

# PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

Issue No. 62

December 2012 - March 2013

## The Power and the Glory: Engineering Excellence at Trencherfield Mill

£1

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### FRONT COVER

*An atmospheric view of the magnificent Trencherfield Mill engine. See article on page ?.*

## Letter from the Editorial Team

**Write 100 words. Win £100!** We now have the results of the Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network 2012 Local History Essay Writing Competition.

Winners were chosen by John O'Neill, Chairman of the Network and the Past Forward Team. We can all say what a good read we had. The winning stories sparked off lots of ideas for follow up research and hopefully other readers, and the authors themselves, will develop further themes inspired by the original work. Prizes were presented at the Network's celebration evening on 1 November at the Museum of Wigan Life by the Worshipful Mayor of Wigan.

First prize went to Mr J Heyes 'The Fool's Errand' published on page three. Second prize, Mr P J Tyldesley 'The Tyldesley Monument 333 years and Three Inscriptions' Third prize, Mr M Finney 'William Medlen Hutchings' 1827-1876

We will be publishing the runners up in future issues of **Past Forward**. We thank all of those who entered, and we hope that those who did not win this time will try again next year. It is the intention of the Network to continue with the competition and possibly develop it so that schools can take part.

Well, it is Christmas time again. The museum shop has many gift ideas for history enthusiasts, and even those who are not! We are currently having a 50% off sale on selected items, so come along and grab that bargain. The only thing left to say, is that we wish all our readers a very Happy Christmas.

## Information for Contributors

We always welcome articles and letters for publication from both new and existing 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
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of, unless you request for them to be returned
- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition

- 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.

**CONTACT DETAILS:** [pastforward@wlct.org](mailto:pastforward@wlct.org) or The Editor at **PAST FORWARD**, Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.





Winners of the Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network essay competition with the Worshipful Mayor of Wigan and winners of the Network Awards. Left to right: winner Mr J Heyes, runner up Mr M Finney, John O'Neill – Network Chairman, second on back row – runner up Mr P J Tyldelsey. Full story of the Network Awards on page 31.

## PAST FORWARD Subscription Form

### Copy Deadline for Issue 63

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday ?? ?????? 2013.

**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

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

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By J Heyes

# The Fool's Errand

Winner of the Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network Local History Essay Writing Competition!

**They had talked about what they should do for weeks; now they had decided to set out together, as their ancestors might have done on pilgrimage, to walk the roads to London. Like those medieval pilgrims they travelled with few possessions and on foot, ignorant of the distance and of what lay ahead. They said their goodbyes to family and friends and went off from Wigan in search of work. There were four of them, ranging in age from their late teens to early twenties, four young women embarking on a great adventure.**

The spring months of 1844 were exceptionally fine; by mid June this warm dry weather made for an easier journey on the dry dusty roads to the capital than they might otherwise have found. Through unfamiliar towns and villages they came to London about 4 July, with 175 miles behind them; next they set about looking for work in the London streets. There was no work, however, three weeks on their savings were gone, the clothes they wore their only belongings. With no work and no poor relief they were forced to beg, although recently the police force were under orders from the commissioners to deal with the 8000 beggars on the streets and bring them before the force of the law. In the afternoon of Monday 8 July the four Wigan girls were arrested by two police sergeants in Brown's Lane, Spitalfields and on 11 July they were brought before Mr. Bingham, magistrate at the Worship Street Police Court in Shoreditch.

Anne Brookes, Mary Pickering, Anne Radcliffe and Margaret Watson were now questioned separately at the bar to establish the truth of their stories. The man they faced had considerable experience as a lawyer, he was a legal write, a friend of Jeremy Bentham and a magistrate used to hearing tales of hardship in his court. The four girls told him how they had formerly been employed in the coal pits of Lord Balcarres at

Haigh where the recent 1842 legislation which had been meant to outlaw the employment of women and children in the coal industry had made scores of them unemployed. Mary Pickering's own account said that she had worked in the mine from the age of 11, while Anne Brookes, the eldest of the group, had worked for Mr Hayes as a wagon loader at the Haigh Colliery during the previous year. A recent dispute between employers and men over wages left almost everyone out of work, the hardship in Wigan affected thousands and relief schemes included soup kitchens. The four Wigan girls had intended to work on farms around London if they could.

The London press seized on the novelty of the Wiganers' story, it was not so much that these paupers had come to London for work, but the circumstances of their offence. The Times journalist said that their clothes resembled those of the German peasantry (they were all dressed alike) which, together with the 'dolorous ditty' they sang in what may have been the unfamiliar dialect of Lancashire, convinced the audience that they were foreigners. Three of the girls had sung their song of woe in the middle of the street and the fourth had asked at doors and from passersby for coppers. The police officers had seen money handed over by some kind people and the girls were then arrested. The Morning Post report said 'all of them (were) coarsely apparelled but remarkably clean-looking'. The London parishes already had considerable numbers of paupers among the two million people in the Capital, many were professional beggars with a bewildering variety of schemes and tricks to persuade the gullible to give generously. One account from 1839, for example, concerned a gang led by a woman named Mary Jones who used, a deception based on a forged document recounting a heart wrenching tale of hardship from a mine disaster.

Bingham determined to check the Wigan girls' story, his clerk wrote to Mr Hayes agent to Lord Balcarres' Pits and shortly after, on 14 July, a reply came from



Mr William Peace, agent for the Haigh Colliery. 'A great number of young women have within the last few months been deprived of employment by the operation of Lord Ashley's Act...and particularly so in this neighbourhood. I do not recollect the girls you mention, but their statement is likely to be true for anything I know to the contrary'. Though he took pains to warn them of the risks they ran in the city Bingham was convinced that the girls were honestly looking for work and treated them leniently. He ordered his clerk to take sufficient funds from the courts' poor-box to pay for the girls to return home to Wigan. His leniency did not extend to three farm labourers who used a similar sorrowful song to beg, they were sent to break stones at the Workhouse.

The story of Margaret Watson and her companions was republished in various London papers and even in the Lancaster Gazette which sniffily referred to their 'fools' errand'. Contemporary newspapers

recorded that women and girls still worked below ground for years after. One mine owner in Yorkshire was fined £20 for four girls found coming from his pit. While in Wigan women found alternatives to the pits; one young woman in 1844 worked as a bricklayer on building a chimney, others found labouring jobs while four sisters in Scholes kept a brothel after they lost their work in the pits.

What happened next to the four young women who travelled to London in 1844? That part of their story is a mystery; they were no longer of interest to the metropolitan press and Wigan had no local newspaper in 1844 but I hope that their lives thereafter rewarded their hopeful endeavours in their great adventure.

*Newspaper sources: The Times; Lloyds Weekly; Lancaster Gazette; Morning Post; Manchester Times, Dictionary of National Biography.*



This is a typical portrait of Wigan pit brow women.

## Your Archives

Regular readers of this column will no doubt be pleased to hear that the Archives are now considerably cleaner than when last I wrote.

But before images of records being sponged down with soapy water come to mind, I should explain further. We launched *The Big Archives Clean* in September, and since then volunteers have been working diligently on Wigan's Victorian Quarter Session records. These records were bundled and tied at the end of each sitting of the court, and from there, were stored in the attic space of Wigan Rectory. It was only in the 1970s that they came to the care of the Archives, and only now, for the first time in 140 years that some of these bundles are again seeing the light of day.



*Quarter Sessions records, before and after cleaning*



Volunteers are using a variety of soft, dry, cleaning techniques to remove the dirt, accumulated largely in the form of coal dust, and we have made great progress so far. Ten bundles were cleaned during four days of the Big Clean; this adds up to over 2500 individual documents, each cleaned by hand. All the documents will now be catalogued and indexed, and a few sent for professional conservation where they were too fragile to work on or required repairs. The greatest success is that these records are now all accessible to researchers, so if you'd like to investigate Victorian Wigan's criminal underworld, now you can.

We'd also like to hear from you if you are interested in joining us to do some cleaning. To keep the momentum going – and there are another 100 bundles to go – we will be presenting on the last Wednesday of each month 'Carry on Cleaning'. We are looking for new volunteers to help out once a month, you will be given full training and it is a great way to get involved with the work we do at the Archives Service. Please get in touch on 01942 404430 if you are interested.

And finally, I'd like to say well done to Archives Volunteer, Phil Cosgrove, on getting a job as an Archives Trainee at Churchill College, Cambridge. Phil has volunteered at the archives for the last two years and we wish him every success in the future.

## Recent Acquisitions

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

- Fred Holcroft Papers (D/DZA/301)
- Bankes Family of Winstanley, scrapbooks (D/DZA/309)
- Records of Lane Head Methodist Church, Lowton (D/NMM/3)
- Records of Leigh United Reformed Church (D/NUR/1)
- Records of Wigan Cricket Club (D/DS/134)
- Wigan Corporation, employee time books (Acc. 2012/54)
- Records of Ashton Linen and Woolen Stock Charity (Addn.) (D/DS/55)
- Westleigh Mill and Mill Dam, deeds and legal documents (D/DY/WLM)
- Wigan Borough, archaeological record files (Acc. 2012/57)
- Records of Leigh Inner Wheel (D/DS/135)
- Records of Atherton Baptist Church (D/NB/9)
- Photographs of the closure of Parsonage Colliery (Acc. 2012/76)



Thank you to all recent donors and depositors of records to the Archives.

