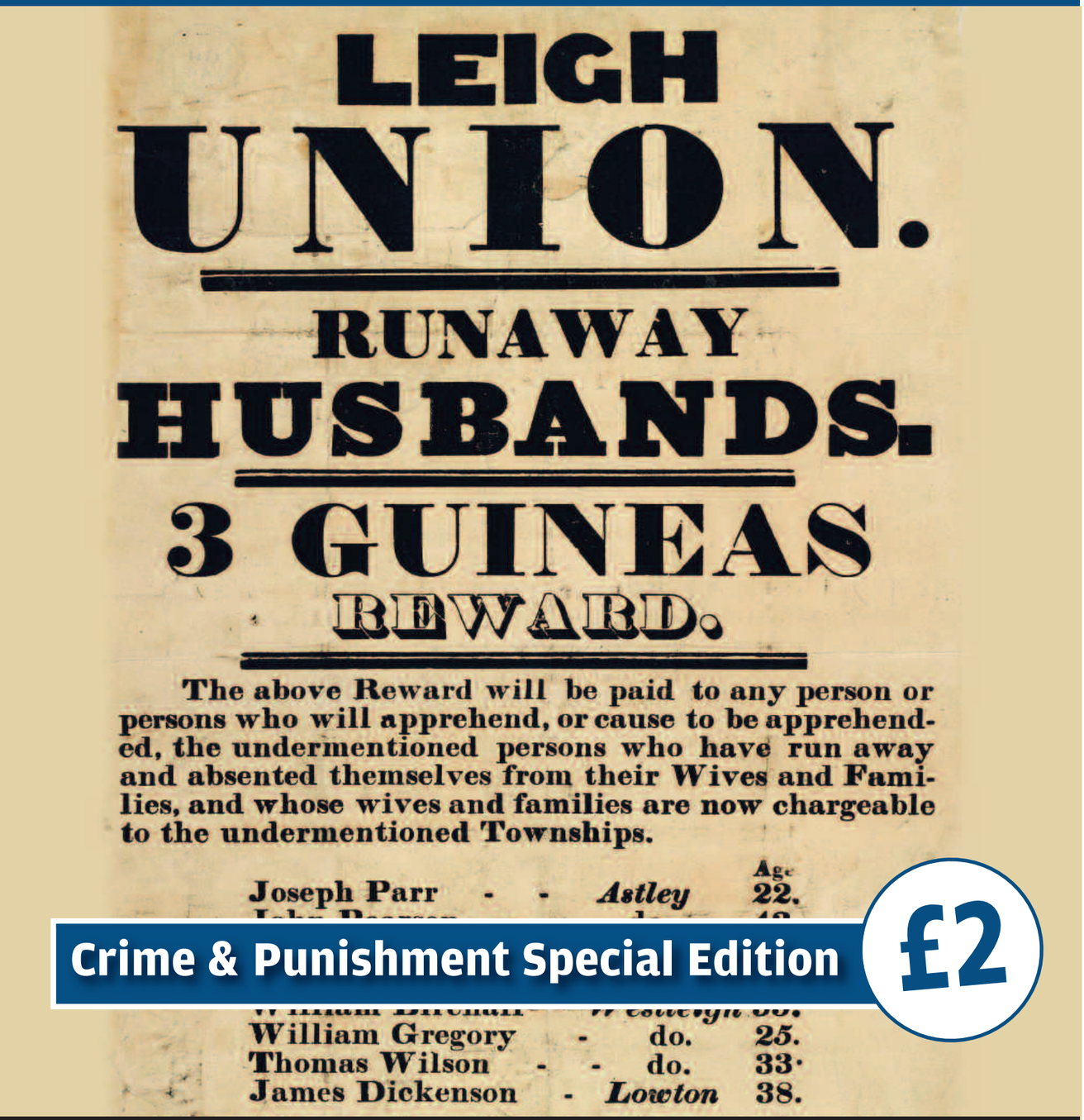
Wigan Council

# PASTFORWARD

Produced by Wigan Archives & Museums | Issue No. 75 | April-July 2017



LEIGH

UNION.

RUNAWAY

HUSBANDS.

3 GUINEAS

REWARD.

The above Reward will be paid to any person or persons who will apprehend, or cause to be apprehended, the undermentioned persons who have run away and absented themselves from their Wives and Families, and whose wives and families are now chargeable to the undermentioned Townships.

| | | Age |
|---|---|---|
| Joseph Parr - - | *Astley* | 22. |
| William Gregory - | do. | 25. |
| Thomas Wilson - - | do. | 33. |
| James Dickenson - | *Lowton* | 38. |

**Crime & Punishment Special Edition** £2

# Contents



***FRONT COVER***
*'Runaway Husbands', with kind permission of Lancashire Archives (CBWA 1-773)*

# Letter from the **Editorial Team**

## Welcome to this Crime and Punishment special edition and our 75th PAST **Forward**.

Having put out the call for articles relating to law and order in the Borough we were delighted to receive a wealth of fascinating stories which we hope you enjoy reading in the new edition.

We take a look at the kidnapped corpse of the Earl of Crawford, offer tips on tracing your criminal ancestors and debate the Jacobite cause – traitors or loyalists? We were amazed to receive two articles, each written entirely independently but following the same research trail into the fascinating life of Charlotte Blears.

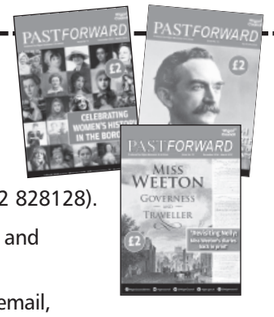
We continue to publish the prize-winning articles from the 2016 Past Forward Essay Writing Competition, with a fascinating look into Tudor marriage at Bryn Hall and an examination of the early years of professional medical care at the Wigan dispensary. Thanks to the kind support of Mr and Mrs O'Neill the Essay Competition will return in 2017; please see page 27 for more details.

Work is continuing on the Heritage Lottery Fund application for the new archive facilities at Leigh. Over the coming months we will be presenting our exciting proposals and architectural designs to you at a series of public consultation events. Please come along and share your thoughts. Your ideas and engagement are vital to the project and in persuading the HLF to support the full scheme. You can keep up to date on progress on our website, social media pages or by getting in touch with the Archives.

Our online offer at the Archives & Museums continues to develop with a new Archives Instagram page and a range of new sources available on our online platform, Wigan & Leigh Archives Online. You can also find us on Facebook, @WiganArchivesService and Twitter @WiganMuseum – our pages are a great way to find out about new collections, exhibitions and event, and to see what we get up to behind the scenes. We hope you enjoy discovering more.

**Information for contributors, please see page 29**

# 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:

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone No.

Email

Signed Date

❑ 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

## Copy Deadline for Issue 76

**Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday, 16th June 2017.**

## We are delighted to announce that our two family history societies were successful at the Wigan 'Our Stars' Volunteering Awards.

***Wigan Family & Local History Society**, and **Leigh & District Family History Society**, won the Voluntary Community Group of the Year award, in recognition for all the work they do to support the Archives & Local Studies and in helping people delve into their family trees.*

*We would like to thank the two groups for their continuing efforts. If you are interested in joining either group, you can find out more about them on their websites or speak to members at their Monday afternoon family history drop-in sessions at the Archives/Leigh Local Studies and Wigan Local Studies.*

# Charlotte Blears

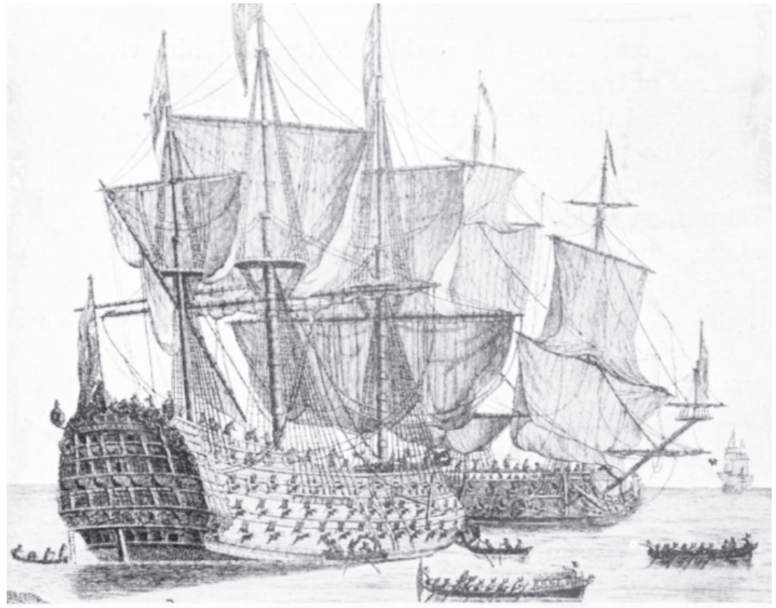
## BY KATH GRAHAM

Charlotte Blears was a local girl, baptised on the 26 October 1822 at St Mary the Virgin, Leigh who was to lead a quite extraordinary life. Her mother, Elizabeth Blare, was described as a single woman and although no father's name is given on the baptismal record, many years later Charlotte herself names him as Henry, Cordwall. This is the first and only mention of Henry who doesn't seem to have played much of a part in Charlotte's life.

Charlotte's mother, Elizabeth (Betty) Blare was the daughter of John and Sarah Blair of Pennington and had herself been baptised at the same church on the 10 November 1798 when her father's occupation was given as weaver. John and Sarah, whose maiden name was Dickonson, had married on the 22 May 1791 at St Oswald, Winwick and they had twelve children born between 1793 and 1818.

Charlotte appears to have been the only child born to Betty as a single woman but she appears again in the church records when she married a Richard Dickinson on the 6 June 1825 at St Oswald. The couple had a daughter Mary Ann Elizabeth who was baptised on 10 June 1826 in Leigh when her parents' residence was given as Lowton, Winwick and her father's occupation that of weaver.

We next see the Blair family in the 1841 census living at Aspull Common in Pennington. John and Sarah both give their age as 70 and John was still working as a silk weaver. Their two youngest daughters Sarah and Jane were living with them along with Sarah's three illegitimate children. Thomas, their son was also living at Aspull Common with his wife Hannah and their seven children. Charlotte wasn't with the rest of her family, however, as she was incarcerated at Kirkdale Goal having been found guilty of 'larceny from the person before convicted of felony'; she was sentenced to nine months imprisonment at Kirkdale Sessions on 16 January 1840. She was sixteen years old and her occupation was given as prisoner/ factory girl.



*Transportation ship 'The Royal Anne' – Victoria State Library*

This was not Charlotte's first conviction. On 17 January 1839 she had appeared before the Kirkdale County Sessions and been convicted of larceny and sentenced to six months imprisonment. She was very fortunate that this conviction did not lead to transportation when she found herself in court again a year later; it was common practice to give a term of imprisonment for the first conviction leading to transportation for a second.

The criminal register records that she was unable to read or write. No further information is given about her conviction in 1839, but we have more details of her two later convictions. The Prosecutor's Bill of January 1840 records the prosecutor to be Thomas Ramsdale. When Charlotte again appeared before the Kirkdale Sessions in July 1842 her trial costs £7 16s 10d, including 15s for the two witnesses John Hilton and Andrew Milne. The prosecutor is given as John Hilton who accused Charlotte and Mary Clancy of stealing 3s 8d from his person. The Liverpool Mercury of 22 July 1842 reports Charlotte aged 18 and Mary Clancy aged 17 as being tried at the Kirkdale Sessions for the theft at Pennington and records their sentences. This seems a very small amount of money to result in Charlotte being transported for ten years but she must have been considered the more culpable as The Order Book for 1842 records that Charlotte Blears of Pennington, single woman, who had been convicted by the courts of 'felony and having before the time of committing the said felony been convicted of another felony' was to be 'transported beyond the seas for the space of ten years' while Mary Clancy only received a sentence of one year in prison. The Magistrate obviously felt that Charlotte was an incorrigible thief and took no chances in halting her from re-offending in the future.

This was how Charlotte was to find herself on the ship the 'Woodbridge', sailing from London on 26 Aug 1843. The voyage took 113 days through rough seas in overcrowded and insanitary conditions but Charlotte like the other 203 female convicts on board all survived the journey and arrived in Hobart, Van Dieman's Land on 25 December 1843. She was aged just nineteen. The Master of the Woodbridge, William B Dobson, made no comment about Charlotte's behaviour whilst on board ship and the Surgeon, Jason Lardner, recorded no illness so she must have kept out of trouble and remained fairly healthy.

On arrival at Hobart she would have been required to give details of her place of birth, family and conviction – when asked her place of birth she said Leigh which was recorded by the officials as 'Leath'. They would have written the name as they heard it, no doubt spoken with a broad Lancashire accent and Charlotte being illiterate would not have been able to correct them. She also volunteered the information that her father's name was Henry Cordwall and that she was an illegitimate child. When asked about her family she said that her sisters were Mary Ann and Catherine. It isn't clear if she is referring to three sisters and no evidence of these sisters exists in the records although she does have a half sister Mary Ann Dickinson. This day was to be the start of a new life for Charlotte; the length of the sentence was irrelevant. In effect, transportation was a life sentence. The vast majority of convicts would never see their families or homeland again and Charlotte was never to return to Leigh.

We have very little information regarding Charlotte once she arrived in Tasmania and what we do have is incomplete. We have no photographs of Charlotte but we do know that a number of men applied to marry her. In 1846 a Joseph Wilcox made his application and on 8 April 1846 she had a child which unfortunately died. However, there is no record of her marriage to Joseph. Subsequently a Mr Fry makes application to marry her but this is refused once and approved at the second application but again there is no evidence of the marriage taking place.

On 11 November 1848 a newspaper article in the Cornwall Chronicle reports a complaint brought by Charlotte Blair against he husband Mr Robinson for an assault alleged to have taken place on Tuesday, the 30 October. The article comments: 'This was one of those disgraceful scenes that too frequently occur – the wife flying to a police officer for protection from the violence of her husband and the husband exposing his wife's every failing to a crowded court – such scenes are disgusting. We have not given the whole of the evidence, as it would be uninteresting to our readers'.

I suspect their readers would have been very interested as it appears that after many beatings, Charlotte had threatened her husband that she would inform the authorities about some stolen goods that were kept in his house. On sureties of ten and twenty-five pounds, Mr Robinson was bound over to keep the peace for a period of six months. After the events of the 30 October Charlotte probably wanted to get away from her husband but until she gained their freedom she was not allowed to move freely from place to place. She applied for and received a pass at the Launceston Police Office on that date to travel from Hobart. We have no idea where she intended to go but she obviously failed to return by the agreed date as the Hobart Town Gazette published an absconding notice a few days later. This notice gives us the date of Robinson's trial as 14 July 1842 but no other information about him. It seems likely, however, that Mr Robinson is Benjamin Robinson, a carter and dealer of Little Hampton who was later mentioned in a newspaper article dated 21 September 1850.

*Illustration of convicts by Felipe Bauza, 1793 – State Library of New South Wales*


On the 22 November 1848 the Cornwall Chronicle is again reporting an incident involving Charlotte. Mr Robinson is this time accusing Sergeant Scalph of the Longford Police of misconduct by allowing 'a woman named Charlotte Blair, whom he had in custody, on escort, to enter a public house, for the purpose of drinking'. The constable pleaded guilty but added that the woman had travelled twelve miles, and he did not think he was committing an offence in allowing the prisoner to have a glass of ale. It is likely that Charlotte was being transported to the factory in Launceston to serve a sentence for absconding. Sergeant Scalph, although described as 'been nearly eight years a constable, and is one of the best conducted in the force', was severely reprimanded by the Magistrate and fined ten shillings for his kindness. We don't know what happened to Charlotte.

