

PAST FORWARD

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The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

From the Editor

WELCOME to the latest edition of *Past Forward* which, I'm delighted to say, has an excellent mix of articles on all manner of topics, many by first-time contributors.

There have been a number of staff changes recently - Dawn Wadsworth has moved on after 12 years service, as has Claire Templeton, our Technician. Claire has been succeeded by Terry Meehan, who has moved from Haigh Country Park. Dawn will be succeeded by a new Heritage Officer, with particular responsibility for Community Outreach & Education; hopefully, this new appointee will be in post by the New Year. This new appointment reflects the Service's awareness of the importance of community involvement and interaction - something which, of course, *Past Forward* has already been instrumental in developing.

This is the first *Past Forward* to be produced on cassette tape, following a successful 'dry run' of the last issue. I must make it clear, however, that this is intended primarily for those who have sight problems, and I hope that it will be possible to distribute these, free of charge, to a significant number of people. Initially, this will be done in conjunction with the Library Service. My thanks to *Making Waves* for their support here, especially Dave and Peter, and to good friend Colin Bean and all those other readers who have helped to make this venture a success.

It's hard to believe, as I write this just before going on a short 'mid-term' break, that it will be nearly Christmas before many readers actually read this. So although it's nearly 10 weeks away, a very Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year to all readers of, and contributors to, *Past Forward*. It has been a major success story, and it's thanks to all of you.

COPY DEADLINE

Please note that the copy deadline for issue no 33 of *Past Forward* is 1 February.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:
Editor, 'Past Forward',
Wigan Heritage Service, Market Suite,
The Galleries, Wigan WN1 1PX

GOODBYE DAWN

AS those of you who are regular visitors to or correspondents with the History Shop will already know, in September we said goodbye to Dawn Wadsworth.

Dawn joined the service in 1989 as Social History Officer, after moving up from the Science Museum in London. Being a northern girl anyway she fitted in at once, working on the care and documentation of her collection, exhibitions and displays at the Pier and enquiries into the social conditions and history of our local area.

Exhibitions which Dawn has worked on have been on subjects as varied as *Rugby League*, *Wigan Men in the Great and Second World Wars* and *The Role of Women in Local Society*; they have been as macabre as *Death Rituals*, as light as *Christmas Traditions*, and as 'dry' as *750 Years of Local Government!*

Most recently her work on the *Wigan 2000* exhibition in the Wickham Gallery and *the 5th Manchesters* show upstairs in the Taylor Gallery showed just how accomplished she had become in the field. For this fact alone she will be



Dawn explains a mystery object from the *Wigan 2000* exhibition

sorely missed.

It was with the opening of the History Shop in 1992 that Dawn developed her other role with which many readers will be more familiar, as saviour to genealogists all over the world studying their Wigan roots. She was also very influential in the retail area, setting up our splendid shop with the help of the Heritage Assistants.

She will be best remembered by most visitors as a constant and extremely helpful member of our excellent team of officers who man our public enquiry desk upstairs. For many years she was responsible for

replying to family history enquiries of all sorts that came in by post, telephone or email from all corners of the globe. In that respect I know that Dawn had her fans as far afield as Australia and North America, and they too will miss her.

Dawn was a vital member of the team that established the History Shop and set the tone for its future. All the staff here would like to thank her for that, they and I'm sure all the visitors who came across her will miss her and join with me in wishing her good luck in her new life in West Yorkshire!

P.B.

Past Forward on tape

I AM delighted to announce that this is the first issue of *Past Forward* which is also available on cassette tape. These tapes are specifically designed so that those with sight problems will still be able to enjoy the magazine. A dry run was made of the last edition, and this proved a huge success, thanks to the excellent work done by *Making Waves*, who have been a tremendous help in bringing this about. Also the various readers, with a special mention of Colin

Bean, an old (in the nicest sense!) friend of the Heritage Service, whose enthusiasm has been infectious! Initially, the cassettes will be distributed as part of the Wigan Library Housebound Service. However, a limited number will also be available for other readers; these can be obtained from the History Shop and other Heritage Service outlets, @ £2 each, or by post at an additional charge of 50p to cover postage and packing.

Cover: I Am A Dog! This delightful picture, depicting the education of a dog and doll, comes from a marvellous collection of photographs of Yew Tree Farm, Hindley Green, in the early 20th century (see page 6 for more).

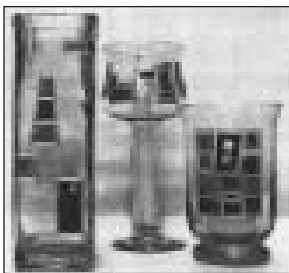
Full of Christmas Cheer (and Gifts!)

IF you're looking for something out of the ordinary for your Christmas gifts this year, why not try the History Shop? We stock a wide range of heritage gifts and publications, as well as general gifts for all ages.

New ranges for Christmas 2002 include a **handbuilt pedal car** in the style of a 1939 Classic car, with other styles



available to order. Admirers of **Gustav Klimt** and **Rennie Mackintosh** will find our inspired giftware range of vases, storm and candle lamps irresistible. New jewellery lines include antique style gem-set pieces, marcasite and more modern designs, all



in quality sterling silver.

As usual we have a range of Christmas cards available in packs and individually. A new selection of glass Christmas decorations include angels, presents,



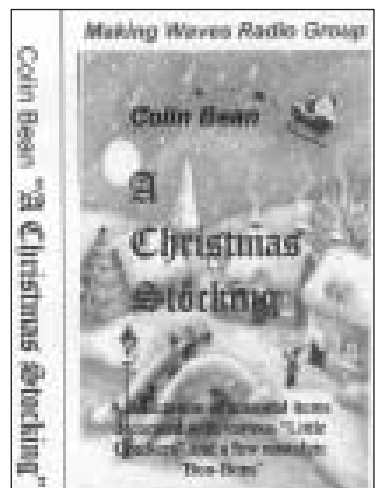
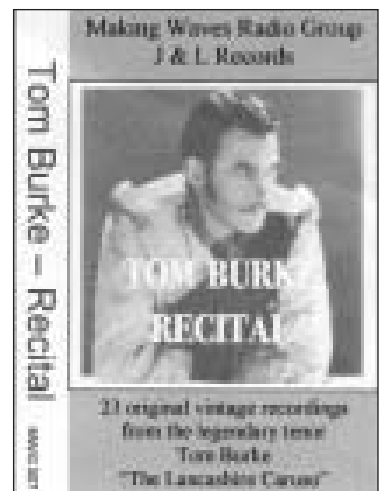
Christmas trees, and even **Tinkerbell!** Remember, you won't find these anywhere else, as we are the only stockists in the area!

A couple of CD's/cassettes are proving very popular, with stocks selling fast. One features

23 original vintage recordings by local tenor **Tom Burke** (1890-1969), who for the first time can be heard without the previous distracting sounds which normally detract so much from early recordings. The other is entitled **A Christmas Stocking**, and features our good friend Colin Bean performing a selection of seasonal items. More than that, the recording was actually made recently in the History Shop itself!

For all the tin toy collectors out there, we have six new designs available, all at less than £10 each. And if a d d i c t i v e , challenging and fun is what you're looking for, then the **Tantrix puzzle** is for you. Voted "Best New Game," "Puzzle of the Year" and "Top Family Game", it is an international best seller, and has even been used in schools because of its educational value.

Finally, top of the list for all *Past Forward* readers is the custom made binder which holds 15 issues of your favourite magazine. At only £1.50 each (plus £1.50 p&p), they are an economical and attractive way to store your precious archive.



N.B. A small selection of our stock is also available from the Local History Service in Leigh Library.

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

MICHAEL FOLLOWS

I first met Michael soon after he retired in his early 50's. He came into the Archives Room in Leigh Town Hall to discuss his willingness to help make the Leigh parish registers more easily available. I was at that time already transcribing the 18th century Leigh registers for the LPRS, and was fast approaching the 19th century with considerable trepidation. Leigh grew so much at this period that the number of entries in the registers was daunting and I didn't know whether it was possible to finish such a task.

But to Michael nothing to do with Leigh was impossible and so he started the enormous job of recording the baptisms, marriages and burials of St. Mary's Church, 1790-1837. When he died, the transcriptions of St. Mary's registers were just about ready to be handed over to the LPRS. He was also discussing with the Society the possibility of producing all the information in St. Mary's registers, 1558-1837 on one CD. It would be the first major town in Lancashire to have such a complete record and also one that was easy to search. All this, of course, took hours of time, not just in the Archives Room at Leigh, but in other record offices, and hours at his computer to check, sort, puzzle over, check again.

That day also started a friendship. No doubt to the irritation of other researchers, we talked quite a lot. We discussed transcription problems. Under ultra-violet light we squinted at the ink worn out by the fingers of countless vicars and

MANY people knew Michael Follows. He was perhaps most frequently seen in the Archives Room with a large parish register in front of him, tapping at his laptop computer, as he transcribed the 19th century parish registers of St. Mary's. His unexpected and early death in July has left us much saddened. The following is an appreciation of him from a fellow transcriber.

parish clerks turning over the pages. Having Michael in the Archives Room made transcribing a real pleasure. Not just because there was someone to share the problems with, but because he was so enthusiastic. The people he was recording were not just names. They had families, homes, ancestors and descendants. They had lived in an area that he now inhabited and he wanted to know more about them.

He also wanted others to be able to know more about them too. Many people come in to the Archives Room hoping to get some clue about their ancestors. If Leigh was involved then so was Michael. When he felt he could help he stopped his own work to search his database to see if there was anything there. Very many people left the Archives a lot more cheerful and hopeful than when they had come in.

Obviously his family will miss him dreadfully, for he was very much a family man. When he wasn't in the Archives Room, he was helping his children to settle into their new homes. I shall miss him, also, for he has been a very important part of my life for the past few years. And the people of Leigh will miss him, including

those who may never have met him or even know of him. For sooner or later all those who are interested in their Leigh ancestors will

find their research is made much easier because of what Michael has provided.

His transcriptions, when properly published, will be even more fully appreciated, for they will have a national and international readership. They should make a fitting tribute to a man who dearly loved his home town and who worked hard to help to make the history and people of Leigh better known.

Ken Taylor

I FIRST met Michael Follows at a meeting of the Leigh Family History Society where I was giving a talk about the Archives. Doing his own family tree and using the Leigh parish registers in the process, he found that Leigh was one of the largest Lancashire parishes whose older registers had not been transcribed and published in full. (In fact the Lancashire Parish Record Society had published the early ones up to 1700).

So he became interested in the idea of continuing the transcription beyond 1700, and began the work in earnest, feeding his transcriptions directly onto a database, spending one or two days per week in the tranquil surroundings of the search room at Leigh Town Hall. This work ran alongside a similar long-term project on the Wigan registers being carried out by the late Len Marsden and subsequently by Ken Taylor [see *Past Forward* 30 p28]. Soon the search room was humming with the sound of their collective endeavours, punctuated by philosophical lucubrations on topics historical, political and social. Michael was always at the centre of these discussions, and ever on hand to advise new visitors to the Archives, as well as carry out name searches from this expanding database.

When I left Leigh three years ago I missed his genuine warmth and concern, as he had become a keen supporter of the Archives Service.

*Nicholas Webb
(former Archives Officer, Leigh)*

Michael Follows died suddenly from a heart attack on 7 July 2002.

Ephemera from the Archives

Access is all

ONE buzzword, albeit harmless in this case, amongst a host of others sent to try those of us who work in the world of heritage, is 'access'. A number of national and regional strategies are under way which aim to increase access, both physically and mentally, to the superb collections held in museums, archives and libraries.

As more and more libraries, archives and museums computerise their records, the collections they hold become increasingly accessible in a number of ways. No individual curator, archivist or librarian, however large their foreheads, could ever hope to grasp the full extent of a large collection, so what better than to use a computer's enormous forehead!

Slave labour

Over the last year and a half Heritage Assistant Stephanie Tsang, normally based at the History Shop, has been literally slaving away transcribing the accession and deposit records held at the Archives onto a computer database. These hand written records are the first documentation items receive after arriving in the Archives, and comprise a unique number along with a brief contents description and depositor details.

To tackle the enormous task of transcribing these records onto computer needs enthusiasm and concentration. Stephanie has these in abundance (plus a sense of humour) and fully realises the value of the work she has been doing. This helps make the task slightly less soul destroying!

Once sections have been transcribed, Stephanie painstakingly double-checks her entries against the master ledger of all accessions and deposits. Now close to completion the database is beginning to really show its worth. Staff (and eventually the public) can now search all the deposits of records since the 1960's by using keywords. These can vary from place names, family names, business names, depositor names or one-offs such as 'coal', 'colliery', 'mining', 'coal company', 'pit' etc.

Searching minefield

In Archives the classification given to deposited documents relates to the source of origin of the documents. We might find documents relating to all aspects of, for instance, coal mining activity in nearly all sections of the collections; public records including hospital and courts, official local government records, business records, family and estate records, solicitors records, society and trade union records, church records and finally miscellaneous manuscripts and miscellaneous record.

The computer database can pick out from the brief descriptions of deposits

whether coal-mining activity is involved. This is only the start, though, as we need all our catalogues on computer before we can know for example whether coal mining related material is hiding amongst large holdings from estates and solicitors, or in unexpected deposits such as miscellaneous manuscripts and records.

Presently the user has to laboriously wade through paper catalogues on the off chance of spotting mining related material. Our traditional card index system is very good but can only go so far as regards cross-referencing.

So when Stephanie eventually completes the transcription of all our catalogues - "you must be joking!" (Steph) - it will be very useful, for example, when a temporary exhibition is planned on a specific theme, enabling us to draw material from the whole archives resource.

Church Archives a rich source

Alongside Stephanie's work, volunteers Laura Binion from Tyldesley and Alex Hodge, now an archives student, from Shevington, along with myself have been transcribing church deposit catalogues onto computer.

Some of the larger catalogues, Wigan All Saints and Lowton St. Lukes for example, hold all manner of fascinating miscellaneous material giving an insight into the administration and harsh lives of individuals of the borough back to the late 16th century. These catalogues can now be searched via the computer for places, names, subjects or just keywords.

Ken Taylor, who you may remember is painstakingly transcribing Wigan All Saints registers, (see *Past Forward* 30, p28) is in effect creating a searchable database. His transcription of burials can be analysed in relation to manner of death, age range, occupation, where the person lived or even the numbers of certain surnames appearing or disappearing in the district over the centuries.

Many of our catalogues were typed in the 1970's and 80's and are the one and only copy. Some are in danger of becoming illegible, thereby also losing the cataloguing structure, a major headache for an archivist.

When new material is offered for deposit from a church with large holdings already here the re-cataloguing used to be an arduous task, having to retype the whole catalogue at times. With a computer-stored catalogue the process of re-cataloguing is simple, and the whole new catalogue can be printed out immediately.

Databases R Us

More and more of the larger archives and information resources are setting up databases, demanding information and copies of catalogues from record offices around the country. These are currently

coming thick and fast, ranging from copies of large chunks of the catalogues (4000 photocopies for the latest phase of Access to Archives!) to Greater Manchester County Record Office needing to know how many shelf feet and number of boxes major sections of the holdings take up.

Another type of database being created is the single subject matter type, eg the world of music (called Cecilia). Within the millions of documents in our holdings thousands will have musical connections, but until we ourselves have completed computerising our catalogues we can only go so far with supplying data.

Sometimes, like buses, three database requests come at once, meaning all other work stops until the data is compiled. When they come with unreasonable deadlines of a week or so the pressure is really on. At times like this volunteer assistance is vital. As soon as a database is created it is very soon out of date so the updating of databases will be a regular feature of work at the Archives from now on.

Worldwide access

Instant access worldwide is now possible in the internet world we live in. Someone in New Zealand can now be e-mailed the Wigan All Saints catalogue and order a copy of a document from the catalogue a few minutes later. I can then scan the document or digitally photograph it and immediately send the scan to them to print out. Under the old process, it could take up to a month for someone writing to us from New Zealand to receive their copies.

Volunteers work vital

Museums and archives rely heavily on volunteers these days. Some are students who have completed a degree at university and want to pursue a career in archives, Alex Hodge mentioned earlier being an example. Alex has to show his commitment to archives work by volunteering before courses such as that offered by Liverpool University will even consider him.

Another type of volunteer can be someone who just enjoys working at archives and is prepared to have a go at anything, Laura Binion from Tyldesley is a good example. Laura works part time at Leigh Library and gives up her spare time to help out. She is currently reboxing the large Peace and Ellis Solicitors deposit, into new acid-free archive boxes, at the same time retaping bundles and keeping an eye out for items in need of conservation. Tight fitting acid free archive boxes maintain a stable 'microclimate' for their contents, even when the outside atmospheric conditions fluctuate substantially.

Alan Davies
Heritage Officer (Archives)

Life on the Farm

MR FRED HARDMAN of Hindley Green has loaned a fascinating collection of photographs relating to life a century ago at Yew Tree Farm, Hindley Green. Mr Hardman, a former headmaster of a local school, married into the family. He writes:

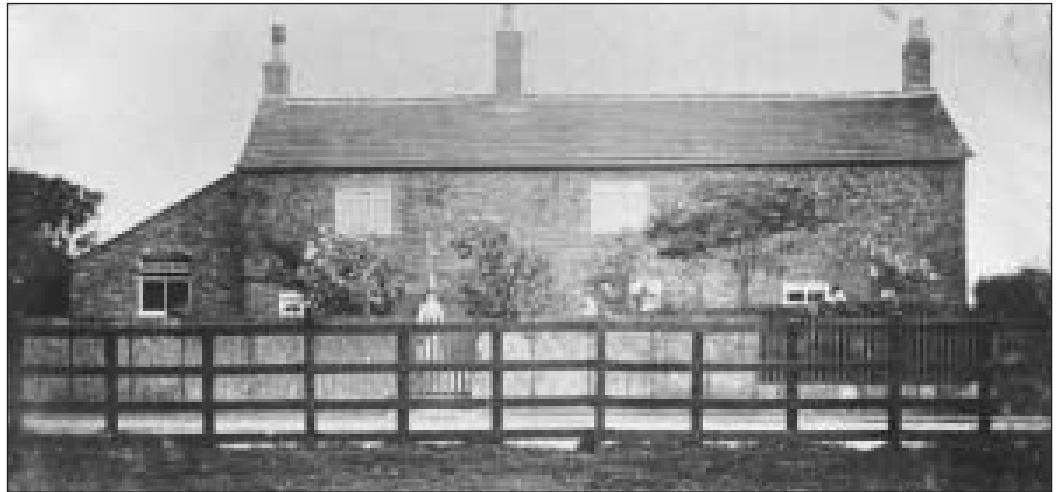
"On the border of Leigh and Hindley Green were two farms, Yew Tree and Jolly House. John Green farmed Yew Tree during his long life - although I was too young to really know him. He had two sons, Alfred and Joseph (who would have been my father-in-law), and three daughters, Annie, Lillian and Cissie.

Alfred worked Yew Tree Farm for many years. He would sell milk from a horse-drawn trap; customers would take their jugs to have their pints or half pints laddled into them. He had two sons and one daughter; both sons were lost during the War.

Joseph Green owned Jolly House, a small farm immediately opposite Yew Tree, as well as a coal business and, for a time, some petrol pumps. Consequently, he knew my father, who was also a coal merchant. He once told my father that he would like to exchange his latest arrival, another girl, for my latest brother! Sadly, Joseph died in 1931, a decade before I married one of his daughters, Lillian. She died last year, which meant that we just failed to be able to celebrate our Diamond Wedding.

John Green's various grandchildren, including my wife, had many happy days at Yew Tree Farm. One day, their grandfather, then into his 60's, bought a car and was asked by a friend, "You've not bought a car at your age, surely?" John replied, "Why? Am I not old enough?" Later, in the same car, he brought home a donkey! The grandchildren had a wonderful time riding in a two-wheeled cart.

The farms have now gone, replaced by a housing estate. But memories live on!"



Yew Tree Farm.



John Green with son Alfred and housekeeper, Martha Abbott - The Dairy, Yew Tree Farm.



John Green with Family.



Threshing, Yew Tree Farm. John Green is in the centre, with the sack truck.



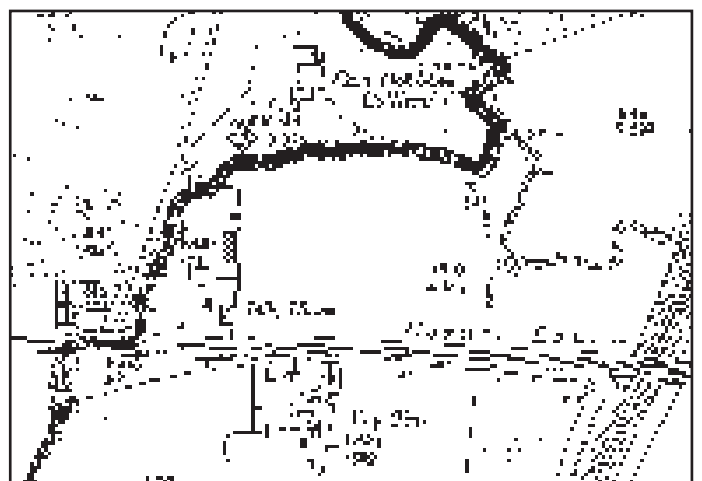
The ladies take tea – Yew Tree Fam.



Hay making on Carr Common.



Joseph Green with his brothers and sisters – Yew Tree Farm.



The Sam Woods Story

SAM WOODS House, which stands at the corner of Wentworth Road and Whitledge Green, Ashton-in-Makerfield, perpetuates the memory of one of the most remarkable men ever to come out of industrial Lancashire. Sam Woods was born in Sutton, a colliery district near St. Helens on 10 May 1846, the year when Cobden and Bright succeeded in bringing about the repeal of the Corn Laws. His father and grandfather had been colliers and his mother had worked underground in her youth. At the age of six he went to school, but even at that age had a mind of his own, proving to be a thorn in the side of the schoolmaster. He wrote later, "Actually, I was unsuited to school. My young imagination had been fired by hearing my father and his mates talk about coal-getting, drilling, filling the holes with gunpowder, igniting and then the cannon-like roar and the crash of the falling coal."

