

PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

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Uncover Wigan's Roman Past



£1

WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICES
discover
YOUR HERITAGE

WIGAN
LEISURE & CULTURE
TRUST

Contents

- 2-3 Heritage Service
- 4 The History Shop Update
- 5 Archives News
- 6 Learning and Outreach News
- 7 Collections Corner
- 8-10 Celebrating 100 Years: A Brief History of Tyldesley Library
- 11 Joe Acton, Wigan's first World Champion?
- 12-13 Flora's Story
- 14-15 The Lady of Station House
- 16-17 Political Jobbery at Leigh
- 18-19 Mild and Bitter were the Days
- 20 Andrew Carnegie
- 21 A Miner's Tale
- 22 Memories – King Street Methodist School
- 23 Gold, Frankincense and Th'Mayor
- 24 Hindley's Fog Horn
- 25 Friends of Wigan Heritage Service
- 26-28 The Eighteenth Century Constable
- 28 Views of Hindley
- 30-31 Can You Help?
- 32-33 Your Letters
- 34 Society News
- 35 Probing Pictures

FRONT COVER PICTURE

Roman Invasion – Wigan's Roman soldiers are put through their paces, see page 6 for full story.

Letter from the Editorial Team

First of all, we would like to wish all our readers a very merry Christmas! How quickly it comes round each year. We also thank all our contributors, as without you, there would be no magazine. Please keep on sending all your articles, letters and suggestions.

In this issue we celebrate the centenary of Tyldesley Library, with an article written by Tony Ashcroft. After all this time, the library is still well used and well loved by local people. May it prosper for another 100 years!

Many visitors to Wigan will have seen the reconstructed Roman hypocaust (central heating system) at the back of the Grand Arcade Shopping Centre. It is based on the Roman remains excavated in 2006. In October, the Heritage Service, with the help of lots of little Romans, invaded Wigan once more. You can read all about it on page 6. Local readers might want to visit the reconstruction, it's fascinating, and there are information panels, as well a leaflet explaining the nature of the Roman site in Wigan. You can pick up a copy of the leaflet inside the Grand Arcade or at The History Shop Interim Service Desk in Wigan Library.

Information for Contributors

If you would like to submit an article for **PAST FORWARD**, please note that:

- Publication is at discretion of Editorial Team
- The Editorial Team reserve the right to edit submissions
- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of
- Articles must be received by the copy date if inclusion is desired in the next issue

Submission Guidelines

- Electronic submissions are preferred, although handwritten ones will be accepted
- Maximum length – no more than 1,000 words
- Include photographs or images where possible – if you wish these to be returned, please include a stamped addressed envelope
- Include your name and address – we will not pass on your details to anyone unless you have given us permission to do so
- Anonymous submissions will not be published

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

CONTACT DETAILS: pastforward@wlct.org or The Editor at PAST FORWARD, The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1NU.



THE HERITAGE SERVICE'S LATEST RECRUIT



Tony Ashcroft Retires

We say goodbye to Tony, our Local & Family History Officer, Leigh who retired from the Heritage Service in September.

He first came to work in Wigan as a Library Assistant, and took up post with the Heritage Service in 1989. History was Tony's second career, having previously worked for the NHS.

His passion for his subject, particularly the history of Leigh, was well known, as was his sartorial elegance! He was always full of ideas to promote local history, some of them a bit wild and wacky, but there was usually a gem. He was also a staunch contributor to Past Forward, which we all hope will continue. At his leaving 'do' he said that he had never been bored, had always looked forward to coming to work and had enjoyed every minute. How many of us can say that? Tony's enthusiasm will be sorely missed. However we probably have not seen the last of him, as the pull of local history will be too strong for him to resist!

One bonus of retirement is that he will be able to enjoy to the full his first grandchild which is due in the near future. Everyone at Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust, especially his Heritage Service colleagues, wish him the very best of luck.



Hannah Turner

As we say goodbye to Tony Ashcroft, we welcome new recruit Hannah Turner, who will be replacing Tony as Local & Family History Officer, Leigh. Hannah said "I am very pleased to join the Heritage Service. It is my second appointment for Wigan Leisure Culture Trust, having previously worked as a library assistant at Beech Hill. I have always loved history, but my interest was fuelled during my placement at the Christopher Columbus Museum in Gran Canaria. I began studying for an MA in Heritage Studies shortly afterwards, whilst also volunteering in my spare time at the International Slavery Museum.

I am looking forward to working alongside the people of Wigan and Leigh, encouraging the community to be engaged and excited by our heritage."

Hannah will become more involved in developing local history and events and activities, so keep a look out for these offers.

Copy Deadline for Issue 54

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday 19 February.

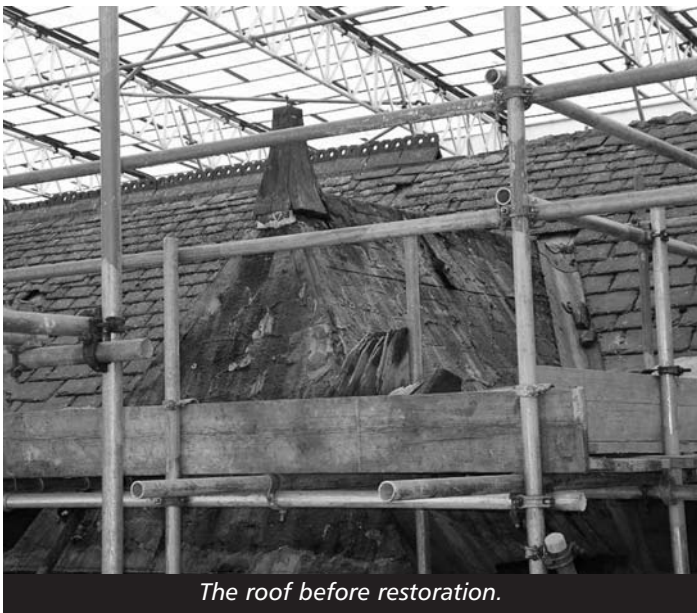
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HISTORY SHOP UPDATE



The roof before restoration.

Work is currently on schedule for re-opening in Spring 2010, with building work due to be completed at the end of this year. The slating of the roof is progressing well and masonry works are almost completed. The scaffold will come down in stages, as work progresses, revealing the beautifully refurbished brick and stone work.

Internally, the split level staircase and lift which will provide improved access to the first floor local study and research area are being fitted. The new colour scheme, based on the historic colours used by architect Alfred Waterhouse, is taking shape. The builders will also be installing a kitchen for the use of groups using our new education room.

Early in the New Year work to install the new exhibition, community temporary exhibition space and the reception and retail areas will begin on the ground floor. In addition to this, all of the books, maps and microfilms currently in storage will be returned to the local study area.

In the meantime the interim Heritage Service continues at our temporary home in Wigan Library, and we are getting out and about in the local community working with a variety of schools, and from libraries and venues across the Borough.

As usual, keep an eye on our 'blog' at www.wlct.org/Culture/Heritage/hsblog.htm for further updates.



Newly re-pointed brickwork.

Susan Clitheroe – Family and Local History Research

Friendly and professional service covering the whole of the North West and North Wales.

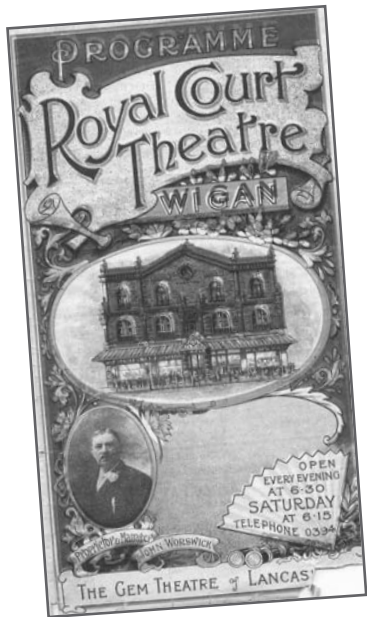
All aspects of family and local history research undertaken by experienced and conscientious researcher. £20.00 for the first hour then £15.00 per hour thereafter. Gift vouchers available – an ideal Christmas present!

Please contact me to discuss your requirements:

Telephone: 01925 220607 Email: susan@scresearch.co.uk

Website: www.scresearch.co.uk





Your Archives

Preparations are well under way at the Archives for the digitisation of original images from the collection of historic photographs. For the past year volunteers and staff at the Archives have diligently sorted through all of the thousands of images held by the service and selected for scanning 5000 of these from all around the borough.

Once scanned, the images will be made available through the Heritage Service website, and we hope will generate much interest in the collection. We always welcome donations to the photographic collections, including digital images, and can often scan original prints when donors wish to retain their original photograph.

Over the past few months we have given a number of introductory talks about what we do at Archives. We can visit local libraries, clubs and societies or host a session in the Town Hall in Leigh. We try to bring along original records local to the area, to give a better feel for what goes on behind the scenes at the Archives. If you would like to arrange for the Archivist to give your group or society an introductory talk, please get in touch.

Recent Acquisitions

New listings continue at pace thanks to the hard work of Archive staff and volunteers. Collections accepted or listed in the last few months include:

- Surface plan of Bickershaw Colliery, 1959 (Acc. 2009/33)
- Testimonial Book for Cllr. Richard Johnson, J.P. of Ince, 1894 (Acc. 2009/38)
- Wigan Free Public Library, lecture posters, 1911-1922 (Acc. 2009/40)

- J & J Heyes, plans for the construction of air raid shelters, 1939-1940 (D/DY/Ha)
- Leigh Glee Club music scores and manuscripts, 1753-1790 (D/DZA/153)
- Diary of Sir Robert Holt Leigh, Solicitor, 1756 (Acc. 2009/74)
- Atherton Independent Methodist Church (additional material) (D/NM(I)/2)

Details of the collections listed above are available from the Archives Service, as is further information on other recent acquisitions.

Collections Corner: Miscellaneous Collections of Records

If you pay a visit to any archive service, you will inevitably find amongst the catalogues a file marked Miscellaneous Collection or Miscellaneous Records. These collections are often neglected by researchers, simply for want of knowing exactly what they contain. So, if you are ever stuck with a piece of research and uncertain of where to look next, they are a great place to go.

Some of the gems of archive collections are by necessity catalogued under miscellaneous if they do not relate to other large series of records, but they have a wealth of information to be uncovered and studied.

At Wigan, the two miscellaneous collections (anything with a reference beginning MMP or D/DZA), contain some of the most interesting and unusual items in the Archives. Assembled in these collections are personal and family papers from all areas of society, diaries and journals, collections of title deeds and other legal documents. Furthermore, there are large collections of posters, pamphlets,

leaflets and other ephemera from all manner of organisations, societies and individuals. Documents like election candidates' flyers, theatre programmes and invitations to dinners and speeches are records never intended to last more than a few weeks or months. Now they give us a unique insight into the daily lives of local people.



LEARNING & OUTREACH NEWS

“CreativeLEIGH”

Leigh Sports Trust (LST) has been awarded a Heritage Lottery grant of just under £44,000 to create a Community Theatre and Visual Arts project that will run between September 2009 and Autumn 2010.

Working in partnership with Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust, LST will commission Wigan Pier Theatre Company to co-ordinate a series of new dramatic live theatre pieces that will bring to life different areas of the Leigh Sports Village (LSV) site in a promenade performance for the public to enjoy. Tightly organised tours will be arranged for audiences to experience once the project is complete.

Entitled “CreativeLEIGH”, the funding will support Youth & Community Theatre activity in the Higher Folds, Leigh and Lowton areas throughout the year leading up to the celebratory performances. Various

age groups will take part in researching, creating and rehearsing the project, and the writing will be undertaken by local professional writer, Julie McKiernan.

Julie says, “The themes within the play will include the heritage of the LSV site and the changes that have happened in the surrounding area. Historical anecdotes from local sports organisations will be brought to life in an exciting fashion and famous people from the Leigh area will also be referred to”.

An additional exciting strand to the work is that members of the community theatre groups will work alongside professional actors in bringing the script to life and creating the performance tour together.

The “CreativeLEIGH” project is also an exciting one for local schools. Primary school children are being approached to work with a visual artist in adding more colour and dynamism with backdrops to the

performances. Also, local high school pupils will be identified to work with older generations of the community in researching and learning about their area working with the writer to make the project relevant and vibrant for the community.

