

# PAST FORWARD

Issue No. 44

December 2006 – March 2007



***New Exhibition at the History Shop - Bloomin' Lovely  
16 October - 20 January 2007***

***Check out the History Shop for your Christmas Gifts***



***Produced by Wigan Heritage Service***

**FREE**

WIGAN  
LEISURE & CULTURE  
TRUST

# Contents

The Future of Past Forward	3
New Books at the History Shop	3-4
Exhibitions at the History Shop	5
Can You Help	6
Learning with the History Shop	7
Double Celebration for Wigan Heritage Service and Wigan Pier	8
Shopping at the History Shop!	9
Family History	10-11
Life in the old Higher Ince	12-13
Wesleyan Methodist Day School, Dicconson Street, Wigan	14
Christmas Memories	15
Childhood Memories of an Old Park Laner	16-17
Brock Mill Forge	18-19
The Last of the Doodlebugs	20-21
1960	22-23
The Story of James Tinsley, One of The Explorers Bedford Colliery Explosion 1886	24-25
Shops Ancient and Loyal	26
How the Archbishop 'saved Arnold's bacon'	27
Book Review	28
Committed to a Lunatic Asylum for Being a Vagrant and Spitting	29
The Laying of The Gantley Farm Boggart	31
Mayor's Charity Appeal - Local Heroes	32
Letters	33-35

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**Our rates are £100 for a full page, £50 for a half page and £25 for a quarter page. For further details contact Sarah Challender, Marketing and Communications Officer on (01942) 486931.**

## Letter from the Editorial Team

First of all, we would like to wish all our readers a very merry Christmas, and a happy New Year. We would also like to thank all of you who have contributed articles, letters and reminiscences for publication over the years. These personal views of the history of our borough are definitely the 'heart' of *Past Forward* and we greatly enjoy the way in which an article or letter will spark a flood of memories or garner new information. There is no doubt that the magazine, which we preserve and index for our local history collections, is a valuable resource for research into community history.

However, we are not complacent, and intend to improve *Past Forward*. In the New Year, we will be consulting you on the way you would like to see it develop, so that the magazine is more responsive to reader's needs.

Finally, if you are looking for a more unusual Christmas gift, or one with a 'conscious' (we now stock a good range of Fair Trade items) see our article on shopping at the History Shop on page 9. We look forward to seeing you!

***We apologise for our error in describing the building on the front cover of issue 43 as Stone Hall, Dalton. It is in fact Douglas Bank Farm, Upholland.***

## Wigan Heritage Service

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## 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 45 is 19 January 2007.**

# The Future of *Past Forward*

THE first issue of *Past Forward* back in the summer of 1991 was a slim 8 pages and concentrated mainly on the recently created Wigan Heritage Service. We thought to increase local knowledge of our service and therefore foster interest in heritage in all its forms. Over the succeeding 15 years our newsletter has grown to a whopping 36-40 pages per issue and is delivered to all parts of the English speaking globe and even a few non-English speaking parts! A tremendous achievement by any standards.

Along with the size of copy, the readership has spiralled to an incredible 10,000 issues. Our success has been as a result of the contribution that you, the reader has made to the mix of reminiscence, poetry, letters and of course news of our service. Without that response we would probably not have arrived at issue 44.

However, as our audience has grown, so too inevitably have the costs of production and postage, and to ensure that *Past Forward* is realistically financed, we are having to consider a nominal charge in the future and we would like your opinions on this. A charge of £1 per issue would cover many of the production costs and ensure we not only maintain the standard but also improve the quality and distribution. Friends of Wigan Heritage Service

already pay £5 per annum to be a Friend and to receive 3 issues of *Past Forward* per year by post which will be reviewed in the future together with the potential to set up a subscription mailing list.

Whatever your opinion on this matter, we would like to know. Please contact the Editor by post or email at the addresses given below. We will not be able to respond to each individual view, but a collective response will be published in *Past Forward* 45.

We welcome your input which is valued and will be part of the decision process. Logistics of sales points, distribution and other efficiencies are being taken into account.

Thank you in advance for your considered view.

**Carole Tyldesley**

Heritage Services and Wigan Pier Manager

Please send your comments via email to [Heritage@wlct.org](mailto:Heritage@wlct.org) or by post to  
Past Forward Consultation  
Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust  
FREEPOST NATW1645  
Wigan  
WN1 1XZ

## NEW BOOKS AT THE HISTORY SHOP

### **LANCASHIRE ENGLISH**

**Paperback 38 pages £1.99 (plus 45p postage)**

At one time or another Lancashire has been home to Celts, Romans, Saxons, Vikings and Normans, all of whom have left their stamp on the language, even if the accent does change from town to town. The “Lankashire” dialect survived almost untouched until after the Second World War, as can be seen from the 1930s and 1940s films of George Formby, Gracie Fields and Frank Randle, but first the eleven plus, then the comprehensive system, and finally the gentrification of the working classes dealt it a series of body blows. Here are over 450 words and phrases to help you understand the “Lankashire” dialect, together with guide to pronunciation.

### **LANCASHIRE v. HITLER: Civilians at War**

**Paperback 176 pages £9.99 (plus £1.00 postage)**

As the men went away to war, local women began to take on traditionally male jobs. Factories were diverted from their peace-time work to making munitions. At the top of Blackpool Tower, radar was being tested. Bomb shelters went up all round the country, fuel and food were rationed, children were evacuated to the countryside. Americans arrived in huge numbers, many via Liverpool and big air

bases were built at Warton and Burtonwood to accommodate them and their aircraft. For the first time since the Depression there was plenty of work and the watchwords were Dig for Victory and Make Do and Mend. People visited the cinema or listened to the radio to keep their spirits up but Lancashire’s civilian population worked hard and suffered a good deal in their effort to beat Hitler – this is their story, much of it told first-hand.

### **BEFORE “MOBILES AND NIGHTSTICKS” (Reflections of a Wigan Detective)**

**Paperback 120 pages 6.99 (plus £1.00 postage)**

Having completed National Service, Harold Pendlebury joined the old Wigan Borough Police Force in 1950. He served 30 years in the force including the C.I.D. and Regional Crime Squad and here he shares some of the highlights and cases of his career. Restless in retirement, he sought new employment with Littlewoods Pools, Liverpool, where he was the man who greeted you on a Monday morning on your doorstep with the news that your life would be changed forever. Being the conveyor of the news of wins of over 2 million pounds, his years with Littlewoods Pools were exciting and colourful to say the least.

*Continued on page 4*

## **THE PIT BROW WOMEN OF THE WIGAN COALFIELD**

**Paperback 126 pages £12.99 (plus £1.00 postage)**

This illustrated book tells the story of the female colliery surface workers, or pit brow women, of the Wigan coalfield. The fate of women working below ground in mines changed dramatically after the introduction of the Children's Employment Commission of 1842 outlawed the practice. This led to many families suffering huge losses of earnings. In Lancashire, many women started to work on the colliery surface, grading the coal on conveyors or acting as general labourers. The Wigan Coalfield employed more than any other area.

There was enormous interest in these remarkable women, fostered by illustrated newspapers and the interest shown from the 1860s by Cambridge academic A.J. Munby. His detailed diaries form an important part of this study. The women themselves remain a fascinating and unique feature of both local and industrial history.

Widely illustrated and entertainingly written by Alan Davies, Wigan Heritage Service's Archivist.

## **JONATHAN DEWHURST, The Lancashire Tragedian 1837-1913**

**Hardback 240 pages £16.95 (plus £2.50 postage)**

Written by his great-great nephew this book charts the theatrical success of one of the great tragedians of the time, his personal joys and trials, and the world of the theatre in the nineteenth century. He enjoyed an international career, ran his own company and managed the Theatre Royal in Leigh for eighteen years yet what is known of him today? This book is a tribute to all those unsung heroes of the stage without whose contributions our theatrical heritage would be far less colourful.

## **THE BEST OF MRS BEETON'S EASY EVERYDAY COOKING**

*Dine we must and we may as well dine elegantly as well as wholesomely*

**Hardback 250 pages £5.99 (plus £2.50 postage)**

**and**

## **THE BEST OF MRS BEETON'S HOUSEHOLD TIPS**

*A place for everything and everything in its place*

**Hardback 250 pages £5.99 (plus £2.50 postage)**

*Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* has been a bestseller since 1861. Its enduring popularity is testament to the quality of her advice.

Isabella Mary Beeton was born in London in 1836, where she grew up in a household of twenty-one children. It took Isabella four years to compile her masterwork which contains an enormous amount of information to help people live 'economically, tastefully and well'. Isabella died four years later in 1865 aged just twenty-eight. For generations Mrs Beeton's books were the bibles for advice on cooking and household management. With the current recognition of the importance of family values and healthy eating the books are as relevant today as when she first started publishing in the 1860s. The cookbook includes the 200 best recipes including many soups, fish, poultry, meat and vegetable dishes, fully updated (even including microwave tips), as well as sections on sauces, dressings etc. Household tips provides a wealth of information in sections such as home maintenance, first aid, nutrition and money management – again all updated for the contemporary

household. These beautifully presented hardback reprints are remarkable value and useful for everyone.

## **HISTORIC HOUSES IN LANCASHIRE THE DOUGLAS VALLEY 1300-1770**

**Paperback 206 pages £25.00 (plus £4.00 postage)**

Lancashire has a wealth of historic buildings – a tangible legacy of the time before the Industrial Revolution swept away much of its rural character. Some of the finest can be found in the low hills that define the valley of the River Douglas, between the towns of Wigan, Chorley and Ormskirk in the county's south-west. In medieval and early modern times, this was one of Lancashire's most prosperous regions and the many farmhouse and manor houses which survive are striking evidence of this. In this book, buildings historian Garry Miller investigates more than 500 years of houses, from the earliest examples to the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. With more than 120 photographs, 50 line drawings and maps and individual descriptions of more than 140 buildings, it adds up to a readable and fascinating reconstruction of the homes our ancestors built and occupied.

## **LOCAL HEROES CALENDAR**

**£5 (plus £1.00 postage)**

This calendar has been produced to be sold in aid of the Mayor's Charity appeal and all proceeds will go to support the designated charities. Each page features someone who has in some way contributed in their given field, be it the arts, sport, science, industry or in the service of the public.

The twelve 'Local Heroes' are:

Sir Thomas Tyldesley 1596-1651. Royalist leader in the English Civil War

Professor Eric Laithwaite 1921-1997. Writer & broadcaster and inventor of the Maglev train.

Alfred Wilkinson died 1940. Awarded the Victoria Cross

Peter Kane 1918-1991. World flyweight boxing champion 1939-1943.

Lawrence Isherwood 1917-1989. Artist.

George Formby OBE 1904-1961. Entertainer.

Margery Booth 1905-1952. Opera singer with Berlin State Opera Company in 1936, She passed secrets to the allies and helped POWs to escape.

Lilly Brayton 1876-1953. Actress.

Gerald Rickards 1931-2006. Artist.

Tom Burke 1890-1968. Opera singer.

Marie Ault 1870-1951. Actress.

Ethel Naylor. First woman mayor of Wigan.

## **THE CALENDAR OF OLD WIGAN**

**£1.99 (plus £1.00 postage)**

This calendar has fascinating pictures of Old Wigan through the years, a different one for each month. Each day includes events that happened on that day in the past – both Nationally and locally. Of interest to young and old it is filled with local facts and figures.

**Please phone 01942 828128 to check on stock availability before sending payment for any items by mail order. All cheques should be made payable to [wlct.org](http://wlct.org) or we can take credit and debit card payments over the phone for sales of £5 or more.**

# Exhibitions at the History Shop

## **New Exhibition Leaflet**

Our new exhibition leaflet is now out, and very distinctive it is too. The cover features the superb photograph by Eddie Prescott, which visitors to the Wigan Photographic Society Annual Show 2005 voted best in show. It lists all our exhibitions and family events to April 2007 and is available from Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust venues around the borough.

## **Bloomin' Lovely**

**16 October – 20 January 2007**

How does your garden grow? The cultivation of plants has been essential to us since Neolithic times, when we moved from being hunter-gatherers to farmers. This small exhibition looks at the importance of plants for food, medicines, pleasure, and even social control! We detail the development of the large country house garden, such as Haigh Hall, and its influence on more modest cottage gardens. We chart the development of our public parks, and explore why they were built, and then look at private space, our own gardens. In the 19th century many of us lived in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, lucky if we had a backyard. With the development of modern council housing, came private gardens. It is obvious from our records that local councils thought that gardening would be a good way to keep people out of the pubs! Competitions developed to encourage neat, tidy gardens,



a sense of civic pride and caring for the environment. We still aspire to these ideals today. The winners were awarded trophies, and some of these will be on display. In the war years, and the years of economic depression in the 20th century, authorities turned to horticulture to provide food, work and hope for thousands of people. Today, many of us garden to relieve the stress of modern life, and gardening is one of our favourite pastimes. It has developed into the multi-million pound industry, with its plethora of plants, products, magazines and TV shows.

Of all the facts revealed by the exhibition, one of the most interesting is the number of botanists and botanical societies, which flourished in various parts of the borough in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when the study of botany amongst ordinary people was in its infancy. Further research in this area could prove very rewarding.

## **Roman Warriors in Britain**

**16 October 2006 – 20 January 2007**

This little cameo exhibition features the work of the Kingsbridge Excellence Cluster, inspired by the discovery of a Roman bath house by archaeologists excavating in Millgate in advance of the building of the Grand Arcade shopping centre in Wigan. The pupils learned about Roman life in Britain, both in the classroom, and on a visit to Chesters Fort in the North East. The centre piece of the exhibition is a model of a typical Roman bath house and a beautiful mosaic floor. The models are supported by photographs of the children working on the project, and their interpretation of life in Roman Wigan. The work was done at a summer school (2006) and 32 pupils, ranging from year 5 to year 8 from Britannia Bridge Primary, Ince CEP, St Catherine's CEP, Fred Longworth High, Rosebridge High and Standish Community High took part. The children also make an impassioned plea for the Roman remains discovered in Wigan to feature in a permanent display at the new shopping centre.

## **Young People and War – Coop's Story**

**5 February – 23 March 2007**

This promises to be a fascinating exhibition, and has been researched and written by a group of young people, all participants in the Coops Foyer project. They have drawn inspiration from the men, workers at Coop's clothing factory, who gave their lives in the 1914-18 War. They chart the lives of these individuals, in particular their fate as soldiers. The whole is set in the context of the history of Coop's factory, its influence on the lives of its young employees and the economic life of Wigan from its foundation to modern times. Finally, the participants explore the role of the Coop's building today, and its use by the Foyer project, highlighting their own achievements and the issues currently facing young people in the borough.

The exhibition will also feature the beautifully designed, art nouveau war memorial which once graced the Coop's building, but is now part of the Heritage Service collections.

# CAN YOU HELP?

Dear Editor,

Though not living in the county, my ancestors originate from Wigan. I was recently sent the enclosed item from a local paper in Huddersfield by my brother and wondered if any of your readers could shed any light on it. One of my friends who recently visited the History Shop tells me that the shop is no longer there, so I wondered when it was demolished and what happened to Mrs S E Dawber.

