

PAST FORWARD

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WIGAN
LEISURE & CULTURE
TRUST



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Letter from the Editorial Team

A WARM welcome to issue 41, and the first put together by the new editorial team. We know that Alastair greatly valued all your contributions. We also set great store by them, as do all our readers (after all, where would we be without them), and look forward to receiving more for future editions. We can assure you that, although Alastair has now left us, we will be building on his good work, to take *Past Forward* into the future. It will be a hard act to follow, but with your help, we are sure we can succeed.

An equally warm welcome is extended to the new manager of Wigan Heritage Service, Carole Tyldesley. Her formal title is Heritage Services and Wigan Pier Manager. Her task is to develop the heritage of the borough and increase access for our varied communities (see article on page 3). It promises to be an exciting time for all!

This year is the 60th anniversary of the ending of World War II. Many of you have written in with your memories. We too, have paid tribute to those who gave so much to ensure that Britain remained undefeated. On page 18 and 19 is a selection of pictures from our photographic archive, featuring the many services such the

WRVS, the Homeguard and ARP personnel who were ready to help and protect us in times of crisis.

We hope you enjoy and find useful our new feature, *Can You Help?* (page 15). So many of you write to us for advice, or trying to trace long lost friends and ancestors, that we decided to set up a page especially for you.

We have had two suggestions for the identity of the picture which appeared on the cover of issue 40 – the waiting room at Central Station Wigan, and the tea room at Leigh Co-op. Do either of these strike a chord? Further suggestions welcome.

Finally, Christmas is upon us once again, and in the centre of this issue, you will find a special pull-out section with a competition to raise funds for Wigan Hospice. Please enter, they need your support, and you could win yourself a print by renowned local artist, Gerald Rickards

Everyone at Wigan Heritage Service, wishes you all a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

PS – looking for that special Christmas present? Look no further – see page 8 for what's on offer at the History Shop!

Notice to Contributors

Copy should be sent to The Editor, Wigan Heritage Service, History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU email y.webb@wlct.org

It would help us greatly if copy could be submitted electronically, either by email or disk. However, if you can only manage hand or type written, that's fine too. We reserve the right to edit material for publication.

Copy deadline for issue 42 is 18th January 2006

Goodbye to Our Editor

AT THE beginning of August we bade farewell to our long serving editor Alastair Gillies. His retirement from the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust, where he had served as the Heritage Services Manager since 1988, has meant a very sorry goodbye to the magazine he created fourteen years ago.

Alastair, as all who met him will know, was originally from Belfast. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, studied Archive Administration in Wales, and began his career in Berkshire. He was welcomed to Wigan in 1978 when he joined the Metro as Archivist. Despite his 'cosmopolitan' past, he became a Wiganer through and through, and twenty-seven years dealing with the subject, has made

him something of an authority on Wigan's heritage. Unfortunately, there was one area where Alastair remained an outsider, he decided to make his home in St. Helen's!

His achievements, with first the Archive Service and then the Heritage Service, have been clear for all to see. He is remembered as the Council's lead officer for the municipal Charter Celebrations in 1996 commemorating the 750th anniversary of the granting of Wigan's first charter, and its creation as a borough. Three years later he was invited to lead the Council's activities again, as Millennium Festival Co-ordinator. On a more sombre note, he was called upon again in 2001 to

Carole is new champion for borough's heritage

WIGAN'S award-winning heritage services have a new boss...but she's no stranger to the borough's historical attractions.

Born and bred Wiganer Carole Tyldesley has been general manager at Wigan Pier for the past six years.

In her new role as Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust's heritage services manager, she has now taken on responsibility for heritage sites across the borough - including the History Shop, Leigh Archives and Wigan Pier.

She takes over from former heritage services manager Alistair Gillies, who retired in July.

Her new role also includes responsibility for the borough's pioneering heritage magazine, *Past Forward*.

Carole has lived in the area all her life and is an active member of the Tourism Society and a member of Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust's Tourism Forum.

She's a chartered member of the Management Institute, gained after 4 years night study at Wigan and Leigh Management College, and has a diploma and post graduate qualification in management

Carole said: "I'm lucky to manage a diverse team of dedicated heritage professionals and operational managers who bring history into the community and offer an excellent service.

"Part of the team has been rewarded by achieving the 'Charter Mark' for the quality of service they provide, and the rest are very near to submitting an application for the same accolade.

"My concern now is how to build up long term interest and increase access to heritage sites, museums and the collections and also generate wider usage within the local community.

"Another area I want to develop is our volunteer programme and recruit a high calibre of volunteer to support



various elements of our services."

Carole says she's a great believer in the importance of heritage-related tourism, born out of six years at the helm of one of the country's top tourist attractions. She added: "From my work at Wigan Pier, I understand the importance of putting visitors at the heart of everything we do. Currently a new vision for heritage is being developed and work will start very soon to find out what is wanted in the borough for the future."

Carole has recently played an important role in helping the Romanian mountain resort of Sinaia - with whom Wigan has close links through the council's development company - develop its tourism and visitor management policies.

organise the Council's first commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day (27th Jan). This was done with such effect and efficiency that he continued in that role until this year's event, and his retirement.

Of course, Alastair will be remembered most of all for the History Shop, and your very own *Past Forward* magazine. In these, he has left not only fantastic successes, but also valued provisions for us to build upon in the future.

Past Forward, as no readers need reminding, is now well established being as it is on its 41st issue. As Alastair himself said about the launch in 1991 "we thought we would give it a go for a couple of editions and, here we are 14 years later!"

The History Shop opened its doors to the public for the first time in 1992 on

the first floor of the old library building on Library Street in Wigan. Since then the venue has grown physically - now occupying the whole of the building, intellectually - now containing art and exhibition galleries, local history resources and family history study facilities, and of course grown in popularity - now an essential destination for local genealogical study and a regular visit for those interested in Wigan's heritage from far and wide.

With the international flavour of the *Past Forward* mailing list, the web site and the email audience, it is fair to say that Alastair has really put Wigan on the map! We have much to thank him for and we will all miss him very much. However we can all enjoy his legacy, in the continued success of the History Shop and of course this magazine.

Good luck Alastair, and enjoy your retirement.



Alastair delivering the Holocaust Memorial Message in a showery Mesnes Park

Wigan Old Boys Rugby Union Football Club Memorials of Old Boys Killed in Action World War II

The story of the quest to reunite war memorials and families

IN SEPTEMBER 1950, as I left school, I found my way to Prospect Park, Standish, and joined Wigan Old Boys RUFC. After training sessions (such as they were then) you could not help noticing a row of tankards on a shelf behind the bar. They were different in size (both pint and half pint) and shape. These were memorial tankards, I was told, to commemorate the lives of club members killed during World War II. At the time I thought no more about them, but later in life I became very interested in the history of the war. At the end of my playing career, I joined the committee of the club, and in 1965, took over as general secretary of the club.

Three years earlier in 1962, the club had moved from Prospect Park to its present location at Douglas Valley. When the new club house was built, Michael Conroy organised the purchase of a memorial plaque, which now hangs on the wall in the main clubroom. Shortly after I became secretary, my predecessor, Jeff Settle, presented me with a cardboard box. In it were the committee minutes going as far back as 1926. From these, I was able to piece together the story of the memorial tankards.

When war was declared, the Rugby Football Union cancelled all fixtures for the remainder of the season. Many clubs closed down for the duration of the war, but the committee at Wigan decided to organise games on a week to week basis. Some members joined the armed forces, and later more were conscripted. Inevitably, as the war wore on, news of casualties was received. In August 1941 Stephen Jacques was killed in an air crash, and shortly after, Arthur Hampson died in a bombing raid over Germany.

by
Gordon Unsworth

In October 1941, committee member Peter Walkden proposed, and everyone agreed that "the club should buy tankards inscribed with his name and other particulars as a personal memorial of each Old Boys member killed on active service". Nothing was done about the proposal at that time, in fact the matter was not mentioned again until March 1944, when the club chairman was thanked for the donation of two tankards. Shortly afterwards, a letter was sent to a Mr A Unsworth (a florist, I think) thanking him for the gift of a tankard. Obviously, it had been decided to obtain the tankards by donation, as wartime restrictions prevented the purchase of so many. This accounts for the different sizes and shapes of them.

As the end of the war approached in May 1945, the committee began to discuss the time and format of a ceremony of dedication. The exact wording on the tankards took up some discussion, but in the end, the wording was left in the hands of the secretary. He chose the following,

WIGAN OLD BOYS
RUFC
To perpetuate the memory of

Killed in Action
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On the 23rd February 1946, a short ceremony was held in the clubhouse before the game against Broughton Park. The Mayor and Town Clerk, as well as relatives of the deceased and vice-presidents, were invited. After speeches by the club chairman and the father of

Arthur Hampson, the Mayor formally dedicated the tankards, and appropriately, was asked to start the game by kicking off.

The Quest Begins

The tankards remained behind the bars at Prospect Park and later Douglas Valley. Sadly a number of them disappeared, largely as a result of break-ins, and as time passed, they were forgotten. The consolation was that the new memorial plaque had been placed on the wall of the clubroom. In 1996, I found seven tankards in a box in the beer cellar. All of them were badly tarnished, and two had dents. They belonged to Allan Carruthers, Sid Cox, Robert Green, the Jacques brothers Stephen and Arthur, Harry Pennington and Kenneth Rigby. I was a little upset at the loss of interest in them, but believed that a relative or descendant would be pleased to take care of them. Thus began the quest that was to prove both interesting and frustrating, but very rewarding.

First of all I had to find as much as possible about the thirteen individuals, though naturally I concentrated on my seven tankards. At the outbreak of the war, the Wigan Observer and Wigan Examiner offered to print an obituary of any Wiganer killed whilst serving in the armed services. So off I went to the History Shop, and after a number of visits I had managed to 'plough through' the wartime editions of the papers.

So the names on my tankards were beginning to reveal themselves. Stephen Jacques and Allan Carruthers were both aircrew and died in 1941 and 1942. Also in 1942, Harry Pennington a captain of the commandos, died in a raid to



blow up a large dry dock at St Nazaire in Brittany. Kenneth Rigby was shot down in a bomber raid over Hamburg. Both Sid Cox and Robert Green served in the army, only to die in Italy in 1944. Finally, Arthur Jacques died in an air crash shortly after the German surrender, but still qualified as a war casualty.

First Success

My first success was Sid Cox, who had lived in Duke Street off Wigan Lane. Several friends knew the family, and I was soon turned in the direction of Pemberton. Sid's sister Beatrice had married, and was living on the Norley Hall estate. I made the mistake of searching for Beatrice on a wet and windy November night. I soon lost my way, and no-one would answer my knock on their door. Eventually I found Beatrice, who was overwhelmed to be given Sid's tankard. Her comment that cleaning it would be a "labour of love" was sufficient reward for my efforts.

My first success was quickly followed by finding a 'home' for Harry Pennington's tankard. Harry was the eldest of the four Pennington brothers. He had studied at Cambridge, and was starting a promising legal career when war intervened. I had played several times with Sid Pennington, the second son, in the 1950's, and the third brother Jack, was a playing member of Orrell. He always drank from Harry's tankard after the Wigan v Orrell games. Sadly both Sid and Harry were dead, but I was able to contact the fourth brother Roy, through Sid's widow. From Roy, I found out that Harry had been married with a young son. Unfortunately, the son Robin, had also died a few years ago, and Roy had also lost all contact with Harry's wife - his letters and Christmas cards were never answered. Roy was more than willing to take care of his brother's tankard, and I understand that it shines bright in his home in Southport.

Difficulties Arise

The quest was getting more difficult, but with a bit of luck, I did have success with a third tankard. Robert Green came from Ince, and in 1937 he signed professional forms

with Wigan RFC, an unpardonable offence in those days. Later he moved to play for Swinton, and bought a house in Walkden. Robert had not played for Wigan Old Boys during the War, but he had been a member and died on active service, so he had a memorial tankard. Robert's address was given to me as Wardley Lane, Swinton, but no such road appeared on modern street plans. Just to confuse the issue, the local council had altered the name to Manchester Road after the war. The house was still there, but uninhabited when I found it. I am sure some suspicious neighbours were about to report me to the police, but I managed to reassure them that my enquiries were authentic. The neighbours could not give me any information at all, so I returned home quite despondent. However, shortly afterwards, one of them rang me up. An old lady across the street remembered he had two sons, one of whom had joined the police force. An ex-pupil of mine was serving with the Greater Manchester Police, so through him I was put in touch with Robert's daughter-in-law, the son Derek, was dead. Mrs Green was reluctant to accept the tankard, as she had never known Robert. She did mention that her grandson, also a Robert, played rugby. Great grandson Robert was the obvious choice to look after the tankard. Great grandfather Robert played prop forward for Wigan Old Boys in the 1930's, and his great grandson played prop forward for Eccles Colts in the 1990's. I hope he keeps his promise to drink from his great grandfather's tankards on his anniversary.

The Quest Falters

At this point my investigations dried up for almost two years. I had been greatly encouraged by the relative ease that I had found 'homes' for the first three tankards. However, during this time I received a good deal of help and inspiration from two people. Keith Hall had made a hobby of researching the lives of the men from Wigan who had died in the war. He has put this wealth of detail on to a computer disc, and helped with information from government agencies. Carole Littler is the local representative of the War Memorials Commission. She collates all the information

about the origin, location and size of all the local memorials, and then registers them with the Commission. On a visit to the club to look at the memorial plaque, I mentioned the tankards. She was immediately interested. After noting the details she registered each one with the Commission, so each of the thirteen members who fell in the war had his own personal war memorial.

I now had four tankards left. The Jacques brothers and Allan Carruthers had lived at Boar's Head and Parbold respectively. I contacted neighbours and churches, and even visited the Lancashire Record office in Preston. Each time I came home with no reward for the journey. Keith Hall assured me that no-one named Kenneth Rigby appeared on any of the Wigan war memorials, neither was there an obituary in the Wigan newspapers. However, Keith did find out that a Pilot Officer Kenneth Rigby had been shot down during a bomber raid on Hamburg in August 1943. The solution to this puzzle came by way of a large slice of good luck.

A Slice of Luck

Some months later, a chance remark in the clubhouse reminded me that Ike Higham, a prominent member of the wartime committee, had contacts in Southport. He was a teacher at the King George V School, and had encouraged one or two players to continue their rugby at Wigan as Southport club had closed down. That season, Wigan had a fixture with Southport, so I made some inquiries after the game. None of the older members knew Kenneth Rigby, but the secretary pointed out that they had a Kenneth Rigby on their war memorial.

This really was a breakthrough, but again my luck dried up. Kenneth was an only son and unmarried, so I could not find any of his relatives, in spite of an appeal in the local newspaper. As no relatives could be found to take care of the tankard, I decided to offer it to the Southport Club. The president was only too pleased to accept the offer, so the next time Wigan played Southport, the tankard was handed over. A short news item and photograph appeared in the Standish Courier. The item also mentioned that I still

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Wigan Old Boys Rugby Union Football Club Memorials of Old Boys Killed in Action World War II

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had the tankards for the Jacques brothers and Allan Carruthers. The repercussions from this press article were quite startling.

A few days after publication, I was called to the telephone. A lady introduced herself as Ruth Walkden. I had come across this name several times in my researches, but then she went on "Yes, I was engaged to Stephen Jacques when he was killed in 1941, please can I have the tankard?" For the moment I was both stunned and speechless, but more was to come. Ruth went on "and my niece would like to claim Arthur Jacques' tankard. My sister Joan married Arthur and their daughter Shelagh would like to find out as much as possible about the father she never knew."

This telephone call from Ruth was definitely the highlight of my quest. Ruth was a guest of the club (her father had been chairman of the club in the late 1930's) at the end of the season and was delighted to take the two Jacques tankards with her. Now a sprightly lady over 80 years old, she said "I realised I had to get on with my life when I lost Stephen, and so many other girls of my age had lost boy-friends or fiancés".

