

# PAST FORWARD

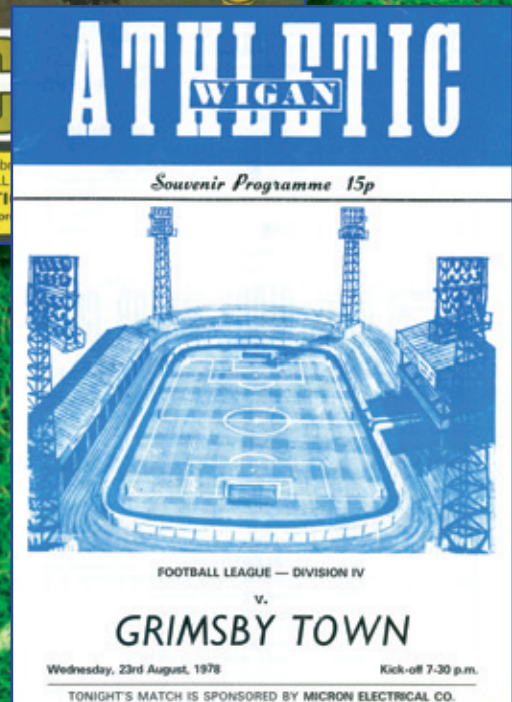
Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

Issue No. 55

August - November 2010

## Football Fever

£1





# Contents

- 3 Heritage Service
- 4/5 Sir Roger Hunt
- 6/7 The Spitfire Story
- 7 The Earthquake
- 8 Local & Family History
- 9 Collections Corner
- 10-11 Leigh Workhouse Children's Experience
- 12 Archives News
- 13 Spring Clean for Bells
- 14/15 The Medieval Open Fields of Wigan
- 15 Windswept by the Lion's Breath
- 16/17 The Atherton Tollgate
- 18/19 Rose Bridge School Revisited
- 20 Learning & Outreach News
- 22/23 The First Rugby League Tour Down Under
- 24/25 Sir Francis Sharp Powell
- 28 Lawrence Spencer Murdoch
- 29 Pretoria Pit Disaster
- 30/31 John Lancaster and the Deerhound
- 32/33 Your Letters/ Can you Help?
- 34 Society News
- 35 Probing Pictures

**FRONT COVER**  
Wigan Athletic FC programmes late 1970's to early 1980's.

## Letter from the Editorial Team

We are currently looking at ways of improving **PAST FORWARD**, and have included a reader survey in this issue. We would be grateful if you would complete it and return to us. It won't cost a penny in postage, as there is a freepost address. All completed surveys will go into a draw and a lucky winner will receive a 'goody bag' from our shop. We look forward to all your suggestions.

The World Cup is now over, and despite England's poor performance, we hope that you will enjoy reading Jenny Broadbent's article about our own home grown world cup footballer.

As ever, please keep your contributions coming in, as without them, we would not have a magazine. We are especially keen to hear from all our local history societies. So please, put pen to paper!

### 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 may edit your submission
- Submissions will remain on file until published
- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of, unless you request for them to be returned

**CONTACT DETAILS**

pastforward@wlct.org or The Editor at **PAST FORWARD**, Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

- Articles must be received by the copy date if inclusion in the next issue is desired

**Submission Guidelines**

- Electronic submissions are preferred, although handwritten ones will be accepted
- We prefer articles to have a maximum length of 1,000 words
- Include photographs or images where possible – these can be returned if requested
- Include your name and address – we will not pass on your details to anyone unless you have given us permission to do so

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

### MUSEUM OF WIGAN LIFE AWARDED TOURIST ACCREDITATION!



Heritage Assistants (left to right) Elizabeth Fairclough, Lynne Marsh and Julie Baker, proudly display our VAQAS certificate.

We are delighted to report that that the Museum achieved Visit Britain's Quality Assured Visitor Attraction Accreditation (VAQAS) following reopening in May. The accreditation involves an independent audit looking at the quality of customer service, from pre arrival right through to exhibition interpretation.

The assessor commented in his report on the Museum being an "outstanding facility for Wigan"

Heritage Services are also working this year towards gaining the Government's Customer Service Excellence accreditation. This puts the customer at the heart of the service and commits us to deliver continuous quality improvements to you.

### PAST FORWARD Subscription Form

**Past Forward Subscription** Subscription is £5 for three issues. Payment by cheque (payable to Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust), postal order or credit/debit card (telephone 01942 828128).

Please state which issue you wish your membership to begin

I am a registered blind person and would like the CD version

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone No.

Email

Signed  Date

Please tick here if you would like to receive information regarding Wigan Leisure & Culture activities and events. We do not pass your details to other organisations.

**Return to:** The Museum of Wigan Life, Past Forward Subscription, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU



## THEME FOR ISSUE 56 The Pretoria Pit Disaster

On 21 December 1910 a massive underground explosion occurred at Pretoria Pit on the borders of Atherton and Westhoughton. 344 lives were lost. We will be commemorating the 100 year anniversary of this tragic event in the next issue and would welcome contributions on this theme. Please note the copy deadline below.

We would of course continue to welcome contributions on other topics for this issue.

### Copy Deadline for Issue 56

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday 15 October.



## The Romans Invade Wigan

Saturday 18th September

Join us for a **FREE** day of fun in Wigan Town Centre - learn what it was like to be a Roman Centurion and take your place in line for a march around Wigan. See Egyptian dancers, take part in fun crafts and activities plus much more!

For further information and details of the full programme of events **contact 01942 828128.**





# Sir **Roger Hunt** was wonderful

By Jenny Broadbent

**Roger Hunt was born on 20 July 1938 in Golborne. He went on to become a Liverpool and England legend.**

He was first selected by England in 1962 but wasn't able to play. This was because Liverpool could not release him as the match clashed with a club game. Luckily this did not deter the England selectors. Hunt went on to gain 34 international caps, scoring 18 international goals. Most memorably, he played in the 1966 World Cup Final when England clinched the cup beating Germany 4-2.

Generally, when the nation reminisces about the famous victory, it is the exploits of hat-trick hero Geoff Hurst that are remembered. Sadly the role of Hunt, who was firmly regarded as one of Manager Alf Ramsey's key players, is all too often forgotten.

Hunt was a very popular and respected member of the '66 team. England trainer Harold Shepherdson was struck by the reaction of the England players when Roger Hunt scored his second goal against France at Wembley. He said "instead of the usual dignified congratulations when a man scores, the players ran over and mobbed Roger in celebration." Unlike today such exuberant behaviour was a rare sight in football. Despite beating France 2-0 Alf Ramsey was disappointed with England's attitude, performance and complacency in the game. However he made one exception, 'Roger always has the right attitude' was the gist of Ramsey's message to the squad. 'He always

plays well.' As Martin Peters later observed "we all knew that Roger would run his socks off for the good of the team."

Hunt played a very different role in the '66 team than he did in the Liverpool squad. At Liverpool, he was regarded as a specialist goal-scorer. As his team-mate Ian Callaghan explained "it was his job to get on the end of things in the penalty area, Bill Shankly didn't want him chasing about all over the place, wasting energy." In this Liverpool team it was the job of Callaghan and Peter Thomas to get the ball to Hunt.

Alf Ramsey's England team, on the other hand, did not use such specialist wingers. Under his system someone was needed up front who was prepared to work tirelessly for the ball; Hunt adapted to fill this role. Before the campaign he had been a fringe player wearing the number 21 shirt. By following orders and finding form at



Jules Rimet Trophy

exactly the right time, Hunt made himself an automatic and indispensable member of the team. He became the only attacker to start every game at the World Cup. As Nobby Stiles stated "most of the football writers back then didn't grasp his importance to the side, but, believe me, the England players did not underestimate his contribution."

Hunt retired from international football in 1969. He had been selected by Ramsey 34 times and scored 18 goals. Incredibly, in the seven years since his debut, England had lost only two of the games in which he played.

Hunt was held in very high esteem by both his England team-mates and Liverpool fans. In April 1972, following his transfer to Bolton Wanderers, his former England team-mates and Liverpool fans turned out in droves for his testimonial. There were 56,000 of them at Anfield! Hunt had signed for Liverpool Football Club in 1958 and made his official debut for the club on 9 September 1959. He went on to make 492 appearances for the club and scored 286 times.

Hunt was a vital factor in the rise of Liverpool under Shankly. Without his input Liverpool may not have escaped life in Division Two and risen to the dizzy heights of the top flight. In the 1961-62 season he had scored an amazing 41 goals from 41 games as the Reds went up as runaway champions. The 'Blonde Bomber' was the leading goalscorer in both the 1963-64 and 1965-66 seasons as Liverpool won the league. It was also Hunt who opened the scoring when the team finally ended their wait to win the FA Cup in 1965. As Shankly explained "Roger didn't just slide them in quietly...he blasted them in."

An ageing Hunt was to leave Liverpool in 1969 as Shankly started to construct his second great side. But he remained a great favourite in the hearts Liverpool fan. Hunt went on to play at Bolton but during his career he also played at Stockton Heath, Bury, Devizes Town and Hellenic FC.

Football has changed a lot since that famous 1966 victory. With each subsequent unsuccessful World Cup Campaign the mystic



Roger Hunt playing for Liverpool FC.

and magic surrounding the team of 1966 has grown. Geoff Hurst believes that "it's only in the past 15 years that there's been a lot more hype surrounding our victory." Hunt himself added "Nothing happened for 35 years."

Hunt's role in the 1966 victory was belatedly recognised when he was awarded an MBE in 2000. In the eyes of Liverpool fans he had always been worthy of knighthood. To quote a line from a famous chant of his time - **'Sir Roger Hunt - was wonderful!'**

#### Sources

Leigh Journal, 15 March 1962  
Liverpool Football Club website - [www.liverpoolfc.tv/history/past-players/roger-hunt](http://www.liverpoolfc.tv/history/past-players/roger-hunt)  
National Football Museum website - [www.nationalfootballmuseum.com/pages/fame/Inductees/rogerhunt.htm](http://www.nationalfootballmuseum.com/pages/fame/Inductees/rogerhunt.htm)  
Times Online - <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/sport/football/article7141691.ece>



# The Spitfire Story

## SECOND WORLD WAR MEMORIES OF YOUNG BOY

By Bill Grundy

### Editor's note.

**This year sees the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, when the RAF defended Britain from the Luftwaffe between 10 July and 1 October 1940. Spitfires played an important part in the battle, and caught the imagination of the public.**

The first years, the formative years of our lives are, we are told, very significant and may affect the rest of our life. We go through those years with no experience or comparison of anything other than our own small world. Born in December 1938 my first years were lived through the entire Second World War. I was born at home, in a semi-detached house that had been built in New Springs, Aspull just one year before. There were 10 houses in the street, five sets of semi's in the row. The house numbers started at No 26 so I assume this row of houses was only part of a larger proposed development. The foundations of two houses were abandoned with the start of the war, providing an adventure playground for the local kids. The houses faced out across meadows and fields where cows grazed and crops of wheat and barley were sown and reaped by basic farm equipment drawn by Shire horses.

The start of WWII must have seemed particularly cruel to the mill workers, miners, industrial production workers and the unemployed. Only twenty years after the end of WW1, followed by a devastating depression, they are faced with an unimaginable future. The austerity, rationing and the day to day uncertainty is, however not part of my memory. The most memorable event of my early years was the crash of an aeroplane that came down so close to the roof of our house that it seemed we were sure to be killed. This event became part of our family stories and history and was discussed by my parents and neighbours for years after the war ended.

My clear memory of that morning is of standing, as a four year old on a chair in the bathroom, my mother giving me my morning wash. Suddenly there was the most deafening, screaming, tearing sound above our heads and the sense that the house was about to explode. The plane crashed in the hedgerow across the

field in front of our house. We rushed from the bathroom to the front window and watched the smoking wreck. We were expecting it to further explode but it didn't.

For some time after we knew very little about the plane, but we guessed it was a Spitfire. Many of the neighbours suspected it was a German plane on a bombing raid. No one could be sure if there was a body still in the cockpit or a bomb on board. Groups of neighbours would make short expeditions to get a closer look. In the weeks following, many people visited the wreck under the cover of night to pick up souvenirs of the fuselage. Eventually we learned that it was a British Spitfire that had got into difficulties and crashed, the pilot having bailed out. We heard that he landed two miles away over Hindley way.

It is only recently, almost 70 years later that I learned more about the crash. I took the hippie trail to India and Nepal in the late 1960's, eventually arriving in Australia. Since that time, for the past 40 years, I have happily lived in Melbourne. In recent years I have browsed the [www.wiganworld.com](http://www.wiganworld.com) web site to keep in touch with Wigan developments. A few weeks ago I noticed a site titled 'Spitfire Crash'. There I discovered so much information that I had never heard before.

A Spitfire, part of a Polish squadron in the Royal Air Force stationed near Southport had got into difficulties and crashed at Aspull, not far from Top Lock. The pilot it seems was Polish. It was from this web site that I learnt for the first time, that it happened on 13 February 1942. The Polish pilot was named Boleslaw Henryk Paley, born 14 September 1915, died 8 May 1996.

Parts of the Spitfire are still on view at the Hindley Museum.

The sound of Spitfires flying overhead was a common daily sound. As children, lying in the summer grass that had taken over the house foundations, we were fascinated by the high whine and coughing sounds often made by the passing tiny planes. Sometimes the engines would suddenly stop, followed by several

seconds of silence, and we waited for another plane to fall out of the sky, but always they spluttered back to life and continued on their way.

The wartime formative years provided many other memories and experiences. At a young age I was shown the red glow on the eastern horizon of the bombing of Salford Docks and Manchester. For a period we had guests to stay in the form of a woman and two very young twins, refugees from the London Blitz. Mrs Clark was her name. She and her sons who were about one year of age, even younger than I was, took over one of the three bedrooms. The vivid memory of this unexplained invader is coloured in my mind in a deep rosy glow, from the dark pink chenille house coat she seemed to wear all the time they were with us. Even though Mr Clark her husband did visit, I think they must have returned after a few months, once the bombing of London stopped.

Other memories are coloured by sounds and smells. My father worked shift work at Irlam Steel works. He had bartered from the crews of the ships that sailed up from Liverpool along the Manchester Ship Canal some exotic luxuries for those times. Each night before leaving to start the night shift, he would brew himself a cup of ground coffee. There was little real coffee or coffee percolators around in Wigan in those days. The coffee grains were put in a pint cup with a pinch of salt and topped with hot water. A saucer was placed on the top and the brew was left for a few minutes. One tap on the saucer would send the coffee grains to the bottom of the cup. I remember still the smell of coffee on his breath as he kissed me and my mother goodnight before he went out into the blackout.