*"Dr Williams Pink Pills*

*Health undermined by hard work and anxiety, a lady collapsed; bloodless, exhausted, unable to sleep or eat, she was in despair. Then a complete cure was found in Dr Williams' Pink Pills. Mrs Se Dawber, who is the energetic owner*

*of a prosperous furniture business at 8 New Square, Wigan, is a typical woman of business.*

*But her responsibilities were the cause of a trying crisis, from which only Dr Williams Pink Pills for Pale People succeeded in rescuing her. "about four years ago" said Mrs Dawber, "long hours of hard work and constant attention to business undermined my health that without warning I collapsed, and became a nervous wreck, unable to do anything. I was in a very low state of health and consulted a medical man, who pronounced my trouble to be a general debility and nervous collapse. My face was deathly pale and I was in a most distressingly bloodless state, exhausted by exertion. Anaemia developed, and I lost appetite entirely. All food was*

*bitter to my palate: even milk caused indigestion. Life was unbearable; I couldn't rest, night or day. Nothing seemed to afford me any relief and I was in despair. Then I heard about Dr Williams Pink Pills for Pale People. I bought a box and found after taking a few pills I was feeling better. In a few weeks Dr Williams pills so built up my strength that I was at business again - strong, healthy and high-spirited. Not once since I took the pink pills have I looked back".*

Of course it would be interesting to find why such an article should be published in Yorkshire and not the Wigan area. Hope you find the article interesting.

Yours truly  
**Colin Dawber.**

## Gidlow Girls School Reunion

Jean Markland, formerly Jean Clements, is arranging a reunion for ex-Gidlow Girls School pupils at Wigan Cricket Club, Bull Hey for Friday 20th April 2007 at 7.30pm. There will also be a buffet on the night and tickets will cost £6, obtainable from Jean at 37 Park Hey Drive, Appley Bridge, Wigan WN6 9JD. Cheques should be payable to Gidlow Girls Reunion.

## George and Ester (nee Topping) Parkinson

Dear Editor,

George Parkinson and Ester (Topping) Parkinson, who died 30.7.1944 and 17.7.1945, were my grandparents and lived at 10 Gidlow Lane. Sadly, they passed away before I was born.

I do not know anything about these people, and have never seen a photograph of them. If any relative or any person at all, who has any information about them (no matter how small) I would be very grateful.

**W E Parkinson**

07960815984 or E.mail [weparkinson@btinternet.com](mailto:weparkinson@btinternet.com)

## Unwanted Certificates

Two certificates of death have been passed on to us at The History Shop. These are for Ellen Mason aged 9 months who died October 1845. She was the daughter of Edward Mason of Scholefield Lane. The second Ellen Mason was aged 11 months and was the daughter of Richard Mason, a shoemaker of Whelley. She died in June 1841.

A certificate for the marriage of John Hargraves aged 56 of Silver Street, and Ellen Abbott (formerly Westhead) aged 52 of Hilton Street, has also been sent in. They were married at St Catherine's Church Wigan in 1901.

If you think any of these certificates relate to your family history research then contact Christine Watts at The History Shop on 01942 828020.

## HIRE OF MEETING ROOM

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

### SOCIETY RATE

**£8.75**

PER MORNING/ AFTERNOON SESSION

### COMMERCIAL RATE

**£21.65**

PER MORNING/AFTERNOON SESSION

*If you are interested, contact Philip Butler*

**Tel (01942) 828128**

# Learning with the History Shop

## Fun Times with the History Shop

It has certainly been a busy summer with lots to see and do, both at the History Shop and out and about in the community.

During the summer holidays, the History Shop was host to Animal Art workshops. These proved to be very popular with each workshop being fully subscribed. In these family friendly sessions we looked at 'our heritage' through the collection of paintings hung in the Wickham Gallery. Exploring the paintings and the animals in the paintings led us into the world of nursery rhymes and their meaning. Within these potted history lessons we were also able to make some very worthwhile mementos to take home.

Out and about in the community we visited the libraries of Shevington, Leigh and Ashton. It was great fun finding out about people from other countries and their customs and traditions. Amongst other things we made Japanese fans, Hawaiian outfits and Native American headbands and totem poles. Not only did the workshops prove productive they also give everybody a taste for travel and proof that is really is a small world!

Working with older people was also in evidence and we went on a few trips down Memory Lane with the people at St Clement's Court and other outposts. One session took the form of remembering holidays and days out, courtesy of the old steam trains and the 'sharra'.

Talk of Teddy boys and milk bars, evacuees and family history provided much entertainment and happy memories.

At the History Shop thanks to a talk given to Wigan Optimists we are now forming a buddy system for people who are blind or partially sighted who wish to trace their family history. The project is only in infancy stage just now, the initial meeting of users and volunteers still needs to be finalised. However, if you would like to join us as a volunteer or want to know more about the Optimists who meet in Wigan every other Wednesday then please make contact with us at the History Shop soon.

International Women's Day next year will be celebrated by a book of writings by local women in a venture known as the Sunflower Project. We are proud to be able to take part in this project by offering workshops for those who are involved with the project. I hope by workshops to help stimulate those budding creative writers that wish to record their memories.

Lots more things are planned so do watch this space. It has been a most enjoyable year for us in the Heritage Service. The History Shop puts people at the heart of everything we do. It is a fun place to be so why not check us out?

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all

**Dianne Teskey**  
**Community Outreach & Education Officer**

Christmas starts at the History Shop on the 21st December with a family workshop.

## Father Christmas Wore Green

**Thursday 21st December at the History Shop.**

Why and when did Father Christmas change the colour of his outfit? What is 'figgy pudding' and why did Victorians have candy canes? Find out the answer to these questions and more and make your own Father Christmas decoration to take home.

Workshop Cost £1 to help towards craft materials.

Places are limited so please book early. To reserve your place telephone 01942 828128.

Suitable for families with children aged 4 – 11years.

All children must be accompanied by an adult.

**Haigh Hall**

# Sunday Carvery

2 course	£9.95
3 course	£12.95
Children	£4.95

Enjoy a mouth watering Sunday dinner with friends or family

**1pm - 7pm**  
Reservations on 01942 833895  
Haigh Hall, Haigh, Wigan, Lancs W14 7LH  
[www.haighhall.net](http://www.haighhall.net)

**Haigh Hall Limited & Co. Ltd.**  
Bransford, Wigan

# DOUBLE CELEBRATION FOR WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE AND WIGAN PIER

Wigan Heritage Service has been awarded the Government's Charter Mark for public sector organisations. Charter Mark provides a framework for improving customer focus, recognising high quality service, and is a tool for continuous improvement. To achieve the standard we had to demonstrate set standards, perform well and actively engage with customers, partners and staff. This is just the beginning. We will be re-assessed every year, and continuous improvement will be expected of us. The end result will be a service that is responsive to the needs of our visitors and other users of our services. We especially would like to thank our volunteers and Friends of the History Shop, and indeed all those who attended and contributed to our assessment day on 4 October, it was quite gruelling at times, but well worth it!

However, this is a double celebration, as Wigan Pier also retained its VAQAS accreditation (Quality Assured Visitor Attraction Accreditation). The assessor commented "The awesome mill engine in steam is one of the special experiences of the region. " All of those involved in these achievements have been praised by our Executive Director (Libraries, Heritage & Information), Ian Bancroft, and Carole Tyldesley (Wigan Pier and Heritage Services Manager). Ian told us " I was delighted to hear about the great news for both Wigan Pier and Wigan Heritage Service, with the unofficial announcements that we will be retaining our VAQAS accreditation at Wigan Pier, and receiving a Charter Mark for

the Heritage Service. The VAQAS re-assessment highlighted areas of best practice, and the Charter Mark assessor commented on the substantial progress in making heritage services more customer focussed over the last 12 months." Carole added " these awards should be celebrated. Excellent service improves staff motivation and embeds customer focus at the heart of our service".

The last word is with you of course, the users of our services, whether at the History Shop, Leigh Local History, Archives, Wigan Pier or as readers of *Past Forward*. Your comments help us to improve, and we cannot do without them, so keep them coming!



## Your Family History Quality Gifts

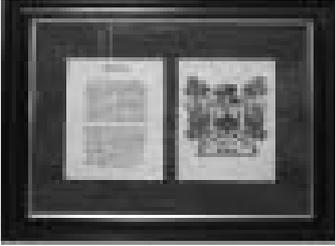
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### Coats of Arms

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Discover your surname origins and meanings

<i>Available in 5 sizes</i>	
Small - 7" x 5"	£7.99
Medium - 10" x 8"	£12.99
Unframed - 10" x 8"	£4.99
Large - 14" x 11"	£15.99
<i>(Large - double only - as in image)</i>	

To order by phone contact Infinite Possibilities 0800 458 7765 or place your order at [www.dream-makers.net](http://www.dream-makers.net)  
 All major credit / debit cards accepted. P & P not included in prices quoted above  
 Also now available from the History Shop, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1ND  
 Call in to view samples, place your order and collect the following week

# Shopping at the History Shop!

## *The Little Shop Of Curiosities – Christmas At The History Shop*

If you want to send some seasonal greetings with a local flavour then you'll love our range of Christmas cards depicting local scenes by local artists. We also have traditional designs with genuine lucky sixpences for your pudding.

As always we have a range of gifts and stocking fillers for all ages. We stock a good selection of local history publications and heritage related souvenirs and many are available by mail order (please phone 01942 828128 for details). Our range of silver and semi precious stone jewellery will bring a sparkle to anyone's eye and includes many 'one-off' pieces in striking designs.

### CHECK OUT FAIR TRADE TODAY

As Christmas is about giving and goodwill to all men we are especially happy to be stocking a newly arrived range of Fair Trade products this

Christmas. Our Fair Trade products seek to ensure that all suppliers get safe working conditions, a reasonable wage and that minorities and children are not exploited. Where possible the community as a whole, as well as the individual benefits from the trade and buying these products mean that you are helping to encourage economic progress and support sustainable industries. This in turn contributes to tackling the long-term problems faced by developing countries. These products also strive to minimise the impact that their production has on the environment by trying to ensure suppliers use materials and production methods that have as little effect as possible on the environment. The range we stock includes jewellery, carvings, giftware, stationery, textiles and a beautiful range of inspirational and handmade greetings cards for every occasion.



**THE HISTORY SHOP**  
Christmas Special

**Festive gifts that make a difference**

Looking for novelty gift ideas this Christmas? Why not visit the History Shop Gift Shop.

With a wide selection of gifts not to mention our new range of Fair Trade items including jewellery, giftware, textiles and handmade cards, you're sure to find the perfect present.

**Special offer** - spend £10 or more and receive a free Heritage Service publication. Complimentary gift wrapping service also provided for one purchase over £5.

venue: HISTORY SHOP, LIBRARY STREET, BRISOL  
Tel: 01942 828128  
www.add.bristol.gov.uk

OPENING HOURS:  
MON: 10:00AM - 7:00PM  
TUE - FRI: 10:00AM - 5:00PM  
SAT: 10:00AM - 1:00PM



### SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFERS

If you spend £10 or more on goods from the History Shop this Christmas you will receive a complimentary Heritage Service Publication. With a choice of four different books on local history it is our way of saying a festive thank you for your custom. If that isn't enough we are also offering a complimentary gift wrapping service on any purchase over £5.

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone.**

# Family History



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

### Donations

- Ince St Mary Marriage Index (2nd edition) Mar 1888 – 20 March 1976
- Pemberton St John Burials vol.1 1832 – 9 June 1896  
Burials vol.2 1896 – 12 June 1929
- Pemberton St John Baptisms registers 4 Oct 1909 – 16 March 1975  
Baptisms 1909-2006 CD ROM
- Pemberton St John Grave purchases and grave interments G & N section
- Rainford All Saints Marriage index 14 Jan 1704 – 18 Oct 1969
- Skelmersdale St Richard R C Baptism register 2 July 1865 – 1 July 1951
- Upholland St Thomas Burials vol.1 March 1619 – 15 Dec 1735
- Upholland St Thomas Burials 24 Aug 1882 – 23 Dec 2005 : Cremations May 1955 – Nov 2005
- Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery Index to registers vol. 9 19 March 1915 – 14 Feb 1923
- Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery (CD ROM) Index to registers vol. 10 14 Feb 1923 – 27 April 1932
- Alan Brackenbury Railway passenger stations in Greater Manchester. 385.094273
- Morris Homes Standish Bleachworks: Historic building recording and archaeological evaluation report 2 vols 720.942736
- Eric Ogden Lancashire United: a centenary celebration 1906-2006. 629.22233
- Allan Scotson Scotson Jottings 929.SCO

### General Books

- Jack Nadin Lancashire Mining disasters 1835-1910 622.8
- Rob Lowe Northern Counties 629.222233

- Bryan Hughes The Schulze dynasty : organ builders 1688-1880. 786.51923
- S. Colwell The National Archives 929.1
- Roni Wilkinson Pals on the Somme 1916 940-4272
- Manchester Evening News Belle Vue 942.733
- Manchester Wartime Memories 942.733
- Mike Fletcher The Making of Wigan 942.736
- W.G. Hale Martin Mere: Lancashire's lost lake 942.761

## Project News

The year has sped along all too fast and we are once again at the end of another eventful year. As usual there are lots of useful transcripts and indexes to tell you about as you will note listed above. Freda and Gerald have worked overtime to produce yet more indexes to the Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery registers to bring the coverage up to 27 April 1932. The full range of indexes can now be searched from your home computer through the Wigan World website at [www.wiganworld.co.uk/stuff/wiganlowerincecemetery](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk/stuff/wiganlowerincecemetery). Freda is currently adding grave numbers to her indexes and eventually she hopes to return to the earlier completed volumes and add the grave numbers back to 1856.

Other projects seem also to be progressing well with the first two sections of the burials at St John Pemberton being completed by Barbara Davies, now in association with Gerry Rigby's Pimbo Group. This same group will also take this index further by transcribing the registers as close to the present date as they can, which is what they have done with the baptism registers and marriages.

Indexing of the newspaper cuttings books is also progressing well thanks to the good work of John Wogan and Robert Heaviside. These large volumes have been slowly disintegrating through old age and heavy usage over the years. We are attempting to salvage at least the references to the original newspaper articles, so that long after the cut article has gone we will still be able to find the original on microfilm. If you would like to join Robert and John on this project give us a call on 01942 828020 and ask for Christine Watts.

Following on from the last edition of Past Forward, where I announced the arrival of the Civil Index to Births, Marriages and Deaths extended now up to the end of 1950, we have even more exciting news. **It is now possible to access [www.Ancestry.com](http://www.Ancestry.com) Library edition at all libraries within Wigan Borough completely free of charge. This also includes The History Shop.** You will also be able to access a free list of useful internet websites to help you with your family history research. Ask for this at your local library or at The History Shop.

Finally an update on [www.lancashirebmd.org.uk](http://www.lancashirebmd.org.uk). Most areas of the present day borough are covered for births up to at least 1876. Other areas notably Wigan, Atherton, Culcheth and Upholland are up to 1881, Westleigh 1880 and Lowton is now up to 1884. Of course more will follow.



## Websites

### [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra)

This website gives access to the National Register of Archives which aims to draw together archives throughout England, Wales and Scotland in one searchable database. It is possible to put in a persons name or the name of a town or even a business and the results show what materials are held in archives on that subject. For instance, I put in the name Haigh and an enormous list of documents currently held in the National Library of Scotland, the National Archive of Scotland, Lancashire Record Office and our own local archives listing, were noted as having material on the Bradshaigh family. Detailed catalogues within each institution on that subject are presented and can be used to plan research.

### [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk)

The website is a digital library of printed sources for the study of the history of Britain and was created by the Institute of Historical Research and the History of Parliament Trust. Divided into the various parts of Great Britain, the site contains, amongst other sources, the Victoria County Histories. Lancashire is currently covered by 3 volumes including the volume for Wigan. There is a

wealth of information on the various townships forming the present day borough as well as information on other counties such as the Lay Subsidy for Yorkshire, maps, Hearth Tax for London, population records, records of professional groups e.g. Worshipful Company of Carpenters, and many other useful sources for local history research.

