

PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Archives & Museums

Issue No. 87

April - July 2021



**A New
Home at
Leigh Town Hall
for Archives:
Wigan &
Leigh**

AWL ARCHIVES:
WIGAN & LEIGH

£2

Wigan and Leigh's local history magazine

Contents

- 4-5 George Okell:
'Rector O' Th' Obelisk'
- 6-7 A Pipe Dream?
- 8-9 Cloth Caps and
Cowboy Hats; the
Day the Wild West
Came to Wigan
- 10-13 What Ever Happened
to Cautopates?
- 14-15 Leigh Town Hall
- 16-18 Leigh's Poor Law
Union 1837-1848
- 20-23 The Diary of
William Walls of
Abram 1915-1919
- 24-25 I Say, 'Anyone
for Tennis?'
- 26-27 Wigan's Mining and
Mechanical School
- 28-30 The Street That Was
- 31 Can You Help?
- 32-33 Childhood Memories
of Growing Up in
Ashton-in-Makerfield
- 35 Society News

FRONT COVER
Portrait of Sir Thomas
Tyldesley, on display at
Leigh Town Hall

Letter from the **Editorial Team**

Welcome to PAST Forward Issue 87.

With spring in the air we are pleased to bring you more amazing local history stories – and some exciting updates for the year ahead from the Archives and Museum teams.

In this edition Bill Aldridge examines Roman relics found in Appley Bridge, Yvonne Eckersley looks at the early years of the Leigh Poor Law Union and Graham Taylor continues his examination of the war diaries of William Walls of Abram.

We mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of Winstanley Tennis Club and take a fascinating look at the history of Wigan's King Street before jumping to the next street over and delving into the history of Wigan's Mining and Mechanical School.

All in all, another fascinating collection of stories about the varied history of the Borough and plenty to enjoy.

Past Forward Essay Competition 2021

We are delighted to reveal the results of the 2021 Past Forward Essay Competition. Submissions ranged widely across subjects and from around the Borough. In fact, we received more entries than ever before.

The judges noted the consistently high quality of all the submissions and the difficulty faced in selecting the successful entries. After much consideration, the panel settled on our winners:

1st place – Brian Joyce, 'George Okell: 'Rector O' Th' Obelisk'

2nd place – Julie McKiernan, 'A Pipe Dream'

3rd place – John Unsworth, 'Cloth Caps and Cowboy Hats: The Day the Wild West Came to Wigan'

Runner-Up – Frank Atherton, 'Sir Francis Sharp Powell'

Runner-Up – Glenys McClellan, 'Getting Side-Tracked While Volunteering'

Runner-Up – Tommy Parkinson, 'Spitfire Crash in Aspull'

Runner-Up – Richard de Grijjs, 'The Curious Tale of a Well-travelled Wigan Long-case Clock'

Runner-Up – Thomas McGrath, 'The Tragedy at Winstanley'

Thank you to all writers who contributed to the competition and particular thanks to the kind sponsorship of Mr and Mrs O'Neill.

You can read the essays from the top three prize-winners in this edition of Past Forward and we will be publishing more of the successful stories in forthcoming editions of the magazine.

Information for Contributors

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

If you would like to submit an article for **PAST FORWARD**, please note that:

- Publication is at the discretion of Editorial Team
- The Editorial Team may edit your submission
- Published and rejected submissions will be

disposed of, unless you request for them to be returned

- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition
- Articles must be received by the copy date if inclusion in the next issue is desired

Submission Guidelines

- Electronic submissions are preferred, although handwritten ones will be accepted
- We prefer articles to have a maximum length of 1,000 words but please

contact us if you would like to submit an article of a greater length

- Include photographs or images where possible – these can be returned if requested
- Include your name and address – we will not pass on your details to anyone unless you have given us permission to do so

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

CONTACT DETAILS:

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk
 or The Editor at
PAST FORWARD, Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

Wigan Borough COVID-Archive: Photographing the Borough

The volunteers at Archives: Wigan and Leigh are still working hard to collect images of the Borough throughout the pandemic, and have contributed over 700 photos to the archives, taken on their daily walks. These images have helped to capture the uniqueness of the last year.

For more information on the Wigan Borough COVID-Archive project, please see page 19.



Photograph kindly supplied by Andrea Foster.

Copy Deadline for Issue 88 – Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday 18 June 2021.

George Okell: 'Rector O' Th' Obelisk'

BY BRIAN JOYCE

Brandishing an axe inscribed with 'Strike at the Root', George Okell was a familiar sight at temperance meetings in Victorian Leigh. Okell and his teetotal comrades beat the drum for total abstinence. They claimed that drink was at the root of social problems such as poverty, domestic violence and crime; take the axe to this root and Leigh would be a more prosperous and peaceful place.

Ironically, George Okell was born in 1810 at his publican father's premises, The Fox Inn, on Leigh's Market Place. What converted him to teetotalism is not clear, but the local movement was supported by most of his family; his sister and seven brothers also became activists. Okell often repeated the story of his mother, who on her deathbed supposedly spurred him on: "George, them long legs o' thine has gone many a mile for the good o' the country; thou mun go on".

A Primitive Methodist chapel was under construction in Bradshawgate, and the inaugural meeting of the new temperance movement took place in August 1834 on its foundations. After speeches by Okell and others, participants were invited to sign a pledge as follows:

'I promise to discountenance all the causes and practices of intemperance. I also promise not to take ale, porter, wine, ardent spirits, peppermint or any other kind of intoxicating liquor, nor give or offer them to others, except as medicine or in a religious ordinance'.

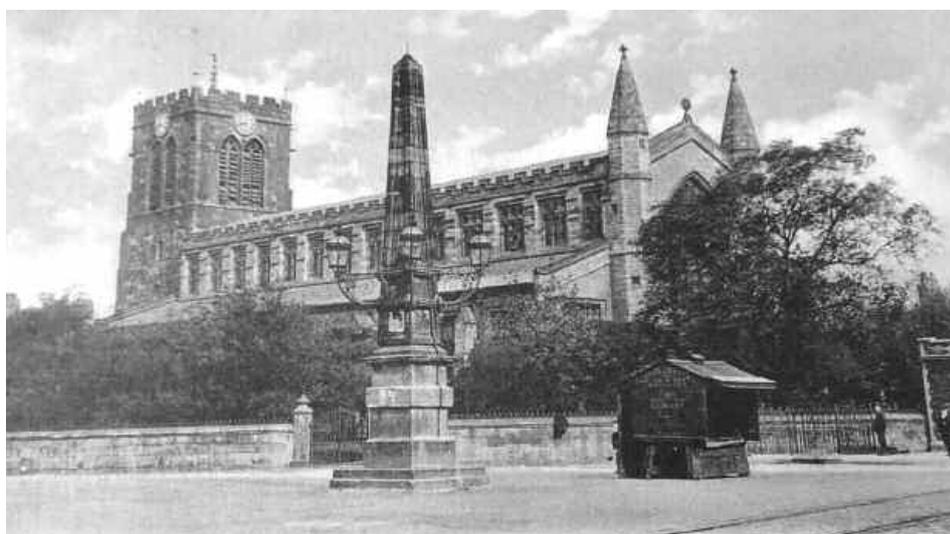
Two dozen people signed the pledge that day including eight members of Okell's family.

After this, he set up a number of temperance societies in the Leigh area and was president of the United Leigh Total Abstinence Association.

Much of Okell's work was done through temperance tracts sold door to door or on the streets. There were also outdoor meetings, the most notable of which were the

regular Sunday evening lectures in Leigh's Market Place. Okell would use the obelisk as his focal point, haranguing his audience from the back of a waggon. His message was always the same: Leigh's social problems were largely caused by drink, and nothing short of prohibition would eradicate them. The so-called 'Rector o' th' Obelisk' argued that half measures, like persuading people to merely reduce their drinking, were useless. Only teetotalism and the closure of all pubs could work.

Some audience reaction was positive, and conversions were undoubtedly made. Okell and his comrades would point proudly to Charles Donnolly as an example. 'This man for a quart of ale would eat glass,



Leigh market with stall

allow pins to be stuck in his thigh, go up a chimney and perform other surprising antics', the Leigh Journal reminded its readers. After his conversion to teetotalism, Donnolly himself had become a lecturer.

On the other hand, much of the reaction to Okell's preaching was negative to say the least. Jeering crowds would hurl bricks, stones, and even beer at the speaker. On one occasion in Hindley, drinkers emerging from a pub spotted Okell addressing a crowd from his waggon, grabbed its shaft, pulled it into the pub, and tipped the startled speaker into the bar.

However, the temperance movement survived these early attacks, and in 1884 celebrated the 50 years that had passed since George Okell and his family had signed the pledge in Bradshawgate. A procession comprising representatives of the various local temperance societies, Bands of Hope, Wesleyan schoolchildren and so on, snaked its way through Leigh, bands playing. George Okell, clutching his axe, waved to the cheering crowds as he was pulled through the streets on a wagonette. Banners were flourished everywhere emblazoned with mottoes such as 'Vote for Sunday Closing' and 'More Bread Less Beer'. One marcher carried a small beer barrel bearing the words 'To Let' and with both ends knocked out. An evening event at Bedford Wesleyan Chapel followed at which Okell was hailed as the pioneer of Leigh teetotalism and his achievements lauded.

And yet one wonders how much progress had actually been made. The recently formed Salvation Army was receiving the same violent



Leigh Parish Church and obelisk

treatment that Okell and his friends had suffered 50 years before. In 1893, violence against The Army outside the Black Horse Inn in Bedford was serious enough to be reported not only in the local press but also in the Salvation Army's own newspaper, the *War Cry*.

A glance at the Police Court columns in the local press leaves the reader in no doubt that drunkenness, street brawls, domestic violence and neglect of children continued.

A new generation of temperance activists were seeking alternative ways to reach drinkers. A widespread network of coffee houses was springing up; Leigh's first opened in Bond Street in 1878. In the same year, a temperance 'pub', the Bolton Arms, opened in Bradshawgate. A portable coffee van was set up at the corner of Bridge Street (now Leigh Road) and Church Street offering an alternative to the tots of rum licensees made available to mill hands and

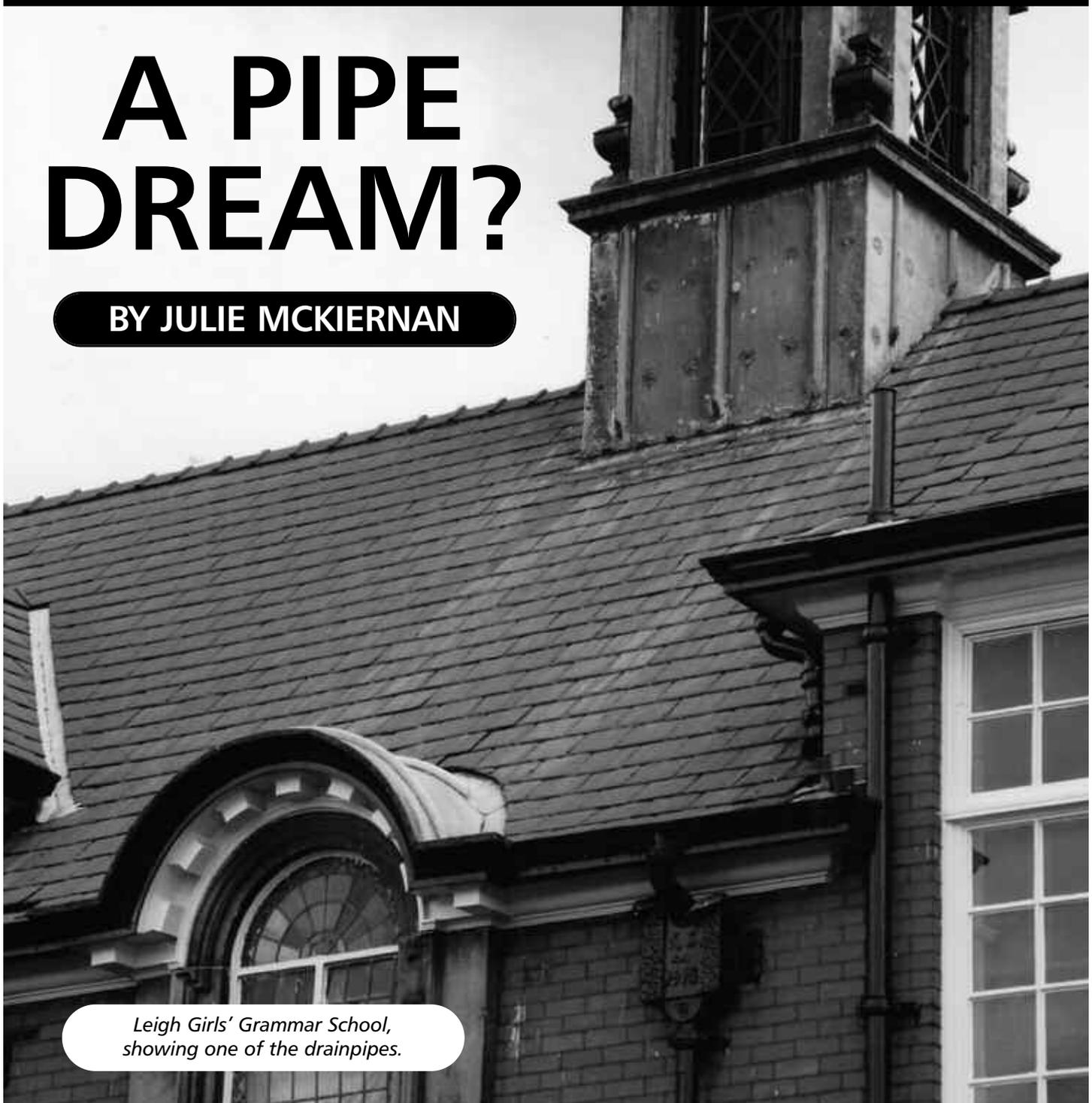
colliers trudging their way to work at 5.30am.