Trevor Barton, Chair of Leigh Sports Trust, adds “The members of Leigh Sports Trust, previously the Leigh and District Sports Partnership which was the force behind developing the LSV, always saw the village as something for the whole community, and the planned cultural activity will inspire people of all ages - its not just about sport. We are very grateful to the Heritage Lottery for their trust in us, this is our first grant but hopefully not the last.”

If you are interested in finding out more about the project, wishing to take part dramatically or help in the research of it by telling us your story, please contact Martin Green, Development Officer for Wigan Pier Theatre Company, on 01942 486919. Or email him at mpj.green@wlct.org

ROMAN *Invasion*

If you visited the Grand Arcade Shopping Centre, Wigan on 27 and 28 October, you probably heard the ghostly echo of Roman soldiers on the march. Led by the Heritage Service Learning team and volunteers, with the help of re-enactors, over a 1000 people followed in the footsteps of the Romans who once lived in Wigan nearly 2,000 years ago.

Participants had the opportunity to see and handle some of the Roman objects from the museum’s collection. These were excavated from the site where the shopping centre now stands. Children dressed as Roman soldiers, enjoyed story telling sessions about life in Roman Wigan and made shields and a large mosaic. The mosaic will feature in the first temporary exhibition at The History Shop produced by the Wigan Archaeological Society. Ian Miller, the archaeologist who was in charge of the excavation, gave a lecture to families about the site, the finds and the importance of the bath-house.

We wanted local people to learn about Wigan’s Roman past and understand its importance in the history of the Borough, whilst having a fun and exciting time. We also want to encourage local people to visit the new History Shop when it re-opens next spring where they will be able to see Roman objects on display. Judging from the reaction of those who took part, we did just that.



Roman re-enactors, Roman Tours Ltd, with Roman items from the museum collection.



Thomas Hulme's Edward Medal

*Left: The Edward Medal in its case
Centre: The back of the Edward Medal
Right: The Edward Medal case*

The Edward Medal recognised the acts of bravery of miners who put their lives at risk rescuing fellow workers. Thomas Hulme was awarded the Edward medal in 1941. He was manager at Parsonage Colliery, Leigh.

On the afternoon of 23 January 1941, the roof of one of the coal faces at Parsonage Colliery began to collapse. Two men were trapped. Thomas Hulme was nearby, and took control of the situation. One of the men was quickly freed, the other, Thomas Wignall, remained in a precarious position. Thomas Hulme went under the roof in extreme danger to try and free him. There was not enough room for Hulme to use a shovel so he used a little travelling hammer and his fingers to clear away the dirt. Two hours later he had freed Thomas Wignall. Soon after they got out the roof crashed down, splitting the chocks (wooden supports) and crushing the conveyor belt.

The Edward Medal was instituted by Royal Warrant on 13 July 1907. There were two types of Edward Medal - Mines and Industry. The cost of the Edward Medal (Mines) came out of a fund established by a group of philanthropists, including prominent mine owners, and not the state. The medal was divided in two grades: first class (silver) and second class (bronze). Thomas Hulme was awarded a silver first class medal. The Edward Medal (Mines) was awarded 395 times, only 77 of them silver.

The medal is 33mm in diameter and is attached to a dark blue ribbon, edged with yellow. The medal has the profile of reigning monarch George VI on the front. On the back a miner is shown holding a lamp rescuing an injured colleague, underneath the inscription 'For Courage'. The medal was designed by W. Reynolds-Stephens. The medal came in a red case

with the inscription 'EDWARD MEDAL / INSTITUTED BY KING EDWARD VII'.



*Thomas Hulme and his wife
at Buckingham Palace*

Thomas Hulme was presented with his medal at Buckingham Palace on 27 May 1941. The Edward Medal was discontinued in 1971, so in 1973 he exchanged it for the George Cross. He presented his Edward

Medal to the Leigh Town Silver Collection and it has since been displayed in Leigh Public library and Leigh Town Hall.

From Spring 2010 the medal will be on display in a new permanent exhibition at The History Shop. Thomas Hulme will feature in the 'Our Champions' section of the exhibition. 'Our Champions' celebrates the achievements of local people including sports people, entertainers, leaders and brave individuals.

For more information on the Edward Medal and George Cross please visit – www.gc-database.co.uk/

Volunteers Wanted

Leigh Local History desk needs volunteers to help with compiling indexes and general administrative tasks.

For further information please contact Hannah Turner on 01942 404559 or e-mail H.Turner@wlct.org.



Interior of Tyldesley Library after refurbishment 1953

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SERVICE:

A brief history of Tyldesley Library

By Tony Ashcroft

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, many towns began to establish public libraries, funded by the generosity of Andrew Carnegie. Amongst these, was Tyldesley Library.

Although the public library in Tyldesley dates from 1909, there had been talk of such an institution as far back as 1897. At that time R. Isherwood, Chairman of the District Council, had convened a meeting to consider how to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. He wanted the council to adopt the Public Libraries Act, so that they could build a library as a



permanent memorial to the Queen's reign. Discussions took place between the council and the Trustees of the Temperance Hall and Mechanics' Institute, who had offered the land and building to the council, for use as a Free Library and Museum by local people. The Temperance Hall, which stood at the corner of Stanley Street and Meanley Street, officially opened in September 1851 at the cost of £650. It was used for a variety of purposes, including technical education. By 1901 it housed a library of 1400 volumes, and was the headquarters of the Tyldesley Natural History Society and their museum.

There appeared to be no further developments until 1908 when the council announced plans, seen by Carnegie, for the new library on the site of the Temperance Hall. By July, a tender for the erection of the library had been accepted at a cost of just under £4,000, and on 18 December 1909, the library was officially opened.

Opening Ceremony

The opening ceremony was described in detail in the local paper.

'A Procession of members and officials of the District Council, Library and Higher Education Committees, Committee of the late Mechanics' Institute, subscribers to the Book Fund, representatives of neighbouring authorities, and leading gentlemen of the town, took place from the Technical School to the principal entrance in Stanley Street, where Mr. A. J. Hope on behalf of architects, Messrs Bradshaw and Gass, presented Mr. Eckersley with a gold key. Mr. Hope said in 1907 it was suggested that the old Temperance Hall should be used as a library. After much consideration it was found impossible to make it adaptable and suitable for the purpose, but a generous offer of £4,000 was made by Mr. Carnegie, and it was then decided to erect a new building. The Committee entrusted with the spending of the money considered many alternatives to secure the best

possible value for the money placed at their disposal, and that building was the result. The building, he thought, would provide excellent accommodation for library purposes for the town. They were not only opening the building, but something a great deal more important, a store of knowledge which would be of the greatest possible benefit to the inhabitants of Tyldesley, and he hoped for many years they would live to see good fruit borne from the undertaking. (Hear, hear) In handing Mr. Eckersley the key, he said he hoped it would be accepted as a memento of a very important event in the history of Tyldesley.

Mr. Eckersley, in accepting the key, said he had had two or three keys given him in his time, but he thought that was the most handsome he had ever had. The weather had turned out dismal, and considering that, it was very gratifying to see such a large assemblage. He echoed what Mr. Hope said about the building being of the greatest benefit to the inhabitants of Tyldesley. (Hear, hear) As they knew, the money with which the building had been erected was provided by a man who commenced his career as an errand boy, and who attributed his success to having access to libraries such as that. Mr. Carnegie was very anxious that other people should have the same opportunities that he had. (Hear, hear) It might be that some of those who used the library would achieve great success like Mr. Carnegie had done, and then they might remember Mr. Carnegie. And do something that would help other people less fortunate than themselves in life. (Hear, hear)

Mr. Eckersley then opened the door and declared the building open. The public were then admitted.'



Description of the building

'The main entrance in Stanley Street, gives access to a wide hall, from which the news room is approached to the left, and the lending department to the right. The news room, 45 feet by 21 feet, provides accommodation for 50 or 60 readers at the newspaper stands and tables; the reference library adjoins the news room, and accommodates the more valuable books, which are accessible for study and kept under the control of the librarian, whose room adjoins it and the lending department. The borrowers' space, 24 feet long by 27 feet wide, has its counter extending the full width, fitted up with "Cotgreave" indicators. Behind the attendant's counter is the lending department, 32 feet by 16 feet, where racks are provided to hold about 10,000 volumes; with a circular plaster enriched ceiling and top lights with coloured red glazing, this room presents a handsome appearance from the borrowers' lobby. The attendants control the reading and reference rooms from the lending department, from

which a stair leads to Mezzanine book gallery, where further accommodation for 5,000 volumes is provided. On the first floor is the lecture room, 43 feet by 30 feet, where seating is provided, with a platform at one end, and retiring room and lavatory accommodation to the rear. The ladies' reading room, capable of comfortably seating 25 readers at the tables, also occupies part of the first floor. In the basement are a large bookstore, heating chamber, cleaners' room etc.

The interior of the building is generally plain but substantial; the walls are plastered with suitable cornice moulds and the lending library and lecture hall have panel and circular ceilings. The joinery work in division screens, doors, etc internally is pitch pine, carefully selected, and varnished. The main staircase is fireproof, with terrazzo finish, and all floors are of fire resistant construction. Heating and ventilation have had careful attention, the contract for the work being entrusted to Mr. Robert Walsh, of Bolton, and the incandescent gas lighting installation is the work of Mr. Henry Baxendale of Tyldesley.

The exterior has been designed in the renaissance style of architecture, with the main entrance in the centre of Stanley Street, front; the windows are circular headed, and enriched with stone dressings. The upper part is treated with pilasters and panels, with moulded brick terminating in a stone cornice with enrichments and moulded blocking course over. The materials used are red Ruabon bricks, with Runcorn

stone dressings, the Meanley Street front being carried out mainly in brick; the roofs are covered with brown brindled tiles, and forming a pleasing colour effect, with rich tones, and the whole effect is one of simplicity and dignity.

The contract for the building and fittings has been carried out by Mr. James Cocker, of Walkden. The whole of the works have been executed under the direction of the architects, Messrs. Bradshaw and Gass, F.R.I.B.A of Bolton and London, who have designed the building, and also the fittings and general furniture of the library.'

Some early librarians

Harold P. Holker - was the first Public Librarian to be appointed, and had come to Tyldesley from Eccles. In 1920 he asked for a rise, he currently earned £213-8-0 per year, but was refused, so he resigned. At the time, one councillor remarked that the job was really only a spare time one which a teacher could undertake. He moved on to become the Borough Librarian at Southall in Middlesex.

Thomas McKnight - prior to his appointment, McKnight had been an Assistant Librarian in Wigan Public Libraries, and later the organising librarian to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust in Ireland. He also acted as Technical Library Advisor to the Irish Advisory Committee of the Carnegie Trustees. He was nephew to Edward McKnight, Chief Librarian of Chorley, one of the founders of the Workers Educational Association (WEA). His time at Tyldesley was very short as he was asked to resign

at the end of January 1921. He was accused of purchasing £100 worth of books without authority, keeping irregular hours and being absent from duty without permission. Furthermore he had failed to keep the library clean and tidy. Although he had been appointed on a salary of £250 per year, the advertisement for his successor only offered £200.

William Eckersley - remained as librarian until 1952 when he retired because of ill-health at the age of 60. He had fought in the First World War and served with the Royal Sussex and Manchester Regiments, losing a leg when under heavy shell fire at St. Quentin. After the war, before becoming a librarian he was a painter and decorator. He died in 1964 and is buried in Tyldesley Cemetery.

Refurbishment

In early 1953 Tyldesley Library Committee approved a scheme for alterations at a cost of £450. It re-opened to the public in August 1953. The reading room was transferred to the room occupied by the lending library and the library was re-lit thus transforming the internal features of the building. The last major decorations took place between 2006-2008, when the library assumed its new corporate colours of purple, lime green and white.

The library is now one of the best loved and used in the borough. It has come a long way since those early days. Users can borrow CDs, DVDs and use the People's Network computers, as well as borrow books. The numerous courses and activities on offer have ensured that it has become a hub of community activity.



Joe Acton, Wigan's First World Champion?

by Tommy Heyes

Joe Acton, Catch as Catch Can Lightweight Wrestling Champion of the World could be Wigan's first ever sporting world champion.