He prevailed upon his father to take him to work underground with him at the age of seven. Although the 1842 Ashley Act had prohibited the employment of women and boys under the age of 10 in mines, the first four mines inspectors needed to enforce the Act were not appointed until 1850. Consequently, with collusion between the workers and management, the practice continued and Sam began work at Pimbo Lane Colliery, Rainford, which belonged to the Earl of Crawford. He left the following recorded experience.

Down in the cage

"I remember it was three o'clock in the morning when we got there. I shall never forget the sensation as we went down in the cage at good speed. Then we groped our way along a dark, subterranean road for about 300 yards and came to a passage about 34 inches high. In my hurry to keep up with my father I ran against a wooden crossbar supporting the



Sam Woods
(1846-1915)

roof and received a stunning blow on the head. My father, who was some yards in front, shouted "Come on, Sam!" I replied, "I've hurt mi' yead". "Never mind thi' yead", he retorted, "it'll be breakfast before we get t' far eend."

Before they reached the "far eend", which was 200 yards further on under this low roof, Sam had received another half dozen bumps. While his father was undressing, he could not help crying out with pain. His father said, "*Tha'll ne'er make a pitmon if tha' cries o'er such a trifle. Poo th' cap off and let mi' look.*" Although Sam was bleeding in several places the only consolation was, "*put th' cap back on, it's noan so bad. Thi' yead 'll soon be awreet again.*"

For the first few months Sam carried his father's picks and shovelled the coal into tubs with him. Then he was put to door-tenting, i.e. opening and closing

doors to let the tubs pass through. Later, he became a pony driver, and years later the family moved to Back Lane, near Carr Mill Dam, he and his father going to work at Johnson's Colliery, Laffaks. Sam's pay was 1s. (5p) a day until he went drawing for his father, i.e. taking out the full tubs of coal and bringing back empties.

"Unfortunately, soon after, my father sustained an eye injury which prevented him working underground. I went to the manager and asked for the job and was given it." At the age of 15 Sam was working at the coal face supporting the family.

Model pupil

Like the majority of his peer group, Sam could barely read or write until the arrival of Rev. Frederick Greening, a Baptist minister from Liverpool, hired by the coal owners to educate the miners' children. Looking for converts, he mingled with the pit lads when their shift was over and soon discovered that in Sam Woods he had a model pupil who was soon studying after work for three or four hours. Such was his progress that at the age of 18 Sam considered joining the Baptist Ministry, studying at Rev. Spurgeon's College in London, but his money was needed and he stayed in the pit.

In 1867, he married Sarah Lee, a miner's daughter; the union produced four daughters. The move to Ashton-in-Makerfield was made shortly afterwards, the 1871 census showing the family living at Rosehill.

Whilst working at the Park Lane Collieries, the Mines Regulation Act (1872) decreed that coal should be paid for by weight. A weigher would record the quantity in a tub at the surface and the men were allowed to appoint, at their own cost, a "check-weigher". Such a man would have to be literate and numerate, unusual

LEGENDS seem to follow me around, being the creator of the poem *Howfen Legend*, but when legend carried with it the mention of a Dead Hand and the area mentioned is Wigan, one takes a sudden interest.

The story of a forged will and a ghost is generally attached to Ince Hall, although the building in question could also be Ince Manor House, a mile to the south east. An early publication of *Lancashire Legends* by J. Harland and T.T. Wilkinson in 1873, however, gives the honour of the legend to Ince Hall and states that one of its early owners lay on his death-bed, so a lawyer was immediately summoned to make his will; alas he arrived too late and the man was dead. In a panic it was decided to try the effect

THE DEAD HAND

by Ernest Ford

of a dead man's hand on the corpse, so the attorneys clerk was sent to Bryn Hall to gather up the dead hand and return. The body of the corpse was rubbed with the holy hand and it was asserted that he revived sufficiently to sign his will!

It is perhaps the point in the story to inform the reader about the Dead Hand or Holy Hand and to whom it belonged. It is known to have belonged to Father Edmund Arrowsmith who was executed at Lancaster on 28 August 1628. He had been

born at Haydock in 1585. In 1612 he was ordained priest and in 1628 was apprehended for being a Romish priest, brought to Lancaster, tried in August of that year, found guilty and hanged.

After he was cut down one of his friends cut off his right hand and for many years kept it at Bryn Hall. The hand, of course, became famous and was believed to be able to cure many human defects by rubbing it over affected parts.

Reverting to the story in

hand (please excuse the pun), after the funeral, the daughter of the deceased produced a will unsigned, which left the property to his son and daughter; however, another will was produced by the lawyer, signed by the dead hand, leaving everything to himself. Obviously the son quarrelled with the lawyer and after wounding him, left the country and was heard of no more. The daughter also disappeared and no-one knew where or when until years later the gardener dug up a skull in the garden and the secret was revealed.

The lawyer left the Hall uninhabited and spent the rest of his miserable life in Wigan, haunted day and night by the murdered daughter's ghost which followed his every move.

then, a man of integrity and who would not be cowed by authority. Sam Woods was the obvious choice, and the less arduous work enabled him to weld Ashton and Haydock miners into a 2,000 strong union. In 1881 the miners appointed him the agent for that district. The miners' lodge began at the pit, or group of pits if they were close together. A number of lodges made up a district and a miners' agent was the medium of communication between the coal owners and the men.

First president

In 1887 the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Federation was formed by Sam Woods, who became its first president. In 1890 the various federations met at a Birmingham conference to amalgamate into the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, with Sam as one of the vice-presidents. Basically, its aims were to obtain an eight-hour day, a minimum wage and nationalisation of the coal mines. Recognising that these could only be obtained by representation at

the highest level, representatives began to contest parliamentary elections. Woods, as a Lib-Lab candidate, fought the 1892 election for the Ince Division against Colonel Blundell, a wealthy Pemberton coal owner, and won the seat by 277 votes. The following year he was elected to the plum trades union job of Secretary of the TUC, holding the position for the next 10 years. Colonel Blundell regained the seat in 1895, and in 1897 Woods was asked to fight the Walthamstow seat in Essex. He won by 293 votes but was defeated again in 1900. In 1906 he was nominated to fight the Newton-le-Willows election, but ill-health, brought on by years of overwork, caused him to retire from public life.

Sued for libel

During the whole of this time he had remained the miners' agent for Ashton and Haydock. On one occasion a colliery manager accused him of knowing nothing about the technical side of mining. Woods studied for a year, sat the colliery

managers examination at Owens College in Manchester and passed, coming fifth in a list of 64. Another time he was sued for libel by three colliery undermanagers whom he said had dismissed miners "out of petty spite". Damages of £150 were awarded against him with £350 costs, an enormous sum then. The money was raised in a few days with all the miners of Lancashire contributing.

Woods had been a temperance advocate from youth and was a founder member of Bryn Baptist Chapel. When he first came to Bryn he held meetings in a disused railway wagon and in his own home.

Sam Woods died on 23 November 1915. His imposing monument in Dentons Green Cemetery, St. Helens states:

"He was a loyal and faithful miners' agent for 25 years. This monument is erected by the workers of Ashton-in-Makerfield and surrounding districts as a token of gratitude by those for whom he gave his life."

© James Fairhurst.

Wigan Carnival

ONE of my most cherished memories of Wigan past was the Carnival Procession. Although the procession still carried on after World War II, albeit after 1970, it lacked the glamour, enthusiasm, imagination and support that was there up to 1939.

Well I remember the Wigan Carnival, a spectacle if ever there was one and a great day out for the family. My most lasting memory of the event is on the day of the Carnival, setting a chair in Earls Street on the pavement edge for my grandmother, as the sellers of flags, streamers and ice cream walked past long before the procession arrived. In St. Michael's School yard the local tableaux were being prepared. Because my grandfather was a coal dealer and had a horse and cart he was roped in by the local Baptist Church for a tableau. The horse was decorated with rosettes and ribbons and the cart with crepe paper.

I hadn't realised, however, until I read in the local newspapers of the time, that the Carnival had been conceived way back in 1926. A group of church dignitaries decided that it would be a grand way of raising funds. In actual fact the money was desperately needed to bring the church schools up to the standard required by the Board of Education.

Three miles long

Of course, in those days it had to be well organised and have a theme that was original and in keeping with the times, dignified and interesting. Thus in 1927 the theme was "The History of Wigan". The procession

was three miles long and even got a mention in the *Yorkshire Post*! Apart from the tableaux depicting a theme there were Kazoo Bands (jazz bands), Morris Dancers and individual artists, one-wheeled cyclists, clowns etc. The restrictions for an entry were set at 16 ft high, 26 ft. long and 10 ft. wide!! An article in the *Sunday Graphic* states, "no sooner had the brass band disappeared around the corner of the Market Square and the strains of 'Sally in Our Alley' begun to fade away, than hot on their heels appeared a pipe band wailing 'The Campbells are Coming', to be followed by 'The

Wearing of the Green' on strings and 'Old Man River' on saxophones."

When the Carnival procession had done the town, so to speak, it proceeded to the Market Square (now the Galleries) where they were judged. The prizes consisted of a cup plus £1 for first prize, £2 for second and £1 for third. Prizes were awarded for the best tableau, best motor car, individual characters, Morris Dancers, bands and cleanest horse and motor vehicle. They then proceeded to Bull Hey cricket ground for the festivities, where there were stalls of every kind, bands, displays and a prize balloon race for the balloon travelling the furthest.

The theme in 1928 was "The Norman Conquest to 1928". Included in the procession was a cart carrying a solid block of coal weighing one ton and

printed on it was "Wigan Colliers Want Work".

Tom Hughes

In 1929 the theme was "Wigan on Wheels through the 20th Century", and included our famous Tom Hughes on his bicycle. "This was the first time such a complete representation of past modes of transport had been attempted. Since then it has been repeated in a number of places, including Lisbon, quite recently."

For 1930 the parish organisations had entered over 100 striking tableaux, the central pageant being 20 interesting scenes from fairy tales. There were 20 exhibits from the trades and six brass bands. The Cotton Queen, Miss Molly Allen, was in the procession, she being one of the 18 finalists at Blackpool. The Carnival Pierrots were in evidence,



Wigan Carnival, 1929.

including the Carnival Queen and King, along with the St. Andrews Girls. The day was not without its accidents, however; the St. John's Ambulance Brigade dealt with 38 cases of fainting, three slight injuries, nine other injuries, including one lady with a suspected fractured wrist.

1931's theme was "A Shakespeare Pageant". This theme was carried on to the Carnival Ground, where a special stage was erected. This time the Carnival Queen was Miss May Dawber (14) of All Saints Parish. Also in the procession was a diminutive pit pony pulling a tub of coal brought from a neighbouring colliery. It was the first time the pony had seen daylight for years and was led by a collier who had come straight from the pit.

Noah's Ark

The headlines for 1932 were "A brilliant event in fine weather, gross profits expected to exceed £900". The centre of the pageant was a giant Noahs Ark and an awe-inspiring dragon. The collectors sported 30 monster carnival heads as used in Nice. Individual entries included: Texas Ranch Girl, Water Carrier, Laurel and Hardy and George Roby.

1933 saw "Education through the Ages". "It was most successfully staged for the first time; since then two other towns have copied the idea".

"Cavalcade of English Genius" for 1934 opened with Boadacea on her chariot and ended with a tableau of Victoria. This theme was the responsibility of Mr. A.J. Hawkes, the Wigan Librarian, and included 42 men and nine women. In the procession were also included some famous Wigan characters:

- John Maunsel, Rector of Wigan, later Henry III's Lord Chancellor
- Dame Mabel Bradshaigh, the Wigan heroine
- Alice Gerrard, Wigan woman arbitrator
- Thomas Linacre, Rector of Wigan and founder of the Royal College of Physicians
- Myles Standish
- Bishop Bridgeman, Rector of Wigan, Bishop of Chester and Chaplain to the King
- Sir Thomas Tyldesley

The Carnival Queen was Miss Marjorie Weston of St. Michael's Parish. Also included in the procession were: the hopping collector – an ex-serviceman with one leg who did not use crutches, while individual characters included A Yorkshire Lad, Aint She Grand, Ghandi and creations on bicycles such as Carnival Coach, A Japanese Tea Garden and a Windmill.

Wedding scenes

Then in the trades section were: an original idea with three miniature coal wagons loaded with coal by Wigan Coal Corporation Ltd., a castle built of coal by Pemberton Colliery, whilst Messrs. Grimshaw and Culshaw had a turnout of pristine green and white milk floats; there were also two furnished houses depicting wedding scenes.

In 1935 one heading read "Sun beats down on Carnival". There were 11 finely executed tableaux portraying principal events in the reign of the King, for this was Royal Jubilee year. One tableau depicted the King giving his broadcast from Sandringham with the Queen by his side. Special permission was received from the Palace, provided the King did not speak! Another tableau depicted the Everest Expedition, and the suit worn by the person portraying Petty Officer Evans was a specimen from

the Royal Geographical Society. The colouring of the suit was white on the outside for hunting, and brightly coloured on the inside for reversing if the wearer got lost. 5,000 people in all took part.

There was no Carnival in 1936 because of the death of King George V.

In 1937 the Carnival had a slogan "Brightest and Best", and included Percy Pickles with his 'fivers' and *Manchester Evening Chronicle's* 'Mystery Man'. Heading the procession was the pipe band of the Oldham Corps of St. Johns Ambulance, one of seven bands in the procession. An unusual band totalling 37 boys aged between 15-17 and dressed in sailors uniform was the Boys Band of Wallasey Naval Training School. Other bands included: Wigan British Legion, Crooke Brass Band, Wrightington and Heskin

Public Band and Pemberton Temperance Band.

For 1938, although no mention is made of the title of the theme, it was suggested that humour be paramount, including 'Snow White and Seven Dwarfs', the keep fit organisations plus, on the cricket grounds, a display of trick riding on motor cycles together with a continental motorball match.

In 1939, in a change from the normal course of events, the Queen of the Carnival together with her retinue appeared at the Ritz Cinema and also on the stage of the Hippodrome. This time, however, it was a day of umbrellas and mackintoshes; the route was curtailed and the gutters in Market Street resembled rivulets.

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Fred Holcroft has contributed a detailed article in which he examines the part played by local men during the Boer War, as seen from their letters from the Front. In the first of several parts, Fred gives the background to the War, and looks at its early phase.

Letters from the Front

Local men in the Boer War 1899-1902

by Fred Holcroft

THE BOER WAR 1899-1902 gives a unique glimpse into the life of the ordinary British soldier. It was the first large-scale conflict since the 1870 Education Act ensured that almost everyone could now read and write. Consequently hundreds of letters were sent home from South Africa. The two Wigan weeklies carried regular "Letters from the Front" features but the *Leigh Chronicle* gave by far the best war coverage, listing all known combatants from Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesley – over 150 – serving in the South African theatre of war.

Several types of soldier served in the army. Almost every regiment in the British army saw active service, and although recruitment was on a county basis, so that most local regulars were in Lancashire regiments, a surprising number served in other units. Many former regulars who had finished their stint "with the Colours" held civilian jobs and were "in the Reserve", liable to be mobilised in an emergency. These men were rapidly recalled to their former regiments. Others were in the Volunteers, part-time soldiers liable to 21 days' training a year and not required to serve overseas. These men formed Active Service companies and were sent out to strengthen the regiments to which they were affiliated. The following is an apocryphal story which deserves to be true. A lone sentry on the Veldt was challenged by an officer:-

"What company are you, my man?"

"Wigan Coal and Iron Company, sir".

Finally there were many



Memorial to those who died in the Boer War, which once stood in Mesnes Park, Wigan.

civilians who, in a fit of patriotic fervour, rushed to enlist in the army when war broke out, and more did so when they received news of the early Boer victories.

Soldiers' letters must be read carefully. The rank and file were not in possession of the full facts and were prone to hearsay and rumour, but they had a sound grasp of military necessity. When writing to their relatives they wished to avoid causing worry and anxiety so often omitted or glossed over their hardships and discomforts, but enough were mentioned to give an idea of what conditions were like. The letters often portrayed bravado, optimism and self-delusion, as the writers attempt to put a brave face on

events, but you do not need a degree in psychology to appreciate them.

Most military history is written by the leaders or by using their memoirs. This series of articles uses the thoughts and opinions of the enlisted men. This is their story told as far as possible in their own words.

The causes of the Boer War

The Boers originally came from Holland to settle in Cape Colony, but in 1814, after they had lived there for 162 years, it was sold to Great Britain. In 1834 the British Government stopped the Boers from keeping negro slaves, so they piled their belongings into their wagons and in a mass migration known as the Great Trek moved inland where they established their own two separate republics: the Orange Free State, set up by those Boers who settled across the Orange river, and the Transvaal, by those who pushed on further inland across the Vaal River.

The two republics lived by farming and were largely left alone. Then in 1886 gold was discovered in the Transvaal and overnight it became the richest country in Africa. Thousands of foreigners flocked there hoping to "get rich quick". The Boers would not give these "Uitlanders" any say in running the country – especially the vote. In 1895 certain foreigners tried to take over the Transvaal in what was known as Jameson Raid but it failed. The Boers then bought artillery and modern rifles



from Britain, France and Germany. In 1899 a petition signed by over 21,000 Transvaal Uitlanders was sent to Queen Victoria asking the British Government to intervene in the Transvaal, take over, and introduce free elections. When negotiations between Britain and the Transvaal foundered, war broke out between them and the Orange Free State sided with the Transvaal.

Of course there was more to it than that. Britain wanted to build a railway from Cairo to Cape Town going through the two Boer republics. And Cecil Rhodes wanted to grab more territory for Britain in Central Africa which later became known as Rhodesia, now called Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi.

Another reason was "jingoism", so named after a patriotic poem written in 1878:

*"We don't want to fight
But by jingo if we do
We've got the ships
We've got the men
We've got the money too."*

The majority of the British public was "jingoistic" – extremely patriotic. Imperialism was another cause. From all parts of the British public there was support for the British Empire because they believed it was a good influence in the world.

The Boers

Every Boer male between 16 and 60 was liable to compulsory military service. Upon call he had to report for duty with a horse, a rifle, 30 rounds of ammunition, and 10 days' rations. Men were organised into units called commando, based on electoral districts. Each commando elected its own officers. There was no discipline of the type found in European armies. A meeting had to be held and a vote taken before any action, but whatever the decision it was accepted by all, even those who voted against it. Yet the Boer soldier could not be made to fight if he didn't want to, and he could go home whenever he

liked. What kept him there, often against his better judgement, were the opinions of his comrades, friends and neighbours, and of course his own family. To be called a coward was the worst thing that could happen to him.

Boer armies, entirely mounted and armed with long range rifles and artillery, possessed tremendous firepower. Boers were farmers, so they could all ride well and shoot straight. Used to hunting for food they were good at concealment and at estimating the range of a target. They soon learned to dig earth fortifications, defend them bravely then ride away fast if things went wrong. They hated to attack because it usually involved taking casualties.

As both republics had only small populations unable to stand heavy losses, Boer generals saw no disgrace in their entire army retreating – even running away – if outnumbered. Dug in so as to be almost invisible, using small-calibre high-velocity rapid-fire rifles with smokeless powder, the Boers' true strength was not at long range but in snapshooting, often at ranges of less than 300 yards.

Boer tactics were like nothing that British soldiers had ever faced before and their frustration is repeatedly expressed in letters home.

Trooper Martin of the 6th Dragoon Guards, a reservist and normally a constable in the Wigan Borough Police wrote to a colleague:

*"The Boers are a lot of cowards.
They never let themselves be
seen and we have all the
attacking to do."*

Driver Mitchell of R Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, from Higher Ince betrayed his exasperation:

*"They get us mad. They will not
show themselves. If they would
only come out and fight us fairly
the war would not last long."*

Private Gore of the 10th Hussars, writing to his brother in Stopforth Street, Woodhouse Lane, puts it similarly:

"They are the biggest cowards

*on earth. They will not come out
into the open to fight or they
would get some 'humpy'. They
are all cowards at heart."*

The British

Most of Great Britain's citizens never saw military service. The 200,000-strong regular army was entirely volunteer with a trained reserve of 30,000 men recently released from the army. Another 230,000 men of varying ability comprised the part-time militia. When the Boer War broke out Britain needed to use all the regulars, all the reservists, as many British who would volunteer, as well as volunteers from the British Empire such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The regulars spent their peace-time years drilling on the parade ground or cleaning the barracks. There was very little training and only 200 bullets a year were issued for target practice. These were fired in volleys – the men standing shoulder to shoulder firing simultaneously. This was all right at close range, against other European armies who fought in the same way, or against natives who charged at them armed only with spears, but it was not suitable for facing opponents like the Boers. The British believed in attack based on the bayonet. Although the old massed formations had been abandoned in favour of three widely separated lines, this manoeuvre was also quite unsuitable when faced with an enemy like the Boers.

The officers came from the upper classes, usually from families with an army tradition, who regarded the army as a gentleman's club with splendid facilities for sport such as polo and hunting. They received very little training in strategy and tactics; any lessons were in out-of-date campaigns such as those of Marlborough, Wellington and Napoleon. As Britain had never been to war against a European army for over 80 years their only experience of active service was

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Letters from the Front

Local men in the Boer War 1899-1902

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against natives.

So neither officers nor men were properly equipped to face white troops, all mounted and armed with artillery and automatic weapons which could kill at a range of over a mile. Another handicap was the slowness of movement. Needing large amounts of supplies, British forces had to stick to the poor quality roads or to the railways, in stark contrast with their highly mobile enemy.

Yet although they came from different backgrounds the officers and men respected each other and shared the same dangers – as the casualty lists prove.