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

## Collections Corner:

A fascinating document recently came to light whilst we were preparing for our regular palaeography class. The document is catalogued with the records of Peace and Ellis, a firm of Wigan solicitors, but the exact reason for it finding its way to a Wigan solicitor's office is not at all clear.

The record dates from 1406 and is a contemporary copy of a document, referring to an earlier record of 1399, the first year of the reign of Henry IV. It concerns the custodianship of the Isle of Mann and the rights and privileges that came with lordship of the Isle.

The year 1399 was one of great upheaval in England, as Henry Bolingbroke rested the crown from Richard II and the country was seized by civil war. Upon Henry's coronation, he sought to reward his followers and punish those who stood against him or supported Richard's cause. The document in the Archives is a direct and contemporary copy from the Rolls, made for Sir John Stanley, on the subject of the sovereignty of the Isle of Man.

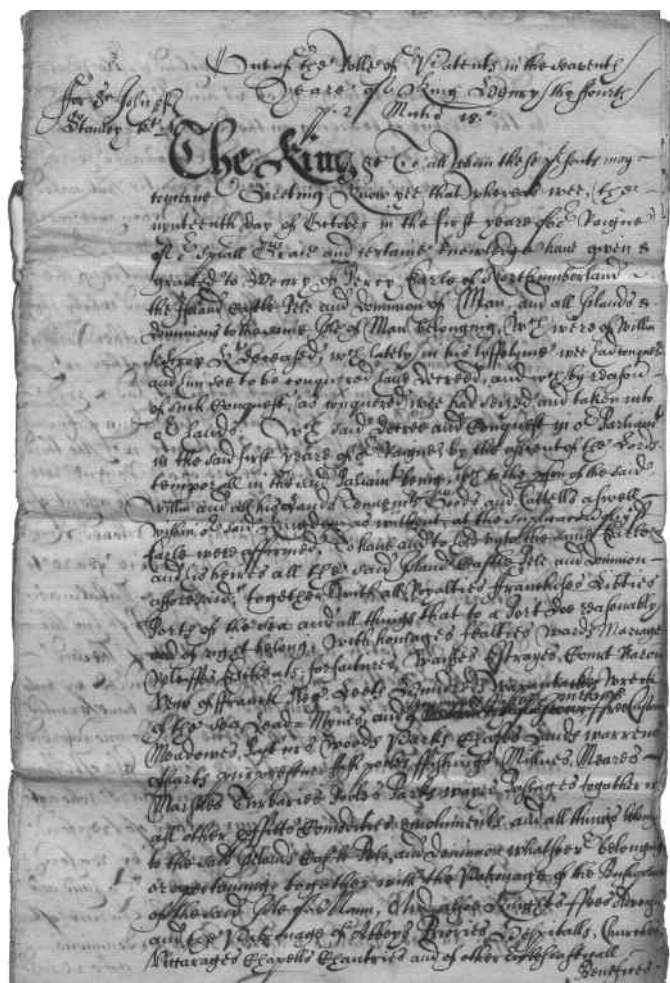
The Isle of Man under Richard II was recognised as an independent kingdom with a king, William le Scrope. Le Scrope, the King of Mann, as the document records was 'conquered', and was executed for treason by Henry IV at Bristol Castle for his support for Richard; his head was put in a white basket and carried to London to be displayed on Tower Bridge.

The document details the granting of the island as a fiefdom of the English Crown, so removing its independence, to Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland. He is granted wide ranging powers to administer justice and manage the economy, everything from, 'lead=mynes, iron=mynes', to 'Meares, Marshes, Turbaries, Pooles, Parks, wayes, Passages...and all other profittes, Comodities & emoluments'.

Percy however, rebelled against Henry and so the powers granted to him, passed to Sir John Stanley.

Stanley's rights however, as extended in this document, were later re-granted and became inheritable; so for generations the title Lord of Mann passed within the family. But how did this record come to be in Wigan? The Stanley Family later became Earls of Derby, remaining prominent in English, then British political life until the present day. The family held substantial estates in the West Derby of Lancashire – hence their title – and it is possible that they dealt with Peace and Ellis in a legal or financial matter. This document may have come into the solicitors' hands for safe-keeping or with papers in relation to other business. Unfortunately we do not know; but it remains a fascinating piece of history and glimpse into medieval life on the Isle of Man.

You can see more images from this document, Ref. D/DX/EI/194, at: <http://www.facebook.com/WiganArchivesService>



D/DX/EI/194

# Lost Railway

## Walking the St. Helens – Lowton Line from Haydock Racecourse to Golborne, September 2012

### History

Originally conceived and approved in 1885 as part of a grand scheme to link St. Helens with Southport and the docks to the north of Liverpool, construction of the St. Helens to Lowton Line was completed in 1899. A full passenger service commenced on 3 January 1900, with six trains per day in both directions calling at four intermediate stations: Haydock, Ashton in Makerfield, Haydock Park Racecourse and Golborne (later 'Golborne North').

Revenue from the passenger service was from the outset disappointing. By nationalisation in 1948, the service was down to three trains daily. The scheduled passenger service ceased completely as of 3 March 1952 and the track from St Helens to a point a few metres west of Ashton-in-Makerfield station was subsequently removed. However, race day specials continued to bring passengers to Haydock Park up to 1965, and a final run through to Ashton for rail enthusiasts occurred in 1975.

Freight services on the Line enjoyed something of a renaissance from 1968, when a link to the West Coast Main Line ("the Haydock Chord") was constructed slightly to the west of Golborne station. Trains used the new link to access the Edge Green Colliery (and later Hanson Aggregates on the same site), an oil storage depot at Haydock and Lowton Metals in Ashton. With this development, the portion of the original St. Helens-Lowton Line from Golborne to Lowton became redundant and was dismantled.

The Shell-BP depot near the Haydock facility opened in 1969 and during its peak operating period had an annual throughput of two million tonnes of oil. Heavy oils were brought in by rail, involving three daily trains from Heysham and two from Stanlow.

Traffic to the oil depot and metal works continued well into the 1980s. However, this part of the Line was also then closed and rails were lifted to a point just east of the bridge over Edge Green Lane in 1991. Twice-weekly services to the Hanson Aggregates site from the West Coast Main Line ceased briefly but resumed in 2009.

### The St. Helens-Lowton Line Today

With the exception of its original western terminus at St. Helens Central, all of the Line's stations have now disappeared and much of the trackbed given up for commercial and residential development. However, a good stretch remains open to walkers between Golborne and the site of the former Haydock Park Racecourse station. The large quantity of ballast left behind when the rails were removed in 1991 ensures that the path is kept well-drained and free of vegetation. In these respects it is a much easier walk than those offered by the public footpaths running parallel to the north and south. Despite the absence of rails and buildings, the sharp-eyed walker will observe various indicators of the former railway's existence.

The actual site of Haydock Park Racecourse station has now been incorporated into the grounds of the Park itself. I therefore began my walk at the base of the footbridge that once crossed the Line near this point. Although nearly covered with ivy, the structures can just be made out among the trees at the end of Ashton Heath Road.





# Engineering Heritage Awards

Trencherfield Mill Engine has just won this prestigious award given by The Institute of Mechanical Engineers. The award established in 1984, is given to artefacts, collections and landmarks of significant engineering importance. The engine is one of the biggest to be manufactured by John & Edward Wood, Engineers, Bolton. It is the only known four cylinder, twin tandem, triple expansion steam condensing engine to be located in original setting, complete with working rope-race. It still operates by steam.



From left to right:  
Bill Rowley – Service Manager Heritage Engineering, Kyle Doward – Volunteer, John Wood – Chairman and past president Institute of Mechanical Engineers, Lord Peter Smith – Leader of Wigan Council, Chris Ready – Wigan Councillor – Portfolio holder for Leisure, Ben Joyce – Heritage Engineering Technician

Along the route you can see the remains of wooden sleepers, ballast and other railway paraphernalia left behind after the rails were removed from this part of the Line in 1991. There are further remains of a bridge presumably constructed to allow access between the fields on either side of the railway embankment.

About 60 metres beyond the Edge Green Lane bridge, progress is prevented by a metal fence and the walker is forced to follow a path down the right-hand side of the embankment. This emerges next to a row of garages behind Edge Green Lane. Before leaving the trackbed, it is possible to glimpse the stop-block marking the limit of that portion of the Line that is still – in theory – accessible by train.

So what further traces of the St. Helens-Lowton Line can be found? The point on Ashton Road overlooking the junction between the Hanson Aggregates 'spur' and the West Coast Main Line link proved a good place to start.

On the north side of Ashton Road, just before the bridge is reached, a public footpath runs almost parallel with the Hanson spur. However it is only on reaching Dam Lane Farm, and the railway crossing there, that the spur comes fully into view. Dam Lane itself leads up to Edge Green Road and the entrance to the Hanson site - but this is not accessible to the public. Returning to the Ashton Road bridge, footpaths leading off from the opposite (south) side of the road afforded these additional views of the still-functional part of St. Helens-Lowton Line.



