

PAST FORWARD

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The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

From the Editor

So here it is - the last *Past Forward* of 1999.....and the century.....and the Millennium! In comparison a decade does not seem long, but in that time *Past Forward* has proved to be an outstanding success. Letters in this special issue once again bear eloquent testimony to its popularity, value and influence. Nearly 10 years ago no one could have begun to predict its success not just locally but nationally and even internationally. My thanks to all contributors, (many of whom have done so regularly almost from day one), designers and printers, and Heritage Service staff - all far too many to mention - who have played a part in this achievement.

Sadly, one such regular contributor, Archivist Nicholas Webb, has written his last article for *Past Forward*. After 14 years of splendid service, Nicholas has decided to move on, into the private sector, and a post in Barclays Bank. A warm welcome to his successor, Joanne Revill, who I'm sure will be continuing the tradition of *News from the Archives*.

I am confident that *Past Forward* will continue to go from strength to strength in the next Millennium - a momentous event which Wigan Heritage Service is certainly doing its bit to commemorate. Full details of the History Shop's exciting new *People's Show*, for example, can be found on p16. I myself, in my new role of Millennium Festival Co-ordinator, have been putting together an exciting package of events, beginning around Easter 2000, based on the Parish Map, which is definitely heading for *Guinness Book of Records* proportions - full details in the next *Past Forward*.

As Christmas rapidly approaches, don't forget the History Shop for that special Christmas - or Millennium - gift. Although it seems strange as I write this in mid-October, may I take this opportunity to be one of the first to wish all readers of *Past Forward*, near and far, a Very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year, Century.....and Millennium.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:

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Bah Humbug!

It's a Dickens of a job picking that perfect Christmas gift, so try the History Shop's range for Christmas '99. Our pewter selection for this year includes pin cushions, pomanders, miniature clocks in art deco, art nouveau and Egyptian style, and irresistible miniature pewter replicas of Victorian and Edwardian pull-a-long toys. We have a wide range of traditional wooden toys, from stocking fillers such as skipping ropes and pick-up-sticks to automated wooden money boxes. For something out of the ordinary how about a replica classical sleeping lion sculpture, or a delicate dandelion paperweight?

To celebrate the Millennium we have commissioned a woven calendar with a view of All Saints Church, available in a green or cream mount; its a perfect keepsake and is ideal for posting to friends and relatives at home or abroad. We only have limited numbers so be sure to get one before stocks run out.



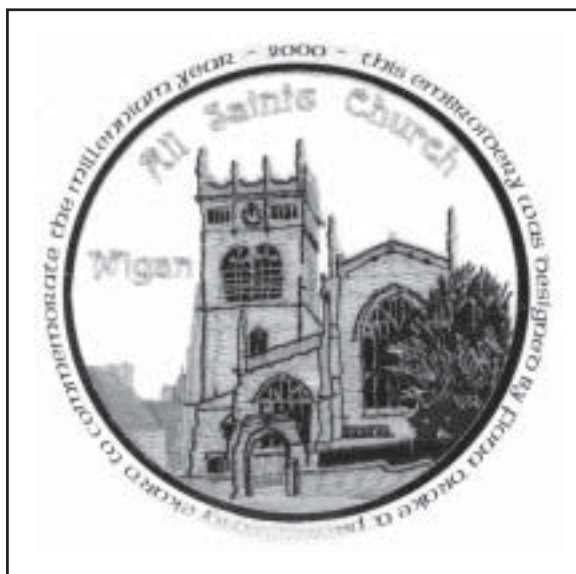
News from the Archives

AS SOME of our regular visitors will know our Archivist Nicholas Webb moved on a couple of months ago. As a result the usual roundup of donations and new acquisitions to the archive collection does not appear this time.

Over the past months we have tried to maintain the service from the Archive search room. Thanks go to our staff Dave and Steph, and to our colleague from the Education Department, Linda Mogg for keeping the service going.

At the time of going to press we are pleased to announce the recruitment of a new Heritage Officer (Archives) Joanne Revill. Joanne comes from Wrexham and has recently completed her Archive Administration training at the Liverpool University Centre for Archive Studies. We would like to welcome her to Wigan and wish her every success in her new post

Nicholas was, of course, a regular contributor to *Past Forward*, and by way of final farewell to him the remainder of the *News from the Archives* section will feature the Roy Cafe, the last article submitted by him for the magazine. (See page opposite).



January 2000

SAT 1	MON 17
SUN 2	TUES 18
MON 3	WED 19
TUES 4	THU 20
WED 5	FRI 21
THU 6	SAT 22
FRI 7	SUN ??

Actual size: 140mm x 283mm

A HERITAGE PHOTOGRAPH FOR CHRISTMAS

Many readers rely on the Heritage Service's splendid photographic collection for Christmas presents - photographs can be supplied in various sizes, framed or unframed, at competitive prices. To avoid disappointment due to the Christmas rush, however, please make sure that your order is placed no later than the beginning of December.

Cover: Staff of The Roy Cafe, Wigan, assembled outside the cafe on the occasion of the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, 1937. (See article on opposite page).

THIS is the last contribution to Past Forward made by Nicholas Webb (written under his latest pseudonym!) before his departure for pastures new (see page opposite).

THE fast food chains and greasy spoon cafes are now such an accepted feature of our towns that it must be difficult for younger readers to imagine life without them. But at one time there was a range of pleasant tea rooms and restaurants in every English town where one could relax after business or shopping, take a fair companion for a cosy chat, or celebrate a minor occasion in reasonably civilised surroundings.

Older Wiganers who regret the passing of these establishments where one could order a pot of tea or a hot lunch, and be served by charming waitresses in frilly aprons, may remember The Roy Cafe, illustrated here. This was situated at the corner of Marsden Street and Hope Street, overlooking Market Square. The proprietors were originally Richard and J.R. Gorner, whose entry in the 1938 Directory of Wigan advertised 'luncheons, teas, suppers, wedding parties etc.... open 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.' The interior photograph of The Roy puts one in mind of the Kardomah Cafes which featured in films of the period, notably David Lean's *Brief Encounter* (1944) based on Noel Coward's play *Still Life*, as the scene of the first tryst between Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson.

The Gorner family seems to have started catering in this way during the early 1900's. Jacob Gorner's dining rooms at 17 Market Arcade were advertised from at least 1909 onwards. The business was entered under Richard's name in the 1920's, and from the 1950's was described as a cafe; at least one regular user of Wigan Archives Service has recalled his nostalgic affection for Gorner's cafe in 'The Little Arcade' which existed there until the early 1970's. The Roy Cafe, meanwhile, changed hands in the late '50's but continued to operate under that name until about 1962. The whole area was demolished in the 1980's to make way for The Galleries.

These photographs, which prompted the article, were kindly donated by Mr. Hulme from the Isle of Man.

'Old Parchment'

A LOST EATING HOUSE: The Roy Cafe



The Roy Cafe decorated for the Coronation in 1937. To the left is 'The Creche', a baby clothes shop in Marsden Street.



Interior. The view from the windows took in the Market Hall and Square (now occupied by The Galleries) and Conroy Brothers' wholesale fruit business.

This fascinating article on the development of Ince from early times has been submitted by Past Forward reader Neil Cain

IT HAPPENED IN INCE

EVERY August in my childhood years my parents and I left home in West London to visit my grandfather in Holt Street, Ince. Grandfather Cain had been born in Caroline Street, behind Manchester Road, just before Christmas 1883, and on his mother's side claimed an association with Ince going back to the 18th century. Grandfather died in 1966, having lived his entire life within a mile of his birthplace, and was known to a number of readers of *Past Forward* as proprietor of Cain's Pie Shop, Belle Green Lane.

Imagine my shock when returning to Ince in 1989 I discovered most of my childhood recollections had disappeared. Gone were the long lines of terraced housing and shops along Manchester Road, the side streets and corner pubs, railway bridges, factory chimneys, and where were the slag tips? Where they still existed they were levelled and grassed over, or planted with trees. A few surviving buildings, such as the Engineers Arms, the Manley Hotel and the Squirrel, only magnified the disappearance of the Cases, Cheetham's Grocery, Saint Mary's Church etc.

I think it must have been this jolting of my memory banks that started the desire to know about Ince. What had it been like, perhaps when Grandad was born; what

went on there, how had it grown from its original state and how had a sense of community developed? Ten years later I sit here hoping to share with *Past Forward* readers some of my findings and maybe a feeling of a by-gone age.

How did Ince get its name?

Consider Ince Brook and the Mosses of Ince. No great leap of imagination then to accept that prior to modern drainage Ince was very marshy. One theory is that Ince derived its name from the Saxon word "Innius" meaning land by the water. Another theory is that it was derived from the Celtic word "Ynys", found today in Welsh place names. Once again the term would indicate an island within an area of marsh, or wetland. The overall picture of Ince in early times would be one of a very rural place with the focal points being the various houses of the landowners - Ince Hall, New Hall, Ince Old Hall, the Hall of Ince and the 14th century Peel Hall near Rose Bridge. Legend has it that it was here in 1505 that a young daughter of the Hall's owner met her death by drowning in the moat.

A Rural Scene

Life must have gone on pretty much the same for centuries; Ince had no church and came under Wigan Parish, so Sunday worship involved a walk along the Higher Lane (later Manchester Road), or the Lower Lane (Warrington

Road). Could this be the derivation of Higher and Lower Ince? The Higher Lane became the turnpike and hence Ince Bar was just that - the payment barrier where travellers paid to undertake the next stage along the road.

During the period from 1754 to 1757 extensive drainage and repairs were undertaken to improve the roads in Ince. The Ince rate books show the workmen were granted 1s.6d. (7 1/2p) to spend on Saturday nights, guess how? Ale was an all important element in life. Once again the rate books show that in 1754/55 the Overseer for the Poor spent "*fourpence for salve for James Whittle's man's leg and a pint of ale*". No doubt the theory was that if one 'pain killer' didn't work the other would!

The 18th century entries in the rate books are nothing if not varied - in 1770 we find this entry: "*In seeking out Richard Lyon and keeping him prisoner until he could arrange for his marrying Mary Cheetham*".

By 1750 coal and cannel mining were taking place in the area around Ince, albeit on a relatively small scale when compared with the following century. The hard labour and danger associated with early mining are well documented, but there were moments of relief for the miners. During the latter half of the 18th century the Kirkless Pits accounts show that 11 cannellers received sixpence (2 1/2p) to spend at Wigan Fair. The Kirkless Pits covered the area

around Top Lock and down to what are now called Rabbit Rocks.

As the early years of the 19th century dawned so came the one single element that was to set Ince on the course that would change the face of the area beyond recognition. The Ince that readers remember had been born - the midwife was the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

Cannel to the Canal

Take a walk up the canal from Rose Bridge towards Top Lock and you will see, in a number of the locks, masonry with the date stamp 1816. This was the year that the canal was opened around Ince thus improving transport beyond measure. Within a few years the area along the canal between Britannia and Rose Bridge was dotted with pits. Speculators moved into the area leasing land from the old Ince families - Andertons, Walmesleys and Gerards, and opening up new pits along the line of the Springs Branch Railway opened in 1838. Soon Ince would be famous for having the greatest number of pits per square mile of anywhere in Great Britain. The coal pits in the angle of Warrington Road and Ince Green Lane became known as Bottom Place, those behind St. William's Church as Middle Place, and hence more latterly the Kirkless Works became Top Place.

Miners from all over England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales arrived to create the mix of nationalities that gave Ince, and on a wider front Wigan and Lancashire, its unique colour and customs.

Don't Forget Cotton

Ince had long had associations with textiles - medieval records show a fulling mill at Lorrington Mill, Ince. Was this Clarington in later years? By the early 1800's the embryonic factory system had appeared in a small factory on the east side of Ince which was the first to install steam power utilising the brook that flowed by Petticoat Lane. The mill, however, was derelict by 1824/25. Marriage certificates of the late 1830's and 1840's often show "cotton weaver" as the occupation of the females of Ince, and the tradition of home weaving continued here until a much later date than in other parts of Lancashire. Eventually the large



The rural nature of 18th century Ince can be seen in this view of Ince Hall.



mills such as the Empress Mill came along to add another piece to the Ince jigsaw.

The Stage is Set

Coal, cotton, the railways and canals - it was boom time in Ince and just north, in Kirkless, where the huge ironworks complex known as Top Place opened in 1858, providing many jobs and yet another influx from all corners of the British Isles. This was the world my grandfather was born into, a world full of toil and tragedy but also humour, novelty, neighbourliness, and sometimes the absolutely bizarre.

The Influence of Coal

One has only to look at the 1891 census for Ince to appreciate just how many men were engaged in working in the pits, either as miners, or in ancillary jobs, such as lamp cleaners, labourers or weighmen. Strikes, or short-time working, led to tension and often violence as reports of the 1893 coal strike indicate. The following is taken from the *Wigan Observer* of 8 November 1893:

"At Wigan County Court on Friday meanwhile six Ince colliers - Atherton, Brown, Kearsley, Charnock, Ellison and Fagan - were charged with unlawfully and maliciously, by the explosion of gunpowder, doing damage to a dwelling house some persons being therein. When spoken to by the police the prisoners had admitted making a cannon from a piece of iron pipe that night, ramming it with powder and fuse and letting it off under the inn windows."

During the strike police had charged a crowd of colliers at the Moss Pits after stone throwing had injured constables. At Ince Hall Pit 200 police made a charge and, according to reports, *"large numbers of police and civilians can show injuries as a result of the disturbances"*.

The strike led to much hardship amongst mining families and the following year the work of Isaac Lawrence in helping these families was recognised:

Saturday November 11 1894 *"On Monday evening at the Royal Hotel, Ince, a number of the principal residents of Higher Ince gathered together to present Mr. Isaac Wilson Lawrence with a testimonial in recognition of his generosity to the colliers and their families during the latter part of last year."*

Water Water Everywhere

The distress of the period was increased due to awful weather which affected the homes, movement, employment and general well being of Ince residents.

Saturday February 17 1894 - *"The storm which swept with such fury over the whole of England on Sunday, left Wigan and the district with many marks of its violence. Pedestrians in the daytime were scarcely able to maintain their balance in the street and blown-in windows and razed palisades were evidence of the strength of a hurricane almost unprecedented in recent years. The whole of the frontage of Mr. E. Bolton's shop at Rose Bridge, Ince, succumbed to the storm, the street being strewn with pinafores and other drapery ware."*

The weather was no less severe the following year as the following extract concerning the Moss Side works, Lower Ince shows:

"The severe weather of the past few days has added greatly to the distress of those who find themselves in the unfortunate position this winter of being destitute of the means of existence. In Ince, among the iron workers, grim want stares many a family in the face, and it is no exaggeration to say that some are on the verge of starvation, owing to the closing of the works of the Pearson and Knowles Coal and Iron Co."

Ince was no stranger to severe weather. A storm in October 1875 had caused considerable damage to property, and in July the following year a great flood occurred after two days of torrential rain. The road at Britannia Bridge was under four feet of water, but it is, as they say, "an ill wind that blows nobody any good". Enterprising locals charged one penny to carry travellers through the water! As if this wasn't enough in April 1889 the Leeds and Liverpool canal burst its banks draining the canal dry. Its legacy? Pearson's Flash.

Lives are Lost

The monument in Ince Cemetery is testimony to the tragic events at the Moss Pits in 1871 when 70 local men and boys were killed in violent explosions underground. Prior to this, in 1853 and 1854, two explosions in the Arley Mine, between Britannia and Rose Bridges, claimed 147 lives. After the latter explosion, which incidentally claimed the lives of 20 boys under 15 years old, the yard and outhouses at the Navigation Inn were used as a temporary mortuary. Such was the loss of life that there were insufficient funeral biers, and hand barrows had to carry the coffins.

