

# PAST FORWARD

Issue No. 40

July – November 2005

WIGAN  
LEISURE & CULTURE  
TRUST



*Produced by Wigan Heritage Service*

**FREE**

THIS edition of *Past Forward* is significant in two ways. Firstly, we have reached the milestone of no. 40, which I find absolutely amazing – it certainly does not seem 14 years since the appearance of no. 1, way back in 1991. Today, the magazine has a worldwide circulation of 10,000, and is also available on cassette tape and now the internet.

Time certainly marches on, which brings me onto a personal note – this will be my last issue as Editor of *Past Forward*. An opportunity has arisen for me to take early retirement (very early, of course!). Not that that is any bad thing for the magazine. I have had the pleasure and privilege to edit it from the very beginning, and while it has unquestionably proved an outstanding success – far in excess of my wildest dreams – that is not to say that it will not benefit from a change in direction.

During recent discussions with staff about the future direction of the Heritage Service in general, it was very noticeable that the concern which was raised most of all was for the future of *Past Forward*. The staff, as well as you the readers, care passionately about it – they are proud of it, and see it as something unique to Wigan. They are determined that it will continue, and I can assure all readers that it will, under the able guidance of a small editorial team from the Heritage Service.

I've lost count how many favourable comments have been made about the magazine (these were summarised in the last issue). The only criticism, in fact, has been that there are only three issues a year! How often has the comment been made, "how I wish my local service had such a publication". A poem has even been written in praise of *Past Forward*! (see p27). It has brought families and friends together from all over the world, even reuniting old war comrades who had not seen each other for over half a century.

# Farewell from the Editor

In saying goodbye, I am conscious that I have so many people to thank for their help and support on what has been such an exciting and successful adventure. Where do I begin? Perhaps with my good friend Alan Roby, who shared my vision back in 1991 for a local history newsletter; Alan at the time had a small printing business, and thus began *Past Forward* – a humble eight page effort which we cobbled together, more in hope than anything else.

Little did we know what we were beginning! Within only a few weeks of publication, I had received more than enough contributions for the next issue. And since then, I have always been spoilt for choice for material for every single issue, and the magazine has grown and grown, from that humble eight pages to the present 44!

So my sincere thanks to Alan for his help and support in these early days and indeed over many issues, until personal commitments meant he could no longer devote the time needed. Douglas Printers in Wigan, who had already worked on the production of the magazine, then became increasingly involved, and thus began an excellent working relationship over recent years with Steve and Cyril, two of the most pleasant and co-operative people it has been my pleasure to work with.

Thanks also to Mitchell & Wright of Southport who have printed most issues of the magazine, and made a marvellous job of it too. My thanks in particular to Keith Mitchell for all his kindness and support.

For the past few years, *Past Forward* has also been available on tape for the visually impaired. For help with this service, I am indebted to a splendid group of people at 'Making Waves Radio' in Leigh, led by Dave Rigby, one of the bravest people it has been my privilege to know and to work with.

Not forgetting Andrew Busby of the Trust's IT section, for his help in getting *Past Forward* on the internet - and doesn't it look great!

Then there are the many contributors to the magazine. One of the greatest sources of pride and satisfaction for me is that *Past Forward* has enabled so many readers, not just locally, or even nationally, but internationally, to put pen to paper and write an article which they would probably never otherwise have done. It is always dangerous, and even invidious, to single out individuals, but one person I would like to mention in particular is Irene Roberts, whose delightfully unique style of writing has captivated so many; and there is further evidence of Irene's talents, and of how much they are appreciated, in this issue.

Other regular and faithful contributors include Ernie Taberner (long-standing readers will remember his splendid '*Remember When .....*' articles), Harold Smith, Neil Cain, Fred Holcroft, Harold Knowles (see p3 for a tribute to Harold), James Fairhurst and, of course, Gerald Rickards, whose centrespreads have been a regular feature for many issues. To them, and the many, many others whom I do not have space to mention, my sincere thanks for helping to make this venture so exciting and successful.

Finally, my thanks to all the Heritage Service staff for their help and support. All of them, in different ways, have had an important part to play in the success of *Past Forward*.

I have many happy memories of my time with Wigan Heritage Service. The History Shop, for example, was, and still is, an exciting development with lots of potential; also the Parish Map, the Wickham story, Wigan's 750th Charter celebrations - and all of these have featured prominently in *Past Forward*. But it is the magazine itself which I would like to think of as my legacy.

Thanks to all those who have joined me on this memorable adventure. Please give Carole, my successor as head of the Heritage Service, and the new editorial team, all the friendship and support you have given me - that way *Past Forward*, and the Heritage Service, will continue to go from strength to strength.

**COPY DEADLINE**  
**Please note that the copy deadline for issue no 41 of *Past Forward* is 16 September 2005.**

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**Cover:** This photograph has baffled me for many years. It appeared way back in issue 10, on the 'Who? Where?' page, when any suggestions received were tentative, to say the least. So I thought, for my last issue, I would try again - can any reader identify this intriguing photograph? *Ed.*

# Harold Knowles

1926 - 2005



IT IS with great sadness that I have to inform readers of my father's sudden death in March this year. He had written several articles for *Past Forward* about his time as a young boy in Ashton-in-Makerfield. On behalf of my family, I would like to write a short article in his honour.

Harold Knowles was born on 18 September 1926 in Ashton-in-Makerfield, the first child of Harry and Lilian Knowles. From what my father told me he grew up to be quite an independent sort of boy, always willing to work hard, taking on odd jobs, such as a delivery boy for one of the local grocers and helping his Auntie Maggie collect payment for her window cleaning round.

He attended the British School situated on Wigan Road in the town centre of Ashton-in-Makerfield, from where he passed his 11-plus and went on to Ashton Grammar School.

My father left Ashton Grammar in the summer of 1943 and started work as an articled pupil with Mr A K Dennis, Engineer and Surveyor to Ashton-in-Makerfield Urban District Council. However, about two years later he was 'called up' into the army, and went into the Royal Engineers. (I know from some paperwork I recently found, that my father's next articles for *Past Forward* were to be about his time in the army).

After being demobbed in 1948 my father found a job as Assistant Engineer in the Borough of Farnworth. During the next ten years or so he had

several similar roles in different UDCs, until in 1960, he secured one of his ultimate goals, Engineer and Surveyor and Water Engineer of Standish UDC. On local government reorganisation in 1974, he became Assistant Director of Works at Stockport MBC. He retired in 1980.

During his retirement my father enjoyed swimming and listening to brass band music, and both he and my mother also took great advantage of being able to go on holiday several times a year! He certainly enjoyed his four granddaughters.

His death earlier this year from a stroke was very sudden and was a shock to the whole family. As we knew how much his background and early years in Ashton meant to him, his funeral took place at St Thomas's Church, Ashton-in-Makerfield and his ashes are buried in the lower graveyard of the church.

I am immensely proud of what my father achieved; it must have taken great guts and determination to get where he did in his career, especially in his early years, when life was hard there was not much money about. The family miss him terribly but our memories of him will be with us forever.

*Gillian Drummond*

I FELL under the spell of Chat Moss on my very first journey over it from Kenyon Junction to Manchester Exchange. I was a young schoolboy at the time and it seemed like a vast alluring wilderness. Fortunately, before I left Leigh about 15 years later, I had been able to spend enough time exploring the mosses - with permission where necessary - to get a good knowledge of their interesting flora and fauna, especially the rarities like long-eared owls, nightjars and visiting harriers.

I was permitted vehicular access from the north west through Windy Bank to Red House on Bedford Moss by the railway. From there I used to roam eastwards through birchwood scrub and over heather and moor grass to or beyond Astley signal box to where Rindle Road from Astley Green crossed the line. Astley Green colliery lay a mile or more to the north on the far side of the Bridgewater Canal and a mineral

## Murder On The Moss

line from the colliery joined the main railway line not far beyond the Rindle Road crossing.

It was this well-remembered scene that came back to mind in most unexpected circumstances. For light reading I had borrowed a library book with a rather intriguing title. It was *Mysterious Railway Stories* edited by William Pattrick (WH Allen, 1984), and it included a story 'The Lost Special' by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This is not a Sherlock Holmes mystery in the fog-ridden, dimly lit streets of old London but a Victorian melodrama which tests credulity - as the author intended. The main action involves a journey from Liverpool to Manchester across the Moss.

I will not venture further into the plot but will leave it for the reader to

follow, for I concluded that Conan Doyle must have made the journey himself sometime and this pleased me as much as it would have pleased the school boy of 1936. The editor points out that Doyle was an ardent railway buff, as is obvious from his other well-known stories, and the actual place names in this story are given from west to east - St Helens, Earlestown, Newton, Kenyon Junction etc.

However, the essence of the story lies east of Glazebury - a body was left near Windy Bank - but that is all I am telling you! On first reading the story, I decided that Doyle must have had Astley Green Colliery in his scenario but that was not so - Conan Doyle wrote 'The Lost Special' in 1898 and construction of Astley Green colliery only began in 1908.

**Tom Edmondson**  
Chester

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# Gibfield Colliery Pithead Baths still open for business

RECENTLY my car broke down and was towed to a local garage on Coal Pit Lane, Atherton for repairs. On collection of my car I was surprised to find that the garage was situated on the site of Gibfield colliery. On entering the garage I was astonished to find myself actually standing inside the original Gibfield pithead baths. Looking closely around the inside of the building beyond the garage equipment, I could see the original bath tiles on the walls and the pulleys in the roof space which were used for hanging the miners clothing on. After talking to the garage owner I discovered that the pithead baths was the only remaining building now standing on the colliery site; he showed me a tablet set into the outside wall showing the

inscription 'Fletcher Burrows 1913'. My interest in local history and mining inspired me to find out more about the bath house.

## The Opening

The pithead baths at Gibfield were officially opened in October 1913. The press were summoned to inspect the building and miners were lined up for photographs. "The washed and the unwashed", read the caption in the *Manchester Evening News*. Even then there was a murmur of dissent from the miner who preferred the tub in front of the fire at home to wash off his pit dirt. "I thowt as on'y as were 'enpecked at home was usin't' baths," he said.

The Coal Miners Act of 1911 had ruled that management must

provide pithead baths if a ballot of the work force showed that they were wanted. Fletcher Burrows, the owner of the mine, however, did not wait for a vote before building the baths. Representatives of the firm visited similar installations in France and Belgium, but decided that the continental baths were too lavish for the Atherton miners. Mr Clement Fletcher thought they were fitted up with "quite unnecessary luxuriousness."

Nevertheless, the baths at Gibfield were popular with most of the men, and almost two thirds of the coal getters, datallers, surface men and boys used them. "It seems to make our time above ground two hours longer", one collier was quoted as saying. The pitmen would leave their

'tommy tins' on hooks near the door. The shower cubicles were along side the buildings and overhead were the pulleys and ropes on which the men hung their change of clothing. The clothes were pulled up to the ceiling and after each shift had washed, all the windows were closed and the temperatures raised to 100 degrees F so that the working clothes would be dried for the next day.

Not only were the baths welcomed by most of the men but they also made life easier for their wives. In fact some women were quite ecstatic! In *'Baths at the Pithead'*, a booklet produced by the Women's League, an article read:

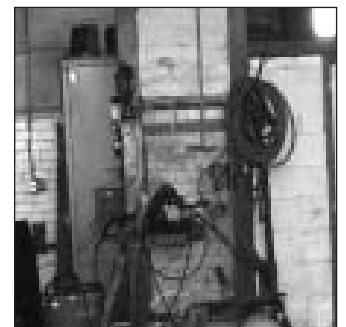
*"At Last! in England, now!*

*To those of us who have been in at the agitation for 'Baths at the pit head' from the start and faced discouragement in so many forms, the news seems almost too good to be true. But there is no least doubt about it.*

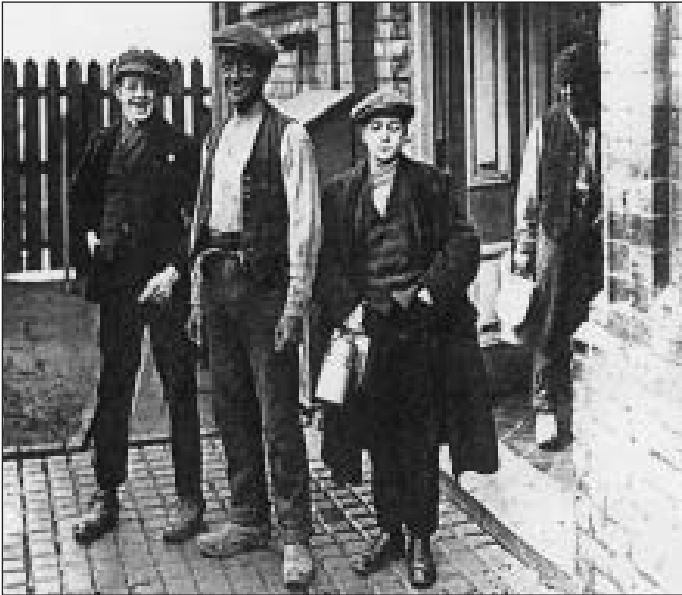
*"The bath house .....  
The white shining Temple*



*Pulleys in the roof space from which miners used to hang their clothes*



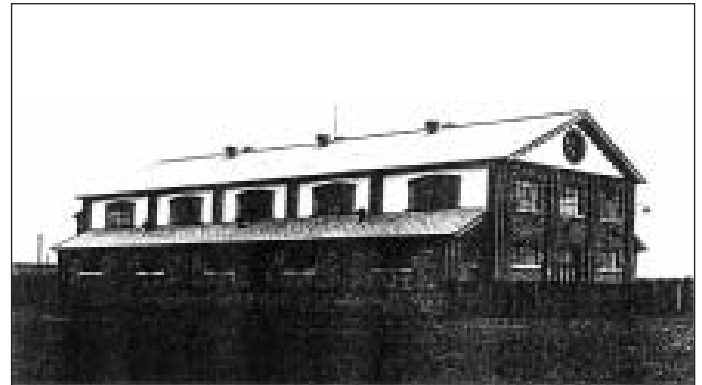
*Original bath tiles still on the walls*



*Gibfield Colliery Baths, 1913. "A white shining temple of health"*



*The Baths today*



*and as they used to be*

*of Health! ..... which when we first wrote about it, was regarded as a sort of fantastic celestial vision, as far as least the miners of Great Britain were concerned ... that Bath House is here ... nay, there are two of them on English soil ... in the Lancashire colliery village of Atherton, near Manchester. But not are they finely outlined, substantial brick buildings, but in spite of all being used.... enthusiastically and increasingly used by the miners."*

What the miners thought of such lyrical prose would be to easy to guess, particularly when the writer, Kathrine Bruce

Glazier, went on ... "the red Ruabon tiles of the floor of the dressing hall made a picture which set one women at any rate longing to dance a sort of Miriam' dance of triumph all down its aisles."

Baths had been opened earlier in 1913 at Howe Bridge and Chanters followed suit the following year.

### Conclusion

Gibfield colliery was the last Of Atherton's deep pits to be sunk, but like other local mines such as Chanters and Howe Bridge, it was a historic mining site and pits close to Gibfield are shown on the map of 1793. There were

eventually three shafts sunk on the site, the Old Gib, the Arley and a third shaft sunk in 1909. In 1842 the Old Gib shaft was extended so that coal could be worked from the Arley seam. Gibfield colliery closed in 1963.

The Fletcher Burrows Co Ltd were owners of the colliery and made many steps to provide for their workers. For example, they had built houses for their workers at Howe Bridge in 1875. In later years the company also gave the colliers the opportunity to buy their own homes. Over the years a bowling green, tennis courts, football pitch, cricket grounds and many other leisure activities were enjoyed by the pit workers of Atherton.

I am amazed to find that the Gibfield pit head baths have survived and I wonder if the building will reach its 100th birthday especially with all the development work

that is taking place at the moment around the Gadbury Fold area. I found the past photographs of the pithead baths slightly haunting, but what a great improvement it must have been for the miners of Gibfield, who were the **first in Britain to have pit head baths**. At the time miners all over the country still went home in their black. Miners at Gibfield could now have a hot shower and then get changed into clean clothes. It must have been more welcome to mothers and wives of miners. No more filling and emptying the tin bath. No more dirty clothes having to be picked up and banged against the outside brick wall to rid them of coal dust. No need for the rest of the family to scatter whilst the miner had his bath!

K Wood  
Hindley and District  
History Society



*Tablet commemorating the opening of the Bath, 1913*

# Killed by electricity

by

Michael Finney

**SOME time ago, whilst searching for a genealogical 'missing link' in the burial ground of Saint James' Roman Catholic Church in Orrell, near Wigan, I was distracted from my task by an inscription on a tall granite memorial. It read as follows:-**

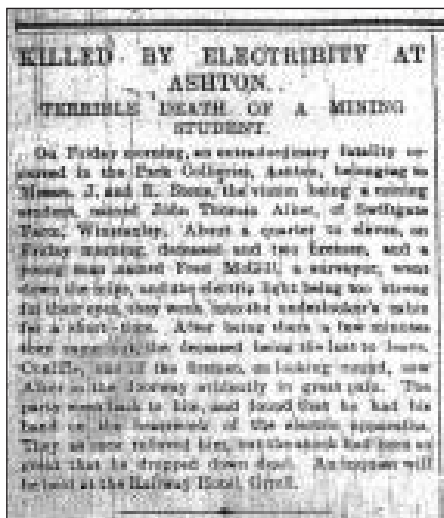
***Sacred Heart of Jesus have Mercy on the Soul of John T. Alker of Winstanley. Killed by electricity June 24th 1898, Aged 21 years.***

'Killed by electricity.' The starkness of the words was an uncommon departure from the usual florid outpourings of Victorian epitaphs. My first thought was that the unfortunate young man may have been the victim of a lightning strike. I knew that electrical engineering was relatively well advanced at the time of his death, but I nonetheless thought it unlikely he had been the victim of some form of industrial accident. Curiosity prompted me to investigate the matter further, revealing both a tragic story, and a public official's indignation at breaches of protocol and procedure .....

## "Stuck fast with the electricity"

The younger son of a well known farming family in the Winstanley district of Orrell, John Thomas Alker was training as a mining student, under Messrs. J and R Stone at Park Collieries, Garswood, Ashton-in-Makerfield, some four miles from his home. On the morning of 24 June 1898, he descended the shaft of the colliery's Number One Pit, in the company of mining surveyor Frederick McGill, and colliery firemen John Cunliffe and Joseph Smalls, in order to carry out an inspection. They arrived at the 'pit bottom' shortly before 10.45a.m., and in order to allow their eyes to become accustomed to the brightness of the underground electrical lighting which had only been installed two days previously, all four men stepped into the underlooker's cabin, which contained the control panel for both the lighting and the electrical pumping systems.

After about half an hour, McGill, Cunliffe and Smalls left the cabin, and started along the roadway. Finding John Alker was not with them, McGill



looked back to see what had become of him, and saw Alker's head and shoulders leaning out of the cabin doorway. He appeared extremely distressed, his face contorted with pain. McGill ran back to the cabin and, on entering, saw that Alker was holding one of the switches on the electrical control panel.

Realising what had happened, he shouted to Cunliffe and Smalls that Alker was "stuck fast with the electricity". Both men hurried back to the cabin and, when Cunliffe threw the main switch on the panel, the lifeless body of John Alker fell into the arms of Joseph Small. The body was taken to the surface, and a doctor summoned. When he pronounced life extinct, the police were sent for. Police Constable Grantham of Ashton-in-Makerfield attended the scene.

According to the accepted legal procedure, the deceased should then have been conveyed to the nearest public house, and a Coroner's jury summoned to view the body. Arrangements would then be made for an Inquest at a later date at those premises. This procedure, however, was not complied with. By this time, Robert Alker, the father of the

deceased had been informed, and had made his way to the colliery. He demanded that the body be taken home without delay. PC Grantham warned him that the body could not be removed without the Coroner's consent and order, but Mr Alker remained insistent and found support in Mr Hilton, the colliery manager, who provided a horse-drawn brake to take the body home to Winstanley, despite PC Grantham's warning.

Although Alker's actions as a grieving parent were understandable, they did, nevertheless, complicate matters. The death of his son had taken place in the township of Ashton, and he had removed the body from that township prior to the Coroner being informed or a jury summoned, and taken it to his home township, Orrell. This meant that the inquest would have to be held in Orrell, several miles from the scene of death, and inquired into by an Orrell jury, who in all probability would not be familiar with the colliery and its environs. All in all, it was an irregular business. Just how irregular, would soon become apparent.

## Inquest

Three days later, on the morning of 27 June 1898 at the *Railway Hotel*, Orrell, the Coroner for South West



Lancashire, Mr Samuel Brighthouse, opened the inquest into the death of John Thomas Alker. The father of the deceased, being unfit to attend, was represented by his son, Robert junior. He testified that he had last seen the deceased (his younger brother) at about 8 a. m. on the day he died, at which time he appeared to be in good health. He went on to say he had been present when the body was brought home, some hours later.