In the same way he brought home a box of curry powder from the Indian cargo vessels. I would imagine at that time curry powder and Wigan would have been a rare combination. We never had a cooked curry meal at home with this spice but whenever cold lamb or beef was served, Dad would sprinkle the dried curry powder on to the meat.

Everyone was issued with an individual gas mask. As a four year old going to nursery class at the local infant's school, I had to carry a tiny gas mask. There was a very distinct claustrophobic feeling when I had to put it on during the regular school evacuation exercises. The inside of the mask smelled strongly of rubber and the visor became quickly filled with condensation from the panicky breath of a youngster not sure of how real the danger was.

These are just some of my memories of those troubled times. I hope they prompt others who lived during those austerity days to also put them into writing. Oral history is a much neglected area of cultural and social history, so those of us who are able and willing to get our memories down in writing are contributing to a better understanding of our past.

# The Earthquake

By Mr R Heaviside

We have a History Shop, or as it is known today, the Museum of Wigan Life (very posh). I feel so privileged to be working there, to be part of the voluntary team! The library part of this facility is a wonderland of information. There are books and maps here dating back to the sixteenth century with both local and in some cases world wide knowledge.

Imagine my surprise when I found a report of an earthquake that happened locally on Sunday 14 September 1777. The recent earthquakes in China and America alerted me to this tragedy. The author does not give his name although I feel he must live in the Manchester area. "A scene truly deplorable and affecting" is how he described it. Firstly there was no Richter scale, nor the means of being advised of an earthquake other than the newspaper or feeling the tremor. Of course this is assuming that the newspaper got wind of it, otherwise you would have to rely on word of mouth. He goes on to say "an attempt to investigate the causes of the dreadful harbinger of divine vengeance to mankind, the churches being much crowded, increased the confusion."

It was not felt at Liverpool and to the west, Sheffield described its limits. To the north, Halifax and Leeds felt the shock more slightly. Preston was severe and beyond Derby they were "scarce sensible of it". I also found later that Wigan felt it.

They go on to say "still there is no proof that the effect was confined to this neighbourhood, since we find that the dreadful earthquake which destroyed the city of Lisbon in the year 1755 and buried in ruins many other cities and villages, in Europe and Africa, was but slightly felt at London and not at all in the neighbourhood, though they were sensible of the shock in several parts of England and Ireland".

He further reports that various experts then endeavoured to show that the formation of metals is a necessary consequence of earthquakes and that the interior parts of the globe abound with sulphurous matter, extraordinary heat philosophers seem puzzled to account in a satisfactory manner for such "terraqueous convulsions".

As Milton put it, "Earth felt the wound, and nature, from her heat, Sighing, thro' all her works, gave Signs of Woe."



## Conscientious Objectors and Guernsey Refugees

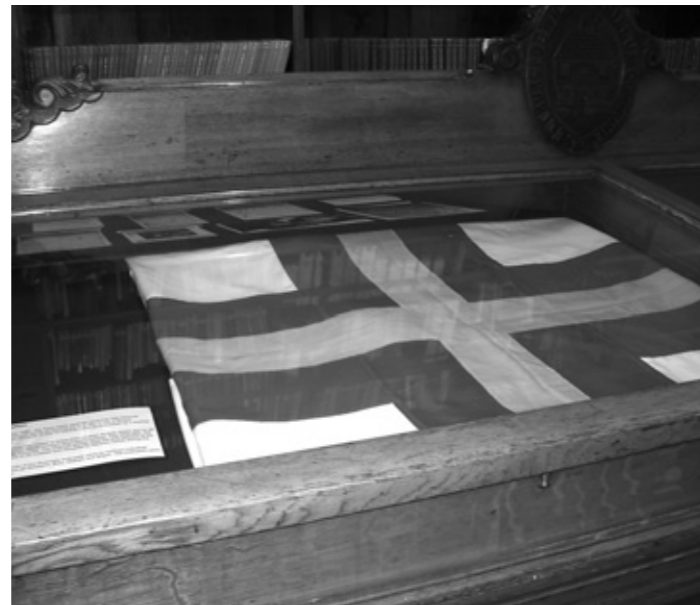
*This month's Local and Family History cases explore the life of a local Conscientious Objector, Arthur Turtle and the Guernsey Refugees.*

### Arthur Turtle

Arthur Turtle was born 3 September 1888 in Tyldesley, Lancashire. He grew up to be a religious man, with a strong belief in peace. He dedicated his life to working against violence, injustice and poverty. He maintained these beliefs during the early years of the First World War and as a result, was brought before a tribunal at Manchester Town Hall in April 1916, as a conscientious objector. Although he was awarded exemption papers following the tribunal, he received his calling up papers in November 1916, following the introduction of the Military Service Act and conscription. Arthur was arrested in January 1917 and placed in Ashton-under-Lyne barracks. He was court-martialled and sentenced to two years hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs prison. Arthur remained in prison until April 1919 and in May 1919 Arthur was dishonourably discharged from the army.

During his time in prison, Arthur was greatly influenced by Quakers, and many came to visit him and they remained firm friends after his release. In April 1923, Arthur and his wife joined Friends at Leigh Meeting. Arthur served Leigh Meeting as Clerk, and was an active member of the community.

*A drawing by Arthur, showing himself cleaning out his cell.*



*The Guernsey Flag presented by refugees to the Mayor of Wigan*

### Guernsey refugees

During the Second World War the Channel Islands were the only portion of the British Isles to be occupied. On the 28 June 1940, German forces bombed Guernsey's harbour, and two days later the island was occupied. Luckily, many children had been evacuated from the island, and on 22 June, 709 Channel Island evacuees arrived in Wigan. Of these 709 children, 136 were billeted with Wigan residents.

When British Forces liberated the Channel Islands in May 1945, those children that had been evacuated were allowed to return. However, many had built a life in Wigan and the northern towns, and so chose to stay, with families coming from Guernsey to join them.

In June 1990, the then Mayor of Wigan was presented with the Guernsey flag as a token of thanks from the Islanders. This May and June celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Guernsey evacuations.

To find out more, and see documents relating to Arthur Turtle and the Guernsey refugees, visit the changing Local and Family History cases at the Museum of Wigan Life. These subjects will be on display until August, after which new themes will be explored.

## Ancient Order of Foresters Sash

This sash belonged to John Cadman who was a member of the Wigan branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters (AOF). He worked at Kirkless Ironworks and died in 1949 aged 83.

The AOF are one of the oldest friendly societies in the country and their origins lie in Yorkshire around 1790. The society was originally called the Royal Ancient Order of Foresters (RAOF) probably after the Royal Forest at Knaresborough. At first, the Foresters seem to have been a purely sociable society until the members decided that they had a duty to assist their fellow men who fell into need "as they walked through the forests of life". Members paid into a common fund from which sick pay and funeral grants could be drawn.

The branches or lodges of the AOF were called courts after medieval forest courts and the officers used titles such as Ranger, Woodward and Beadle. John Cadman was a Past Chief Ranger. This is shown on the sash with the gold letters "PCR". Past Chief Rangers were chosen by their fellow members to serve in office for a period of 3, 6 or 12 months. A PCR was often presented with a sash as mark of recognition. He would then have worn it with pride at anniversary parades and other social events.

Like many friendly societies the AOF had their own highly symbolic regalia including collars, sashes and badges. In the AOF a sash, sometimes known as a scarf, was one of the key items of personal regalia. The sash had to be 6 inches (15.2 cm) wide and 2¼ yards (2.1 metres) long. It was worn over the right shoulder and tied at the left of the waist. You could either buy the official sash or use an ordinary scarf and add the necessary elements to save expense. The latter appears to be the case for this sash. The metal lettering PCR has been hand-sewn to the sash along with a printed silk panel, padded satin star and gold fringe. The sash is green with purple edging.

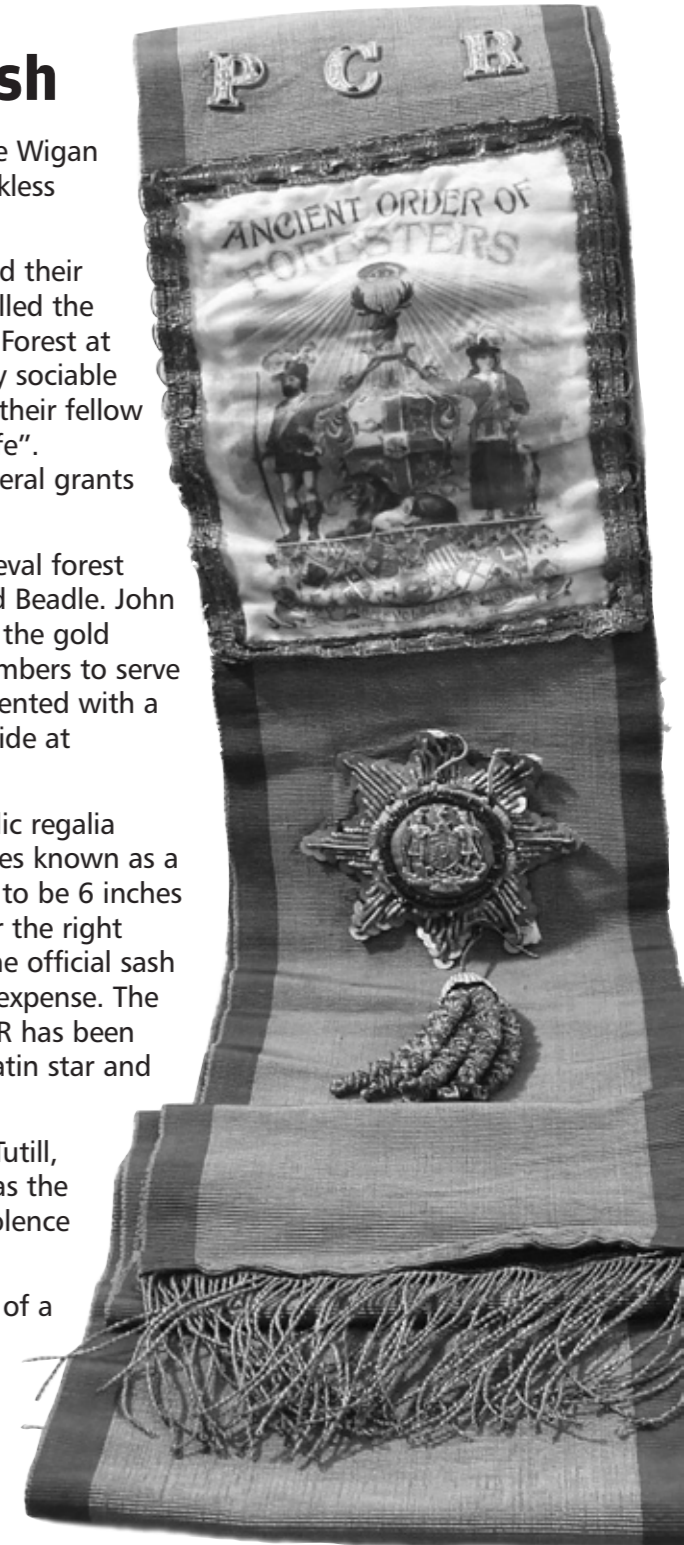
The printed silk panel would have been purchased from George Tutill, who is better known as a banner maker. The printed silk panel has the motto "Unitas, Benevolentia, Concordia" meaning "Unity, Benevolence and Concord".

The silk panel also contains the emblem of the AOF. This consists of a shield divided by a cross with various symbols incorporated into the shield, including clasped hands, bows and arrows, a bugle horn and running stags. Above the shield is a coronet (or small crown) a stag's head and the all-seeing eye. On either side of the shield is a Forester. On this sash one of the foresters is male and the other is female. From 1892 onwards women were able to become members of the AOF. Before 1892 they were not allowed to join and both Foresters on the emblem would have been male.

The Foresters still exist today and provide financial, social and charitable activities. There is one court operating locally, Court Faithful Abraham 1549.

#### Sources

*Discovering Friendly and Fraternal Societies-their badges and regalia' by Victoria Solt Dennis (334.70941 DEN)*  
*The Foresters Heritage Trust website - [www.aoforestersheritage.com](http://www.aoforestersheritage.com)*  
*Foresters Friendly Society website - [www.forestersfriendlysociety.co.uk/our-history.aspx](http://www.forestersfriendlysociety.co.uk/our-history.aspx)*





# LEIGH WORKHOUSE CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE - A SECOND LOOK

by Yvonne Eckersley



Chatham House, Atherleigh Hospital children's home in 1990.

Looking further at Leigh Workhouse children's experiences in the first decade of the twentieth century, I found, contrary to my hope, children's lives continued to be blighted. Nationally the Local Government Board (LGB) was playing an increasingly active role in the care of pauper children. Legislation, including the Children's Act of 1908 and The Infant Protection Act of 1909, accelerated movement towards more structured, realistic and humane practices. I found evidence of the enactment of many of these changes by Leigh Union Guardians, but conversely their reluctance to accept or act on others.

## Children of the State

This article begins with Section 1 of the Poor Law Act of 1899 which compelled Guardians to keep a 'Register of Control' naming all the children the State had responsibility for. Children who were orphaned or deserted were formally 'adopted' as Children of the State. These children are my subjects.

The parents of these children were prosecuted for neglecting to maintain or deserting them. The children were placed under the control of the Guardians. Babies were put into the Workhouse Nursery, younger children went into certified Poor Law Institutions until either their parents reclaimed them or they were old enough, from 11 years, to place into service and certain older children were placed directly into service. Siblings were often placed in different institutions. Some children, were 'Boarded Out' in private homes, Leigh Guardians recorded nothing of their lives apart from the fortnightly collective cost of their care.

## Babies in the Workhouse Nursery

Where the Guardians were not required to execute improvements, they were reluctant to do so. From 1903 Leigh's Medical Officer and the LGB Inspector's Reports repeatedly criticised the Nursery. It was unsanitary, had a damp, uneven flagged floor, with no bathing accommodation, no suitable lavatory;

sleeping accommodation was "fair" with "warmth and ventilation somewhat deficient". Eventually in 1909 a new Nursery was formed from the disused Lunatic Block. Its lack of heating was repeatedly criticised but the Board refused to heat it. There were also concerns that because the Nursery had no Night Nurse, bottle-fed babies were sent to the Hospital overnight. The rest, presumably, were left alone. Guardians continually refused to employ a Night Nurse.