Whilst these events are the most notable cases of loss of life due to mining accidents, deaths around the pits were common place as the following reports show:

December 21, 1897 - *"An inquest was held at the Infirmary on Friday, touching the death of John Wardle (45) an overlooker in*

a factory of Darlington Street East, who was injured whilst pulling down an engine house at Bottom Place Colliery and died shortly afterward. Walter Rutter said he was engaged by the deceased to assist in pulling down the engine house at Bottom Place Colliery. At nine o'clock on Thursday morning, he was going on with his work, and heard a crunch. Witness shouted "run" and the deceased and others did so, but Wardle fell and was caught by the falling house. The building was a very old one."

Perhaps the greatest sadness of the period was that of infant mortality. An especially tragic case occurred in 1887:

"An inquest was held at the Walmsley Arms Hotel, Higher Ince, into the death of a little boy named James Hostler who met his death by being run over by a London and North Western Railway company "lurry". A witness said he was standing close by the Fox Inn at about 3 o'clock when he saw a wagon drawn by one horse going up Manchester Road. A fife and drum band was standing by playing. When the horse was about 40 yards off the band it took fright and kept going. The driver tried to pull it up but could not, although holding the horse by the head. The driver turned the horse into Brook Street where the children were, amongst whom was the deceased. The child tried to run away but fell and the wheel went over him and killed him."

Lives are Saved

Death was obviously a common place occurrence in those times but ones in a while an act of bravery in saving life stands in stark contrast to sadder events. The following was reported in February 1893 when Ralph Sutcliffe the lock keeper at Higher Ince heard screams:

"Scantily-clad though he was, he caught hold of a keb and ran to the canal, where he found a man and a woman in the water. The man was clinging to the bank, but the woman had already gone under twice, and Sutcliffe managed to catch her with the keb, and hauled her out rendering assistance to the man immediately afterwards. The girl was taken to Sutcliffe's cottage and artificial respiration was adopted. Dr. O'Donnell later attending to her. It appears that when the couple walked into the basin, they were proceeding towards Wigan along the canal bank. The lights from the iron works suddenly dropped and they found themselves in such darkness that they fell into the water. Sutcliffe had already saved ten lives from the canal and has received numerous decorations and acknowledgements of his bravery."

Another report, dating from

1887, shows the harshness of life at the time; this time, however, the outcome appears to have been happier than usual.

"A man and his wife named George Minsher were passing through Ince between 2.30 and 3.30 on Saturday morning and on arriving in Manchester road, near the corner with Pickup Street, the poor woman, who was heavily pregnant, could go no further. Police Constable Banes, who was in the vicinity at the time, ascertained the cause of her distress and called upon Mrs. Crompton who was up at the time, to give assistance. He then went to inform Mr. Simm, relieving officer who went to the scene and on his arrival they found the father walking about with the child under his coat. After treatment, Mr. Simm consequently removed the mother and child in Mr. James Walker's conveyance to the Workhouse."

The Naughty Nineties

The following two accounts are included as they show the breadth of the work the Police were called upon to cover.

Saturday August 2 1890 - *"In Victoria Street, Ince at 7.00 a.m. last Saturday, a man who earlier had been seen climbing up the gable end of a house, was found dead in an entry. A police constable found in the deceased's pocket two dollar notes, a railway ticket from Liverpool to Glasgow and a pawn ticket from New Jersey City. Later on, Dr. T. Brayton recorded a verdict of death by natural causes, due to consumption."*

From July 1894 - *"A disgraceful scene took place at Ince on Saturday last. While the United Nonconformist scholars were preceding down Manchester Road, the engine driver in charge of one of the tram cars persistently refused to stop the car, and actually went so far as to run part way through their ranks. Even more astonishing, an inspector belonging to the company was present urging the engineman on. As the scholars only have their procession once a year and parents go to trouble and expense making their little ones look so attractive, the directors of the tramway should see that this thing does not happen again."*

Animal Magic

The following advertisement was placed by my great uncle and raises a number of questions. Was the appearance of a swan in Ince such a rare thing that it warranted the advert? Was it a way of making a few bob? Did my ancestor believe all swans had to have owners? So from the *Wigan Observer* in November 1877:

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IT HAPPENED IN INCE

Continued from page 5

“Notice: A fine swan caught on Thursday evening last on Amberswood common. The owner can have the same on describing it and paying expenses by applying to Christopher Higham, Star Inn, Amberswood Common, Ince.”

How the claimant’s description of the swan would have marked it as his is not known!

Perhaps one of the most unexpected claims to fame that Ince may extend concerns the Duke of Albany. Locals will no doubt be familiar with associations with the Earls of Crawford and Balcarres, or perhaps the Duke of Bridgewater, but the Duke of Albany? All is revealed in this report from April 1895:

“A valuable St. Bernard dog belonging to Mr. H. Fairhurst, Ince, named ‘The Duke of Albany I’, reputed to be the largest dog in the world, dropped down dead at his master’s feet on Sunday last. He simply dropped dead! The dog had won 13 first prizes and five specials under the most prominent judges. In fact, the animal won laurels wherever shown, and it is claimed that England had not its equal.”

The final animal entry is offensive in more ways than one. In October, 1873 a man was reported to the authorities for roasting dog carcasses on Amberswood common causing *“an injurious stench”*.

Ancient Games and Customs

Recently the Wigan World page of the *Wigan Observer* has appealed to readers for information concerning the old miners’ game of piggy.* Back in 1885 no such appeal would have been necessary, as can be seen by the following from March 1885: *“The Piggy Nuisance - James Farrell, a youth, was summoned for playing piggy in the field belonging to Mr. T.M. Percy at Ince, doing damage to the grass growing therein.”*

A few years before, in 1878 the crowning of the May Queen occasioned great interest. A correspondent writes: *“A great demonstration is to take place at Ince on Wednesday next, the 1st May. The Queen of the May is to be crowned in the presence, it is anticipated, of no fewer than 10,000 persons. Will the managers and employers kindly*



Late 19th century Ince. Warrington Lane looking towards Britannia Bridge from the Wigan boundary.

arrange for a general holiday on this august occasion? I have good authority for saying that triumphal arches, festoons and banners etc., will form part of the street decorations of the parish and that the procession will far surpass last year’s. The profit will go towards the much needed new school church at Belle Green. It is the only great festive day when persons may witness a procession and ceremony the like of which can only be seen in distant parts of England”.

We have seen from various accounts so far that tragedy and humour were often only thinly divided. One instance of the two combining comes in the case of *“The Mayor of Ince”*. This account, however, comes from the *Wigan Observer* for 6 August, 1887:

“For many years it has been the custom to choose a ‘gentleman’ to officiate as ‘Mayor’ of Ince for the year ensuing. The custom originated over half a century ago, and from an innocent practice it has developed into a drunken riot.

Immediately after the choosing of the ‘Mayor’ the men, who join in the ceremony, put ‘his worship’ in a barrow and take him to the public houses in the township where they demand drink, and, if it is not supplied, use abusive language.

This year a man by the name of James Yates of Caroline Street was chosen for the ‘honoured position’. One of the duties of which is to undergo the process of ducking in the canal. Whatever the ‘Mayor’ does, those with him follow suit, and on Tuesday

evening, these genial spirits, after getting as much beer as they could, adjourned to the canal where the ‘Mayor’ made a plunge into the canal. He was followed by four of his associates, three of whom got safely across but the fourth, Alfred Hindley, was drowned, notwithstanding the attempts of several of his companions to save him.”

Finally for those readers who will shortly be attending the new J.J.B. Stadium as supporters of Wigan RLFC and Wigan Athletic, the following will serve to remind you that it is always the other lot who have a ropey pitch!

Saturday March 3 1894 - Our local soccer side, the Wigan Nondescripts have played on some bad grounds in their time, but the one on which they played the Ince Amateurs on Saturday not only takes the cake, but annexes the entire bakery as well. To begin with, it was fully 40 yards short of the usual length. There was a ditch at one end, and a large lodge at the other, and several small lodges on the ground itself - one right in front of the goal. There were deep ridges running across the field which were filled with rank, slimy mud and, the depth of which they cannot state, as their players were fortunately dragged out before they got to the bottom of it. It is with great pleasure that they note the Ince committee have ordered some life-buoys. Three goals into the game, the ball was kicked clean into the middle of the lodge. Another ball - which was not a stranger to the lodge, as its weight would testify - was brought into play. The

game now became slow and uninteresting, it requiring two men to kick the ball at the same time, to make any impression upon it. The second ball then went into the lodge and hostilities were suspended until they got it out. Which was done by throwing bottles, bricks and salmon tins (taken from the ground) at it! The Nondescripts then scored, but through a miscalculation on their part, (their fullback pluckily but rashly attempting to clear the ball by himself) Ince equalised. The referee by the way, had dispensed almost entirely with such a minor article as a whistle and claims for hands passed unnoticed. On resumption of play, the Nondescripts tried hard but shots which should have scored were stopped by the ball going into the lodges in front of the goals, the ball being got out with the aid of a touch-kick. The Nondescripts regret to state that the Amateurs then lost their temper, one of them in particular - a bear of a fellow - pushing the right wing half back in the face, fouling the centre and riding on the left wings back. The Nondescripts presented a sad and painful sight as they left the ground bespattered to the eyes with mud and wet to the skin. They are glad though that for the return match, they can offer Ince a decent ground, a friendly game and a referee with a whistle.”

Through the ups and downs of life in Ince, there was always sport but maybe not as we know it; or have we just gone soft?

The author wishes to thank the Editor of the *Wigan Observer* for permission to quote from reports of the time.

To commemorate 150 years since the death of prolific letter writer Ellen Weeton, Alan Roby continues with some of Miss Weeton's Liverpool experiences. Now in her prime, it was to be a period of discovery, excitement and also disappointment.

ELLEN WEETON

(1776-1849)

GOVERNESS

Pastures new

AFTER a day's journey by canal 'packet' Miss Weeton arrived in the bustling borough of Liverpool towards the end of August 1808.

At the beginning of the 19th century Liverpool was in its ascendancy, benefiting from the prosperity created by the 18th century African slave trade. With the trade's abolition in 1807 came new opportunities through trade in bringing linen yarn from Ireland and cotton from the American south for Lancashire's expanding mills.

The population of 5,000 in 1700 had risen to 85,000 by 1801 and was still rapidly rising. It was to this up and coming vibrant seaport that Miss Weeton arrived in a combination of excitement, tempered with some trepidation.

Armed with a mental picture of what Liverpool would be like she made her way to the Dale Street home of Mr. and Mrs. Chorley and their daughter. She realised there would, of course, be some disadvantages. In a letter from Upholland to her Liverpool friend, Miss Chorley, earlier in the year she said:

"... how delighted I feel as each day passes on at the approach of Spring; at my

consequent release from the torpid state to which Winter necessarily reduces me... But why talk to you of the pleasures of Spring? Who, living in a town, know comparatively little difference between one season and another.

"The simplicity of the peasantry is soon discovered to be tiresome ignorance; and their wisdom little better than cunning... The intelligent beings I meet with in a large society delight me beyond measure, but the noise of the crowd distracts me. The beautiful buildings, fine open streets, and elegant equipages excite admiration; yet, when the novelty wears off, I wish for a more frequent sight of fields, groves, hills and vales..."

Big disappointment

After living in Liverpool for a few months a big disappointment, not previously anticipated, became obvious:

"When I came to Liverpool I expected to have found it filled with intelligent beings, imagining knowledge to be so generally diffused. I begin to discover that it contains

as much proportionate ignorance as any little village in England, where perhaps the curate is the only intelligent man in it. How astonished am I daily to find so many more ignorant than myself, so few more knowing... Here, not one in ten can speak their native language tolerably; not more than one in twenty correctly; and of these last, scarce one tenth can boast any real literary acquirement than that of their grammar. I thought myself very ignorant when I came here, expecting to find so many wise, so many learned - I find them not... The people here do not seize the opportunities of improvement that so frequently occur - which they must almost wilfully reject. Their ignorance

is astonishing! It would almost appear as if ignorance was taught, as if it were something to boast of..."

Miss Weeton was received warmly by the Chorley family who begged her to stay the winter before seeking lodgings elsewhere. She was indeed most comfortable there, but Miss Chorley soon proved to be something of a snob and not a loyal friend. On one occasion Miss Chorley had apparently ridiculed one of Miss Weeton's letters to her and had showed it to a large party at dinner in Warrington.

Although generally kind Mrs. Chorley was sometimes very rude and showing a flash of bad temper. This

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Castle Street, Liverpool, 1784. The street's appearance would have changed little by 1809, when Miss Weeton and Miss Winkley drank tea together at Mr. Nevitt's bookshop.

ELLEN WEETON
(1776-1849)
GOVERNESS
Pastures new

Continued from page 7

characteristic was also very evident in her daughter. In a lengthy letter to her brother in December 1808, Miss Weeton said of Miss Chorley:

"Unfortunately her daughter inherits all her mother's violence of temper, without her strength of intellect or goodness of heart; for if she had either she would not insult the dependant, or tyrannise over the weak, without any intermission. I am no dependant, thank God for it! Yet she treats me as such daily and almost hourly insulting me. And in so gross a manner! I have been under great obligation to her; but she has no firm principles. I have begun to find her friendship mere caprice . . . Oh, Miss Chorley you are in this house what Buonaparte (sic) is to Europe . . . Your insolence to your parents, and the tyranny you are guilty of to all you have in your power, requires the prayers of all who feel it (and you have mine), and particularly forgiveness of Him who is pouring his benefits upon you every moment."

New lodgings

By 22 September, 1808, Miss Weeton had found new lodgings at 'Beacon's Gutter' ("fine romantic name to utter"), Kirkdale, the home of Edward and Betty Smith and their small son. It was on the banks of the Mersey, about two miles north of Liverpool's town hall. Until the docks reached that point in 1850, it was a place of "seaside charm and solitude". It had a fine stretch of sand at low water and was much frequented by salt water bathers and where Miss

Weeton could enter the water for bathing from her door. The approach to and from Liverpool was by paths through the fields.

Miss Weeton lodged at Beacon's Gutter for just 12 months, then removed to new lodgings as a paying guest with the Winkley family at their home and shop, 10 Princes Street, Liverpool. The family lived frugally "keeping no servants".

All in all Miss Weeton enjoyed her months of leisure on Merseyside. The letters she wrote from there are largely witty and full of fun. She was slowly recovering from drudgery of her Upholland years in doing and seeing new things and meeting more people. In July 1809, here cousin Henry Latham visited her and together they went to the Theatre Royal, Williamson Square, to see Sarah Siddons play Lady Macbeth. When she returned to Liverpool after occasionally visiting her Aunt and Uncle Barton, at Upholland, her 'thank you' letters contained amusing observations of her fellow travellers on the canal passenger barge from Appley Bridge:

" . . . most people who go into the tail end of the packet (second class seats) seem to think that eating and drinking is the most delightful amusement of travelling. The generality of those who sail in the upper end seem to have very different ideas. They appear as if ashamed of such a piece of vulgarity as the indulging a propensity to eat . . . Some very odd faces are to be seen at times. Two old ladies got in a few miles from Liverpool. The very moment they could squat themselves on the cushion, they began to knit. One had a good hardy look, as if she had been stewed to make her keep. She looked more like a coddled gooseberry than anything else . . . A very nice

old lady got in much about the same time, accompanied by almost as nice a young one; both of respectable appearance. The old one had rather an ill-tempered look, but fortunately she was very deaf, so she could not often be put out of her way by what she heard. A clergyman sailed with us five or six miles; he had that waif-like keenness in his eyes, as if he knew which was the best method of taking tithe."

* * * *

Anonymous advertiser

It was whilst drinking tea with Miss Winkley, at Mr. Nevitt's, a bookseller, in Castle Street and where they were later joined by Mrs. Winkley, that Mrs. Winkley mentioned she had seen a newspaper advertisement for a governess. On making further enquiries, Miss Weeton discovered that the anonymous advertiser, was "highly respectable, kept carriages and had town and country houses."

The advertisement, which appeared in *Gore's General Advertiser*, Liverpool, on Thursday 9 November, 1809, read:

WANTED in the neighbourhood of Kendal, a GOVERNESS to superintend the Education of a Young Lady. None need apply but such as can give good references as to ability and character, Apply J. Gore.