These facts having been established, an evidently irritated Mr Brighthouse called for PC Grantham, and addressed him:

*"I want some explanation as to how it came about that the deceased's body has been removed out of the township of Ashton into the township of Orrell without my consent. I have been told that the deceased's father insisted on removing the body to Orrell. I have been informed that the colliery manager also approved of them being removed. What is the result? The body was removed into the township of Orrell, and the gentlemen of that township have to inquire into the cause of death, when the jury of Ashton ought to have done so. All this inconvenience has been caused by an illegal and irregular action. They might as well have removed the body to London. I quite appreciate and sympathise with the parents wishing the body to be removed home, I would have done so as well, but certain formalities have to be gone through before that can be done, and they could have removed the deceased the same day, if they had communicated with me."*

No doubt taken aback by this onslaught, PC Grantham could only reply that he had warned Mr Alker of the illegality of his actions, to which Mr Brighthouse replied: *"if it occurs again after this explanation, I shall have the body taken back into the township, and then it won't be done again I know."*

Mr Brighthouse, having left both witnesses and jury in no doubt as to his authority, then continued the inquiry into Alker's death. Mine surveyor Joseph McGill gave evidence of how he had seen the deceased leaning out of the underlooker's cabin door in apparent pain, and how when he entered the cabin he saw that the deceased was holding a switch on the electrical control panel. He added that the deceased had no cause to operate the switchboard. Fireman John Cunliffe told the inquiry of how he switched off the current, and stated

that he also saw the deceased's hand on a switch. He further explained that, whilst the deceased was holding the insulated switch handle between his forefinger and thumb, his remaining three fingers were resting on the 'live' metalwork beneath the handle

evidently the cause of his shock.

Mr Matthews, a Mines Inspector, was then called. He expressed the opinion that the actions of the deceased had been the result of youthful curiosity; the fact that he had evidently been leaning out of the cabin suggested that he was looking to see if the switch he was holding operated the lighting system. This theory was largely accepted.

Mr Allen, representing the company responsible for the electrical installation, stated that similar switchboards were in use all over the country, and that the power of current generated was not sufficient to kill a healthy man. Some amusement was caused at this point by a juror, who commented: *"I should not like to try it"*. Mr Allan pointed out that the deceased had recently recovered from a bout of typhoid, and that this could have weakened his constitution, and made him more susceptible to shock. He went on to explain that he knew of many colliery workers who had received shocks, but suffered no ill effects. He qualified this statement by adding that, once they had experienced one shock, *"they did not particularly put themselves in the way of a second"*, which prompted a rather acid reply from Mr Brighthouse: *"if they died from the first, there would be no necessity for the second"*.

Finally, Mr Brighthouse addressed the jury: *"It is not my rule to order a post mortem examination unless it is absolutely necessary for the enquiry. As far as the immediate cause of death is concerned, your duty seems to be purely formal. That is the lad died from the result of an electric shock received from the switchboard. You are entitled to take into consideration the circumstances under which he received*



Copy of John Alker's death certificate

*the shock, and if you have a suggestion which would tend to preserve life in the future, you will be entitled to add that suggestion."*

The jury returned a verdict of accidental death, and recommended that in future switch boards should be operated by one authorised person. They further recommended that all live components be 'boxed in', and the switch handles better insulated. They concluded by offering a vote of sympathy to the relations of the deceased.

The Lancashire mining industry claimed many hundreds of lives. Roof falls, flooding and gas explosions were only three of the many ways a man could lose his life in this most dangerous of industries. There is a terrible irony in the fact that the unfortunate John Thomas Alker met his death by way of a medium only recently introduced to his colliery as a safety measure.

**Sources:- The History Shop  
Wigan Register Office**



Memorial to John Alker, 1898

# TRIPS ON THE BARGE

I AM looking forward to meeting Uncle Bob who has a barge along the Leeds and Liverpool canal, based at Crooke Village. I can't wait for the holidays and weekend when I'm able to go with Uncle Bob and help him with taking coal to the Wigan Power Station. Some days we change route and go to Burscough, and take flour to a corn mill at Parbold through to Burscough .....

## 'Cebbing'

In August, the potato picking season, my cousin and I would go to Valentines Farm at Appley Bridge, near Wigan, and help with picking potatoes. We would both get half a crown which seemed a lot of money to us; of course, we would spend it on raspberry pop and Smith crisps, but these only cost us 3d., leaving us plenty of change.

I liked it when my cousin and I would go to the drift mine at John Pit Colliery at Crooke, where the big coal wagons loaded with coal would go down the railway lines to be weighed on the roundabout. The coal would be released down a chute in the barge and some of the coal would spill over from the barges and fall into the canal. One old villager thought up an idea on how to get the coal from the canal. He would get a big shovel butt, put thick wire mesh over the shovel and tie rope over the shovel, which could then be thrown into the canal; slowly they pulled out pieces of coal. This method was called 'cebbing'. The coal was then put into some old flour sacks and these full sacks of coal were then placed into wheelbarrows, which was then taken around the village and old age pensioners asked if they would like to buy some cheap coal and slack.

Sometimes the lads next door would go into the wagons and get a shovel of whatever was left in them. Helping with the coal would provide coal for the winter and I remember many people would cycle from Springfield and Beech Hill, bringing their families with them on their bikes, so that they could watch the tipping of the coal into the barges.

## Fish and chips

In the school holidays, people would spend all afternoon at Crooke

village when the barges were going to Wigan Power Station and Burscough corn mill. When it was sunny, and always on Fridays and Saturdays, my cousin and I would sit in the garden at the pub alongside the canal; sometimes Uncle Bob would sit with us outside or he would stay inside the pub. He would like to get chatting to the other barge owners and discuss what they had heard and seen during the day.

As there wasn't a fish and chip shop in Crooke village where I lived, another favourite pastime was having fish and chips from Burscough, six miles away. We loved these fish and chips and raspberry pop. We liked going with Uncle Bob on his barge, which was called 'Shelga'. We liked it too when we could help with the cleaning of the brasses around the fireplace on the barge.

## Poker to the rescue

At first, my cousin and I were scared when we came up to the canal locks, so we would ask Uncle Bob to leave us at the side of the bank until we became used to the big wide locks. It took us a while to get used to them; what probably helped us was finding a stray mongrel dog who had become our friend, and whom we named Poker. Uncle Bob told us that if Poker wasn't afraid of the big lock, then we shouldn't be either. He said we should hold Poker and try not to look down at the big walls inside the lock; we did this, and remembering what Uncle Bob had told us, and thinking of our reward of fish and chips which we would get afterwards, we didn't think of the danger! After that, we became less and less frightened and soon got used to the locks and big keys.

Sometimes it would be raining and cold, so we would stay below in the cabin and have our Oxo drink with our bullies of sliced bread, cheese and pickle and an apple and pear. We would read our comics - the *Beano* and *Dandy*.

## Black peas

Uncle Bob would sometimes go to the pub at Parbold with the other barge owners and we would meet with other children from nearby Wigan; they would sometimes tell us

tales of drunken men fighting over who had won at card games. On our trips to Wigan, there would be the summer fair on the old Market Square, where they had candy floss, toffee lollies and cups of black peas; my cousin and I thought they were delicious, and they certainly made us feel warm and ready for the walk back down to Wallgate, where 'Shelga' was moored.

Some of the old people around Wallgate canal area would ask Uncle Bob to get them some Indian Brandy from the shop at Burscough - they thought it was a stronger flavour because it came from the barrel. Other requests would be to bring back paraffin from the barrel and bottles of Lanry bleach which was more powerful and stronger. The old people would repay Uncle Bob by buying him some pigs' trotters and black tripe in Wigan, or they would just give him 5s. for getting their shopping.

Our last night on the 'Shelga' was always on a Sunday, as we would go to school on the Monday, but we couldn't wait until the next Friday when we would set foot again on 'Shelga'.

## Horse shoes and muck

It was Uncle Bob's dream to retire and settle down in the old lock house at Appley Bridge with 'Shelga' moored at the side, ready to use for barge trips once the tipping of coal was finished. Uncle Bob would get into talking with other barge owners who had horses pulling the barges. Sometimes, the old people at the cottages would ask Uncle Bob to save the horses' shoes and the shoes from other horses that pulled the barges, so that they could nail them on their coal sheds to promote good luck around the cottage. Some would also ask for the 'horse muck' to put on their gardens, to help the roses and fertilise the soil; this would get good Burscough potatoes, as everyone at Crooke village said that Burscough potatoes tasted better than the ones from Wigan Market. They could also tell the difference between Burscough and Wigan chips!

But eventually 'Shelga' got too old and, sadly, she ended up in the boat yard at Wigan.

Barbara Anderton  
Chorley Lincs



# WINSTANLEY HALL

“WINSTANLEY is a fertile and picturesque township, rich in the prevailing mineral of the district...” (Baines, *History of Lancashire* 2nd rev. ed. 1891)

Local press has recently reported that the current owners of Winstanley Hall, Dorbcrest Homes, were being urged to complete urgent work on the Hall and Courtyard.

Dorbcrest had originally bought the property around four years ago with the view to restoring the Hall and converting part of it to luxury flats. Unfortunately, they decided this was no longer feasible, since the schemes put forward were deemed incompatible with green belt policies.

This has led to Wigan Council Planning Department issuing an Urgent Works Notice to safeguard the future of the Grade II listed hall and courtyard buildings. These major structural problems include bulging walls, dry rot, collapsed floors and dangerous chimneys. But a look at these pictures show the Hall's former splendour and proud heritage.

## The Beginnings

Most early 16th century manor houses were built of timber on



*Early engraving of the Hall*

stone foundations. Towards the end of that century, fashion changed and more substantial houses out of stone began to be built. The oldest portion of the present Winstanley Hall dates from the period 1555-1561. An even earlier house probably existed from as early as 1402, adjacent to the still visible moat.

The earliest documentary evidence regarding the Winstanley family, however, is dated 1240. These early houses were built by the Winstanleys. They intermarried with other local landowners, notably the Langtons, who held the Barony of Newton, and the Crosse family of Wigan, Chorley and Liverpool.

This particular period of time in Lancashire was turbulent, with invading Scottish armies and pillaging by barons, especially

during the Banastre rebellion. The two factions of Sir Adam Banastre and Sir Robert Holland generally caused havoc by their incursions throughout South West Lancashire, especially in the areas around Wigan and Pemberton. The rebellion was crushed in 1315 with one of the participants, Sir William Bradshaigh, being forced to flee the country. Others

paid with their lives.

## The Bankes come to Winstanley

Following the death of Edmund Winstanley in 1592, the manor passed to Edmund's nephew, also an Edmund, who was living in Wales. Since he was evidently settled there, a buyer was sought. In January 1595 James Bankes, goldsmith and resident of London, took possession of the manor of Winstanley.

Upon the death of James in 1617 the manor passed to his son William, who in turn came to leave the estate to his son. The succession continued smoothly through the generations until the death of another William Bankes in 1800. This William had been born in 1751 and was an indefatigable

*Continued on page 10*



*An early aerial photograph of Winstanley Hall and estate buildings*



*Squire Bankes in front of the Hall*

# WINSTANLEY HALL

*Continued from page 9*

traveller both in Britain and abroad. His health, however, was never robust and Lancashire's damp climate did not help. By the age of 47, he was confined to the house due to his failing health. Upon his death the direct male line died out and the property was left to his first cousin, Rev Thomas Holme of Upholland, the son of Ann Banks. Rev Holme died in 1803 and was succeeded by his eldest surviving son, Meyrick Holme, who took the name and arms of Banks in 1804. He became High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1805.



*Meyrick Banks*

Upon his death in 1827, his only son Meyrick succeeded him. At this time the Winstanley estate extended to Winstanley, Billinge, Pemberton, Upholland, Newton Park and Lower Cudworth (near Barnsley), as well as the houses of Winstanley Hall and Holland Hall and, of course, the coal pits. By the time of Meyrick II's death in 1881, the family had also acquired a large estate at Letterewe in Scotland and Bispham Hall near Billinge. Squire Banks was heavily involved with the running of his coal mines and was often to be seen at one or other of his pits at 5.30 a.m. Meyrick actually died at his offices in Old Hall Street, Liverpool. His funeral was still remembered in



*Amy Banks*

Wigan in 1945, and there was said to be "not a yard of black cloth" to be had in Wigan. The assembled crowds watching the funeral procession were said to have numbered in the region of 10,000.

The estate then passed to the Squire's daughter, Eleanor, wife of William John Murray. She too assumed the name and arms of Banks. Following her death in 1907, her son, George Hildyard Banks, inherited the estate. He was married to Amy Orkney Stracathro, daughter of Charles Robertson of Kindeace, Ross-shire.

## The 20th Century

Both George and Amy Banks became local magistrates. Amy was

very active locally, being variously President of Ince Women's Unionist Association, the Billinge branch of the National Life Boat Association and the Wigan and District Nursing Association and Vice-President of St Margaret's Home for Girls, Goose Green, as well as being a member of Billinge Parochial Church Council and a Trustee of Edelstone Charity, Billinge. For many years she was also County Commissioner for N.W. Lancashire for Girl Guides Association and organised many local events for charities.

George Hildyard Banks became Sheriff of Lancashire in 1921. Upon his death, their daughter Joyce Helena Murray Banks inherited the property. Joyce married Captain Edward William Jervis Banks R.N. at Billinge St Aidan's Church on 23 April 1929. Their grandson, Timothy Guy, was still living in the Lodge at Winstanley Hall until recently. Other members of the family had moved south to Gloucestershire and one branch now has a bookshop in Bath.

Joyce Banks was very interested in the history of the estate and had completed two volumes of a history and part of a third volume before her death in 1974. The last volume was completed by her daughter, Elizabeth Garland. There is a copy of this three volume work in the History Shop for reference purposes.



*Wedding of Joyce Banks and Capt. Edward Banks, 1929*

## Winstanley Hall during the Wars

During the two World Wars, the Hall and its grounds were given over to a different clientele. In 1914, G H Bankes offered the Hall as accommodation to the Red Cross Society for wounded soldiers and sailors. He offered not only to fit out the Hall as a hospital, but also to do the same at his other seat, Balconie Castle, Ross-shire. However it would also seem that the Hall was used as a military training and transit camp. Units of Royal Engineers who were sent to Gallipoli and also the 6th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment are known to have stayed there.



*The Stable block*



*Winstanley Hall Lodge, Pemberton Road*

In World War II, the grounds were home to W.A.A.F.'s in nissen huts. After they moved out, squatters moved in - 20 families of local homeless people, many of whom were ex-servicemen. By September Billinge Council's Medical Officer had inspected the dwellings and pronounced the squatters "comfortably settled and wanting for nothing from the public health standpoint. There was no

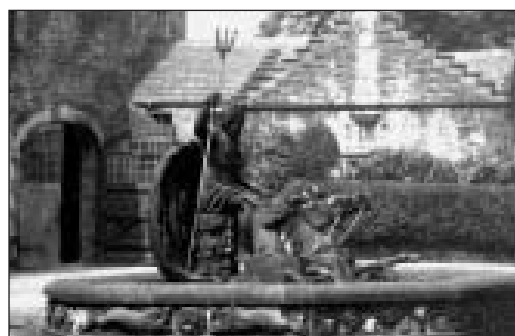
overcrowding". Arrangements were made to collect rent of 10 shillings. They stayed for about a year.

### Sources

Joyce H.M. Bankes *Winstanley Hall* (unpublished typescript)  
 W.B. Savigny *History of Bispham Hall, Billinge* (typescript)  
 R. Winstanley *Winstanley and Highfield* (1998) Typescript  
 Wigan Council website  
[www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/pub/council/agendas](http://www.wiganmbc.gov.uk/pub/council/agendas).  
*Wigan Observer*

**THE Hall, in the main, is a stone built Elizabethan manor house with extensive alterations at the end of the 18th century. The basic plan of the Tudor House can still be traced i.e. central hall with parlour coming off one side and a chamber over the hall. The hall faces east and west according to Tudor custom.**

**Over the succeeding centuries, the Tudor house was extended to provide more comfortable accommodation, with Meyrick (Holme) Bankes making considerable alterations in the years 1812-27. Part of the west front was raised by one storey and a parapet added. A three-storey block with porch was added to the North West front and became the main entrance. The Holme and Bankes coat of arms and the date 1819 was added (see right, top). It is thought that Lewis Wyatt worked at Winstanley 1818-19. Plans are in existence that were signed by him. Meyrick's son Meyrick (1811-81) further extended the Hall and its site. The courtyard and an outside staircase were added alongside an older barn. William Spence (1793-1849), a noted sculptor from Liverpool, was commissioned to create a large fountain of Neptune in the courtyard (see right, bottom), apparently to Meyrick Bankes' own design. William Spence is thought to have sculpted a marble bust of William Roscoe, the Liverpool abolitionist, which now resides in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Meyrick Bankes also designed the new decorative glass windows. Further alterations were made between 1881-1904 when two bays were built on the west side of the house.**



# Family History



## Additions to Taylor Gallery (for reference)

### Donations

Davies & Rigby; Pemberton St John marriage index 1835-1926  
Rigby et al; Upholland baptism index 1813-1900  
Rigby et al; Upholland marriage index 1600-1837  
Rigby, Newton, Chorlton et al; 1891 census indexes Leigh, Atherton, Tyldesley RG12 3083-3091  
Registers for Liverpool Road, Platt Bridge Methodist Church marriages 2 April 1934 – 28 August 1993  
Registers for Ashton-in-Makerfield Congregational Methodist Church marriages 15 Sept 1979 – 3 June 1989

### CD ROM

Marsden, G; Surname index to Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery registers 23 July 1865 – 21 Feb 1873

### Transcripts

Lancashire Parish Register Society vol. 158: Registers of All Saints Newton Heath Part 1: 1655-1796

### Genealogy

Beckett, I.F.W. *The First World War: essential guide to sources in the UK National Archives*  
Watts, C.T. *Tracing Births, Deaths & Marriages at Sea*

### General

Ashcroft, Tony *150 Years of Service: a brief history of Christ Church, Pennington 1854-2004* 283.42736  
Hamilton, Jill *Thomas Cook : the holiday-maker* 338.76191  
Higgins, Peter *The Surgeon's Journal, Lancaster Castle 1843-49* 365.66  
Miller, Alan *From Upholland Grammar School to Winstanley College* 373.42736  
Suggitt, G *Lost Railways of Merseyside and Greater Manchester* 385.094273 \*  
Darbyshire, Fred *A Footplateman Remembers: the staff and workings at Lower Ince Shed* 385.0942736 \*  
Pixton, Bob *Main Line Railways around Wigan* 385.0942736  
Jenkinson, David *LNWR Carriages: a concise history* 625.23  
Maconie, Stuart *Cider with Roadies* 780.92  
Hayes, Dean P *The Who's Who of Wigan Athletic in the Football League 1978-2004* 796.334

Lancashire Football Association *A Celebration of 125 Years 1878-2003* 796.334 \*  
Tarbuck, Martin *Let's Hang On (Wigan Athletic)* 796.334  
Leigh Cricket, Tennis and Bowling Club *Celebrating 150 Years 1854-2004* 796.358094227  
Howe, Malcolm *Death the Grim Reaper – the Pilkington Crest* 929.2  
Briody R F *House of Briody* 929.2 BRI  
Ellis, Miles *From the Falls of the Pig's Brook* 929.2 ELL \*  
Shotter, David *Romans and Britons in North-West England 3rd ed.* 936.2704  
Bonner, Robert *Great Gable to Gallipoli (6th Manchester Battalion)* 940.48141  
Ferguson, A P *Lancashire Airfields in the Second World War* 940.5443 \*  
Women at War *Eye Witness Accounts from the Imperial War Museum's Sound Archive* 941.08409  
Griffiths, A *Memories of an Atherton Pitman* 942.736  
Leech, Joseph *Extracts from the War Diary of Joseph Leech, Wigan* 942.736  
Ridyard, Richard *Mining Days in Abram (new edition)* 942.736  
Bark, Gertrude *Around the Kitchen Table: a Lancashire Childhood* 942.76

\* an asterisk denotes copies are available for purchase in our shop.

## Project News

Once again our indexing Friends have come up trumps, on our behalf, with a bumper crop of research aids. Volume 2 of Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery register indexes for July 1865-February 1873 has been added to our growing stock of CD ROMS, thanks to Gerald Marsden. Both he and Freda Chorlton are currently indexing the next two reels of the registers which will soon take the indexes up to the end of 1887.

As usual Gerry Rigby and his industrious group of helpers, have been hard at work producing indexes to the 1891 census for Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesley. So far they have indexed the greater part. This project amalgamated the indexes produced by Tom Newton and Freda Chorlton along with some produced by Gerry's own group. Copies of the indexes are available for reference both in the Taylor Gallery at the History Shop and Leigh Local History with a CD ROM version being at Leigh Archives.

Incredibly, Gerry Rigby's group has, in addition to these indexes, this past month, presented to the History Shop research area, a copy of their Index to Baptisms at Upholland St Thomas for 1813-1900.

Meanwhile, Barbara Davies soldiers on in her solitary but mammoth task of indexing the burials of St John, Pemberton.

