to hold the Company or the Association responsible...'

Deaths at work were not

uncommon in Edwardian Britain. Indeed, the area around Atherton was still reeling from the Pretoria Pit disaster which had killed more than 340 men the year before. What was unusual about the Dan Lane Mill tragedy was the fact that the six dead were women; no doubt it would take a long time to fade from the minds of textile workers. A few weeks after the calamity, a steam pipe burst in the weaving shed at Stanley Mill in Leigh. The panic-stricken women and girls working there fled for the exits. Fortunately there were no casualties, the pipe was mended and the wary women were able to re-enter the shed.

Spinning at Dan Lane Mill did not survive competition from the developing world after the Second World War. The buildings were eventually sub-divided into various industrial units, but were ultimately demolished. A large supermarket now covers most of the site. The part of the Mill which had contained the cop warehouse was the last to go, being pulled down in 2013. The substantial area left behind has yet to be built on and lies empty. There is no sign that there was ever a mill there at all.

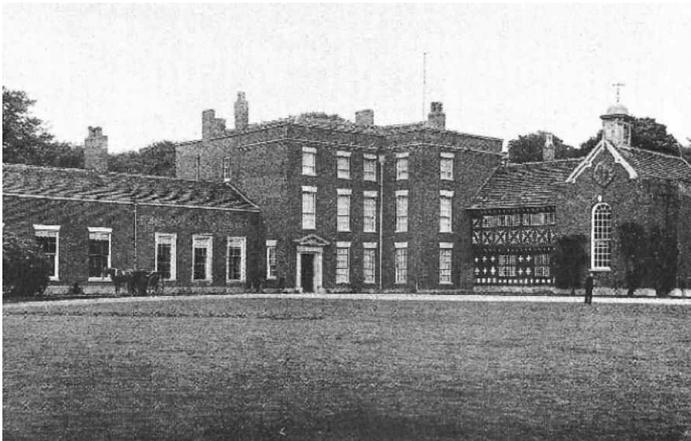
Lost parts of Standish Hall found in America

By Jim Meehan

When Henry Standish died in 1920 he had no heirs. He was the last Lord of the Manor. The estate was put up for sale and Standish Hall partly demolished. The once beautiful Manor House on the slopes of the Douglas Valley had the Tudor wing and chapel pulled down and the remains of the house made into two smaller homes. They were demolished in the 1980s when the Coal Board took ownership of the land.

For nearly 100 years people have been trying to solve the mystery of what happened to the parts that were removed in the 1920s. Stories grew in later years that the chapel and Tudor wing had been rebuilt in America. Were these true, or was it the valuable interiors that had been shipped across the Atlantic to be reassembled? Now four ancient rooms from the Hall have been tracked down. Three have been found in America and one in England.

The Standish name has a prominent part in American history. Myles Standish was the military adviser onboard the Mayflower. He became an important member of the Plymouth Colony who were credited with founding modern America. Although his origins remain unclear there was great interest in anything with a Standish connection when the estate went up for sale.



*Standish Hall in 1920 –
Tudor wing and Chapel on the right*

The Daily Mail reported in 1922 that fireplaces and oak panelling from the Hall had been sold to Robersons of Knightsbridge. They were dealers who specialised in selling manor house interiors to wealthy clients. But where did the rooms go from there?

One man who spent years trying to track down parts of Standish Hall was Norman Standish, an American directly descended from Myles. In 1987 he gave a talk at the Standish Festival. He told of how, after years of searching, he got a call to say a wealthy couple living in Detroit had a wood panelled room from Standish Hall in their home. He travelled to Detroit and persuaded the couple to let him see the room. He opened the door to find a beautiful walnut panelled room. His heart sank. He knew the rooms from Standish Hall were oak. He may have been closer than he knew.

In the 1920s Robersons set up an exhibition hall in Knightsbridge where they reconstructed oak panelled rooms for potential buyers to view. The most ornate and valuable rooms from Standish were sold as the 'James I Room' and the 'State Bedroom'. They were described as the finest examples of Jacobean and Elizabethan carved oak rooms ever seen. In the Hall they had been the 'Old Drawing Room' and the 'Study'. The other two rooms for sale were the 'Oak Library' and the 'Dining Room'.

There was an article in the New York Herald in 1922 describing how rooms from Standish Hall could soon be brought to America. It said the rooms were 'unchanged in any detail and utterly unaltered since Myles Standish was born in the Large Bedroom'.

The Drawing Room and Study were originally from Borwick Hall near Carnforth. They were moved to Standish following the marriage of William Standish



The Elizabethan 'State Bedroom' in the Hall (left) and in Robersons' showroom

to Cecilia Bindloss, the heiress of Borwick Hall. They were probably moved to Standish when William inherited the manor in 1682.

So, who would have the wealth to buy these rooms with a unique place in history? The Old Drawing Room (James I Room) and the Study (State Bedroom) were bought by one of the wealthiest and best-known men in America, William Randolph Hearst.

Hearst had amassed huge personal wealth as a media magnate. He was one of the richest and most powerful men in America, and a prolific collector. Many acquisitions were stored away, others were used to furnish the castle he was building in California known as San Simeon. His life was controversially depicted by Orson Wells in the Oscar winning movie Citizen Kane.

The rooms were shipped to his four-storey warehouse in the Bronx, New York. A few years later the great depression of the 1930s put an end to Robersons' trade. They closed their show rooms and a fire destroyed their sales records. Even Hearst faced bankruptcy. He was forced to sell many of his treasures, but was able to keep some, whilst others were placed in the hands of the Hearst Foundation.

The two rooms next appear in the catalogue for the 'Hearst Sale' of 1940/41. To his humiliation his close rival in the art world, Armand Hammer, took ownership of much of his collection and organised a huge sale using the two-acre fifth floor of Gimbel's Department store in New York. Hammer was the Chairman of Occidental Oil and, like Hearst, used his wealth to acquire art.

The timing of the sale was unfortunate. World War II was escalating and there was low interest in the sale. The Study (State Bedroom) did not sell and became the property of the Hearst Foundation. It next appears when it is donated by the Foundation to the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) in 1958. It remains there in storage to this day. It was valued at \$27,500 in 1958 which would equate to around a quarter of a million dollars in 2019. The Old Drawing Room, however, did attract a buyer in 1941.

Anton (Tony) Hulman was from a wealthy family in Terre Haute, Indiana. They made their wealth in the wholesale grocery trade. Tony was building a lakeside lodge in Terre Haute, and bought the room as the main feature. He became a household name in the USA when he restored the Indianapolis Racing Circuit after WW II and revived the famous Indianapolis 500. He was a modest man but became known for starting the race each year with the iconic words 'gentlemen start your engines'. He installed the room in 'Lingen Lodge', named after the town in Germany, where his grandfather was born.

Tony was pictured in front of the fireplace with his wife Mary in a local newspaper article in 1977. He sadly died a few months later. Mary continued Tony's philanthropic work supporting the arts, education, and sport in the city and surrounding area.

They were benefactors of the Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in the city. The lodge and surrounding parkland remained in the family until it was sold to the Institute in 2017. The lodge is used as a resource for the college and to host conferences and meetings. The Old Drawing Room is still intact and well cared for. It is known as the 'Myles Standish Room' and the college president has taken a keen interest in its history. He has kindly supplied photographs which provide stunning detail of the 400-year-old carved woodwork.



Jacobean Chimneypiece from the 'Old Drawing Room' - now known as the Myles Standish room - in The Hulman Lodge, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

The Oak Library was sold by Robersons in 1922 to Ralph Harman Booth of Detroit, Michigan who was building a house at Grosse Pointe. Like Hearst he was a publisher but also had interests in banking. The house has changed hands over the years but is still known as the Ralph Harman Booth House. When up for sale in 2019 the description of the interior included the following: 'Amongst many of the superb architectural details is the library's fireplace, and walnut panelling from Standish Hall'. However, we know the Library from Standish Hall was oak.

This must be the same room Norman Standish described visiting in 1987. There is a photograph of Ralph's widow, Mary, standing in a room in the 1940s, which appears to match the Standish Hall Library. The fireplace sold by Robersons with the room had the distinctive arms of Ralph and Mary Standish carved into the stone hearth. So, any sight of the room should be conclusive. Robersons fitted out several rooms on two floors of the house, so it is possible the oak library panelling has been used elsewhere in the house.