By 1851 things are looking up as she has a bank account under the name of Charlotte Blears containing eleven shillings. She then appears to leave Tasmania as The Cornwall Chronicle for 13 November 1851, lists Charlotte as a steerage passenger on the Sea Belle heading for Geelong, Australia. She is recorded as arriving in the colony via Scotia and claims to be free. Also on board ship, occupying a cabin with two other men, is a Mr Wiggins, perhaps a misspelling for Higgins and Charlotte's future husband. Although it appears that she did marry a Mr Higgins there is no evidence of the marriage and no record of her death under Higgins or Wiggins has been found in Tasmania or Australia and at this point Charlotte disappears from the records for ever or so I thought until Brian Joyce's article 'Pablo and other 'Unfortunates' revealed Charlotte's life after transportation. *Editor's note: Brian Joyce's article is on pages 6 and 7*

*With particular thanks to:*
*Pat Bellas, Projects Co-ordinator for the Liverpool & S W Lancs Family History Society*
*Colette Mcalpine of the Female Convicts Research Centre Tasmania*

*References:*
*Ancestry.co.uk*
*Lancashire on-line parish clerks*
*Lancashire County Library Services – Gale Digital Collection*
*www.LeighLife.com*
*www.LowtonWebsite.co.uk*
*www.femaleconvicts.org.au*

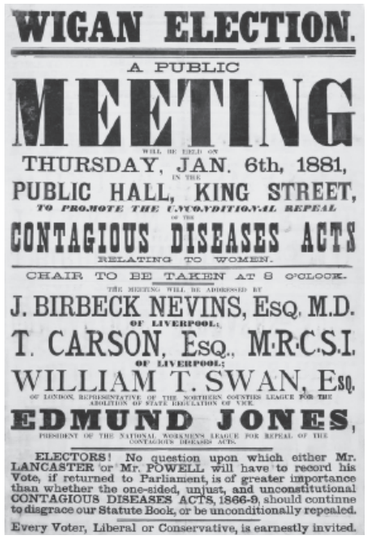
# PABLO AND OTHER 'UNFORTUNATES':
# PROSTITUTION IN VICTORIAN WIGAN AND LEIGH

## BY BRIAN JOYCE

Victorians called prostitution 'The Great Social Evil', but estimates of its extent varied. In 1859, the government put the number of prostitutes known to the police at a precise 28,743 in England and Wales. However, in the same year, a preacher in Leigh claimed there were 40,000 in Liverpool alone!

It is impossible to accurately measure the extent of Victorian prostitution, but it is safe to say that contemporaries believed it was widespread and was the cause of immorality, disorder and disease.

Governments were concerned about venereal disease in servicemen. Its spread was blamed on prostitutes rather than their customers. Between 1864 and 1882, the Contagious Diseases Acts regulated prostitution in naval and garrison towns in the South and in Ireland. Suspected women were compulsorily examined for venereal disease. If infected they were detained in hospital until cured. Although some government ministers wanted to extend this nationally, organised opposition to the Acts was fierce. The recent Chartist disturbances and opposition to the New Poor Law made the


WIGAN ELECTION.

A PUBLIC

MEETING

WILL BE HELD ON

THURSDAY, JAN. 6th, 1881,

IN THE

PUBLIC HALL, KING STREET,

TO PROMOTE THE UNCONDITIONAL REPEAL

OF THE

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS

RELATING TO WOMEN.

CHAIR TO BE TAKEN AT 8 O'CLOCK.

THE MEETING WILL BE ADDRESSED BY

J. BIRBECK NEVINS, Esq. M.D.

OF LIVERPOOL;

T. CARSON, Esq., M.R.C.S.I.

OF LIVERPOOL;

WILLIAM T. SWAN, Esq.

OF LONDON, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NORTHERN COUNTIES LEAGUE FOR THE ABOLITION OF STATE REGULATION OF VICE.

EDMUND JONES,

PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL WORKMEN'S LEAGUE FOR REPEAL OF THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS.

ELECTORS! No question upon which either Mr. LANCASTER or Mr. POWELL will have to record his Vote, if returned to Parliament, is of greater importance than whether the one-sided, unjust, and unconstitutional CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS, 1866-9, should continue to disgrace our Statute Book, or be unconditionally repealed.

Every Voter, Liberal or Conservative, is earnestly invited.

*Notice to promote the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts*

government wary of extending the Acts northwards.

More importantly, historians agree that prostitution was nowhere near as prevalent in the textile towns of the North as it was in naval, garrison and port towns. In the latter, respectable work for women was scarce. Many girls may therefore have been tempted to go on the streets, particularly as demand was there from a large transient male population. However, in the Wigan and Leigh areas, the textile industry provided plentiful, respectable and relatively well paid jobs. There were also more opportunities for girls in domestic service – in the homes of successful mill owners and in those of their clerks, accountants and salesmen. Few such opportunities existed in places like Aldershot or Chatham because the main employer was the State and a sizeable local middle class did not exist.

When I first started reading the local press at Wigan Archives, I was struck by the relatively few reports of prostitution. Of course, the police might have turned a blind eye to the problem, or the newspapers may have been too coy to report it. However, a likelier reason is that because there was plenty of respectable work for local women there was less prostitution to report.

However, some prostitution did exist in Wigan and Leigh and examples follow. Note that prostitution was not illegal. When the women appeared in court it was for soliciting, drunkenness and indecent or disorderly behaviour rather than prostitution itself.

Newspapers often commented on a woman's supposed character. In 1856, the Leigh Chronicle observed that Margaret Cummins was 'a woman not in very good repute for virtuous habits'. Elizabeth Ann Woods was labelled 'a disgrace'. Margaret Rosbotton was 'somewhat idiotic' and Charlotte Blears, a former convict and transportee, was described as having 'well-known vicious propensities'. In fact the latter featured in the Leigh Chronicle so frequently that it began calling her 'Charlotte the Harlot'. With this kind of labelling, it must have been very difficult for a woman to obtain a respectable job, even if she wanted to.

Some of the women, trapped in prostitution into their middle age and raddled by drink, became notorious. The abovementioned Margaret Rosbotton was arrested in Wigan in 1858. She had been walking up and down Scholes with her bed on her head, occasionally throwing it into people's doorways. Again in Wigan in 1858: 'An old woman named Mary Haslam was charged with being drunk and incapable. She has had a chequered career, alternately having been the occupant of a prison and a workhouse, and while she has been at large, notwithstanding her hoary hairs, her conduct has been most vicious and depraved. It was alleged that she had even resorted to prostitution'.

However, it would be misguided to assume that all these women were simply victims.

Catherine Yates picked up John Lythgoe in Leigh in 1865, took him to 'a private place', and while he was diverted picked his pocket of 2s 6d.

In more than one court appearance, Mary Ellen McGuire told magistrates that she could serve her fourteen days 'standing on my head'. She often sang her way from the court, and on one occasion disrupted the rest of its business by singing and dancing with another prostitute in their cell.

The most spirited and interesting woman I have encountered is Harriet 'Pablo' Dawes, a court regular in the 1850s. Harriet claimed she had been a star of Pablo Fanque's travelling equestrian show. As an attractive woman, she resisted the advances of male admirers until succumbing to temptation, or as the Leigh Chronicle put it, 'allured to her destruction through the hollowness of men's flattery and heartless treachery'. Once she had 'fallen', she 'abandoned herself to an openly profligate life'. As a prostitute, 'she now ranked with the lowest of the low'. In January 1859, she was in court yet again for being drunk and disorderly in King Street, Leigh. The following exchange took place:

**Harriet:** 'Allow me if you please. I had partaken of very little drink, but it is only three weeks since I was confined [i.e. in gaol], and a little drink took a great effect. I had but two glasses of rum and I had only been confined three weeks'.
**Magistrate:** 'Do you belong to Yorkshire somewhere?'
**Harriet:** 'Yes'
**Magistrate:** 'So why not remain there? You have promised repeatedly that you would go there and remain with your friends'.
**Harriet:** 'I have written to them, but my step-father will not take me in... I pray, I hope you will deal leniently with me this time and I really will try to amend'.
**Magistrate:** 'I do not see how we can be lenient with a character like you. I can only say it is a shame the county should be put to the expense time after time of prosecuting you... But we will try to avoid the unnecessary expense by calling upon you to find sureties to keep the peace for six months...'
**Harriet:** 'Excuse me, sir; you say I have been sent eight or ten times before, but I have only been sent four times and once was four years ago and once two years ago'.
**Police Superintendant Orton:** 'Now it's no use telling stories...She has been sent four times from this court and once discharged, but ten times she has been committed from the neighbouring town of St Helens'.

*Nineteenth century satirical postcard concerning prostitution*

The magistrate and the policeman conferred privately and then greatly increased her sureties to two of £10 each and one of £20. If she was unable to find this kind of bail she would serve a six month gaol sentence. I have not seen any references to Harriet after this.

The reasons for Victorian prostitution were diverse and varied from woman to woman, but I am struck by this comment made by a prostitute to the journalist Henry Mayhew in 1851: 'Could I have earned enough to have subsisted upon, to find me in proper food and clothing such as are necessary, I should not have gone astray...To be poor and to be honest, especially as a young girl, is the hardest struggle of all'.

*Editor's note: Charlotte Blears is also the subject of Kath Graham's article on pages 4 and 5.*

By Pat Sankey

# Carry on Cleaning: Wigan's Court of Quarter Session Records

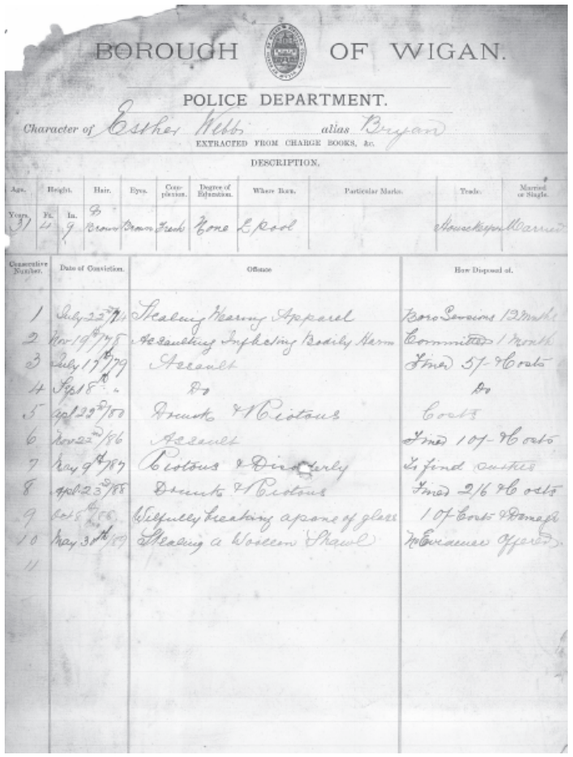
My name is Pat Sankey and I am a volunteer at Wigan Archives and Local Studies, based at Leigh Town Hall. In my time here, approximately 21 months, I have catalogued photographs and transcribed diaries. On the last Wednesday of each month the other volunteers and I undertake the task to clean one or two boxes of old Quarter Session Court documents for the Borough of Wigan. These had been stored in the attic of a municipal building in Wigan. The documents had been rolled up prior to storage and the outer pages are covered in decades of soot and can be quite fragile.

So, armed with the appropriate brush, sponge and eraser and bearing in mind the guidelines that I have been given, I prepare to be transported back to the 1870s and 1880s, to see how crime was dealt with and what justice was deemed fit. It is an amazing task and one that I feel privileged to take part in. The rolls of documents have lain untouched and unviewed for around 140 years.

Today's society is a materialistic one, the need to have the latest gadget or fashion item. Life in the 1870s was hard and in my opinion, the majority of crimes of theft were carried out for reasons of poverty and need.

Items listed in the documents as having been stolen are diverse. The theft of money is self-explanatory, the need of it, whether to use it to feed a family, or to be spent on drink (thought by many to be a need). Jewellery was stolen to sell or pawn for much the same reasons.

The theft of clothing, boots and household linen took place in a variety of ways. From the brazen taking of items from a shop, an employer, a neighbour's home, or from a lodging house, these items usually ended up being taken to the pawn


BOROUGH OF WIGAN.

POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Character of Esther Webb alias Bryan

EXTRACTED FROM CHARGE BOOKS, &c.

DESCRIPTION.

| Age. | Height. Ft. | In. | Hair. | Eyes. | Complexion. | Degree of Education. | Where Born. | Particular Marks. | Trade. | Married or Single. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Years 37 | 4 | 9 | Brown | Brown | Fresh | None | Liverpool | | Housekeeper | Married |

| Consecutive Number. | Date of Conviction. | Offence. | How Disposed of. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | July 23rd 70 | Stealing Wearing Apparel | Kept Sessions 12 Months |
| 2 | Nov 19th 75 | Assaulting Inspecting Bailiff Harm | Committed 1 Month |
| 3 | July 17th 79 | Stealing | Fined 5/- & Costs |
| 4 | Sept 18th " | Do | Do |
| 5 | April 23rd 80 | Drunk & Riotous | Costs |
| 6 | Nov 22nd 86 | Stealing | Fined 10/- & Costs |
| 7 | May 9th 87 | Riotous & Disorderly | To find sureties |
| 8 | April 23rd 88 | Drunk & Riotous | Fined 2/6 & Costs |
| 9 | Oct 5th 88 | Wilfully breaking a pane of glass | 10/- Costs & Damages |
| 10 | May 3rd 89 | Stealing a Woollen Shawl | Two months Hard |
| 11 | | | |

*Quarter session record for Esther Webb alias Bryan (Wigan Archives)*

shop. The money made in this way was the end goal; the option of redeeming the goods at a later date was never the plan. Occasionally there were thefts of 'tools of the trade', such as stealing the brushes of a chimney sweep, resulting in hardship for the victim, unable to pursue his occupation.

One man was charged with stealing 30 yards of shirting fabric; he was apprehended at a nearby inn, with the shirting coiled around his body and his jacket over the top. He didn't seem to see the need of making himself scarce after the theft and the exertion used to wrap the cloth around his body made him very thirsty; perhaps he was needing refreshment at the inn before going along his way or he was hoping to sell his ill-gotten gains there. To no avail, he was charged, issued with a fine and costs, with the promise of a custodial sentence with hard labour if he failed to pay.

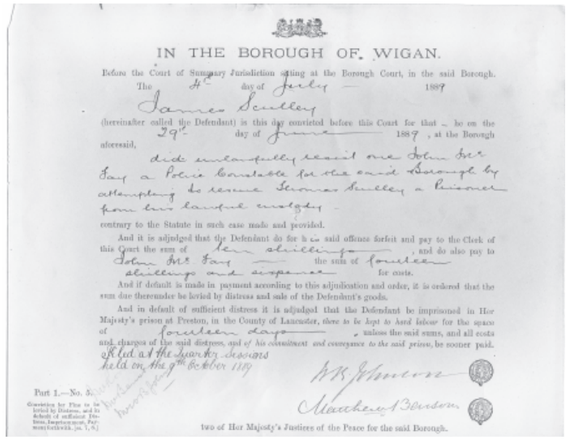
The excuses given by the accused are sometimes quite amusing, such as 'I took it but I did not steal it' or 'I didn't steal it, but I pawned it'. It was a sign of the times that the majority of the documents show that the accused could neither read nor write and placed a cross instead of a signature. This was also evident in the recording of some witness statements, hard to imagine in this day and age.

Livestock frequently feature in the Court's dealings, from the theft of chickens and ducks, to the mistreatment of animals by their owners. There are records of farmers causing distress to their cows by not milking them adequately. Horse owners were fined for over working their animals.

Drunkenness and riotous behaviour feature in many documents, along with obstructing the pavement and brawling in the street. Drunks were always charged with being: 'Drunk in a certain place'. Prostitutes were referred to as 'wondering abroad'.

There are records of employers being charged with working their employees far longer than the permitted hours, or on a public holiday such as Good Friday, when only certain types of work and sales of certain goods were allowed. When I was young I can remember shops being closed on a Sunday. Our local newsagent was allowed to open for only a couple of hours to sell newspapers; I wasn't allowed to buy a birthday card one Sunday as it was illegal for the shop owner to sell it to me. This law covered quite a lot of products; now anything can be purchased. The gambling game of pitch and toss – where a group of men would each toss a coin, either against a given mark or a wall and the owner of the coin landing nearest was the winner – was illegal and there are numerous court documents showing the fines and costs metred out to the participants. Documents detailing these charges can often be found together, indicating that a group of men were caught and arrested as a group.

Owners of lodging houses were fined if they exceeded the number of registered lodgers allocated to them. One such case involved Ellen Reddington, who allowed fourteen lodgers to stay


IN THE BOROUGH OF WIGAN.

Before the Court of Summary Jurisdiction sitting at the Borough Court, in the said Borough.