### Family History Workshop Dates for 2007

More dates for workshops. There are two sessions per date, at 1.30 pm and 3.00pm. Please ring 01942 828128 to book. The cost is £3.50 and this includes a useful pack.

**10th and 24th January**

**7th and 21st February**

**7th and 21st March**

**18th April**

**2nd, 16th and 30th May**

**13th and 27th June.**

## Bay Horse Hotel, Whelley

My simple appeal for a photograph of the Bay Horse Hotel at Whelley in issue 43 has had a tremendous response. I certainly did not expect the interest this request has generated, and all the memories that have been rekindled as a result.

It all started as a personal quest to find out about my grandfather, who had been licensee of this establishment from 1924 until 1930. I remember hearing in the early 1970s that the building was going to be demolished, and consequently, taking my mum up to see the Bay Horse, where she spent her early years.

Working at the History Shop has rekindled my interest in family history, and on finding a reference to the Bay Horse in a local directory, it set my 'enquiry bell' ringing again. I was determined to find a photograph! As Community Outreach & Education Officer I work with people of all ages. Older people in general enjoy looking at old photographs, and I thought if I found one, I could also use it in workshops when we looked at the changing face of Wigan, and how the townships used to be.

Thanks to Mr and Mrs Tom Seddon from Orrell, we now have a photograph. Unfortunately, the copy was passed on via email, and is not clear enough to be reprinted here. However, we are working on trying to locate the original, so that we can add this to both our photographic collection and Wigan World Website.

To all those who have contacted me with information, may I say a sincere thank you. Watch this space because there is a lot more to come!

**Dianne Teskey,  
Community Outreach & Education Officer**

## More Memories of the Bay Horse

I would like to thank Elsie Alker, for my memories of The Bay Horse, at Higher Ince. I used to go with my mum, Mrs Jarvis, when we lived in the old Bolton Street. Elsie had a sister, Vera, who helped her mum and dad. Mrs Hocking also played a baby grand piano, and my mum used to sit next to the piano and sing all the top twenty hits.

Elsie used to come over from Blackpool, and she always used to sing a song called 'You Should See Me Dance The Polka'. We once made a song up about Wigan Pier, it went like this.

*'Wigan Pier, Wigan Pier,  
Its the famous beauty spot in Lancashire.  
Bright and breezy, you can stroll  
By the sea, by the sea.  
Say hello, aye, aye well,  
That's the place for me.  
With the lasses and the lads  
Out there, never mind the Isle of Man,  
Put your jack-bit in your can,  
And come to Wigan Pier.*

Higher Ince also had some great rugby league players, Ernie Ashcroft, John Lawrenson, Frank Collier, Bill Collier, Bill Ashurst and Mick Cassidy. So, Higher Ince has something to be proud of. And I knew every one of them.

**Mrs Benson (nee Jarvis)**

# LIFE IN THE OLD HIGHER INCE

By Elsie Alker

IN 1935 my parents, my two sisters and I came to live in the Bay Horse Hotel (pub) on Manchester Road, Higher Ince, from Bolton. My father had previously lived in the Queens Head opposite the Bay Horse when a boy. His parents being the licensees of the pub then.



*Stanley & Cissie Hocking at the Bay Horse*

My sisters and I went to the same school (Rosebridge Primary) which Dad had attended as a boy. Mr. Seddon was our headmaster (circa 1935). Teachers included, Miss Holt (daughter of the then headmaster in my fathers day) Miss Platt (who also taught Dad) Miss Leyland, Miss Hurst, Miss Evans and Mr Lancaster. First names were not permitted in those days!

Our lives soon evolved around Ince Parish church and the vicar, the Reverend Herbert Stoneley. I remember being Snow White in the Church Carnival (just before WWII broke out). My blue cloak borrowed from St. Williams RC church. My sisters Vera, Joan and I attending the Sunday School at St Christopher's Mission in Holt Street.

At age 11 (closely followed by my younger sisters) it was onto the 'new school' in Holt Street (Ince Secondary Modern). The lovely Miss Anderton was our headmistress. Miss Eddleston (who after my time became Headmistress when Miss Anderton retired) was quite strict, and I think most of the girls were afraid of her. I know I was! Miss Belshaw and Miss Forrest were two other teachers, along with the cookery class teacher Miss Murray. Mr Staveley was headmaster in the

boys school and he married the local grocers (opposite the Bay Horse) daughter, May Harris.

Who could forget Polly Birchall's 'fruit and veg' shop opposite the pub on Manchester Road.

I had a very close friendship with Doris Blackledge, who lived in one of the cottages next door to the Bay Horse. We made a strange looking pair of friends, as Doris was so tiny and I was always very tall; we were teased a lot but we were inseparable.

Clarrington Forge was directly behind the Bay Horse. The heavy hammers banging all day and night (especially during the war) never kept us awake, as we had grown up with the noise. During work hours, the men from the forge were so hot because of the furnaces, my Dad allowed them to drink beer shandies during the afternoon closing period, which of course was illegal in those days! This was the only 'after time' drinking he allowed.

Mary, my mothers right hand for so many years, known to us as 'our Mary', could always find us when out playing on summer evenings, no matter how hard we tried to allude her. She had us bathed and in bed by 8pm every evening. She never got cross with us, though we must have tried her patience so many times.

The picture shows Mam and Dad, me far right, and my sister Vera. The two young men standing next to Dad are the sons of Norman Turner ( a friend of Dad's) who was the local butcher, his shop being close to the Bay Horse on Manchester Road. Unfortunately, I can not remember the young man's name standing behind Vera. ➡



## The War Years

Our dad was Chief Air Raid Warden (so we were the first people with a telephone!) until he went into the army. Our mam taking over the license and running of the pub in WW11. She was helped by not only family, but also many good friends from the community, including the police.

My sister Vera became a Sunday School teacher at St Christopher's Mission. Who can forget the annual walking days? She is the teacher to the left on the front row, holding the little boy's hand.

The next photograph is of myself and two sisters on our very first church 'walking day' in 1935.



My youngest sister Joan (a little tomboy when we were children) still lives in Ince on Forge Street, on the canal bank. She married Cliff McKnight, who became such a well known character in Ince, and in fact wherever he went, home and abroad.

## Bay Horse

After the war, we had a small band in the 'singing room'. The other room was known as the 'parlour'. Regular customers every weekend, always occupying the same places they sat in every weekend and holidays. Woe betide any stranger who tried to sit in a regular's place!

Popular days out for the customers, were lady's and men's trips, separate and never on the same day; which were organised by my parents.

Higher Ince before, during and after the war

was a close knit, village like community. My parents Stanley and Cissie Hocking were perhaps the best known, and highly respected landlord and landlady in Ince. The pub we grew up in, the Bay Horse, on Manchester Road, is no longer standing, like most of Higher Ince between Clarington Brook and Rose Bridge. But the memories of our happy childhood, and growing up amongst all those people we knew and cared about, can never be forgotten.



*The band in the singing room.*



*The "regulars" getting served in the vault.*

# Wesleyan Methodist Day School, Dicconson Street, Wigan

I WENT to the school in the 1930's. The teachers were named Miss Latham, who was the Head, Miss Santus, Miss Clark, Miss White and Miss Wilcock. There were four classes, ranging from the very young in Miss Clark's class (where in the afternoon the child would have a sleep on the small wooden tables covered by a blanket) it was here that we saw the last of slates and slate pencils. You then went upstairs into Miss White's class, followed by Miss Santus, and finally into Miss Wilcock's class ready for the scholarship exam.

Since it was a long time ago, I have had difficulty in tracing any information relating to those early years. I am, however, grateful to Frank King, who was at school with me, and provided a contact with information which I will use later. (Booklet, *'Old Sunday School'*, accession number 4075 class number DDZA-123, in Leigh Archives.)

I remember little things, like dishing out the bottles of milk and orange juice at playtime, of course you could also buy chocolate biscuits as well! The playground, flagged and underneath the school, quite dry, but cold in winter. The boys were divided from the girls by a brick wall. Sometimes the boys got through the gate into the girls' yard. Punishment resulted, the dreaded cane! Miss Latham could dish it out. I remember one time when I was caned, the backs of my legs came out in great weals. When I went home at lunch time my mother went mad; in those days, as later when I went to Grammar School, caning was expected. A milder punishment was levelled at another pupil, who was tied up with rope on the banister by the clock. For quite a while, we boys were allowed to bring our Dinky vehicles to school, to run them on the floor of the hall during break-time. Singing, prayers and PE, were all carried out in the hall. Most important, though not connected, the sweet shop was just around the corner, opposite the then Co-op, in Standishgate. We could buy Santus lollipops, coconut strings, 'spanish', gob-stoppers, lucky dips, and of course, Barratt's sherbet.

I don't remember whether it was every year, but I do remember being in two plays", *Peter Pan*", where I had to wear pyjamas; ( Bessie Cowling made the sweetest Wendy!) and then there was *"Alice in Wonderland"* where I was the dormouse. These plays were enacted on the stage of the Sunday School across the road from the school, a part of the church.

I have to say that though we were not well off, there were some quite poor children attending the school; runny noses, chapped legs and hands, and of course, nits, were just a few of the problems. I remember a girl that I was quite fond of at the tender age of eight, one of the more 'posh' types, who said that I was too poorly dressed to be considered!

Then there was that trip to end all trips, to London, with the top class. Staying at Westminster College, we

by R D Heavside

went by train and the underground, what an experience. The first night the teachers had to intervene when they

found the boys in the washroom with the girls. The same washroom! We had a great time, going to Regent's Park Zoo, Buckingham Palace, The Changing of The Guard, etc.

Finally, when we passed our Scholarship, we were invited to Miss Wilcock's house for a party, one of the games was finding hidden clues in the garden. A great time was had by all.

However, I think I should tell you a little bit about the school, sadly it has now disappeared along with the church. In fact the whole street is no longer there because of the new layout of roads. The school and the church were demolished, along with the rest of Standishgate, around December 1970.

The school was begun in the 1850's when a site of 913 square yards was purchased for £421, executed by none other than the Rt. Hon. Lord Skelmersdale together with the trustees. It was finally opened in 1856, and originally consisted of two large rooms, two class rooms and a masters house.

The largest room or hall, was 90 feet x 30 feet and was the main room of the upper school. It had a large gallery at the street end, but this was replaced in 1833 or 1834 by a double class room. At the other end, there was a lower level room for infants, and above this were two classrooms, also built in 1834. The masters house was eventually used as the caretakers house from 1902. A collection was made towards expenses, for the day school and an amount of £20 3d was collected!

To return to the teaching of the day it must be realised that the teachers were nearly all untrained, poorly qualified, poorly paid, some eking out their existence by weaving "between wiles". The then headmaster came from the college at Westminster. The first teacher was Ann H Siddell, a young Methodist cotton spinner, who lost her hand in a machine accident and was sent to Westminster College for training. After 16 years of loyal service, she opened a private school in Greenough Street. Her career spanned 36 years, at both schools.

The pupils had to pay 4d per week and the infants 2d or 3d. A comment in the local paper stated, "them that larns manners" pay 2d extra. It was also noted that the school did not specialise in grammar or spelling and a committee of young ladies visited to superintend the plain sewing, knitting etc. and evening classes were conducted on Thursdays, in domestic economy. Even in those days, the children 'stole' extra holidays (this is from a report all that time ago) and on Wigan Fair Monday in June 1867, only six pupils attended school, and only three on August Monday?

I would be interested to hear from any of the pupils that attended this school. I understand that when the school was closed, the children were transferred to the High School at the top of Standishgate.



# Christmas Memories



In issue 43 of *Past Forward*, we appealed to you for your Christmas stories.

Amongst readers' responses, was one which we could not resist. Mr Raynor of Standish, sent a letter about a book which his uncle had made for him at Christmas 1933. I went to view the book, and was utterly charmed by it. It was small, but filled with amusing caricatures drawn by his



George Barl Foster.

uncle, George Barl Foster, who was the son of John Monk Foster (see article in issue 31), author and co-proprietor of the Comet newspaper in Wigan. All the line drawings were coloured and on paper, which had then been pasted on to a book of stitched, linen pages. Mr Raynor very kindly agreed to loan the book to us for copying, and we have reproduced one of the topical

cartoons on the front cover of this issue. To give you a flavour of the delightful contents, the inscription on the cover of the book reads

*'Christmas 1933; Linen By Poole's, Ink By Windsor & Newton, Paper & Paste By McGregor's Wigan, Made And Sewn By Aunt Celia, Wigan, Written And Illustrated by Barl Foster, Everything Else By Accident'.*

Barl Foster (as he liked to be known) also made a Christmas card (illustrated above), again with another humorous inscription *'I wish you everything I wish myself'*. Uncle George was obviously quite a character. We plan to feature other drawings from the book in future editions of *Past Forward*, and hope you find them as entertaining as we do. Editor.

Dear Editor

I wonder how many ex Heinz workers from the old Standish factory remember the excitement just before Christmastime every year, when Heinz would present every one of its employees with a Christmas present? No-one knew what these gifts were to be until the actual presentation, and there was much excited speculation and rumour, as to the nature of these gifts.

I still have some towels I received over forty years ago, albeit a bit threadbare now. Other gifts I remember, were a string of pearls, reading lamp, various cases and one gift which was a set of Blue Grass perfume and talcum powder.

Men's gifts were different to the women's, and often people would swap presents.

One year we all received suit cases, and it was quite hilarious going home with them. In those days, not many people had cars, so we all had to go home on the buses, which came into Heinz's yard to pick us up. Well, you can imagine the frustration of the bus conductor (they still had bus conductors then) trying to get past to collect fares, when the aisle was completely blocked with everyone's cases. I'm afraid there was much muttering about "bloody Heinz"!

Also much looked forward to was Heinz Christmas Dance at the 'Emp', which was always well attended, and often people who didn't work for Heinz would try to bribe us to sell our tickets to them. I expect Heinz is much changed now. I worked in the Standish ketchup filling department for 10 years, and had many happy times there.

**G Sharples  
Orrell**

## Father Christmas Comes to Lowe's!

I expect many people in Wigan and district in the 80's plus stage of their lives, like me, remember Father Christmas coming to Wigan each December. In those days we only had one, not a new one every day like it is now.

Our parents took us to Wigan on the special day, chosen by Lowe's of Wigan, in the Market Place. All of Wigan Market Place and Market Street was crowded. The Wigan Corporation buses didn't stand a chance. Father Christmas was coming, and everyone wanted to see him. My dad put me on his shoulders so that I could see, as did the other dads with their children.

Everyone was excited, too impatient to wait, until the cry went up "HE'S COMING!"

Father Christmas came up Market Street on his sleigh (loaded with presents) until he arrived at Lowe's, where a ladder had been fixed for him to climb the chimney. When he started to climb everyone was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. Suddenly, he slipped on the ladder (purposely of course) and a loud groan was heard from the crowd "OH, HE'S SLIPPED!" Then he started going up again, and everyone cheered. When he reached the chimney he waved to everyone and then climbed down the chimney into Lowe's store and went to his grotto. If you wanted, you could go inside to visit him and get a present (with parents, of course.)

Happy Memories of long ago!

**Miss W J Barton  
Abram**

# Childhood Memories Of An Old Park Laner

by Sarah Ellen (Nellie) Sudworth (nee Lowe)

MY MATERNAL and paternal grandparents are interred in the Park Lane Chapel graveyard. My grandma Adamson (maternal) was very fond of talking about Reverend George Fox, who, she said, knew every face in his congregation, and if anyone missed going to Chapel on Sunday, he would go on the following day to find out why he or she had not attended. My grandma had a very delicate daughter, Sarah Ellen by name, who was often poorly. Mr Fox would make a special journey to bring the sick girl a small blancmange made by himself, or a small dish of calf's foot jelly. Grandma Adamson called them possets. She said that he was a thoughtful, kindly man, almost womanlike, making tasty, little nourishing dishes for an invalid. Grandma Adamson was very fond of him for his good works and diligence in looking after his flock.