Two journalists, in New York to report on Acton's world championship match against another Lancashire born wrestler, Edwin Bibby, both stated that Acton came from Wigan. The American correspondent for 'Sporting Life' seemed to know Acton and other Lancashire wrestlers based in New York quite well. The second was the sports reporter from the 'New York Herald', whose account of the match appeared in the 'Wigan Observer' a few days later.

There is no doubt that Acton was born in Lancashire in 1852 and learnt to wrestle in his native country before leaving for America. There, he was credited with being one of a small group of Lancashire wrestlers to introduce Catch as Catch Can wrestling to the United States. Bibby, a clever and experienced wrestler was well known in American wrestling circles, where the press dubbed him the 'Champion of Catch Wrestling.' Acton was billed as the 'Little Demon,' suggesting he may have visited America on a previous occasion. The pair had also wrestled eight times in England, the score going to Acton five, three.

The date for their match was set for 7 August 1882, and billed as the Lightweight Catch as Catch Can Championship of the World, with \$1000 prize money for the winner. Over a thousand spectators took their seats at Madison Square Garden to witness the first

championship match in the Lancashire style to be seen in the United States.

On coming together, the two contestants set about each other with a speed and tenacity that surprised the veteran wrestlers at ringside. Nevertheless, the 'Little Demon' had come to win. Although Bibby was several pounds bigger, after forty-eight minutes Acton turned his opponent to secure the second and winning fall of the match, and was declared the Lightweight Champion of the World.

Editor – has anyone tried to trace the family history of Joe Acton?

Sources: 'Wigan Observer' 'Sporting Life' 'New York Times'

o exhibitions
o learning
o outreach

turnpike
GALLERY

J Lawrence Isherwood
7th November - 2nd January



Paintings from the William Higham collection
Talk by author Stephen Eckersley on
Wednesday 11th November 7.00pm-9.00pm

GALLERY OPENING TIMES
Monday - Friday 10am-6pm
Saturday 9.30am-3.30pm
FREE ADMISSION

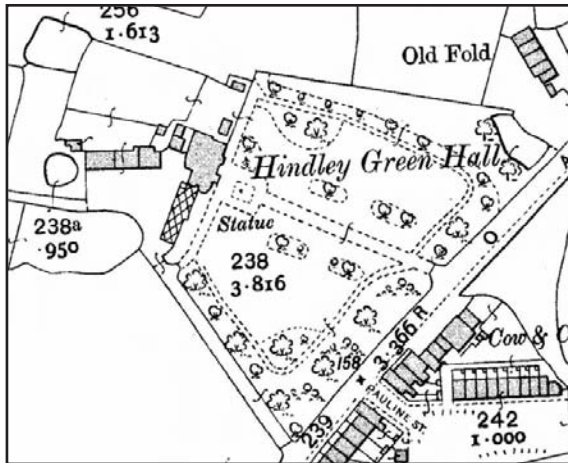
Turnpike Gallery, Civic Square, Leigh WN7 1EB
Tel: 01942 404469 www.wlct.org/turnpike

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FLORA'S STORY

By Keith Wood



After purchasing a 1908 Ordnance Survey map of Hindley Green on eBay, I became drawn to an area of the map, which shows Hindley Green Hall. The Hall and its grounds are shown in great detail due to the large scale of the map, 25 inches to 1 mile.

The map shows that the Hall was of a substantial size with several buildings shown, including a large greenhouse situated at the side of the house. Extensive gardens and footpaths are clearly marked. One feature, which I find fascinating, is that of a statue which is located within the garden grounds. I decided to investigate further. Why would a statue be shown on the map? What was the statue? Where is the statue now?

The Hall and the Statue

The Hall was situated near the entrance to the present PPG works on Leigh Road, Hindley Green. It was the home of the Diggle family who were local farm and mine owners, and proprietors of the local Brunswick Chapel and Sunday School.

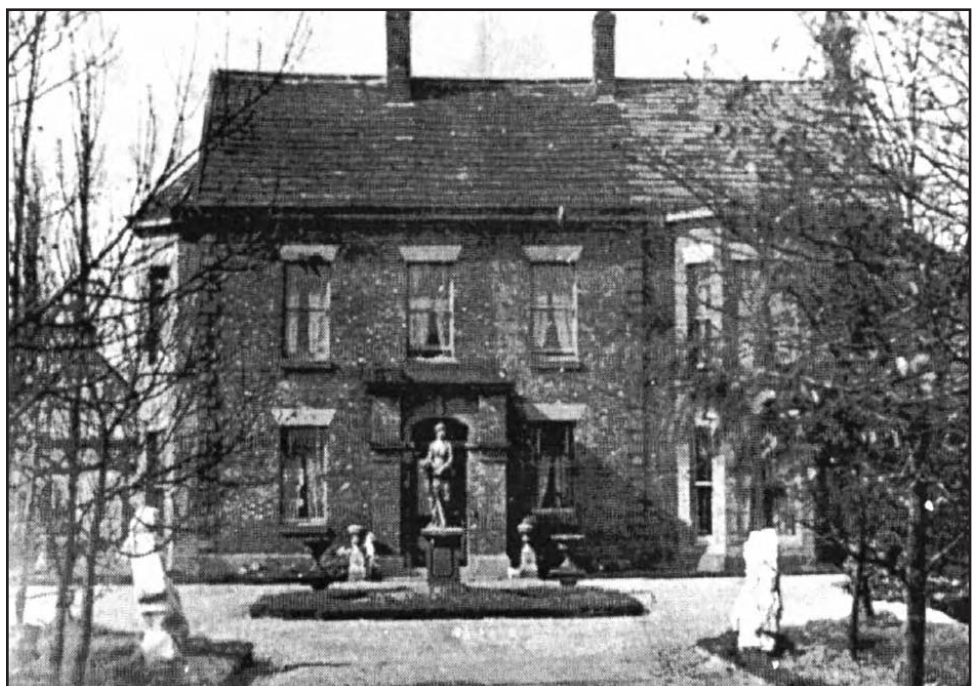
The Rescued Goddess

On Tuesday 4 September 1962 the 'Evening Chronicle' printed this story.

'Two Tonne Flora – Ince MP gives her VIP spot

There are no fairies at the bottom of the garden owned by Mr Tom Brown MP the 76-year-old MP for Ince. Instead there is a two tonne Flora, a

statue. Flora, Goddess of spring and flowers, stood in front of Hindley Green Hall, which was demolished about 15 years ago to make way for the Hindley Green factory of Turner Bros. Tom, in love with the statue since his boyhood, bought the statue for 10s, for his garden in Leigh Road, Hindley Green.'



Tom recalled that the man responsible for the Hall was James Diggle, who sank five shafts at West Leigh Colliery. When he died, his family kept the Hall for some time. Finally, it fell into disrepair and was taken over by squatters.

As a boy Tom was the eldest of five children and was born a little further along the road near the Hall. Tom had been fascinated by the statue, which, as far as he knows, Mr Diggle brought over from the South of France or the North of Spain. "I decided to try and buy it for my own garden," Tom told the reporter, "after a lot of inquires I found that the person responsible for the estate was a solicitor in Wigan. He'd never heard of the statue, but he put by the suggestion to the trustees, and they said I could have it on two conditions. The first was that I should make myself responsible for removing it: the second was that I should make a reasonable offer for it. As a matter of fact I gave 10s for it. And it was accepted without argument". Tom described how he and a friend went with a borrowed handcart to hump the statue to his own home. "And what a surprise I got, when I found that Flora was not stone, as we had all supposed, but lead. Still we got it home, even though the springs of the handcart broke halfway there." When asked what would become of it, when he was no longer there to look after it, Tom replied "I reckon it's been in Hindley Green all of 100 years already, so I've



told my son that it has to be offered to Hindley Council so that if they wish they can put it in one of their parks."

The testament of Albert Raine

I met Albert at his home on Leigh Road in the summer of 2007. I found him to be a real gentleman and very knowledgeable about the history of his local area. Albert told me that he remembered the walking days from Brunswick Chapel to the Hall. The procession would walk around the Hall grounds stopping at the statue to sing hymns. The procession would then walk back to the Chapel, stopping on the way at several houses to sing hymns. "The statue was called Flora. I remember someone saying that it had been bought by the owners of the Hall to remember a lady servant who worked at the Hall who died in a drowning accident at the rear of the Hall". Albert also told me that he knew Tom Brown, the MP, who bought the statue. He said that Tom grew up living in a house opposite the Hall "Tom's mother died when he was a young boy. I think that that

was the reason Tom loved the statue, as he was able to see it from his bedroom window". Albert helped Tom to move the statue from the Hall to Tom's home on Leigh Road, where the statue took pride of place in the garden. According to Albert, Tom's garden looked like a park, the lawn and the flowerbeds were always immaculate. Tom liked to grow orchids, which he used to take to Westminster to give to his MP friends. I asked Albert did he know of the present whereabouts of the statue, but he had not seen it since Tom died in 1970.

Could the 'Wigan Observer' help?

In June 2008 I wrote an article about the statue and mailed it to Geoffrey Shryane the editor of the 'Wigan World' page in the 'Wigan Observer'. I asked the question did anyone know what happened to Flora? To my surprise, a gentleman named Tom Hunt contacted the newspaper and reported that he had bought the statue for a tidy sum from Mr Brown's daughter-in-law. She had been advised by her husband to sell the statue when the allotment closed. I think that she was afraid of someone stealing Flora and melting her down. That would have been a terrible tragedy. It took eight men to move the heavyweight work of art, and it is now believed that Flora is giving pleasure to some person living in Texas. Mystery solved!

If anyone has any more information about the Hall or statue please could you contact the Editor.

THE LADY OF STATION HOUSE

by Eunice Berry

Nobody would ever have guessed how keenly Mary Cheetham, known to her family as Polly, disliked the endless chores that came her way in childhood. Being an innate 'lady', she did them all with a patient smile. To complain might have hurt the feelings of the folk she loved most.

There were many to consider since her mother, Elizabeth, had borne eleven children before she was 40. Several had failed to survive infancy, but the remaining ones filled the house with noise and activity. Brother Harry, two years older than Polly, was a tower of strength to his gentle sister, and her undisputed favourite. Then along came Lizzie, Maggie, Ellen, Ethel, Tom and Fred.

All were aware from their earliest schooldays that their father, John Cheetham, was a special man. As Area Leader of the Miner's Trades Union and a local councillor, his name and photograph were frequently in the Wigan newspapers. Even the teachers were impressed, when in 1892 at the age of 34, he was appointed Justice of the Peace for the County Borough of Wigan. This was the first time in the history of England that an ordinary working miner had become a magistrate. Perhaps Polly started to develop the cool, ladylike air she was later renowned for at the age of eleven, when her father received this first major honour. Boastfulness was frowned upon in the Cheetham household, so, even though she was inwardly bursting with pride, on this and other occasions, the bland expression on her pretty, little face refuted the fact.

As the Victorian era drew to a close Polly now employed as a tailor, was being pursued by various suitors, but she was waiting for the tall, dark stranger of her dreams to come along. Just before the turn of the century, he did in the form of Joseph John Marsh. He came from Staffordshire, and his parents had come to live in Highfield, just a short distance from the Cheetham home in Rose Hill, Pemberton. Joe was not only the most handsome man she had ever, met he was also the kindest.

A less welcome arrival in 1900 was a new baby sister. Although little Clara soon won everyone's heart, Polly was sure her coming was the reason for Harry's decision to emigrate to America the following year. He became a cutter at the Hawick Mine on the banks of the Alleghany River in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He married American girl Sarah Ann McGowan in 1903. Tragically, the year after at the age of 24, he was one of the 170 miners killed in a huge explosion. His family in Wigan were grief-stricken when the news reached them and none more so than Polly, who had been so close to him. Joe provided a much-needed shoulder to lean on, and in 1905 the local newspapers recorded their marriage at the Mount Zion Church, Pemberton.