## Certified Institutions

After the Inquiry of Holly Mount Schools' neglect in 1902, Guardians increased the number of Inspections of Certified Schools to three annually. But as these were notified in advance their value is questionable. It was not until after 1910 that Guardians' visits became unannounced

Institutions for boys included training ships. Leigh boys were mainly sent to the 'Indefatigable' at Rock Ferry or the 'Clio', Anglesey. Training ships were used by magistrates to incarcerate troublesome boys, as well

as boys whose only crime was to be destitute. It was not an easy life. As boys reached 15 years of age many were apprenticed to merchant ships as cabin boys. Guardian Minutes record efforts were made to ensure boys' further training and care was satisfactory.

By 1908 the LGB were making efforts to ensure institutions did not exploit children by placing them into service. They requested Unions to supply information on children's whereabouts. Leigh Guardians could not be certain where their children were. In 1903 they had sanctioned school managers placing Leigh children in service provided they were informed in advance. Concern was voiced in 1905 and by 1908 it was evident this was not happening.

## Children in Service

From a pool of children, potential employers applied for a child. The Guardians investigated their circumstances. If suitable, the child was placed with the employer for a month's trial, after which the Guardians assessed the situation, if they were satisfied the child stayed and an allowance given for clothing. Children were mainly placed in service locally but some were sent to Liverpool, Lancaster, Standish, Lostock, Westhoughton and Bolton. These children were visited twice a year. In response to the Children's Act the Guardians created a committee of four "Lady" members and two males. Although they began to formalise and improve the processes of applications and welfare visits, they relied on the good-will of the employers.

Yet the impression one gets is that to many employers, workhouse children were a commodity, to be acquired and disposed of at will. There were instances of people requesting a "young girl" of about 8 or 9, or "healthy lads" for service, individuals who went as far as adopting very young children, only to return them as "unsuitable". Some children, sent out on a month's trial, were repeatedly returned as "unsuitable". Employers returned children for economic or personal reasons, one

child returned because her employers had a "disagreement"

## Boarded Out Children

The Children's Act of 1908 and the Infant Protection Act of 1909, no doubt stimulated by popular concern surrounding a spate of high profile murder trials and the execution of a notorious 'baby farmer' for infanticide, introduced non-negotiable regulations concerning the organisation of children boarded out (within the Union). Here Leigh's inadequate practices were addressed and formalised for the first time. Lists of children, their foster parents' names and addresses, the amount of money each received and for how long, was recorded in the minute books. The monies were to be handed to the foster parent personally by a member of the newly formed Boarding-Out Committee to facilitate incidental supervision of the children's welfare. After 1909, Infant Protection Officers were employed for each Relief District. These women's role included locating unregistered foster homes then notifying the Committee, assessing foster parents suitability and ensuring they were conversant with the Children Act's requirements. On a more humane level, government recognition that children would be happier placed with relatives resulted in a reversal of practice, and many children were placed with family members.

## Emigration

Emigration of Leigh children was seriously considered in 1903. In response to a circular letter from the State Children's Association, a Guardian motion to emigrate children was defeated by the chairman's vote.

However, some Certified Schools, which Leigh children attended, did adopt a policy of emigration, but the minute books do not record any instances of this. One girl of 17 did apply and was assisted, but she did so independently.

## Children's Receiving Home

The LGB ideal was to remove children completely from the taint of pauperism associated with the workhouse. For this to be properly effective it was considered preferable for Unions to build Children's Receiving Homes away from workhouses. LGB architects calculated the optimum amount of space, heating, bathing requirements and kitchen facilities for these homes. Leigh Guardians were reluctant to accept the LGB's expertise, and building was delayed whilst the two sides debated. Leigh's Receiving Homes were eventually built in 1907 to LGB standards. They were built adjoining the workhouse and as there was no gate between the children's yard and the Union offices until 1910-11, many children continued to be "tainted with pauperism".

## Observations

Briefly, Leigh Guardians Minute Books record the harsh experiences of pauper children, and although conditions were improving, one cannot help but conclude that many childhoods were made unnecessarily harsher than they needed to be.

**Information: The Leigh Guardians Minute Books from 1899 to 1911. Wigan Archives Service, Leigh Town Hall, Leigh.**

Resolved that payments be made to the foster parents as under:—				
Name of Foster Parent.	Name of Child.	Address.	Amount per Week.	Period.
Mary O'Neill	Cecilia O'Neill	...22 St. Helens Road, Leigh	2/-	...14 weeks
Mary Johnson	Thomas Hatton	...20 Baker Street,	3/-	...14 "
"	James Hatton	...20 "	3/-	...14 "
Amelia Alcock	John Alcock	...6 Jaffrey Street,	3/-	...14 "
F.L. Partington	Wm. Alcock	...15 1/2 Leigh Road	3/-	...14 "
M. A. Calvert	...	...34 Walmsley Road,	5/-	...14 "
"	...	...34 "	5/-	...14 "

Extract from Leigh Union Minutes 1.1.1910 showing payments to foster parents.



## Your Archives

I would like to use this opportunity to say thank you and well done to two Archive volunteers. Chris Fryer and Magdalen Pickering have been volunteering at the Archives for some time now and have recently been awarded places on masters degree courses in Archives and Records Management. We wish them success in their future careers and thank them for all their hard work.

We have also had some staff changes at the Archives in the last few months. Sadly, Audrey Harrison, the Leigh based Heritage Assistant, has left us (but I'm assured will be back to look through the diary collections) and we are pleased to welcome Joan Livesey our new Heritage Assistant.

## Recent Acquisitions

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

- Photographs of the Combined Egyptian Mills Limited, 1930-1950 (Acc. 2010/9)
- Records of St Joseph's Dramatic Society and Leigh Drama Festival, 1940s-1990s (Acc. 2010/12)
- Records of Leigh and District Soroptimist International (D/DS/99)
- Photographic record of the Beat Boys and The Dominoes (D/DZA/173)
- Records of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic School, Leigh (SR/112)
- Records of Wigan Leigh and District Society for the Blind (D/DS/100)

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



Programme from St Joseph's Dramatic Society, Leigh 1951

## Collections Corner

**Percy Walter de Courcy Smale (D/DZA/183)**  
On occasion, documents and photographs arrive at the Archives Service with little or no associated information. These are items that test the knowledge of Heritage staff, and until we get to work on finding their context, items without a history. One such collection was delivered to the Archives earlier this year.

A padded, foolscap envelope arrived in the post, safely wrapping its contents and bearing air mail stamps, alongside the markings of the United States Postal Service. Inside, were two volumes of



A page from a musical score by Percy Walter de Courcy Smale

music composed by the Wigan musician and composer, Percy W. de Courcy Smale. The books, one black and one maroon, contain two original musical scores, written in black ink for a full orchestra, entitled, Seaside Pictures: Theme and Variations for Orchestra and In Lavender. Suite for Full Orchestra. The former is around 50 pages, the latter 20, and offer no date of composition and the only personal information on their composer, a pencil-written address on Swinley Road.

From subsequent research, we found that de Courcy Smale was a prominent Wigan musician and composer during the first decades of the twentieth century, organist at Wigan All Saints Church and died at the age of 66 in April 1942. An important local man, he was held in high esteem for his performances and compositions. The intriguing question that remains is how did these documents end up in the USA?

They were donated to the Archives by a journalist from Wharton, in rural Texas, who purchased the volumes from a thrift store for 75 cents each. That leaves over 60 years of unaccounted history during which the volumes made the long trip across the Atlantic, and only in the last few months, found their way back again to Wigan. If anyone can provide us with any details of de Courcy Smale's life and work, or can explain the how the documents got to Texas, please get in touch.

If any readers would like to view the volumes (or perhaps make an attempt at performing the works), please contact us.

# SPRING CLEAN FOR BELLS

By Hannah Turner

In March this year the bells of St Mary's Parish Church in Leigh were taken out of the church to be cleaned. They have not been out of the bell tower for more than 100 years. The church has been fundraising since 2006 in order to raise the £30,000 needed to restore the bells to their former glory. Specialists from Nicholson Engineering of Bridport, Dorset carried out the refurbishment which finished in May.

Many people came to the church to watch the bells being taken down from the Tudor tower. There were nine bells altogether including a priest's bell, believed to be the oldest of them all. Over the centuries, bells at the church have been used to call the parishioners to worship and also for announcing important events. They are believed to have been rung for Lord Nelson's Funeral. Some of the members of Leigh's 'History Chat' attended the bell event. They were able to see the bells being lowered as well as see the bells up-close. The bells bear different inscriptions such as "peace and good neighbourhood" and "when you ring, we'll sweetly sing".

One of the bells has a special significance for one of the 'History Chatters', Gess Farrington. Gess is a descendant of the vicar William Farrington. William's name is inscribed on one of the bells which were cast in 1740 in Gloucester by Abel Rudhall. William was educated at Manchester Grammar School. He was the vicar of Leigh from around 1734. He later became Rector of Warrington in 1767. He died that same year. William may be better known though, for being the father of Joseph Farrington, the artist.



Three of the bells on display in the church after being lowered from the bell tower.

Joseph was born in Leigh. He contributed regularly to the Royal Academy. He illustrated 'Lysons Magna Britannia' and other topographical works. Engravings have been made of his views of Cornwall, Devon, Cheshire and Derbyshire, to name but a few. Joseph wrote the 'Memoir and Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds' and he also kept a diary. In the diary he discusses the union of England and Ireland, America and independence, and Napoleon Bonaparte. He also describes having dinner with Lord and Lady Hamilton and Lord Nelson. He describes Lady Hamilton as being "bold & unguarded in her manner, is grown fat, & drinks freely".

The diary is an interesting account of Farrington's society. The diary, which is in several volumes, is a part of the Dootson Collection kept at Leigh Library. The diary is available to view on request from the Local History Desk within the library.

For further information about 'History Chat' or the Dootson Collection please ring Hannah Turner on 01942 404559 or e-mail at H.Turner@wlct.org.

### Sources

Leigh Journal 03/03/2010

The Farrington Diary by Joseph Farrington Vol. 1 (1793-1802)

Leigh District Authors by TR Dootson



Gess with the Farrington Bell



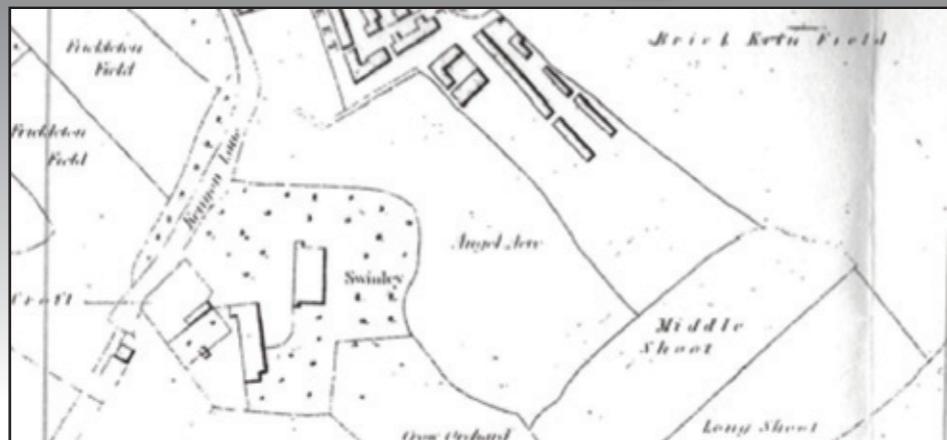
# The Medieval Open Fields of Wigan

By Bob Blakeman

Nowadays, few people passing Longshoot Health Centre in Wigan would be aware that the name 'Longshoot' is one of the last local reminders of a system of farming which was introduced at the time of the Viking invasions and lasted until the middle years of the nineteenth century. This was the open-field system, in which the arable land of a settlement consisted of a large number of strips, which were arranged in rectangular shaped groups known as 'furlongs', 'shots' or 'shoots'. The shoots could be of different lengths, so there were long shoots and short shoots. The shoots themselves were arranged in groups known as 'fields'. Each of these huge fields would have its own individual name.

The reason the land was ploughed in strips was almost certainly the introduction of an improved plough that could turn the soil over, rather than just scratch the surface, and thus create a better seed-bed. But the new plough required more pulling power, usually a team of eight oxen. The disadvantage of this arrangement was that turning the team was cumbersome and time consuming. In order to be used efficiently the team needed to move as far as possible in the same direction, hence the strips.

What was the name of the great open field of which Longshoot was a part? Most likely it was Scholes Field, because even today we find Scholefield Lane in the area, and two large fields, each called Scholes Field, appear here on a map of Wigan produced by John Mather in 1827. Scholes Field seems to have extended as far east as Clarington Brook, which forms the boundary with Ince-in-Makerfield, because nineteenth century maps show a group of long, narrow, rectangular



Part of Mather's map of Wigan in 1827 showing fields called Middleshoot and Longshoot in Swinley.

fields, which usually indicates enclosed former open-field strips, on the west side of the brook. Nearby is Birkett Bank, formerly known as Birkhede, a 'headland' being a strip of land left unploughed along the edge of an arable field to provide room for the plough to turn.

Not all land was suitable for use as arable in the Middle Ages. A major requirement was a well-drained soil, preferably overlying sand. The drift geology underlying the Scholes area consists of sand and gravel, and this extends westwards across the River Douglas into Swinley, and as far south as the Mesnes. It is not surprising, then, to find fields called Middleshoot and another Longshoot in Swinley, indicating that an open field once existed here (see map).

Beyond the Mesnes, boulder clay replaces sand and gravel, and slope becomes an important factor determining drainage. There appears to have been a small area of open-field arable on the site of the present Wallgate Station and railway lines, limited in the north by ill drained land used as meadow around Frog Lane, a name indicative of wet ground, and in the west by similar land around Miry Lane that is 'Muddy Lane'. There were also

patches of open field between Wallgate and Chapel Lane, and Chapel Lane and the River Douglas.

The introduction of the improved plough seems to have encouraged manorial lords to re-organise their estates, concentrating former scattered peasant homesteads into nucleated villages, and re-distributing their landholdings in scattered strips around the open fields. This is probably what happened in Ashton-in-Makerfield, where the pattern of enclosed fields indicated former extensive open fields. Further evidence is provided by the survival of the name 'Townfields'. This is a common name on old estate and tithe maps, indicating a field divided into strips owned by numerous inhabitants of the township.

In 1246 Wigan officially became a borough. Merchants and craftsmen such as blacksmiths, tanners and potters were encouraged to settle here. But there was nothing incongruous in an urban centre having open fields. It was usual for the burgesses, as the merchants and craftsmen were known, to own strips in the fields which were worked by men of a lower class.