The key to this approach to temperance was to offer choice rather than prohibition. An anonymous contributor to the Leigh Journal summed this up in 1877: '...Until substitutes for the public houses are provided, they might as well try to stop the rolling waves of the ocean with mop rags. In my opinion, the Leigh Coffee Van Company have hit the nail on the head'.

When George Okell died in March 1885, his funeral procession began outside the grocer's shop he had owned at 39 Wigan Road, Westleigh. Before setting off towards Leigh Cemetery, a delegation of his old abstentionist comrades placed his coffin on a row of chairs, encircled it, and sang a selection of temperance hymns. One wonders what thoughts passed through the heads of the drinkers in the Waggon and Horses next door.

A PIPE DREAM?

BY JULIE MCKIERNAN



Leigh Girls' Grammar School, showing one of the drainpipes.

2021 is the centenary of Leigh Girls' Grammar School, so why was 1915 imprinted on its ornate cast iron rainwater pipes? Rome wasn't built in a day but this building, sadly demolished in 2010, took almost 25 years to materialise.

Although no early records survive there is evidence that Leigh Grammar School existed in 1592ⁱ making it one of the earliest Lancashire grammar schools. Classes were originally held in Leigh Parish Church, but a separate school was built in 1719. It was here, in 1724, that 16 girlsⁱⁱ were studying, the tradition being that they were allowed to

accompany their brothers to school.

In 1889 a bigger buildingⁱⁱⁱ was purchased in Railway Road, but as numbers increased Headmaster Mr Leek applied to use the science rooms at the new Technical School^{iv}. In 1898 the whole school of 40 boys and 18 girls^v moved to this building as a temporary measure until more suitable premises could be found. The Technical School now accommodated the Grammar School, the Pupil Teacher Centre, and its own classes so it was hardly surprising that a Board of Education report highlighted the inadequacy of the building.

In 1905 Leigh Town Council recommended to the Lancashire Education Committee that the building be expanded to accommodate a grammar school for boys, and that the girls should form a separate school elsewhere.

Although the Lancashire Education Committee agreed that the premises could be extended, they rejected the proposal for the girls' school on the grounds that 'if a separate school was granted to Leigh, other Non-County Boroughs would also make like demands and the cost of secondary education in Lancashire would be enormously increased'.^{vi}

Instead, the County Architect was instructed to prepare plans for the extension, but Leigh Town Council rejected them on the grounds that it would be in the best educational interests of the Borough to create a separate school for girls and make only minor alterations at the Technical School.

With pupil numbers increasing renewed representations were made to the Lancashire Education Committee. They agreed in principle if the combined costs of the alterations and a new girls' school did not greatly exceed the estimated cost of the County Architect's plans.

In 1907, the Board of Education visited the Technical School and concluded that it wouldn't be worth spending large sums to extend it to accommodate a mixed school, but they would allow it to be used as a temporary base for a secondary school for boys.^{vii} However, the County Council refused to accept the report's recommendations, and the overcrowding had now become so acute that a temporary iron building had to be built on adjoining land. So, the County authorities suggested that the Board be asked to sanction a separate girls' school on the Railway Road site. Leigh Town Council agreed, but only as a long-term solution.

By 1908 negotiations had made very little progress. Leigh Town Council insisted that building a separate school for girls would be cheaper and that Leigh should be 'allowed to have the kind of school they like best... public schools for boys and girls of the wealthy classes are not mixed... There does not appear to be any reason why the same educational advantages should not be available, so far as is reasonably possible, for Leigh children.' However, they added, 'The curriculum of the girls' school should be widely different from that of the boys'.^{viii}

The education of girls had been a topic of serious discussion since the 1850s, when an increase in the middle classes led to a greater demand for educating their daughters to make them suitable

candidates for marriage. 'The ideal presented to a young girl... is to be amiable, inoffensive, always ready to give pleasure and to be pleased'.^{ix} But by 1898, there were 90 grammar schools for girls and teaching was rapidly becoming a popular and respected female profession.

In 1909 Leigh Grammar School was removed from the Board of Education's list of secondary schools. A Leigh deputation met with the Board who stressed that the accommodation was only meant to be temporary and unless permanent premises were provided they were not prepared to renew the grant.

The deputation returned to Leigh dejected but quickly arranged a meeting with the school's governors and representatives of the County Education Committee to discuss their pressing problem. Clearly no resolution was arrived at because it wasn't until 1911 that plans were finally prepared^x for extensions at the Technical School, and for a new secondary school for girls in Windermere Road. It was to be built in a Baroque Revivalist style with sash windows, classical style door surrounds, and stained glass windows.^{xi}

In 1913 builders were finally appointed, and in 1914 a loan was awarded towards the total construction costs of £11,969.^{xii} The building of the school could finally begin which explains the puzzling 1915 date on the ornamental drainpipe casings!

In December 1920 Miss Nora Caress BSc was appointed as headmistress and the school officially opened on 11 November 1921. But 'with 252 pupils on its opening day, its inadequate size was immediately apparent, and building began again almost immediately'...^{xiii}

-
- i Leigh Grammar School - A Brief History by Tony Bent
 - ii Leigh Girls' Grammar School Jubilee Magazine Editorial
 - iii 'The Old Grammar School building' now owned by The Old Leigh Educational Endowment Trust
 - iv in Railway Road, opened in 1894
 - v Leigh Borough Council Technical Instruction Committee Annual Report 1899 to 1900
 - vi Borough of Leigh Council Minutes Higher Education Committee Grammar School Report 14 December 1909
 - vii Borough of Leigh Council Minutes Higher Education Committee Grammar School Report 14 December 1909
 - viii Borough of Leigh Council Minutes Higher Education Committee Grammar School Report 14 December 1909
 - ix <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/taunton1868/taunton1.html>
 - x by the County Architect, Henry Littler II 1865-1933. He became the County Architect for Lancashire in 1900 and was also architect to the Lancashire Asylums Board.
 - xi <https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/news/item/127/Dismay-as-Leigh-School-comes-down>
 - xii Leigh Education Committee Report 25.06.1914
 - xiii 1971 LGGs Jubilee Magazine

Cloth Caps and Cowboy Hats; the Day the Wild West Came to Wigan

By John Unsworth

On 29 September 1904, a small army invaded the cotton manufacturing town of Wigan in Lancashire. Nearly 1,000 strong it was a mixture of veteran US cavalrymen, Lakota Indians, American cowboys, Mexican vaqueros, Arab Spahis (light cavalry), Japanese acrobats, wives, consorts and other camp followers. There was also a contingent of teamsters, horse wranglers, carpenters, stage hands, electricians (for the special electric light plants), armourers, cooks and butchers.

Together with a convoy of 50 wagons, including a stagecoach, carrying supplies and equipment, they made the trek through the town to Lamberhead Green, a semi-rural area just over a mile to the south. It was pure spectacle with the Sioux warriors resplendent in warpaint and eagle feathers, the vaqueros in gaily coloured ponchos and sombreros, and Arab Spahis mounted on their spirited chargers. Then came the cowboys wearing Stetsons and silver spurred high heeled boots, amusing the spectators with rope tricks. And in the vanguard, waving gallantly to the crowds lining the roadside, rode Colonel



Willie Holy Frog Knas-ka-wakan. Dakota Native American Wild West Show performer (Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-135999)

William Frederick Cody, six feet four and clad in buckskins, thigh length black riding boots and a wide brimmed white sombrero. Ex-army scout, showman, and self-styled killer of Cheyenne war chief Yellow Hair, with cascading curls and well waxed moustache and goatee, at 58 still erect astride his prancing horse; it was an entry to make even Caesar blush. Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show was in town.

Arriving at their destination, an area stretching from Lamberhead Green to present day Worsley Hall, an encampment of canvas tents and tipis was erected. Then came the main tent and a number of marquees around a central horseshoe shaped arena. Inhabited by peoples of many nations, it was a town within a town. Two weeks before the Show's arrival hundreds of posters had magically appeared in shop

windows, on billboards and vacant walls, heralding the imminent arrival of BUFFALO BILL AND HIS CONGRESS OF ROUGH RIDERS OF THE WORLD!

The frenetic schedule included two shows, afternoon and evening (hence the new-fangled electric lighting). Admission was priced at one shilling upwards to four, with box seats costing five shillings and seven shillings and sixpence. Children under 10 were admitted at half price. For a ha'penny you could have a cone filled with popcorn. Programmes and other souvenirs were also on sale. Locals were even allowed to visit the tipis of the Native Americans. Some of those who attended later recalled how they had dressed up in their Sunday best for the once in a lifetime occasion. Some may even have remembered earlier visits to Lancashire by Bill and his Wild West. The famed frontier scout had whooped them up on three previous tours. He had even met Queen Victoria, a huge fan. So the ground was well ploughed.

The Show opened with a review of the entire company who, to the accompaniment of William Sweeney and his Cowboy Band, galloped and paraded around the arena. Then, as the music morphed into The Star Spangled Banner, Buffalo Bill made his dramatic entrance. Mounted on a handsome black steed wearing a silver bridle, a present from Edward VII back when he was Prince of Wales, with a flourish of his white sombrero he introduced the Congress of Rough Riders of the World who, at his signal, entered into a dazzling,

kaleidoscopic routine of interspersing concentric circles.

Then came the entertainment proper. A panoply of riding and roping and shooting exhibitions performed by the troupe - Cody included. Edwardian Evel Knievel, George C. Davis, did death defying feats on his bicycle, one of them involving a 56 foot jump across a chasm. There were also acrobatics and other spectacular feats. The cavalry and infantry drilled, and marksman Johnny Baker showed off his considerable shooting skills.

But these were only curtain raisers for the melodramatic main events - frontier vignettes featuring Buffalo Bill as Pony Express rider, Buffalo Bill as buffalo hunter, and Buffalo Bill as the thrilling last minute rescuer of a settler's cabin surrounded by Indians. There was also an Indian attack on the Deadwood stage. Buffalo Bill to the rescue again!

