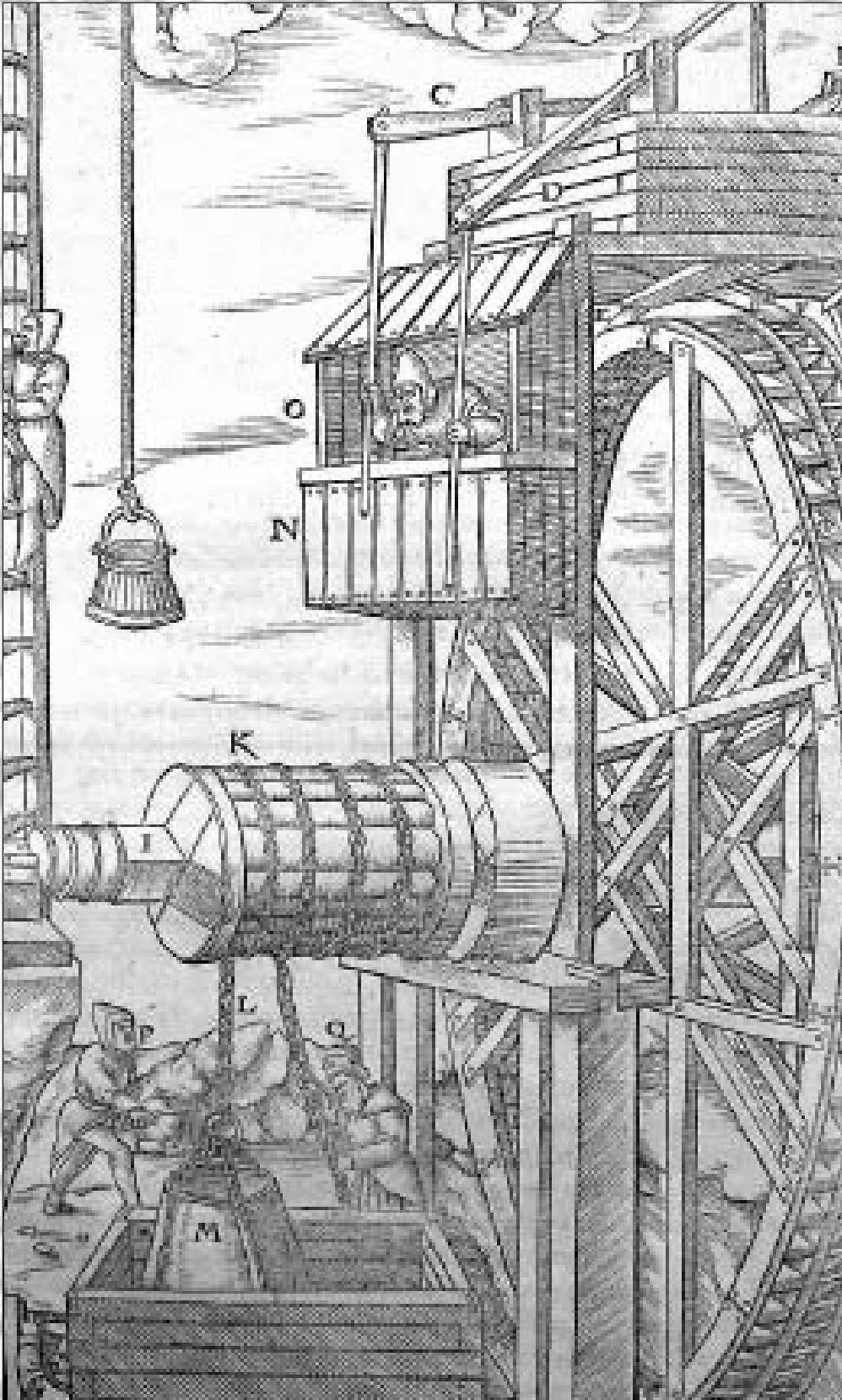


# PAST FORWARD

Issue No. 42

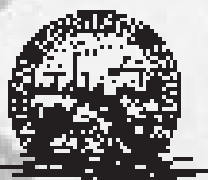
April – July 2006



***Wigan 1841  
Census Index  
now  
available!***

***New  
Exhibition at  
the History  
Shop -  
Secret Life of  
Textiles***

***Early Mining  
Gem  
Rediscovered  
at the History  
Shop***



***Produced by Wigan Heritage Service***

**FREE**

WIGAN  
LEISURE & CULTURE  
TRUST

# Letter from the Editorial Team

It is very gratifying to report that your letters, articles and snippets of local history keep rolling in, which is just what we want. Obviously, we cannot guarantee to publish them all (see our editorial policy below). If any reader has any ideas about the types of articles and information they think should be included in *Past Forward* (especially if you want to write them!), then please let us know.

We are sad to report the death of the well known, local artist Gerald Rickards. He was involved with the Heritage Service, producing several competitions and drawings for *Past Forward* and also exhibiting at the History Shop. Alastair Gillies (former editor and manager of the Heritage Service) worked closely with Gerald for many years, writes in tribute on page 33.

Finally, we wish all our readers a Happy Easter.

## 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](mailto: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 43  
is 19 June 2006**

## Wigan Heritage Service

### You Contact Us

Carole Tyldesley Heritage Services and Wigan  
Pier Manager 01942 323666

### At the History Shop

Email: [heritage@wlct.org](mailto:heritage@wlct.org)

	<b>Reception</b>	01942 828128
Philip Butler	Visitor Services Manager	01942 827594
Yvonne Webb	Collections Development Manager	01942 828123
Chris Watts	Family and Local History Officer	01942 828020
Mike Haddon	Industrial History Officer	01942 828121
Dianne Teskey	Community Outreach and Education Officer	01942 828124

### At Archives - Leigh Town Hall

Email: [a.davies@wlct.org](mailto:a.davies@wlct.org)

Alan Davies Archivist 01942 404430

### At Leigh Local History - Leigh Library

Tony Ashcroft Leigh Local History Officer 01942 404559

## OUR EDITORIAL POLICY

Many of you have been asking what our editorial policy is, so we have printed it here.

- All correspondence, articles and material submitted, must be accompanied by the name and postal address of the author. Anonymous material will not be published.
- Publication of any material is at our discretion, and cannot be guaranteed.
- We reserve the right to edit any material we decide to publish.
- Unfortunately, we cannot acknowledge receipt of material or return any material submitted, except photographs if requested.
- Material is kept on file for one year, and then destroyed.

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**Cover:** Background detail 19th century silk pattern, Charles Hilton Archive, main picture detail from *De Re Metallica* by Georgii Agricola

# Exhibitions at the History Shop

## The Secret Life of Textiles

6 March – 27 May 2006

*The Secret Life of Textiles* is a touring exhibition by Bolton Museums, Art Gallery and Aquarium, Liverpool John Moores University, Macclesfield Museums, Manchester Central library, Quarry Bank Mill (The National Trust) and Wigan Heritage Service, and has been generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Two years ago we joined together in a Heritage Lottery bid to make our textile pattern book collections known to the public, and highlight them as a fabulous source of historical information and design history.

Pattern books and other design material will be on display from each of the partners. There will also be a timeline of the major advances in textile technology, a model loom which explains the technique of weaving and an AV presentation featuring highlights from the six partners' collections.

We will also be displaying additional material from our own collection, the Charles Hilton Archive. The fabrics produced by Charles Hilton (a Leigh firm of silk weavers) were made into clothing for the less expensive end of the market. Survival of this type of material is much rarer, and it gives us a good insight into what great, great grandma's 'posh' frock was made out of!

A catalogue of the exhibition, featuring coloured prints and a wealth of information about the industry and our collections, will be on sale in the shop.



**THE Secret Life of Textiles**

The textile industry has dominated life in the North West of England from the middle of the 18th century. Discover our textile heritage and gain insight into the development of the industry through the wonderful and unique collections of *Flaxen Boods* that are housed in this region.

**6 March to 27 May 2006**

Wigan Heritage Service, The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

**Opening Times**  
Monday - 10am to 7pm  
Tuesday to Friday - 10am to 5pm  
Saturday - 10am to 1pm

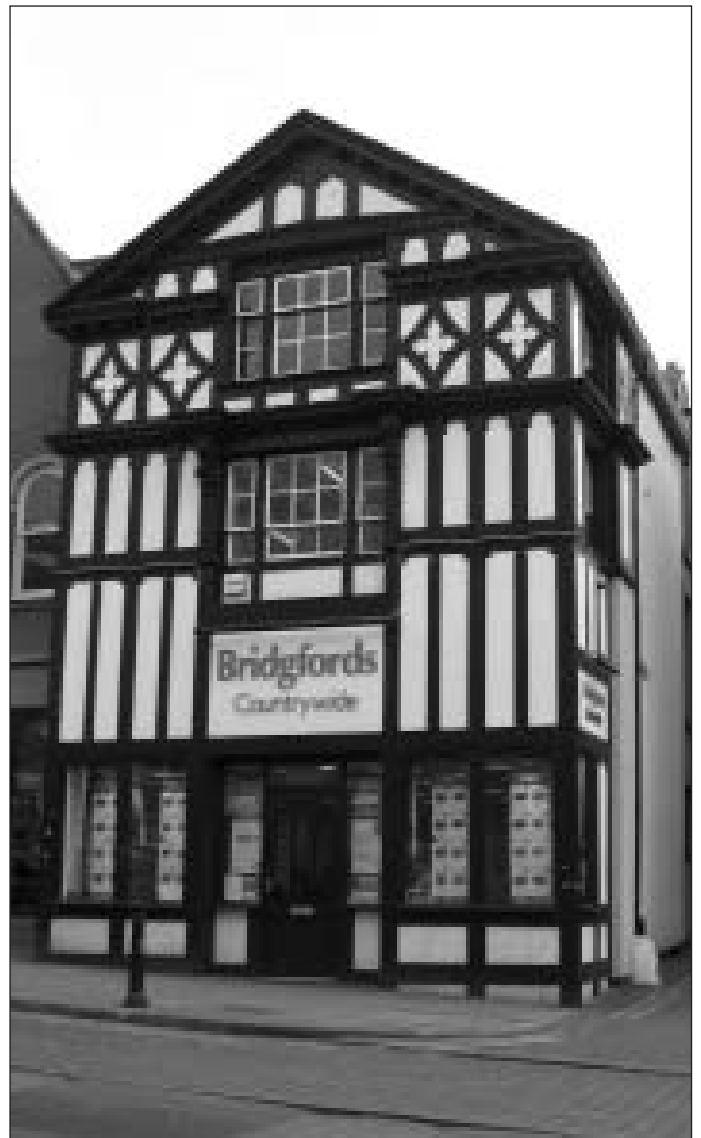
## Historic Buildings in Wigan and the Douglas Valley

*The Work of the Heritage Trust for the North West in Greater Manchester*

19 June – 19 August 2006

The Heritage Trust for the North West is a Building Preservation Trust established in 1978 as a registered charity. It has rescued and restored many historic buildings in Lancashire and the North West. Its aim is to find new and appropriate uses for redundant buildings of architectural importance, and through renovation, encourage good design and craftsmanship. Many are open to the public.

This exhibition looks at the work of the Trust in Greater Manchester including Wigan and the Douglas Valley. They are currently surveying buildings at risk in the Wigan area, and the record should be completed by June. The trust owns 25 Wallgate (pictured) which typifies the type of building they are interested in.



# CAN YOU HELP?

Dear Editor,

I hope that you will be able to help as I have been stuck on this one line for several years.

My ggf JOHN GRIME(S) died in Atherton in April 1926 aged 78 years. He married ELIZABETH HIGHAM on the 12th April 1868 at the Wesleyan Chapel, Pennington.

John was 20 and Elizabeth was 19 years. Her parents were Richard Higham and Ann Molyneux who were married on 13th November 1842 at Leigh Parish Church.

When John and Elizabeth married both lived in Atherton and children were baptised at Atherton Parish Church.

The 1881, 1891 and 1901 census says that John was born in Atherton. The 1871 says that he was born in Ulverston, which I think is a mistake by the enumerator.

I have not found the family on the 1861 census. John must have been born 1847/48 but he is not registered on the National Index – I have tried Wigan and Ulverston.

I have not found John's baptism. When he married John was a boltmaker. His father was named Thomas but he was deceased. Thomas had been a coal dealer.

I have searched for several years but cannot proceed further along this line. I would appreciate any help from your readers. I would like to find John's baptism or his date of birth. His mother's name would help me to find his parents' marriage. Did John have any siblings? Are there any readers researching the Grime(s) family?

I have struggled for many years on this problem without any success. Hopefully some reader may be descended from a sibling of John and will enable me to continue with my genealogical research.

Looking forward to making contact with anyone who can help. Thank you.

**Mrs Sheila Sivill**  
**Sheila@sivill125.fsnet.co.uk**

Dear Editor,

Margaret Lupton (nee Walsh) would like to see Photographs or programmes of the productions by Wigan Operatic Society in the early 1930s. Harold Rigby is known to have sung principal roles. Other members of the Rigby and France families were active members of this Society. Are there any descendants of Harold's brother Eric?

Mrs Susan Williams, has sent this photograph, and would love to know the occasion for this outing. Any ideas to colin@williams442.fsnet.co.uk



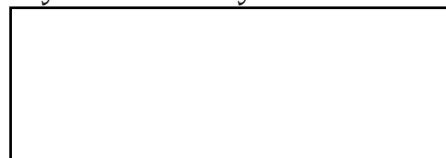
From Dorothea Ruddle,

My great grandparents lived in Leigh and had a grocers shop in Bradshawgate for a period of time, Joseph Isherwood died in March 1911 (I have a notice of his obituary) also his brother, who was Mayor at a later date.

The photograph was taken at the celebration of a wedding anniversary of Fred Mort (son of Elizabeth Isherwood, daughter of Joseph). Other people in the group are probably relatives, but I have never

been able to trace Fred Mort's marriage.

One of Joseph's sons, Frank Isherwood, who was a bus inspector, had a daughter named Dorothy born in 1924. She married Leslie Fletcher, and I understand that she also appears on this photograph. Can anyone confirm any of this?



Dear Editor,

Jack Knowles would like to contact Irene Roberts, with particular reference to PF35 and the article Brass Bands and Kind Hearts. The photograph in the article showed young people taking part in a 1950's walking day. Jack suspects that he is one of the young men. Can Irene contact Jack (01942 21594) with any information she may have. ⇨

# Memories of a Golden Voice

by F Morris

It was before the developer began to destroy every bit of countryside he could lay his hand on.

The wife, Lilian, and myself lived in Parkbrook Lane, Shevington. We could get a bus, half hour's ride into Wigan, or the train from Gathurst Station into Southport for shopping, both about the same distance.

There were nine houses in our lane, we were the last but one at the bottom. After that, came the John Pit Wood, which in the spring was alive with bluebells, primroses, cowslips, harebells and every wild flower one could mention. All gone now, the wood ruthlessly torn up to make way for a housing estate. The little waterfall we would listen to on a lovely summer night while lying in bed, all smashed up and diverted elsewhere. A little bit of heaven nature fashioned, and man the developer, destroyed.

During the summer months, every evening Lilian and I would stroll along the country lanes until we came to the country pub called The Black Horse, which Jim and Agnes Cain kept. They were a charming couple, who would come and sit with us until their attention was needed. Every Saturday and Sunday evening, they hired a pianist for the local talent who wanted to sing. Whether he could read music, I never found out, but he was a genius on the piano. If you could sing it, he could play it. The people came from miles around to hear Jim Aston, who was a great friend of mine, sing. They would listen to the local talent, which was very good, and then came stamping of feet with "Come on Jim, sing us the 'Little Old Church in the Valley'. When it came to the part where mother used to pray, the silence was so intense, it was more like being in a church than a public

house. As the beautiful sound of his voice gradually faded away, it seemed as if everyone was afraid to break the silence.

Then came the time we never saw Jim for well over a month. Everyone knew why, he had lost his little boy who had caught a cold which turned to pneumonia, from which he never recovered. We were all enjoying our beer, listening to the local talent, when Jim walked in and joined us. All the singing had finished and we were chatting away, when one of the regulars came over and said "I don't suppose you feel like doing a song do you Jim?" To my surprise, he walked over to the pianist, and after a few words, the pianist played the introduction to 'Two Little Boys'.

In the meantime, Jim Cain went round the rest of the pub to tell everyone Jim Aston was going to sing, and everyone crowded round the door to listen. At first his voice was very quiet, until it came to the part where it says "do you think I would leave you dying". The tears were streaming down his face, and everyone there was crying with him. As his lovely voice faded away, there was no applause, just a deathly silence and the echo of that golden voice which would live in the minds of those who heard it as long as memory lasts.

The tragedy of this story is that every word is true. The destruction of John Pit Wood, the waterfall, the very lane itself and poor Jim's boy. The cornfield that came right up to our garden fence is now a girls' high school. The pretty hamlet of Almond Brook has disappeared, as the M6 rushes on to Blackpool and the Lake District, leaving neglect and bitterness behind.

We should leave the past alone and never go back, it brings too much sorrow.

Dear Editor,

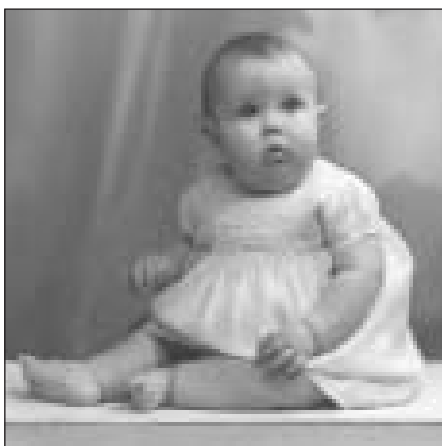
The photo right was bought by my grandmother from a Charity Shop. I hope one of your readers may recognise the child and then the photo can be returned to the family. On the reverse of the photo there is an address in Lily Lane, Bamfurlong.

I do hope it can be traced & returned back to the family.

Stuart Pilkington

Abram

Please contact the editor if you recognise the photo.



Dear Editor,

I have been trying for a year, without success, to find the exact place in Southern Ireland where my ancestors originated. I know a lot about the family and most are buried in Leigh Cemetery. A brief summary of the family is as follows:

Thomas and Margaret Kennedy born 1830 in Ireland. Sons Andrew (1856), Edward (1860), James (1869), dates approx. and maybe more. Andrew is my great grandfather. On the 1891 census they were living in Lion Court, Bedford

area of Leigh. Edward and Eliza (maybe Ryan) had a son Thomas born in Ireland 1880, Myles born in Leigh 1881/2 and Mary (1886) who married a Rothwell or Rodwell, also Henry born 1900. Andrew married Louisa Wilkinson in 1889. My grandfather Patrick was born 1896, but unfortunately his brother Joseph was killed in WWI in 1916.

Anyone with information can contact me on 0161 790 9275, or email roy88.kath88@tiscali.co.uk

Kathleen Mills

Dear Editor,

I am trying to locate my father's family in the UK. My father's name is Michael Terris Donovan. His parents' names are William and Elizabeth Donovan. They lived in Wigan, their street address was 70 Dicconson Street, Wigan. William was a greengrocer at one time. They had daughters, Kathleen, Vicky and Patricia alongside my dad Michael.

I understand the parents may have died in the past ten years, as there is no Donovan in the telephone listings for that address anymore. I am desperately trying to find my connections as I have lost all ties with all Donovan relatives, as my dad and mum separated when I was 3.