The situation at Wigan and Ashton may be compared with that at Ince-

in-Makerfield, where the geology, topography and settlement pattern did not favour the introduction of the open-field system. About a quarter of the surface area of the township consisted of mossland in the form of the Ince and Bryn Mosses; and a quarter of communal wood-pasture in the form of Amberswood Common. The population density was low, and the settlement pattern consisted of a number of capital messuages or landholdings, such as Peel Hall, New Hall and the Hall of Ince, forming compact estates held by individual owners. Where such large farms existed there was little potential value in creating open fields with intermingled strips.

This mixture of communally worked open fields and individually-owned estates was typical of the north-west region of England as a whole. The region was an economically and socially backward part of England, and open fields were introduced here at a late date, at some time after the Norman Conquest. They were abandoned early, in piecemeal fashion, as animal grazing became more important before the great period of parliamentary enclosures that began in the mid-eighteenth century.

In recent years we have seen how the introduction of new technology can alter the landscape. Modern agricultural machinery cannot be

used efficiently in the small fields created by the enclosure movement of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hedges have been torn up to create much larger fields, small farms combined to form larger ones, and farm buildings converted into living accommodation for people who do not work on the land.

**General works consulted:**  
*Field, John (1993) A History of English field-names. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd.*

*Higham, Nicholas (2004) A Frontier landscape: the north-west in the Middle Ages. Windgather Press.*

## WINDSWEPT BY THE LION'S BREATH MEMORIES OF A WARTIME PHOTOGRAPHER

By Austin Lyons

**In the summer of 1945, we moved out of Burma and relocated to the East Coast of India, to a camp in the vicinities of Jaculia, leaving behind our bamboo-style dwellings erected on the earthen floor. Here we had the more up to date buildings for most sections of our unit, only the billets were of Indian origin. The huts were constructed of plaster walls, reinforced by wooden strips, then covered by thatched roofs. We found our style of accommodation very comfortable and more relaxing, than the dusty, hot atmosphere of Burma.**

One evening, I was sitting outside, preparing to write a letter home, when a young, Indian boy came running and shouting "Sahib! Sahib!" and pointing backwards. Somewhat puzzled, I looked up and there looming over the horizon was an ominous, dark cloud-form, heading in our direction. Thinking we were going to be lashed by a monsoon, I hurried inside to warn the lads. Suddenly, there was a loud, almost deafening sound. We thought there had been some explosion. The whole place shuddered. The plaster walls quite literally rippled in waves, terrified, we just stared at each other in disbelief and shock.

There was no rain storm, just a horrible, roaring wind. I glanced out of the window, and saw large sheets of corrugated metal being tossed about like pieces of paper. Other items, such as machine parts and heavy tools were being hauled through the air like matchwood, the accompanying noise adding to the horror of it all. I remember in writing home how I tried to describe it "It sounded like thirty or more lions all roaring at the same time" I penned. One of the lads told me later that he had been through the London Blitz, but nothing as scaring as this.

Here we were at the mercy of the elements, when eventually the tornado stopped and we ventured outside. The whole area looked as if it had been strafed by an attacking airplane, debris was scattered everywhere. The thatched roofs of several of the billets were torn off, ours thankfully, remaining intact. What we were unaware of at the time, was that we would be subjected to two further tornado visits within the next few days. When we

saw the second approaching, I had some misgivings about staying put, rippling walls wasn't an attractive option. Looking around I noticed a nearby latrine, it had stout, brick walls, and a semi-open ventilator thatched roof, so I quickly decided that the corner of this structure would provide me with a safe refuge. There I huddled when the storm came and the 'lion's breath' roared fearfully all around me for the next hour or so. Thankfully, once again, the roof of our billet was unaffected.

In a couple of days, at exactly the same time, the tornado struck a third time, so once more, I hurried to my refuge point and stuck it out. By now, most of the lads had conducted that meteorologically, our camp was in some sort of 'tornado track'. As we left our billet the following morning, we met scores of the lads who had been caught out in the storm. Heads bandaged, there were numerous injuries, but no fatalities, a remarkable outcome considering we had survived three tornado assaults.

When things had eventually settled down, I was driven around in a jeep with orders to photograph the resultant damage both in the camps as well as the air strip. The thatched roofs on all the huts had been destroyed, with the exception of our billet. They had been torn off and lay inverted like a peeled banana. Massive brick buttresses supporting hangar-style buildings were demolished, as if they had been hit with a bulldozer. As we approached the air strip, there wasn't any aircraft in sight. The whole area was covered in debris with a huge pile at the far end. As we drove up to this we received something of a shock. There, in a perfectly formed circle, were twenty or so single-engined light aircraft, tightly locked together by some strange, mystical centrifugal force of the tornadoes. No wonder they call them 'twisters' in the USA. They had twisted these aircraft with perfect circular symmetry. After all their turmoil, it came as no surprise, when we were informed that we would soon be on the move again this time heading south to Madras. Once again normal service life resumed, but this haunting legacy in the triple tornado attacks, being deeply etched in our memories.



# The Atherton Tollgate

by Bob Evans

Until the latter half of the nineteenth century most of the roads in Atherton, as elsewhere in the region, were little more than poorly maintained tracks, well illustrated by the detailed accounts of Atherton highways surveyors. The exception to this was the Bolton to St Helens Turnpike Road. In 1762 Parliamentary approval was given for private individuals to invest money for the improvement of this length of road in return for the right to place toll gates across it and charge travellers and carts passing through them. Though those using the road may have welcomed the easier journey, they frequently voiced resentment at the charges levied.



In the mid nineteenth century these concerns were intensified by the intention of the Trust to seek an ammendment to their act, described in many of the sources for this article as the "1860 Act". No copy exists in our local records, but Bolton archives have a 1828 map of the road annotated with changes dated 1860, and accompanied by large scale plans surveyed in 1859. When the Atherton parish officers became aware of the intention to place a new toll bar in Atherton market place to raise additional revenue from traffic passing onto the toll road from Tyldesley Road, they called a ratepayers' meeting which is recorded in their minute book "Township of Atherton August 6th 1860....At a meeting held at the National School for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of opposing the present

scheme of the trustees of the Bolton & St Helens Trust of placing toll bars in the Township." It was agreed to send a deputation on the following Thursday to a meeting at the King's Head: "for the purpose of making known to the Trustees the opposition and objection to such scheme by the ratepayers." At a further meeting on the 10 October the turnpike authorities were asked if it was possible for the Vestry to take over part of the turnpike road "to avoid the erection of a toll bar in the Township." The issue became public knowledge when on 20 October the following news item appeared in the Leigh Chronicle "THE NEW TOLL BAR IN ATHERTON – We understand that the new side bar, near the Market-place, Atherton, is to be fixed at an early period; in fact it is included in their list of bars to be shortly let."

From this date onwards the paper published letters from ratepayers and reports of meetings most expressing strong opposition, not only to any additional bars, but also to those that already existed. A letter from "An Atherton Man" published 8 December complained that the new gate would add 6d to the cost of each load of coal crossing the toll road from Tyldesley on the way to Bag Lane and the railway.

During the following four years this opposition to the turnpike trust became closely linked with the consideration of options to replace the long established parish vestry



with a new form of local government, particularly whether to adopt the 1858 Local Government Act. At a meeting reported in the 'Chronicle' 3 May 1862 ratepayers were given the legal opinion that if the Act were adopted the result would be "in the first place all the toll bars within the township would be illegal; secondly, that the trustees would claim no compensation whatever: and thirdly, that the mortgages would have no claim upon the township". Both in the debate which followed and in letters published in the following weeks opposition was expressed to the principle of a Local Board with powers to provide water and sewage as well as taking over the cost of road repairs all of which would result in increased rates. Such a negative view was answered by another correspondence, signing as "Another Donkey", who in reply wrote "last week's correspondents' objection to the removal of nuisances and the water supply, may I explain in one sentence, their meaning – they object powers to pay for water and prefer to remain in filth."

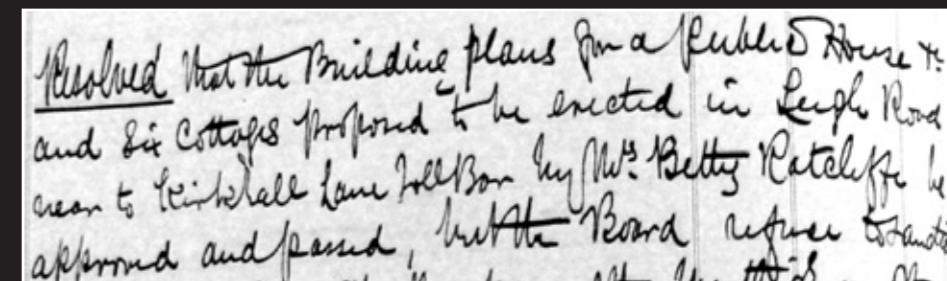
Perhaps, in the hope that it would weaken support for the adoption of a Local Board, the Trust made a concession which the 'Chronicle' reported at the end of its report on the May meeting. They had been informed that following a meeting with the trustees at the Kings Head Inn "an arrangement was made for the Early Removal of the Bar across the Turnpike Road near the Church, and for the Removal of the Side Bar in the Market Place at the end of this year." On 3 January 1863 the 'Chronicle' included "ATHERTON TOLL BAR REMOVED - On New Year's Day, at 12 o'clock, the Toll Bar which has so long disgraced the Atherton Market-place, was

removed amidst the general rejoicing of the inhabitants.....The event was signalled by ringing the church bell."

The decision to form a local board was finally made. On 17 October 1863 the Chronicle reported "on Monday forenoon last a duly convened meeting of ratepayers and owners of property in Atherton was held in the National School..... Upwards of 200 persons were present ....the act was carried by a very large majority." Following this approval it must have been assumed that once the Board came into existence tolls were no longer payable for the 'Chronicle' reported on 2 January 1864 "THE KIRKHALL LANE TOLL BAR - This obnoxious obstruction to one of the principal entrances to Leigh was yesterday thrown open and traffic between Leigh, Atherton and Westleigh proceeds untaxed." However, as the 'Chronicle' had already reported on 4 November that the Trust had made provision to protect their interests "The trustees of this road have given notice of their intention to apply to Parliament in the ensuing session for an amended act to enable them to retain the present objectionable toll-gate at Kirkhall lane and to repeal that clause in their present act which enables any township adopting the Local Government Act to rid itself of any toll gate within its boundaries".



At its first meeting in February 1864 the Board decided to oppose this application. At the following week's meeting it was agreed by a vote of 9 to 4 to send a petition to Parliament opposing any retention of tolls. This decision, as the 'Chronicle' reported on 13 February, was only reached after an eloquent and passionate defence of the trust by two members, Thomas Peake and Thomas Hoyle Hope. Their concern was for people who had invested in the trust and would not be repaid,



making particular reference to costs incurred when what is now Bolton New Road was made to by-pass the original steep descent of the old road across the Valley. Mr Peake, speaking as one of the oldest members of the Board, said "I can recollect when the roads in Atherton were in a miserable state.....the road between Leigh and Chowbent used to be a very zig-zag road.....a great deal of money has been laid out..... to this day there is four or five thousand pounds still owing to Atherton people.....If we stop them from taking toll, their security will be gone." This opposition they repeated in two letters published in the following week's 'Chronicle'. These two were the only members to continue to register dissent when the Board was asked to confirm support for the petition at its meeting on 21 April.

The outcome depended on the decision of a parliamentary committee which, after hearing the views of the two parties, reached an agreement satisfactory to both. The 'Chronicle' summarised this on 7 May "The promoters of the bill endeavoured to saddle Atherton and Pennington with a large share of the debt on the road. This was

of course rejected and a compromise was arranged... although the bars at Kirkhall Lane and Pennington may again be reinstated for three years, yet all that belatedly, will at the expiration of that period most certainly be removed from the ratepayers of this district, once and for ever. Further the trustees will be debarred from imposing any additional bars on the line of the road between Bolton and Newton, so that all apprehensions

of a bar at the boundary of Lowton and Pennington or Hulton and Atherton are set at rest."

On 7 July 1864 the 'Chronicle' confirmed that the re-imposition of tolls had begun that week "THE TOLL BARS - the collection of tolls at Pennington and Kirkhall lane was resumed on Thursday morning last, and will continue for three years, when the nuisance will finally terminate"

A local board minute of plans for a public house and cottages near the Kirkhall Lane toll house confirms its continuing presence in 1866.

Surprisingly, considering the attention both the Local Board and the 'Chronicle' had given to the issue, neither provide any reference to the final removal of this toll bar. Lowton parish documents reveal that the trust finally gave up responsibility for its remaining lengths of road outside the local board areas in 1879. At that year's annual meeting the trustees "appointed a General Committee for the purpose of performing all duties necessary to wind up this Trust." This committee was "to make all necessary arrangements for putting down and removing the Toll Gates and Bars". These Lowton records make particular reference to one toll house, at Stone Croft Lane on the road between Lowton and Newton.

**Sources And Acknowledgments**  
This brief account is based on minutes of meetings of the Atherton Vestry (TR Ath A/1/2) and of the succeeding Local Board (UD Ath/1/1), together with Lowton Parish records (DP/17/20/1 to 6), all of which are in the Wigan Archives in Leigh Town Hall. Thanks are due to the archivist there and also to staff in the local history sections of Leigh and Bolton libraries, the former for assistance with accessing the 'Chronicle' articles (on microfilm) and the latter for identifying and locating the maps of the turnpike road (ZJA/3 to 6).



# ROSE BRIDGE SCHOOL REVISITED

By Mrs V Coleman

After seeing an advertisement in the local paper for Rose Bridge High School Open Day and Market Garden Day, I thought I may go and have a look around. I may buy some vegetables, after all it is for the school, and it'll give me the chance to look at my old school again. On the Monday I went along with my shopping trolley. Hey! I'm a pensioner I'm allowed to pull a trolley. As I got there at the school, the gates were different, but the structure was still the same. Inside a big, white marquee children were selling vegetables they had grown in the school garden. They looked so proud emptying sacks of potatoes on tables which they must have carefully tended for months. I thought 'Good on ya!' I bought as much as I could fit in my trolley as they looked so fresh, I had enough to last weeks, and I thought 'Well, I'm giving something back to my school.' I started thinking 'my school,' thinking back to 1956 and me – an eleven year old girl walking into the school gates on my first day. I still remember the uniform, white long sleeved shirt, navy gymslip which buttoned on the shoulders and belt with buttons on, navy mac and a navy beret on my head with a red 'R B' badge sewn on.

The first thing that met you were the classrooms, tucked inside a veranda, a path all around, and a garden area in the middle, which you weren't allowed to walk on. The hall separated the middle of the school, as boys were on one side of the school and girls taught on the other side, and never the twain shall meet. That's what they thought!