I could now concentrate on the final tankard, dedicated to Allan Carruthers. Allan married Antoinette Hall from Mill Lane in Parbold in 1941. A son, Ian, was born in June 1942, just before his father was killed. During the war Antoinette was on the nursing staff at Wigan Infirmary, but soon after the war, moved south to open a nursing home in Hastings. Through the secretary of Hastings RUFC (a Liverpoolian who remembered playing against Wigan Unionists at Little Lane) I contacted the editor of

the Hastings Observer. A letter appealing for information was printed, but brought no results.

A few months later, I was given another clue. The aunt of a friend also worked at the Infirmary during the 1940's. She believed Antoinette perhaps went to Nether Stowey near Taunton. Travelling down to Somerset was out of the question, but I did find one Carruthers in the telephone directory. A phone call put me in touch with the widow of Allan Carruthers' brother. An address she gave me in St Albans hit the jackpot. Allan's grandson, Piers, replied to my letter. He was delighted to have his grandfather's tankard, and to find out some details of his life. The ironic part of this episode, is that Antoinette had moved back to Parbold when she retired, and had died in a nursing home in Ormskirk. Perhaps I could have met her, if I had started my search earlier.

The Quest is Over?

My quest was over. I hope I have brought some contentment to a few families, who lost loved ones during the war. On the other hand, there are still six tankards missing or stolen.

Charles Fleming died when his bomber was shot down over Holland. Before he joined the RAF, he was a teacher at the Sacred

Heart School.

Clifford Grundy was a wireless operator with an army co-operation squadron. He was a keen member of the Greenhough Street and Preston Road Methodist church choirs.

Arthur Hampson from Swinley, was a member of the crew of a Wellington bomber hit by flak over Hanover. The inscription on his headstone reads "He fought for Freedom and here laid to rest".

Hamish Hunter, a lieutenant in the Army Reconnaissance Corps, died as a result of a vehicle accident in October 1941.

Leonard Mayer from Wrightington was married with a young son. His Stirling bomber was shot down over Frankfurt.

Harry Nicolson was born in Ealing, London, and joined the staff of Wigan Grammar School in 1939. He was piloting an aircraft that crashed in November 1941.

Surely the six missing tankards deserve a proper resting place with the families of those who gave their lives. If anyone knows the whereabouts, or would like to return one of these tankards, I would be very happy to start all over again. These thirteen members of Wigan Old Boys RUFC are just a few of the 1800 or more from Wigan who paid with their lives fighting for their country, **but they each have their own personal war memorial.**



Kenneth Rigby's tankard is presented to the President of Southport RUFC.

Joseph Bates – British Speed Skating Champion

In July 1924 at the age of 52, Joseph Bates (or Joe as he was known) died at his home at 485 Warrington Road, Glazebury. At the time, he was employed by Leigh Corporation Highways Department, and was on his way to work, when he was taken ill near Butts Bridge. He had to return home, where he died before the doctor could arrive.

Born in Bold Street, Leigh, Joe took to ice skating as a duck takes to water, and between 1890 and 1908, he had a notable skating career. He was never a robust man, as he had a heart condition, which forced him to leave the mines and become a lamp lighter.

Joe possessed a kind of double ankle which enabled him to put great power into his skating strokes. This helped to make him one of the fastest skaters in the world. In 1897, 1901 and 1902, his impressive speed helped to win the coveted Littleport Cup. However, it was on 17th February 1902 at Lingey Fen near Cambridge, that he earned the title of British Professional Skating Champion, by winning the British Professional Belt over a distance of one and a half miles. He beat F Ward in the final, even though he lost 100 yards initially, because of spectators who crowded him off the ice.

His prowess on skates, also enabled him to win many races for wagers. He was encouraged by Thomas Collier, head of the firm Thomas Collier & Sons,



builders and contractors, and founder member of Leigh Football Club.

Joe commenced skating in the winter of 1890-1, when he first beat a local man by the name of Unsworth, at Taylor's Hole, Pennington, in a 200 yard race. In the following winter, he managed to defeat 'Cocky' Davies of Lowton in a 600 yard race around Plank Lane Flash, Mr Rothwell of Plank Lane in a 300 yard race and Robert Hazeldene in a 250 yard race on Diggle's Flash.

His first big race was against Tunstall of Sefton at Sefton Meadows in 1892-3, when he won the quarter mile race by 30 yards.

Other important victories that season, were at Carr Mill Dam at St Helens, and Sefton Meadows, in a race for the Lancashire Mile Championship, which he won by 60 yards, beating F Litherland. In 1895-5, he again beat Litherland at Newton Lake in a 300 yard race. He then went on to the Welsh Harp, Hendon, where he won the third prize of £10, in an international race, after being severely injured in a fall during the first heat.

On 23rd February 1895, Joe skated in a race for the quarter of a mile championship of the world at Rosthern Mere. His opponent was F Litherland. Joe won by six yards in 35.25 seconds, beating the

world record of 37.15 seconds.

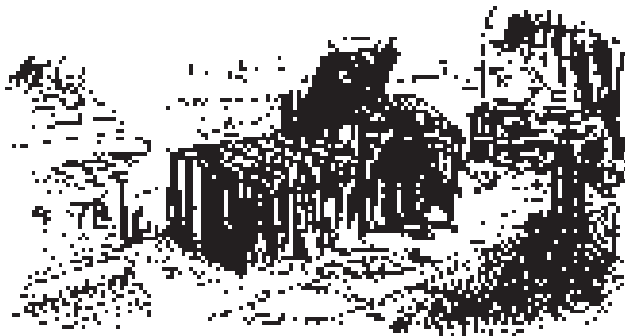
In the Fens race of 1897 for the Littleport Cup, he beat Lindahl the Norwegian by 160 yards and also came first in the mile at Peakirk. Two years later, his championship dreams were shattered, as he had to retire after winning the first heat, because of illness. However, he won the cup a second time in 1901, by beating the record by seven seconds, as he covered the one and a half miles in four minutes 38 seconds, in front of a crowd of 4000. The following year, he once again won the cup, by defeating Lindahl by 50 yards.

Other races followed, and his last season was in 1908, when he came third at Lingey Fen in the British Professional Championship. Although known as a skater, Bates took part in a bicycle race in October 1897 at Leigh Athletic Ground. His opponent was George Woodward, captain of the Tyldesley Football Club. Over 1000 persons came to see the event, which was won by Bates.

In February 1902, a testimonial had been raised by various interested parties, including the Leigh Conservative Club and Leigh Liberal Club. At the Theatre Royal, Bates appeared on stage dressed in his full skating costume (including skates) and was presented with a gold medal by Jonty Dewhurst (manager) and Mr W Sley (manager of the pantomime company).

Joe is buried in Leigh Cemetery.

Family History



Additions to the Local and Family History Collection (for reference)

Genealogy

- Franklin, M. Guide to tracing your Limerick ancestors.
Marshall, H. Palaeography for family and local historians.
McCarthy, T. A guide to tracing your Cork ancestors.
O'Connor, M.H. A guide to tracing your Kerry ancestors. 2nd ed.
Paley, Ruth. My ancestor was a bastard.
Ryan, James G. A guide to tracing your Dublin ancestors. 2nd ed.

Donations

- Rigby,GP/Upholland Parish register group. Marriage index to St. Paul CE Skelmersdale. 7 Dec 1858 – 8 Nov 1980
Rigby,GP/Gaskell,G. Upholland St Thomas CE index to baptisms 1 Jan 1735 – 27 December 1812.

CD ROM

- Marsden, G. Surname index to Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery registers. Volume 3. 21 Feb 1873 – 11 June 1880.
Chorlton, F. Surname index to Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery registers. Volume 4. 11 June 1880 – 13 Dec 1887.

General

- Ackers, P. West End Chapel, Back Street, Bethel. 289.5 Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Society. Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway signalling. 385.09427
Hartwell, C. Lancashire : Manchester and S. East. (Buildings of England). 720.94276
Major, Mary (Dr.). Theodore Major 1909 – 1999. 759.2 MAJ
Newling, John. Weight. 759.2 NEW
Huggins, M. The Victorians and Sport. 796.0941

Project News

Production of indexes and databases has merely paused during the last few summer months. The next 2 volumes of Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery Indexes have, as promised in Past Forward 40, been received at the History Shop for consultation and by the time we go to print, will be available in CD ROM and paper format for eager researchers to consult. The registers are now indexed from

September 1856 up until 13 December 1887. Congratulations and thanks go to Gerald Marsden and Freda Chorlton for their total dedication to the project.

July brought us visitors from America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and one Canadian in particular, Michael Fisher, Online Parish Clerk for Standish, brought a gift of a CD ROM transcript of Standish registers 1560-1840. This searchable database may be consulted at the History Shop.

Finally the indexing of Upholland records by Gerry Rigby and Gerald Gaskell moved on again with another section being completed. This time for baptisms 1 January 1735 to 27 December 1812. The only section remaining is 1600-1734. This early section has been transcribed years ago by Lancashire Parish Register Society and of course has an index. All are available for reference at the History Shop. The Upholland Parish register group have also presented us with an index of marriages for St Pauls church Skelmersdale.

Websites

www.stepping-stones.co.uk

Ordinarily this site sells CD ROMS of census and directories. A recent development has been to offer online access to census. Only a selection of counties is as yet available. For example, 1851 census for Lancashire and Liverpool may be viewed but the West Riding of Yorkshire cannot. Nor has the Cheshire census, though available on CD ROM, been uploaded for viewing as yet.

After having registered and purchased online credits, each credit allows you to view chosen films for 14 days with no time limit on using the rest of the unused credits. A free DJVu plugin is downloaded to your computer and you may choose from a selection of films and street indexes for the area. Each film viewed constitutes a unit viewed but the same film may be viewed several times and at length with no reduction in your credits. 10 credits cost £5, 32 credits £15, 50 credits £20 (£5 free) and as an introductory offer 25 credits cost £10.

Yet another pay per view site but fairly modestly priced for what you get.

The only drawback to the site is that there are no name indexes only street indexes. Good clear images are produced though.

www.visionofbritain.org.uk

This website was created by the Great Britain Historical Geographical Information System (GIS) Project which is based at the Department of Geography of the University of Portsmouth.

This site aims to be a vision of Britain between 1801 and 2001 and includes maps, statistics and historical descriptions. It is possible to search the site for information on your local area, using in particular the census 1801-2001. For Wigan there is a huge amount of detailed information on its population, industries, housing and historical maps.

www.institutions.org.uk

www.missing-ancestors.com

www.hiddenlives.org.uk

All of the above three web-sites aim to help track down those ancestors that seem to disappear into thin air periodically. All three have information on institutions and



Friend's of Mesnes Park

WE have received a plea for help from a local Friends group, the Friends of Mesnes Park. They are trying to assist the Leisure & Culture Trust in the restoration of a rock garden in the park, and wonder if anyone remembers it. Specifically, they would be delighted to see any pictures that show an old coat of arms feature in the rocks at the top end of the lake. If you have such a picture, you should contact the Parks Office at Worsley Terrace in Wigan on 01942 828828.

Parks Community Liaison Officer Sharon Saunders said:

It has been an aspiration of the Friends of Mesnes Park to restore the Pulham & Sons rock/water feature by the lake in the park. They have already had some success at securing funding to restore the planting scheme to the original one, but we are awaiting the results of a study which will provide us with costs for restoring the rockwork. Once we have this, we hope to

secure external funding to restore it.

We would be very grateful for any photographs or details about the rockwork or waterfall or even memories of people who

can remember the waterfall running? We have very little information on this part of the lake, despite carrying out extensive research a few years ago.



The Pulham designed rock feature in Mesnes park

institutional life throughout Britain, from the workhouses, to reformatories and prisons, orphanages and hospitals.

Institutions.org explains the Poor Law pre and post 1834 and lists the constituent parts of each union. Where to find records is also noted, when possible. Reformatories and industrial schools arranged by county are also included.

Missing-ancestors.com lists reformatories and industrial schools, states the archives repository and goes one step further by transcribing the records. There are transcribed lists of London boys and girls sent for instance to Stockport, Sale and Ardwick Industrial School.

hiddenlives.org aims to be a virtual archive of children in care 1881-1918. Included are 200 photos showing the conditions and background endured by children and stories from the Waifs and Strays Society, who prior to 1918 had 175 homes. Case files of anonymous children may also be viewed.

www.lostcousins.co.uk

Finally, lostcousins which aims to match researchers' submitted details, using the 1881 census as a meeting point, to other researchers of the same families. Thus reuniting "lost cousins". The only information which may be submitted is an ancestor and family located on the 1881 census. Personal details such as the enquirer's name and contact details are kept separately and when a match is submitted an e-mail will be sent to each party asking them to check the "my cousins" page. The rest is up to each party.

**you're never
too young or old
to explore your
local library**

**and now you can visit them for
longer and for a whole lot more !**

- Extended opening hours
- CD, DVD and Video Hire
- Free use of computer and internet access through the Peoples Network
- Free access to Playstation 2
- Adult IT & Lifelong Learning Courses

explore 
wigan libraries
www.wlct.org/libraries

Abram Ashton Aspall Atherton Beech Hill Colborne
Hindley Ince Leigh Marsh Green Orrell Shevington
Scandian Tyldesley Wigan Children's Wigan

Ephemera From The Archives

Recent accessions, a selection

D/DZ A128/7

Records related to the mining career of Robert Norris (1922-2004).

The son of a miner Robert was brought up amongst the Howe Bridge, Atherton mining community. He started work below ground aged 14 but by the age of 26 he had gained his colliery managers certificate.

As his career developed he worked as a shotfirer at Howe Bridge Colliery, a ventilation officer at Parsonage Colliery Leigh, undermanager then temporary manager at Maypole Colliery Abram in 1955.

1959 found him colliery manager at Chisnall Hall Colliery, Coppull where he was involved in the design of the Anderton Shearer Loader and also Area Mines Rescue Co-ordinator.

1964 found him managing Llay Main Colliery, North Wales, then Bersham Colliery in 1968 and later Gresford Colliery in the same area. Photographs and newscuttings are also within the deposit.

D/NU4

Records of the Unitarian Chapel, Twist Lane Leigh

It isn't very often that records arrive for the first time for a local church, as virtually all of the churches which should be depositing their records here have done since the archives was created in the late 1960's.

I was quite surprised

when a very friendly old couple called with two shopping bags and a box full of the records of the Unitarian Chapel, Twist Lane Leigh. Leigh followers of the Unitarian 'connexion' as it is termed were active from around 1859, coming under Astley Unitarian Chapel by 1872. In May 1897 the Leigh chapel was built, closing in April 2001.

D/DY Gr

Heating order book, 1959-1973 for John Grundy Ltd of Tyldesley, general ironsmiths and particularly manufacturers of boilers, radiators and fitments. These records will complement those we already hold including family items.

Initially John Grundy was a grocer operating in Elliot St Tyldesley. In 1864 his frustration at shivering in the cold at Tyldesley Top Chapel led to his designing one of the first central heating systems in the country, based on piping the hot air flues around the building. Later taking out various patents the company he set up specialised in church heating systems. The next time you are looking around an old church or cathedral if possible look at the heating system, there's a good chance it's a Grundy!

MMP 30/1

Wigan wall calendar by Bamforth's Popular Calendars for 1939. This is in as new condition with a postcard attached with multiple views of the town. I am always amazed when items such as this or old phone directories turn up,

why was it never used and why was it never thrown away?

Acc 4247

Two photographs of around 1934 of Pemberton Prize Band and Pemberton Temperance Band on the steps near the café in Mesnes Park Wigan.

Acc 4260

Miscellaneous Ince and

Wigan area items, but including a group photo postcard of Caseys Court Circus variety show performers who visited the Wigan area around 1906. In the photo is a certain Charlie Chaplin. The following year, his career took off when he became a clown in Fred Karno's *Fun Factory* slapstick comedy company and the rest is history!