The 4th day of July — 1887

James Sculley

(hereinafter called the Defendant) is this day convicted before this Court for that he on the 29th day of June 1887, at the Borough aforesaid,

did unlawfully assault one John Lee Esq a Police Constable for the said Borough by attempting to rescue Thomas Sculley a Prisoner from his lawful custody

contrary to the Statute in such case made and provided.

And it is adjudged that the Defendant do for h is said offence forfeit and pay to the Clerk of this Court the sum of ten shillings, and do also pay to John Lee Esq the sum of fourteen shillings and expenses for costs.

And if default is made in payment according to this adjudication and order, it is ordered that the sum due thereunder be levied by distress and sale of the Defendant's goods.

And in default of sufficient distress it is adjudged that the Defendant be imprisoned in Her Majesty's prison at Preston, in the County of Lancaster, there to be kept to hard labour for the space of fourteen days, unless the said sums, and all costs and charges of the said distress, and of his commitment and conveyance to the said prison, be sooner paid.

Read at the Quarter Sessions held on the 9th October 1889

Part 1.—No. 5.

Two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said Borough.

*Quarter session record for James Sculley, 1899 (Wigan Archives)*

when she was only registered for seven. She was fined 40 shillings plus three shillings and sixpence costs, or one calendar month hard labour at Her Majesty's Prison Preston in default of payment. The prisons of Kirkdale and Walton also feature in the documents. The fines and costs levied were obviously out of the reach of the majority of offenders, so it must follow that very many of them ended up serving a custodial sentence with hard labour.

Young male offenders could be given a number of strokes of the birch for their offences. This was carried out by a Police Officer above the rank of Constable and with the parent's or guardian's permission. Other documents catalogue the costs of holding the Court Sessions; these include, amongst others, the Prosecutor's Bill, which also details the payments made to the Jurors and Witnesses and the Bill for Fees due to the Clerk of the Peace for the Borough of Wigan from the Borough Funds. The Calendar of Prisoners detailed the charge, plea, verdict and penalty, if found guilty, along with details of previous convictions. There are examples of men wishing to be excused from jury service due to illness, or employment arrangements. Fines were levied for any man failing to do his duty without a valid and approved excuse. Ten shillings was the fine levied for non-attendance as a juror.

As you can probably tell from reading this article I am fascinated by these documents; they shed light onto another time, one that was hard and a struggle for many people.

*Find more Quarter Session resources on Wigan & Leigh Archives Online http://archives.wigan.gov.uk*

BY MARY HALLIWELL AND YVONNE ECKERSLEY

# FOOLISH OR BRAVE?

## Militant Suffragette Imprisoned by Leigh Magistrates Condemned by Leigh's Medical Officer Of Health

On 16 July 1909, Florence Clarkson appeared at Church Street Police Station before the Leigh magistrates, Alderman W Horrocks, Dr W G Gray and Mr James Hindley, charged with assaulting Sergeant Mercer the previous day. She did not deny this and was found guilty. She chose a fourteen day prison sentence without hard labour rather than pay a £1 fine. In Strangeways Prison Manchester, she was one of the Women's Social and Political Union's first supported hunger strikers.

This article is not an attempt to deny that Florence Clarkson committed a constitutional crime. What we hope it will do is, by using the events in Leigh on the 15 July and Florence's refusal of food whilst in prison, illustrate the courage of individual young women idealists as they fought for the cause they believed in.

Thwarted by the Liberal Party, from 29 June 1909 there had been a significant shift in the direction of the Women's Social and Political Union's (WSPU) activism. Where previously they had sought publicity for their cause by being arrested and imprisoned for damaging public property, they now courted arrest and imprisonment by disrupting the Liberal Party's political meetings. Their immediate objective was to pressurise the government into accepting their activism was politically legitimate, and as such, should they be imprisoned, they ought to be awarded political prisoner status.

In Leigh, on 15 July 1909, a group of WSPU 'soldiers' – i.e. paid organisers – arrived in the town with the stated object of disrupting the speech of Lewis Harcourt, Leigh Liberal Association's 'Great Demonstration' chief speaker, in the Co-operative Hall. Fully aware of the WSPU strategy, Leigh Liberal Association barred all women except a few ticket holders, locked and guarded the entrances to the Hall with numerous police officers and Liberal Party officials.

Once in Leigh, Florence Clarkson, Annie Kenney, Charlotte Marsh, Jennie Baines and Mabel Capper leafleted the town, advertising their meeting in Market Place at 6:30pm, and their intention to disrupt Harcourt's 7:30 speech. They spoke from a landau and the obelisk steps. Besides the women's

*Annie Kenney (with kind permission from the Working Class Movement Library)*

suffrage question, they stressed their view that suffragettes imprisoned because of their activism, ought to be classed as political prisoners.

At 7:10pm the women left Market Place, followed by a huge and excitable crowd and drove to the Co-operative Hall. Fully aware of what to expect the determined women divided themselves into two groups, one at the entrance in Albion Street and the other in Gas Street. Hopelessly outnumbered and outclassed in strength, they attempted to battle their way into the Hall.

### Albion Street and Gas Street Action

The Leigh Chronicle reported, 'the crowd pressed forward' and 'the women fought and struggled for the door, while a solid body of police pushed them back. The crushing was terrific, there was much screaming and fear of injury'.

As the crowd pushed forward, three of the suffragettes found themselves in 'rough contact' with police and were arrested. The crowd did not take too kindly to this and managed to rescue Charlotte Marsh, Mabel Capper and Jennie Baines. Florence Clarkson was not rescued and remained under arrest.

Florence Clarkson of Oxford Road, Manchester, had struck Sergeant Mercer in the face several times and 'bobbed' a book in his eye. In the fracas that followed the remaining suffragists continued to fight their way to the doors. One grabbed a policeman by the throat; five officers pushed her back through the crowd where 'she was left almost breathless, looking a weary object, leaning against a wall'.

Simultaneously, in Gas Street, the gate to the Hall was temporarily opened and one of the suffragettes 'flung' herself at it. The crowd surged to watch as she was pushed back after spitting in Alderman Boydell's face and threatening to break his jaw.

### The Aftermath

It was not only the authorities who abused the young women. Defeated, exhausted, and 'the laughing stock' of the crowd, the suffragettes retreated. One sought relief and a breath of fresh air in Silk Street. The crowd followed her into Lord Street, sneering at and jostling her. According to the Chronicle, Leigh women's comments were particularly obnoxious. Their reporter described her as a 'pitiable object, looking more like a hunted beast, than a respectable young woman', who only escaped the Leigh crowd by boarding a tram.

These women knowingly put themselves at risk on such occasions. The reaction of the crowds that attended could be unpredictable. As the crowd followed and taunted the escaping suffragettes, 'an old woman was seen to knock a young girl down and severely thrash her, she was about to kick her as she lay on the floor' when another act of violence

*Dr Wynne*

stopped the attack; 'a youth stepped forward and struck the old woman'. Although in Leigh the victim of violence was a Leigh girl, it could have just as easily have been a suffragette.

Florence Clarkson was not a passive prisoner, nor was she intimidated by Leigh's magistrates and Mayor. It is through her defence we hear of the violence used against her in Leigh. She accused Sergeant Mercer of handling her 'roughly' and Police Constable Dixon of 'unnecessarily twisting her arm'. Her defence was that she was defending herself. Tellingly she opined 'I do not see why, when we go to these protest meetings, that we should be open to assault from the police'.

The magistrates were careful to sentence her according to government guidelines, consulting Court Officials before imprisoning her in the criminal rather than political division. She objected, stating she had committed a Political Offence as part of Political Agitation. Turning to reporters she said she, 'did not intend to be treated other than as a Political Prisoner' and 'I shall go and Mutiny'.

Once in Holloway she did mutiny and refused to eat. She was released from Holloway, half starved, on 20 July after serving four days of her sentence. During her imprisonment, Mary Gawthorpe and other suffragettes gathered opposite Strangeways, demonstrating their solidarity and support by cheering, flag waving and by means of megaphone, verbally expressing the WSPU's admiration and gratitude.

### Postscript

Over the next five years, every one of the suffragettes who came to Leigh were frequently imprisoned and went on hunger strike for their beliefs. From 24 September 1909 they repeatedly subjected themselves to the horrors of being force fed.

Despite their obvious personal bravery in risking personal injury as a result of forced feeding, Leigh's newly appointed Medical Officer of Health, Dr Frederick E Wynne, felt sufficiently qualified to undermine its dangerous potential. Writing to the Manchester Guardian, he upheld the Liberal Government's disputed position, that it was a common, safe and painless hospital practice. Furthermore he opined if the women refused food then government ought to, 'Let these foolish people starve'. His logic was that if hunger striking secured early release, then every felon would follow their example.

*References:*

*Leigh Chronicle, July 1909*
*Leigh Journal, July 1909*
*Leigh Petty Sessional Court Register, 16 July 1909 (PS/Lei)*
*Manchester Guardian, October 1909*
*June Purvis, 'Emmeline Pankhurst: A Biography'*

# Ralph Standish of Standish (1670-1755): Rebel and Traitor or Brave Loyalist?

## BY JOHN NICHOLLS MBE

*John Nicholls MBE was Chairman of The Fifteen (The Northumbrian Jacobite Society) for nine years and Editor of their Journal for thirteen years. He is now their Honorable Life President. At an auction in 1997, he bought – to prevent its sale to America – a remarkable case of Jacobite relics, which its inscription plaque states were given to Ralph Standish of Standish by Bonnie Prince Charlie. He has lent this case, which has never been on display to the public before, to the Museum of Wigan Life, along with other related Jacobite items from his own collection. They are currently on show until 31 May 2017.*

Treason is the crime of betraying one's country, especially by attempting to kill or overthrow the sovereign or government. It is usually considered the worst of crimes, after murder – perhaps even the ultimate crime. But 'treason' is a subjective term.

It has long been realised that the victors in any conflict record history as they see it, employing propagandists after the event to portray them in the best possible light. They usually denigrate those who have opposed them, regardless of their courage in upholding their own cause or maintaining loyalty to their own leaders, and can inflict cruel punishment and even execution on them for their 'treachery' towards the winning side.

The Jacobite risings in favour of the exiled Royal House of Stuart, which continued for more than 50 years from 1689 onwards, were not 'rebellions', as they were called at the time by the victors, but insurrections by challengers of the status quo in what was really a long civil war. It was a power-struggle between closely related dynasties: the Stuarts (represented by the king in exile, James II, and after his death, his son, known as 'James III' or 'The Old Pretender') and the Hanoverians (represented by the reigning monarch, George I, formerly Elector of Hanover, and his son, George II, who succeeded under the Act of Settlement of 1701).

None of the Jacobites (their name is derived from 'Jacobus', the Latin form of 'James'), had ever sworn allegiance to the Hanoverian monarchs. They remained faithful to James II and after his death, to James III, whom they saw as their rightful king. To them, the Hanoverians were usurpers – as were their predecessors, William of Orange, who had deposed James II to become William III, and his wife Mary II, who had betrayed her father in taking his crown, as had her sister Anne, who succeeded them. In their eyes, any action they took against usurpers could never be treasonable.

But the Hanoverians were the final victors and looked on the Jacobite forces as rebels to be crushed so that their own dynasty would never be at risk again. The conflict effectively ended when the 'Butcher' Duke of Cumberland, George I's favourite son, defeated the army of James III's eldest son, Prince Charles Edward Stuart (called 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' or 'The Young Pretender'), his third cousin, at the Battle of Culloden in 1746.

Ralph Standish (1670-1755), Lord of the Manor of Standish, near Wigan, was one such Jacobite 'rebel' whose courage in joining the 1715 Rising as a loyal subject of James III deserves praise instead of censure. Not a reckless youth in search of adventure but a middle-aged man of 45 when he joined the rising, he nevertheless valued loyalty enough to risk his all against the established order, whilst others who claimed to favour the cause sat on the fence or hedged their bets. He is neglected in the histories of the Jacobite period, as all Northern English participants generally are. He is usually only briefly referred to as one of the Lancastrian Catholic gentlemen who joined the Scots and Northern English forces in the 'Fifteen at Preston, on their way, as they thought, to London after leaving Scotland and taking the north-western route through Lancashire, where they had been assured, many would show their support for King James.

Ralph Standish was one of 'a great many Gentlemen with their tenants, servants and attendants, and some of very good figure in the country but still all Papists' who rode to Preston to join the Jacobite forces on 9 November 1715. It was not surprising that he should do so, since his family had fought for the Stuart King Charles I in the Civil War (with their estate confiscated by Cromwell and later recovered); his father, William Standish, had been heavily involved in the Lancashire plots of 1690 and 1694 against William III and only avoided arrest by disappearing. Standish Hall was said to have been used as a meeting place for the conspirators and was searched, but nothing incriminating was found.

Like James III, the Standishes were Catholic, though Protestants like the Northumbrian Thomas Forster MP also followed him. Other gentry who appeared at Preston with Ralph Standish were: Richard Towneley of Towneley; Sir Francis Anderton of Lostock; Richard Chorley of Chorley and his son Charles; Gabriel Hesketh of Whitehall, St Michael's-on-Wyre, and his son Cuthbert; and John Leyburne of Nateby.

The Jacobites at Preston were complacent about defence and the town was rapidly surrounded by Government forces. Fighting took place in the barricaded streets. Ralph Standish may have stood side by side with James Radcliffe, 3rd Earl of Derwentwater and his brother, the Honorable Charles Radcliffe, Northumbrians to whom he was distantly related. Their heroic actions were undercut on 14 November when 'General' Forster, who had had no military experience, finally surrendered on behalf of the Jacobites to General Wills without securing terms and the rising came to an untimely end.

1,569 prisoners were taken (1,000 of them Scots) and most of them were imprisoned within the Parish Church, where ill-treatment and disease took their toll. Jacobite officers were detained in local inns. Ralph Standish was, with peers and other gentry, taken to London for trial on a charge of high treason. Lord Derwentwater and Lord Kenmure, a Lowland Scot, were found guilty and beheaded (the death reserved for nobles) on Tower Hill. In total, 40 'rebels' were executed. These included 34 Lancastrians, who were hanged at locations spread around the county for maximum effect, the first five being also drawn and quartered. Twelve (including Richard Chorley) suffered at Preston, five at Wigan, five at Manchester, four at Garstang, four at Lancaster and four at Low Hill, near Liverpool. Many more were transported into slavery in the West Indies and America as indentured labourers.

Ralph Standish was condemned to death but was reprieved through the actions of his wife's family, who had friends in high places. She was Lady Philippa Howard, daughter of Henry Howard, 6th Duke of Norfolk, the premier peer in England and notably Catholic, as the Standishes were. The Standishes had also intermarried with the Howards two generations earlier. Though Ralph Standish's life was spared, Standish Hall, its surrounding estate of about 3,000 acres and other property and money that he owned in Lancashire were confiscated by the Crown as the property of an attainted traitor. Yet even here he was favoured as it was sold on by the Forfeited Estates Commission to others who turned out to be fronts for the Howards, so that it was restored eventually to Ralph Standish.

Ralph Standish was a very lucky survivor of the 'rebellion'. He was still in possession of the manor of Standish 30 years later when Prince Charles Edward Stuart ('Bonnie Prince Charlie' or 'The Young Pretender') passed through Standish with another Jacobite army on their way south towards London in 1745. He did not join the Prince as by then he was 75, and there seems to have been no son of a suitable age to take his place. He may well have been wary of committing himself to the Jacobite cause a second time, having so narrowly escaped with his life in 1716.

Ironically, though Ralph Standish himself escaped retribution, fortune had different tricks to play on his descendants. Ralph knew when he died that he was the last male-line heir of the Standishes; his manorial title passed to his fifth and only surviving daughter, Cecilia, who had married William Towneley, head of another local Catholic family. The original seventeenth century doors from Standish Hall can be seen today at Towneley Hall. Cecilia's third son succeeded her and took the name of Standish but the last lord of the manor of Standish, Henry Noailles Widdrington Standish, died childless in 1920 having had, like his father, a French wife. He was never a resident of Standish Hall but lived mainly on the Continent.

At an auction in Wigan in 1921, Standish Hall failed to reach its reserve price of £4,800 and no trace of it now remains, with parts of the fabric sold to American buyers. The family is remembered in St Wilfrid's Church, Standish, where there is a Standish Chapel and other memorials. A more potent and poignant reminder, perhaps, is the case of Jacobite relics that once belonged to Ralph Standish of Standish. Like Ralph himself, it is a rare survivor, which bears witness to the loyalty and steadfastness of its former owner. It has temporarily returned to Wigan Museum, the nearest it can be to its former home, Standish Hall. Do try to see it whilst you can.