Finally, with marriage, came the tranquillity Polly had been denied in childhood. When Joe was appointed signalman at Bryn Station near Wigan, a house came with the job. From a busy home in a busy district, she became the mistress of Station House, which was set in solitary splendour on the high embankment a considerable distance from the public road. To many women it would have seemed lonely and isolated, but from the first moment Polly saw its unique position, and noted the rooms with high ceilings and quaint windows,

she fell in love with the place. She rejoiced in the space and privacy after the crowded atmosphere of her upbringing.

A first-born son arrived in 1906 and was named Harry Cheetham Marsh in memory of Polly's brother. Less than two years later Leonard John was born to complete the happy family. Polly felt she was mistress of all she surveyed and her contentment knew no bounds. A steady stream of family and friends visited, and were fascinated by Station House. The boys were bright scholars and on Sundays attended chapel with their parents, taking part in its many social activities. Polly knew they would never be well-to-do in the material sense, but felt in all other respects life was rich and rewarding. She became a devotee of the Co-operative Movement, believing it provided a great service for people like her, who had to watch their pennies. She was elected delegate for Ashton area which involved travelling to conferences in other parts of the country. The warmth of the welcome she received on returning made up for home-sickness she suffered when away.

Through times of war and peace, joy and sorrow, Polly never lost her deep affection for Station House. Its lack of modern amenities meant it was shunned by other rail employees, so when Joe died in 1934, she was able to remain in the home they had shared. She hoped and prayed she would be permitted to end her days there. This actually seemed likely until in the 1950s, bureaucrats began a blitz on old property, and Station House provided an obvious target. She tried to convince critics that she was comfortable with her circumstances but to no avail. They decreed her house without hot water and electricity was unfit for human habitation. The verdict almost broke her heart, but as ever she was too much of a lady to make a fuss. For a brief time she went through the motions of living in the neat little bungalow magnanimously wished upon her, and then departed as she had lived, with dignity, in her sleep,- possibly dreaming that she was still the lady of her beloved Station House.



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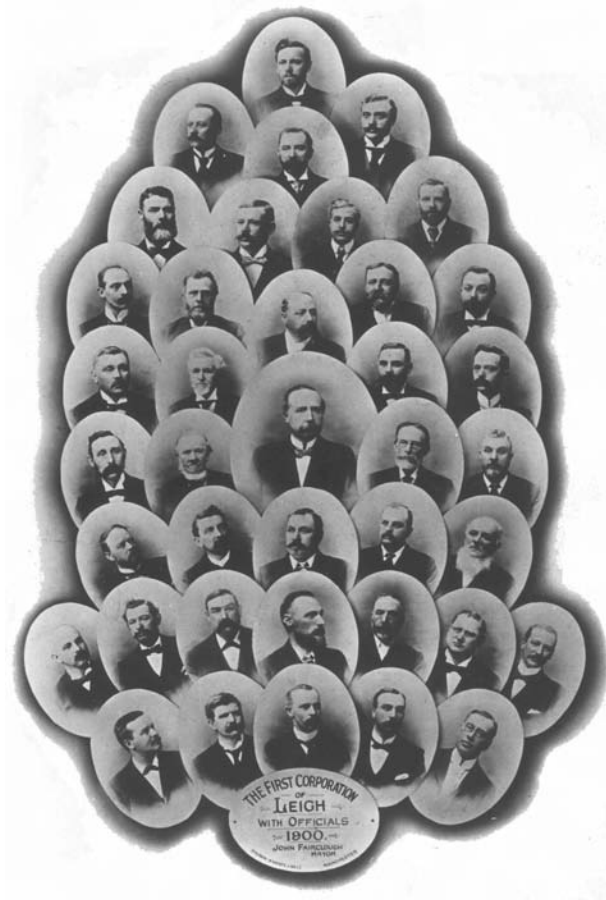
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“Political Jobbery”

By Yvonne Eckersley

at Leigh



The First Corporation of Leigh, 1900

By the late Victorian era, Leigh, like many other towns of its type, had been and still was expanding rapidly. The rise in population and industry was creating problems for the health and well-being, not just of Leigh, but of most British towns. Local Government Boards and ratepayers were struggling to provide much needed services, particularly those that could not be provided within one town's boundaries or budget. As it became obvious that a unified system of local government was required, both Conservative and Liberal Governments instigated a number of organisational reforms. A Local Government Act of 1888, created elected County Councils, which had overall responsibility for their county. An Act in 1894 created a system of urban and rural districts with elected councils for the smaller towns. These district councils were responsible for day to day running. These acts saw the establishment of Lancashire County Council and Leigh Urban District Council.

Leigh becomes a borough

By the late 1890s Leigh's population had grown sufficiently to be granted borough status. Around 4000 Leigh voters petitioned Parliament to grant it a Charter of Corporation. The Charter arrived in Leigh on 5 August 1899. On the 9 November, Leigh Borough Council came into being and the Urban District Council became defunct. Electing a Borough Council required changes in the town's municipal organisation. Leigh was divided into eight wards, each ward electing three councillors. The 24 councillors were obliged to elect eight aldermen, one for each ward and a Mayor. The latter created eight vacancies on the council, which were filled through by-elections by 23 November 1899.

It was rather ironic, that although the granting of the Charter was a

forward step, for one section of the electorate the reverse was true. Woman had the right to sit on District Councils, but not Borough Councils. In 1895 there were 352 Leigh women recorded as qualified to vote and therefore eligible to become councillors. By 1899, the number had increased to 646, but none could be elected onto the council. Leigh's women had to wait until 1907, when the law was changed to include the Borough Council.

The political hierarchy

Political activity in Leigh at that time was typical of late Victorian local politics. There was a discernable political hierarchy. Without an aristocracy, the first tier consisted of wealthy industrialists. These were men of high social and economic status, many living in the leafy suburb of Pennington. They included the

brewer, George Shaw, colliery proprietors; Henry Cowburn, William Unsworth and Henry Speakman, and cotton manufacturers; Charles Guest and W J Smith. They stressed their position as large employers and high rate payers to support their candidatures.

Professionals and smaller businessmen formed another tier. These included solicitors, colliery officials, a school master, tailor and a physician. Finally, there were men like William Corner, a miner, who stood "at the request of working men" and Richard Gaskell, Dr. Edmund Pollard and Eli Taylor who made their loyalties clear. They would support any improvement that would protect "the health of the working man - which is his capital".

Concern to keep the rates down and issues of council expenditure were general themes in British local politics.

Leigh's rates had risen from two shillings in the pound in 1895 to three in 1899. Candidates promised to work for "efficiency and economy" and they were against "extravagance" particularly money spent for the "aggrandisement of the mayor" or a Charter Day of celebrations. Candidates were also keen to pronounce they were "anti School Board". The strong support for church schools ensured there were no Board Schools in Leigh until the twentieth century. Other issues included support for a standard rate of wage for council workers, street improvements, cemetery works, sanitation and sewage farms.

Political jobbery

Despite protestations that Council elections ought to be free of party politics, candidates had strong party ties. 'The Chronicle' reported "men known to be Liberal or Conservative prefer not to fight as party men but individuals". A number of candidates for Hope Carr Ward openly stated their "anti-party" stance. However once in office they readily identified with their respective parties. The November 1899 election returned 14 Liberal and 10 Conservative members. The Liberal council elected seven Liberal Aldermen and one Conservative. A problem was

created when the Liberal council offered William Harrison, Conservative, a three year Aldermanship despite his high poll. It had been popularly believed that had Conservative candidate James Hurst not died, then he, with his co-candidate would have been elected, and that two Conservative councillors should have been made Alderman. Consequently, the results of the election would have been more equal. People felt aggrieved. The accusation of "Political Jobbery" came from the 'Manchester Courier' prompted by Mr Harrison being offered a term of office for just three years whilst the "two Radicals...who were at the bottom of the poll in their respective Wards" were "given six years". 'The Chronicle' agreed it was "most unwarranted and unfair", commenting "such an act of glaring injustice had excited public feeling", having earlier acknowledged the offer as a "magnanimous gesture". The Chronicle published Mr Harrison's letter declining the aldermanship. The letter was addressed to W J Smith who was later offered the aldermanship. The paper prophetically reflected that henceforth Leigh politics "will be chiefly on Party lines" and that "all future elections will revolve themselves in a struggle for supremacy on the council".

The first council meeting was to be held in the then Town Hall on King St., (which still stands opposite the George and Dragon). However this inaugural meeting was so well attended that they had to move to a larger room in the Technical School, Railway Road.

Editor - if you want to find out more, see the following Past Forward Articles: Issue 21 Spring 1999 "John Fairclough (1854-1923)"; Issue 22 Summer 1999 "One Hundred Years Old"

I would also like to apologise for the error that appeared in Yvonne's article 'Leigh Labour Party' issue 52 pp. 26-28

"Conservatives dominated The House of Lords to try to scupper the Liberal Government's attempts to find sufficient money to fund its social reform and military programmes"

Should have read:

"Conservatives dominated the House of Lords and had the power to scupper the Liberal Government's attempts to find sufficient money to fund its social reform and military programmes."

Election of Councillors			November 1, 1899 - List of Candidates		
Wards	Surname	Other Names	Address	Description	Votes Received
2 1/2 or St Pauls Ward	Comer	Joseph	8 Kenyon Street Leigh	Insurance Agent	429
	Comer	William	27 Walsley Road Leigh	Miner	270
	Cushion	Henry	253 Westing Lane Leigh	Colliery Proprietor	315
	Hawson	Robert Bryan	Drink House, Mill Lane Leigh	Colliery Manager	377
	Percott	Thomas	15 Dilkefield Street Leigh	Cotton Operative	176
2 or St Marys Ward	Guest	Charles	53 Church Street Leigh	Cotton Spinner	659
	Hayward	Albert Harris	121 Railway Road Leigh	Colliery	575
	Penniston	William Green	House Plat House Leigh	Plumber & Decorator	790
	Smith	William James	The Newlands, Green Lane Leigh	Cotton Manufacturer	622
	Munro	William	53 Bond Street Leigh	Colliery Proprietor	431
3 or St John Ward	Alford	James Taylor	64 Railway Road Leigh	Cypherman	335
	Battersby	John	61 Bond Street Leigh	Wholesale Grocer	447
	Goodenough	John	55 Church Street Leigh	Stone Merchant	497
	Greenough	Richard	The Dingle, Green Lane Leigh	Press Founder	410

Town Election Book Leigh, 1899

'Mild & Bitter were the Days'

By Ken Barlow

My book, of the same title, was published in August this year. It is based on my diary kept throughout the year of 1970. It is a wry look back at a year in the life of a 16 year-old lad typically perplexed by life. I knew everything. I was opinionated, bigoted, unwittingly sexist and racist. My friends and I were anti-establishment, dismissive of the given order of things and knew everything. WE were the new order, WE would change the world, we just needed to get out of bed and have a beer or two first.

Sunday 4 January

Stayed in all morning, very cold out, watched football on TV.

Went to Tufty Club at night. One of the better nights, two lads got kicked out. Bes nearly went too. A girl was after stabbin' a lass with her steel comb so Johnny Ras stopped her, all very good. Shirley and Val were there and I got talking to Shirley mostly. I bought her some cigs, with her money of course, and I've decided I'm going to ask her to go with me tomorrow. Saw Mick coming home, he says he can get us tickets for The Monaco so here we come!

Fast forward to September 1970. By now, our diarist is an obnoxious, bored, spotty-faced working lad. The art of making my wages last an

entire week was proving even more elusive than keeping a girlfriend for a similar period of time.

Sunday 6 September

At night I met Bes at Queensway and first we went to the Market Hotel, then the Swan & Railway, then on to the Bier Keller. Went to Tufty Club, then back to Bier Keller again. Helped Blue Rust, the live group, pack up their gear, I am a roadie!! Came home rather drunk.

Tuesday 8 September

I got up at the stupid time of 10am. Why, when I'm off work? David, my cousin from London, came to stay with a French exchange student called Didi. He is quite pleasant but can hardly speak a word of English and I can't speak much French.

My cousin David, with an A level in French, was ostensibly able to translate. Sadly however, coming from down south, he had problems understanding the Wigan accent! One example of this was when David gave Bes and me a French 'Disque Bleu' cigarette and asked us what we thought of the unique taste and aroma? Bes replied, "It's pot" meaning rubbish. With great consternation David assured us it was indeed not! Heaven forbid that we would return home telling our parents that 'my perfect cousin' David, Cambridge Blue, friend of athlete David Bedford and all round paragon of everything my family wished me to aspire to, was dishing out illegal substances at Blackpool Pleasure Beach? "No! No! No!" he implored, "it's just the way the French treat the tobacco." "Well it's still pot," said Bes. We strung David along for quite some time before explaining what 'pot' meant in Wigan. Again, fast forward November 1970.