Ralph Booth was a lifetime patron of the arts. He founded the Detroit Arts Commission and later the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA). He donated much of his personal collection to the DIA and the National Gallery in Washington. He died in Europe in 1931 while serving as the US envoy to Denmark. Mary continued to live at Grosse Pointe where she died in 1951.

So, by an incredible coincidence two rooms from Standish ended up in Detroit less than 10 miles apart. One donated to the DIA by the Hearst Foundation and the other in a house built by one of the DIA's major benefactors.

The Dining Room was bought in 1924 by Tryphena Gunn Mitchell. She was an American living in



Young musicians using the 'Dining Room' in Halsway Manor, Somerset

England. She had met and married William Nelson Mitchell following a family visit to Bristol. He was a senior executive with the Imperial Tobacco Co. They bought Halsway Manor in Somerset in the early 1920s and Tryphena was sympathetically refitting the interior. She was obviously keen to have the Dining Room as she had to raise the ceiling and floor above so that it could be installed.

Halsway remained the family home until William died in 1936 when Tryphena moved to a smaller house in Bath. Her only son was killed during WW II and she later returned to her family in Indiana USA. She died in California in 1971 aged 94. She was reunited with her husband when her ashes were buried alongside him in the local church near Halsway Manor.

The Manor changed hands a number of times before it was sold to become the National Centre for Folk Arts. Since then it has provided a residential setting for promoting and practising



The Ralph Harmon Booth House and Mary Booth in the 'Oak Library'

folk arts. The Dining Room from Standish remains intact, and is often filled with people of all ages practising and performing music and folk art.

So, we have found all four rooms from Standish Hall. Does this solve the mystery? Was it the dismantling and removal of the rooms and their reassembly in America that created the belief that the Hall had been rebuilt in the States? I have not found any contemporary reports of the Tudor wing and Chapel being taken to America, and no trace of the Hall's exterior has ever been found there. Perhaps the story helped soften the blow of the precious parts of the Hall being lost, or perhaps, like most myths, the story grew and evolved in the retelling.



The Tudor Hall and Chapel being demolished in 1923. The valuable wood panelled rooms had been removed.

Of the four rooms, we know two are linked to Detroit and the Institute of Arts, but the other two rooms also retain a link. They are both connected to Terre Haute in Indiana. The Old Drawing Room was bought by one of its most famous sons, Tony Hulman. When he died in 1977 his widow Mary Fendrich Hulman took over his position and continued as a benefactor to the city. She grew up in Terre Haute and attended Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College and became a long-term patron. The Dining room that is now in Halsway Manor was bought by Tryphena Gunn Mitchell. She was born and brought up in Indiana and incredibly also attended Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College. She maintained contact with the college and contributed to it all her life. Over 20 years separated their time there, but I cannot help wondering if they ever met, or if they knew they both owned precious rooms that were part of Standish Hall centuries earlier.

With thanks to Anne Hurst, Andy Lomax, Dave Thomas, Bill Aldridge, and David Yendley

Information for Contributors

We always welcome articles and letters for publication from both new and existing contributors.

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Finch House – Fact & Fiction

A lost Gem of the Douglas Valley

BY DR STEPHEN SMITH

For over three hundred years Finch House stood proud upon a grassy knoll overlooking the River Douglas, midway between Shevington Nook and Appley Bridge. After Wrightington Hall, it was the largest and most prestigious house in the immediate area. Although located within the civil parish of Shevington, from the late nineteenth century the house became surrounded by the ever-expanding industrial village of Appley Bridge.

Much mystery surrounds the origin of this house, when exactly it was built and by whom, but many experts suggest 'the early decades of the eighteenth century' judging by its structure, size, and layout. According to Miller (2002) 'new houses built by the yeomanry around this time took the double-depth plan a stage further by extending it to three units instead of the normal two, and two and a half storeys in height throughout.' This can be clearly seen in the photograph of Finch House below taken some time around 1900 – three roof gables and the top floor confined to the centre of each roof pitch.

The house was built of small rough bricks, most probably made from clay deposits located nearby (much of these adjacent clay deposits were exploited commercially by the Appley Bridge Brick and Tile Co. when it started production in 1871.) On top of one of the three gable ends, about 25 feet above the ground was a lead spout held in place by brackets and decorated with a lion, a swan, a six-pointed star, a fleur-de-lis and a Tudor rose. There were also the initials I.F.M. supported by two birds (possibly finches?) which held a trefoil leaf in their beaks, below which was the date 1722. (Price 1901). 1722 may or may not be the year of construction.



Finch House

On an adjacent building, possibly a barn, was a stone panel bearing the letters E.D. and a coat of arms, below which was a Bishop's Mitre, Crozier, and Staff and the date 1747. These features are almost certainly related to one-time occupant Edward Dicconson.



Edward Dicconson was the third son of Hugh Dicconson of Wrightington Hall and his wife, Agnes Kirkby. Wrightington Hall was the seat of the recusant Dicconson family and had its own private chapel hidden within the Hall. Edward was born on 30 November 1670 and in 1684, aged 14, he was sent to Douai (an English Seminary attached to Douai University in France) to study philosophy, which he completed in 1691.

In 1698 he returned to Douai, became an ordained priest in 1701, and remained there for some years. In 1704 he visited Paris to take the Compliments of the College to King

James II's son, the 'Old Pretender', who was recognised by exiled English Catholics as the rightful king. Edward's brother, William Dicconson, was one-time tutor to the Old Pretender. Edward later became professor of philosophy and Vice-President of Douai in 1713.

In 1720 Edward Dicconson again returned to England to take up the position of chaplain to Mr. Giffard of Chillington, Staffordshire, and a short while later also accepted the position of Vicar-General to Bishop Stoner, Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District. In 1741 Edward was consecrated Titular Bishop of Malla (in partibus infidelium). This was a time when Roman Catholics were persecuted and, without property or parishes of their own, were nominally given 'dioceses' in lands not then won over by the faith. Malla was an ancient city in Eastern Turkey – this was a nominated title and not somewhere he ever visited.

Once he became a Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of Northern England, he

moved to Finch House where he remained until his death on 5 May 1752. Although a Roman Catholic he was buried in a private chapel attached to the Anglican Church of St Wilfred's, Standish. At that time Finch House was within the ecclesiastical parish of Standish. There is a tablet on the south side of the chancel to his memory. According to Allan Rimmer (1968) 'how a Roman Catholic Bishop came to be buried in Standish Parish Church has still to be explained'.

In the 1960s the front door opened onto a large square hall with an imposing oak staircase to the upper levels. On the first-floor landing was a room with a canopied oak doorway and on the second-floor landing was a lattice work structure. The first-floor room, with the canopied oak doorway, may well have once been used as a private chapel and the second-floor room, with the lattice structure, may well have been a confessional box.

Fr Andrew Unsworth, an expert on North-West Catholic history, however, wonders if the adjacent barn-like building with the tablet dated 1747 and including the initials E.D. and a Bishop's Mitre, Crozier, and Staff might be the more likely candidate for a private chapel. It was not unusual in the eighteenth century to disguise secret catholic chapels as barns so as not to draw the attention of the public or government officials. With both buildings now demolished we will probably never know for certain.

Although Edward Dicconson may have been the most famous occupant of Finch House it continued to be the home of many subsequent families. The last family to live in the house,

prior to its unfortunate demise in 1968, was the Dowding Family who moved from heavily bombed Liverpool to quieter Appley Bridge in 1941. Just prior to the imminent demolition of Finch House Allan Rimmer interviewed the Dowding Family who had some interesting stories to tell.

Mrs Dowding told Allan Rimmer she was a very down to earth person with no qualms about living in such a large and historic house, but when she first moved in, certain local tradesmen were reluctant to deliver goods to the 'haunted house.' Skull House in Appley Bridge was well known for its ghost, but Finch House was also considered haunted. The Dowding family laughed off any real concern but did admit to hearing mysterious sounds and movements. She said all the family had experienced the House Ghost affectionally known as George.