I Remember

*I remember waking up by the sound
Of miners with clogs on their feet
When food was rationed,
Snake belts were in fashion,
And policemen walked down the street.*

*I remember air raids,
And when people were not afraid
To walk down the street after dark,
And I also recall
When Billy Boston got the ball,
The roar that went round Central Park.*

*I remember there weren't many cars,
The only Jams were in cars
And Community spirit was there,
And it was comforting to know
That you could knock on any door
And your neighbour would be willing to share.*

*If you did anything bad
You would get a clout of your Dad,
And early to bed you were sent.
I remember the blitz,
And one or two moonlight flits
When people got behind with their rent.*

*Mobile phones weren't around
You could get drunk with a pound,
There wasn't any E-Mails, or texts,
Everyone had a coal fire
But the thing I admire,
Our parents had taught us respect.*

By Dave Hawkins.

Exhibitions at the History Shop

As expected, Feast of Photography (27 August-1 October) show-casing the talent of the photographic societies of Wigan and Atherton was a great success. Your comments included " Digital pics are noticeably different", "One of the best shows around", and perhaps more controversially "Wigan far outgunned Atherton"!

We at the Heritage Service thought that members of both societies, displayed some remarkable work.

As usual, visitors voted for their favourite Wigan Photographic Society print, and the winner is the evocative **'Winter's Mist Over Bradburn's Farm'** by Eddie Prescott. Eddie has kindly let us reproduce it (the original is beautifully coloured) for all our readers to enjoy.



Picture: copyright Eddie Prescott

The Changing Face of Wigan 15 October 2005 – 11 February 2006

For all those of you who regularly visit Wigan, it cannot have escaped your notice that the area around what was once Millgate and Station Road, has turned into a giant building site. The new shopping centre, the Grand Arcade, is due to open here in 2007. We thought that it was a good opportunity to take a look at the historical development of this area, and perhaps indulge in a bit of nostalgia. We have also included Wigan's new cultural area, the Wigan Pier Quarter, currently under construction at Trencherfield Mill. These parts of town will change substantially, and in the case of Millgate, be totally obliterated.

We have used photographs, drawings, maps and old documents from our collections to chart the history of the two areas. Millgate especially, can trace its origins back to medieval times. However, there is always new knowledge to be gained, and if any of you have photographs or documents relating to the buildings and businesses of Millgate and Station Road, we would be pleased to hear from you. They may have disappeared, but hopefully, they will live on in our archives.

Undoubtedly, the most exciting aspect so far of the Grand Arcade redevelopment, is the archaeological excavations conducted by Oxford Archaeology North, in advance of the bulldozers moving in. They uncovered yet more of the Roman site that was first discovered (although long known about) during construction of the Children's Library in the Wiend. The exhibition includes some superb photographs of the whole site, and the major discovery of

a hypocaust, dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries. We will have to wait until the post excavation work is completed before Millgate finally gives up its secrets.

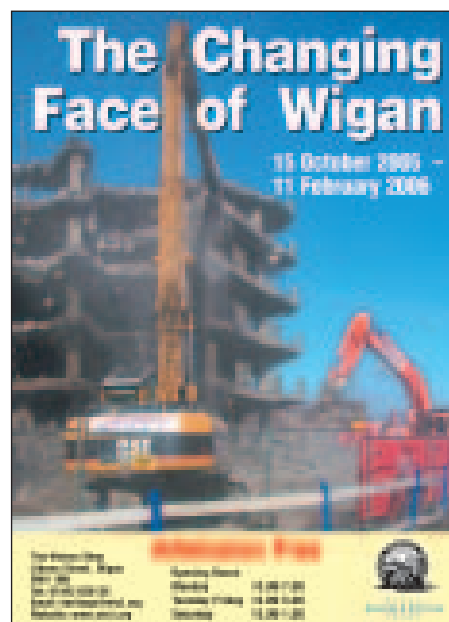
So, come along to the History Shop and revel in the history of your town. We look forward to seeing you there!

The Secret Life of Textiles 6 March – 27 May 2006

The textile industry has dominated life in the North West of England from the middle of the 18th century. So, come along, and discover our textile heritage and gain insight into the development of this industry through the wonderful and unique collections of pattern books that are housed in the region. The exhibition has been produced by ourselves and our partners (Bolton Museum & Art Gallery, Macclesfield Museum, Quarry Bank Mill, and Liverpool John Moores University). We explore the nature of design and design trends, and the technical translation of a design into the finished cloth. The pattern books also give a fascinating insight into day to day business, with details of orders, colours and what was high fashion at the time. Examples of pattern books, from each of the partner's collections will be on display. They are quite beautiful, as each contains brightly coloured samples of cloth. There are also point papers (graphs used to translate the design for the loom) and original designers' drawings.

In addition, we will be displaying extra material from our own collection, the Charles Hilton Archive. This is a very complete sequence of silk pattern books dating from the mid to late 19th century, generated by the firm of Charles Hilton, silk weavers of Leigh. What makes it all the more interesting, is that the cloth they produced, was for ordinary people at the less expensive end of the market. Survival of this type of material is rarer, and it gives us a good idea of what great grandma's favourite 'posh' frock was made out of!

A catalogue of ours' and our partner's collections, will be on sale during the exhibition.



Christmas Shopping at the History Shop!

Those readers who have been to the History Shop in person will know that we have a well-stocked and varied retail area. Those who haven't, would find paying us a visit well worthwhile, especially with Christmas coming up and that 'something different' proving hard to find. We promise that you won't find our gifts elsewhere, or so competitively priced, with many unique to the local history of Wigan. You can browse at your leisure, or Heritage staff will be happy to assist you. **As an extra gesture of festive goodwill, we will also be offering a free gift wrapping service during December!**

Especially for Christmas

A lucky sixpence for your pudding? This unusual card range will send nostalgic Christmas greetings enclosing a real sixpence to save as a memento. Our range of cards and decorations also includes those depicting local scenes and 'Greetings from Wigan'. **A new addition this Christmas, is the beautiful 'Serenity Angels' range, of which we are the only stockists in Wigan.** Each piece is

lovingly designed, crafted and packaged, including a message of love, hope and inspiration from people such as Charlotte Bronte and Mother Theresa. **Part of the profits from the Angels will be donated to aid the fight against breast cancer in the UK.**

Local History Publications

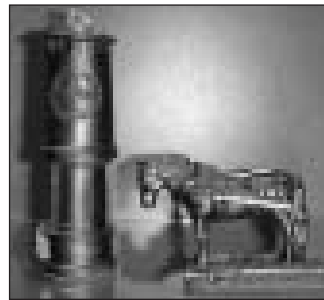
Our selection of local history publications will leave you spoilt for choice. We have everything from books of old photographs of Wigan and surrounding areas, to specialist subjects like *'Lost Railways of Lancashire'* and *'Lanky Twang'*. For the family historian, there are books and family tree charts to aid in the search for your ancestors. **Cannot get to the History Shop? We provide a mail order service for our range of publications. Just send a stamped s.a.e. to The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1NU, and we will forward a list, detailing costs (including post and packing).** On receipt of your order and cheque, made payable to WLCT we will promptly mail your selection to you by first class post.



'Courage is not the towering oak that sees storms come and go; it is the fragile blossom that opens in the snow.'
Alice M. Swain

Coal Figures

Possibly our most popular line is a selection of coal figures made from British Coal. The choices include miners, trains and even a plaque entitled 'The Last Shift'. Evocative gifts for anyone who used to work in the mines and an attractive addition to any mantelpiece. Prices start at £2 and go up to £50 so we cater for all pockets.

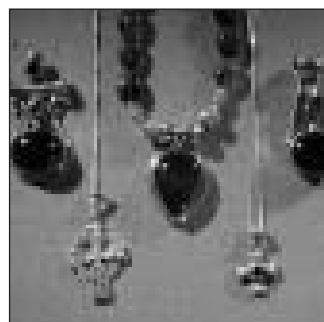


Traditional Toys

An alternative to computer games for Christmas stockings is our choice of traditional, educational and fun games and toys. From whips and tops, pop guns and puzzles to the Wigan version of the famous Monopoly game, we have something for all ages. Fancy getting a different perspective on life? We have kaleidoscopes to suit all tastes from a 25p 'fly's eye' viewer to beautiful brass kaleidoscopes for the connoisseur.

Jewellery

We also stock a stunning range of jewellery including classic, or one-off pieces in silver, semi-precious stones and



marcasite. Prices range from £4 to £25 offering excellent value for money for individual, quality jewellery.

Photographs

We all have fond memories of particular buildings, streets or areas of Wigan and its surrounding townships. A photographic print of that special place will bring back memories and make a wonderful Christmas present. The Heritage Service's photographic collection holds thousands of images of the local area, in times past and present. Our black and white reproduction prints start at £5.95 for a 10"x 8", and for an extra charge, can be sepia tinted and/or framed. Your order can be collected or delivered (unframed only, and at an extra charge) to you, or the person for whom it is a gift. **Prints will take three weeks to process, so order early to avoid disappointment, especially if you also require delivery.**

Wigan Casino

Following the outstanding success of our Wigan Casino exhibition last year we have continued to stock Casino merchandise. This includes prints, CDs and T shirts for all you die-hard Northern Soul fans.

But remember, the History Shop is not just for Christmas. We are open all year round for browsing and buying alongside your enjoyment of our exhibitions and research areas.

We wish you a Merry Christmas, Prosperous New Year and most importantlyHAPPY SHOPPING!

Glyn Jones was the first Headmaster of Higher Fold Primary School and recalls the teething problems of the new school in the late 1960s.

Streaks of red bacon and metal monsters

IN OCTOBER we had a further setback. I had a petition from parents of children in the annexe. The slag heaps adjacent to the class rooms were being removed to provide ballast for a new motorway. The ensuing clouds of dust were a health hazard. These slag heaps, known locally as rucks, had lay dormant for some years. Now the slag was to be removed at the rate of twelve hundred tons a day. The unannounced commencement of operations meant that the dust was soon swirling all over the area. Classroom windows had to be kept permanently closed. On their brief outside excursions at play times children wrapped handkerchiefs around their faces as they played out the actions of Batman, their television hero. "When the wind drives the dust towards the houses the windows look like streaks of red bacon", said one mother. The children in the main school were asked to record their impressions. "I am sitting in the playground gazing into the distance," wrote ten years old Barbara. "I can see the dirty filthy mountains of slag. There are two metal monsters on them with their arms stretched out to the sky. They have their great big wide mouths open. They reach down and grab the filthy slag in their mouths. The mountains of shale have scars a filthy rusty brown. The chimneys in the distance make a curtain of smoke like a twirlwind and could kill you. It smells like a dirty canal". There was one boy who was greatly disturbed because his grandfather was dying of cancer. He wrote: "It is a cloudy afternoon and the rucks are like a round cancer in your body swirling up smoke. I can see the great giant cranes reaching out with their great giant arms for the sky. On the top of the ruck I can see a tree stripped of its branches and a sparrow hawk flying around the top." Some children viewed the removal of the rucks with a twinge of sadness. For them they were an adventure playground. They could slide on shovels, roll down old

Part Two by Glyn Jones

car tyres, engage their rival gangs in combat and improvise their own imaginative play activities. Eleven year old Denise wrote:

The rucks are being pulled down.
O what a pity for us.
We used to play on them.
They made a track
To let the lorries come.
The crane is working hard
To get it done soon.
O what a pity for us.

Television in schools

I cannot remember how the situation arose but this particular event led to an appearance on television. Granada T.V. spent three days filming children playing on the rucks. They also recorded the children singing "We thank Thee Lord for this fair earth", accompanied by our little 'Brass Ensemble' and myself accompanying on the piano. The documentary was about the effect of industrialisation on the landscape of Lancashire. Filming on the rucks and at the school was directed by Austin Mitchell, who later became a prominent Labour M.P. All the outside shots must have been left on the cutting room floor. The children did however appear in close up singing the hymn against the background of the slag heaps. My appearance was fleeting. There was a close up of my hands on the piano!

In October '66 the children from the annexe were moved back to the main school. Staff shortages meant that my wife, who was a qualified Nursery and Infant teacher, helped out as a supply teacher. It may be appropriate at this point to make some observations on the introduction of television in Primary schools, and how my experience shaped my use of it in Higher Folds.

It was one morning in the 'fifties' that I was made aware of the extent to which television was being viewed by the children in the village school where I was headmaster. The toilets were outside in the playground. On one of the walls was a chalked goal post. On this particular morning play time the scoring of each goal was celebrated by arms raised aloft and shouts of 'Mackesons!' Commercial television had arrived. I had also noticed that Monday morning drowsiness had shown a marked increase. It seemed that a number of children were staying up until nearly midnight watching 'Armchair Theatre.' I decided we should use television in a positive way and take advantage of some of the very good schools programmes being transmitted. The cost of renting a set however was beyond our means. The obvious solution was to literally 'Watch with Mother.' I was given the support of the local Divisional Education Officer. A list was made of the homes of mothers at home during the day that had televisions and would be willing to have a small group of children to view some of the broadcasts. The term's programmes were planned in advance. I took on the role of a roving teacher visiting houses in turn. This proved a great success, some parents becoming quite interested in the programmes. This led to some national newspaper publicity when an Inspector arrived one morning unannounced. He was told that the headmaster and the top class Juniors had gone home to watch television!

Obviously this approach would not be practical at Higher Fold. We did however make one effort at parental participation. This was not a success for understandable reasons, and the venture was short lived. This was a period when teachers were being beseeched to abandon old-fashioned teaching of Arithmetic, and introduce the concept of Mathematics, even at

Continued on page 14

Streaks of red bacon and metal monsters

Continued from page 13

Reception class level. It was an age of Cuisinaire Rods, Nuffield Mathematics and a plethora of practical aids to help children 'Do and Understand'.

There was a very good BBC television Maths series of lessons which Mr Johnson was using with the older Juniors. Parents were invited to come into the classroom and observe these lessons.

A couple of years before I came to Higher Folds I was one of twenty Headteachers, Educational Advisors, and College of Education lecturers, invited to attend a conference at Broadcasting House with producers of School Television programmes. I had a close insight into the research and preparation, which went into the making of these programmes. They had resources and expertise at their disposal, which were unavailable to the average classroom teacher. Now at Higher Fold we had, particularly in the early years, many teachers who came straight from college. (During my time at the school we had 20 who started their teaching careers with us.) The BBC produced excellent Teachers' Notes. They also produced very good pupils' pamphlets, which were far cheaper to buy than textbooks.

For the less confident teacher these provided a solid framework. For the imaginative teacher they often stimulated them to widen their horizons. The term's work could be planned in advance, and evaluation could be done in Staff meeting discussions.

There was one occasion when there was an opportunity for parent participation. I had foolishly arranged a Parents' Evening when Leigh were playing Salford in a BBC Floodlight competition. I let parents know a television would be available in a class room.

New Staff

After two years in which four care-takers came and went, and a number of 'supply' caretakers filled

the gap, we had a care-taker appointed who stayed a considerable time. Indeed Noah Greenhalgh was still at the school when I retired! In August Mr Beardmore and Hilary Spragg were appointed, the end of the term saw the departure of Mrs Morris and Mr Johnson. Mrs Beckingham, the school Secretary also left. She had been a real 'treasure' when the school opened. Her successor, Mrs Heaton, was to be a considerable help to me in the years to follow.

Even though at this point teacher shortage was such that we had to appoint two sixth formers as temporary 'teachers', there were signs that real progress was being made. John Beardmore had become Deputy Head, and the appointment of Hilary Spragg, and later, Maureen Cain and Kathleen Meadows, made up a team of young teachers, who though inexperienced, brought imagination, flair and dedication to their work. Moreover they were eager to learn, and many lively discussions took place about the work we were doing. At the same time Mrs Phipps, in charge of the Infants, had a naturally caring and motherly personality to which parents and children warmed. By now I felt that the school was beginning to take root, and even looked forward to 1969.