I want also to see if my father Michael Terris (or Terriss) Donovan is still alive as he will be in his 60's now. His parents were 80's plus when I last spoke to them which was at least 10 years ago. I will be most grateful for your assistance.

Victoria, the daughter married someone with a name like Recihe or Reiche and moved to Cognac, France. Her husband worked for a brandy company.

**Sarah Donovan**  
**Jencarbear3@xtra.co.nz**  
**New Zealand**



# Family History



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

### *Donations*

#### **Genealogy**

Raymond, Stuart A. Irish family history on the web 2nd ed. Marriage Index to Dalton St Michael & All Angels Sept 1872-Sept 2005  
Baptism Index to Dalton St Michael & All Angels 31 July 1897 - 25 Sept 2005  
Upholland St Thomas Index to burials 15 Aug 1825-23 Oct 1882  
1901 Census Index to RG13 3589-RG13 3591 Bedford, Glazebury, Culcheth and Astley

#### **CD ROM**

Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery Vol.6 Index to registers 31 Dec 1894-30 August 1901  
Park Lane Chapel, Ashton Memorial Inscriptions  
St John Pemberton Memorial Inscriptions (unindexed but searchable)  
Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery vol.5. Index to registers 14 Dec 1887 - 31 Dec 1894

#### **General**

National Archives. History for all: annual report 2004-2005. 027.5  
Wallbank, Sally. Chingle: Britain's most haunted house. 133.129  
Holt, Geoffrey. Some old Catholic missions. 271.53094276  
Mitchinson, Alan. Catholicism in Standish: from persecution to parish 1559-1884. 282.42736  
North West Labour History Group Journal Vol. 30 (2005). 320.531  
Dennis, V S. Discovering friendly and fraternal societies. 334.70941  
Wise, T. Guide to military museums 10th ed. 355.0074  
Home Guard Instructions No.51: Battlecraft and battle drill Part IV. 355.370941  
Forth, Anita, D. Edgworth to Crowthorn. 362.732  
O'Brien, P. Warrington Academy 1757-86. 374.942719.  
Nock, O.S. History of the LMS 3. 385.0941  
Yeadon, H.L. The motorway achievement. 382.122  
Bradley, Anne. Mary, Mary nurse contrary: life of Mary Alicia Hodgkinson 1912-1995. 610.7309  
Ashcroft, Tony. The Sixpenny rush. 791.430942736

Templeman, Ian. From Mill to Millennium: 50 years of Ashton Town AFC. 796.3340942736  
Burchett, Philip J. Red Rose rhymes. 821 BUR  
Simm, Tom. Write now and again. 823 SIM  
Oliver, Richard. Ordnance survey maps: a concise guide for historians 2nd ed. 912.41  
Wigan Visitor Guide 914.2736  
Pappalardo, Bruno. Using navy records. 929.1  
Henesy, A. Routes to your roots: mapping your mining past. 929.342  
Fields, Ken. The mysterious north. 942.7  
Bennett, Edward. Memories. 942.736  
Old Wigan 2006. Calendar. 942.736  
Ridyard, R. Memories of Lowton 2004 ed. 942.736  
Fleming, R. H. Prescott: a town trail. 942.754  
Rothwell, Catherine. Lancashire sea stories. 942.76  
Keery, Rosemary. Historic Culcheth. 942.919  
Casualties sustained by the British Army in the Korean War 1950-53. 951.9042  
Lines, G.W. The Ladysmith siege. 968.0484

## Project News

Once again our Friends and volunteers have been enormously productive, as you can see from the above list of donations and CD ROMS. Freda Chorlton and Gerald Marsden have produced two more CD ROM transcript indexes to Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery Records. Coverage has therefore now been extended to 30 August 1901. Freda and Gerald have been joined by Carol Lowton, who is currently attempting the period from September 1901. These are available for consultation on CD ROM or in paper form in our reference section.

Two other very welcome CD ROM donations are the memorial inscriptions of Park Lane Unitarian Chapel, Ashton, and the long awaited Memorial inscriptions for St John the Divine, Pemberton. Both discs are searchable by surname and can be viewed at The History Shop. As usual the Upholland Parish Register group has been prolific in the past three months and have recently deposited with us indexes to burials at Upholland St Thomas Church for 15 Aug 1825-23 Oct 1882, Marriage Indexes to St Michael's at Dalton for the years 14 December 1887-31 Dec 1894, and baptisms indexes for the same church for 31 July 1897-25 September 2005.

Despite being kept extremely busy publishing the latter indexes, Gerry and Shirley Rigby have also been instrumental in the indexing and publishing of 1901 census indexes to Bedford, Culcheth and Astley. The team of indexers has long been supported in their endeavours by Alan Maloney, with his dogged inputting of their collected data into his computer. For his lonely dedication to this key task, Alan deserves our gratitude.

One other donation, not mentioned in the lists above but which deserves mention here is from Mr Karl Gaskell. He recently donated a fiche reader complete with a set of sundry fiches, consisting mainly of the International Genealogical Index for Lancashire and Cheshire. The fiche have promptly been put to good use by Tony Ashcroft at Leigh with the fiche reader being installed at the History Shop. Other fiche donated by Karl are now available at the History Shop, notably an index to marriages at Holy Cross Church Liverpool for 1855-1897 and the burials 1657-1838 of the Society of Friends, Hardshaw West.

Many thanks for all these lovely gifts. They will be well used, I am sure.

Finally an update on local input to the lancashirebmd

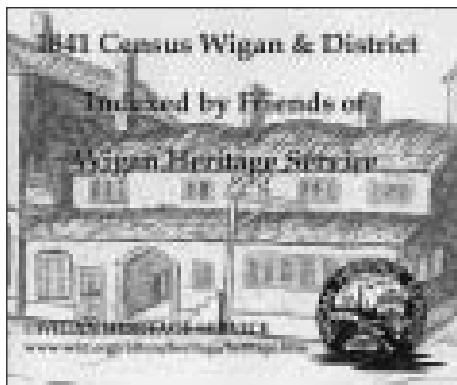


project. With marriages being complete for 1837-1950, work is well under way on the birth indexes for Wigan and Leigh registration district. The first tranche has now been uploaded for Atherton 1837-1862, Culcheth 1837-61, Lowton 1837 and Westleigh 1846-62. Sections for other areas have been checked and are expected to be uploaded in the next month or two.

The really **exciting news this issue, is the long awaited purchase of GRO Indexes to births, marriages and deaths 1919-1950.** By the time you read this, the fiche will be installed in their drawers at the History Shop, ready for use!

Another long awaited event is the arrival of an amended edition of the 1861 census index on CD ROM. The first edition proved very popular locally and around the globe with stocks quickly selling out. The new edition can be purchased from our shop priced at £9.00 (+ p&p £1.00). Bargain!

Even greater cause for celebration, especially since we thought it would never happen, is the arrival of the CD ROM of the index to the 1841 census. This covers not only the current Metropolitan Borough area but other areas as diverse as Haydock, Eccleston, Clayton Le Woods, Adlington, Whittle-le-Woods, Rufford, Euxton, Anderton, Rivington, Sharples, Lostock, Kearsley, Rumworth, Westhoughton, Horwich, Litherland, Netherton, Orrell and Ford and many, many more. This name index is also available for purchase from the shop priced at £9.00 (+ p&p £1.00). Another delightful bargain.



## Websites

[www.bifhsgo.ca/home\\_children.htm](http://www.bifhsgo.ca/home_children.htm)

This is the website of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa, Canada. The purpose of the Society is to encourage and to facilitate research and its publication, by people having British Isles ancestry. This includes therefore, emigrants from not only England and Wales but also from Scotland and Ireland, to North America and Canada. The project works closely with the Library and Archives Canada indexing project of Home Children as found in ships passenger lists, and in the records of Middlemore Homes. Estimates of over 100,000 Home Children arrived in Canada between 1869-1948. These were aged upwards of 6 months old with some "children" being in their twenties. They were brought to Canada for adoption, in the case of the younger children or to work as labourers and domestic servants. The children were poor but not generally orphaned. They had been institutionalised, perhaps in a workhouse, children's home or reformatory. These emigration schemes were supported by both Canadian

and British government. 70% of the children settled in Ontario. The Society has ready access to ship and military records as well as civil registration documents. The Society therefore has indexed the children who arrived by ship in Canada 1869-1948 and the Middlemore home children, arriving 1873-1933. Details in the database include full name and age, date of birth, date the ship left Britain and arrived in North America and where the child first settled.

[www.theshipslist.com](http://www.theshipslist.com)

Another site useful for tracking down emigrant relatives, and which is linked to the above site. There are a number of searchable databases, such as marriages at sea, diaries and descriptions of the voyages and ships. The ships lists databases are mainly for the early period c.1825-40 to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and the USA. Also included though, are U.K. assisted passages to Australia 1847-1886 and emigrants throughout the Irish famine period.

<http://castlegarden.org>

This site offers free access to the records of 10 million immigrants who arrived in America from 1830-1892. Castle Garden itself was from 1855-1890 America's first official immigration centre. Situated within the Battery in Manhattan, it is today known as Castle Clinton National Monument. Details are brief, as usual, with only full names, occupation, age, date of arrival and name of the ship being given.

[www.genealogy.gc.ca](http://www.genealogy.gc.ca)

This is the web-site of Library and Archives Canada which holds the national records of Canada. Online databases include the census 1866-1901 (with the newly issued 1911 census), immigration records 1925-35, soldiers in World War I, Canadian naturalisation 1915-1932, along with some more unusual records notably divorces in Canada 1841-1968. The Home children database can also be accessed from the site.

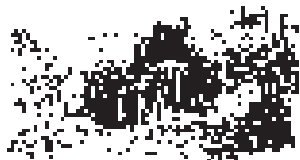
*Continued on page 8*

## Museum Collection – New Acquisitions

The following items have recently been donated to the museum collection.

- C05.001 Miner's lamp, Spiralarm Type S made by J H Naylor Ltd, Wigan.
- C05.002 Tea and sugar caddy of metal, for personal use.
- C05.003 Match box of metal, advertising the Abbey Lakes Hotel Pleasure Grounds.
- C05.004 National Registration Identity Card, 1943.
- C05.005 National Registration Identity Card, 1943.
- C05.006 National Registration Identity Card, Under 16, 1947.
- C05.007 Trophy shield, presented to Councillor D. Rourke. Mayor of Wigan
- C05.008 Miner's tally, Scot Lane Colliery Co. Ltd. No.435.
- C05.009 Programme, FA Youth Cup 1st Round. Manchester United Youth v Wigan Athletic Youth 9.10.1961.
- C05.010 Programme, Lancashire FA Youth Cup Semi-Final. Manchester United Youth v Wigan Athletic Youth 8.2.1994.
- C05.011 Lamp, heavy duty inspection lamp made by Heyes & Co. Wigan

## Family History



*Continued from page 7*

### Family History Workshops at the History Shop

A new series of family history workshops for beginners, run by the Friends of Wigan Heritage Service, started in February. The cost, £3.50, is remarkable value, as it includes a starter pack (full of useful 'goodies' eg

a guide to internet genealogy and a family tree chart) and the individual attention of an experienced genealogist, who can cater the session to your exact needs. Sessions take place at 1.30pm and 3.00pm. The remaining dates are

<b>12 April</b>	<b>26 April</b>
<b>10 May</b>	<b>24 May</b>
<b>7 June</b>	<b>21 June</b>
<b>5 July</b>	

If you are unable to attend on these dates, we may be able to arrange a workshop that is convenient to you. Booking is essential, telephone the History Shop (01942) 828128.

Stephen Hill BSc Hon's  
Project Officer  
Coops Foyer  
Chequer Street  
Wigan, WN1 1HN

Dear Sirs,

I am a Project Officer at Coops Foyer, which provides accommodation for young people aged 16-25 years old who have been homeless, whilst at the project the staff provide support, information, advice and guidance on employment, education, training and housing related matters.

This year is the tenth anniversary of the forming of Coops Foyer and to recognise this we intend to do something a little special. On the 90th anniversary of The Battle of The Somme we will be taking a group of young people to France on holiday. In particular the residents will take time to pay respect to seven men who previously worked in Coops Mill, the site of the Foyer, who volunteered for service and died in the War.

As it stands the only information we have regarding these men is a plaque commemorating them which is stored in the local History Shop. The residents will be starting a project to find out more about these men and we would like you to help us if you can.

#### The plaque reads:

Coops & Co Limited, To, The memory of, Norman F Adamson, Harold Beach, John Cartwright, Henry Deitz, Norman Fulton, Henry Monks, Frederick Parker, Who sacrificed their lives, For their King and Country, In The Great War, 1914-1919.

Please contact me at the address above if you can assist us in any way. Thanks for your time.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Hill BSc Hon's  
Project Officer



*Stephen Smith Foyer Resident holding picture of the Coops Plaque.*

## Memories are made of this...

After many years of successfully delivering school workshops and family activities, Wigan Pier is now expanding its service and developing a reminiscence programme for older people in the local community. Reminiscence is increasingly being seen as an important activity which can restore and preserve a person's sense of identity, and in a society that puts little value on old age, reminiscence can give older people the chance to be listened to and have their memories valued. Kirsty Hall, a Learning Officer at Wigan Pier, gives Past Forward an insight into her reminiscence work.

### Trivets and Toffee Apples!

Last year I was charged with the task of developing a reminiscence programme for Wigan Pier – a daunting prospect for someone more used to working with 5 year olds than 75 year olds! I began by rummaging through our handling collection to see what objects we had and deciding on appropriate themes.

I then needed to learn how to plan and run a reminiscence session. I attended an "Introduction to Reminiscence" course at Age Exchange in London, observed sessions at Chester's Grosvenor Museum and Orrell Park Nursing Home, and was then ready to try out some sessions and needed some guinea pigs! In partnership with Age Concern, pilot sessions were arranged with a group of ten ladies from Brackley House in Goose Green. They reminisced about washday, household chores and holidays, and were rewarded with a trip to Southport for some well-earned fish and chips! I learned how to plan and run a reminiscence programme but a lot of information about Wigan's history and traditions was also gleaned – the sort of information that cannot be read about in books. For example, jam jars were taken as payment at the cinema!

The pilot was a tremendous success, some of the ladies' comments included, "I enjoyed it all, it was a good laugh", "everything was perfect", "it's a chance to talk and get to know your neighbours better". The ladies are keen to continue reminiscing – a follow-up Christmas session complete with carols, card making and mince pies was very popular and even attracted some new members. More reminiscence sessions at Brackley House are planned for 2006.

### Shevington Schooldays

On Friday 13th January, along with Sue Maiden (a fellow Learning Officer) and Barbara and Maureen – two of Wigan Pier invaluable volunteers, I visited Shevington Memory Group for an afternoon of schooldays reminiscing. An interesting time was had with us learning, amongst other things, why girls had a pocket in their gym knickers and how to cheat at cross-country running! Some very positive comments were received with one lady saying the session was "one of the best I've been to because everyone participated".

### Future Plans

Keen to build on our successes, a number of reminiscence sessions are now being offered to groups who visit Wigan Pier and groups within the local community, hopefully using some local libraries to host sessions. We currently offer the themes of "House and Home", "Holidays", "Schooldays" and "The Home Front", with new themes being developed.

For more information about Reminiscence at Wigan Pier, contact Kirsty Hall on 01942 707049.



# Ephemera From The Archives

Those of us who work in the heritage field chewing the cud of history are well aware that occasionally some of the more enthusiastic members of the public know far more than we do about particular areas of local history. We enjoy it when they expound their knowledge at us rather than on us! Their expert knowledge can save us a great deal of time if we suddenly get an enquiry like: "Can you tell me when locomotive *Respite* at Bickershaw Colliery had it's last set of boiler tubes?" Obviously we don't like to say in humility "Well actually no" so are keen to find out. Believe it or not I can draw on the knowledge of a particular member of the train set in the loft fraternity kitted out in a blue anorak to answer that enquiry!

If there's one type of enquiry which can be very frustrating being time consuming and which usually flounders the keenest of local experts it's when someone needs the exact date that an event took place such as the momentous occasion Kentucky Fried Chicken opened it's doors at Ince. If someone is writing a decent local historical study it isn't really good enough to say the Maypole Colliery explosion took place in 1908, we need the exact date and in this case the exact time.

## Friends and volunteers vital

Enthusiastic members of the public are often prepared to work extremely hard at projects we do not have the time to spare for. The Friends of the History

Shop are a good example, creating indexes of the census or local newspapers. A friend of mine who I got to know through being a close friend of Fred Dibnah is Brian Elsey, a web designer who established the humungous Wigan World website [www.wiganworld.co.uk](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk).

When I first looked at Brian's website about 5 years ago even then I thought it was a great piece of work with a mass of interesting information on, there was nothing like it in the borough or even on the internet. Well five years on the site is going from strength to strength. I knew in the archives we had a fascinating handwritten chronology of local events 1853-1888 drawn up by the Wigan town clerk John Charnock (clerk 1895-1900). Arranged alphabetically and not always laid out in order within each letter section it was not easy to search for a particular event as John headed each entry as he thought best.

## You can't put a good man down!

I sounded Brian out on whether he thought this worth putting onto his web site and he enthusiastically agreed to transcribe the document, hundreds of pages long onto his computer. After many hours work this was completed. Our mutual friend 'new technology' now allows us to search the document using key words such as pit, coal, colliery, mine, miner, cannel..... etc. We can also carry out a group search for all entries which mention Ince for example and save the results together.

The period the clerk covered 1853-1888 was a particularly busy one in the history of the borough, with new mines, mills and other industries springing up left right and centre. In 1850 the population of the borough and parish totalled 107,000. By 1860 this had risen to 133,000.

The chronology lists all manner of events, from someone drowning in the canal (a regular occurrence it seems) to the gift of land for Mesnes Park to be laid out on June 20. 1871, from the regular colliery explosions to the opening of railways, to the opening of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Permanent Relief Society, Bridgeman Terrace. on March 7th 1874 (now closing with the archives being transferred to us ).

As this chronology only covers the years 1853-1888 Brian is now avidly transcribing the list of events from the yearly Wigan Almanacks which we have a full run of from the 1880's onwards. Go onto

his web site at [www.wiganworld.co.uk](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk) and either look under the links **chronology** or **stuff** as he curiously terms it and have a 'reet good root' at this latest work, you'll be amazed what turns up.

## Date required

As I have nearly completed my book on The Pit Brow Women of the Wigan Coalfield I myself am stuck for an exact date, the date when the decision was taken by the National Union of Mineworkers to stop women working on the surface at collieries in Lancashire. Due to a gap in the run of minutes I have access to the closest I can get is 1953. After then the number of females on the books at pits dramatically decreases. If you can get me that date I'll acknowledge your help in the book. It's not too late also for any ex pit brow women to write to me with reminiscences and I'll try to squeeze them in.

Alan Davies  
Heritage Officer (Archives)

## Easter Family Activities at the History Shop

Wednesday the 12th April make your own Easter card.

Wednesday the 19th April make an animal finger puppet..

Both sessions are **FREE** but booking is essential. To book a place ring the History shop on 01942 828128.

Suitable for children aged 4 - 11 years but **all children must be accompanied by an adult.**

The History Shop is also out and about the community over the summer holidays. Look out for further information at the History Shop and in the local libraries. Do come and join us to find out why it is a *Very Small World*.

# Who? Where?

We have not received any positive identification of the pictures featured in issue 41. If you can identify any of these please contact The History Shop on (01942) 828128.