## **Note on sources**

Historical information taken from: "Lost Railways of Merseyside and Greater Manchester", Gordon Suggit (Countryside Books, 2004)  
[www.disused-stations.org](http://www.disused-stations.org)  
[www.ashton-in-makerfield.org.uk](http://www.ashton-in-makerfield.org.uk)  
[www.wiganworld.co.uk](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk)  
[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) [www.rmweb.co.uk](http://www.rmweb.co.uk)  
[www.railwayherald.com](http://www.railwayherald.com)

# Around in the 1930s Whitley Fields

by Frank  
Brown

An uncle born in 1877 in Dorning Street, off Frog Lane, told me that there used to be a coal mine, called Mesnes Colliery, alongside the railway at Bull Hey, which had railway access to the main line. An explosion took place at the mine, fortunately with no fatalities. When it was safe to re-enter the mine, the pit pony was found still alive but severely emaciated. Afterwards the Mesnes Colliery became known as 'Barebones Pit.'

Alongside the railway that ran under Buckley Street bridge there was a circular manhole cover, which was worded 'Old Mine Shaft', in the rim. It was forced off its mounting, possibly during the Second World War. An underground water barrier in the nearby mine shaft, which was in the middle of the field towards Rylands factory, gave way. The shaft was filled with water and pit debris, including a mail bag, and it partially demolished a brick wall surrounding the shaft at the surface. A circular steel fence was later erected round it. I do not know whether the shaft was filled in or simply capped but a new college was recently erected on the site.



*Aerial  
photograph  
of Whitley,  
Wigan, 1948.*

At Park Road and Buckley Street bridges, the retaining walls to the embankments have been extended by about 20 feet on the Gidlow side, in anticipation that the railway tracks may be quadrupled at some later date. Each retaining wall includes two massive stone blocks about six feet by two feet deep which would have formed the bed for the new tracks. Four tracks

already existed from Bamfurlong into Wigan, and similarly four tracks northwards from the site of Standish station, leaving a bottleneck in between Wigan and Standish stations. The problem was partially resolved in the early 1900s by the construction of a by-pass on the eastern side of the town. This was termed the Whelley Loop.



The Whelley Loop ran from Bamfurlong to a new station at Whelley, through Haigh plantations, crossed the Boars Head to the Red Rock-Chorley line at Worthington, and rejoined the main line at Standish Station. I do not recall ever seeing passenger traffic, but it did include the banana traffic from Liverpool to Scotland.

In the 1930s it was possible to walk alongside the railway line from Buckley Street almost to Boars Head, and there were former mine workings all along the way. I understand that in Edwardian times, about 50 yards from Buckley Street there was a mail exchange apparatus, whereby mailbags could be despatched and others collected while the train was travelling at speed and to avoid a stop at Wigan station. It seems that the mail bag earlier mentioned, found in the mine, came from a robbery at this site

Nearby and set well back from Walkden Avenue was a row of property known as Buckley Houses and aside there, was a long strip of pit spoil about 100 yards long and 20 yards wide fronting on to Walkden Avenue. It was well cratered with the

activities of people searching for coal in the 1926 General Strike. They collected the coal in potato sacks and hawked it around the neighbourhood by placing the bags under the crossbars of the bicycles and across the pedals. I think the price was one shilling a bag, which was not much reward for a hard days work.

In due course, cycle tracks were made along the craters, and the area became known as the 'Walls of Death', alluding to a sideshow of that name at Wigan Fair, where a motorcyclist sped around the vertical wall of a wooden arena. Spectators would peer over the top to throw coins into the ring.

Continuing Northwards from the Walls of Death, there was a large pond suitable for sailing model boats and rafts, and stones could be skimmed across the surface. Beyond that, and midway between the railway and where Holme Terrace then finished, there was another mine shaft with a square wall of brick around it. There were double doors in the North wall, where periodically a street refuse cart called. The cart resembled a large bucket between two wheels, and was so balanced

that at the release of a lever, the bucket revolved 45% and its load fell into the shaft. Such carts were formerly used in the town for the collection of night soil.

The ground surface now rose steadily until it was level with the signal box roof. At this high point there was yet another area of pit spoil about 50 yards long and 20 yards wide, which had also been picked over in the General Strike. An unusual feature was that it contained the brick arch of a drift mine, with a downward slope of about 30%. It could only be accessed for about 20 feet because it had been back filled up to the roof. The ground now sloped downwards steeply to Barley Brook, but there was a track down the hillside to a planked bridge where it met another track from Whitley Pedestrian Crossing to where Spencer Road finished. It was known as Beggars Walk.

Continuing along the railway, the track passed Barley Brook to yet another mine shaft as before, and aside it was a large mound of pit spoil about 80 feet high which we referred to as Scouts Hill. I think this site was known as Elm's Colliery. I do not know whether the shaft was filled in or capped, but the mound is now covered with bushes and trees. Immediately opposite, on the Gidlow side of the railway there was another shaft with a square wall of brick around it, but when I visited the site about fifteen years ago, the whole area had been transformed as a washery, but the site of the shaft was marked by a concrete obelisk similar to a trig point marker. After leaving Scouts hill, one could turn left and walk along a cobbled bridge over the railway to a site which is now Gidlow Cemetery. This is the last bridge before Boars Head.

*Train on the Whelley Loop Line coming South out of Haigh Plantations and going towards Whelley, Wigan.*



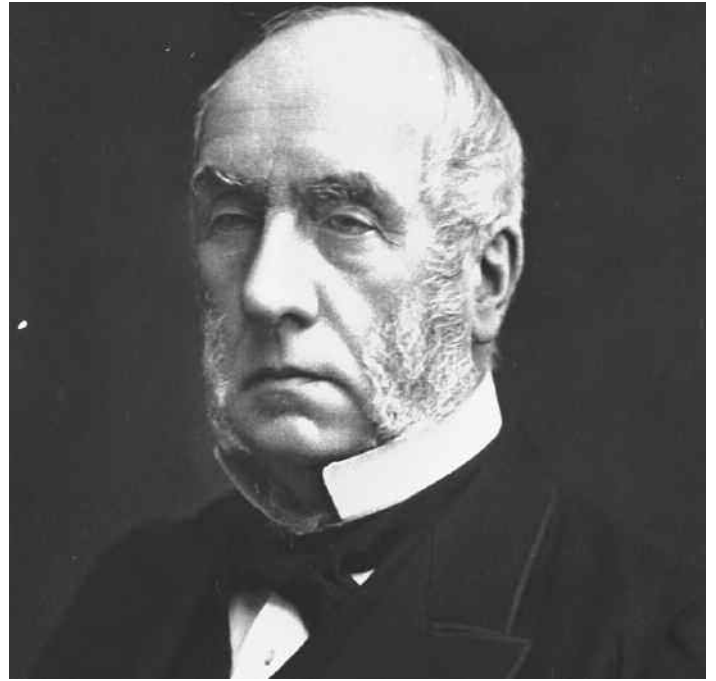
By Bob Evans

# Can I Buy Your Vote?

Until 1885 Wigan was entitled to two members of Parliament. After 1867 they were chosen by an electorate including all male householders and male lodgers paying a rent of £10 per year. With the exception of 1874, when William Picard stood as a labour candidate, working class men had to decide whether a Conservative or Liberal candidate would best serve their interests. On 18 January 1881 there was a by-election resulting from the death of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres and the elevation of his son, Lord Lindsay, to the House of Lords.

The liberals were convinced that their candidate, John Lancaster, would have the support of most workers after a miners strike had left many families experiencing extreme poverty. Canvas returns had been encouraging. John Lancaster had contested previous elections and had been successful in 1868 and may have only been denied victory in 1874 because the labour candidate received 1134 votes. At the previous general election in 1880 he received only 66 and 33 fewer votes than Lord Lindsay and Thomas Knowles, the conservative candidates. Liberal supporters were astounded to learn that on a bitterly cold January day almost 90% of the electors had turned out to vote and that the Conservative candidate, Mr Powell, had received 3005 votes providing him with a majority of 465. Their only explanation was that bribery had persuaded a large number of working men to venture out in the atrocious weather of that day and cast votes for the conservative candidate. As they were convinced that this result had been achieved by corrupt electioneering they presented a petition alleging that the Conservatives had been guilty of bribery and exerting undue influence and that the election should be declared null and void.

The charges were heard the following March before Justices Grove and Bowen at the Borough Magistrates' Court. The Wigan Chronicle printed detailed daily reports of the court proceedings



Francis Powell

together with a summary of previous occasions when election results had been challenged and even overturned.

A detailed account of the Petitioner's case, supported by a large number of witness statements, refers principally to the provision of free food and drink on election-day in public houses such as the Balcarres Arms, the Rose and Crown and particularly in the home of John Gee, a prominent conservative and a Town Council member for Scholes Ward. Joseph Orrell's statement about what occurred there is typical. On the Monday evening prior to election day he was told that he could have his breakfast at John Gees'. Together with many others he went there and had corn beef and bread and some coffee. He was then taken to the voting place and afterwards to the Balcarres Arms where he had plenty of free ale. Samuel Foster, a collier, said he was also invited there and urged to vote for No.2, a direction which would help illiterate working class voters such as he to mark the ballot paper against Powell's name. This he did.