BY BILL MELLING

# THE MYSTERY OF THE KIDNAPPED CORPSE

*Wigan All Saints, the site of the Crawford Chapel (Wigan Archives)*

Alexander Lindsay, 25th Earl of Crawford, died at his villa in Florence on the 13th December 1880. In a break with family tradition he had chosen to be interred on his Scottish estate at Dunecht rather than the vault of the Crawford Chapel in Wigan Parish Church.

The Dunecht estate near Aberdeen had been purchased by Alexander's father in 1845 and since then the house had been much improved and extended, including a private family chapel beneath which was a mausoleum with space for 25 coffins. The only access to this vault was down a flight of steps from outside the chapel which could be closed off and sealed by four large slabs of Caithness granite. In order to get Alexander's body home from Italy it was embalmed and enclosed inside three coffins, the inner one of soft Italian wood, the middle one of lead and the outer one of polished oak with silver fittings. For the purpose of the journey home these were in turn placed inside a protective walnut container, a precaution that certainly proved its worth as the journey was beset by storms, gales and freezing snow with the final leg from Aberdeen being undertaken in one of the worst snowstorms of the nineteenth century.

However, by the 29 December 1880 Alexander's remains had been successfully interred in the vault and the entrance sealed by the four slabs of granite. Five months later, on 29 May 1881, one of the house servants on her way back from church noticed a 'pleasant aromatic smell' issuing from the vault. This was subsequently attributed to scent from the flowers and wreaths left with the coffin escaping through the joints between the granite slabs. The problem was cured by sealing the joints with lime and cement and then the whole area on the top of the stairs was covered in soil and seeded down with grass.

Two months later, Mr William Yeats, the Lindsay's local solicitor and agent received an anonymous letter in the following terms:

*'The remains of the late Earl of Crawford are not beneath the chapel at Dunecht as you believe, but were removed hence last spring, and the smell of decayed flowers ascending from the vault since that will, on investigation, be found to come from another cause than flowers.*

*Signed: Nabob'*

After consulting the man who had been in charge of the building of the vault and being assured of its impregnable character, Yeates concluded that the letter was a hoax and put it to one side without informing the family. All remained quiet until the early morning of 1 December 1881 when a passing workman noticed that turf covering the entrance to the vault had been removed and one of the huge granite flagstones displaced (6ft x 4ft and weighing 15 cwt.). The police were called and on entering the vault found the outer coffin and its contents had been removed from its niche and its contents scattered about the floor of the vault.

There was however no sign of the Earl's body. An inquiry was at once commenced by the procurator-fiscal, the official responsible for criminal investigation under Scottish law. He immediately initiated an exhaustive search of the surrounding district, including the use of bloodhounds, which went on for two weeks until interrupted by blizzards which left the ground frozen and snow covered well into the following spring. The disappearance of the Earl's corpse brought great public interest and press speculation as to its cause. Rewards were offered for information leading to the recovery of the body and an appeal made for 'Nabob', the author of the anonymous letter, to come forward. On 23 December 'Nabob' replied saying that the Earl's body was still in Aberdeenshire but that he, 'Nabob', was under threat of death if he revealed its position.

As the months elapsed without any fresh news, public interest in the case began to wane and the impression became general that the Dunecht mystery would never be solved. However, the police had not relaxed their efforts and on 17 July 1882 a 42 year-old man, Charles Soutar, was taken into custody. Up to a few years previously he had been employed on the Dunecht estate as a rat catcher until he was dismissed for poaching. Under questioning he admitted to being 'Nabob' and went on to explain how he became involved in the theft of the Earl's body. He said that one night in late spring he was poaching on the Dunecht estate, not far from the house, when he blundered into a group of men apparently burying something. Thinking they were keepers he turned and fled only to be caught and pinned to the ground by two men with Aberdeenshire accents. The other two men in the group had upper class English accents. They were all dressed in dark clothes with blackened or masked faces. One of the local men identified Soutar as 'the rat catcher', whereupon the tall Englishman who appeared to be in charge held a revolver to Soulters head and threatened that if he breathed a word of what he had seen that night they would hunt him down and wipe him off the face of the earth.

With this threat still hanging over him Soutar refused to show the police the whereabouts of the body but his interrogation gave them enough clues to enable them to reduce the search area. The search was resumed with some twenty constables and keepers, with sharp pointed iron probes scouring the woods around Dunecht House. On Tuesday 18 July, after about eight hours searching, the body of the late Earl was found, wrapped in a blanket, in the bottom of a dry ditch. The whole affair had raised national interest with even Queen Victoria sending a letter of sympathy to the Dowager Countess of Crawford, so it was only natural that the family wished the body to be reinterred as soon as possible with the minimum of publicity.

*Crawford Chapel*

REMOVAL OF THE LATE LORD CRAWFORD'S BODY TO WIGAN.

INTERMENT UNDER THE PARISH CHURCH.

It is an old saying that truth is stranger than fiction, and certainly the facts relating to the theft, recovery, and ultimate re-interment of the body of the late Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, reads more like a page from the Arabian Knights' Entertainment than a recital of sober unimpeachable facts. The noble house of Haigh possesses a history perhaps as distinguished as any contemporary family in the land, and there is no circumstance recorded in its fascinating pages so dramatic and withal so absorbingly thrilling as the

*Article in the Wigan Examiner, 1882*

It was decided that the Earl's final resting place should be in the family vault of the Lindsay Chapel in Wigan Parish Church. The arrangements to do this were planned with military precision and secrecy. At midnight on the Monday following the discovery of the body it was taken by hearse to Aberdeen station and placed in a goods van for onward transmission to Wigan where it was due to arrive in the early hours of Wednesday. At Wigan a group of trusted estate workers had left Haigh Hall shortly after midnight to open up the entrance to the Lindsay vault, which was under flagstones in the churchyard. Working by lamplight behind screens and under police guard they had the vault ready to receive the coffin when it arrived around 4:00am. It was immediately carried in procession through the empty streets and placed in its niche in the vault alongside the coffins of his ancestors.

Close members of the family who had been waiting in the Parish Church vestry then entered the vault to place wreaths on the coffin and then after a couple of minutes contemplation left to go their separate ways thus bringing the whole sorry matter to a close, as far as the family was concerned. As soon as the family left the flagstones were replaced and by 4.30am the churchyard was back to normal. However, back in Scotland investigations continued and on 23 October 1882 Charles Soutar was indicted and accused of 'violating the sepulchers of the dead and the raising and carrying dead bodies out of their graves'. Soutar was found guilty and sentenced to five years penal servitude.

The trial provoked a great deal of public interest and speculation, particularly as to the motive for stealing the body, a fact that the trial never established. Among the various theories put forward was one particularly popular in the area around the Dunecht estate. This was that Alexander Lindsay the 25th Earl, had before he died inserted a clause into the deeds to the estate stating that the estate could not be sold if his remains were still interred there. Whether or not there is any truth in this theory has never been tested but in 1886 the estate was put up for sale and was eventually sold in 1900.

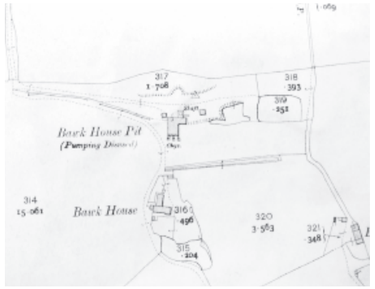
'A Murder Most, Gross, Foul and Unnatural':

# The Button Pit Murder

## 2 January 1863, the crime that shocked Wigan

JOAN KORWIN-SZYMANOWSKI,
WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF MARIANNE HOWELL

One hundred years after the Button Pit murder, I made an astounding discovery – that the murdered man was my great-great-great grandfather. This led me to carry out a great deal of research in local archives and newspapers and to contact many other descendants. The following account outlines just some of the sad and remarkable facts surrounding this grotesque crime.




*Ordnance Survey map, 1909 (LXXXV.16)*

On the evening of Friday 2 January 1863, James Barton set off from home to walk across the fields to the Button Pit, where he was an engine-tenter. James and his wife Mary had lived in Top Row, outside the village of Haigh, for 25 years before the tragedy and raised twelve children. The pit – Bawk-House (or Back-House) Pit, known locally as the Button Pit – was nearby at Red Rock. It was demolished in 1919.

*Button Pit, each of the three furnaces had a separate squat chimney; it was said that this construction was adopted so that it would not spoil the view from Haigh Hall*

James had his purple scarf fastened firmly around his neck against the cold, and in his pocket a pipe and tobacco box, a pen-knife and his prized silver watch.

Along the way he met his son John at a stile, after John had finished his shift. John and his brother Thomas were also engine-tenters at the pit. When the day-shift pitmen began arriving at five o'clock they realised that something must be wrong – the furnaces were cold, the purple scarf was burnt, and Barton was missing, so John and Thomas were sent for. They decided to search down the pit, but had to fire up the furnaces to power the winding gear to do so. But Barton could not be found.

### A Terrible Discovery

Only as daylight dawned did the searchers notice blood in the cabin.

Poor Thomas must have recoiled in horror on realising that his father had been put in the furnace during the night, and that they had been heaping coals upon his remains, in their efforts to get the fires going again.

The little rural community was shocked beyond belief at the crime. The Earl of Balcarres, who owned the land and the pit, offered a reward of £200, to which the government added another £100.

*Handbills and posters were displayed around the neighbourhood. Despite all the publicity and the huge reward, not a single clue of any kind came to light. Image by John Douglas-Ryder*

### A Vital Piece of Evidence Sought

Publicity was printed which included a description of James's missing possessions, of which the watch was the most important. It was 'made by Robert Crosskill, of Liverpool, and it was numbered 17844. It was a silver patent lever, roughly finished, with a second hand'.

### Laid To Rest

After a distressing inquest, on Friday 30 January 1863, the pitiful remains of James Barton were laid to rest in the little churchyard of St David's at Haigh.

### Fingers of Suspicion

Despite all the publicity and speculation, more than two years passed before the case was revived with credible suspects.

A man named Thomas Walton said that he had acted with others in the murder, and that they had thrown James's watch into the Leeds & Liverpool canal. He was indicted, but then acquitted because he had made his statement when very drunk. When the canal was dredged in March 1866, the watch was not found.

### The Watch is Discovered At Last

The Wigan Observer of 31 March 1866 reported: 'Barton's watch has been discovered and a man and his son have delivered the watch to the county police for the Wigan division, and have made statements implicating a person who is the son of one and the brother of the other'.

The implicated person was Thomas Grime. He came from a respectable family living in Eaves Lane, Chorley, but was at the time serving a period of penal servitude in Dartmoor.

When his brother James read the newspaper reports, he was horrified to recall Thomas having pawned the watch, then asking James to redeem it. James had then passed it to a friend named Ackers. James and his father reclaimed the watch and took it to the police.

Grime implicated two other men, Joseph Seddon and William Thompson, by saying they had shared a sovereign from the pawnbroker.

Both the supposed accomplices were arrested, but Joseph Seddon died before he could be tried.

William Thompson and Grime appeared before the magistrates at Wigan Moot Hall in March 1866. Although Grime accused Thompson of the actual murder, he was acquitted, leaving only Grime to be imprisoned in Kirkdale gaol before being sent for trial at Liverpool Assizes.

### A Model Prisoner Accepts His Fate

Whilst Grime was in prison he conducted himself well, and made a statement exonerating Thompson and Seddon.

The Wigan Observer gave a very long account of the day of his hanging on 3 September. At noon, the crowd of tens of thousands fell silent as a door opened leading to the scaffold. The hanging was performed by William Calcraft, Britain's longest serving hangman, and Grime went quietly to his fate.

*The execution scene. Image by John Douglas-Ryder*

### I Hold the Watch in My Hands

The watch was passed down through several generations of the Barton family. Eventually it was bought by Bob Lawrenson, who invited me to see it.

How can I describe my feelings? I saw the name: 'Robert Crosskill, maker, Liverpool'. Proof that it was James's own watch was the unique number '17884' engraved on the workings and on the silver back cover.

*I took a photograph of the place in the churchyard where I believe James is buried, but no trace of his grave remains*

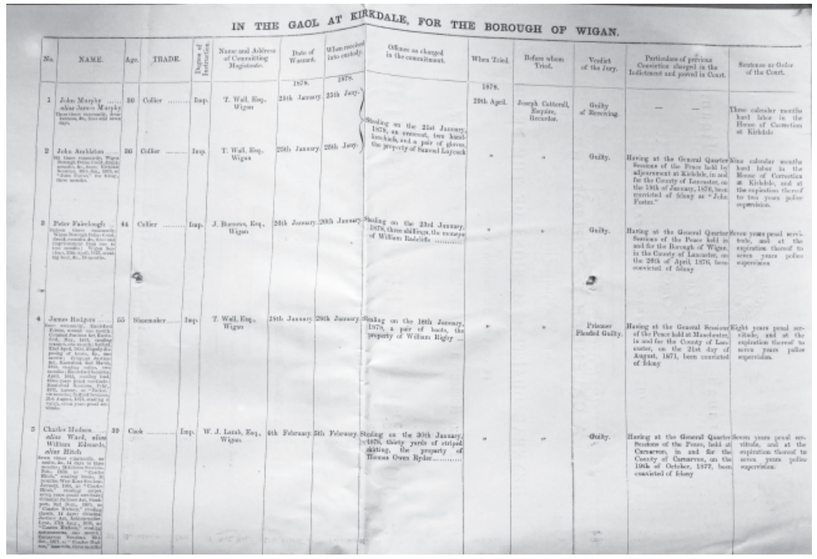
It is sad to reflect that no-one now can visit the grave to reflect on the life and death of one James Barton. But my researches have enabled the memory to be kept alive of my quiet, law-abiding and innocent ancestor. I am delighted to know that his watch is still ticking off the hours, days, years and decades…

Much more detail can be found in the book I have written, which is soon to be published with Wigan & Leigh Archives & Local Studies, and will be available to buy from the Archives and Museum.

# Tracing Your Criminal Ancestors

by Rita Musa

Were your ancestors in trouble with the law? Criminal records are a vast source of information for family historians. Some criminal records covering England and Wales can be found online on the websites of both Ancestry and Find My Past; these resources are available to use free of charge at Wigan Local Studies and Wigan Archives & Leigh Local Studies.



IN THE GAOL AT KIRKDALE, FOR THE BOROUGH OF WIGAN.

| No. | NAME. | Age. | TRADE. | Degree of Instruction. | Name and Address of Committing Magistrate. | Date of Warrant. | When received into custody. | Offence as charged in the commitment. | When Tried. | Before whom Tried. | Verdict of the Jury. | Particulars of previous Conviction charged in the Indictment and proved in Court. | Sentence or Order of the Court. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1878. | 1878. | | 1878. | | | | |
| 1 | John Murphy alias James Murphy | 20 | Collier | Imp. | T. Wall, Esq., Wigan | 24th January | 25th Jany. | Stealing on the 21st January, 1878, six sovereigns, two hammers, and a pair of gloves, the property of Samuel Laycock | 29th April. | Joseph Catterall, Esquire, Recorder. | Guilty of Receiving. | — — | Three calendar months hard labor in the House of Correction at Kirkdale |
| 2 | John Ambleton | 26 | Collier | Imp. | T. Wall, Esq., Wigan | 25th January | 28th Jany. | " " | " | " | Guilty. | Having at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace held by adjournment at Kirkdale, in and for the County of Lancaster, on the 18th of January, 1876, been convicted of felony as "John Porter." | Nine calendar months hard labor in the House of Correction at Kirkdale, and at the expiration thereof to two years police supervision |
| 3 | Peter Fairclough | 44 | Collier | Imp. | J. Bonnor, Esq., Wigan | 26th January | 30th Jany. | Stealing on the 23rd January, 1878, three sheets, the property of William Radcliffe | " | " | Guilty. | Having at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace held in and for the Borough of Wigan, in the County of Lancaster, on the 28th of April, 1876, been convicted of felony | Seven years penal servitude, and at the expiration thereof to seven years police supervision |
| 4 | James Rodgers | 55 | Shoemaker | Imp. | T. Wall, Esq., Wigan | 29th January | 29th Jany. | Stealing on the 16th January, 1878, a pair of boots, the property of William Rigby | " | " | Prisoner Pleaded Guilty. | Having at the General Sessions of the Peace held at Manchester, in and for the County of Lancaster, on the 21st day of August, 1871, been convicted of felony | Eight years penal servitude, and at the expiration thereof to seven years police supervision. |
| 5 | Charles Hudson alias Ward, alias William Edwards, alias Hitch | 39 | Cook | Imp. | W. J. Lunt, Esq., Wigan. | 4th February. | 5th February. | Stealing on the 30th January, 1878, thirty yards of striped ticking, the property of Thomas Owen Ryder | " | " | Guilty. | Having at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, held at Carnarvon, in and for the County of Carnarvon, on the 18th of October, 1877, been convicted of felony | Seven years penal servitude, and at the expiration thereof to seven years police supervision. |

*Record of Wigan Prisoners held at Kirkdale Gaol, April 1878*

Find My Past's collection of records, 'England and Wales: Crime, Prisons and Punishment, 1770-1935', includes records of criminal cases, gaols (including Wigan Gaol), prison hulks, prisons and criminal calendars. The England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892, available on Ancestry include information about an individual, such as their age, when and where they were tried, sentencing and if you are lucky their place of birth. Information obtained from these registers may lead you to other records, transportation records for instance.