And then the high point of the whole spectacle - a re-enactment of Custer's Last Stand, the finest hour of Lakota and Cheyenne resistance to white encroachment on their land. The arena echoed with gunfire and the war whoops of triumphant Indian warriors as they wiped out the Wasichus. Johnnie Baker, wearing built up boots and a blonde wig, played Custer. The Indians played themselves. Some of them may have even been present at the actual battle. Sitting Bull Jnr, son of the chief who had been at the battle, played the role of his father. For him, like the rest of the Native performers, it was a temporary escape from the grim realities of reservation life. And

the pay was good. But of greater importance though, was the opportunity it gave them to present a culture and lifestyle that was fast disappearing, and to relive again the old ways and old victories.

Then it was over. The last shot fired, the last Indian felled, the last settler saved. Buffalo Bill bade the crowded stands farewell and they filtered home with their programmes and souvenirs and memories.

In the just dawning century a new medium, made of flickering images, would take on the role of storyteller of the American West, presenting an image that the old scout, both in real life and in fiction, had had a major role in developing. He would even appear before the camera himself. But the movies, captivating as they were, could never deliver the excitement, the experience of being there. You were in the presence of REAL Indians and REAL cowboys and a REAL western hero - Buffalo Bill, attesting to the authenticity of his Frontier tableaux. For Cody himself, the show presented America's, and his own, take on the conquest of the Plains and its native peoples. He was the most famous American of his day, and the world was wild about the West. But to the hundreds who crowded the canvas covered stands on that long ago day in Wigan, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was never anything more than entertainment and spectacle. A temporary bolt hole out of a coal mine or cotton mill and into another world, albeit one long gone.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO CAUTOPATES?

BY BILL ALDRIDGE

In 1937 the headless statue of a Roman Mithraic deity was found by a local farmer, Thomas Kelly, while deep ploughing in a field in Appley Bridge. In Dr David Shotter's book, 'Romans in Lancashire'¹, he describes the find as 'Cautopates, the companion of Mithras representing the setting sun' and suggests a strong possibility of there being a Mithraic temple in the area. Strangely though, the statue does not appear in Shotter's subsequent publications or in any other book on the history of the Romans in this area - but why? How could such an important artefact be ignored and where is the statue now? The explanation makes for quite an intriguing story.

For me, this story begins in Hindley Library one bored afternoon in the late 1970s when I saw the statue on display on the first floor of the building. It was part of a travelling exhibition of Roman finds from the Greater Manchester area, put together by Yvonne Langtree of Wigan Museum Services. At the time my interest in history and archaeology had yet to develop but I was impressed by the range of objects on display - in particular, the stone carving of this headless figure, legs crossed, holding an extinguished torch. It was about 66cm (i.e. 26 inches) high and, if I remember rightly, the label said 'Cautopates, attendant to Roman god Mithras'.

It was a few years later before I came across the statue again, this time in Shotter's book where it was described as being found in Dalton, five miles from Wigan. By then I had been hooked by



*Cautopates attendant of Mithras
(Wigan Archives)*

the archaeology bug and had become a founder member of the Wigan Archaeological Society (which formed in 1982). One of our early projects was to check through the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for the Wigan Metro area - checking for errors and making any additions. The SMR (now called the HER - Heritage

Environment Record) was created by the Greater Manchester Archaeology Unit, and is now maintained by its successor, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service. It was, and still is, the primary source of information for both the planning authorities and those researching the local history. Checking through the list there was no entry for the statue of Cautopates, but perhaps not surprising as Dalton lies in West Lancashire and, therefore, should only appear in the Lancashire records².

Mithraism was popular with the Romans throughout the Roman occupation of Britain, particularly with the army. The cult originated in Persia, and in the Roman version the Mithras is always shown killing a bull. A number of Mithraic temples have been discovered in Britain, particularly in areas with a strong military presence such as Hadrian's Wall, where three have been found. The discovery of a temple in London in 1954 caused quite a stir and was reconstructed for tourists to appreciate in nearby Temple Court, Queen Victoria Street (it has now been returned to where it was originally found). To find one in the Wigan area would certainly be something quite significant, adding to the important discoveries made in recent years, including the huge Roman bathhouse excavated in the town centre in 2005.

But was there a temple as Shotter had suggested and what had happen to the statue? At the time of his book, the statue was said to be on loan to Ribchester Museum. However the GM HER record has it as being with Kelly's descendant; frustratingly though, there was no indication of who that was. A visit to the reference library in Wigan (now the Museum of Wigan Life) provided the answer. A selection of newspaper cuttings and letters, particularly from Kelly himself, shed the light on this mystery revealing a sad story of misunderstanding and missed opportunity.

Thomas Forest Kelly was living in Pepper Lane in Standish at the time of the find but later moved to Speakmans Drive in Appley Bridge, which is next to the fields he was farming where he said he found the statue. Having discovered it in 1937³, it wasn't until 1967 that he brought it to



*Fire Altar
(Mrs Milligan)*

the attention of the authorities, i.e. H H G Arthur, chief librarian at Wigan Library. Kelly had been carrying out his own investigations of the site looking for the statue's head, as he was convinced there was a Roman presence in the area, but had failed to find it or any pottery evidence. He had also been reluctant to divulge the exact location of the site, but in a later press article⁴ he indicated that it was where the local stream had been diverted⁵ (this was certainly in Appley Bridge, not Dalton - the confusion was the result of a mistake later admitted by the SMR recorder). He was, however, keen for the statue to go on permanent display in the Library (and then the Powell Museum at the bottom of Millgate, which was to be commissioned the following year).

H H G Arthur showed great interest in the find and even arranged for a base and cabinet to be constructed for its presentation. Things went wrong, however, when he made the mistake of contacting the local press in which he cast doubts on the statue's provenance, suggesting a Roman site in the fields of Appley Bridge to be unlikely. In the article he concludes that the statue had probably arrived there by 'someone who did not realise what it was or its value'.⁶ As you can imagine, Kelly, on reading the article, was not best pleased, particularly as it went against what



*Cult of Mithras - from Aquileia in Northern Italy
(Wikipedia)*

he had told Arthur about the 'material facts' of his own investigations. In a letter to the Library he expressed his dissatisfaction with the librarian's actions, and he immediately withdrew his offer for its display. Kelly did allow the statue to go on display two years later at Ribchester Museum - for how long I'm not sure but it was certainly still there in 1981 according to an article in *Lancashire Life*⁷. It was while it was there that it went on loan to the travelling exhibition that I saw in Hindley. Why the Museum returned it to its owner is not clear but could well be due to insurance costs. Since then the statue has never been seen again in public.

Arthur probably arrived at his opinion about the statue after speaking to Ben Edwards, the then County Archaeologist for Lancashire, who at the time had interviewed Kelly. Edwards' report, published in 1977 in the *Journal of Chester Archaeological Society*⁸, makes very interesting reading. As early as the eighteenth century, great interest was being shown in the remains of the Roman fortress at Chester. Many of the finds

unearthed were being catalogued by the antiquarians and sold to private collectors. An illustration of one of these was of a statue of Cautopates which had subsequently gone missing. It was pointed out to Edwards by a colleague that it was very similar to the statue Kelly had found. Could it be the same one? If so, how could it have ended up in Appley Bridge? Looking into this, Edwards discovered that the owner in the eighteenth century had been a Mr Prescott, who happened to have family living at Ayrfield Farm. This farm is only a quarter of a mile from Kelly's find spot in Appley Bridge. If this connection is true, then there is a strong possibility that this is how the statue (if it's the same one) found its way there. How it got buried in a field is another matter but this certainly casts doubt on there being a Roman presence in the area.

Even so, it is a great shame that such an important figure should go unseen. Whether there was or wasn't a Roman temple in Appley Bridge, the statue itself has great significance for

the North West in general. A Roman tradition in the local area, however, still persists with rumours of finds over the years. Nothing else, unfortunately, has ever turned up. A figure said to be Roman Victory, was reported in Upholland in the eighteenth century, again found by ploughing, but was identified by the antiquarian W T Watkin as Cupid⁹ and so could possibly be Medieval. Also, according to a 2002 newspaper article,¹⁰ a Samian bowl measuring 12 inches in diameter was found in Appley Bridge but nothing else is known about this. Kelly himself was certainly convinced he had a Roman site and did actually produce another item, which he referred to as a fire altar. This also went to Ribchester Museum. We know this from the Lancashire Life article which shows both items on display (the image shows it to be about half the size of the statue). Fire altars were sometimes a feature of the Mithraic ritual¹¹ although quite rare - we can only assume it came from the same site. Kelly studied Mithraism and, together with his friend Alan Rogerson (of Orrell bike shop fame), joined the Mithraic Society. He even attended the International Mithraic Congress when it was held in London in 1976¹², where both his objects were presented (apparently to great acclaim).

By the time I came to look into the story, Kelly had already passed away and his family no longer lived in Speakmans Drive. However, I managed to locate his daughter, Mrs Milligan¹³, who was still living in Appley Bridge, and so arranged to meet her. She told me that she had inherited the statue from her father¹⁴ but had always hated it and never wanted it in the house as it had brought nothing but bad luck to the family. She had therefore put the statue up for auction at Sotheby's, not long after her father had died. She thought it had gone to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford but my enquiries there proved this not to be the case. On contacting Sotheby's, the statue had apparently been sold to a private dealer/collector for an undisclosed sum. They could not disclose the contact details of the new owners but said they would approach them on my behalf for information about it, but no reply was forthcoming. It would appear that the statue is now in some private collection, perhaps not even in this country.

As it happens, in recent years, a strong Roman presence has been detected in the West Lancashire area. Finds such as pottery and coins were found in the late 1990s, early 2000s by Ron Cowell at Dutton's Farm near Lathom and, very significantly, there is exciting news of the recent discovery of a large Roman fort in the Burscough area. Current investigations are being carried out by Bluestone Archaeology (as reported in Wigan Archaeological Society's recent newsletters)¹⁵. There must surely have been a road connecting Burscough with Wigan and it's quite possible the route would have gone through the Douglas valley, perhaps along Dalton Lees and past the site in Appley Bridge. Could Mr Kelly have been right all along? – who knows, we can only hope that one day we will find out.

References:

1. *Romans in Lancashire* - Dr David Shotter (Dalesman Books 1973) pp.56-57
2. *Lancashire HER No.1873*. Strangely enough it also found its way onto the Greater Manchester's HER No. 9083.1.0, added in the mid 90s and listed as 'Dalton (Roman Sculpture)' - and also Cheshire's HER No.8430/24.
3. *Lancashire Evening Post* (1 May 1969)
4. *There is some confusion with the date as an article in the Observer* (4 August 1967) gives 1937 whereas the later *Evening Post* has it as 1932
5. *Examination of early OS maps reveals that the stream in question had been diverted in the late nineteenth century.*
6. *Liverpool Echo* (6 August 1967)
7. *Lancashire Life* (October 1981)
8. *Chester Archaeological Journal No.60* - Edwards, B J N. (1977) pp.56-60
9. *Roman Lancashire W T Watkin* (1883) p.230
10. *Wigan Observer* (1 October 2002)
11. <http://www.soudavar.com/MITHRAIC-SF2.pdf> pp.274-275
12. *Bulletin of the International Mithraic Congress* (1976) pp.8-9
13. *Mrs Milligan passed away in 2018, however the information and photos she provided have been invaluable and much appreciated.*
14. *The fire altar apparently had already gone to his friend, Alan Rogerson, which I haven't been able to confirm.*
15. www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk Newsletters No.221, No.224 and No.235



AML ARCHIVES: WIGAN & LEIGH

The restored foyer to Leigh Town Hall

With its extensive records dating back 800 years, events of the past are the usual focus for the Borough's archives and local studies service,



but with a major makeover project nearing completion, it is a fresh chapter of history claiming the spotlight. Following a Covid-related delay last year, the new home of the archives at Leigh Town Hall is ready to showcase its bold new look.

It will make the details of how our Borough has been shaped through the centuries more accessible than ever before. There will be a public searchroom alongside collection exhibition spaces.

The project - supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund – also sees old shop units restored to create new archive and exhibition spaces.

For Alex Miller, the council's lead officer for archives and local studies, it is the culmination



New home: Archive collections safely returned to the state-of-the-art new strongrooms

of a long process, and he can't wait to welcome the public, once restrictions are lifted.