The latest news from Wigan Register Office's volunteer indexers is that the current number of Wigan and Leigh marriages indexed, checked and whose details are listed online at [www.lancashirebmd.org.uk](http://www.lancashirebmd.org.uk), stands currently at 941,131. The next tranche to be added, possibly by the time you read this edition of *Past Forward*, will consist of a further 36,021 marriages for Leigh, Atherton, Astley, Tyldesley, Golborne and Lowton, covering the period c.1843 to c.1931. Astonishingly, Wigan All Saints marriages are represented from 1837 to 1926. Goose Green St Paul, whose marriage registers still remain at the church, are indexed by the site for 1916-1930.

## Websites

[www.lan-opc.org.uk](http://www.lan-opc.org.uk)

I included this site in *Past Forward* 39 highlighting Atherton and Tyldesley. There are, however, many other areas of the Borough listed, each giving valuable information for genealogists and local historians.

The sections devoted to Wigan, Standish and Upholland have grown apace these last few months. Standish now has searchable indexes to burials, baptisms and marriages 1653-1840, with links to entry details. The Wigan section includes a link to Highfield St Mathews burials (reviewed in *Past Forward* 36) online at [www.stmatthewhighfield.org.UK/registers](http://www.stmatthewhighfield.org.UK/registers), and growing databases to the church records of All Saints, Wigan, St David's Haigh and, unusually, to the Catholic registers of St Mary and St John Wigan and St Marie's Standish. The Online Parish Clerk for Wigan, Margaret Gardner, is to be commended for her considerable efforts.

[www.stmichaeldalton.co.uk](http://www.stmichaeldalton.co.uk)

This new site is devoted, as the title suggests, to St Michael's Church at Dalton, providing burial entries complete with an excellent search engine, with links to the grave details, a pointer to the exact location on the churchyard plan and including a colour photograph of the headstone.

[www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk)

Many readers will already be familiar with this site and also its sister site at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).

The site has recently added the 1861 census to its list of searchable sources, in association with National Archives. Thus for a subscription you can now view all census images 1861-1901. There is still an initial free search.

To view the image, formerly, you would have had to pay a hefty annual fee of £69.95 or quarterly fee of £29.95. Now a new pay as you go system is available, whereby for £6.99 you may view 20 pages anytime over a period of seven days. Civil indexes to births, marriages and deaths can still be searched for free and for an up-grade in subscription, it is possible to check American records also.

Other records available are the Pallot marriage index, UK and Ireland Parish and probate records, Irish immigrants to the Port of New York, Indian Army records and early UK and US directories 1680-1830.

### **New local history DVD from the Billinge History/Heritage Society**

We have just got news that a brand new 34-minute DVD featuring film, photograph and even song has been created by this busy society in Billinge (see also Society News page for further details). It features Billinge history from the very earliest times through to the last century, and is expertly narrated by Alan Rooney of BBC Radio Merseyside.

A high point must be a rendition of 'Eau'r Nell's Jack', a song about a champion speed skater from Billinge, Jack Hill, who took on the then national champion in 1879 on Carr Mill Dam and won! [see *Past Forward* 36, p30 for an article on Jack Hill].

All sales will be for a very good cause. Joe Taylor of the society said: "We are just trying to sell enough copies to cover the cost of supplying a disk each to all the primary school children in the village. I'm sure people would pay for it anyway, but as all money collected is going back into free copies for the kids I hope it will be an extra incentive."

If you fancy a slice of Billinge history on DVD, contact the society via their web site at [www.billinge-history.com](http://www.billinge-history.com). At the time of going to press the price has not been fixed, but the *Past Forward* verdict is that it must be well worth a few pounds.

# Family History Workshops

If any of you out there have always felt you would fancy finding out more about your ancestors, this is your chance. At the History Shop in Wigan all the local church records and 19<sup>th</sup> century census returns are kept. This collection forms the core of our genealogy study centre for the borough and it is here those secrets could be unlocked.

A couple of guiding notes about this material. Firstly it is mainly on microfilm or increasingly the computer, so pre-booking is required. Secondly this is a local/regional activity. Records of your forebears from our area can be found here but not from further afield. Once you trace back to relatives from outside our borough then I'm afraid travelling is required.

If all of this is new to you why not come along to one of our Family History Workshops? These are one-to-one sessions run by our 'Friends' organisation to help people to get started on their family history. They are on the following Wednesday afternoons in the Taylor Gallery on the first floor of the History Shop. Unfortunately this venue is not yet accessible by wheelchair (though we are working hard on this!) as a staircase needs to be negotiated. If disabled arrangements are required please ring the number below.

Date	Time	Location
3 August 2005	1.30 & 3.00 pm	History Shop
24 August 2005	1.30 & 3.00 pm	History Shop
14 September 2005	1.30 & 3.00 pm	History Shop

The arrangements are the same as for previous series - **booking is essential**. The fee of £2.50 is payable in advance, and in return a Family History pack is distributed before the session. The very best features of the sessions are:

- ❖ one-to-one tuition from an experienced genealogist, including a tour of the History Shop study area.
- ❖ free use of the machines and facilities with advice and guidance as to the next steps.
- ❖ the general approach is for the beginner, but more advanced workshops can be arranged.
- ❖ Similarly, if the Wednesday afternoon slot does not suit your circumstances, other times can be arranged.

**Please ring the History Shop with your requirements or to book your place, on 01942 828128.**

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## William Moore's DCM Medal

Dear Sir

Thank you for publishing Fred Holcroft's article 'Another War in Iraq' (*Past Forward* no 38). It was of particular interest to me because William Moore was my father's eldest brother. The smaller of the two photographs in the article was one I have never seen.

He was of a line of William Moores that I have traced back to 1748 in Devon. William's

grandparents made their way to Wigan via Cardiff following the work available in the mines and then finally to Wigan where William was born. The family like many others left their farm labourers jobs after several years of bad harvests. I knew very little of him until recently other than that he was killed in Iraq and was awarded the DCM.

The medal unfortunately has vanished. I wonder if it is in some collection of military history. It would be good to know that it does not simply sit anonymously in a cupboard somewhere, with the human story behind its existence unknown.

I have lived in Toronto for 30 years but my interest is Wigan is sustained by my sister who still lives there and sends me copies of *Past Forward*.

Eric Moore  
Toronto Canada  
Email:

[nemoore@pathcom.com](mailto:nemoore@pathcom.com)

## GLADYS WRIGHT

Dear Editor

I am a new member of the Wigan FHS and am endeavouring to carry out research into my mother's family in and around Ashton-in-Makerfield where my mother came from. I wonder if anyone can help me with a couple of queries I have.

My relative Gladys Wright used to work, I believe, at Wigan Casino - there is a flower case on her grave in Our Lady of Good Counsel, engraved "From your friends at the Casino". She died at the age of 47 on 10 February 1954. If there is anyone that could give me any information about her I would be most grateful.

Also my mother used to tell me a rhyme about a little mouse that went out one night and left half it's tale in a mousetrap; I think she could possibly have learnt this at school. She and her family all attended St. Oswald's & St. Edmund's RC Church, where my great grandparents, grandparents and a few other relatives are buried. Also my great grandfather Jacob Wright, as a child, used to receive clothing etc., from the 'Woollen & Linen Charity'; do any of your readers or members of the Society know anything about this?

Thank you very much for any help your readers can give me.

Catherine Webb  
15 Longmeadow  
Weaverham  
Northwich CW8 3JH  
Email: [KatyCheshire@aol.com](mailto:KatyCheshire@aol.com)

## DAWSONS

Dear Sir

I have been researching my grandparents' families for the past 10 to 12 years. I have had considerable success with the Beesleys, Liptrots and Forshaws but the Dawsons are proving a little more difficult. I would appreciate any contact from descendants of the following families (all are brothers or sisters of my grandfather Fred (James Fredrick) Dawson).

Newark Shipley Dawson (tailors cutter) married Jane Leech in 1902

May Agnes Dawson married grocer Alfred John Davies in 1909

Ernest Dawson (tailor) married Monica Magraw in 1911

Gertrude Dawson married Fredrick Bell in 1927

Other siblings were John Arthur Dawson born 1884

Norah Dawson born 1889

Percy Dawson born 1891

Olive Tamar Dawson born 1893

Sydney Dawson born 1898 (Sydney might have married Sarah Kendrick in 1906)

I would appreciate contact from any relatives.

Thanks in advance.

Margaret Hegan  
Suffolk  
Tel: 01359 244194

Email: [margaret.hegan@btinternet.com](mailto:margaret.hegan@btinternet.com)

## SOS

Mrs D Leonard 3 Felixstowe Close, Hartlepool, Teeside TS25 2RE (tel: 01429 423218) is anxious to contact descendants of the Good family, namely John, Mary-Ann, Augustus, Clara, children of Michael and Mary-Ann Good (nee Brannan).

## Elizabeth Spencer (nee Burns)

Dear Mr. Gillies

I was very interested to read the article about the sinking of the 'Priam' in the latest issue of *Past Forward* (p7). John and Harriet Darbyshire were my greatgrandparents - I have already corresponded with Tony Ashcroft about them.

However, I was wondering if there was room in the next issue for an enquiry about my paternal grandmother Elizabeth Spencer nee Burns of 17 Abbey Street, Leigh. I am trying to find out where and when she was born. Although I can remember my grandmother, as she lived until she was 81, I cannot find her place of birth, nor can I find her on the 1881 census. She died in Leigh on 10 July 1961, having lived there all her married life; unfortunately, however, all her six children, including my father, are now dead, so no information there.

The very little I know about Elizabeth is that she lived in Clopton Street,

Hulme before she married Alfred Spencer on 9 March 1903 in the Registry Office in Chorlton, Manchester. Alfred was a coachman to a doctor and lived in Leigh.

Alfred and Elizabeth are buried in a grave in Leigh cemetery, along with Gladys and Edith, their daughters. There is also a child named Harry who was born after the death of my grandfather. I knew nothing about the existence of Harry - my grandmother's name is on his birth certificate as his mother.

If anyone can throw some light on the above, I would be most grateful.

Pauline Howell  
(nee Spencer)  
38 Glossop Road  
Marple Bridge  
Stockport SK6 5EL  
Email: [paulinehowell@breathemail.net](mailto:paulinehowell@breathemail.net)

*40 years ago, Higher Folds Primary School opened its doors. Here the first Headmaster, Glyn Jones, in the first of a fascinating new series, recalls these exciting early days, with mixed emotions.*

# Higher Folds

## A New School Opens

*"HIGHER Folds school says goodbye with Bingo. A local Primary school will be welcoming visitors to look around before it closes its doors for the last time. The school will be demolished over the summer holidays to make way for a new building. Ex pupils, staff and governors and members of the Higher Folds community are being invited to take a last look around".* Thus reported the *Leigh Journal* in June 2001.

As I mingled with the parents waiting in the school hall for the start of the Bingo session it became for me an occasion to "summon up remembrance of things past". If those walls could only speak!

### **"Leigh's stop-go school to open at last"**

This was the *Journal's* headlines for 1 May. The article continued:

*"A school which was built after more than four years of dispute has opened its doors at last and now faces the threat of over crowding. Leigh's Higher Folds County Primary School was included in the 1960 building programme but because of a 'who pays for what' wrangle between the National Coalboard, Leigh Corporation and the County Council, the project was held up.*

*Eventually the delays about where the school should be and concern about compensation for possible mining subsidence were settled and the children moved in last week. There was another shock waiting for the education authorities. It had been estimated that there would be an initial intake of 120 children, but on opening day 170 turned up, and 150 wanted to stay for dinner. There were crowded classes until a temporary teacher was found. The problem of providing extra meals was solved by having them brought from a canteen."*

I was appointed Headmaster of the

by  
Glyn Jones

new school on 25 February 1965, at a salary of £1,585 per year. The building was due for completion on 23 April and the school was to admit its first children one week later. The timetable was obviously a very tight one - in sharp contrast to the prolonged negotiations which had preceded the building.

### **"Even the storks have bronchitis here!"**

At the time of my appointment I was a full-time teaching head of a three teacher village school, with no non-teaching time and no clerical assistance. I was then given sole responsibility for requisitioning all stationery and text books for the new school, but as my resignation could not take effect until 30 April, this had to be done in my 'spare' time, again without any clerical assistance. I was also given sole responsibility for making timetables and schemes of work for the new school. It was fortunate that I had a number of years of varied experience. I had taught in a large Junior school in a city, had two years teaching a Remedial class in a non-affluent district and finally, I had 10 years as Head of a village school.

My first visit to the school to see how the building was progressing convinced me that my own background made me 'tailor made' for the task ahead. I was accompanied by 'Charlie' Bratt, the Chairman of Managers. He viewed the factory chimneys on the horizon and the panorama of surrounding coal tips. "Even the storks have bronchitis here", he said. My father was a coal miner and I felt immediately at home. I had the feeling that I had arrived at the right spot at the right time.

### **'Handbook of Suggestions'**

The years between the War and my arrival at Higher Folds saw momentous change. In my early years there was no Ministry of Education, but a Board of Education. Children who did not go to Grammar schools stayed on at Elementary schools until they were 14 years old. The Board published a Teacher's manual called the 'Handbook of Suggestions', which was used in my teacher training days. It gave guidelines for the curriculum and teaching method. The curriculum was set out in detail and timetables were adhered to strictly. Scripture lessons ended at exactly 9.30 a.m. and arithmetic, which was divided into times for tables drill, mental arithmetic and problems, lasted from then until 10.30. Every Friday morning there would be a written test.

The teaching of English was similarly divided. There was round-the-class reading, group reading, silent reading, and comprehension exercises. There was also a time when the teacher read excerpts from literature and poetry. There was a lesson for composition preparation, for the writing of the composition, and a lesson for corrections. Excerpts from some individual compositions would be read to the class, and exercises in spelling, sentence construction and grammar would be taken from these. Handwriting lessons were also given with attention to posture, the 'correct' way of holding the pen, letter formation and neatness. The same standard was expected from the teacher when writing on the blackboard!

### **'Seamless robe of learning'**

By the '60's the Board of Education had been replaced by the Ministry of Education, and teaching in Primary schools became child centred, not subject centred. Teachers were to

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# Higher Folds A New School Opens

*Continued from page 15*

adopt the 'seamless robe of learning' approach, with emphasis on the correlation of subjects. A subject such as transport would be chosen, and planning of the lessons would include aspects of literature, maths, geography, art etc. Unless a watchful eye was kept on this it could result in children doing a lot of repetitive work from class to class. Indeed they would sometimes find that in their first year at the 'Sec.Mod.' they would be repeating projects they had done in Junior school. This was the educational climate which prevailed when the Higher Folds school opened. Head teachers at this time were given a great deal of freedom in establishing the curriculum to be adopted.

Meanwhile in society at large there was emerging what was to become known as the 'permissive society'. There are some who argue that many of the problems facing schools today have their roots in that period. Certainly the tendency to place fewer restraints upon children made the maintaining of discipline in schools more difficult. On the other hand there were some positive sides to this era. I doubt whether some of the creative talents shown by many of the children at Higher Folds would have blossomed under the old authoritarian regime.

## **Panic stations!**

The original staff appointed were:

W G Jones, Headmaster  
L Johnson, Deputy Head  
Mrs C Davies and Mrs D Pitt, Infant teachers

But the new school hardly got off to a dream start. It had been anticipated that 120 children would start on the first morning, with numbers increasing at the beginning of the new school year. But on the first day 172 children arrived. Panic stations! Staff at the Leigh office must have pulled out all the stops. Extra chairs and desks were found, as well as an extra member of staff, Miss J Lowe, a student awaiting entrance to Teacher Training College.

The school kitchen had been designed to provide a maximum of 100 meals. On the first day 150 children stayed to school dinner. Extra meals were brought from a nearby canteen, and I had to organise two sittings. Mrs Aspinall and Mrs Davies, the two cooks, were to stay at the school during the whole of my time there.

The first term was obviously going to be something of a 'holding operation' until the beginning of the new school year which, in those days, commenced in August. It was important to gain the confidence of the parents, so that they would pass on favourable impressions to other parents on the estate. Some parents continued to bus their children to other schools in Leigh, and some understandingly felt a sense of loyalty to those schools.

Two factors, however, were of considerable help to me. Firstly, Mrs Davies and Mrs Pitt brought with them two Infant classes which had been housed in an annexe of St. Matthew's church. This meant that, though the surroundings were new, the young children were met by familiar faces. The second positive factor was the temperament of Mr Johnson, the Deputy Head (he later became a Head at Cadishead.) - he

was a calm and unflappable person who had that quiet air of authority to which children instinctively respond.

## **The 'tone' for the day**

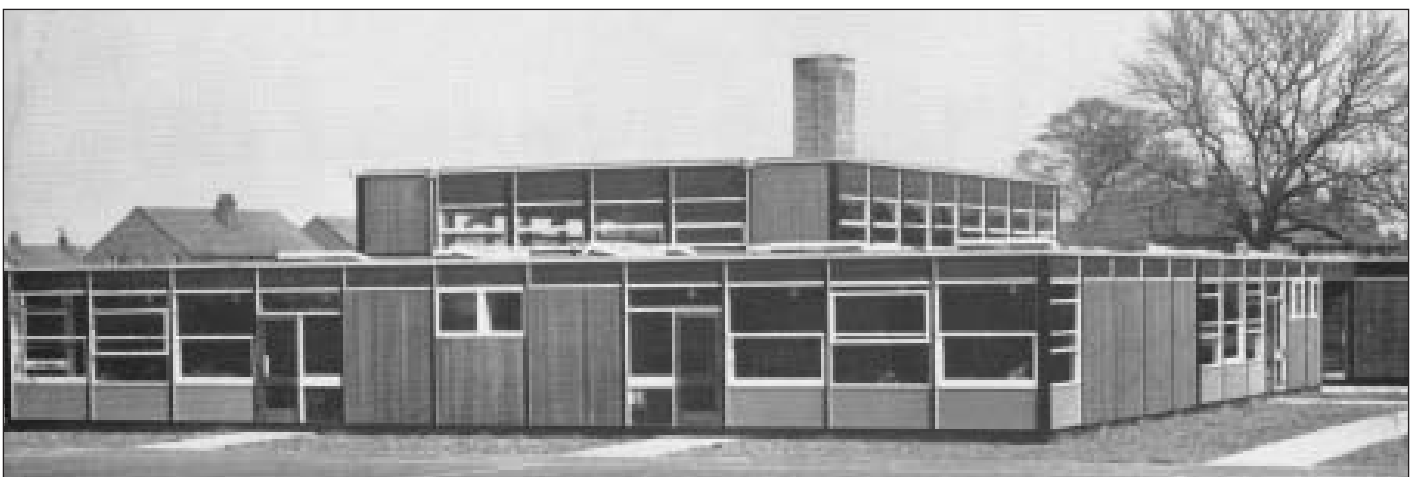
I always attached great importance to the Morning Assembly. It set the 'tone' for the day. More importantly, it showed that the school was a community, not just a collection of individual classes. The content of the Assemblies would hopefully enhance this feeling.

The first Morning Assembly set the pattern for the years ahead. Mr. Johnson would bring in the top class Juniors first. He would lead them from his classroom along the linking corridor, chairs held in front of them, to their place at the back of the hall. They would deposit their chairs and sit in lines as straight and equally spaced as though they were lined up for inspection on Horse Guards Parade. Other classes would be sent for in turn.

To background music supplied by the gramophone or by myself at the piano, children would proceed quietly to their places. Staff would sit opposite their respective classes.

## **Shoe inspection**

The first term went reasonably well, but even at this early stage, there was evidence of shortcomings in the design and structure of the building. The immediate concern was the landscaping. This had not been completed before the first children were admitted. In wet weather, the green verges bordering the asphalt playground were a sea of mud. In spite of adult supervision, the mud had a magnetic attraction for the children at playtimes and dinner times. Unlike in the case of the hippopotamus of Flanders and Swann fame, wallowing in the mud did not





cool the blood. On the one hand I had parents complaining about the state of the children's shoes, and on the other hand I had caretakers complaining about the mud in classrooms and hall. Drastic action was called for.

At the end of playtime the duty teacher would blow the whistle. Children would then cease their activities and walk to their allocated line in the playground. Each class teacher would then supervise their entry in single file - a great advantage when trying to solve the problem of the muddy shoes. I instituted a shoe inspection. I would inspect each child at the entrance to the classroom. Children with excessively muddy shoes would deposit their shoes outside the classroom door in neat lines and collect them at home time. However, this measure only had limited success. In the first nine months of the school's life, four caretakers resigned!

### Miss Dorothy Shepherd

The school log book for the beginning of our first complete school year contained the following entry:

*"Miss Dorothy Shepherd, (Probationer), commenced."*

Dorothy was the first of many teachers who started their career at Higher Folds.

Unfortunately the log book for 27 February 1989 read:

*"It is with sadness we record the death of Mrs. Dorothy Hayman."*

Dorothy was a talented, unassuming teacher, who was dedicated to teaching in general but to Higher Folds in particular. She was especially gifted in producing, and sometimes writing, dramatisations of Bible stories. I often helped her with these, providing suitable recorded background music. We kept in touch after my retirement. I let her have some recordings of these and other memories of happy occasions at school. I know these sometimes gave her enjoyment during her illness.