I was born 16th September, 1908. My first recollections of Park Lane non-denomination Day School, was at the age of five years. The small room of the school was known as the Little Room, and was presided over by Miss Brindle, the Headmistress, and Miss Smalley (later to be Mrs Marsh). The room had two classes, the babies (Miss Smalley) and the six year olds (Miss Brindle.) In winter a lovely warm fire burned in the large grate, and a large iron-railed fireguard kept any curious child at bay, and on rainy mornings was useful for drying socks and stockings. A cardboard box was always kept filled with miscellaneous oddments to change into. In spring, the window sills held amber coloured glass bulb vases, and as the days and weeks passed, we watched with awe the white roots twining around the vases in the water underneath the hyacinth bulbs.

Under the window was an upright piano, which Miss Brindle played for the dancing lessons. My young brother, Jack, along with others who always wore clogs, had to take them off and dance in stocking feet. My mother used to get quite annoyed looking at the holes in the feet of his stockings. He learned to dance 'Sir Roger de Coverley' and being a rather bonny lad, the heavy thumps on the floor could be heard throughout the school. On winter evenings, we used to have little concerts in our own home, and my mother used to always say "*Our Jack will dance Sir Roger*".

My two sisters, Bessie and Maggie, would recite and sing. I was always the pianist. We had a sewing machine with a box lid, and I would sit on the chair next to it, and plonk the tunes out on the wooden surface with my fingers. Sometimes we went down to grandma Adamson's to give her a concert, and I always wondered

why she wanted us to go as often as she did, because she laughed until she cried. I can see her now with her eyes screwed up, and tears rolling down her face.

At grandma Adamson's we had a real harmonium to sing to, so I was done out of my job as a pianist. At one end of the room was a recess under the stairs, with a green baize curtain across. This was our 'off stage' and 'entrance'. "*Now make your curtsy*" would command Auntie Bessie, and sometimes we had to have several attempts before she was satisfied, while grandma recovered her breath, and composed her face. The harmonium sometimes had notes that wouldn't play, but auntie Bessie kept up her treadling and wheezed along until the time was finished. When we were learning songs for concerts, auntie Bessie accompanied us on the harmonium while we practiced them. Fun again for grandma, but not quite so much as when we gave her a concert of our own with our Jack the star turn.

Tuesday nights was 'Sunbeam Circle Night', in the day school room. All the boys and girls off Rose Hill, the boys and girls from 'Cox Lump', along with the Sunday School children and Superintendent, would converge on the school, and sit in more or less orderly rows in the school desks placed ready for them. Tom Lomax played the piano for one or two children's hymns, and the solos sung by some of the girls. Recitations were given, and both songs and recitations were rewarded by much applause from the assembled company. Names of anyone who had been unable to attend were given in and flowers sent to any sick child.

As the First World War progressed, we had to walk down the Rag Brow in the dark, lights not being allowed in case any Zeppelins were about. We always talked amongst ourselves that the Zeppelins were always looking for the 'Top Place'. During that time, I always wondered whatever the Top Place was. It turned out to be the steelworks in Ince, which threw a bright red glare into the sky. Sometimes, aunt Bessie would put a lighted candle in a jam jar to give a little light on our way down from the Brow, past the brickyard, but we had to be very quiet and keep close together. I don't really know why, but we obeyed her instructions, not wanting to attract any Zeppelins.

At the end of the evening, the Superintendent always stood on the stage and asked for quiet while he spoke to the assembled children. "*Now boys and girls, I want all of you to walk to your homes quietly. There are people who have gone to bed remember, so we don't want*



any noise." These were not small children, some were boys of twelve and thereabouts, but when William Thomas Baker asked them to go home quietly, they obeyed. They probably ran all the way, laughing amongst themselves, but there wasn't any fighting or quarrelling.

I remember William Thomas' favourite hymn for those nights was 'God Bless Our Native Land'. When he was Superintendent of the Sunday School we very often used to open the afternoon Sunday School with this hymn.

Sunday was always a day to look forward to. There was Miss Edith Britton and Mr Arthur Britton, accompanied Mr and Mrs Fairless and Mr and Mrs Derbyshire, both sisters of Arthur and Edith, and Mr and Mrs Nathan Wright. Mr Wright, Tanny to the grown ups of the Chapel, resplendent in his fancy waistcoats with the lovely buttons which always drew my attention, and his gold-headed walking stick with which he always pretended to smack our behinds if we didn't go into Chapel. His moustache was waxed to points at each side. They always walked to Chapel at a leisurely pace from their homes way down Wigan road. There were not many cars in those days. Mrs Fairless (formerly Gertie Britton) sang in a deep, contralto voice and held her book towards the window, enjoying her singing with her head held high. My Mother used to talk about 'Old Bill Britton', father of Arthur and the sisters, who was Choirmaster in my Mother's growing up years, and how he liked to have the windows and Chapel door open during practice times, so that people could hear the singing.

I can remember going for a ride with auntie Bessie in one of the first motor cars I had ever seen. It belonged to Mr W A Thornley, architect of Ashton Public Library, who was a friend of auntie Bessie. It was a black Ford, later to become known as a 'Tin Lizzie'. Mrs Thornley wore a large hat with a silk scarf tied over the top and under her chin with a bow. I can remember the route we took. We came down Old Road, into Low Bank Road, turning before we got to Spindle Hillock, and on down Camp Lane. I can still almost feel the jolt as we went over the loco rails at Stone's pit. The tyres, I think, were solid in those days. This is 75 years ago. I was crushed in between Auntie Bessie and Mrs Thornley on the back seat. It must have made a great impression on me, because I remember it so very clearly. Auntie Bessie loved to mix with folk like the Thornleys. Grandma called it 'scrattin' (Aristocracy). So did my mother. She was friendly with another family, Platt by name. Mr Platt was a solicitor.

In grandma Adamson's household was uncle William and uncle Arthur, who used to tease us unmercifully, but we didn't realise it because uncle William was a very serious looking man. When laying the table for a meal, he would bark at me "Go and get your 'gaping sticks' " (knives and forks) and if radishes were on the table for tea he would say in a sharp tone of voice, "Eat them

tops" (leaves). I loved the little bright red radishes grown down the garden, but, oh, those 'tops'! I can still feel the roughness of them on my tongue. Uncle Arthur called our Maggie 'Ben' (grandfather Lowe's name was Benjamin). Our Bessie was 'Chally', and I was 'little Jim'. He would pretend to 'call' my dad, and would be 'sticking up' for him. He would say, "Why, your dad can't make a 'Worm cote'." "Yes he can", I would almost shout, ever on the defensive where my dad was concerned. I didn't even know what he meant by a 'Worm cote'. My dad wasn't a 'tron', if he put our clog irons on, sure as night follows day he would finish up with a cracked clog. Then the clogs would have to be clogged (new wooden soles), and his wage didn't stretch to such luxuries, when they were unnecessary luxuries. Auntie Bessie could put clog soles on, so, very often, she got the job.

Because my dad worked in the pit, colliers were allowed loads of coal at a cheaper rate, but when it was time for our load to come my mother was like a 'nettled hen'. The back of our house was paved, and everyone kept the area outside their gate swept and clean. Old auntie Martha and aunt Anne Green, owners of the two rows of houses, used to come out of their house and stand looking at the load of coal with looks on their faces like old toads (sorry, toads)

We were told at dinner-time to get home as soon as we could. So breathless, we would arrive at 3.45 to the command from ma to start moving the 'lumps'. Clutching them to our bodies, regardless of coal dust on our pinnies, we hurriedly formed a chain gang, and placed them on the edge, so that the smaller cobbles could be tipped bucket by bucket, inside the lumps. My poor mother, sweat running down her face, urging us onward. When I think of how those two old harridans terrorised my mother all those years, I feel as mad as a hatter. Friday, when we came from school, ma would say "Now who's going to take t'rent?" There was never any takers, and so she would say "Our Nellie'll take it, won't you?" and so the job was mine. One of the aunts would come to the door, take it off me, and, after a while, bring the rent book back again, very often a shrivelled carrot accompanied it as a treat for being good enough to take it. I always think of auntie Green when I see left-over shrivelled carrots.

They lived to be quite old, and they never altered. When our Maggie had Jeffrey, and I had Jim, the thing they always loved to do was get my dad's and uncle John's pit clogs, put them on, and clomp up and down the yard. Aunt Anne complained to my mother about this, and, unknown to my dad, she put the clogs in the cellar. My dad was unaware of this, and when the children couldn't find them and asked for 'Cogs', "They're in't kitchen Laddie" said my dad, and went to get them for the little lads. When he learned from ma what had happened, he went mad, but knowing how they put ma through it, he let the clogs stay where she had put them.

# Brock Mill Forge

by Bob Blakeman

**SOME of the best archival sources for information about British industry in the eighteenth century are surprisingly in Sweden. This is because it was not in the interests of British industrialists, who worked independently of the government, to publicise details of their manufacturing processes, and thereby make their information available to competitors. In Sweden, however, the government oversaw industrial affairs and made efforts to maintain and improve the health of Swedish industry. To this end, it is sometimes sent, at government expense, travellers with knowledge of industrial matters, to various countries within Western Europe, to act as industrial spies, and to write reports on what they found. These reports were preserved for posterity.**

Several of these spies visited Britain. The Swedish government was particularly interested in the British iron industry because Sweden was the main exporter of bar iron to this country.

The most useful of these industrial spies to the Swedish government (and to modern historians) was R.R. Angerstein. Angerstein's family originated in Germany, but had moved to Sweden to set up an ironworks there. As well as being knowledgeable about the iron industry, Angerstein was a keen observer, a painstaking writer and a capable artist: the perfect man for the job. He visited several countries, including Britain, and his reports, in 8 volumes, containing 150,000 words and 360 pages of sketches, are in the archives of the Swedish Steel Producers Association. Two of the volumes, which relate to Britain, have been translated into English and published as one volume (1) They provide a fascinating picture of England in the middle of the eighteenth century; not just its industry, but its agricultural and social life as well.

Angerstein arrived at Harwich on 16th September 1753, and stayed in the country until the end of 1755. On his arrival he made contact with Swedish merchants living in London. They helped him to plan his journeys and wrote letters of introduction to their business acquaintances for him.

Angerstein passed through Wigan on his travels, and in his report on this district he describes his visit to Brock Mill, a watermill situated in the narrow valley of the River Douglas, to the North of the town. (The site is now occupied by a small housing estate called Woodland Park).

Some idea of the importance of watermills before the introduction of steam power can be gained from the number of such mills on the upper reaches of the

River Douglas. William Yates' Map of Lancashire, published in 1786, shows seven watermills between Wigan and Worthington. Although not named on the map, they were almost certainly Scholes Mill, at the bottom of Millgate, Wigan; Sutton Mill, at Bottling Wood; Haigh Mill, where the drive from the Plantation Gates crosses the river; Leyland Mill, in Leyland Mill Lane; Brock Mill, in Wingates Road; Jolly Mill, near Fairclough Wood off Chorley Road; and Worthington Mill, near the junction of Rectory Lane and Chorley Road.

At the time of Angerstein's visit Brock Mill contained several forges at which tools were made from scrap iron. (These forges were, in 1788, to be combined with a foundry at Leyland Mill to form the embryonic Haigh Ironworks). A mill race ran alongside the River Douglas to a point near Samuel's Fold in Pendlebury Lane. Water in the race turned the waterwheel at the mill which worked the bellows which blew onto the hearths. Angerstein writes:

Brock mill has a wind furnace for melting down scrap, some of which is purchased in London, and some from foundries in the neighbourhood that specialise in the casting of pots. The latter consists of castings that have become malleable iron during remelting. The former kind of iron, melted down from scrap is the best, and is used for making hoes, shovels and sugar-cane knives. The latter, on the other hand is used for the core of forge anvils and for other heavy forgings.

In the smithy there are five hearths, where ten people are occupied making hoes and other goods, all of which are sold in Liverpool for the West India trade.

For hoes, two pieces of iron are selected, 4 inches or 5 inches long, depending on the size of the finished article; and in between them, at one end, a piece of steel is placed, whereupon the sandwich is welded together. One end, destined to become the socket, is forged down thin and cut. It is then bent, and formed into a socket over an anvil. Finally the hoe is trimmed even with a shear, and hardened and ground. Two hands can forge two dozen hoes a day and, if they have been partly fabricated beforehand with the socket etc, they can make three dozen.

The wages are 9, 10 to 12 pence per dozen, according to size. Sugar knives, which are called 'sucherbis', cost 10 pence per dozen for one kind and 12 pence per dozen for another type. Anvils for smithies are sold for 6 pence a pound, but the work is carried out at day rates. ➡



*Brock Mill Cottages (now demolished) stood at the bottom of Brock Mill Lane and housed workers at the mill when it was part of Haigh Hall Ironworks.*

Angerstein's account of Brock Mill is particularly interesting because of a number of recent inventions that were in use there. These inventions were the work of an "expert mechanic" named Merlin, the previous owner of Brock Mill who, "made himself poor through experimenting, and now lives a few miles away in a little town called Holland" (i.e. Upholland).

One of these inventions was a peculiar kind of tuyere or nozzle through which air is injected into a furnace. Angerstein waited in vain to have its mechanism explained to him, for it was the firm's policy to keep such information secret. He noticed, however that it seemed to have a cooling system built into it; a useful adaptation for equipment that was used at very high temperatures,

Angerstein also mentions "a contrivance to drive five pairs of bellows from one waterwheel by means of flat rods. The workmen at each hearth could stop the bellows as often as they wished by pulling up a weight, and start them again as soon as the weight was released". As this mechanism was open to view, he was able to provide a detailed description of it, together with a sketch of a Heath-Robinson contraption.

But the invention that Angerstein most wanted to see was an invention for making screws, and that was kept locked in a cellar. He writes:

In the absence of Mr 'Thornis', to whom the works belong, I tried to bribe the workers to show me the machine, but they told me that it was locked in, and that they had sworn to keep the invention

secret, so that not even a 100 guineas could induce them to reveal it.

Subsequently Angerstein went to Upholland and tricked the inventor into giving away details of the machine by pretending that he had already seen it.

Another invention of Merlin's that interested Angerstein was a windmill with eight sails (instead of the usual four). It was equipped with a regulator which kept the sails turning at a uniform speed in both strong and moderate winds. Sir Roger Bradshaigh 4th Baronet, Angerstein informs us, had used one there for several years for pumping water from one of his coal mines.

Angerstein has more to say about the Wigan district than his visit to Brock Mill. He gives a brief description of the town, its industries and one or two of the people living there who struck him as noteworthy. He describes the local coal industry and notes the geological strata that he observed as he descended the mines, together with his theories on their origin.

Angerstein's observations of Brock Mill are typical of the notes he made on all the places he visited. His complete records provide a fascinating collection of vignettes of England on the eve of the Industrial Revolution. His translators, T. Berg and P. Berg, are to be congratulated for rendering his journals into English, from the little known Swedish, and thus making them accessible to a much wider readership.

[Footnote] (1) Angerstein, R.R. (2001) R.R. *Angerstein's illustrated travel diary 1753-1755*. Trans. T Berg and P. Berg. London. Science Museum.

# The Last of the Doodlebugs

by Mr Taylor

AT Christmas 1944 I came home on leave from the RAF, and was invited to ride the footplate on the night turn bank engine duty, based on Springs Branch shed.