"It's massively exciting for all of our team, the researchers and the volunteers to be able to move into this new 21st century home. Compared to the old facilities, it's a complete sea-change. We have increased capacity and everything is far more accessible for the public."

The archives service collects, preserves and catalogues thousands of records from schools, churches, hospitals, businesses, families, estates and individuals, making them available to the public.

The new facilities include a new conservation studio and a digitisation suite to help make historical documents more accessible. The service has also been renamed to mark the launch of the new facilities and will now be known as Archives: Wigan & Leigh.

A further feature on the entire Leigh Town Hall project will be included in the summer edition of Past Forward, Issue 88.

For information on when the new facilities will reopen to the public, follow Archives: Wigan & Leigh's social media channels.

For forthcoming events, activities and volunteering opportunities please visit our website or social media pages.



Celebration: Part of the new exhibition spaces celebrating local history and heritage



Access: The new public and volunteer searchroom nearing completion



Heritage: Part of the new exhibition space awaiting final installation of graphics and objects

Leigh's Poor Law Union



1936 photograph of the building that was Culcheth Workhouse

Leigh Guardians of the Poor received orders for reorganising their Poor Law provision into the Leigh Union on 5 October 1837 and the first meeting of the new Union Board was held on the 20th. This followed the compulsory civil registration of births, marriages and deaths from 1 July 1837.

The registrar's first meeting of 6 October was in Pennington Workhouse. This building was ending its life as a workhouse and was to become a school for Leigh's poor children. The Guardians reasoned that to use part of it as Leigh's Registrar Office would save them money but it was soon deemed unsatisfactory. The meeting of the 6th was adjourned to the Royal Oak, and by the 20th it had been decided that the Registrars' Office and the Guardians' boardroom would be in a suitably customised building in Union Street. Until the building was ready pubs like the Chat Moss were used. Poor relief was still paid out in the Pennington Workhouse building. In May 1841 it was proposed that they rented rooms in the, then, new Town Hall on King Street. From November, Guardians,

registrars and the town's Petty Sessions operated from there.

The Workhouses

.....

From the summer of 1838 there were just two workhouses: one in Lowton (off Newton Rd, just past Lane Head) three and a half miles from Leigh, and the other further away in Culcheth (where the CPS shopping centre is). By 15 June 1838, with new governors, Thomas MacClure at Lowton and Samuel Moss crop at Culcheth, the workhouses were ready to admit paupers.

The earliest record of their capacity I have found was in 1842. Lowton Workhouse could house 102 inmates with three to a bed, two adults and one child; and Culcheth 135, with the same ratio of three to a bed. The Guardians' minute book for 22 May 1846 records 160 at Lowton and 129 at Culcheth. Minute books also record that the buildings were continually being adapted, expanded and repaired, mainly to comply with the Poor Law Commission's requests. These books also show the

idea of building a purpose built workhouse was discussed in March 1842 and December 1848; in 1850-51 the Leigh Road Workhouse was built.

Personal Liberty

Once in the workhouse a pauper's freedom was severely curtailed. They had no control over the hours they worked; when they went to, and who shared their beds; the clothes they wore; or the food they ate. Mothers and children could be put in separate workhouses, as was the case of Sarah Knight and her seven year old daughter. And, until 1842, inmates were obliged, whatever their religion, to attend churches the Guardians chose.

It was also a legal offence to leave the workhouse without permission. In 1839, after John Stirrup had become annoyed when Lowton's Master would not give him his clothes and allow him to leave, he was 'confined' for 24 hours; after his release he ran away. Two days later Martha Dickenson joined him. They were found in Delph near Warrington. The Guardians decided against involving magistrates, preferring to put the couple in separate workhouses. After John had escaped again, the Guardians made Lowton Workhouse more secure.

Work in the Workhouses

Workhouses needed to be as self-sufficient as possible as ratepayers were not fond of paying the poor rate. To keep rates down the Guardians seized every opportunity, however small, to minimise costs and generate income.

In 1838 the Guardians rented School Croft, a piece of land adjoining Culcheth Workhouse and Culcheth School, to grow their own potatoes and vegetables. During the 1839 nail making crisis, Guardians set up a smithy, or rock, with a pair of bellows and three anvils in Lowton's cart house to provide work for poor nailers. The nails would have been sold to local builders.

In 1840 they were identifying children who were able to go into service, thus removing the cost of their keep. In Culcheth's weaving shed five children earned their keep by helping women silk weavers as they wove bandanas for a Mr Cree. In 1843, during the deepening depression, 10 looms were installed at Lowton for weaving bandanas.

In 1844 the Guardians informed the Poor Law Commissioners that due to increasing unemployment, especially among silk weavers, they had too many poor to relieve. Also in 1844 the practice of hiring out paupers was investigated and it was suggested that it was discontinued. In 1845, at the time of the Irish potato famine, the Guardians were considering allowing workers to help farmers weed out diseased potatoes from their harvest. In September 1847 the possibility of hiring paupers to local farmers was again considered. Poor Law Commissioners allowed the Guardians to

decide. In 1847 the Guardians rented the field in front of Lowton's workhouse, belonging to Matthew Eckersley. In 1848, as resources would not stretch to buying a scythe, Lowton's Master was told to beg or borrow one. At Lowton, as there was not enough work for weaver inmates, a hand mill for grinding corn was bought. And 1848 was the year Leigh Guardians gave way to introducing oakum picking and stone breaking at Lowton Workhouse.

Vaccination

In late 1840 the Vaccination Act to combat smallpox was passed during an epidemic in and around Leigh. In February 1841 there were 20 cases of smallpox in Lowton Workhouse. The sick were crowded in dirty rooms alongside other ill paupers. After a visit, the Guardians ordered the destruction of bedsteads and bedding and began to consider the provision of a sick room, or infirmary, at Lowton.

Medical knowledge at that time was limited; minute books refer to leeches, gin and porter being used to treat paupers. In 1841 Cape Madeira wine and half a cask of porter were provided for convalescing smallpox patients.

Leigh Guardians, who were responsible for vaccinating local infants, embraced the possibility of removing smallpox forever. They contracted medical officers and paid them 1s and 6d per vaccination, and offered it to inhabitants of the Leigh area. Vaccination centres were set up in Westleigh, Culcheth Workhouse, Lowton Workhouse, Bedford School, Astley, Atherton, and Tyldesley School. Perhaps fed by the knowledge that Leigh's surgeons were not always professional in their practice, (Mr Anderson was called to account for not monitoring babies after vaccination) parents were understandably reluctant to have their infants vaccinated. Concerned Guardians asked the Poor Law Commissioners if it would be justified to enforce vaccination on any pauper admitted to their workhouses. The Commissioners advised them to vaccinate as they thought necessary and expedient. Compulsory vaccination was introduced in 1853.

By 1848 the Guardians were more alert to some of the causes of life threatening infectious diseases. Importantly they recognised their responsibility to remove some of the 'nuisances' identified as a source of cholera. And in October, in the midst of a cholera epidemic, they organised Leigh's police to distribute 5,000 handbills which gave 'Suggestions in reference to Cholera' in all the townships.

Guardians and Officials

During the early years the Guardians had many problems with the Union's doctors. Reading through the minute books patterns emerge. Surgeons, Wardleworth,



Lowton Workhouse, Newton Heath: in the triangle formed by Newton Road, Heath Lane and Stone Cross Lane South

Anderson and Cleworth, were repeatedly called before the Board to answer complaints from local people and the Commissioners. The common complaints included not attending, nor being attentive enough, to ill pauper patients and neglecting to attend women in childbirth or postpartum. On numerous occasions the Guardians deducted money when they discovered surgeons had overcharged, or claimed for medical treatment not given.

In 1840 Lowton's first governor, Thomas Clure, had to be reminded that the Guardians' visiting committee's suggestions that were 'conducive to the comfort, health, good order and regulation' of the paupers and the workhouse, had to be complied with. In 1846 he was not keeping the books in good order, and resisting efforts to compel him to. A year later he and his wife were questioned about their disposal of cotton fents and Mrs Clure's visits to Manchester. He was replaced in 1847.

The Guardians had to rebuke Samuel Part, Receiving Officer, following a complaint by police officers. He had refused to admit John Hesford into Lowton when police requested it. They considered it 'harsh, improper and at variance with the orders contained in the duties to be performed by ROs'.

Richard Withington was obliged to resign as Governor of Culcheth due to the fact he had got an inmate pregnant. Betty Dixon and her two existing children were removed from Culcheth to Lowton in June 1843 and Withington was dismissed. Such was the displeasure of the Guardians he was not allowed to sell his furniture from the workhouse.

Rev. James Irvine

Leigh's vicar, James Irvine, refused to baptise or bury paupers. Tradition and an Act of Parliament decreed that Guardians and clergymen were to provide for a Christian burial for paupers in parish church graveyards. Irvine's refusal presented a huge problem for the Guardians, i.e. where were Leigh's paupers to be buried in the future?

In December 1845 his continual refusal to bury one child became a protracted battle to affirm the legal right of

paupers to be buried in the parish church's graveyard. The process included hiring solicitors and barristers, who consulted Ecclesiastical and Poor Laws, and consideration of presenting the case to the Queen's Bench. During this time the body of Thomas Clark, who had died on 1 December, had been turned away from the locked gates of the graveyard and lay, unburied, in a lead coffin until at least February 1846.

Clothing

In April 1848 the Guardians, prompted by the Poor Law Commissioners, considered the adoption of a Union Dress. In May it had been decided that 12 suits of clothing for men and six for boys would be ordered for newly admitted inmates at Lowton. Made by Emanuel Shovelton, these were made from drub cord. The jackets were the same length as 'railway porters' jackets and faced in cloth in the same colour and had one row of strong gilt buttons. Each suit was to have one pocket inside the jacket, and the trousers fully lined. Fabric was provided for women's mop caps and calico dresses. Paupers wore clogs, but a pair of shoes, a coat and trousers were provided for Thomas Hilton, Lowton's schoolmaster.

Thomas Hilton – Schoolmaster at Lowton Workhouse

The Master at Culcheth recommended the removal of Thomas Hilton to Lowton as they considered it objectionable for him to remain at Culcheth amongst so many women 'of indifferent character'. Apart from having a few women at Lowton to keep the workhouse clean, female paupers lived at Culcheth Workhouse. The Board thought he could be employed at Lowton as its schoolmaster. In 1848 the Guardians arranged for him to go to Westleigh School half time for six months, to be trained by Mr Lee, its schoolmaster. In July the Schools' Inspector was impressed by his work and recommended the Guardians pay him between £20-£30 a year. However, this was a time of severe poverty, with Leigh Union struggling to cope and Culcheth Workhouse having to turn people away. Consequently he was paid £5 with a promise of a rise the following year.

Postscript

1837 to 1848 was a period of protracted poverty caused by trade recessions and unemployment. Although the Guardians attempted to mitigate this, it was not enough. Neither were the calls by the Chartists for the government to alleviate the causes of their poverty. They were tumultuous years with many confrontations.

Sources from Wigan and Leigh Archives at Leigh Town Hall

Leigh Union Minute Books 1837-1848

Photograph of Culcheth Workhouse from the Leigh Journal 28 August 1936.

A short article and a photograph in the Leigh Journal of 12 June 1953.

The Wigan Borough Covid-19 Archives



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 Archives: Wigan and Leigh 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 Archives: Wigan and Leigh 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.

The Diary of By Graham Taylor William Walls Part 2 of Abram 1915-1919

In the last edition of Past Forward, Part 1 covered William's early life in Abram and his enlistment into the army. In late 1915, after a spell in the trenches in northern France and in the Somme Valley, his unit, the 4th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, was sent to northern Greece as part of the British Salonika Force.

The troops of the British Salonika Force were to lead a nomadic lifestyle for the next three years, moving along the front line, patrolling, or manning trenches and outposts.

Away from the front they laboured, digging trenches, or making and maintaining roads. They lived in tented camps and conditions were at best primitive, washing their laundry in streams and bathing in rivers. This wasn't without its risks as William was later to note in his diary:

'I went down to the river Struma for a wash and whilst there the Bulgars sent a volley of shells over wounding about six of our fellows but God preserved me.'