A snippet of a handwritten document, likely a petition or legal record. The text is written in cursive and includes the following lines: "In the High Court of Justice", "Success Bench Division", "The Parliamentary Elections Act 1868", "The Parliamentary Elections &amp; Corrupt Practices Act 1879", "In the matter of a Petition from the Borough of Wigan in the County of Lancashire.", and "Wherein James Spencer and Edward Best are Petitioners".



Another list of charges alleges illegal payments, some of which may have been superficially justified as legitimate campaigning expenses. James Bidy, a collier, was engaged as what was termed a 'constable', at the Conservative Committee Rooms. He was given both breakfast and a potato pie dinner and occupied the day, supervised by James Hilton, a conservative canvasser, accompanying voters first to the poll but afterwards to a public house where free drink was available. Other witnesses describe what appears to be more blatant attempts at bribery. John Finch, a miner and voter in Scholes Ward, described how on the day before he had been invited into the premises of James Hilton who said, after making a reference to the coming election, "if I happen to fall o'er a shilling I mun pick it up". With his back turned away he put one on the counter. This John picked it up and walked out of the shop.

Simon Mulligan recounted that he was one of a number of people invited into the Bricklayers Arms and then individually taken into the brew house. There, Simon said, a young man held five shillings behind his back. This Simon took and was then accompanied with the others to the poll and told to make his mark for Powell. Thomas Farrimond was one of a group of miners at Carr's colliery who came by an early morning train into Wigan. He described being taken into the Conservative Committee Rooms where in the presence of Mr Scott, the Tory Agent, it was confirmed that they were voters and each was given 10s, taken to the King's Head and given whiskey followed by an offer of breakfast after they had voted. Thomas not only referred to the events on election-day but also made, allegations that just before the date for the inquiry he was offered bribes not to appear in court. He named people who contacted him with the offer of £10 and a suit of clothes and told him "go away to Ireland or anywhere else". He replied "I might get shot if I went to Ireland". A second offer of £2 each week was accompanied by the words: "Let's go and have a Gentleman's life for about 10 weeks".

One can never be certain to what extent Powell's majority resulted from bribery as since 1872 the ballot had been secret. Electors accepting food, drink or money could promise to vote as directed but beyond observing that they entered a polling station and registered a vote, there were no means to verify the casting. What appears reasonable is

*Report on the Wigan Election Petition*

**(C) That there is reason to believe that corrupt practices have extensively prevailed at the election for the borough of Wigan to which the said petition relates.**

**Dated this 1st day of April, 1881.**

that, given the appalling weather conditions of the day and the economic circumstances of many of the working people, the incentives that were offered did encourage the high voter turnout. In their summing up both judges were very clear the evidence proved that what had occurred went far beyond acceptable electioneering. Mr Justice Brown commented that "this took place at a time of great distress in the town when large numbers of colliers were on strike and when a gift of a breakfast to a starving man was worth as much to him on that morning as the gift of a pound would have been at a more prosperous time." As no direct evidence was produced against Mr Powell, the initial charge which had named him was withdrawn, and the verdict was based solely on the actions of his campaign agents.

The decision was that two prominent subordinates in the election campaign, Thomas Scott and Edwin Mcloughland were guilty of the corrupt practice of bribery and because of their actions the election was declared void. Four years later Francis Powell successfully won the seat and thereafter represented Wigan until 1910, his service commemorated by the erection of his statue in Mesnes Park.

*Sources and Acknowledgements:*

The account is based on the following documents in D/Dx Hea at Wigan Archives Service.

1. Wigan Election Petition – containing pasted cuttings of the daily proceedings from Wigan Observer – 23 March to 1 April.
2. The Petitioners' Case – 175 pages of a handwritten brief of proceedings and evidence.
3. Named Particulars – 20 sheets of printed lists of "persons alleged to have been influenced".
4. Two hand written sets of sheets of "Additional Proofs" for the 1881 election petition.
5. A copy of the petition and documents dated prior to the opening of the case.
6. Handwritten copies of orders to produce documents.

# Nurse Martha Hogg, JP:

## *She lived to serve*

BY TOM WALSH



**It was a very lucky happening for Wigan, when John Robert Chadwick left his home in Henley, Stoke on Trent, to find work in Lancashire. He found lodgings in the Poolstock area of the town, and secured work in a local cotton factory. It was here that he met his future wife, Margaret Birchall also a resident of Poolstock. They married on the 21 April 1869 and set up home in Baker Street before moving to nearby Byrom Street. They had six children, the third being Martha, born in July 1872, the subject of this article.**

Martha Chadwick Hogg, was one of the greatest figures to hail from Wigan, or given her achievements, from anywhere in the country. I think she can fairly rank with the likes of the Countess de Markaievicz, the first women to be elected to the House of Commons in 1918 and Nancy, Lady Astor, the first women to take her seat in the chamber, the latter being shoehorned in to her husband's constituency (Portsmouth Sutton) on his elevation to The House of Lords.

Not wishing to undermine their commitment to suffrage, they operated from a position of great privilege. Martha, on the other hand, was born into poverty, leaving school at 13 to work in a cotton factory, like her mother and father before. On her marriage to her husband, William Hogg on 29 August 1891, she was forced to leave her employ, as many women in those day were impelled to do. This arcane practise applied even to some of the professions, teachers for example had to leave their chosen calling on taking their nuptial vows. The rule on this now unbelievable dictate was: no questions, no debate, and no exceptions. To my surprise, whilst researching this topic, I found the discrimination carried on until

the 1960s, Barclays Bank for instance only relaxing the rule in 1961. It was this type of unfairness that drove the young Martha Hogg to train to be a Midwife, qualifying in 1912, which was a remarkable achievement for someone who left school at 13 without qualifications. It was this steely determination that would come to the fore later, in her political life.

Martha and William Hogg made their home in Greenough Street, Wigan, where they lived until their deaths, in 1934 and 1941 respectively. They had four children and by all accounts were greatly respected in the locality. This was particularly true for Martha as a result of her work in the community. It was this work, seeing the terrible living conditions and poverty, that drove her to politics and the Labour Party. She was involved with local politics throughout the First World War, sitting on several committees regarding health issues and as a representative of the Guild of Midwives.

She first stood for public office in the election of 1919, when she contested Lindsey Ward for Labour. She lost to the Conservative candidate by only 92 votes. She would have undoubtedly won the seat had there been a fairer voting system in place. Whilst it was possible for some women to vote at 21, in local elections the restrictions with regard to property made a mockery of the process. Universal suffrage was not to come for another nine years. It was her stance in taking on the establishment that makes her stand out as a beacon just as much as Countess de Markaievicz and Lady Astor. In my opinion her light shines brighter. You can only marvel at the courage of a working class woman standing up to the ruling class, an action difficult to imagine, particularly in those days.

Martha was a fighter and undeterred by her defeat in 1919, stood for Lindsey Ward again in 1920, this time successfully winning the seat with a majority of 119



over the Conservative candidate. She became the first woman Councillor for Wigan and one of only a small number in the country. Martha Hogg's victory on 1 November 1920 provided Wigan with another first. Labour became the largest party on Wigan Council for the first time, though a long way from an overall majority. The new council was made up of the following: Labour 23 members, Conservative 21, Liberals 9 and Independents 2, so setting in train Labour's dominance on the council that lasts until the present day.

Martha was not to be a token woman by any means and made her voice heard on subjects including pensions for the blind and for ex-servicemen. She showed great concern for the plight of the mothers she cared for as a midwife. Her contribution to the many Council debates can be read in the Council minutes.

Her exploits didn't stop with her election to the council. She played a notable role on many committees and was so well thought of by her fellow councillors that she was appointed as the first female member of the Watch Committee in 1929. This was a rare honour for any councillor and a much sought after appointment. In February 1931 she was appointed as a Magistrate to the Wigan Bench and whilst not the first woman on the bench, she was one of only a handful. She served in that role with great distinction until her death.

Baptised as an Anglican, in her teenage years she attended the Baptist Church in King Street and was a leading light on the executive committee of the Women's Meeting. Very sadly Martha Hogg has largely been forgotten in Wigan and I must confess that I only learned of her existence by chance, when visiting Wigan Cemetery on another quest. I stumbled on her grave and was intrigued to find out more. With each new discovery, all the more I have been impressed by this very formidable woman.

Martha died suddenly on the 16 May 1934, caring for her patients up to a couple of days before her untimely death. Her funeral brought Wigan to a standstill; such was the esteem in which she was held. On the day of the service her coffin was carried in to the church by four police constables. The Minister, Reverend R.H. Jackson paid tribute to her in his address. He spoke of her Christian piety and the work she had done, especially among the women of the town. He said that this work would not cease with her death as she had left a blueprint for future endeavour. He continued that the best word to sum up her life was 'altruistic', a selfless concern for the well being of others. I am sure the vast congregation concurred

with this sentiment. There were hundreds of floral tributes and the one that I think would have pleased her most was the one from the Women's Labour Party. In attendance were numerous local dignitaries, including the Chief Constable, Thomas Pey.