"More like friends than teachers"

In March 1969 a peripatetic teacher of Brass instruments was appointed. We had children learning the Cornet, Trumpet, Horn and Baritone. Mrs Cain was a talented musician and with the help of other members of staff a good standard of recorder playing was achieved. From April 1969 Wednesday morning 'open' school Assemblies became a regular feature. Each class took it in turn to take the assembly, which included a mixture of drama, choral speaking, mime, singing and recorder playing. A display of children's work was always attractively presented at the entrance to the hall. Each class took it in turn to provide the display. Parents and grandparents often stayed behind looking at and discussing the work. On one occasion I heard a grandma remark "Ee, they're more like friends than teachers these days." In the large city school where I started my teaching and where I stayed for two years, I never met a single parent of any child I taught.

No universal approval

In June Alderman Charles Bratt, Chairman of Managers, presented a lecture to the school. This had been made by two students at Leigh Technical College. The students, with their Principal, Dr. Owen, were present at the service of dedication. At Christmas we had a performance of the pantomime 'Alice in Wonderland' scripted by members of staff. This was a successful 'bonding' exercise, which led to the producing of other pantomimes in future years. In December work had begun on the two class extension needed to cope with extra numbers. This was built as an 'Open Plan' unit and work was completed in June. Open Plan was a move away from the formal box shaped classrooms in which children and teachers were isolated from other classes. There were teaching areas, craft areas, and general resource areas. When formal work is done, either in class units or small groups, easily moved partitions convert parts of the unit into conventional classrooms.

The move towards an open plan system did not meet with universal approval. The following letter in the 'Education Guardian' was typical of the views of many parents.

'Sir' — In sharp contrast to the well publicised protests in recent years over the comprehensive issue, I have heard of no organised demonstrations against the much more revolutionary change taking place in many primary schools—the open plan system.

The Education Authority in which my own children attend school is committed to open plan. New schools are to be custom built and older schools are being remodelled. As a parent I am concerned that my children's education can be affected radically by what is little more than a fashion in education. If so many teachers are against the open plan system and those in favour are so limited in their experience of it, surely it is unsound to implement such changes.'

The letter was written by a parent who was a teacher in an open plan primary school in Cumberland. School architects also came in for some criticism.

'As manager of a local primary school I recently attended a special meeting to discuss a proposed extension to the school. The headmistress of the school had called



CAN YOU HELP?

So many of you have been writing in with family history queries, or wanting to contact people who you have not seen for many years, that we decided to give you a feature of your own! If you have lost touch with Wigan friends and distant cousins, and would like your query published, then write to:- The Editor, *Past Forward*, The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

Wallace Rouse attended Warrington Lane Council Primary School between the years 1937-1942. He wishes to contact his former classmates. He particularly remembers **Rosemary Bennett, Sammy Woods, Eric Birtwhistle, Thomas Ollerton, Stephen Parker and Roy Topping.** Contact him at 6 Nightingale Way, Gillibrand South, Chorley PR7 2RS.

R. Williams is trying to get in touch with any descendants of **Joseph Brinsley Powell**, son of **Joe Powell JP** who was a member of Hindley UD Council from roughly 1920-1950's. You can phone him on 01942 517729 or write to him at 341 Slag Lane, Lowton, Nr. Warrington WA3 2HZ.

Gordon Winnard would like to speak to **Don Rayner**, who wrote about **John Monk Foster** in *Past Forward* 40. There may be a family connection. His telephone number is 01942 521236.

Dylan Harris has lots of information and photographs of The Ritz that he would be willing to share with **Caroline Chadwick** who wrote in *Past Forward* 40. He can be contacted by e-mail : dylan@lupinepromotions.com or by post at 17 Swinley Road, Wigan WN1 2DN.

the meeting since she was disturbed at a number of points in the architect's plans. One important point that came from this meeting was that architects in general seem to know little about educational requirements.'

As so often happens when changes in education policy take place there is no shortage of experts keen to jump on the band wagon of fashion. Some of these experts delighted in using a language, which seemed to have the required 'mystique' to suit the occasion. The BBC ran a series of programmes on 'Open Plan'. At Higher Folds we viewed some of these in after school staff meetings. I particularly remember a little gem of advice. We were warned of 'the incompatibility of adjacent resources!'

I did receive a visit from the County architect who explained that this extension would be one of the first open plan projects in the county, and hoped it would prove to be a useful 'prototype.' There were many pleasing features about the completed extension. However as a traditionalist I was always keen on teachers' own blackboard work setting an example for children's written work. In the new classrooms I had the feeling that

one needed to be no more than five feet tall and be ambidextrous to use the fixed wall blackboards.

Two of the early Authorities to introduce the system were Leicester and Nottingham. I had a friend who was a lecturer in Education at a College of Education in Nottingham. With his assistance (and free lodging), I spent much of my Easter holiday visiting some schools with which he was familiar. While I found much that was good it was obvious to me that in the open plan situation there could be a lot of superficial learning, especially in the emphasis placed on children producing reams of written work from 'books of information. Indeed, I concluded that the type of classroom organisation needed was that which I had adopted as a necessity in my time as Head of the village school. I was fortunate that at Higher Folds I had two excellent teachers in Glennis Andrews and Kathleen Meadows who made the most of the challenge.

To be continued in the next issue, when a painting of Bedford Colliery is presented to the school and children take advantage of school trips.

Calling all Groups and Societies

Wigan Library Service is starting to compile a listing of all the groups and societies in the local area. This will then be transferred to an online database which will be launched in 2006. If you would like to be included in this listing please contact either Rita Musa, Wigan Library Telephone 01942 404126 e-mail r.musa@wlct.org or Vanessa Stott Leigh Library Telephone 01942 404556 e-mail v.stott@wlct.org

Information wanted

I am undertaking research into Harrison McGregor and Co. Ltd the agricultural machinery firm based at the Albion Works, Leigh. If any readers have photographs or reminiscences of the firm I would like to hear from them.

Tony Ashcroft
Local History Officer
Leigh Library
Civic Square
Leigh, WN7 1EB
Tel: 01942 404559

FRIENDS

The Friends of Wigan Heritage Service have once again been busy with Family History Workshops, indexing of papers and church records and generally helping out in the study area. We are indebted to those who are helping regularly as it allows us to do so much more than we could otherwise manage.

One such Friend is Mr Gerald Marsden, retired mechanical engineer from Orrell, who gives up his time freely for the organised Family History Workshops and is a regular attendee at Friends meetings. He also comes into the study area for an afternoon each week and is delighted to help any researchers who need it. They may be beginners, stuck on a certain branch of

the family, or (his speciality) need help getting started on the computer.

Mr David Devine is another example of someone always willing to help. Again David has helped us greatly over the years always supplying items of local interest, photographs or information for our shelves. Every week he spends a morning with us and is only too happy to help someone new to the area or unfamiliar with the resources available. David also helps beginners on the PC showing them how to search specific parts of the internet for information, as this is done in part through a subscription site David has to pay for himself, we are very grateful. And David, don't worry, we won't tell!

Peer Support

These are two examples of how volunteers can help us at the History Shop. This form of 'peer support' has grown up informally in the study area and we have decided we want to recognise it and encourage it. A former regular who was a great exponent of the art of helping others was Mr Tom Bennett. Sadly Tom died nearly three years ago but many people still fondly remember him, 'the old gentleman who was so helpful in the study area', and he is still asked after even now. We propose to see if there is enough interest from our regular researchers/genealogists to cover most if not all of the week with similar 'peer support'. Obviously most of the researchers most of the time, will simply be getting on with their own thing and not need support, but with beginners and those who are looking for more detailed advice, it can be a different matter.

Many of the beginners who have attended one of the Family History Workshop sessions have then asked if they could book again to see the same 'Friend' to help them some more. As these sessions are for beginners and there is usually competition to attend, this would be unfair. However, if we had more volunteers in the study area willing to act when required, as 'peer support', then this sort of progression would be possible. Of course there is also the more common enquiry at the desk "I'd like to trace my family tree and I don't know where to start" and if more than one of these comes along at once we are unable to cope. Even during quieter periods staff cannot always devote the time necessary to ensure every beginner gets a positive beginning.

If you would like to be considered, can commit to one morning or afternoon session a week and love family history, then contact Philip or Christine at the History Shop.

Don't forget, a new series of Family History Workshops started in November. They are held every third Wednesday afternoon at the History Shop. They are just £2.50 for a session bookable in advance and are aimed at **beginners**. So if you have always fancied getting started on your story, this is the ideal opportunity. Ring the History Shop on 01942 828128 to book, or for details.

Haigh Hall
Haigh Hall
 Wigan Heritage Service

Celebrate Christmas & New Year

For a Christmas and New Year to remember celebrate at Haigh Hall.

Party Nights
 Live music accompanied by entertainment from table magicians and our talented DJ.

Carvery Lunches
 Weekday or Sunday Carvery. Sunday Carvery includes a visit from Santa and gift for every child.

New Year's Eve Dinner Dance
 Feast, drink and entertainment to bring the biggest night of the year.

For details tel 01942 832895 or visit www.haighhall.net

Haigh Country Park Events

Sunday 11th December 12-3pm
NATURE'S CHRISTMAS CRAFTS
 Have a day of festive fun with Christmas Coles, crafty cash and Yuletide logs. Mulled wine and mince pies will be served whilst you enjoy seasonal tunes. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**

Sundays 4th, 11th and 18th December
CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR AND MEET FATHER CHRISTMAS
 Craft for free admission, 10.30-4.30pm Meet Father Christmas, 12.30-4.30pm £3.20 per head.

Contact Haigh Hall Information Centre on 01942 832895



Friends Focus Group

In August, an invited group of Friends and a selected group of non-users were assembled for two focus group sessions. The aim was to find out what you liked and disliked, what you enjoyed and what you wanted. Some of the key themes from the two workshops are listed below.

What is the 'Shop'?

There is some confusion amongst both previous users and non-users about what the facility is trying to be in terms of its role. Although it houses a shop, it clearly doesn't solely perform this function.

Publicity

Allied to a lack of understanding of the role of the shop, is a lack of awareness and uncertainty about the facilities, by both previous users and non-users. This is both an issue of publicity and signage.

Displays and information

The displays were thought to need to be made more 'child friendly' by previous users and non-users and more exciting, stimulating, interactive, relevant to the whole of Wigan's history, varied and easy to understand. There was an abundance of enthusiasm and ideas from the majority of workshop participants concerning new local history themes.

Local History

There was very positive and strong support for increasing awareness of local history and heritage and recognition of its role in developing an understanding of the local community.

Family history

This is a key component of the facilities offered by the History Shop. The researching of family history is currently very popular and the Shop is well placed to be of enormous benefit to local people. There is however a need to invest in the indexing, archives and equipment necessary to keep the research up to date and to make the process more easily accessible to the public. There is great scope for outreach work, possibly involving volunteers.

Learning

There were many very positive personal learning experiences gained from interaction with History Shop, and in particular a profound sense of appreciation of what others have done, and the quality of life that we enjoy today. In addition, individuals have gained in terms of their confidence and abilities.

The building

Many of the participants noted the need for improved access for disabled

Thank you to all that participated.

It is not too late to have your say. If you have any opinions on the above or other issues relating to the History Shop, please get in touch. Write to or email to: Philip Butler
Wigan Heritage Service
The History Shop
Library Street
Wigan
WN1 1NU
heritage@wlct.org

PAST FORWARD ONLINE

As reported in *Past Forward* 40, we have now put back issues of our magazine on the Internet. Issues 21-40 are now available! There is a steady stream of requests for older issues which, hopefully can be satisfied by this new initiative. And it's free for you to keep in electronic form or to print out! We've already had many favourable comments. Many of you have been quick to pick up on the fact that you need never miss another copy.

Dear Editor,

As someone who only occasionally picks up a copy of *Past Forward* I was very pleased to see that it is now available online. Now I won't miss any future editions, and I've put a link to remind others on the Ashton-in-Makerfield Community Forum website.

Best wishes

David McKendrick
Ashton Community
Information
www.aimi.org.uk

Dear Editor,

"I have just downloaded some of the back issues of *Past Forward*. I think this is a great idea and I look forward to seeing more on your website in the future. But for this facility I would have missed the article in issue No.32 by Mr Fred Hardman."

Eric Pilkington

Dear Alastair,

Yesterday evening a Chapel friend of mine called to see me, and brought with him a surprise. He's quite a keen Internet user, and had run off something he had found. It was - "Higher Folds - a new school opens". What a superb job you have made of it...

Glyn, Bolton

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

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Interests

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

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

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

Should the In



Wigan decontamination squad, seen here on the market square, 1941, with volunteers from Wigan Corporation Cleansing Department.

Back in the dark days of World War II, Winston Churchill said "should the invaders come" we would be ready for them. In this year, when we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the ending of that terrible conflict, we thought we would pay tribute to the people of our borough, who joined the home guard



Leigh air raid wardens at the back of Brown Street, 1941, with their home made equipment to deal with incendiary devices. Councillor James Hilton on the front row centre.



Getting the Drill Hall ready, Leigh in 1938.



Atherton ARP testing their gas masks on Atherton Street, Atherton.



Leigh ARP volunteers at Atherleigh Hospital, June 1941, looking very smartly turned out. The Rev. A H Bowdell on the middle row, ready to "do his bit".



New Springs ARP members ready for action, with out and with their gas masks, outside their ARP post.



Ince Home Guard, seen here on the Ince Lane.

Invaders Come!

and emergency services. They obviously took Winston's words to heart, as we can see in this selection from our photographic archive. We hope you enjoy the pictures, and perhaps recognise friends or family members who did their bit for 'King and Country', and remember them.



Masks in the gas works yard, Waterbury 1938.



Spoil heaps at the top of Belle Green.



Ladies on parade in Wigan market square, 1941. Can anyone tell us which service they belong to? Notice the mobile canteen behind them.



Tyldesley Home Guard parading behind St George's Pit, June 1940. Notice that they did not have their uniforms in the first picture

Father's Chimney

by
J Whithead

WHENEVER my wife and I, coming from the motorway, turned from Wigan Lane into Mesnes Road by *The Cherry Gardens* Hotel, one of us invariably used to sing-song "And...there's...Father's...c him...bley!". Everyone who makes that turn will see it. Father knew that chimney all his 96 years.

My father was born in Buckley House in 1906. A four square and solid double fronted mansion in dark red brick, Buckley House stood alongside the railway embankment by the Walkden Avenue bridge. It had been the home of the manager of the coalmine that once stood opposite it, before my paternal grandfather moved in. Grandfather, whom I never knew though I was given his names, was the President of the National Union of Life Assurance Agents (having served as General Secretary for many years) retiring because of ill health in 1912. He was also a pillar of the 'Tin Chapel' which stood in Buckley Street. 'Nanna' used to point out to me the foundation stone laid for the Tin Chapel by her and grandfather and bearing 'my' names. Hence, at her instigation, when the green corrugated iron Chapel was replaced in my boyhood by a solid brick building, my name *had* to go in 'The Book of the Builders' for the new structure. Buckley House faced out across the mine-waste towards the rear of Mesnes Park and Ryland's Mill. In 1906 the mill was working hard, and its great smoke stack was one of father's earliest memories.

A couple of terraces of small houses occupy the Buckley House site now, for the big house has gone, as has the spur of railway lines which used to run in front of it, across Walkden Avenue, under the railway bridge into Buckley Street. The rails ran along the side of the pit-waste, through huge double

gates, into the walled and secret heart of Ryland's Mill, where a 'lodge' or reservoir of dark and sinister water lay alongside the rear of the mill. The water stretched beneath the loading area, which was on pilings, and under the building itself. There were supposed to be goldfish in that deadly looking tank when I was a boy, and indeed, if one could scramble to the top of the cement faced, and well defended wall, one might actually see that this was true. It required a cooperative effort from a considerable band of small boys to get one up to the top of the wall. I made it successfully once or twice, but I never saw a goldfish and had to accept the word of others.