Having put on my disguise, in the form of my father's spare set of overalls, jacket, and cap, my father and I made our way to the shed, booked on, collected our fireman, and set off to walk to Ince Moss signal cabin to relieve the afternoon set of men who had just arrived on their Super D after banking a train to Garswood.

After stowing our food, and placing our bottles of cold tea on the tray above the firehole door, we were called forward by the signalman to buffer up to the brake van of a freight train standing on the bank up to Fir Tree Junction, waiting to travel over the Whelley line.

We whistled two crows to tell the train engine driver that we were ready, and on hearing his reply, which was also two crows, we opened the regulator of our 'D' and commenced shoving. We made steady progress up the bank up to Amberswood West box, where the gradient changes to downhill, whereupon the front man shut off and we kept pushing hard to keep contact with the guard's van. As the train passed through the dip and started to climb towards Amberswood East, the driver of the train engine gradually opened his regulator to stretch out the loose link couplings without breaking loose, and up we pounded with the distinctive 'one, TWO, three, four' exhaust beat, common to all LNWR engines fitted with Joy's valve gear.

I believe that this limping beat was due to Crewe's refusal to pay royalties to David Joy, who could have laid out the geometry of the valve gear to give even beats as on L & Y engines. All NW locos fitted with this gear could be identified from miles away by this characteristic beat. Would that I could hear it again in the flesh, although I do have it on tape (the last engine of this class has been rebuilt by Pete Waterman of pop music fame, so I may have my wish granted). On we plodded to De Trafford Junction, where we shut off and stopped to let the freight continue alone through the Plantations, Whelley Junction and under the burrowing junction at Standish, to regain the main line and so on to Carlisle.

We came to a stand by the box at De Trafford, where

my father informed the 'bobby' (the first signalmen were classed as policemen and gave similar hand signals, hence the traditional name still being used after 150 years or more) that we were short of water in the tender. In normal circumstances we would have crossed over to the up line and gone back to the nearest water column, but a freight was standing on the up line and was not likely to move for some time. The nearest water was at Rose Bridge, some threequarters of a mile to our rear, on the same side of the line as that on which we were standing. A wrong line order could not, apparently, be issued in this section, so there was in theory, nowhere we could go for water, and a condition of stalemate existed. Railwaymen, however, are not so easily defeated, and a quiet telephone call by our bobby to De Trafford box resulted in permission being given to make this illegal move, wrong line back to Rose Bridge, thus saving hours of delay and the consequent blocking of all traffic for that time.

After filling the tender, we moved forward to Roundhouse where the freight on the up road had moved forward along the track to De Trafford, and left towards Hindley No. 2 box., waiting for us to bank him up the Lanky to Crow's Nest Junction and on as far as Westhoughton. This we proceeded to do after using the Roundhouse crossover which was now clear. We pushed him all the way, doing most of the work, since he had a big train, and only a small 0-6-0 tender engine of doubtful parentage, possibly a Lanky "A" class. Due to the blackout, I could only see his gauge lamp and the glow from his ashpan.

The Lanky goods left us at Westhoughton, where we dropped off, crossed over to the opposite line and made our way to Bamfurlong via Amberswood West, and left to pass under the main line into Bamfurlong loop to park engine siding by Bamfurlong box. We sat there quietly freezing for an hour or two. If you think it was always warm on a loco footplate, then you should try going tender first on a Black Five on a freezing cold night, putting your head out of the side frequently to spot the signals. I did this one night all the way from Leigh to



Manchester Exchange, and you could only stand about five seconds exposure at a time before nose and ears nearly dropped off. Brass monkeys stood at every signal, singing in high-pitched voices whilst I cursed and wished I had a class four tank. Our wait at Bamfurlong was cold, a southerly breeze wafted freezing cold air over the tender on to our bodies, or at least those parts which were not at that time facing the open firebox door. As the least hardy of the three of us, I preferred to stand in the middle of the cab roasting alternate sides of my body, whilst trying to warm the inside with repeated dollops of regulator soup (tea)

Eventually, a coal train rolled past on the down slow and a few minutes later the dummy dropped (ground signal turned to green) calling us out of the siding to follow the freight to Wigan station, where we found him creeping up Number 5 platform. As I was a novice at buffering up behind a moving train (in fact I did not realise that he was still moving) I repeatedly touched the van, then stooped, allowing him to draw clear. My father, realising my difficulty, took over, moved us forward and at the precise moment we touched buffers, opened the regulator smartly and off we went up Wigan Bank, Ryland's Siding, Boar's Head, Victoria Colliery, Standish Junction and on to Coppull Hall. Here we

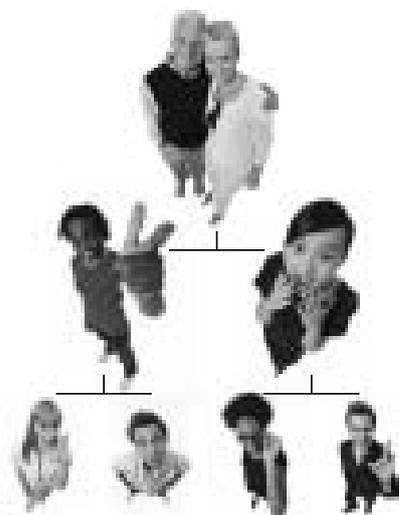
dropped off and stopped at the box, ready to cross over to the up slow, and so back to Wigan, the time now being nearly 5.30 am. Instead of reversing the points, the bobby came to the door of the box to tell us that he had just received an air raid warning 'red', which meant that enemy aircraft were expected overhead immediately. A minute or so later, I heard the familiar stuttering roar of the ram jet engine of a 'flying bomb' or 'Doodlebug', approaching from the east.

I had had experience of these diabolical machines in London during the summer of 1944, and found them more frightening than the "Blitz" of 1940, for two reasons. Firstly the damned things came over every few minutes, day and night, prompting me to dive for cover, usually under the bed, whenever the engine cut out. This caused the machine to dive steeply to the ground where the one ton warhead exploded, and secondly, there was something unnerving about a robot screaming across the sky to fall at random when its fuel ran out. As the flame of its exhaust approached, I realised that the miserably small cab of a Super 'D' offered little or no protection on three sides and that more seriously, should the bomb fall nearby, the water gauge glasses, including protectors, could easily be shattered, causing all to be scalded, perhaps fatally.

Had I been as knowledgeable then as I am now, I would have immediately pulled the shut off levers on the gauge frame, as it was I did nothing but stand waiting for the bang. Luckily for us, the motor cut out some distance North of our position, so far as I could estimate the ensuing explosion seemed to be towards Leyland. A minute or two later, a Northbound express drew alongside, headed by a Jubilee class engine. The driver stopped the train and asked us what had happened. I told him that so far as I could estimate, the bomb had dropped a mile or two ahead, roughly in line with the railway. "Right" said he "it's walking pace all the way to Preston!" and off he went, very slowly, hanging out of the cab, trying to watch the track in the light cast by his two weak oil lamps.

Recent research in a book called 'Doodlebugs' suggests that two flying bombs were released that night over the North Sea by 'pickaback' aircraft, probably Ju88 or ME110. The target was probably Manchester, but due to the distance and relative inaccuracy of the gyro guidance system, one fell on Oldham and ours fell on Brindle. After a few minutes the bobby gave us 'status green', reversed the crossover and pulled off the dummy and the main line signals, to send us south to Springs Branch, where we went on the shed, booked off and went home to bed.

That, fortunately, was the last I ever saw of the 'Doodlebugs'.



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# 1960

by Vera Coleman

**1960 was the year I left school at the age of 15. The first job I had, was at Eckersley Mill in Wigan, when the cotton industry was thriving.**

My first day in the mill was frightening. The noise was deafening and everyone used sign language, which you had to pick up very quickly. If the head doffer moved her hands resembling milking a cow, it meant that frame was ready for doffing. Doffing means you take the full bobbins off, and put empty ones on. Sound easy doesn't it? No! Each doffer had a truck on wheels with two compartments, one to fill with empty bobbins, the other for putting in the full ones. You had to run up and down the room (the room being as long as an average street!) doffing each frame as it was stopped, ready for each group of doffers, usually six in a team, it was non stop.

Noisy, the heat was stifling, sweat dripping off you all day, and cotton and dust flying everywhere, like you were in a snowstorm, only hot. Your mouth was so dry you couldn't talk or shout. I suppose that's why they used sign language. You prayed for someone to give you the sign for lunch break – lifting your hand to your mouth and pretending to drink was the sign. Then, everyone would run to their locker to get their snack, and drink as much as possible. If you wanted a quick cigarette, you had to get in the toilets before everyone else piled in. The toilets were only the size of an average bathroom with two toilets and one sink. Fifteen or twenty girls and women would all squeeze in at once. When you

heard someone bang on the door and shout "Doffing!" you'd think 'Oh no! here we go again'. We used to sing while doffing, one lady taught us. Our first song, was to the tune of Red River Valley.

*'Won't you stand by my side while I'm doffing  
Please don't leave me to doff on my own  
Cause I'm always the last in the alley  
I'm tired and I want to go home.'*

And this one.

*'Oh mother it's Hindley Fair  
Get some papers and curl my hair  
For all the boys at Hindley Fair  
Are after the girls with the curly hair.'*

Although the work was hard and the hours long, we made our own fun. The atmosphere in the mill was the best. All the older ones looked after the younger ones, after all we were only fifteen, and so naïve. They used to play tricks on us by sending us on an errand to the next floor above to ask the bosses for a bucket of steam. We used to feel so important until everyone burst out laughing, and you had to walk back to your room red faced, but it was all in fun. Others were sent for a left handed screw driver or a long stand.

When someone was getting married, one of the women would get hold of her coat when she wasn't looking, and dress it up with all sorts of things pinned on to it. Baby's dummies, streamers, bobbins, L plates and balloons, she would have to wear it going home. All the women and girls would follow behind her, all linking each other singing 'I'm getting married

in the morning poor girl'. They would have collections of money for marriages, births and even sadly deaths.

There was no such thing as who could dress better than anyone, everyone wore a cotton pinny, like a kitchen apron, the more pockets the better to hold items like a picker (a metal hook for removing cotton on rollers or for holding bobbins) headscarves were common, and so were hair curlers.

Christmas time in the mill was brilliant, you could pay a few pence a week into a savings club all year round and by Christmas you got it back. Everybody chipped in for food and drink. Nobody got left out, everybody shared everything. On the last day you finished for Christmas holidays, after dinner break all the machines were stopped and every room had their own Christmas party. All the older ones would sing wartime songs, all the young ones sang rock 'n' roll songs and tried to teach the older ones how to jive. Everyone was tipsy or drunk, some went home minus shoes, some went to sleep outside in the cold factory yard, most fell asleep on the bus going home. The bus conductor just laughed and said "I don't know, you factory girls!" I looked up and smiled, and said to my friend Joyce, "Hey! We're factory girls" and both burst out laughing.

1960 was also the year for rock 'n' roll. We sang it, danced it, we lived for it. We couldn't keep still. We jived at the bus stop, we jived in the corner shop, or most times outside, as we'd get thrown out. At home we drove our parents mad, jiving with a brush as a partner or



dancing with the door handle. We never stopped. Every night of the week, we went jiving. Monday night at the Monaco, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at school halls and church halls. Saturday was my favourite, The Continental, which was Ince Central School Hall.

On our black and white TV we waited patiently all week for 'Oh Boy!' ( a pop programme similar to Top of the Pops, only live performances). Cliff Richard was my idol. He always came on with his latest hit. "More It" I would scream, the dog would howl, the budgie squawked, my Dad would shout "Turn it off". Then Marty Wilde singing 'Teenager in Love'! Me and my friend Joyce like the Vernon Girls, who were a group of girls who worked for Vernon's Pools in Liverpool, hence the name. They all wore short, tight shorts and fitted tops and high heels. They stood in rows on steps and would always sing 'Who Wears Short Shorts'. Me and my friend Joyce would try and copy them, stood on me mam's stairs with tall heels on singing "short shorts" and end up falling down and landing on the bottom step, just missing the brush my brothers threw at us.

We couldn't wait to finish work at night. I'd run home, throw my tea down and get my clothes out for dancing. Frilly net underskirts, flared, gathered skirts, tight tops (like the Vernon Girls) wide belts, tall heels and flat ballerina shoes for dancing in. We back-combed our hair, sprayed it with Belair lacquer until it was like candy floss. As you walked into the dance hall, as soon as you heard the music, you were straight on the dance floor, dancing to Del Shannon 'Runaway' and we never stopped until the last record was played. Records meaning we danced to a record player which played 45rpm's, small records, one after the other, as long as it was rock 'n' roll. It was all we had, and all we knew. Then it was home worn out with dancing, work till the next day, when we did it all over again.

Fashion in the 1960 was gathered skirts to tight skirts, frilly, frothy net underskirts to make the gathered skirts stick out, and to show all the coloured net as you twirled round when jiving, like a statement. I used to stand aside sometimes and watch all the different coloured skirts twirling round the dance floor looking like spinning tops, not knowing at the time, that I would never see this era again.

Still on the subject of sticky out underskirts, there was also the thin plastic strip you could buy from the haberdashery (you don't hear that name anymore) which you thread through the hem of your gathered underskirt and it made it stick out like a crinoline or umbrella. But the 'but' being, you couldn't sit down whilst wearing it, or your skirt lifted right over your head showing all next weeks' washing.

Stockings and suspenders were the fashion (as tights were not yet invented). If you lost the little button off the suspender, I used to rob the little rubber wheels off my brother's Dinky cars, they were perfect. My brother never knew why his wheels were always missing.

The boys wore long, mainly black coats, tight pants or jeans, always white shirts with black string ties or thin black ordinary ties, crepe soled shoes they called beetle crushers, hair smothered in Brylcream slicked back with a quiff of hair falling down at the front. Sides combed back into a DA (meaning resembling a duck's backside) plus they all wanted to look like Elvis Presley. They all carried little combs in their top pocket because it looked cool when they kept lifting their combs out and fixing their quiffs.

Although I didn't realise it at the time, 1960 was my year. My first job, first love, first dances. By day I was a hardworking factory girl, by night I was a teenager going out and having fun. 1960 was special, 'Six Five Special', 'Oh Boy!', Rock 'n' Roll', yeah!

## Ellen (Nelly) Weeton – Update

It will be of interest to many readers to learn that Ellen (Nelly) Weeton (1776-1849) married name Stock, who for many years lived in both Upholland and Wigan, has now found fame nationally in recognition of her inadvertent, yet valuable contribution to our nation's social history.

Recently, the History Shop was contacted by a research editor (18th century) of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography's (DNB), who was updating the existing entry on Ellen, based on work by Ruth Symes. He was delighted to discover the series of articles on Ellen's life written by Alan Roby, and published in *Past Forward*. We put the editor and Alan in touch, and Alan has been able to provide new knowledge, which will be published in the online version of the Oxford DNB, which should be available by the time you read this.

For those of you who have not come across Ellen Weeton before, she wrote daily to relatives and friends from c 1804 to c 1830. It was her custom to painstakingly write a copy of every single letter, which over time resulted in nine volumes of copy-letters. The letters provide a fascinating insight into life at that time, especially for women. Unfortunately only four volumes have ever come to light. They were discovered by Mr. Edward Hall, Surveyor to Upholland District Council, in a Wigan book dealer's shop in 1925. Edward Hall presented the letter books to Wigan Council, and they can be seen (by appointment) at our archive office in Leigh Town Hall (Wigan 440430).

Local historians will be pleased to know that Wigan Library Service are subscribers to the online version of the Oxford DNB, which can be accessed at local libraries via the People's Network. Additionally, library members can also access it for free on their home computer via the Wigan Council website (follow the library links) but please note, you will need your membership number handy.