The 80th Brigade was using Tasli on the coast as a depot, as it had a pier from which to unload supplies. It was also used as a rest camp, where the soldiers would replenish kit, get their medical needs sorted, relaxed, and played sports before departing for their next spell on the front line.

William must have been very

good at football as, from just playing for his Platoon, then his Company, he soon got picked to represent his Battalion, eventually becoming captain of the Regimental team. They played against other regiments, the crews of Royal Navy ships and even in Internationals when English soldiers would play against the Welsh or Scottish contingents.

William attended church as often as possible and, on one occasion, declined to play for the Battalion football team in favour of attending a church service. His devotion to his faith is demonstrated in his diary with prayers and psalms quoted regularly throughout its pages, and with every Saint's Day also noted. At every opportunity he would read his bible or, as he put it, 'The Book'.

He noted every cigarette and rum issue in his diary and, although a non-smoker, William still accepted his 'fag' ration and gave them away to his friends.

William was also a prolific letter writer. He wrote regularly to his mother; his sweetheart, Annie;

his brothers and sisters; and niece, Nellie Crouchley. He also wrote letters home on behalf of some of his fellow soldiers who couldn't read or write very well.

He kept in contact with Reverend Scott, the Vicar of St. John's in Abram, and also communicated regularly with Reverend Twemlow, who had moved from St. John's in 1911 and was now incumbent at St. Peter's Church in Preston.

He also corresponded regularly with parishioners of St. John's Church, especially his brother in law, Samuel Marsden, who had married his sister, Betsy. Sam, an accountant at Bickershaw Colliery, was a prominent member of St. John's. He was a Churchwarden, Honorary Secretary of the Curate Fund, Superintendent of the Good Shepherd Mission Room in Bamfurlong, and Secretary of the Sunday School Bank.

William also kept in touch with William Forrest, the choirmaster, who lived in Ashton-in-Makerfield; Mr. Gaskell, the organist; Ernest Dawson, a grocer, who lived at 360

Warrington Rd, and a fellow member of the choir; Miss Davies, the Primary School Headmistress; and also young Jack Wigan from 293 Warrington Rd, a Sunday School pupil of his.

He didn't forget his friends and neighbours back home in Warrington Rd and wrote to Jim Southworth of No. 64; Bob Dodd, who worked at Moss Hall Colliery and lived at No. 141; Jim Higson of No. 232; George Henry Gaskell who lived at No. 364; Matt Round of No. 359; and Jim Blakeley of No. 402.

An entry in his diary on 2 March 1916 reads:

'In the evening I wrote a letter to one of my old pals Sgt. J. E. Grimshaw V.C. of the Lancashire Fusiliers.'

John Elisha Grimshaw was, of course, a hero back home in Abram. His Victoria Cross was one of the famous 'Six VCs before breakfast' won in Gallipoli on 25 April 1915.

William must have been an intelligent and capable man in whom his superiors saw potential. He refused promotion to lance corporal and twice he refused jobs as a 'batman', or servant, to his Platoon Officer. He also declined a chance to join the Reconnaissance Scouts, the eyes and ears of his Battalion. His reason every time was that he didn't want to leave his friends in his Platoon.

In 1916 an epidemic of malaria broke out in the region. The majority of cases occurred in units serving in the Struma Valley, at the time one of the worst malarial areas in Europe. Rates of infection were such a problem that both the British



Ambulances in Salonika

and their Bulgarian opponents withdrew to the hills during summer months and just patrolled the valley. By the end of the campaign the British Salonika Force alone had suffered 156,309 cases of malaria, resulting in 819 deaths. For every battle casualty there were three others from malaria and other diseases.

Despite daily doses of quinine William was not to escape the dreaded mosquito. On 6 March 1916 he recorded his first attack of fever; with a temperature of 101 degrees he was put on light duties. For the rest of his time in the army he suffered recurring attacks of malaria, along with other illnesses, and was hospitalised several times.

On 3 April the 4th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps struck camp in the hills and marched off to relieve the Naval Brigade on the front line at the Gulf of Orfano. William's Company pitched their bivouacs on the beach 100 yards from the sea. Here the Battalion dug new trenches, erected more barbed

wire, and patrolled the front line. They bathed and washed their laundry in the sea, then went for a swim leaving it to dry on the sands.

This was one of the better spots to fight the war from, as William describes:

'Friday June 23rd 1916: Went to work on dugouts in the morning. In the evening went for some water up the hills which was beautiful, as clear as crystal. By the fountain there was a large well cut in the rocks. Here under the shelter of the olive trees our fellows would take a dip when too tired to walk down to the sea. From this point there is a splendid view, a narrow path zig-zagging down the hill-side among the trees and shrubs, then the plain with the sheep, goats & oxen grazing peacefully with their different toned bells around their necks, stretching unto the sea, and there one sees the sea so peaceful as a rule with three or four battle ships at anchor and a few small boats belonging to the native fishermen. I have sat at this

point for hours drinking as it were the beauty of this scene.'

On 24 July, after three and a half months on the coast, the 4th Battalion loaded up their mules and marched for two days up to a new location in the hills at Kato Krusoves, overlooking the Struma Plain.

They immediately started digging trenches with pick and spade in the solid rock but found it very hard work. As a miner William was used to it, but he felt sorry for some of the chaps who weren't used to the pick as they kept jarring their wrists up. Eventually it was conceded that the rock was too hard for the picks so holes were made with hand drills and the rock was blown out with explosives.

This work, making a defensive line, went on for week after week; after the trenches were dug they had to be protected with barbed wire. At the same time the never ending routine of manning dugouts, picquet duty forward of the wire, wire patrol, and reconnaissance patrolling against the enemy went on. On 3 November William's Company were sent back from the front line to a camp at Kucos for a week to rest.

Convalescence in Malta

Over a period of time, starting in September through to November, William suffered persistent bouts of fever and, being unable to fulfil his duties properly, he was placed on light duties several times. On 25 November, the anniversary of their landing at Salonika, he wrote in his diary:



Army tents in Salonika

'Came off picket at 6.30am, I fried some bacon for my breakfast but it made me bad. I paraded with my Platoon at 2pm for work on the trenches, feeling about half dead, I came back with a very bad head, and scarcely able to take my breath.'

Two days later he reported sick and was immediately strapped to a mule and transported to an advanced dressing station at Tasli. After a check-up by a doctor he was taken by boat across the Gulf of Orfano to the 83rd Field Ambulance RAMC hospital at Stavros where he was admitted to a malaria ward.

By 9 December his condition had worsened and he was in a delirious state. Ten days later William was transferred to the hospital ship, Panama, which then made its way round to Salonika to pick up more patients, before sailing for Malta on 22 December.

The Panama arrived in St. Paul's Bay in Malta on Christmas Day 1916. The next day it sailed round the island and docked at Valletta where William was admitted to the Floriana Military Hospital overlooking

the Grand Harbour. Formerly the Floriana Barracks, it was converted to a 1,304 bed hospital in readiness for the influx of malarial patients from Salonika.

William was to spend 10 weeks in Malta recovering. As he got stronger he was put on light duties in the Red Cross kitchen, then eventually transferred to St. Peter's Convalescent Camp at Ghajn Tuffieha on the other side of the island.

He spent his time looking round town, watching football matches, attending concerts and lantern slides, and also writing scores of letters in the YMCA tent. Most importantly for him he attended church as often as possible to receive Holy Communion. Whilst there he bumped into Bill Battersby from Wigan, with whom he had joined up two years previously.

Eventually William was marked fit for active service and on 4 March 1917 he embarked on HMS Cameronia bound for Salonika and a return to his unit. However, it wasn't long before he had a relapse. A week later he collapsed whilst on sentry duty and over the next few weeks had recurring bouts

of fever with temperatures of 104 degrees.

On 28 March 1917 William was transferred to the 3rd Entrenching Battalion. This was a temporary unit raised to assist the Royal Engineers in building defences in the rear areas. For the next three weeks they were to spend all their time in the hills making roads under Royal Engineer supervision.

On 20 April he collapsed again with a temperature of 104.6 and, vomiting continuously, was taken to see the medics at 83 Field Ambulance RAMC. Two days later he was transferred to hospital at 27 Casualty Clearing Station with a racking cough and ulcerated throat. On three doses of quinine a day he started to feel better and was sent to No. 6 Rest Camp. Despite a bout of dysentery, he managed to represent the camp at cricket against the medical staff.

He was marked fit for service on 4 May but, on hearing that the 3rd Entrenching Battalion had been disbanded, decided to join a draft of men bound for 3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps back in his old Brigade. After a spell in the front line trenches with the 3rd Battalion, where they had skirmishes with the Bulgarians, William finally got orders to re-join his old unit. On 18 June he returned to the 4th Battalion at Kastri after an absence of six months.

Here at Kastri, one of the permanent camps, military training went on as normal with kit inspections, PT, route marches, rifle drill, weapon training and shooting competitions. They would also

be required to take their turn doing guard duty and fatigue details such as working in the cookhouse or collecting and cutting wood for the cook's fires.

Despite the war the Divisional Commanders were determined to keep the morale of the troops up with football competitions at all levels. On 5 September William was in a party of 14 footballers that left Tasli on a three day march to Division HQ to represent the 4th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps in the Divisional Platoon football final. Despite not feeling well William played in the game, which they lost 1-0 to the Lovat Scouts. William notes that they were not disgraced as their Scottish opponents had an international player and four professional players in their team.

On their way back to their unit William felt so bad that he reported sick at Nigrita. He was taken by ambulance to 82 Field Ambulance where he was diagnosed with scabies and admitted to an isolation ward where he underwent a sulphur vapour treatment.

Ten days later he was discharged and, on return to his regiment, was put on light duties. On 6 October he reported sick again and was sent to 81 Field Ambulance where, once more, he was diagnosed with scabies and had to undergo the sulphur vapour treatment. He notes that this time the fumes were so strong they made him vomit.

After a week in hospital William returned to his unit and normal duties but it wasn't to last long.

On 20 October he reported sick with 14 boils on his body and was excused duties. A week later his body broke out in a rash and, once again, he was hospitalised in the Field Ambulance.

On 1 November he was put on a light railway, that was used to transport equipment, and taken round the Gulf of Orfano to the Field Hospital at Stavros, where he was to spend two months.

On Christmas Eve 1917 he was discharged and boarded the SS Princess Ena which sailed for Salonika. It was to be his second consecutive Christmas on the high seas.

William describes his return to Salonika:

'Tuesday Dec. 25th 1917 Christmas Day. We got in Salonica about 9A.M. and marched up to Karassi Rest Camp which had been turned into the temporary Base owing to measles having broken out at the Base at Summer Hill Camp. We got in camp just at dinner time. Our Christmas dinner consisted of a tin of bully beef and biscuits the worst I have had yet. At tea time we fared even worse for we only got a biscuit. I went to evening service at 6.30pm in the church tent which comforted me somewhat, but when the pangs of hunger are gnawing at you it is hard to collect ones thoughts together for prayer and meditation. There was a rum issue about 9pm.'

To be continued in the next edition...

I Say, 'Anyone for Tennis?'



Aerial view of Winstanley Tennis Club

Tennis is considered elitist in some quarters. This notion is often reinforced by the 'headline' above, often used in situation comedies and farces to exemplify a class divide. The truth is the complete opposite to this notion. The sport is not elitist in anyway whatsoever, welcoming to people of all creeds, backgrounds and abilities.

Tennis is still very much part of our heritage. There are, for example, 4,118 places to play tennis, including 97 performance centres, 21,186 courts (1,645 of which are indoor) and 3,904 registered or licensed coaches. I include these statistics to demonstrate that the game is alive and well.

Winstanley Tennis Club is proof of the vibrancy of the sport, still booming a century after its foundation in May 1921. It was a difficult time when the Club came into being, three years after WWI and at a time of social discord, witnessed by the general strike five years later. However, the Club prospered and 'carried on and kept calm' through the privations of The Depression and the horrors of WWII.