Corrugated iron toboggan

Between the 'back' of Ryland's and Buckley House lay the old mine shaft and a surrounding area of waste-tip. Walkden Avenue bordered one side of the tip, the rear of the mill another, while a footpath followed the remaining two sides. The footpath ran by the railway embankment from the railway bridge, then turned at right angles behind the Mesnes Park maintenance areas and to the 'back gate' of the park. It still does, to the best of my knowledge. Of course it was 'not done' to follow the footpath, but we cut across the 'tip' following winding tracks along the humps and hollows. The tip was a low mass of humps and hillocks, quite unlike the high slack heaps such as 'Scout's Hill' near Whitley Fields, (where we used to toboggan down on a corrugated iron section of Anderson Shelter, many years before the new Girls' High School was built there). The Walkden Avenue tip was a fine place for exciting cycling. A couple of the hollows were so steeply conical as

to provide a 'Wall of Death' entertainment. With sufficient speed one could hurtle over the lip and circle round the rim of the hollow at an alarming angle from the vertical. Provided you maintained the speed, you could shoot out again after a couple of circuits, but woe betide you if you lost too much momentum. In the bottom lay a permanent pool, or in very dry weather, a patch of yellowish grey slime. Up and down and round the humps and hollows was an entertaining hour for a ten or twelve year old cyclist. The mine shaft was still there. Towards the railway side of the tip stood a circular arrangement of curved iron rails, rising from a low wall and looking like nothing so much as a giant parrot cage. It was incumbent upon us, whenever passing, to peer between the bars and shout down the dark shaft and pitch a stone or two. My father said he used to do the same in his own boyhood. The shaft was capped the last time I saw it and the 'cage' had disappeared.

Pushing a hand trolley

My paternal Grandfather died before the end of the First World War, I think, and father and Nanna moved out of Buckley House. They lived for some years in one of the terraced houses that still stand at the Mesnes Road end of Walkden Avenue, nearly opposite the side entrance to Ryland's. The sight of Ryland's chimney was, therefore, still a major memory of father's life, though nothing but fields and footpaths lay where Walkden Avenue East, and Mesnes Road are now busy with traffic. I'm not sure if he was living here, rather than at Buckley House, when father took on a part time job as a boy at Santus', pushing a hand trolley around the sweet factory. He was the young lad called 'Eric' referred to in the company's centenary booklet some



years ago. Later, father attended Wigan Mining and Technical College, and later still, married Phyllis Peet, ex-High School girl and then a pharmacist working at the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary. They set up home in 35 Springfield Lane, but when I came along in 1932 they bought a newly built 'semi' in Danesway, a new development just beginning off Mesnes Road.

Toast on an electric fire

Before my brother was born (early in 1939 before the War started) Nanna was living with us in Danesway. She was always awake as early as me, and if I knocked at her room very quietly, she would make me toast on her electric fire. We would read "Pilgrim's Progress" from the massive great volume of Bunyan's works, which had belonged to my Great-Grandfather and which I now have, or from "Tales of Heroes and Great Men of Old", which is still in my mother's bookcase in Chelmsford Mews. With the advent of brother Charles, Nanna went back to Buckley House, living with Mrs. Major and Miss McCardle. Or was it Miss Major and Mrs. McCardle? I got to know Buckley House well then, because I had to visit on Sunday afternoons for tea. It was no hardship. I still remember that I had to walk from Sunday School (at the Congregational Church in Hope Street) through Mesnes Park and out by the small and unimpressive back gate of the park. Then it was a quick scramble up the low stone wall and on to the mine waste tip. A shoe-scuffing walk over the tip, across the still cobbled, rail-inlaid bit of Walkden Avenue, then up the stone steps to the huge door in the middle of Buckley House. In the awesome drawing-room I sat on an anti-macassared sofa and swung my little legs and talked to Nanna, or I might be allowed to open the glass curio cabinet, and actually handle the Ostrich egg and (even more exciting) the shark's jaws. There were assegais and knobkerries on the walls, a hippos foot umbrella stand and all sorts of exotic stuff in that dark house. I

remember it as a strange and exciting place. What I remember most clearly however was Nanna's whalebone stick, upon which her yellowish and almost translucent hands rested as we talked, and which rapped briskly on my shins if I was not standing politely within four seconds of Miss McCardle entering the room with the tea tray. Little ladies may be born, but little gentlemen have to be hewn, like monuments, out of solid resistance.

Finally the weekly meeting would be over and I would be off skipping my way back up Queensway to where Mum and Dad (and little Charles) awaited my return in Danesway. The upper part of Queensway (above what was then the Co-op) and the link through to Danesway from cobbled Holme Terrace, were still unpaved, and remained so until long after the war. The intended road through from Holme Terrace was never constructed. The space was used as a building plot, and a mean and narrow angled footpath is all that remains of the link.

My brother and I were lucky in that our father was not away from home for too long during the War. For a short time my school (the 'Wesleyan', to which I had moved at the age of seven from the Bluecoat School opposite the gated entrance to the Parish Church Rectory) was made to join with St. Michael's in Swinley Lane because an Air Raid Wardens HQ was set up in the Wesleyan School. We were not so 'billeted' for very long and were soon back in our own school (which now had brick air-raid shelters underneath it) next door to the Catholic 'St. John's'. All gone now, but I am lucky still to know one or two friends who shared those days, *and* the School Dinners.

Lady teachers

I started at Wigan Grammar in 1943, where we had some lady teachers because, we were told, so many of the men had been 'called-up'. Years fly by now, but the war years seemed in those days interminable, with an Anderson Shelter at the side of the house, and our back garden all dug up for

vegetables. Mother, and a group of friends, who had always called themselves "The Friday Nighters" because that was their girls' 'get-together' night, ran a Merchant Navy shop in Standishgate, and raised a lot of money for sailors' comforts. They chose to support the Merchant Navy because they thought them the forgotten heroes of the war. Mother also recalls, during the war, buying green fabric at 6d per yard and making a little tunic for doing her drill and exercises with scores of other ladies in Millgate Baths. Probably "The Womens' League of Health and Beauty", I suppose. It may, though, have had something to do with the Red Cross, because she was closely involved in that as well, becoming Assistant Commissioner in later life. The war was all over at last however, and VE Day came with the bonfires and the fireworks. Then in the decade following, it was, for me, National Service and University and work and marriage and leaving Wigan.

My parents too left Danesway in due time. After both my brother and I were gone away our Uncle Jack (Councillor Jack Whitehead) died, and they bought his bungalow in the upper part of Mesnes Road, backing onto Spencer Road. Father was still able to see Ryland's chimney from his garden, where he spent much time. Finally, in their later years, they took one of the pleasant new flats at Chelmsford Mews, developed by my cousin-in-law, Mike Birchall, and their big picture window looked out onto a wild, green garden. Remarkably, it also looked onto the rear of the terraced house where father had lived in the twenties. Beyond that towered The Chimney. The Chimney no longer grandly belches smoke. It seems humiliated by the little stainless steel flue pipes pathetically poking from its Victorian massiveness, providing Educational Institutional Heating,. Except for holidays, of which there were long winter ones in warmer places after his retirement, probably with 'SAGA' I suppose, Father never did move far from home and his view was always dominated by Ryland's chimney. Father's chimney.

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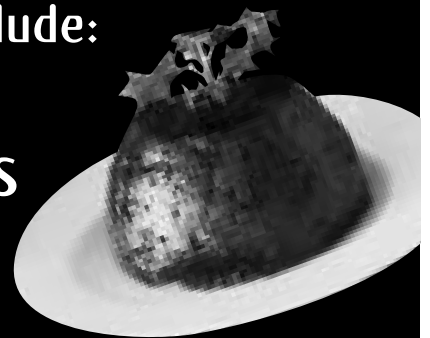
Dates:
Sunday 4th,
11th & 18th
December.
From 1.30pm
until 5pm.
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Sunday 4th, 11th, 18th December,
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Thursday 22nd December 2005.**
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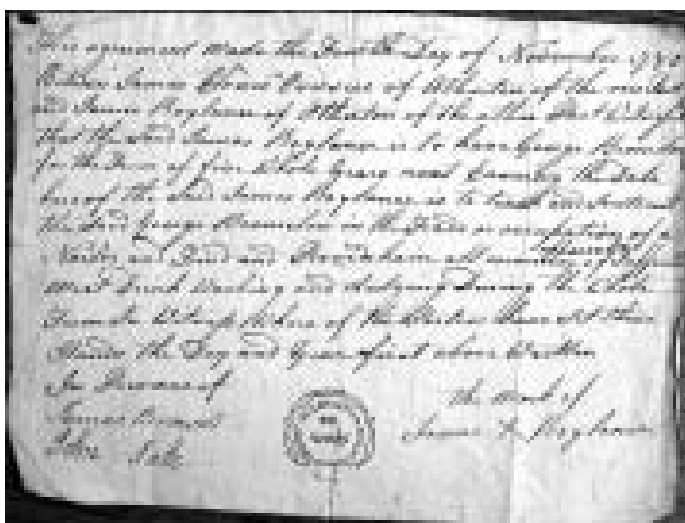
W I G A N
LEISURE & CULTURE
T R U S T

ATHERTON APPRENTICES IN THE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURY

by Mr R.Evans

PRIOR to the Industrial Revolution most manufacturing took place either in the homes of individual workers or in small workshops often attached to their homes. Here skilled craftsmen could agree to take young people into their homes as apprentices. In return for largely unpaid labour the apprentice was provided with the opportunity to acquire the skills of the trade and eventually gain the right to work on their own behalf. Such young people left any family they had and were in the total care of the master craftsman. The Atherton Township Records now in the archives in Leigh Town Hall include 46 indentures, the legal agreements which bound an apprentice to the master craftsman.

Though some appear to be private agreements, the majority relate to children who had become the responsibility of the parish either because they were orphans or had parents who were unable to care for them. The earliest are hand written as is illustrated by one in 1780 when parish officers placed George Bromilow in the care of James Roylance, a nailor.



Most of the later ones consist of printed forms with space for individual details to be inserted. Attached to many are additional printed forms confirming that the Justices had inquired into the suitability of the master, the age of the child had been verified and stating that the child should not be placed too far away from their place of birth. The earlier ones contain very similar wording to describe the responsibilities of the apprentice and master. When in 1790 the parish officers bound John Hallowel “a Poor boy of the township of Atherton” to William Prescott, fustian weaver, he was expected to abide by the following:

“...co-habit and dwell after the Manner of an Apprentice For the term and time of nine whole years next ensuing the Date hereof, during which Time his said master he shall faithfully Serve, his Secrets keep, his lawful Commands obey; at Cards, Dice, or any unlawful Game he shall not Play, or exercise himself therein: Ale-houses, Taverns, evil Company he shall not frequent.

Fornication or adultery he shall not commit, nor matrimony contract during the said term; neither shall he consume or Lend the Goods of his said Master to anyone without his Knowledge and Consent: DAMAGE he shall not do to his said Master or suffer the same to be done by others, but shall endeavour to prevent the same, and give Notice thereof to his said Master. Neither shall he absent himself from the Service of his said Master by Day or Night, during the Whole Term of his Apprenticeship, but in all Things behave himself to his said master and all his Family as becomes a faithful Apprentice during the said Term....”

In return William Prescott promised the Churchwardens and Overseer of the Poor that he would:

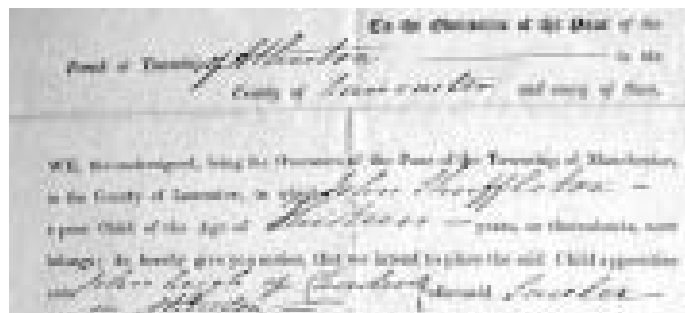
“...Teach and instruct the said John Hallowel or cause him to be well Taught and instructed in the Trade or Occupation of a Fustian Weaver and find and provide for him all Manner of Apparel, and wholesome sufficient Meat, Drink, washing and Lodging during the said Term...”

Though we must assume that the parish officers were interested in the well-being and future of the children in their care they were also concerned that such children should not be a burden on the Township. As the master to whom the child was apprenticed assumed responsibility for the cost of this care the child’s maintenance was no longer a charge on the Poor Law ratepayers once the initial fee for the indenture had been paid. The desire to achieve this saving is made perfectly clear in wording in the printed indentures drawn up from the later part of the century onwards an is illustrated by an extract from the indenture dated 1828 which bound Alice Peak aged ten to Thomas Jackson, a dressmaker of Pennington.

AND ALSO, that he the said Master shall and will be liable for the said Apprentice, that he be not any Way a Charge to the said Township of 1828 or the Substitutes of the same, but all said Fees or Charges shall and will come the said Township of 1828 or the Substitutes of the same.

Apprentices could be placed in Atherton from a neighbouring township and similarly Atherton children could be placed in other townships. There is one official request in 1829 from the overseers of Manchester to place John Shuffleton in Chowbent.

Continued on page 24



ATHERTON APPRENTICES IN THE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURY

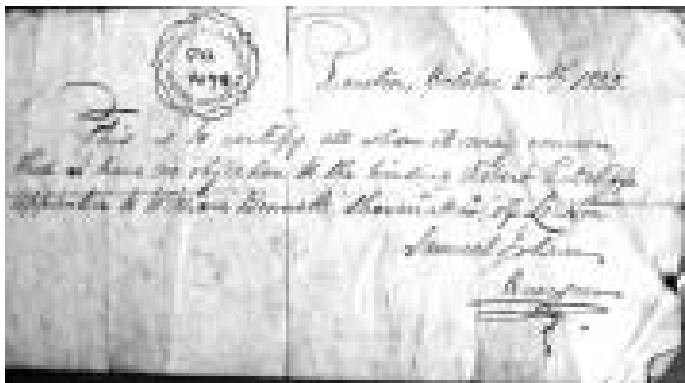
Continued from page 23

In 1832 The Atherton overseer wrote to his counterpart in Little Hulton:

"To the Overseers of the Poor of Little Hulton in the County of Lancaster

We the undersigned being the Overseers of the Poor of the Township of Atherton in the said County do hereby give you notice that we intend to bind Charlson, a poor boy belonging to the township of Atherton Apprentice to Samuel Crompton of your Township"

The indenture for this apprenticeship was completed with the result that James Charlston aged 10 went to work in the coalmines. In 1833 the overseers of Lowton wrote to indicate they had no objection to Robert Ratcliffe of Atherton being apprenticed to a shoemaker in their Township.



Over one hundred years earlier, in 1728, the township officers of Little Lever apprenticed Margaret, a young girl of their township, to Richard Cook described as a labourer of "Adderton" until she reached the age of twenty to be "Instructed and Informed in the Art or Mistery of Housewivery".

As part of the agreement Margaret was to get 6d each Xmas day and at the end of her apprenticeship was to be provided with clothing "Double Apparell both of Linen and woollen". This final provision appears in all the later printed indentures together with a requirement to meet the spiritual needs of the apprentice. In 1828 Alice Peak aged 10 was bound to Thomas Jackson, a dressmaker of Pennington with the instruction that he:

shall and will, on every Sunday, during the said Term, take, or cause to be taken, the said Apprentice, to some Church, Chapel, or other Place of religious Worship, there to hear Divine Service according to the Usage of the Church of England; and at the Expiration of the said Term provide the said Apprentice with two complete Suits of Clothes, one for Sundays and one for working Days, neat and suitable for a Person in the like Situation and Capacity.