She said at various times all the family had heard footsteps coming up the path to the front door, but no one appeared, and the footsteps simply faded away. On another occasion she felt that she was distinctly touched on the shoulder but her daughter, the only other person in the house, was on the far side of the room.

Village folk lore also maintains a Cavalier had his head cut off by Roundheads in the house, but if that did take place, it could not have been in this Finch House, which was only built in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Talk of a secret tunnel connecting Finch House with Wrightington Hall is also as equally improbable, and on subsequent demolition no secret tunnels were ever discovered.

A combination of factors led to the final demise of Finch House. In the early 1960s mains drainage came to the village, which, when completed, could facilitate more housing development and at a much higher density. Secondly, the clay deposits behind Finch House were finally exhausted and the Appley Bridge Brick and Tile Works closed during this decade. Reclamation of the disused clay workings provided potential building land for new housing development. Thirdly, with the expansion of private car ownership during the 1960s there was greater opportunity for commuters to enjoy rural village living.

Unfortunately, Finch House was never registered as an 'ancient monument' or a 'building of particular interest' so there was little impediment to demolition. The area was zoned for residential living. Keith Pigott of Southport did try to find an American keen enough, and rich enough, to transport the entire building brick by brick to the United States but there were no takers. The area, including the site of Finch House, now supports a major housing estate.

An interesting historic building lost in the face of progress!

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Acknowledgements

I thank Alex Miller and Kathryn Pass of Wigan and Leigh Archives for help in writing this account.



Finch House, Appley Bridge 1840s O.S. 6 inch to the mile map

The Flitcroft Inheritance

The name Flitcroft is a very common one in the Leigh area of Lancashire. John Lunn, in his book *The History of Leigh*, writes about one Geoffrey Flitcroft, Master of Leigh School in 1578, who died in 1617 and was buried in the churchyard of St Mary, Leigh. On his death he left several fields in Bedford to his three sons: George, Henry and Original, the latter's baptismal name indicating his father's puritan sympathies. He was also a generous benefactor to the town of Leigh; his bequests including three shillings for the mending of the road in his native town, Bedford, and £10 towards the erecting of a Free School for Leigh, providing the parish could raise a further £100 within a year of his death. It is likely that the Flitcrofts of Culcheth were descended from this family.

Jeffrey Flitcroft, the son of Henry Flitcroft, was born in the village of Culcheth and was probably baptised at Newchurch on 25 August 1633. The Dictionary of National Biography in the entry for his grandson, Henry, declares that Jeffrey was the son of another Jeffrey from Twiss Green, Winwick, Lancashire. I have been unable to find an entry of baptism that matches this information, although the Hunt family tree on Ancestry includes Jeffrey the son of Jeffrey being born in 1662 in Culcheth. This second Jeffrey, at some point, leaves the quiet countryside of Culcheth and goes to London to seek his fortune. In this he was successful, becoming a gardener for William III at Hampton Court Palace. This decision was to set up the fortunes for the generations to come.

When, or where, Jeffrey, the gardener, married is unclear, but we know that his son, Henry, was born on 29 August 1697, which would fit in with a baptism at St Andrew, Holborn on 2 September 1697 for a child called Henry, son of Jeffrey and Margaret Flitcroft of Little Derby Street. Derby Street still exists, just off Curzon Street, in Westminster and the five remaining houses are now listed. When the London Poverty Maps were published, the area was noted as having comfortable living conditions, with the occupants having average household salaries, some being classed as more-well off or middle-class. Jeffrey must have been doing quite well financially to afford a house in this area, even if he was only able to rent it.

It is possible that, when Jeffrey died, his body was returned to Lancashire for burial as there is an entry



Henry Flitcroft (Architect)

on 19 November 1702 at St Michael, Hyton, Lancashire for the burial of a Jeoffrey Flitcroft of London. Unfortunately, as with many early records, no age is given; but if this is the Jeffrey born in 1662, who left Culcheth to seek his fortune, he would have been 40 years old when he died.

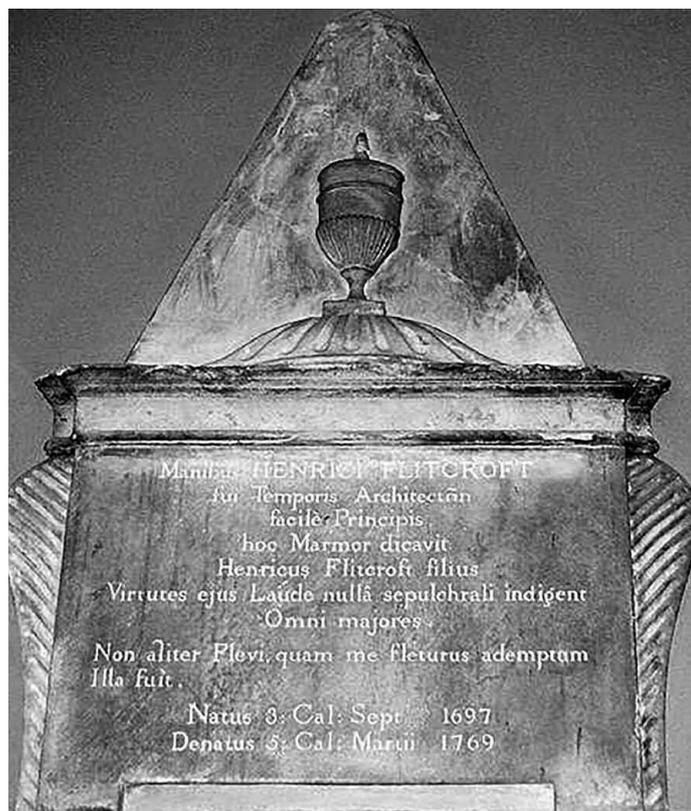
It seems likely that Jeffrey also had a daughter around 1712 named Elizabeth, who married James White, a bricklayer, in 1733. Elizabeth was declared to be of Hampton Court, which makes her relationship to Jeffrey and Henry extremely likely. They had a son, Henry, born 1737 and died 1799, plus four other sons, two of them named Jeffrey. It seems likely that the Henry White who administered Henry's financial affairs after he was declared a lunatic, came from this family. If that were the case the descendents of Elizabeth White (Flitcroft) would have had a claim on the estate.

Henry Flitcroft, son of Jeffrey, was given the best possible opportunities in life. His father made the shrewd move of apprenticing him to Thomas Morris, citizen and joiner of London, on 6 November 1711 and, after a seven year apprenticeship, he was admitted to the freedom of that company. He married

Sarah Minns, the daughter of a wealthy glazier from Hertfordshire, on 4 June 1724 at St Benet's, Paul's Wharf in London; where he is described as Henry Flitcroft of St James, Westminster and his bride as of the parish of St Giles. Henry and Sarah appear to have had two children in 1740, both dying as infants, and then a single surviving son, Henry, in 1742, by which time Sarah was well into her forties.

Henry's career as an architect began with some ill luck in falling from a scaffold when working as a joiner for the Earl of Burlington. This ill luck was outweighed by his good luck in his choice of employer. The Earl, recognising Henry's draftsmanship, continued to employ him to execute some drawings based on designs by Inigo Jones, which were published in 1827. Due to the Earl's continued patronage Henry became known as 'Burlington Harry'. From these rather humble beginnings Henry continued with a stellar career, both in public and private commissions. He became Comptroller of the Works in England in 1758; a post he held until his death in 1769. His fortune, however, was made by his architectural works which mainly revolved around redesigning churches and homes of the rich and famous.

He became famous for designing and rebuilding churches such as St Giles in the Fields in 1731, St Olave, Southwark in 1737, and St John at Hampstead



Monument to Henry Flitcroft, 1769,
St Mary's, Teddington

in 1745. Additionally, he had been commissioned as an architect on many other projects, including designing a mansion for John Baynes near Havering in Essex in 1729, and was connected with alterations at Carlton House for the Prince of Wales in 1733. He also designed alterations at Wentworth House and Woburn Abbey before finally building a house for himself at Frognall in Hampshire, where he continued to live until his death in 1769, aged 71, when he was then buried at St Mary's, Teddington.

Although he had a long life he died intestate; his wife, Sarah, and her son, another Henry, taking out Letters of Administration at Doctor's Common on 21 March 1769. Henry had £1,000 to dispose of, and it was agreed between Henry and his mother that she would renounce any claim to the estate and would be paid an annuity of £500 per annum, which, unfortunately, was never paid.