Members of the Wigan Women's Labour Party walked in procession, including Mrs Ethel Naylor, who many years later was to become Wigan's first Lady Mayor. During my research for this synopsis I placed an article in the Wigan Observer, seeking information about Martha Hogg and was contacted by one of her two great-grandchildren, Tim Jones, from Ashton-in-Makerfield. His help had been invaluable, as has Julie Baker's from Wigan Local Studies.

Tim Jones, his wife Veronica and myself had a meeting and agreed to campaign for Martha Hogg's life to be remembered with a memorial, to be placed in a prominent place in the town. There may be a report on this subject in the next issue.

My wife joked recently that there were three people in our marriage: herself, me and Martha Hogg. If we are successful in our endeavours to have her life suitably marked, I think I will at last, be able to say,

**"Goodnight and God bless, Martha!"**

*Martha Hogg's gravestone*



*The Coming of Age of Lord Balcarres.*



*The Earl and Countess of Crawford  
request the pleasure of the Company of*

Invitation to Mr James Holding to attend the coming of age dinner of Lord Balcarres at Haigh Hall, 1893

*Mr James Holding  
at Dinner on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April at two o'clock.*

*An early answer is requested.*

# A BIT OF A DO

BY WILLIAM MELLING as told by James Holding

It's Sunday morning, 25 June 1893 and like most of the other workers on the Haigh estate I'm enjoying a well earned rest. Yesterday we were helping to entertain nearly 10,000 people around the Hall at the last of the events held to celebrate the coming of age of Lord Balcarres, Lord Crawford's eldest son and heir.

The occasion was a special treat for all the school children in the surrounding districts. It should have taken place in April but had to be postponed until now because of an epidemic of measles. Invitations had been sent to all the schools, irrespective of denomination, in New Springs, Aspull, Blackrod and Haigh. The scholars assembled at their schools where they partook of a nice tea, provided at the expense of Lord Crawford, before marching in procession to the Estate Office. Here the 5100

children, and nearly as many adults, formed into one long procession and to the strains of three brass bands marched down to the Hall.

At the Hall, Lord Balcarres stood on the terrace and as each group passed, led by their respective clergy, he gave them a cordial salute. They then went to their appointed places on the lawns and were soon romping around merrily and enjoying the games and sports that had been arranged for them. There was a Punch and Judy show for the little ones which they greatly enjoyed and Lord Balcarres moved amongst the children and did all he could to promote their enjoyment. During the afternoon each scholar was given a bag of sweets and nuts and in the evening the bands played for dancing which went on until about eight o'clock when everyone went home tired but happy.

His Lordship's 21st birthday was actually on 10 of October last year so you may be wondering why we celebrated his coming of age nearly six months after his actual birthday. It was because Lord and Lady Crawford decided that the gloom and chill of October were not the conditions for the kind of celebrations they wished to hold for this happy event. Accordingly things were postponed until April, a decision which proved to be correct since happily the celebrations were a great success and were blessed with a summer-like radiance.

I expect you are also wondering where I come into all this. I was born in 1869, three years before Lord Balcarres and although we both grew up on the Haigh Estate our stations in life were very different. He lived at the Hall whilst I lived at its gates. Both my parents had died within three months of my birth leaving me to



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be brought up by my grandparents. They lived at the Wigan Lane Lodge, the main entrance to Haigh Hall, where my grandfather was the gatekeeper. His Lordship went to Eton and Oxford University whilst I went to St Michael's school and then to work in the estate yard.

In the yard, I served my apprenticeship as a joiner and it was through this job that I became involved in the celebrations. A huge marquee, capable of seating 400 people for dinner, was erected on the lawn in front of the Hall. We joiners had to lay over 10,000 square feet of boarded floor, make a top table 90 feet long, ten tables 32 feet long and two 22 foot serving tables. We also assisted with the building of a temporary kitchen for the use of Mr Eberle, a caterer from Liverpool, who had been hired for the occasion since the numbers expected to attend the planned banquets were quite beyond the capabilities of the Hall's own kitchen. Mr Eberle had performed a similar role when the Prince & Princess of Wales had stayed at the Hall for the opening of the Infirmary. The marquee had all the usual offices necessary when large numbers of people gather. There was even a police station with a small contingent of constables and a plain clothed detective under the command of Inspector Jump to take care of any troublemakers who might have upset the proceedings.

Although the real programme of festivities was not due to start until Tuesday 11 of April, for a few days before that date various organisations and groups attended on Lord Balcarres to present gifts and congratulations. On the previous Friday a deputation of tenants from the estate presented him with three handsome, inscribed, silver bowls with delicate

filigree decoration. On the Saturday morning 670 Sunday School scholars and teachers presented an illuminated address and eight folio volumes of the works of Ruskin. They were followed by a deputation representing the employees on the estate, who presented a handsome solid leather dressing bag, lined with pigskin and embossed in gold with "B" and a coronet.

That afternoon the entire membership of the Wigan Conservative Association, some 400 strong, came in a procession 250 yards long with blue ribbons fluttering and headed by the Old Borough Reed Band. They gave his Lordship a capital reception and embodied their good wishes in an illuminated address. After a rush for drinks in the big marquee they formed up again behind the band and marched back to Wigan in high spirits. On Monday afternoon Lord Balcarres was host to deputations from the Haigh, Aspull and Blackrod Local Boards who expressed their appreciation of the part his family played in local affairs. There was also a presentation from the officials and employees of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company of an illuminated address, some silver photograph frames and a solid silver dessert service. The service had been specially commissioned and at the foot of each corner of the triangular centre piece were exquisitely worked statuettes of a collier, a blast furnace keeper and a pit brow woman. These had been modeled from photographs of actual employees of the Company.

The main celebrations began on Tuesday evening with a grand ball for friends and relations of the family and the next day there was a dinner in the marquee for the members of Wigan Corporation,

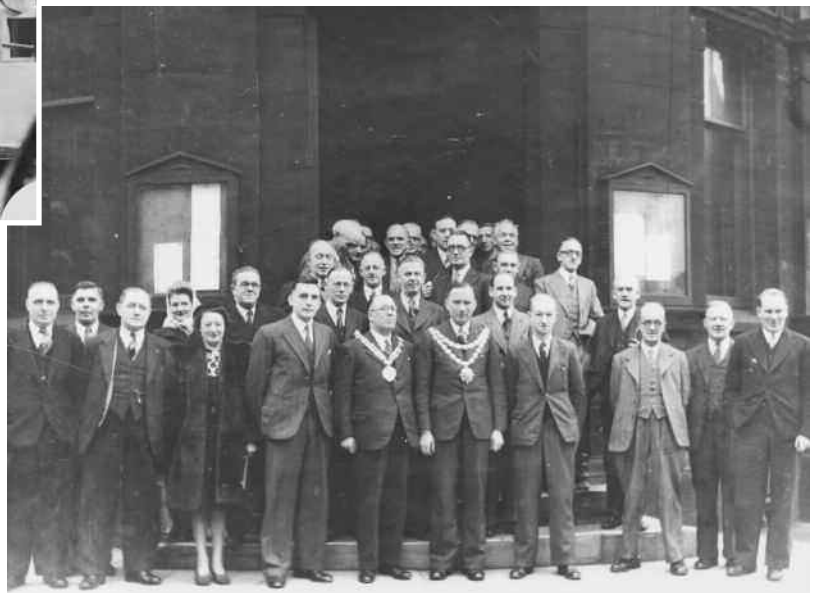
local dignitaries, magistrates and the tradespeople of the borough. On Thursday the marquee was again filled to capacity with a dinner for Wigan Coal and Iron Company officials, overlookers and other long serving employees. Friday's dinner, which I attended, was for estate employees and cottagers who were tenants on the estate. After the meal we adjourned to the terrace where we were entertained by a gymnastic display and music from the Haigh Brass Band. On the Friday evening there was a dance in the big marquee for estate employees, farm tenants and their wives which was attended by Lord Balcarres who danced nearly every dance and with a different partner each time. During the course of the evening I overheard him telling Mr Fair, Lord Crawford's agent, that in the past week he had made over twenty speeches. The dancing went on until the early hours of Saturday morning and at its conclusion Lord Balcarres was enthusiastically cheered when he thanked all the employees for their hard work in making the week's events such a success.

The last few weeks have been a busy time for everyone involved in the celebrations and I think we are all looking forward to things getting back to our normal routine again. Tomorrow, Lord Balcarres is off back to Oxford, Lord and Lady Crawford and the rest of the family are going to London for the Season and me, I am looking forward to a nice Sunday dinner and then going to the "Pleasant Sunday Afternoon" meeting at St Paul's church in Standishgate. The speaker is Dr Hugh Campbell of Falkirk and his subject – "Building Castles in the Air" – looks a pleasant change from laying (and dismantling) floors and building kitchens.

# PROBING PICTURES

We are always receiving historic images into the Archives, donated by people living all around the world, but who have a connection to Wigan Borough. Some of these images come to the Archives with very little information, or without the names of the people in the photographs.