There are slight modifications in the terms contained in indentures, which seem to be private

agreements. In 1750 The Atherton officers apprenticed James Harrison who was 14 to George Hatton, a fustian weaver of Bedford, for seven years at a cost of 20s but when in 1780 Nathan Dunster apprenticed his son to John Jackson, a joiner and cabinet maker for six years the cost was £5-5s and John was asked to agree that his apprentice would be allowed time "to go to school to learn to read and Write"

In 1760 Adam Gregory bound himself to Henry Sealand, a fustian weaver, of Atherton:

"as an apprentice or constant servant unto the sd Henry Sealand for yr space of Twenty Months that is till 25 December 1761 from yr Date underwrit & yr said Henry Sealand doth on his part promise to teach him to weave and find him all Necessarys for that purpose together with wholesome meat & Washing & Lodging" but Adam's brother George Gregory agreed to: "find the said apprentice with Necessaryes for clothing from head to foot" The agreement also included "In case of Adam Gregory Contracts Matrimony or misbehaves shall stand open to ye Law for 50s payable to his master Henry Sealand"

There is no explanation why the earliest of the indentures is in the Atherton records, as the persons named do not appear to have any connection with the township. It appears to be a private agreement made in 1677 by Thomas Aspinall a carpenter of Barton upon Irwell in the parish of Eccles arranging for his son, Peter, to be apprenticed to Jeremiah Hindley, a blacksmith in Worsley, for a period of seven years. The indenture clearly states the cost of making this agreement:

"the said Thomas Aspinall the father hath given and paid unto the said Jeremiah Hindley in hand before the sealing hereof the sum of two pounds tenne shillings & is to pay two pounds tenne shillings more three weeks after John the Baptist next ensuing the date hereof"

An additional condition was attached at the foot of the indenture:

"Jeremiah Hindley yr mst allow his apprenticeto work for himself on Saturdays in yr afternoon when his mst is absent"

One of the most interesting and certainly the most elaborate is a private indenture in which James Partington bound his son Joseph, aged 15 to Edmund Manley for 6 years

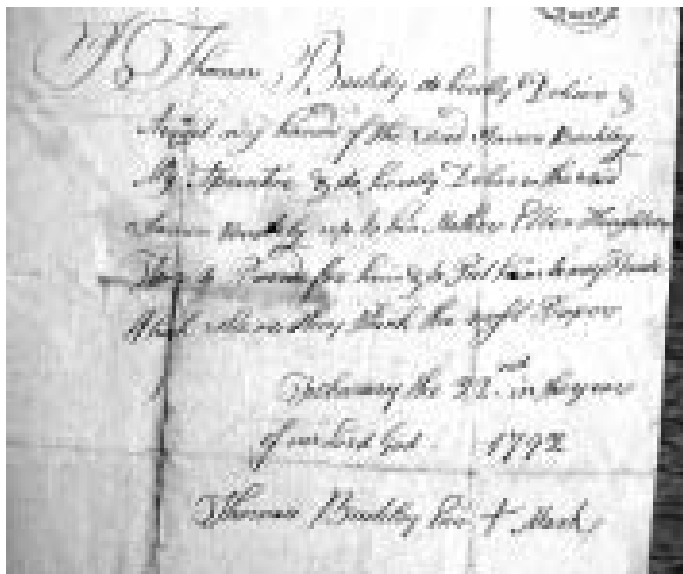
"..to be well and sufficiently taught and instructed in the Trade Science or Business of a machine maker with all its various Branches."

Joseph or his father was to receive a weekly wage of 4s rising by 1s a year to a maximum of 9s in the final year. This is a clear indication that Atherton was entering the industrial age, creating demands for new skills. The 1825 Directory of Edward Baines lists Edmund Manley as a maker of power looms with his workshop near Atherton market place. Both James and

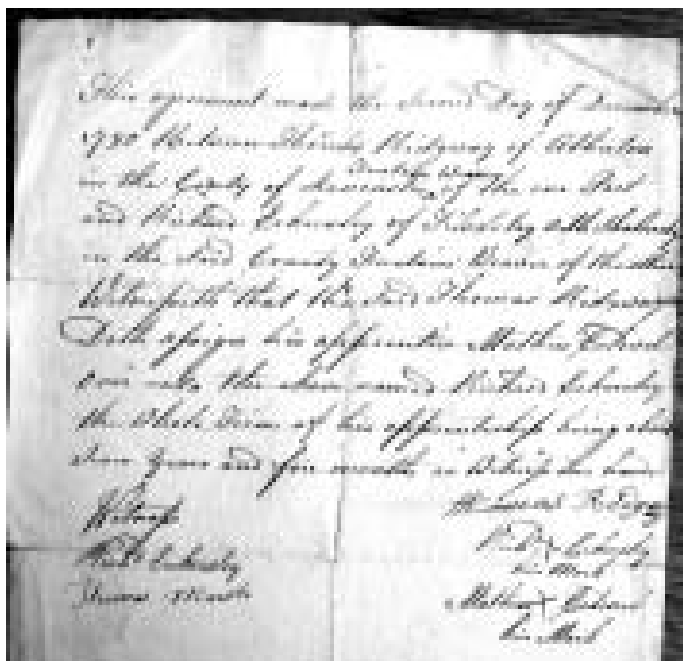


Joseph were educated as unlike on the majority of indentures they were able to sign in their own names.

There were occasions when for unspecified reasons the indenture agreement was terminated. In the first example James Buckley was returned to his parents with the advice that they should find a suitable trade for him. (TRAth/C/4/5)



On other occasions apprentices were passed on to other masters. In 1780 Alice Croft passed her apprentice Thomas Bromilow over to William Charlson while in 1780 Thomas Ridgway of Atherton after what must have been a very short period passed his apprentice, Mathew Caldwell, over to the care of another weaver, Richard Eckersley of 'Tilsley with Shakerley' (Tr Ath/C/4/3)



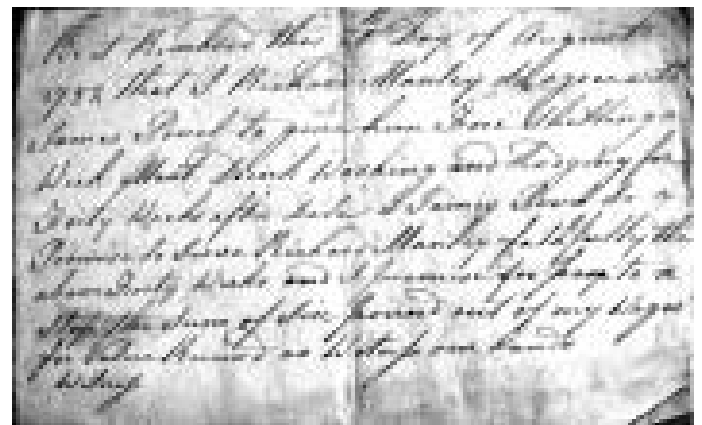
The possible explanation for one document in the records is that there was a fear that one master, Robert Kersley, was about to abandon his apprentices. Presumably friends of Robert agreed to indemnify the Overseer if this did occur. TR Ath/C/4/8

"Jan 3- 1770 We or either of us do promis to pay to John Clowes or his Sucksesers the sun of three pounds

if Robert Kersley do not take his apreticeis with him and Quit Athurton from them at May Next as witness our Hands"

SOME GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

There is no information in the Township records about the outcome for the children named in the indentures. To what extent did master and apprentice work in harmony or were the children, particularly those who had been apprenticed by the parish officers, just regarded as a source of cheap labour. One document indicates that there could be a good working relationship between master and apprentice. In 1782 Richard Manley agreed to pay James Powel a total of £8 for forty weeks work but £6 of this would be returned for the cost of his care.



We do not know how successful the apprenticeships were in ensuring that otherwise deprived children were able to make a success of their lives. One suspects that for those intending to become fustian weavers the future was bleak as the introduction of machinery was beginning to deprive these handloom workers of their livelihood. Life must have been grim for those children apprenticed to coal miners at a time before there was any regulation of underground child labour. Perhaps there was a brighter future for those entering trades such shoemaking, millinery and cabinet making, occupations which had the potential to benefit from economic growth and increased demand for the products. Joseph Partington and others apprenticed to engineering had perhaps the best prospects as the introduction of power machinery was only just beginning to transform the character of manufacturing industry.

REFERENCES

This account is based on The Atherton Township Records in the archives in Leigh Town Hall. The majority of the extracts are from the file containing Indentures which is indexed as TR Ath/C/4/1 The reference to additional extracts is given in the text above.

1. History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster Vol. 2 1825 Pg. 703

The writer acknowledges the help given by Mr Alan Davies archivist in the Leigh Records Office for making the records available for study and for help in providing background information.

The Pretoria Pit Disaster

CHRISTMAS was coming to Westhoughton, a mining village near Bolton, Lancashire in 1910, and so was one of the worst mining disasters in history. Almost every family had at least one member killed and some houses were emptied completely of menfolk on that fateful day.

Regardless of various Coal Mining Acts passed in the 19th century, accidents did occur with repeated regularity. From 1880 to 1910, around 1500 people were killed each year below the ground in this country, and about a hundred times that total suffered injury. Mining indeed was a very dangerous occupation, and it was against that background that the Westhoughton miners and their families had to live.

The Hulton Colliery commonly known as the Pretoria Pit, was situated on the border of Atherton and Westhoughton, and was one of four collieries owned by the Hulton Colliery Company. There were seven coal driving shafts which before the accident raised 2400 tons of coal per day.

Our story concerns the Pretoria Pit only, which had two shafts sunk in 1900 and 1901 known as the No's. 3. and 4. The shafts were split into seams, with number 3 shaft having three seams being worked from the same level, known as the Plodder Seam. It was in this level that the explosion occurred. In the seams in the fateful number 3 pit, were 344 men and boys; 230 persons in the Yard Seam, 90 men in the Plodder Seam and 24 people in the Three - quarter Seam. At 7.50 on the morning of Wednesday Dec 21, 1910 an explosion occurred in the No.3 shaft, affecting all three seams and wiping out all 344 men.

Explosion

The explosion caused an earth tremor which could be felt for miles around. The news spread quickly as anxious womenfolk from Bolton, Westhoughton and Atherton collected at the pit mouth, but all they could do was wait. No attempt to enter the shaft was made until the general manager Mr Tonge Arrived. He and five other men descended the number 4 shaft which would give access to the disaster area. The time was now 9.00 a.m. as the cage slowly moved downwards and although the force of the blast had thrown various obstacles in its way, these were patiently overcome.

The men entered the Yard seam and discovered that the underground fan had been blown inwards with the impact and there was much wreckage around. A number of fires were still burning and, fearing being overcome by fumes, Mr Tonge and his immediate helpers returned to the surface to organise the introduction of fans.

Grisly Find

Within the space of 30 minutes, a search of the mine began, and the grisly find was discovered, although it had already been presumed that the 344 men working on the seams would be dead. The nearest body to the detonation point was sixty yards away and many of the bodies were terribly burned or mutilated.

Rescue men with breathing apparatus began the hazardous job of getting the bodies out of the mine, as the roofs were not safe and the supports unstable. These men worked continuously through Christmas and the New Year to do a job that must have felt like clearing up a battle field.

Aftermath

The first casualty was brought up between 10 and 11 o'clock. It was a youth called Gibson aged 15. His body was badly burned, and covered in coal dust. The second victim brought out was Fountain Byers aged 33, who was also badly burned and had a scalp wound. Remarkably, he was still alive, but sadly died the next day. Many gas cases followed him, and the body of head foreman, Richard Clayton was brought to the surface. He was just alive but in serious distress. Efforts to revive him failed.

It should however be reported that disfigurement did not occur in the majority of cases as 312 of the 344 victims showed no marks at all having been overcome by carbon monoxide poisoning. When found, their features were peaceful and placid as if sleeping peacefully with none showing an expression of agony or pain. Death had been breathed into their bodies by the lungs. One man was found in the act of eating a piece of bread and more than one with hands raised in the act of getting coal.

Christmas and New Year had been forgotten in Westhoughton as the death toll was being counted. One woman lost her husband and four sons. A retired collier lost 5 sons, a brother and a nephew. There were many families with four or five involved. There were funerals on Christmas day, which was a Sunday, continuing from morning till night and also on Monday and Tuesday. Then at steady intervals after that. The undertakers in Bolton, Wigan and Westhoughton were in great demand to cope with the unexpected rush for coffins which in most cases had to remain plain and unvarnished. Wingates Temperance Band lost 9 of its instrumentalists in the disaster.



Ever thought of Volunteering?

THOSE of you reading this publication are obviously interested in your local history and heritage, but have you ever considered the possibility of becoming involved in a more active and practical way?

Wigan Heritage Services, including Wigan Pier, have a variety of volunteering opportunities available which are sure to stir your interest and provide a richly rewarding experience for anybody willing to give it a try.

Wigan Pier's volunteers have, for many years, provided visitors with interpretation, tours, demonstrations, guided walks and storytelling sessions to name but a few! Imagine the reward as you watch a child's face as he or she finally comprehends an important part of our history for the first time, or the delight in reminiscing with our older visitors about the "joys" of local life in bygone times.

On site at Wigan Pier is also Trencherfield Mill, home of the world's largest original working mill steam engine, and here volunteers can have a unique opportunity to work alongside this magnificent piece of engineering. This may be by assisting with basic cleaning and upkeep or sharing information and updates with visitors to the site

Volunteers can be any age over 16, come from all walks of life and usually give one day of their week, although any regular time commitment is greatly appreciated. In addition, we can offer anybody considering volunteering the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised qualification – an NVQ level 2 in Heritage Care and Visitor Services, should they wish to undertake this.

If you think volunteering may be for you why not come down and find out more? To arrange a visit, please contact Debby Hill, Learning and Volunteer Officer on **01942 323666**.



After the dark cloud had eased over this mining community an inquiry was started on February 20 at Westhoughton Carnegie Hall to explore every possibility of what caused the explosion, although it was obvious that the explosion had been caused by gas being ignited. Previously Davy lamps had been used in the mine but for two years these had been replaced by Wolf lamps. Evidence by lampmen stated that the Wolf lamp sometimes got damaged and

caused overheating. Although these were sent to the firm in Leeds for repair, some still were not detected, and were used on the 'face'.

There had been a roof collapse on the North Plodder Seam causing gas which, it had been decided, was ignited by a faulty lamp.

That fall put Westhoughton once again on the industrial map. A map of death, destruction and heartache which put families around a family grave at a time

when they should have been enjoying a festive time around the family table.

Readers would perhaps like to note that a memorial service is held at St Batholomew's church every year on 21st December.

Photographs of the disaster can be viewed at www.ourtreasures.org/mediaassets/jpg/LSW0067.jpg
www.sithi.com.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk

Ernest Ford

A REFUGE IN WIGAN

LIKE all towns in Britain during World War II, Wigan gave of her utmost for the War effort. Our citizens were generous with their time and effort as well as funds, whether it was raising money for Spitfires, battleships, and cigarettes for servicemen, (or socks!), they gave unstintingly.

Earlier this year, however, I received letters and information from people who do not live in Wigan, but who remember our citizens with gratitude and affection. In keeping with many of our neighbouring towns Wigan took in the distressed and needy, who had been made homeless or worse, were threatened with the invasion of the German Army.

They came from as far as Belgium, Holland, Germany, and the Channel Islands and as close as Liverpool and London.

Some were billeted in Wigan for only a week or two, some much longer but all had cause to remember their stay here. Over the next few issues I will be telling their story. Meanwhile I enclose a few letters as a taste of what is to come.

Christine Watts
Heritage Officer (Local and Family History)

Dear Sirs,

I don't know if you will be able to help, but if not, perhaps you would pass this letter to the relevant department.