When Sarah herself died her will, written on 13 January 1783, was proved in London in 1784. She left a number of annuities to: James Fletcher, brother of her late daughter in law, Jane Fletcher, who was allocated £100 a year for life; his sister, Anna Maria Fletcher, £50 a year for life; and her brother, Richard Minns, and her sister, Amy Chapman, both £50 a year for life. The remainder of her estate was to go to her son, Henry Flitcroft, despite the fact that, on 18 September the previous year, he 'had the misfortune to be deprived of his reason and understanding to so very great a regard as to be totally unable to govern himself, or manage his estate and affairs, and he has ever since been, and continues to be, so deprived of his reason.' Having been declared a lunatic by the Commission of Sanity, set up by his mother, a man named Henry White, possibly a family member, was employed to manage his affairs.

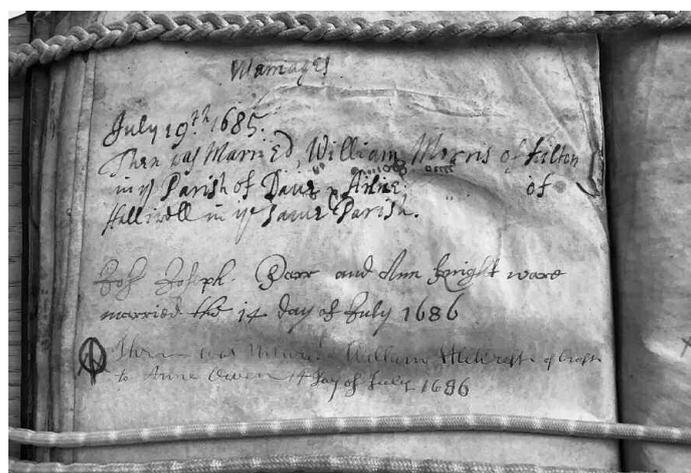
Henry, the only son of Henry and Sarah Flitcroft, was probably baptised at New Court Independent Church, Carey Street, London on 19 August 1742 eight days after his birth. He married Jane Fletcher, who was aged only 17 in 1771, and who died four years later without issue. Henry was never to remarry but took over responsibility for Jane's brother and sister, who were young children at the time.

His father had provided him with an excellent education, with him attending Corpus Christi, Cambridge in 1759 and receiving his M.A. in 1763. The University benefited from Henry's will, receiving his expensive library of books. He was admitted to Lincoln's Inn in November 1761, and went on to

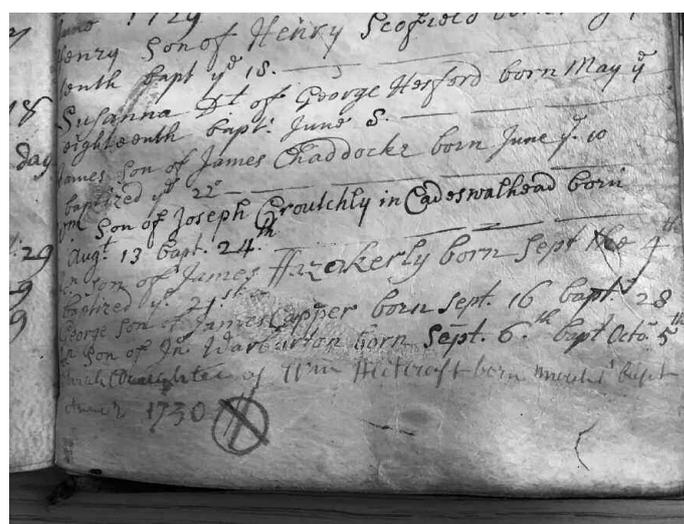
become a successful lawyer, rising up the legal ranks, to become an Examiner for the High Court of Chancery and ending as one of the two Principal Examiners. Unfortunately, this position, as was common at the time, was held for life and, despite the fact that he had been incapacitated since 1782, it took an Act of Parliament in 1810 to remove his name from the Roll. He died 15 April 1826 and was buried at St Mary, Teddington with his father.

Although Henry left a will dated 11 September 1782, it involved a spectacular number of contingencies, resulting in a scramble by family members to inherit his money which was to last for the next 15 years. His mother was to be taken care of for the rest of her life, but the principal beneficiaries were James Fletcher, his deceased wife's brother, and her sister, Anna Maria Fletcher. James was also named as sole executor. Smaller amounts were left to Mary King, his servant, and Henry's aunt, Amy Chapman and uncle, Richard Minns. No mention is made of Joseph Walmsley who became heir at law.

One week after making this will, on 18 September, Henry was declared a lunatic, which must surely have cast some doubt on the validity of this will. It was to be another 40 years before the will was probated and the issue of who was to inherit was hotly contested. Henry, having died childless, meant there were no direct heirs, and the issue of the person who was to be named as heir at law continued for many years. As early as 1799 the Manchester Mercury published requests for 'anyone with a claim to the estate of Henry Flitcroft Esq, a lunatic and only son of Henry Flitcroft Esq, deceased, formerly Surveyor of his Majesties Board of Works', to contact either Messrs. Turner and Kerfoot of Warrington or Mr Street, Solicitor of London, to make their claim. It would seem that, despite Henry having made a will, there was some dispute about its legality.



Newchurch Parish Register showing the marriage of William Flitcroft and Anne Owen, 14 July 1686



Newchurch Parish Register showing the baptism of Sarah, daughter of William Flitcroft, 1730

There appear to have been a vast number of claimants to Henry's estate. Three years after Henry's death in 1826, Joseph Walmsley took his case to the Court of King's Bench who issued a Mandamus requiring the Lord of the Manor of Hampstead to admit Walmsley, as heir at law, to the immediate tenancy of Frognall, the Flitcroft family home in Hampstead. It isn't possible to trace Joseph's exact relationship to Henry, and therefore his right to inherit, but The Victoria County History for Middlesex describes Joseph Walmsley as Henry Flitcroft's great nephew. It is possible that he was the grandson of a Joseph Walmsley and Sarah Flitcroft, who married in St Helens in 1725, although this must remain speculation.

The matter of the inheritance again became an issue in 1853 when the last tenant for life, James Fletcher, died in December of that year. James Flitcroft from Bolton made a claim to the estate based on his descent from William Flitcroft, the son of Henry Flitcroft, who lived in 1688, and over 100 people joined in a bond to support his case. The case of Flitcroft V Fletcher was reported in the Preston Chronicle, dated 27 February 1856. The trial was proceeding without incident when the registers for the Parish of Newchurch were consulted and it was realised that there had been a number of false entries pertaining to the Flitcroft family included in the register. A marriage of William Flitcroft to Ann Owen dated 4 July 1686 had obviously been inserted, as were three baptisms: Elizabeth Flitcroft, 1723; Margaret Flitcroft, 1726; and Sarah Flitcroft in 1730, all daughters of William Flitcroft. There is mention of this issue in the Newchurch Parish Register Society where it was noted that 'some of the parish clerks have incurred the grave charge of tampering with the registers for considerations of filthy lucre'. This evidence, unfortunately for James,



St Giles in the Fields

prevented any further claims and he disappears from the family history. The Rector also makes note that the many false insertions under the name of Flitcroft had led to members of the family, now in America, being given valueless genealogical information. Presumably, they also intended to make a claim.

In fact, the money now follows the line of James Fletcher, who, true to form, died childless. Captain James Fletcher had been raised in the household of Henry Flitcroft Junior and had served as a midshipman. He lived at Hodsall in Kent and reputedly had become rich on prize money from the battle of Trafalgar. The Leeds Intelligencer in July 1838 claims that Fletcher either inherited, or bought, the estate on the death of Henry Flitcroft the younger. Although he



Woburn Abbey

had no children of his own he provided for a great number of nephews, nieces and great nephews and nieces. The chief benefactor of his will is his great nephew, Amos James Fletcher, who inherited all James' property in Kent and Mill Hill. Amos had seven children, all of whom were given the name of 'Flitcroft'.