You can see a few such images in this edition's feature, and we would be delighted to hear from any readers who can tell where they were taken, and who the people are.



*Images recently received from the family of Alderman, Mayor Edward Maloney. We can identify the Alderman, and his wife, but who else appears in these images from the late 1940s?*





*These images show Billinge Carnival (c. 1925), a bonfire on Billing Hill (1935) and the Abram Parish Church Football Club (1905), but we don't have any names for the individuals. Can any readers help?*



# The Rise and Fall of Pony Dick

*By Derek Winstanley*

**About 200 years ago, Squire Bankes of Winstanley Hall had a white pony, Pony Dick. Dick died in 1841 at the grand old age of 36 and is buried under a gravestone near the Hall. In the first part of the nineteenth century, the Old Horse and Jockey Inn, at the bottom of present day Ribbesford Road, near the border between Wigan and Winstanley, was rebuilt and renamed Favourite Pony Dick Inn. The inn was demolished in the 1950s, but we can reconstruct the history of the area surrounding the Inn from old records and memories of Sam Fouracre and Joe Starkey, as recorded in 1979 interviews.**

The Inn was the focal point for folks living in Hall Lane Cottages, Copperas House, Molyneux House, Rainford House, Sumner's Hall, Holme's House, Hill House and the New Houses. It was also a stopping place for travelers along 'th'owd cut', then Rylance Mill Lane, now Billinge Road. Squire Bankes also frequented the Inn. In the 1820s to 1840s, the start of coal mining at Blundell's Wood, Venture and Mill pits and Bankes' Winstanley Colliery pits would have created a lot of thirsty colliers and no doubt boosted trade. There was a club room on the upper level where the Foresters and the Picnic and Children's Clubs met and contributions were collected for funerals.



*The Favourite Pony Dick Inn about 1900.*

William Starkey from Cheshire, whom Squire Bankes hired in about 1830 to take care of his horses, took over the Inn in 1837. In 1899, after serving as apprentice to James Hesketh in Wallgate, Joseph Starkey, the son of James and Alice Starkey (nee Winstanley) and grandson of William Starkey started a wheelwright business. The buildings to the right of the Inn were the paint and wheelwright's shops, the building on the left was the smithy and the workshop was in the middle. There was no electricity, so work was done by hand; turning and band sawing were contracted out. James Starkey made high quality carts, shafts, lorries, floats, pig crates, barrows, coffins and cow troughs. He also repaired these along with ploughs, binders, spades, traps and churns. He used oak, ash and hickory timber and all his supplies came from south Lancashire, except high quality varnish supplied by Joseph Mason & Co. in Derby. He had many customers in a three mile radius including farmers, coal merchants, butchers, grocers, builders, contractors, quarry owners, wine and spirit merchants, collieries and Squire Bankes. James Starkey was twice awarded silver medals for his carts at agricultural fairs and was a member of the National Association of Vehicle Builders.

Rylance (Ryland's) Mill Bridge spans Smithy Brook and to the west is the road leading to Winstanley Hall. Remains of the estate wall (the Long Wall) built in the late 1800s can be seen to the right; to the left is the old Ryland's Mill farm house and the 1841 barn. Stone from the delph up Hall Lane was used to build the wall and barn.



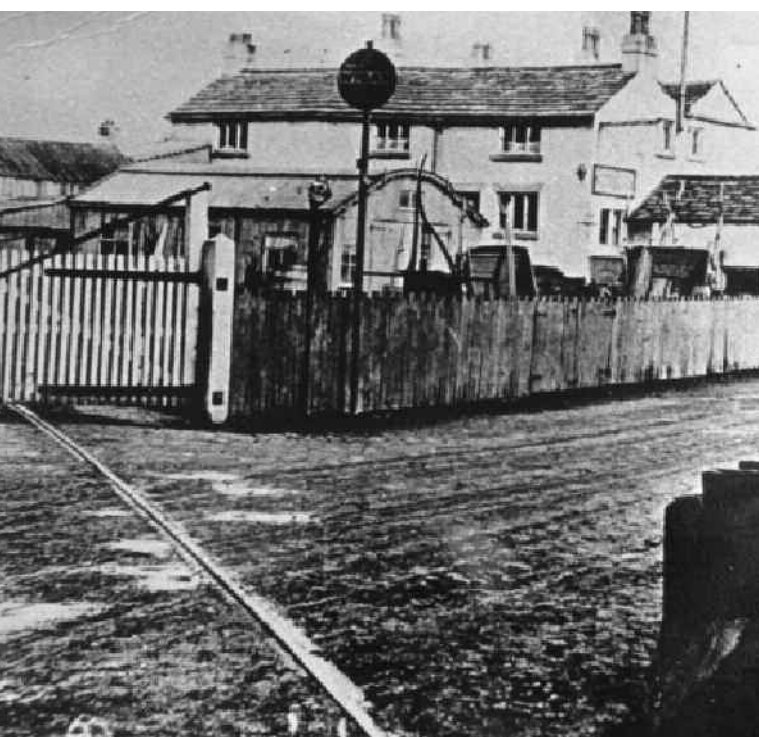
Business at the mill in 1669-70 to 1671-72 is shown in the table:

	WHEAT		BARLEY		MEAL		MALT		TOTAL CHARGES
	windles	pecks	windles	pecks	windles	pecks	windles	pecks	£. s. d.
1669-70	9	0	64	1	89	1	18	1	29 3 1
1670-71	8	0	75	3	74	0	11	2	33 2 2
1671-72	6	3	71	1	106	3	18	1	29 9 11

Across the entrance road to the Hall and behind the wall, was one of the last working tithe mills in Lancashire, possibly dating from the sixteenth century. William Fouracre came up from Somerset about 1770, probably as page boy at the Hall, and about 1800 took over the mill and farm. Fouracre also carted coals, slack, marl, lime, stone and cinders. Even after living around the area for a couple of centuries, the Fouracres retained a bit of a Somerset accent.

The mill was water powered and had three sources of water: Smithy Brook flowing down from the northwest; the stream that flows along the side of Hall Lane from the west; and a stream from Lea Wood to the southwest. Embankments were constructed to store water in a mill pond. The stream from the west flowed directly into the mill pond, but water from Smithy Brook and Lea Wood was diverted to feed into the mill pond. The 12-15 feet diameter mill wheel was iron with brass

*The Favourite Pony Dick Inn and Starkey's wheelwright business 1923.*



bearings and oak troughs. All other mechanisms in the mill were of wood and the mill, about 40 feet long and 30 feet wide, was stone and brick. A big square wooden trough controlled water flowing onto the top of the wheel and there was a timber sluice gate at the side. Water used in the mill was channeled underground to Smithy Brook. About 30 feet from the mill was a brick kiln about 41 feet long, 21 feet wide and 13 feet high where grain was dried on terra cotta 'tiles' over a coal fire. An inscription over the fire place read 'Luke Taylor Dryster 1797'.

The mill stopped working about 1900 and was demolished in 1927. At least one of the two millstones was taken up to the Hall, remnants of the waterwheel rest in situ and part of the mill was incorporated in the estate wall. From 1921 to 1924 the average annual income from the wheelwright business was £387 6s 4d. However, as the coal and cotton industries declined and manufacturing was mechanized, the wheelwright business came to an end and the Inn lost its license in 1924. In 1926 a new era began as a Wigan Corporation bus (No. 19) arrived at Pony Dick, and Winstanley Hall today lies in ruins.

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# Shevington with Lower Ground



*The coal tippler at Crooke.*

Today Shevington and District is a pleasant patchwork of modern dormitory estates separated from Wigan and other townships by the Green Belt. As well as the central community of Shevington, gathered around the historic centre of Broad o'th Lane, the district also comprises Shevington Moor - adjacent to the Standish turnoff from the M6; Shevington Vale - which merges into Appley Bridge; Crooke - an idyllic backwater on the banks of the Leeds to Liverpool Canal; and Standish Lower Ground - the area at the foot of the former parkland surrounding Standish Hall. But behind the neat rows of post-war houses lies the rich history of a largely rural area, scarred by the industrial revolution.

A new DVD entitled 'Our Story - Shevington with Lower Ground' explores the history of the whole area and brings the story up to

date with a portrait of the community today. There is also an ongoing series of historical booklets focussing on the individual areas within the district, including short self-guided heritage walks, and interpretation boards installed in key locations. This celebration of the area's heritage is the work of John O'Neill, the chair of Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network and a former Deputy Leader of Wigan Council. For the production of the DVD he enlisted the help of Tradition Films, who produced the recent, popular 'Our Heritage' DVD.

## Rural beginnings

The first document to record the name 'Shevington' dates from 1225. The name, possibly comes from the Welsh 'Cefyn' and the old English 'Tun', and relates to the

position of the settlement on a hill slope of the Douglas Valley. At this time Shevington was a manor, formed from the larger Standish manor. The manor was defined by physical boundaries, the River Douglas to the south, the Western branch of Calico Brook leading from Wrightington Pond to the River Douglas at Appley Bridge, and an eastern border defined by Almond Brook and Mill Brook running through Elnup wood to the River at Crooke. These historic borders still endure today in defining the boundaries of Shevington Parish Council. Shevington with Lower Ground Electoral Ward also follows this ancient pattern, with the one addition of the Standish Lower Ground settlement, which until recently was part of Standish.