# Shopping at the History Shop!

## *New Books Available To Buy*

**'The Making of Wigan' by  
Mike Fletcher  
£10.99 176 pp**

The Making of Wigan summarises the evolution, and highlights the significant changes in one of Lancashire's most important towns, from its Roman origins through to modern times. Tribute is paid to the resilience and determination of Wiganers in times of adversity particularly during the English Civil War and when dealing with the trauma of two World Wars. The town's prosperity and economy expanded during much of the nineteenth century, helped by coal and cotton but also saw mixed fortunes as Wigan experienced poverty and unemployment alongside the decline of its traditional industries. In more recent years Wigan has been transformed into a modern urban centre but remains proud of its history.

**'The Industrial Revolution Explained (Steam, Sparks & Massive Wheels)' by Stan Yorke  
£7.99 128 pp**

The English Industrial Revolution was a triumph of ingenuity and invention. New sources of power, better manufacturing methods and expanding transport systems brought fantastic changes affecting every walk of life. Man and machine worked side by side to produce iron, coal and cotton cloth on a scale never before imagined. In this well researched book, Stan Yorke explains the background, machines and processes that helped create our industrial world.

**Lancashire 1939-1945 The Secret War by Ron Freethy  
£9.99 176 pp**

Ron Freethy's well-researched book will fascinate and inform all those who took part in the last war and anyone interested in Lancashire's all-out determination to play an important role in the defeat of the enemy. To defend the country if necessary a secret army was formed from local anglers, poachers, gamekeepers, miners, foresters and postmen. Underground holes were built and old caves and mineshafts opened up. Training was given in arms, explosives and general survival and all this was kept a secret. In fact, the slogan of the day was 'Be Like Dad, keep Mum'. Lancashire's skilful and willing workforce were involved in secret development in munitions (the famous bouncing bombs were made at Chorley), planes and materials to help the war effort. Fleetwood fishing trawlers were secretly converted to minesweepers. One way or another Lancashire's civilian population got involved and took their oath so seriously that only now, some 60 years later, can the full story be told.

**'Lancashire Tales of Mystery & Murder' by Steve Fielding  
£7.99 127 pp**

Each county holds within it a store of amazing mysteries and chilling murders. Lancashire is no exception. This collection includes the fascinating stories of a Fylde witch who was exhumed and reburied head-first to prevent her from digging herself out; sixteen ghosts who haunted Chingle Hall in Goosnargh; and Walter Rowland from Manchester who was said to have been reprieved for a murder he did commit and hanged for one he did not.

**'Lancashire within Living Memory' by Lancashire Federation of Women's Institutes  
£8.95 224 pp**

Between 1900 and 1960 the pattern of life and particularly country life, altered almost beyond recognition. Members of the Lancashire Federation of Women's Institutes, conscious of the importance of recording these changes, have compiled their own personal recollections and have also interviewed elderly friends and relations, both men and women. The remarkable memories they have uncovered reflect the moods and aspirations of bygone eras. And, in spite of two world wars, hardship and difficult times, a sense of cheerfulness and community spirit shines through. Here then is a goldmine of information about life in Lancashire in the first half of the century. It stands as a permanent record of a past way of life, which can be read and enjoyed by this generation and those to come.

**'Wigan Home-Thoughts, from France (Written on the Somme, May 1918) by Donald Alexander Mackenzie M.A., M.C. £2.00 15 pp**

See separate mention on page 12. All profits from this publication will be donated to the Royal British Legion.

**'The Maypole, Diary of a Colliery Disaster' by John Hannavy and Roy Lewis  
Was £4.95 now £3.00 77 pp**

This book was out of print but we have been lucky enough to source a further supply but numbers are limited. The Maypole Pit Disaster was one of the most costly in human life in the Wigan coalfield, with 75 miners killed. It was also one

*Continued on page 12*

of the first to be subjected to the close scrutiny of the press photographer. This has provided the authors with a rich source of visual material. Fifty-two pictures include scenes at the pithead on the day of the explosion, portraits of the leading figures in the disaster and the subsequent inquest and inquiry, and views of the colliery itself.

THE FOLLOWING TWO BOOKS HAVE BEEN OUT OF PRINT BUT ARE AVAILABLE NOW IN A SMALLER POCKET SIZE WITH A MATCHING PRICE TAG OF £5.99 INSTEAD OF £12.99.

**‘Around Hindley and Abram’, by Bob Blakeman and Staff of Wigan Heritage Services £5.99 128pp**

This book of nearly 200 photographs illustrates the recent history of the neighbouring communities of Hindley and Abram. The photographs cover a period from the mid-nineteenth century to the post war decades and show some of the great changes that have occurred as a result of industrialisation and its subsequent decline. The

book will be a nostalgic trip for many, and an eye-opener for a younger generation and newcomers to the area.

**‘Around Ashton-in-Golborne’, by Tony Ashcroft £5.99 128 pp**

This fascinating collection of old photographs provides an evocative visual record of the Urban District of Ashton-in-Makerfield and the township of Golborne. It looks back to a time when the pace of life was slower, but often arduous. Mines and mills once dominated the industrial landscape and the area was famous for the production of hinges and locks.

The photographs for the above two books have been selected mainly from the archives of Wigan Heritage Services which have, over the years, acquired the images as loans or donations from the people of Wigan and surrounding areas.

**Available from the History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU, and by mail order. Telephone (01942) 828128 for details.**

**Authors have brought the following to our attention**

**Booklet**

Donald Alexander Mackenzie *Home Thoughts from France (Written on the Somme May 1918)* edited J A Hilton 2005.

Mackenzie’s poem is well known in Wigan (it appears in the North Swinley parish map, on show at the History Shop). This version has been authorised by his son Kenneth Mackenzie, and includes biographical details of the author. The editor sets the poem in its literary and historical contexts and includes a useful bibliography.

The profits from the sale of the book will be donated to the Royal British Legion. Copies can be obtained from the History Shop, Smiths of Wigan or by post (£2 post free) from Carol Littler, 17 Sefton Avenue, Orrell, Wigan, WN5 8UN.

**Book**

Daniel Lythgoe *Wigan Bred and Other Poems*, illustrated by Alan Prosser, 2005. It is being sold in aid of Wigan & Leigh Hospice, and is available from the author (£6) telephone 01695 555190.

**CD**

*Park Lane Unitarian Chapel Graves Plan and Inscriptions* is available from Mrs Knowles (£5 plus £1.50 p&p) telephone 01695 623676. All monies raised will be given to church funds.

**Book and CD**

Ted Dakin *Not Far from Wigan Pier* is a collection of semi-autobiographical short stories set in the 1930’s and 1940’s. The book, which is being given away free with the CD, contains 15 stories. The CD contains nine stories from the book. All monies raised will be used in aid of the community radio group Making Waves Radio. Available (£5.50) from Smith’s of Wigan, Making Waves Radio Group 85 Church Street, Leigh WN7 1AZ (01942) 679867 or [www.Makingwavesradio.org.uk](http://www.Makingwavesradio.org.uk) and Ted Dakin (01942) 498193.

**Wigan and Leigh Souvenirs**

We have just produced a selection of paperweights (£7) fridge magnets (£1.30) and keyrings (£1) decorated with the Wigan Ancient & Loyal and the Leigh coats of arms. Ideal presents for your ex-pat Wigan and Leigh relatives! They are available from the History Shop, Leigh Library and mail order. Telephone the History Shop (01942) 828128 for details.





# A REFUGE IN WIGAN

THE first refugees, victims of Hitler's racial policies, arrived from Europe in Wigan on a cold, dark evening in January 1939. Ten Austrian and German Jewish boys aged 14-17 years, arrived almost unnoticed clutching their meagre belongings. They went on to the Catholic Land Association's hostel at Priorswood Hall, Parbold, where earlier, three other German refugees had been housed. The boys had first arrived in Britain in December, and were to be trained in agricultural work. They were to stay a year and, hopefully, to go on to South Africa or other Dominions. Whether they stayed or went on to other countries, is not known since, as we now know, Britain was embroiled in war with Germany by the end of that year.

During early May 1940, following the heroic retreat from Dunkirk, Britain braced itself for possible invasion by German forces. That month, Wigan's Town Clerk received a confidential communication from the Ministry of Health about the reception of war refugees. Detailed instructions were given for their accommodation and on the 10th May a telegram was received to "prepare for war refugees". Consequently, a War Refugees Committee and Voluntary War Refugees Committee were set up and advance preparations made for the coming influx.

The Women's Voluntary Services undertook the job of canvassing householders as to who would take in refugees either voluntarily, or for a billeting allowance. Later on, an important part of the work of the War Refugees Voluntary Committee would be the raising of

funds to supplement the government's allowances for food and shelter. Then, as now, in any emergency of this nature, people responded with extraordinary generosity.

On the 22nd of May the first wave of 171 Dutch refugees arrived in Wigan and was met with an army of volunteers. The refugees told of their experience of being machine-gunned by German warplanes as they boarded their boat in Amsterdam. The boat was a small cargo vessel with accommodation for 50 persons, yet 270 people were crammed into every available space. Fortunately the sea was calm. The party included German Jews ( who had previously fled into Holland), Austrians and Poles. Six persons were described as "stateless". There was a three years old boy whose parents were missing, a blind musician and a Rabbi. All were weary and carried bundles of belongings or suitcases. Several little girls were clutching dolls. They had come from an orphanage in Holland. The large crowd that met them at the entrance to Wallgate clapped and cheered when the refugees appeared.

Having been bussed to The Drill Hall and fed, the visitors were taken to their temporary billets. The Dutch were housed temporarily in King Street Baptist School (31 persons), King Street Methodist School (24), and the Queen's Hall (33). Distressingly, there were 83 parentless children. These were split between St Michael's Parish Hall and All Saints Institute. Seven empty houses had been requisitioned and generous local organisations such as The British Legion and individuals stepped forward to equip the houses. Interestingly, four persons were interned. A larger group of Jewish refugees followed from Belgium.

By the time of the War Refugees Committee meeting on 25th May, the Wigan Local Youth Committee had volunteered to undertake the welfare and aftercare of the children. This would include suitable recreational activities and games. A special cinema show was organised at the Baths Café for the refugees on the 26th, which was swiftly followed by an offer from Mr Buxton of Prince's Cinema of free entrance to any performance. Even the Borough Librarian felt it necessary to "do his bit" by setting aside tables in the Powell Juvenile Library and Pemberton Library for the use of French speaking refugees.

When the War Refugees Voluntary Committee met on 10 June, the feeding arrangements needed to be altered to include a wider variety of foods on the menu, due to complaints and of course to accommodate the Jewish refugees who had different dietary needs. How they managed this, considering rationing had started in January, must have been a major feat. On top of this, 75-80 children still awaited permanent housing, since they were still living in All Saints Parish Room and St Michael's Institute.

However, events were about to send the War Refugees Committees into overdrive. On the 21 June the Town Clerk received word that 709 Channel Islands refugees would be arriving the next day. In the event, the party proved to be a part of a school evacuation scheme for the Junior and Infant children of Hautes Capelles School and of the Vale School, Guernsey. Every 10 children were accompanied by a teacher. There were also a few parents

Dear Mrs Watts,

My sister-in-law ZILMA TOLCHER has shown us the letter she received from you concerning the Vale School evacuees who were billeted in Wigan in 1940.

My husband, ZILMA's brother, who I married in 1953, having known him all my life, doesn't remember his address in Wigan, only that it was a new house by wasteland and a bridge. He does however say that the family was very kind to him.

My sister and I were put in separate billets. We were terribly distressed to be parted, and although my family would have let her come to them, her lady wouldn't allow it. I lived with a wonderful family - Mr & Mrs Edwards, 141 Ormskirk Road (opposite the Bowling Green Hotel), the elder son was Norman the two girls were Doreen and Joan. Mr Edwards was a local police sergeant. He used to take me with him to his allotment. He grew veg and flowers, he also had an aviary of budgies, I loved it there. Near by was a public house, a blind lady lived there. I remember the morning we had to leave and how they all cried, as we boarded the bus.

We are thankful to the people of Wigan who took us, small children into their homes. Many were so traumatised that they find it hard to remember details of that time.

We went on to Wrenbury but when Mum (Dad stayed on in Guernsey) found us we went on to Halifax, Yorkshire.

My husband, along with his 4 sisters, stayed the 5 yrs in Wrenbury. Both their parents, elder brother and sister also stayed in Guernsey. Sadly their Dad died in 1941 leaving their Mum pregnant. When they returned in 1945 they had a new brother.

Best wishes

Delma & Arthur Whales, Guernsey

*Continued on page 14*

in the party and even a complete family, the Windsor's, consisting of father, mother and 10 children. On arrival, all were taken to the Drill Hall. Four persons were on stretchers and were taken straightaway to Billinge Hospital, two persons were intended for Stockport and were immediately despatched there. Some children were found to have chickenpox and measles and were sent to hospital. Also in the party was a mother with a three weeks old baby boy. Both were temporarily housed at St Margaret's Home in Goose Green. Incredibly, by the 23rd June all were billeted.

The Government, however, had other plans for the children. Within two weeks the Town Clerk, W.H Tyrer, was dealing with the Ministry of Health's representative in Manchester, protesting vigorously against the imminent removal of the children from Wigan to other parts of the country. He emphasised the great trouble that the War Refugees Committee and all volunteers had gone to, and moreover "expressed the great disappointment felt by the large number of foster parents who had taken the Guernsey children into their homes and, indeed into their hearts". The Ministry's representative, however, though grateful for all that had been done, was insistent that the move was for the good of the children and their teachers, as they were evacuees NOT refugees.

Consequently, on Sunday July 7th, the Guernsey children were moved out to various places. Of the original 709 persons, 455 were moved to Nantwich and 118 were moved to other areas. The rest were still billeted with Wigan residents or in the empty houses that were offered. Some were adults with families. These were the occupants of 70 Mesnes Road, 18 Avondale Road and 343 Ormskirk Road, Pemberton. Those that could, found work to pay the rent on the houses. To help furnish the houses, the occupants appealed to the committees for their assistance and were granted a loan of £10 for furniture. In all, 136 persons remained. The Windsor family, who were living in Avondale Road, remained. Mr Windsor found a job on Government work and one son and daughter also

managed to find work.

On the Eve of their departure a letter expressing their thanks was written by C. Martel, Headmistress of Hautes Capelles Junior School on behalf of the children and her colleagues was passed to the Wigan Observer for publication. "From the moment of our arrival we have been deeply touched by the kindness and sympathy everywhere shown to us .....we leave with the greatest regret....."

The greater number of the Guernsey evacuees having left, the interests of the children, though technically passing to others, was still very much on the agenda of the Voluntary War Refugees Committee, since donations were still coming in from a range of sources. One source of funds was collected by A.Bradnum and Sons, Fruiterers of Newcastle on Tyne, and forwarded to Owen Owen's fund in Wigan for the Guernsey children. The princely sum of £402-19s-6d was collected. This was added to by the Headmaster of Vale School, Mr Carre, who forwarded 32 pairs of boots for distribution.

In the event, these gifts proved timely, since the Ministry of Health announced that it was not able to make provision for the re-clothing of Channel Islands children for the coming Winter. The Channel Islands Refugees Committee in London and the local committees were obviously concerned, especially since it was felt that some pocket money for the refugees and evacuees would help alleviate their situation. This was thought to be necessarily the concern of the local authority with all monies being claimed back from the Ministry. Older refugees were also obligated to find work.

With this initial flurry of activity and excitement over, life returned to "normal" and the remaining evacuees and refugees were left to get on with the sometimes, very daunting prospect, of life in another town, and for some, in another country.

**Christine Watts**  
**Heritage Officer**  
**(Local and Family History)**  
**To be continued in *Past Forward* 43**

Dear Sir,

Mrs Tolcher told me she had written to you about when we were evacuated to Wigan. She told me I too should write and tell you what I too can remember.

As you know we were only 2 weeks in Wigan, then we went on to Nantwich where we stayed during the war years. In Guernsey we were told to be at our school by 2pm on the 20 June 1940. When we came to the school we were told that the boat would be coming at 2am in the morning. We left the school for the boat at daybreak, the boat was an old cargo, cattle and coal boat. Nevermind, we had a boat to leave on. While we were on our way the German planes were trying to bomb us. When we arrived in Weymouth there was a boat that had been hit and its' nose was pointing straight up in the air. We were so frightened. We were put on trains for Wigan, then taken to a church Hall and we slept on the floor. The next day a few of us went to a small shop for postage stamps. We wanted to write to our parents. I can see the kind lady of the shop giving us the stamps and being so sad that we were evacuees. We tried to pay the lady but she would not accept any money. I was staying at a Mr & Mrs Halton, 18 Walkden Avenue East, Wigan. I shall always remember that, they were so kind to me and so sorry when I had to go on to Nantwich. We left on Sunday 7 July. During my short stay in Wigan Mrs Halton used to give me bread to go and feed the ducks in the Park. I became friendly with the Park keepers. I also used to go in a kind of playing field and alongside the train used to

pass and I used to go and look if my mum and Dad were on the trains. I used to wave and some would wave back and I was sure at times I had seen my mum but it was not to be. My parents were unable to leave Guernsey. The Germans arrived soon afterwards and they could not get away. They stayed in Guernsey for 5 years of the war. On 7th July on a Sunday, we left for Nantwich and we were taken to all the villages around. I was taken to Worleston first, to the vicarage. The vicar had only been told the day before, by a phone call from the Nantwich council saying they would be bringing 30 children & helpers and they must find homes for them. So the vicar phoned around to his congregation saying we were arriving at 2pm and we had to be found homes. On arriving at the vicarage we were greeted by all these ladies and had a tea, then a lady came up to me and said would you like to stay with me? I stayed with them for the rest of the war. I was very lucky my sister who had just come to England, before the Germans arrived, found out where I was and she then came and worked as a maid on the farm. She married a farmer's son, so I had someone from my family with me. I used to go and see her most days. Both places I was, in Wigan and Nantwich, I had kind and understanding people. I shall be ever grateful to both the kind people who took me in when we had nowhere to go.

I send my best wishes to you all.  
Yours sincerely,  
S T Martin, Guernsey

# Memories of War Time Working at Rushton's

I READ with much interest the letter from Mrs J Walsh from Knotty Ash in issue 41 (*A Refuge in Wigan p.29*).

by Mrs Edna Land  
(nee Heeley)

I worked for O G Rushton from 1943 to 1946, not at the warehouse, but at the drapery branch in Market Place, Wigan (at the top of Commercial Yard).

Every dinner time I went across to the warehouse for my dinner hour, as my auntie Doris worked in the tea room there, she had to bag up all the loose tea for all the Rushton's branch shops, which were situated in all parts of Wigan and the out lying districts. I got to know most of the staff. There was Mrs Mort who worked on the big counter down stairs along with a school friend of mine called Stalla Marsden. Eileen, who worked in the flour room (mentioned in Mrs Walsh's letter) was always covered in flour, I don't think I would have recognised her if she had been minus the flour! Murial worked on the hardware counter, but I remember she spent most of her time in the tea room because it had a radiator, it was the warmest room in the place!

In the summer the staff used to sit on the steps outside the main entrance facing the market square. I came over at 1pm and I had to be back at the drapers shop at 2.15pm. I used to watch the clock on the market hall and at 2.10pm, I would run through the market hall and arrive back just in time for opening the draper's.

The shop was freezing winter, we had a small radiator at the bottom of the stairs where we used to stand to keep warm.