### "Nothing but the best"

The official opening of the school took place on 23 October. During the morning clean up to get things spick and span the bulldozer was reversed into one of the large glass windows in the linking corridor! Since proceedings were not to commence until 3.00 p.m. there was time for repairs to be carried out!

No one was prouder than the Chairman of Managers, Charles Bratt.

"Nothing but the best for Higher Folds" was his introduction. Some years after, in a moment of rare cynicism, I wrote the following poem.

#### NOTHING BUT THE BEST

*The Chairman smiled  
and swelled with pride  
as he viewed the parents gathered  
inside.*

*The Architect smiled  
and viewed with elation  
his wondrous creation.  
But the ravage of inflation  
led to much modification  
and the building as it stands  
is not quite as he had planned.*

*The Education Officer smiled  
and advised  
'Don't set your sights too high  
good teachers are in short supply.  
Just make the best of what you get.  
We haven't reached Utopia yet.'*

*The Headteacher smiled  
And had it filed.*

### Beginning of a music tradition

At Christmas 1965 we had our first carol service. We set the 'tone' for what I hoped would be the establishing of a music tradition in the school. We had a small 'ensemble' performing a 'Christmas Suite'. Our own singers and recorder players were joined by two guests. We had Mr A B Pearson, Divisional Education Officer, playing the treble recorder and Miss Jennifer Patterson, County Music Adviser, playing the violin. More than 100 parents attended.

We now had 223 children on roll and two Infant classes had to be accommodated full time in the hall. The hall was well equipped as a gym but could not now be used for that purpose. An experienced teacher, Mrs Morris, was appointed to a graded post in the Infant Department and, at the beginning of the new school year, we had two further appointments, Miss G Waind and Mrs V Wilkinson.

One of the most enjoyable events in this period was a visit to Manchester Opera House. 64 children, parents and teachers went to see the D'Oyle Carte production of 'The Mikado'. Following this the large windows in the linking corridor were filled with almost life size paintings of several of the characters, as seen through the eyes of Mrs Andrews.

### Success at rugby

We also had successful Parents'

Evenings and the first of what was to become an annual fixture, whereby parents played against children at cricket and rounders. At such times the vibrant atmosphere in the playground and on the playing fields made one feel that the school was becoming part of the community.

By now our fourth year group was large enough for us to have a rugby team which could join the Leigh Schools Rugby League. I recall that our first victory was against Pennington, and that the scorer of the first try was a well-built redhead called Peter France, who later went on to play rugby union with Tyldesley. Peter was a quiet lad, but on the rugby field he steamrollered his way over less well physically endowed youngsters. I composed a calypso to celebrate his first try.

Of course it often happened that boys on the rugby field showed a hitherto unseen side of their characters. One such boy, who did not go on to play professionally, inspired me to write this poem (this was later broadcast on Radio 4 in a programme called 'Pen to Paper').

*Teacher says  
He's rude, insolent,  
Lazy, a perfect nuisance  
A trouble maker.  
Psychologist says  
He's retarded, aggressive,  
Shows signs  
Of maternal deprivation.  
Mother says  
Never does as he's told,  
Not at all  
Like my other children.  
His pals say  
He's tough  
A fast runner  
A smashing tackler.  
Please sir  
Can he be on our side?*

A number of Higher Folds boys went on to play professional rugby with Leigh. I recall going to one match at Hilton Park when Leigh were playing Wigan. The Wigan team included John Pendlebury and the Leigh team Darren Beazant and Wayne Atherton. They all started their rugby at Higher Folds C.P. School. Paul Hardman also played for Leigh at that time. Steve Davies, another 'Old Boy', signed for Wigan as a teenager. Other boys, including John's brother Gary, went on to play amateur Rugby League.

To be continued in the next issue, when Glyn recalls more teething problems of the new school in the late '60's.

# I'll tell you a tale

HAVE you ever tried telling someone under 40 that you grew up in a house without television? Once they've stopped looking at you as if you've sprouted a second head, they will ask the inevitable question - what did you do? Well you know the answer of course. We talked and listened.

## His tales live on

My dad Jack Cain needed no second bidding to talk of his beloved Ince and Wigan. Give him the chance and you'd have better not wanted an early night. Scraps of old paper and the backs of envelopes would serve to draw maps. The next day all the boxes, crosses, lines and squiggles meant little, but the night before they had been railways, mills, tram tracks and forges as he created the world of his youth. The tales he told, well yes - maybe some were a bit on the tall side - but he could take you with him, back to the '20's and '30's. Here a miner with a blackened face, trudging home after a long shift; there a shrimp seller from Southport touring the streets. There were kids kicking a rag ball while the sound of a trumpet floated in and out of the terraced rows.

Although my dad is no longer with us, his tales live on in my mind, and in sharing them with you maybe it will stir some of your recollections. So imagine him on one side of a crackling fire, me on the other and the cat curled up on the rug between us, whistling down her nose, and twitching - dreaming of mice, while the old grandfather clock filled the room with its heartbeat.

Dad was born at the top of Belle Green Lane in Ince in 1915. The rows of terraces built for the workers at Top Place iron and steelworks are gone, as are the works, most of the pubs and the bowling greens, but if you can picture them, picture also a small boy holding the reins of the coalman's horse while the coalman delivers his sacks. For this assistance my dad was sat up on the horse and taken for a ride up the street. After this close encounter with horse, coalman and



*The Cain family at Francis Street, Ince 1926*

Wigan's 'Black Diamonds', you can imagine the state he went home in.

## "You prize idiot"

Belle Green school and mission church obviously served an important role in community life. Despite their physical toughness, many miners were quite religious men. Living with the constant danger, as well as possibly having survived service in the Great War, may have contributed in some way. John Willie Heaton was one such and played the little church organ.

Some readers may recall the Pennington family, painters and decorators in Ince - Arthur, the father, and sons Jack and Corny. Corny and my dad were pals but was Corny quite so 'head in the clouds' as dad made out? One day the teacher was telling the class how Deakins got the fruit for their jams from the Vale of Evesham and Corny was called up to point to the area. He supposedly obliged by pointing to the middle of the North Sea, to be sent back with the words of the teacher ringing in his ears ...."You prize idiot Pennington".

The Pennington's business activities were prone to mishap too. Once they set fire to a woman's curtains with a blowlamp and ran down the street shouting "Eh missus tha curtins is aleet." Mrs Pennington was obviously a woman of principle as my uncle, Teddy Cain (in his 100th year) told me how she took an axe to Corny's bike as he had kept my dad waiting.

## Sport was king

Sport was king to lads playing in the streets. Some from that district became top flight rugby players, such as Jonnie Lawrenson, Dick Green and Tommy Holland. After Bolton won the famous 1923 'White Horse' final, the game was recreated, with a lad named Hotchkiss as the Bolton goalie Pym. Another boy (Aaron Roby?) had a short leg and, if the tale is to be believed, played as a winger so he could prop his short leg on the kerbstone.

Come summer the boys played cricket at the foot of the slag tip at the side of Hemfield Road. Makeshift stumps would be set up on the narrow strip of grass and the game would get under way. Play was interrupted many a time as an ironworks locomotive would release its load of slag filled ladles. As these had often solidified to some degree they would roll down from the top of the tip high above the cricket match. The stumps would quickly be pulled and the boys would flee. Sometimes the slag boulders would break open and showers of sparks and red hot slag would shower everywhere.

Many adventures were to be had around the ironworks. One involved straddling a huge pipe that ran across the lodge of steaming water pumped from the great boilers. Another was wading in Hindley Hall golf club lake to find lost balls, all the while believing in the huge pike that might bite your toes at any moment. Then there was the delf between Kirkless and Aspull, which in dad's account resembled Jurassic Park, or Conan Doyle's 'lost world'.

Kickcap was a rather unkind game played when a new boy entered the area. Each boy took turns to kick a folded cap as far as possible. When it was the new boy's turn a stone or half a brick was slipped inside. Many a clog was broken and the poor unfortunate given a clip around the ear on his return home for incurring repair bills the family could ill afford.

Another of dad's stories concerned a girl named Mary Nichols who had had a brand new scooter, the envy of

all. Edward Atherton's dad couldn't abide his son being without, so he set about building one for Edward. The only trouble was that he built it with whatever he could find and it ended up looking and sounding like a tank. The wheels were so wide it couldn't lean over, and so couldn't go round corners; but Edward was dead proud of it. When he took to the street on it, people rushed to their windows to see what was making the noise.

As a child my dad was obviously a great one for getting his way into places. Next door to his home in Francis Street lived the Holmes family, and they had a cat's whisker wireless set which they used to let him listen to under the headphones. Another port of call was the signal box that controlled the level crossing which took the Springs Branch railway across Belle Green Lane at the *Oak Tree* pub. He would sit on a stool watching the signman pull the levers and keep warm in there on a winter's day. If he couldn't get in there, there was a cloggers roughly opposite where once again a small boy might scramble up on a convenient stool. He always mentioned something that had made an impression on him as a lad - how the flags rang at a certain point near the cloggers. He wondered in later life if it had anything to do with the workings of the industrious Bee colliery underneath.

### Came in at 33-1

As I mentioned above, the Kirkless (Top Place) ironworks dominated that area, and the men who worked on the great furnaces could drink like fish due to the heat in which they worked. The young children in each family would deliver drink to their fathers come break time. The men loved a flutter on the horses and one day encouraged dad to choose a horse. His choice of one called 'The Bug' at 33-1 didn't meet with universal delight but the men went with it - and it won. Thereafter they kept asking grandad Cain, "When's your little lad coming up again?"

The ironworks was the source for many stories handed on from grandad to my dad. Many of them were sad, and illustrative of the harsh working conditions either side of World War I. The one that used to give me a chill as a child was of the man suffocated to death in a flue when the doors were shut by accident whilst he was inside cleaning. There was a one eyed man blinded by red

hot molten iron as it was run into the pig beds and splashed up into his face. Scars from burns were almost a badge of office, it would seem. Then there was the hated manager, Big Daf the Welshman, who lived in Kirkless Hall by the canal. He would see the children waiting with their fathers' drink and refuse to let the men take it.

The Hill was on dad's paper round and the dark, unlit lane that ran past it filled him with dread as a little lad. So he would hurry on to reach sanctuary on Cale Lane as quickly as possible. He used to recount how one day a horse fell into the canal when it slipped while pulling a loaded barge. Men were trying to secure it with ropes and pull it to safety. At other times people were forced to throw fighting dogs into the canal to part them. Walking along the tow path towards Top Look now, it is hard to imagine the once constant noise and activity of the place. The famous 'glow upon the heavens' caused when the furnaces were opened at night for loading is something that some readers may have experienced when young.

### Stopped two weeks pay

By the 1930s Jack Cain was apprenticed to the famous Wigan engineers Walker Bros. Unusually Wigan RLFC were playing a midweek daytime match, a cup replay I think. Together with another chap named Harry Cowser dad slipped away to watch the game. They were found out and were duly hauled before Major Walker who stopped them two weeks pay. The shame of having to admit to his mother that she wouldn't see any money from him for a fortnight was something that was never forgotten.

Even allowing for some embroidery over the years, Jack's memories, and those he inherited from his father, serve to show what a hard but vibrant world existed back then. The war took him away from Wigan and, for nearly 60 years, he lived down south; but somehow nothing quite recaptured those colourful, youthful days in Ince as far as he was concerned. To him there were two kinds of people - Lancastrians and other folk - and even other

Lancastrians gave best to Wiganers.

Towards the end of his life I introduced him to a charismatic friend of mine and they got on like a house on fire. Afterwards he said, "talking to your pal was like being back in Ince with the people I grew up with." The ultimate accolade. As they say, you can take the boy out of Wigan but you'll not take Wigan out the boy.

\*\*\*\*\*

Back in issue 26, the Editor kindly published photos of Ince Boys Brigade at camp in the 1920's. Fortunately some further shots have come to light. The fun that the lads had on these trips is evident and they also illustrate the more simple amusements of young lads in days gone by. Are any members still about?

Neil Cain  
Northolt Middlessex



*Fun and games for the Brigade at Ansdell near Lytham, 1931*



*Ince Boys' Brigade at Rhyl, 1932 (Jack Cain is 2nd from right)*

# HISTORY SHOP NEWS

## Exhibitions at the History Shop

### The Taylor Gallery

#### Routes to Your Roots

19 March - 20 August

You still have time to catch this fascinating travelling exhibition from the National Coal Mining Museum for England, supplemented by local material, if you have not already done so.

If you want to find out about your ancestors who worked in the coal mining industry, and how they lived their lives in the heart of the coal mining community. Then this is the exhibition for you. Using photographs, artefacts and documents from our collections, we explain the sources available, and how to use them. Younger visitors can use our special storyboards to learn how to become family and local history detectives, and play the 'Back to Your Roots' game.

### A Feast of Photography!

The History Shop welcomes Wigan Borough's two distinguished local photographic societies for their annual exhibitions. If you love photography, you must not miss either of them.

#### Wigan Photographic Society Annual Show

27 August - 10 September

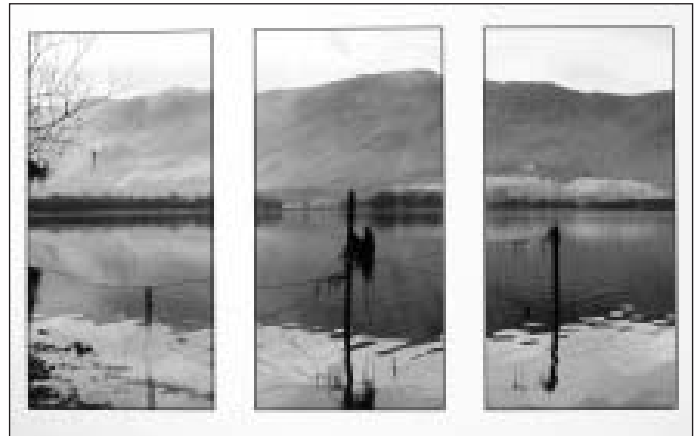
The members will be showing works that they have produced over the last twelve months. There will be over 400 images, both prints and slides. Visitors will have the opportunity to vote for their favourite picture. Last year, you voted for this picture of a very appealing seal by Derek Swift.



#### Atherton Photographic Society Annual Show

14 September - 1 October

Atherton will be presenting a cross section of members work from their 2004-2005 competition entries, originally shown at their club premises. It includes a wide variety of subject matter in both in traditional and digital formats. This serene picture of Derwentwater is by Sue Riley.



#### The Changing Face of Wigan

15 October 2005 - 11 February 2006

Can you remember what Wigan looked like 20 years ago? The town centre is currently undergoing redevelopment to build a grand new shopping centre. We have taken this opportunity to explore how and why Wigan has changed over the years, and is still changing. Through old maps, documents, photographs and works of art from our collections, we present the changing face of Wigan from the early 19th century to the present day.

### Next Year!

#### The Secret Life of Textiles

6 March - 27 May 2006

This exhibition takes a look at the fabulous wealth of design and textile history hidden away in pattern book collections throughout the NW. Produced with lottery funding, it features our own collections alongside those of Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, Macclesfield Museum, Liverpool John Moores University and Quarry Bank Mill, and will help you decode the secrets they hold. A catalogue of the collections will be on sale in our shop. Don't know what a pattern book is? Come along and find out!

**Yvonne Webb**  
Collections Development Manager  
Wigan Heritage Service

# HISTORY SHOP NEWS

## Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust Wigan Heritage Service Customer Charter

Last year, in *Past Forward 37*, we published our 'customer charter' to you. In it we made a commitment of the sort of service to which we aspire and which you as our visitors deserve.

This commitment was split into three sections:

### 'Visitor Services'

- provide an efficient, friendly and customer focused service
- offer a range of services, both educational and recreational, designed to meet the needs of all our visitors
- consult with existing and potential users and partners for their views to help us improve our service
- respond to your feedback and enquiries as speedily as possible, and certainly within 10 working days

### 'Collections'

- ensure that all artefacts and archives within our trust are cared for to national standards
- ensure that they will be made available for your enjoyment, inspiration and education, subject to availability

### 'Facilities'

- ensure your safety by complying with all Health & Safety policies and procedures
- endeavour to make your visit a pleasant and comfortable experience by ensuring that our facilities meet acceptable standards of quality and cleanliness
- seek to provide reasonable physical access to our outlets

One year on, we are happy to report back on these commitments and tell you exactly how we have done.

You will recall that the Charter published in *Past Forward 37* was accompanied with a questionnaire. The results of this were fully published in the last issue of our magazine. Also a survey of visitors to the History Shop was carried out last year, as was a survey of non-users through the Citizens' Panel. These are the main sources of the following data:

### Visitor Services

Provide an efficient, friendly and customer focused service ✓

*From our survey 96% of you rated our services good or excellent*

Offer a range of services, both educational and recreational, designed to meet the needs of all our visitors ✓

*Last year the Heritage Service put on 33 educational or outreach based activities, from family friendly workshops in the History Shop to guided walks and evening talks*

Consult with existing and potential users and partners for their views to help us improve our service ✓  
*Our surveys themselves generated 1,276 responses last year alone. That is not counting the visitor comments in our books.*

Respond to your feedback and enquiries as speedily as possible, and certainly within 10 working days ✓  
*Our record for the year April 2004-March 2005 was 96% answered within ten working days*

### Collections

Ensure that all artefacts and archives within our trust are cared for to national standards ✓  
*Wigan Heritage Service continues to be a registered museum under the Museums Libraries and Archive Council and an authorised repository for church records.*

Ensure that they will be made available for your enjoyment, inspiration and education, subject to availability ✓  
*During the year the History Shop was open for exhibitions and family history study for 299 days. The Archive search room was available 139 days*

### Facilities

Ensure your safety by complying with all Health & Safety policies and procedures ✓  
*We have had 0 complaints*

Endeavour to make your visit a pleasant and comfortable experience by ensuring that our facilities meet acceptable standards of quality and cleanliness ✓  
*No really, we have had 0 complaints!*

Seek to provide reasonable physical access to our outlets ✓  
*The ground floor of the History Shop is fully accessible.*

*Comments on the accessibility of the History Shop first floor are being carefully collected and looked at; however an alternative study area is provided.*  
*The Archive search room is already served by a lift.*

**We are keen to continually improve our service. The Heritage Service staff would welcome any comments, compliments or complaints, which you may have. You can always contact us at:  
The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU  
Tel: 01942 828128 Email: [heritage@wlct.org](mailto:heritage@wlct.org)**

# Wigan Pier

Personal circumstances have prevented Gerald from continuing his series of local drawings, at least for the time being. However, I am delighted that he has allowed this series of drawings, completed in the late 1990's, to be reproduced here.

Many of Wigan's landmarks are included, but the



drawings focus particularly on Wigan Pier. This, I think, is very apt at this time - exactly 20 years on from when it first opened, and when the Pier is now undergoing a considerable change of focus and direction.

On a personal note, it was 20 years ago when I

first came across, and was immediately attracted to, the paintings of Gerald Rickards. Since then, it has been a privilege to display his Charter Mural and several exhibitions of his work in the History Shop, as well as to have known him as a friend.

*Ed.*



# Just One Day

IT IS a holiday from school, summer holidays, Easter holidays, it does not really matter; all that matters is that the sun is shining and it is hot. What a lovely day to pick the tar out from between the cobbles; all I need now are some lolly sticks. Found some, that didn't take long. Ferretti the ice cream man came round last night and my friends and I all got an ice cream lolly dipped in chocolate.

## Treacle lollies

My friend is not coming out till after dinner and I told her I would be in the street making treacle lollies (ie tar wrapped round lolly sticks). Because the sun is hot the tar is bubbling and shiny, just right. Pick a nice spot slap, bang in the middle of the road where the car wheels don't touch (not that any cars come down our street) and start rolling. The secret is not too much tar, because it's hot if you put too much on, it all drops off. That's it, six treacle lollies all in a row, put them in the shade and they go hard again.

"KATHLEEN!" "Oops, that's my mum shouting. As I get up to see what she wants, my knees, socks and hands are covered in sticky black tar; never mind, my mum will put some butter on and wash it off. My mum wants me to go to Margaret's shop, just round the corner from our house. She wants a loaf, so off I go; she said I can have 3d. for some toffee.

"A large loaf please, Margaret, for my mum". "One shilling and 3 halfpennies" says Margaret as she wraps the large un-sliced loaf in tissue paper and twists the corners. "How clever". I save the 3d. for later.

Outside the shop, off comes the tissue paper and, before I get home, all four corners of the loaf has been eaten. Put the tissue paper back, mum'll never know. Just then, my friend shouts me; she has had her dinner and has come out to play. "I'll just take this loaf

to my mum and then come out". Putting the loaf on the kitchen table before she says anything, I run out of the back door and off we go, straight onto the black patch. It is a black patch of dirt across the road from the Empress Mill. Because it's a hot day all the side doors to the mill are open, so we go across the road to watch all the mill workers; there are bars up, so we push our faces through and smell the cotton, see the dust and watch all the women working, and shouting loud above the noise of all the machinery, How do they know what each other is saying when they can't hear? Magic.