On my first day we were shown the big cloak room where you hung your coats up, and big sinks to wash your hands. The toilets were in the schoolyard, in a block. I never went in the first day as everybody said all new starters had their heads ducked down the toilets, we were petrified, but I never heard or saw of it, it was just to scare us. Oh! It certainly did that.

The class you were sent in depended on how clever you were, C being not very clever, B average and A clever. I started off in a B class but wasn't happy, so worked my way up to an A class. In school tests I was always bottom of the list but I didn't care I was still in an A class. We were given a jotter or note book to make a timetable of our lessons for the week, English,

maths, science, geography, history, cookery, sewing, PE and music.

Every morning before lessons all pupils had assembly in the hall, first year pupils at the front near the stage facing the head teacher, Miss Eccleston, who had eyes like a hawk. She saw everything and missed nothing. She could freeze you on the spot with a stare. You never put a foot wrong when she was around. Sometimes if you were late for a lesson and gave a little run, this voice would come out of nowhere, "don't run girls" and you stopped dead in your tracks like playing musical statues. I really thought our head teacher came out of the brickwork.

My favourite lesson was sewing. I couldn't wait to learn because nobody in our house could sew a button on a

shirt, let alone a hem on a skirt. Thanks to Miss Ashall, the skills she taught us have always stayed with me and my sewing knowledge has helped me all my life. I've saved money making my own clothes and curtains, I've made money making fancy dress outfits, I've made costumes for school plays when my children were in infant school and also made crafts and had fundraising days for school funds. It's a real shame that sewing skills are dying out as we now live in a throw away society.

In domestic science, I didn't like cookery although I did get better. We learnt how to make bread and different pastries, mine were like cobble stones. We also had to starch clothes, another dying skill. It was an art in itself. We would have to wash tray cloths which were white linen and beautifully embroidered. Now the starch was like white gravel. You put it in a bowl of warm water, wait until it went glue-like, then stick your tray cloths in, lift them out still dripping and peg them on the washing line outside until they dry. When dry they're like cardboard, when ironed they looked so sharp and crisp and neat. I sometimes buy a tin of spray starch for my cottons, but the starching we did at school was another skill I'm proud I learned.

Maths was taught in feet, inches and yards, currency was pounds, shillings and pence. I always found maths hard so I would stare out through the french windows. When it was hot in summer the doors would be opened so you could smell the grass outside.

PE was netball outside in all weathers. In winter your legs were blue. In the hall on the apparatus, some girls would climb those ropes like monkeys. I couldn't stand heights so I just jumped on the mats trying to look good. I was no athlete, that's for sure. Talking of PE, your kit was a white tee shirt and navy knickers. These had to last as long as possible, so your tee shirt was down to your knees and the knickers were thick cotton with elastic at waist and legs, and a pocket. The kids today could fit a mobile phone in.

You didn't get into any trouble, or behaved badly. I remember one time me and my sister, who was three years older than me, had bought these bright pink luminous socks as rock 'n' roll was all the rage. Three other girls, friends of my sisters, also brought some in lime green. We decided to show off our socks and wear them to school, bad mistake. They were so bright you could see us coming a mile away. Well, the first person to spot us was the head teacher out the brick work, Miss Eccleston. We all walked straight into assembly, all the whispering and nudging soon got the attention of head teacher, who was on stage glaring down at us. I now regretted putting on those socks. We thought we'd got away with it as we were singing the last hymn, then it went quiet, deadly quiet. Mrs Eccleston bellowed out "Those girls with the bright socks on, come on stage!" We slowly walked up the steps, on to the stage. We paraded in front of the whole school and

## LEIGH FOR ALL

As part of the National Heritage Open Days celebrations and fun for all the family - join us for a **FREE** weekend of events.

Highlights include;  
Tours of Leigh Parish Church & Leigh Town Hall, a vintage car show, Victorian games, music, drama, talks, cookery demonstrations plus much more!

**Time:**  
11.00am - 4.00pm

**Dates:**  
Fri 10th & Sat 11th September

**Venue:**  
Leigh Civic Square, Leigh

For details of the full programme of Heritage Open Weekend events in both Leigh and Wigan, please contact:

01942 828128 or visit [www.wlct.org/heritage](http://www.wlct.org/heritage)



## museum of WiganLife

Discover Your New Shop!

Whether you're visiting the Museum or just passing, why not call in for that perfect gift or card?

We have a brand new range of **unusual gifts and games, local books, postcards and confectionery.** There's something for all ages and pockets, from children's favourites to local and family history books.



**SPECIAL  
INTRODUCTORY  
OFFER**  
Quote **MOWL1** and  
claim a **10% discount**  
on all purchases, valid  
till Nov 2010.

Museum of Wigan Life,  
Library Street, Wigan  
For further information call **01942 828128**  
or visit [www.wlct.org/heritage](http://www.wlct.org/heritage)



were made to take our socks off, wrap brown paper around our feet tied with string and walk round like that all day. How shaming? We were laughed at more for the brown paper flapping around our ankles than for the bright pink socks. I never wore them again, I learned my lesson, don't break the rules! Rules were strict, punishments were harsh, but we learned to respect our teachers.

When you reached your last year in school there were four leaving terms. If you turned fifteen before October, you left in October. If you were fifteen before Christmas, you left at Christmas. Same for Easter leavers, then Summer leavers. I was a Summer leaver, so I had a full year in school before I left. On the last day of leaving school there was always, a leavers' assembly. We all cried as we didn't want to leave, most of us didn't have choices of a career. It was straight into the cotton mills for me and a few others.

Walking back home after reminiscing about my few good years in this school, I thought about all my friends, the many Brendas, Doreens, Irene, Joyces, Joans and Jeans, Margarets, Marjorys, Vivienne, Marion – all modern names at the time. As I reached the canal bridge, I stopped and looked over and pictured the group of girls, just left school fifty years ago, all shouting 'One! Two! Three!' and throwing their berets in the canal, it was a tradition, watching each one go their separate ways, all moving in different directions, wondering if they would ever meet up again. Who knows? Who knows?





## Jenny Roberts – Learning Officer

Jenny's role as Learning Officer is primarily to manage and develop our volunteers and Friends here at the Heritage Service. She is passionate about volunteering and is looking forward to working alongside all the volunteers. Additionally, she will be assisting with other learning and outreach projects, with community groups, schools and families. Before coming to work for Wigan Heritage

Service, Jenny worked at Salford Museum and Art Gallery in the learning and outreach team. On a freelance basis, she thoroughly enjoys doing reminiscence work with dementia patients for the NHS. Outside of work she is a keen dancer and amateur theatre performer.

## VOLUNTEERS WEEK 2010

Volunteer's Week is an annual celebration of those people in our communities, who dedicate their time, enthusiasm and commitment to many

worthwhile causes. Between 1 and 7 June, there were lots of activities across the country to highlight the contribution that volunteers of all ages make to local groups and communities. In Wigan, Heritage Service Volunteers, along with others from around the borough, were invited to celebrate



Barbara and Joyce, two of our volunteers at the Museum of Wigan Life during Volunteer's Week.

at Mesnes Park on Tuesday 1 June, where a whole array of activities were available.

Unfortunately, the rain came down in buckets and it was cancelled! Despite this, a number of heritage service volunteers and Jenny quickly moved camp and set up the information and 'handling objects' stall in the museum. Throughout the day they spoke to around fifty people about volunteering whilst engaging younger visitors with Victorian toys and games.

Later in the week, there was a larger celebration buffet and entertainment organised by Wigan and Leigh CVS. A few of the volunteers and staff gathered at the Royal Oak hotel in Wigan and were treated to some Caribbean dancing, after which the volunteers were presented with pin badges and certificates of recognition by the Mayor of Wigan, Councillor Michael Winstanley.

## Recent additions to the Reference Stock at the Museum of Wigan Life

Allinson, T A. Victorian guide to healthy living 615.5	Smith, L. Young voices: British children remember the Second World War 940.53161
Coyle, G. The riches beneath our feet 338.20941	Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Volume 158
Hilton, J A. Hindley Coal, cotton and community 942.736	Westlake, R. Tracing the rifle volunteers 1859-1908: a guide for military and family historians. 356.1
History of the county of Sussex; volume 5 part 2: Littlehampton and district	Wigan County Borough Education Week Handbook 1924. 371.942
History of the county of Middlesex; volume 13: City of Westminster Part 1.	Wigan County Borough Education Committee. Syllabus of religious instruction. 371.942
Oxford Archaeology North. Grand Arcade, Millgate: final excavation report. 2 volumes. 936.278	

**Editor's Note.** This poem written by Mr and Mrs Anderton pays tribute to Wigan town. The History Shop has now been re-named the Museum of Wigan Life.

*Oh Wigan is my birth place*

*And Wigan is my home*

*A very pretty town where people like to be seen*

*They visit us from far away and even overseas*

*To view our ancient town which now sails to please.*

*The Houses on the roadside*

*Front doors past, which we work*

*What stories they could tell us if only they could talk.*

*The Ruins and the Church the Canal running near.*

*All add to the beauty of the town we hold so dear.*

*The Church and the School the Railway so near not forgetting Edwards*

*delicious pies has been drawn many times with jock with artistic eye.*

*It's mentioned in the Doomsday Book*

*From old to something new*

*It's mentioned in the AA book of pretty towns too*

*Everybody doesn't like Wigan, it isn't everybody's cup of tea*

*But there's a warm and friendly welcome and it's always home to me*

*The Wigan Family Tree*

*Not forgetting now Robin Park and JJB Sports and Heinz 57 where the fields so green.*

*Which is near the canal with boats which must be seen*

*Can't miss the History Shop with interesting things from Past to present times,*

*that's been going for some time.*



## "THE NOISE WE MEK!"

Your invitation to be part of a unique project and make your mark on local history!

### The Project

The Lancashire Society have been successful in gaining funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for their "THE NOISE WE MEK!" project.

The project follows the canal from Burscough to Blackburn and aims to study and record the variety of dialects and accents along its route. "THE NOISE WE MEK!" will be the sounds of industrial Lancashire, and the people that make this area so unique. For more information about the project go to:

[www.thelancshiresociety.org.uk](http://www.thelancshiresociety.org.uk)

### We Need Wiganers!

We would like to offer you the opportunity to get involved and really make your mark on the preservation of our local oral history.

Wigan has a rich and unique oral tradition, and we would like to hear from the young and old and everyone in-between! Anyone with an interest in drama and local history will be intrigued and excited by this project.

### What, When and Where

Please come along to our launch event at the Museum of Wigan Life where you will view a short performance by the Lancashire Society and then have the opportunity to have your say in an open discussion.

Two sessions will be held in September:

**Schools & Youth Groups: Wednesday 29 September 1:00pm-2:45pm**

**Community Groups & Individuals: Thursday 30 September 6:00pm- 7:30pm**

Refreshments and entertainment will be provided!

### RSVP

Please call the Museum of Wigan Life to let us know if you can attend this session. **01942 828128**. We recommend booking early to avoid disappointment as places are limited.

## MUSEUM OF WIGAN LIFE - VENUE AND ROOM HIRE

The Museum can provide the ideal venue for a host of events, including small group and community meetings. Our Thursday evening opening could be the perfect time for your group to use the newly refurbished Discover Room; or to arrange a dedicated research session in the Local Studies Area.

For further details call 01942 828128





# The First Rugby League Tour Down Under

By Tom Mather

Exactly 100 years ago in 1910, the Rugby League then known as the Northern Union took the trail blazing decision to send a team down to Australia and New Zealand. In doing so they were repaying the Australians for their tour here in 1908/09 and the New Zealanders for their ground breaking tour in 1907/08.

Playing a major part in its great success, were five Wigan rugby league club players. The Wigan club supplied more players to

that tour party than any other club. The five were; the full back Jim Sharrock born in New Springs Aspull and spent his whole career with Wigan, Dick Ramsdale, a forward born in Wigan and also only ever played for Wigan, the wingman, Jim Leytham born in Lancaster and signed for Wigan from the Lancaster club, the great centre Bert Jenkins who had come up from Mountain Ash and the stand-off Johnny Thomas who had signed from Cardiff, both were also to play their whole career at Central Park. The tourists travelled down under in two parties, the first on

the 'Osterley' while the Wigan and Oldham players who contested the Championship Final along with Billy Batten left a week later on the 'Malwa'. Once in Australia they faced the New South Wales (NSW) side twice in three days after only being in the country a week. Not surprisingly they lost both encounters. The following Saturday however, having trained well and come to terms with the smaller ball, harder grounds and the different interpretation of the rules by the referees, they came good when they defeated NSW in the third meeting between the two sides.

By the time the first test arrived the tourists were in top form and on the 18 June 1910 Australia and England (The Northern Union) met in the first test at The Agricultural Ground in Sydney. A crowd of 42,000 turned up to witness the battle that ensued and which saw the tourists victorious by a score of 27-20. All five of the Wigan players were in that victorious team which won the first ever test between the two countries in Australia. Jim Leytham crossed for two tries, and the forward Billy Jukes scored a hat-trick, something no forward has bettered in the last 100 years of test rugby between the two sides.

Just two weeks later the two teams met again in the second test, this time up in Brisbane and in front of 18,000 supporters, a record crowd for a game in Queensland. The tourists won the Ashes by winning 22-17. The match was special simply because it clinched the series for England, and the Wigan wingman, Leytham crossed for four tries. Leytham's efforts have not been equalled let alone bettered since that day. The Wigan club had four representatives in that second test, Jenkins missing the game through injury.

With the Ashes won, the only other big occasion was the game against Australasia, a team comprising of both Australian and New Zealand players. It was billed as the battle between Northern and Southern hemispheres for dominance of the game. That game, played at the Agricultural Ground attracted 44,000 who witnessed a 13-13 draw. The match was important for one reason, it was that game which was to knock the final nail in the coffin of the rugby union authorities. They realised that they could not compete with the new code. Rugby league would become, and still is the dominant rugby code in NSW and Queensland.

With the Australian leg of the trip over, the tourists sailed to Auckland New Zealand and played four games. They won them all, but in the test against the hosts they really did turn on the style and recorded a 52-20 victory. Once again the Wigan contingent all played in the game. Leytham bagged his usual brace as did Bert Jenkins, as the Wigan pair dominated one side of the field all through the match. While the New Zealanders may have lost the test they gained considerably off the field, simply because the visit by the Northern Union strengthened the tenuous foothold the game had in the country. They too were fighting the rugby union authorities, and the tour allowed the new code to flourish enough to survive the Great War and maintain a foot hold in the North and South islands.