You couldn't buy anything in the shop unless you had clothing coupons. I think there was a new issue about once every two months. On the day of the issue we were very busy, the busiest day would be Saturday. Lots of people came in with clothing cheques. They would get a cheque from some

organisation (I never understood how it worked) then they would pay it back weekly. Most of the amounts were £20 and

that was a lot of money in those days. if they (women) spent the whole £20 they were allowed to purchase a pair of fully fashioned stockings. Mr Rhodes, the manager, used to go down to the cellar where he kept his stock of precious stockings. I know it sounds daft now, but fully fashioned stockings were like gold dust in the war years!

I remember we found some rolls of material that had been there for years before the war. One of the girl's had the bright idea to cut them into headscarves, but we didn't have a sewing machine. So we used a pin and pulled out the fibres to make a fringe all round. We made about 50 altogether, because they were sold without clothing coupons, they went like hot cakes at 1 shilling (5p) each. We had a window display in the morning and by teatime they had all been sold.

I was a great fan of James Cagney, so I decided I would decorate the ladies washroom with a bit of graffiti. I wrote on the wall in pencil JIMMY CAGNEY IS A TOUGH GUY. I thought it was brilliant, but I forgot that the manager's wife, Mrs Rhodes used the same washroom. I spent the next couple of hours scrubbing the walls! I ran errands for Mrs Rhodes. On Friday's I would collect her groceries from Redmans in the market hall, then deliver them to her house in Swinley Road, she gave me (10p) shillings a week for this, which was very good, my weekly wage was only 7 shillings and sixpence (c.37p)

I did enjoy my time at Rushtons', even though there was a war on, and I would love to hear from J Walsh of Knotty Ash.

*If any other reader has memories of working at Rushton's, the Heritage Service would like to hear from you. Editor.*

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## Henry Tennyson Folkard, Librarian of Wigan Library 1877-1916.

Henry Tennyson Folkard was the first librarian of Wigan Library. Born in December 1850, his father was a doctor in Bayswater, London. He trained at the London Library, and held the post of sub librarian at the Royal Academy 1875-1877, before taking up appointment at Wigan in October 1877.

He was an early member of the Library Association and its Council, and of several societies including the Library Association Council, the Bibliographical Society and the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society.

He eventually became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries.

He assisted in the initial purchase of books for the new library (opened in 1878). He was responsible for building up the collection, engaging experts in given academic fields to provide lists of the best, most update works then available. These were then purchased, using money given by Dr Taylor Winnard c.£15,000. After this money was spent, Folkard managed to persuade the council to raise funds for library book purchase from the rates.

He was so successful, that at the time

of his death, the collection was estimated at 80,000 volumes including rare books, incunabula and illuminated medieval manuscripts. Strengths include mining, French literature, art and freemasonry, Greek and Latin classics (the latter five subjects of particular interest to him). Also large collections relating to Lancashire and Cheshire. As a result, Wigan Library was reputed to have one of the largest, best and most up to date collections of its time.

Folkard compiled a catalogue of the Wigan collection arranged by subject, the mining section was used as a bibliography by the British Library and the Bibliotheque Nationale. He also published many works relating to the Wigan collections, Wigan's local history and its industry, including –  
A Journey Around Wigan Reference Library. 1884-86  
Wigan Bibliography. 1886  
Wigan County Council Chamber, a descriptive sketch. 1890  
Freemasonry in the Wigan Library. 1892

The Wigan Free Public Library, its rise and progress. 1899

A Lindsay Record, being a handlist of books written by or relating to the clan Lindsay. 1899

The Court Guide Gazeteer and royal blue book of the county palatine of Lancashire. 1903

Gabriel Peignot, a list of his works in the Wigan Reference Department 1905  
Old Wigan in Memorials of Old Lancashire 1911 Vol 2 ed H. Fishwick and P H Ditchfield.

He died 25th August 1916 in a road traffic accident involving a horse drawn milk float.

### Further Reading

Daily Telegraph 28.8.1916

Manchester Guardian 26.8.1916 & 28.8.1916

Wigan Examiner 29.8.1916

Wigan Observer 29.8.1916 & 2.9.1916

**Hawkes, A J** Henry Tennyson Folkard 1850-1916 first librarian of Wigan in Librarian and Bookworld May-June 1942.

*See also the piece by Alan Davies on De Re Metallica by Georgius Agricola.*



# BROWN & HAIGH'S CHARTERED TRAIN

**JOHN MYERS** of North Wales has forwarded this postcard photograph of a 'works outing' special train, which he correctly identifies as having just left Wigan Central station, hauled by a London & North Eastern Railway class B7 steam locomotive. He goes on to say that he would be interested to know when and on what occasion the photograph was taken.

The following additional information is a result of research done by the Heritage Service's Mike Haddon.

On checking various directories and newspaper references he found that the Brown & Haigh partnership was established as 'wholesale clothiers' operating from Wood Street, Wigan, in about 1895, when David Haigh, a native of Huddersfield joined the existing clothing manufacturing business run by David and Arthur Brown under the name of Brown & Coop.

A Wigan directory for 1890 includes the entry "Brown & Coop wholesale clothing manufacturer Wood Street Mill Chapel Lane." However there is also a separate mention of "Coop & Co. wholesale and retail clothiers 1 & 3 Wallgate: Works - Dorning Street (and intriguingly) also Alliance Collieries, Crompton Street"! This latter revelation seems to be such an extraordinary location for a clothing firm to be associated with, that it raises the question as to whether it is in fact a compositor's error when the directory was being prepared for printing. It is not clear whether Timothy Coop (originator of the distinctive Coop's building in

Dorning Street) was associated with both businesses, or if it was another member of the Coop family who was originally in partnership with the Browns.

A good idea of the extent of the business can be found in the April 1929 obituary report of David Haigh, which states "The firm's career has been one of remarkable progress, and it has extended so much that at the moment it employs close upon a thousand hands, whilst its operations extend from South Wales to the North of Scotland, there being branches in Cardiff, Manchester, Liverpool, Preston and Newcastle-on-Tyne." How many employees were based at Wigan is not clear, but four years earlier the Southport funeral of Arthur Brown had been attended by some 250 of the Wood Street Mill workforce. Despite the deaths of the original partners the firm continued under the same name and at the same premises until the late 1960's, having become a limited liability company some time prior to 1947.

Turning now to the railway aspect of the photograph, Mr Myers thought that the number displayed on the circular headboard and repeated separately on the top lamp bracket would be that of the locomotive. This is not the case however, the 648 is a train recognition number, allocated because this is a one off special, so that signalmen and other rail staff en route will be able to identify the working by referring the number to the list which would appear in that week's notices and thus not confuse it with a normal timetabled service.

The locomotive's own number appears on the right hand side of the front buffer beam and on both

cab sides. Unfortunately the narrowness of the angle and the reflection of light renders the cab side numerals illegible and a buffer head obstructs most of the front digits. Only a 5 is clearly visible followed by what appears to be a 4. This would be appropriate for the majority of this class of locomotive, which like the line to Wigan Central itself, has its origins with the Great Central Railway. This type of 4-6-0 engine was in fact the very last locomotive design to be introduced by the GCR before it and other east of England & Scotland railway companies were compulsorily combined to form the London & North Eastern Railway with effect from 1st January 1923.

There were 28 engines of this type, which the GCR termed as Class 9Q, built between 1921 and 1922, in three batches as shown below :-

The GCR itself constructed 13 examples at its works in the Gorton district of Manchester. Numbered 72, 73, 78 and 465 - 474 they entered service between May 1921 and August 1922.

Next a batch of ten were ordered from the Vulcan Foundry Co. at Newton le Willows. These were delivered between September and November 1921 and carried the numbers 36 - 38 and 458 - 464.

The final five were supplied by Beyer Peacock & Co., also of Gorton, Manchester, in July and August 1922 and were allocated the numbers 31 - 35.

These locos were powerful four cylinder machines, just one step down from the GCR's top express engines, but having smaller driving wheels were designed for 'mixed traffic' duties, equally







suited to long distance passenger workings, fast freights and fish trains from Grimsby docks. They were good performers but somewhat heavy in their coal consumption, a reputation that earned them the nicknames 'Black Pigs' and appropriately for the Wigan area 'Colliers Friends'. Such a large locomotive would not be required for the normal passengers services out of Wigan Central, so it was probably brought over from a Manchester depot specially for the occasion.

The LNER reclassified and re-numbered all its newly acquired motive power into a single fleet. All locomotives of the 4-6-0-wheel arrangement had a 'B' prefix classification, in this case B7, and all ex GCR engines had five thousand added to their old numbers. Thus the B7's became numbers 5031-5038, 5072, 5073, 5078 and 5458-5474. One of the last sequence of seventeen locos is therefore the subject of our illustration.

Naturally it took time to repaint and re-number the thousands of locomotives inherited by the new

Company and records show that the first of our possibles was so treated in February 1924, thus giving us the earliest possible date for our view. In reality it is probably several years later than this as the first carriage is of a Gresley LNER design.

The second coach is very identifiable as an ex GCR 'Barnum'. Its unusual flat-sided construction was based on North American practice and these English examples got their nickname from their resemblance to the carriages of the famous Barnum and Bailey's circus train.

Just before it and the other three big regional railway companies were nationalised on 1st Jan 1948, the LNER decided to renumber its locomotive stock into a more logical sequence. From this activity we can therefore determine the latest possible date of the photograph which turns out to be January 1947.

As it is highly improbable that such an excursion would have been run during World War II, the photograph was most likely taken between the late 1920's and the

mid 1930's. As to the train's destination, without an exhaustive study of official railway archives, we can only speculate that it was presumably somewhere on the LNER system. If it was a seaside trip then it could have been to an East Coast resort such as Scarborough, Bridlington or Cleethorpes.

Is there anyone out there who can recall as a child being taken on such a works outing? Presumably it could have been an annual tradition, if so does anyone know for how long it continued and was it always by train or were motor coaches also hired by the firm especially in the post war period?

It would be much appreciated if anyone with knowledge of the illustrated special train or similar excursions run for employees of Brown & Haigh, would contact Mike Haddon at Wigan History Shop, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1NU. tel. 01942 828121 or E mail:- m.haddon@wlct.org

Any information received will be passed on to Mr Myers and reported in a future edition of *Past Forward*.

# Early Mining Gem Rediscovered at the History Shop

WIGAN Public Library, today's History Shop at the bottom of Library Street, opened its doors in 1878 shortly after the Public Libraries Act amendment had allowed the local authority to levy a charge on the rates to provide such a library with ongoing funding. Along with funding from this source the library was already paid for, both land and building to the tune of £5000 by local benefactor Thomas Taylor JP. It was designed by architect Alfred Waterhouse of Manchester Town Hall fame, and received a very large bequest from the estate of Joseph Winnard MRCP, a surgeon formerly attached to the Wigan Poor Law Union, to stock its shelves. The Winnard Bequest amounted to £12,000 and along with £590 from other local individuals, which in today's terms would be equivalent to £814,000.

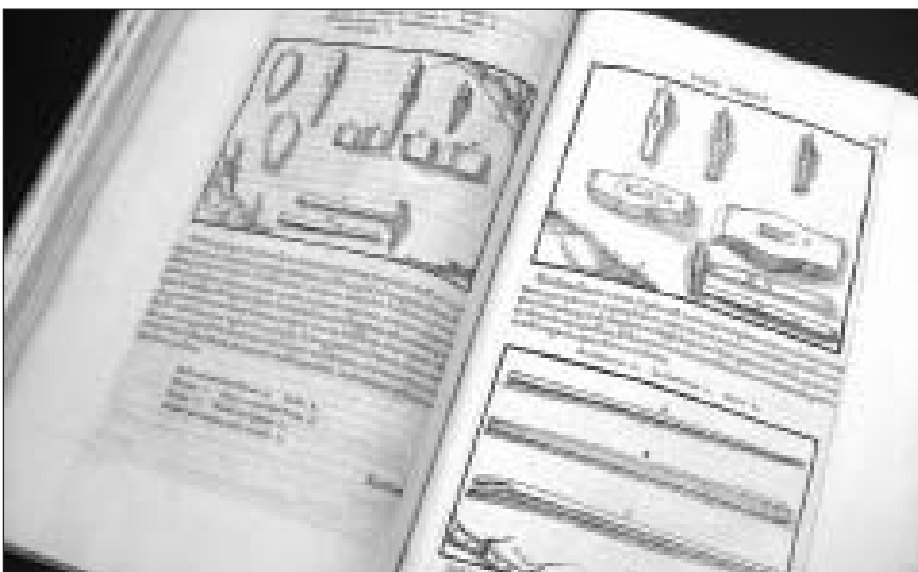
The first librarian, Henry Folkard (d.1916) could add to the reference collection virtually any volume he pleased, he was not restricted financially as we are today and could also add volumes on any subject matter, from an 18th century work on smoking traditions, to a 16th century Greek theological study (in Greek!). Today, collecting policies restrict how the small amount of funding for new accessions is spent.

Folkard was well aware that he lived in the most famous coal mining



*The ornamental wood engraved lead capital begins the first chapter of De Re Metallica.*

borough in the world. The Wigan area was famous for its many and varied mining engineering skills, innovation in the field, teaching and research. Even though no doubt he would rather add early first editions and classics to the library, the core mining collection always took prominence and eventually became one of the finest in Britain. Although having access to substantial funding, Folkard still struggled to track down the most rare works for the collections and it was to be approximately five years before he had a chance to acquire an example of the most famous early illustrated work on mining techniques and technology, *De Re Metallica* by Georgius Agricola. Even then, he only managed to acquire a second edition copy, yet with its original binding of 1561.



*De Re Metallica open at a double spread of illustrations of hand forged miners tool bars and hammer heads.*

Close to the library stood the first true coal mining (rather than general mining) college in the world (1857) and no doubt many a Wigan mining student must have been excited as I was back in the mid 1970's by being allowed access to such a superb collection.

Recent index card work by a student listing early works held in reserve at the History Shop showed the volume was still held on site and had not left when the main mining collection went into store for many years at Leigh Library. From there the collection headed off to join the library of the Lancashire Mining Museum at Salford (closed 2000). That library is now held by Manchester Museum of Science and Industry.

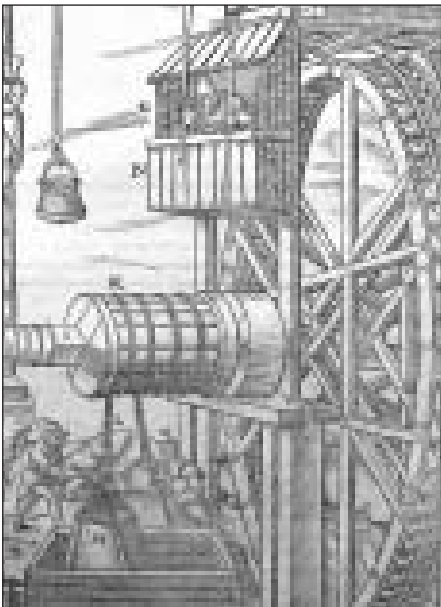
Georgius Agricola was born in 1494 in Saxony. His real name was Georg Bauer, but following the custom of the time, it was latinised to Georgius Agricola early in his youth. A contemporary of Copernicus, Martin Luther, Leonardo da Vinci, and Christopher Columbus, Agricola is today regarded as the father of mineralogy.

Initially educated at the University of Leipzig where he taught Greek and Latin, Agricola subsequently continued his education at the Universities of Bologna, Venice, and Padua where he studied philosophy, medicine, and the natural sciences. In 1527, he accepted a job as town physician in Joachimsthal an important metal mining town in Bohemia. The time he did not spend in the practice of medicine was devoted to the study and exploration of everything he could find that dealt with mining.

In 1530, Agricola left Joachimsthal. He spent the next three years travelling and studying mines. He settled in Chemnitz, Saxony, in 1533 where he again assumed a position of city physician. In 1546, he was appointed Burgermeister of Chemnitz. During this time he was frequently consulted on matters related to mining engineering. It was also during this time that Agricola devoted himself to setting down on paper what he had learned.

A prolific writer in many disciplines, he is especially respected for his





*A reversible water powered winding wheel. Amazingly one of these was in use at Oak Pit, Howe Bridge, Atherton around 1820, it's water supply channelled from close to Bolton Old Road.*



*The very arduous task of boring out tree trunks for use as pipes in pump ranges. These occasionally turn up in old shafts and opencast sites around the Wigan area..*



*A cross section of the workings showing multi level winding in place.*

numerous books on mining and other topics dealing with the earth sciences. As a medical doctor he observed at first hand the mining operations commonly used, as well as the ill effects on the miners, silicosis for example.

One of his earliest books on mining and mineralogy, *Bermannus* (1530), was based upon information obtained from his conversations with the "learned miner" Lorenz Berman during his time at Joachimsthal. In 1546, four of Agricola's multi-part books on mining and natural science were published. They were *De Ortu et Causis Subterraneorum*, one of the first works on physical geology; *De Natura Eorum quae Effluunt ex Terra*, which dealt with subterranean waters and gasses; *De Veteribus et Novis Metallis*, which was devoted to the history of metals and topographical mineralogy; and *De Natura Fossilium*, the first book which attempted to cover mineralogy in a systematic fashion.

Agricola's most famous work *De Re Metallica* was published in 1556, one year after his death. Twenty years in the making, the text was complete by 1550. Another three years were spent by Blasius Weffring producing the woodcut illustrations. Agricola describes in detail the mining methods, prospecting, equipment, smelting and metallurgical processes, geology, mineralogy, and mining law of the day. It is comprised of, as he termed, twelve "books". The inclusion of the 292 remarkably detailed and animated woodcuts showing cutaway

views of equipment and procedures explained in the text, made this study unique and unlike any previous work.

*De Re Metallica* remains today an important historical and scientific document. It was not until 1738 that *De Re Metallica* was surpassed by Schlüter's book on metallurgy *Grundlicher Huttenwerken....* *De Re Metallica* was reprinted in three languages and ten editions. As was the custom for scientific literature produced during his time, Agricola wrote and published his works in Latin instead of his native German. Doing so apparently strained the resources not only of the writer, but of readers and translators as well. In the sixteenth century, as today, Latin was pretty much a dead language. Many of the concepts that Agricola attempted to describe in his works defied simple description. Latin just did not have the words to express his ideas. As a result Agricola was forced to invent a large number of Latin terms to convey his thoughts. This made translation into English centuries later very difficult.

Agricola was largely forgotten in his country after his death. Neither the cities of his birth, residences, nor interment have ever demonstrated any recognition of his contributions to science and engineering. The eventual translation into English in 1912, 356 years after first publication created an enormous impact on the mining world. Once more the work came to life for thousands of mining engineers, miners and students. This first successful



*Attaching feathers to the edges of a four paddle ventilation fan rotor. Believe it or not the Walker Brothers (Wigan) Indestructible Fan in use from around 1860 to modern times was virtually identical to this design, minus the feathers!*

scholarly and analytical translation was performed, you may be surprised to learn, by American mining engineer and subsequent President of the United States Herbert Clark Hoover and his wife Lou Henry Hoover. The translation was done in a day when Presidents were chosen for their previous positive contributions to society, rather than for their media appeal and political chicanery. The translation was originally published in *The Mining Magazine*, London, in 1912. A subsequent edition was published in the United States in 1950 by Dover Publications.

For those interested, Dover publications still sell the reprint of the translation which can be ordered through Amazon online or at a Waterstones shop.