## Sixpenny ice lollies

"Oi, you two, come here," shouts a lady from the next-door up from the one we are looking through. "Wonder what she wants us for?" As we run up, she is taking her purse out of her crossover pinafore, her arm comes through the bars and in my hand she puts 2s.6d. "Go to Woodcocks at the top, and get four sixpenny ice lollies, get you and your friend a 3d. lolly each, and hurry up before they melt." Off we run, exciting stuff this, getting lollies for the women in the mill. Stop at the kerb, run across the road straight into Woodcocks. "Six ice lollies please, 4 sixpenny, and 2 threepenny ones, she puts them all in a paper bag, but before we have crossed the road out come our lollies, and by the time we have run down Anderton Street, our lollies have nearly gone. The lady is waiting for us, and takes the paper bag off us. "Thanks love", she said, and back into the mist of cotton she went.

"Now what shall we do? I know, let's follow somebody". We go to sit on the Labour Club steps and wait till somebody comes past, then get up and follow them. That doesn't last long, because as soon as they know you are following them they turn round and call you cheeky beggars. Better stop it before they tell our mums.

## Barley broth with dumplings

I wonder what time it is, must be nearly tea time. I'm hungry. "I'm going for my tea, come for me when it's dark and we'll play hide and seek." Off I go round the back, through the back gate and into our yard, then climb on the coal bunker under the kitchen window and look through to see if my dad's home from work; not yet. My mum opens the back door; "wash your hands, your tea is nearly ready." It's barley broth with dumplings – lovely; it doesn't matter it is cracking flags outside, home made apple pie for afters, what more could you want?

"Can I go in the front and watch the telly now?" After about an hour of 'Popeye meets the Goonies' and 'Robin Hood', my friend knocks on the door. "I'm going out", I shout to my mum, "only at the front". My friend and I see how many buttons we have on our dresses and count, "lady, baby, gypsy, queen, elephant, monkey, tangerine." Wherever your finger stops that is what you are.

## What a belting day!

Some more friends are out by now, there are about six of us. We play hide and seek just across from our house. I run round the back of our house, in the back way, through the kitchen, through the front, look through the front window, and when my friend has gone to find us, out through the front door I run, and am home without being found. After half a dozen times doing this, my dad shouts, "the next time you come in, you stop in". I had better find another place to hide, I do, but I have to have one more go at running through the house. "That's it, stop in." "Can I tell my friends I will see them tomorrow?" I open the front door and shout, "my dad says I have to stop in now; see you tomorrow." Another ten minutes and everybody goes home.

I grab a comic, go upstairs to read, and think what a belting day it was. But that was just one day, there are loads left!

**Kath Meadwell  
Ince Nr Wigan**



# 50 Years of Football in Ashton-in-Makerfield

ASHTON Town Football Club, based in Ashton-in-Makerfield, is looking forward to one of the most exciting periods in its 52 year history.

The future looks bright for the club in more ways than one, with floodlights being installed at their Edge Green Street ground over the summer. This latest development opens up a new era in the club's existence and provides a fascinating contrast to the early days of its existence when it began life as Makerfield Mill FC and its driving force was a man who worked at a local textile mill.

## Makerfield Mill FC

Makerfield Mill, located in Windsor Road in Ashton-in-Makerfield, was one of Lancashire's leading textile mills in the 1950's. The mill itself was known locally as the 'Weaving Shed', and at the height of Lancashire textile industry several hundred people were employed there. In 1953 one of the workforce, Derek (Mick) Mycock, decided to form a works football team comprised entirely of mill employees, to offer local men the chance to play in organised football matches. He approached the mill's management with the idea, and permission was granted for a piece of land adjacent to the works in Windsor Road to be used as the site for the football club's ground. Once his application for membership of the Wigan Sunday School League for the start of the 1953-54 season had been accepted, Mick set about forming the

first squad of players to represent Makerfield Mill F.C.

The club's first two seasons in the Wigan Sunday School League were disastrous from a playing point of view, and meant that Mick had to change his original plan of playing only mill employees in the team. Mick successfully gained permission from the Mill to bring in four non-employees, and set about planning for the next phase of the club's development.

The club then joined the St Helens Combination for the start of the 1955-56 season, and after a season of consolidation brought about an improvement in fortunes, Mick decided to extend the experiment of bringing in outsiders to play for the club. He also enlisted the help of two other men to assist in the running of the club - Joe Glaze and Arthur Jones - and the three men were to be the driving force behind the club for the next few years.

## Outstanding Seasons

An outstanding campaign in the 1956-57 season saw the club win the Liverpool County F.A. Shield (the first club from the Wigan area to do so since 1932-33), the St Helens Hospital Cup, the Rainford Pottery Cup and the Tom Worrell Cup, while in the league they were St Helens Combination Division Two Runners Up.

The club enjoyed another outstanding season in 1957-58, winning the St Helens Combination Division Two and dominating local cup competitions. At the end of the season they applied to

join the Warrington Amateur League, and as the member clubs had been impressed by the team's recent performances, were accepted straight away. After an inaugural season of consolidation, the club won the Warrington League First Division Championship trophy for the first time at the end of the 1959-60 season. The standard was maintained the following season, when the championship was retained, along with the Depot Cup and the Wigan Cup.

## Move to Bryn

The 1961-62 season proved to be a notable one in the club's history, although this was due more to events off the park than on it. During the course of the season the club's committee became aware of a major threat to the club. The Mill management informed the committee that they would not allow the playing area to be used for outsiders to play football on after the end of the 1961-62 season. The club's immediate response was to offer to take over any financial responsibility for the costs of maintaining the ground, but this offer was rejected outright by the Mill's management. The reasons for this soon became apparent, when it was announced that a local construction company, Smith Brothers, had purchased the land for building new houses.

The committee was therefore forced to look at alternatives, and having appealed to the local Council for assistance, their

persistence was rewarded when the Council sanctioned the use of Whithill Street Recreation Ground in Bryn as a temporary home. There were no changing rooms at the new venue, but by securing the use of St Peter's Church Hall and later *Bath Springs* Hotel for changing purposes, the club managed to meet the standards required by the League to remain in existence.

## Ashton Town FC

At this point, with no links of any description now remaining with the Mill, the club changed its name to Ashton Town FC, and began the 1962-63 season under the new name at their new home. A change of name and base did little to alter the club's run of success. They dominated the Warrington League for the next three seasons, winning the First Division Championship in 1962-63, 1963-64 and 1964-65, with the triple crown of Warrington League honours - the Dodds Shield (a cup competition for Division One clubs), the Depot Cup and the Warrington Guardian Cup - also being captured during a memorable 1963-64 season.

By this time the club had a very strong and active committee, and Mick Mycock was still very actively involved. In the early part of 1964 Mick discovered that the old Stubshaw Cross Rovers' ground at Edge Green Street in Ashton-in-Makerfield was available for sale, and it was duly purchased in time for the

*Continued on page 26*

# THE RETURN

The day is hot and cloudless and filled with summer dreams of long ago – it is time to go back. One magical day last spring, I had a strange but wonderful glimpse into the past, and saw again the little girl I used to be. I vowed I would return, and today I walk hopefully through the golden afternoon to my childhood haunts, but she is not here.

## On the beach

Where would she be on a day like this? The seaside, perhaps? I wander down to Ince station, which lies still and silent in the heat, and long gone are the old ticket office and waiting room, blackened by years of smoke. A weeks holiday was out of the question, but we had the odd afternoon at Southport or

Blackpool, watching the teenagers, wearing kiss-me- quick hats and throwing darts at playing cards to win cloth dolls with pointed heads and painted faces. They would scramble onto the rattling old 'Caterpillar', the girls screaming as the green cover enveloped them in a strange underwater-like gloom, and a sudden deliberate rush of wind blew flared skirts high over nylon stockings. Then it was on to the helter skelter, where skirts blew up again as the screaming girls shot down the corkscrew slide on little mats. They landed in a giggling, tangled heap in a huge wooden bowl, under the fixed smiles of the rather dated cut-out figures of 1950's ladies which adorned the surrounding walls.

We younger ones played on the beach, wearing bubbly swimming costumes. We ate Pablo's ice cream

and made sand pies with colourful tin buckets and spades. Mams queued at little kiosks advertising "jugs of tea to take on the sands", whilst dads sat in deckchairs reading "Billy's Weekly Liar" and anticipating a Double Diamond Beer later on. We had our tea in a back street café – "fish and chips, tea, bread and butter 2/6d" – then bought little heart-shaped brooches with our name on, before a magnificent steam train brought us back to this once bustling station, which now slumbers in the sunshine, with only birdsong to break the silence. I walk away and leave it to its dreams.

The heat is intense now and I sit for a while and close my eyes; when I open them, romper suited babies are being wheeled by in coach-built Silver Cross prams with ↪

## 50 Years of Football in Ashton-in-Makerfield

*Continued from page 25*

start of the 1964-65 season.

Through hard work and fund raising, the club spent nearly £10,000 on developing the ground, the majority of the expenditure being used to build modern fully equipped dressing rooms and a club room with fully licensed bar, which was officially opened in March 1969 by Roger Hunt, the Liverpool and England player. Around the same time a covered enclosure was built on the far side of the ground, providing spectators with some protection from the weather

for the first time.

With facilities upgraded, the committee decided that it was time to move to a higher standard of football. Ashton Town's application for membership of the Lancashire Football Combination at the end of season 1970-71 was successful, and after four years in the Cheshire League between 1978 and 1982, reorganization of the leagues in the North West saw the club join the semi-professional North West Counties League in 1982, in which it has competed ever since.

## Mick's Legacy

Sadly Mick Mycock died in 1987, but his legacy to the club and the town was to leave behind a committed band of volunteers who have continued to work for the club with equal enthusiasm through to the present day.

The ground improvements of 2005 herald the dawn of a new era for Ashton Town FC, as these will bring the ground up to required league grading standards, and enable Ashton Town to compete in national competitions such as the FA Cup. It is a far cry from 50 years ago when the team had to play on a piece of land next to a mill, but the basic principle remains the same. Ashton Town FC is able to offer local footballers the opportunity to play competitive football, and gives local people the chance to get involved with a community based organisation - just as Mick Mycock intended when he started up a works football team back in 1953.

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## PLEA FROM THE EDITOR

I greatly value all contributions to *Past Forward*, and if you don't have access to a computer, don't let that put you off sending me your article - preferably typed, but again, if you can only manage handwritten, that's fine.

Best by far are electronic contributions, ie by Email ([heritage@wlct.org](mailto:heritage@wlct.org)), or on CD ROM or floppy disc together with hard copy printouts. And it would help the production team and myself even more if articles were double line spaced with one inch (25mm) margins and a word count included. Many thanks.

**Ed.**

fringed sun shades, their chattering young mums sporting crisp summer dresses, peep-toe sandals and Twink home perms. And then I see the girl. She's looking in the window of the corner shop, and she is carrying my doll, Suzy, who I used to push along in my Triang dolls pram, after tucking her in cosily with beautifully crocheted covers made by Aunt Mary's clever hand. Suzy was so beautiful and much loved, and when you turned her over, she said "Mama".

### 'Last orders'

The shop bell tinkles and Suzy is carried proudly in after much deliberation over Penny Arrows, Cherry Lips and Lucky Bags, but I am not surprised to see that an ice cold 4d. Jubbly is the choice on this summers day. Across the road, the smell of beer wafts from the open pub doorway. Beer seemed to smell much stronger when I was a child, and perhaps it was, for off-key renditions of "Nelly Dean" and "Honley a rose hi give yooooo!" occasionally floated across to our house! My mam and dad often enjoyed the 'last hour' across in the pub's 'singing room' - in those days any unruly behaviour or bad language would be nipped sharply in the bud by the landlord, and neighbours could relax over a Magee's Oatmeal Stout and a chat around the piano. 'Last orders' was announced at 10.30pm by the pub lights being 'blinked', and dad would come home and put a bottle of pop and a bag of crisps containing a little blue salt-bag "on't t'cornish" (mantelpiece - now there's an expression you never hear now!) for me.

### Walk to the cemetery

On sunny Sunday afternoons, a popular outing for many people was a walk to the cemetery - honest! Mam and Aunt Mary would walk in front, gossiping, and my friend Christine and I would dawdle along behind, singing the latest songs - can you imagine children looking forward to that today? Aunt Mary always put on her Sunday voice during cemetery strolls, as we bumped into people

wearing their best clothes and carrying bunches of flowers. "Hit's very naice to see you", she would greet them, "hisn't it warm?" Then, in a whispered aside to my mam, "E's pots - fer - rags, yon mon!" One blustery day of April showers, following a life of hardship and mental cruelty from an evil husband, she paid another visit to that cemetery - one from which she never returned. But she lives on in the sound of her laughter, for he couldn't break her spirit, nor her irrepressible sense of humour. But why oh why did she and others like her put up with it? Perhaps, in those days, there was simply nowhere to turn.

The girl has walked up to Ince Park, and she strolls along with Suzy, blowing a dandelion clock to 'tell the time'. In years to come, there will be a skateboard area in the far corner, but today the swings are still there, and I think of Elsie, a woman who remained a child and used to stand on the swing seat, pushing herself so high that we held our breath for fear she would go over the top bar, but she never did.

### "It's gerrin dark!"

As the sun starts to go down, the girl turns for home. Down the back entries, mothers begin to call their children in from play, their voices raising an octave on the last syllable "Su-SAN!", "Kath-LEEN!", "come on in now - it's gerrin dark!" It's a sound you don't seem to hear these days, isn't it? The girl slows down as the television news filters through an open doorway, then walks on head bowed. At the entrance to our row she turns towards me and there is fear in her eyes.... where is Cuba? What is a missile? What does it mean? She doesn't understand, but she knows the grown-ups are worried, and she senses the tension in the air as the world holds its breath. Oh, how I long to reach out and tell her that it won't happen - that she will grow up safe and sound. I want her to know that she has a son and a daughter, who played 'shops' in the backyard, and who have made her so very, very happy. But she won't be able to comprehend, will she?

Not yet - not whilst there are still bluebells to pick and trees to climb.

"I-RENE!" suddenly calls a voice I love, and my heart skips a beat. I start to run joyfully towards it, but come to a sudden stop, because it isn't for me, is it? - it is for her, and, just for a split second, I envy her.... Run, little girl - run through the summer days: enjoy every precious moment of your childhood, for all too soon, its magic will be gone. But remember it all, and one day you will tell others of your memories, and they too will recall their own, and you will smile together. "I-RENE!" calls that beloved voice once more, growing anxious now, and I motion for her to go. But she takes a step towards me, and her eyes ask, "will it REALLY be alright?" My head nods, "yes it will - don't worry", and we smile, and all is right in her little world. Go on now, love - your mam is waiting. Goodbye.

Irene Roberts  
Abram Nr Wigan

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### *In Praise of 'Past Forward'*

*They call it 'Past Forward'  
Where did they get that name?  
I'm always waiting for it to come out  
No sex, in fact it's quite tame.*

*Many people think it's wonderful  
They come from near and far  
All about what happened here  
There's nothing on a par.*

*Stories, rhymes, they're all there  
From the town and round about  
Ince, Platt Bridge and such like  
Never nought about 'out!*

*You'll learn a lot about the area  
What went on long ago  
And there was always something  
going on  
And what's not written we may  
never know.*

*Near Standish they planned an  
airport!  
Was King Arthur seen at Boars  
Head?  
Did Gracie come to Wigan?  
I don't know, that's what they said.*

*So don't forget 'Past Forward'  
It's such a good paper to read  
There's plenty of topics to interest  
you  
And a very good read indeed.*

Bob Heaviside  
Standish Nr Wigan

# The Scots are Coming!

by  
R. Evans

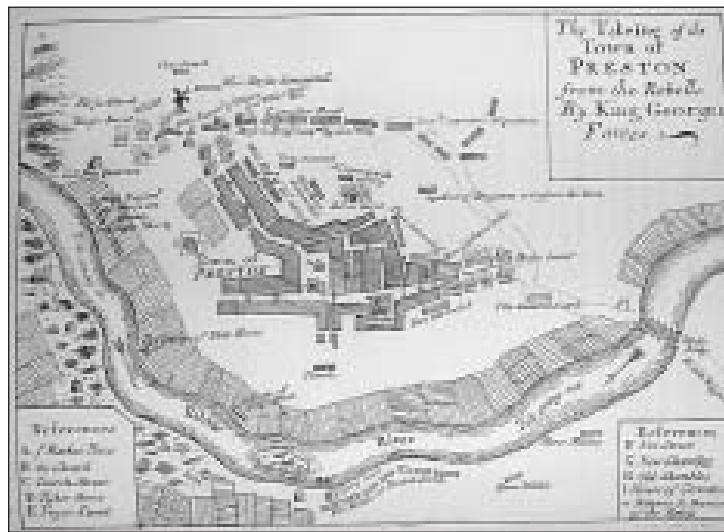
THE map right, drawn some 100 years after the events, is a recreation of the scene as it was on 13 December 1715 (1). The evidence provided in this account describes how men from Atherton were in the militia groups stationed on the south bank of the River Ribble. From there they could look northwards towards a blanket of smoke produced by the flames rising from the burning buildings of Preston. From across the river they could hear the heavy thud of cannon fire together with sharper crackle of musket fire. Two government armies were engaged in battle with an army from Scotland which had invaded England with the intention of placing James Edward Stuart on the throne of England.

Since 1688, when his father, James 11, had been deposed Parliament had passed laws to ensure that throne could only be occupied by a Protestant. As a result, following the death of Queen Anne in the previous year, Parliament invited her closest Protestant relative, George, the Elector of Hanover, to succeed her. Scottish supporters of the Stuarts viewed this as an opportunity for the family to reclaim the throne, believing that there would be little support in England for foreigner who could speak no English.

## Rev Woods of Chowbent Chapel

The inhabitants of Atherton were independently minded in both a religious and political sense. They were Puritans and dissenters who wished to preserve the right to follow their individual religious beliefs. They rejected the Stuart claim of absolute power for the ruler and feared that if they did regain power Catholicism would be reintroduced as the nation's religion. For this reason both official county militia forces as well as what appear to have been volunteers were encamped on the banks of the Ribble to oppose this threat from Scotland. There they had been entrusted with the task of preventing any of the rebel troops escaping across the river to seek sanctuary amongst the Catholic supporters in the West of the county.

There are two principal sources of evidence concerning the involvement of Atherton townspeople in this action. One, found in many general historical writings about Atherton, is based on a series of notes written in the latter part of the 18th century by Dorning Rasbotham using information provided by Peter



Valentine of Chowbent  
(2)

*"During the rebellion of 1715 Mr Woods at that time minister of the chapel by virtue of a commission under the hand of General Wills marched to Preston at the head of about 80 of his bearers armed with implements of husbandry, in support of the present government. By the general's orders he took a post upon the south side of the Ribble for the defence of the ford which leads from Penwortham to Preston. His situation did*

*not allow him to take part in the victory which immediately succeeded, but he is said to have sworn (which he constantly denied) that he would run through the first man who betrayed any sign of timidity."*

This contingent had come in response to an appeal for armed volunteers sent by General Willis and Sir Henry Houghton, commanders of the Government forces, to Mr Woods minister of the chapel in Atherton.(3)

*"To the Rev. Mr Woods in Chowbent for his Majesty's Service*

*Charles Wills*

*The officers here design to march at the break of the day for Preston, they have devised me to raise what men I can to meet us at Preston tomorrow, so desire you to raise all the force you can, I mean lusty young fellows to draw up on Cuerden Green, to be there by 10 o'clock, to bring with them what arms they have fitt for service, and scythes put in straight polls, and such as have not to bring spades and billhooks for pioneering with. Pray go immediately all amongst your neighbours and give this notice.*

*I am your very faithful servant*

*Wigan 11th Nov. 1715*

*H Houghton"*

## Constables Accounts

The second source consists of first hand evidence from the annual account sheets compiled by the Constables of Atherton, part of the Township Records now in Wigan Archives in Leigh Town Hall. One of the Constable's responsibilities was the maintenance of a local contribution to the County militia, a force that could be mobilised in a national emergency. The records suggest that in normal times this duty did not occupy much of a Constable's time or required him to make many

payments from his budget. Two sums were spent to maintain an area in Atherton where shooting skills could be practised. One assumes by this date it was for muskets rather than archery. At the end of the 17th century Rowland Houghton's accounts include:

*"Paid for Repairing the Shooting butts — £00:1s: 00d"*

Further repair work was done in 1707/08 when both Constables paid 1s. each towards their repair:

*"pd for Repairing yr Shutting Butts my part — £0 -1s -0d"*

In 1705 the Constable made payments to ensure that the town's weapons were kept in good condition.

For most of the first half of the 18th century Constables were appointed for the Upper and Lower sides of the township and each produced an individual account running from October to October. The threat and increased burden of work in this period of crisis is probably why combined accounts were produced for 1715/16 and 1716/17, and it is these accounts which, while not providing a narrative account, do allow one to follow the sequence of events in late 1715.

Local people must have become aware of the threat in late October when money was spent at Thomas Hatton's, no doubt to discuss the role of the militia which was being assembled initially at Newton, a strategic point on the main road north.

By 8 November it would appear that the militia was based in Wigan and here their equipment was being checked and where necessary repaired.