The Early Phase: October 1899- November 1901

Luckily for Britain, when hostilities began in October 1899 the Boer armies moved surprisingly slowly and were unable to overrun the two British colonies, Cape Colony and Natal as originally planned. However, the Boers did something which dominated British thinking. They surrounded three British-held towns: Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith. Attempts to relieve these three besieged places obsessed both British generals and public opinion at home. The desire to relieve them caused the British Commander Sir Redvers Buller to adapt a disastrous strategic plan. He divided his forces into two main groups. On the left about 10,000 men under Lord Methuen advanced towards Kimberley. On the right about 20,000 men under Buller himself advanced towards

Ladysmith. In the centre a small force under General Gatacre kept contact between the two main armies at the strategic railway junction of Stormberg. Instead of concentrating their forces the British scattered them, and were weak everywhere and strong nowhere, and while the Boers in the interior could quickly reinforce each other the British had difficulty keeping in touch

At first everything went well with Lord Methuen's advance. Although suffering exceptionally high casualties he forced the Boers to retreat in a series of battles: Belmont (23 November 1899), Graspan (25 November 1899) and Modder River (28 November 1899). In every case the British advanced with fixed bayonets supported by artillery fire and the Boers fought well until the British got close then mounted up and retreated to another position.

Private Thomas Brimelow of the Coldstream Guards wrote to his sister in Lower Ince describing how he had fought in all three battles. At Belmont:

"We fixed our bayonets and charged them. We had to run up a hill where they were in trenches. We got them out but we lost 58 men."

"At Modder River we started fighting at 6 a.m. in the morning till 8 the same night my comrades falling right and left. I had my helmet blown off and my haversack. Oh we were in a state. We slept all night with our rifles. The following morning we bayoneted them out and took the place off them."

Private E. Bull of the Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders had been called back to the Colours from his job at Horwich Loco Works and he described his experiences at Modder River in a letter to Mr. J. Ormrod the works manager:

"The enemy's position was very strong but after 13 hours fighting in the burning sun it was taken. We lost 400 men from our division, 22 of them belonging to our regiment killed and over 100 wounded. It was an awful day which will not be forgotten."

The Highland Brigade suffered severely, including their Commander General Andy Wauchope killed, and Private Grundy of the Highland Light Infantry from Princess Street, Tyldesley was wounded.

Private W. Mulrooney of the Grenadier Guards, formerly a forward in the Tyldesley rugby team, told his parents living in Ashwell Street that the Boer position was the best so far and they should never have left it.

Sergeant Hartley, Lancashire Fusiliers, formerly a constable in the Wigan Borough Police agreed:

".....They only show the muzzle, fire three rounds then run out of sight again. I am sure that if they would stand their ground they would do more damage but the sooner they can fire and get away the better, they think."

Private G. Boardman, Coldstream Guards of 46 George Street, Tyldesley, who had also fought in all three battles, showed that the ordinary soldier knew more than the top brass:

"I don't know how we are going to get them out. It is madness to attack. You can't see one of them."

After Modder River, Private John Giblin, Scots Guards, was so amazed he wrote home to 54 Bold Street, Leigh:

"I don't know how we got away with our lives."

Unknown to Hartley the Boers had learned a lot from these early battles. Abandoning their hill top positions and entrenching at the foot where they were even more invisible to the British artillery, they were about to give the British Army another lesson and British public opinion – supremely confident that "the war will be over by Christmas" – was rudely shocked when all three armies were defeated in the same week, "Black Week" as it came to be known.

In the next issue, Fred describes the disasters of "Black Week", and looks at the local mens' impressions of war. Ed.

Using as his source a strangely neglected diary, Allan Miller gives a fascinating insight into Wigan Rugby League Club before World War II. This is the first of a two part series.

A Rugby League Diary

1898-1938

JOHN Counsell was a director and chairman of Wigan Rugby League Football Club and a prominent Rugby Football legislator; he was chairman of the Rugby League Council 1922-1923. Between 1898 and 1938 he kept a diary with 'meticulous care'; this represents a record which is 'probably unique in Rugby Football history.'

Counsell was acknowledged at the time as an important source of history of Rugby League. Yet his diary has been strangely neglected by the sport's historians; there is no reference to it, for example, in *The Official History of Rugby League 1895-1995*. It is a veritable goldmine of information for historians of the sport. It reveals the inside story of the Wigan Football Club from its 'comparatively humble beginnings to its present [1938] fame,' and the diary mentions many of the names and events that featured in the wider history of rugby league during those crucial formative years.

Committees

From the earliest entries in the diary, it was obvious that John Counsell took an active part in committee work at Wigan RLFC. On 2 June 1903 Mr Counsell arrived late for a Wigan Football Club committee meeting and was informed that he had 'been elected Chairman.' In 1921 he referred to 'a milestone event' in the history of the Wigan Club. At a meeting in the Queen's Hall on 16 March the unanimous decision was taken to float the club as a limited liability company. The decision met with

'approbation' and the club 'received more cash than was asked for by applicants who asked to take up shares.' An important alteration to the articles of the Wigan Club was made at an extraordinary meeting in March 1937 when it was decided to raise the number necessary to demand a poll at general meetings from 50 to 150. In March 1938 John Counsell was appointed Chairman of Wigan RLFC in succession to Alderman Walkden.

The power of the Wigan Committee was often in evidence in the diary. On 7 November 1904 the Committee decided not to play W Anderson against Huddersfield and this action 'caused quite a stir in the town.' In November 1906 a number of players were suspended, including Windsor Jones, Voisey, Watkins and Trezise, but 'the directors went to Wales to fetch Bert Jenkins back after suspension.' In January 1926 the Wigan Directors were not satisfied with the form of the players and called a Special Meeting 'for a straight talk to players.' On Christmas Eve 1933 Wigan directors met 'to select team for match against Salford on Christmas Day.'

John Counsell also involved himself in more mundane club tasks as these diary entries illustrated:

23 September 1899: 'Made sandwiches for Wigan team en route to Millom.'

27 March 1908: 'Made sandwiches at home for Wigan team travelling to London.'

9 September 1931: With other directors 'went round

the Wigan district to find private posting board places to advertise matches.'

16 November 1933: 'Examined Wigan Rangers' football ground and declared it fit for play in the qualifying round of the cup.'

Central Park

In the early years, facilities left much to be desired. 'The landlord of the *Princess of Wales*, our headquarters, being dead in the house, the players dressed for training at the *White Horse Hotel*.' In 1902, having won the Lancashire League, their first major honour under the Northern Union during the previous season, at a meeting in the basement of the Public Hall the Wigan committee made the courageous decision to move to a new ground in Powell Street, 'leaving Springfield Park to the soccer team.' In August the committee appointed a groundsman 'at 25 shillings all year round.' About 8,000 spectators watched Wigan defeat Batley 14-8 in the first match to be played at the new Central Park on 6 September 1902. Barr scored the first try and Rothwell kicked the first goal on the new pitch. In June 1909 the Wigan directors went to see the 'dressing accommodation' at Liverpool and Everton soccer clubs and a month later a 'new brick pavilion' was under construction at Central Park, the 'new dressing rooms and baths' being used on 2 September. Mr Counsell later negotiated with the Great Central Railway Company for extensions of the lease of the world famous stadium. In

December 1936 a meeting of Ground Committee discussed the exchange of plots of land between St Mary's and the rugby club as Central Park developed.

The diary indicated how variable conditions could be during the season. In April 1906: 'Had water carts on the football ground to keep dust down.' In January 1933 games were postponed because of frost: 'The little experiment with kill-frost was not a success.' Later in the same year, Mr Counsell 'went with Alderman Walkden to order a gas stove for Wigan Football Club.' On 1 March 1937 it was necessary to have 'snow cleared off Central Park with the Corporation's brush machine.'

Mr Counsell's diary also gave an indication of the training methods employed in rugby league at the time. Before key matches the players were sometimes sent for special training away from Central Park. Morecambe was a favourite location for these extra training sessions. In February 1938 Mr Counsell 'addressed the players at Central Park prior to their starting special training. They went for a long walk with R Hough and Jim Sullivan in charge. They dined at the Grill Room.' On the following day the directors and players went by train to Southport as part of the training for the cup tie at Leeds. The party dined at the Scarisbrick Hotel. On arrival back in Wigan 'we all went to the Hippodrome first house.'

Players

Wigan were always on the look out for the best playing

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A Rugby League Diary, 1898-1938

Continued from page 15

talent and John Counsell scoured the country. Some signings went through smoothly and amicably. In January 1938 the Wigan board met Leeds directors and agreed the transfer of Harry Woods from Leeds to Wigan for £450. 'They received us very well and entertained us to lunch.' One of the best signings was made on 11 December 1903 when the Wigan Club Secretary, George Taylor, 'drew £10 by cheque to sign J Leytham' from Lancaster Northern Union Football Club, which received £80 for their star winger. 'Gentleman Jim' captained the Wigan team to



J. Leytham, Wigan F. C. & British N. U. Team.

some of its greatest triumphs, including Wigan's 'first four cup season' in 1908-9. (See Tom Mather's excellent book: *James Leytham Diary*). Jimmy Leytham's wing partner, Joe Miller, was signed on 24 January 1906 from Pemberton. Another coup was the capture of Alf Ellaby, in July 1934, and this helped to establish the Wigan tradition of signing exciting,

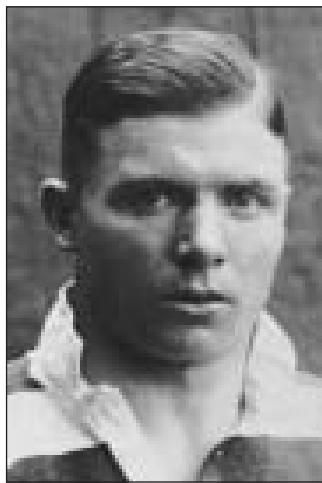
try-scoring wingers.

Excursions into the Welsh valleys were frequent. In October 1903 Mr Counsell 'received telegram from Mr S Latham saying he was bringing Dai Harris from Wales' and a further delegation 'went to Cardiff in search of new players.' The Counsell diary recorded that in August 1904 'met Windsor Jones and Fred Jones from Wales at [Wigan] station' and that in December of the same year Wigan signed Bert Jenkins and later Johnny Thomas for £200. Danny Hurcombe arrived in 1919 and the wing sensation, Johnny Ring, signed in 1922. When John Morley from Newport Rugby Union Club signed for Wigan in August 1932, 'his conversion to the Rugby League game caused a stir in Rugby Union circles.'

Peerless Jim Sullivan

Perhaps Wigan's greatest capture ever occurred on 18 June 1921 when Wigan 'signed Jim Sullivan' from Cardiff Rugby Union Club when he was just 17 years of age. Entries in the Counsell diary outlined some of the highlights of Sullivan's incredible career during the 1920s and 1930s. He was a veritable points scoring machine: on 2 April 1923 Sullivan beat Huddersfield's Ben Gronow's record of 172 goals in a season. In 1929 he was captain of the Wigan team that defeated Dewsbury in the first ever Rugby League Challenge Cup Final to be played at Wembley and inevitably he scored the first rugby league points at the stadium when he kicked a penalty goal. On 25 October 1930 Wigan beat Halifax 10-8 in Jim Sullivan's benefit match. Mr Counsell was present at a special meeting of Wigan Football Club Ltd in 1932 that made the momentous decision to offer the legendary Sullivan the position of player-coach. In May 1933 Jim Sullivan took a

team to play Swinton at Station Road 'to raise funds for a local hospital.' One of the personal highlights of his personal career occurred in October 1933 when Sullivan 'kicked two goals to beat the Australians' in a test match watched by 33,000 in the rain at Belle Vue stadium. On 15 June 1937 John Counsell witnessed an agreement between Wigan Football Club and Jim Sullivan for 'three' years guarantee of a position as trainer-groundsmen including his playing career and after to the extent of



J. Sullivan, Wigan F. C.

above term.' (Sullivan had requested a guarantee of 5 years employment on resigning.) 'Sully' may not have won that particular personal battle with the Wigan directors but he usually did get his way as was illustrated by the following case:

6 November 1937: 'Francis Gregory, although selected, refused to play v Widnes.'

18 November 1937: At a meeting of the Wigan directors there was 'an enquiry re charges made by Francis Gregory against Jim Sullivan. We found them not proven.'

6 January 1938: Directors came to terms with Francis Gregory playing for Wigan 'although Alderman Walkden and myself had to see Jim Sullivan on the matter.'

27 January 1938: 'Verbally agreed with

Warrington to transfer Gregory, the forward, for £300.'

Overseas stars

Wigan were always keen on a supply of players from the colonies. Mr Counsell's diary indicated the conflicting opinions in the game about the import of overseas players and the opposition that Wigan had to overcome. At a meeting of League Clubs in Manchester on 5 January 1927, a proposition 'to remove ban on Colonial players was lost by 14-13.' On 22 December 1937 at a meeting at Manchester of the Rugby League Council: "We discussed the position of imposing the ban on Colonial players. I was the only one who objected to it on the instruction of the Wigan directors." Whenever there was freedom of trade, Wigan officials were usually first into the market. Amongst the overseas stars who signed for Wigan during the early decades of the 20th century were New Zealanders Lance Todd (1908), William 'Massa' Johnston (1908) and Charlie Seeling (1910). Lance Todd's brilliant career with the Wigan club was interspersed with problems. In February 1909 'Lance Todd upset at being on reserve...said he would not play for Wigan again.' But Todd's popularity with the Wigan public was unbridled: on 16 November 1909 there were 'immense crowds in Wallgate to welcome Lance Todd back.' In March of the following year 'Lance Todd complained, on behalf of the players, about sandwiches for match with Hunslet next Saturday. Committee would not give way.' However, at the end of 1913 Lance Todd informed the Committee that he would not play for Wigan again, resigned his connection with the club and asked for a transfer.' At a General Meeting of the Wigan Football Club held in the Co-operative

Hall on 23 January 1914 members expressed their dissatisfaction with the management 'on and off the field of play of the team.' Todd himself attended and expressed his point of view. 'It was a disorderly meeting from beginning to end, the committee leaving the platform.' Todd was transferred to Dewsbury for £400. He went on to become manager of Salford during the 1930's and achieved fame as a radio commentator on Rugby League, his name being perpetuated by the annual award of the Lance Todd trophy to the outstanding player in the Challenge Cup final.

Wigan's search for players knew few geographical boundaries. During the 1920's no less than six South Africans played for Wigan, including another speedy star winger, Adrian 'Artie' van Heerden, and the massive forward, George van Rooyen, who was signed from Hull Kingston Rovers.

Who needed agents?

Not all of Wigan's scouting missions were successful. In 1903 Mr Counsell made a visit to Morecambe to see the Wigan players who lived there but he failed to re-sign any of them. In 1932 he went to watch 'a certain player' at Keighley but he was 'disappointing' and later in the same year he interviewed Bailey, a St Helens Recs player, but 'he said he wasn't playing for any club next season.' Moreover, there were often disputes over signing players. In October 1903 Ashton Association Football Club informed Wigan that Jim Sharrock had signed on for them prior to signing for Wigan Rugby Club and Mr Counsell was obliged to go to Ashton 'to strike Jim Sharrock off their register.' In July 1908 Wigan secured the 'verdict and £65 costs at Liverpool Assizes against Tommy Thomas for breach of agreement with Wigan



Lance Todd in military uniform.

Football Club.' In the days before agents, players and relatives had to negotiate their own deals. In the summer of 1909 'Mrs Bert Jenkins came to see me about her husband signing on for next season. She said he wanted £200. I had to go to bed.' Likewise in October 1931 when Mr Counsell went to interview 'a promising junior player' he 'made little headway with his father.' In 1933 Mr Counsell travelled to meet New Zealander Gordon Innes at King George V dock in London. 'After a lot of wrangle he signed for the Wigan club.' Two years later he went with Alderman Walkden to see the Vicar of St Michael's in support of Gordon Innes and his application for a teaching post in the day school. In February 1937 John Counsell went with Alderman Walkden to see the Vicar about allowing Gordon Innes leave of absence from school to play in a Wednesday match against Halifax.

Transfers

Harking back to the troubled years before the great split of the game in 1895, poaching of players from other clubs was often a cause of friction between clubs. On 5 December 1905 the case against Wigan for 'inducing a

Broughton player' was dismissed. Wigan often had to negotiate surreptitiously with players and the secrecy in which signings from Rugby Union had to be negotiated was illustrated by a Scottish case in July 1905: 'Went to Hawick and signed Anthony W Little, Scottish international forward, by candle light in an attic.' Nevertheless Wigan did shrewd business in the transfer market. In September 1925 Danny Hurcombe was offered for sale to 'a few leading clubs' and he was eventually sold to Halifax. In 1937, when a rugby league experiment in London was floundering, John Counsell noted in his diary: 'I was introduced to Eddie Hodder, the New Zealand footballer from Streatham and Mitcham, and signed him on for the Wigan club'.

Inducements and Money

It was often necessary to offer inducements to players to sign on and the diary contained many examples of Mr Counsell visiting local firms to arrange jobs for new players:

9 March 1904: Met W Hector from South Shields at Wigan station and 'took him to W Livesey's who engaged him to work for them.'

9 October 1934: 'Went with Alderman Walkden to Harry Williams and got A V Twose a job with him on a month's trial.'

In the early years of the game bonus payments in kind were a feature. When Wigan defeated Coventry by 70-0 in 1912: 'Todd, Bradley, Curwen and Ramsdale earned an overcoat each for scoring 3 tries each and 1 each for a friend.' But the players preferred extra money. In May 1921 the players were offered an 'extra £5 if they won the final against Oldham

for the Northern League Cup.' The importance of bonus payments as an incentive to win was illustrated by Wigan's cup match at Leeds in February 1938: 'the play of Wigan was poor in the extreme. They were too slow and could not get the ball in the scrums. We offered £5 bonus to win. At half time an extra £3.'

Money was often an issue between players and management. In September 1905 the Wigan Committee made a controversial decision to pay backs higher wages than forwards. The backs were to receive the following payments for a win, draw and loss: £2.10 shillings, £2.5 shillings and £2 whilst the forwards would get only £1.7.6d for a win, £1.5s for a draw and £1.2.6d for a defeat. In November 1905 the Wigan players were promised £1 each extra bonus if they beat Oldham in the semi final of the Lancashire Cup. When the Wigan Club Committee refused to accede to the players' request for £1 per man in February 1919, the players threatened strike action until a compromise was reached on the following terms: '15s win; 12s 6d draw or lose; 7s 6d reserves.' The problem of differentiated wages emerged again in January 1920 when the Wigan forwards intimated that they would not play 'unless they got the same pay as back players.' The problem was compounded when the Wigan backs refused to play with 'the emergency forwards the Committee had called upon.' The dispute between the Wigan Committee and Wigan Forward Players went to arbitration: 'Award given in club's favour.'

In the next issue, Allan will look at injuries and violence before World War II, as well as rivals (even then!) St. Helens and Australia.

**Allan Miller
Orrell Wigan**

Coal Dust, the Miner's Unexpected Menace

WE are all getting used to being accosted on the streets today by insurance companies wanting to take their cut of compensation claims. Now even men who look as though they may have been miners during their working lives are being approached on the streets. Claims are going in thick and fast for 'white finger' and of course pneumoconiosis. Claims are even being processed on behalf of men who died of pneumoconiosis 30 years ago.

Here at the Archives we hold post mortem records, and a steady trickle of requests are being dealt with from solicitors.

Old King Coal

That Wigan's men, women and children had to toil down coal mines from at least the 14th century was bad enough. To have to suffer the daily danger of shaft accidents, roof falls, gas and coal dust explosions or fall prey to a host of debilitating diseases and ailments and then die prematurely due to pneumoconiosis and silicosis is tragic beyond belief.

Coal itself might seem to the average person a fairly innocuous substance apart from the obvious fact that it burns! For centuries it has even had a certain curiosity value and traditional 'charm' for want of a better term, yet the fine combustible dust

created as coal breaks down has for at least the last 800 years provided a two-pronged menace for Wigan's coal miners, with deadly consequences. Miners and scientists alike were for centuries not fully aware that this dust was both involved in explosions and causing pitmen's lungs to gradually lose efficiency.

Black Lung

For generations coal owners and their highly paid doctors conveniently turned a blind eye to the obvious connection between the coal miners workplace environment and the commonplace incidence of lung disorders.

We now know with certainty that pneumoconiosis in coal miners is a lung condition caused by inhaling particles of coal and silica (stone dust). After continued exposure to the dust, the lungs undergo structural changes that eventually can be seen on a chest X-ray. If the dust triggers lung inflammation, this inflammation eventually can lead to fibrosis (the formation of tough, fibrous tissue deposits). In miners with severe pneumoconiosis, fibrosis stiffens the lungs, restricts airflow and ultimately interferes with the lung's

normal exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide.

Where I live in Tyldesley as well as all other parts of Wigan Borough ex-miners who are suffering from the effects of years of exposure to coal dust can be seen struggling to gain their breath as they walk slowly along the street, a sad end for men to whom we all owe an enormous debt of gratitude.

Dangers recognised a century earlier

With the increase in size of the industry as a whole and also of individual collieries from the early 19th century coal dust was to be found in ever increasing quantities below ground.