**Alan Davies**  
Heritage Officer (Archives)

# THE SETTLEMENT LAWS OF THE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURIES

by Robert Evans

PRIOR to the Industrial Revolution most people lived the whole of their lives in small closely-knit rural communities. Here most of their basic needs could be provided locally and they could expect some degree of help and support if they became ill or incapable of earning their own living because of illness, disability or ageing. Strangers coming into such communities could not expect any such help and from medieval times laws had been passed to move them on.

This right to help only in one's own parish was the central principle of the 1662 Settlement Act. It made clear that 'settlement' and the associated right to receive parish relief depended on where a person's father had existing 'settlement rights' which would normally, but not necessarily, be one's birthplace. Only if certain specific conditions were met, such as serving an apprenticeship, being hired to work for longer than twelve months or renting property valued over £10 per year in another parish could these rights be transferred. Married women were given the settlement entitlement of their husbands while the children of unmarried women were automatically granted a settlement in their place of birth. From the many Atherton township documents dealing with the application of this Act a small selection has been chosen to illustrate the affect on local people.

There are several bonds which in the years following 1662 guaranteed that people coming in from neighbouring townships would not become a liability on the township. (C3/3)



By the turn of the century certificates were being provided confirming that a parish would accept a holder back if they needed relief.

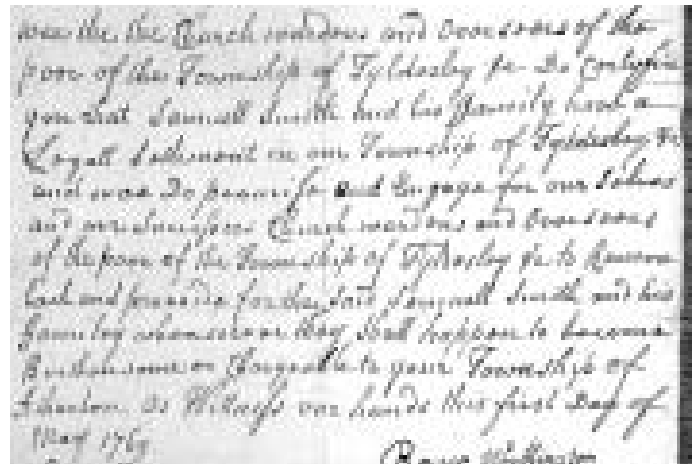
In 1720 the Westhoughton officers wrote explaining that John France, his wife and three children were: (C3/1)

*"desireous for their more Convenient Subsistance and better way of Living to reside and dwell for sometime in your said Townshop of Atherton and to that end have requested us to give Such Certificate for Indemnifieing your Township of Atherton as by law is required"*

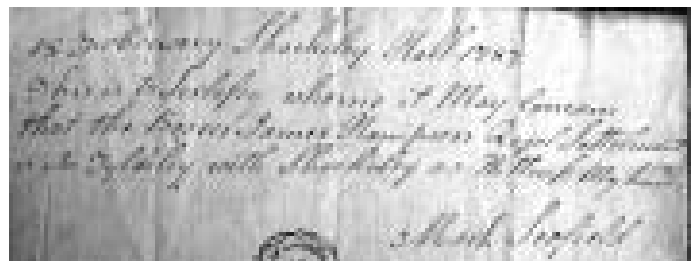
and went on to acknowledge that they would take them back into Westhoughton:

*"whensoever they or any of them shall become Chargeable or Burdensome to your sd Township of Atherton or the Inhabitants thereof in any wise"*

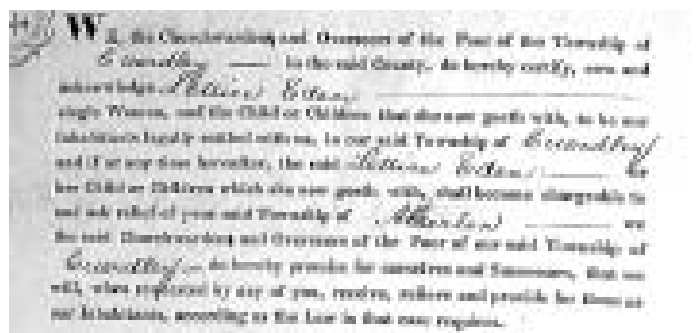
In 1769 the officers in Atherton were provided with a much simpler statement that Tyldesley would accept responsibility for Samuell Smith and his family. (C3/1)



In the latter part of the century a simple signed slip could provide sufficient reassurance for a township to accept someone from outside. (C3/1)



By the late 18th century with the growth of new industries and the demand for labour the movement of people had become so common that certificates were only issued to confirm that another parish accepted responsibility for someone who had become destitute after moving into Atherton. Many of these are for women who had been widowed or abandoned by their husbands and left with children to support. Others, such as one made out in 1828 for Lettice Eden, are for unmarried pregnant women who together with their child would become a burden on the ratepayers. (C3/1)

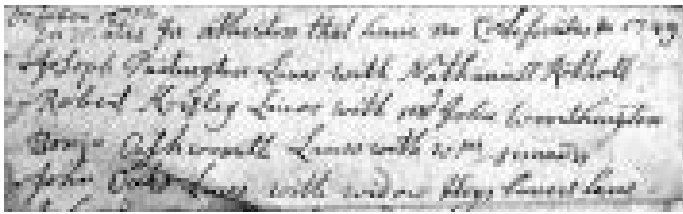


The 1662 Act did not prevent people moving to another area to seek a better standard of life and none of the Atherton documents suggest that there was any objection to newcomers who were fit and able to earn a living to support themselves and their families. One

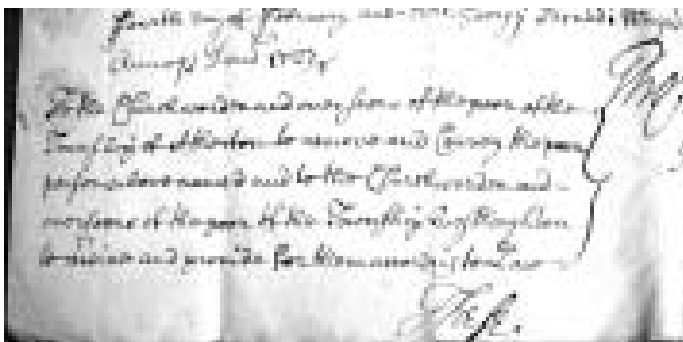




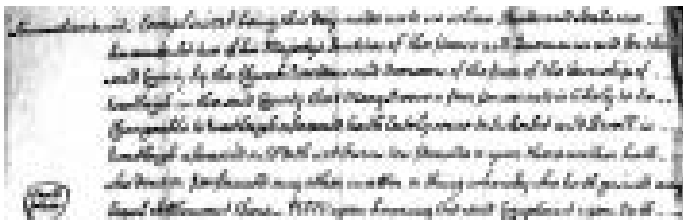
fragmentary document suggests that until the mid 18th century some monitoring of outsiders was undertaken to keep a check on how many people without certificates were lodging in the township. (C3/11)



The Settlement Laws did, however, require that if such people became incapable of supporting themselves and their families, then they should return to their original parish. If they would not go voluntarily then the Justices were asked to approve removal orders. In 1727 the Atherton officers obtained an order to remove Margaret Rothwell and her children to Westhoughton following the death of her husband. (C3/4)



In 1760 the overseer of Westleigh claimed that it was Atherton's duty to provide for Mary Reeves. (C3/4)

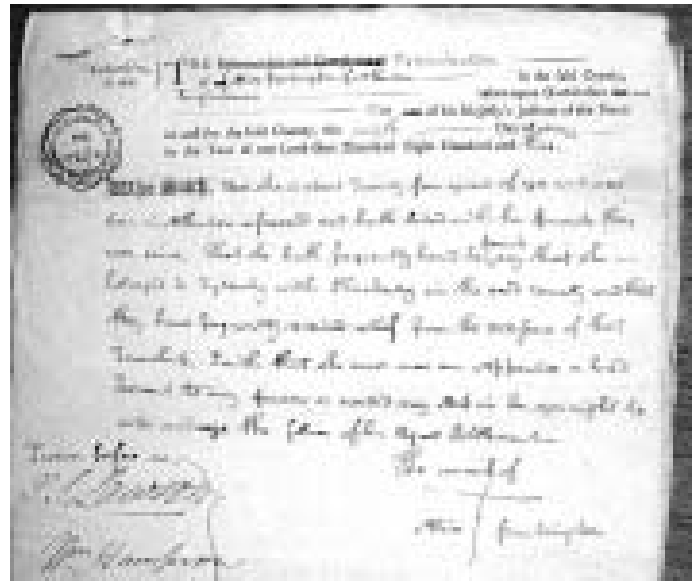


The overseer of the township to which a person was to be returned was notified so there was an opportunity to lodge an appeal with the Justices, as the Atherton overseers did in 1839. (C3/4)

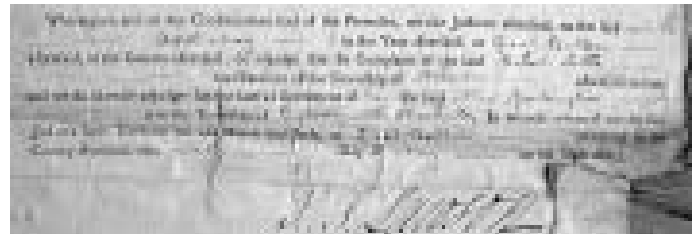


The Justices had to be satisfied that a particular township was the rightful place of settlement and they came to a decision after receiving statements – 'examinations' – from the person whose settlement right was being questioned and from others who could confirm their status.

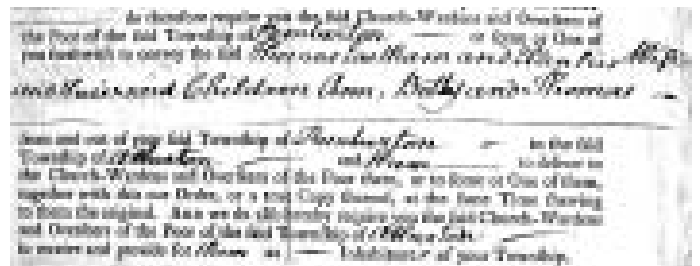
In 1803 there was no doubt about Alice Partington's settlement as she provided a statement in which she said though Atherton was her birthplace her father's place of settlement had been the township of Tyldesley with Shakerley. C/3/2)



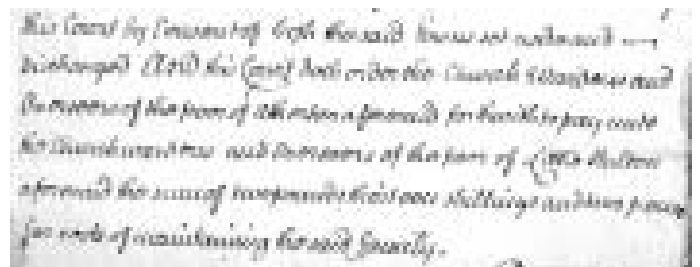
The Justices confirmed that this was indeed the township that should provide relief (C3/2)



Following the decision of the Justices, unless there was an appeal, a removal order would be issued giving the overseer the responsibility to supervise the move and confirm that it had been carried out. In 1784 Atherton was required to accept a family from Pemberton. (C3/4)



But often there were disputes and when overseers successfully appealed against decisions they were able to recover expenses as in 1768 when the Justices overturned a decision to send Thomas Ridgway and his family to Little Hulton (C3/6)

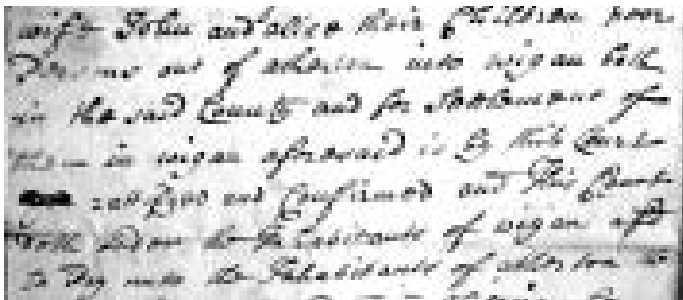


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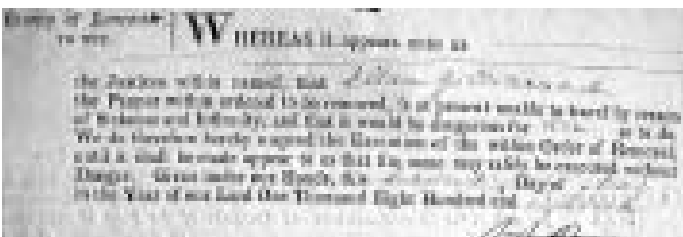
# THE SETTLEMENT LAWS OF THE 18th AND EARLY 19th CENTURIES

Continued from page 21

In 1736 Wigan paid costs after losing an appeal over the settlement of John Heaton and his family. (C3/5)



Removal would be postponed if a person was too sick to travel. (C3/4)



In such cases the overseer of the receiving township was presented with a bill for care during the period of suspension and this included the funeral expenses if death had occurred. (C3/4)

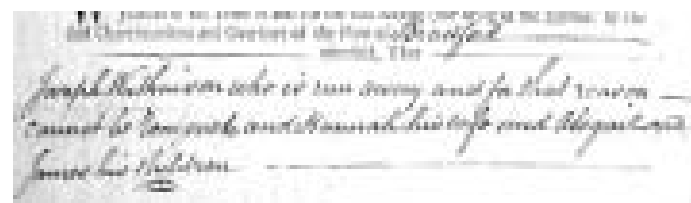
20/2	1 do	6-0	21/11/87 2-13-7 7-5-11-87
7	1 do	6-0	
16	1 do	6-0	
22	1 do	6-0	
16/11/87 16-0 18-0 1-12-6 6-18-0		2-13-7	John Dodson of his Majesty's Justice of the Peace for the County of Lancashire

On occasions people were returned to Atherton from distant parts of the country and in such cases the removal orders served as passes requiring the township officers to supervise passage from one township to the next. Each stage of the journey was recorded on the removal document. In 1748 Joseph Seal a "Discharged Soldier from General Chambers regiment of ffoot" together with his wife were

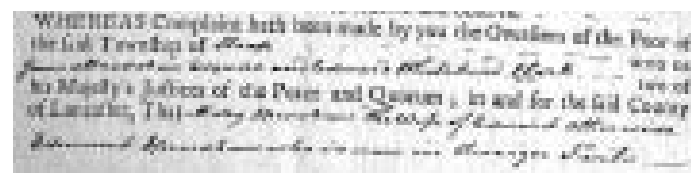
apprehended in Berwick as "Rogues and Vagabonds" He stated in his examination that "he was discharged from the said Regiment on Account of his being wounded and unfit for Service by a Shot received as he was standing Centry." He stated that his legal settlement was in Atherton and the order shows that he was passed on from Newcastle to Gateshead, and then into Durham and Yorkshire and finally from Rochdale to Chowbent. (C3/7) In March 1741 Jane Smith was regarded as a vagrant in Halifax and the Constable there was ordered to convey her "on horseback" to the House of Correction in Wakefield and the governor in his turn was required to see that she went to the next House of Correction in Lancashire "in the direct way to the Township of Atheron". It appears that she evaded her supervisors at some stage as her name appears on another order made in late May in Warrington requiring the Warrington constable to take her "to the parish or Town of Chow-Bent". (C137)

This brief survey does not provide space for the many more accounts of the lives of local people and the reasons they became paupers seeking relief. The following are just a selection of the circumstances in which, apart from the death of husbands, resulted in some women becoming destitute and together with their children subject to removal.

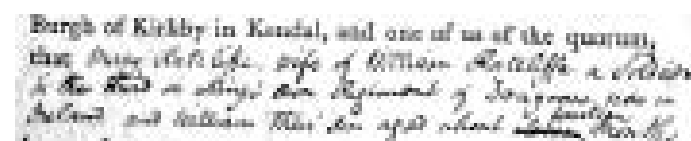
Some had been deserted by their husbands. (C3/4)



Mary Openshaw's husband was out of the country "in foreign parts." (C3/4)

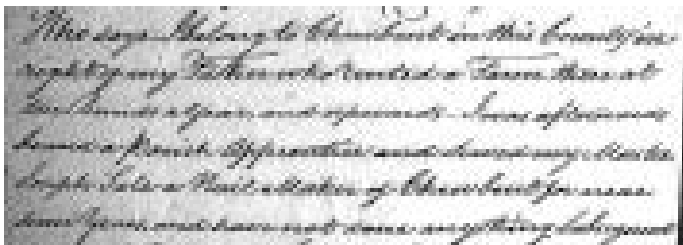


The wives of serving soldiers who became dependent on relief could only receive help from the township where their husbands had settlement when they required help. In 1803 the overseers of Atherton were required to accept and provide for Mary Ratcliffe and her son from Westmorland. (C3/4)



In 1831 the family of Arthur Peake, "a private soldier in His Majesties Eighty fourth Regiment of Foot" then living in Rochdale were returned to Atherton where according to his examination he claimed settlement. (C3/4)

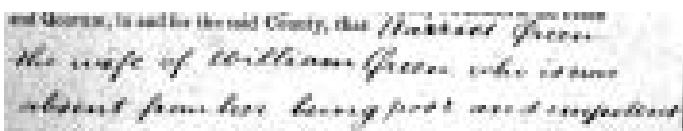




In 1829 the husband of Hannah Dauber was in prison and an order was issued to remove her and her child from Manchester to Atherton. (C3/4)



A rather intriguing reason is given for the removal of Harriet Green from Ashton-under-Lyne to Atherton in 1832. (C3/4)



Reading these records one must have sympathy for those people who at a time when they were experiencing personal hardship were forced out of familiar surroundings in a community where they were known and where they had perhaps made a valuable contribution to the local economy. As the records illustrate particularly bereaved women together with their children could be sent to distant townships to be alone amongst strangers. Nevertheless the documents do make it clear that removal was governed by a legal process which did identify where each person was entitled to receive help and which made some provision for personal circumstances. In 1808 Elizabeth Wilkin together with her three children was left destitute following the death of her husband Joseph who had originally come from Ormersley in Worcestershire. Though the Justices recognised that this was the place where she should receive relief they appear to have taken pity on her situation as at the foot of her examination sheet they added: (C3/2)



**REFERENCES**

The account is based on extracts from the Atherton Township Records now in the archives in Leigh Town Hall. There are several hundred of these in folders TR Ath/C/3/1-11. The writer acknowledges the assistance of Mr Alan Davis in making these records available and for help in identifying other related sources.

# VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

## TRENCHERFIELD MILL STEAM ENGINE, WIGAN PIER

The Trencherfield Mill Steam engine, situated at Wigan Pier, is the largest original working mill engine in its original setting.

It provides a unique surviving resource which gives huge opportunities for the sharing of knowledge and enjoyment to present and future generations of visitors.

Anybody who has seen the engine come to life cannot fail to be impressed by the size, grace and beauty of this surviving example of Victorian cutting edge technology.

This engine needs continual inspection, cleaning, care, overhaul and repair. This is where **YOU** can help. As well as these roles, volunteers can have the chance to speak with visitors about the engine and assist the engine team with special events and interpretative activities.

Wigan Pier is also recruiting Volunteers to work in The Way We Were Museum in general visitor assistance, interpretation and guiding.

Interested? Why not pop along and have a look for yourself; come and have a talk to our engine team about the exciting and varied opportunities available.