This tour was ground breaking in many ways, and it no doubt placed rugby league firmly on the international stage. It, along with the visits previously of Australia and New Zealand, changed a sport which was moribund into a vibrant game that thrived and developed into the game we know today. There is also little

doubt that the five Wigan players played a great part in achieving this simply by the way in which they played to ensure the test matches were won and showed that they along with the other tourists were the best in the Northern Union.

The sad thing is, that the rugby authorities here and in Sydney have chosen not to acknowledge the centenary of that first test down under. The New Zealand and England teams when they meet in the Four Nations competition in October this year will however play in replica shirts like those used in 1910.

A book dealing with this first ever tour is due to be published on 18 June 2010 to coincide with the one hundredth anniversary of the first test match between England and Australia to be played in Australia

## THE BEST IN THE NORTHERN UNION

The pioneering 1910 Rugby League Lions to Australia and New Zealand By Tom Mather ISBN No. 978-1903659-51-9

Available from London League Publications

## CHOWBENT UNITARIAN CHAPEL English Heritage Open Days September 2010

The present chapel is situated in Bolton Old Road, Atherton, and is a replacement of the for the original built in 1645 on the site of the Parish Church of St John the Baptist, Atherton.

The chapel is much as it was when first built in 1721 using local labour and oak from the Hulton Estate. Described as brick (hand-made) with stone detailing round arched windows, of two storeys, it was fully in use by 1722. The box pews are original, as is the three-decker pulpit and there are beautiful stained glass windows. The very fine organ, which was installed in 1901 by Young, sits in the middle of a three-sided balcony.

### THE CHAPEL WILL BE OPEN:

Friday 10 September 12.00 until 5.00pm.  
Saturday 11 September 10.00am until 5.00pm.  
Sunday 12 September 12.00 until 5.00pm.

Archives relating to the Chapel will also be on display in the adjacent hall. Everyone is welcome.



# Sir Francis Sharp Powell

By Christine Watts

It has become something of a tradition in Wigan when visiting Mesnes Park, to visit the statue of Sir Francis Sharp Powell and to rub his foot for luck. Quite why we associate good luck with rubbing his foot or even with the man himself remains something of a mystery. But the fact remains that Wiganers have a fondness for the statue. Since restoration of the park began in January the statue has been protected by fencing and with the foot being now out of reach, the tradition has temporarily lapsed.

How many Wiganers however actually know who Sir Francis was and why in fact there is a statue of him? Since the statue will be 100 years old in November of this year, I thought it particularly appropriate to investigate.

Sir Francis was born in Wigan on 29 June 1827 and died in Bradford on 24 December 1911 at the age of 84. He was the son of Reverend Benjamin Powell, the then curate, later the Vicar, of St George's Church and Ann Wade, daughter of Reverend Thomas Wade and

niece of Francis Sharp Bridges of Horton Hall. Sir Francis attended Wigan Grammar School and Sedburgh School and later graduated from St John's College Cambridge. He went on to study law and was called to the Bar in 1853. He married Annie Gregson daughter of Matthew Gregson of Toxteth Park Liverpool in 1858. The couple lived at Bellingham Lodge in Wigan Lane until Sir Francis inherited his uncle's estate, Horton Hall, in Bradford.

Sir Francis practised law for only a short while. His predominant interest lay in politics and election to Parliament. His first attempt, in Wigan in 1852, was unsuccessful. He was also defeated at his second attempt in 1854. He finally succeeded in 1857, but was ousted at the next election in 1859. He remained without a seat until 1863, when he was asked to stand for Cambridge. He represented the city until 1868 when he lost his seat. During the next few years he briefly represented the North West Riding of Yorkshire, and then

attempted to be elected to a Manchester seat in 1875 against the brother of the Manchester radical Jacob Bright. His win at Wigan in 1885 finally saw him elected by a great majority and he remained as Conservative Member of Parliament for Wigan until he retired from politics in September 1909. He was created baronet in 1892.

His interests and achievements include being a member of the Royal Commission on Sanitation in 1870 and having credit for writing the greater part of the report of the committee. This far reaching report influenced the reform of sanitary laws and Sir Francis himself introduced the amendment to the Public Health Act in 1890 and to later acts. He was the treasurer to the Church Defence Committee. With Lord Frederick Cavendish he founded the Yorkshire College, later Leeds University. He also built All Saints Church in Bradford (1864). He supported the Mining College in Wigan constantly as well as financially and instituted the Powell Scholarships which gave recipients £50 for three years to

enable poorer students to study. He was a governor of the Grammar School from 1857 and held the position of Chairman for a number of years. In 1870 he started scholarships to the value of £50 a year for use of students to Oxford or Cambridge or alternatively to be used as £25 scholarships at Manchester or Leeds Universities.

Sir Francis gave generously to the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary as well as to Wigan Library. He encouraged swimming among boys in elementary school and gave the Powell Shield to this end. And of course there is the Powell Boys Reading Room which he had built and equipped to the sum of £3600. In recognition of this generous donation, he was made a Freeman of the Borough in 1895.

It is therefore not surprising that shortly before Sir Francis' retirement from political life, the then Mayor, Councillor James O'Donahue, should call for a special meeting to discuss presenting a testimonial to him. In the ensuing meetings a fund was begun and a competition for the design of a statue was set up with Sir William Goscombe John, the eminent sculptor as adjudicator. The model submitted by E G Gillick of London was deemed the winner at a cost considerably over £1000.

Symbolically the statue faces the Grammar School and has panels depicting Education as a seated female imparting

knowledge to the children around her. Health is also represented by a seated figure on the steps of a well giving the water of life to a group of happy people.

At the unveiling ceremony on 4 November 1910, Lord Derby spoke of his friendship with Sir Francis and above all he wished it to be known that the statue was of a man "who did his duty to all those with whom he came into contact" that he did that duty for anyone

Mesnes Park  
Powell Statue



regardless of their politics, indeed as the plaques on the side of the statue state, he did "great work...for sanitation and the housing of the poor".

*Let's hope the statue will be around for the next 100 years and that another couple of generations of Wiganers continue the tradition of rubbing his foot!*

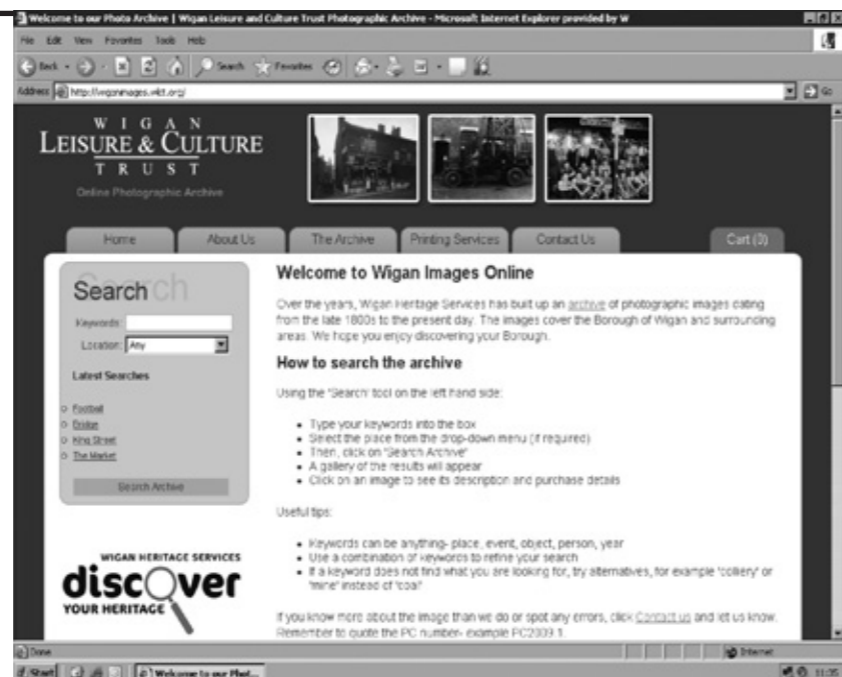


## HISTORIC ARCHIVE Goes Live!

Historic images from Wigan Heritage Services' photographic collection are now available to view online. Images date from the late nineteenth century and feature people and places from all around Wigan Borough.

The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Museum of Wigan Life development. The project would not have been possible without the hard work of our dedicated volunteers, so a big thank you to you all.

To view the archive visit:  
<http://wiganimages.wlct.org/>



## RAG RUG MAKING WORKSHOPS

Turnpike Gallery, Civic Square, Leigh WN7 1EB.

### RAG RUG TASTER SESSION

Friday 17 September, 1.00pm-2.30pm

A bite sized introduction to rag rug making for anyone who has never tried this technique before. Learn the basic techniques and make a small sample.

**Cost:** £4.00, including all materials.

**Advance booking required.** Telephone the gallery office on 01942 404469 to book your place.

### RAG RUG MAKING

Saturday 9 October, 10.00am-3.00pm

Rag rugs are a great way to recycle fabric. During this one-day workshop you will experiment with different kinds of materials to create exciting colour and texture combinations, making not just a rug but a unique piece of textile art. You will have the opportunity to complete small items or start something bigger to be continued at home. Suitable for beginners.

**Cost:** £12.00, including all materials.

**Advance booking required.** Telephone the gallery office on 01942 404469 to book your place.

## Flashback Fiction Competition

Have you been inspired by a story you have heard, or read, or perhaps by a visit you have made to a historic site, museum or library? We invite you to create a very short story which uses history in some way. It could be set in a historic house, use real or imaginary historic characters or use events from the past anywhere in the world. We would like your story to be set before 1960, not just yesterday.

Flashback Fiction is a short story competition run through libraries in the North West, by Time to Read. It asks you to bring the past to life in no more than 500 words. Entries must be made online. There are two categories: Under-16s and Over-16s, with cash and book tokens for prizes. The closing date for entries is 31 October 2010. For full information, or to enter your story, please go to:

<http://www.time-to-read.co.uk/promotions/>

## PAGES AGO



Time to read history at your library

## Official Opening of MUSEUM OF WIGAN LIFE

In Issue 54 we invited to you all to the launch of the new museum on 9 April. We are pleased to report that over 800 of you attended on the day, and more than 7,000 of you have visited us since then. The launch was followed by the official opening on 1 July by the Mayor of Wigan, Cllr Michael Winstanley. He said that the borough "has a proud history and a rich cultural heritage and the Museum of Wigan Life is the perfect celebration of this tradition. It is a top-quality transformation of the former History Shop which presents our past with a distinctly modern edge. I hope many people in our borough will make the most of this fantastic facility". The museum is the first port of call for anyone wanting to discover the history of the borough, and if you are local, your own history



The Mayor of Wigan, Cllr Michael Winstanley and Pete Gascoigne, Executive Director Libraries, Heritage & Arts proudly display the plaque commemorating the opening of the museum.

too. As well as our exhibitions and local and family research centre, we have a varied programme of events and activities, to suit all age ranges and local history interests. Keep an eye on our website, 'Exhibitions and Events Guide' and 'What's On'.

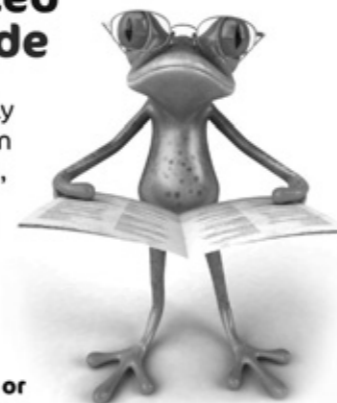
Don't let  
computers  
pass you by

myguide  
the easy way to find out  
how to use the internet

Get connected  
with myguide

Attend our FREE weekly sessions where you can learn at your own pace, discover the exciting world of computers and the internet together with their many uses and benefits.

For further information or to book your place please contact your local library.



explore  
wigan libraries

WIGAN  
LEISURE & CULTURE  
TRUST

VISIT THE UK...  
BOOK YOUR UK TRIP  
THROUGH US WITH  
SUPERBREAK OR  
NATIONAL EXPRESS

WE HAVE UNIQUE WIGAN  
GIFTS FOR ANY OCCASION.

LOVE WIGAN

WIGAN TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE  
WE ARE OPPOSITE WIGAN NORTH WESTERN TRAIN STATION

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

01942825677

Tourist Awards  
2009  
WINNER

superbreak  
national express

WIGAN  
LEISURE & CULTURE  
TRUST





Scout fundraising leaflet featuring scoutmaster Rev Cannon Murdoch.

Rev Cannon Murdoch.

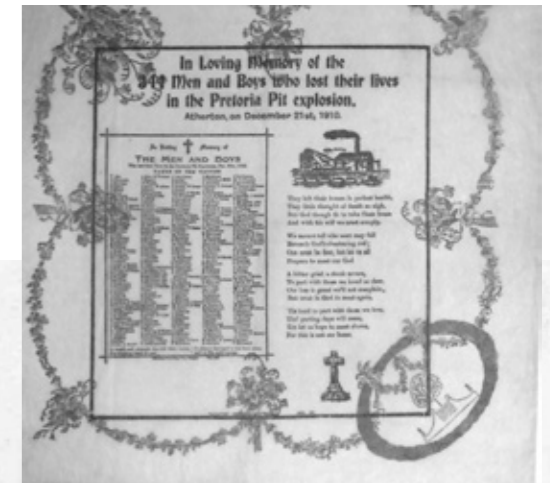
Gravestone of Rev Cannon Murdoch and his wife.

# PRETORIA PIT DISASTER

## Call for your mining safety stories!

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Pretoria Pit Disaster (21 December 1910) the next temporary exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life will feature the story of mining safety. We are very keen to bring your experiences into the exhibition. Do you have a story about a mining accident? Do you know of any superstitions that miners had around safety? Did you belong to a union that fought for safety down the mine? If so, we would love to hear from you!

If you have a story relates to mining safety in the Wigan Borough, please contact [l.keys@wlct.org](mailto:l.keys@wlct.org) or telephone 01942 828126.



Commemorative tissue, Preoria Pit Disaster 21.10.1910.