Despite the large number of relatives, much of the estate now devolved to Thomas Brook Wavell, son of Thomas Bruce Wavell, born in 1825 on the Isle of Wight. It isn't clear why Thomas inherited but he was a bit of a character. Formerly a member of the Stock Exchange he deserted his wife and six children to set up home in Edinburgh with a Miss Collins, reputedly a professional singer. He is described as six feet one inch in height, very stout with a fair complexion and prominent teeth. He emigrated to Canada, and then America, before dying in California aged 85. Upon his death he conveyed his estates to Mary Ann, wife of John Vining Porter. It was at this stage that the estate of Hampstead was broken up, with the 20 acres north of Fortune Green being sold to the parish for a cemetery in 1874, and the rest of the estate given over to the builders in the 1880s.

Finally, the Illustrated Times dated 17 July 1869 proclaimed, 'We are informed that the doubts long existing to the title of Sir Thomas M. Wilson to the above estate is being speedily cleared up. The heir-at-law of the late Henry Flitcroft, Esq., who held the lands in fee—comprising Hendon, Froggnall, Holly Bush Hill, Aughton, &c.—has commenced proceedings for the recovery of his rights. His trustee is now actively engaged in London and Hampstead, and there is prospect that the matter may shortly be definitively disposed of.' The saga of the Flitcroft inheritance that had been rumbling on for 43 years was finally over.

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JOSEPH PETERS

A MAN OF HIS TIME

BY KATH GRAHAM AND MARLENE NOLAN

Joseph Peters was a man whose antecedents were based in a rural, pre-industrial community but who, by his own efforts, became a man of regional and, perhaps, national importance, representing his fellow workers in a new post-industrial world.

Joseph's family were hand loom weavers in the predominantly textile manufacturing district of Culcheth, a connection going back to his grandfather who had been born in the early 1780s. William Peters, a weaver by trade, had married a local girl, Ann Warburton, in 1800 and the couple had gone on to produce six children before William's death in 1830 at the relatively young age of 49. Most of the hand loom weavers in this area, which would have included Joseph's family, would also have been involved in agricultural work to supplement their incomes from the textile trade.

His youngest child, Peter, born in June 1822, followed in his father's footsteps becoming a weaver and living, like his father, in Culcheth. He married Ann Leyland, another local girl, on 4 March 1851 at Newchurch Church in Culcheth, where their first child, a boy named after his grandfather, William, was baptised three months later. They went on to have a further 13 children in the next 20 years. The family were living at Cross Lane, Culcheth in 1851 and for the next 30 years lived at 10 Wigshaw Lane. Although a weaver, like his father, Peter appears to have prospered as, when he died in 1886, he left his widow, Ann, £46 10s. Although buried at Newchurch there is now no evidence of his grave.

Peter's third son, Joseph, was baptised in the family church in 1853, and it is he that carried on the upward mobility of the Peters' family. He was educated at the Culcheth



Joseph Peters, 1890

Church School, going on to finish his education later in life, possibly aided by the trade union movement. He married Martha Allen Heys in 1880 at West Derby, the bride's parish, but the couple set up home in Edge Hill where their eight children were born. Joseph, unlike his father and grandfather, who had remained local to their birthplace and worked as silk weavers all their lives, had a number of occupations, initially linked to agriculture before becoming a male servant to local families. Finally, he began his career on the railways, which was to lead to his pre-eminence in the trade union movement.

Children were expected to help out with the family finances at that time and, as a child of 10, Joseph brought in a little extra money by tending cows and doing odd jobs on a farm near his home and then, for a couple of years, he was employed as a gardener at Kenyon Hall; but, by the age of 13, he was working on a large farm called Green's Pool at Sandypool in Leigh. From there he moved to another large farm attached to the Pearson & Knowles Collieries of

Wigan. Whilst working there he attracted the attention of Mr Thomas Knowles, co-owner of the company and sometime MP for Wigan. Joseph must have made a big impression as Thomas Knowles went on to employ him as a footman at his residence in Platt Bridge, a very different type of work than that of a farm labourer. How long he remained a footman is unknown but at some point he relocated to Leigh to become a coachman for a veterinary surgeon.

By 1871 both he and his older brother, Thomas, were lodging with the Talbot family in Spring View at Ince near Wigan. Both men give their occupations as colliery labourers, and we know from other sources that they were working at Ince Moss Pit owned by Pearson & Knowles Collieries. After a short spell as a fireman he again moved on to become coachman to a doctor in Chowbent.

It isn't known what prompted him to make another, perhaps the most significant, change in his circumstances but, at the age of 18, he joined the railways, commencing as a cleaner before rising to the position of fireman and, finally, an engine driver. Engine drivers were held in great esteem in the working-class community as being at the pinnacle of their profession with a salary to match.

Sadly, however, in March 1872 he had an accident that deprived him of the sight in one eye and which left him unable to continue as a driver or fireman. The accident, reported in the local press, happened between Pinnock's Bridge and Boar's Head Junction near Preston, when Joseph, as fireman on the goods express from Carlisle to Liverpool, was checking how much smoke was escaping from the funnel of the engine. A piece of zinc flew from the chimney striking

him in the ball of the right eye. The subsequent loss of sight in the injured eye necessitated the use of spectacles, after which he was unable to return to his former occupation, which would have left him unable to provide for his family. His employers, however, must have appreciated his strong work ethic and gave him work in the locomotive department at Edge Hill. Financially he did quite well, receiving £60 from the London & North Western Railway Insurance Company and £40 from the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. He also received five shillings a week from a railway friendly society, of which he was a member.

Probably using the compensation money awarded to him for this accident Joseph bought a newsagent shop at 34 Picton Road, Wavertree. In 1881 he is still giving his occupation as railway furnace man but by 1891 he is running the newsagents. The family remain at this address, at least until 1911, although his wife took over the newsagent business whilst Joseph became an assurance agent and, later, an assistant superintendent at an ironworks. Perhaps these occupations gave him more time to carry out his union work as it is during 1890 that Joseph becomes more active and pre-eminent in the union movement.

Joseph had joined the ASRS in July 1876, aged 23, when he was a fireman on the LNR. He was a founder member of the Edge Hill Branch of the ASRS and was the Secretary of this Branch for many years. In 1890 he became the President of the Liverpool Trades Council, which represented all the Trade Unions in Liverpool; a prestigious and highly responsible post which he held for six months. During the years 1890 to 1891 Joseph presided over a number of



Lime Street, Liverpool, 1898

important meetings for the Unions, including one meeting where female representation was agreed. On 8 August 1890 he presided over The Demonstration of Trades Unionists in Liverpool and on 23 August that year he was a delegate at the Trade Union Congress, which he helped plan during his Presidency. This was the biggest conference ever held with 350 delegates and attended by such notable men as Keir Hardy. It must have been a very proud moment for Joseph and his family when, in September 1890, he attended a meeting at Culcheth New Inn as President of Liverpool Trades Council that, by 1891, had 46,000 members, making it the second largest in the country with 121 delegates. He was obviously a very forward-thinking man as he ensured his daughters had a good education, both girls becoming shorthand typists, which would have meant them remaining in education long past the official leaving age.

Joseph retired aged 65 and received Superannuation benefit from July 1918, which he received until his death aged 86 years on 2 Dec 1939 in Liverpool. He was interred at

West Derby Cemetery four days later. By this time, the family were living at 30 Corinthian Avenue, Stoneycroft, a large bay windowed terraced house. He left his wife, Martha, £239 2s 3d in his will, which would today have amounted to nearly £10,000; not a huge amount of money but enough to keep her comfortable until her death a few years later.

The 1939 Register records Martha, then incapacitated, living at this address with her daughter and her husband, but there is no mention of Joseph, who would still have been alive when the information for the Register was collected.