On the 13th, the day of the battle, they went to Preston and further improvements were made to their equipment. There is no indication that they were involved in the actual fighting and as previously quoted sources suggest they were members of the militia detachments guarding the ford across the Ribble.

When news of the government victory reached Atherton fuel was bought for a celebration bonfire.

During this period wives and children often accompanied the armies and the Constable was obliged to find somewhere for them to live:

Troops remained in the region for some months afterwards and the Constables paid charges for the movement of prisoners to Warrington and Lancaster.

There had been casualties in the fighting and payments were made to those who had been wounded or needed transport out of the district.

One payment at the head of the account sheet may indicate that the number of official militia participants in the action was five – each paid £1 6s 4d.

In the following year, 1716/17, the accounts submitted by Henry Helliwell and Robert Kearsley show that there were still expenses to be paid possibly to ensure that the militia was properly equipped for any similar threat. One of the Constables made three journeys to Wigan in connection with the militia weapons and a musket was also purchased.

There were still casualties who required help. Two wounded soldiers were given money while one who was too sick to ride was given lodgings and then taken to Leigh.

Involvement in this action resulted in a much-increased charge to the township. The accounts record a total spend of £25 07s 00d in 1715/16 and £10 14s 06d in 1716/17, compared with £7 03s 051/2d in 1713/14.

*Continued on page 30*

# The Scots are Coming!

Continued from page 29

## The '45 - The Second Jacobite Rebellion

Thirty years later, on 28 November 1745, the townspeople of Atherton were aware of the presence of another invading army from Scotland marching along what is now the A6 and passing across Four Lane Ends towards Manchester. On this occasion the Jacobite army led in person by Charles Edward Stuart, "Bonnie Prince Charlie", the son of James Edward, penetrated as far south as Derby. Here, discouraged by the lack of any significant support in England, the decision was made to return to Scotland and they retreated along the A49 through Warrington and Wigan. As they passed southwards a letter preserved in a collection of manuscripts describes how they entered local townships and there requisitioned quarters for the night. (4)

[1746.] Nov. 29. Rochdale.—"Yesterday at 2 o'clock, two Highlanders went into Manchester and soon after beat up for volunteers and enlisted forty or fifty; betwixt six and seven about 200 of them on horseback passed by Four Lane End, in Hilton, on their road to Manchester, and said more were following, as they intended to march thither that night; yesterday quarters were ordered for 800 at Leigh and Chorlton, about eight miles from Manchester." ½ p.

On this occasion there was no attempt to resist the advance through Lancashire but the 1745/46 accounts of both John Morley for the Lower Side and John Baxter for the Higher Side make it clear that before the invading army reached Lancashire preparations were being made to prepare the militia to resist the threat. John Baxter's payments are undated but those of John Morley with items dated 12 November show a number of payments made to prepare the militia prior to the arrival of the rebel forces.

1745 Account of J<sup>r</sup> Constable this for  
the Lower Side of Atherton for 1745  
Nov. 13 P. for Drags for goods for militia - 0 6  
P. for Drags for militia - 5 10  
P. for post - 0 10  
Expenses of Night - 1 0  
P. for carrying down men - 1 0

But by 28/29 November the invaders had reached this area and as there were no government forces in the region, it would have been unreasonable to expect the militia alone to have attempted any resistance. Local people were in no position to prevent their homes being used for overnight accommodation. Another item in the account is John Morley's claim for expenses travelling to Manchester suggesting that limited, though no doubt reluctant, co-operation had to be given to the invaders who were clearly regarded as rebels.

Expenses of Night when of militia came in - 2 6  
Expenses going to Manchester and back - 2 8

Payments in John Baxter's accounts are not dated but show that during this period he paid similar sums for weapons and equipment. Jonathan Johnson's signed receipt for "Malicia arms and Other Repairs" which John paid still survives.

An account of money Received by John Baxter of Atherton for the higher side of Atherton for 1745  
was by way of October 15<sup>th</sup> 1745 as follows to wit.  
Paid of Malicia Arms & other Repairs - L 8 8  
and other Repairs as in the Bill appears - 6 3 7  
and for a Bill for services as in the Bill appears - 2 11 3

Malicia Arms for the militia of Atherton for 1745  
for four muskets and Ammunition - L 8 8  
for Ammunition and other Repairs - 6 3 7  
Total - 15 1 5  
for Ammunition and other Repairs - 3 0 11 0  
for Ammunition and other Repairs - 1 0 1 6  
for four Carriage Drags and other Repairs - 7 0 4  
for one Bill and other Repairs - 0 0 9  
Total - 6 9 7  
Received the full contents of the Bill  
and in full by one Jonathan Johnson

He appears to have had to make a number of journeys to in order to obtain these weapons and had to claim expenses particularly for the time spent at Wigan.

for Malicia Arms for a Service to Wigan with Ammunition  
and Drags for Drags and other Repairs  
all Day for Ammunition and other Repairs - 1  
Other Ammunition for Wigan my self & Ammunition to be found  
and for Ammunition for Ammunition and other Repairs 12 8  
Total spent in a Service to Wigan and other Repairs - 2 16

Following the return to Scotland, pursued by government forces, the Jacobite army was finally routed at Culloden and Charles fled back to the Continent. John Baxter's account for 1745/46 includes a payment made for bonfire celebrations in Atherton on 28 April which no doubt was in response to the arrival of news of the Government victory over a week earlier on 16 April .

for a Service to Wigan with Ammunition and other Repairs - 12 8

### PRIMARY SOURCE REFERENCES

The extracts which are quoted in this account are from the Atherton Township Records held by Wigan Archives Service as follows:

- Constable Accounts TR -Ath/D  
1692-1720 /1/1 and 1732-1749 /1/3
- Constable Accounts Vouchers for Accounts -TR Ath/D  
1745 - 1779 /1 /115

The writer acknowledges the valuable help given by Alan Davies, Wigan Heritage Service's Archivist in Leigh Town Hall, in making the records available for study.

# Wartime in Wigan

WHEN the dangers of invasion came with the fall of France in the summer of 1940, there was a call for men to join the Local Defence Volunteers, as they were first known. The name was changed by Winston Churchill to 'Home Guard', after the initials LDV were interpreted as 'Look, Duck and Vanish'. Many who had served in the 1914-18 war joined at once, ready, in the Prime Minister's words, "to defend our island whatever the cost".

The Wigan headquarters for the Home Guard was the Drill Hall. Public buildings were sandbagged and cellars used as air-raid shelters until better shelters could be constructed. Many residents began to build shelters in their gardens. Gas masks were issued and most people carried them at first; indeed, for a time it was impossible to enter a football ground without carrying a gas mask. However, the practice fell into disuse long before the end of the year. Cinemas closed and then re-opened with a closing time of 10.00 pm. Traffic signals had shields with small apertures put over them.

*Continuing his series on 'Wartime in Wigan', James Fairhurst looks at the dark days of the early 1940's.*

All cotton mills eventually closed and were turned over to war work.

On Sunday 9 June 1940, the bells of Wigan parish church fell silent. In future, they would only be rung as a local alarm signal for any form of enemy attack, whether seaborne or airborne. It was not to be a general warning of invasion - purely a local signal that troops were in the immediate neighbourhood or approaching.

Milestones and signposts were removed, names of railway stations were taken down and names of towns were obliterated from all buildings and vehicles. (It has to be said, however, that these measures, taken to confuse an invading force, confused the troops moving about the country even more!)

Older men joined the Special Constabulary and patrolled the streets at night in all kinds of weather. Many police pensioners were recalled to take the place of police

officers who had joined the forces, and there was another body called the Police War Reserves.

Women were incorporated into the National Fire Service in Wigan. Originally, 20 were trained and a further 22 recruited. Training was a two weeks course in all departments of fire-fighting, much of which as carried out at the Presbyterian school, Harrogate Street.

National Identity Cards had been issued in September 1939, and

persons requested to produce them had to do so within 48 hours. Two defendants who gave false names and addresses were fined £3 and £2 on each charge (this at a time when the average wage was between £3 and £4 per week).

Attendance committees were formed and persistent absentees fined; one 22 year old miner who had a summons for failing to work regularly was sentenced to six weeks imprisonment - he had been absent 41 times in six months!

And throughout these difficult years, sport carried on - Wigan Rugby League Club, for example, fulfilled all its fixtures every season.

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*If you are interested, contact Philip Butler*

**Tel (01942) 828128**

## JOIN THE HOME GUARD- NOW

### T' HOME GUARDS.

In t' Reichstag we're day just a bit since,  
Two fellows sat - both lookin' grim;  
Wann was the great Adolf Titer,  
An' t' other was Goerin' - 'is claim.  
"New Adolf," said Goerin' was sayin',  
"It's high time that the made a move;  
The promised 'at dard invade England -  
Our power is finally passin'.  
Ah've cleared the t' way we' re' Luftwaffe -  
We've bow'd t' R.A.F. down to t' ground;  
For each plane we've lost, they've lost seven!  
Or, do ah mean t' other way round.  
Poor Adolf, 'e looked very mournful,  
'Is moultache it drooped on 'is lip;  
'Is sleek lock of hair was being pulled -  
Yer could tell the poor chap 'ad the pip.  
'E pondered for just a few moments,  
Then open'd 'is mouth with a sigh.  
'Eh see, 'Oh well... it's aw right then talkin' -  
But invasion ah don't think ah'd try t'  
"Why, we've done it before," protests Goerin',  
It's as easy as easy can be;  
We've done it on all t' other countries -  
Ah can't think what's come over thee."  
"We've only to take t' same procedure -  
Drop parachute-troops in t' backyards;  
"Aye, an' that's where the wrong," replies Adolf.  
"That's forgotten just was thing - t' one Guards!"  
Well, said Goerin' at first 'e looked puzzled,  
Then 'oldin' 'is coat by the 'em,  
An' burstin' out laughin' right loudly,  
See "The don't mean the' frightened o' them!"  
"It's all right then laughin', see Adolf,  
"But they've rifles - machine guns an' so well;  
An' between me and thee an' t' jump-post;  
They'd be glad to blow us lot to 'el."  
"An' there's was other thing to consider -  
An' it's reason for most of me fears;  
There's nearly two million of 'em,  
An' t' very ruddy wan - t' Kolossus.  
So help us a good job to finish,  
To bring back the times that were gay,  
Be ready to smash the invader,  
So roll up - and sign on to-day.

ENROL THIS WEEK AT  
**ANY POLICE STATION-ANY TIME**  
**HOME GUARD HEADQUARTERS**  
- ANY DAY 7 p.m. to 9 -

# What Happened to the Prizes?

Probably not many will remember - I was only six at the time - the event in aid of the Mayor's Cot Fund, on 23 September 1933. It was to be a timed motor reliability trial, from Market Square Wigan to Rivington Pike and back. The starter was to be none other than the world famous Gracie Fields. There were Baby Austins, Rileys, Fords, Standards, Lagondas and even a Buick, for it was to be a very important day for the motoring fraternity.

## Gracie arrives

The Market Square was decked out with banners and advertisements of every kind; there were stalls and, of course, the famous Mr. Michelin just as big as you like, bobbing about in the breeze. Wigan was bathed in sunshine as the starter, none other than the world famous Gracie Fields, eventually arrived - she was late because of the 'traffic' (even in 1933!). She commented, "It's always been snowing or raining when I've been here before." She judged all the vehicles, from the baby Austins to the sleek Lagonda.

Most of the competitors were local

drivers who were having their first experience of trials, but some well known competitors were also taking part. The first car was away at 1.30 prompt. The race, controlled by the RAC, was approximately 97 miles, but cars were never more than 15 miles from the centre of Wigan. There were six time checks, including two secret ones at Euxton and Belmont. Three non stop sections were observed during the trials - Rivington four miles, and Howitt Hill and Stone Cottage both one and a half miles.

## Course was too easy!

It was at Howitt Hill, or Quarry Bank as it was popularly called, where there was most trouble. There were minor accidents here, and many of the competitors received assistance; fortunately, however, no serious accidents were reported. The first driver out had to retire - he had the ill luck to disturb a large stone which punctured his petrol tank. Another competitor from Southport, in a Wolseley sports, had to retire with a broken track rod end.

But 88 of the 101 competitors who started managed to finish the course, the last arriving back at 7.15p.m. Some even complained afterwards about how easy the course was!

You may wonder how I know about the event. The reason is that my uncle was driving Dr. Whitehead's Austin and they won 1st prize in class 3. The prizes, which I



*Trouble on Howitt Hill*

presume are still around somewhere, were quite something. The premier award, presented by the Motor Traders of Wigan and District and won by Mr L R Hough (no 17 Riley), was a beautiful gold bowl, 10 inches in diameter, with three hand carved dragons perched around the bowl. The premier award in class 3, presented by Messrs. Peter Walker, was a silver cup 10 inches high, surmounted by a winged wheel on the lid. All these prizes were supplied by Bakers Jewel Casket of Wigan.

## Regrets

I will close with three regrets. Firstly, despite the comment made by a reporter that he wouldn't be surprised if this became a yearly event, it would seem that this did not in fact happen. Secondly, I am unable to show the course on a map of the area (I have written to the R.A.C but unfortunately they cannot help me). Finally, the big question, whatever happened to all the prizes? I have been in touch with various people of my age, and they don't even remember the event!



*A bouquet for the star*

**Bob Heaviside  
Standish Nr Wigan**





# WIGAN AND THE ARRAS TUNNELS

GEORGE Ogden, my greatgrandfather, was born on 24 March 1865 in Stone Clough, Kearsley, Lancashire, the son of Jonathon Ogden and Mary Lee. They were a coal mining family who moved around Lancashire for work, with George eventually settling in Wigan where he married Mary Ann Atherton (nee Pilkington) of Wigan in 1884 at Holy Trinity Church, Ashton-in-Makerfield. In the 1901 census the family were living at 4 Gravel Hill, Little Hulton with children, Elizabeth, aged 15, a cotton framer, George, 10 and Albert, 8. All were born in Wigan. When their daughter Hilda was born in 1903, they were living at 33 First Avenue, Hindley.

## Sapper No 21418

George immigrated to New Zealand in 1905 and the rest of the family followed in 1906, including my grandmother Elizabeth (Lizzie), who was born in 1886 in Platt Bridge, Wigan. George's World War 1 war record records that he was a miner and was

enrolled as Sapper No 21418 in the Second Reinforcements of the New Zealand Engineers Tunnelling Company. After training, he sailed for France in June 1916 and was posted to the Company on 15 November 1916. That he was engaged with a tunnelling Company was always a mystery to me until, in 2000, there were some newspaper articles about a series of World War 1 tunnels which had been discovered under Arras in France. They were to be reopened and restored.

## Old caverns

Arras is a small picturesque city in the North of France; it was the scene of close contact fighting between the British and the Germans, and later tens of thousands of troops were involved in the Battle of Arras from 9 April to 16 May 1917. The battles raged above a series of caverns left when chalk and later limestone had been mined since the 10th century. The story emerged that in 1915 the Allies had requested that New Zealand

supply tunnellers for the job of extending these ancient tunnels under 'No Mans Land' and behind the Germans, ultimately for troops to break through to the surface and attack them from behind. Thousands of soldiers would shelter in the system of caverns as German shells screamed down. 15,000 assault men moved into position to fight, through the tunnels of Arras. They were 100ft. below ground, in appalling conditions of 80% humidity as they waited for the Battle of Arras.

In books on the NZ Tunnelling Company, it is written that the New Zealanders, working in shifts around the clock, would dig a tunnel to extend eventually eight miles long. A major operations room would be dug every hundred metres or so, and these were named after places dear to their hearts - they recorded their home cities such as Auckland, New Plymouth, Wellington, Nelson, Blenheim, Christchurch, Dunedin and our southernmost town, Bluff. These names were used as

signposts to be a guide through the labyrinth of shafts. Some plaques are still visible today with the opening of the tunnels. Galleries such as Glasgow, London, Manchester and Liverpool were settled and claimed by ex UK soldiers. Within the maze of tunnels would be kitchens and sleeping quarters, as well as a hospital and ammunition dumps.

## In Memoriam

Testimony to the fighting is recorded on the Arras Memorial to the thousands of UK, NZ and other Allies who died. In Arras, a museum has been opened to display the war artefacts found in the tunnels, and you can join tours to parts of the tunnels to observe names and badges carved into the limestone walls.

George was nearly 50 when he enlisted; he had never practiced as a miner since leaving Wigan, so he must have found the work in the tunnels very hard. His war record states he was invalided back to New Zealand in July 1917 and died in Auckland Military Hospital on 23 September 1919, aged 54. He was awarded the British War and Victory medals. On his grave is a marker from the New Zealand Returned Servicemens Association; the headstone also records his wife, Mary Ann, who died aged 59 in 1924.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Ogden, my grandmother, never lost her Lancashire accent. She married John Wallett in 1910, and they made only one journey back to Wigan, in 1939 when she visited an aunt and cousins. On the voyage home they were left stranded in Bombay when their boat, the P&O Maloja, was taken over for a hospital ship - World War II had just been declared. But that's another story.....

Noleen Sutton  
Auckland  
New Zealand



*Wedding of George Ogden's daughter Elizabeth to John Wallett, 1910. George is seated at far right, beside his son Albert. Daughter Hilda is the flowergirl on the floor.*

# Fond Memories of the Ritz

*SADLY, the Ritz in Wigan has recently been demolished, as part of the new town centre development. Here are two very different responses - Fred Darbyshire remembers it back in the '40's, while Caroline Chadwick's memories are much more recent.*

The demolition of the Ritz Cinema prompted me to look back through my old programmes. Even although it is sad to see the Ritz disappear, these old programmes brought back some wonderful memories of the '40's.

**Sunday 1 April 1945**

**EDDIE KISTLER** and his **SWINGTIPS**, the dance orchestra of the US Army Air Force. What a night that was!

**Sunday 15 April 1945**

**THE NAT ALLEN BROADCASTING BAND**

**Sunday 17 November 1946**

**THE SQUADRONAIRES**, directed by star vocalist **JIMMY MILLAR**, on piano **RONNIE ALDRICH**, later to take over the band, then to move to the BBC. There were many star musicians in the band, but **GEORGE CHISHOLM** in the trombone section was the best - his solos and comedy were something never to be forgotten; he also worked for the BBC.

**Friday 9 February 1947**

**THE JOE LOSS ORCHESTRA**. A fantastic orchestra, to whom my wife and I have danced many times. His isngers all became solo stars in their own right - **HOWARD JONES**, **ELIZABETH BATEY** and **DON RIVERS**.

We also had the other RAF band, **THE SKYROCKETS**, conducted by



another BBC man, **PAUL FENNELL**, with star singer **DENNY DENNIS**, who sang with the great **Tommy Dorsey** after the war. I also remember **SID MILLWARD** and his **NITWITS**; the funny little bald headed man in the band later shot to fame with **Benny Hill**.

It will be sad to see the Ritz go. Thursday was our night in the 1s.9d.'s; I'm sure lots of my generation will remember these charity concerts. What memories!

Fred Darbyshire  
Ince Wigan

\*\*\*\*\*

The other day, with a heavy heart, I walked past the demolition that has just started on the old Ritz cinema on Station Road, to make way for the new Grand Arcade; soon, all that will be there is an empty space, and all my memories of going there as a child came flooding back.

I'm not old enough to remember it in its heyday in the '40's and '50's -

I don't even remember the '60's when the Beatles came (for the record I'm only 29) - but I absolutely fell in love with the place in the mid '80's, going there on a Saturday afternoon and in the school holidays to watch all my favourite films.

I can remember the anticipation of going about 1.15 for the 2.00 opening, and people waiting all the way up to **John Menzies** (W H Smiths now). I can vividly remember the first time I ever went through the double doors and up the steps to the kiosk. I think that it was at that moment that I fell in love with everything about the Ritz - the wonderful smells of the confectionery counter with the warm, freshly made popcorn, going to the kiosk to get your tickets for your chosen film, then going up the steps to the screen of your film. My favourite was screen 1, the biggest screen - as a child it was magical to me, with all the 1930's Art Deco design. I would love to have seen it in its heyday, when it was a single screen 2000 seater; it would have been really something to see the Art Deco design, all the lighting arrangements and all the vivid colours - a dream come true.

Alas, I will never set foot in the place again. It is sad to see the last 'Picture Palace' of Wigan in the hands of the demolition team, but I wonder if there are any pictorial records of the Ritz from its heyday, and from the three screen multiple days anywhere? Does anyone have photos of the inside decor of the Ritz, so I could have my own personal memories of my favourite building in Wigan.

**Caroline Chadwick**  
Platt Bridge Wigan



The Squadraires. The late **George Chisholm** is fourth from left  
Photo courtesy of [www.maybole.org](http://www.maybole.org)

# "Never Married, but Wore Engagement Ring until her Death

Base B.E.F.  
2nd August, 1917

My Darling Edith,

Still in the same place and still the vile weather. It has rained almost incessantly ever since I set foot in this country. Last night I had a look round the town, but it simply poured the whole of the time. The visit was very disappointing, the only pleasant result being in increased feeling of patriotism towards the old country. Really there is no place to compare with England.

I have just finished my day's duties - censoring letters. One half of the world does not know how the other half lives.