Please telephone Debby Hill on 01942 323666 for an initial chat or to arrange an appointment.

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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:

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**£8.75**

PER MORNING/ AFTERNOON SESSION

**COMMERCIAL RATE**

**£21.65**

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*If you are interested, contact Philip Butler*

**Tel (01942) 828128**

# Robert Ogden – Gone But Not Forgotten

**ON 24th May 1941, Battle Cruiser HMS Hood sank during combat with the German battleship Bismarck in the Denmark Strait, with the loss of 1,415 lives. Only three of the crew survived, and of those three, just one, Ted Briggs is still alive today.**

Some sixty years after the sinking, the wreck of the Hood was discovered and explored. Ted Briggs was transported there for an emotional memorial service and a bronze plaque was placed to commemorate those who had given up their lives for their country. Television programmes were shown and several books were published. One book, "Hood's legacy" by Nixie Taverner, listed the names of all the 1,415 dead and included in the list was one Robert Ogden – my grandfather's brother.

I had known for some time that Robert had died on the Hood, indeed I had received a copy of his death certificate from the General Register Office a number of years previously, but some of the other crew members had their photographs in the book and I suddenly realised that, apart from his birth and death details, I knew nothing else about him. I, therefore, decided to find out more.

If someone served in the Royal Navy, then the closest living relative is able to apply to the National Archive Office for a copy of their career record. Robert never married or had children so I had to contact someone from my father's generation. Sadly, my father died several years ago but I got in touch with his cousin and not only did he give me permission to apply for the details, he also sent me a series of photographs of Robert and the Ogden family. These were a revelation to me because my grandfather hadn't kept anything of that nature.

At the time of his death, Robert was a resident of Eccleston in Chorley but a search through all the local newspapers in Lancashire failed to produce an obituary. It saddened me to think that someone who had served his country and made the ultimate sacrifice didn't even merit a few lines in the press. His name does appear on the war memorial at Eccleston Churchyard though and also on the Ogden family grave at St. Thomas,

by Paul Ogden

Ashton-in-Makerfield. Although, sadly, the gravestone is now broken in two.

Eventually I received Robert's naval record from the National Archive and it proved to be a great surprise to me. I had thought, quite wrongly as it turned out, that Robert had merely signed up for the war, but, in fact, he had signed up as a teenager and he served on a number of ships before he joined the Hood. He was a Boy 2nd Class from August 4th 1926 to June 12th 1927, a Boy 1st Class from 13th June 1927 to 1st January 1929, an Ordinary Seaman from 2nd January to 2nd May 1930 and an Able Seaman from 3rd May 1930. He also received two good conduct badges – the first on 2nd January 1932 and the second on 2nd January 1937.

Having discovered that Robert had served on a number of ships, I then wrote to International Maritime Research and I was sent detailed accounts of the movements of the various ships during the time he was aboard. I also joined the HMS Hood Association which has a website – [www.hmshood.com](http://www.hmshood.com). The Association is trying to put together a comprehensive history of the ship and all those who served on her, so I sent all Robert's details for them to display. At this moment in time there are individual pages set aside for all those who were lost when the Hood sank but they only have photographs of 571. It is to be hoped that more can be provided so that those individuals like Robert Ogden are no longer just names on a list.

Robert Ogden was born 2nd January at Stocks Farm in Haydock to Paul and Margaret Ogden. He died on HMS Hood on 24th May 1941.

The ships/shore establishments he served on read as follows:

HMS Impregnable  
4 August 1926 – 27 October 1927  
HMS Emperor of India  
28 October 1927 – 30 December 1928  
HMS Renown  
31 December 1928 – 13 May 1929  
HMS Victory  
14 May 1929 – 10 June 1929

HMS Vivacious  
11 June 1929 – 6 October 1930  
HMS Wakefield  
7 October 1930 – 17 June 1931  
HMS Vivacious  
18 June 1931 – 30 November 1931  
HMS Victory  
1 December 1931 – 31 August 1932  
HMS Nelson  
1 September 1932 – 11 January 1934  
HMS Victory  
12 January 1934 – 8 March 1934  
HMS Excellent  
9 March 1934 – 14 November 1935  
HMS Coventry  
15 November 1935 – 21 February 1937  
HMS Excellent  
22 February 1937 – 1 March 1937  
HMS Diomedé  
7 March 1937 – 18 April 1937  
HMS Griat  
19 April 1937 – 5 May 1939  
HMS Mantis  
6 May 1939 – 8 June 1939  
HMS Victory  
9 June 1939 – 8 September 1939  
HMS Windsor  
9 September 1939 – 17 October 1939  
HMS Victory  
18 October 1939 – 1 March 1940  
HMS Suffolk  
2 March 1940 – 31 January 1941  
HMS Excellent  
1 February 1941 – 7 March 1941  
HMS Hood  
8 March 1941 – 24 May 1941

## Post Script

It may be of interest to know that the late entertainer, Jon Pertwee, famous for his roles in "The Navy Lark", "Doctor Who" and "Worzel Gummidge", served on the HMS Hood until its fateful mission. He was, however, transferred to the Dunlce Castle with several others thought to be officer class and so was spared. Apparently when he featured on the television programme "This is Your Life" in 1971, the two remaining survivors from the 'Hood' were brought on as guests and so emotional was he that he found it hard to retain his composure. As he says in his autobiography "I am the Doctor", "In War people die. Friends die. It is impossible to have lived through something like that and not be affected by it for the rest of your life".



# DANCE IN TIME

GOING back to 1941 at age 13, my mother took me to my first dance. It was a charity dance in aid of the war effort, I had on my only suit, a brown double breasted with short pants, long stockings and my only pair of black boots. My dancing was restricted to old time waltzes and the like. The reason I was my mother's partner, was my dad had two left feet and was also on shift work, travelling to and from Irlam Steel Works, which made it a long day for him.

One year later, and I am travelling to and from Irlam working in the engine shed as "Oil Lad". I stayed on at evening class doing an engineering course three nights a week, and this introduced me to more dancing at the "Penny Hop" held on a free night at Argyle Street School. There we danced to the records of the day, if you could find a partner of the opposite sex. I was now learning I bit about modern dancing. I was still my mother's partner attending charity dances, but now in long pants and guess what? Another brown suit!

My brother Jack, four years my senior, was a very good dancer and

by Fred Darbyshire

I guess he was the one who got me interested in dancing and big band music. Jack joined the army at age 18, where he had a rough time being wounded on two occasions. At age 16, I change jobs, going to work on the railway and get myself a girl friend (now my wife) who can dance. Because of staff shortages at Trafford Park Shed in Manchester, I get transferred there. This curtails the dancing to holidays at the Hindley British Restaurant, dancing to Donald Atherton on Christmas Eve and Hindley Public Hall (over the Co-op in Market St) New Years Eve. The war ends, I am transferred back to the Lower Ince Shed, and now we can get on with some serious courting and dancing!

The young cleaners and firemen at the shed all seemed to go out dancing, mainly to Wigan Emp. If you danced the last waltz to the tune "Whose taking you home tonight" then you expected to walk her home, this was one way of meeting the girl of your dreams.

Shift work to a certain extent curtailed your dancing, however the big thing was, that working on the railway, you got privilege tickets (cheap travel) and some free passes.

So, when on early shift on a Saturday you got a privilege ticket from the boss, you'd go home, change, then pick up the girl friend, go to Wigan N.W station and catch an express to Blackpool. This got you there by tea time, you found a cheap café for tea, then you had a choice, remember these were exciting times in the late 1940s and early 1950s if you were a dancer and big band fan. At the Winter Gardens you danced to Horace Finch on the organ and the resident band (the name eludes me). Other artists I remember were the Ted Heath Band and singers Dickie Valentine, Lita Rosa and Dennis Lotus (this was my favourite British big band, and still is). Not much dancing got done when Ted was in town, because the floor was packed tight around the bandstand, you could just about get round the dance floor. You could also go to the Opera House or Pavilion Theatres, both in the Winter Gardens first house, then into the ballroom free. This was in summer; dance till train time, the last train to Wigan was around 11pm, then a nice walk to drop the girl friend off (she lived in Ince) then home to Hindley.

Another option was the Tower Ballroom, were you could watch the children's show, followed by dancing to the Charles Barlow Orchestra, then the one the old people had been waiting for Reginald Dixon on the organ to play for dancing, no seats by the time he appeared. In summer they had guest bands to play for dancing, the best of these and my favourite, was Billy Ternant, beautiful band to dance to.

The third option was the Palace. It stood where Woolworth's now stands. Again, you could see a variety show first house, then into the dancehall free, till train time, these were great Saturday nights out.

11 August 1951, Saturday (Wigan v Warrington) was our wedding day, we could have gone anywhere on our honeymoon with a free railway pass, but we chose Blackpool for two weeks, why Blackpool?

Sunday 12 August - the Andrew Sisters at the Opera House (ticket price 10/6d circle).

Continued on page 26



Here I am at age 13yrs in my brown suit (fourth one up in the centre) with St. Peter's Boys Brigade in Market St, Hindley 1941. Entwistle's newsagent in the background, brother Jack was on the big drum, that's why we are all in step. Left column, Jack Taylor, ? ? John Whiteside. Centre, Fred Valentine, Bill Markleton, F.D-Frank Lowe? Nearside, ? Kenny Croft, Fred Wolstenholme, Billy Edwards, Edwin Bibby, Jack Fillingham.

# DANCE IN TIME

*Continued from page 25*

Sunday 26 August - the Andrew Sisters and the Edmundo Ross Orchestra.

Monday 13 August - Al Read at the Central Pier, there was also dancing on the pier in the afternoons.

Wednesday 15 August - Vera Lynn and dancing to Geraldo.

Friday 17 August - Palace Theatre, Morton Fraser's Harmonica Gang. Sunday 19 August - Opera House, Sugar Chile Robinson (rhythmic child pianist) from America.

Wednesday 22 August - Winter Gardens Pavilion, Norman Evans and dancing to Geraldo.

Thursday 23 August - Palace Pictures to see 'Lorna Doone'.

On what free nights we had, it was to the Tower to dance to favourite dance band Billy Ternant. We finished the honeymoon off at the Grand Theatre, Wilfred Pickles in 'Hobson's Choice'.

Once we got back home and into the routine of work, the rest of the fifties was just as exciting. In 1953 Frankie Lane, Billy Daniels and The Merry Macs at the Opera House and many more stars over the next few years to be seen. Shows featuring Charlie Chester, Nat Jackley, Val Doonican, Morecambe & Wise and Matt Monro, all followed by dancing.

In 1955, we left our first house in Platt Bridge, and moved to a new house in Hindley, where our first daughter is born (1956). With the aid of a baby sitter, we start dancing again on a Thursday night at the Monaco Ballroom in Hindley (music by Jess Greenhough and his band). In 1960 we moved to our present house in Ince, where our second daughter is born (1961). We soon start dancing again, our good fortune is that my wife's young brother Roland, is a very well respected local musician who started his musical career at the Tudor House Youth Club playing with the Madhatter's dance band in 1951 aged 13 years.

Roland next played with Derek

Lee and the Cherokees and Jess Greenhough. (Jess is no longer with us, he managed the Monaco Ballroom, Hindley for many years and played their with his band. He was a remarkable man, serving in the army during WW II, joining as a private and being de-mobbed as a captain). Roland did national service with the Gordon Highlanders Military Band. Now married and living in Hindley, it was easy for him to pick the wife and me up on a Saturday night and take us to Orrell British Legion, where he played in a four-piece dance band. Later on, it was Bolton Town Hall where Roland played in a 10 piece band. These were great nights out, but in the eighties they had the fire at the Town Hall, this was the end of our regular dancing nights out. Roland joined the Wally McKensie Band at Oldham Town Hall, our dancing is now restricted to charity dances, that Roland was playing at around the Wigan/Manchester area. Come the nineties, we took up sequence dancing at Ince Public Hall on Monday nights, dancing to records played by Tommy Taylor. We still attend Wednesday and Friday nights, and also go on dancing holidays twice a year. There is nothing as exciting as dancing to a big band!

Over the years, we attended many big band concerts including Count Basie at the Manchester Free Trade

Hall in April 1968, Duke Ellington in November 1969 and Ella Fitzgerald with Ronnie Scott. Glenn Miller was my brother's favourite band, I treated him to a concert by Buddy de Franco and the Glenn Miller Orchestra, it was the only concert we attended together. However, we did go to the Monaco many a Saturday night to dance to Jess Greenhough. One very exciting concert was Stan Kenton at the Floral Hall, Southport in 1973, we got to meet and talk to the great man. We saw Sid Lawrence the Queens Hall, Wigan, the Monaco Ballroom, Hindley and at the Llandudno National Theatre. Lets not forget local lad Andy Prior, who we have seen on many occasions. Also at the Monaco, the Don Lusher Big Band plying lots of Ted Heath music. A regular Monday night venue in the 1970's and 1980's, was The Horseshoe, Little Hulton, Bolton to listen to the Ron Bold Big Band.

We have supported many local big bands at many local venues over the years and still do. Our last big concert was special for my 77 birthday. I, with my wife and family went to see the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Radio 2 Big Band play a concert of Duke Ellington music in the magnificent Birmingham concert hall. What more can I say "keep music live"!



*M Furray - piano, Harry Pemberton - piano accordion (that well known local funny man who sadly is no longer with us), Kevin Aldred - drums, K Holland, Roland Slater - alto sax, Norman Livesey - tenor sax, Bill Turton - trumpet, name not known.*



# Joe arrived in a Jaguar

In 1970 the outstanding event of the year was the presentation to the school of an oil painting of Bedford Colliery. At lunch time, some fathers on their way to afternoon shift at Bedford Colliery would wave to their children in the school playground. By the 'seventies' however Bedford Colliery, like many other pits in the country, was scheduled for closure. I approached Joe Gormley, Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, to see if we could get a grant to commission a painting of the mine. He was eager to oblige. I knew that Roger Hampson, Principal of Bolton College of Art and Design had staged a number of exhibitions of his paintings of Lancashire mines and miners. He was a native of Tyldesley and enthusiastically took on the commission. The oil painting he did of the miners coming up from the last shift at Bedford Colliery was four feet by three feet and took three months to complete. Parents, children, staff and former miners, together with school managers and Education Officer Charles Hopkinson gathered in the school hall for the presentation. Former miners recalled some of their past experiences. Children sang a folk song on the topic of pit closures, written by the headmaster.

The presentation was made by Joe Gormley on behalf of the National Union of Mineworkers, with Sid Vincent, who represented the Lancashire Mineworkers Union. The fact that Joe Gormley later received a knighthood was purely coincidental! The arrival of Joe Gormley reminded me of the only time I had the privilege of meeting a serving Minister of Education. A Lancashire school in which I was teaching in 1948 was in the constituency of George Tomlinson. During his Ministry he asked to present the prizes at the school Speech Day. I was sitting on the bus waiting to set off for the school when a short squat figure boarded and asked whether the bus passed the school. I told him I was a teacher at the school. He introduced himself. George used public transport. Joe arrived in a Jaguar!

## Eventful times

During 1972 I was absent from work due to ill health, enduring a major operation at Manchester Royal Infirmary in the October of that year. I returned to school in January 1973. In April 1974, Leigh became part of the Wigan Metropolitan District. I had taught with the Lancashire Education Authority for 26 years and found it a good authority for which to work. The change over however, was cushioned by the fact that Charles Hopkinson was to become Director of Education for Wigan.

During the events of the next few months I was thankful that I was dealing with administrative personnel with whom I was familiar. There was a spate of vandalism on the roof, a number of broken windows, flooding in one of the classrooms and water coming through the roof. There were more boiler problems. Temperatures in the classrooms were as low as 48 F, and an emergency meeting was called with the Chairman of Managers and Mr. Burman from the Education Department. A point was reached where 209 children, whose parents could be contacted were sent home and 56 children whose parents could not be contacted were kept in school.

Meanwhile there had been a number of staff changes. Miss Robinson, Mrs. Schofield and Mr. Fisher (Probationers) commenced, and Miss Owen, Miss Smith, Mrs. Black and Miss Meadows left. In view of the staff changes I decided to move two infant classes into the open plan unit and move the junior classes into the two traditional classrooms.

In February 1972 schools held a Divisional Arts Festival. At Higher Folds we were blessed with a number of staff who were exceptionally talented in Art, Craft and Music. Parents, teachers and children took part in a variety of activities. Other members of the Higher Folds community from youth to senior citizen were also invited. Many tried their hands at musical instruments and artwork.

There was also a day when the infant classes were open to visitors. In June Robert Drabble came third out of one hundred and fourteen contestants in the Junior Cycling Rally organised by the Road Safety Officer and an examiner from the Victoria Music Board came to examine children for Grade 2 in Brass Instrument playing. The results were most pleasing.

L. Harper.	Cornet	Distinction
J. Johnson	Trumpet	Distinction
J. Newman.	Cornet	Merit.
L. Marsh	E Horn	Merit.
S. Rushworth	Baritone	Merit.

In December rewiring of the hall and classrooms commenced. The boiler had one of its winter tantrums. In spite of every thing we went ahead with our usual Christmas activities. In 1975 we opened on a positive note. Miss Lambert, Nursery Education Adviser, came to discuss the proposed addition of a Nursery Unit. There were further visits from Miss Lambert who was to prove most helpful in the future development of the project.

## "Bottles of beer in the wardrobe"

We had our usual summer activities and two school trips were organised. The infants and class four went to Chester. We were more adventurous with the top juniors. We decided to use Banbury as a base. From there we would go on to Oxford, Blenheim Palace, Stratford on Avon and Warwick Castle. We had not realised quite what an adventure it would turn out to be. This was recalled some time later when in March 1978 my daughter sent me a cutting from the Oxford Times. It featured a hostel 'somewhere in the Cotswolds.' It had apparently become a half way house for homeless people who needed somewhere to go. Besides providing bed and breakfast accommodation for lorry drivers and construction workers, it took

*Continued on page 28*

# Joe arrived in a Jaguar

*Continued from page 27*

on social service families. It accommodated people on social security, probation cases, and people who had come out of jail and had nowhere to go. It had originally been a British Rail Hostel and had 87 bedrooms.

At about 5.00 pm on a warm evening in 1975 a happy, but tired coach load of thirty children and four adults from Higher Folds arrived at this very hostelry. It had been booked through a reputable holiday agency which the school had used before. It was to be a base from which we would set forth to explore the rich cultural heritage of Oxford, Blenheim Palace, Stratford on Avon, and on the homeward route pay a visit to Warwick Castle. To say the start was somewhat inauspicious would be something of an understatement.

Since the children were tired, restless and hungry we felt there was no alternative but to drop anchor and at least let the children have a wash and a meal. We did however tell the children to leave their luggage in the rooms but not to unpack. Our troubles were just about to begin. "Please sir, there's a couple of beer bottles in the wardrobe." This was followed by "Please sir, there's some stale bread on the table." We eventually gathered the flock together and shepherded them into a dining room where a number of long distance lorry drivers and construction workers were tucking into their meals. Obviously the place was completely unsuitable. While the children and staff went for their meal I used the very public telephone to contact the office of the travel agent in Manchester, only to be informed that the person in charge had gone home. Meanwhile the coach driver had agreed to search for a recreational area where Mrs. Andrews, Mrs. Newman, and Mr. Fisher, could keep the children occupied for an hour or so. Negotiations still had not been completed by the time the

coach returned, so it was about turn and more fun and games for another hour or so. After a lengthy, and sometimes rather heated exchange, the matter was finally resolved. We finished up in two separate AA 2 star rated hotels. It was with some relief that next morning we arrived in Oxford at the University of St Mary where we were met my daughter who had volunteered as an addition helper for the day. By the time we breathlessly climbed the spiral stairs and viewed the city of dreaming spires the trauma of the traumatic beginning had disappeared. The icing on the cake came at Leamington Spa where we stopped for lunch. I was approached by a retired headmistress and the head of a cathedral choir school who both complimented us on the children's behaviour.