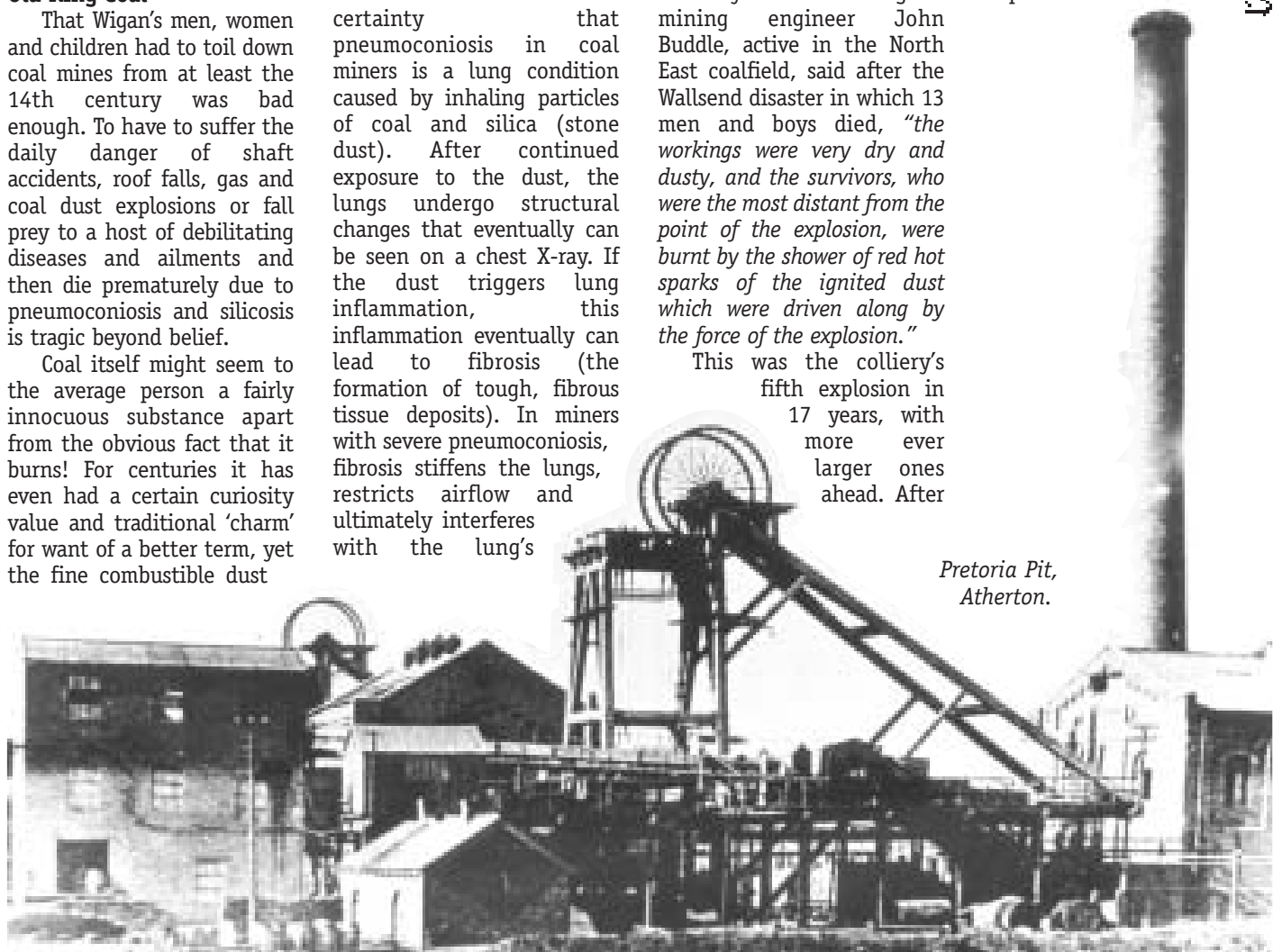
As early as 1803 the great mining engineer John Buddle, active in the North East coalfield, said after the Wallsend disaster in which 13 men and boys died, *"the workings were very dry and dusty, and the survivors, who were the most distant from the point of the explosion, were burnt by the shower of red hot sparks of the ignited dust which were driven along by the force of the explosion."*

This was the colliery's fifth explosion in 17 years, with more ever larger ones ahead. After

the Haswell Colliery, Northumberland explosion in 1844, Professor Faraday said he felt that *"the ignition and explosion of the [firedamp] mixture would raise and then kindle the coal dust which is always pervading the passages, and these effects must in a moment have made the part of the mine which was the scene of the calamity glow like a furnace."*

Royal Commissions

A Royal Commission was appointed in 1891 to enquire into the effects of coal dust in originating or extending explosions in mines. This found that coal dust could extend explosions, could increase the danger of explosions



Pretoria Pit, Atherton.

even when only small quantities of gas were normally found, that coal dust alone with no gas present could cause an explosion, from a blown out shot for example.

In 1906 the Royal Commission on Mines was appointed, this time to study along with other aspects of health and safety the nature of coal dust explosions. A gallery was created at Altofts in Yorkshire, made up of a wrought iron tube built up from sections, diameter 7 feet and 78 feet long. Inside the recreated mine tunnel with tubs on rails and wooden pit props and pit waste, coaldust could be laid in various quantities. Various types of coal were tested, being ignited by a small electrically detonated cannon.

In meticulous fashion experimental ignitions took place over the period 1908-9. Photographs were taken of the ensuing flame and blast emitting from the tubs; use was also made of cine. Measurements were taken of air pressure at various points within the explosion gallery. Microscopic analysis of material after the explosion was carried out. Gas samples were taken along the gallery at time intervals after ignitions. Coal dust mixtures with inert stone dusts of varying particle sizes were tried out.

Stone Dust Trials

Ever safety-conscious, Fletcher Burrows and Co. operating the Atherton Collieries experimented with stone dust spreading machines at Gibfield Colliery back in the late 19th century. The use of stone dust in specified zones with varying coal dust environments was tried out. The conclusion was that, even though some good results had been obtained with very fine stone dusts in 'defusing' explosions, the speed of creation of a stone dust cloud was not fast enough to whip up the stone dust enough for damping

down to take place.

In later days, and until very recently, Wigan area miners would be routinely taken to watch a coal dust explosion simulation at the Buxton Mines Research Station (opened 1924). This really drove home the dangers of coal dust and the importance of using stone dust in roadways.

A Busy Period for Rescue Services

In January 1908 the major Lancashire coal owners set up the first central rescue station in the country, at Howe Bridge, Atherton (the building still stands today at the bottom of Lovers Lane). Later on in the same year came the Maypole disaster at Abram (due mainly to a gas rather than coal dust explosion) where 75 men and boys died. An average gas explosion would often 'only' kill 40 or 50 men and boys. Once the self-feeding coal dust element was involved there really was no limit.

A Time for Celebration?

Christmas arrives earlier every year and many today will spend a few hundred pounds on the family (or one child's!) presents. Back in the early years of the last century the average workman had to work as much overtime and weekends as possible in the lead up to Christmas to enable him to buy just a few shillings worth of gifts.

A Christmas with a difference was celebrated on 21 December 1910, as Lancashire's largest ever coal mining disaster occurred at the Pretoria Colliery, Over Hulton. On that fateful day, 900 men and boys clocked on for the morning shift. In the coal seam affected at Pretoria Pit, 347 men had been at work. Only three survived. Over 500 other men were below ground at the time in other districts, separately ventilated and unaffected by the blast.

A small number of men died due to being very close to the blast, their bodies

literally blasted apart and totally burned. A number were never identified. I remember talking to an old man who worked at Pretoria Colliery 20 years after the blast. He found a mummified hand near an old haulage engine house. Management 'hushed up' this grim discovery.

Those farther away from the actual blast were burned virtually to a cinder with less physical damage. Even further away were the victims of carbon monoxide poisoning or 'afterdamp' as it is known in mining. As little as 0.2% will kill after 5-10 minutes exposure. Much higher percentages would have been found after such a massive blast, suffocating the men virtually instantly.

One theory was that the blast was caused by sparking on a conveyor switch at No.1 face of the North Plodder District. Miners had reported seeing open sparks at the switch. The switch would not have been operated during loading, which would only take place after the coal from the "Iron Man" (the mechanical coal cutter on night shift) had been brought down. A second theory was that defective miner's safety lamps with cracked glasses had ignited the gas in this area, one where men had complained of its presence over the preceding weeks.

The report into the causes of the disaster was prepared by the Chief Inspector of Mines, Richard Redmayne, one of the finest mining engineers Britain has known. He noted that a large fall of roof which had occurred the day before the blast at No.2 face of the North Plodder district had not been completely shuttered off, allowing gas to accumulate in the cavity.

One important aspect of the operations which was not allowed to occur again was where the colliery manager had charge of two other collieries - it was felt a lack of managerial supervision partly accounted for slack practices.

Worse To Come

The Pretoria disaster was the largest since the Oaks Colliery, Yorkshire in 1866 when 366 died.

Three years later Universal Colliery, Senghennydd, South Wales blew up, killing 439, Britain's largest ever mining disaster. After Senghennydd fewer instances of coal dust explosions occurred as the message struck home and systematic stone dusting became the norm. However, Pretoria and Senghennydd pale into insignificance when we look at the disaster which occurred at the Honkeiko Colliery in China in April 1942. The world's worst coal dust disaster claimed 1,549 miners.

Lesson Learned For What?

So coal dust explosions had been recognised as occurring at least since the late 18th century, but probably had always been occurring from day one of what you might call confined space accessed coal mining. Perhaps some unlucky character back in 1450 met his end in a bell pit as a result of a coal dust blast.

Nowadays, multiple stone dust barriers are required by law in all coal mines, in specified places, of set dimensions, spaced at set distances apart, the weight of stone dust on the shelves also specified, and at set distances from the coal face. Only very close to the coal face would you be walking on large amounts of coal dust today.

However, coal dust explosions still occur amazingly in Chinese, Ukrainian and South African mines, where lax working practices and poor management are coupled with apparent lack of respect for human life. Explosions of other types of combustible dust (in grain and flour silos, for example) occur regularly world wide with hundreds killed annually.

**Alan Davies
Heritage Officer
(Archives)**

HISTORY SHOP NEWS

NEW EXHIBITION AT THE HISTORY SHOP

*Maroon by Day,
Green by Night -
30 September 2002 –
3 January 2003*

THIS exhibition, telling the story of Wigan Corporation Transport, drew its inspiration from the Vintage Vehicle Rally (held at Haigh Hall on 29 September) organised by Wigan Transport Society to celebrate Wigan Corporation's take over of Wigan & District Tramways Co Ltd.

The stars of the show are the vehicles, which provided such good service during the 73 year reign of municipal public transport in Wigan and surrounding areas. Dozens of photographs (from our own collection and those of private collectors) trace the introduction, development and obsolescence of steam and electric trams, trolley buses and the

many different type of motor bus. There is even a photograph (the only one we know of) of an early horse drawn bus (pre Wigan Corporation days) operated by Proe & Co between Wigan and Hindley in the 1870's.

Local vehicle manufacture (tram and bus bodywork, chassis, steam tram locomotives and support vehicles) feature prominently. The names to look out for are Pagefield Motors - Walker Brothers (Wigan) Ltd, William Wilkinson & Co Ltd, Massey Brothers Ltd, Santus Motor Body Works Ltd and Northern Counties Motor Engineering Co Ltd.

In addition to these informative and evocative photographs, the display includes a uniform, bus models, ticket machine, an early fare collection box from the days of the steam trams and memorabilia such as tickets, time tables, fare tables and a bus destination blind.

For those of you wondering about the significance of the title, here is a brief explanation. Maroon was the livery of Wigan Corporation Transport. At night, a small green light would show in the bus destination window. The reason for this is obscure, but the same green light was used on the trams. If anyone has any ideas, Mike Haddon, curator of the exhibition, would be pleased to hear from you. (01942 828121). We hope you enjoy your visit!

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

THIS issue there is a lot of information to squeeze into the space, so apologies if each section is a little brief. As always you can find out more about the Friends group by contacting me here at the History Shop or coming in and talking to any of the Friends often frequenting our study area.

The first thing to report on is the October meeting of the Friends group which took place in the History Shop on Saturday 5 October. The main points for discussion were the Friends work projects, the Friends representation on the Cultural Partnership, and the contributions on behalf of the group to this very magazine. Each of these will be looked at in more detail below.

The **work projects** continue, reflecting the hard work being put in by our Friends. The **1861** project is nearing completion; indeed we are hoping to be able to have finished within the shelf life of this current issue of *Past Forward*. Approximately 130,000 names will have been indexed, a task made all the more difficult by some truly dreadful handwriting by the enumerators, but our volunteers have overcome.

To mark this occasion we would like to thank every one who has been involved in the project and especially; **Mr R Heaviside, Mr C Miller, Mrs M Hynes, Mrs C Lowton, Mrs J Whitter, Mr T Newton, Mr R Wrench, Mrs L Kidger and Mrs B M Davies** who has co-ordinated the project and collated the data.

We are hoping to begin a new project in the New Year, an indexing project for the **1841 census** using the same format as for **1861**. To this end we need volunteers to help out as

LOCAL AND FAMILY HISTORY WORKSHOPS

DOES this sound like just the sort of thing you need?

Someone to show you how to get started and what it's all about?

Someone to explain what resources are available, and how to access them?

Someone to point you in the right direction, or suggest some new avenues after yet another dead end?

Someone to tell you what is at the History Shop and what is not, and where to find other resources?

We would love to do just that. However, we do have one condition, we would then like you to undertake workshops on our behalf. Let's face it, some of you have expertise in genealogy or local history research already, and those of you who visit other record offices and libraries know

what else is around as well as anyone.

We propose a workshop for Friends explaining exactly what we can and can't provide. Then we would hold a series of workshops for the public, run by you, the Friends, to spread this knowledge more widely. We do not have the manpower to run public sessions and operate normally as well, so that is why we need your help.

Please register your interest at the History Shop; for each group of five or six people we will arrange a session to go through all our 'secrets' so that you can then pass them on through open workshops.

As with the project work, it is up to you. We need your help to achieve our goals, and it should be fun!

HISTORY SHOP NEWS

before and get cataloguing. Either speak to the person on duty at the History Shop enquiry desk or come in and speak with our indexing co-ordinator Barbara Davies.

The indexing of certain **church records** has also been going ahead and is always going to be needed in the future. Mr E Davies and Mrs B M Davies have indexed the records of St. Mary's Ince and St. John's Abram; the next project, I believe, is St. John's Pemberton.

The Friends have also been undertaking a basic assessment of our **map** holdings, and hopefully when that project is finished ideas are being looked at on how the Friends may be able to help with the photographic collection.

These and other ideas for the future are really up to you. If you are interested in joining in the work alongside like-minded people, then why not get in touch.

Our chairman Max Finney represents the group on the **Cultural Partnership**. They publish a Cultural Strategy and an associated action plan. The formation of an active Friends group was one of the outcomes of the first action plan. Now for 2002-03 the action plan has moved on, and for the group this now mentions specifically the indexing projects, the increased access to the collections that they can deliver and the prospect of funding the publication of these resources.

Finally, it was agreed at the meeting to make a request for more volunteers for future work projects. To make things lighter and more readable, please contact me at the History Shop, with short pieces, please, for the next copy date of 7 February 2003.

The next meeting of the Friends has been scheduled for 11 January 2003 at 1pm in the History Shop. If you do want to come along and get involved then you are very welcome, just let me know first. But if you are that keen, why wait until then, come into the History Shop anytime and ask for me.

Philip Butler
Friends Co-ordinator
Tel: 01942 827594

NEW ACCESSIONS

New additions to the shelves at the History Shop include:

- St. Mary's Birchley RC, *Marriage Index 1856 - 1930***, G P Rigby;
- St. Marie's Standish RC, *Memorial Inscriptions 1883 - 2002***, E S Cheetham & G P Rigby;
- St. Mary's Euxton RC, *Memorial Inscriptions with plan***, M Davies & E S Cheetham;
- St. James Orrell RC, *Memorial Inscriptions with plan***, M Davies & E S Cheetham;
- St. Mary's Ince CE, *Baptism Index 1887 - 1960, Marriage Index 1888 - 1976***, E & B M Davies;
- St. Luke's Orrell CE, *Memorial Inscriptions***, G Rigby & E S Cheetham;
- Standish Hall Chapel, *Registers 1742 - 1884***, A J Michison;
- St. John the Evangelist Abram, *Registers 1838 - 1979***, B M Davies;
- 1901 Census Name Index, *Pemberton, Winstanley, Orrell***, G P Rigby & W Maloney;
- Billinge War Dead, *Great & Second Wars***, H Roughley.

As all of the above titles have been transcribed and indexed locally, we would like to thank all the people involved for their hard work and dedication, and for making a copy of their work available to us.

- Baglee C & Morley A, *Enamel Advertising Signs*
- Bardsley A, *First Name Variants*
- Bevan A, *Tracing Your Ancestors in the PRO*
- Billinge Historical Society, *History of Billinge*
- Boydell T, *Diary of Old Leigh*
- Clifford D, *My Ancestors were Congregationalists...*
- Cormack, A, *The Journal of Corporal Todd 1745 - 1762*
- Duckers P, *British Gallantry Awards 1855 - 2000*
- Floate S, *My Ancestors were Gypsies*
- Hawgood D, *Family Search on the Internet*
- Herbert M, *The Wearing of the Green*
- Holcroft F, *Silk Manufacturers in Leigh*
- Holdsworth W, *The Handy Book of Parish Law*
- Howgate F, *The Ashton 100 - Ashton Golf Club*
- Jackson W, *The Victorian Chemist and Druggist*
- Lysons K, *A Little Primitive*
- May T, *The Victorian Railway Worker*
- Raymond S, *British Family History on CD*
- Richards T, *Was Your Grandfather a Railwayman?*
- Ruston A, *My Ancestors Were English Presbyterians*
- Shearman A, *My Ancestor was a Policeman*
- Wood C, *The Duke's Cut - The Bridgewater Canal*

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

Name

Address

.....

Interests

.....

Please enclose £5 subscription for one year's membership. Cheque/P.O. payable to Wigan Council. Please return to the History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

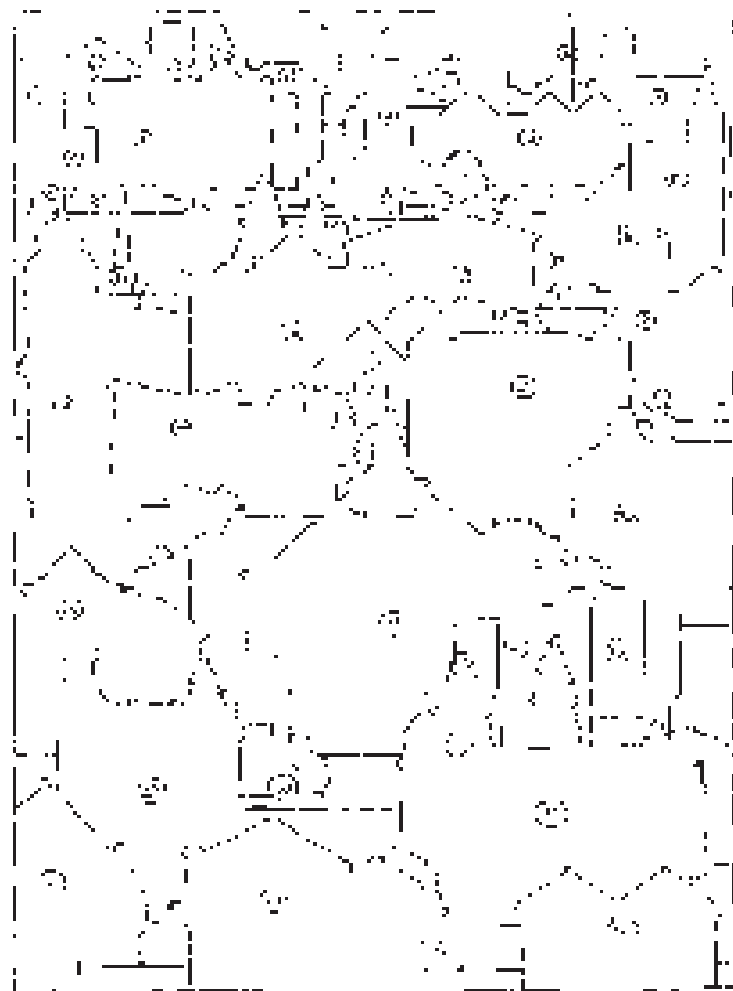
Remember your subscription entitles you to a priority mailing of *Past Forward* three times a year, starting with the current issue unless you request otherwise.

N.B. If you do not wish to cut this coupon out, a cheque along with your details on plain paper is fine.

Leigh

Here is the fourth in the series of line drawings by Gerald Rickards, covering all townships in the Borough; for the first time, Gerald turns his attention towards the east of the Borough. The Leigh drawing has taken Gerald longer than before, as he already knew Aspull, Orrell and Standish well, but had only visited Leigh on a few occasions, and even then usually for an evening event in the Turnpike Gallery. He writes: *"I now know a lot more about Leigh. On each visit I have become more enthusiastic. The impressive mills and buildings alongside the canal seem perfect subjects for my style of painting. The information from books and cuttings now means so much after time spent looking at the buildings. I have received information from so many helpful people."*

1. One of the many mills that are reminiscent of Leigh's industrial past.
2. Leigh Rugby League Club.
3. Clock tower on the new canalside development, facing the Waterside Inn. The site was a former rope works.
4. Mather Lane Mill.
5. Savings Bank.
6. Chimney at Butts Mill.
7. Butts Mill.
8. Former warehouse, now part of the Waterside Inn.
9. Canal leisure boat, on the Leigh Branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.
10. Former large warehouse, now the Waterside Inn.
11. Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, as rebuilt by church architects Paley and Austin around 1873.
12. The Spinning Gate Shopping Centre; opened 1989.
13. Barclays Bank.
14. The Spindle, a five metre high piece of public art recently erected in Bradshawgate.
15. The former offices of J C Prestwich. The architectural practice responsible for several important buildings in Leigh over a period of 100 years.
16. Brewery offices built in 1903 for George Shaw, one time mayor of Leigh. Now occupied by P.A.B. Architects.
17. No. 26 Hilton Street where James Hilton, author of *'Lost Horizon'* and *'Goodbye Mr Chips'*, was born.
18. Sacred Heart Catholic Church.
19. The 'Free Library' doorway. An equally impressive entrance to the same 1894 building is to the 'Municipal College'.
20. The Image Centre at Wigan and Leigh College, Coniston Street.
21. Wigan and Leigh College Media Centre – in a building where 'Grammar School' can be seen inscribed in the stone.
22. The Grand Theatre and Hippodrome.
23. Leigh Co-op, completed at the end of the 19th century. J C Prestwich's largest building in the town.
24. Leigh County Court Building.
25. The former Leigh Club at Bold Street corner, now the HSBC and solicitors' offices.
26. Leigh Town Hall; designed by J C Prestwich, opened 1907.
27. The Turnpike Centre designed by J C Prestwich and Sons.
28. Eye catching textured relief sculpture designed by William Mitchell.
29. *Edison's*, which used to be the *Eagle and Child*.
30. The obelisk, erected in the in 1762 by Robert Vernon Atherton Gwilym of Atherton Hall.
31. The *Boar's Head* Hotel, behind which is the stable block and the ramp leading to it, where the market stalls used to be stored.
32. Salvation Army building, which was once a Primitive Methodist Chapel.
33. Originally Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society offices, which later became the Masonic Hall.
34. The half timbered *George and Dragon* Inn, the oldest public house in Leigh. Originally a beerhouse, which included a bakehouse, orchard and gardens. Dates back to the late 1600's.