The transportation of offenders began in 1717, with criminals sent to Britain's colonies in North America. The American Revolution in 1776 brought this to an end. With overcrowding in British prisons, transportation was re-introduced in 1787; transportees began to be sent to New South Wales in Australia and Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). This continued until 1868. Convicts awaiting transportation were housed in prison hulks – decommissioned wood ships – moored in the River Thames.

The Assizes Courts were for the most serious offences. Suspects would be tried before two or more judges who travelled a Circuit to hear the cases too serious for the local Justices of the Peace. If someone was tried at the Central Criminal Court (the Old Bailey) there may be a transcript of their trial on their free to use website: **www.oldbaileyonline.org**

Wigan Archives hold collections of the Wigan Court of Quarter Sessions, 1733-1754 and 1790-1971. These record cases such as assault, theft, and petty larceny which were brought before a jury and local Justices of the Peace. They were held four times a year, at Epiphany, Easter, Trinity and Michaelmas. Other records available are the Petty Sessional Courts records for Wigan and Leigh. These were the predecessors of the present Magistrates' Courts; they dealt with minor offences, drunkenness for example, tried by a magistrate, usually without a jury. From 1933 separate registers were kept for Juvenile Courts.

Local newspapers published detailed accounts of criminal acts and court cases, sometimes including verbatim reports of the criminal proceedings. Minor crimes were often reported. You may be able to find the colourful detail that is missing from dry official documents. Wigan and Leigh Local Studies hold collections of local and national newspapers on.

**For further information please have a look at: www.wigan.gov.uk/archives**



# WHAT'S NEW AT THE MUSEUM OF WIGAN LIFE

**QUESTION:** How many more objects are now on display at the Museum of Wigan Life?
**ANSWER:** The recent update of the permanent gallery has seen an amazing 82 per cent increase on the amount of objects on public view. The team at Wigan are committed to increasing the number of artefacts on display and changing displays more often. We now have 111 more objects out to view.

The themes walk the visitor through the history of the Borough, from the Carboniferous period (327-299 million years ago) right through to the twentieth century. Archaeology to fine art, natural history to social history – they all play a key part in telling the fascinating story of our area. A few of the current highlights are featured here but many more objects are eagerly waiting their turn for display. Keep coming back to visit as more and more of this fantastic collection is revealed.

*Contact us: www.wigan.gov.uk/museum 01942 828128 wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk @wiganmuseum - Twitter; @MuseumOfWiganLife - Facebook*

Joan Livesey, Exhibitions Officer

## Wooden Support Beam, 1576

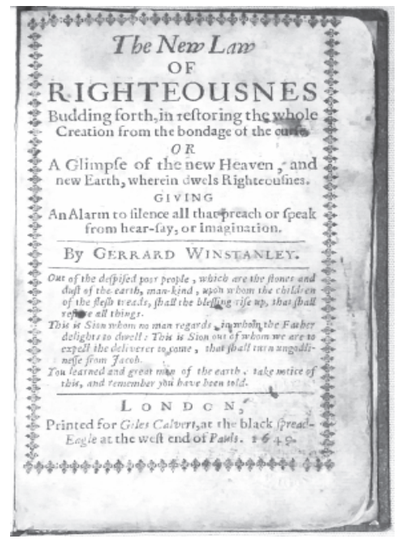
This wooden support is all that survives from an old manor house in Scholes. It is carved with the initials 'ML' and the date '1576'. The initials probably represent the name of the owner or builder of the house


## Mrs Sarah Siddons by Elias Bancroft

Elias Bancroft (1755-1831) studied at the Royal College of Art and later taught at Manchester School of Art. This stunning portrait showcases his amazing talent and is just one of a number of pieces fine art now on show in the museum.

## Gerrard Winstanley Books, 1648 and 1649

During the English Civil War, Wigan-born Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676) was an important radical who founded the 'True Levellers' or 'The Diggers'. He believed all common land belonged to the people and that they had a right to dig and grow their own food. A deeply religious man, he wrote many books, three of which are now on display.



The New Law
OF
RIGHTEOUSNES
Budding forth, in restoring the whole Creation from the bondage of the curse
OR
A Glimpse of the new Heaven, and new Earth, wherein dwels Righteousnes.
GIVING
An Alarm to silence all that preach or speak from hear-say, or imagination.
By GERRARD WINSTANLEY.
Out of the despised poor people, which are the flowers and dust of the earth, mankind, upon whom the children of the flesh treads, shall the blessing rise up, that shall restore all things.
This is Sion whom no man regards, in whom the Father delights to dwell: This is Sion out of whom we are to expect the deliverer to come, that shall turn ungodliness from Jacob.
You learned and great men of the earth, take notice of this, and remember you have been told.
LONDON,
Printed for Giles Calvert, at the black spread-Eagle at the west end of Pauls. 1649.

BY CHRIS HEAVEN

# Wigan Dispensary

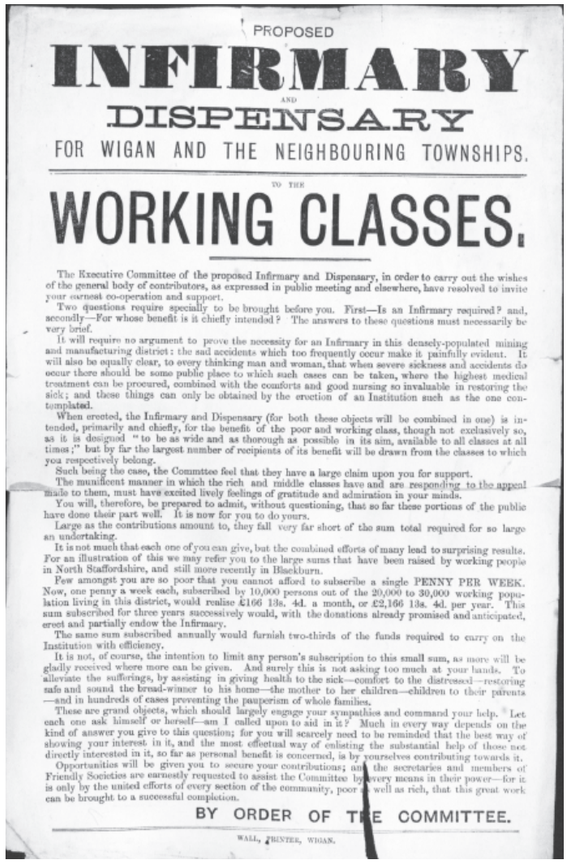
The Wigan Dispensary was formed in 1798. Its aim was to provide charitable medical assistance to the very poor of the town, those unable to pay for medicines themselves. From 1801 it had a building in King Street. In 1873 it amalgamated with Wigan Infirmary which opened in that year.

Today, 'Dispensary' suggests a pharmacy or chemist shop. Back then it meant a place where general healthcare was provided – dispensed – to patients.

Wigan Dispensary was the idea of Dr William Caunce and he served as Honorary Physician to the institution until 1831. Initially the Dispensary didn't live up to expectations. In 1824 the records admit that its performance compared unfavourably with similar institutions in neighbouring towns.
A fundamental re-organisation was needed.
The upgrade introduced a resident 'House Surgeon' and Matron, and increased the visiting 'Honorary Surgeons' from one to three. John Latham was the first House Surgeon. He gave a career long commitment to Wigan and was later one of the Dispensary's Honorary Surgeons. When the Infirmary opened he was its most senior medical practitioner, a position he held until his death in 1879.

The House Surgeon served for a minimum of three years and medical practice outside the Dispensary, within five miles of Wigan, was strictly forbidden. A bond of £500 (reduced to £50 by 1860) would be forfeited if these conditions were not met.

The Matron was a housekeeper rather than a senior nurse. She was required to keep the premises 'clean and well aired' and to support the medical staff. She lived in the lower apartments rent free and had use of the garden. One irksome task was the requirement to clean the House Surgeon's room and make up his bed and fire – for no extra pay. Disputes over this only ended when the House Surgeon's wife became Matron. They were Mr and Mrs John Macloghlin and the Dispensary was their home for 14 years. He was appointed House Surgeon in July 1859 and served until the amalgamation with the Infirmary. She became Matron in January 1860 and things ran smoothly thereafter.



PROPOSED

INFIRMARY

AND

DISPENSARY

FOR WIGAN AND THE NEIGHBOURING TOWNSHIPS.

TO THE

WORKING CLASSES.

The Executive Committee of the proposed Infirmary and Dispensary, in order to carry out the wishes of the general body of contributors, as expressed in public meeting and elsewhere, have resolved to invite your earnest co-operation and support.

Two questions require specially to be brought before you. First—Is an Infirmary required? and, secondly—For whose benefit is it chiefly intended? The answers to these questions must necessarily be very brief.

It will require no argument to prove the necessity for an Infirmary in this densely-populated mining and manufacturing district: the sad accidents which too frequently occur make it painfully evident. It will also be equally clear, to every thinking man and woman, that when severe sickness and accidents do occur there should be some public place to which such cases can be taken, where the highest medical treatment can be procured, combined with the comforts and good nursing so invaluable in restoring the sick; and these things can only be obtained by the erection of an Institution such as the one contemplated.

When erected, the Infirmary and Dispensary (for both these objects will be combined in one) is intended, primarily and chiefly, for the benefit of the poor and working class, though not exclusively so, as it is designed "to be as wide and as thorough as possible in its aim, available to all classes at all times;" but by far the largest number of recipients of its benefit will be drawn from the classes to which you respectively belong.

Such being the case, the Committee feel that they have a large claim upon you for support.

The munificent manner in which the rich and middle classes have and are responding to the appeal made to them, must have excited lively feelings of gratitude and admiration in your minds.

You will, therefore, be prepared to admit, without questioning, that so far these portions of the public have done their part well. It is now for you to do yours.

Large as the contributions amount to, they fall very far short of the sum total required for so large an undertaking.

It is not much that each one of you can give, but the combined efforts of many lead to surprising results. For an illustration of this we may refer you to the large sums that have been raised by working people in North Staffordshire, and still more recently in Blackburn.

Few amongst you are so poor that you cannot afford to subscribe a single PENNY PER WEEK. Now, one penny a week each, subscribed by 10,000 persons out of the 20,000 to 30,000 working population living in this district, would realise £166 13s. 4d. a month, or £2,166 13s. 4d. per year. This sum subscribed for three years successively would, with the donations already promised and anticipated, erect and partially endow the Infirmary.

The same sum subscribed annually would furnish two-thirds of the funds required to carry on the Institution with efficiency.

It is not, of course, the intention to limit any person's subscription to this small sum, as more will be gladly received where more can be given. And surely this is not asking too much at your hands. To alleviate the sufferings, by assisting in giving health to the sick—comfort to the distressed—restoring safe and sound the bread-winner to his home—the mother to her children—children to their parents—and in hundreds of cases preventing the pauperism of whole families.

These are grand objects, which should largely engage your sympathies and command your help. Let each one ask himself or herself—am I called upon to aid in it? Much in every way depends on the kind of answer you give to this question; for you will scarcely need to be reminded that the best way of showing your interest in it, and the most effectual way of enlisting the substantial help of those not directly interested in it, so far as personal benefit is concerned, is by yourselves contributing towards it.

Opportunities will be given you to secure your contributions; and the secretaries and members of Friendly Societies are earnestly requested to assist the Committee by every means in their power—for it is only by the united efforts of every section of the community, poor as well as rich, that this great work can be brought to a successful completion.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMITTEE.

WALL, PRINTER, WIGAN.

*Proposal for Wigan dispensary, Wigan Archives*

The Dispensary was open six days a week from 9am until 6pm. A physician and surgeon, or two surgeons, attended the Dispensary each day, by rota. These gentlemen had private practices in the town and would see patients at the Dispensary free of charge. Two surgeons gave long service and are worthy of particular mention. Mr George Daglish was appointed in 1832 and died in post in 1871. His father Robert was the first to bring a steam engine to Wigan. Mr Thomas Fisher was appointed in 1828 and served until closure in 1873. In recognition of his commitment he received the unique title of Honorary Consultant Surgeon.

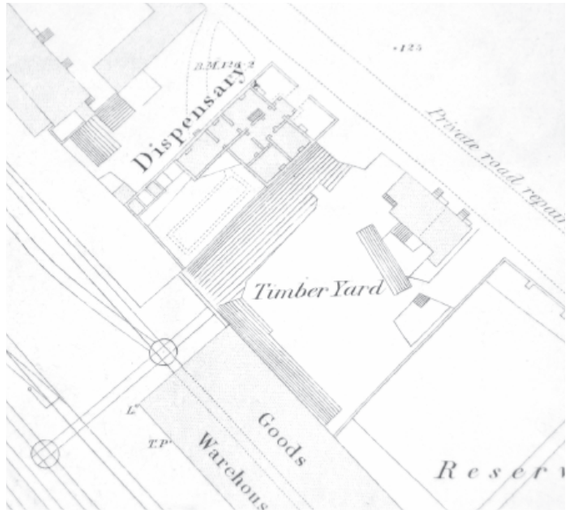
The Dispensary building was intensively used and there were constant struggles to maintain its condition. In 1855 the matron was forced to move out of her apartment because of damp and the Drug Room was temporarily converted to a bedroom for her. A detailed inspection in May 1863 found increasing dilapidation and many repairs were needed.

The Dispensary was funded by one off donations and bequests, and recurring annual subscriptions and church collections. There was also an Annual Ball, at the Eagle and Child. In 1832 ticket prices were ladies 7s, 6d and gentlemen 10s, 6d. In the early decades finances were precarious. The numbers of renewing subscribers was constantly eroded by deaths and in crisis years there were campaigns to canvass for new subscribers.

Patients could not access care directly themselves. There was rationing to protect the financial viability of the charity. Patients could be referred – the term used was 'recommended' – to the Dispensary by a donor, subscriber, or the clergy, but only in proportion to the amount given to the institution. Patients were means tested to check that they could not afford to pay.

Perhaps the most useful medical intervention undertaken at the Dispensary was the vaccination of children against smallpox. It was not however the simple sterile jab in the arm we associate with immunisation today. Children were infected with the unpleasant but mild illness of cowpox which gave protection from the more serious smallpox. The records of 1840 record the arrangements. The parent of every child vaccinated had to deposit one shilling. When the child came back to the Dispensary a week later matter was taken from the pustules and the shilling was returned. The probable explanation for this is that the vaccine material was kept viable by transfer from the arm of one patient

*Wigan dispensary*




*Site of the Wigan dispensary*

to the arm of the next candidate. Originally obtained from a calf the cowpox material was inoculated (scratched) into the skin on the arm of the first patient. When they developed a skin pustule fresh matter was drawn from it for the next patient. The chain of vaccination therefore depended on each successive patient returning for the material to be harvested. The one shilling incentive was to encourage them to do so. The Vaccination Act, 1853, made such vaccination of babies a legal requirement.

The use of leeches was common practice. Certain local women were the main suppliers. Effective surgical procedures were limited but extraction of bladder stones and emergency tracheotomy in diphtheria were probably done. Trusses were provided for hernias.