The original name of the club was 'Winstanley Park Tennis Club,' its name reflecting its initial location within the parkland of the Winstanley

Estate, the home of the Bankes family. Indeed, the idea of an adjacent tennis club came from members of the cricket club, Winstanley Park CC. Thanks to their records we know that various fundraising events, including an August Bank Holiday carnival in 1921, made it possible to bring about the actual beginnings of tennis on the site with one grass court in May 1922, followed by three shale courts shortly afterwards.

An annual rent of 2s/6d (12.5 pence) for the tennis and cricket clubs was paid in alternate years by each; this peppercorn rent was to protect the ownership of the land – this is how the Club's legendary 'faith teas' at tournaments came about! The shale courts were considered to be the best in the Warrington League, and were maintained by constant rolling and brushing by the members, overseen by Jimmy Winstanley, a long-standing servant and, ultimately, President of the Club.

In the late 70s, the decision was taken to obtain land so the Club would be its own landlord, so to speak.

A site was identified just off Winstanley Road, where it would be possible to expand the Club and increase the junior membership. The land was

purchased from the local farmer with the help of Gerry Rickards, Club Chairman at the time. Donations and loans from members allowed the erection of three hard courts and, in 1980, a very basic wooden clubhouse.

The early days on the new site involved members running jumble sales, afternoon teas, sponsored walks and various competitions to help raise the money to run the Club. League matches took place on the old shale courts, and on hard courts at Winstanley College, as well as on the new courts. In order to maintain the Club's reputation for providing refreshments to visiting teams at these other locations, tea and biscuits were dispensed from car boots!

The clubhouse was extended in 1993 and two further hard courts were laid, with grant-aid from The Foundation for Sports and the Arts, and a loan from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA).

Following a bequest from Jimmy Winstanley's estate, land for a sixth court was purchased in 2000, and this artificial grass court was named in his honour upon its opening in July 2004. Floodlighting was installed on this court in June 2006 with a grant from the LTA helping towards the cost. It's a great pity that this long held ambition of Jimmy's came after his death.

That same year, members also agreed to set the wheels in motion for a replacement clubhouse.

The project came to completion under the guidance of former Club Chairmen, Geoff Bradshaw (2006-12) and John Elmer (2013-17). The Club made a giant leap forward when, on Saturday 27 September 2014, Club President, Dr Ken Walker, cut the ribbon and declared the new clubhouse 'officially open'.

The Club owes much to the generosity of the Bankes family, the Chairmen and Presidents throughout the decades, and it would be remiss not to give a special mention of thanks to Jimmy Winstanley and, of course, the work of all the members during its long existence; those providing the 'famous teas' deserving a special mention too. The Club has benefited from the involvement and support of the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), The Foundation for Sport and the Arts, and Tennis Lancashire.



Winstanley Tennis Club: wooden clubhouse

The Club is rightly proud that in 2009 it was the first outdoor club in the district to receive the 'The Tennis Clubmark'. This prestigious award is in recognition of all the voluntary work throughout the Club's history that has made the Club what it is today. Imagine how proud the founding fathers of 1921 would be to know how the Club has progressed.

The Club has been part of the Warrington and District League for over 50 years, entering men's, ladies' and mixed teams as well as participating in the annual Knock Out competition. More recently the Club's Junior section has belonged to the Bolton League, winning Division 1 in 2017.

The Club goes from strength to strength with over 170 members; I'm sure a century from now someone will be writing an article to celebrate the Club's bicentenary. To all faint hearts who have doubted the viability of the sport at local level - I think it can be fairly said 'Game, Set and Match!'



Winstanley Tennis Club

WIGAN'S MINING AND MECHANICAL SCHOOL

The second oldest School of Mines in the country

BY STEPHEN CRAIG SMITH

On the Hewlett Street corner of what is now Wigan Town Hall is a commemorative plaque which states, 'this building used to be the Wigan Mining and Technical College which originated as the Wigan Mining and Mechanical School – the second oldest School of Mines in the country.' This can be attributed to Wigan's location on one of the most prosperous English coalfields of the nineteenth century.

The Original Idea. Interest in creating a mining school in Wigan began around the mid-1850s some 40 years before the establishment of most other technical colleges in the country. This interest resulted from a coalescence of local and national events. At the local level, interest can be attributed to the increasing importance of coal to Wigan's economy during most of the nineteenth century. By the late 1890s over 60,000 people in the Wigan area were engaged in the mining industry in one way or another.

Local interest coincided with a growing national interest in practical education. Following the success of the 1851 Great Exhibition and the subsequent creation of the South Kensington Science and Art Department as a division of the Board of Trade, there was a greater awareness of the need for more centres of learning outside London with emphasis on the needs of local industries.

Given the importance of coal mining to the local town economy, local mine owner Edward Cardwell (1813-1886) was particularly keen to see a school of mines opened locally. In 1857 he approached the trustees of the local Blue Coat School and the directors of the Wigan Mechanics' Institute with a view to establishing such a school in Wigan.

On 27 October 1857 Dr Playfair (1818-1898) and Capt. Fowke (1823-1865), of the Science and Art Department of South Kensington, visited Wigan to address a public meeting for all interested parties at the Mechanics' Institute on King Street. Lord Derby (1826-1893) and Dr Playfair addressed this meeting chaired by Mr Henry Woods (1822-1882), M.P. for Wigan. (See 'Wigan Mechanics Institute' Past Forward Issue 86 pp24-26)

This public meeting resulted in Dr Playfair appointing Mr, later Dr, Birkenhead (1838-1867) as headmaster of the Wigan Mining School on 6 November 1857, although official inauguration had to wait until Mr Birkenhead completed his studies. By this process, the second oldest Mining School in England was created in Wigan. There was some discussion as to the name - Lord Cardwell, representing the interests of the mining industry, preferred 'Wigan Mining School' whilst Mr Woods M.P., possibly vote conscious, wanted a broader focus so preferred 'Wigan Mining and Mechanical School'. Following some discussion, the latter name was adopted.

Inauguration. On 2 August 1858, the school was formally opened. William Peace, agent for the Earl of Crawford, took the chair, his son, Maskell William Peace, became Honorary Secretary, and the Rev. Canon Fergie became School Chairman. One moderate sized room was obtained in the Public Hall for classes in mining, geology, chemistry, and mechanics and around 50 students enrolled. At the end of the first session in June 1859 seven students were successful in mining, six in geology and three in chemistry.

Early Troubles. The school, comprising one master and around 50 students, used one rented room in the Public Hall, this arrangement continuing until the end of the 1867-8 session. Unfortunately, Dr Birkenhead, aged just 30, fell ill in September 1867 and died on 22 October, just at a time when local industry support for the school had fallen well short of expectation. There were even whispers of possible closure, but the School Committee was reluctant to accept defeat and petitioned the South Kensington Science and Art Department for guidance. The South Kensington authorities were also reluctant to admit defeat and sent Mr Buckmaster to Wigan to address the School Committee at a meeting held on 10 January 1868. It was unanimously agreed that the school should be kept open.

A New Start. The School reopened at the end of January 1868 after the appointment of two new teachers, Mr Ralph Bentley F.G.S. and Mr C. M. Percy M.I.Mech.E., F.G.S., the latter having been a student under Dr Birkenhead; both were well qualified and well acquainted with local industries in the area. Their salaries were £50 each per annum.

With a new start and new staff, student numbers doubled, but the one rented room in the Public Hall proved inconvenient owing to the number of entertainment events held there. An alternative room was found in the Commercial Hall, but this was also far from perfect. For the next five years the school led a nomadic existence, renting rooms from time to time in the Old Town Hall, the Old Grammar School, the Conservative Working Men's Club, and the Hope Street School. A building of its own was clearly needed – even by 1870 numbers of students were refused admission because of limited accommodation. As the greater part of the school's finances came from the generosity of a few private providers – mostly local industrialists – owning its own building was going to be no easy task.

A Building Fund. Desperation for new premises led to the formation of a Building Committee in 1875. This was an initiative of Mr Alfred Hewlett, Managing Director of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, one of the largest industrial concerns in the country with over 10,000 employees. Alfred Hewlett was elected Chairman

and Maskell William Peace and George Campbell were elected joint Honorary Secretaries.

A pamphlet was published, and a public meeting was held in Wigan Council Chamber on Friday 24 December 1875 at 2pm. One wonders how successful a meeting scheduled for 2pm on Christmas Eve would be today!

It was envisaged that a permanent home would include classrooms suitable for studying art and design in addition to a laboratory and museum suitable for teaching mining, geology, mechanics, machine construction, technical drawing, steam, chemistry, and other sciences. The cost of such a building was estimated to be around £12,000 with an annual running cost of around £450. Various local industrialists and entrepreneurs donated contributions to 'lead the way'. Mr William Fawcett, brother of the Postmaster General, drew up some initial building plans which were sent to, and subsequently approved by, South Kensington.

Land Purchased. Unfortunately, the funding appeal was soon followed by a serious economic depression and all building plans were shelved, but on the plus side, sufficient funds had already been raised to purchase from the Trustees of the Old Grammar School a plot of land immediately opposite the Free Library at the lower end of Library Street. The upper end of Library Street was only created in 1898.

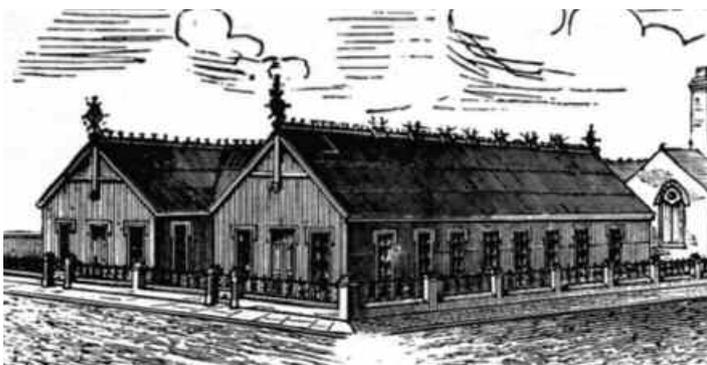


In spite of this set back the school continued to prosper, albeit under difficult circumstances. As there were insufficient funds for a permanent building, the option of constructing a temporary home was considered. Over the summer vacation of 1882 the Building Committee decided to erect a temporary building on the recently purchased land. The map above shows the block of land between the Public Baths and the bottom end of Library Street with an outline plan of the Mining and Mechanical School temporary building in the 1890s.

A Temporary Home – the Old Tin Tabernacle.

Around £2000 was spent on erecting a temporary building during the session 1882-3. The corrugated iron clad building erected by Francis Morton & Co. of Liverpool became known as the 'Old Tin Tabernacle' and formed part of the Wigan scene until the turn of the twentieth century.

The principal room measured 50 feet by 33 feet, looked towards Rodney Street and was capable of accommodating 100 students meeting. A smaller lecture hall measured 33 feet by 24 feet, faced the Free Library and could hold over 100 students. In addition to



these principal rooms there was a laboratory of the same dimensions as the smaller lecture hall, one model room and two front entrances, each with a porch. There were the usual lavatory arrangements and the whole building was heated by hot water.

It was around this time that the school began to enjoy not just a national, but an international reputation. In 1884 a valuable collection of fossils and minerals was donated as a gift from Canada, and a third teacher, Mr S L Booth, joined the permanent staff. In 1885 a valuable collection of geological maps was donated by an ex-student who was, at the time, a Government Inspector of the New South Wales Coalfield. In 1886 three of the top five national honour's awards were presented to Wigan students, 1st Place, 2nd Place and 5th Place.

Reorganisation. Following the creation of County Councils in 1888, and the duty of providing technical education placed upon them in 1889, financing the Mining School underwent a fundamental change. In 1891 the name 'Wigan Mining and Mechanical School' was changed to 'Wigan Mining and Technical School' and in 1892 the position of Principal was created and given to Cornelius McLeod Percy who was both a former student and staff member.

No longer did the school have to rely solely on the generosity of a limited circle of private subscribers. On 24 September 1891, the County Borough of Wigan agreed to donate all the money it received for technical education to the School, and on 16 October the Local Boards of Abram, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Aspull, Ince-in-Makerfield, Pemberton, Standish, and the Rural District Townships of Dalton, Haigh, Shevington, Worthington and Wrightington agreed to do the same.