The advertiser turned out to be none other than Edward Pedder, a member of the important Preston banking family of that name. Pedder's annual income at that time was the large sum of £1,500 to £2,000. Having lost his first wife, he had subsequently made a Gretna Green marriage with his uneducated dairy maid employed at

Darwen Bank, near Preston and had also taken a seven year lease on Dove's Nest, "a charming seat", at Lowwood, near Ambleside, Westmorland. He then advertised for a governess to undertake the joint education of his wife and the child of his first marriage. Pedder's age at this time was about 34 and his wife 17.

On requesting what salary Miss Weeton expected, boldly she answered: "Thirty guineas". Pedder agreed and she was engaged.

After less than one month's stay with the Winkley family, Miss Weeton left Liverpool by stage coach on 12 December 1809. She proceeded via Ormskirk to Walton, near Preston, where she stayed the night at the home of Mr. Barton (a friend of Mr. Pedder). The following morning, accompanied by Mr. Barton, she caught the seven o'clock mail coach for Kendal. After dining at Kendal they then took a post chaise for the final 12 miles to Dove's Nest.

At 33 years-of-age Miss Weeton was in her prime and understandably excited about her prospects at Dove's Nest in the beautiful Lake District. All went very well at first but nothing could prepare her for the terrible calamity which was to befall the Pedder household. In turn the once "good looking man . . . good natured, liberal, hospitable and unsuspecting" Edward Pedder changed into a bad tempered drunken brute.

● **The next issue will describe incidents at Dove's Nest; a trip to the Isle-of-Man; relocation to High Royd, near Huddersfield and her marriage at the age of 37 to Aaron Stock of Wigan. Also a profile of Stock, owner of a tottering cotton spinning factory, based in Chapel Lane, Wigan.**

THOMAS RAWLINSON WEETON (1781-1845)

MISS Weeton loved her brother, Thomas Rawlinson Weeton, more than she did her mother. The pair were inseparable companions in childhood to maturity and Miss Weeton plunged into deep melancholy when Thomas left home to become articled to a Preston solicitor in 1795 at the age of 14. For weeks afterwards she visited each place in and around Upholland where he was once regularly seen. She wrote: *"I never should see him again as I had seen him before: his seat in church; his usual corner at home; his old clothes and books. Everything that had been his reminded me of the happy days that were fled . . ."*

Within a year of ending his seven year clerkship Thomas married Miss Jane Scott, the daughter of the owner of a Wigan cotton spinning factory. On the day of the wedding the happy couple went to live with Miss Weeton at Upholland. The accommodation arrangements were unfortunately most ungenerous to Miss Weeton, and exacerbated by the indolent nature of Thomas's new wife. Fortunately within a month Mrs. Scott sent a man with a horse and a note persuading her daughter and son-in-law to return on the horse to live in Wigan, which they did.

Thomas's marriage to Jane resulted in one son, Thomas (born 1804) and two daughters, Catherine (born 1806) and Jane (born 1807). Four other children of the marriage died in infancy.

Writing to Miss Bolton of Wigan in August 1808, after spending some four or five weeks at her brother's home, Miss Weeton recorded in a matter-of-fact style, without the slightest hint of jealousy:

"My brother does seem so fond of her and his children, that seriously it was a most exquisite pleasure to me to witness his happiness. He is not content with kissing and cuddling by moonlight, but he must do so by sunlight too. Every day, after dinner and supper instead of dessert on his table, came his wife upon his knee, and her lips to his mouth, sweeter I dare say in his opinion than the finest garden fruit, and more grateful to his heart."

At the age of 26, bolstered by Scott money, Thomas Weeton was gradually getting established as Attorney in the little township of Leigh, Lancashire. Leigh at that time boasted 22 licensed houses, a bull-baiting ring and a cock-pit. The population of about 5,200 consisted mainly of poor weavers and Thomas must have found it difficult to

establish himself. Steady progress through perseverance eventually secured for himself the bulk of the practice to be had in Leigh.

He became increasingly ashamed of his humble upbringing, of which his sister was a constant reminder because of her own humble position of village school-mistress. Continually goaded by his socially aspiring wife, any remaining regard, esteem or affection for his sister was rapidly being eroded. This culminated in despicable behaviour towards his long-suffering sister, even to eventual attempted character assassination and detailed at length in Miss Weeton's letters.

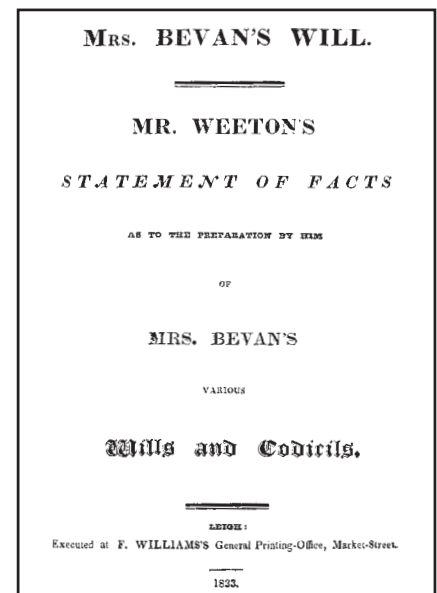
Thomas Weeton appears to have been a man who loved open debate and the attendant publicity. He had been well educated via Mr. Braithwaite's "most excellent" Upholland Academy coupled with seven years' training as a solicitor. Clearly he possessed above average intelligence and was articulate. Perhaps this was his very undoing - in underestimating his 'less intelligent' Leigh contemporaries.

He became involved in the cut and thrust of pamphlet warfare and scathing letters from and to him are revealed via lengthy column inches in newspapers. He lashed out against riotous weavers; he objected to the singing of sacred music by an opera star; he attempted to run with both the fox and hounds at the time of the Peterloo Massacre; his loyalty was called into question at the accession of George IV in respect of a local celebration to celebrate the coronation in 1820. In the process he made many enemies and they gave him little peace. Even his personal friendship of Mr. Marsh, the magistrate, offered him no protection in the matter of Mrs. Bevan's Will in 1833.

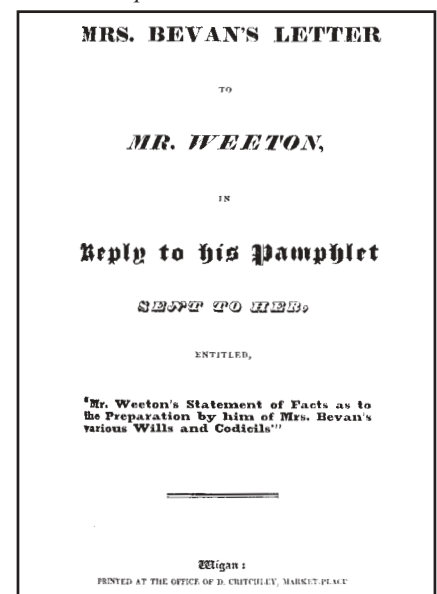
Mrs. Elizabeth Bevan lived at Laurel House, Lowton, and was a lady of considerable wealth through her extensive Lowton Estates. Then 81 years of age and with rapidly failing health, she instructed Mr. Weeton in the disposal of her estate. According to Mrs. Bevan, Mr. Weeton fraudulently made the main beneficiary of her will his very good friend, Mr. Philip Newton. In return for a valuable legacy for Mr. Newton, an alleged £500 would be given to Mr. Weeton. Mrs. Bevan, however, recovered sufficiently to expose the forgery. Weeton wriggled via a 25-page pamphlet comprehensively written and meticulously executed by a Leigh

printer. Mrs. Bevan likewise responded with a 15-page pamphlet produced by a Wigan printer, but Weeton was a beaten man. Already he had lost the coveted position of Clerk to the Magistrates and his professional fees had suffered severely. He was finished in Leigh.

In the 1930's fresh material came to light which was in the possession of Mr. Willoughby Scott Darlington M.A., a collateral descendant of Thomas Weeton. It seems that Thomas had retired in the year 1837 and probably lived out his years at the home of his daughter and son-in-law at Adlington, near Chorley. There he died of pleurisy on 5 March, 1845, aged 64.



The title page of Thomas Weeton's 25 page pamphlet and (below) the title page of Mrs. Bevan's 15 page pamphlet response to Mr. Weeton.



SIR HENRY HALL – The Miners' Friend

FOR a generation in the Wigan coalfield, there was no more respected name than that of Henry (later Sir Henry) Hall, a mining engineer and a distinguished inspector of mines. In the late 19th and early 20th century, accounts of inquests and inquiries into mining accidents and explosions contained the views and conclusions of Mr. Hall. Coroners at the time were always grateful for his evidence given after visits to the scenes of mining accidents and disasters. Research into the causes of explosions by him led to the passing of important mining legislation. He was born in 1845, the youngest son of John Hall of Sedgefield, Co. Durham and was educated at York. His mining career began at Hasslewell Colliery, in Durham, and he joined the mines inspectorate at the early age of 28. His first appointment was to the Swansea area in 1873 and a year later he took up a similar post in the Wigan area, later becoming HM Chief Inspector of Mines, being in charge of the Lancashire and North Wales Division. During this time he was president of the Manchester Mining and Geological Society, meetings of which were often held at the Wigan Mining and Technical College when it opened in the 20th century. Mr. Hall was an early advocate of the disuse of furnace ventilation. This method of providing a colliery with an intake of fresh air was highly dangerous and Mr. Hall did not hesitate to say so, expressing himself in favour of the innovation of fan ventilation. It need hardly be said that he lived to see his belief in fans justified and furnaces becoming obsolete.

Henry Hall experiments

Because of his position he was independent of colliery owners and mining unions but he showed clearly that an inspector could be a friend to both. He recognised that his duty was not to harass employers and managers but to help them and at the same time to safeguard the lives and limbs of those who were employed in and about mines. At all times during his office he took an interest in all matters affecting the safety, health and education of the mining communities and his speeches



Henry Hall

were always instructive and full of information. He won the confidence of both management and men by his impartiality and the ability to express the courage of his convictions clearly and tactfully. On behalf of a Royal Commission what became known as the Henry Hall experiments began in 1837 when a disused colliery shaft was placed at his disposal by the White Moss Coal Company of Skelmersdale in the Wigan coalfield. For a considerable period and at various times, Mr. Hall carried out experiments into the causes of coal dust explosions. From all over Britain samples of coal dust were sent to him by colliery authorities who were as anxious as he was to see the end of the coal dust explosions which ravaged colliers and cost thousands of lives.

In the shaft which was 50 yards deep and seven feet in diameter, timber was lined along the sides to represent the timbering of an underground roadway and ventilation was provided by a small fan. A wrought iron cannon, three feet long with a two inch diameter, was used to fire gunpowder shots. About two hundredweight of coal dust was deposited into the shaft and the cannon containing a gunpowder charge was detonated by an electrical device. Various tactics were employed. At one time the charge would be fired immediately and then at intervals to try

to discover which produced maximum violence. The investigations were carried out at a time - i.e. in 1893 - when the causes of coal dust explosions in mines were much less understood than later. The results of Mr. Hall's experiments were an important contribution to the findings of the Royal Commission on Coal Dust Explosions in Mines and were to prove that coal dust - contrary to popular belief - was a more serious factor in explosions than firedamp.

Dust would explode

Mr. Hall was able to show and substantiate that coal dust would explode if raised in a cloud, when the cloud was dense enough and there was a means of ignition. The dangers of a coal dust explosion were shown by him to increase with the presence of methane, with the fineness of the dust and when the dust had a high volatile content. A small, local explosion of firedamp could raise the dust and provide the means of ignition as could a blown-out shot. What happened was that a particle of dust, once ignited, would set off the next particle and so on in what we would now call a mini-atomic explosion. These conclusions led to the introduction of an inert dust into mines placed at strategic points and being scattered to mix with coal dust to render it harmless. In the 20th century water infusion was introduced which also helped to negate the hazard.

In submitting his report Mr. Hall recommended the disuse of gunpowder and the substitution of less dangerous explosives. He estimated that in the 20 years preceding his experiments coal dust explosions ignited by gunpowder had caused the death of 2,500 miners. In 1902 Mr. Hall was awarded the Imperial Service Order and in 1910 was knighted for his services to mining. In 1928 he was given the Greenwell silver medal, the highest award of the Institute of Mining Engineers. When he retired at the age of 65 he was given a suitably inscribed coffee set by workers and friends and his wife received a silver bracelet. Sir Henry Hall died at his residence at Hoole, Cheshire in 1936 in his 91st year.

James Fairhurst

WIGAN INFIRMARY IN THE EARLY YEARS

by Don Rayner

THE Royal Albert Edward Infirmary was opened in 1873 by the Prince of Wales; it was funded by voluntary contributions and donations. Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess, both stayed at Haigh Hall as the guests of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres.

The idea of building an infirmary in Wigan was first mooted (in what was then the Wigan Dispensary in King Street) at a meeting held on 22 October 1866. At a further meeting the following month it was resolved that it was desirable to erect a building to be used as an infirmary and dispensary. It was thought a figure of 60 beds should be aimed for.

Suitable land was found on the north side of Wigan on the left hand side of Wigan Lane. This was bought at a cost of £6,192 10s. The Architects were to be Mr. T. Worthington of Manchester and Joseph Hanson of London.

Messrs Joseph Wilson and Son of The Steam Sawmills, Caroline Street, Wigan (founded 1853) were awarded the contract - the tender was for a sum of £13,032. This was to be for the cost of building what we now know as South Ward, at one end of the old main corridor, and North Ward at the other end. South Pavilion as it was described was to be for females, North Pavilion for men. The hospital was to be fronted by the still existing Admin Building. At the rear there would be a further two storeys to be used for male surgical and accidents; these were later to be known as Lancaster and Crawford wards. Also in this rear block was to be an operating theatre and a lift for 'recumbent patients'. The writer never saw any evidence



The proposed Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, 1873. Opened by the Prince and Princess of Wales, it had completely superseded the Dispensary by 1876. The male and female wings were to the right and left of the Administrative Offices, with the surgery and casualty departments behind. There was ward accommodation for 45 males and 15 women. In 1877, a children's ward was opened.

of a lift in this area, but certainly the theatre was here - the terazzo floor still exists. The theatre area in later years in turn became a Pathology Lab, Matrons office, Red Cross Library, and passed through many department's hands as offices.

'Wine Cellar'

It is interesting to know that in the cellars of this central area there was also planned a 'wine cellar', and another for keeping beers and ales in. Another room in the cellars was set aside to be used if ever needed as a boiler room, but I don't think this was ever the case. The planned heating in the 1870's was open coal fires in the wards and other rooms. Evidence of the old fireplaces and chimney breasts could be seen for many years - sometimes the space was used as a ward cupboard. Many of the chimney stacks were only dismantled as recently as the 1960's and 70's.

Although there are no actual mentions of it in my sources, it

can safely be assumed that all the original lighting was by gaslight, as the local municipal electric power station at Bradford Place, Poolstock was only to be tendered for in 1899.

The outpatients' consulting and waiting rooms were to be in the area now occupied by the present general office, on the left on entering from under the clock tower. However, the outpatients were not intended to use the posh entrance; evidence of other doors for their use still exists on the outside of the building facing the Accident Dept. A couple of outside toilets were also provided in this area. The yard here was where the horse drawn ambulances, the first of which was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Peck of Southport, were tethered; a metal ring for this purpose still existed until quite recently, when all the area became the new Gastro-Enterology Dept. Whilst mentioning the restricted use of the front door, even in the 1960's and 70's Matron Gale

still frowned on its use by student nurses.

Always locked!

The accommodation on the first floor, currently used as the staff dining room, was originally designed as quarters for the Matron, and was still used in this capacity until the 1970's, when the rooms were used by doctors as their sitting room. The other occupants on this floor were the House Surgeon, and surprisingly bedrooms for nurses and domestic servants. The writer uses the word 'surprisingly' because in later years first year nurses and domestics were to sleep in cold cheerless attic rooms above Gidlow, Johnson and Crawford wards. It should also be pointed out that in the writer's experience, the door between the Matron's quarters and the Doctors' rooms was always locked!