Poor, cramped and squalid housing made folk vulnerable to infectious diseases. Periodic epidemics put strains on the Dispensary. In 1857 the number of patients rose sharply during a period when typhus fever and smallpox were particularly prevalent. 1867 brought three epidemics – scarlet fever, smallpox and measles. That year there were fewer patients but more deaths, mostly amongst children. However, in 1872 there was a sharp decrease in deaths due to the cleansing effects of the unusual and prolonged rain.

The Dispensary closed and the site was sold soon after the Infirmary opened. In 76 years it treated 148,281 patients. The name of the new hospital remained The Royal Albert Edward Infirmary and Dispensary until the creation of the NHS after which the word 'Dispensary' was dropped.

# The Origins of the New Spring Plotters

## By Isabel Gibbard

Nowadays, having an allotment is regarded as a leisure activity. Yet it was not always so. The history of the allotment system has been shaped by the economic, cultural and political conditions. Behind the old St John the Baptist School in Whelley lie the allotment gardens of New Springs Horticultural Society which have been in continuous cultivation for 135 years. The oldest document of the Society is an 1883 balance sheet, from the Haigh Estate records held by Wigan Archives which lists rents from the gardens and indicates that the allotments were fully established in 1883. Their history goes back even further.

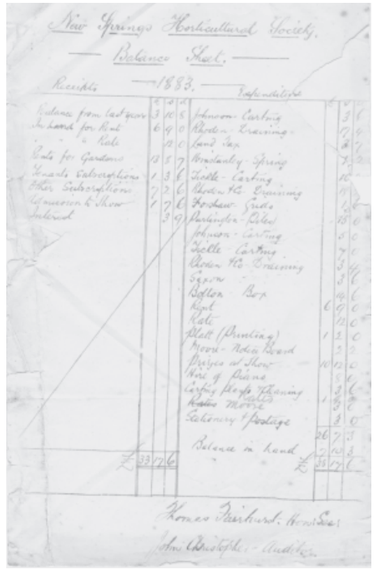
New Springs Floral Society began in 1878 to organise annual shows of window plants, held in St John the Baptist school. The reports in the Wigan Observer of the early shows describe how the Floral Society was the idea of the Reverend C H James, the zealous and much respected curate of St John the Baptist's Church. In the spirit of Victorian philanthropy, the Earl and Countess of Crawford gave their support and various local officials including those of Wigan Coal and Iron Company liberally subscribed to the society.

At the first annual flower show in 1878 there were prizes for Fuchsias, Geraniums, Pelargoniums, Calceolaria, Musk, Hydrangea and Ferns and there was a prize for the best window display. Mr Jamieson, head gardener to Lord Crawford, acted as judge and displays of plants and flowers were sent from the gardens at Haigh Hall. Mr Jamieson also brought a large hamper of pelargonium cuttings, to which visitors could help themselves, and the Haigh Band considerably enlivened the proceedings.


*The site of the New Springs Horticultural Society allotment gardens*

New Springs Floral Society was probably not an original idea of Reverend James. Flower shows organised by clergy were common occurrences in Victorian Britain and the idea that growing plants and flowers could improve the homes and lives of the poor began in the East End of London. It was thought to be beneficial to the poor in several ways – plants purified the air, promoted habits of cleanliness, and their cultivation provided an alternative to the ale house. Plants also helped improve the spiritual condition of the poor as the beauty of the flowers would remind them of their Creator.

The report of the second annual show in 1879 expresses some surprise at the degree of perfection of the plants given the difficulties encountered. One can imagine what these difficulties were. The Alexandra and Lindsay pits were nearby, and the air would have been polluted with smoke and chemicals. There were organisational difficulties too. Residents entering the class for the best window display had to give their names and addresses to the secretary beforehand so that the judges had the opportunity of going round to see the windows. Unfortunately some people did not give their details or gave them to the wrong person and were not included in the judging. In 1882, Mr Holker complained to the committee about some plants exhibited by fellow competitors, Mr Crewdson and Mrs Foy. The committee took this very seriously, and requested several gentlemen to inquire into the matter. This they kindly did, and found that the objections were unfounded. The committee believed that the competition was fair and honest




*New Springs Horticultural Society balance sheet, 1883*

and hoped that it may always be so and the rivalry between the different gardeners and plant growers would remain a friendly and open one.

By 1882 the name changed to New Springs Horticultural Society and, in addition to prizes awarded for window plants, the Wigan Observer lists prizes for vegetables grown in the allotments and for the best kept and best cropped allotments. Mr J Moan kindly declined the first prize for the best allotment as he had won it the previous year, suggesting that the gardens were made in time for the growing season of 1881. 1884 was a noteworthy year when the Earl and Countess of Crawford walked through the gardens, visited the show, and the Countess gracefully distributed the prizes. Lord Crawford spoke of his admiration of what he had seen in the gardens. He said the change there was really wonderful, and reflected great credit on the tenants, who in so short a time, and without any previous knowledge of gardening, had brought their allotments to such a high state of perfection.

The alleviation of rural poverty by providing allotments to improve the standard of living of agricultural workers and their families was a hot political topic in the nineteenth century. The Liberal catchphrase was that if labourers voted for them they would get 'three acres and a cow'. There were some who argued that it would be beneficial all round to provide allotments for industrial workers. Allotments would bring about the social and moral improvement of the worker as they would allow him to spend his spare time profitably providing food for his family, rather than in the public house. It would be in the financial interest of the landowners as the workers would pay rent for their allotments. The employers too would reap the benefit as they would have sober, steady workmen who would stand by their employer in times of difficulty and be less likely to strike.

Relations between Lord Crawford and the New Springs miners had been difficult for many years. In 1853 a strike turned into a riot when Lord Crawford brought in blackleg Welsh miners and the military had to be summoned to restore order. A similar situation arose in 1866 when the Lindsay Pit was attacked and occupied and the blacklegs evicted. In 1881 (the year the allotments were made), there was another strike in Wigan, which was so severe that it led to almost complete closure of the South Lancashire Coalfield. So, not only were allotments a possible means of moral and social improvement they may also have been seen as a means of improving industrial relations and averting unrest.

This is the story so far. For more information please visit us at: https://allotment166.wordpress.com

***Sources:***

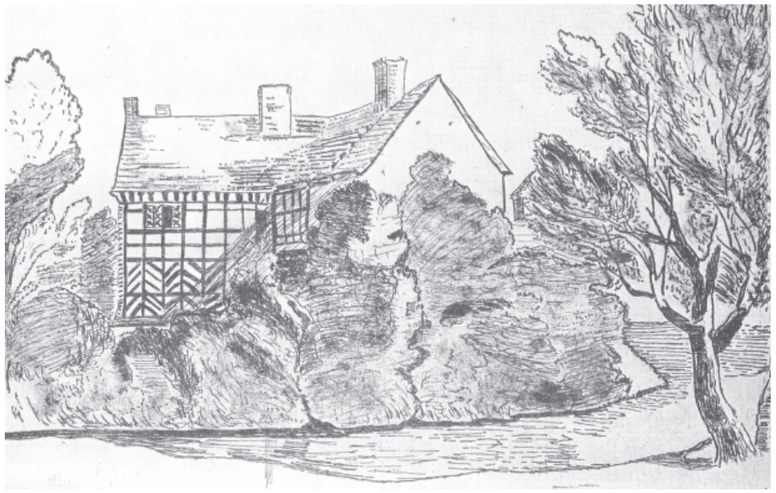
*Wigan Observer archives*
*Gardeners Chronicle archives*
*Church Times archives*
*Mike Fletcher (2005), 'The Making of Wigan', Wharncliffe Books*

# A Midsummer Marriage

## By Anthony Pilgrim

*Silently, cautiously, Humphrey lifted the latch, opened the door and stepped outside. Momentarily startled by the contrast with the dark interior of Bryn Hall, he stopped to take in the scene. The entire park was bathed in mid-morning sunshine. On the far side of the moat, restless deer competed for shade under a gigantic willow tree. Bees buzzed lazily in the warm air, heavy with the scent of Gillyflowers and Sweet Williams. Listening more intently, Humphrey could hear Park Brook gurgling its way under the stone bridge further up the lane. He was about to go to the bridge when, from the opposite direction, new sounds began to impose themselves: a fiddle, pipe and drum, and then laughter and excited chatter. Turning, he noticed a middle-aged man carrying a large bride-cup, inside which was a branch of rosemary festooned with coloured ribbons. Next came the musicians, and then the bride. Still in her teens, her long brown hair combed and pleated, she wore a russet gown and was flanked by two small boys, each with sprigs of rosemary attached by laces to the sleeves of their silk shirts. Bringing up the rear was a group of women and girls, some carrying bride-cakes, others garlands of gilded wheat. At that moment the bride's gaze met his own and a smile crossed her lips. Blushing, Humphrey darted back inside and leaned breathlessly against the door. As his eyes readjusted to the gloom, he found himself face-to-face with Father Key and his guardian, Sir Thomas Gerard....*

'A chapell of Sir Thomas Gerrardes callid the Brinne, in a morninge about 9 or 10 of the clocke, about Midsomer', is identified as the setting for the marriage in 1559 of twelve-year-old Humphrey Winstanley to Alice Worsley, then seventeen. Child marriages were not unusual in sixteenth century aristocratic families, given the importance of ensuring the succession of titles and other property. Annulment was possible when both parties had reached 'the yeres of Consent' (twelve for females, fourteen for males), provided it could then be shown that the marriage had existed in name only.



*Pencil and wash drawing by John Weld of the remains of the Tudor-era Bryn Hall in 1848*

Humphrey had been in ward to Sir Thomas (c. 1512-71, father of the Sir Thomas Gerard commemorated by the Ashton town-centre pub), 'ever syns his fathers death, bie a bargen', and may have been heir to the Blackleyhurst estate near Billinge. Wardship at this period bore little relation to its modern legal counterpart or to adoption. Where the inheritor of certain lands was a minor, the monarch could, through the Court of Wards and for a fee, entrust his or her care and property to a guardian. The prospect of acquiring the inherited estates through marriage to the young heir made wardship a valuable commodity and, far from being simply a kindly act to a fatherless child, wardships were often sold on to third parties at vastly inflated prices. Having been 'convented' in 1543 for 'divers causes' including adultery, 'his general conduct being considered injurious in example to his son… and prejudicial to the church and commonweal', Sir Thomas was hardly a good role model. He does at least seem to have made provision for Humphrey's education, possibly sending him to Winwick Grammar School or to the Boteler school at Warrington.

Like the Gerards, Alice's family had maintained their Catholic faith after Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1533. With the recent accession of Elizabeth I and restoration of the Henrician ecclesiastical system, Sir Thomas may have seen more than financial advantage in building an alliance with the Worsleys. Alice, too, seems at first to have entertained the idea that a lasting relationship might result. However, having seen little of her 'husband' for nearly two years – he had mostly been at 'the scole 8 or 10 myle off', and otherwise lodged with his uncle – it cannot have come as a complete surprise when, in 1561, Humphrey petitioned the Chester Consistory Court for a decree of annulment. In her response, Alice acknowledged that Sir Thomas had instigated the match 'against the mynde of the said Homfrey, as she thinkes'. Despite the entreaties of both her brother and Humphrey's uncle, he had never shown her any love or good will, and he 'never came in bed with her...And forther she sais that she will never refuse hym, but he shall Refuse her first. And nowe she desirethe, that he may either take or refuse her before a Judge, biecause he is at the yeres of Consent'.

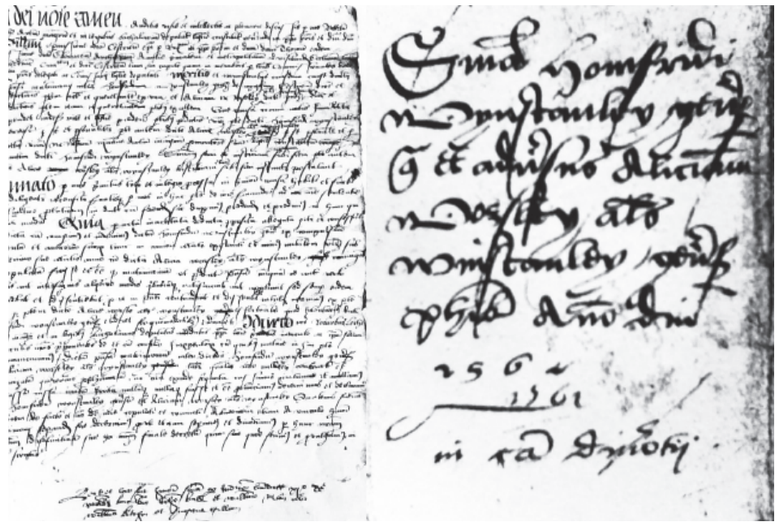
Bryn Hall had been built (or re-built) on the site of the present Hall about 1550. A description of 'the glasse wyndow in his Chaple at the Bryne' is given in the 1601 funeral certificate of Sir Thomas' eldest son. Humphrey's uncle, John Sothworth, identifies the marriage celebrant in 1559 as 'Sir Oswalde Key, chaplen singing att Ashton chapell' – suggesting either that there was then no resident chaplain at Bryn Hall or that he was unable to conduct weddings. Oswald Key occurs in the lists of Winwick Parish clergy for May 1548 and June-August 1554. In the list for 1565 his name again appears but has been crossed through. Unlike the Sothworth deposition, however, none of these 'Liber Cleri' links him with the Ashton-in-Makerfield chapel specifically.

Having taken evidence from Alice, her brother James and John Sothworth, Chancellor Robert Leche pronounced the pair 'separated and entirely divorced from the Bond of Matrimony'. Alice then disappears from the historical record until, aged 60 and either widowed or still unmarried, she is named as co-heir to Worsley Hall and other estates of her late brother. Humphrey may have married Jane Heyton and become involved in a dispute with the Heyton and Anderton families over 'messuages and lands' at Birchley, Billinge and elsewhere – though, since more than one 'Humphrey Winstanley' existed locally at this time, we cannot be sure of the subsequent fate of the reluctant bridegroom.

*Note on Sources*

*My description of the bridal procession is based on a scene in Thomas Deloney's 'The Pleasant Historie of John Winchcomb', written about 1595. Transcripts of the depositions made by Alice and James Worsley, and John Sothworth, are in F J Furnivall (ed) 'Child Marriages [etc] in the Diocese of Chester', Early English Text Society, 1897.*

*The original annulment decree is at Cheshire Record Office, ref. EDC 5/1561/2. The CRO also holds the diocesan 'Liber Cleri' or Visitation Books (class EDV), but fully searchable transcripts are available at www.theclergydatabase.org.uk. The 1601 funeral certificate and details of Sir Thomas' conventing are in T W King (ed) 'Lancashire Funeral Certificates', Chetham Society, 1869. The inquisition post-mortem for Alice's brother is in J P Rylands (ed) 'Lancashire Inquisitions..., 1 to 11 James I', Record Society Lancashire & Cheshire, 1880.*



*The Winstanley-Worsley Annulment Decree, 1561*

## 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

Monthly meetings held on second Tuesday of each month in St Richard's Parish Centre, Mayfield Street, Atherton at 7.30pm. Admission – Members, £1.00, Non Members, £2.00, including refreshments. Contact Details: Margaret Hodge, 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. Members £10 Visitors £2 Enquiries: Zoe Chaddock – 01925 752276 (Chair)

## Hindley & District History Society

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

## Leigh & District Antiques and Collectables Society

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

## Leigh & District History

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

## Leigh Family History Society

The Leigh & District Family History Help Desk is available every Monday afternoon (except Bank Holidays) from 12.30pm to 2.30pm.

There is no need to book an appointment for this Help Desk, which can be reached by lift.

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)

## Local History Federation Lancashire

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

Meetings held at 7.30pm on the fourth Tuesday each month at Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland.
For more information contact Sue Hesketh (Secretary) 01942 212940 or Suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk or visit www.liverpoolgenealogy.org.uk/SkemGrp/Skem

## Wigan Civic Trust

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

## Wigan Archaeological Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm, in the Standish Suite at the Brocket Arms on Mesnes Road - on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August). There is a car park adjacent on the left. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. For more information call Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342.
You an also visit the website at www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk

## Wigan Family and Local History Society

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

## Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

We meet on the first Monday of each month at Beech Hill Book Cycle at 6.30pm.
Admission to the meeting is £2.50
For more information please contact Sheila Ramsdale at sheila.ramsdale@blueyonder.co.uk



# Write 1000 words - Win £100!

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

**Local History Writing Competition**

1st Prize - £100
2nd Prize - £75
3rd Prize - £50
Five Runners Up Prizes of £25

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

*Winners from the Wigan Borough Environment & Heritage Network, Essay Competition 2016*

### Criteria

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

  If selected for publication the Past Forward Editorial Team may edit your submission.