# Lawrence Spencer Murdoch

by Tony Ashcroft

## (1866-1946)

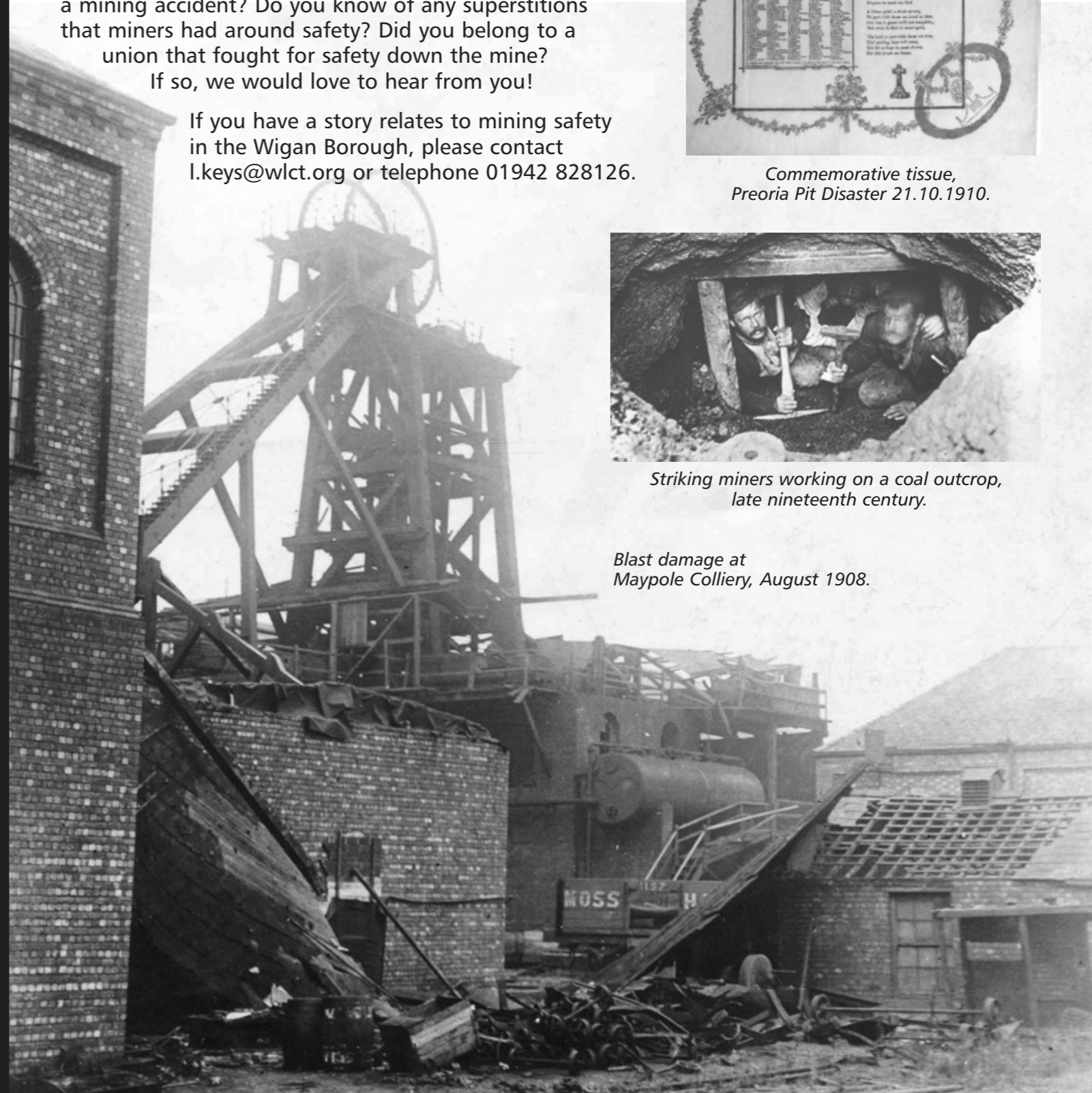
Lawrence Spencer Murdoch was born the son of Preston clergyman Rev E S Murdoch, Vicar of Emmanuel Church. He was educated at Preston Grammar School and Trinity College, Dublin where he obtained his BA in 1888. His first curacy was at St. Philip's, Blackburn in 1889. He held positions at St Matthew's, Campfield, Manchester (1892-8) St Stephen's, City Road, Hulme (1898-1906). In 1906 he accepted the appointment of Vicar of Christ Church, Pennington. He was offered the post by a friend the Archbishop of Sydney.

Rev Murdoch was inducted as vicar at the church in May 1906 by Archdeacon Blackburn of Manchester. His father and brother attended the service. He remained at Pennington until his death in 1946. This made him the longest serving of all ministers at the church, and one of the oldest men to hold the vicarate at the grand old age of 80. In May 1931, Rev Murdoch celebrated 25 years as the vicar at Christ Church. At the Wilkinson Street Mission, T D Harrison JP presented him with a canteen of stainless steel cutlery in an oak pedestal cabinet, whilst Hugh James Yates handed a gold wristlet watch to Mrs Murdoch. Sunday school scholars presented him with a four valve wireless set inscribed "Presented to the Rev. L. S.

Murdoch, M.A., by the children of Christ Church, Pennington, day and Sunday schools and parish in commemoration of his 25 years loving regard and ministry for their welfare". Mrs Murdoch received a bouquet of roses from Miss Dorothy Prescott, the May Queen.

The celebrations culminated with a commemorative service at Christ Church on 17 May. The Dean of Manchester, Dr Hewlett Johnson, was guest preacher. His grandfather was Alfred Hewlett of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, and his great grandfather, also Alfred Hewlett, was Vicar of Astley who helped establish the church at Pennington. Hewlett Johnson later became known as the 'Red Dean' of Canterbury because of his Communist sympathies, and in 1951 he received the Stalin peace prize. In 1933 the Rural Deanery of Eccles was divided into two (Eccles and Leigh) and Rev Murdoch became the first Rural Dean of Leigh. In July 1938 he was appointed as an Honorary Canon of Manchester Cathedral because of his long and faithful service to the diocese. During his incumbency, Canon Murdoch was always considered to be an excellent preacher with an expressive and beautiful modulated voice. He was always interested in education and served on the Leigh Education

Committee for many years as well as being a manager for the Windermere Council School. In his time at Christ Church he had formed Pennington Young People's Union, the Pennington branch of the Girls Friendly Society, The Shakespearian Society and Pennington Scouts. Furthermore he was president of the Christ Church Amateur Dramatic Society which became the Leigh Amateur Dramatic Society. In the First World War he was chaplain to the German Prisoner of War Camp in the mill on Etherstone Street, ministering to both the English guards and their German prisoners. As a keen freemason he was Chaplain to the Marquis of Lorne lodge, a member of the Lodge of Valour and a Grand Lodge Officer with the title of Pall Assistant Grand Chaplain. In May 1946, there were celebrations to commemorate Canon Murdoch's 40 years as incumbent. Unfortunately by this time his health was beginning to deteriorate, and in September of that year he died. The memorial service was conducted by the curate Rev R W Singleton, with the Bishop of Manchester, providing the address. Canon Murdoch was buried in Leigh cemetery alongside his wife, who had died in 1939 in a road accident on the East Lancashire Road.



Striking miners working on a coal outcrop, late nineteenth century.

Blast damage at Maypole Colliery, August 1908.



# John Lancaster and the DEERHOUND

by Neville Wantling



The European Confederate Medal of Honour awarded posthumously to John Lancaster

Mr John Lancaster was born in Radcliffe, near Bury, on 19 September 1815. From a very early age he showed an enthusiastic liking for mechanics and mining engineering and in 1845 he started the Kirkless Hall Colliery, Aspull. He had strong connections, and for a time lived at Hindley Hall, Aspull and Ashfield House, Standish. He also represented Wigan as an MP. It is not however his mining

concerns or local connections that are the focus of this article. This is the tale of John Lancaster and the 'Deerhound'.

Mr Lancaster became a very public character after his actions on 19 June 1864. On this day he rescued the captain, 13 officers and 28 crewmen of the 'Alabama', a well-known confederate cruiser. The rescue took place during the American Civil War after a fight between the Alabama and the 'Kearsage', a federal war steamer.

Mr Lancaster was spending his vacation yachting on the 'Deerhound', a yacht of 190 tons and 70 horsepower. Mr Lancaster arrived at Cherbourg, France, at 10 o'clock at night on Saturday 18 June, by rail from Caen. On arrival he was informed by the captain of the Deerhound that it was reported that the Alabama and the Kearsage were going to fight each other in the morning. Mr Lancaster, whose wife, niece and family were also on board his yacht, at once determined to go out in the morning and see the combat. The log of Mr Lancaster's yacht furnishes the following details:-

'10.30. Observed the Alabama steaming out of the harbour towards the Federal steamer Kearsage.

*11.10. The Alabama commenced firing with her starboard battery, the distance between the contending vessels being about one mile. The Kearsage immediately replied with her starboard guns; a very sharp spirited firing was then kept up, shot being sometimes being varied by shell, in manoeuvring both vessels made seven complete circles at distances of between a quarter and half a mile, at 12 o'clock a slight intermission was observed in the firing, the Alabama making head sail and shaping her course for the land, distance about nine miles, at 12.30 observed the Alabama to be disabled and in a sinking state. We immediately made towards her, and on passing the Kearsage were requested to assist in saving the Alabama's crew, at 12.50, when within a distance of 200 yards the Alabama sank, we then lowered two boats, and with the assistance of the Alabama's whale-boat and dingy, succeeded in saving about 40 men, including Captain Semmes and 13 officers. At 1pm we steered for Southampton.'*

Other accounts published at the time furnish further details. One account tells how the Alabama's rudder was disabled by one of her opponent's shells, and they hoisted sails, but it was soon reported to Captain Semmes by one of his officers that his ship was sinking. With great bravery the guns were kept ported till the muzzles were under water and the last shot from the doomed ship was fired as she was settling down. When her stern was underwater, Captain Semmes gave orders for the men to save themselves as best they could, and everyone jumped into the sea and swam to the boats that had put off to their rescue.

Those of them who were wounded were at once ordered by Captain Semmes, to be placed in the Alabama's boats and taken on board the Kearsage, which was as far as possible obeyed. Captain Semmes and a further 13 officers and

28 crewmen were saved in the Deerhound's boats, which steamed away for Cowes and then on to Southampton.

The wounded men on board the Deerhound were carefully attended to until the arrival at Southampton, when they were taken to the sailor's home at Canute Road. When the men came on to the Deerhound, they had nothing on but their draws and shirts, having stripped to fight. One of the men with a sailor's devotedness, insisted on seeing the captain, who was then lying in Mr Lancaster's cabin in a very exhausted state. He had been entrusted by Captain Semmes with the ships papers, and to no one else would he give them up. The men were very anxious about their captain, and were rejoiced to find that he had been saved. They appeared to be a set of first-rate fellows, and to act well together in perfect union under the most trying circumstances.

Throughout the action, the Deerhound kept a mile to the windward of the combatants and was enabled to witness the whole of it. The Kearsage was burning Newcastle coals, and the Alabama Welsh coals, the difference in the smoke (the Kearsage yielding much more) enabling the movement of each ship to be distinctly traced by Mr Lancaster. Not a relic of the Alabama came into the possession of her successful rival. When she was sinking, Captain Semmes dropped his own sword into the sea to prevent the possibility of it getting into the opponents hands, and the gunner made a hole in one of the Alabama's boats and sank her for the same reason.

Before leaving the Deerhound Captain Semmes presented Mr Lancaster's son with one of his officer's swords and a pistol in remembrance of the occurrence and kind treatment he and his men had received on board the yacht. The spectacle presented during the combat was described by those who witnessed it from the Deerhound as magnificent, and thus the extraordinary career of the Alabama came to a grand and appropriate termination. The presence of the Deerhound on the scene was a providential circumstance, as in all probability the men saved by her would have drowned and a lamentable addition would thus have been made to the number of lives lost on the occasion.

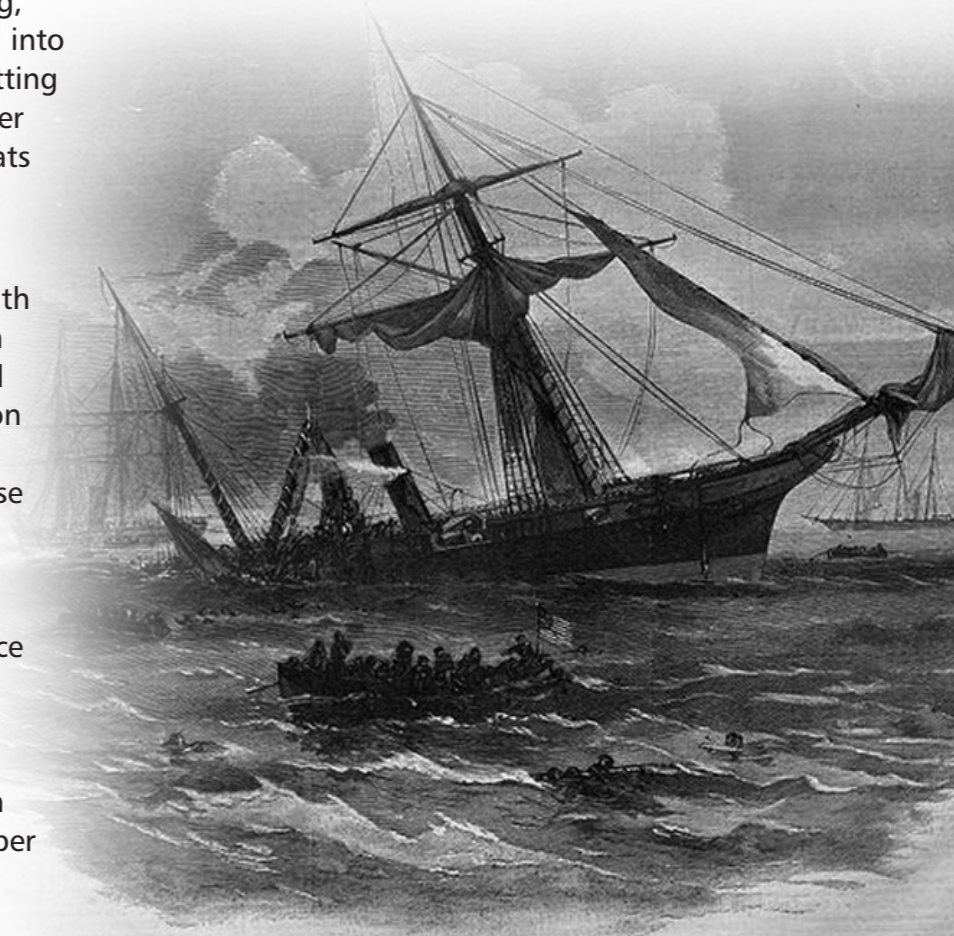
The rescue created immense excitement in this country and the United States and lengthy letters appeared in the papers. Mr Lancaster was soundly berated by friends of the Northern Government for his conduct, but he retaliated that what he had done was simply in the cause of humanity. Public opinion endorsed his action and applauded him for his courage.