Standing aloft of the main

Continued on page 12

WIGAN INFIRMARY IN THE EARLY YEARS

Continued from page 11

entrance is what was described in the prospectus as ‘a handsome square tower’. This contained a large cistern to provide water for the general use of the establishment. From my own experience I knew that this lead-lined tank was unprotected from the many pigeons which roosted in the clock tower above! Needless to say it hasn’t been used for many a year. The tower was to have a clock with a face three feet in diameter; the face and fingers are still the original. However, for many years the clock required someone strong of arm to weekly wind up the weights to maintain its timekeeping. There were also to be a set of bells meant to chime on the quarter, but these were very soon disconnected as the whole hospital soon became sick of being disturbed every 15 minutes. In the 1960’s the bells and weights were removed and sold for scrap, the proceeds being used to provide an electric clock motor and fluorescent lighting for the face.

Situated besides the main gates, which, were to be handsome and substantial, was to be erected a porter’s lodge. This building was to have a portico entrance supported by four polished Yorkshire ashlar pillars with foliated capitals and moulded bases. Above the porch was to be shown the borough coat of arms. The lodge consisted of parlour, kitchen, scullery and bedroom and etc! I am reminded of a story I heard many years ago whereby porters who used to have a smoke at the previously mentioned ambulance cum loading bay always wondered how the head porter who then lived there knew what was going on. It was only when the lodge was being demolished to make way for what is now the Surgical OPD that a small slit window was seen concealed behind a drainpipe!

A total of £30,000 would be needed to build and furnish the new hospital and a further £3,000 per annum required for running costs! Some of this would be raised from the sale of the existing dispensary in King Street. This building would be best remembered as the old Trustee Savings Bank, and latterly the Rates Office.

By the time this foundation stone was laid in 1870, the amount promised and raised came to £24,564.4s.9d. plus the value of the dispensary. One tenth of this sum had been collected from “the class of men for whose benefit the infirmary is chiefly intended”. The workmen of the Wigan Coal and

to give in later years much more, especially Emily and Amelia Gidlow, as can be seen by perusing the old marble plaques at the entrance to the hospital. These donations would be translated into millions of pounds in today’s money!

Grand affair

The ceremony of laying the foundation stone was a grand affair. The stone which can be seen at the left-hand side of the main entrance was laid by the Earl on Boxing Day, 1870, witnessed by his wife the Countess and General The Honourable Sir James Lindsay, as well as M.Ps. Lord Crawford was presented with a large silver

nature she would have to decline the invitation however much it gratified the Queen to receive the invite from so populous and important a town as Wigan”. Lord Crawford, however, was able to use his influence, and eventually it was arranged that the Queen’s eldest son, HRH Prince Albert Edward the Prince of Wales and his wife the Princess were to do the honours. This was to be the first official visit by royalty to the ancient and loyal borough, although they often had passed through on their travels to the north.

4,000 yards of festooning

The arrangements for the big day were carried on at a great pace, whilst the Council and the hospital committee argued as to who should bear the huge cost of the royal visit, estimated at about £2,000. Arrangements were made and tenders sought for the decorating of the royal route and the building of great temporary pavilions at the rear of the hospital, where a grand bazaar and exhibition would be held as part of the celebrations.

Ground floor rooms at the front of the hospital were to be used as royal retiring rooms, (these rooms later became the boardroom and now are used by the League of Friends as their shop). Many items were bought to decorate this area, although by 20 June these had been auctioned. Typical prices were £1.6s. for the window screens used to prevent prying eyes peering in the front windows. Also three lace antimacassars brought 10 shillings, two ornaments of negroes £2.5s., the inkstand and pen used by the royal couple to sign the visitors book fetched £3.12s.6d. By far the best price was gained for the gilt chair used by Her Royal Highness at £7.

The exhibition and bazaar, to be held over four days, commenced with the grand opening ceremony by the Prince on Wednesday 4 June. Over the four days the festivities included the royal banquet and a fine art



Surgeons and staff of the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, c.1875. There were five honorary surgeons, all legally registered, one of whom had to be in attendance each day. Dr. White is standing (left); seated (right) is Dr. Berry, who was to become Medical Officer of Health for Wigan. In the centre is Miss McIntyre, the matron, who was responsible for the domestic management of the hospital.

Iron Co. were said “to have acted nobly towards the large amount which the men freely gave every fortnight”. This was a penny! Other contributions, from the gentry, were substantial - John Lancaster Esq. MP, gave £3,000, the Wigan Coal and Iron Co., which was owned mostly by the Earl of Crawford, donated £3,000, with the Earl giving a personal £2,000. Others chipping in were the Earl’s son Lord Lindsay (£1,000) and the Misses Gidlow (£2,000). Lancaster, Crawford and Gidlow will be remembered as old ward names. Some of these benefactors were

trowel to commemorate the occasion. The Mayor (Mr. Nathaniel Eckersely) stated in his speech of thanks that “the House of Haigh from time immemorial has ever been prominent in works of charity and that no member of it was a nobler representative of the family than the present Earl”.

As the completion of the building works neared, thoughts were turned to the opening. Queen Victoria was invited to perform the opening ceremony, but alas this was not to be. The Queen’s secretary replied to signify that “due to numerous demands on Her Majesty of this



exhibition with paintings and curios borrowed from the finest galleries in the country. Stalls, run by the elite of Wigan, included one by the Countess herself. Bands would be playing, there was a children's grotto in the storage space under the North wing, an area later to become Red Cross Ward during the First World War to cater for the influx of wounded soldiers. The four days would also include an athletics festival, a fancy fair, wrestling, bicycle races and much more. Prices were to be one guinea for a season ticket and 6d to watch the daily sports events. It is interesting to think that the domestic servants who were

required to 'live in' would be lucky to get half a guinea a week, while nurses didn't get much more.

The future King and Queen would sit on richly gilded chairs in the exhibition hall, with walls richly adorned with pink, blue and gold banners, and with patent rose water fountains nearby to freshen the air. This rostrum would be the central point of all the festivities.

The royal route through the streets of Wigan was decorated with 250 Venetian masts, each over 25 feet high, and 4,000 yards of festooning. The whole of the Town Hall was covered with trophies and banners (the moot hall was in a terribly

dilapidated state and not fit for royal eyes).

Two companies of infantry and a troop of lancers were stationed at the entrance to the site, the gate which is now next to Knowsley House. This led to the exhibition area. On entering the grounds the Royal party would be confronted by a huge pyramid constructed of blocks of locally mined coal with a total weight of nearly 250 tons. This coal was later donated to the hospital for its own use! The procession was led by carriages containing firstly Lord Lieutenants and the County Sheriff, then came the Mayor, Town Clerk and the Recorder of Wigan. Following a mounted

police escort came the Royal carriage, the Royals being accompanied by their hosts the Earl and Countess of Crawford and Balcarres. An advertisement in the *Wigan Observer* had been offering space on the spare land opposite the hospital for the use of spectators and refreshment stalls. Around 3,000 people were present at the proceedings, and according to the *Wigan Observer* it was expected the Royal couple would be surrounded by a "glittering array of fashion and beauty and not a few who can boast a noble ancestry".

Spending spree

The Royals and their party were to be guests of the Crawfords at Haigh Hall for the three days, and a very costly three days it was to be for the hosts! The Countess embarked on a spending spree, determined to be worthy of the Royal presence. The house was redecorated, recarpetted, and recurtained. An expensive London firm was called to supply furniture of silk and velvet, gold plate would adorn the sideboards, there would be exquisite porcelain by Dresden, Wedgewood, Minton, nothing being deemed too good. Lighting at the Hall at that time was all by candles, and accordingly much was spent on huge chandeliers, some containing as many as 36 candles. Bedrooms and dressing rooms were also sumptuously furnished. No expense was spared and the whole cost was an astonishing £80,000!! The whole cost of the visit and the celebrations cost much more than the cost of the hospital itself!

Some days later a letter dated 9 June was received by the Mayor;

Dear Sir;

I am instructed by His Royal Highness to inform you that your suggestion to rename the Wigan Infirmary THE ROYAL ALBERT EDWARD INFIRMARY was welcomed by HRH, he also intimated that he believed it to be the first institution to which that name had been given.

Signed, Private Secretary to His Royal Highness.

OPENING DAY—WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4th.

The ADDRESS of the Infirmary Authorities to their Royal Highnesses
THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES,
will be presented in front of the Grand Stand, at Two p.m., by
JOHN LANCASTER, ESQ., M.P.,
And the OPENING of the INFIRMARY will be declared.

OPENING OF THE INDUSTRIAL AND FINE ART TREASURES
EXHIBITION AND GRAND BAZAAR
BY THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES.

STALL HOLDERS:

<p>MRS. PEACE. MRS. JACQUES. MRS. PICKARD. MRS. WALL. MRS. WILSON. MRS. KNOWLES. MRS. H. PARK. MRS. W. KELLET. MRS. HOWE, MRS. ENTWISTLE, AND MRS. COWPER. MRS. PETERKIN. MRS. BENT.</p>	<p>THE COUNTESS OF CRAWFORD AND BALCARRES. MRS. WOODS. MRS. LANCASTER. MRS. JOHNSON AND MRS. BURLAND. MRS. GERRARD, MRS. EDWARD WOODCOCK, AND MISS WALMESLEY. MRS. FAIRHURST, MRS. J. LEECH, AND MRS. WADDINGTON. MRS. HAINS AND MRS. RYLEY. MRS. BURROWS, MRS. LEADER, AND MRS. L. R. ROWBOTTOM.</p>
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On the Bazaar being declared open, the EXHIBITION CHOIR will sing a verse of the National Anthem.
Mr. FFOULKES will Conduct.

ATHLETIC FESTIVAL,
COMMENCING AT TWO O'CLOCK.

GRAND FANCY FAIR:—
THEATRE OF VARIETIES, RICHARSON'S SHOW, PUNCH AND JUDY, &c., &c., &c.

MILITARY BANDS:—
The Band of the 7th Dragoon Guards,—The Band of the Bengal Fusiliers (101st),—The Band of the 8th Regiment.

FAIRY GROTTO,
IN THE BASEMENT BELOW THE NORTH WING OF THE INFIRMARY BUILDINGS.
PERFORMANCE ON THE ORGAN IN THE BAZAAR BUILDING.

THURSDAY, June 6th, the Exhibition and Bazaar will open at Noon.

BICYCLE RACES AND OLD ENGLISH SPORTS,
AT FOUR.

The Fairy Grotto. The Fancy Fair. The Band of the 8th Regiment. Organ Performance in the Bazaar.

FRIDAY, June 6th.

LEAPING OF HUNTERS
(Open to the United Kingdom), at Three.

EXHIBITION, BAZAAR, AND FANCY FAIR will be open at Noon.
The Band of the Duke of Lancaster's Own Rifles. Organ Performances in the Bazaar.

SATURDAY, June 7th.

EXHIBITION, BAZAAR, AND FANCY FAIR will open at Noon.
The Band of the Duke of Lancaster's Own Rifles. The Band of the Liverpool Training Ship "Indefatigable."

WESTMORLAND AND CUMBERLAND WRESTLING
OLD ENGLISH SPORTS,
COMMENCING AT FOUR O'CLOCK.

HISTORY SHOP NEWS HISTOR

FRIENDS OF THE HERITAGE SERVICE

To all readers, Friends and future supporters of the Heritage Service in Wigan. We need you to consider our proposals for a constitution for the new Friends of the Heritage Service so that we may progress our plans and give you the opportunity to get involved.

Outlined below are our thoughts. Please study them and return the slip stating your agreement, any amendments you suggest and whether you are a new or existing Friend.

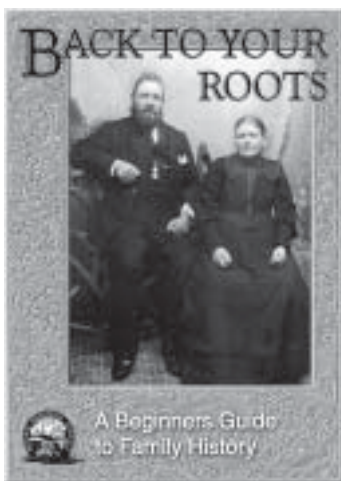
The final version of the constitution will be presented at the next meeting of the Friends of the History Shop in

early December. Keep an eye out for the final date. For all of our Friends from outside the Borough, or even outside the country, please indicate on your slip if you are happy with the proposals.

If you do have suggestions for committee members please nominate them and they will be considered at the meeting. Otherwise appointments will be voted on at the meeting.

If you do not want to deface your copy of *Past Forward* please put your thoughts on a sheet of paper and send it to us at the History Shop. ➔

EXHIBITIONS IN THE HISTORY SHOP



12 October - 13 November - *Back to Your Roots*

17 November - January 2000 - *Around Standish and Shevington* - the exhibition of the book

January - March 2000 - *Mr. Prestwich's Improvements: A travelling exhibition celebrating 125 years of the Protector Lamp and Lighting Co. Ltd., producers of miners' safety lamps.*

In July the History Shop took part in the annual Wigan Arts Festival, a joint undertaking by the Wigan Artists' Network and the Turnpike Centre, Leigh. The theme of this year's show was *Presenting the Figure* and it was

interesting to have contemporary, local work on display, ranging from large canvas paintings to papier mache sculpture. Our thanks go to Martyn Lucas of the Turnpike for allowing us to be one of the chosen venues, and we look forward to next year's Festival.

August saw two exhibitions. Firstly we had work by the children of Aspull Primary School. They investigated the history of the township's crest and their resulting illustrations and text were displayed at the History Shop. Crest jigsaws and worksheets augmented the display and our congratulations go to Stephanie and Martin Banks, the winners of our summer competition.

At the end of August we hosted the annual Wigan Photographic Society exhibition; as usual the standard of prints was excellent and we hope that many of you voted for your favourite image. As we go to press the History Shop is hosting the annual exhibition of the Atherton Photographic Society. Both societies are keen to welcome new members so please ask us for details if you are interested in joining.

Family history is obviously a keen interest for many of our visitors/readers. The Heritage Service's own exhibition for the autumn is *Back to Your Roots*, an

introduction for anyone who has wondered how to begin the search for ancestors. It investigates the sources available: parish records, census returns, archive material; and gives advice for beginners. Come along, get the bug and start an enthralling journey. The exhibition runs until mid-November.

**THE DERBY ROOM,
Leigh Library
January - February 2000**
Back to Your Roots

PUBLIC LECTURES IN THE HISTORY SHOP

10 November
The Natural History of Elnup Wood, Standish
Adrian Morris

8 December
Haigh Hall and the People Who Lived There
Carol Banks
12 January
Lancashire and the Domesday Book
Fred Holcroft

9 February
The Victorian Photographic Portrait Parlour
Audrey Linkman

'OLD SOLDIERS' NEVER DIE

WIGAN born and bred Colin Bean, now aged 73, who once played Private Sponge in the popular Dad's Army TV series in the 1970's; has recently written his autobiography.

Drawing on over 50 years experience in the theatre, Colin's book is the "most absorbing and informative theatrical biography I have come across" according to Peter Hepple of 'The Stage and TV Today'.

During his career Colin has seldom been without work for long. He once ran his own company in Wigan and played many small roles on television apart from Private Sponge. Now in semi-retirement, Colin occasionally is heard on Northern Radio and keeps busy with small scale one-man shows in this area.

Part of the backbone of his profession, Colin is a man who loves the theatre and this is reflected in his book which comes straight from the heart. He recalls years of treading the boards, the hard work behind the scenes, the rich variety of roles he has played, his fellow actors and many amusing anecdotes from the world of showbusiness. In particular he shares his love of pantomime and relates his hilarious experiences behind the scenes of Dad's Army. 'Who Do You Think You Are Kidding' (Colin Bean's Story) is published by Minerva Press, £9.99 paperback. ISBN 0 75410 499 0. Available from the History Shop.