### How to enter

- Articles must be received by e-mail or post by Monday 2 October 2017.
- Electronic submissions are preferred although handwritten ones will be accepted.
- You must state clearly that your article is an entry into the Local History Writing Competition.
- You must include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if applicable). We will not pass your details on to anyone.
- It will not be possible for articles to be returned.
- You are welcome to include photographs or images however they cannot be returned.

### Submit to

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

*OR*

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

# Emmanual School Admission Registers, Ashton-in-Makerfield

**BY GLENYS McCLELLAN (nee Hughes)**

In Past Forward, Issue 7 (August 2015), I noticed one entry in the new Archive Accessions column: 'Emmanuel School Admissions Registers'. Most people probably did not realise that this was actually the original name of the school that locals in Ashton-in-Makerfield knew as 'The British School'. Its title, when I attended in the late 1950s, was Richard Evans County Primary School and the building still stands in the centre of the town, redesigned as Ashton View Care Home.

As a volunteer at the Archives, I offered to transcribe the early admissions covering the years 1870-1919. There is a 100-year embargo on the more recent entries.

As the third generation of my family to attend the school, it covered the years when the school was attended by my grandfather and his siblings. Also listed are my father, his siblings, cousins and many of his friends, some of whom I recognised as I knew them as a child. I spotted my Sunday School Superintendent's name, starting in the Junior Department at the age of seven, giving me a completely different view of the man I later knew. Another entry reminded me of having tea at an address in the 1960s still lived in by the same family as had been there earlier in the century.

There were also entries for children who attended when they visited the town with the fairground. This reminded me of walking along the top floor corridor of the school looking through the windows to see the big wheel growing behind the shops opposite the school. Other children were listed as lodging in the town for a week while their parents appeared at the Hippodrome Theatre in Heath Road.

Many of the early addresses recorded were interesting as only a terrace row name was entered rather than the road. This led me and some friends to start wandering around the town with our eyes upwards searching for these nameplates on the centre of a row. Local nicknames for areas such as America Lane, now Golborne Road, were also included. Sometimes when children arrived in the town from other towns or schools, mention is made of this. This could be helpful to family historians who may not know the date of their arrival or their previous location.

Transcribing these registers has brought back many memories. I remember being a 'grown-up' seven year old and I was allowed to walk down the sloping path at the front of the school to go in through the Teachers' door as we marched upstairs to the Junior Department.

As well as the admission registers, there are also early meeting minutes and log books. These give details of the lessons, teachers and local events which sometimes meant poor attendance, especially in bad weather or when the races were on at Haydock Park.

Perhaps other former pupils will remember collecting empty jam jars twice a year to raise funds, probably for our Christmas party. They were all stored in the open area, down under the front left of the building (it is now covered in as part of the redesigned building). We had a competition to see who could collect the most jars and one year I won.

Perhaps I've made other Ashtonians remember their early days at 'The British' – one line in the accessions column certainly took me back there.

The Emmanuel School Registers are available from the Archives, reference SR/137 or can be found online at: www.wigan.gov.uk/archives

### *A Footnote: The Welsh in Ashton*

*During the 1950s and early 1960s I often spent my Sunday evenings visiting relatives and friends of my parents in 'Little Wales'. This was the area of Ashton-in-Makerfield around the Bryn Road, Bolton Road junction which was where the Welsh families had settled when they came from North Wales to the new mines which opened at the end of the nineteenth century. Sadly most of the Welsh speakers are no longer with us but I feel this bit of Ashton's history should be recorded.*

*If anyone has any details they would like me to include in any future record I am hoping to make, please contact me at glenys.mcclellan@blueyonder.co.uk*



# CANADA DRAWS A SURPRISE FIND FOR LEIGH PARISH CHURCH

**BY JOHN MOLYNEUX**

In the spring edition of Past Forward (Issue 72) I wrote about a sketch of a section of a stained glass window made by James Powell of London.

The sketch was sent with two other sketches of parts of a window installed in St Mary's Parish Church, Leigh. The sketches were purchased with the help of a Brighter Borough grant supported by the three ward Councillors, Lord Peter Smith, Myra Whiteside and Susan Greensmith.

The third sketch did not name the organisation commissioning the work and my article asked readers to take the photograph of the sketch and to look in their local churches for clues as to where the actual window could be found.

I am delighted to say the search is over. The window was ordered for the Congregational Church in Union Street, Leigh.

The mystery was solved with a little luck and perseverance. I noticed that the sketch had a number written near the top. The form of that number was a standard one used by the factory. I sent a quick email to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, asking them to look up the numbers in the James Powell order book, and 'bingo' – they turned up trumps. I now have a copy of the original order raised by Bradshaw Gass and Hope of 12 Silverwell Street, Bolton on 26 August 1926.

Unfortunately, the Congregational Church has since been demolished. I understand that the window was removed at the time and sold to a local firm dealing in stained glass windows; it is believed to have been used in repairing other windows.

The Church Council of Leigh St Mary's have kindly donated the sketch to the Archives & Local Studies service at Leigh Town Hall where the surviving archive of the Congregational Church in Leigh is already held. Please contact the Archives if you would like to view the original design or any records relating to the Church.

# 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 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
- 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.

*Front page from the first edition of the Leigh's People's Paper*

Leigh People's Paper

2p

**Why another Paper**

We think there is a definite need for a new paper because the present local press fails Leigh. Take away the pictures and the advertisements and there's not a lot left.

We think there are important issues in Leigh which other papers either ignore or give little coverage. We intend to bring these issues to the attention of you, the public. Issues like **PLANK LANE.**

We are a non-profit making paper, your 2p goes to cover our costs only. We aim to be your voice, to be a paper by the people, for the people. To that end, we would like to hear your views about anything going on in town or in the country generally. Write us an article, you don't have to be a journalist, none of us are. If you disagree with anythmng in this issue then write us a letter.

The address to contact the paper is 184 The Avenue, Leigh.

# The Story of Leigh People's Paper and Leyth, Bent and Bongs People's Paper, 1973-1983

## BY MICHAEL CAINE

The first issue of L.P.P. was in February 1973. It was the brainchild of Judith Robinson (from Scunthorpe) and a product of the time when the Alternative Press had given rise to independent papers in a number of cities and towns.

Judith worked for the Leigh Area Anglican Churches Council and as a Community Project Church the paper was backed by the Vicar of Leigh, the Reverend John Rogan, who provided a small set-up loan.

The aims of the paper were stated on the cover of the first two page issue. This rationale continued throughout the life of the paper. It was felt that the local press failed the town, in not covering local news adequately and by not asking enough questions. A number of folk agreed with that and were prepared to write, edit, produce, sell or buy this new paper.

Time was given freely, no political donations were taken and the paper proved viable on an average print run of 2,000 at the princely sum of 2p.

It was cutting with scissors, pasting with prit-stick, drawing by hand and ye olde manual typing. Copies were delivered to Leigh Library (most surviving) and also posted to the British Library (status unknown).

In April 1974, the same month that Leigh Borough lost its independent status, Lancashire Life focussed on Leigh. L.P.P. was featured as 'Leigh's Pungent People's Paper'. They wrote: 'Believing that protest and feeling were inadequately represented in the press of the area, a group of young men and women started their own monthly paper. Called Leigh People's Paper it began life as a church community project. It is non profit making, carries no paid advertising, sells at 8 pages for 2p and its circulation has doubled the 700 copies sold in the first edition a year ago. Its sponsors - writers, typists and salesmen include teachers like Michael Caine and Tony Castledine, an accountant, Peter Hardie, a coppersmith, James Blackburn, students Pauline Dergachev and Judith Robinson, and its cartoonist Phil Sharples, a local draughtsman. They boast a scoop over a recent ambulance strike, demand cleaner canals, make strident educational demands and devote a lot of space to painting grim pictures of the horrors of life with Wigan. As with most things Leythian, fun pokes out its welcoming head. Phil Sharples has created 'Clogman', a kind of Super/Batman – the saviour of Leigh, who in a full page strip cartoon readily and regularly demolishes those 'Things' from down the road – the humble pie-eaters of Wigan!'

### Who was involved?

Producing the first issues were Judith, Tony Castledine, Peter Hardie, Michael Caine, James Blackburn (not the librarian of the time), Peter Smith (now Lord Smith of Leigh, Leader of Wigan Council), Joy Smith (now Lady Smith), Malcolm Kirkpatrick, Pauline Dergachev and Walter Brown. Typists were Judith, Peter and for a while, Jenny Scully.

By issue 4, April 1973, cartoonist extraordinaire Phil Sharples was at the drawing board.

Later, in volume 2, September 1977, the following were involved: David Matthews, Keith Battersby, Joan Miller, Dermot Harris, Barbara Panton and Harry Miller. Most of the original crew were still there.

By volume 3, in 1979, quite a few had dropped out and Rick Riley, Lindon Phillips and Tony Barclay were involved. Steve Jones and Tony Castledine were contributing the cartoons and drawings. These personnel, I believe, were there at the end.

### Publishing, Printing and Prices

There were eight different publishing addresses for the papers (L.P.P. and L.B.B.P.P.). Following on from 184 The Avenue, the order reads: 5 Faith Street; 18 Astley Street; 1 Buck Street (short stay); 53a Everest Road, Atherton; 5 Leigh Road (short, I think); 354 Wigan Road, Atherton; and finally 30 Devon Street, Leigh. I wonder if any blue plaques will be going up at these places?

The printers used were those who specialised in the alternative press, which flourished in the 1970s and 1980s. These were Moss Side Press, Progress Bookshop (Hathersage) and finally Rochdale Alternative Press.

*Michael Caine and Pauline Dergachev*

It's fair to say the size of the paper increased over time, but inevitably so did the price. Issue 1 cost 2p; by July 1974 it was 3p (issue 16); December 1977 saw 5p, with 7p charged in March 1978. The 10p mark was hit in April 1979, with a whopping 15p by the time the paper closed.

### Name Changes

After 5½ years, L.P.P. changed its name to Leigh People's Paper with Bent and Bongs. Shortly afterwards in volume 3, number 1, the name became Leyth, Bent and Bongs and People's Paper. This, I believe, reflected the increased coverage and interest shown in the town.

### Cartoons, Characters and Pie-Eaters

The biggest hits with readers, I thought, were the cartoons.

Issue 2, March 1973 had featured an article 'Pie-Eaters Never!', in resurrecting the old nickname for Wigginers. Its writer, Michael Caine, was protesting against Leigh's proposed inclusion in the new Wigan M.B.C. (due 1 April 1974).
This, plus a desire to improve the graphics of L.P.P., prompted Phil Sharples to create and draw 'Clogman, Hero of Leyth', which appeared in issue 4, May 1973. This adventure was entitled 'Clogman Versus the Pie-Eaters', and thus was a legend born! The term 'pie-eaters' became locally widespread again after somewhat falling out of use. It spread around the U.K. and eventually went international as Leythers sent copies of the paper abroad.

The pie-eater thread ran in the paper from then on.

Phil finally bowed out after many Clogman adventures, always drawn by him and mainly scripted by him, but some storylines were by Michael Caine and at least one was with Tony Castledine. Phil also produced cartoon strips featuring local 'dignitaries', events and issues.

Also contributing cartoons, sketches and graphics were Pauline Dergachev and Tony 'Cas', the latter coming up with 'Clogman's Angels' before introducing readers to 'Sid O'Common – Son of Clogman'. Sis's exploits continued to the very end. Steve Jones did most of the L.B.B. graphics and other cartoons, carrying on the fine tradition.

### The End...and a little bit more

Ten years for an independent paper is quite an achievement in any town. Indeed, there was just one competitor, launched by Leigh Young Conservatives, which faded after just two issues.

The folk who produced L.P.P. and L.B.B. came from a wide variety of trades and professions and had a range of political views. Somehow they got the paper to thrive and survive until the last pages were folded in July 1983. Another issue was promised for September, but it didn't happen. Perhaps they went on their hols and forgot, or just moved on. I was unable to find out what happened, since I wasn't involved during the L.B.B. era, and that's why I've been unable to write as much about that period as I would have liked.


*'Clogman', courtesy of Phil Sharples*

BY SHEILA RAMSDALE

# Irish Immigration in Wigan

This is the first article relating to a talk about 'Wigan's Reaction to the Dublin Uprising of 1916', given by Sheila Ramsdale and Michael Gallagher in 2016

One of the fascinating aspects of living in Wigan are the numerous occasions on which when chatting to people, you discover they originated from some part of Ireland. Like many others, my maternal grandfather, Alderman John Patrick Mannion, came here from Dunmore in County Galway in the early 1900s and spent the rest of his life dedicated to the people of St Patrick's Ward in Scholes, maintaining Irish culture and politics as well as becoming politically involved with the Labour Party in Wigan. He was typical of many Irish people who have become assimilated into the town and are still proud of their Irish ancestors.

The Irish have been coming to England for much longer than we might imagine. Bristol has records showing there was an Irish settlement before 1200. People had been coming to Liverpool for centuries, some for trade reasons – not all the Irish were poor – some for seasonal employment such as harvesting and some who settled permanently. Liverpool was used to large numbers of Irish moving through or staying for temporary work before returning to Ireland. In 1841 over 57,000 arrived for navvying and building work. They were attracted to England because of the Industrial Revolution and the increased demand for labour in coal, cotton and the iron industries as well as the building of canals and railways.

The Catholic Baptism Registers of St John's and St Mary's Church show a marked increase in the number of births of people from Ireland in the 1830s. Mather's map of Wigan showed an expansion in the Scholes and Wallgate areas housing many Irish people by 1827.

By 1841 there were over 100,000 Irish born people living in Lancashire out of a total of 219,000 in the whole of England and Wales. What is interesting is that the 1836 Commission looking into Poor Law Relief mentioned that the immigrants, including the labouring poor, had a strong desire to better themselves. This is mentioned with surprise for some reason!

Needless to say, the numbers of Irish immigrants increased dramatically by the mid-1840s as a result of the Great Famine when many thousands had starved to death as a result of potato blight in Ireland.

The poor Irish had left behind such a hard life that jobs even at a very low rate of pay with poor conditions seemed attractive. Many of them came from the Counties of Connaught, Kerry and Cork. For these poor unfortunate people emigration was no casual decision and they arrived in a distressed and emaciated state. The Liverpool Mercury in 1850 described, 'hundreds of squalid creatures, without shoes, stockings or shirts with nothing on their heads and with rags, hardly sufficient to hide the nakedness of their bodies'. However, you don't get the impression they feel any pity for these poor creatures or looked upon them as victims; if anything they appear to have viewed them as a serious threat.

It is probably true to say that the Irish were England's first substantial resident ethnic minority; this was certainly the case in Wigan when they arrived in large numbers. Reading local newspapers they appear to have produced a reaction of fear and prejudice.

They were greeted with mixed reactions on the streets of the town and in its institutions. The Catholic Church was very welcoming and acted almost like a surrogate family. Because of their distressed conditions they were glad to accept any jobs; even those with low pay and poor working conditions appeared attractive. This was at a time when the indigenous working class were also living in very straitened circumstances and were practically on a par with the Irish. Reading local newspapers it is obvious that some Wiganers reacted with hostility to what they regarded as unfair competition for jobs. On the other hand this suited the employers who found it useful to force wages down even further and use the Irish as scapegoats. Instead of seeing the employer as the threat people viewed the incoming immigrant as a danger.

The initial hostile reaction of the host community led to the 'ghettoisation' of the Irish in Scholes and the Wallgate area, which led to a worsening of social problems. These areas already had severe problems of overcrowding and poor living conditions. For instance, in Greenhough Row off Scholes there were reputedly 316 Irish people out of a total of 357 inhabitants, living in 32 houses, at an average of nearly 10 people per house.

*St Patrick's Church, visible behind cottages in Hardybutts*

As I have already stated even at the height of the exodus from Ireland there was very little sympathy shown, nor were the poor people seen as victims. The 1836 Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain concluded that the Irish invasion of Britain was an 'example of a less civilized population spreading themselves…beneath a more civilized community'.