Alan's articles can be found in Issues 20 to 29. If Ruth Symes is a familiar name, she also published in *Past Forward* in issue 24.

# The Story of James Tinsley, One of The Explorers Bedford Colliery Explosion 1886

by Helen Holmes

*Part 2 of Mrs Holmes story of the tragedy of the Bedford Colliery Explosion 1886 (Part1 in issue 43) detailing the life of her great uncle.*

## James Tinsley, Explorer

We, the grandson and great-niece of James Tinsley, one of the Bedford Colliery explorer (mines rescue workers), felt that the story of his life and career must have been typical of many who rose to success from very humble beginnings. We feel that the occasion of the 120th Anniversary of the Bedford Colliery explosion, when he received his illuminated address, is the ideal time to describe a life which began in the very poor Scholes district of Wigan. He was to end his days in South Wales.

James Tinsley was born on October 29th 1854 and baptised two weeks later at the church of All Saints Wigan, the Parish Church. His parents Matthew and Catherine gave their address as Scholefield Lane. The 'Scholes' was in the heart of industrial Wigan, an area so cruelly described years later by George Orwell. Scholefield Lane bisected the area from west to east, and from it there opened many alleys and 'courts,' often around small factories. Matthew had been brought up in one such court, Cook's Houses. We can find no record of his birth, around 1831, nor the name of his parents. In 1841 he lived as a ten year old lodger with the family of Michael Burns, a hand-loom weaver and Irish immigrant. Others in the household gave their occupations as hand loom weaver, bobbin winder, and throstle spinner. This story must seem familiar to others who have tried to trace their family's story from that area. Even as late as 1851, Matthew

Tinsley described himself as a hand-loom weaver, as he did on his marriage certificate in 1853. By 1861 this family had moved to Ince Green Lane, away from the centre of Wigan. Matthew had given up his work as a weaver, and now described himself as a miner. He was within walking distance (as one had to be) of what is assumed to have been his place of work, the Ince Coal and Cannel Company. Again, his story follows what must have been typical of that period. His wife had died in childbirth the previous year, and he was a widower with a seven year old son. The young James Tinsley was now in the sort of area, surrounded by coal mines, which was to be familiar to him for the rest of his life. In 1865, Matthew married a childless widow, Jane Moran, at Haigh Church, and he was living in Aspull, where there were numerous small collieries. The 1871 census shows that he had moved again, to the Colliery Houses at Shevington, and he described himself as coal miner. James was now seventeen and his occupation, too, is given as coal miner. They might have worked at one of the two small collieries nearby, John Pit or Taylor Pit. Matthew and Jane now had a nine month old son, Richard.

He was married aged 19, to a local girl, Grace Baron, also 19, at Standish Church, and they both signed their names, evidence of a rise in literacy. A family bible records, '*James Tinsley married unto Grace Baron, August 30th 1874.*' It was a marriage that was to last for over 50 years and produce eight children, six of whom survived to adulthood. Their first child was born within the year, and the two young parents could not have had an easy time.

In the light of his future success,

it must have been about this time that James began his 'self-education'. Young lads went 'down the pit' several years before the youth of today leave school. By 1886 when the explosion occurred, many of the men would have had some schooling, which only became compulsory after the Education Act of 1870. One way for a man to better himself, having started at the coalface, was to take advantage of the evening classes provided by such establishments as the renowned Wigan School of Mines. This was the first true School of Coal-Mining to be established, and had a very high reputation. Managerial qualifications from Wigan were highly regarded in the industry. By the 1880s it was organising correspondence courses, too, and miners with hopes of promotion could take advantage of such courses. Did he attend evening classes? Did he pursue one of the correspondence courses? This would have been easier in 1881, when he was living in Field Street, Wigan. One assumes that he moved for some kind of promotion, though he still described himself as 'coal miner' in the census returns of that year, probably at the nearby Meadows Colliery.

A year later, he registered the death of his first born, Catherine, from heart disease. He was still at Field Street, but had made his first move up the managerial ladder, he gave his occupation as colliery fireman. By then, the family had another daughter, Susan, and a son Matthew, and we know that when his second son George was born in 1883, he had moved to the colliery houses, Bolton's Houses, in Abram. There he worked at Abram Colliery,



and it must have been with some pride that he could register George as the son of a colliery underlooker.

Like all readers who have tried to trace the family of an ancestor who came from humble beginnings, we have found few written records other than official 'returns'. However, this period then provides the greatest find, an award for bravery, in the story of James' early life.

### The Illuminated Address

His grandson, Christopher James Tinsley, is the proud possessor of the illuminated address, which reads.

This Illuminated Address  
Is Presented to  
**James Tinsley**

In recognition of his BRAVERY in  
Descending the Shaft and  
Exploring the Workings of the  
Colliery, and thereby risking his  
own life in the noble effort to save  
the life of others, after the  
Disastrous Explosion on Friday,  
August 13th 1886

James, along with the other explorers, was presented with his illuminated address at a ceremony in the Leigh Theatre in February 1887. The names of all receiving their awards were listed in the Leigh Journal in an article which included the poignant notice that Oliver Madron had since been killed, and his widow would receive his award. The committee of the Explosion Fund had organised the proceedings. There was a very hard and fast line drawn as to who was to have free admission, listed in the following order, subscribers, members of the choir, explorers, and widows of the deceased. Others had to pay a shilling, sixpence or three pence. Local dignitaries were present, all having been requested to 'put their hands in their pockets'. The framed document was large, 50 x 64 cms, and must have made a very prominent feature in the homes of the recipients.

In order to appreciate the delicate work and detail, I quote



the description from the Leigh Journal of February 11th 1887. "The general style of the address is after the manner of the 17th century; the elegant illuminated border is copied from a 'Book of Hours', a rare and celebrated ecclesiastical volume, designed and painted in 1526 by Theilman Kerver, shortly before the Reformation. The lettering is adapted from originals of an earlier period - the initial 'T' being a copy from a manuscript Bible in the British Museum. The body of the text is set out in lettering of the Tudor period. Incorporated with the exfoliated ornamentation surrounding the border are the Arms of Lancashire at the head, and at the foot a faithful picture of the scene of the disaster taken from the Journal supplement; whilst in the upper left-hand corner an emblematical angelic figure is presenting two laurel crowns, severally described " Faith" and "Courage". As a suggestion of the bravery of "hearts of oak", frames of English oak have been constructed to enclose the address, and the whole of the workmanship is of the highest class. Messrs. George

Falkner and Sons, the Art printers of Manchester, have been entrusted with this work, and they have spared no pains to produce a memento which shall be alike worthy of the occasion as of their craft."

It is interesting to note that, whilst researching material for this article, a search on the Internet brought up an item of great interest, in that the sale has recently taken place, on E-bay, of the illuminated address which was presented to Harry Speakman, the mine owner' son,

who later went on to become Mayor of Leigh, and was knighted for his services. The winning bid for the address was £227.

James' climb to the top was to take him to Tawd Vale Colliery, Skelmersdale, to the Ebbw Vale Steel Iron & Coal Company, South Wales and finally to his own engineering company, which sold Tinsley's Patent Condensers to the coal-mines of the Wigan and Leigh area where he had been brought up.

### Glossary

- Throstle spinner  
a throstle was a spinning machine that made a noise like a bird (throstle- thrush).
- Underlooker  
undermanager.
- Fireman  
an official who is in charge of a district in a mine.

Mrs Holmes would like to thank Joan Szymanowski (née Melling) an old school friend from Howe Bridge, Tony Ashcroft (Local History Officer, Leigh) Alan Davies (Archivist) and staff at the History Shop.

# Shops Ancient and Loyal

by Irene Roberts

*Will this put you in the mood for the shopping frenzy that is now Christmas? Editor*

I read through Past Forward's (issue 42) magical pages and came across an article by Mr R.Heaviside who asked "do you remember the old shops in Wigan?" and it was as if a light had been switched on and I itched to put pen to paper.

Just after the old Market Hall had been demolished, I got a copy of Geoff Shryhane's video of it's last days; I enjoyed it, but the building had only just gone and so the images were recent, but oh! how good it is to see it again NOW – Santus's toffee stall, Harold Bradshaw's "Menswear" and Mr Ali Khan presiding over his jeans stall with his surprising Lancashire accent, not forgetting Lewis's and Cassinelli's ice cream vans parked outside. I loved the Market Hall as a little girl; do you remember the doll's hospital there? I loved the sparrows in the roof, and the revolving doors at the back where my friends and I used to spin ourselves dizzy! The fish market was a strange place – it always seemed to be dank and dark, with damp stone steps leading into the Market Hall proper. My mam used to buy shellfish there, cockles and mussels, which she boiled in a pan, (I can smell them still!), and winkles, which you pulled out of their shells with a pin. They were sold by the 'measure', a tin receptacle of some kind, and put into paper bags. The fruit market was also separate from the main hall, and its floor was always littered with slatted wooden boxes, cabbage leaves, and tissue paper from around the oranges and tangerines.

Mr Heaviside recalls Father Christmas climbing onto Lowe's roof and pretending to slip – there is actual footage of that on a video I have, (a Platt Bridge story). Just think, hundreds of Wigan children must have wondered how he managed to get down their chimney carrying a bike from Oliver Somers! Lowes always reminded me of Grace Brothers in 'Are You Being Served?' It was quiet and carpeted and rather sedate. Mr Heaviside recalls Poole's Central Warehouse, which I remember as Oxley's, and I can't remember if it was in there or Pendlebury's where the customers money was shot along a wire in a little canister to the cash office, and the change sent back the opposite way.

I too remember Latimer's grocers. It was partly on Market Street and partly in Commercial Yard, and I remember going there to buy fresh yeast (which my mam called "barm"), for a cookery lesson at school. Commercial Yard was like a magnet to me when I was fifteen, for, besides McGregor's wallpaper shop and the Commercial Inn, it housed Sawbridge's butchers where Peter, my seventeen-year-old boyfriend, worked. He used to deliver orders on an old fashioned delivery bike to the old terraced homes in Wallgate's close-knit community; then, when he passed his driving test, his round was extended to include the dizzy heights of Wigan Lane! All these years on, Peter fondly remembers many of his customers. I wonder if any Past Forward readers remember Peter, the butcher's lad from Commercial Yard?

One of my favourite spots in Wigan was the Old Arcade, oh, what character that place had! My mam remembered being mortified when dad took us into Gornor's café and asked the waitress for three beers instead of three cups of tea, he must have imagined he was in the Legs of Man pub which ran alongside! There was a shop in the Arcade that sold strings of paper bags, and mam sometimes bought me some of the three-cornered toffee-bags to play "shops" with. In the autumn, that

same shop sold loose fireworks from a box outside the door, can you imagine that being allowed today? The Arcade had a slight bend in it, so you couldn't see one end from the other until you were halfway down, and I can remember mam and I walking down there one dark winter night when the shops had shut, (looking back, I can't imagine why we would have done so), and it was very dimly lit, the poor lighting threw long shadows across the walls and our footsteps rang out eerily. It struck terror in me as a child, and occasionally creeps into my dreams to this day.

A very precious childhood memory is of shopping with my mam in Wigan on winter Saturdays, when, just before we caught the lovely maroon-and-cream coloured Wigan Corporation bus home to Ince, we queued up in Vose's shop for pies for the family's tea. I think Vose's was a tripe shop, but they also sold delicious oval-shaped meat-and-potato pies, and I can remember the safe, cosy feeling as we queued, the homely banter between the head-scarved shoppers and the staff, and the brightness and the warmth of the shop contrasting sharply with the nip in the air outside as darkness fell. How I looked forward to eating my pie whilst watching Dixon of Dock Green by the fire. If I'm not mistaken, didn't Vose's later become the UCP Café? My mam often spoke of the Roy Café, and Dickie Lee's. I don't remember either, but they must have sold delicious food because she always said of wrongdoers, "They should purr 'em i' Dickie Lee's wi' a muzzle on!"

As I got older, I would go by myself to Wigan, first visiting the Powell Children's Library, and then Starr's and Wilding's stationery shops on Wallgate and of course good old Woolies! I can see it now, the sweet counter near the door with sweets behind sloping glass counters, the assistants wearing little caps embroidered with F.W. Woolworth, and the stationery counter (my favourite) which stood near to the long tea bar where customers sat on high stools in front of steaming tea urns and sizzling sausages.

During our teenage years, my friends and I were naturally interested in the sixties fashions, and we loved to wander around C and A's (which we called Coats an' 'Ats!), Van Allen's and Joan Barrie's. Remember the Summer of Love when we walked around wearing cow-bells and flowers, and Lewis's Separates on the corner of Crompton Street changed its name to the more trendy Chelsea Girl. And of course the lads went to "John Collier, the window to watch". We loved to shop for shoes in Freeman, Hardy and Willis, and who remembers saving up to buy a "tranny" in Rumbelow's or Broadmead's? Did you ever book a coach-trip with Frames Tours? Or queue in Mark Williams pork butchers or Lace's cake shop, and do you remember savouring the wonderful aroma in Makinson's coffee shop, with its name picked out in mosaic on the step? How many brides-to-be, or excited little girls about to walk "under the banner" on walking day chose their dress material from Hart's of Wigan, and how many housewives shopped for butter and cheese at the Maypole Dairy? Hands up who remembers the underground toilets in Market Place, Meeson's toffee shop and Kaye's army surplus store on King Street? Kaye's was absolutely bursting at the seams with stock, and how the lady owner ever found anything in there remains a mystery! Who will ever forget the homely Boro' chippy on Millgate, which we have only just lost, or the Aladdin's cave that was Tickles in the Wiend, and all the other atmospheric little shops and twisting alleyways that made up the wonderful, unique character that was once our town?

# How the Archbishop 'saved Arnold's bacon'

By Austin Lyons

*Another fascinating story from our regular contributor and former 'intrepid' press photographer! Editor*

The old cliché 'to save your bacon', is not heard so much these days, but it was a common expression way back in the early 1950's, when this incident occurred. One associated it with saving you from 'getting the sack', 'being told off', 'getting into trouble', and so on. One could put this story with any of these expressions.

The event in question was the blessing and laying of the foundation stone of the St Thomas More RC School, in Newtown, Wigan. The ceremony was to be performed by Dr. Richard Downey, Archbishop of Liverpool, on a site well prepared for the occasion. A large stage-like structure had been expertly erected behind the foundation stone, enabling the hundreds of people who attended to have a clear view of the proceedings without the hindrance of scaffolding. It also ensured that press photographers could 'stay put' at the front, and not to be darting about to 'get a better picture. My colleague on this occasion was an old Wigan friend, Arnold Hall, then working as a staff photographer with an evening newspaper.

The weather was fine, so we weren't anticipating any problems. This ceremony, as with all such religious events, was slow-moving, but, aware that the actual blessing of the stone was a significant part of the service, I took several photographs at this juncture. Shortly afterwards, the service ended. The Archbishop gave his blessing to the huge crowd, and, accompanied by the clergy and servers, left the

platform.