Volunteers packing and checking the images.

The end of the beginning!

Volunteers have been working on the digitisation project, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, since January 2009. From the selection of historic photographs to packing boxes they were instrumental in meeting the deadline of 22 October when the collection was sent for digitising. The photographs will be available to view and buy online in 2010.

Watch this space.

Saturday 7 November

Me and Paul had our dinner in the Market, yet another one of Colin Cooke's cheese and onion butties washed down by half a Tartan. 8d for a half is alreet I reckon.

We went to Latics and played soccer in the car park before going to Skem. Not a bad game but we should have won it. We'll ave em at home!

[1-1 vs Skelmersdale Utd away. FA Cup fourth qualifying round. Scorer: Bobby Todd. Attendance: 5,200].

Got home, had me tea and went to Tech dance with Paul. Great it was too, Paul went with some girl but I came out at 11.15pm and came home.

Sunday 8 November

Well it started off so well. I only got up at 12.45pm to have my dinner. I went to Paul's and we watched soccer on TV. I left to come home to have a bath and a shave, all ready for my night out with Sayes. Me and Sayes had a great time in our house and I walked her into town to get her bus

back to Worsley Mesnes. Then at the last moment she tells me she doesn't want to see me proper!

I was keen to get on the bus with Sue. I'd have happily walked/floated back home all the way back from her house in Worsley Mesnes. But, in a sign of things to come, Sue made a 'sensible' decision. She said she had "enjoyed the night but didn't want to get serious, oh and by the way, get off the bloody bus!"

A clip around the ear from the conductor also helped to prise me from her company thus allowing the increasingly angry passengers to get on their way.

Editor – the book is available at Waterstones and www.mildandbitter.co.uk



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Andrew Carnegie

1835-1919

by Tony Ashcroft

Carnegie was an iron and steel manufacturer and philanthropist, born in Dunfermline, Scotland. Although from humble beginnings, his father was a hand-loom weaver, he grew up in a family that valued books and ideas as well as progressive social and economic reforms. In 1848 the family emigrated to the United States.

Initially, young Andrew worked as a bobbin boy in a factory before becoming a telegraph operator. He then became an assistant to Thomas Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad from 1853 to 1865. He left to establish his own business, the Keystone Bridge Company. Later, he turned his hand to making iron and steel. Everything he took up seemed to make him more wealthy. As he prospered, he broadened his interests, travelling abroad and exchanging views. He built a large estate in Scotland where he entertained prominent people.

By 1905 his Carnegie Steel Company had become one of the largest in the world and when he sold his business for \$260 million, profit for himself, as he had managed to keep majority ownership. This allowed him to devote himself to philanthropic works including establishing funds to help communities build libraries.

It was through this fund that many boroughs' libraries were established. In order to recognise Andrew Carnegie's benevolence, Wigan County Borough Council arranged a special meeting on 7th October 1908 where the Mayor, Sam Wood, JP proposed that Andrew Carnegie be admitted as an Honorary Freeman of the County Borough of Wigan. The motion was seconded by Councillor J P Heyes.

On 29th May 1909 Andrew Carnegie came to Wigan to receive the honour of the freedom of the borough. He arrived by train from London and the presentation ceremony took place in the Wigan and District Mining and Technical College in Library Street. The casket which was of silver gilt contained an admirable portrait of Dr. Carnegie. There were also views of Pemberton, the Maypole Colliery, the Wigan Infirmary and the Wigan Parish Church. The inscription on the casket said:

'The County Borough
of Wigan.
This casket was presented
to Dr. Carnegie by the
Corporation
of Wigan in
commemoration of
his admission as an
Honorary Freeman
of the Borough.
Sam Wood, Mayor.
Harold Jevons, Town Clerk.'



*Ashton Library in 2006, its centenary year.
Ashton Library was funded by Carnegie.*



A Miner's Tale

By Tom Anderton

A poem inspired by the old miners of the borough.

You could smell the fog on that damp winter's morning,
As Jack left the pit just as daybreak was dawning
He'd done his twelve hours through the night that day,
His face black with coal dust, his body wracked with pain.
Who cares thought the Pitman! Who cares about me!
I've only earned peanuts and done work for three
I've got to keep going for the family I feed,
but does anyone care does anyone heed.
His wife lit the fire to get the house warm.
As he coughed and he spluttered his weary way home.
He never saw much daylight, did poor old Jack,
It was dark when he went to work and dark coming back.
He'd walked from Old Boston this last 30 years.
The sweat and the coal dust mixed with his tears.
Going down Heath Rd was always the best,
He could sit on't school wall, for a spit and rest.
The fire that morning roared in the grate.
"Where've you been Love, your little bit late"
"I'm tired and hungry". He said to his Nell,
And thought to himself 'isn't life hell'
"Get me some breakfast I'll have dripping and bread,
then get the kids up I'm ready for bed".
"The tin bath's filled up in the kitchen" Nell said,
"have a good scrub then get off to bed".
"I'll just feed the pigeons and take the dog out".
"I'll only be ten minutes, give the kids a shout".
"Time to get up" shouted our Nell
"It's an awful, wet day, I can hear the school bell".
He'd just fed his pigeons and opened the kennel door;
his whippet got excited then Jack hit the floor.
Too much! Too much! Of blood sweat and tears,
Had taken its toll after 30 long years.
He'd never again take his bath in a tin.
Poor old Jack, his heart had give in.
His hard work was over he would toil no more.
If he thought life was hell on earth. It had a lot more in store,
For poor old Jack was a good family man,
But could swear and cuss as pitmen can
would Saint Peter waiting at the gate,
take pity on Jack or seal his fate.

MEMORIES

King Street Methodist School, Leigh

BY JUDITH NEAL

I wonder how many Past Forward readers have memories of King Street Methodist School, Leigh. When I started there in 1944 the headmistress was Miss Bessie Clough and the two teachers in the infants were Miss Close, later to become Mrs Morgan, and Mrs Mercer. Incidentally, my mother had also taught at the school in the 1930s, Miss Hull, as she was then, of Standard II.

In the Infants each of us was issued with a Tidy Box made of stout cardboard, does anyone remember what we actually kept in them? I have vague recollections of red and blue counters for doing sums, some very unappetizing grey plasticine and some very blunt little scissors.

I think most of us went home for our midday dinner as we lived quite near. At that time during the war, I lived with my grandparents in Langdale Street. I know we were seen across the road outside school but I must still have crossed Railway Road on my own; I do not think five year olds are allowed to be that independent these days.

I have a very clear memory of my first Christmas party at school in 1944. The teachers must have scrimped and saved their coupons to give us a feast of jelly, biscuits, meat paste, jam sandwiches and a mug of tea. I'll always remember the little boy sitting next to me, who came from a very poor home, putting his hand up and saying "Please Miss, Judith Gaskell doesn't want her jam butties so can I have them 'cos I'm hungry". Another memory of Christmas is making paper decorations from old wallpaper sample books, we made miles of paper chains and lanterns.

By the time I was in the junior school Mr Joshua Spedding was headmaster, Miss Maud Ranicar took Standard I, Miss Brown Standard II, Standard III I've forgotten, and Miss Fielding Standard IV. It seemed that Miss Ranicar had been there forever, as she'd taught several of my aunts and uncles. I was terrified of her sewing and knitting classes because my work was always in a tangle. I was good at reading and writing, but even there I was often in trouble for chattering and mucking about if I finished my work early. I got the ruler across my hand a few times and

spent several lessons in disgrace on the back landing by the stone stairs.

There were a lot of good times too, for instance going swimming at Silk Street Baths, a terrible shame they pulled that building down. On our return to school, if we'd behaved well, Miss Fielding would read aloud to us. Two books I particularly remember were 'The Gay Dolphin Adventure' by Malcolm Saville and 'What Katy Did at School'. Once we were taken on an outing around the office and works of Leigh Journal. I still have the slug of type with my name on which we were given as a memento.

We usually did PT and country dancing in the upstairs hall which had a very splintery floor. The music for the dancing came from a wind-up gramophone and with a bit of luck it would run down before we'd finished 'Gathering Peascods' or 'Rufty Tufty' or 'Sellers Round'. This livened up the lesson a bit, especially for the boys who hated it. Occasionally, we would be required to walk right the way along St Helens Road to the Wesley Guild cricket field for a game of rounders.

I live a long way from Leigh now, but a few months ago I came back on a visit to show my daughter where I was born and brought up. When we got to the school, we walked up to the front door I never saw it open in my young days. A gentleman who now runs the gym on the first floor, very kindly offered to show us round, when I told him I'd been a pupil there from 1944 to 1950. Going round the old place was what prompted me to write down a few memories and I'd be interested to hear from anyone who shares them.



Gold, Frankincense and Th' Mayor

By John Sharrock Taylor

An extract from his book 'A Wigan Childhood'

In the early years after my marriage to Val, one of our continuing links with the old town was Wigan Parish Church, where I was a member of the choir and drove over for rehearsals and services until our move to Cambridgeshire in 1979 made that impossible. In an era when many all-male church choirs, especially those whose town centre parishes were suffering wholesale demolition, were shutting up shop, the All Saints choir was still thriving under the directorship of David Cutter. Godfather to our son Richard, David is one of the last generation of Keble graduates to speak with the Oxford accent of Huxley and Professor Joad. Thirty-odd years in Wigan did not manage to erode it but it was even more remarkable that he managed to persuade Lancashire lads to sing in the cut-glass tones of Christ Church Cathedral. I recall one chorister who stubbornly insisted on 'gold, frankincense and MARE' until David pulled him up short with "Listen, Karl, What do you Wiganers call your civic leader? The fellow with the gold chain?" Karl paused for thought and then broke into a broad grin "Th' MURR," he replied triumphantly. "That's it! Keep thinking 'gold frankincense and th' MURR' and it'll come out just right."

In addition to the couple of dozen trebles drawn from several local primary schools, the choir of the 1970s had a strong corps of men ranging from youngsters like myself,

to veterans such as the splendidly-named William Henry Sumner Taylor Walker, Wigan's answer to Beniamino Gigli (Italian opera singer b.1890 d. 1957). Like his great hero, and to paraphrase the General Confession in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, Sumner had a habit of haspirating where he hought not to have haspirated and not haspirating where he hought to have haspirated, and his memorable performance of the tenor solo in Harold Edwin Darke's beautiful carol In the Bleak Mid-Winter inspired our colleague John Benn to pen the following gem:

*'In the bleak mid-winter
Sumner made great moan.
Thought he was a tenor
(A view which was his own).
Oh, how we abhor him
On this Christmas Day
With his 'hox' and his 'hass'
And his haitches hall hastray.'*

One of my visits to the Parish Church during the late 1970s stays in the memory because it ended in a scene worthy of Monty Python. The Christmas Midnight Mass had just finished and the richly coloured interior of 'Th' Owd' Church was bathed in mellow candle light. The Rector said the final vestry prayers and the men's choir prepared to process back to un-robe in the Song Room behind the church. Billy Cowan the Verger swung open the heavy gothic door and the lamplight spilled out into the churchyard. It had been snowing for perhaps half an hour and huge

feathery flakes floated gently down onto the worn paving stones and onto a young couple who were feverishly making love right in front of the open door.

There was a brief reflective pause, then two of my elderly colleagues delicately lifted the hems of their cassocks and stepped, daintily as duchesses over the prostrate bodies. The couple were so absorbed that several seconds and half the choir had passed before they noticed what was going on. Then they leapt to their feet in embarrassed confusion and fled down the churchyard, the girl covering her face in horror and the young man hopping unsteadily on one leg as he attempted to insert the other into his jeans. He turned and glared fiercely at us. "What do you lot think you're gawping at?" Well, I don't think we had any doubt about the answer to that and I can remember supposing that my older colleagues, all round about the age I am now, would be scandalised or embarrassed by the experience. We arrived in the Song Room and there was another thoughtful pause, then "Poor kids! To be as desperate as that! And snowing too! We used to tek our lasses down th' canal bank to do yon. Dosta remember, Jack?" "We did that, Arthur, but, My God! Never in December"

*'Well, Merry Christmas, all.'
'Aye, Merry Christmas.'*

Editor – the book was published by Carnegie Publishing in October.