I am requesting information from the 1940's, the basic reasons for which are as follows:

I was a pupil at the Vale School in Guernsey, and on the 21st July 1940, due to the impending German invasion, we were evacuated to the UK. Most of the pupils left, the majority of them without their parents. We travelled by boat to Weymouth, then went by train to Wigan.

This year on May 9th we in Guernsey celebrate 60 years of liberation from the German occupying forces. On the 21st July we are holding a reunion at our old school, which will be exactly 65 years to the day that we left our homes and families. We

had no idea that we would be away from home for five long years. Our families left in Guernsey had no idea where we were, some were told we had been sent to Canada! Our only contact was through Red Cross letters, which were very brief and gave no indication of where we were, only that we were safe.

We only stayed in Wigan for two or three weeks before being moved on. I can remember on arrival going to a church hall, then some of us were taken to a large building with a high wall, which we subsequently found out was the workhouse. We were then billeted with local people. I was eleven years old at the time, and we were all very, very frightened and confused, having never left the island before. I went to a young couple who were very kind. I can't even

remember their name or address, I can only remember they lived in a new house and the road hadn't yet been finished.

I wonder if you have any information recorded from the time which would be of interest and could be passed on at our reunion.

I look forward to hearing from you, and thank you in anticipation of your assistance.

Yours faithfully,

Zilma Tolcher
Vale
Guernsey

Dear Mrs Watts,

Thank you for the valuable and very interesting information which you kindly sent and I know everyone at our reunion will be interested in and I am sure you will get some feedback.

Reading the notes a lot of work had gone into the arrangements of welcoming us and I do know many of us would have liked to stay in Wigan but as children we had no say in the matter and we do hold fond memories of our short stay.

With many Many Thanks

I remain yours faithfully

Z. Tolcher
Guernsey
Channel Islands

Editor: The details of the arrangements will be in Past Forward 42.

Dear Mrs Watts,

At a recent meeting of Vale School evacuees, Zilma Tolcher showed us a letter she had received from you and your address to contact you. I was one of the evacuees,

ten and a half years of age, billeted with Mr & Mrs Entwistle, 66 Frog Lane. They had a son Eric who was a similar age to myself. I would like to contact him if he is still alive. I can be contacted by email, rouxel@cwgsy.net or by phone 01481 256396. My name is Peter and as we were only in Wigan for two or three weeks he may not remember me.

I recall the Entwistles owned a small grocery shop and I enjoyed eating the meat puddings they sold in the shop which were in little basins. Eric took me to see interesting sights around Wigan, (including the Pier) and I enjoyed my short stay with him, then we were whisked off to Cheshire, and I did not contact him again. I have thought of him often, and if you are able to get any information I would be much obliged.

Yours truly,

Peter F. Rouxel
Ambleside
Rue des Cottes
St. Sampsons
Guernsey
Channel Islands
GY2 4TZ

Dear History Shop,

I wonder if you could help me. In the war our house was badly damaged in the bombing and we had to get out.

The whole family were evacuated to Wigan. I was 14. We lived in Dicconson Street and worked in a large food Warehouse – Rushtons. It took up the whole block opposite the old Market Hall. The address was 1 Parsons Walk. When I was eighteen and a half we



had to come back to Liverpool and I had to leave my job and friends. It was a very unhappy year.

I am now 77 and often think of those happy years at Rushton's. When I was sixteen we used to fire-watch, and went to the Drill Hall to learn how to put out the fire bombs. It was just two of us. We stayed from 5.30 till 9 o'clock when the Home Guard came. We had two letters from them thanking us. I still have them. Luckily Wigan didn't have any air raids but they had black out in Rushton's. The only light on was in the kitchen. In the cellar we used to put the wireless on. It relayed to a little hut on the huge flat roof. I learned to dance. We had to run up all the stairs in the dark. Three floors. We danced in the moonlight. So many happy memories. Both my sisters married Wigan boys but sadly are gone now. One sister sent me leaflets of Wigan, but the new Wigan. Why I'm writing is, have you any of the old Wigan? I would love a picture of Rushton's. I believe the building is still there but it isn't a warehouse. It would make an old lady very happy.

**Mrs J Walsh
Knotty Ash
Liverpool**

Dear Christine,

A bit late but I would like to thank you for the time you must have spent finding all the photos you sent me. Good memories. Well, one not so good. In those days, medicine was always a bottle not pills and for a repeat, you took the bottle back or the chemist charged you for another one. I used to go through the market opposite was Makinson

Arcade, where the chemist was. This day it was raining and I was rushing as usual in my dinner hour. The fruit and veg stalls were on the outside of the market just by the door and I must have slipped on a wet cabbage leaf and fell onto the bottle. When I got up my little finger wasn't there. I just went into complete shock! I looked on the ground. Then I saw it. It was still on but hanging down. Then some man got hold of me and dragged me in the market, sat me down and grabbed cotton wool and a bandage off one of the stalls. He gently lifted my finger back over and put it across the palm and padded my hand like a big ball. I did not look at the man once, my eyes were just fixed on my hand. I don't remember going but I remember sitting in the kitchen in Rushton's and the cook giving me a strong cup of tea. At 2 o'clock I went back to the doctors but he wouldn't take the bandages off. He told me to go back in a week. When I did, he took the bandages off. He said "that man knew what he was doing". If he'd just put it straight with my other fingers it would have gone dead and I would have had it cut off. He saved my finger. It is perfect now. I used to go in the market, hang around the stalls hoping someone would know me and know who that man was but I never found out.

And the Empress Ballroom - I used to go every week. After a couple more lessons on the roof I became a good dancer. I got a medal and certificate for ballroom dancing, and -a new job!

When the interval came the band used to go for a pint, except one. His name was Harry. He was

a manager of one of the Co-op shops. He didn't drink so he used to sit on the end of the stage and talk to us. He said he'd recommend me and gave me a letter, and I got the job. I would never have left Rushton's but the lady in the flour room left. No-one wanted that job, but with me being the youngest and last one there, I got it. You wore a hat but the flour was everywhere. Eyebrows, eyelashes, up your nose..... So I left but I was only in the Co-op six months before we came back to Liverpool.

On V.E. Day in the Co-op everywhere closed but our bosses said as long as people were coming in we had to stay open!

There was no sliced bread then, so we would alter the width of the slice and slice the bread for the street parties all day. To slice the loaves you had

to turn a handle and my arm was dropping off. When there was nothing at all left in the shop that would make a sandwich or a cake we closed. It was 7.30.

We could hear everyone enjoying themselves, singing and dancing. Then they made a big conga right up Standishgate and Wallgate to the station and round back again with everyone joining on the end. It just looked like a big snake. At last the war was over. All the curtains were open letting all the light out. A great night.

Well since the war I've had a very happy and contented life and I hope you do too.

**Mrs J Walsh
Knotty Ash
Liverpool**

**To be continued in
Past Forward 42**

**Green Spaces
Yours to Enjoy**

**Christmas events
in Wigan's Parks
and
Countryside.**

Sunday 18th December :
1.00pm - 4.00pm
WINTER BOOMS...
Start your festive celebrations with craft activities and listening to seasonal music from the band at Pennington Hall Park. Telephone 01942 766708 for further details.

Sunday 18th December :
1.00pm - 3.00pm
CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS
The Rangers will show you how to make your own Christmas decorations from natural items. Meet at Mosses Park, Wigan. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL.** Telephone 01942 245368 for further details.

Thursday 22nd December :
1.00pm - 4.00pm
CHRISTMAS CRAFTS
Pop into the visitor centre at Three Sisters to make some Christmas decorations using materials found throughout the park. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL.** Telephone 01942 720458 for further details.

Monday 26th December :
BOOKING DAY WALKS
A variety of walks will be held at Pennington Rush, Orrell Water Park and Pennington Hall Park. Stout footwear required. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL.** Contact Pennington Rush Visitor Centre 01942 605253, Orrell Water Park 01942 338453, Pennington Hall Park 01942 766708 for further details.

The Famous Leigh Cheese

**“An apple pie without some cheese
Is like a kiss without the squeeze”**

Old English Rhyme

TODAY, in shops and markets around the country, there are a great number of local and foreign cheeses, which attract our eyes, and challenge our palate. Lancashire, Red Leicester, Blue Stilton, Sage Derby and Wensleydale are just a few of the home produced varieties. Whatever the texture and flavour, they are all made from the same basic material - milk. It is estimated that England can boast over 300 different cheeses. However, one of the best known local cheeses that disappeared in the 19th century, was Leigh's very own type of toasting cheese.

Although basic cheese making utensils, dating back to the Iron Age, have been found in England, it was not until the Romans arrived, in the 1st century AD, that changes began to appear. New agricultural ideas were introduced, which enabled cheeses to become harder and longer lasting. Through the years, there were numerous influences in cheese making. It is believed that William the Conqueror brought with him Cistercian monks from Cîteaux in Burgundy, who were reputed to have taught shepherds of the Yorkshire Dales to make cheese from sheep's milk.

A later development occurred with the dissolution of the monasteries during the reign of Henry VIII, when many monks were forced to find alternative shelter and employment. As a large number of them had experience tending animals, and growing crops, they were able to find employment on local farms, and utilise their cheese making skills. Little by little, cattle began to replace sheep, which meant that more milk could be produced.

Dairy farming prospered in the English landscape. By the 16th century. Most counties could boast their own unique cheese. Unfortunately, very few of these

exist today. Several factors are thought to have led to this loss. An epidemic cattle disease in the 1860's, resulted in the slaughter of thousands of cattle. This, together with the importation of American Cheddar, and the huge demand for cheese, paved the way for the industrialisation of cheese making. Many farmers found it easier to sell their milk to large industrial dairies, than make their own cheese. As a result, the numbers of cheese makers declined even further.

In 1795 a book was published entitled *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lancaster: with observations on the Means of its Improvement....From the Communications of Mr John Holt*. On page 145 he enthuses over Lancashire Cheese, which many considered to be superior to that of Cheshire. Cheese made in the vicinity of Leigh had a mildness and rich flavour, which enabled it to fetch an advanced market price. Remarkably, Leigh had one of the best dairies, though the land was poor, and the soil less than three inches deep. Even in 1851, Leigh was still a noted cheese making district.

The following is an account from John Holt's book.

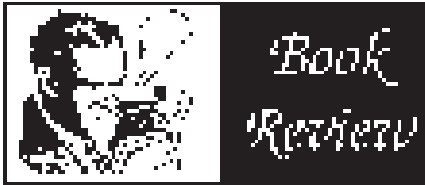
Copy of a letter to the Surveyor, on the subject of Leigh Cheese.

The method of manufacturing Leigh Cheese; with some Observations on the Quality of the Cheese, the Nature of the Land, and the Quantity made from a Cow.

The farmers in Leigh parish make their cheese of two meals of milk, the night's milk and the morning's. sometimes the night's milk is skimmed, and part of the cream taken from the cheese, but this is not everywhere, for the best dairies put all in; in the morning when the cheese is to be made, the night's milk is to be heated till it is just as warm as from the cow, and then mixed with the new milk as soon as it is milked; - into this is put a small

quantity of rennet just sufficient to come the curd, and no more; for on this proportioning of rennet and milk, they tell me, the mildness of the cheese greatly depends. The rennet is made from the stomach-bag of a calf, salted and dried, which they call a bagskin; a piece of this, no bigger than a much-worn sixpence, is put into a tea-cup-full of water, with a little salt, about twelve hours before it is wanted, and this is sufficient for 18 gallons of milk, which it will come in about an hour and a half, if the bagskin be good; then the curd is broke down, and, when separated from the whey, is put into a cheese-vat, and pressed very dry, and after that broken very small, by squeezing it with the hands; the new curd used is mixed with about half its quantity of yesterday's, and which has been kept for that purpose; and a part of the new curd is put by for tomorrow, if it can be spared; if not, all tomorrow's is put by to mix with the new, as convenience suits, for the best cheese is always made with part old curds in the middle of the cheese; ether of which ways will do very well, as often I have noticed. When the curds have been thus mixed, and well pressed and closed with the hands in a cheese-vat, till they become one solid lump, it is put into a press for four or five hours; then taken out of the cheese-vat and turned, by means of a cloth put into the cheese-vat for this purpose, and again put into the press, where it stands till night; then taken out, well salted, and put into the press again till morning, when it is taken out, and laid upon a flag or board, till the salt is quite melted, which will be in a day or two; then it is wiped, put in a dry room upon a turning board, turned every day, till it becomes dry enough for the market. The usual thickness of cheese, when dry is not more than three inches, so that in five or six months it is hard enough to carry to market; and a great deal of it at this stage is sent to London, by persons who are commissioned to purchase it





Book review by Mike Haddon,
Industrial History Officer

GROWING UP IN WIGAN 1930 – 1950

by F.S. (Joe) Winstanley

Some readers may already be aware of this title as it was originally published about five years ago. However it has now been re-issued, and should you be inspired by the following review, the volume can be obtained from the History Shop, price £5.95 (plus £1.20 for UK post & packing)

To paraphrase the well known expression "It does what it says on the tin", this book tells exactly what it says on the cover.

In many, many ways the first two decades of Joe Winstanley's life growing up in an industrial town in Lancashire will have been the norm of thousands of other people, so why write a book about such an ordinary experience?

The first reason is that hardly any one else has taken the trouble to submit their early years to public scrutiny in such a comprehensive,

well written, easy to read and amusing way. For those of Joe's generation I'm sure it will bring back many youthful memories of their own.

Secondly it is an important social document for succeeding generations to begin to appreciate exactly how rapidly lifestyle changes have occurred in the last 80 years or so.

The author's own story naturally begins with his birth, which occurred on 12th October 1930, but the early part of the book is given over to describing his memories of parents, grand parents and neighbours, plus the fruits of family history research going back a further two generations. Perhaps the most interesting revelation in this section is the mysterious loss of fortune suffered by great granddad John Winstanley. In his prime he is recorded as being the owner of both a brass foundry in Wigan and a brewery in Upholland, with the family, his wife and four sons, residing in a substantial detached house in Orrell. From this prosperous state to being employed by Wigan Corporation as a tram conductor living in a Hodges Street terrace is somewhat of a retrograde step to say the least. The author has been unable to determine the reason for this spectacular decline, but it is intriguing to speculate on possible reasons for this situation. I wonder if further research would be able to

provide a definitive answer.

Undoubtedly the all time family villain was another great grandfather by the name of Henry Hill, otherwise described by the author as 'The Big Spender'. I won't go into details here and spoil a good 'bad story', if intrigued you will have to seek out the book.

Naturally the work covers many aspects of local life such as education (in this case St. Marks C of E at Newtown and Wigan Grammar School), sport, recreation and entertainment. Descriptions of various places and events include local cinemas, concerts at Central Hall, rugby at Central Park and the twice a year fun fair on the Market Place.

Two particular loves of the author, music and cricket, are gone into in some detail as is life in the civil service, a career followed both by the writer and his father before him. Living through the days of the second world war from a school boys perspective makes for interesting reading as does the account of subsequent national service in the RAF.