'In Their Own Write'

OVER the years Wigan Metropolitan Borough has produced a large number of men and women who have made contributions to our literary heritage. Whilst a few of the writers may be known nationally, the majority of them are virtually unknown but still need to be remembered as local celebrities. So for the first of a few small articles I have selected a couple of female writers who have had works published. One of them was born and lived in the area whilst the other had more tenuous connections.

Mrs E L O Isherwood

In the early 1930's Mrs. Isherwood was living at 'Holly Croft' 199 Newton Road, Lowton. She had resided in Lowton for over 30 years and at one time had been a member of the Independent Methodist Church there. Her father was a Mr. John Hodgkiss, colliery manager of Smallbrook Lane who had been choirmaster, trustee and manager of the United Methodist Church at Hindley Green. Although she had always taken an interest in the Bible, it was in 1922 she began her intense study of it. Through her research and her deductions from certain quotations of it taken in conjunction with the figures and number of the Great Pyramids of Egypt she predicted that the return of the Saviour, Jesus Christ would occur in 1936. Obviously there had always been keen interest in forecasting the 'Second Coming of Christ'. In 1918 the Rev. W. Askwith,

Women Writers Associated with the Area

Vicar of Matlock, Bath had fixed the date around 1935, so Mrs. Isherwood's prediction was to be a year later than this. Furthermore she expressed the belief that the Great World War 1914-1918 would be the last on earth. Her writing on the subject can be found in:

The Slain Gail and the Scapegoat of a King's and Queen's Chamber. published by Arthur H. Stockwell [?1932]

Stockwell also published *The Poets Library* (no date). In Vol. IX Mrs. Isherwood's poem entitled *Gethsemane* appeared. Both volumes are held in the Dootson Collection at Leigh Local History Library. If anyone would like to consult them or have any further details on Mrs. Isherwood's life please contact Tony Ashcroft, Leigh Local History Officer.

Felicia Dorothea Hemans (nee Brown) (1793-1835)

Mrs. Hemans, whilst one of the most popular women poets of the 19th century, might not be a household name today, but then she achieved great success with her poetry. Perhaps one of the best remembered poems is *The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck*.

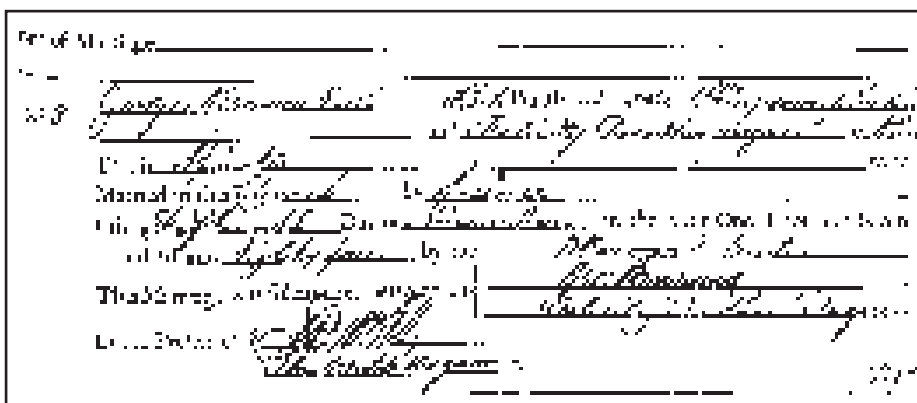
Although she was born in Liverpool, in September 1793, her

connection with the Wigan area is through her mother Felicity. Her maternal grandfather Benedict Paul Wagner was a Liverpool merchant who married Elizabeth Haydock widow of Joseph Bogburn Hall, Coppull and later of Standish. Joseph who died in 1759 was a nephew of the notable Quaker Roger Haydock. Felicity, who was the daughter of Mr and Mrs Wagner married George Brown of Liverpool at Standish in 1784, the rector being Mr. Perryn. The Wagner family lived at North Hall which had been built by Lord Chief Justice Clayton for his brother around 1750. Soon after 1774 the Hall became home to the Wagners who lived there until sometime between 1792 and 1799.

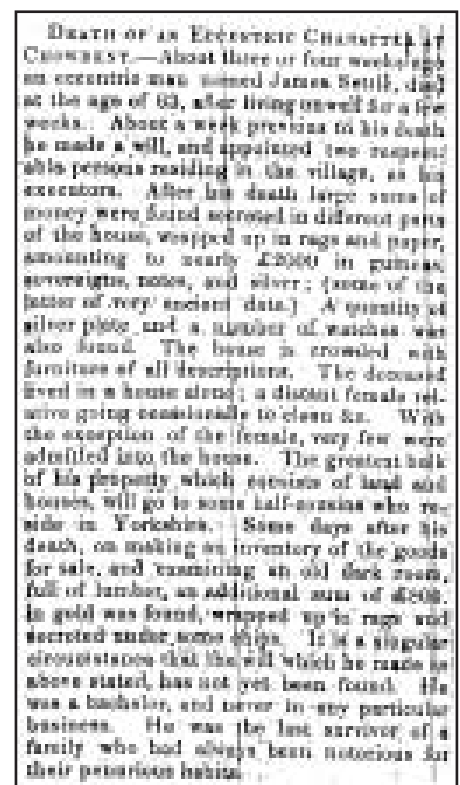
Her poem entitled *The Homes of England* begins with the line 'The stately homes of England', which could possibly have influenced Noel Coward's song of the same name.

A copy of Felicity Wagner's marriage certificate, in the Standish Parish Church registers, appears below.

Tony Ashcroft
Local History Officer
(01942 404559).



Banns of Marriage certificate for George Brown and Felicity Dorothea Hemans (nee Wagner).



From the Leigh Chronicle, April 1853.

Harold Smith has contributed many articles to Past Forward relating to his memories of growing up in Ashton-in-Makerfield. Here, he goes back as far as he can remember.

Childhood Revisited

"We didn't want those days to end but now we've come to know That they were beacons pointing, to the way that we would go."

CHILDHOOD, that initial, Biblical sixth of our lives upon earth, is commonly looked upon as a separate existence, an existence apparently ending before our last days at school. With the benefit of hindsight, however, extending far beyond my Biblical span, I find agreement with that doctrine more and more difficult in view of my conviction that childhood, though a temporal period, is a tile in life's mosaic, not confined to any one section of the whole picture.

John Milton, in his poem *Paradise Regained*, put the point more succinctly: "*The childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day.*" With such a thought in mind, though knowing little of the bard himself, I wonder if it was the result of his own personal reflections on his own life – surely he would never have had the time to do a national census! On that pretentious basis I shall further my assumption in the guise of a long look back at my own childhood and in doing so, perhaps halt now and again whenever the words of Milton prick the conscience.

Garswood

I was born on 26 October 1917 in the village of Garswood, five miles south of Wigan and for quite a few years in my younger days, I nurtured a childish smugness in believing that my birthdate appeared in the history books, along with that of the Bolshevik Revolution 25/26 1917. Had that been the case,

mother could have postponed the services of midwife Nurse Taberner until 6 or 7 November as the Russians were still using the Julian, not the Gregorian calendar of the West!

Unlike some people who are able to remember occasions dating back to their first three or four years, I have to depend on The Chronicles of Mamma in reporting anything of note occurring that early in my life. On such occasions as family gatherings or when she thought a little gentle admonishment was in order, mother would trot out a selection of her well rehearsed anecdotes with me as cause celebre, though for immediate effect and the delectation of her listeners, I would be the hero of the piece. From the gist of mother's anecdotes, one would gather that even at that early age, I was showing a distinct propensity to travel (full marks Mr. Milton) even to the extent of unwittingly inviting self destruction.

Apparently, the earliest of my escapades might have ended in tragedy by my going

AWOL for a very worrying period of absence. Mother used to relate the drama in great detail of how the neighbours scoured the immediate vicinity for any signs of Martha Smith's youngest – '*im wit' white yed.*' (at the time, I was the sixth of an eventual eight). When all hope seemed to have evaporated, Ma herself spotted a movement in the cornfield almost adjacent to our house, a movement which, thankfully, was my wandering, white headed body, blending almost completely with that of the waving corn.

Parental displeasure

Exasperatingly, mother always ended her story at that point, leaving the listener to imagine the scene on my re-appearance through my curtain of corn stalks. The same scene today might be one of lachrymal wailing and misty eyes. With very vague memories of having incurred parental displeasure, for whatever reason, such sentiments might have been short-lived 80 years ago. It was nothing out of the ordinary to collect a well aimed clout, the penalty for simply falling down when *not lookin' where yu wus goin'*.

History tells us that in less than two generations beforehand, children were a commodity and a most important item of income in the family, if not in the national frame of economy. Parish records of the period are heavy with entries of child deaths, many before their first birthdays, thus it may be imagined that children soon grew out of that

cuddly stage, once able to use their limbs in useful occupation.

In that genre, I am happy to state that nothing like that existed in my family circle. With history aforethought, however, I think I might have sympathised with parents of huge families of the era whose genuine love for their families was cruelly suppressed within the punitive shackles of domestic imprisonment in the interests of sheer survival, such as it was.

Undaunted by such historical statistics and still below the school age of the day, my next foray, again involving the innate desire to distance myself from home, ended on a stranger's door step, two miles away from home. Whether or not the occupant of the cottage (one of those by the dam in Downall Green) had displayed me there in the hope of recognition by someone, (made easier by plying me with a thick jam butty) is not known, but it worked. Apparently, a passer-by is supposed to have remarked to the lady of the cottage, "That's Jack Smith's lad", and in saying so, he took me back home – again, to what manner of reception, I was never informed.

Fifth birthday

I have no doubt that the arrival of my fifth birthday was heralded by some relief in the knowledge that twixt the hours of 9 am and 4 pm, I would be more or less under lock and key, save for the long lunch break, at the *Little Skoo*, or St. Andrews C. of E.

Continued on page 26

Childhood Revisited

Continued from page 25

Infant School, just five minutes walk away.

Thus began what might be described as yet another (private) war, nine years of me against the might of Lancashire Education Committee, a battle I would certainly lose via my handicap of cranial excess.

Looking back at the general picture of education as I view it within the confines of the area of my own upbringing between the two World Wars, though allowing for the fact that I was far from being a model pupil, I see visions of a national panic in trying to educate the masses on a multiple scale with a view to extracting from the result, the best brains available for the replacement of the inevitable drain of six or more years of the effect of war.

Numerically and indeed historically, that plan may have been described as successful but I wonder how the picture would have looked had the time for developing latent talent *per se* been available. In the absence of all the details and with the vaguest of memory of the situation, I feel that selection for secondary education at the time might have been sculptured by many influences of the times though the general picture appeared to be very much black and white, with very little hope for latency in learning.

“Stand”

But life at St. Andrew’s Infant School was at least five years away from that awesome period where one’s future pigeonhole is first

designated, euphorically or despairingly. Early school days for us meant nothing more demanding than being prompt for lessons, in as neat appearance as parents or guardians could muster and of course, possessing some semblance of understanding the mother tongue. The day began in the tiny schoolyard when, at exactly 9 am, the Headmistress would command, “STAND” and then lead us into *The Lord’s Prayer*. A similar routine at the close of the day included Miss Hutton’s perching at the dusty piano to play the introductory bars of the hymn, *Now the Day is Over, Night is Drawing Nigh, Shadows of the Evening, Steal across the Sky*, to be droned in about 50 infantile variations of the chosen key, followed by the eagerly awaited, “Good night Mrs. Hampson”.

Following the morning prayer there was the handing out of slates, plus the slate pencils, those little grey sticks which, depending on the nature of the strata from which they were quarried, could behave quite silently, or alternatively, could produce a tooth-edging screech with which to annoy anyone, from desk mate to the less amused teacher. No doubt we started to write the alphabet and numbers on the slates, thus progressing to word building. That was the stage where Miss Hutton read out words to spell and where on one occasion I amazed the whole class, and Miss Hutton, with my spelling of the word biscuit. Little did anyone know that through the glass partition to my right, I could see into the infants’ class, where there was a large picture on the wall, advertising Crawfords

Biscuits! So much for Miss Hutton’s observation!

Uniformity

As aforementioned, some semblance of uniformity of behaviour was the order of the day. This included the simple request to leave the room, something which most of us had never had to make before, thus making the raising of the hand whilst uttering, “Please may I leave the room”, seem a little bit embarrassing at first. One teacher, obviously bent on insisting that nicety was to be pursued, would answer the request by asking the pupil “Why?” There was no animosity intended, what the teacher wanted to hear was the child’s normal reply, which in many cases might have been something like, “Ah want, t’ go t’ closet”, or even the cruder form of, “t’ petty”, neither of which were socially accepted in the nicest of circles. These references were euphemistically modified in favour of the word ‘office’, “I want to go to the office” – still no mention of the word lavatory. (Imagine that in later life – I’ve been detained at the office).

Occasionally, we would have a visit by the Rector, Rev. W.W. Williams from Holy Trinity Church, North Ashton (actually, Downhall Green) who would lead us in prayer and deliver an appropriate little homily, perhaps ask a few questions and then.....hoorah, hoorah, he would announce a half day holiday.

Once having reached Standard One, there was little time left before moving on, at the age of seven, to the BIG school, North Ashton Rectory C. of E. School at Downhall Green, just less than a couple of miles north of our village.

Idyllic landscape

There was something childishly exciting about that

move, made all the more enjoyable as the initial walks to school across open country with little groups of other pupils would be made in late summer. In hindsight, the idyllic landscape of sloping fields, the cottage by the pool we knew as the *Tillesheds*, the glade of trees in the sunken valley of the trickling brook, were all that a poet could ask for. And, as we became inured to the experience, there was always the thrill of trespassing along the 20 yard long access to what we called the sewerage farm (called sewerage outfalls on official maps) just to peer through the bars of the iron gates through which we were almost guaranteed to watch the antics of the sewer rats in and out of their runs.

Rabbits and hares were a common sight and there was bird life in abundance, including, though seldom seen, the corncrake. One year, a pair of swans made a home and stayed for a number of years on the *Tillesheds* pool. People came from miles around just to watch them, especially when their cygnets were in evidence.

But winter was a different story; more than once I remember walking to school in snow, deeper than my knees which, of course, in those days, were completely exposed to the elements, until one attained that magical cardinal of 14 years. I remember quite clearly, one particularly foul day, a most frightening (for a child of seven or eight) experience on being caught in a wintry squall half way over the open tract. A howling wind was driving before it, a vicious hail storm, the stones, like frozen musketshot being driven horizontally with such force that a little knot of three or four of us, started to cry with the pain inflicted on our exposed knees and faces. The experience was so frightening, we started to run for the shelter of one of a



number of the farmer's muck stacks, on the edge of the field adjacent to the footpath.

Putrescence

If the reader happens to be of riper years, mention of a muck stack will no doubt evoke memories of the lowest form of putrescence one could imagine, together with matching stink. To the uninitiated, a muck stack was literally a large stack, sometimes as high as seven or eight feet, measuring perhaps 15 feet square or more, composed of farmyard manure of every description, straw, dead poultry, a few dead rats and anything that was likely to rot when eventually spread over the land, where potatoes, turnips, cabbages etc. would be grown. A combination of the natural seepage, plus the climatic contributions, resulted in a sort of shallow, brown border around the base of the stack which became a stinking moat of putrid liquid about two inches deep. It was in that horrible ooze that we were thankful to stand, in preference to facing the cruelty of the hailstorm. The fact that later in the classroom, we were the centre of a few curious gazes, would never have registered.

Life at the *BIG* school saw quite a few differences, not the least noticeable of which was the comparative militancy, almost non-existent at the infant school. But I think there was a universal acceptance, as was the penalty (usually the cane) for straying from the rules laid down. In my view, we read and hear more about caning today than we did in the days when it was in mode. I also think that the term 'corporal punishment' evokes different thoughts for people from different eras and that its use today, compared, say, with 80 years ago is somewhat hyperbolic. Such a term in those days was evocative of Hogarthian caricatures of life in Newgate

Prison or cheap blood and thunder novels.

'Owd Stan'

There was, however, a dramatic distinction between a caning in the class (often an occasion for a few juvenile smirks) and the cardinal sin of being, '*sent to the desk*', the outcome of which had only one conclusion – the painful laying of at least, '*two of the best*'. (why the *best* I could never understand). The '*desk*' was exactly what the name implied, raised about three feet above floor level and partially obscured from classroom view. Not one pupil in the school, however, would be unfamiliar with the picture of those fateful four steps to the sanctum of *Owd Stan*. Being called to mount same was a sure sign that in the preliminary trial, the miscreant had been found wanting and all hope abandoned.

From the experience of one single visit to '*the desk*', I am able to quote quite categorically that the humiliation began with the initial decision by the teacher whose ire had been intentionally or otherwise incurred. Becoming the centre of immediate, multiple gaze, there followed the lonely walk down the double flight of stone steps to playground level. The door of Standard Three would then open to a mass turning of heads and knowing glances, a similar picture repeated on passing the pupils of two more classes, and then the loneliness of arrival and waiting at the bottom step for the headmaster's command, "Stand there lad". There were few preliminaries, his hand instinctively moving towards his thick cane which hung menacingly and conspicuously on the side of his desk.

Suicidal

Execution was short – and painful – not to mention the reminders (white stinging weals) of the occasion which

one was likely to endure for the next hour or two. There was, however, a certain resignation present in which I, and I suspect every other pupil, accepted that there was little or nothing we could have done about it. The juvenile opinion then, was that the teacher was always right, any reference at home to a caning at school was suicidal – unless one were stupid enough to invite a repetition...with perhaps a few variations on the theme.

Dwelling for a moment on the pupil/teacher/parent syndrome which we hear so much about today, spare a thought for one young pupil, who shall be nameless, having taken his seat at his desk one fine morning just waiting for the teacher, Miss Colbourne, to appear from the little adjacent common room to call the register. Imagine his absolute shock at seeing his big sister accompanying Miss C., positioning herself where Miss C. normally stood. Well, I had heard many blood chilling threats from mum on more than one occasion, but

sending a big sister to MY class as a spy, was a bit beyond the blue!

Whether by accident or design, I did not have any previous warning about that heart stopping experience. My sister was about 10 years older than me and as far as I was likely to know on that fateful morning, she was a student at Ashton Grammar School. What I had not been told, was the fact that she had been accepted as a student teacher and by sheer coincidence, she had been allocated a place at OUR school in MY class. This, of course, meant a double cramping of my style, any straying from the straight and narrow in class would be the subject of a report to mum. And that state of affairs continued for a year or so until she landed a permanent post at St. John's C. of E. School in Banks, near Southport.

To be continued in the next issue, in which Harold recalls his holiday-time exploits.

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Remember, Remember, The Fifth of November ...

ALL through the long summer holiday we had played our games – “skilly”, top-and whip, and “kick-can”, and steered our trolleys, made of wood and old pram-wheels over bumpy cobbles. We had chalked hopscotch-beds on sun-warmed flagstones, carefully avoiding the cracked ones – “tread on a nick and you’ll marry a stick, and a beetle will come to your wedding!” – and watched fluffy airborne seeds which we called “sugar-stealers”, float through the balmy summer air. It was still hot when we went back to school, and we knelt in the playground, on asphalt, playing “jacks” with little pebbles. We grimaced at our free school-milk – horribly warm – a third of a pint drunk through a soggy paper straw, and we thought the summer would never end.

But gradually, a chill crept into the air, spiders’ webs appeared on the school railings, and the classroom lights had to be switched on for our afternoon story. In the window of the corner-shop, with its familiar “Brook-Bond Tea” adverts, cardboard masks in vivid pinks and greens suddenly grinned out at us from amongst the “spangles”, the “fairy snow” and the “dolly-blues”. But it was the lit-up window of the papershop that drew us like moths in the dusk, as colourful posters appeared advertising the delights of “Brocks” or “Standard” fireworks, and we sang along with the TV jingle – remember it? – come on then, all together now! – “Light up the sky with Standard fireworks!”

Wreathed in mist

Misty October Saturdays were spent collecting firewood, or pinching it from another gang’s “bommy”. A sudden cry of “Mam – they’re poggin’ us!” would rend the air, and we legged it home down the back-entries in the dusk. On the telly, the wrestling had just finished, and the chillingly haunting theme-tune of “Doctor Who” filled our senses – magic! Outside, street-lamps, wreathed in mist, shone dimly on cobbled streets. I have a picture in mind, from early childhood, of a man cycling up Ince Green Lane, lighting the gas-lamps with a long pole; they had changed to electric by the time my story is set, but I feel privileged to have seen the lamplighter – a cosy memory to keep forever.

Towards the end of October we held an important meeting in our coal-shed, where we made our Guy Fawkes out of my dad’s old overalls, and sat him (the Guy, not my dad) outside the papershop, under the “Beechnut” slot-machine. “Rupert” annuals and tinsel had just started to appear in the window, together with “chocolate smoker’s outfits” and an invitation to ‘Join our Christmas Club’, and we ogled the cinder-toffee and the sherbet and liquorice (which we called kali and spanish). “Penny for the Guy?” we asked hopefully, one eye on the sweets, as people hurried by in the cold wind which blew discarded bus-tickets and empty three-cornered toffee bags (remember those?) along the gutter. It moaned eerily in the trees outside St. William’s Church, and once, someone had chalked “The Ghost walks tonight” on the

papershop wall, and it struck absolute **terror** in me! (I found out years later that it means it’s pay-day!)