Shevington manor was a scattered, sparsely populated rural area, with



the land owned by various families as Lords of the manor, including the Banastres as first Lords in 1288, the Standishes of Standish Hall, the Dicconsens of Wrightington Hall, the Catteralls of Crooke Hall, and the Heskeths of Rufford, who were the last Lords in 1798. Most of the land was divided amongst tenant farmers, and farming was supplemented by handcrafts such as handloom weaving and basket making. Local water mills such as Finch Mill on Calico Brook and Standish Mill on Mill Brook ground corn into flour, and basic digging out of coal began to exploit the area's rich mineral wealth. The population remained small and still only numbered 646 by the first census in 1801.

## The Industrial Revolution

The industrial phase of Shevington and district's history started to develop after 1742 when the River Douglas was made navigable. Shevington, and nearby Standish, had rich coal reserves. Mining activity increased dramatically and a system of local tramways were built to transport the coal tubs down the slope to the River Douglas.

The opening of the Leeds Liverpool Canal in the 1780s improved transport links even further. Coal produced in the area was transported via mineral railways to Gathurst, Appley Bridge and Crooke, where it was loaded onto barges for Liverpool and local markets.

Initially some early collieries were sited in Shevington, Shevington Moor and Shevington Vale. But all the Shevington mines had closed by the 1880s, and local coal mining became concentrated across Standish Lower Ground in John Pit, Taylor Pit and later the Giants Hall Colliery.

Other industries also developed in the area such as a Copperas works in Shevington, which

manufactured a chemical used in textile manufacture. There were quarrying, glue works, chemical works and brick and tile works at Appley Bridge, and the Roburite explosive works at Gathurst, which supplied explosives for mining and quarrying, and munitions during both World Wars.

The population expanded during the nineteenth Century to nearly 2,000 in 1901. The Victorian era also saw, in 1855, the development of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company line from Wigan to Southport, with stations at Gathurst and Appley Bridge, along with the building of a church, chapels, schools, new pubs and housing. Shevington became a church parish in its own right with the building of St Anne's in 1887, after centuries as part of the parish of St Wilfrid's at Standish. The first school in Shevington was opened in 1814. Broad o'th' Lane became the 'crossroads' centre of Shevington, and the original Plough and Harrow pub built there in the late 1700s was rebuilt in 1905.

*'Our Story – Shevington with Lower Ground' is available to buy for £10 by sending a cheque payable to 'John O'Neill' to 24 Willowbrook Drive, Shevington, WN6 8AH. The DVD is also available, along with the 'Our Heritage' DVD, in the shop at the Museum of Wigan Life or online at [www.traditionfilms.co.uk](http://www.traditionfilms.co.uk)*



Mill Dam House

## The Twentieth Century

A significant development occurred in 1921 when the majority of land held for rent from the Standish Estate throughout the district was sold at auction and Standish Hall itself demolished. During the mid twentieth century, traditional industries declined not only in Shevington, but in the whole of the UK. An increase in residential development between 1950 and 1980, coupled with the development of the M6 motorway in the 1960s, has seen the local population in the ward increase to over 11,000, most of who now commute to work. These housing developments were made possible by the sale of agricultural land from farm closures at the end of World War Two. The pits are long gone and few traces remain. But the district still retains echoes of its rural past, surrounded by green open space, crisscrossed by an ancient network of footpaths, fields, woods and ponds.

# Blitz & Bananas!

## A wartime drama film

By Anna Littler

On Remembrance Day, the DVD of a heart-warming wartime drama film, 'Blitz & Bananas' was launched. The film involved many people from the Wigan area.

The film is a feature length family drama, in which four year old Bessie Smiley and her sisters decide to do war work and secretly set about helping people who've lost everything during the Blitz. However, their secret operation brings little Bessie face to face with the grumpiest old man in town, Grumpy Old Granddad, played brilliantly by well known television actor Brian Murphy. Bessie's wartime adventure leads to big decisions about evacuees, an RAF Pilot, prisoners of war and even a banana.

I have been a professional family tree researcher for a number of years, immersed in fascinating social history stories, and for years I had wanted to somehow preserve stories told by my own grandparents. My love for social history led me to start doing Reminiscence sessions in clubs and homes for retired people but I soon realised that so many memories would simply disappear and be forgotten if they were not recorded. This prompted a desire in me to make a film to preserve memories for future generations.

I had started filmmaking about 15 years ago through my management work overseeing charity projects in Russia. The seventieth anniversary of the Blitz in 2010 was the impetus for me to start looking for wartime stories for a feature length drama script. As a member of Orpington Video and Film Makers, I shared my big film project idea with them and I was delighted to receive an overwhelmingly good response including many moving and fascinating memories of the Blitz. I started advertising for more wartime memories and received a number of stories from former evacuees, as well as others

who had stayed at home and experienced the bombs of the Blitz. Others had memories of life near Biggin Hill and many talked about their wartime childhood games and adventures.

Around 150 people got involved in the project, aged one month to 91 years. We were also offered four air raid shelters, ten vintage cars, several pre-1940s houses, as well as military uniforms and 1940s props.

Although presently living in Bromley, Kent, where the film is set, I am a Wigan born and bred. So I was keen to involve people from the Wigan area.

*Actors Adam Gray and Olivia Jackson who play the parts of Ronnie and Pearl.  
© Simon Earwicker/Ced Verdon*





Many Wigan people including members of Whitley Methodist Church, Wigan Cricket Club and Wigan Grammar School Old Boys shared wartime memories and anecdotes, which all aided my understanding of the war and the 1930s and 1940s eras. Some Wigan teenagers joined the crew in the summer holidays to help us behind the scenes and Wigan friends also lent us wonderful 1940s costumes. Filming in Wigan included footage of a demolished house, perfect for a bombed out house and some indoor shots were filmed in a pre 1940s house, including a kitchen with its original red tiled floor.

As my writing progressed, I decided that the film script needed a friendly northerner, of course. Mrs Kendal was created, a warm and caring housekeeper

who looks after evacuees while anxiously waiting for her fire fighter husband to return from London during the Blitz. You'll have to watch the film to see who plays Mrs Kendal! The Premiere held in Bromley earlier this year attracted an amazing 1,500 people to two sell-out performances. Since then another several hundred people have seen the film, and on Remembrance Day another screening was organised in the Orpington area.

We have had a wonderful response to the film from people of all ages. It makes people laugh and cry and it has been commended for its authentic look and feel. Remembrance Day is an occasion that I always find very moving, as I feel so indebted to those who risked, or even gave their lives for us and for our

freedom. In the First World War, my grandparents in Wigan both had uncles who died in Flanders and in the Second World War, my grandfather was a POW and his brother was an RAF pilot who never came back from the war. Through the 'Blitz & Bananas' film, we have already raised £1200 for charity, including £700, so far, for the Poppy Appeal. We are working together with the Royal British Legion to promote the film to raise more funds for their very worthy cause.

#### Editor's note

Anyone interested in the DVD, raising money for the Poppy Appeal or in Anna's next project on the First World War, can contact her at [annahopelittler@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:annahopelittler@yahoo.co.uk) or 07757 162114.

## • Book Review •

### An Unjust Hanging

by Dave Halliwell

'An Unjust Hanging' is the macabre tale of John Horwood by the Leigh based writer Dave Halliwell. One winter's evening in 1821 in Hanham, Bristol, John is alleged to have picked up a stone and flung it at his girlfriend Eliza Balsom. This act cost both John and Eliza their lives.

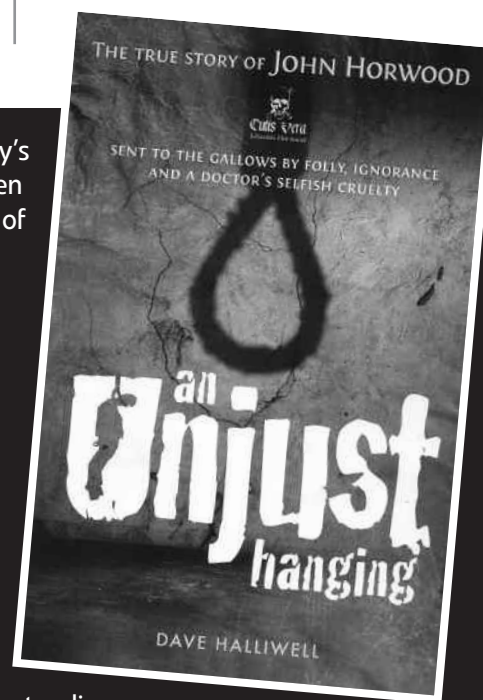
At Bristol Royal Infirmary a prominent surgeon called Dr Richard Smith operated on Eliza's head injury but she did not survive. John was put on trial for the death of Eliza, found guilty and hanged at the New Prison. Dr. Smith brought John's body from the prison to Bristol Infirmary and gave a public lecture to around eighty people. He dismembered the body and had a book bound with the skin, an inscription on the book 'Cutis Vera Johannis Horwood' translates as 'The Skin of John Horwood'.