Thus the commotion started. "He's not used the mallet", "He's not used the mallet, yelled Arnold at the top of his voice, and kept up this tirade for quite some time, his behaviour bordering on the hysterical. If this had not happened in open air, it certainly would have created a scene. It then became clear to me what Arnold's problem was, he had not taken any photographs, because he was waiting for the Bishop to use the mallet, as the cue for his shot. It took me some time to calm him down. In the meantime, I tried to explain the difference between a religious and civic ceremony, but to no avail. He had now become a frightened man and was obviously scared, he thought he would lose his job. It was then I said, "I think I can fix it." "How can you fix it?", he asked of me rather indignantly. "I know Dr. Downey" I said. "He has helped me in the past, and it is worth a try". By now the Archbishop had divested, and with the clergy and altar servers moved to the far end of the site, where they greeted all the people as they left, by standing behind a large church collecting box. I knew this was going to take some time, so I approached the Archbishop's secretary, told him that my colleague had unfortunately failed to take any photographs, and would he kindly ask His Grace to come down to the stone for another photograph. He promised to do so. I then left, assuring him that we were quite prepared to wait. It seemed to take ages for the several hundreds to walk slowly past the Archbishop, but eventually the site was cleared. Then it seemed to happen so quickly, The Archbishop was

on his way down again with all the clergy and altar boys following. Arnold couldn't believe it, he just stood there transfixed as the Archbishop mounted the platform and called "Now where do you want me?" Arnold looked bewildered so I decided to go and meet His Grace. It was then I realised he was without his mitre and cape, so I suggested as discreetly as I could- that to be liturgically correct he should again be wearing his Episcopal attire. He just smiled in approval and left the platform, and went to the vesting tent situated at the rear. After a short period he re-emerged resplendent in his Mitre and Cope, along with his attendant priests and servers. I quickly 'stage-managed' His Grace and clergy in the positions I thought they should occupy at the stone, and for realism, asked them not to look at the camera, but to glance at the Archbishop for the photograph. By now Arnold was clicking away, I joined him and took a few shots so as not to make him feel so isolated I then returned to the platform, and as professionally as I could, then asked His Grace for his generous help - he just smiled gratefully then left. As we packed up our cameras, I thought Arnold seemed rather chastened, - less than an hour earlier he was in the depths of despair, now all that had changed, he had seen the apparently impossible happen before his eyes. He had got all the photographs he wanted - his job was safe - all thanks to the generosity and consideration of this charming and jovial old gentleman, the Archbishop of Liverpool, who undoubtedly on this occasion, had in no uncertain terms, definitely 'saved Arnold's bacon'.

# BOOK REVIEW

By Mike Haddon

In a slight variation on the old adage about bunched buses, I can now reveal that in this area we've waited years for a new book about the local bus 'scene', then two come along together! So having got the novelty introduction out of the way, I am pleased to be able to recommend both volumes as welcome additions to the literature available on public road transport in the district. Although both come from the same publishing house, they contrast with each other as one relates to the history of an operator, 'Lancashire United Transport', the other to a vehicle manufacturer, namely 'Northern Counties Motor & Engineering' of Wigan Lane, Wigan.

**Lancashire United – A Centenary Celebration 1906 to 2006** is the work of Eric Ogden, one of the region's top experts on north west bus operators and a prolific author on the industry over many years.

As the author admits this is not the first publication about 'LUT' however in his introduction he outlines three reasons to justify this latest offering. Firstly it provides a commemoration of the centenary of the original Lancashire United Tramways Company. Secondly some 21 years have elapsed since the author's previous work on this topic and he has subsequently been able to undertake further research from sources not available to him previously. The third reason is to place some emphasis on the personalities whose decisions determined the Company's strategy and development over the years. This is a topic often ignored in favour of descriptions of vehicle and routes operated, though of course there is still much of this type of material, including a multitude of photographs.

The 144 pages of this soft-backed book are principally devoted to a chronological account of the undertaking's 72 year history together with a 'personalities' section at the end. With bus deregulation and privatisation there is little remaining physical evidence of the former company apart from the sizeable number of former LUT buses rescued and restored by enthusiasts. Some of these survivors, the oldest of which dates back to 1930, are the subject to colour illustrations at the rear of the book.

Published by Venture Publications (ISBN 1905 304 129) as No.10 in their 'Super Prestige' series, it retails at £18:95 and is available for purchase at the History Shop. (To obtain by post please telephone 01942 828128 to check on postage costs and availability.)

Slightly more expensive at £27:50, but in larger, hard back format is Peter Rowe's work which carries the cover title '**Northern Counties**' the short hand

name of the former Northern Counties Motor & Engineering Co. Although this volume is about a manufacturer rather than an operator there are a couple of links with the LUT book reviewed above. Again this is not the first publication on the subject, the first entitled 'Northern Counties of Wigan – A pictorial survey of their bus building activities from the twenties, with a brief history', came out in 1976 and was the work of Eric Ogden, who I have already introduced as author of the LUT publication. The other connection is that Lancashire United became one of NCME's best customers after placing their first order in 1942. The capital to start Northern Counties came from well outside the area, the major investor being a Cardiff based business man by the name of Henry Gethin Lewis. The author believes he has discovered why this gentleman with seemingly no Lancashire connections, chose to establish a new venture so far from home by taking over the existing motor garage premises of a Mr. T.G.Bell in 1919.

The volume goes on to tell how the company soon gave up on sales, servicing and repair of motor vehicles to concentrate on body building, initially for private cars but soon introducing bus and charabanc versions, which after a few years had become the sole output of the factory.

With plenty of vehicle photographs available, not least the official Northern Counties finished product views (invariably staged outside the Wigan Lane plantation gates or in nearby Spencer Road), the book is highly illustrated throughout complete with extensive captions, but there is plenty of text too, making this work much more than the photo album format of the earlier N.C. book. The book concludes with a number of appendixes covering the aspects of staff, premises, annual production figures and an alphabetical list of customers plus a three page index.

A substantial and well produced literary work on an aspect of local commercial activity is always welcome. In this case however it also acts as a tribute to the fine work of several generations of Northern Counties employees, which has resulted in the letters N.C.M.E. being known as synonymous with quality built bus body by operators up and down the Country.

Published by Venture Publications '**Northern Counties**' is a 192-page volume in A4, hard back, portrait format and retails at £27:50. A small stock is held for sale at the History Shop, but if interested in purchasing please telephone before hand to check availability.

# Committed to a Lunatic Asylum for Being a Vagrant and Spitting

by John Wogan

RECENTLY I obtained copies of my g g g grandmother's case notes from Lancaster Moor Lane Lunatic asylum. When I first read these I was very saddened that these few pages were all there was to show for the 17 years of her life in the institution. Her age at admittance was stated to be 48, yet on her death certificate 17 years later, her age is given as 75 years. The 1851 census gave her age as 59, so I did not think that this was my ancestor. Her death certificate however confirmed her as my ancestor. The details were as follows:-  
18th April 1857 Lunatic Asylum Lancaster

Catherine Wogan Female aged 75 years Late of Wigan.  
No occupation. Death by old age and debility.

The case notes start at the time of admission. On 17 February 1851, the notes state that Catherine claimed to have seen numerous battles. My wife, who came along to the records office with me, actually found this entry, and was intrigued with the story that eventually unfolded. I suppose the people around her thought that she was mad, after all she was in a Lunatic asylum. However, this was the truth (apart from Trafalgar, unless her husband John Wogan also joined the navy). She would have seen all the battles, as she was a soldiers' wife. In fact she had a child in Malta in 1807.

These case notes are the complete set, nothing has been left out. Let us hope that this could not happen in this modern

day with no follow up for four years, then seven years until her next appraisal and yet another six years before a flurry of notes whilst she was dying. It is a very sad story, and raises many questions. Why was she a vagrant, as she was married with a family of three grown up sons? She states that she had seven children, but I have only found three sons. Was she really suffering from mental illness, or was she sane?

## **Lancaster Moor Lane Lunatic Asylum Case notes for Catherine Wogan**

### **Admitted this day 8th April 1840**

*A vagrant from Wigan aged 48 no cure.*

*Says she is married and has had seven children, much excited and violent and spits.*

*Born in Drogheda, Ireland. She is swarthy, with a low forehead. Religion - Roman Catholic. She says she can read and write she is in good health. Mind a little impaired and, very seldom, spits at anyone. Incapable of being employed. Has dirty habits. Employed in sewing.*

### **MARCH 26TH 1844**

*For a length of time attentive to her habits. Complexion clearer and quite left of spitting tolerably. Neat in her person. Constantly employed in the wash house, where she is very industrious. Though less rambling in her conversation than formerly, is now sometimes heard to talk absurdly.*

### **FEBRUARY 17TH 1851**

*No change in mind. Talks incoherently about her past life and confuses people and places. States that she has been at the battles of the Nile, Trafalgar, Corunna, Waterloo and Valencia. Is practically and industriously employed in the washhouse.*

### **NOVEMBER 2ND**

*No change in mental condition. Bodily health remains good.*

### **MARCH 28TH 1857.**

*Has been failing in health since last appraisal. Legs odenatious and has lost much flesh.*

### **APRIL 4TH**

*Unable to leave her bed and is very weakly.*

### **APRIL 11TH**

*Scarcely to take any liquids. Less power of observation. Has a sore over sacrum.*

### **APRIL 18TH**

*Died this day, of old age and debility.*

## **Source of records - Lancashire Record Office Preston**

*Editor's note:*

*John could of course follow up the information on the battles by checking for Catherine's husband's service record at The National Archives in London. There may also be baptisms for the child who was born in Malta and even the missing children. At [www.nationalarchivist.com](http://www.nationalarchivist.com) I found an entry which showed a John Wogan in the 44th Foot received a clasp for actions in Egypt. He may indeed therefore have been at the Battle of the Nile.*

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# The Laying of The Gantley Farm Boggart

by Michael Finney

ONE hundred years ago, Billinge, like many other Lancashire villages, had more than its fair share of spectral inhabitants. If the late night traveller managed to avoid the clutches of the ghostly cavalier at the Stork Hotel, and those of Nelly, the resident phantom of Bispham Hall, there was every chance that they would encounter one of the many other spooks and boggarts that were said to haunt every footpath and stile in the district.

Whilst the existence of these ghostly presences was largely accepted by the residents of Billinge, it was well-nigh impossible to find an actual witness to any form of paranormal manifestation: the usual proof for its existence being along the lines of "Well, Ah'v not sin it misel, but mi gronfeyther knew a chap as sin it"

There was, however, one exception to the rule. There were many Billingers who could honestly say that they had heard the antics of the Gantley Farm Boggart, probably the most terrifying phantom in the district. Gantley Farm, at the head of a lonely cart track, in the

shadow of Billinge Hill, was home to a boggart that reserved its finest performances for stormy nights. Unwary travellers passing the spot would be terrified by unearthly screams and groans, that seemed to emanate from the ground at their feet, often accompanied by a frantic hammering, which led people to talk of restless souls of long-forgotten miners trapped underground. In time, the spot gained such a terrible reputation that the most adventurous courting couples avoided it, and even hardened poachers were reluctant to pass that way after nightfall. This state of affairs persisted for many years, even into the early decades of the twentieth century, but the 1920's would see the Gantley Farm Boggart laid in the most unusual manner

In August 1924, Joseph Gibbon, a labourer at the farm, was going about his duties when he saw that 'Blossom', one of the farm horses, had strayed into a disused garden, and had apparently fallen. On going to investigate, Gibbon found that the ground had actually given way under the horse, trapping one of its' forelegs. He

summoned assistance, and when the horse was pulled free, it could be seen that the weight of the animal had caused a rotting baulk of timber, concealed under two feet of soil, to collapse, revealing a void underneath. Gibbon and his fellow labourers set to work with spades and ropes, and after lifting a number of similar timbers, succeeded in uncovering a stone-lined pit, with an iron waterwheel set in the bottom, to take advantage of an underground stream. It was subsequently found that whenever it rained heavily, the waterwheel would be set in motion, producing the most hair-raising sounds. Hence the Boggart's activities on rainy nights. ....

Local historians who later visited the farm, estimated the waterwheel to be over two hundred years old, and expressed the belief that it had been used to provide power for cottage industries, sited in nearby outhouses. The annals of Lancashire folklore are full of ingenious tricks used to lay boggarts. Some boggarts were laid under stones, some were even trapped in bottles. Surely the Gantley Farm specimen was the only to be laid by a clumsy horse!

*It wouldn't be Christmas without a ghost story! Editor.*



## Girlguiding

### Lancashire South

The new guiding county of Lancashire South was formed on 1st April 1987 out of the County of Greater Manchester West. It was launched on 20th September 1987 at Robin Park, Wigan.

The County is basically Wigan Metro with a small area around Billinge belonging to St Helens.

Prior to joining Greater Manchester West in 1974 Leigh Division was part of South Lancashire whilst Wigan belonged to South West Lancs.

To celebrate the 20th birthday of the County and in preparation for the centenary of guiding in 2010, an exhibition of guiding will be held in the History Shop from 16th April – 16th June 2007.

Not only will we be looking back to how guiding used to be but also trying to change people's perceptions of guiding as something slightly old fashioned and demonstrate just how active and modern we are as the UK's leading organisation for girls and young women.

Further details can be obtained from Mrs Susan Heyes, Girlguiding Lancs South archivist. Tel: 01942 245412 or Email Susanheyes@aol.com



*Commissioners in the photo, l-r: Mrs Halliwell, Mrs Leak, Mrs Russell, Miss Mabel Hall, Mrs Clara Wood, Mrs Gladys Singer, Mrs Mabel Southern, Miss Ursula Brown, Mrs Gaskell, Mrs Firth, Miss Joan Hesketh, Bessie Woods.*

# Mayor's Charity Appeal - Local Heroes

In issue 42 Philip Loudon appealed for nominations for a 'local heroes' calendar which is to be sold to raise money for charity. The calendar is now finished, and will be on sale in local shops shortly. The money raised will be shared between the Domestic Violence Centre D.I.A.S (Drop in and Share), and the Victim Support and Witness Service. A page for each month will feature someone with links to the local area who has contributed in a positive way in their chosen field of activity. This is a very worthwhile cause, so we urge you to support the Mayor's Charity Appeal. Calendars will be available from the Town Halls across the Borough.

For those of you who are interested, here is a list of those 'chosen' and the reasons why they were included.

#### **Thomas Tyldesley 1596-1651**

Described as 'the bravest knight in the land'. Sir Thomas, a Royalist was a leader during the English Civil War and killed in the thick of the action at the Battle of Wigan Lane.

#### **Professor Eric Laithwaite 1921-1997**

Engineer, scientist, writer and broadcaster, this blunt outspoken Lancastrian was born in Atherton. He is remembered as the inventor of the Maglev system of rail transport.

#### **Alfred Wilkinson 1895-1940**

Born in Leigh, Alfred Wilkinson was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery whilst under fire on the Western front during the First World War.

#### **Peter Kane 1918-1991**

Peter Kane lived in Golborne and from becoming an amateur boxer went on to become World Lightweight Champion from 1939 to 1943. In 103 professional bouts Peter won all but seven matches. A workmate described Peter as "always a gentleman".

#### **Lawrence Isherwood 1917-1989**

Often regarded as Wigan's answer to Salford's L.S. Lowry, Lawrence's paintings gave an original and colourful view of his home town, Wigan.

#### **George Formby, 1904-1961**

The famous son of a famous father, he may have played the gormless Wiganer on film, but in his day he was Britain's highest paid star, and he always got the girl.

#### **Margery Booth, 1905-1952**

Wigan born opera singer who performed in front of high ranking Nazi officials, but despite being called a collaborator she spied for the allies and helped POW's escape from Nazi Germany.

#### **Lilly Brayton 1876-1953**

Despite parental opposition she left Hindley to become one of the top actresses and pin up girl of her day, appearing in everything from Shakespeare to musicals.

#### **Gerald Rickards 1931-2006**

A Wigan artist who's murals have adorned the walls of schools, Wigan Pier, Wigan and Leigh Hospice and Manchester Airport.

#### **Tom Burke 1890-1968**

Born in Leigh into a large family, Tom graduated from singing in pubs to London's Covent Garden, La Scala, Milan and New York but he never forgot his humble beginnings.

#### **Marie Ault 1870-1951**

She ran away from home in Wigan to join a troop of travelling actors. During a career that spanned more than 60 years she appeared in pantomime, London's West End shows, radio, films and the first TV broadcasts.