Y SHOP NEWS HISTORY SHOP

CONSTITUTION

The parties involved

Wigan Heritage Service - part of Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Friends of Wigan Heritage Service

Aims & Objectives Statement

To further the aims set out in the Mission Statement of Wigan Heritage Service and the objectives set out in the Access Plan 1998-20001

Specifically to enable the Heritage Service to provide an improved customer service and greater public access

How it achieves these objectives

By providing

- ♦ project work groups
- ♦ function/event organisation/help
- ♦ opportunities for fundraising
- ♦ local knowledge/information

By supporting

- ♦ regular meetings
- ♦ Friends pages in *Past Forward*

Governing Body

Initially chaired by Heritage Service

Suggested Committee of 6?

- ♦ Chair
 - ♦ Secretary
 - ♦ Treasurer
 - Group Representatives
 - Museums
 - Archives
 - Local History
- Possibly include correspondents
- * Regional
 - * National International

Election v Appointment

Election - nomination and vote through *Past Forward* and *Past Forward* mailing list

Appointment - local appointments by Heritage Service

The first method is preferable and should provide the nominations and then the committee, but will take longer. The second needs to remain an option dependent upon response.

How to join

Simply get on the Friends mailing list and subscribe. No qualification tests, no direct association with the Borough necessary. You can join through slip in *Past Forward*, at

one of our venues, by mail, 'phone, email, etc....

Should the group for any reason cease to exist, all assets goods and services of the group will become the assets goods and services of Wigan Heritage Service. These assets would be treated as a donation to the Heritage Service to be used only for the following purposes

- To improve/develop the Heritage Service
- To provide improved access to collections
- To improve the storage and documentation of the collections
- To further Heritage communications through *Past Forward*
- To help purchase items for the collection

According to the rules laid down for Registered museums by the Museums and Galleries Commission and the codes of the Museums Association.

FRIENDS - HOW WILL IT WORK?

Meetings

- Regular open meetings - all Friends and newcomers
- Venue History Shop - but could move around later e.g. Leigh, Wigan Pier, Astley Green
- Frequency - every 2 months
- AGM - members only
- Venue History Shop
- Voting in person and by proxy
- Committee/Governing Body - elected body plus Heritage Service representative
- Venue History Shop
- Frequency - every 4 months
- Interest Groups
 - * Museums & Art Gallery
 - * Archive
 - * Local History
 - * Genealogy

To be set up according to demand/interest

Meetings to be held at the Heritage venue specific to the subject

To become the focus for project work - supervised by Wigan Heritage Service

News and Reports - through *Past Forward*, special Friends pages and Friends mailings

- Interest Groups
- Regional and Foreign Correspondents
- Exchange of information/ideas
- Notices and events

Activities

- Project work - going on at specific venues, regular group or individual work on Heritage supervised tasks
- Special events/openings/workshops etc...to further the aims and objectives of the Friends with Heritage input
- Annual exhibition - possibly rotating for each of the active interest groups - venue could be seen at each Heritage venue
- Fund raising - within the aims and objectives of the Friends

PROJECTS

Some examples of the type of project work that the Friends group could get involved with.

- Archives - listing, indexing and transcribing - Leigh Town Hall
- Genealogy - indexing census and parish record material for the study area - the History Shop
- Local History - indexing project on the Dootson collection of Lancashire books
- Exhibitions - Work on the *People's Show* element of the Millennium exhibition

An important point to stress however is that these are only suggestions and that we want the group once formed to come up with its own ideas as well and follow its own interests.

MEETING REPORT

Meeting of the Friends Monday 6 September 7 p.m.

History Shop

Chair - Philip Butler (Acting Heritage Services Manager)

This was a very interesting meeting despite a disappointingly low turnout. Our ideas for the development of the Friends were followed by some lively and informed debate that moved the subject on very well.

The idea that the newly formed group may be in line for a generous Millennium grant under the Awards for All scheme was greeted favourably, but more information was requested - see section on Awards for All.

Some of the salient points were

- Given the profile of the Friends attending the meeting, the time could be changed to during the day rather than the evening.
- More should have been done to publicise the meeting to encourage a larger turnout
- Some idea of the projects that might be on offer for the Friends should be given
- Events like a Friends cheese and wine party/reception should begin at once.

To round off the meeting Philip Butler gave a short presentation on the forthcoming Millennium exhibition, part of the *Year 2K and Beyond* project, at the History Shop. At present the help required is for the *People's Show* element of the exhibition. See the section on the exhibition to see how you can get involved.

Continued on page 16

STOP PRESS

The latest volume in the highly successful photographic histories of our area, **Around Standish and Shevington**, compiled by Nicholas Webb, is now on sale in the History Shop. As usual, this latest addition to the series is full of fascinating photographs, many of which are being seen for the first time. Priced at £9.99 it's an ideal Christmas present.



HISTORY SHOP NEWS

EXHIBITION

The People's Show

We need you to get involved in our exhibition project for the new Millennium. As part of our *Year 2K and Beyond* project the Wickham Gallery on the ground floor of the History Shop will be redisplayed to reflect life in the Wigan area today, with the help of local people, local groups and local firms.

One area within this show will focus on people, specifically an object that people feel marks the occasion for them. It could be something old or new, something you couldn't do without, the latest fashion or something very personal, something unique or mass-produced. **But it must be a thing.** We cannot feature people or pets. It must also be something that you feel you could loan to us for a year or so for the exhibition. We would also need to know why you feel it important, what makes it special to you and just how you see it marking the occasion. Then we will hopefully have an area of the display that features many of these things on show alongside a picture and description of the person and their explanation of the object.

So come along to the History Shop and get involved in the exhibition. It's your chance to feature in a major exhibition in Wigan about our area today. Contact Dawn Wadsworth for more details (01942 828124).



PEOPLE'S SHOW

- TO MARK THE MILLENNIUM
- YOUR STORY / YOUR OBJECT
- THINGS NOT PEOPLE
 - ITEM YOU COULDN'T DO WITHOUT
 - ITEM FOR A DESERT ISLAND
 - WHAT YOU WOULD HAND DOWN
- AND WHY



STOP PRESS

Awards for All

Lottery Grants for Local Groups
This means the Friends of Wigan Heritage Service.

Launched recently this scheme gives local groups of all sizes, however small, the chance to make an application for lottery money. It is part of the Millennium Festival scheme and funds are available for activities by local groups which

- **Mark or celebrate the Millennium**
- **Bring people together**
- **Increase involvement in a wide range of community activities**
- **Are open and accessible**
- **Are well organised and planned**

We feel that this presents a perfect opportunity for our new group. A modest bid to this fund, - the average bid is expected to be £2000 - £3000 - will give us the ideal platform to really launch the Friends.

Further into their application pack document, a copy of which we have already secured, it states that applications from **new groups** would be welcome. However in order for us to be eligible for a grant we must agree our constitution, set up our committee and open our bank account as soon as possible.

Please consider the section on the constitution carefully and then as a Friend complete the slip (or return on a blank sheet of paper) and send it to us at the History Shop.

SOME RECENT ADDITIONS TO STOCK AT THE HISTORY SHOP

929.342 Herber, Mark. *Clandestine Marriages in the Chapel and Rules of the Fleet Prison 1680-1754*. Francis Boutle Publishers. 1998. 128pp. [A transcription of some of the registers, and an important source for marriages which do not appear in parish registers]

282 Gardner, Norman (Ed.). *Lancashire Quarter Sessions Records; Register of Recusants 1678*. Wigan. North West Catholic History Society. 1998. 204pp. ISBN 0953 1020 25.

282 Gardner, Norman (Ed.). *Lancashire Quarter Sessions Records; Register of Recusants 1679*. Wigan. North West Catholic History Society. 1998. 101pp. ISBN 0953 1020 25.

282.42 Hilton, J.A. and others (Ed.). *Bishop Leyburn's Confirmation Register of 1687*. Wigan. North West Catholic History Society. 1997. 311pp. ISBN 0951 4615 83.

[The above three volumes contain lists of names of known Catholics]

929.1 Herber, Mark D. *Ancestral Trails. The Complete Guide to British Genealogy and Family History*. Stroud. Sutton Publishing. 1997. 674pp. ISBN 0750 9141 81.

[Published in association with the Society of Genealogists, this is probably the definitive guide to the subject]

920 FOR Bret, David. *George Formby; a troubled genius*. Robson Books. 1999. 296pp. ISBN 1861 0523 91.

[A controversial biography of this Wigan-born comedian]

652.24 Watts, A.J. *Private owner wagons from the Ince Waggon and Ironworks Company*. Historical Model Railway Society. 1998. ISBN 0902 8352 54.

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

Name

Address

Existing Friend New Friend (£5 annual subscription payable to Wigan MBC)

Constitution - Do you support the proposals Y N

Comments

Please state preference for Time of Meeting in December

Morning Afternoon Evening

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

£7.00

PER MORNING OR AFTERNOON SESSION

£10.50

PER EVENING SESSION

COMMERCIAL RATE

£15.00

(Day time only)

REFRESHMENTS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE

If you are interested, contact Mike Haddon

(01942) 828121

Is your dialect really necessary?

APPARENTLY, a resounding YES, according to the almost endless bibliography on the subject and the fact that dialect has been around for well over a thousand years.

Over 35 years of daily technical report writing. I fell in love with, but have never completely mastered, the use of words. In this connection I purchased, about 45 years ago, a Pelican paperback by the late Simeon Potter, entitled *Our Language*, the best 3s.6d. I ever spent.

Mr. Potter laid great store in the importance of dialect when he wrote that, between the years 1150 and 1500, there were five major dialects, all of equally important literary standing - Northern, East Midlands, West Midlands, Southern and Kent.

Well ... imagine the preening on reading the first one! I even invested in myself the honour of being bi-lingual - English (with a distinct flavour of Garswood) and fluent Wiganese.

Concerned

Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a belief that progress would eventually see the demise of dialect. So concerned was one Joseph Wright that in 1898 he sat down to compile his *Dictionary of English Dialect* - six volumes of it. Incidentally, I have recently discovered, in mint condition, the six volumes which he completed in 1905, in our local reference library to which I shall be making more frequent visits.

In his volume on *The Grammar of Dialect* he wrote in his Preface that the reason for embarking on such a mammoth task was that the advance of technology in communication, travel, both domestic and foreign would, in the next 20 years, see the philology (pronunciation) existing at the end of the century irretrievably lost.

By sheer coincidence, I was born in that period of estimation and though I never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Wright, I could have informed him that as far as Garswood was concerned, he was worrying unduly.

In the following 21 years I spoke, as did 99% of the 300 or

so population, fluent, broad Wiganese, for the want of a better description. But let me hasten to add that such lingo was not normally used in the home, though I do remember the opposite with a few families. Neither was it used in school, church or even shops, unless one was on familiar terms with the proprietor or assistant(s) thereof.

Consider the following, I have vivid memories of a handful of very old (probably ten years younger than I am now) residents of Garswood who never spoke anything but dialect. Opinions may vary here but, with that term "Dialect Speaking Areas" in mind, could it have been that they were the remaining fossils of a community that spoke, exclusively, dialect?

I have mentioned the co-existence of standard English and dialect but as far as I am aware, nothing has been recorded about the dialect speaker's psychological standing in relation to that of the more (but not necessarily) articulate English speaker.

"Talkin' proper"

To elucidate, it was my experience that if a local, dialect speaker was approached by a stranger or someone of known officialdom, the change from dialect to "talkin' proper" was immediate and, somehow, intuitive. Add to that and with a few exceptions, the dialect speaker automatically assumed the subordinate role. This scenario, I suppose, would never materialise.

Existing at the time was, by today's standards, a more restricted urge to invade the territory of your neighbouring tribe, with the philological result that should a resident of, say, south of a line below St. Helens stray into Garswood, his exit would be remarked upon in terms of, "Din't 'e talk nice?" Well they do say that comparisons are odious.

"Yed it wi thi yed"

During my working life I encountered many dialects and was even invited to try one or two

out. I remember quite vividly the efforts of a group of lovely young girls from the Potteries teaching me Potter's elocution test piece, "Cos kick a baw agen a waw then yed it wi thi yed an' bust it?" I must, though, hasten to add that in the ensuing 55 years, I have yet to encounter the occasion to enquire of anyone if they are capable of kicking a ball against a wall, then heading it with their head (what else?) sufficiently hard to burst it.

With the benefit of hindsight and my feeling for dialect there is a distinct possibility that such a feeling is on hold and with this in mind, I often wonder about the existence of dialect today, especially in my old principality. I would simply hate to learn that it had died.

In this connection I wonder if, in the network of Wigan Heritage Service, there might be a section centred on the survival of the local dialect that could perhaps supply me with relevant information.

As may be imagined, living where I do, there is no dialect, only that plaintiff sounding

Brummie accent. The only Wiganese I hear now is when Uncle Ernie Taberner rings! I would love to hear of tapes on dialect (not the ones by actors), especially those made on impromptu, rather than on stage production!

In conclusion, and with Joseph Wright again in mind, I wonder if his concern for the dialect's survival is now more justified than it was earlier this century and whether any movement has been noted in the Wigan area.

If I could use the incident of my recent visit to my local library as a sort of warning beacon to the effect that interest in dialect is on the wane, let me report that here, on the shelves, are six large volumes each containing say 600 or more pages, still in mint condition, as far as I am aware, my request to see them was the first in years. Please, you Wiganers, tell me I am hopelessly wrong!

**J. Harold Smith
Sutton Coldfield
West Midlands**

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So many readers have expressed their appreciation of Harold Knowles's previous contributions on Ashton-in-Makerfield that he has been persuaded to write some . . .

MORE MEMORIES OF ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD IN THE 1930's

I DON'T think that Ashton-in-Makerfield could ever have been considered to be big enough to have suburbs. If it had been, however, Stubshaw Cross would have been its north-eastern suburb.

I was born in Dawber Street, Stubshaw Cross in the mid-1920's. In those days, in Stubshaw Cross, there were two public houses, one off-licence, a large branch of the Bryn Gates Co-operative Society, Rigby's Farm and a large advertisement hoarding which conveniently masked the activities of us kids on the "croft" behind it. Today there are still two public houses, the off-licence has gone, Bryn Gates Co-operative Society in its entirety has gone and Rigby's Farm is now Jameson's Farm. There was quite a large area of "spare" land to the north of Golborne Road on which we could play, secure in the knowledge that we wouldn't be chased off; there was also a pond where we caught tiddlers (we called them cockies) in jam jars and gazed in amazement at the very large and colourful dragonflies which used to breed in the pond. Those of us who were old enough played "piggy"* - a game very popular in Lancashire mining communities - and flew home-made kites on the croft. Others, such as my age group, were too young for an active part and just watched.

On a piece of land next to the croft there stood a semi-derelict building of corrugated iron construction. It had, allegedly, been a toffee works but it was in a very sad state with every window broken, the roof littered with half bricks and other debris. It was, in fact, so badly damaged that we kids gave it a very wide berth for fear of being blamed for previous damage

Jug for buttermilk

In the 1920's and 1930's children of a very young age would be required to do their share of running errands. I recall being sent to Rigby's Farm with a jug for buttermilk. The buttermilk would be poured onto mashed potatoes and was considered by many people to be a great delicacy; not by me though. I only tried it once and thought it revolting! I also provided great amusement in the local corner shop where I would be sent to buy two penn'orth of desiccated coconut. I always pronounced it as "desecrated" coconut! We were also sent to school completely unaccompanied, in many instances from the very first day. My mother's older brother, Peter, was sent out on his first school day to go to the Roman Catholic School in Liverpool Road, Ashton, because my grandmother's second marriage had been to a Roman Catholic. His two step-brothers, Charlie and James, being the children of my grandmother's first, Protestant, marriage were already attending St. Lukes, Protestant School. On Peter's first school day Charlie and James simply shanghaied him and took him with them to St. Lukes School. Apparently they just introduced Peter as their step-brother, he was entered into the register and that was that! He never went to a Roman Catholic School. Family history does not relate what happened at home when it was discovered what had been done, but it was never undone and my Uncle Peter's religious transformation on his first school day meant that he remained a Protestant for the rest of his life. They certainly

practised informality in those days!