In addition to being wet the weather is somewhat colder so I may require my woollen coat before long. Have you tried dying it yet?

I have not been able to get any decent note-paper here, and I am still using the bit you gave me. Would you mind getting me a pad and then you can send it on when I get a permanent address.

I am still awaiting your first letter dear. It may come to-day. It is still quite early. This afternoon I am going down to Ordnance to get rubber boots and a few other things.

Well little pet I find that answering letters has a disastrous effect on the composition of my own correspondence. One's ideas and expressions are swamped in a multitude of others.

B.E.F.

Night Sun 12 to Mon 13th Aug. 1917

My Darling Edith,

I am on night duty again and am snatching a few minutes to write to you. I have just set the guns banging away at the Bosch and they do not require my attention for a time. I am settling down to my new duties quite nicely now and am much happier than I was. You see dear it was such a sudden shock stepping from England right into this, - like stepping into a cold bath. But I am getting used again now. I wish I could tell you more of my life and work out here, but a great deal is forbidden. However

Dear Sir

I enclose some letters from Norman Cecil Wilkinson of Atherton Road, Hindley to his fiancée (my aunt) Edith McCormick of Liverpool, as well as two relating to his death. He attended Wigan & District Mining & Technical College before going to Liverpool University, where he met my aunt, a fellow science student. She went on to teach mathematics and physics at Blackburn House Grammar School, Liverpool, where she was Deputy Head; she never married, but wore Norman's engagement ring until her death.

Eileen Anderton  
Southport

Edith this letter might be well worth keeping, some day I will explain why.

My fellow officers are thorough gentlemen and we get on very well together. It makes a huge difference to things, when one has decent fellows to work with. The men too, are quite decent chaps, in fact many are downright heroes.

Well little pet, you are safe and comfy in bed! Thank God for that. Even during the roughest times out here, I have always the satisfaction of knowing that you pet are quite safe.

3.30 am Monday.

I spoke too soon about the guns not requiring attention for some time. They have been giving trouble of a mechanical nature and I have been busy in the "wee small hours".

Well darling I am still awaiting your first letter and getting rather impatient too. I left you a fortnight ago this morning and since then I have heard no word. Isn't it very cruel dear? Still I blame the post, and though impatient, I am very happy for I know you are thinking dearly of me. I wonder what you are doing.

61. C.C.S.  
B.E. Forces  
25.8.17

Sir,

I regret to tell you that Lieut

Wilkinson R.G.A. 332 S. Battery, died here on 24.8.17. He was admitted the day before with a severe shell wound in his right leg. He was in a serious condition on admission and never rallied.

He was buried at Dozinghem Cemetery. All his belongings will be sent to you from the War Office.

With much sympathy,

I am

Yours sincerely,

(signed) A. BAIRD, (Sister)

(2nd Lieut. Norman Wilkinson fell at St. Julien, a little to the right of Langermarck. His battery had been stationed at La Brique, outside Ypres.)

Gr. Hodkinson 98637,  
5, Lisbon Place,  
Holloway,  
Bath.  
18th Dec. 1917.

Miss McCormick,  
Dear Madam,

I will commence by saying that Signallers work in pairs in France, and I was fortunate in having a good chum Richard Hasten by name. It was our good luck in being with Mr. Wilkinson very frequently, as we happened to be detailed for the posts that he had charge of on those days. As an officer is frequently alone all day with his two signallers you can quite understand that we are treated a bit more intimately. We generally went to the O.P. on the occasions when it fell to Mr. Wilkinson's turn. He seemed to like us and was kind to us in many ways which none but a soldier could understand and appreciate. I recollect one occasion upon which he told me he was engaged. I note from my diary that we three were on O.P. on the 17th and we were lucky to come out of it alive. I recall it well and the 3 of us had to run 5 or 6 hundred yards through very heavy shell fire. On this occasion he helped us to carry our telephones and telescopes, etc., and but for that we should most certainly have gone under. You can therefore understand my

*Continued on page 36*

## *"Never Married, but Wore Engagement Ring until her Death*

*Continued from page 35*

remembrance of him is very grateful. I cannot bring to mind the instance you mention as the 12th ... I shall try and should I remember will let you know what it was.

Upon the morning of the 23rd 1 and my chum were a little late owing to a very slight misunderstanding. It was a lovely day when we set off together from our rear position, which was then in a village or rather suburb of Ypres distant from that place 1/2 mile. We had to walk towards our front line trenches, to our Observation Post. Calling at our forward position, we resumed our journey (after a few minutes rest).

The O.P. was at the time close to Kitchener Wood and was a Pillbox. It was always risky getting there and away again, but you were fairly safe when there, but I have had some very warm times there. Upon arriving, we got seated inside and chatted awhile resting, when Mr. Wilkinson asked me to get through to our Battery. I did so at once, and the Major at once spoke from there. As a result Mr. Wilkinson announced that one of us was to accompany him to the Front Line. I wanted to go, but my chum being a single chap would not hear of it. The time then was probably about 9.30.

When they had set off, I got outside to see them off. They had only gone about 200 yds. when I saw a shell (4.2) pass about 30 yds. over to their left. Almost immediately another one dropped some distance to the right. They continued upon their way, but unfortunately then came the fatal third which must have dropped at their feet. I saw Dick emerge from behind the tree, and I at once saw

him come running for a stretcher. Poor chum, he was dazed and shaken terribly. I at once sprinted to him, and we got the assistance of an R.E. officer. At the same time a stretcher was brought up and we had him upon it at once. He was dressed as well as the circumstances permitted, but it was a terrible wound. I have no hesitation in saying that, had he lived, he would have lost his leg. I do not wish to dwell upon this part of the letter, so please excuse me. Suffice it to say that I felt sick at the appearance of it. He was splendid in his courage, in his great pain he could yet speak kindly to us. He was quite conscious, and having made him comfortable, we started as quickly as possible to get him to a Dressing Station. I asked him if he would like a drink of water and I was so glad I had my water bottle, as he was glad of a few sips. He spoke to me several times on the way down, which was fully 3/4 of a mile along the duckboard tracks (Admiral Road).

# *WIGAN*

*(Written on the Somme, May 1918)*

*From Harrock Hill to Roby Mill,  
From Lathom House to Standish,  
From Arley's moated manor  
To the Cross of Mabel's anguish;  
From windy pike to chequered plain,  
Each meadow, copse and wildwood—  
I love you all, dear names of home,  
Sweet continent of childhood.*

*There's bluebells now in John Pit Wood,  
And baby ferns unfurling,  
And in the dell beside Wood Folds,  
A tiny beck is purling;  
I see the shadows dapple  
Underneath the beeches tall,  
Where the Roman road goes dipping  
Down the slope to Giant's Hall.*

*The birds are returning,  
To Balcarres' stately park,  
In the wood the mellow mavis  
On the lea the soaring lark.  
Oh, the green of tender birches!  
Oh, the scent of alien pines!  
In the cutting where the sunlight  
Dances down t the railway lines!*

*From the steps of Ashurst steeple  
You can see the ships at sea;  
From the bluffs of Billinge Beacon  
All the way to Anglesea!  
Hunter's Hill's a noble foreland,  
At its feet a sea of green,  
For a thousand rolling meadows  
From its summit may be seen.*

*By the steeps of old Upholland  
By the depths of Anglezarke.  
By the glare upon the heavens  
Over Kirkless after dark;  
Oh I swear by every acre  
That a link of memory claims,  
There is no enchanted country  
With such old sweet-sounding  
names!*

Donald Mackenzie, a Wigan soldier, wrote this nostalgic poem in the final year of World War I. My thanks to Harry and Brenda Short of Leeds for kindly sending it to me. *Ed.*

## **STOP PRESS PAST FORWARD NOW ONLINE**



The last edition of *Past Forward* (number 39) is now available, in colour, for viewing at our own website [www.wlct.org](http://www.wlct.org). Scroll down on the first page on the site or click onto culture then heritage and a PDF will download for viewing, saving to your computer or to your printer. In fact, past copies are going online at the rate of one per week, so when you read this, something like the last 12 issues should be online! Imagine! Never missing another edition of your favourite magazine!

### **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 1st Wednesday of every month at 11.00 a.m. Details from Alan Bradshaw (01942 726493)

#### **7 September**

*The Work of the Citizens Advice Bureau*

**5 October** Postcards Alec Wallace

#### **2 November**

*Aspects of Ashton's History* Walter Carney

#### **7 December**

*History of the Christmas Carol*

James Fairhurst (followed by lunch)

### **Aspull & Haigh Historical Society**

We meet in Our Lady's R.C. Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull on the 2nd Thursday in the month at 7.30 p.m. Details from Barbara Rhodes (01942 222769)

#### **8 September**

*Return to the Titanic* Steve Rigby

#### **13 October**

*The Lancashire Cotton Mills*

#### **10 November**

*A Dramatisation* Lizzie Jones

### **Atherton Heritage Society**

Meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. at St. Richards Jubilee Hall, Atherton. Details from Margaret Hodge (01942 884893)

#### **9 August**

*The Life of Beatrix Potter* Dorothy Hindle

#### **13 September**

*Women and children in the Mines*

Alan Davies

#### **11 October**

*Victorian Pressed Glass* (follows AGM)

Christine Ogden

#### **8 November**

*History of the American Musical*

B Schnieder

### **Atherton Probus Club**

This is a non-political and non-sectarian Club for retired professional/businessmen, who meet in St Richard Parish Centre, Mayfield Street, on alternate Thursday afternoons at 1.30 p.m. Details from Ron Collier (0161 790 1819).

### **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](http://www.billinge-history.com).

### **Golborne & Lowton Local History Society**

Meetings are held at Golborne Library on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7.00 p.m. Details from Derek Briscoe (01942 747366) or Jim Scotson (01942 206820).

### **Hindley History Society**

We meet in the Museum at Hindley Library, Market Street at 7.00 pm on the second Monday of the month. The museum is open three times per month on either Friday or Saturday mornings. Details from Joan Topping (01942 257361) or Norma Brannagan (01942 258668).

## **SOCIETY NEWS**

### **To all Secretaries**

**Would Secretaries please note the copy deadline on p2, and ensure that you send in all details of your meetings up to Easter 2006 for inclusion in the next issue. Thanks.**

### **Leigh & District Antique & Collectables Society**

Meetings are held on the last Thursday of the month (September to April) at 7.30 p.m. in the Derby Room of Leigh Library. Details from Janet Wilson (01942 516210)

### **Leigh & District Family History Society**

Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7.30 p.m. in the Derby Room of Leigh Library. Details from Olive Hughes (01942 741594).

#### **20 September**

*Wills* David Lambert

#### **18 October**

*Skeletons in the Cupboard* W J Taylor

#### **15 November**

*Slavery Records* Gordon Reed

#### **20 December**

*Theatres and Music Halls in the North West* Les Willis

### **Leigh Literary Society**

Meetings are held in the Derby Room at the Turnpike Centre, on alternate Monday evenings at 7.30 p.m. Details from Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, Leigh Library (01942 404559)

### **Leigh Local History Society**

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library, on the last Wednesday of the month. Details from Norma Ackers (01942 865488)

### **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. Details from Tom Kelly (01942 608787).

### **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. Details from Maurice Hilton (01942 223107).

### **Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society**

Meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month, except December, July and August, at 7.30 p.m., in the Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland. Beginners and more experienced family historians welcome. Details from Simon Martin (01942 702594).

#### **27 September**

*Family History Course - Parish Registers Part 1* Simon Martin

#### **25 October**

*Family History Course - Parish Registers Part 2* Simon Martin

#### **22 November**

*Soldier of the Crimean War* Neville King

### **Standish Probus Club**

Members are retired business and professional people. Meetings are held at 'The Owls', Rectory Lane, Standish on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 10.30 a.m. Details from Bryan Shepherd (01257 424994)

### **Tyldesley & District Historical Society**

Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of every month from September to May at the Tyldesley Pensioners club on Milk Street at 7.30 p.m. Refreshments available. Contact Tony Rydings (01942 514271) or Email: [rydings@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:rydings@blueyonder.co.uk). Visit our website at [www.tyldesleyhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.tyldesleyhistoricalsociety.co.uk).

### **Tyldesley Probus Club**

Members of the Club meet at Tyldesley Methodist Church, Eliot Street, on alternate Thursday mornings at 10.30 a.m., from 7 October until May 2005. The Club is for retired business/professional man and is non-political and non-sectarian. Details from Cedric Evans (0161 790 5166).

### **Upholland U3A Local History Group**

The University of the Third Age provides a meeting ground for retired and semi-retired people, of all walks of life, to socialise and encourage further learning in a multitude of subjects. A Local History Group has recently been formed, which meets in Hall Green Meeting Room, Upholland on the 4th Thursday of each month at 10.30 a.m. Refreshments available. Details from Don Stanway (01257 252719) or Joan Monks (01695 628184).

### **Wigan Archaeological Society**

The Society meets at the BP Centre (Scout HQ) in Greenhough Street on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m.

### **Wigan Civic Trust**

The Trust meets at Drumcroon Education Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan, on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7.30 p.m. Details from A.J. Grimshaw, 6 Bridgeman Terrace, Wigan (01942 245777).

### **Wigan Family & Local History Society**

Meetings are held on the 3rd 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. Further information from John Wogan, 678 Warrington Road, Goose Green, Wigan WN3 6XN or email [Johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:Johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk). Visit our website at [www.ffhs.org.uk/members/wigan.htm](http://www.ffhs.org.uk/members/wigan.htm).

# ARE WE ALL KNOBSTICKS?

Dear Editor,

Whilst reading about the battle of Howe Bridge in issue 38 of *Past Forward*, the word 'knobsticks' came up a couple of times as a means of describing the black legs who were continuing to work during the strike. I was reminded that the only other time that I had seen this word used was in a letter that my grandfather sent to the *Wigan Observer* in 1920. He (John Monk Foster) was a prolific writer to the press. However, the 'knobsticks' he wrote of were not involved in strike action, perhaps it's best that I let him tell the tale.

HOUSE OWNERS, RENTMEN, TRADE UNION BLACKLEGS

To the editor of the *Wigan Observer*

*Sir, A little matter, apparently, which is taking place quietly in our midst today is worthy, I think of a word or two of comment. The principles of trades unionism are recognised nowadays as being so beneficial to vast masses of workers that they are almost universally adopted; and it would be no easy business at the present moment, to find any considerable body of workers who are not organised to safeguard their interests as wage earners.*

*This being so, it will come as a great surprise to most people to learn that under certain given conditions some of these trade unionists are making blacklegs or knobsticks of themselves at this very moment, not at work, however, but at home. How this seeming paradox is brought about it will be necessary to show.*

*For years before the war broke out, all the time the war was waged, and since, countless thousands of working class dwellings had been allowed to fall into a scandalous condition of disrepair and dirtiness. The world conflict, shortage of labour and materials, were good enough excuse for this deplorable neglect of cottage property, so long as the war lasted.*

*But the armistice was signed, and common folk began to demand that their dwellings, unrepaired for six or more years should be made fit for decent people to live in.*

*The 'Rent Act' has enabled Landlords to increase rents by one third or more, and then what happened? Were cottages repaired and renovated as tenants had every right to*

*expect? Not at all. The authorities say a landlord is compelled to undertake no more than repairs; the matter of cleaning and decorating is optional.*

*The result has been this, certain homeowners and their agents have offered their tenants lime and paper and paint; and now we find these people turning themselves into amateur whitewashers, paper-hangers, painters and plasterers at the bidding of the rentman or owner. But what of the master painters and decorators, and the workmen they employ, whose work, wages and profits are being stolen by these homemade knobsticks to save a stingy property owner's pocket. And this being done while hundreds of thousands of good workmen are idle all over the country.*

Yours J. Monk Foster

Well, of course, in these days of DIY, these views are totally alien and out of step; there are very few jobs in the home that we don't attempt. However, it seems my grandfather was not without support because only a week later, again in the *Observer*, a letter written by a Mr. Banks of Throstlenest Avenue was full of support; again, I will let the writer tell his side of the tale.

AMATEUR DECORATORS AND KNOBSTICKS

*Sir, Might I be allowed to express my approval of the able manner in which the writer in last weeks issue denounces the knobsticks who are prepared to take on other peoples jobs and assist the rentman in filching the work from its rightful source to the detriment of the men now unemployed. Now the war is over it is sheer greed of gold and our friends are helping them to starve their own pals.*

Can I then appeal to the better side of these 'knobsticks' to desist from helping landlords to get work done on the cheap but let the practical painter make their home fit to live in. And so fellow readers of *Past Forward* perhaps we should remember next time we do a spot of tiling or paper the ceiling, you are a 'knobstick'!

Don Rayner  
Standish Wigan

## Chowbent Unitarian Chapel

Dear Mr Gillies

Chowbent Unitarian Chapel will be supporting this year's Heritage Open Days, a national event, by opening the Chapel to visitors as follows:

Friday 9 Sept, 1.00 - 5.00  
Saturday 10 Sept, 10.00 - 5.00  
Sunday 11 Sept, 12.00 - 5.00

Refreshments will be available in the new Chowbent Hall next to the Chapel, where there be a display of Chapel archive material. The only charges will be for refreshments.

From March to June this year the Chapel has been undergoing its final major phase of essential restoration: most of the windows have been removed for re-leading and the worn stone window surrounds have been replaced where necessary. Some repointing has been carried out.

The Chapel now has its own website: [www.chowbent-unitarian-chapel.org.uk](http://www.chowbent-unitarian-chapel.org.uk)

Rev Peter L Hughes  
Email: [Revpeter.Hughes@btpopenworld.com](mailto:Revpeter.Hughes@btpopenworld.com)

## SNORING

*Tha's 'eard about mi 'usban' recently  
One day he found 'is car and lost the key*

*'e drives mi mad wen finishin' 'is chores  
'e jumps straight into bed 'n' then 'e snores*

*Once Robert wakes mi up it cannot fail  
It makes no difference if ah rant 'n' wail*

*Or elbowin' 'is ribs ah couldn't tell  
Jus' nothin' 'appens awl is not too well*

*Wen 'e's awake wi seem to 'ave such fun  
'n' 'ave such happy times wen awl is done*

Elene Humphreys  
Treuddyn Mold

# Memories 1935-1945

by

Irene Cunliffe (nee Hughes)

**I WAS born on 28 December 1920; I will begin my memories 15 years later, when my dad was in business with his two brothers, trading as grocers. My family lived behind the shop.**

## First day at work

On 2 January 1935, aged 14, I had my first day at work - working with Dad and his brothers. Dad was next to the eldest in a family of ten. His brothers were many years his junior, more like my big brothers rather than my uncles. My education had supposedly ended; in fact, however, it was only just beginning.

I was taught to use the scales with words of *"never rob the customer, never rob your master, give correct weight always. Be sure to count change out in the customer's hand as mistakes cost money - even worse could lose us a customer. If not busy, look busy, there is always a job to be done in a shop. Last but not least, the golden rule, remember the customer is always right."*

Times were hard, many were unemployed, money was scarce. Today, people speak of poverty but they don't know the true meaning of the word. Children were kept from school because they had no shoes. Two brothers would share a pair of shoes, often too big for one of them. One would go to school in them one day and the other the next.

## The scraps

Shops were open 8.00am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday (except for Wednesday, halfday, 1.00pm) and 8.00am - 9.00pm Saturday; there was no Sunday opening. Just as the shop was closing, women would come in to buy the scraps of bacon and cheese crumbs that had fallen off the bacon machine and cheese board when being cut. These were sold at

2d. a time. Most people took a week's credit. We had a shop book, and the customer their own small book, so each could keep a record of what was spent. People shopped daily, with an order Friday or

Saturday. In most cases the order was delivered by the errand boy. He had a bike with a big basket on the front. The miles that 14 year old boy covered in all weathers for his 10s. per week. I remember he had to address his three 'bosses' as Mr Fred, Mr Ben and Mr Harry, as all had the same surname!

Each day commercial travellers called at the shop, representing such firms as Typhoo tea, Homepride flour, HP Sauce, Cherry Blossom boot polish, Robertson's jam, Huntley and Palmer's biscuits, Robin starch and many others too numerous to mention. As I write I can picture them all, those 'gentlemen of the road'. After business was concluded, each traveller would be guided into the 'back shop' and given a cup of tea.

Every subject under the sun was discussed behind our small shop. I recollect a few: "Would Tommy Farr win when he went to America to box Joe Louis?" "What about Harold Larwood's body line bowling?" "Was Jardine the right choice to captain the England cricket team against Australia?" "What about that goal Stanley Matthews scored on Saturday?" "Have you heard the budget?" "Is there a God?" "Is there life after death?" How I loved to listen to those conversations! I was never allowed to join in - my dad was strict, and I had to keep my place.

## Reserved occupation

In 1939, when I was 18 years old, war was declared. The shop no longer had an errand boy. There were better jobs and more money to be had. All eligible men and women were called up. My brother joined the Navy, my boyfriend the RAF. Married women were going out to work. Rationing was introduced - points for food, coupons for clothes and petrol.