Prayers

My box of fireworks and packet of sparklers were kept on top of the meat-safe, and mum was fed up of reaching them down to show my friends. There was magic even in their names – Roman Candle, Thunderflash, Silver Fountain and Golden Rain. On the afternoon of 5 November we watched the slowly-darkening sky through the classroom window until at last it was four o’clock; a quick reminder from the teacher to “Follow the Firework Code” and then prayers: “Lord keep us safe this night ‘til morning light appears – Amen!” we gabbed out irreverently at breakneck speed, and then we were free. By six o’clock we were outside, ribboned plaits covered by hand-knitted bonnets, and there it was – waiting on the night air – the smoky, heady, unmistakable smell of Bonfire Night!

“Owd Mon! Ah’m cowder than ‘im i’ t’park!” remarked my dad, (referring to the statue of Sir Francis Sharp-Powell), as the bonfire crackled into life and the first rocket brought the first “whooh!” from the crowd. Mums gossiped and handed out toffee-apples and parkin, and dads, full of importance, tended the fire, lit the ‘Jumping-Jacks’, and set fire yet again to the backyard-gate with a ‘Catherine-Wheel’. The old sofa on which we sat eventually joined the flames, and we stood, transfixed, our faces burning and our backs freezing, as the night wore on and the fire slowly died. Then grimy, sticky, tired and happy, we gradually drifted indoors. The next morning was always

misty, and the spent fireworks in the damp grass became “treasure” to collect for a couple of days before we turned our thoughts to Christmas.

Separate ways

Childhood passed. We grew up and went our separate ways, and my home on marriage was in another little terraced row – it still is, actually – where I was delighted to discover they still held a community bonfire in the “backs”, and eventually my own children joined in the fun. Once again there was a tingling excitement as the nights drew in, and I was able to re-live it all through their excited eyes. My parents were by now elderly, and the world in its usual precarious state, and I had a habit – call it daft and you’d be dead right! – of looking out of the back-bedroom window, last thing, at the dying embers of the bonfire, and wondering if things would still be the same next year?

But time brings changes, and finally, one misty November, it was over. My parents had gone, the children in our “backs” had flown the nest, and the next generation were being taken to organised events – admittedly a great deal safer and with increasingly sophisticated fireworks – and yet I feel they’ve missed out on something. I’m **glad** my children came home rosy-cheeked and grubby from “collectin’ fer t’bommy”. I’m **glad** they enjoyed sooty, not-quite-done potatoes, eaten with butter and salt, and baked in a bonfire they had helped to build – happy childhood memories that will stay with them all their lives.



I Don't Remember When ...

I am well known to all *Past Forward* readers for my features, usually on motoring topics edited by you, commencing "I Remember When", but I wonder if I could crave your indulgence for a 'one off special' headed "I Don't Remember When"?

Whilst still on early motoring topics I would here state "I don't remember when" an early Wigan-made car (the 11.9 HP Open Tourer) competed in the 1921 London to Land's End Time Trial driven by a well known Wigan business man, because I was only four years old at the time! I refer, of course, to the "Westwood"* made in Wigan and, as its name implies, made in the Lower Ince part of the Ancient and Loyal Borough! This was driven by our own Jesse Baker, better known in the early part of last century as a manufacturing jeweller of Baker's jewel casket fame in

*A history of the Westwood car by Michael Worthington-Williams will appear in the next issue of *Past Forward*.

Darkness

Do you know, I still peep out, last thing, on Bonfire Night, but now there is only the darkness. But in it I can see 10-year old Jamie, capering round the fire with a voice like a foghorn, and five-year old Ashley, in her little red duffel-coat, waving a sparkler in the night, and I hear again the words of Robert Louis Stephenson that have whirled in my head all day:

*"For long ago, the truth to say,
He has grown up and gone away,
And it is but a child of air
That lingers in the garden there..."*

With a pang of nostalgia for the children they used to be, and a heart full of thanks for the people they have become, I close the curtains and go to bed.

**Irene Roberts
Abram Nr. Wigan**

Market Place.

Jesse had frequently ridden Scott motor cycles, and as a youngster I had followed his fortunes obviously unaware, that I would help build the very car which almost killed him in the mid 50's, the Triumph Renown Roadster! This we learned, was his pride and joy, but whilst on a newly tarred road on a bend in Gloucestershire he skidded, failed to negotiate a sharp bend, overturned and ended with the car on top of him in a roadside ditch. By scraping the mud away with his bare hands, he managed to wriggle from underneath and hold his head above the water to get his breath. In due course he retired to Colwyn Bay but I can't remember reading of Jesse's death from the various publications Wiganers or Ex-Wiganers send, so hopefully he may still be alive.

Specialist job

His Triumph Renown Roadster would have been one of the 1.9 we built hourly when I was production controller at the time. I write the last sentence guardedly, however, because the Standard Motor Co. Ltd. never completely built even one car – they "assembled" cars from mostly "made in", components but as they had no bodybuilding facility, all bodies were "bought out" completely trimmed. This was because Captain Jack Black, later Sir John Black (whose wife was Miss Hillman, of another motoring family) maintained that making car bodies was a specialist job, so why not let specialists make them?

So he specialised in engines, gearboxes and rear

axles, and assembled them, selling finished cars. As an ex-serviceman he insisted that employment managers must find employment for all ex-servicemen applying for work at "The Standard", as it became known locally. We even had a VC, (Jack Tandy VC) as a commissionaire! If the applicant for employment was untrained, he would be trained by us!

Outside the plant everyone wanted to work at "The Standard" because they had a reputation for being the highest payers of workers anywhere in England. All Sir John's workers were on piece work so the more they produced the more they earned.

Co-ordination

So where did I fit into the scheme of things then? I didn't – I created them! Here is how. If you have many operators all with special skills, each with the common objective of building, a motor car, then it was essential that each departmental foreman needed to know, in advance, which component or assembly was required to be loaded on the special carrying hooks on the overhead conveyor travelling through his department early enough for it to reach the assembly point at precisely the same time as the body arrived at that same point. A rear axle, for instance, couldn't be fitted to a car body which was still 20 feet in the air, nor could road wheels, so the overhead conveyor dipped towards the assembly lines at these points to facilitate assembly. So the one operative word was co-ordination.

The common denominator, of working towards this, was that everyone had a copy of a build sheet, compiled by my department, early enough to prepare his specialised component to be fitted to the correct car at exactly the right time. No reader will readily

accept without detailed explanation that even a customer requirement of, say, a short wave radio could only be fitted in one point of the assembly track, and an incorrect engine loaded wrongly in the engine shop could not be returned on the overhead conveyor – it had to be unloaded and returned by fork lift truck! The important point was without question synchronisation.

I remember when we built cars on one level, when each component could be carried to the vehicle by one or two operators, it could till be confusing at times, even to skilled operators. It was not generally known in the organisation, that sometimes a special operator would ask me not to include on a build sheet a certain type of car requiring a special component, and only I would know the reason; we were working Saturday mornings at the time and as he hadn't enough short wave radios in stock and didn't intend to come to work the following morning – he was going to a family wedding – he didn't want anyone else messing about with the radios already prepared by him – enough to last several days. So some customer in Hong Kong had to wait a little longer for his new car!

The build sheets were despatched by hand, by a partially blind man who could dodge hanging steel baskets on overhead conveyors (where they dipped to ground level) as if he had no impediment to his sight.

I will conclude with the incident when two Scotland Yard officers arrived unannounced to interview me one mid week afternoon, and I had to tell them that I could only see them "next Saturday when the tracks were stopped, or else all the workers would have to be sent home!" And they agreed!

© E. Taberner

The Lambs of Wigan

ARTHUR Moore Lamb was the last male member of a Wigan family whose earlier members had been well-known and important local figures. He never married and the family name died out in the branch of the family on his death in 1946. His ancestors were generally enterprising and vigorous people who over the years had built up a prosperous family business and became quite wealthy.

Arthur's great great grandfather James Lamb started the family enterprise in Wigan by building a windmill in Scholes c.1801 (see *Past Forward* No.6, p14). After James' early death in 1805 the milling business was carried on by his widow Mary and eldest son William (Arthur's great grandfather, 1787-1869).

However, James had already discovered coal on his land and his son William began to diversify into coal production and marketing. He acquired Whelley colliery and bought several coal deposits including some from Richard Topping in Whelley in 1837. William became quite prosperous, acquiring several houses and fields in the Whelley/Scholes area, became a J.P. and by 1858 was living in style in Southworth House, Wigan Lane.

William's son Jonathan (Arthur's grandfather, 1809-1877) continued and extended the coal business while still maintaining an interest in the corn-milling business. In 1851 the Wallace Lane Pit, Whelley, employed 13 colliers and worked the Wigan 7ft. seam, producing 30 tons of coal per day. (a small street at right angles to Wallace Lane is still called Lamb Street). Jonathan was active in local politics and became a member of Wigan Town Council in 1836, serving as a Councillor and Alderman for over 40 years,

and was elected Mayor in 1857.

William James Lamb

The prosperity and influence of the family undoubtedly reached its peak during the life of Jonathan's son, William James (Arthur's father, 1839-1901). He was educated at Wigan Grammar School and Rossall School and first started work in his father's colliery. In 1860, when he was 21, William James combined with his cousin J.L. Moore in taking over the Newtown and

Meadows collieries (henceforth known as "Lamb and Moore"). An overhead gantry later ran between the two collieries in order to carry coal trucks over the low-lying land and the canal. This is widely regarded as the origin of the Wigan Pier joke. William James had many other business interests including Sovereign cotton mill, the Rolling Mills at Pagefield, Wigan Wagon Co., and the Lodna Colliery in India. He also followed his father's example and entered local politics, becoming a Town Councillor and later Alderman. He was elected Mayor of Wigan in 1880 and was appointed to many local bodies and committees.

In 1870 William James married Olivia Sutcliffe and they had three children, Ernest James (1871) who died in infancy, Arthur Moore (1873) and Ethel Mary

(1876). Arthur was born while they were living at Thornhill, Standish, but after several other moves in the Wigan district the family eventually moved out to Southport in 1890 and bought a large house, "Eskdale" in Gloucester Road, Birkdale.

Arthur was educated at Repton School (Derbyshire) and later attended Wigan Mining School. In 1897 he joined his father's business (Newtown and Meadows collieries), although the Newtown pit was nearing exhaustion, employing only 13 men for maintenance whereas the Meadows colliery still employed 222 men underground and 72 on the surface at that time.

Arthur's father, William James, died on 11 July 1901, aged 62. His body was brought from Southport to Wigan where elaborate processions accompanied it from the L and Y station to Standish Parish Church where the funeral took place. As the only surviving son, therefore, Arthur inherited the bulk of William James' fortune, including the Birkdale house "Eskdale", and also succeeded to many of his father's positions. Although he did not follow his father and grandfather into local politics he was made a J.P. in 1916 and for one year in 1924 he was appointed High Sheriff for Lancashire. However, he was clearly not of the same calibre as his father and in fact was actually disliked by many of his contemporaries.

"A mean selfish little man"

In researching the family history it was at first difficult to find out much about Arthur Lamb. In asking people in Wigan I found several who were reluctant to say much, but one said significantly, "Go



Three generations of Lambs, c.1860.

Left to right: William Lamb (b. 1787),

Jonathan Lamb (b.1809), William James Lamb (b.1839).

and see Lionel Hewlett. He'll give you all the dirt on Arthur Lamb". Now the Hewletts were another prominent Wigan family of coal owners and mining engineers who had been colleagues and friends of William James Lamb's family for many years. Lionel was the last chairman of their Welch Whittle Colliery in Coppull and had retired to Biggar, Lanarkshire where the grouse shooting was good.

"Yes, I knew Arthur Lamb," he said, "I didn't like him. He was a mean, selfish little man, thought only of himself, and had no friends. He was very fond of his food and hence rather fat. We used to call him "The Fat Lamb". He also had an irritating habit of giggling nervously".....According to Lionel Hewlett, Arthur as a young man did very badly in the examination for Mining Engineers Certificate, but because of the eminence of his father (William James) the examiners gave him his certificate. He had no time for women and never had love affairs. Although his hobby was shooting he was a bad shot and was not liked by other sportsmen.

A somewhat kinder account was given by his niece Olive Moffat (daughter of his sister Ethel Mary), who remembered visiting the big house in Birkdale where "Uncle Arthur" lived with his widowed mother Olivia. She agreed that he was a nervous frightened man but quite



William James Lamb, Mayor of Wigan in 1880.

friendly. He had bought one of the first cars to be registered in Wigan from Timberlakes garage (registration no. EK10), then taught his gardener Thomas Green to drive and made him his chauffeur. He spent a lot of time in the pursuit of health and "manly" occupations (hence the shooting). Contrary to Lionel Hewlett's opinion Mrs. Moffat thought Arthur had had girl friends and in his later years had a particular woman friend in Southport. He also had a particular man friend Harold Coney from Freshfields, although they

often had fierce arguments because Coney was a Liberal in favour of Free Trade, whereas Arthur and his brother-in-law Frederick Brereton were Conservatives who believed in Tariffs.

During Arthur's life many Lancashire collieries were closing. The Newtown pit was already exhausted when he joined the family firm in 1897, and the Meadows Colliery closed c.1910. Arthur also closed down the Wigan Rolling Mills at Pagefield in 1925 with the loss of about 350 jobs. The firm still had a colliery in India (Sripur Colliery, Bengal) and in 1936 Arthur employed Donald Anderson to manage it for some years.

Towards the end of his life Arthur Lamb began to deteriorate mentally, which may partially explain the difficulty in finding information. Lionel Hewlett told a story of his father once coming across Arthur travelling on the early morning "workmans" train because he "couldn't afford the normal fares". Eventually, according to Mrs. Moffat, he had a complete mental breakdown, became violent

and had to be confined to an institution. He died in St. Andrews Hospital, Northampton on 29 June 1946, aged 73. His body was brought back to Wigan to be buried in the family grave in Standish.

In spite of the closing-down of the company's collieries and other establishments Arthur managed to hold on to an increase the family fortune. On his death his estate was valued at £437,796. His brother-in-law Frederick Brereton (Mrs. Moffat's father) accused him of having profiteered during World War I, instead of joining the army.

Although he clearly had some character defects, Arthur was kind and generous to many people. He had nine godchildren to whom he left legacies in his will. He also left legacies to all his household staff, a couple of dozen relatives and friends and 10 charities. The bulk of his fortune, however, he left to his sister Ethel Mary Brereton, who also died two years later and passed the money on to her own two children and to charities.

After Arthur's death, the Birkdale house "Eskdale" and its valuable contents were sold, and the house has since been converted into a nursing home. A sad end to a once-eminent family.

David Lamb Windermere Cumbria.



The Lamb family home, "Eskdale", Gloucester Road, Birkdale.

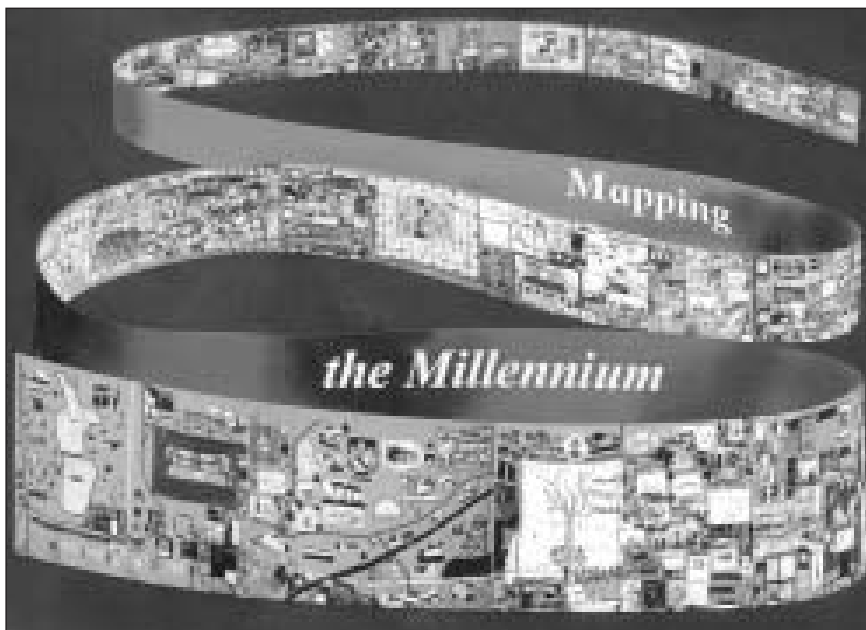


The Lamb family grave in Standish churchyard.

The Parish Map

THERE has been great interest in the *Parish Map*, and I am delighted to announce that progress is now being made on the project to display the Map in its entirety (no easy task!) in the History Shop, as part of an exciting new exhibition. A leading designer, Headland Design Associates of Chester, has been appointed to work with Colin Balls of CB(AV) Ltd (Colin has already produced a series of audio visual programmes for the Heritage Service), Marian Andrews from the Soroptimists (they were particularly responsible for initiating the *Parish Map* project), Tony Staunton-Unsworth (design consultant for the *Parish Map*) and Yvonne Webb and myself from Wigan Heritage Service.

The exhibition is scheduled to open in March 2003, coinciding with the publication of the next issue of *Past Forward*.



A computer simulation of the entire Parish Map. It will be brought together for the first time in 2003.

HIRE OF MEETING ROOM

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:

SOCIETY RATE

£8.00

PER MORNING/ AFTERNOON SESSION

£12.00

PER EVENING SESSION

COMMERCIAL RATE

£19.50

PER MORNING/AFTERNOON/EVENING SESSION

If you are interested, contact Philip Butler

Tel (01942) 828128

HELP WANTED FOR CHILDREN'S CONCERT

The Vivace Trust is a registered charity based in Hindley which gives new musical performance opportunities to children and young people across the North West by organising large-scale concerts. Since 1997 we have organised 56 concerts which have involved over 20,000 children from more than 500 schools and music centre groups.

We are currently writing a musical/dramatic piece about the links between Wigan and "Bonnie Prince Charlie's" Highlanders in the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion. We know that the Jacobites stopped at Wigan on the way down to Derby and again during their retreat. We also know that eight men from Wigan joined the Jacobite army.

We would be delighted to hear from anyone who can contribute any further information (all contributions will be acknowledged of course) or who might be prepared to do some research for us or act as a volunteer (= unpaid, I'm afraid!) historical consultant to the project.

We hope that the finished work will be performed by more than 1,500 children over four nights of performance at Robin Park in April 2003.

For more information, or to offer your help, please contact George Kearton on 01942 521670.

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Wigan 100 – The Centenary of Wigan Corporation Transport

29 September 2002

ON Sunday 29 September 2002, Haigh Hall was the venue for a Transport Rally to mark the centenary of Wigan Corporation Transport. The event had been the brainchild of Wigan Transport Society, a group of likeminded enthusiasts from the Wigan area.

Originally the lads would have been happy with a photo shoot of five surviving Wigan Corporation buses at Meverley Street, Wigan - the former Wigan Corporation Transport bus depot now utilised by "First". Following a meeting of the society, however, an outline plan was developed and presented to Wigan Council and "First".

The Rally idea was formulated, assisted by Council representatives, with an expectation of around 20 buses, old and new, which frequented the town. It was soon clear that the event was going to be popular and we revised our expectations very quickly, assuming that 75 vehicles was now a more realistic figure.

"First" were also keen to mark the event and arranged for one of their Double Decker buses, which had been built in Enfield Street, Pemberton by Northern Counties Motor Engineering, to be repainted in the traditional colours of Wigan Corporation Transport. Wigan Corporation had been loyal in its purchasing policy to local bus body manufacturers, including Massey Brothers, Santus and, as already mentioned, Northern Counties.

By the time of the event, over 100 vehicles had been entered. This included seven former Wigan Corporation buses which provided a magnificent sight, being the greatest number of former

Wigan Corporation buses gathered together, at anyone time, in preservation. With 15 currently in preservation, together with the tow truck, there is plenty of scope to bring more together in the future.

In addition there were other preserved buses from many of the operators who frequented the town. These



included Ribble, Lancashire United Transport, Fishwicks, Bolton Corporation, Leigh Corporation, St Helens Corporation, SELNEC and Greater Manchester Transport. Many former municipal towns were represented, including Barrow, Berry, Manchester, Preston, Salford and Southport. In addition to the preserved buses there were many cars, vans, HGV's and even a fire engine.

"First" provided an excellent display of current buses, including a bendy bus operated out of Bury and an American school bus based at Halifax. Additionally their "Heritage Fleet" was represented by the Wigan and Salford "repaints". Other current operators present included Arriva, Blue Bus, Finches of Wigan, Grayways, South Lancs Travel and Stagecoach.

Wigan Council displayed a refuse lorry and a Social Services coach. The PTE provided a "Ring And Ride" bus.

More unusual exhibits

included the Carlsberg-Tetley Heavy Horse team, who gave various demonstrations. Another exhibitor provided musical entertainment throughout the day with his musical organ. We were also entertained by Pemberton and Wigan Old Brass Band.

The Police entered into the spirit of the day with two

have been donated to the Mayor's Charity Wigan and Leigh Scope.

Official Guests included The Mayor and Mayoress of Wigan, and Councillor John Hilton, representing Wigan Council, and Dr Mike Mitchell representing "First". Also Mr and Mrs Johnson and Mrs Greenwood, retired employees from Wigan Corporation Transport. Mr Johnson starting his working life as a points boy on the tramway.

Wigan Transport Society would like to thank Councillors John Ball and John Hilton, Heritage Services Manager, Alastair Gillies, Haigh Country Park Assistant Manager Colin Hurst, and the staff at "First", who saw the potential of the event and have made it a reality. Additional thanks to the Ribble Preservation Vehicle Trust for their support and assistance. Finally thanks to the owners who brought their lovely vehicles and the visitors for attending.