#### Editors note:

*You may be wondering why this American Civil War battle took place on this side of the Atlantic. The Alabama was engaged in commerce raiding missions in the Atlantic. Commerce raiding is the use of naval forces to destroy the supplies of an enemy on the open sea. After five successful commerce raiding missions, the Alabama was heading into Cherbourg Harbour to receive repairs when the battle with the Kearsage occurred.*

*Mr Neville Wantling is a member of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans (SCV) Association and designer of the European Confederate Medal of Honour. The medal is awarded to those who 'performed extraordinary feats of courage or acts of heroism amidst 'enemy fire' or eminent danger in disregard for ones own being.' The SCV recently honoured John Lancaster by posthumously awarding him the European Confederate Medal of Honour.*

*Sinking of the Alabama, engraving, Harper's Weekly*





## A Personal Story by Roy Gorner

### Dear Editor

Hello from New Zealand. I received my issue No 54 of Past Forward and the above article was of great interest. I attended Hindley and Abram Grammar School from 1951 to 1954, and I am sure Mr Gorner was our maths teacher. I also have a friend in New Zealand who was there at the same time. My maiden name was Margaret Churnside and my friend's name was Maureen Whelan. I would like to hear from anyone who was there over this period.

Thank you for an excellent magazine looking forward to my next issue.

Margaret Mitchell  
New Zealand

*Editor's note. If anyone would like to contact Margaret, please forward you contact details to me and I will ensure that they are passed on.*

## Alan Godfrey

### Dear Editor

I have always been interested in family and local history, and in the past have purchased maps of the locality from both the Museum of Wigan Life and Leigh Library, which were published by Alan Godfrey of Consett, County Durham.

In 2009 I rang the map publishers to see if they had editions of the few maps I was missing. I was informed they had, so I sent a postal order for them only to be told they had not yet been published. Today, 19 January, I was going for my daily walk, along the railway pathway of the former Hindley Green station, where I met a man and we passed the time of day. After chatting about the recent snow and icy weather he told me it was still thick on the ground in Consett, where he came from. He told me he was a map-maker and he liked to survey the places he was making the maps for. After further questions, I discovered he was Alan Godfrey. What an amazing coincidence to meet the fine man! We shook hands and he told me the maps I required would be published next month. I look forward to obtaining them and I advise anyone interested in local history to do the same.

I have every publication of Past Forward from the very first edition, and I always send one to relatives I traced in Nova Scotia. If I am fortunate enough to have this

letter included in the next issue of Past Forward, I will send a copy to Alan Godfrey in Consett.

Mr J Grimshaw  
Hindley Green

*Editor's note. If anyone wants to follow up Mr Grimshaw's recommendation, the museum has a great range covering many areas of the borough. Most are reproductions of the 1907- 1909 maps and some are 1929. Telephone for details.*

## Bispham Methodist Church

### Dear Editor

David Lythgoe's excellent article on Bispham Methodist Church in issue 54 reminded me that it was part of the tripod that gave stability to my childhood and teenage years, namely family, school and chapel. Family was largely based in Orrell, part of the Cadman group through my mum plus a bit of Fenland through my dad. School was St James's Road County Primary and Up Holland Grammar, and chapel was Bispham. Though I moved away in 1960 to go to Leicester then Leeds Universities and have lived ever since in the South of England, I have always been grateful for the start I was given in life.

Bispham Methodist Church was a great place to be associated with and David's article prompted me to reflect on the things it gave me:

Firstly, of course, there was the significance of religious faith. Prayers, hymns, Bible reading, preaching and sitting quietly in a pew were all a natural part of my early life and, though I've sometimes rebelled and doubted, I have been grateful for the basis these gave me. I am now a member of the Church of England and happily settled in a local congregation here in Hitchin, but I often think of myself as an anti-establishment and dissenting Anglican and I'm sure this all goes back to being brought up at Bispham.

Secondly, it conveyed values for living. Among these was valuing others. Because there was a large congregation, I learned to get along with people, to appreciate a diversity of gifts and to respect people of all ages, not least those who were getting on a bit. Many of these did not have the privileged education that I had and no doubt sometimes I showed off a bit, but I came to value their experience and wisdom. I think I also absorbed a sense of justice from the preachers and teachers and suspect this contributed to my left-wing leanings. And then there was kindness,

expressed through care to those in need, whether local or around the world. Like everyone, I don't always live up to these high standards but I am very grateful to have been made aware of them.

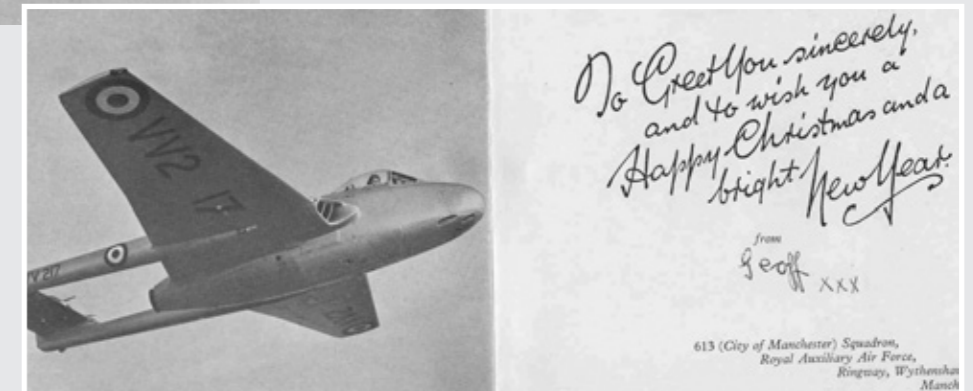
Finally, Bispham taught me practical skills. There were Sunday School anniversaries and concerts that gave me confidence in public speaking. The church had cricket and football teams and, though I never distinguished myself in either, I was enthusiastic in both. The youth club had facilities for darts, table tennis, billiards and snooker and also held debates on moral issues, giving me confidence in arguing a case that has stood me in good stead ever since. I also learned to dance at socials and, with mixed success, how to relate to girls, especially on day trips and evening walks to Shaley Brow cafe.

I agree with David that the church is a beautiful and unusual example of Methodist architecture. It still catches the eye and personally I always feel a sense of pleasure and gratitude on the occasions, about once a year, when I drive past. I may have left Bispham, but Bispham has not left me!

John Richardson  
Hitchin, Hertfordshire



Mrs Barbara Barclay would like to know if anyone has any information about this photograph of her husband's grandfather John Henry Barclay. She believes the building in the background is in Ashton in Makerfield. She can be contacted at Innisfree, 289B Conway Road, Mochdre, Colwyn Bay, Conwy County LL28 5AA.



## Lost Letters

A collection of letters written during the Second World War was recently discovered inside a book bought from a charity shop in Leigh. They are all addressed to a Mr and Mrs Wilcock of Wordsworth Avenue, Leigh. Amongst the collection are a selection of Christmas cards, one from Alex in the "Royal Air Force Middle East", and "Geoff in the 'Royal Auxiliary Air Force'" in Wythenshawe.

There is a letter dated the 26 September 1944 and it has been stamped by the RAF censor. The letter is addressed to a Mr and Mrs A J Wilcock from their loving nephew, Alex. Alex describes life from his RAF staging post. He has had his air-mail rationed to two a week and he has suffered from sand fly fever. Sand fly fever gained considerable importance for the allies in the Mediterranean theatre as it could incapacitate men for several days.

Alex also describes how a variety show came to perform for them in the form of a South African ENSA concert party. ENSA was the organisation responsible for entertaining members of the armed forces wherever they happened to be.

Alex also feels optimistic that the war will soon be over judging from the news reports he is hearing. He can't see the European side of it lasting much past Christmas.

The other cards and letters are all addressed to the Wilcock' and are from a variety of people including Alex, Harry and Geoff.

The lady who found the collection would like to return them. If anyone has information about the people mentioned or of their next of kin could you please contact Hannah Turner on 01942 404559 or e-mail H.Turner@wlct.org.



## 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.

**Tuesday 10 August**  
International Cuisine:  
The World's Kitchen  
Speaker, Mr. M. Clarke

**Tuesday 14 September**  
Beatrix Potter,  
Part 2: Lakeland Legacy  
Speaker, Margaret Curry.

**Tuesday 12 October**  
Artifacts of Superstitions  
Speaker, Peter Watson.

**Tuesday 9 November**  
One Saturday in July:  
The fateful battle of the Somme.  
Speaker, Alan Hayhurst

## 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](http://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. Please note there is no meeting in July and

August. Admission is £1.00 for members and £1.50 for non-members. Everyone is welcome.

Our October meeting is on Monday 11 October at 7.00pm when the speaker will be David Kaye who will talk on the Pretoria Pit Disaster and also update us on all the commemorations planned. He is President and Trustee of Wingates Band and also a member of Westhoughton History Society.

Hindley Museum will be open as follows:

**Friday 28 August**  
10.00am-3.00pm

**Friday 10 September**  
10.00am - 12.00 noon

**Friday 17 September**  
10.00am - 3.00pm

**Saturday 25 September**  
10.00am - 12 noon

As usual we will also open by appointment for groups or individuals.

For further details telephone our Secretary Mrs Joan Topping (01942 257361) or Mrs Norma Brannagh (01942 258668).

## Leigh & District Family History Society

Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room of Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month, except in June and July.

**Tuesday 17 August**  
Getting Started

**Tuesday 21 September**  
A Deeper look at Civil Registration by Tony Foster

**Tuesday 19 October**  
Members Help Evening

**Tuesday 16 November**  
Making the Most of the Census by Bill Taylor

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

For more information contact-  
Mrs M Harrop (Chairman) - 01942 743428  
Mrs G McClellan (Secretary) - 01942 729559  
E-mail: [leighfhs@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:leighfhs@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Local History Federation Lancashire

The Federation holds several meetings each year, with a varied and interesting programme. For details visit [www.lancashirehistory.org](http://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. There are no meetings in July or August.

For more information contact-  
Sue Hesketh (Secretary) - 01942 212940 or [suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk) or visit [www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk/SkemGrp/Skem](http://www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk/SkemGrp/Skem)

## 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.

## Wigan Family & Local History Society

Meetings are held at the The Bowling Green, 108 Wigan Lane, Wigan on the third Monday of each month (7.30 for 8.00pm). No meetings are held in July and August.

Please note we do have a small charge for each meeting of £2.00 for both members and visitors. For further information call 01942 727875 or visit [www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory)

## Wigan Archaeology Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30, at the Upper Morris Street Working Men's Club in Wigan, for lectures and discussions on topics of historical or archaeological interest.

Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. 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](http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk)

**Sunday 15 August**  
Society Trip to the Hungate excavations in York

**Wednesday 1 September**  
Something from the East  
Speaker - Martin Charlesworth

**Wednesday 6 October**  
Haigh Hall and the people who lived there  
Speaker - Carole Banks

**Wednesday 3 November**  
The Caer Alyn Heritage Project  
Speaker - Phil Cox

**Wednesday 1 December**  
Oxford Archaeology North  
Speaker - Ian Miller

## Wigan Baths construction 1968

Some of you may recognise this picture. It shows the construction of Wigan Baths in 1968. This is not too dissimilar a scene to the area at the moment with the development of the new Wigan Life Centre. Do you remember the building of the old baths? What do you remember being on this area? Please email [l.keys@wlct.org](mailto:l.keys@wlct.org) or call 01942 828126.



## From Issue 53

We had a response from Gordon Rigby about this photograph that featured in PF53. The card with the 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". Gordon used to work in the Heinz personnel department and remembers Johnnie, Duggie and Ken as working in the manufacturing department. Both Johnnie and Duggie appear in the photograph. Gordon thinks that, being close colleagues, they will have gone on holiday together, perhaps with their families. Heinz did have a '57 club' which ran social events on the premises as well as parties, trips and activities. However, Gordon didn't think this trip was organised by the club as he didn't recognise any of the other faces in the photograph.



## EDITORIAL APOLOGY

Thank you to Mrs Avril Barr for pointing out an error in the crossword puzzle in Issue 54. Clue No.11 - the name of the champion boxer is Peter and not Neil as stated in the answers. Apologies to all who struggled with this.



# How to Find Us



## Museum of Wigan Life

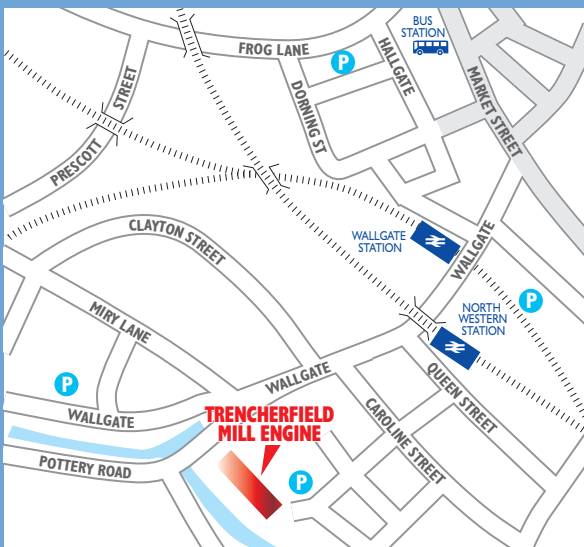
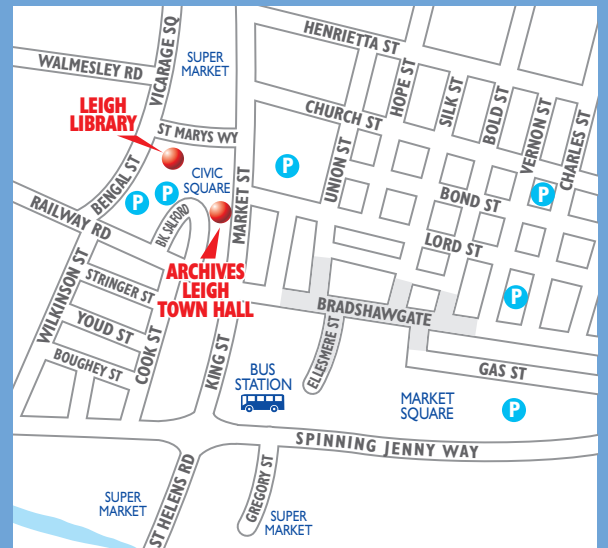
Library Street,  
Wigan WN1 1NU  
Telephone 01942 828128  
heritage@wlct.org

## Leigh Local History

Leigh Library, Turnpike Centre,  
Civic Square, Leigh WN7 1EB  
Telephone 01942 404559  
h.turner@wlct.org

## Archives

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



## Trencherfield Mill Engine

Wigan Pier Quarter, Heritage Way,  
Wigan WN3 4EF  
Telephone 01942 828128