#### **Ethel Naylor 1900-1990**

The seventh of 11 children born to a Wigan miner, Ethel spent her life working for the community from the soup kitchens of the 1926 General Strike, to become Wigan first woman mayor.



## Lost sporting chance!

Dear Editor,

In 1929, I was attending Pemberton Boys Colliery School, and we had a very good rugby team, all now 13 years old, except for Ken Gee, who was 12. We had great hopes of winning the Daily Despatch Rugby shield, usually contested between Rose Bridge and St. Patrick's, one match drawing 15, 000 spectators.

Our team consisted of, full back Horace Williams, who later played for Wigan Highfield; forwards Ken Gee and Fred Fourke, from a farm near Pony Dick; Horace Lappage, from the outdoor licence shop at the top of Enfield Street; Bill Derbyshire, who I believe later played for

Warrington RL club (I am unable to remember the other 2 forwards); leftwing Joe Allan, playing later for Orrell Rugby Union; myself at left-centre; stand off Jimmy Lowe, who later played alongside John Heaton for Highfield Cricket Club 1st Eleven; scrum half, a son of Jeddy Parkes, who played for Highfield Rugby League Club; right centre Donald Heaton, a three quarter from Billinge Road and right wing Steadman, a newcomer and former Northern Counties 100yd winner.

One Saturday, when we were due to play a round for the Daily Despatch Shield at Central park, all our hopes were shattered. Five players failed to turn up. We only learnt the Monday morning in school that they had gone to watch Wigan playing away in a round for the Rugby League Cup!

**Jack Houghton  
Southport**

*We would like to have been a 'fly on the wall' in school that Monday! Editor.*

## Rushton's

Dear Editor,

My name is James Winstanley I'm now aged 83.

After reading your issue No 42, which is very interesting, I saw the name of one of my employer's, O G Rushton. I worked there from 1939 to 1942 in the cellar of the warehouse. My job was to weigh out the rations of butter, marg, lard and cheese etc for each of their 50 odd shops. Very hard job, but I enjoyed it, one big happy family. I loved working with the girls, all the young men had been called up in the forces. In 1942 I was asked to drive one of their vans, taking rations out to the shops.

All the men there had to join the Home Guard, and one night each week, had to guard the warehouse during air-raids. We had to go on the roof, looking out for parachutes. I got a kick out of this, being only 17 years old.

I joined the army in June 1943, went all through Europe to Germany, and then to the middle east, coming home in 1947. I went back to Rushton's for my job, but could not get it, and spent the rest of my life at Leyland Motors.

I often wonder what happened to the people who worked at O G Rushton. I would like to meet them. If you hear of anyone, would you please let me know.

**J Winstanley  
Upholland**

## "Reminiscences of Farming" by Tony Berry, Issue No.43

Dear Editor

As a child I remember the threshing machine coming to my grandfather and grandmother's Edge Wood Hall Farm, Orrell. The thresher was owned by Herbert Marsh of Tower Hill, Upholland, and Bill Berry was in charge. Bill was a tall man and to me as a young lad, he was a gentle giant. There was also a man named Joe Anderton who bled the straw after the corn had been threshed.

On the day of the threshing Bill would arrive at the farm at about six o'clock in the morning and lay the boiler fire of the engine, so that steam would be up for the eight o'clock start. At around seven fifteen, Bill and Joe would go to the farm house where my grandmother had made breakfast of eggs and bacon for them. I was always up early on threshing days, and I would go with Bill and Joe to the farm house (not for breakfast though) and I remember how they used to take off their caps as they entered the house, and drop them onto the flagged floor of the hall.

Threshing days were always exciting, especially when the last stack under the Dutch Barn was reached. This was because hordes of rats had gathered there. The farm had two good dogs, and they could worry the rats as they appeared. Also a few local folk would bring their

dogs as well, to join in the kill. Everybody working by the thresher used to tie the bottom of their trouser legs with binder twine, this was to stop a rat running up the inside of the leg. There was no pest control in those days, so farmers had to deal with the rats themselves. In two days threshing, well over a hundred rats could be under the stacks.

One thing Bill used to allow me to do, which was exciting for me as a young lad, was to blow the engine's whistle at lunch time, (dinner time on the farm) and again to start after dinner. Bill and Joe always had lunch as well as breakfast at the farm house.

Sadly, the thresher disappeared when the combined harvester arrived. I knew Bill very well, and met him many times during later years and I always found him to be a gentleman. It is nice to know that he had quite a long life. Joe, the second-in-command of the threshing machine, 'another gentleman', died a good few years before Bill.

I, like Tony, can still remember the smell of steam and hot oil around the engine. Thank you, Tony, for reminding me of those happy days of when the thresher came to Edge Wood Hall Farm, Edge Hall Road, Orrell.

**Frank Winnard  
Billinge**

## SOCIETY NEWS

### LEIGH & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library on the third Tuesday of each month, except June & July, at 7.30p.m.

Visit [www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk](http://www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk) for details.

Secretary. Glenys McClellan 01942 729559

### Programme January – April 2007

#### January 16th

*Getting Started & AGM*

#### February 20th

*Merchant Seaman's Records* by Dr Michael Watts

#### March 20th

*Latin without Tears* by Pat Winker

#### April 17th

*Dorothy Legh* by Phillip Hagert



# J H Naylor Brass Foundry

Dear Editor

In the last issue of Past Forward, there was an article with memories of Millgate, which interested me, as I have memories of Millgate, and, at the same time, give the present youth an insight into the lot of an apprentice, in my case from 1935-1939.

I started work at Millgate, at J.H.Naylor, Brass Foundry and Engineers. This was situated across the passage from Pennington's, the furniture store, and where the Civic Centre offices now stand. Having left school at 14 years of age in June, I began work after the annual one week holiday in July. It was only ONE week then, and without pay. The day began at 8am to 5.30pm daily, and four

and a half hours on a Saturday. to make it up to a 48 hour week. My wage was ten shillings and sixpence (52 and a half pence in present money) Three minutes late, and wages were docked by a half hour.

My day started by going round to all the men, about 25 in all, to get their brew-cans, and the money for a tea-break at 10am. After filling a large kettle, and placing it on an old stove, at 9.30 am I had to go up Millgate to the Palais de Danse, and then down to the Market Place, to a confectioner's shop (Dicky Lee's) where I got the mens' tea, coffee, and various cakes and buns, so that I was back at the workplace for the 10am break. After break, it was usually one of the men calling for a clean out of the swarf under his machine, or to carry some castings in for someone. All in all, general labouring until about

11.30am, when it was dinner-time, brew cans, pies, chips at a chip-shop in Millgate, near to where Salvation Army had their rooms.

After lunch I usually had to take the hand-cart round to all the Wigan stores, (both large and small) in order to get as much straw as possible, which was given to me for the packing department. Makinson's always had some, but it was dusty, and the packer didn't like that. I also had to scrounge boxes from shoe shops etc.

Back at the works, it was always someone wanting a machine clean, or the Test Bench having some valves or fittings sent back to the men for repair. Then it was into the packing department, to help pack up the finished goods. This generally lasted until 4.30pm, when I had to get the hand-cart again, and take the parcels and boxes to the two railway stations and the Post Office, and try to get back to the works for 5.30pm. I didn't always make it, but I had a key to let myself in, but no overtime, as I was told "I was lucky to have a job". I also had to take work over to the lamp shop in the Weind, where they made pit lamps for miners. Today, of course, all this work

will be done by a labourer.

So, at the middle of October I got a jolt, as it were, to the system, when the foreman called me into the office, to tell me I must go to the Gas Works in Chapel Lane (when I go out for straw) and get as much coke as possible, for the boiler. So it was, I couldn't argue, and in November, I started to look after this boiler, and it had to heat up the whole building (equivalent to 4 x 2 bedroomed houses). Carrying the coke up Millgate was too much, so I went up King Street and by the Court Hall dance hall to Library Street, and by the Technical College to Millgate.

Monday morning especially, was a nightmare after being closed for the weekend. Everybody got on to me about being cold. I was told of course that everyone of the apprentices had done this is in the past.

I was there for about five years, and I only left because of the War. That is another story. In those days we only got three days holiday at Easter, one week in July, three days at Christmas and one day for New Year. All without pay.

**Mr L Atty  
Colwyn Bay**

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TRUST

## George's Ghost

By Eric Holt

*When Orwell took the road to Wigan Pier  
He painted a picture so grim,  
No doubt, at the time, what he penned was true,  
The aspect seemed hopeless to him.*

*With mean, crumbling dwellings, poverty rife,  
Folk desperate, desperate lives.  
Miners depicted as loutish and coarse,  
Children hungry, worn-out wives.*

*A town with a future he could not know,  
But one not forgetting its past.  
The Orwellian image is outlived,  
A new Wigan is here to last!*



## Copernicus and Lord Crawford

Dear Editor

Here is something I recently came across in a book called 'The Book Nobody Read' by Owen Gingerich (published 2004). It tells the story of one of the world's most significant scientific books namely 'De revolutionibus orbium coelestium libri sex'.

Translated the title means 'Six books on the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres' and it was written by Nicolaus Copernicus in 1543. It presents the radically different structure of the cosmos by placing the sun, and not the earth at the centre of the universe (solar system).

Now 'Revolutionibus' was tough going, and it has been said no one could understand it. Gingerich thought otherwise but how could he prove it had been widely studied? Gingerich's book tells the story of how he has spent years travelling around the world

searching out every existing copy of Copernicus's work still in existence with the object of logging them all and looking for proof that the book was in fact referred to by astronomers over the past four centuries.

Why should this interest Wiganers? Bear with me, I'm nearly there!

When Gingerich was in Scotland he had a lucky break at The Royal Observatory. He stumbled upon a first edition of Revolutionibus which was covered in pencilled notes from beginning to end thus demonstrating that at least one reader had had the mental capacity to follow it and appreciate the work.

Within whose collection was this copy of Revolutionibus found? None other than Alexander William Lindsay, the 25th Earl of Crawford and 8th Earl of Balcarres who lived at Haigh Hall in the 19th Century. I am not suggesting here that the notes on the copy of Revolutionibus were his notes. I am merely underlying the fact that Earl had collected, preserved and probably referred to the copy during his residency at the Hall. As a boy exploring Haigh Plantations, I can remember timber ruins sprawled across the hillock to the north east of the hall, said to be the remains of the observatory.

**David Whalley**

## Refugees

Dear Editor

I remember the De La Mares from Ormskirk Road, Pemberton, as I was very friendly with Joyce, who also had sisters 'Dolly' and Molly, and of course, Ronnie.

I used to call for Joyce on my way to school, and remember Mrs De La Mare had the four of them lined up dishing out a spoonful of cod liver oil and MALT, UGH! I thought it was awful.

Joyce did not remember Guernsey, as she was too young when they left during the Nazi occupation. When the war ended, they would not go to school on that day, so of course, I did not go. On arriving home I got a clout for not going.

We left Highfield School together, and not long after, they went back to Guernsey and of course, we lost touch. Mrs De La Mare was very artistic, making beautiful knitted dolls, she could turn her hand to anything. Oh, how I loved to go round to their house! They lived on the ground floor, whilst upstairs was the Robilliard family, also from Guernsey. They all got on well with each other. Oh, happy days, even with a war on.

**Mrs Thelma Chadwick  
Pemberton**

## INCE

Dear Editor

I felt that I should write in relation to Mrs Elsie Alker's 'complaint' regarding Ince being 'under-represented' in Past Forward. I think that Ince is well-served by your magazine.

I look forward to the copy arriving by post. Living away from Wigan seems to sharpen the memories, etc. For example, the article about Gidlow House, Petticoat Lane, in Higher Ince, brought back memories as a youngster brought up in Belle Green Lane. Mr Wadson is obviously more senior than I am, but his article conjured up things that I remember well.

We always held Gidlow House in awe. We were always told that this house (which was much more grand than all other houses in Ince at the time) belonged to a Mr Albert Longworth of the mining family. They owned collieries in the area such as the Industrious Bee pit, near to the railway level crossing on Belle Green Lane. We called it 'The Busy Bee', and it was one of the many interesting places to play, climbing on to the large masonry, that might have been the winding-engine moorings, and looking up the chimney stack from the bottom. Yes, it was smashing to live in the Belle Green Lane

area during the 1940's and 1950's. There was so many things to do, climbing to the top of the Slag Heap at the 'Top Place', sliding down the pit heaps, we called them the 'Branch Brew' as they were adjacent to another colliery called the Branch Pit. I think the official name was Ince Hall Colliery, or East Pit.

The pit was even more exciting in winter, we had our very own 'ski slope', sliding down on corrugated tin or a home-made sledge, imaginatively constructed from old barrel stoves 'borrowed' from Gallagher's pickle works, which was situated just off Belle Green Lane, in Earl Street and King Street.

I could write pages about Ince, it was an exciting place to live. You could even collect engine numbers whilst in the classroom at Belle green School, as the engines passed by on the Whelley Loop line. Mind you, you could get the cane if you were caught turning round to watch them!

I could go on forever, and I'm sure my letter will bring back memories to my age group (67 years.)

**Mr Roy Ashurst  
Flixton**

*See Mrs Alker's article on page 10 on life in Higher Ince. Editor.*

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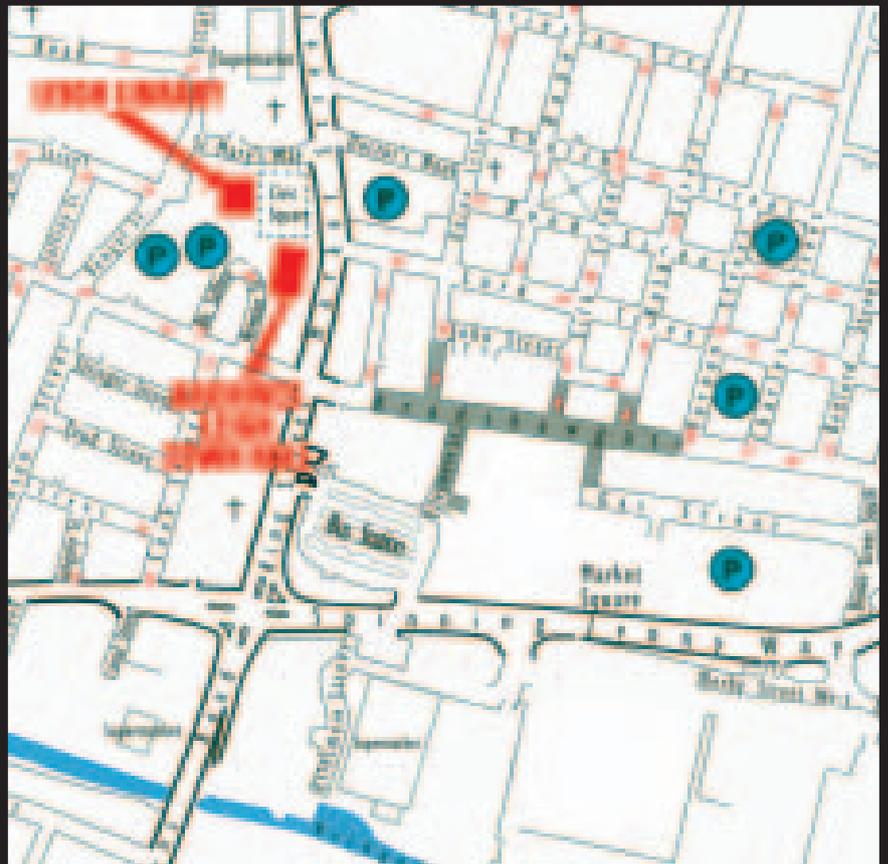
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