All in all the 130 page book is a good read for anyone interested in 'how it was' in the middle decades of the last century, and even more fascinating if you are familiar with the many locations and local characters that are featured.

from the farmers. At a year old I think it is in its greatest perfection, for if it is kept any longer it grows too dry; and for this reason it is always sold off as soon as possible it can be carried away without damaging. The cheese is mild; and when toasted it keeps all its butter within it, which makes it eat soft and rich. This property of its mixing together when hot, is said to be owing to its being put together cool when made, for this makes the curd mild and tender, and likewise the cheese, so that its more solid particles, when heated, are easily separated, and the whole so loosed and broken, that room is made for the butter, which adheres to the

small particles of cheese, and forms one pulpous consistence. Not so when the cheese is over-heated in making, for then more of the butter runs out, and the curd is softer bound together than before; and when toasting, the parts are loosened, the butter is run out, and the remainder of the cheese is left hard and dry.- The land around Leigh is chiefly barren, being ebb of foil and clay under, which makes it cold and wet. A few years since some of the farmers, encouraged by the high price of corn, marled and ploughed their farms, which had been grazed time immemorial; the consequence was, the plough soon wore out, and left them poorer than ever. The grass

that came was coarse and dry, and the cheese made of these ploughed farms of an inferior quality, which had like to have brought the whole into disrepute. But since the plough was laid by, the pastures have come about, and the cheese made upon them begins to fetch as much at market as the others do. Of cheese, the quantity made from a cow is about 360lb. Fit for the market; besides a small quantity made before and after proper cheeing time, which begins when the cows go to grass, which is generally the old May-day, and ends when they are taken up for the winter, which is commonly in the beginning of November.

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)

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)

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)

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.

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).

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 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7.30 p.m. in the Derby Room of Leigh Library.

Details from Glenys McClellan (01942 729559)

20 December

Theatres and Music Halls in the North West - Les Willis

17 January 2006

Members' Evening & A.G.M

21 February

The Accrington Pals - William Turner

21 March

The Life of Beatrix Potter - Dorothy Hindle

18 April

North Country Folklore - Peter Watson

SOCIETY NEWS

To all Secretaries

Would Secretaries please note the copy deadline on p2.

Leigh Literary Society

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

October 3

My dive to the Titanic (ILL) - Steve Rigby

October 17

Warrington's first Botanical Garden (ILL) - John Edmondson

October 31

Banking in a gentler age - Alan Hayhurst

November 14

Historic Baltic Republics (ILL) - Agatha Brown

November 28

30 years at Pennington Flash (ILL) - Charles Owen

December 12

Assyria, Babylon & the Bible (ILL) - Chris & Ruth Byworth

January 9

Cornwall (ILL) - Trevor & Sue Lucas

January 23

In the steps of the Brontes (ILL) - Margaret Curry

February 6

1932 Kinder Scout Trespass (ILL) - Keith Warrender

February 20

History of Teddy Bears (ILL) - Jenny Todhunter

March 6

The World of William Wickham (ILL) - Len Hudson

March 20

Tai Chi Ch'uan - A Chinese way of health, meditation and martial art - Talk and demonstration by Dr Stewart McFarlane

April 10

AGM & *The Great Comedians* - Davis Hill

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).

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)

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. Visit our website at www.ffhs.org.uk/members/wigan.htm.

ALASTAIR GILLIES

Though I met Alastair through various connections with the History Shop, and not least when I had exhibitions of paintings there, it was whilst discussing work on the Charter Mural that we really got to know each other. Our meetings were enjoyable and I never came away without thinking we had come up with some new ideas. References to *Past Forward* were frequent and my involvement was extended, when I was doing research for the cover of the sadly, not yet produced book on Aspull, by an Art School contemporary of mine, the late Eva Turner. Little did I realise that when the drawing was reproduced in *Past Forward* it would be followed by so many centre spread illustrations featuring different regions of the borough. Memories of our discussions for such works will always remain.

Gerald Rickards



Gibfield Pit Head Baths

Dear Editor,

I was delighted to see the article in the 40th issue of the forever wonderful Past Forward re the pithead bath at Gibfield Colliery on Coal Pit Lane, Atherton. My father, myself and my maternal grandfather all worked down Gibfield at some time in our lives.

I was born in 1931, only a stones throw from the baths and lived there until 1960. All the surrounding areas were very well known to myself. I have very fond memories of my youth. I don't think I could have

been born at a more favourable time

From my back bedroom, I could hear the first workmen coming up the cobbled street in their clogs as early as 4.30am, and the men singing in the baths when they had finished their shift. Also the winding engine going by day, and night, plus many other noises such as running tuns on the pit brow.

I look at the changing face of the Gibfield scree and in a way I am sorry to think back about 65 years. There was also a brick works there, and we used to swim and fish in its huge clay pit, which was also used as a firing range for Gibfield home guard. We used to dig the bullets out of the targets and the clay sides in fact I still had some until a few years ago.

I have been sending a copy of Past Forward to relatives I have traced to Nova Scotia in Canada.

Keep up the good work.

**Mr J Grimshaw,
Hindley Green**

Annie Wild

Dear Editor,

I was interested in the article in Past Forward 40 about the visit of Gracie Fields to Wigan, and the photograph on page 32. The young girl presenting the bouquet to Gracie is my youngest sister Annie Wild. Gracie reportedly said "Ee you've got a fringe like mine, only I 'ave to spit on mine to curl it round"!

Yours faithfully,

**Mrs Pauline Walker,
Aspull.**

HIRE OF MEETING ROOM

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

SOCIETY RATE

£8.75

PER MORNING/ AFTERNOON SESSION

COMMERCIAL RATE

£21.65

PER MORNING/AFTERNOON SESSION

If you are interested, contact Philip Butler

Tel (01942) 828128

THE CLEANSING

*The pit-head baths at one o'clock,
Empty, echoing and dry.*

*Doorless cubicles, concrete floored
Appear pristine. The odd drip*

Of a basic shower-head

Breaks the silence. Then,

Three-thirty, a clanging of steel

As locker doors are opened

To receive dusty, sweaty work-clothes,

Scarred helmets, and formidable

Steel-toed boots.

Naked male bodies commandeer

Cubicles, often shared, handy

For complementary back-scrubbing.

Steam fills the air as scalding

Water gushes from once-passive

Showerheads. Black rivulets run

To king-size plug holes

As cloying coal-dust is vanquished

By fist-sized tablets of green soap

Lettered PHB, not designer initials,

Simply the obvious, "Pit Head Baths".

Later the miners dress for home

All trace of the pit sluiced away,

Save for panda-rimmed eyes.

A wetted corner of a damp towel

Completes the surface cleansing.

Inside the breathed-in dust settles,

Not to be disturbed by the magic

Of PHB, or anything else.

**Eric Holt
Westhoughton**

Designs for Life

4 designers/makers

at the Turnpike Gallery, Leigh

10 December – 28 January 06



Craft Fair and special opening event

Friday 9 December 1-5pm and 6-8pm

TURNPIKE GALLERY



Fire Watching

Dear Editor,

Reading stories of WWII reminded me of my mother who volunteered to do fire watching. Every street or road was asking for people to take a couple of nights each to patrol their street during an air raid, under the supervision of the local ARP warden. My father was a railway driver, and could not offer his services, as he worked shifts, so mother volunteered.

One night, the siren went, and it was mother's turn to patrol. Well, up she gets out of bed, and started to get dressed, when I heard her call to me to come and do the

laces and hooks of her Sirella corsets. After much struggling, I finally managed to do her up. Finally, she was dressed. And went down stairs, put on her coat, hat and gloves. I said "mummy, I don't know why you don't have some trousers instead of a frock, and don't forget, you have to wear a tin hat." Mother was aghast. "No way" she said "If I am going to be killed, I want them to find me properly dressed". With that, she started to go out the front door, when the All Clear sounded. Needless to say, that was the end of mother's fire watching. The street warden said "Sorry Mrs Green, but the whole street could have gone up in flames whilst you were getting dressed, and putting your corsets on". Mother had tried to explain why she took a long time, as it had taken her a good hour to get dressed.

It became a standing joke with the family - "Our Annie's Fire Watching".

**Margaret (nee Green)
Upton on Severn,
Worcestershire.**

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Wigan and the Arras Tunnels

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the article, 'Wigan and the Arras Tunnels', page 33, issue 40 by Noleen Sutton. In the article the tunnels referred to were used as living quarters, command posts and hospitals etc. This was just one aspect of the underground warfare that was engaged in by both sides in that terrible conflict World War One.

The tunnellers, being miners in civilian life, swapped a life of danger for a living hell and must have included many hundreds of men from this part of the country. The following item appeared in the St Helens Reporter in June 1915, St Helens D.C.M.S. a thrilling story.

The first men in the South Lancs Regiment awarded the D.C.M. are Sergeant T Hallwood, Corporal Evason, and Corporal Ching. They got the medals for long arduous and dangerous work in successfully driving mines under the German trenches, the mines being exploded with great damage to the Germans and considerable advantage to us. Sergeant Hallwood, having been a fireman at the Ravenhead colliery, the other two men having been employed at the Richard Evans colliery, at Haydock.

On 27th February, 1915, Sergeant Hallwood, Corporals Evason and Ching, under the command of Captain Edwards, a mining engineer of the Monmouthshire regiment, together with other men of the

South Lancs Regiment, A Rigby, J Hamilton, J Lyon, N. Neary, W Rigby, R Jones, W Egan, and S Dyson, carried out the work in three eight hour shifts and continued until the 20th April 1915.

A shaft was sunk in the cellar of an Inn within the British lines and driven straight for the German lines only 40 yards away. When the mine had been driven this length the party then drove to the left for 20 yards and then 30 yards to the right. The work was very arduous as the soil was sand and clay and very wet.

At this point they found that the Germans were driving towards them so it was a question of who would explode their bombs first. Our men exploded the first bomb demolishing the German buildings and trenches inflicting much loss of life.

For a large part of the time our men knew that the Germans were countermining as the latter's work was quite audible. Nevertheless they continued to work, uncertain as to how soon the Germans would explode their mines with the instant death of all the men.

In civilian life a miner's work was at all times hazardous but for the tunnellers it must have been a living hell.

Sergeant Hallwood, who was related to my mother, was killed in action on April 12th, 1917, aged 36.

**Mr Henry Collins
St Helens**

Harold Knowles

Dear Editor

It was with great sadness that I read the obituary of Harold Knowles, written by his daughter Gillian Drummond. I have read several letters about his life in *Past Forward*, but never connected him to the Harold Knowles I knew. I realised when Gillian talked of her father's job, that I had worked with him at the Borough Engineer's in Library Street, Wigan. We worked for Denis McKellen (Sir Ian McKellen's father), I was a typist in the office, and Harold was an engineer.

My best wishes go to Gillian and the family, her father was a kind and understanding man, and she had every right to be proud of him.

Joyce Riddick (nee Nicholson)



RITZ CINEMA

Dear Editor,

I read your item on the demise of the Ritz Cinema with the same sadness as was shown by your other correspondents. My own memories, however, pre date theirs, as I attended my first film there in 1938.

At the tender age of 15, I arranged, along with my best school friend, that we should take our girl friends to see the film which was then showing. This was in fact the opening feature of the Ritz, *Lost Horizon* and featured Ronald Coleman. My friend's girl duly arrived at the appointed time, but mine was nowhere to be seen. Since she had to walk from Westwood Lane, Higher Ince, I was not disturbed, but as time passed it became obvious that she was not coming, and that I had been 'stood up'. After my companions had waited with me in Station Road for a reasonable period, it was decided that they would go in, while I waited for a bit longer. I finally went in alone, my only source of comfort being that my greatly stretched pocket

Walker Brothers Employee Nursery



We have recently received this addition to our photographic collection from Mrs Margaret White in Herefordshire. According to Mrs White, the company set up a day nursery during World War II for their workers at The Hall in Frog Lane, Wigan. The woman in the striped coat is Dr. Muriel Haigh, and the nurse is Miss Jessie Hyde. The other women are the nursery helpers. Does any reader have any information or even recollections of attending the nursery?

Please contact Yvonne Webb (Collections Development Manager) 01942 828123 or y.webb@wlct.org

money had not suffered the damage which earlier had seemed likely, having only paid for one instead of two!

Still full of nostalgia, I was amazed on leafing through *Past Forward*, to find on page 40, a tribute to the novelist James Hilton. Mr Hammond, in his note discussed Hilton's origins in Leigh, but made no mention of his long and distinguished career in Hollywood as a screen writer. To me the amazing coincidence was that in fact he wrote the novel and the screen play for the film. To which I

referred earlier, as the opening feature at the Ritz. I had no idea back in 1938 that we were being entertained by a

wonderfully written piece of work buy a local lad!

**Dr E Atherton
Swinley**

Johnny Bunny Pastilles

Mike Haddon (Industrial History Officer) would like to express his appreciation to everyone who contacted him regarding the above product (see PF No. 40, page 41).

The response was excellent and Mike, who still has some leads to follow up, hopes to have an item on the firm concerned, the Brynn Manufacturing Co. Ltd., and its principal partner Mr. J.B. Morris, in the next issue of *Past Forward*.

High Tea

*Ther's sanwiches, egg, cheese and 'am
Wi' sausage rolls (fert childer - spam)
Wi' love to munch on't chocolate bars
They'r jus the bes', you'll see
An 'omemade biscuits twice as good
W'en eaten wi' ower tea
Ther's strawberries, wi' cakes on view
To add to ower cusine
Tinned pineapples and peaches too
Topped up wi' swirls of thin Carnation
cream!*

By Elene Humphreys

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W I G A N
LEISURE & CULTURE
T R U S T

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Who? Where?

Thank you for your responses to the mystery photographs in issue 40. You have managed to identify the building in the top and middle pictures as the Robert Lewis School, Severn Drive in Norley Hall. If you have ideas about the photographs shown here, please contact Len Hudson on (01942) 404432, he'll be delighted to hear from you.



WITHIN THE BOROUGH - A DRAWING AND QUIZ

by GERALD RICKARDS

THE DRAWING

The drawing features buildings and landmarks from twelve different parts of the borough, from north to south, from east to west. It has been designed in the form of twelve 'skylines', each with a few well know landmarks, including several places of worship and public buildings, as well as a few other significant 'items'. Each region is presented, either as a black silhouette, or as a black line drawing on white. The buildings for each region are not always true in scale or in the exact location to each other.

THE QUIZ

The twelve places featured need to be named, starting at the top of the design; then working down the drawing through the alternate horizontal bands of black silhouettes, and black line drawings. Two of the places featured are sometimes linked together. Assistance is given with two letters alongside each of the twelve places. The letters alongside are taken from the place name but are not necessarily in the correct order. It is hoped that working out the answers will give enjoyment, whilst at the same time carry on a tradition that has become a pleasant and accepted way of helping to raise money for the Wigan and Leigh Hospice.

ENTERING THE COMPETITION

Answers can be sent either by submitting this question page, together with a donation of not less than £1 or the answers handwritten with question numbers alongside or using one of the question sheets available at various outlets including the Hospice, Hospice Shops, the artist and at CC Art picture framers and gallery in Hallgate, Wigan.

Entry Forms can be sent to Wigan and Leigh Hospice, Kildare Street, Hindley, Wigan WN2 3HZ, or handed in at any of the above listed places by 31st January 2006.

THE PRIZES

Two prizes are offered from the artist's selection of signed prints in frames. One prize is offered for the highest number of correct answers, with question 13 as a tie breaker. **AND** (to encourage everyone to enter) another prize for the most apt and original answer to question 13 – irrespective of the number of correct answers to questions 1 to 12.

Prize winners will be able to select from a wide range of signed framed prints. As an alternative they can select two card mounted unframed prints. The prints offered, range from local subjects, including public buildings, churches, streets, Formby houses, parkland, canalside and sections from the Central Park triptych. Decorative compositions include those developed from drawings previously printed in 'Past Forward': Aspull, Haigh, Ince, Leigh, Orrell, Standish, etc. Subjects further afield range from limited editions of Thomas Hardy properties and places linked with his writing; to English Cathedrals and Cathedral Close buildings, National Trust properties, canalside views, Oxbridge Colleges.

1. (HH)
2. (EO)
3. (TH)
4. (ET)
5. (NA)
6. (LL)
7. (HE)
8. (LL)
9. (HT)
10. (DH)
11. (DH)
12. (LL)
13. (tie breaker and/or 'extra' prize) Suggest three buildings or 'items', not necessarily depicted in the quiz design, which you consider represent the borough

- (i)
- (ii)
- (iii)

and in not more than twelve words, say why

.....
.....
.....
.....