Nick Whimpany
Chairperson
Wigan Transport Society



I TOOK along *Past Forward* on a recent trip from Hull to Zeebrugge to pass the time. I got well absorbed in many of the stories and told my mum about them. She started to tell me of her memories of school in the 1930's and of starting work aged 16 at Uncle Joe's factory in Wigan.

Dot and Egg

She started at St. Catherine's C. of E. School in Schofield Lane in 1939, which was very different to the time I started there in 1964. Her name then was Doreen Mitchell (now Thomas) and this little bespeckled character, who was overwhelmed by the teachers, always kept her 'Ps' and 'Qs'. One day, Doreen and her best friend Jean Bradbury strolled out of school for lunch break and stopped dead in their tracks at what they saw. Two girls from the class, known as Dot and Egg, had spat at the grocers come toffee shop window. Doreen and Jean stood awhile with mouths wide open and looked at one another. "Oooh, how awful...what cheek.... They'd get kilt if someone saw them", was all they could say. Just then, the old 'lady' who owned the shop grabbed them both with the hair at the back of their heads and rubbed the spit, which was now sliding down the window, into their fringes! "Right, St. Catherine's it will be", yelled the woman. "Let's see what Mr. Steel [the Headmaster] has to say". "It wasn't us Mrs!" they both tried to plead their innocence. If Mr. Steel was told, they feared the worst. It was Steel by name and by nature!

Doreen asked Jean if she thought it would be wise to run home for their mothers and get them to put an adult argument forward. Jean assured Doreen that it they told the truth, they would be believed. Later in the afternoon, the dreaded call from their teacher for them both to go and see Mr. Steel made the girls stomachs flutter and with flushed cheeks, they dragged their feet toward their fate. Before leaving the classroom, Jean turned to Dot and Egg and told them to own up and come with them. Not

Wigan Tales

Dear Sir

Please find enclosed two small stories which may be of interest to your readers. I have read your publication on a number of occasions and think it is an excellent read.

Having introduced my parents to it, they have lots of stories to tell me about the past. I promised to choose a couple and send them to you. Keep up the good work!

Mrs. Gwen M Charnock
Worthington
Wigan WN1 2XN

much chance of that.

There sat Steel, the judge and grocer woman, the accuser. "This lady tells me of the terrible thing you two have done, so what have you to say for yourselves?" Steel demanded. "It wasn't us Sir". Jean tried to explain. "Are you calling this lady a liar?" Steel bellowed. "Oh no," replied poor shocked-to-the-bone Doreen, "but she's not telling the truth....I mean she doesn't kn..." "I am very sorry Madam!" Steel sprang to his feet. "This type of behaviour cannot be tolerated. I have only one option". He then got his long willowy stick and dealt out its punishment on the two terrified innocent victims. The two girls winced and took the blows on their soft upturned palms. The old woman gave a nod of satisfaction and left the scene, thinking justice had been carried out.

Doreen and Jean were stinging with discomfort for a time, but the home time bell rang and it was time to 'turn the tables'. Dot and Egg ran quickly out of the classroom and as soon as Jean could race after them, she did. They were not at the school exit and Jean decided that they must be hiding somewhere. "Let's try the girls toilets," Jean suggested. The door was locked to one of the toilets and Jean looked under the door. Four feet stood like statues. For a few seconds, there was silence and then all hell let loose. Jean rattled the

door and yelled for them to come out. They would not, of course, so she climbed over the adjacent cubicle into theirs and in the words of my mother, 'pasted' them.

It may have been less of a trauma for them if they had have 'come clean'. Needless to say, it has always been a strong memory in my mum's mind.

She is till determined that those were still the best days and much better than now. I think, they were too severe then and too soft now. It was perfect in my schooldays, honestly!

Santus Toffee Works

My mum started work at Santus's Toffee Works in Wigan at the age of 16. She loved working there and recalled some of the people she knew. Tom Bennett, who was long serving, John Butler, Ted Kay, Irene Turner, who was in charge of my mum, and Mr. Fairhurst, in charge of transport.

Mr. Santus was obviously well liked and, according to mum, a very firm, generous, kind fellow. The works treat, among other things, would include a coach trip to Llanfairechan. Mr. Santus had a 'thing' about travelling on water and would not even 'tackle' Lake Windermere. He would travel along to see how things were going with his workers, but instead of going on the coach, he was chauffeured in his Daimler. He did not learn to drive himself.

His regular chauffeur, Norman Howard, would be on the coach on these occasions, and would tell the staff when the Daimler was passing. They would all sing 'Bread of Heaven' as it came alongside at the top of their lungs, so that Mr. Santus may hear and appreciate it. Mum thinks he was quite a strong Methodist.

They would all enjoy a Welsh lamb 'slap up do', followed by ice-creams, a game of rounders and later, a light salad tea. My mum was licking her lips as the memories came flooding back. Then home they would come to be dropped off in Dorning Street, Wigan to make their way home. Mum was often followed home by half a dozen dogs on a regular basis. The stray canines were rather partial to the strong smell of aniseed on her clothing. It must have been quite embarrassing! In 1953, sugar came off ration and Mr. Santus was all excited about the Queen's Coronation celebrations. He allowed crepe paper decorations to be hung in safe places away from the toffee preparations. He told my mum that he like her handy work of twisted crepe around the Queen's picture. Sweets and treats were all part of his plans, but things took on a sour note.

The staff heard that Mr. Santus was not too well, but thought little about it. They came into work as usual to be told to be a little more quiet because they had just been informed that Mr. Santus had died. There were quite a few tears shed. He was going to be missed. Although he lived in Chester Avenue, Southport, Mr. Santus was buried at the church on Parbold Hill.

30 people or so in black cars attended the funeral as invited guests. Mrs. Ellen Santus and a daughter Nellie gave all of their staff a £1 note, which had some worth then. They saw it as a thank you for everyone carrying on with their work to great satisfaction. The family also donated a church bell in memory of a man who was going to be missed, but obviously not forgotten.

Ashton-in-Makerfield Probus Club

Members of the Club are retired business/professional people, who meet at the Angel Hotel, Ashton-in-Makerfield on the first Wednesday of every month at 11.00 a.m. New members are always welcome, and can receive details from the Honorary Secretary, Alan Bradshaw (01942 726493)

4 December

Christmas Readings

James Fairhurst

8 January

Open Meeting

5 February

Ashton History

Walter Carney

5 March

Genealogy

Pat Grimshaw

2 April

Stephen Walsh

James Fairhurst

Aspull & Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held in Our Lady's R.C. Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull on the second Thursday in the month at 7.30 p.m. Further details from the Secretary, Barbara Rhodes (01942 222769)

Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. at St. Richards Jubilee Hall, Atherton. Admission £1 (members), £1.50 (non-members). Further details from Mrs. M. Hodge Tel: (01942 884893)

10 December

Bess of Hardwicke

Lizzie Jones

A Christmas Treat

14 January

Smithills Gardens (Medieval to Regency Period)

Elaine Taylor

11 February

The History of Coal Mining in Atherton

Alan Davies

11 March

"Steam" Part One – Preserved Standard & Narrow Gauge Railways in the UK

Norman Astley

Billinge Local History Society

For further details contact Jack Boardman, 38 Garswood Road, Billinge, Wigan WN5 7TH (01744 892613), or visit our web site at www.billinge-history.com.

Golborne & Lowton Local History Society

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 are welcome. Further details from Ron Marsh, P.R. Officer (01942 726027).

Leigh & District Family History Society

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month at 7.30 p.m. in the Derby Room of Leigh Library. For further details contact the Secretary, Mrs. O. Hughes (01942 741594).

17 December

Christmas Meeting

21 January

Members' Evening

SOCIETY NEWS

18 February

AGM

18 March

The Families & Places of Old Lowton

Alec Hughes

18 April

A Bag of Treasures

Simon Martin

Leigh Literary Society

This is the Society's 125th season. Meetings are held in the Derby Room at the Turnpike Centre, on alternate Monday evenings at 7.30 p.m. Annual subscriptions £11; visitors £1.50 per meeting. For further details contact Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, Leigh Library (01942 404559)

2 December

Through a Glass Darkly

Len Hudson

16 December

Traditional English Folk Customs

Fred Holcroft

NB This meeting will be held in the Reference Section of Leigh Library

6 January

The Crystal Palace

David Hill

20 January

Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen & Love

Liz Williams

3 February

Folklore & Wildflowers

Cliff Astin

17 February

East Sussex

Neville Holt

3 March

Margaret, Queen & Saint

Maureen Gilbertson

17 March

English Idyll

John Westmorland

14 April

AGM

Leigh Music Society

The Society presents its 31st season – a series of six Sunday concerts held between October and March in the Derby Room, Leigh Library, from 2.15 until 4.15 p.m. Full membership is £21 and £9 for children; for single concerts £4.50 for adults and £2 for children. For further details ring 01942 725876.

1 December

Pupils of the Junior School at the Royal Northern College of Music

5 January

Andrew Wilde – piano

2 February

The Dulcian Wind Quintet

2 March

Simon Wilding – bass – and Kevin Thraves - piano

Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month from September to May at the Tyldesley Pensions club on Milk Street at 7.30 p.m. We do not charge an entrance fee although voluntary contributions are always welcome.

Refreshments available. Contact the Secretary (01942 514271 or rydings@cablernet.co.uk). Visit our website at www.amw02593.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk.

Leigh Probus Club

Members of the Club, which is non-sectarian, are generally retired professional/businessmen. The Club meets at the Leigh Masonic Hall on alternate Thursday afternoons between October and April. New members are welcome – anyone wishing to join should contact H. Wilkinson (01942 671943).

Shevington Memories Group

This small, informal group meets each Friday at 2.30 p.m. in Shevington Methodist Church (New Lounge), to share memories about old times. Anyone is welcome – just turn up! Contact Maurice Hilton (01942 223107) for further details.

Wigan Archaeological Society

The Society meets at the BP Centre (Scout HQ) in Greenhough Street on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. Entrance is only £1.

Wigan Civic Trust

The Trust stimulates public interest in the Wigan area; promotes high standards of planning and architecture; and aims to secure the preservation, conservation, development and improvement of the historic parts of town and country. The Trust meets at Drumcroon Education Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan, on the second Monday of the month at 7.30 p.m. For further details contact the Secretary, A.J. Grimshaw, 6 Bridgeman Terrace, Wigan (01942 245777). New members always welcome.

9 December

Christmas Party

Wigan Family & Local History Society

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month (except in July and August) in the Springfield Hotel, Springfield Road, Wigan, at 7.30 p.m. for 8.00 p.m. The meetings alternate between members' evenings and external speakers on history related topics. Annual Membership fees are £6 for individuals, £7 for families and £10 for overseas membership. A meeting fee is charged at £1 per member and £1.50 per non-member. For further information contact the Secretary, Maureen Metcalfe, 4 Spilsby Square, Wigan WN3 5QP.

17 December

English Christmas Customs

Fred Holcroft

(followed by buffet)

20 January

Aids to Research

Members Discussion

17 February

The Lancashire Cotton Famine of the Mid 19th Century

Fred Holcroft

17 March

The Irish 'Town' of Ince

Max Finney

20 April

Probate Inventories

Fred Holcroft



WHEN LUNCH WAS AN OXO CUBE!

Dear Sir

Thank you for my copy of *Past Forward* delivered this morning. As I was browsing through it certain memories began to awaken. I am now 90 years old, and have had very little connection with Wigan for many years, having only two or three cousins still living in the area.

A couple or so issues back I noticed a little article by Cathy Jameson, formerly of Hawkley Hall. When I was a pupil

at Ashton Grammar School, from January 1924 until 1930, I was friendly, part of the time, with her brother, whose name for the present eludes me – Jack, perhaps. I often used to visit and play during holidays.

Her mother was a very kind lady who, when she learned that my ‘lunch’ was going to be an Oxo cube, (all I could afford,

having no father – killed in 1917) made me stay for a full lunch; and what a lunch – something from another planet as far as I was concerned!

I had no idea that Hawkley Hall had been turned into a school, and cannot imagine how the places where we, as lads, used to play in ‘Cromwell’s Ditch’, quite near to the Hall, must have changed. I know that the little terraced house where I was born is no longer in existence, as well as other nearby localities, so I would be lost if I did re-visit Worsley Mesnes at any time.

**S. Winrow, B.Sc.
Scarborough
N. Yorks YO11 3SU**

WINSTANLEY HALL WAAF CAMP CONFIRMED I

Dear Sir

Further to Derek Cross’s letter in issue 31, there was indeed a WAAF camp on Winstanley Hall Estate in World War II. At that time I was a pupil at Ashton Grammar School and an invitation was sent from Winstanley to the school with a view to arranging a hockey match.

The First Team was eventually sent by bus and we met a team of very fit young women. There followed a hard physical match – and some of us youngsters nursed bruised shins for days afterward. We lost, of course – but only just!

**Mary Smith
Garswood Nr. Wigan**

WINSTANLEY HALL WAAF CAMP CONFIRMED II

Dear Sir

Re the question asked by Derek Cross in issue No. 31, about a World War II WAAF Camp at Winstanley Hall Estate.

The RAF in addition to WAAF did occupy a large part of the Hall. The rest was retained by Squire Bankes and his family for living quarters. I was a member of St. Luke’s 7th Wigan Company Boys Brigade (disbanded 1946) and we played a football match against the RAF on Winstanley Park Cricket Ground.

I cannot remember if the RAF and WAAF stayed until the end of hostilities, but they were definitely there.

**Joe Heaton
Shevington Wigan**

WINSTANLEY HALL WAAF CAMP CONFIRMED III

Dear Sir

My letter in Issue no. 31 requested information on the one-time WAAF camp at Winstanley Hall. I had a phone call from Marjorie in Appley Bridge who suggested I ring her uncle, Harold Dawber, who now lives in Newark, Notts.

Harold, now 80, informed me that the unit, made up of nissen huts, was sleeping accommodation only for the girls who worked at the North Western Signals Centre. He knew this because his fiancée was stationed there! Possibly there was also a motor transport section on the site, as the WAAFs were daily transported to their duties. There would probably have been a cookhouse there too. Harold thinks the Hall was the H.Q. and also used as the officers’ mess.

It appears the North Western Signals Centre was on the East Lancashire Road, near a Pilkington factory, and was camouflaged from the air by being sited beneath a tip! So my next question. Has anyone any information regarding this important wartime location?

**Derek Cross
7 Chervil Walk
Highfield Wigan
WN3 6AR**



These two photographs, courtesy of Mr. Graham Christy of Higher Ince, were taken in Platt Bridge shortly after World War II. The top photograph shows a group of children beside the Hart Street and Gas Street bonfire. The bottom photograph is of a class from Moss Lane Secondary School; Mr. Christy is on the front row, far right.



Info wanted about Alfred Crooks and Siblings

Dear Sir

I am looking for anyone with a connection with or information about Alfred Crook(s). Alfred's father was William and his mother was Margaret (formerly Beesley). Margaret and

William married in 1882 in Wigan and Margaret died in 1897 in Wigan. Around 1906 Alfred worked at Rylands Gidlow Mill with his brother John (Jack) Beesley (my grandfather) but shortly after 1906 he left

Rylands to become under-manager at Eckersleys Swan Meadow Mills.

I have not been able to find Alfred in the 1891 or 1901 census and would appreciate any help from *Past Forward* readers. I believe Alfred may have had other Crook siblings.

Margaret Hegan
67 Chester Road
Stevenage
Herts SG1 4JY
Tel: 01438 233687
Email: margaret.hegan@ntlworld.com

Success and influence world-wide!

Dear Mr. Gillies

Thankyou so much – all of you at *Past Forward* – for issue 31 – its brilliant! I was so pleased Mr. Brownbill of Lowton had written in with his own memories of “The Bug”, and said that my article had awakened those memories – that means so much to me. I enjoyed Neil’s article very much - he really is a Wiganer at heart, despite coming from

Middlesex, but the letter from Mrs. Marsh of Ramsbottom was the one that said it all – “last year whilst in America I was given a copy of *Past Forward* No. 28.....!” If that doesn’t prove *Past Forward’s* success and influence worldwide, I don’t know what will.

Mrs. I. Roberts
Abram Wigan.

See p28 for Irene’s latest article. Ed.

‘THE LAST (TROLLEY) BUS’

This photograph of South Lancashire Transport Company’s ‘Last Trolley Bus’ was kindly sent in by Mr. R. Lucas of Ince, Nr. Wigan.



WHEN WAS UNION BRIDGE DEMOLISHED?

Dear Sir

I wonder if any of your readers could tell me when Union Bank Bridge, Ormskirk Road, was demolished. I was born in Ormskirk Road, Newtown in August 1939, but within a few months moved higher up from where the bridge was.

I remember some of the shops from 1946 onwards, such as Jack Mason’s café/chip shop, Pimblett’s sweets & tobacco, Frank Taylor’s newsagents, Ted? The barber, Arthur Ashurst the photographer and Plumpton’s the cabinet makers (I think Mr. Plumpton was the Conservative candidate at that time).

By the way, referring to the article by the late Ken Lucas in *Past Forward* 27, p30, I think he actually missed out one in Pemberton – the Albion Dance Hall, known by the locals as ‘Bamfords’.

Joe Dolan
20 Prestt Grove
Worsley Mesnes
Wigan WN3 5UX

PARK LANE UNITARIAN CHAPEL CRICKET TEAM, 1927

Dear Sir

This is a photo of the Park Lane Unitarian Chapel Cricket Team of the ‘20’s. Does anyone remember or recognise any of the team? I remember most of them – only three names beat me, but after all I was only eight years old when this photo was taken. My father is the captain, over the years he was also captain of Garswood Hall Colliery Team and St. James’ Church Poolstock.

The cricket field was behind St.

Peter’s school, Downhall Green Road, Bryn, now a housing estate. It wasn’t exactly Lords but was just as enjoyable on a Saturday afternoon.

My father finished up as umpire for the West Lancashire League.

Good luck and thanks for a nostalgic and happy magazine. Keep up the good work.

I. Fairhurst (nee) Shaw
44 Newton Road
Billinge Wigan



Back row: L – R J.T. Bates, ? Rev. Watkins, Worsick, P & C Derbyshire (brothers), P. Comca, Ashcroft ? V. Littler, C. Wright
Seated: L – R ? A. Smawe, P. Shaw (Captain) ? E. Hughes
Kneeling: L – R T. Speakman, E. Ashcroft



‘... we are loyal, and we’ll fight a battle royal ...’

Dear Editor

I am writing to say how much I appreciated the summer edition of your publication.

I really enjoyed reading about John Monk Foster as my mother Annie (nee Foster) believes she is a relative of his. The article about the Great Central Railway was also interesting as my father lived in Junction Terrace, overlooking Lower Ince Station before he married.

Finally, the letter from Mr. Appleton of Porchester needs a slight correction, as the “little ditty” he describes is, of course,

part of the Wigan Grammar School Song.

“For the honour of the school we will fight with all our might,

For the very name of Wigan we are told implies a fight.

Though not ancient, we are loyal, and we’ll fight a battle royal,

For that good old school of Wigan that we love so well.”

I stand to be corrected on any of that!! I attended Wigan Grammar from 1959 to 1965.

**G.W. Winnard
Hindley Wigan**

HAPPY MEMORIES OF WALKING DAYS

Dear Sir

Re Issue 30 St. Andrew’s Mission, Garswood. This brings back happy memories of Trinity Sunday walking days, which I am sorry to say have sadly faded away. The Annual Walk 1963 picture seems to have got mixed up with 1948; it was the opposite way about – my sister and I are on the one with the banner, and treated this as a great honour.

There are so many things I could say about this edition of your very popular *Past Forward*, but going back to St. Andrew’s I feel I must mention Miss Hilda Plant who was pianist for a number of years and passed away early this year;

she was also a teacher at Cansfield or Ashton Central. I am enclosing a picture taken of some of her girls or “my girls”, as she liked to refer to them. I think it was 1948/49. Some of the girls still live in the Ashton area. The school was then known as Ashton Secondary Modern and wasn’t a mixed school. (Happy Days!)

The pictures on p39 (*Past Forward* issue no 30) are of Hollin Hay Farm, Garswood Old Road, not far from Carr Mill.

Keep up the good work.

**Mrs N. Crompton
(nee Sharples)
Ashton-in-Makerfield
WN4 9JY**



MR. GEORGE TINSLEY – LOCAL CELEBRITY

Dear Sir

I have been corresponding with a lady, Kris Webb from Barnet Herts; we have a mutual interest in the family research of the name Tinsley, in Wigan and the surrounding areas. She has sent me the enclosed photocopy about one of her ancestors, taken from the *Wigan Examiner* 11/6/1927. I wonder if you are able to put this in your magazine, I am sure it would be of interest to other readers.

I enjoy reading *Past Forward*. Keep up the good work.

**Anne Leyland
Newtown Wigan**

In June 1887, George Tinsley first took up his post of usefulness at the L. & Y. Station, Wallgate. Forty years ago he started there, as a young man of twenty-six or twenty-seven, after a hardy youth spent in the mine, and at Wallgate Station he has been ever since; and by the fit and able look of him, likely to give another forty years of out-portering.

White-haired, but vigorous and sturdy, with the keen eye and the clear complexion of one sane of mine and body, George Tinsley is a figure as familiar and as popular as any of our Wigan worthies, a boon to the harassed traveller, an encyclopaedia of train service information, and a willing and ever-ready helper over the difficulties which somehow seem to lie in wait around luggage offices.

The out-door portering at the L. & Y. (now Wallgate L.M.S.) has been in the Tinsley family for over half a century, for it was under his uncle that young George commenced on leaving the pit. That was in the days of the cumbersome tank engine and the big fly-wheeled flyer types, which have been superseded by more powerful and speedy engines.

But a locomotive is one thing and a man another, and George Tinsley, belongs to a rare type of honest workman which we could not wish to improve upon – ever willing, never perfunctory and every cheerful.