## Great achievements

During 1975 Higher Fold received further visits from Miss Lambert in preparation for the opening of a Nursery Unit. We also received visits from Dorothy Cryer, who on re-organisation had become our Primary Schools Adviser. She had previously been our PE Adviser, and in relation to this subject had been of considerable help to the number of probationary teachers we had. The log book also records that we had some visits from Mr. Lambort HMI. These were the days when Inspectors arrived un-announced, and saw schools 'in the raw'.

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the opening of the school we printed a small anthology of children's work, which we called 'A taste for words.' I wrote the following foreword. "Children have a satiable curiosity not only about the curious world in which they live, but also about the magical world of words. Once this taste is titillated they come easily to the feast. We trust that this anthology will help dispel the myth that the isolated community of Higher Folds live in a cultural desert." All the written work in this anthology arose from work done with the children by myself and Glennis Andrews. The following is an extract from a letter I received. Names have been changed.

"This note is prompted by the delightful little magazine Betty

brought to me yesterday. Thank you to you and your staff not just for my own kin, but for all the children in Higher Folds. From the contents of the magazine you have certainly rubbed off a little of yourselves on to these children and helped them on the way to learning what life is really about." In the anthology a ten year old girl expressed in verse the frustrations she experienced one dinner time. I know exactly how she felt. I once penned my personal experience of school dinner times.

### *SCHOOL DINNERS*

*Nothing seemed to go right today  
I slipped in the hail and dropped  
my tray,  
I went for the mop when I slipped  
on the floor  
But some one had locked the  
caretaker's door.  
Nothing seemed to go right today.  
Perhaps tomorrow will be a better  
day.*

I know just how she felt. I had my first experience of dinner duty in a large city school in 1946.

Twenty years later, when I arrived at Higher Folds, the winds of change that had been blowing through the classrooms blew a gust or two through the school meals service. Meals were no longer delivered from central kitchens, but were cooked on the premises. I was fortunate that the two cooks, Mrs Aspinall and Mrs Davies stayed at school during the whole of my time there. Both ladies always took an active interest in all aspects of the school activities and always gave their utmost loyalty.

## "Bloody starving"

Changes to the dinning-hall meant that long forms and trestle tables were replaced by stacking chairs and tables with shiny formica tops. A teacher or monitor would sit at the head of each table and take on the role of Mum or Dad, serving each child individually. This sometimes led to problems when children would go home complaining about perceived injustices. Some parents aired their grievances politely. 'For some time Arthur and his sister have been coming home complaining that other children on their table are always getting bigger helpings than





## WIGAN PIER THEATRE COMPANY – OUTREACH: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

they do. I know that some times children exaggerate, but as they are both adamant I feel something should be done about it. 'Some parents were not so polite. "Our Barry reckons 'es not gettin 'is fair shares at dinner. I don't pay dinner money for 'I'm to be bloody starved!'

All teachers did not find the combined role of teacher, parent, social worker and feeder of manna to the hungry entirely to their taste. As usual, it was the teachers in schools where a high proportion of children were lacking in table manners who took the greatest strain. The question of whether school dinner time supervision was a statutory or voluntary duty was a subject of much heated debate. There came a point when action was taken nationally and many teachers withdrew their labour. At this time supervision at Higher Folds was done by Mr Cooley and myself. Fortunately this only lasted a short time and a compromise was reached. I personally found the hour and a half lunch time session the most challenging and stressful time of the school day. It tested one's patience, tact and authority to the utmost. Some teachers, fortunately not many, were incapable of exercising control over a hall full of lively children in a situation where there were ample opportunities for bad behaviour, mob psychology sometimes takes over, and even normally well behaved children then behave badly. This occasionally led to strained relations, particularly when non-teaching staff felt that children were allowed to be excessively noisy and rude. On these occasions I would have to diplomatically smooth ruffled feathers. There was an especially delicate relationship between welfare assistants and children, particularly when it involved playground supervision before and after meal times. On the other hand, there was often a really caring relationship between welfare assistants. At Easter time they would give the children a special treat. They would be given a sweet in the shape of a bird's egg, with a chocolate egg in the middle.

*To be continued in the next issue, when Glyn recalls some magic moments, great achievements and his enforced retirement due to ill health.*

DURING 2005, Wigan Pier Theatre Company delivered two major pieces of theatre with the community that focused on heritage themes.

The first was a newly commissioned play financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund about the history of Haigh Hall. Four local high schools researched and rehearsed "Haigh Fever" – a promenade performance of the Haigh Hall building with ghosts of Haigh's past coming to life over eight performances on one night in July.

Home Front Recall funding also allowed the Leisure Trust's resident professional theatre company to work with primary schools in creating a celebratory "Street Party" performance to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II. Young and old attended the event, discussed the past and had a great time in a sing-along of World War II songs.

At the end of 2005, the theatre company was awarded a grant of £34,000 to run a three-year programme with Higher Folds Community Centre in Leigh. Two youth theatres and an adult community group have now been established to perform another new play called "The Folk On The Hill". This will be penned by local playwright, Julie McKiernan, and will look at past, present and future times of the Higher Folds estate in a story that will involve all generations of the community. It will be performed at the Community Centre on Stirling Close between 5th – 7th July 2006.

If you are a community group and would like to develop a youth theatre or create a performance project whether it is heritage based or not, then please contact Wigan Pier Theatre Company's Development Officer, Martin Green, on 01942 709305 or e-mail him at [mpj.green@wlct.org](mailto:mpj.green@wlct.org)

Don't forget that you can visit "The Way We Were" museum at Wigan Pier on Wallgate to see the theatre company's live heritage interpretation work, where actors bring Victorian Wigan back to life. The unique Victorian Schoolroom is an experience that will take you back to the strictness of 1900. New scenes that have recently been added to the repertoire look at the themes of the Boer War and Votes For Women. Call 01942 323666 for opening times or further details.

### The Mayor's Charity

**DO you know of any local heroes?** As part of the Mayor's Charity, it is hoped that we can honour those who have achieved fame or infamy by a series of commemorative plaques placed in public places with a link to the person. It can be an entertainer, sportsman or woman, inventor, writer or artist. Nominate someone whose life has affected others in some way. Whoever they are, they must fulfil one criteria – they must be dead. Dead for a few years or a few hundred years, so **don't** nominate *Lord of the Rings* star, Sir Ian McKellan. Events can also be commemorated in the same way – for example, the Battle of Wigan Lane or the site of Wigan Casino.

For the year 2007 a calendar is being planned featuring a

different hero each month. For both the calendar and the commemorative plaques, we are looking for suitable sponsors who will be willing to contribute to the cost of these projects. In return, sponsors' generosity will be acknowledged.

The Mayor's Charity Committee will make the final decision on who and what will be remembered with the coveted blue plaque. So, let's give the area a positive image by reminding ourselves and visitors to the borough of our local heroes!

#### Suggestions to:

Mr Philip Loudon, 80 Bag Lane, Atherton M46 0JX or Ms Christine Charnock-Jones, The Mayor's Secretary, Wigan Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1YN.

# Riley's Gym in the 1950's

IT WAS when I started my apprenticeship with the Wigan Corporation Electricity Works in the late 1940's, that I first met Ernie Riley. Despite our paths dividing and diversifying, we never were to lose contact for the rest of our lives, until his death in October 2000. He was the son of Billy Riley and like his well known father, was to become a world-class "all-in wrestler". The family home in Great Acre was always a venue for friends and characters from the wrestling fraternity, some of whom were already becoming well known on television. Bob Robinson, alias "the Farmers Boy" and Jack Pye, "the villain", Tommy "Tucker" Moore alias "Jack Dempsey", Alan Latham, Matt Byrnes and many others who, when not engaged in the usual show of aggression in the ring, were as well behaved as you or I. Their only aim in life was to avoid any other form of fighting at all costs, although at the same time they could take care of themselves otherwise. The logic of this was, "that only fools fought each other for nowt".

When training in the gym there was, from time-to-time, a lot of sweat and hard work involved and also the basics of straight wrestling. However, to be of any entertainment value at all, the art of "show wrestling" had to be practised. To watch wrestlers in training would bore most people to tears, and would not encourage them greatly to part with their money to do so.

Ernie's father, Billy Riley, in his heyday wrestled for the World Heavyweight Championship in South Africa, and like his father, Ernie also wrestled abroad, in India, Turkey, Japan and also, if I remember correctly, in America and Australia. Some of his opponents from these locations whenever visiting this country came to know this little gym that we all helped to build. It was situated to the rear of Whelley Senior School, and was the second of Riley's gyms to have existed. The early one being situated at the bottom of Scholes, to the back of Farr's Haulage company's yard, adjacent to the river Douglas. It was far from what we have come to expect from today's standards, being a small, plain brick oblong building, built to basic standards by enthusiastic members, but nevertheless waterproof. The equipment was equally basic,

by Derek Yates

consisting of a large mat for the wrestling, a few barbells and some minor aids to fitness scattered around, plus a very basic shower compartment. And that was it! From then on, all that needed to be added, was a lot of sweat and effort, by some more than others. The weekly membership charge, was one shilling and sixpence (15p in today's money). It seems incredible to recall, that some of these lads who for the most parts were only earning basic wages, went on later to earn the kind of money that they could have never dreamt of. Yet they were all the same to Mr Riley, for his sole satisfaction came from helping anyone willing to learn, and who were willing to put the effort into it. He frowned on bad behaviour, swearing, and also "big heads" who did appear occasionally through the door of the gym, and who seldom came back for more when, after a nod from Billy, the likes of Bob Robinson would invite them to an introductory session on the mat! Billy always kept in touch with the gym and was very often to be seen there. Even when as a senior citizen, he would be seen down at mat level on one knee, advising and demonstrating the appropriate "holds", dressed in his everyday waistcoat, shirt and trousers and only discarding his trilby hat that he often wore in order to do so.

Some little time later in the 1950s after I was "de-mobbed" out of the Fleet Air Arm, we were to join up with other wrestlers, Alan Latham for instance, with myself acting as so-called manager for Ernie Riley. We turned up at boxing/wrestling booths on various fairgrounds, which appeared around the district from time to time, and were typical of the kind of booths that were being run by fairground promoters such as Matt Moran. Because none of us possessed cars at that time, we travelled on the bus together, splitting up, just before entering the fairground. The third member of our party would disappear around into the back of the booth, whilst Ernie and myself, wearing a trench mac with turned up collar and snap-brimmed trilby (a la Humphrey Bogart), wandered around the fairground for a while, in order to provide some time for a crowd to assemble in front of the booth. For by

now, the other wrestler would be flexing his muscles on the front platform of the booth and Matt Moran would be giving his spiel about the forthcoming contests. "And tonight's main contest will be between two American soldiers fighting over a married woman"! That being the accepted humour of the time and occasion. At the same time he issued a challenge to "Any likely lad that fancies his chances against my boy, £5 for the winner"! Then I would step up and take the challenge on behalf of "my boy", who was of course totally unknown to Matt's champion! We then went around to the back into the caravan, to prepare.

Five rounds would ensue in that tightly packed booth, the crowd always supporting the local lad, especially as it was Billy Riley's lad. The ring was normally erected to stand at about chest level, and I stood down there in "my mate's" corner. The contest as usual had been well practised and was pretty convincing to the uninitiated, with lots of slapping of hands and forearms on the hard canvas as they took the falls. In the early rounds of course, the villain was inflicting grievous damage (or so it would seem). But by the end of the third round, I thought it was high time for me as 'manager' to be seen to be passing at least some instructions to my corner. So tapping Ernie on the ankle, who bent down close, I whispered "fish and chips, fish and chips, fish and chips" in his ear, which seemed to convince the crowd, as from then on, Billy Riley's lad went on to win! Eventually, on pushing our way out through the crowd, we were being warned and advised by the well-wishers that on receiving our money, we should make a quick escape, in the likelihood of us being ambushed and robbed by the men from the booth!

In the event we did, only to meet up again with Alan, far enough away from the fairground to escape detection, and for all three of us to return in high spirits on the top of a local bus, both contestants being equally satisfied with their earnings.

As previously mentioned, they were to go on from this early start to earn a great deal more than £5 a bout in later years. Riley's gym however, continued to encourage youngsters and others in keeping fit and in the skills of wrestling. Billy would have been happy enough, with that!

# They Called Her 'The White Mother'

EMILY SPROTT (nee France) was the daughter, and one of 22 children of Joseph France, a confectioner, who had a business in Millgate and Market Street. One of her brothers was Richard France who was a prominent member of Wigan Parish Church, another brother was Charles France, sanitary inspector for Wigan Corporation.

From her girlhood, Emily was actively associated with Wigan Parish Church and Sunday School which led her to embrace missionary work in the early 1900's. She received her training in London before taking up work, initially in Korea. She then travelled to the Solomon Islands under the auspices of the Melanesia Mission. Emily married Rev. R. Sprott a missionary. Although he died in

1928 she continued to carry on the good work in which they had been jointly engaged.

The Wigan Parish Church, through the agency of a special, local Melanesian Mission Fund, maintained a practical interest in Emily's work, and from time to time sent out such supplies as were needed in the South Seas missionary settlement.

Whilst undertaking work in social and child welfare for the mission in this British Solomon Islands Protectorate, the Japanese invaded the country. Although she could have been evacuated, she decided to stay and help the local children and attend the wounded. Emily (the only European on the island) lived deep in the jungle with the local people, whilst the Japanese looted and murdered in other

parts of the island.

Readers can read an account of her experiences in the Wigan Observer of 1st May 1943.

In June 1943 Emily was awarded an MBE in recognition for her work. After the war she returned to Santo Isabel to spend more time with the people she loved. Emily, the unknown heroine, a Wiganer, came back to the peace of the Berkshire countryside where she died in 1958. She never acknowledged her age, but it is possible by her death she was in her mid eighties.

Should anyone have any further information about Emily or her work I would be pleased to hear from them.

**Tony Ashcroft**  
**Leigh Local History Officer**  
(Tel: 01942 404559)

## *Do You Remember?*

*Mr R Heaviside takes on a shopping trip around the Wigan of over 50 years ago*

I REMEMBER Poole's Central Warehouse in Millgate, quite a long row of shops, selling furniture, carpets and hardware. How about Pendleburys (now Debenhams) - who remembers the terrific fire and the fire engines? I went to watch in my pyjamas with my mother! I used to go there into the basement to be measured for my Grammar School uniform - who was the outfitter, a portly gentleman, well dressed? Later there was the café, what a treat! As we travel around the township we remember, for instance in Market Street, Latimers, U.C.P, Meesons and Webster

Brothers.

Finally, we come to Christmastime and who remembers Father Christmas arriving at Lowes? We used to stand out in the cold and watch him arrive, then mounting the fire brigade's turntable ladder - WHOOPS! He nearly fell as he went down the chimney.

The store of course was a real Aladdin's cave, and once again there was the restaurant!

*If any other reader has reminiscences of shopping in Wigan let us know. Mr Heaviside was obviously fond of his cafes! Editor.*



## Atherton Heritage Society

April 11th

"Surnames" Speaker - Peter Watson

May 9th

"Samuel Coulthurst" (Salford  
Photographer) Speaker - John Aldred

June 13th

"A visit to Chowbent Chapel Atherton"

Meet at the chapel at 7pm.

Meetings held at St. Richards Hall,  
Atherton - 7.30pm. Details from Margaret  
Hodge- Tel. No. 01942 884893.

## Golborne & Lowton History Society

Coming Talks and Events

11th April

AGM.

9th May

Trolley Buses by John Bradbury.

13th June

Visit - to be arranged.

Meetings are held at Golborne Library  
every 2nd Tuesday of the month at  
7.00pm. Non members welcome.

Enquiries to: Derek Briscoe (chairman)  
(01942) 747366, Frank Hill (01942)  
728066, John Maconie (01942) 706595

## Hindley & District History Society

Dear Editor

Many churches or chapels built during  
the 19th Century were unfortunately  
destined to close down during the next  
century. Hindley & District History Society  
is undertaking a project to gather  
information on such places of worship in  
the Hindley area. We already have much  
information on places such as Bridgecroft  
Independent Chapel, St Paul's  
Independent Chapel and Ebenezer  
Particular Baptist Chapel whose premises  
have either been demolished or converted  
into other places of commerce, but we are  
lacking information on other less well-  
known places.

We are particularly interested in St  
Augustine's Chapel which is shown on a  
1925 map of Hindley as being off Atherton  
Road, (possibly near where Corsey Road is  
now), the Salvation Army Barracks on  
Market Street and the Church Army  
Mission off Liverpool Road plus any other  
places of worship which were in existence  
during the 19th and 20th centuries but  
which have now closed down.

The sort of information we are looking  
for is when and where such places were  
built or opened, when and why did they  
close, as well as any other activities which  
may have taken place in the premises.

Readers can write to me c/o Hindley  
History Society at Hindley Library, Market  
Street, Hindley.

Norma Brannagan, Hindley.

## Leigh & District Family History Society (part of Liverpool & SW Lancs. Family History Society)

Website: [www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk](http://www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk)  
<<http://www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk>>

# SOCIETY NEWS

## To all Secretaries

Would Secretaries please note the copy  
deadline on p2.

### Programme of Events

18th April

North Country Folklore by Peter Watson

16th May

Records held by the Latter Day Saints by

Rita Greenwood

20th June

Project Night

18th July

Project Night

15th August

Getting Started

### Wigan Register Office for BMD

Indexing

The volunteers at the Register Office have  
completed all marriages for inclusion on  
the Lancashire BMD website from 1837 -  
1950 for the Wigan & Leigh Registration  
District.

Checking has started on the Birth indexes  
for the same area. Check

[www.lancashirebmd.org](http://www.lancashirebmd.org)

<<http://www.lancashirebmd.org>> for  
coverage update details.

Glenys McClellan

Hon. Secretary Leigh Family History  
Society and Co-ordinator at Wigan Register  
Office for BMD Indexing.

### Leigh Literary Society

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

10th April

AGM & The Great Comedians by Davis Hill

### Standish PROBUS Club

Members are retired/semi retired  
professional business men and women.  
Meetings are held at The Crown, Platt  
Lane, Worthington on the 2nd Tuesday of  
every month at 10.30am.

Details from Bryan Shepherd on 01257-  
424994.

### Wigan Family & Local History Society

We meet at the Springfield Hotel every 3rd  
Tuesday in the month.

Last year was a record year with 104  
subscribing members who joined the  
Society.

Speakers remaining for the rest of the year

18th April

Paul Cross

20 Artifacts from the past with stories and  
humorous tales.

16th May

Peter Watson

Stranger than fiction. Brilliant speaker

## 20th May

AGM

Everyone is welcome to come along to  
listen to the speakers. There is a charge for  
guests of £1.50 (£1) for members.

**Membership** for the year is £6 for  
individual members and £7 for family  
members. Overseas membership £10. For  
membership form contact John Wogan at  
01942 321163 [johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk)  
or visit our web site at  
[www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory)  
Visit [www.wiganworld.co.uk](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk) for everything  
related to Wigan old and new.