Transport in the 1920's and early 1930's still relied quite heavily on the horse. Many local councils still used horse-drawn vehicles as did Ashton Council for their dust carts. One of my most vivid childhood memories is of a council dustcart horse collapsing in Edgeseen Street. I would have been about three or four years old at the time and I was fascinated to see this enormous carhorse lying helpless, still in the shafts of the cart, the dustmen gathered, impotently, around and housewives at every door. I suspect that the poor animal must have had to be destroyed, but I never saw it because I vaguely remember someone rushing me indoors.

Bonfire night

At the bottom of Dawber Street and Edgeseen Street there were some allotment gardens, the cultivation of which was a very popular pastime, particularly since there was a valuable edible benefit in the vegetables which formed the bulk of the crops. My grandfather rented one of these allotments, none of which had a piped water supply; most of the allotment holders, therefore, dug a pit into which water drained naturally, thus providing a supply of water for irrigation. On bonfire night each year my grandfather would make a big bonfire which also served the dual purpose of burning up the year's garden waste. Naturally, seeing the bonfire was a big event in a child's life, and I remember running down to the allotment this bonfire night well in advance of my parents in my eagerness to see the bonfire. It was, of course, pitch dark; I was about five years old and the water pit lay alongside the path in the allotment. What a recipe for disaster! Sure enough, as I was running along the path I slipped into the water pit. I should perhaps mention that, in addition to being cold and wet, it smelled

absolutely vile! Luckily the water only came up to my waist so I was quickly rescued and rapidly carted off home to be stripped off and scrubbed down. I saw no bonfire that night.

Boxing matches

Boxing matches were staged in the yard at the rear of the Caledonian Hotel. It must have been a large yard because it had to accommodate a full size boxing-ring and quite a large crowd of spectators. I think the boxing matches would have been relatively minor events of mainly local significance but they certainly seemed to be well attended and very popular. They would only be staged during the light evenings of the summer months for obvious reasons and I used to be able to watch them from one of the back bedroom windows of my Auntie Evelyn's house. They were sash windows and, by leaning out of the window, you could get a reasonable view. Not quite Frazier-Ali standard but it was very entertaining and, free.

Behind my Auntie Evelyn's house and down a narrow dirt track between some allotments was the Y.M.C.A. football ground which doubled up in summer as a sports field used by local Sunday Schools for their annual Field Days. They used to charge for admission to the football matches but they had a custom which was of great benefit to local children - at half-time they would let us in free!

Street entertainment was a fairly regular feature of life in Stubshaw Cross. Clog dancers, some incredibly adept, others rather less so, came along, seemingly on a daily basis. Other performers displayed a variety of skills - or pretensions - with piano accordions, mouth organs and other musical instrumentalists. I vaguely remember a one-man band coming round once and there was the occasional juggler.



One entertainment I particularly remember was an outdoor film show. The films were movies, but silent, and they were shown on a screen mounted on the side of a lorry. Presumably the power to light and drive the film was taken from a small lorry-mounted generator.

Digressing slightly and moving forward a few years, I remember the Salvation Army, in Ashton, putting on shows for the local children. I don't know if there is a name for it but the shows consisted of the enactment of various sorts of action behind a large white screen. All the children would sit on wooden benches in front of the screen and there were lights behind it so arranged as to cast the shadows of the performers on to the other side of the screen for us to see. Sometimes someone would perform the old trick of casting shadows, using their hands, of such things as birds, butterflies and various animals onto the screen. We really weren't very sophisticated in those days! The big attraction, however, wasn't the entertainment so much as the refreshments which were, wisely, only served after the performances and the inevitable, slightly religious, pep-talk which always followed the show. The refreshments were really rather generous with biscuits or cake and a drink of tea or, if we were lucky, pop. I'm not sure how many converts the Salvation Army got from events such as these but, even if we didn't give the matter a lot of thought at the time, I know that I have always had a soft spot for the Salvation Army.

Kaolin poultice

Illness was much more of a burden on people then than it is now. Of course humanity, even in a modern country such as England, still has to fight against the killers such as cancer, heart disease etc. but the days have gone when, for example, respiratory infections of a comparatively minor nature could develop into a fatal illness. I remember one occasion - I would be about three years old - when my father had a particular severe chest infection which must have been bronchitis. He was in bed and was having what I later thought must have been a kaolin poultice applied to his chest and back. This treatment was being applied by candlelight - the house had gas lighting downstairs but nothing upstairs - by my mother and our next door neighbour,



Bolton Road, Stubshaw Cross, c.1910.

Molly Griffiths. The kaolin - if such it was - had to be heated up on the fire downstairs and then rushed upstairs and spread on Dad's chest and back. Makeshift bandages - items of old clothing such as shirts etc. cut into wide strips - were then wrapped around the unfortunate patient's body and left in place for 24 hours. As a three year old spectator I was half fascinated, half horrified and certainly somewhat frightened by the spectacle. My dad recovered but I often used to think later that it was in spite of the poultice rather than because of it. The whole scene could have come straight from the pages of Charles Dickens.

Our neighbour Mollie Griffiths, mentioned above, was one of those women whose value to their immediate neighbourhood could not be exaggerated. If there was a sick baby or fractious child Mollie didn't just offer sympathy, she rolled up her sleeves and pitched in with solid practical help. She would sit with the child, day or night, as required, to give the mother a much needed rest or the chance to go out and do her shopping. She also cut the local children's hair! This was greatly appreciated by the local parents because, of course - what else - yes, she did it for nothing! She helped our family in Stubshaw Cross and continued to help us when we all moved to Grove Street/Crescent Avenue.

"Doctor's man"

A long illness could be financially crippling to a family for a number of reasons apart from the most obvious reason of doctor's bills having to be paid. If the worker of the family was ill and couldn't work it spelled trouble immediately in the shape of a significant reduction in

income. Doctor's bills had to be paid and even though most people paid off the doctor in weekly instalments the money still had to be found. A common sight on Friday evenings was the "Doctor's man" doing his rounds, collecting those weekly payments. No wonder patent medicines with their beguiling, tempting advertisements promising instant cures for virtually all ills made vast fortunes for their manufacturers. I remember once, after I was married, my Dad visited us for a few days when we lived in Yorkshire. I was working for Pudsey Borough Council, between Leeds and Bradford, at the time. At bedtime my Dad opened his suitcase and proceeded to take out his seemingly exhaustive, supply of medicines. He first took a dose of Fennings Fever Cure, then a Fennings Little Healer, then a dose of Owbridges Lung Tonic and followed this revolting cocktail with a large dose of Scott's Cod Liver Oil Emulsion. Then, just for good measure, he popped a couple of Beacham's Pills into his mouth! He had taken enough medicine to stop a carhorse! I asked him "Are you ill Dad?" "No", he said, "but I would be if I didn't take this stuff!" Such is the power of advertising!

Another consequence of the expense of bringing in the doctor was the continuing popularity of herbalists. Most towns would have one or more herbalist shops, usually quite small premises with a dark and slightly sinister interior. The window display, as with chemists, usually featured a few large glass containers, of a pharmaceutical aspect, filled with coloured water and, occasionally, a stuffed animal or bird, mounted

in a glass case. Sometimes, these natural history exhibits would be displayed within the shop, enhancing the, already intimidating, atmosphere. The most popular herbalists, especially with children, were those with a stuffed alligator. This would guarantee that there would usually be a few children hanging around the shop. Many people swore by the herbs or whatever they got from the herbalist. My Uncle Charlie did. He had moved to Yorkshire in the 1920's or 1930's and, whenever he came back to Ashton to visit his mother, he would call in at the herbalist in Gerard Street and stock up his supplies. This was a typical herbalist shop - small with a slightly dark interior and rows of glass or white ceramic jars on shelves lining the walls. The jars had ornate labels or fancy gold lettering on the front spelling out the Latin name of whatever it contained. Most herbalists had facilities for dispensing refreshing drinks or herbal remedies. Sarsaparilla and Dandelion and Burdock were great favourites. The herbalist shop in Ashton was in Gerard Street on the same side as Cromptons Factory. It was one of a terrace of very small shops opposite Timothy White and Taylor, the chemist; I think the whole terrace was demolished in the 1950's.

Horse-drawn funerals

Horse-drawn funerals were still to be seen in the early 1930's. My maternal grandfather died in 1932 and the hearse at his funeral was horse-drawn. It was the full "monte" - coal black horses with

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MORE MEMORIES OF ASHTON-IN- MAKERFIELD IN THE 1930s

Continued from page 19

black, plumed, head-dresses, brightly polished harness and the hearse, a highly ornate, glass-sided and lavishly decorated receptacle for a coffin which, to my recollection of later years, seemed so insignificant by comparison that it should have been apologetic for having the temerity to allow itself to be placed therein. I didn't go to the funeral - at just over five years old I would have been too young. I was just one of the crowd of spectators - in those days all the neighbours made a point of turning out to pay their last respects and to be seen to be so doing - fascinated by the panoply of the funeral scene and too pre-occupied by it to be more than slightly disturbed by the sight of my mother and my aunts in tears.

Not long after my Grandad's funeral a number of families were re-housed from Stubshaw Cross to the Crescent Avenue area of Ashton, between Wigan Road and Old Road. Luckily, my Grandma was moved into the house next door to us together with my three, as yet unmarried, aunts and my Uncle Jimmy (he of the one arm who taught me to swim). For me, the most immediate effect of the move was a change of school. I was sent to the British School, situated in Wigan Road in Ashton town centre. Although I wasn't to know it at the time, I was very fortunate to go to the British School. It was a combined infants and junior school; the headmaster was Arthur Cottam, a man of diminutive stature but with enormous strength of character and personality. He was also a strict disciplinarian who had built up a sound reputation for getting the best out of his pupils, particularly in the senior classes. He had an enviable record of success by his pupils in the 11-plus or "scholarship" examination as it was then known. He was a firm advocate of corporal punishment which he applied in liberal measure, and though the anatomical location of the punishment - strokes of the cane on the hands rather than the backside - differed from my later experience at Ashton Grammar School, the effect was similar - it hurt! I met Arthur Cottam years

later when my schooldays were long behind me. He was retired by then and probably in his seventies. I had never before fully realised how small he was - I towered over him and it was difficult to reconcile the man I saw then with the headmaster who had exercised such a great influence over me during the five or six years I spent at the British School. I owe a great deal to Arthur Cottam. He it was who pushed me to Ashton Grammar School and, although that was just a beginning, without the beginning nothing can follow. He was, of course, aided and supported by his teaching staff. I can't remember all the names but I do recall Miss Piggott and Mr. Johnson in my first year or so and I particularly remember Miss Hilda Corless who, I'm sure, was in charge of the final year class when pupils were being prepared for the scholarship examination. She had the sporting distinction of being an England ladies hockey international. I am very glad to say that the British School is still in existence, but has now been converted into, I think, residential accommodation for aged persons.

Matriarch of the family

When I was about 10 or 11 years old I used to help my Auntie Maggie on Saturday mornings. My Auntie Maggie was a window cleaner working for Peace's firm of window cleaners. This was a fairly large family concern controlled by the matriarch of the family, Mrs. Pearce, from her bungalow in Bryn Road South, off Bolton Road and Town Green. Auntie Maggie's "beat" extended along the length of Bolton Road to the Ram's Head public house at the junction of Bolton Road with Golborne Road at Stubshaw Cross, including the side streets along the way. On Saturday mornings Auntie Maggie had to collect the "window money" from the houses where the windows had been cleaned the previous week. My job was to help her. She would tell me which houses to go to and how much money was required. Large sums of money were not involved. Rarely did the cost exceed 3d (this was 1936 of course).

In those days a knock at the door on Friday night or Saturday morning meant only one thing - someone had come for money. Consequently, at some houses, adult members of a family rarely

answered the door on Friday evening or Saturday morning. This important duty would be delegated to the member of the family least qualified to discharge that duty - usually a very small child of tender years, always in a state of embarrassing undress - no trousers etc. The door was usually left ajar and would be pulled open by this infant, who, usually, had only the barest grasp of his or her native tongue. "Der noy in" was the standard response to a request for the miserably few coppers involved. I would persist and the infant would disappear into the inner recesses of the house, presumably for further instructions. "Dey seh der noy in" was the further response when he/she returned. I would continue to insist upon payment and, eventually, they would realise I wasn't going to go away and the required coppers would be, grudgingly, tendered.

It would take my Auntie Maggie and me the whole of Saturday morning to collect the window money along Bolton Road and the various side streets. When we had finished we then had to take the money to Mrs. Pearce in her bungalow in Bryn Road South. For this three hours work Auntie Maggie would give me sixpence, which was generous for those days. To put it into perspective, I could buy twelve 1 oz. bags of sweets for sixpence - wine gums, marzipan teacakes, coconut mushrooms, liquorice allsorts - all these goodies were within my reach.

Three cinemas

Or, instead, I could go to the Saturday matinee at the Palace cinema. There were three cinemas in Ashton in the 1930's - the Queens, the Palace and the Scala - but only one of them, the Palace, opened for a children's matinee on Saturday afternoon. The admission prices were 1d for the cheapest seats (the front stalls), 2d for the back stalls and 3d for the balcony seats, usually occupied by the children of indulgent parents. The social discrimination thus imposed in no way guaranteed any superiority in the behaviour of the juvenile plutocrats of the upper level. Quite the reverse, in fact - they were much more badly behaved, something which students of social history would probably find not at all surprising. The kids in the balcony seats made full use of the law of gravity, raining every sort of debris imaginable upon

the unfortunates in the 1d seats below. In the fruit harvest weeks of autumn the situation was much worse for those in the lower seats. Mrs. Green, mother of Alan Green, the founder of Green's supermarket in Gerard Street, had a fruit and vegetable shop opposite the Palace and for a 1d you could get a brown paper bag full of small hard pears. Guess where the cores went on Saturday afternoons! As to the official entertainment - the films of course - it consisted largely of serials. We called them "following-ups", featuring Tom Mix, Ken Maynard, Buck Jones, Roy Rogers etc. - all cowboy films - and Buster Crabbe as Flash Gordon for science fiction. Laurel and Hardy short films and early cartoon were also very popular.

The noise inside the cinema was indescribable - it had to be heard to be believed. I never knew a full performance to go through uninterrupted. Several times during the show the house lights would come on and the manager would appear at the front of the stage. His appeal never varied - he knew his task was completely hopeless - he would repeat, two or three times, "Would you be quiet please!" - only in England would the manager have said "please"! - then the house lights were dimmed again, the performance re-commenced and mayhem continued as before.

One of my pals, Bill Griffiths, son of the Mollie Griffiths mentioned earlier in this article and brother of the Joe Griffiths who emigrated to Australia, got a job as a projectionist at the Palace cinema when he left school and, on quiet mid-week evenings, would invite me to join him in the projection room. It was quite fascinating to see how a smooth continuation of the film from reel to reel was achieved. The projectionist had to watch the screen when the reel being played was nearing its end. A signal would appear in the top right-hand corner of the screen to alert the projectionist to switch on the second projector which was, of course, synchronised with the reel in the first projector. After a spell at the Palace, Bill was promoted to the Ritz in Wigan, a much bigger and almost new cinema with a modern state of the art projection room which I was also privileged to visit.

● In the next issue, Harold Knowles recalls a holiday in Blackpool in the 1930's. Ed.

AMONGST all the events and celebrations held during 1999, one anniversary has almost been overlooked, although its introduction brought about a minor domestic revolution and created in its wake an urban myth. I am referring to the introduction of the launderette, which is celebrating its jubilee this year.