The School very quickly started to expand beyond the capacity of its temporary home. Three staff had increased to seven, and student numbers had risen to over 600 by 1893. The School had once more to find additional accommodation in the Old Council Chambers, the Old Grammar School, and the Public Hall.

In 1896 Mr Alfred Hewlett, chairman of the College Committee, suggested that 1897 (Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Year) would be an opportune time to raise a sum of £40,000 to build and equip a permanent college building. For approximately 40 years the second Mining School in Great Britain (founded only four years after the Royal School of Mines) had developed an excellent international reputation for its teaching and sound educational practice in spite of a continual shortage of funds and ongoing limited accommodation.

The Building Appeal went ahead, new paths were followed, and new heights achieved - but that is another story.

References

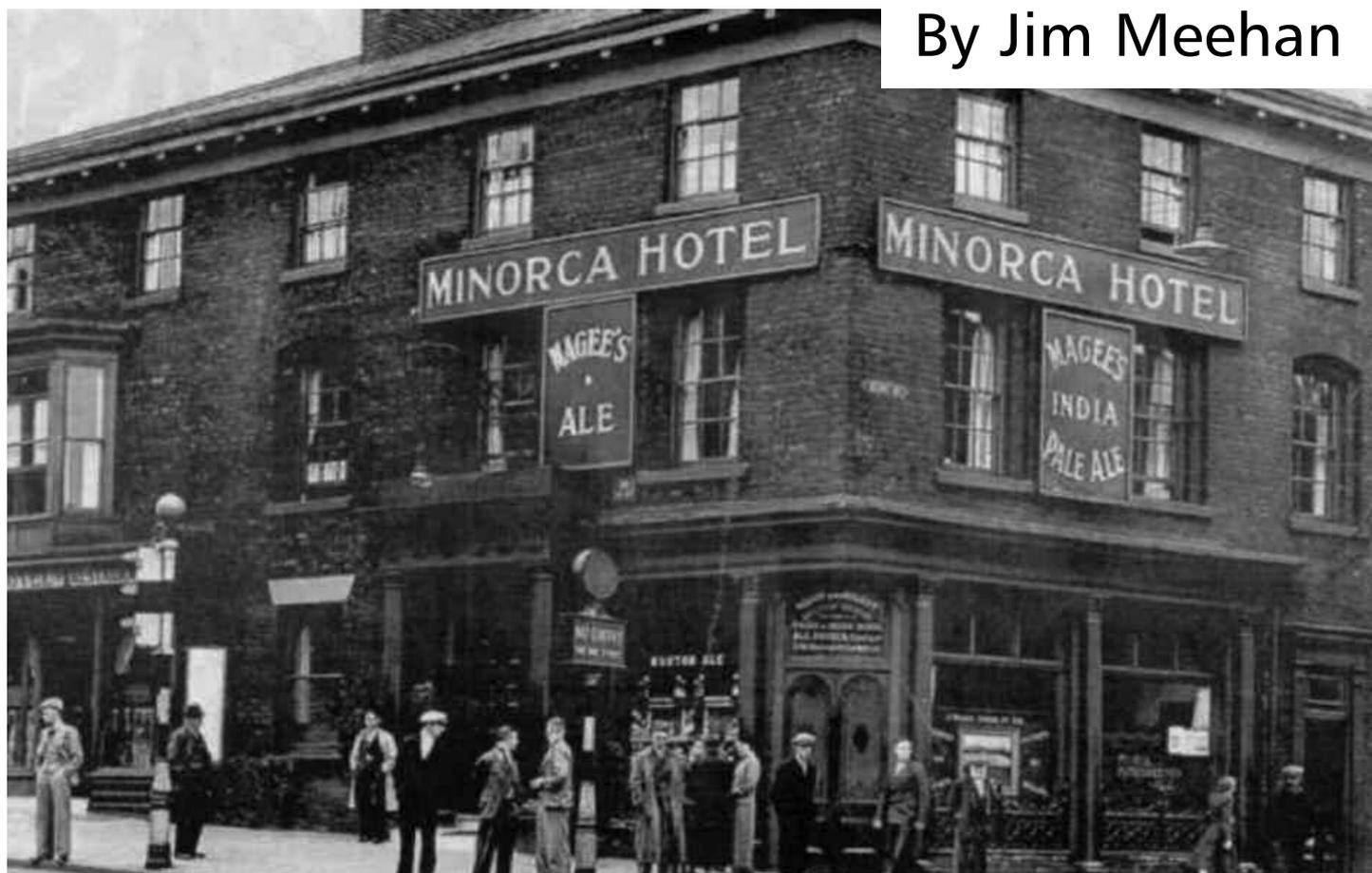
- 1) 'A short history of the Wigan Mining and Technical College founded in 1858' published by the Observer Office, Wigan (1885)
- 2) 'History of the Mining and Technical School, Wigan' by C M Percy, Principal published at the Office of Science and Art of Mining, Wigan (1909)
- 3) 'To Wigan – A College' A short history of the Wigan and District Mining and Technical College from its beginnings in 1857 to the present day'. by S J Smith, Wigan Technical College (1965)

Acknowledgements

Alex Miller and Kathryn Pass of Wigan Archives for information and research assistance, J Bamford for use of his plan of Wigan, and M. Prescott for information on C. M. Percy.

The Street That Was

By Jim Meehan



The Minorca Hotel on the corner of King Street and Wallgate

As the eighteenth century drew to a close Wigan had grown into a sizeable town. The rapid growth of the Victorian era was yet to come and would be stimulated by the arrival of the railways. The town centre had evolved as a classic market town in medieval times. There was a busy marketplace with four main streets radiating from it. Better-off people had homes and businesses fronting onto these. A little further back was a network of yards and courts where small industries grew and many lived in much more difficult conditions.

As industry and commerce continued to grow plans emerged for a new street. It would be a prestigious street where people would want to live and work; one where leading businesses would want to be. Unlike some of the old streets it would be straight and direct. It needed a name to reflect its aspirational status. It would be King Street.

Over the next 230 years the street would grow, slowly at first. It would have good times and some not so good. People and buildings would come and go. It would be a place where many memories would be made, and where some would have moments they would prefer to forget.

It would become the nerve centre of the town. Legal and financial businesses would clamour to be there, close to the

Town Hall and courts. There would be shops and a posh arcade and, by the early 1900s, it would be the entertainment hub of the town with seven theatres and halls. The one constant was the pace of change. As tastes evolved theatres became cinemas, then bingo halls. This plethora of large indoor spaces would later provide an ideal opportunity for the street to become a place of bars and nightclubs. A place for partying.

Now King Street, and the area around it, has been recognised as a High Street Heritage Action Zone. It is an ideal time to look back at the 'street that was' and think about how we care for it in the future. It has some incredible buildings. We must work together to keep them safe and find good uses for them. Let us start by looking back at the rich history of a small selection of those buildings. Understanding where they came from will help us appreciate them and encourage people to invest in their future.

Humble beginnings - Faggy Lane

Before we start I have to mention Faggy Lane, arguably the forerunner of King Street. When the Corporation commissioned the new street, the deeds included a requirement to 'furnish between Wallgate, Chapel Lane and Millgate a better lane than Faggy Lane'.

A fragment of it remains today between Queen Street and the railway, hidden behind a car sales showroom. At one time it connected Chapel Lane with the town centre and ran across Faggy Lane Fields, which were later swallowed up by railway lines and sidings. It was the scene of a fierce battle in 1867 over the right of way between two major rail companies, but that is another story for another day.

The spot where the old lane met the new King Street is still there today. It is where the walkway across the railway joins King Street next to the old County Playhouse.

Where a nightingale sang



On the left is the shop of Thomas Wall, founder of the Wigan Observer and District Advertiser

One building that played a central role in the creation of the King Street we know today is The Berkeley, formerly Berkeley Square, named after the square in London where the nightingale sang in the well-known song. It should be pronounced the same as the London square, but it would take a braver person than me to give Wiganers a lesson in pronunciation.

In 1763 there was a farm and malt kiln on the site, but by 1791 there was an inn owned by William Roper. It was William who was the other party to the deed with the Corporation to create King Street.

The inn, which was originally known as The Thornton, had a prominent spot on the corner of King Street and Wallgate. It was rebuilt as a fine Georgian inn around the end of the 1820s. It retains many of its original features, earning a Grade 2 listing with Historic England.

For many decades it was known as The Minorca Hotel. The origins of the name are not fully understood, but it is believed to have been run by a Spanish refugee from the Napoleonic Wars, who was a skilled hotelier and may have named it after the Balearic Island he came from.

It became a successful business. The construction of two mainline stations nearby would have helped. The stone lined carriage archway leading to the stable yard remains unchanged. From here the inn provided livery services, including the hire of horses and a range of carriages. Charabancs were run from here, as were some of the first

omnibus services in the town. A regular service using a 'large commodious omnibus' was running to the Cross Keys in Hindley in 1870.

Shop units, which were opened on Wallgate and on the corner, were put to good use. The one on the front was occupied by Thomas Wall, printers, stationers, and stamp sellers. Wall founded the Wigan Observer and District Advertiser in 1853. He moved into what is now the Observer Building, a few yards away in Rowbottom Square. The shop front became the Minorca Grill Room, a walk-in restaurant. There was a separate 'Ladies' Tearoom' which was upstairs, and had an entrance around the corner in Rowbottom Square which is still there.

The corner shop unit was selling tickets for the many nearby theatres at the turn of the twentieth century, and later became an off license. The Minorca was also a good place for meetings. Many election meetings and a number of inquests were held there. As King Street became a financial and legal hub some important deals were made there after a glass or two.

In the 1970s there was a Berni Inn, the height of sophistication at the time. The Steak and Chicken Bar menu reveals that you could get an 8oz rump steak for 77p. That included chips, a bread roll and butter, and a choice of ice cream or cheese and biscuits to follow. You could wash it down with a carafe of Spanish Red for 28p; or you could push the boat out and have a bottle of Matheus Rose for what seems like a relatively expensive £1.35.

At the back of the Minorca was the Stable Bar in the 1960s and 70s. Allegedly they were somewhat liberal as regards underage drinking, which means a lot of people remember having their first drink there. By the 1980s the pub became Blair's, then later the Berkeley Square.

Grime's Arcade - a passage through time

It took a while for the northeast side of King Street to fill up. In 1870 one of its most impressive buildings was completed at numbers 20 and 22.

The Arcade was built for Richard Leigh, solicitors, and the Manchester and County Bank. The monograms of the two organisations are carved in stone roundels above the two entrance doors. They would occupy the office space whilst there would be room for shops and a splendid arcade on the ground floor. This led through to what became Arcade Street.



Grime's Arcade in the 1970s

The building has an impressive carved stone front with polished pink marble columns. The arcade has oriel windowed shop fronts with a glass roof to the rear. There are very solid looking gothic oak doors in the arcade that provide another entrance to the office space above. There would be other bigger arcades built in Wigan, but this was the first.

It has always been known as Grime's Arcade, named after the music store that was there from the start. They sold pianofortes, harmoniums, and organs, as well as a full range of other instruments and sheet music. Later, they would sell gramophones and electrical appliances. In the 1950s and 60s music shops became exciting places for young people to meet on a Saturday. They could hear the latest singles in a listening booth. A generation of people bought their first record there, and many bought their first record player.

In the 1970s Dawson's Music took over when they relocated from Hallgate, and remained there until the arcade closed. Sadly, at the time of writing it has been closed for around 20 years. However, most of the original features are still intact.

In the 1960s and 70s a busy solicitors, Ellis, Sayer, and Henderson, occupied the floors above the arcade. The offices could be accessed from the front door (number 24) or from a door in the arcade. They had a large safe with a heavy metal door on the ground floor which I suspect remains there today.

Georgian splendour

One of the earliest, and most beautiful, Georgian buildings on the street is the large double fronted town house at number 23. Built around 1800 it was the home and place of work of two generations of the Roocroft family. They were surgeons and apothecaries.