Various reports concluded that the Irish just worsened existing social problems. A Mr William Acton, Overseer of the Poor in Wigan, reported to the Commissioners and gave evidence saying that the Irish resided in the worst parts of the town and were, 'generally filthy in their habits'. It was also reported that the Irish were, 'utterly regardless both of personal and domestic cleanliness'.

It is difficult to know how the Irish must have felt. They had come from essentially rural areas to an urban one where they lived in appalling conditions, worked very hard for very little pay and seemed to be subjected to unrelenting discrimination and violence. This must have been a demoralising and alienating lifestyle for them. The Wigan Observer described them as 'low life drunkards, dirty and feckless with a Celtic idleness and a taste for anarchy'. It seems that the Catholic Church was the only fixed points in their lives and the local priest and Church was looked upon as their saviour.

The power of the Church was channelled through the local parishes and the priest, who was obviously better educated than the parishioners, quickly came to be looked on as their saviour. For instance, immigrants arriving in Scholes learned how to locate the Wigan Arms public house, where the landlord managed to get them a house and a job and contact with the priest.

In the next article we will look at the influence of the Catholic Church and how the Irish quickly became assimilated into the social fabric of the town, eventually holding official positions on the Town Council, Board of Guardians and numerous other important organisations.

Mam never went out to work, but she did take in washing and the few bob earned went with Dad's meagre wage into an old tea caddy on the mantelpiece. Like most housewives in those times, Mam was the one who suffered most. Her working day, every day, was drudgery. She toiled slavishly from morning till night. For a woman dedicated to the needs of her family this meant she had very little time to herself. I never saw her settle down to read a book, use lipstick, rouge or perfume, but I would often see her knitting, sewing, crocheting and patching clothes, all done to ease the family burden of poverty.

She was tolerantly mindful to her family's needs in every way possible, giving Dad and us as much comfort as she possibly could. Even with a lack of money she was never submissive. Dad, in the early days had already relinquished his war pension of seven shilling and sixpence, for a lump sum of £10, and now that was just a memory. Their living standards and conditions hadn't improved much and her favourite quote was, 'we'll manage somehow'.

She took in extra washing, using a dolly tub, dolly leg, rubbing board and mangle, she washed Mondays and Tuesdays and ironed on Wednesdays. At that time her iron was a gas operated one. She would climb on a chair, then on to our solid wooden dinner table in the centre of the living-room, remove the gas mantle and connect a rubber tube from the fitting down to the iron itself.

Mam was the pivot, the centre of all that was essential to our childhood. Our house may have been rented but she made it hers. Sparsely furnished it may have been, with odd square pieces of carpet on the floor and a black-leaded fire range for heat and baking bread and cakes, but she polished, black-leaded and beat those carpets relentlessly until the place smelled and shone like a country mansion. God knows how she found time for visitors, but she did, and always with a cup of tea and slice of homemade cake.

It was always Mam who went without and we, the family, Dad and all, never appreciated her love, tolerance and dedication, until it was too late. We never kissed or hugged her and never said 'thanks Mam'. But deep down, we loved her and in later years we came to realize and appreciate how unselfishly she had given her very life to us.

So where does that leave Dad? To be brutally honest, on his own Dad wouldn't have lasted a week. He was honest and firm and a family provider, handing over a labourer's wage but he never did any household chores. I don't remember him ever making a cup of tea. He decorated (using colour wash) and soled and heeled our shoes, renewed the irons on our clogs and cut our hair. He never hit us. Mam did the clouting at our house. Dad was still a force to be reckoned with. One look from him was sufficient enough to deter any roistering or bother. Dad believed absolutely in physical exercise. Walking and gathering herbs from the countryside was his favourite pastime. Later (in the better times), Dad spent precious money on a variety of body building courses. Burough's club (heavy ones) swinging course, T W Standwell's deep breathing exercises, Charles Atlas's 'Have a body like mine' and so it went. Mam persevered.

The years rolled on. Dad's siblings moved on. Grandad became poorly and died in bed in 1946 still wearing a knitted skullcap Mam had made. Dad and Uncle Dick washed his lifeless body and he was buried, like his wife Margaret nine years later, in Newburgh church-yard.

It was the end of an era. In the early 1960s a slum clearance order brought in the demolition men to bulldoze Miry Lane, Horsefield Street and the surrounding area. Mam and Dad, in their dwindling years found some reasonable comfort and contentment in a place, that back in the dark days of poverty and want, they could only have dreamed about: a modern bungalow.

*View across Scholes taken in the 1950s*

BOOK REVIEW

## ‘The Bridgewater Canal through Time’

‘The Bridgewater Canal through Time’ by Jean and John Bradburn is a recent publications from Amberely Publishing. The book is a journey along parts of the Bridgewater comparing photographs from the past and the present to highlight how the canal has changed.

The book begins with the Duke of Bridgewater and his motivation for building the waterway and then looks at specific locations such as Worsley, Manchester, Runcorn and the Leigh section of the Bridgewater. Features of the canal are illustrated by high quality photographs in both colour and in black and white. Interesting local history snippets are also included such as the canal water being dyed blue in preparation for Queen Victoria’s visit to Worsley!

This book would be enjoyed by both local historians and canal enthusiasts. Available to buy from Waterstones or Amazon and costs £14.99.

# White Plume

Thoughts of a Conscientious Objector, 1916
Dedicated to Jack Foister

By Tom Walsh

Row after row of smiling faces eager to answer Kitchener's call. The recruiting office is where all good men should be. Sign the papers, leave your home, leave your sweetheart, leave your dreams. For King and country bids you come, to fight, to slay, to die.

What to do if not to go, it is your duty, it is your fight, if you renege a white plume will be your lasting shame. No man should see what you will see, you'll hear the sounds of hell, where life is cheap and death will seem the better choice .

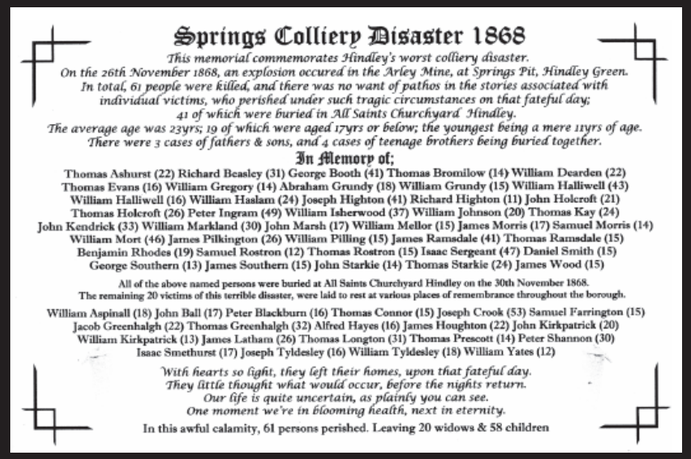
I will not go, I can not kill, to take a life would be a sin. Please help me God to be unflinching, to say no to slaughter and to war; grant dear Lord that I stay resolute. The man I'm meant to kill is not my foe. He has family, hopes and dreams, what right have I to take his dreams away!

# THE SPRINGS PIT DISASTER

On 26 November 1868 an accident occurred at Springs Pit, Hindley Green. Hindley and District History Society and All Saints Church, Hindley, are proposing to erect a memorial stone to commemorate all those who died.

The memorial stone will be on the site of the graves of the 42 who were buried in All Saints graveyard, Hindley. A further 16 were buried in Leigh Cemetery and four elsewhere.

We will be raising funds for the memorial but in the first instance we are looking for family members of those who died to invite them to the official dedication of the memorial on the 150th anniversary in 2018.



**Springs Colliery Disaster 1868**

*This memorial commemorates Hindley's worst colliery disaster.*
*On the 26th November 1868, an explosion occured in the Arley Mine, at Springs Pit, Hindley Green.*
*In total, 61 people were killed, and there was no want of pathos in the stories associated with individual victims, who perished under such tragic circumstances on that fateful day;*
*41 of which were buried in All Saints Churchyard Hindley.*
*The average age was 23yrs; 19 of which were aged 17yrs or below; the youngest being a mere 11yrs of age.*
*There were 3 cases of fathers & sons, and 4 cases of teenage brothers being buried together.*

**In Memory of;**

Thomas Ashurst (22) Richard Beasley (31) George Booth (41) Thomas Bromilow (14) William Dearden (22)
Thomas Evans (16) William Gregory (14) Abraham Grundy (18) William Grundy (15) William Halliwell (43)
William Halliwell (16) William Haslam (24) Joseph Highton (41) Richard Highton (11) John Holcroft (21)
Thomas Holcroft (26) Peter Ingram (49) William Isherwood (37) William Johnson (20) Thomas Kay (24)
John Kendrick (33) William Markland (30) John Marsh (17) William Mellor (15) James Morris (17) Samuel Morris (14)
William Mort (46) James Pilkington (26) William Pilling (15) James Ramsdale (41) Thomas Ramsdale (15)
Benjamin Rhodes (19) Samuel Rostron (12) Thomas Rostron (15) Isaac Sergeant (47) Daniel Smith (15)
George Southern (13) James Southern (15) John Starkie (14) Thomas Starkie (24) James Wood (15)

All of the above named persons were buried at All Saints Churchyard Hindley on the 30th November 1868.
The remaining 20 victims of this terrible disaster, were laid to rest at various places of remembrance throughout the borough.

William Aspinall (18) John Ball (17) Peter Blackburn (16) Thomas Connor (15) Joseph Crook (53) Samuel Farrington (15)
Jacob Greenhalgh (22) Thomas Greenhalgh (32) Alfred Hayes (16) James Houghton (22) John Kirkpatrick (20)
William Kirkpatrick (13) James Latham (26) Thomas Longton (31) Thomas Prescott (14) Peter Shannon (30)
Isaac Smethurst (17) Joseph Tyldesley (16) William Tyldesley (18) William Yates (12)

*With hearts so light, they left their homes, upon that fateful day.*
*They little thought what would occur, before the nights return.*
*Our life is quite uncertain, as plainly you can see.*
*One moment we're in blooming health, next in eternity.*

In this awful calamity, 61 persons perished. Leaving 20 widows & 58 children

***Keith Wood’s research on the disaster can be found in Past Forward, Issue 47.***

***For further details, please contact: Joan Topping, 15 Longton Street, Hindley, WN2 3HT 01942 257 361***





# What’s On at The Museum of Wigan Life

All events **£2.50pp** incl tea or coffee unless otherwise stated.

Please call **01942 828128** or email **wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk** to book your place.

## Wigan Pewter – A Lost Industry

**By Caroline Heaven**
**Thursday 20th April**
**12 noon – 1pm**

During the 1600s Golden Age of Pewter, Wigan was only second to London in the number of pewterers working here. The town supplied much of the North and traded abroad via Liverpool. Why did the pewter industry thrive? Who were the ‘Troublesome Pewterers’ of Wigan? Why did such a flourishing industry begin to fail? This is your chance to obtain answers to these questions and many more and to handle and view genuine pewter artefacts.

## Family History and the First World War

**Thursday 27th April**
**and 8th June**
**2.30pm – 4pm**
**Tea or coffee not supplied**

What did your family do in the war? If you have an ancestor involved in the First World War and want to find out more, this is the workshop for you. We will look at how to search military records online including Wigan Borough Online War Memorial.

## Victorian Medicine

**by Charlie Guy**
**Monday 8th May • 12 noon – 1pm**
**Price: £2.50 per person**
**booking required**

Victorian medicine could be a combination of quackery, pseudoscience and luck. Medicines ranged from mercury, arsenic and phosphorous to leeches and laxatives. Find out about the use of electricity and class A drugs on the ill and beliefs about women and sex. Discover how approaches to care were defined by a patient’s social class, gender and race. Don’t miss this intriguing look into the medical quirks and progress of the Victorian Age.

## Museums at Night

**Museum of Wigan Life**
**Friday 19th May • 7pm – 10.30pm**
**Price: £3.00 per person**

After dark the museum comes alive with new art, music and performance. Forget what you know about museums and see culture in a new light. Visit for a drink, explore the quirky corners and discover newly commissioned artworks, live music and soundscapes.

## Creepy Crawlies and Brilliant Bugs

**Tuesday 30th May & Thursday 1st June • 1pm – 2.30pm**

Join us for May half term! Make your own creep crawlies, go on a ‘bug hunt’ and get a peak behind the scenes at preserved insects and butterflies from the collection.

## The Douglas Navigation

**By Mike Clarke**
**Tuesday 20th June**
**12 noon – 1pm**

Back by popular demand Mike Clarke looks at the story of Wigan’s River Douglas as it was turned from a natural waterway into an industrial highway. The Douglas Navigation was authorised in 1720 and finally opened in 1742 before it was closed in 1781. Find out more about this important part of our industrial heritage.

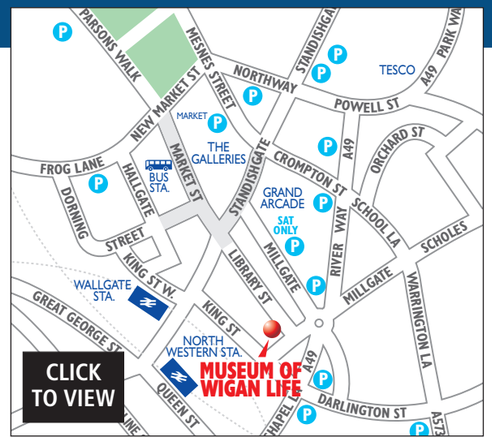
## Passchendaele and the First World War

**By Colonel Glover**
**Thursday 6th July**
**12 noon – 1.15pm**

July 2017 marks the centenary of the Battle of Passchendaele, an event made infamous by the mud and slaughter faced by troops on both sides during the First World War. After three months of fighting, causalities numbered 325,000 for the Allies and 260,000 for the Germans. The huge loss of life for limited gains continues to make this major battle controversial today. Why did the battle take place? How was it fought? What was the reality on the ground? Find out more about the military context of this battle and the conditions for those who lived and died through it.

# How to Find Us

Wigan Council

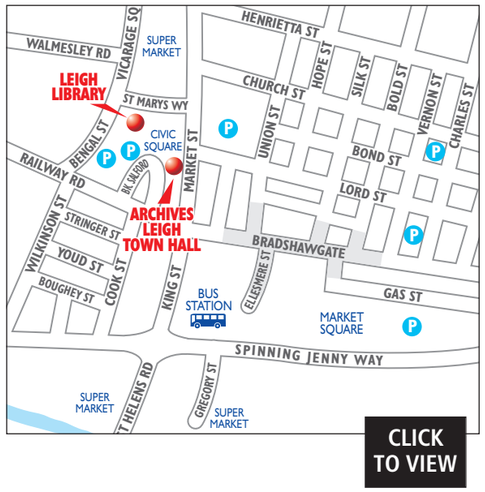


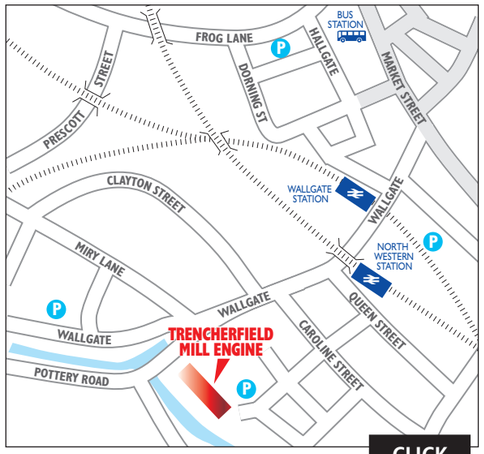

## Museum of Wigan Life & Wigan Local Studies

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

## Archives & Leigh Local Studies

Leigh Town Hall, Leigh WN7 1DY
Telephone 01942 404430
archives@wigan.gov.uk




## Trencherfield Mill Engine

Wigan Pier Quarter, Heritage Way,
Wigan WN3 4EF
Telephone 01942 828128
b.rowley@wigan.gov.uk

YOUR LOCAL MUSEUM

Bolton Bury
Oldham Rochdale
Salford Stockport
Tameside Wigan

**Take a closer look** www.gmmg.org.uk

GM
GREATER MANCHESTER MUSEUMS GROUP

@WiganArchives Service @MuseumofWiganLife @WiganMuseum @wiganandleigharchives