From a very humble beginning as a farm labourer, Joseph made the very best of his opportunities, culminating in his Presidency of the Liverpool Trades Council, nomination as a Liberal Party Candidate and being a marshal during the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

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Memorial stone for Joseph Peters, West Derby Cemetery

Jim Hammond

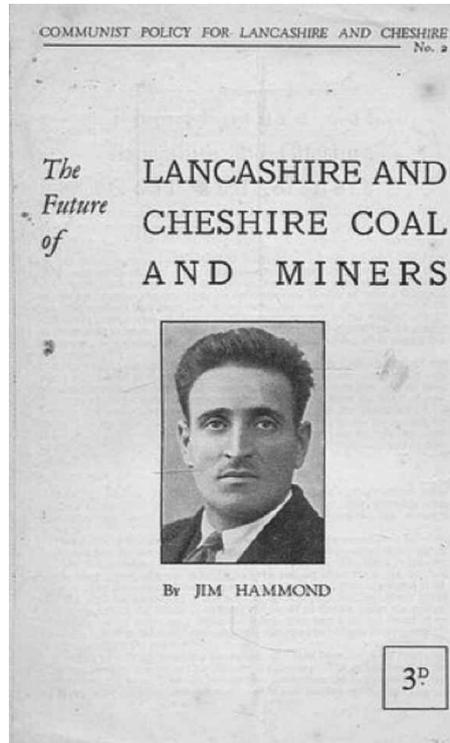
Miners' Leader and Trade Unionist By Sheila Ramsdale

Jim Hammond was born in Wigan, Lancashire in 1907. He was the son of John Hammond, an overhead fireman, and Elizabeth, nee Dawber. At this point they lived in Great George Street, off Wallgate. His father was a free thinker and his mother, who was of Irish ancestry, was keen on passing her interests in the English Language and poetry on to her son.

The 1911 Census showed his family had moved to 3 Low Street, off School Lane. At this time there were eight people residing in the house, which would have been small. There were John and Elizabeth, then Ralph aged five; Jim, four; Mary Agnes, the daughter, aged one; a Walter Hammond, John's brother; and a George Jones, aged 62, who was a lodger there; plus a young girl called Martha Western, who was a schoolgirl, aged 12. This would have been typical of many houses at that time, overcrowded with more than one family living in it.

Jim attended Warrington Lane Council School until he left at the age of 13, in 1921, and began working at the Victoria Colliery, part of the Wigan Coal and Iron Co, situated in the Lancashire coalfield and owned by Lord Crawford.

He worked down the pit for over 11 years whilst studying mining engineering at the Wigan Mining College. At a young age he became active in the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation (LCMF), and in 1933 he was sacked for his union activity. He was forced to leave the industry because he was 'blacklisted' by the company for taking a stance for better terms and conditions. He was passionate about improving the working conditions and rights of the miners. Consequently, Jim Hammond became an embittered young man who whiled away his days in Wigan Public Library among the history and



Cover of, *'The Future of Lancashire and Cheshire Coal and Miners',* by Jim Hammond,

politics books. He seemed to have had a strategy whereby he was going to get his revenge by becoming intellectually smarter than the opposition. This was mentioned in NUM North Western Area (NUMNWA) Committee Meetings Minutes, 16 September 1967.

During this time out of work he met George Orwell, when he came to Wigan whilst researching his book, *The Road to Wigan Pier*. He was impressed by Orwell. He followed his example by working in different industries, and embarked upon a period as an itinerant, working in a Skelmersdale chemical factory followed by a brief spell in a food processing factory, where once again he was dismissed for 'activism' (*Wigan Observer* 4 April 1980). This was then succeeded by a period of working on an oil refinery, followed by time as a merchant seaman, working as an engineer on an oil tanker, which took him to Texas.

These experiences of working in different areas of society gave Hammond a good opportunity to encounter different working practices and conditions, which helped to make him even more committed to his own principles in the workplace.

He was soon to return down the mines. With the outbreak of the Second World War Hammond was directed by the Government Emergency Labour Decree to work in coal mining again. He quickly established himself working underground at Garswood Hall Colliery, situated between Wigan and St Helens. He swiftly became reinvolved with industrial activism, earning a reputation as a formidable and respected negotiator through the work of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation (LCMF) at the colliery.

In 1942, at the age of 34, Hammond was elected as full time Miners' Agent for the union's Wigan District. Hammond held this post till his retirement in 1967. He was appointed with a massive endorsement for a candidate of the left, registering a higher vote twice as either of his rivals on the right, Edwin Hall and Laurence Plover, and with a majority of over 9,000 votes. (LCMF Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 11 and 25 April 1942).

In 1945, the LCMF became the Lancashire Area of the National Union of Mineworkers, and Hammond continued in post, also serving as vice-president in 1944 and 1945. Early in 1945, he stood to become General Secretary of the union, the most important position within the union, following the retirement of Peter Plumb; but on this occasion he was defeated by Edwin Hall. (NUMLA, monthly Conference Report 25 April 1945).

He then served as president of the Lancashire Union, a distinguished but largely nominal post from 1946-

1948, and again in 1952. He was also elected by NUMLA to serve on the National Executive Committee of the NUM from 1945-1947. During this time, he headed delegations to the Soviet Union, Poland and the Netherlands. At the same time, he visited the Dutch State Mines to obtain ideas on colliery modernization, working conditions and practices, where he observed that a recently modernized pit in Holland could produce a quarter of the tonnage of all the collieries in his native Lancashire. (Coal 1947 July). He was profoundly impressed with these working practices.

Intellectually, he was very sharp and emerged as the most powerful figure in the NUMLA after the General Secretary during the 1940s and 50s. This was helped by the growing appeal of the left, assisted by production and operational differences in Lancashire pits, caused by wartime exigencies having to be met by largely dilapidated collieries.

The office of Full Time Miners' agent allowed Hammond to continue in the Wigan Fiefdom of Wigan Coalfield, from where he was able to exert power and influence within the Labour Movement. The front room of his home in Poolstock, near Wigan, became his study and his office. Here he held regular counsel with other union officials and heard grievances from a succession of mineworkers. Thereafter, his rise within the Lancashire Miners Union was meteoric as the LMCF became the National Union of Mineworkers Lancashire Area (NUMLA) from 1945. They were a very powerful force within the mining industry.

During this period Hammond was seen as the standard bearer for the left in Lancashire, and his credibility amongst miners, union officials and indeed most of the newly nationalized industries, regardless of political affiliation, rose considerably. This was seen as a result of his equitable and skillful handling of a difficult and protracted dispute in the Lancashire coalfield, over the contentious issue of concessionary coal for local miners. These men had enjoyed special privileges relative to the other coalfield regions in the private coal industry. These concessions were now formalised and reduced

under Nationalisation. Hammond was instrumental in achieving a settlement in 1952, which allowed miners to retain some measure of the privileges they had previously enjoyed, built only after the dispute had culminated into a full-scale strike, widespread throughout the Lancashire coalfield. Hammond was lauded for the role he played in this dispute. (Wigan Observer 4 April 1980). He was definitely seen as the second most powerful figure in the coalfield behind General Secretary Edwin Hall.

As a result of his popularity he was put forward as the NUMLA nomination for National President in 1959, which he contested unsuccessfully. He came a poor seventh, being dismissed in the first round of voting. Undeterred, in 1960 he again contested the post of General Secretary against another aspiring candidate, Joe Gormley, who also came from Wigan, but was a right-wing candidate standing against him.

Gormley organised his campaign so effectively that he not only won the vote but aroused cries of 'ballot rigging' from Jim Hammond. Hammond believed that Gormley and Hall had colluded to rig the ballot against him and picketed the union's headquarters. Gormley immediately resigned, but when a second ballot was held, and was undertaken by the Electoral Commission, he still lost by a similar margin.

Gormley's election was confirmed by a substantial majority and he was exonerated from any irregularities. According to Arthur Marwick (an historian, who wrote a biography on Joe Gormley), Gormley, during this period managed, in a pub argument, to land a hefty punch in Hammond's gut- the macho image of Joe Gormley being quite apparent at the time..

Despite these personal differences, Gormley and Hammond then worked together to promote the modernisation of the local coal industry under a Labour Government. Given both these powerful men came from Wigan and were working class, politically they were poles apart. Jim Hammond was very well read, and intellectually very successful in debates. He was on the left, having been very involved with the

Communist Party. Joe Gormley also considered himself to be a socialist, but his politics' gut was more to the right. He always said his socialism was a 'gut belief'; it had nothing to do with books, or intellectual arguments. He found it natural to totally accept the principle, 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his need'. (Battered Cherub by Joe Gormley).