Hindley's Fog Horn



By Austin Lyons

Hindley in 1925 was like any other industrial town, but in some respects, seemed to have a rhythm of its own. It was like a well wound-up clock, such was the precision of much of its activity.

Early morning pit workers clanking their way for the first shift, then the mill girls a little later, hurrying to one or other of the town's several factories. Later the children would take their place in this rhythm of noisy clogs as they made their way to school. Gradually, the town began to wake up. Horse-drawn carts and milk floats began to ply their wares to all parts of the town, and so the day moved on, each hour having its special part to play. As the day ended, gas lamps were lit on the street corners by lamp lighters with long poles to ignite and later to extinguish them. Shops and houses were illuminated by gas mantles, delicate things to handle. Bed, then the sound of the 'knocker upper', with his long cane knocking on the bedroom window to awaken early morning shift workers, and for many, another day dawned.

There was only one thing that ever broke into this rhythm, the town's fire whistle. This was no ordinary siren; it was in fact, a former ship's fog horn, mounted on top of a

steam valve on a machine in the town council's work-yard. When it blasted forth, its loud, low drone could be heard several miles away. It was, in the main, the signal for much varied and urgent activity. The town's fire engine, which was horse-drawn, was housed in the Fire Station at the bottom of Cross Street. Its two horses, when not in use, were employed to draw large refuse carts in various parts of the township. On hearing the fire whistle, the drivers of these carts were required to unharness the horses and then trot off with them down to the Fire Station. By now, volunteer firemen from all parts of the town, could be seen rushing down to the Fire Station or riding their bikes to get there. These men would have to man-handle the fire engine out of the station and onto the roadway, there to await the arrival of the two horses, which were then hurriedly harnessed into the shafts. Then came the moment when 'owd Cooper' as he was fondly called, would climb up to his special seat high above the horses and grab the long reins. A couple of pulls on these and what a transformation!

The apparently placid cart horses became different animals. Within seconds they were galloping away, their heavy hooves pounding the cobble stones of the streets. Meanwhile, the firemen who had just climbed aboard busied themselves ringing the fire engine's

bell to ensure a clear run to the seat of the fire. Close on its heels was a large group of excited children running wildly in their clanking clogs, trying to keep up with the horses like the children in the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Suddenly, this day, everything stopped. The fire involved some property at the bottom of Castle Hill Road, in the vicinity of Baxter's Smithy. The police moved in to clear the children and on-lookers away, so as to give the firemen easy access to the fittings of the fire hydrants. They soon had the blaze under control, much to the disappointment of the youngsters who were expecting something spectacular. Incidentally, the late Dr. Jim Holmes' father, also James Holme, was the Superintendent of the Hindley Fire Brigade at this time.

The only other occasion when Hindley's fire whistle played an important role was on New Year's Eve. It joined all the other 'treble' whistles of the various collieries and factories blowing the Old Year out, and the New Year in. Except of course, it was no mere whistle, but our very own base baritone, the 'Hindley Fog Horn'.

Author's Note - Hindley continued to use the 'Fog Horn' fire whistle until the outbreak of World War Two in 1939. It was replaced by a standard Air Raid Siren mounted on the town hall roof.

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

Helping with Local and Family History in Wigan and Leigh

History Shop

Although closed for refurbishment the work of the 'Friends' does not stop. In our temporary home in the Wigan Library, volunteers are indexing church records, Newspaper reports and cemetery indexes from microfilm.

The volunteers involved with the Outreach Team are constantly busy with school visits, canal trips etc.

Workshops

Family History sessions are held on Wednesday afternoons at 1.30pm and 3.00pm. The workshops have been heavily subscribed, instead of fortnightly sessions the volunteers have been very busy with sessions held weekly.

If you would like to book a one-to-one Family History session with an experienced volunteer please telephone 01942-828128. There is a nominal charge of £2.50 for this service.

Archives at Leigh

Work is still ongoing at Leigh Archives with Lisa Keys and volunteers going through 30,000 photographs to pick out 5,000 to be digitally placed online.

Leigh Family History Society provides a Family History workshop each Monday at Leigh library.

Ongoing Projects

Indexing of Cemetery Records.

St Catherine's Wigan.

St Wilfred's almost completed.

Ashton St Thomas' in progress.

All Saints Wigan 1812-1844.

Registered deaths for Wigan and Leigh are being indexed and are available online for the years 1837-1901.

Births and Marriages are available online for the years 1837-1950 for all Wigan and Leigh districts. Please visit www.lancashirebmd.org.uk.

Call for Volunteers

By the time you are reading this issue of Past Forward the volunteers will be preparing themselves for the mammoth task of returning the books from storage to their rightful place in the Taylor Gallery for the re-opening of The History Shop.

If you would like to help please contact Christine Watts on 01942 828128.

If you have any queries about the Friends please contact me at johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk

Or John Wogan
c/o The History Shop,
Library Street,
Wigan WN1 1NU



Friends of Wigan Heritage Service

Please find enclosed my cheque for £5.00 (*made payable to Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust*)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel: Signed: Date:

Please return to the Heritage Service desk in Wigan Library or via post:

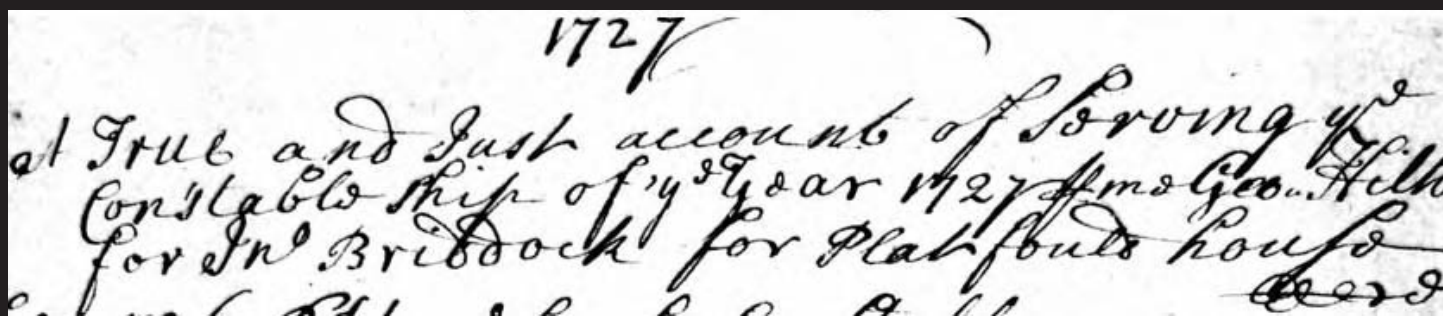
Past Forward, Wigan Heritage Service, The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

- I would like to become a member of 'Friends of Wigan Heritage Service' and receive copies of Past Forward through the post.

Please state which issue you wish your membership to begin.

The Eighteenth Century Constable

by Bob Evans



Until the latter part of the nineteenth century the constable was one of the principle officers responsible for local administration. His duties are vividly illustrated by a comprehensive collection of Atherton township records consisting of annual account sheets, warrants and receipts for payments dating from the late seventeenth century.

Until the mid eighteenth century, two constable appointments were made in Atherton for the upper and lower areas of the township. They were chosen by the ratepayers each year to serve for a twelve month period beginning in the late autumn. The duties they were required to undertake were additional to their usual occupations and must have been regarded as a burden. For this reason, individuals seldom served for more than one term and the records contain instances of the work being undertaken by a substitute. However, as in other areas of local administration, a greater degree of continuity was possible in the latter years of the century when people such as Richard Clowes and John Green assumed the role for several years. An incentive for this was possibly a payment

awarded for the duty. This is first recorded in John Clowes accounts for 1761/62: "Constables Wages £3-0-0." In the 1790s this amount had risen to £8-0-0 and by the late 1820s to £12-0-0.

His work involved a much wider range of duties than those undertaken by the present day constabulary. These included the collection of local taxes, the recruitment of a local militia and the maintenance of its armaments and the supervision of local celebrations to mark important national events. This brief review focuses on a selection of extracts from the records dealing solely with his responsibility for law and order.

Throughout the period the account sheets contain frequent references to costs involved in taking people into custody as on a typical occasion in 1728/29:

"May 21 Spent In apprehending Thomas Ratline	- 3s 6d
Ditto a Secondtime Carring Before Captin Legh Spent	- 2s 6d
Ditto 24th Keeping him and his Attendane a night and morning Spent	- 3s 6d
Spent and paid In Carriing Him to preston	- 13s -9d"

Only occasionally is there a charge stated. Whilst transportation or hanging was often the fate of those found guilty of the most trivial offences, the local records do state if these punishments were suffered by anyone arrested by the Atherton constable. In 1740/41 theft was the reason for an arrest.

"Charge of Apprehending William Cewda? and Carrying him to Leigh for Stealing Iron from Bedford Colpits - 2s 9d"

In 1769/70 John Clowes arrested Joseph Morris "for Suspicion of Stealing A wach" and Joshua Longworth "Upon Suspicion of breaking Willm Ecersley House," and holding him in custody "All Night". In 1771 he was called upon to act in a personal dispute "feb 10 pd Expencc of Taking A man into Custity About His wife and him falling out one Sunday - 5d".

To help secure prisoners constables were provided with handcuffs and there are several references to their purchase. The 1765/66 accounts include "Mar 8 To A kay to the hand Cofts 0 - 0 - 4d. June 9 To A Second kay for the hand Cofts 0 - 0 - 4d". A later payment in 1828/29 was made to "J Ronson for a leg lock 0 - 2s 6d"

The stocks provided a means to punish people for minor offences. There are many references to their existence and frequent repair as in 1748/49 "pd for Stone Wood and Iron Load and In Workmanship for Repairing Stocks on Chowbent -18s-2d". In 1795/96 George Green

recorded "Paid John Anderton for Stocks 1- 9s-6d " and the actual receipt for this work still survives:

M. Geo. Green
1796 To John Anderton
March 26 To a Pair of Stocks at Chowbent L. s. d
Contains 32 feet at 8 - - - - - 1. 1. 14
Lutting the same - - - - - 1. 0
2 Men one Day Letting up the same 6. 0
Engraving the same - - - - - 0. 8
1. 9. 0

The 1775/76 accounts provide one example of their use "Pd Expencc of John Seddon in Stocks and Attendance all night 0 - 1s - 6d". An 1864 minute of the Local Board provides a list of the names and locations of the principle Atherton streets and clearly indicates that these stocks were in the centre of Chowbent at the junction of Bolton New and Old Roads and Church Street "Bolton Oldroad to Extend from opposite the Blue Bell to the Stocks. Bolton New Road to Extend from the Blue Bell to the Stocks. Church Street Stocks to the Obelisk"

Under instructions from the magistrates the constable could administer corporal punishment. In one instance from 1728/29 it appears to have been ordered for an apprentice who had run away from his master "pd

John Hallna (?) for Bringing Bonktop? to His Master and Whiping Him By an Order from

Captin Leighe - 1s -"
Many of the warrants issued by the Justices, giving authority for the constable to bring

people to court to answer charges, still exist. In 1776 Edward Alred had not paid his poor rate of £1 11s 3d. The constable was ordered to recover this by "distress of the Goods and Chattles of the said Edward Alred." In 1783 Bryan Arrowsmith had not done his quota of work on the highways and had also failed to pay 9s in lieu of this. Again he was required to sell his possessions but, as it appeared he did not possess goods of the required value, the constable was instructed to "apprehend the said Bryan Arrowsmith and him safely to convey to the House of Correction at Preston...for the space of three month unless the sum shall be sooner paid." Warrants were issued for failure to support wives and children as was the charge levied against Robert Houghton:

Lancashire. WHEREAS Information and Complaint upon Oath have this Day been made unto me one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace and Quorum, in and for the County of Lancaster, That upon and of nine Months ago Robert Houghton of Liverpool in the said County Dancing-master left his Family chargeable to the Townships of Atherton in the said County, Contrary to the Statute in that Case made.