George’s start in life as a worker would have been a terrifying one for most of us, for scarcely had the reverberations ceased after the Moss Pit explosion, a disaster in which his elder brother perished, than economic pressure forced George into the mine as a wage earner. Some premonition may have prompted his brother shortly before meeting his fate to beg of George never to work in the mine. However, George survived fourteen years of colliery work, which in no way bore out the dread threat of his introduction to it, and at the end of it commenced, as we have stated, at the L. & Y. Station.

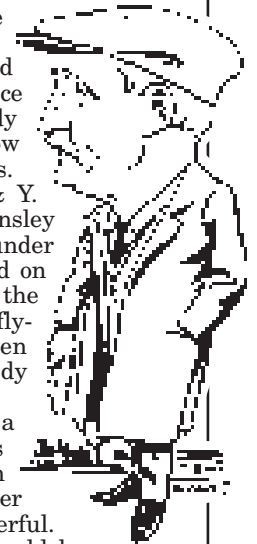
In his youth, too, George was the same keen sportsman as he now is, but, of course, in an active sense, for he played Rugby football for Pagefield and Wigan Rugby clubs, and cricket for any team who wanted a lad who could to a bit of everything as well.

In the old Prescott Street days of the Wigan Rugby club, George did a great deal to help in its struggle for existence, for besides being a playing member, he acted as honorary skip-man for fifteen years, and when not playing was check-taking or assisting in some other valuable way.

The Rugby club is now a strong and virile force, and so is George, and he is as deeply interested in its doings now as he was then.

George is not what one would call a rolling stone; he has not much moss about his make-up; indeed, he has not moved very far from the place where he was born – in Dandy Shop Yard, Queen Street. But he has gone a long way in the esteem of Wigan people. He is a Wiganer of Wiganers and a good citizen. Carry on, George!

From the Wigan Examiner, 11 June 1927.





HARD TIMES BUT PEOPLE GOT ON WELL TOGETHER

Dear Sir

The last photograph on the right in last issue's Who? Where? is of the Standishgate Methodist Church Concert Party. The Church was demolished some time ago when they moved up to Whitley to their new church on Spencer Road. On the photograph are my Aunt and Uncle, Doris Westhead (nee Wood) and Bill Westhead who was my mother's eldest brother. I mention the name 'Wood' because in her day, Madam Doris Wood was a very good contralto singer.

I also enclose two very old photographs of days gone by (top and centre right). They were given to me by a lady who was the organist at our Church, Platt Bridge Independent Methodist, for 66 years, and sadly died recently. She didn't remember where they had been taken, but as a young girl she went to Bamfurlong Methodist and I have a feeling that they are something to do with that Church. Perhaps some of your readers may be able to help?

The death of another lady prompted some memories of Higher Ince, where I was brought up. Cissie May Ellison lived at Park View, just off Manchester Road – as kids, we used to think it was the posh part of Higher Ince. She

married Henry Maudsley at Ince Parish Church in 1940 and when she died earlier this year, they had been together for 62 years. Although she was quite a bit older than me, being Incers' we used to talk quite a lot about how it had changed over the years. Driving through these days I look at all the empty shops on Manchester Road. I remember starting work just at the start of World War II at a butchers, J.H. Dewhurst. Mr. Binks was the boss, and everybody knew the shop as Jack Bink's; he worked there for 50 years. Higher Ince seemed alive in those days, there were plenty of works – Ince Wagon Works, Ince Forge, the pits, cotton mills, Smiths Dairies, English Tools, Rapaports Sewing Factory, cabinet works a number of pop works and, of course, the railways. But Higher Ince was a thriving place, with magic all of its own. I remember swimming in the cut, playing in the park, football matches at Ince Parish Rec., rugby on the Chemic fields where the famous Ince All Blacks played. All these and many more were part of everyday life.

They were hard times yet people seemed to get on well together. But time marches on and not just in Higher Ince.

**A.E. Smith
Winstanley
Wigan**



Mr. Smith has also sent in this photograph of the principals in the Higher Ince production of 'The Sunshine Cruise', 2 March 1935. These included his aunt, Lily Westhead, and the then vicar or curate as the Captain.



**PRIVATE
NORMAN
HARVEY
VC**

RE-LIVING OLD WIGAN

Dear Sir

I received from my son-in-law your magazine no. 31. In it was an article on 'Norman Harvey' V.C. [p8] of which you were seeking information. I forward the following for you; there are five men with the name of Harvey but this man is the only one that comes from this area. The information below is correct as I have the complete history of all V.Cs. since it first began.

**Gordon Powell
Ladybridge Bolton**

Norman Harvey. Private (later Company Quartermaster-Sergeant)
1st Bn. The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers
Date of Gazette: 6 January 1919
Place/Date of Birth: Newton-le-Willows, Lancashire – 6 April 1899
Place/Date of Death: Near Haifa, Palestine – 16 February 1942
Memorials: Khayat Beach War Cemetery, Haifa
Town/County Connections: Newton-le-Willows, Lancashire.
Remarks: Served with Corps of Royal Engineers in 2nd World War.

Account of Deed: On 25 October 1918 at Ingoyghem, Belgium, when the Battalion was held up and suffering heavy casualties from enemy machine-guns, Private Harvey on his own initiative rushed forward and engaged the enemy single-handed, disposing of 20 of them and capturing the guns. Later when his company was checked by another enemy strong point he again rushed forward and put the enemy to flight. Subsequently, after dark he voluntarily carried out a single-handed and important reconnaissance and gained valuable information.

VC's NAME READ OUT EACH YEAR

Dear Sir

I write with regard to your article entitled **The Victoria Cross**, in issue No. 31 of *Past Forward*. You may also be interested to know that the name of Norman Harvey, V.C. is on the Memorial Board in St. Peter's Church, Church Street, Newton-le-Willows, and his name, along with others who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars, is read out each year on the Sunday nearest to Remembrance Day.

May I also say how much I enjoy reading your magazine, which is forwarded to me by my cousin who lives in Ashton-in-Makerfield. I have lived in Newton-le-Willows all my life but attended the British School, Ashton, in the days when Mr. Cottam was the Headmaster, and my mother's aunt, Mrs. Mary Pennington, was the Headmistress of the Infant Department. My grandparents lived in Ashton-in-Makerfield and my mother was born there.

**J. Parfrey (Mrs.)
9 Willowdale
Newton-le-Willows
Merseyside WA12 9SZ**

Dear Sir

I think you are doing a great job re-living old Wigan. I have read with interest many previous copies, and know many of the contributors, or their relatives, Mr. Baines from Canada and Mrs. Margaret Hirst's father being just two.

My father had a Grocers Shop at 99 Darlington Street East since the '20's. Mr. Baines' father had a shop on the corner of Harrogate Street. Although rivals, they were friends. Mrs. Hirst's father was very involved in the church at Warrington Lane, and later lived in Swinley Lane.

Many of the artists who appeared at the "Wigan Hippodrome" stayed in lodgings in Brookhouse Street; a Mrs. Fisher used to look after their needs and we supplied her with the food.

Later the famous Bertram Mills Circus came to Wigan and set up their 'Big Top' on the field between Harper Street and the canal. We

had trapeze artists, clowns, animal trainers coming to the shop for all kinds of food, much of which I had never been asked for before.

In the pre-war period the shop used to open six days a week but closed Wednesday afternoon. This was the afternoon when bowls were played competitively by Ashton, Orrell and Leigh Grocers. The families hadn't much money in the early '50's, so to help the customers we had an annual trip on a Wednesday, usually to Knaresborough. The customers would save up for this, putting what money they could spare in a Savings Club. I like to think they were a great success; usually we had three Walls coaches. During the journey we had raffles etc; these were free and added to the enjoyment.

The trip used to coincide with the markets at Knaresborough. On one of the trips there was a cheap stall selling nylons, which were still expensive in the shops, so the customers descended on the stall to buy quite a

few pairs. One customer opened the packet to find there were no feet in those nylons; she complained bitterly, only to be told to **turn em under** and no-one would know!

After a look at the markets and maybe a walk to Mother Shipton's well, we had a good meal at the hotel near the markets, and then off we set for the return journey.

The day wasn't complete without a call at the Red Lion in Shipton on the way home. We were very fortunate to have a talented pianist and entertainer among our party, Mrs. Keery's daughter Winifred. This wonderful pianist (she played with Ivy Benson's Band for a period) used to bring the house down; she could impersonate Frank Randall and many others perfectly.

Our very happy and enjoyable trip used to arrive home about 11 p.m. or later most times; they didn't need any sleeping pills that night!

**Derek Belshaw
Orrell Wigan**

A very important element of dotage!

Dear Alastair

Many thanks for the *Past Forward* binders, the possession of which I am now most proud. Thank you also for yet another addition to what has for me, and I am doubly sure, for a host of *Past Forward* readers, become a very important element of my dotage. No one, but no one will disagree with the fact that as life trundles on, the sense of belonging seems to diminish for many unfortunates. In that connection, I feel that the *Past Forward* habit can, and does play major role in providing a wonderful opportunity of at least setting into motion, the

means of making that trend more bearable, if not indeed, put into reverse.

Such thoughts cannot be without foundation now that I have before me, ample proof that 31 issues of a recipe of what readers of a measureless cross section eagerly look forward to thrice annually, has gown in every conceivable dimension and, may I say, that in the capable hands of those responsible, will continue in that genre.

I am particularly pleased with the response to your appeal for more people to put pen to paper, irrespective of their literary

apprehension etc. Perhaps more and more people are beginning to realise that our overworked editor is only too willing to transform any worthwhile effort into instantly digestible material, fit for inclusion in *Past Forward*. I am a great believer in the old adage that anything quoted badly is often better than not quoted at all.

Though quoting a foregone conclusion, may I wish you, and all at *Past Forward*, continued success.

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



Allowed on the plush seats

Dear Mr. Gillies

I really enjoyed the latest *Past Forward*, and especially "Open door for the Penny Rush". It brought back memories of when I went 10 years earlier than World War II.

Ted Heaton forgot to mention that the exit was the fire escape exit, very rickety and wide openings between each step. I had a phobia for heights, and I just shut

my eyes, and let the crowd carry me down. I didn't go very much on a Saturday, because my mother received a complimentary ticket, so she took me with her; I was allowed in for half price, and we were allowed on the plush seats. The ticket was given to her by Mrs. Nellie Berry who had the corner shop at Platt Lane and Bolton Street, because we helped to clean the shop. If Ted Heaton still reads *Past Forward* and had relatives in Counce Road, I would love to hear from him, as I had a friend, Agnes Heaton, that lived in Counce Road, but lost contact when World War II started.

Thanks again for all the interesting items in *Past Forward*.

Mrs. A. Schofield
19/4 Harris St
Goolwa
S. Australia 5214

'NO SHRINKING VIOLET SHE'

Dear Sir

I am responding to your correspondent, W. Brownhill in the recent edition of *Past Forward* issue no. 31, as the article brought back many memories for me of those days in Hindley at the various cinemas.

I should like to relate two stories told by my mother, Maggie Gore of the Gores of the Temperance Bar at the Bird i'th Hand in Hindley. I cannot vouch for the first story's authenticity as mother would tell us children many stories based on fact but with a little embroidery to make us laugh.

The first story happened at the Palace Cinema in Market Street. Mo Lias and Billy Boydell went to a

matinee there. Billy arrived after Mo and discovered that Mo had paid less for his seat. Billy returned to the ticket kiosk to demand some money back – "Cos I'm just as daft as he is!!"

The second story happened in the Vic Cinema – my Aunt Alice went there to see a film one evening. Mr. X – no name – sat next to her. What happened when the lights went out I do not know but the next moment my Aunt Alice (no shrinking violet she) leapt to her feet and

brandishing a hatpin plucked from her hat cried, "You dirty b——. Do that again and I'll stick this in you". This was said in ringing tones to Mr. X who hurriedly exited with loud laughter and applause ringing in his ears. Aunt Alice told that story many times.

Thank you W. Brownhill for reviving those days.

Margaret Hutchinson
Honiton Devon

P.S. Such a wonderful newsletter – long may you continue to print it, thank you.

O, the war the blooming war ...

Dear Sir

Please find enclosed typed copy of the Boer War music hall song, as referred to in the summer 2002 issue of *Past Forward*.

The song is as my mother, Mrs. Ena Banks, aged 93, remembers it.

D.E. Banks
Orrell Wigan

O, the war the blooming war has turned my wife insane.

From Kruger to Majuba she's the Transvaal on the brain.

We went to christen our first child, last Sunday week we tried.

The parson said "What's this child's name?" and my old girl replied:

"The baby's name is Kitchener, Carrington, Methuen, Kekewick, White, Cronje, Plummer, Powell, Majuba, Gatacre, Warren, Kalenza, Kruger, Cape Town, Mafeking, French, Kimberley, Ladysmith, Blobs, Union Jack, Fighting Mac, Lyddite, Pretoria Blobbs".

The Parson said, "Such names upon this infant I can't put". . .

Further verses referring to other Boer War icons, rolling velt and armoured train, Spion Kop and Kroonstad, Bloemfontein and Modder River follow.

This song, written by C.W. Murphy and Albert Hall to a tune by Murphy and published by Francis, Day and Hunter at four shillings a copy, was sung in music halls by Charles Bignell.

DOES ANYONE RECOGNISE ANYONE?

Dear Editor

My sister, Phyllis Rawcliffe (nee Ashworth) 87 years old from Australia, who is currently visiting myself and other relatives in Wigan, has asked me to pass this photo on to you in the hope that someone will recognise themselves (or relatives) from the group of Sunday School teachers and Elders at St. Michael's Church (Swinley) taken sometime

during the 1930's. Incidentally my sister receives *Past Forward* from me regularly and enjoys reading it; she also passes it on to other ex-Wiganers in Melbourne, Victoria who look forward to receiving same.

May you long continue to bring enjoyment to so many ex-Wiganers around the world.

Mrs. G. Guest
Marsh Green Wigan





A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN RAILWAYS

Dear Sir

Whilst holidaying in your area over the summer, I picked up a couple of copies (nos 30 and 31) of your excellent newsletter, *Past Forward* – a fascinating read to me as a history teacher with a particular interest in railways, (although Wigan Pier was really nostalgic). Some of the (railway) articles in your publication jogged my memory of a previous visit to the area nearly 40 years ago.

As schoolboy trainspotters, three of us bought Railover tickets and spent a week travelling around the country in search of any steam engines that hadn't become extinct by that time. We made a special diversion from a journey up the West Coast mainline to come across to Wigan because we'd heard that there was a scrapyard at nearby Ince with some steam locomotives in it.

I note from my diary that the date was Tuesday 3 August 1965. We found our way to the scrapyard where we found a sad sight – 15 steam locomotives, all in a sorry state, some being almost totally dismembered. One was one of "your own" – an LMS pacific, number 46243 *City of Lancaster*, once pride of the West Coast mainline but now cut down to just its cab and firebox.

Oddly (we thought), another was "one of ours", like us a long way from home a Great Western 4-6-0 Hall loco, number 4976 *Warfield Hall*. Although looking very forlorn, this locomotive was still more or less intact. The full complement of locomotives in Ince scrapyard that day was: 42901, 42778, 42904, 42751, 42155, 42937, 42952, 42639, 45623, 46243, 61144, 90245, 90667, 4976 and 3208 (the latter another one of ours a long way from home). I assume most of the others had come here

from not too far away – I bet some of your (railway) contributors will know?

Interestingly, whilst waiting at Ince Station for a train to get us back to the West Coast mainline the stationmaster chatted to us, and seemed pleased to meet youngsters with an interest he shared – railways – and that we had made a detour to his home town and station. He went into his office and came out with three brass tokens, giving us one each as a souvenir. I still treasure my souvenir token. It looks like it is made of brass and is some 30mm (an inch and a quarter) in diameter. It has been hand-stamped with the wording "16 INCE L&Y.R.Co". (The other lads obviously had different numbers on theirs). I assume that Ince, therefore, was a pre-grouping Lancashire and Yorkshire station

rather than London Midland and Scottish?

I'd be intrigued if one of your older (railwaymen) readers could tell me what these tokens were used for in



their day. (I enclose a rubbing to aid identification). If anyone knows, I'd be interested to learn the name of the kind stationmaster who befriended us back in 1965 – its probable that he's no longer with us today. And do any other readers remember the scrapyard at Ince that helped to make steam locomotives extinct 40 years ago?

Thanks for the memories – any information gratefully received.

Peter Allen
8 The Quantocks
Thatcham
Berkshire RG19 3SF

Exciting time for a small boy

Dear Sir

Having been brought up close to Lowton St. Mary's railway station may I say how much I have enjoyed the articles about the Great Central Railway in Wigan. They brought back many happy memories of travel by train in a bygone age. It was always an exciting time for a small boy to be taken by train to Wigan Central. I remember well the clatter of feet on the wooden platform. As I got a little older and allowed to venture further afield with my pals we would, during the summer holidays, catch the 05.25 from Lowton to Manchester Central in order to get to Old Trafford cricket ground in plenty of time to watch the Test Match. I was there when Jim Laker demolished the Aussies! (and I still have the scorecard).

On a minor note can I make a couple of comments about the photographs in issue 31? Loco. No. 46434 is described as a P2 class. In actual fact it is just 2 classification. This can be clearly seen above the loco. number. The loco. was shedded at Spring's Branch and was designated a Mixed Traffic loco. i.e. both passenger and freight. P2 engines were large 2 – 8 – 2 express locos., designed by Sir Nigel Gresley of the L.N.E.R. for hauling trains between Edinburgh and Aberdeen.

The second photograph of the J10 loco. was taken in June 1949 on the C.L.C. line approaching what was Farnworth station but later became Widnes. The engine is pulling seven, not five, coaches as stated in the caption.

Sorry for appearing pedantic, but as your magazine will surely be used as a reference source in years to come, I feel as much correct information should be given wherever possible.

Looking forward to the next issue.

Brian Liptrot
Hunger Hill
Bolton



The scene in Ince scrapyard on 3 August 1965: GWR loco. 4976 "Warfield Hall" in left foreground. © Peter Allen.



THE OLD PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL, BRADSHAWGATE, LEIGH 1867-1903

Fascinating

Dear Sir

My mother and I read with interest the article from Geoffrey Molyneux regarding the Abram Ladies Football team, as the photographs accompanying the article included two of my (now deceased) great aunts, Beattie and Alice Eddleston and my great uncle Tommy Eddleston, my maternal grandfather's sisters and brother.

Regarding the "dapperly dressed" gentleman in the football team photograph, this could be Alice's husband as my mother remembers him as a snappy dresser; however, if this is Alice's husband then it certainly is not the stepson of Wigan MP John Alan Parkinson, as that particular gentleman was married to another of my great aunts, Nellie Eddleston, and neither is he Beattie's husband.

Another relative was also mentioned in this edition. The line up of the 1965-66 Wigan Rugby League side included Chris Hesketh, another cousin on my mother's side.

The editions of *Past Forward* are passed to us by my mother's cousin, Mary Catterall (Chris Hesketh's aunt) and we enjoy the reading very much; the recent articles regarding railways have been of particular interest to my train mad husband and I look forward to reading the stories from Irene Roberts. Irene and I are old schoolfriends and her poetry and short stories were always very readable even at that early age!

Once again thanks to all concerned for a fascinating magazine.

**Julia Mckie (Mrs)
Great Sankey
Warrington**

Dear Editor

The photograph on the back cover of *Past Forward* issue no. 30, is definitely the above chapel. I quote excerpts from the book *Primitive Methodism in Leigh, Lancashire*, which was published in 1932, when several Methodist factions joined together, and the Primitive Methodist faith, as such, ended.

"During the ministry of the Rev. George Kidd, 1867-1870, the Bradshawgate Chapel was built at a cost of £2,000. The land in front of the chapel had been used as a burial ground, but it is not possible to say how many persons were interred therein. Before 1868, the ground had been levelled and was overgrown with grass, and few of the graves were distinguished by gravestones.

The original plans of the chapel were altered "so as not to interfere with the ground containing the dead bodies - with one exception". It appears that a Mrs. Thomas Lee, before her death, had expressed a desire to be buried close to the front entrance of the then existing chapel, in order that in the event of an enlargement, her remains might be enclosed by the new building.

Mrs. Lee was buried in 1852 and her grave was enclosed by the new building, her surviving husband agreeing to her wish being carried out. There was a garden in front which gave a pleasing



appearance to the main elevation, and a semi-circular arrangement of the pews inside (divided under the large front window in 1888) with beautiful rostrum, communion, and singers' gallery formed an inside picture which was not undignified.

The organ was purchased in 1892 for the sum of £125 from Sleaford Parish Church. It was built for Sleaford Church by no less than Samuel Green himself, was one of the first to be made, and bore the inscription "Saml Green fecit, 1772". Thus it was older even than the Leigh Parish Church organ which he constructed in 1775. It is strange that two of Green's organs should have found their way into two Leigh churches only a stone's throw away from one another.

When they left the Bradshawgate Chapel in May of 1903, the organ went into storage for two years until their new chapel and school

were built, at the junction of Leigh Road and Windermere Road. This storage, and general removals, did not add to the organ's serviceability, but it lasted another 28 years, thanks to careful and patient tuners, and devoted organists who not only played it but "saw to its bodily needs as well".

The book records an amusing incident when the eccentric Rev. A.W. Cottle preached in October 1880. He began the service seven

minutes too soon and there was no organist. When it came to the collection, he told the collectors to go round once, and if they didn't get a goodly sum, they were to "go round again and hit the people on the heads with the boxes!"

The Bradshawgate Chapel land became the Central Hall, then later the Empire Cinema (in the 1950's); later it became Lennon's Supermarket, then Gateway Supermarket. Currently it is "Iceland".

Joan Szymanowski

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Who? Where?

There has been only one positive identification of a Who? Where? photograph from the last issue. The group in the bottom right photograph was definitely the Wigan Standishgate Methodist Church Old Time Musical Concert Party, c.1967 (see Alan Smith's letter, p39). We are no nearer to identifying the top left group, however – there have been four totally different suggestions. All are agreed, however, that the photograph was taken in the mid-1950's.

If you can provide any more information on photographs from past issues or think you can identify any one of the four below, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).