The launderette, or self service laundry, originated in the Manhattan district of the City of New York in 1945. In 1946 Bendix Home Appliances Company was formed in the UK, and within a year had established itself as a leading manufacturer of the top end of the home-washer market, producing a 9 lbs capacity automatic washer which sold at just over £100. Later in 1946 a director of Fisher & Ludlow, of which Bendix was a subsidiary company, went on a visit to the United States and observed the development of self service laundries and considered the possibility of introducing the concept into Britain. Wilfred Russell-Neil, a top manager from Bendix was sent to the United States to investigate the possibilities, and on his return decided that the concept could be made to work in Britain. Russell-Neil took the view that Bendix themselves would have to launch

A CLEAN SHEET

the scheme by establishing the first laundries, before they could reasonably expect to sell this new concept to the British public.

Bendix took to the ideas

Bendix took to the ideas, and in 1947 opened a suite of offices at 46 Baker Street, deciding on the name Launderette for their branches. Their first site was Queensway, where the first Bendix self service launderette opened its doors in early 1949. It consisted of 20 Bendix washers and 3 hydro extractors. In contrast to the United States, tumble dryers were not installed, as no suitable drying equipment was available in Britain at the time, and importing was not permitted because of strict import controls.

One of the first launderettes in this area was opened by W. Lee, electrician, in Smith Street, Atherton in May 1949. Known as the Launderteria it possessed a battery of electric washing machines. Housewives who wanted their washing done could take their bundles to the shop, where the parcels were weighed and a charge of 2s.6d. or 12 1/2p was made for 9lbs weight. Supervisors separated the woollens, coloureds and whites which were then put into the washing machine. The dial was set, soap placed in the water and then the machine was switched on. Each batch of washing took 45 minutes, enabling the housewife to either go and do her shopping or else wait in a room at the shop.

Mr. Lee's idea was to

take the drudgery and backache out of washing and rid the home of wash day blues. His experiment must have been successful as he then opened a launderette in Railway Road, Leigh in September 1949.

Violet Carson

Certainly, during the next couple of decades launderettes grew in number, and even as late as January 1967 an article in the *Wigan Observer* referred to the opening of the Platt Bridge Launderette at 164 Warrington Road, Lower Ince, by Coronation Street star Violet Carson.

The launderette boasted a vending machine and a brightly illuminated jukebox besides the 10 washing machines and six dryers. Soap powder used was Persil and Omo. Whilst the washing machines could hold 9 lbs of clothes, the dryers were able to carry 20 lbs for only 6d.

Although there are still launderettes operating in the Wigan area I would be most interested to hear which is the oldest one still operating. If any readers have memories of launderette use, or photographs, I would be most grateful if they could contact me at Leigh Local History Library.

T.A.

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From the Leigh Reporter, March 1966.

WANTED

Besides information and reminiscences needed on launderettes, I also require information, photographs etc. on the following subjects:-

Friendly Societies, Dry Cleaners and Supermarkets.

Furthermore I am most interested in personalities of the area and would welcome any information on the stage and screen star Elizabeth Larnes, and the date of death of the Hindley born writer John Farrimond.

During the early part of the next year there will be an exhibition on food & shopping. If any reader has photographs, bill heads etc. of shops such as butchers or bakers, or any memories of going to restaurants, coffee bars and Chinese restaurants, I would like to hear from them.

Tony Ashcroft
Leigh Local History Officer
Tel (01942) 404559

EARLY DAYS IN HINDLEY

I WAS born in the Urban District of Hindley, near Wigan, on 21 August 1912, in Fairclough Street. Soon after, however, my parents moved to 17 George Street. The house was old and small - a living room, kitchen, pantry and two bedrooms. It had a small front garden but a much larger one at the back. Beyond the garden were open fields of a small poultry farm.

At the top of our neighbour's garden was a brick built lavatory. Inside was a wooden seat with a hole in the middle. There was a metal container underneath which was emptied weekly. Toilet paper was old newspapers cut into small pieces.

The washing was done in the small kitchen where there was a brick built boiler heated by a coal fire. The washing was put through two wooden rollers of a mangle and the water squeezed out.

The living room had a clothes line hanging from the ceiling over the hearth. The heat from the coal fire would dry the washing. A coal fire in the living room was our only source of heat. On one side the fire was the hob where the kettle and cooking pans could rest. On the other side was the oven. A hinged bar could be dropped over the fire. This would enable kettle or pans to be heated. Iron bars in front of the fire kept the coals from falling out. There was also an iron shelf that latched onto the bars. This shelf was adjustable. You toasted your bread here with the aid of a long fork. Steak could also be grilled in front of the bars, and very tasty it was too. The oven was always warmed by the fire. This too had a shelf inside and this could be used as a bed warmer in winter.

The living room floor was of flagstones covered with oilcloth or linoleum. Over this in part was some coconut matting. In

front of the hearth was a home-made rug made from old clothes, cut into strips and then 'pegged' into some sacking. A sideboard, sofa, two rocking chairs, three other chairs and a sewing machine completed the furniture. On the walls was one large framed photograph of me in swaddling clothes and two other pictures. A gas light in the living room was the only artificial light we had in the house.

My first memory is of being awake in the middle of the night, watching the sky lit up over Wigan. We learned later that there had been a raid by a German 'Zeppelin', the target probably an iron works on the outskirts of Wigan. People were killed and property damaged.

School years

I attended All Saints Church School. I hadn't far to go as the school was situated at the top of George Street. The main school had two floors. On the ground floor the girls were taught, the upper floor being for the boys. The upper floor had two closed-in rooms and one large room where three classes were accommodated. The school desks were long and six pupils sat side by side. There was a groove for pen or pencil and a hole for each pupil to place an inkwell for use when a pen was needed.

Our first lesson was always scripture, and we learned the catechism and parts of the Bible off by heart. If you were late for school I seem to recall having to see the headmaster. The cane was administered if necessary. In this school I passed exams to go to a local grammar school, but for financial reasons I wasn't able to take advantage of it. However, when I was 11 years old a new arrangement for our education came into being. We older children were transferred to a more modern council school, also quite close to home. We still had our scripture lesson

at the old school, then we would walk through the streets as a group, escorted by a teacher to the other school. This school had separate classrooms and the desks were for two boys.

Games we played

Outside the school there were sizable areas of common land where we played all kinds of games. We played football with any rubber ball we could get hold of sometimes by clubbing halfpennies together! But as we all wore clogs they never lasted very long.

We played cricket with home-made bats and some rather odd wickets, sometimes chalked on a wall. Later we acquired proper 'stumps' and respectable bats. My word we thought we were well off! Then we would make our way to the local park with good playing fields.

Tally was a game we played with a small ball, hitting it with a hand against the gable end of a house. This did not make you popular with the householder!

We also played a game called piggy*. A small round piece of wood, tapered at one end, was hit on this point by a round stick. It spun upwards then you belted it as hard as you could and challenged your opponent to jump the distance in so many strides. Then it was your opponents turn.

We bought football cards and rugby cards, with the name of the clubs on them. We played each other for these in a game similar to snap.

Playing with marbles and collecting cigarette cards were also popular activities. I also recall having a large iron hoop and running alongside it with a separate hook attachment in one hand. The noise made by this hoop and the fact that I wore clogs at the time must have been shattering!

Indoors we had snakes and ladders, ludo, dominoes and draughts. I had a small bagatelle

table and a pitching board. There were rubber rings which you threw to try to hook on to a number on the board.

Only recently did it occur to me that we were assisting our education. We were counting, adding up, taking away and becoming familiar with numbers.

Leisure activities

I was an avid reader in my later school years, with a fondness for adventure stories. Every Christmas I would get an annual called 'Hultons Adventure Stories'. I also recall us getting 'Comic Cuts' and 'Comic Chips'. Indeed comics were very popular with children at that time. My parents even went to great expense to buy for me a "Children's Encyclopedia".

Saturday afternoons would often see us at the local cinema. We called it the 'Penny Rush'. They were silent pictures in those days but the noise made by the children as the excitement grew could be deafening. 'Pea shooters' abounded with bits of orange peel as ammunition.

When I was working, Saturdays would see us queuing up outside the 'County' Cinema. Or the 'Empire'. We thought the 'County' posh with plush seats everywhere. I think we paid 6d. or 9d. for admission. The 'Hippodrome' with its variety shows was thrilling to us and I remember going to the pantomime at the 'Court Theatre'. Later the 'Court' went over to films and I well recall the organ rising in front of the screen from where the orchestra pit used to be. We would be treated to organ music before the picture was ready to begin. I was in Wigan when the 'Princess' was opened by Princess Margaret.

I was often a spectator at the old Wigan Borough Football Club and many years later, when



*See also pp 18, 22 Ed.

Ernie's back with more motoring memories – a timely reminder that winter has always been a test for a car's battery,

I remember when . . .

IF YOU were a pre war (1939/45) motorist you didn't have to query the cost of replacement car parts and assemblies, because there was so much competition for your business that garage owners were quite willing to knock off a few shillings here and there, and bartering was common. Those were the days when customers could literally demand satisfaction, not just ask for it because the last thing the repairer wanted was for you to go to a competitor.

No-one 'in the trade' in those days could have

foreseen that motoring would become part of almost everyone's life in a few years time, rather than of just a few businessmen and professionals (who were the first of the car owners). As for an average teenager wishing to own his/her own car, that was a 'pipe dream', not the fact of life that it has now become.

Because of this extreme competition the Society of Motoring Manufacturers and Traders drew up guidelines of prices which ensured a fair return on their capital to all manufacturing of spares and replacement assemblies.

Accordingly another phrase entered the vocabulary of the trade - 'Manufacturer's Recommended Retail Price' (MRRP). From this the user - your father and grandfather (and in some cases your great grandfather) - would know how much an item would cost before he sanctioned the repair at his local garage.

Whether the replacement was a few miles from the origin of manufacture or a few thousand miles, the price was 'fixed' often not by the car manufacturer but by their suppliers! Since every car on the road carries so many 'bought out' items, not made

by the car makers themselves, it was their suppliers who effectively dictated costs of replacement parts. That was acceptable in principle, of course, but in practice became a burden to the car owner.

A moment's reflection on a car's component content not 'made in' at the manufacturers:- wheels, tyres, batteries, carburettors, ignition coils, alternators, water pumps, drive shafts, radiators, lamps, windscreens and door windows, bumpers, shock

Continued on page 24

Wigan Athletic was born. From a very early age I watched Wigan Rugby from the children's section at Central Park. I saw the great Jim Sullivan in action. Money being scarce more often than not we walked it to Wigan from Hindley and back.

We played happily in the streets; an occasional horse and cart might interfere with our play, but cars were a rarity. Open fields were nearby, where we could chase butterflies. We could go for long country walks, safely. The song of a lark was a common sound, it's joyful notes a sheer delight to listen to. We were rich and we didn't know it!

Family

Both my father and mother came from large families, and most uncles and aunts lived relatively close. There was always a welcome whenever I visited them. There was a great sense of family which was nice and comforting. On many

Sundays my parents, sister and I went to my grandparents for tea. Uncles, aunts and their families also gathered there.

The children had their meal after the adults had left the table. During the evening there would be some entertainment round the piano. My Aunt Sarah could play it and there was always someone to volunteer a song. I recall my mother singing 'By Killarneys lakes and fells'.

My father was a miner and we had a tough time in the pit strike of 1926. My father and I would pick coal from disused slag heaps (or 'rucks' as we called them). Ponies and carts, trucks, bicycles, old prams - in fact all kinds of conveyances were used to bring the hard-won coal home. It was hard work digging for the coal but there was good fellowship and a great deal of satisfaction if you managed to find a place where the coal was good and relatively plentiful. We depended on coal for all our cooking and warmth.

Some relief was given, I think, by the local council, but when the miners returned to work it had to be paid back in instalments.

I vaguely recall having dinners in the school. The mothers acquired the ingredients (I don't know who from) and took it in turn to cook meals for the miners' children. I think this would only be in the school holidays. Also the Hindley Labour Club, of which my father was a member, gave soup and a barm cake to us every Saturday dinner-time.

I understand that the strike was caused by the pit owners wanting to reduce the miners' wages. Many of the public were in sympathy with the miners. My father would often come home from the pit and fall asleep in the rocking chair in his black face, too tired to have a wash first.

I left school at the end of the Summer Term in 1926 and started work in late September in a Bolton Spinning Mill as a

little piecer in the 'mulespinning' department.

The Way we Were

I had a happy childhood; my memory is of a safe, secure and loving home. I never went short of food. Meals were basic but nourishing. I have memories of tasty stews made with cow-heels or pigs feet. Roast beef was our usual Sunday dinner, with rice or sago pudding. My mother baked her own bread and made cakes - jam tarts, custards and jellies for Sunday tea. We rarely had cake at any other time.

We would make do and mend, socks were darned, clothes mended, shoes or clogs repaired, and rugs made from old clothes.

Money was scarce but that was the way it was. But we were far from depressed, we had fun and enjoyed simple pleasures that didn't cost much. They were happy years.

**E. Bennett
(aged 86)
Chilcompton
Bath.**

I remember when . . .

Continued from page 23

absorbers, steering and drive shafts, completely assembled and trimmed bodies, etc. etc. - the list is enormous, so that manufacturers willingly accepted their suppliers' Recommended Retail Prices structure, because often it meant that it was a bargaining counter to keep down manufacturing costs of the new car.

So since there were so few component specialists, and therefore lack of competition to keep prices competitive in the 'replacement field', it became 'acceptable' to accept their (component manufacturers) MRRP prices in return for a few original equipment OE cost.

As an example, a carburettor manufacturer would quote a low OE cost provided that they fixed the MRRP of spares; or a clutch manufacturer would do likewise, both stipulating that the manufacturer of the car would only sell their approved replacements at their recommended prices.

Here my readers may say, "that seems fair enough", and in principle I would have to agree; however, I could never in principle accept their method of arriving at the prices, which was OE x 6 at times, so that if the price of the component was, say £1, whilst it was still being fitted in current production on the assembly tracks, on your grandfather's bill it was £6 plus cost of fitting!!

This to me was 'commercial blackmail', and immoral, and often I said "It

owt be stopped", as they would have said in Wigan! Little did I realise that in due course I would be instrumental in getting it stopped!

Because prices of spares were "outrageous" compared to the prices of original equipment, as I've shown above, quite naturally some manufacturers saw a lucrative way of manufacturing replacements, and started to make 'copies' relatively much cheaper. The original equipment suppliers however, foresaw this possibility, and countered it by writing a clause in their contracts "that only their products would be used in the replacement field."

Nothing wrong with that, you might say - after all, if, for example, your own car's battery failed, then it was only commonsense to replace it with the same one as was originally fitted. However, it was not common knowledge that garage owners would fit a 'spurious' one at half the cost of the recommended replacement!

I use the word 'spurious' guardedly because my dictionary defines it as "not genuine or authentic; counterfeit; false!" Taking my battery analogy as an example, most batteries fitted by car manufacturers just after the War were made by Lucas and were what we defined as a 12volt 9-57 amp hours i.e. a 12volt 9 Plates per cell, with a capacity of 57 amps per hour at 1amp for 57 hours. So here is the truth that makes the term 'spurious' not applicable.

All car battery manufacturers were members of The British Car Battery Manufacturer's Association' who laid down standards to which all manufacturers had to build batteries. It therefore follows that whoever built up

a battery of 12volts 9 plates per cell with standard separators and a capacity of 57 amp hours to BCBMA standards was creating a unit equal to his competitor, whoever it was, and was therefore not 'spurious', nor was the manufacturer. It could therefore be deduced that, whichever supplier gained the contract for fitting his product as OE (original equipment), it was not because his product was the best but because his OE terms were more favourable to the OE buyer!

Readers of *Past Forward* will recall my memory feature on pp. 16, 17 of Issue No. 17 (Autumn/Winter 1997) in which Mr. (later Sir) Quinton Hazell introduced me to the Manager of his South African Plant as "Ernie Taberner - the only man in the whole of the British car industry prepared to give me a fair crack of the whip!" This was because I gave him my personal assurance that if he purchased from one of my suppliers (Chorley Precision Ltd.) of Chorley, Lancs, who made all spare ball joints for my company, we would continue to trade with him. And so between us we could 'thumb our noses' at the SMMQT who wouldn't allow Mr. Hazell to join their organisation!