Occasionally, summonses were issued requiring other township officers to justify their actions. In 1791 a charge was made for not repairing "the common and ancient King's Highway from the Township of Blackrod in the County of Lancaster towards and into the Town of Leighlying and being in the Township of Atherton aforesaid beginning at a certain Place in Atherton aforesaid called four Lane Ends and so continued towards the Town of Leigh aforesaid for the length of Eight Hundred and seventy yards"

Why the starting point of this road is given as Blackrod is not clear, but the length described appears to be from what is now the junction of Wigan Road and Schofield Lane, then known as "Four Lane Ends," continuing down Lovers Lane to its junction with the road to Leigh. The summons continued with instructions to the constable

"To apprehend and take the Bodies of two of the substantial Men, Inhabitants of the Township of Atherton aforesaid, and bring them before some of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace.....to answer the Indictment.....And herein you are not to fail at your Peril."

One of the earliest of the records, dated 1708, reveals that concern about misconduct in licensed premises is not new problem. The charge reads "Whereas Henry Halliwell of Atherton in the sd County Inkeeper stands indicted at this Sessions for keeping a disorderly Inn or Alehouse." As a result he and his family were barred from keeping "the sd Inn or Alehouse" for the next three years and they were ordered not "to brew & sell Ale Beer or other Liguers in the sd house during that time except the drinks allerady brewed." The constable was to remove the inn sign post.

Parish constables continued to be appointed until the second half of the nineteenth century. The final reference to local residents undertaking this duty can be found in the Minute Book of Vestry Meetings. On 8 March 1862 there was a request for "a list of fifteen persons qualified and liable to serve the office of parish Constables for the year ensuing". John Heaton, a painter of Market Street, was first on the list "appointed at a salary of twenty five shillings".

Sources and Acknowledgements

The majority of the extracts quoted are from the constables' accounts and associated voucher folders TR Ath/D/1/1 to 1/19 and folders of miscellaneous documents D/2. The Vestry Minute Book is TR Ath/1/2 and the Local Board reference is from UD Ath/1/1. All these records are kept at Wigan Archives in Leigh Town Hall. Thanks are due to the archivist and his assistants for making the documents available for study and for advice.

VIEWS OF TYLDESLEY

Pictures from top left clockwise: 1. Bullock Roasting, Tyldesley, 1925 2. Market Place, Tyldesley, no date 3. Top Chapel, Tyldesley, no date 4. Burton's Spinning Mill & Weaving Sheds, no date

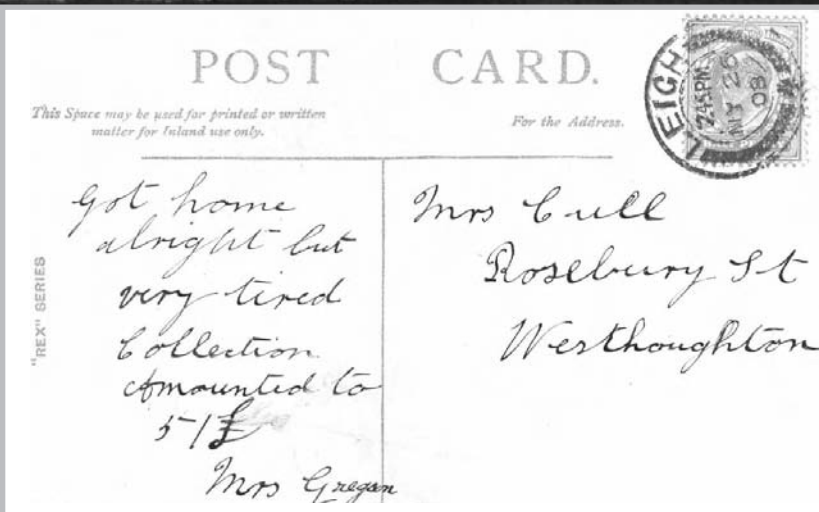


Waiting for the Blackpool train

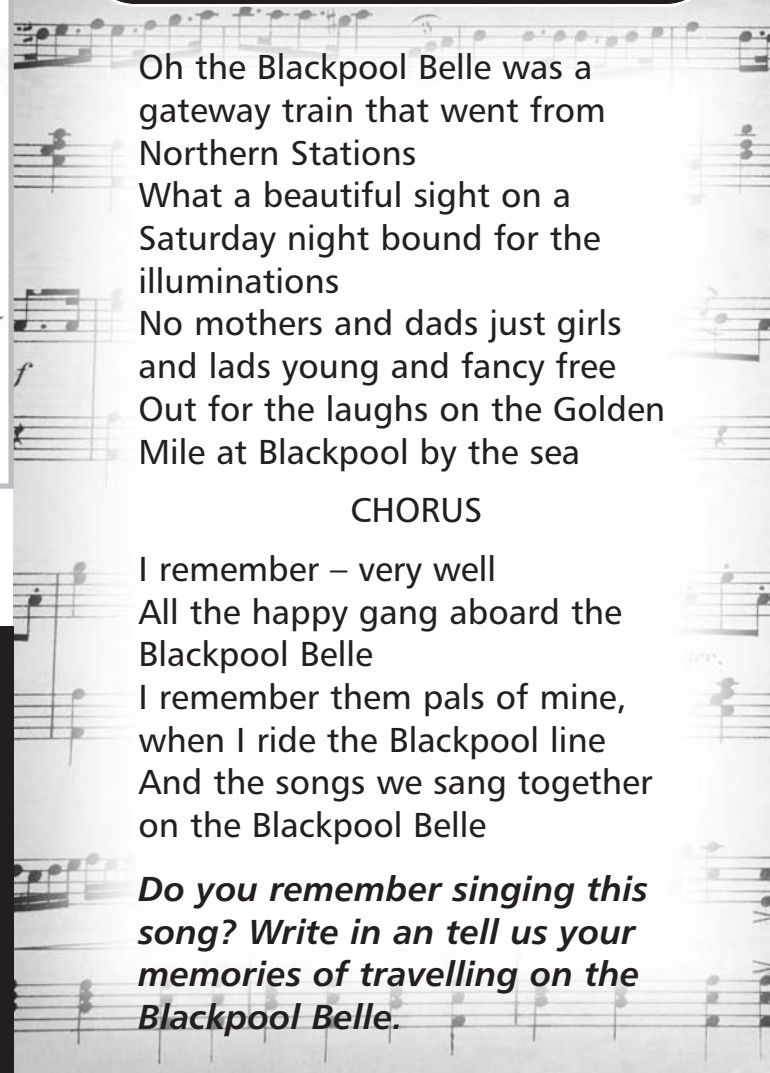


Blackpool Belle

by Howard Broadbent and Jimmy Smith



This postcard was sent in 1908 by 'Mrs Gregson'. We don't know what the £51 was collected for. Do you have any ideas?



Oh the Blackpool Belle was a gateway train that went from Northern Stations
 What a beautiful sight on a Saturday night bound for the illuminations
 No mothers and dads just girls and lads young and fancy free
 Out for the laughs on the Golden Mile at Blackpool by the sea

CHORUS

I remember – very well
 All the happy gang aboard the Blackpool Belle
 I remember them pals of mine, when I ride the Blackpool line
 And the songs we sang together on the Blackpool Belle

Do you remember singing this song? Write in an tell us your memories of travelling on the Blackpool Belle.

Who, What, Where, When?

- Who** was James Hilton?
 - What** was the origin of Wakes Weeks?
 - Where** is the Frank Horrocks hide?
 - When** were Uncle Joe's mint balls introduced to the Borough?
- Answers can be found on page 33**

CAN YOU HELP?

Spanish Civil War

Dear Editor,

Wigan Trades Union Council are seeking information about ten local people who volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War. The men volunteered to fight on behalf of the Spanish Government against the Fascist dictator General Francisco Franco. The war lasted from 1936 to 1939.

Michael Gallagher who was from Ashton Street in Scholes was killed in the Battle of Brunete in 1937. He was very active in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. He took part in the 1934 and 1936 Hunger Marches to London with the Wigan Contingents. We have traced his niece Pat Gallagher.

Bernard Sweeney who was the 2nd Wiganer to be killed during the war died in the battle of Belchite in March 1938. This local man who was from Crabtree Road, Pemberton was formerly a miner in the Wigan Coalfield, we have traced his nephew also a Bernard Gallagher.

Paul Dewhurst who originated from Leigh was killed in March 1937 at the Battle of Guadalajara. Interestingly Paul's grandfather Jonathan Dewhurst 1837-1913 was shown to be in the Wigan Workhouse with his parents in the census of 1881, he was age three. Jonathon Dewhurst was later to become a leading actor of his day and took many leading parts in the theatres of London.

Edwin Blood. We have traced the niece of Edwin Blood who was born in Stanley Street, Scholes and afterwards moved to New Lodge, Wigan Lane.

Harold Croston was formerly in the Royal Navy with 21 years service. He was in charge of one of the big gun batteries during the battles. His son informs us that on his return to England he became a trawler man.

Tommy Degnan who lived in Cambridge Street, Scholes was a miner who took a leading role in the 1921 Miners' Strike. He later moved to the Yorkshire Coalfield, where he became a leading

member of the NUM. On his death at the age of 81 in March 1979, Arthur Scargill paid tribute to Tommy by saying that "His career was remarkable by any standard. No fiction writer could produce a story to equal the life of Tommy Degnan". Tommy was seriously wounded in Spain. This left him with a piece of shrapnel in his lung which he carried for the rest of his life. We are indebted to his niece for information about her uncle.

We are looking for information about the following local people **Arthur Evans**, who served with the Spanish Government's navy, **Pat Deegan**, **John Connolly** and **Hector Coop** who came from Leigh. We are informed that a **Benny Hoath** who worked for Wigan Corporation as a bus driver also went to Spain. His conductor was John Thomas Coghlin.

If any reader has further information we would be very grateful if they could get in touch with us at: Wigan Trades Union Council, 11 New Market Street, Wigan WN1 1SE or telephone 01942 322813.

The sacrifice that these young people made in defence of democracy has been neglected for too long and some time in the future we will erect a memorial to these young men. This is a huge part of Wigan's history and we should recognise that and celebrate it.

*Ron Thompson,
Wigan Trades Union Council*

Henrietta Jones

Dear Editor,

Whilst going through my late parent's correspondence, I came across a letter which detailed an event when I was a child which saved my life. I do remember the event but not the details which the letter brought to life for me and made me aware of a great debt I owed a certain lady.

I was 11 years old, I'm 80 in November, and was very ill in bed. My parent's called for the doctor, Dr Jones from the Park Road Surgery,

CAN YOU HELP?

now the Drumcroon Art Gallery, in Wigan. The doctor duly came and prescribed medication but on the second house call his wife came (also a qualified doctor) and requested an ambulance straight away. She stated that if I did not go to hospital straight away I would be dead within the week! So off I went in the ambulance and they removed a rib to be able to draw the fluid off my lungs. An ordeal at the time but fully healed now and it didn't stop me being A1 for National Service. I often kid my grandchildren I got this injury 'in the war' just to spice my stories up!

So, the point of re-telling this tale now? I wish to show my gratitude to the lady concerned by laying flowers at her grave. The staff at The History Shop have checked the burial records, and we think we have found a relevant date of

2001 aged 93 but we do not know where. If anyone knows of the whereabouts of this grave I would be grateful if they could contact me via Past Forward so that my wife and I can make this pilgrimage.

Colin Fishwick
Pemberton

Have you got a family or local history query you think our readers can help you with? If so, please write to the Editor.

If there are no contact details with individual letters, please send information to the Editor, and it will be forwarded.