William Mawdesley Roocroft was born in Standish and trained in Liverpool. By 1871 he was

living in the house with his wife, son William Mitchell, two daughters, an assistant surgeon, and three servants. He also practiced surgery at the Infirmary. He was a Justice of the Peace and prominent in Wigan society. Like many enterprising Victorians he diversified. He can be found in the local paper endorsing 'Patent Airtight Metallic Coffins' which 'prevented the release of infection and noxious gases



Classic Georgian architecture at number 23 King Street

from decomposition'. He was also a director of a number of Wigan companies.

He was first on the scene of a disaster in 1884. The LNWR were widening the railway near Wigan. As a bridge was being demolished it collapsed, killing the railway inspector and six men. He helped recover the dead and treat the many who were seriously injured.

By 1891 William junior had joined the practice. As well as serving the town, he served his country as a Surgeon Colonel in the volunteer battalion of the Manchester Regiment. At the age of 56 he was serving at Flanders on the Western Front. He was awarded a CMG in the 1918 Honours List. Shortly after he resigned his commission due to ill health but remained an honorary colonel. He later retired to Southport where he died in 1943. The house had a number of other occupants, including the Hulton Colliery Company, and in the 1960s it housed an optician.

Deserved recognition

So much history in just three buildings. King Street and the area between it and Library Street has 10 listed buildings, and many more historic and architectural gems, each with a story to tell. Being made a High Street Heritage Action Zone by Historic England will give it the recognition and, hopefully, the lift it deserves.

It is not just about the buildings, though. It is about the people who used them, the people who lived in them, worked in them, shopped in them, or had a drink in them. They are all part of the story.

Go there in the daytime and have a good look around. Stop and look up. It is still worth its regal title. It is still our King Street.

Main sources:

Wigan MBC, Wigan Town Centre Trail, 1998

Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record

Historic England website

Worrall's Directory, 1876

Ancestry.co.uk

Find My Past – Newspaper Archives

Wiganworld website

Pictures: Jim Meehan, Wigan and Leigh Archives, Wiganworld

If you would like to know more about the King Street Heritage Action Zone, please contact Phil Machin at: planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk

CAN YOU HELP?

Dear Editor,

LETTER FROM AMERICA

I have recently discovered that my great great grandfather, James (Jameson) Bradshaw, returned to England in 1850 after living in this country for nearly 12 years. He went back with his wife, Helen, and seven children: Betsey, Thomas, Anna, Richard, Ellen, William and Margaret. They had one more child after returning, James. Three of their children remained in America: Peter, Joseph and James.

James (Jameson) Bradshaw died at the age of 55 on 14 February 1866 and is buried in Standish.

I would like to know if I have any relatives remaining around Wigan. I would love to let them know what happened to their family who remained here.

Sincerely

Barb (Bradshaw) Shirtz

We would love to hear from anyone who has any information about the Bradshaw family or who think that they may be descendants of James Bradshaw. Any information can be sent to pastforward@wigan.gov.uk and we will pass the information on to Barb.

Dear Editor,

FINCH HOUSE

Following the article in Past Forward Issue 85 about Finch House, written by Dr Stephen Smith, a booklet covering the various people who lived in the house at different times is being prepared, and the authors would be interested to hear from anyone who has any stories, memories or photographs of Finch House, and the people they knew who lived there. Please contact Wigan Archives on pastforward@wigan.gov.uk or Mark Dowding (whose grandparents lived there from 1941 until the house was demolished in 1969) on mark@markdowding.co.uk

FREE ONLINE TALKS HOSTED BY THE MUSEUM OF WIGAN LIFE

Titanic – Saviours, Scoundrels and Scapegoats (The Bolton Boys)
by Caroline Heaven

Thursday 15th April 1pm-2pm. Online Zoom talk.

On the 15th April 1912, the Titanic sank just four days into her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York City. Of the 2240 passengers and crew on board, more than 1500 sadly lost their lives in the disaster. The Titanic's plea for help was ignored by a ship that could have saved almost everyone on board from the freezing sea. Two other ships much further away steamed to her aid. One captain would be hailed a hero, and one would be unjustly blamed for the rest of his life for the tragic deaths on that fateful night. Both captains were experienced, and both came from Bolton.

On the anniversary of the tragic event, Caroline is privileged to tell their stories and discuss evidence that may unmask the 'mystery ship' and her captain, a captain who stood by while the Titanic and 1500 people sank to an icy grave, leaving others to take the blame.

Wigan Pier - The Way We Were and What We Became by Jim Holian

Thursday 20th May 1pm-2pm. Online Zoom talk.

This online talk and picture presentation will explore how the Wigan Pier canal complex and more generally Wigan as a town, developed at the peak of its industrial heyday around 1900. Using contemporary photographs, it will explore the three 'Cs' of coal, cotton and canals, as well as looking at what happened after the boom years and how the site was later successfully redeveloped. It will also consider Wigan Pier's plans for the future.

Jim Holian has lived and worked in Wigan for over 42 years as a teacher and later, a Head teacher. He has served in no fewer than six areas within the Borough, as well as a two-year secondment to the school centre at Wigan Pier itself, during the time when Wigan Education Authority won the prestigious Sanford Education award. His style is humorous and engaging and is guaranteed to keep you listening. He presently works for Manchester Metropolitan University on a part time basis. Definitely one not to miss!

Cognition from Chaos: The Anatomy of the Gods by Charlie Guy

Saturday 24th July 1pm-2pm. Online Zoom talk.

A great number of terms in not only anatomy, but also psychiatry, medicine, and other related disciplines, originate from Classical mythology. Some well-known, some largely forgotten, understanding the history behind the terms we use to describe our own bodies can unlock a wealth of knowledge, understanding, and historical curiosity. Just as the anatomy of the human body is interconnected, so is the anatomy of the Gods and Goddesses of Classical mythology. Join this animated talk, and learn about the body in a way you may never previously have considered.

Tickets are free and can be booked via Eventbrite. <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Museums-archives/whats-on.aspx>

Childhood Memories of Growing Up in Ashton-in-Makerfield

By Glenys McClellan

I thought I would share some childhood memories with you that some of you may have experienced.

I grew up living on Wigan Road in Ashton-in-Makerfield in the 1950s and 60s. Our house was one of the terraced houses built on a banking known locally as 'The Banking' but officially Poplar Bank.

I think one of my earliest memories was Coronation Day. I was about three years old. Basically, I remember that the radio was on and my Mum had the Radio Times open to follow the proceedings. I was told to keep quiet and follow the little map showing whereabouts the event was happening a long way away.

Later we went to the old Baths Hall in Morden Avenue to collect my special blue glass tumbler presented to all the children under school age. Those at school, including my brother, received a mug with the Queen's face on it.

I think the next big day in Ashton was when the Queen came past our house. I went to the British School in the morning and, instead of going in school, we had the register taken outside in the playground before walking up Wigan Road to stand near the park. There was no traffic, which was very strange for our usually busy road. Eventually two large cars went past with the Queen in one of them. The teachers then told us we could go straight home and have the rest of the day off as a holiday!

When I got home, my Mum had taken our dining chairs to the front of the house on the banking so that all the neighbours who lived behind us in Queens Avenue could join them for a good view.

Later in the day I went with my Mum to Wigan and she took me to see where the Queen had opened the new Technical College on Parson's Walk.

The next big highlight in Ashton was when the radio programme 'Have a Go' was broadcast from the Baths Hall. Earlier in the day, Wilfred and Mabel Pickles, who presented the quiz show, came to the school and asked general knowledge questions, similar to the show's format, and gave away some prizes. In the



A Walking Day Procession

evening, my Mum and Dad had tickets to attend the show and I sat at home with my brother listening to the show on the radio.

The next time the BBC came to Ashton was to broadcast 'Sunday Half Hour' from the old Congregational Church that stood on Gerard Street (where Weatherspoons now stands). All the local churches had practised singing a selection of hymns for several weeks prior to the programme. On the evening we sang them all through to check the timing as it was broadcast 'live' and then, when the red light went on, we were 'on the air'. Afterwards some of the children, including me, were shown into the vestry to see the controls, and I remember the huge BBC van being parked outside. The organist was Mr Leonard K. Pilling, who was my headmaster at the British School, and the conductor was Mr Arthur Jones, another headmaster but known to me as my parents' friend and the organist at their wedding.

Another big occasion in Ashton was the Annual Non-Conformist Walking Day. This was when all the local non-conformist churches would parade around the streets before having a huge picnic on the local playing fields. Each church would have at least one large banner with ropes for each girl, and the boys would walk in lines behind, followed by the adult

members of the church. Each church would choose a different dress material and all the girls would have a new dress.

My mother was a dressmaker, and in the weeks leading up to the big day she would be busy making up to nine dresses for the day. I would watch her cutting them out on the big table in our living room, before sewing them on her treadle machine in the bay window. I would wait to see the designs of the other girls before suggesting how I would like mine to look. The dresses would be hung around the room in various stages, waiting for girls to come and try them on before their final finishing touches were added. These dresses were considered to be really special and would be put away and only worn on special days, and last year's dress would be brought out to use on the other Sundays.

Bonfire Night was another highlight of the year. For weeks before I would take a few pence (probably three old pennies) to the little sweet shop run by Mrs Chomondley on Wigan Road. She would enter the amount on my card and then on Bonfire Day I would go with my Mum and choose fireworks up to the value I had collected. It would be about five old shillings (25 pence)! I would have a couple of rockets and lots of fireworks. The children of the road would collect firewood from neighbours and we would have a bonfire in the backs behind our houses and



Library and British Schools, Ashton-in-Makerfield

set the fireworks off while roasting potatoes in the bonfire.

At Christmas time my Dad would take me to Wigan to hear the Salvation Army Band playing carols near to where their Citadel had been near the old Market Hall (now B & M Bargains). The Market Hall would be busy selling Christmas trees and holly and there would be a huge Christmas tree outside.

If it was a cold night, when I arrived home, Mum would wrap the huge metal shelf from the oven at the side of the black fireplace in newspaper and put it between the sheets of my bed. I would curl up on the warm patch it had made and hope that Father Christmas would remember me.

PAST FORWARD Subscription Form

Past Forward Subscription

Magazine subscription is £9 for three issues (incl. UK delivery). Payment by cheque (payable to Wigan Council), postal order or credit/debit card (telephone 01942 828128).

For worldwide subscription prices and information, please contact us.

Digital subscription (delivered by email, worldwide) is £6 per year. Payment options as above.

Please state which issue you wish your subscription to begin at:

Please tick here if you would like to receive information regarding Wigan Museums & Archives activities and events. We do not pass your details to other organisations.

Return to: The Museum of Wigan Life, Past Forward Subscription, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU or email us at archives@wigan.gov.uk



Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone No.

Email

Signed Date

RUGBY LEAGUE EXHIBITION We Need You!

To coincide with the upcoming Rugby League World Cup we are planning an exciting new temporary exhibition at the Museum of Wigan of Life, opening this autumn. This will explore the history and development of the sport as well as the game today, showcasing local clubs in all levels of the men's, women's, wheelchair and Physical Disability Rugby League competitions. There will be particular focus on local connections, the fan base and how the game has shaped local culture throughout the Borough.

With this in mind we are looking for your help. Do you have any stories or memories you would like to share? Maybe you have objects or photographs which we could display?

If so, we would love to hear from you!

Please get in touch via email at louisa.attaheri@wigan.gov.uk



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 2pm to 4pm.

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 Family History Society

The Leigh Family History Society Help Desk is available at Archives: Wigan & Leigh, at Leigh Town Hall.

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 (except January and August), at 7.30pm at the Bellingham Hotel, Wigan. 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 Help Desk at Wigan Local Studies, 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/>

YOUR LOCAL ARCHIVES ARE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

As we prepare to open our brand new space in Leigh Town Hall in 2021, we are looking for people to join our amazing team of Volunteers to help make it a success!



OUR ROLES ARE VARIED
and include things such as
supporting our education
sessions as a Learning
Volunteer.

OR HELPING TO GREET VISITORS
as a Visitor Engagement Volunteer
and helping to show them some of
the amazing local history on
display.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON VOLUNTEERING OR
TO APPLY**

Please contact Jilly.McKiernan@wigan.gov.uk or visit:
<https://www.wbcommunitypartnership.org/volunteer-heritage-culture-and-leisure/>