### News

Wigan and Leigh Marriages from 1837-  
1950 are now on the internet at  
<http://www.lancashirebmd.org.uk>  
or use the link from our website.

### Snippets From Our Members

**Stuart Wade** who works at the Priory  
Wood Hotel and Restaurant Orrell would  
like any information about the building  
which used to be **Orrell Mount**. Priory  
Wood will be renamed Orrell Mount later  
this year.

So far, we have unearthed that the building  
was built by John Clarke a banker and  
mine owner of Orrell Colliery (who can  
boast one of the first locomotives in  
Lancashire) and used by an order of  
French nuns for a short time.

It then became the home of Abraham  
Guest, a prominent member of the Orrell  
Community, the school just down the road  
from the Orrell Mount, is named after him.  
Finally, the building was used as a Berni  
Inn before becoming Priory Wood.

**Douglas Roberts** who lives in Nottingham  
would like any information about  
Henry/Harry Roberts a railway man living  
in Spring View prior to his death in Spring St  
1850s.

### Rorke's Drift - A Wigan Connection By John Wogan, Wigan Family and Local History Society

One of our members, Keith Guest found  
this snippet '**Wigan Hero's Defiant  
Stand at Rorke's Drift**'.

There must be few folk who have not  
heard of Rorke's Drift, depicted in the  
epic movie Zulu, starring Michael Cain  
and Stanley Baker. One hundred and  
thirty-nine British soldiers stood against  
overwhelming numbers of ferocious Zulu  
warriors, fresh from a stunning victory  
over the British at the battle of  
Isandlwana. Eleven Victoria Crosses were  
won at Rorke's Drift, the highest ever  
awarded for a single action.

One thing, which may be unfamiliar to  
readers, is a little-known Wigan  
connection. When the Zulu War broke out  
in January 1879, the British sent a force  
of some 16,000 men into Zulu territory  
under the command of Lord Chelmsford.  
The majority of these troops were Natal  
natives. Amongst the ranks of the 5,400





# Gerald Rickards (1931 – 2006)

THE packed church at his funeral last week and the huge array of sympathy cards that filled his lounge said it all – Gerald was a much loved and respected person who will be deeply missed by so many.

I had the pleasure and privilege to know Gerald for over 10 years. We first met when I visited his house to discuss the Charter Mural in the History Shop. And what a surprise I got! Artists are frequently not the easiest people to get on with, but not so Gerald. He was one of the most gentle and amenable people I have ever met. In subsequent years, when I had to contact him, I often thought I might be disturbing him as he worked in the front room of his house, but never once was there a hint of irritation, always the same friendly, warm welcome.

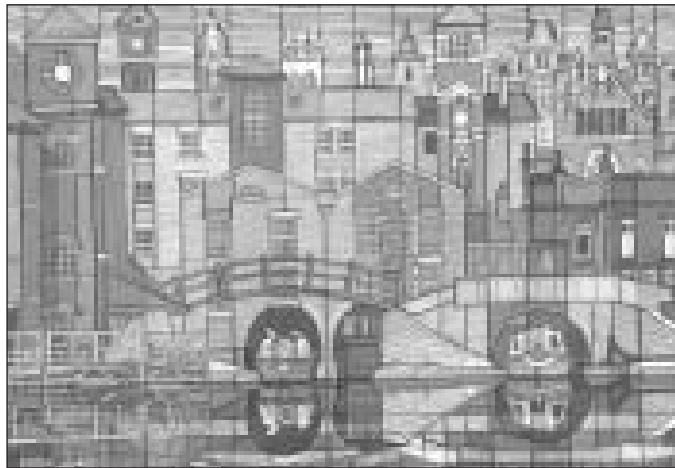
And what a house! The walls – and often the floors – were literally covered with his paintings! It was quite an experience to see them all.

Gerald was a Wiganer through and through, and proud of it. He was born in nearby Aspull, and attended Wigan Grammar School and Wigan School of Art. Following further studies in Liverpool, Edinburgh and Europe (a travelling scholarship to study mural painting), his two principal posts were as Head of Art at Upholland Grammar School (later Winstanley College) and as the first Artist in Residence at Drumcroon Education Art Centre in Wigan.

Following his early retirement, he spent over 20 years painting, in his own attractive and distinctive style. And what a prodigious output! He had exhibitions throughout the country, many with a particular theme – National Trust properties, churches, cathedrals, Thomas Hardy, to name but a few.

Closer to home, he designed and painted the central window in Queen's Hall, Wigan, and was commissioned to produce a large number of paintings for the opening of Wigan Pier in the mid 1980's.

But it is for his work for Wigan Heritage Service, and the History Shop and *Past Forward* in particular,



that I will most remember Gerald. In 1996, as part of Wigan's 750th celebrations of its first charter, I commissioned Gerald to produce a 37 foot Charter Mural, depicting many of the local buildings past and present. From the outset, it was clear that this was a labour of love for Gerald, and I look back with many fond memories of this time. The magnificent Charter Mural can still be seen in the History Shop today.

Gerald also had three exhibitions of his work in the History Shop, and I considered it a great honour when he invited me to open the last of these. This particular exhibition featured paintings and compositions developed from a series which Gerald had produced for *Past Forward* from 2001, depicting the buildings of each local township, in his own inimitable style. Again, I have many happy memories of our meetings – and Gerald's many anecdotes – to discuss these; and again, this was a project very close to his heart. Sadly, however, it was never completed; it was clear in the last few years that Gerald's health was declining, and he was not able to put in the necessary work to produce these works to his own high standards. Typically of Gerald, though, he was determined not to let me down, and came up with various alternatives from work he had already carried out.

This included a number of quizzes which he produced, partly out of his deep interest and affection for Wigan, but also to raise money for Wigan & Leigh Hospice, for which he also produced a number of murals. The Hospice was a cause which became increasingly dear to his heart.

Sadly, Gerald lost his battle for life in February, when he died peacefully at home. I will miss the friendship of this very gentle and humble man, as will so many others. Fortunately his legacy will live on, in his many wonderful works, painted in his own very distinctive style. To his wife Mildred and his family, we extend our deepest sympathy.

*Alastair Gillies*  
(former Heritage Services Manager & Editor of *Past Forward*)

British regular soldiers were Wigan born William Neville and John Smith. Both privates in the 2nd Battalion (2nd Warwickshire) Regiment of Foot. Neville had enlisted at Liverpool in 1877 and Smith on Christmas Eve 1876 at Ashton-under-Lyne; it was not unusual for men to enlist in units whose nominal home was many miles away.

William Neville was born the son of Abram farmer, James Neville, on Warrington Road in February 1858. He worked as a colliery weigh clerk prior to

enlisting in the army, aged nineteen. He continued his service until his discharge in 1889. Described as of bad character and intemperate habits he lived with his wife and children in Broom Street, Ince. He died in 1895 of a heart attack at the age of thirty-seven and was buried in an unmarked public grave in Ince cemetery.

John Smith was born in December 1851 in Chapel Lane, Wigan - the son of a Railway worker. He had worked as a labourer and served in the Lancashire Rifle Militia. At the age of twenty-five, he enlisted

into the regular army. It is believed he was the only soldier to suffer injury from a native spear, when he received a wound to the abdomen from a Zulu assegai whilst defending the barricade at Rorke's Drift.

John Smith discharged from the army in 1882, described as of good character and temperate habits and went to live in Bury.

Both men received the South African Medal 1877-8 and 1879 clasps.

**For more detailed information see *Rorke's Drift Men* by James W Bancroft**



## Ghostly Policeman

Dear Editor,

I was talking to a friend and she told me that in the 1950's, when she was 17, she was going to a dance hall at Higher Ince. As she was walking down the lane and going past the alleyways, she saw a policeman who was wearing a cape. She thought she was safe with the policeman walking behind, but when she came to the ending of the road and she turned around, there was no sign of the policeman. That same week she found out that a policeman had been killed. Was that the Phantom Policeman? Can anyone else recall this at Higher Ince in the 1950's? He just seemed to vanish in mid air.

**E, Grimshaw  
Kitt Green**

### *Once Upon A Time In Lancashire*

*Why have all the  
Chimnies gone  
That towered high  
In the terraced sky?*

*Where burning mills  
In wet cobbled grey  
Saw lighter man  
The fogs to slay?*

*Echo'd clogged street  
In gantry lines with  
Coaled canals that  
Knew no mines*

*The worker ants  
Are all long done  
Why have all the  
Chimnies gone?*

*Ernie Woodcock*

## WAR TIME CYCLE ADVENTURE TO SOUTHPORT

Dear Editor,

I wonder how many of your readers rode to Southport on their bicycles just before or during the last war?

I think the year would have been around 1942 or 1943. A group of us lads got together and our plans were hatched – Southport or bust! We set off from Higher Ince early morning. Not a lot of traffic on the roads, except maybe the odd bus, or someone with a horse and cart. Petrol was rationed and not many people had cars. In them days, only the well to do could afford to run a car. Wigan up to Standish - quite a climb on a bike. Legs felt a bit heavy, but no-one wanted to get off and walk, so we made it to a flat road at last, then down to Almond Brook. Wrightington fish pond, we did rest there for a while to have a drink and a butty, then up to Parbold. Again we stopped to admire the

glorious view from the top of the hill. Then someone said, "We will never get there at this rate", so off we went down Parbold Hill – what a thrill! For the first time no-one fell off, so we carried on our merry way, past the aerodrome that was in the fields at that time, the army depot at Burscough and finally to the Morris Dancer, we were nearly there.

After more than two hours, we finally arrived in Lord Street. There were plenty of places to leave your bike, they charged a penny or tuppence to look after it for the day in their back yards. Some more butties, we bought some chips and then down to the front. A lot of barbed wire around, soldiers who had been wounded in the hotels, with their blue uniforms, red ties and white shirts. They would wave to you from the hotel windows. Of course we waved back. We did not have

much money for the fun fair, so we went to the open air swimming pool, which after a swim, made us feel quite hungry, so we ate the rest of our butties and set for home.

Someone had a puncture, a chain came off, all of which caused quite a delay, as we wanted to stick together come what may. Parbold Hill was a lot harder going, most of us walked up. After that, it was nearly all down hill in to Wigan. Most of us were really hungry by this time, so whatever we had left we shared between us, saying, "I will eat the table top off when I get home". Tired and weary, we finally made it back to Higher Ince. Everybody was looking for us, but thank the Lord, we all arrived home safe and well. We were better prepared the next time we went!

**Mr A E Smith  
Winstanley**

## WWII RUFC tankards

Dear Editor,

I found the story by Gordon Unsworth, very sad and moving. His quest to reunite the RUFC tankards to any remaining friends and relatives of the young men who lost their lives in World War II was truly quite a

mammoth task and not always rewarding.

Hamish Hunter, who was mentioned, was the son of a local doctor who lived on Wigan Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield. He had two sisters who may have been twins, I am not sure if there was

a younger brother. A photograph and a report of the accident and death were published in – I think the Wigan Examiner. Before he enlisted Hamish was employed by Coop & Co.

**E. Wilkinson  
Blackpool**

## LOST HORIZONS

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest Dr Atherton's letter regarding the Ritz cinema and the showing of the film LOST HORIZON, based on the famous novel by James Hilton.

My article on Hilton was specially written for Past Forward and I therefore focussed on his Leigh and Lancashire connections. It is true that James Hilton was a Hollywood scriptwriter for many years and won an Academy Award (an "Oscar") for his work

on the script of MRS MINIVER, made in 1942. He also narrated the films MADAME CURIE and SO WELL REMEMBERED.

Your readers may be interested to know that there is now a flourishing James Hilton Society which organises meetings and conferences, publishes a quarterly newsletter, and issues an annual scholarly journal. Hilton deserves to be remembered, for he was not only the author of LOST HORIZON, which is

now regarded as a twentieth century classic, but also wrote the best selling novels RANDOM HARVEST and GOODBYE MR CHIPS.

**John Hammond  
Nottingham**

(For those wishing to contact the society here is the address. Ed.)

The James Hilton Society  
49 Beckingthorpe Drive  
Bottesford  
Nottingham  
NG13 0DN



## Ashton Town FC

Dear Editor,

As a journalist who used to work in Ashton-in-Makerfield, I was interested in the article in *Past Forward* (Issue no.40) on 50 years of Football in Ashton-in-Makerfield.

I would, however, like to correct an error repeated in Ian Templeman's history of the club. He refers to them winning among their Warrington League honours the Dodds Shield and describes it as a cup competition for Division one clubs. The Dodds Shield was, in fact, awarded to the Champions of Division One, as Ashton were in their "triple crown" season of 1963-4.

I used to report a lot on Ashton Town in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s and still have many newspaper cuttings of what I used to write down about their successes and failures during that period. The late founder Mick Mycock was a regular caller at the Ashton Reporter Office in Earlestown to give me his reports. When they joined higher leagues, I used to write freelance reports for papers representing the visiting teams. I only wished I had written a history of Ashton Town and wish them every success in their efforts to progress the club.

**Gordon Brown  
Whitehaven**

## When Dracula Came to Wigan

Dear Editor,

The recent letter in *Past Forward* re the Ritz Cinema reminded me of an incident at the Prince's Cinema some years earlier.

This cinema was built in the early 1930's and opened by the famous film star Anna Neagle, who was accompanied by her film director, Herbert Wilcox, whom she later married. Some years later, around 1937, the Prince's management decided to re-screen the horror film 'Dracula' and contacted me to take a series of photographs of an actor made up to resemble Dracula. Arrangements had been made for me to meet him at an address in the vicinity of Greenhough Street. This turned out to be a decrepit old building down one of the side streets and appeared to be a former stable. It had a floor of rough, rounded paving stones and walls covered in flaking layers of old white wash. In fact, it was now being used by a coffin maker, it was perfect for the job. Part of my brief was to show Dracula getting out of his coffin. "This is going to be easy" I thought, "the place is full of them".

By now Dracula had arrived, nearly all six feet of him, dressed in a black mourning suit complete with the dreaded black cloak, his face a mass of green and white make-up. A quick look around the place

soon convinced us that our Dracula was too big for any of the coffins. We now had a problem, and for some time just stood there looking at each other. Finally I said "We only want him getting out of the coffin, not lying in it". Looking around, I then selected the largest, which was a very dark oak casket lacking any ornamentation, it looked just the thing. I asked Dracula to half sit in this, and with his left hand, pretend to be raising the lid. With some difficulty he managed to do this, and my flask powder did the rest, a very realistic photograph. I was about to pack up my equipment, when the full menacing figure of Dracula came walking towards me from out of the shadows and stopped just a few feet away. Then, in what can only be described as a whisper, said "Have you a couple of aspirins, I don't feel at all well". The coffin must have affected him more than the fiend he was impersonating. I had to restrain myself from howling with laughter, as I called out the request to the coffin maker in his little drab office, who fortunately was able to oblige.

My pictures were put on display in front of the cinema, whilst Dracula earned himself his fee by walking around Wigan advertising the film.

**Austin Lyons  
Wigan**

## Refugees in Wigan

Dear Editor,

I have just been reading issue 41 for the umpteenth time and thought I should write a note of praise. I am an 87 year old Wiganer who has lived in Co. Durham since 1946. A Wiganer I shall always be.

I had a lovely life in Wigan – born in 1918 to Robert Sandford and Priscilla Horner. I attended the Blue Coat School and Wigan High School. In 1935 I worked in the Education Office and knew many prominent people.

I have recently read the letters from the Channel Island refugees with great interest, as I met the train full of arriving children as part of my job in the Education Department. I got them to their rest centres and saw them off again when they were moved on. I can still remember handing out apples to them as they got on the train. A sad occasion!

**Mrs Margery Parkinson  
C. Durham**

## Wall of Death!

Dear Editor,

Referring to the article Father's Chimney by J Whitehead (issue 41) reminds me of my childhood days in the Swinley area. Born in 1927, I was on 'Rylance Lobby' and the tips near by, a little earlier than the writer. Yes, I remember the railway line, shelter and loading bay and of course the pond and the chimney.

During the school holidays, on my bike (a Hopper without brakes or mudguards) I attempted the 'wall of death' ride and fell into the water in the middle! One could start on the swings in the park, cross over Walkden Avenue (where the houses were being built) through the Halls estate to Whitley. There was also the brook (that used to dam) the tunnel under the railway and of course Scouts Hill. What more

could one want! Oh yes, and I can mention that I also went to the Wesleyan School (with the teachers Miss Wilcock, Miss White, Miss Clark and Miss Latham) where I remember a certain boy being tied to the banisters of the staircase leading to the classrooms! I note Mr Whitehead mentions the League of Health and Beauty – I too remember the 'Miss Dance' ladies that were involved.

What about this magazine *Past Forward* and the old saying "you've got to laugh"? The younger people will not remember the war years, but surely they can't help but smile at the article Fire Watching by Margaret in the last issue (41). "Our Annie's Fire Watching", that takes the biscuit!

**Mr R D Heavside  
Wigan**

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

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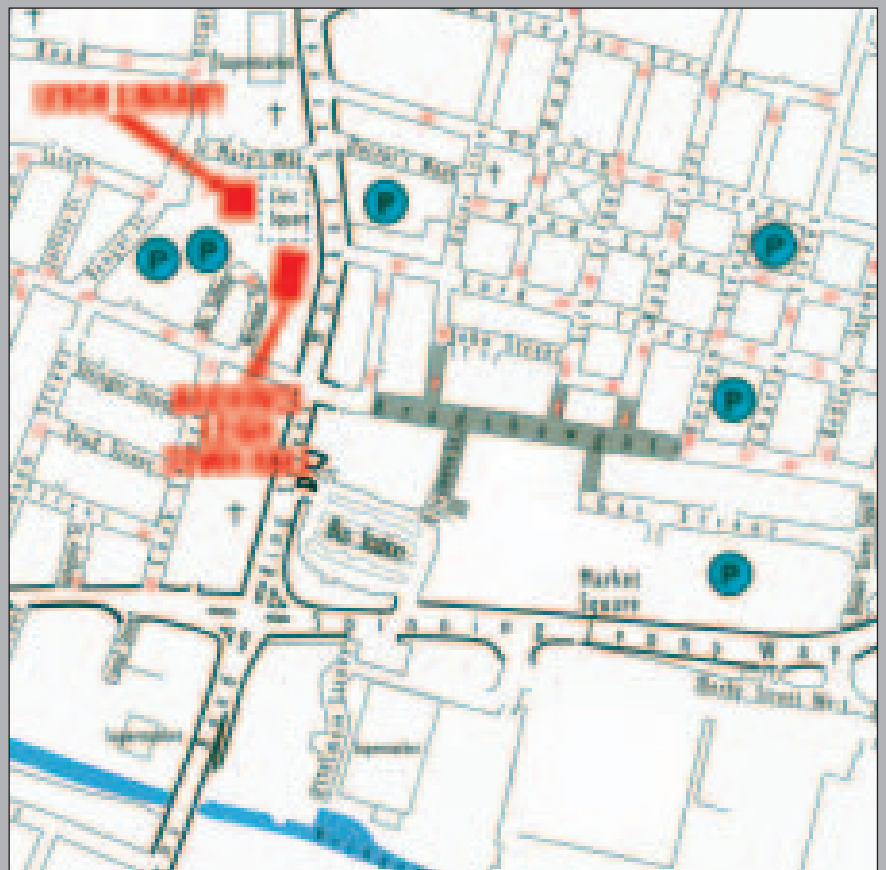
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