Editor

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ALL WRAPPED UP!**



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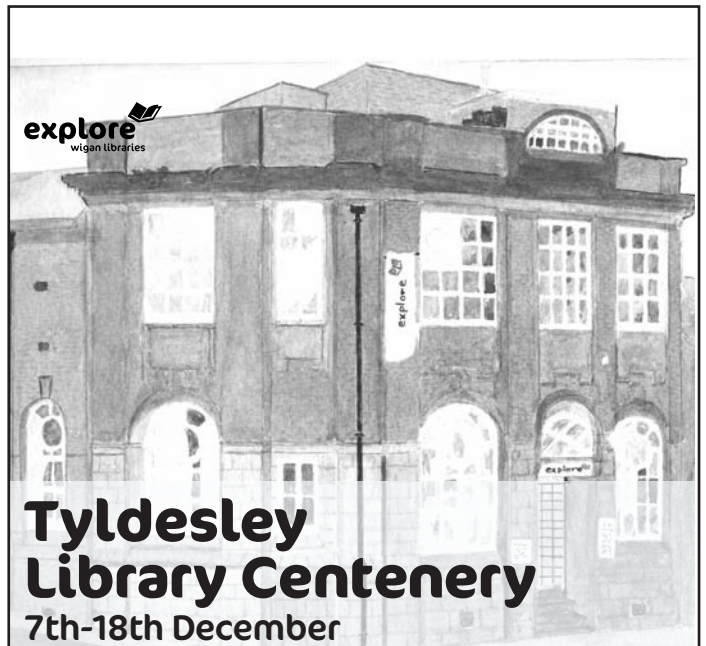


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**Tyldesley
Library Centenary**

7th-18th December

Tyldesley Library will be celebrating its centenary this December. To help mark this historic birthday we will be hosting two weeks of events with the main celebrations held on Saturday 12th December.

FREE fun for all the family – join us for a packed programme of events including storytelling, an author visit, a local history talk, arts and crafts, refreshments and much more.

Why not come along and explore what your local library has to offer and help us celebrate our 100th birthday!

For details of the full programme please contact **01942 404738** or visit www.wlct.org/libraries.

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In partnership with Wigan Council

YOUR LETTERS

Save Wigan

Dear Editor

I am writing to inform you of the latest heritage group to appear in Wigan, namely 'Save Wigan'. My group will focus on buildings at risk/potential risk, and hopefully gain money through membership, donations and funding, which enhances the building and its fabric.

We are a new proposition with the aims and objectives of sharing a more practical approach to Wigan's Heritage. On discussion with fellow committee members, the irons are still hot on the Boer War Memorial, and feel that being able to offer cash towards a replacement is a realistic aim. We hope that other societies would undertake the raising of funds towards this.

We will be an online based organisation, in which a website has been created for members to browse and become further involved. We will act as an 'arm' to the already popular WiganWorld, which boasts 3,500 members.

I will make myself readily available to you and hope we can work together, sharing the same intentions.

I hope to see you soon in some capacity.

*Mr. A. Lomax - Chairman
Save Wigan Heritage Group
PO Box 519, Wigan WN1 9AS*

Stanier Mogul 42968

Dear Editor

The article in issue 52 p18 'August 1966 – A Nostalgic Tour in the Dying Days of Steam' was of great interest to me. The locomotive mentioned, Stanier Mogul 42968, is, as rightly stated, preserved and running on the Severn Valley Railway (SVR). It got there after a period in Woodham Bros' scrapyards at Barry, South Wales, where I and three friends went in 1970 to see and photograph her. This led immediately to the formation of the Stanier Mogul Fund, whose objectives were to purchase the engine and restore her to working order. This we did, the engine returning to SVR traffic on 20th April 1991. I meanwhile had moved to Abram in 1977 and became the Fund's Secretary, a position I still hold, in 2002; this is why the engine still carries a Springs Branch shed plate!

I have quite a bit of information and, possibly more importantly, photographs of that tour. Although these concentrate on the engine, there is considerable background detail.



*42968 at
Wigan Central Goods*

*Photos credit Brian Taylor
- SMF Collection*



42968 at Rose Bridge Junction

One was taken at Rose Bridge Junction on the Whelley Line, between the Leeds - Liverpool canal and De Trafford Junction, where the engine took water. Behind the engine can be seen the slag deposits from Wigan Coal & Iron Co, whose works were behind the embankment and whose waste products were tipped down it. A walk along the old track bed between the canal and Belle Green Lane will show that the embankment and tip are still very much there, still with the slag deposits identifiable from the photograph.

The background of this photo should still be recognisable: Wigan Central Goods just south east of the junction of Darlington Street and Warrington Road, with the multi-storey flats of Scholes visible in the background. The area behind the engine is now a small industrial estate, with Entwistle & Joynt Ltd occupying much of the land where the goods sheds once stood.

Although the engine is resident on the SVR, she did escape on to the main line for 14 rail tours between December 1996 and January 1998. On three of these she worked her train along the West Coast Main Line, passing her old home of Springs Branch depot with her whistle screaming a salute.

The Stanier Mogul Fund can be contacted and further information found through its web site www.staniermogulfund.org.uk

Jim Norman

Tom Brown and George Hesketh

Dear Editor

In response to the photograph, published in issue 51 p28 of Past Forward submitted by Roy Ainscough, may I offer a couple of names and one very speculative one.



The two gentlemen seated at the table, on the extreme left and the one in the middle are, Tom Brown and George Hesketh respectively, both Directors of Wigan RL Club. Tom Brown was also the landlord of

the Park Hotel in Wigan Town centre, perhaps that's where this reception is being held?

The gentleman standing behind George Hesketh and wearing glasses has a very strong resemblance to Harry Sunderland, the former Australian Wigan manager in 1938/39 but who later resided in this country. This is a complete guess but it's the best I can come up with.

Keith Bowen

Hindley Hall

Dear Editor

I was interested to see the picture of Hindley Green Hall in issue 52 of Past Forward, because my great-grandmother and one of her sisters worked there in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

My great grandmother, Eliza Britt, was born and brought up in Grindle, a tiny hamlet near Shifnal in Shropshire. I've not yet discovered how she came to get a job as a servant at the Hall. She married John Dyson, a colliery engine worker from Tamer Lane End, Westleigh on 9 March 1880 at Brunswick Chapel, Hindley. Eliza's 'residence at time of marriage' is given as Hindley Green Hall, where she was employed as a cook.



I know it became the home of Mr James Diggle and his second wife Charlotte Letitia whom he married in 1873. James died on

19 May 1880. The 1881 census shows his widow Charlotte Letitia living there with my great-grandmother's sister, Sarah Jane Britt as cook, plus a little 13 year old housemaid, also from Shropshire. A few years later Mrs Diggle moved away to Blackpool. In 1891 the Hall was home to the family of Alfred Thorp, a cotton manufacturer, and by 1901 it was listed as 11 Leigh Road. The occupants were, Amos Kerr a colliery manager, his wife, their housekeeper and her two sons - both miners and a lodger.

After their marriage in 1880 my great-grandparents went to live at 5 Thomas Street, Hindley Green, where my grandmother was born and also her sister, Letitia, presumably called after Mrs Diggle. Are any of the old houses in Thomas Street still standing by the way? I know most of the other places mentioned have long since gone, together with Higher Hall Colliery and its cottages, where my grandfather John Hull was born, Diggle Flash, Lower Hall Colliery at Shuttle Hillock, and Dyson Fold. These are all places where members of my family had lived and worked.

If any readers have photos or other material about the places and people I've mentioned, I'd love to hear from them. I haven't lived in Leigh for over 50 years but I was born and brought up there and it's still my home town. I live about 200 miles away now so I can only get up north occasionally, but Past Forward is a good link.

Judith Neal (formerly Gaskell)
Suffolk.

Editor – I hope that Mrs Neal equally enjoys the article 'Flora's Story' on p12.

PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS

Who, What, Where, When?

Who? Leigh man James Hilton was the author of several best-selling books including 'Goodbye Mr. Chips'. In 1942 he won an Oscar for his work on the screenplay for the film 'Mrs. Miniver'. James Hilton was also chairman of Leigh Rugby League Football Club.

What? Wakes weeks were originally religious festivals that celebrated the opening of churches. During the Industrial Revolution the Wakes turned into a week long holiday for the mill towns of Lancashire.

Where? At Pennington Flash. Frank Horrocks was a well-known ornithologist from Leigh.

When? Uncle Joe's mint balls and Wigan go hand-in-hand. They date back to the 1930s.

Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Our Lady's RC Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull at 7.30pm. All are welcome, contact Barbara Rhodes (01942) 222769 for further details.

Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings held on second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in St Richards Community Centre, Mayfield St., Atherton. Members £1.00 Non Members £1.50. For further information contact (01942) 884893.

Meeting in December is strictly for members only.

Tuesday 12 January 2010

'The Panama Canal'. The history and how one of the modern great wonders of the world was built. Speakers P&D Haslam

Tuesday 9 February 2010

'Turnpikes'. The Forerunners of our modern road systems. Speaker Mrs B Fox

Billinge History Society

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. For further details visit www.billinge-history.com

Hindley & District History Society

Meetings are held on the second Monday in the month at Hindley Museum in Hindley Library from 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Admission is £1.00 for members and £1.50 for non-members. Everyone is welcome.

The museum is open to the public at least once a week and entry is free.

Contact the library staff for times and dates or telephone our Secretary, Mrs Joan Topping on 01942 257361 or Mrs Norma Brannagan on 01942 258668.

Leigh & District Family History Society

Chairman: Tel 01942 743428
Secretary: Tel 01942 729559

Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room of Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month.

Weekly Help Desk run by members of the Society each Monday from 1.30pm to 3.30pm in the Local History Section of Leigh Library.

Tuesday 19 January 2010

AGM
'Leigh Archives'
Speaker Alex Miller

Tuesday 16 February 2010

'Chethams Library'
Speaker Mr Powell

Tuesday 9 March 2010

'Ribchester to York'
Speaker John Shaw

Tuesday 16 March 2010

Members Group Talks

Local History Federation Lancashire

The Federation holds several meetings each year, with a varied and interesting programme. For details visit www.lancashirehistory.org or call 01204 707885.

Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

Meetings held at 7.30pm on the fourth Tuesday each month at Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland.

For more information visit www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk

Wigan Civic Trust

If you have an interest in the standard of planning and architecture, and the conservation of buildings and structures in our historic town, come along and meet us.

Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. The venue is Drumcroon, 2 Parsons Walk, Wigan. Contact Mr A Grimshaw on 01942 245777 for further information.

Monday 14 December

The History and production of Uncle Joe's Mint Balls
Speaker Mr J Winnard

Wigan Family & Local History Society

Meetings are held at the Caledonian Hotel on Bolton Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield, near Wigan, WN4 8PF on the third Monday of each month (7.30 for 8.00pm). Attendance fees are £2.00 per meeting for both members and visitors.

For further information call (01942) 727875 or visit www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory

Wigan Archaeology Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm, at the Baden Powell Centre (District Scout HQ) in Greenough Street, Wigan, for lectures and discussions on topics of historical or archaeological interest. Admission is £3. For more information call Tom Glover on 01695 624372 or Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342. You can also visit the website www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk

Wednesday 2 December

OAN update
Speaker Ian Miller

PROBING PICTURES

These two photographs were recently found in the Wigan Council Social Services Department in Leigh. They were handed to the Wigan Archive Service at Leigh Town Hall.

If you have any information about any of these photographs, please contact Lisa Keys on 01942 828126 or email l.keys@wlct.org

Lilford Ward Rovers

This photograph shows the Lilford Ward Rovers team during the 1912 to 1913 season.

Can you tell us about that particular season? Who are the team members?



Wigan holiday snap

The card holding the this photograph tells us it was taken in 1954 at the 'Edinburgh' Hotel in Douglas, Isle of Man. The card also reads 'Johnnie from Wigan, Duggie from Wigan, Ken from Wigan – AND THE BEST OF LUCK JACK'.

Do you know who Johnnie, Duggie and Ken are? Who was Jack and why did he need luck? Are the other people from Wigan?

From the last issue

Unfortunately there were no responses to our request for information about the photograph of 'Sam's Rick'. If you think you can help in any way, we'd love to hear from you.



How to Find Us



History Shop (currently closed for refurbishment)

Library Street,
Wigan WN1 1NU
Telephone 01942 828128
heritage@wlct.org

Interim Service at Wigan Library

College Avenue (joining
Millgate and Library Street),
Wigan WN1 1NN



Leigh Local History

Leigh Library,
Turnpike Centre,
Civic Square,
Leigh WN7 1EB
Telephone 01942 404559

Archives

Leigh Town Hall,
Leigh WN7 1DY
Telephone 01942 404430
a.miller@wlct.org