In explanation I was not an OE buyer, so that I was not bound by OE rules. I was Chief Purchasing Officer for spares and replacements for Jaguar Rover Triumph, and was therefore able to place business for spares with anyone I chose, who of course had to pass our own stringent engineering data regarding materials and dimensions! Thus a blow was struck to the advantage of every motorist in the world driving one of our OE products!

I have now been retired

more than 20 years, but only recently have discovered another 'fiddle' which I now highlight for the benefit of motorists everywhere. **Caveat Emptor!** (Let the buyer beware).

It is well known that, if you purchase at some motor factors in the High Street you could buy at prices much less than the MRRP. Some traders (garages) take advantage of this, so check your invoice to ensure that you are paying for what you have had fitted! If it was purchased at a main agency it would be correct to pay the MRRP for the component, but if not you are (or have been) 'taken for a ride' in your own car!! The fitter (especially the smaller garage owner) has bought a 'spurious' component and charged you the cost of a genuine one, which by any viewpoint is dishonest unless verbally agreed between you beforehand.

It could happen, perhaps, that a main stockist is temporarily out of stock, but if your chosen fitter, on checking, finds this to be the case, and offers to run out of his way to collect a 'spurious' one a few miles away, then in my view he would be 'playing fair' by explaining this as his reason for charging the higher price, since he had your interest in mind by so doing - you get your repaired car back in your possession more quickly because of his action!

Some garages now loan out a courtesy car - I call that real service - but sadly not all. Most complaints I hear are from lady owners, which is particularly sad - in my day we leaned over backwards towards the inexperienced. So once again **Caveat Emptor.** (Forewarned is Forearmed).

Happy motoring to you all!

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1999**

Aspull & Haigh Historical Society

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

Atherton Heritage Society

The programme includes monthly meetings with talks on local history and visits throughout the year to places of historical interest. Meetings are held usually on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. at St. Richard's Jubilee Hall, Atherton. Admission: Members £1, non-members £1.50. The annual membership fee is £3. Information from Hon. Sec. (01204 651478)

9 November

Farewell to Lord Derby
Lizzie Jones

Lizzie portrays, in her own inimitable way, the landlady of the Dog Inn in Wigan who saved Lord Derby's life only to see him executed in Bolton.

14 December

Christmas Past and Present

Mr. Barton

We started the year with Mr. Barton and we end 1999 with him giving one of his humorous talks in which he draws, not only on his personal memories, but those of a wide range of people, with laughter uppermost.

Followed by a Christmas Buffet (**Ticket only**).

Billinge Local History Society

For further details contact Roger Hart, 57 Windsor Road, Billinge, Wigan, WN5 7LD (01744 892915)

Golborne & Lowton Local History

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

Leigh & District Family History Society

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

SOCIETY NEWS

16 November

Members evening

21 December

A.G.M. Followed by *Using Books for Family History*

Mrs. E. Finch

2000

18 January

Members evening

15 February

My ancestor was a Reluctant Pirate

Robert Redmond

21 March

My search for my Military ancestors

Dan Muir

Leigh Literary Society

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library, on the last Wednesday of the month. For further details contact the Secretary, Mrs. H. Gaskell (01942 801743).

Leigh Local History Society

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library, on the last Wednesday of the month. For further details contact the Secretary, Mrs. Norma Ackers (01942 865488).

Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month from September to May at the Tyldesley Pensioners Club on Milk Street at 7.30 p.m. We do not charge an entrance fee although voluntary contributions are always welcome. Refreshments available. Everyone is welcome, so come along, drag yourself away from the tele and have an informative and cheap night out! Contact the Secretary on (01942 514271).

18 November

Photographs from the Collection of the Lancashire Mining Museum, Salford

Alan Davies

An illustrated talk on this ever popular subject.

16 December

Christmas Past and Present

Fred Barton

An amusing look at Yuletide.

N.B. This meeting will be preceded by the AGM

2000

20 January

John Dee and Cleworth Hall

Stan Smith

A true story of magic and mayhem in Tyldesley from the time of Elizabeth I.

17 February

Mr. Preswich's Improvement

David Mather

The story of the Protector miners Lamp Co. Of Eccles.

16 March

The Meaning Behind Nursery Rhymes

A fascinating look at the hidden messages contained in those seemingly childish rhymes.

20 April

Farewell to Lord Derby

Lizzie Jones

The story of the execution of the royalist Earl of Derby in Bolton 1651.

May

Annual Visit

To be arranged.

Wigan Archaeological Society

The Society meets in the History Shop on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. New members are always welcome.

Wigan Civic Trust

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

Wigan Family and Local History Society

Meetings are held on the first (workshops) and third (speakers) Tuesday of the month at the Springfield Hotel, Springfield Road, Wigan, at 7.30 p.m. For further information contact Mrs. Lynne Kearns, 28 Wareing Street, Tyldesley, Manchester. M29 8HS (01942 878549 evenings/weekends).

5 October

Workshop

19 October

Catholic Ancestry

Mr. J.A. Hilton

THREE roads linked Roman Wigan with other settlements in the north-west. One linked Wigan with Ribchester, one with Manchester, and one with Wilderspool, Warrington. The first of these is now known as Standishgate. The suffix '-gate' derives from the Old Norse 'gata' meaning a road. *Standishgate* is, then, the road that leads to Standish. The road that led to Manchester is now known as *Millgate*, because it led to the rector's water mills on the River Douglas. The Rector was the lord of the manor of Wigan, and the inhabitants of the town were obliged to have their corn ground at his mills and to pay for the privilege. The road continues through Higher Ince as Manchester Road. In the 18th century this road was known as

The Gates of Wigan

Highgate. The road that linked Wigan with Wilderspool is known in the town as *Wallgate*. The name refers to the town well, which was situated in front of the present post office.

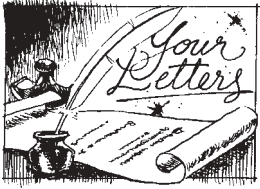
Other old street names ending in '-gate' include *Hallgate*, which links the parish church with Wigan Hall, the home of the Rector, and *Stairgate*, which presumably used to consist of steps leading from Millgate to the River Douglas (which has since been diverted at this point).

Similar names no longer in use include *Mesnesgate*, which later became Hope Street, and *Turfgate*,

whose remains now consist solely of the footbridge over the railway near Wigan North-Western Station, and leading to the car park there. This was an area where peat was cut for fuel. At the other end of the car-park is *Faggy Lane*; the name is derived from another word for peat.

Some recent additions to the streets of Wigan have continued the pattern. *Bishopgate* is probably of 18th or early 19th century origin. *Churchgates*, which links the Market Place with the churchyard, was formerly known as Church Alley. In 1990 the Wigan Centre Arcade was renamed *Marketgate* – a welcome addition to a venerable tradition, as long as we remember to distinguish between the old and the new.

B.B.



MEMORIES OF 779 ATHERTON ROAD, HINDLEY GREEN

Dear Sir,

With reference to my recent telephone conversation with Mr. Len Hudson regarding the article about 779 Atherton Road, Hindley Green in the summer issue of *Past Forward*.

I enclose a summary of my recollections from 1949 to the 1960's.

I hope this information will be of interest for your next issue.

Yours faithfully

Ann Eccles (Mrs.)
594 Wigan Road
Atherton
Nr. Manchester

MY earliest memory of 779 Atherton Road, Hindley Green, was when as a three year old, I moved with my parents to the house next door no. 777. At this time no. 779 was a grocer's shop trading under the name of Wilcock and Ashurst. I understand that the premises had been purchased from Storeys some years previously.

The Wilcock of the partnership I never knew as the gentleman concerned had passed away some years before. However, Mr. and Mrs. Ashurst who owned the shop were (I thought) elderly, but looking back as an adult they must have been relatively young! They had one

daughter named Freda, some years older than myself.

The shop itself was, to a small child, an Aladdin's cave, for Mr. Ashurst sold everything the housewife could wish for, bringing to mind "Open All Hours". On entering the double fronted shop the first thing to see was a large mahogany counter-top shining and gleaming, having just been polished with loving care. This stretched around what I as a small child thought to be a huge shop. There was a chair situated on the left behind the door as you entered, where the customer could sit whilst being served personally by Mr. Ashurst. You could also place your order with him,

and this would be delivered to you by Mr. Ashurst's employee by bicycle, and some years later by the shop van.

Along the base of the counter at floor level was an assortment of tinned loose biscuits, from which the purchaser could choose any selection of their choice (no pre-packed stuff in those days). Along the walls of the shop where what appeared to be pigeon holes all built in mahogany. These housed various household items. Situated on the right hand side as you entered was the bacon machine (hand operated of course), cheese cabinet and other items of dairy produce.

Tea and sugar were all weighed out by Mr.

Ashurst who also skilfully patted the golden churned loose butter into 1/2lb and 1 lb packs. As I remember Mr. Ashurst was in stature a small man with pleasant features, and always wore a white coat which was clean and well laundered by Mrs. Ashurst. Mr. and Mrs. Ashurst owned the shop until their retirement, I think sometime in the late 1960's. Mr. Ashurst died shortly after and Mrs. Ashurst bought a small bungalow in Edinburgh Drive, Hindley Green. She lived to the ripe old age of 90 plus. Freda their daughter married and went to live in Worcester.

Mr. and Mrs. Ashurst would have been very upset today to see the demise of their well kept shop.

Information on detailed diaries wanted

Dear Mr. Gillies,

You will be interested to know that my article reproduced from *The Guardian*, appearing in Issue 22 of *Past Forward*, has encouraged a response from one of your readers. Mr. Fred Herst Junior of Shevington has written to point out that his father, who worked for Monaghan's Cloggers in Warrington Lane, probably made the clogs which lucky recipients like myself received free from the Chief Constable's Clog and Stocking Fund. He detailed the names of mutual acquaintances, including Robert Ramsdale, one of four successful candidates to go to Wigan Grammar School in 1932. The other two

were Arnold Morris and Robert Hanson.

My real purpose in writing this letter is to seek the help of *Past Forward* in tracing the detailed diaries kept by Miss E.M. Tyrer, Headmistress of Warrington Lane Council School. Her brother was the Town Clerk at the time.

One sequel of *The Guardian* article in 1984 was a contact from a Dr. Tyrer, living in Chepstow. He was the nephew of Miss Tyrer, and he brought Miss Tyrer's diaries for 1931 and 1932 to Portishead, where I was living at the time. I was intrigued to read details of various events including the naming of four successful scholarship candidates in 1932. Much else of general interest was

recorded. Miss Tyrer acted as secretary to the **Headmasters / Headmistresses** group in Wigan. She records a visit to the famous novelist, Hugh Walpole, living in the Lake District. Much else of general interest was to be culled from these diaries.

My attempts to track down the diaries have been unsuccessful. Dr. Tyrer died some years ago. The hope is that his son, who studied languages and then switched to law, may still have them. It is just possible that some of your readers may have contacts with the surviving Tyrers and can assist in unearthing these valuable records.

Yours sincerely

J.H. Ollerton
9 Fairfield Park
Broadstairs
Kent. CT10 2JT
Tel: (01843) 860413

grandmother and my great grandfather were brother and sister. We are now in regular correspondence thanks to *Past Forward*.

A.R. Gorner
22 The Woodlands
Lostock Park
Bolton
BL6 4JD

Grammar School. She has been researching her family history and discovered that her great grandmother Ellen Gorner came from Ashton-in-Makerfield, but had drawn a blank on further information.

She wrote to me, and from my family tree I discovered that her great

An interest in coal, canals and Wigan

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed cheque as subscription to "Friends of Wigan Heritage Service" for the year 2000 and also membership of the same. My interests are mainly connected with coal mining, having worked for British Coal for 33 years. Also my other interests are canals and local history of Wigan and Ashton-in-Makerfield and the surrounding districts.

I have been given a Lancashire poem/ode written by a Mary Smallshaw who is 87 years of age and wondered was it worthy of inclusion in one of the forthcoming editions.

Pray in Thi Yed

Aster prayed in thi yed?
Un askt God fur 'is 'elp.
'Specially, when tha's cum
Tu th'end o' thi tether?
Well eaze thi mind
Un tell 'im aw.
Th'll fond, he's heard
Aw tha's sed
In thi yed.
Tha doesn't need t' tell im
Who tha art
Fur God knows us aw,
Un He'll sort it eawt
In He's own way,
So pray in thi yed.

Keep up the good work you all are doing in producing *Past Forward*. I can't wait for the next edition.

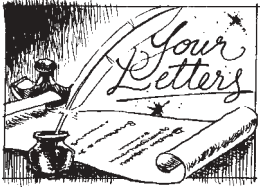
Yours truly,

Tony Haslam
15 Welbeck Road
Ashton-in-Makerfield
Near Wigan
WN4 8AR

Happy families

Dear Sir,

Distance is certainly no problem for *Past Forward*. Madeline Carome of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, U.S.A. read my letter in Issue 20 re Ashton-in-Makerfield



MASSEY BROS. OF WIGAN IN HIS SIGHTS

Dear Mr. Gillies,

Thank you for another interesting issue of the excellent *Past Forward*. I wish my own local authority would produce a magazine of this quality.

You may have seen my two books on Lancashire United Transport published by the Transport Publishing Co. Ltd. Of Glossop in 1974 and 1985, and I have a manuscript on Massey Bros., bus body builders of Wigan. My research on these companies continues and I should like to hear from any reader who

would be willing to lend for copying photographs of vehicles, personalities, premises, etc. of these companies. Any such material would, of course, be returned.

Yours sincerely

Eric Ogden
40 Burnedge Lane
Grasscroft
Oldham, Lancs.
OL4 4EA
Tel: (01457) 873661

Readers may be interested in the following letter from John Lees (aged 72), in response to a letter from Joe Brooks published in the Summer 1999 issue of *Past Forward*:

“BUSKER HARRY IN THE BUCKET”

(The name we called him)

Dear Joe Brooks,

Read your article in the Summer edition of *Past Forward*. You certainly described the period of Wigan in the 30's etc. very well.

Not only can I identify with your description of the man with the bucket, but I actually knew him, and even tried to stand with my head in his bucket!

His name was Harry Bradshaw, an old soldier from the 1914-18 war who had travelled as a clown with Fossitt's Circus a well known circus family in another part of the country. He died in late 70's and I have a photograph I took of him with my 620 box camera.

The reason I know so much about Harry is that he lodged at the Mens

Hostel which my late dad managed in Hardybutts, Scholes and acted as a 'nightman' looking after the stoves and water boilers. He did this until he passed away, after a short illness, in the late 1950's.

John Lees
49 Sherwood Drive
Pemberton
Wigan.
WN5 9QY

“Old” Friends Reunited

Dear Sir,

Back in 1996 whilst making arrangements to have the ashes of my late mother consecrated at Lower Ince Cemetery I shared a few lines of nostalgia with the young lady at the cemeteries office. Those few lines appeared as a letter in *Past Forward* issued number 14.

Since then I have been in contact with ex-school friends, work mates and neighbours.

When visiting my family in the Wigan area I have been able to meet again with these “old” friends.

Another example of the power of *Past Forward*.

With all good wishes,

J. Pearson
1 Station Road
Charfield
Wotton-under-Edge
Glos. GL12 8SY

From all at
Wigan
Heritage
Service
to all
readers of
Past Forward
a Happy
Christmas
and a
Prosperous
New
Millennium
Year



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

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November 1999

Who? Where?

No suggestions - surprisingly - for the top four photographs in last issue's **Who? Where?** But a positive identification of the bottom photograph, which shows the Home Guard parading in Warrington Road, Abram, in front of Willow Lodge, the home of the manager of Maypole Colliery. This may have been their last parade.

This time, we have a very mixed bag, which should produce a good response. All suggestions, please, to Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942) 404432.