Hammond, and his wife Phyllis, whom he had met at the age of 23, were both important figures in reorganising, and ensuring the rising importance of the Communist Party of Great Britain in Wigan and Lancashire generally, during the late 1940s and 50s. Rising support in Lancashire brought union reorganisation in the coalfield, which produced a more effective base from which to campaign for Hammond. His popularity in the Lancashire Miners' Union was matched by his joining the Communist Party in 1942, and his growing influence and organising both nationally and in the North West. There was certainly an active branch of the Communist Party in Wigan at that time.

They both campaigned until their resignation in 1956. Some say it was as a result of the Soviet invasion of Hungary, others in Wigan felt it was because one of his sons had gone to Oxford and was a rising star legally. He was soon to qualify as a Barrister and Hammond felt his own politics might interfere with his son's career. His other son followed Jim by becoming a miner down the pit at Mosley Common.

After leaving the Communist Party, Hammond then quickly became associated with the left wing of the Labour Party and worked tirelessly for the return of a Labour Government. Interestingly, he never actually joined the Labour Party. I think it is probably true to say that many people, both within the NUM and on the left of the Labour Party, were suspicious of Jim Hammond because of his involvement with the Communist Party, and this was probably a significant factor in the huge majority Joe Gormley got when he stood as Leader against him.

Jim Hammond,
7 Aug 1907 - 30 March 1980

The Observatory

By Karen Lynch

Haigh Hall, Wigan, Lancashire

On the edge of the town of Wigan stands Haigh Hall, described in 1745 as a 'good old house and wood in a very pretty situation'. On rising ground above Haigh Hall (pronounced Hay) there once stood a substantial landscape feature which housed an observatory. A pair of paintings with an interesting history help tell the tale.



Samuel Richardson by Joseph Highmore (National Portrait Gallery. Creative Commons License).

Lady Bradshaigh (née Bellingham, 1705-1785) was a close friend of the popular author Samuel Richardson, whose Pamela was one of the bestsellers of the day. In 1750 she asked the artist, Joseph Highmore, to paint Richardson, but in tribute to their friendship the writer asked that Sir Roger and Lady Bradshaigh and their home also be included in the portrait.

The Bradshaighs had recently been painted by Edward Haytley (also known as Heatly or Hateley) as shown above, so they had a second

version painted to be used by Highmore in his painting of Richardson. Curiously, it varies in significant detail: the couple have changed their outfits, Sir Roger (1699-1770) strikes a different pose, and Lady Bradshaigh is attended by her pet fawn instead of her dog. A constant in both paintings is the folly, top right.

The painting above is now in the collection of the Museum of Wigan Life (the other is in a private collection) and it is possible to see the observatory in some detail. The folly looks to have been constructed as an eye-catcher in the form of a sham ruin, and consists of a central pavilion, pierced with an arch, and flanking walls with arches. By the 1770s it was known as the Observatory, possibly after some rebuilding work in the 1760s, for which accounts survive. Haytley's portrait, painted in 1746, shows Sir Roger with a telescope, giving further evidence of his interest in the firmament. As so often, there was a claim of countless counties being visible from the structure; eighteenth century accounts disagree as to whether it is 12 or 13.

A sketch dated 1826 shows this remodelling of the central pavilion to create a room with large windows, and this building is reminiscent of Robert Adam's Ratcheugh Observatory for the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle. It is not known when the building disappeared, but by the late nineteenth century there was another observatory on the site, a simple wooden tower built for Lord Crawford (1871-1940)*, also a keen

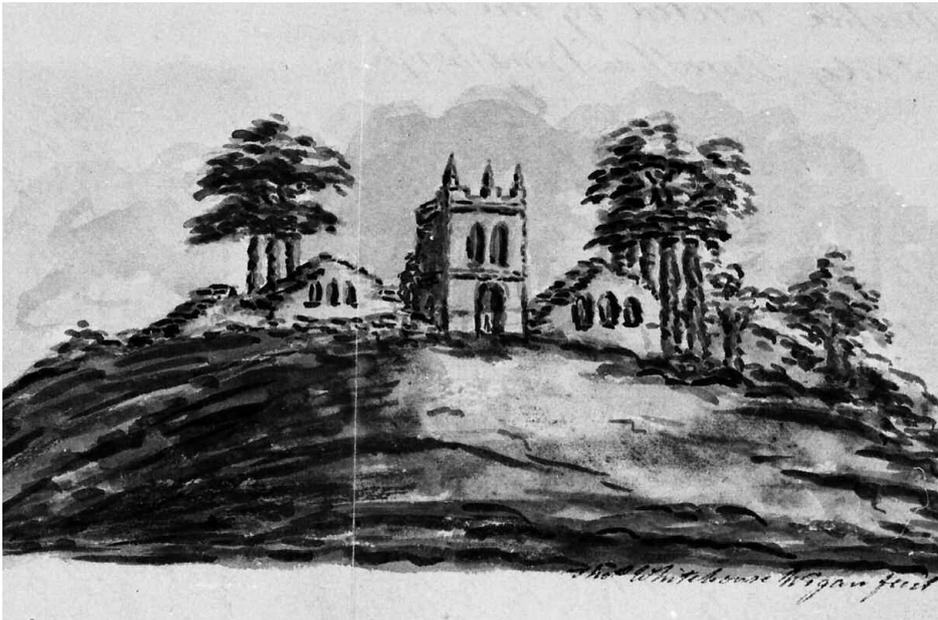
astronomer. A tiny fragment of this later structure survives but the eighteenth century observatory has literally disappeared: Wigan Archaeological Society has tried in vain to find its foundations.

In the eighteenth century visitors to Haigh Hall were fascinated by a material called cannel (or candle) coal which was mined on the estate. This was an extremely dense form of coal, used for the usual purposes of providing heat and light (it burned very brightly), but also as a decorative material that could be carved into ornaments and was often passed off as a rare black marble.



Sir Roger and Lady Bradshaigh by Edward Haytley, 1746. Look closely at the top right hand corner. (B81.909, Wigan Museum Collection).

At Haigh Hall it was used for a much larger project: the building of a summerhouse for Lady Bradshaigh. What made the summerhouse such a novelty was that, although made of coal, it was entirely clean to the touch, and much was made of the fact that young ladies could sit in it without leaving a mark on 'their most delicate vestures'. It must have been



*The Observatory at Haigh Hall, drawing by Thomas Whitehouse, 1826.
(PC2010.411, Wigan and Leigh Archives Online).*

built sometime between 1742, when Sir Roger took over the estate, and 1772 when it is described by a visitor. Sadly, no trace remains, and one can't help but wonder if it ended up on the fire once it became unfashionable.

The big question is whether the Observatory and Summerhouse were one and the same building; no early visitor mentions both. The 1796 estate map shows a structure in the location of the folly shown in the portraits, but with no detail. The building in the portraits shines golden, and certainly doesn't

appear to be coal black. The Crawford Muniments in the National Library of Scotland, currently uncatalogued, may reveal more in due course.

Haigh Hall is now a very popular country park
<http://www.haighwoodlandpark.co.uk>

The handsome hall (remodelled in the 1820s) is currently empty and in need of a purpose after a failed hotel venture.

Examples of cannel coal and the painting of Sir Roger and Lady

Bradshaigh can be seen in the Museum of Wigan Life.

**** Sir Roger died without issue and the baronetcy became extinct. The estates passed, via a niece, to the Earls of Crawford and Balcarres.***

Further articles about follies and landscape buildings by Karen can be found at her blog www.thefollyflaneuse.com



This bust of Henry VIII, attributed to Robert Town (active 1756-1767), is made of the local seam of cannel, a fossilised material resembling jet, found in the coal seams near Wigan, Lancashire.

Can you Help?

Dear Past Forward,

This is the Wigan Orchestral Society, taken in 1949. My father, Joseph Shepherd is the trombone player, third from the right. I don't have any other information on any of the players in the Society, but maybe people could help with names if they recognise anyone?

Cathy Shepherd



If you have any information and can help Cathy identify any of the musicians, please contact us at pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

Museum Collections Corner: Battlefield Cross

One of our more poignant new acquisitions to the museum collection is a wooden battlefield cross commemorating Bryn soldier Lance Corporal David Norman Worswick. Part of the 2nd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards, David was killed on the Somme Battlefield between Ginchy and Lesboeufs on 15 September 1916; he was just 20 years old.