Goods were no longer delivered to the shop, so we managed to buy a second-hand van. I was taught to drive; indeed, my job became important enough to be made a reserved occupation. The 'Mill at the Pier', as it is now, was then the Canal Wharf. Many goods would come up

the canal by barge. I had to collect them there. Goods also had to be collected at the Railway Sidings in Chapel Lane. Petrol was rationed. Not having enough petrol to use the van all the time, I sometimes had to go out on my bike.

One day Dad noticed two bikes being loaded on a horse and cart at the Railway Sidings and determined to buy one if possible. He followed the horse and cart to Ormerod's Warehouse which was alongside the old Market Square. He managed it! Alas! It was a big bike and I was only small - my feet wouldn't reach the pedals! Not to be outdone, Dad made four wooden blocks, two for each pedal, and fastened them on. It was lovely in the summertime - a soft breeze on my face and lifting my hair.

## No white wedding

As the war continued, many loved ones were lost. People became closer in their grief. I was married - no white wedding, no big reception, just families to a sit down tea at my home.

Food became scarcer. The few travellers who now called on us told us what we could have - no need to sell their goods. We were grateful for what we could get. The conversations in the 'back shop' continued. The subjects changed - "Could Montgomery beat Rommel?" "How many planes did we lose last night?" "Could Churchill really win us the war?" "Did you read what John Gordon said in the Sunday Express?"

After six years, the war ended. With joy and thankfulness some loved ones returned; sadly, many didn't - for their families just a memory. Yes, The war was over! Lights in the sky, hope in our hearts. Great Britain had survived. The lucky ones could build a life together.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shop in Gidlow Lane still remains, no longer belonging to my family, and no longer a grocers. I drove past it last week. The door was open - I wanted to stop my car and look inside - so many memories, so long ago, with only myself left to remember them.



## 'Monkey Parade'

Dear Sir

I mustn't pretend to be to sure, but I think my father and mother met on the Sunday evening parade (see *Past Forward* 39, p31) on 7 April 1907. I was astonished at her reflections late in life as to how similar her Edwardian days were to life on Wigan Lane in the 1930's.

When in 1955 I became Vicar of a church in Bradford, I was equally surprised to hear that there had been a 'monkey parade' there pre 1939, just as we did in Wigan. I always surmised that the custom was killed by three factors - World War II, an increase in vehicular traffic and the opening of Sunday cinemas.

**Rev Roger Taylor  
Lindsey Suffolk**

## Who Are These People?

Dear Alastair

The photograph (top) is of my grandmother, Mary Ellen Carroll and her sisters. She is standing on the left of the second row. Her two sisters are Catherine (third in from boy on left) and Jane (back row with head silhouetted in front of window, first on right). Her mother Ellen Carroll is seated second from right.



The bottom photograph shows the Mines Rescue unit at Howe Bridge. George Highfield is first on left (looking slightly sideways!). I wonder if any reader can identify the others.

**Dianne Teskey  
Community & Education Outreach Officer  
Wigan Heritage Service**

## BOB DOBSON

**Publisher and Book Dealer**

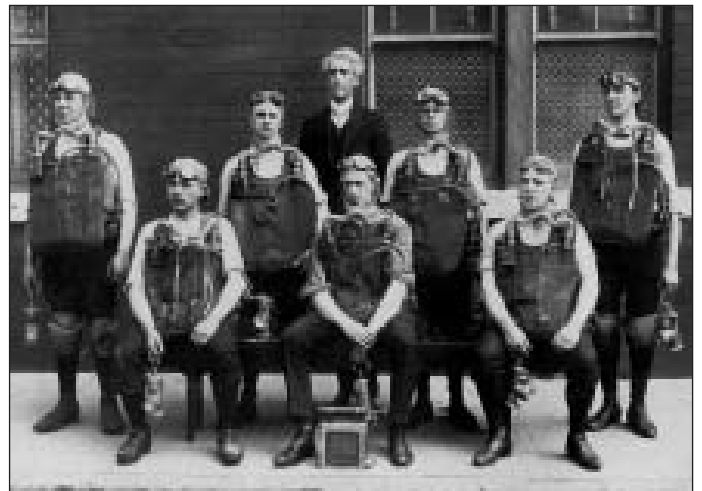
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I buy, sell and search for second-hand books relating to these counties: I search for books: I issue lists. I buy quantities of other books.

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## James Hilton remembered

Dear Sir,

The novelist James Hilton was born in Leigh in 1900 and wrote a number of books with a Lancashire setting, including the novels *So Well Remembered* and *And Now Goodbye*, and the short story *Gerald and the Candidate*. These are set in the fictional town of 'Browdley', which bears a close resemblance to Leigh.

I understand that Hilton returned to Leigh on a number of occasions in the 1950's to visit family and friends. I would be most grateful if any of your readers with reminiscences of Hilton would kindly contact me.

**John Hammond  
Secretary  
The James Hilton Society  
49 Beckingthorpe Drive  
Bottesford  
Nottingham NG13 0DN**





## A lot of humbug

Dear Editor

First I would like to thank *Past Forward* for a very good magazine; both my wife and I really enjoy reading it.

Re the article 'Anything for the Weekend Sir?' in the last issue of *Past Forward*, 'th'owd mon' who made the mint balls was my grandfather, John Bromilow; my uncle, Thomas Bromilow, also worked with him. They would make the famous mint and aniseed balls all week in a garage in Miry Lane, then go down to Central Park each Saturday when there was a home match; the crowd then would be about 40,000. Imagine selling the toffee at 10 in a bag for one old penny. They could make up to £10 just on Saturday.

So my father told me. He also said - and this may be an apochryphal story - that at the time my grandfather and uncle Tom were selling at Central Park, Santus, the other famous mint ball makers, offered to buy the recipe off them but they refused!

Later, my grandfather moved into the shop at 158 Scholes and carried on making mint balls there. After he died, when I was about 10 years old, my parents John and Annie Bromilow moved from Ince into the shop in Scholes and took over making the toffee. Later on my mother would buy little bits of things like needles and cotton to sell in the shop, to try and make a little more money.

When we were going to make a boiling of toffee, my mother would put my younger sister in a dolly tub with a few toys, because we didn't have much time in which to roll the mint balls, or stretch a lump of the toffee to make humbugs, as it went hard very quickly. While it was hot - very hot - my mother used to stretch a lump of toffee until it was a very light cream colour, then she would roll one cream and one dark lump together, snip off the end, and as she cut it she would do a half turn of the rolled toffee - that is how she did the humbugs.

My father passed the recipe on to me, and in later years my wife Cath and I made some just for fun for our friends; we still know how to make them, but alas we don't bother anymore.

Have you thought just how many mint balls were rolled by hand by my grandfather and uncle Tom, for each match? 24,000. Wow! Those were the days!

**Leslie Bromilow**  
Southport

## 'Johnny Bunny'

The Heritage Service has recently received an enquiry from a gentleman in Switzerland requesting any information about a brand of cough pastille which he believes was manufactured in Ashton-in-Makerfield and marketed under the trade name 'Johnny Bunny'. Staff at the History Shop have been unable to uncover any details of this brand, and would be most interested to here from anyone who can recall this product, especially as to the identity of the maker and the period when it was on sale.

**Mike Haddon**  
The History Shop  
Library Street  
Wigan WN1 1NU  
Tel: 01942 828121  
Email: [heritage@wlct.org](mailto:heritage@wlct.org)

## LONGEST JIGSAW

Dear Sir

I would just like to show my appreciation to George Wadson for his very interesting article 'Memories of 'Top Place' ironworks' in *Past Forward* no 38, p33.

During an electrical engineering apprenticeship at Mather & Platts, Manchester, I spent many spare moments watching the production of castings. I was absolutely fascinated with the whole process, from casting large motor/pump bedplates and casings to visiting the brass foundry to see the production of sprinklers to centrifugal pump impellers, a highly skilled process making the wooden patterns to the actual moulds. Then around the early '50's fabricated bedplates became the norm, a welding system which would lend itself to mass production.

As a volunteer at Wigan Pier I do enjoy talking to visitors about the foundry floor and the importance of the iron foundry during the Industrial Revolution. One of my forbears was a partner of a foundry in Manchester, Wren & Hopkinson, which designed and built water wheels, and later in 1850 supplied cast iron gear wheels for Brunel's Great Britain. This was quite a surprise and only came to light after discovering a letter as follows :-

*1852, at Mr Whitworths, Saturday.*

*My Dear Sir. The Great Britain will go to sea for a 48 hour trial on Monday morning starting about 12 O'clock. I hope arrangements will be made for those, who desire to go no further, to get out at*

*Holyhead. I intend to do this myself if the weather should be fine enough. If you will take the risk or chance I should be very glad to see you on board.*

*Yours Faithfully, John Penn*  
*(Your wheels work perfectly)"*

After visiting the ship the wheels turned out to be gear wheels four 14 feet in diameter 13 inches thick; these meshed with four drive wheels 4 feet 8 inches in diameter, each wheel being offset by an angle of 90 degrees to reduce noise. Another piece fitted into a family history project started some 30 years ago - the longest jigsaw puzzle I have ever attempted!

Another puzzle on which I need help is the Douglas Navigation, especially the area around Dean Wood to the River Douglas and the locks to the canal. I do have some early sketches of the area but not many details. I have read Mike Clark's books but wish to try and obtain more information from local people. Many years ago my son uncovered part of the old wagon road through the wood and also the road from the stone quarries at Roby Mill; we also located one of the wharves at the side of the Douglas. The Douglas Navigation was a tremendous piece of engineering in the 18th century. when one sees the size of the earth works from the Ribble estuary. I have heard that men who worked on the Navigation were not all Irishmen - some were Cornish tin miners. In any event I believe the word Navyv originated here.

**Ron Hopkinson**  
7 Cambridge Road Orrell  
Nr Wigan WN5 8PL

## An early saddle tank

Dear Sir

With reference to the picture of the loco in the latest issue of *Past Forward* (p 13), I think it is an early 0-6-0 or 0-6-2 saddle tank designed by Webb for the London and North Western Railway. It could be a colliery loco but by its cab design and the nature of name and number plates I think it is definitely LNWR. It was probably built at Crewe about 1870-1890. A good chance of identifying the loco may be with Pete Waterman as he now officially owns the London and North Western Railway Company.

I always like *Past Forward*, especially when there are railway items in letters or articles. It is a pity that Warrington does not have a magazine such as this.

**George F McKie**  
Great Sankey Warrington



Dear Mr Gillies,

I have read and re-read Irene Roberts' wonderful account of her happy and secure school-days spent at Ince Central School ("An Apple for the Teacher", *Past Forward* no 38), in which she describes so vividly the days before S.A.T.s and School League Tables, when children and teachers were so happy and relaxed. There were no computers or calculators – sums had to be worked out 'in our heads'.

As Irene recalls, teachers were allowed to get on with the real job of teaching basic skills, but there was still ample time to read Milly-Molly-Mandy stories (she had two friends called Little Friend Susan and Billy Blunt), recite poems, sing songs and hymns, dance, play games etc.

Bullying and bad language were very rare. Children were mischievous, but never

## Happy School Days at Ince

thuggish. I remember three little lads (who shall remain nameless!) being caught red-handed having a drink from a bottle of milk, which had been left on the doorstep of a house in Pickup Street. One of them protested to the lady-occupant, "but missus, E's nor 'ad a drink yet" – pointing to his co-accused!

The local dialect also caused some hilarity. When asked by the teacher for examples of words beginning with the sound 'O', one eager little scholar shot his hand in the air, puffed out his chest and proudly announced "Ommer, Miss".

I too remember children bringing 3d every week to help to pay for the new school. I hope the little pottery rabbit still sits on the cupboard in the corridor, keeping a friendly eye on the events of each day.

Does Irene remember bringing small amounts of bank money on Monday mornings, and children standing at the front of the Hall in Assembly on birthdays and having candles lit (and hair tugged!) according to their age? There were May Queen celebrations when pupils from the 'Top Class' were chosen to be the attendants (or

the Queen!) by having their names drawn from a hat. Other children practiced Maypole dancing (frequently getting their ribbons tangled, which led to friendly arguments).

On Ash Wednesday and Ascension Day we all walked to church along Ince Green Lane in crocodile fashion. The remainder of the day was a holiday.

But there was more!! On reading issue no 39, I walked closely behind Irene as she followed "The Girl", wearing a blue coat and a ribbon in her hair, around all the familiar places of Higher Ince. Again, her sense of well-being shone through every paragraph.

But when Irene hesitated close to St. Williams Presbytery and "The Girl" was about to open the door of the little terraced house behind the garden wall, my heart skipped a beat. I recognised the little girl to whom I delivered a spill-holder one Christmas many years ago. She had measles and I knew she would be upset if she didn't receive it, as it was a present for her dad. I feel sure – but I could be mistaken – that she gave me a shy smile before closing the door. I was a

newly qualified teacher at the time and my colleague, Mrs. Sandiford, was my role model, whom I shall always remember with great respect and admiration – she taught me so many things.

After delivering the present I continued along Ince Green Lane to my home in Lower Ince where I spent most of my life and, as a child, attended St. Mary's C.E. Primary School and then Hindley and Abram Grammar School.

Although much older than Irene, my childhood had many similarities for which I am truly grateful. I too made slop-dash, played 'shops' and remember walking round the streets dressed as a sun-flower on May Queen Day!

Kathleen Meadwell's letter was also very interesting – sadly the other teachers she mentions have all passed away. The photograph, which she submitted, was of the first class of children I taught after qualifying as a teacher.

Kind regards to Kathleen and Irene (I remember her and her mam and her maiden name very clearly) and all who share our memories.

**Margaret A Johnson  
(nee Ashurst)  
Standish Nr Wigan**

## MOVED TO TEARS

Dear Editor

How I have enjoyed reading the latest issue of *Past Forward*, received today.

I was moved to tears by the article written by Irene Roberts on pp37,38. How it took me back to my own childhood. It was as if she was narrating my own life as a girl, not in Wigan but in Royton, near Oldham.

My ancestors (Forshaws) are all from Wigan. My grandfather Elijah brought his family to the Oldham area in 1916, to get them away from coal mining. But Irene's descriptions of her local shops, the schoolrooms, the odd and scary characters, the games she played, such as making sloppy daw daw (as we called it) with dirt and water, and chip shop - we also used dog biscuits, but ate them before our dog got to them! - all brought back such wonderful memories.

I cried - and I am not ashamed to admit it - as I remembered dressing up our dog in a bonnet with a lacy frill, tucking him up in my doll's pram and taking him for a walk, or performing pantomimes in our yard and charging the local kids a penny to watch us perform.

Thank you, Irene, for making all these memories come flooding back. Your article was wonderfully written.

**Marian Buckley  
(nee Forshaw)  
Oldham Lancs**

## Well done Irene

Dear Mr Gillies,

Just a line to let you know how much we enjoy your magazine, especially the letters written by Irene Roberts.

Irene is a regular customer of Abram Library and also a member of Abram Community Link. She has just appeared in a play at Wigan Little Theatre called 'Wanted One Body'. We all went to see her and she was just great. Well done Irene. Next stop Hollywood!

Best wishes for future success from all the team at Abram Community Link and also from all the staff at Abram Library. Thanking you.

**Pauline Calter  
Email: paulinecalter5@hotmail.com**

## Worthingtons, Wigan Lane

Dear Alastair

I would like to thank you for your efforts with *Past Forward*.

I must particularly mention one article from the latest issue - 'Anything for the Weekend Sir?' (p30). As I read it, my mind was transported back to the days in Wigan Lane and Worthington's barbers shop. I remember both father and son; if you didn't get

a cold with father breathing down your neck, then you would when Frank got drawn into the conversation on rugby! Everything stopped - he was replaying the match and, if you happened to be in the chair, goodness knows when you'd get finished! Thanks again.

**Bob Heaviside  
Standish Nr Wigan**



## Wonderful Service!

Dear Editor

Last week I received two tapes of *Past Forward* with my library books. What a wonderful service! I listened to an article on 'The War in Atherton', about a landmine which dropped on the farm near Atherton Central Station.

I remember it well! I lived at 197 Car Bank Street, where a landmine dropped, without warning, about five days before the Central Station one. My father was a soldier, and had only gone back from leave the night before; so that left my mother, two brothers and myself. I was about 10 years old.

The blast threw my mother on top of me (I was asleep in her bed), but she, and my eldest brother, only received minor cuts. I came off worst, as I got the blast in my left ear; since then I have been stone deaf in that ear.

We were then split as a family. My younger brother and I went to live with an aunt in Tyldesley Old Road; but this was not far from Central Station so, when that was hit a few days later, my brother and I were screaming our heads off again! It was nine months before we were able to return home, which was without any windows and, indeed, remained so until the end of the war.

If any reader has a photograph of the Car Bank Street landmine, I'd love to see it. I'm sure you will understand what it meant to me to hear this tape; I can't wait to play it to my son and granddaughter when they next visit.

Thank you so very much for sending me the tape of *Past Forward*.

**Margaret Baxter  
(nee Green)  
Tyldesley Nr Manchester**

## Past Forward has done it again!

Dear Mr. Gillies,

Thankyou for including my letter regarding the HILTON/PUGH GENEALOGY in issue 39 of *Past Forward*. I would like to let you know that thanks to you my article brought forth a wonderful response from many readers once again. The mystery of the little engine 'Shah' has been solved with details of its history supplied; as it turns out it was the responsibility of the driver, James Pugh, the gentleman on the adjoining photo, who drove it between Crawford owned collieries and kept it in immaculate running order with a great deal of pride.

I have been introduced to a real live member of the Pugh line by a gentleman who read the article and acted on intuition. We are busily engaged, through our mutual friend, in increasing my knowledge of the family featured on the photo et al.

I would like to convey my sincere thanks to all who troubled to contact me, and especially to the unknown donor of the lovely photo of the *Commercial Inn* which I have received - the sender's name was not included on the little note enclosed, but I do appreciate the photo.

May I take this opportunity to say a big THANK YOU TO ALL.

**Elspeith Bradbury  
31 Dalwood Close  
Eleebana 2282 NSW  
AUSTRALIA**

## Olive Carr

Dear Editor,

I have a friend, Olive Carr (nee Sharrat) who went to Rose Bridge secondary modern school; her father also went to that school and played in the school team which won the Daily Dispatch shield in 1931.

Olive would like to know if there are any of the team left. If so, could they contact her either through *Past Forward* or me.

Many thanks

**Victor Wadson  
Email:  
Vic.wadson@btinternet.com**

## Aspull's wrestler

Dear Sir

In their article in the last issue of *Past Forward* on 'Burgly Ben' (p39), the co-authors stated that their grandfather, real name Thomas Jones, wrestled his last match in 1907. They may be pleased to learn that he competed in the National Sporting Club wrestling tournament held at the Alhambra Theatre in 1910 (see *Past Forward* no 22, p20).

'Apollo Magazine', a popular sports magazine of the day reporting on the tournament, stated that a surprise occurred on the third day, when the celebrated lightweight Tom Jones of Wigan lost his bout to G A Faulkner of Birmingham. As the lightweights were the first to the mat at the start of the tournament, this suggests that Jones had enjoyed some success in the early rounds of the competition.

The other wrestler pictured with Burgly Ben fits the description of James Collins of Hollingsworth, who wrestled M W Makinson of Aspull at the Borough Grounds, Oldham, in 1905. The match attracted 4000 spectators and was billed as being for the Lightweight Championship of the world.

Twelve months later the Borough Grounds was again the venue when Aspull's J Rigby (trained by Thomas Jones) wrestled J Barker of Leeds for £50 a side, in a match that lasted almost two hours and was described by onlookers as a tremendous feat of endurance.

All these matches were in the Lancashire style and they give us a glimpse into the history of Aspull's wrestler, which is a story that can be told in greater detail at a later date.

**Thomas Heyes**

## Bikes & Boats

Dear Editor

No wonder the young man on the motorcycle on p14 of the latest *Past Forward* is grinning from ear to ear. He is sat astride one of the fabulous Norton Internationals, THE sports bike of the 1930's. In those days, Norton made a habit of winning both Junior and Senior Classes of the Isle of Man TT. I notice that the bike has a straight through exhaust. Perhaps he was an entrant for the Manx Grand Prix, a race for Amateurs held on the island in

September each year.

Harry Walls, who contributed the canal article on p24, may be interested to know that the 1945 film, Painted Boats, is available on video from Camden Miniature Steam Services, Barrow Farm, Rode, Somerset BA11 6PS, @ £10.99 inc p&p. Made by Ealing Studios and filmed on the Grand Union Canal, it is said to be a close representation of life on the canals at that time.

**Brian Barlow  
Wigan**

Published by Wigan Heritage Service, Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust, The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

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T R U S T**

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# Who? Where?



The response to the mystery photographs in the last issue was in complete contrast to the excellent one for issue 38. The most positive was for the shop (top right) - this was most probably located at no 106 Bradshawgate, Leigh. Possible identifications for the two bottom photographs are, left to right, a farm in Pennington, Leigh and a Royal Ordnance Factory (exact location unknown). No suggestions received to date for the top left photograph.

The three photographs shown here have all appeared in earlier issues, but as they are ones to which we have not had any response but are particularly keen to identify, we thought we would run with them again, in the hope that new readers might have some suggestions.

If you can help identify any of these photographs, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).