First World War battlefield crosses and grave markers, which can provide a tangible connection to those people involved in conflict, are relatively rare. Although an estimated 10,000 of these memorials were returned to the next of kin after the soldiers' bodies were reburied in Commonwealth Graves, only around 500 are known about in Britain today.

Websites, such as Returned from the Front and the Imperial War Museum's War Memorial Register, look to readdress this by creating a resource cataloguing all such objects from both this country and around the world.

When originally taken in, we thought this memorial may have been even more of a rarity as it was accompanied by an image of the cross on the battlefield. However, after further investigation researcher David Long found this was in fact a previous cross; as seen in this image taken from the archives of his brother Thomas, kept at the University of Westminster. Major



Grave of David Norman Worswick near Lesboeufs, France.

Courtesy of University of Westminster Archives. © University of Westminster Archive

Thomas Worswick was Director of Education there, then known as Regent Street Polytechnic, from 1922 until his death in 1932.

We are unsure what happened to this original marker, it may have been lost or damaged in further fighting. However, we do know that the cross in our collection did mark the grave for some period after being placed there by the Grave Registration Unit.

David's body was reinterred to its present grave at the Guards' Cemetery, Lesboeufs in August 1919 and given a permanent stone marker. After this, the wooden cross was returned to the family and dedicated in a ceremony at St. Peter's Church, Bryn on 14 September.

It continued to be displayed there until

the church closed in May 2016, due to the poor condition of the building which was eventually demolished in 2019. The cross was again returned to the family but donated to the museum collection last year in order that this memorial stay in the area. It is currently in the museum stores, but we hope to display this in an appropriate public space very soon.

Another object of this type soon to be on display is the battlefield cross commemorating Lancashire Fusilier Private Fred Briscoe. The son of Leigh Football Club trainer James Briscoe, Fred was killed on 1 July 1916 in France. This object will form part of the new exhibition in Leigh Town Hall, due to open early next year.



Cross commemorating Lance Corporal David Norman Worswick (Wigan Museum Collections, C19.34)



The interior of St. Peter's Church, taken in the interwar period. The cross can be seen on the wall to the left of this image. © University of David Long

Please note that events listed may be cancelled and groups may not be meeting in light of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Please check with event organisers for further information before attending.

Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Our Lady's RC Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. All are welcome, contact Barbara Rhodes for further details on 01942 222769.

Atherton Heritage Society

Please note – From 2019 the meetings will be held on the second Wednesday of the month. Meetings begin at 7.30pm. in St. Richards Parish Centre, Mayfield St. Atherton. Visitors Welcome – Admission £2, including refreshments. Contact Margaret Hodge on 01942 884893.

Billinge History and Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. There is a door charge of £2. Please contact Geoff Crank for more information on 01695 624411 or at Gcrank_2000@yahoo.co.uk

Culcheth Local History Group

The Village Centre, Jackson Avenue. Second Thursday of each month. Doors open 7.15pm for 7.30pm start. Membership £10, Visitors £3 Enquiries: Zoe Chaddock – 01925 752276 (Chair)

Hindley & District History Society

Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.00pm at Tudor House, Liverpool Road, Hindley. Please contact Mrs Joan Topping on 01942 257361 for information.

Leigh & District Antiques and Collectables Society

The society meets at Leigh RUFC, Beech Walk, Leigh. New members are always welcome and further details available from Mr C Gaskell on 01942 673521.

Leigh & District History

www.leighanddistricthistory.com An exciting new, free, local history website, covering Leigh and the surrounding districts. Still in its infancy, it already boasts a list of births, marriages and deaths, 1852-1856, including cemetery internments, nineteenth century letters from soldiers serving abroad, a scrapbook of interesting articles, local railway accidents and an embryonic photograph gallery. There are also links to other sites covering historic and genealogical interest.

Leigh Family History Society

The Leigh & District Family History Help Desk is available every Monday afternoon (except Bank Holidays) from 12.30pm to 2.30pm, at Leigh Library. There is no need to book an appointment for this Help Desk. Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month (except July, August and December), contact Mrs G McClellan (01942 729559).

Lancashire Local History Federation

The Federation holds several meetings each year, with a varied and interesting programme. For details visit www.lancashirehistory.org or call 01204 707885.

Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

The group meets at Upholland Library Community Room, Hall Green, Upholland, WN8 0PB, at 7.00pm for 7.30pm start on the first Tuesday of each month; no meeting in July, August and January. December is a meal out at The Plough at Lathom. For more information please contact Bill Fairclough, Chairman on 07712766288 or Caroline Fairclough, Secretary, at carolinefairclough@hotmail.com

Wigan Civic Trust

If you have an interest in the standard of planning and architecture, and the conservation of buildings and structures in our historic town, come along and meet us. Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. The venue is St George's Church, Water Street, Wigan WN1 1XD. Contact Mr A Grimshaw on 01942 245777 for further information.

Wigan Archaeological Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm at the Bellingham Hotel, Wigan on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August). There is a car park adjacent on the left. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. For more information call Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342. You can also visit the website at www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk

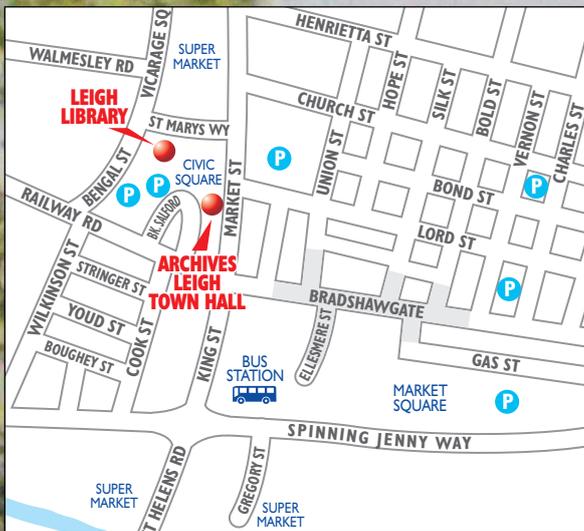
Wigan Family and Local History Society

We meet on the second Wednesday at 6.45pm, at St Andrews Parish Centre. Please contact wigan.fhs@gmail.com to find out more information. Attendance fees are £2.50 per meeting for both members and visitors. Our aim is to provide support, help, ideas and advice for members and non-members alike. For more information please visit, www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/ or see us at our weekly Monday helpdesks at the Museum of Wigan Life.

Wigan Local History and Heritage Society

We meet on the second Monday of each month, with a local history themed presentation starting at 7.15pm in The Function Room at Wigan Cricket Club. Doors open at 6:30pm. Members £2.50, Visitors £3.00 per meeting. For more information please contact us <https://www.facebook.com/wiganhistoryandheritage/>

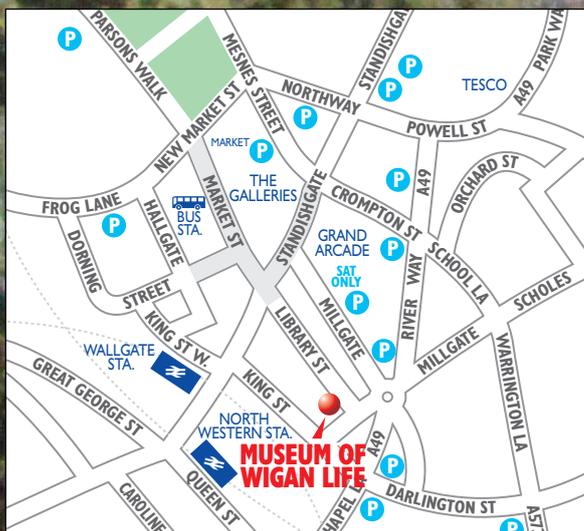
How to Find Us



Archives & Leigh Local Studies

(Temporarily closed until Spring 2021)

Leigh Library, Leigh WN7 1EB
Telephone 01942 404430
archives@wigan.gov.uk



Museum of Wigan Life & Wigan Local Studies

Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU
Telephone 01942 828128
heritage@wigan.gov.uk

*Keepers' Lane,
Golborne.*

*For the latest information on
opening times, please check
our website or call us on
01942 828128*