John's descendant Mary Halliwell discovered this tale whilst researching the maternal side of her family history. In the preview to 'An Unjust Hanging' Mary describes her sadness at seeing John's skeleton in a cupboard at Bristol University Medical School with a rope still around his neck, a sign of the skeleton being a felon, as well as the horror of coming across John's book of skin.

Dave Halliwell, Mary's husband, has written a gripping account of John Horwood's story. The sources used such as the 'John Horwood Papers' and the 'Notes of Reverend Roberts' are both fascinating and disturbing. The documents reproduced in the book are intriguing such as the drawing of John standing at the bar during his trial and the defence's drawing of the murder scene.

Dave and Mary eventually had John's skeleton removed from Bristol University and buried in a local church there. 'An Unjust Hanging' is an excellent tale of how family history can take you on new routes and may literally lead to discovering a skeleton in the cupboard!

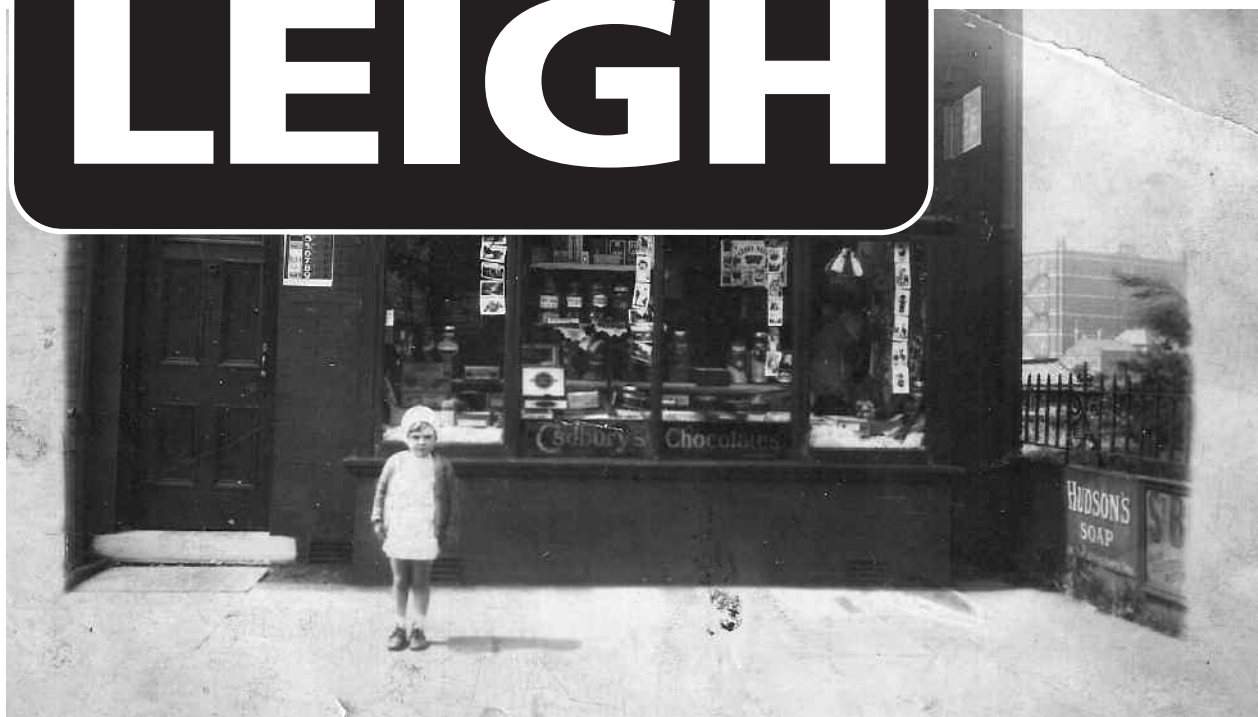
Published 2012 by Memoirs Publishing.  
£10 paperback, illustrated. ISBN 978-1-909020-66-5.



# My Life in

By Dorothy Smith

# LEIGH



*Dorothy Smith outside the family shop on Warrington Road.*

My grandfather James Rew, who came from a family of crofters in Scotland, moved down to Wigan to work for Lord Crawford at Haigh Hall where he met my grandmother Annie Unsworth who was also in service. The family later became tenants on a farm in Lurdin Lane, Standish where my father Percy Rew was born.

My parents moved to Hindley when my father began his working life at the Wigan Coal and Iron Company as a wheelwright joiner. During the 1914 war he served in the army in the Royal Horse Artillery. Following the war he returned to his job at the Company. My parents moved to Hindley where I was born. It was said that the Company was due to close in Wigan and the work was to move to Irlam, so my father moved the family to live in Leigh. However, the joinery section of the company stayed open in Wigan.

On moving to Leigh my parents bought a grocery shop on Warrington Road where I grew up; they also ran the shop as a newsagents. There were fields all around at the time and a lot of business came from workers on their way home from Butts Cotton Mill, who came in the shop covered from head to toe in cotton.

I remember when I was at Butts Junior School the new East Lancashire Road was built, and all the children went to watch the opening near the Greyhound Inn. It was opened by King George V and Queen Mary.

I used to walk to school with a little boy called Alfred Bent. His parents were rose



*Percy Rew (left)*



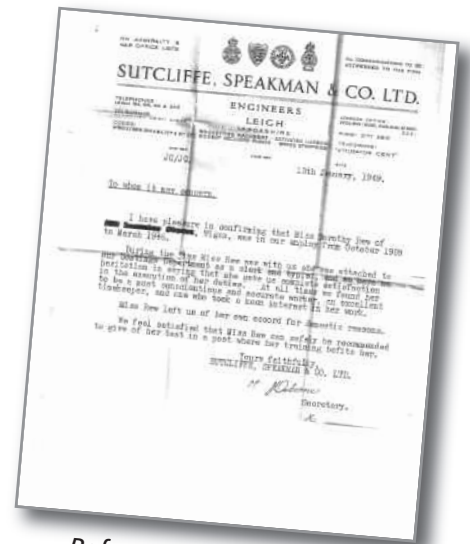
growers and his family are still the owners of Bents Garden Centre in Glazebury.

In 1939 I left school at the age of 14 and went to work in Manchester as a clerk/typist in Rylands Mill office overlooking Piccadilly Gardens. After only a few weeks the Second World War broke out; I never went back to my job in the city. I then went to work at Sutcliffe, Speakman Co. Ltd., in Guest Street, originally a brewery.

During the Second World War we could hear the anti-aircraft guns on lorries on the Liverpool-

East Lancashire Road firing at the enemy aircraft. The aircraft used the road as a navigational landmark and would follow it to Liverpool. I remember one night hearing a loud banging noise which turned out to be a barrage balloon that had broken loose. My father ran the Home Guard and they kept their guns under the stairs in our shop.

Following the war my parents sold the shop and we returned to Wigan where I still live. My father continued to work at the Wigan Coal and Iron Company until his retirement.



Reference received from Sutcliffe, Speakman & Co. Ltd

# Quality QR!

**A novel heritage trail has landed one group a top award at this year's North West in Bloom Competition.**

Villagers in Howe Bridge were celebrating in October with top prizes at the North West in Bloom Awards ceremony at Southport including gold in the Best Large Village category and the overall winner in the village category making the old mining community the region's best.

But they also won the much acclaimed Heritage Trophy with an inspired QR Coded Heritage Trail.

The trail, which has 27 sites, was funded with money secured by Atherleigh councillor Sue Loudon from the North West Employers Organisation.

QR codes give users of smartphones, iPhones, and other devices the opportunity to read about a site and view what a site used to look like.

Each QR code is linked to a particular page on community group 'The Bridgers' website, which means the information can be changed on the website without having to change the site signs.

The trail launched in July and was a big hit with visitors and saw a surge of people visiting the website.

Cllr Loudon said: "It's been quite a year for Howe Bridge. There's a lot of innovation and

community spirit here which has helped us to achieve these awards.

"We're particularly proud of our heritage and by using new technology we're able to engage and share our past with a younger generation."

Chairman of Howe Bridge Community Group – 'The Bridgers' – is Terry Daly.

He said: "This was a project everyone in the village got involved with in one way or another. We're delighted to win the Heritage Trophy – there's a strong sense of history and pride in Howe Bridge and I think that shone through.

"I would like to thank everyone for their tremendous and committed contribution to the project, especially, members of The Bridgers Community Group, Atherton Environment Projects, Gardeners Bowling Club, local councillors, St Michael's School, St Michael's Church, 2nd Atherton Scouts & 3rd Atherton Guides, Wigan Council's Highways Department and all the residents."

**For more information visit [www.bridgers.org.uk](http://www.bridgers.org.uk)**



# Proud to Call Him Cousin

**By Derek Barnes**

William Maskell Peace, was born in Wigan on 3 April 1834 to William Peace and his wife Elizabeth (nee Maskell) Peace, residing at Ashfield House Standish. He can be found in family history websites as Maskell William Peace. William Peace was my great, great, grandfather's brother. This leg of the family tree was unknown to me, hence the reason for investigation.

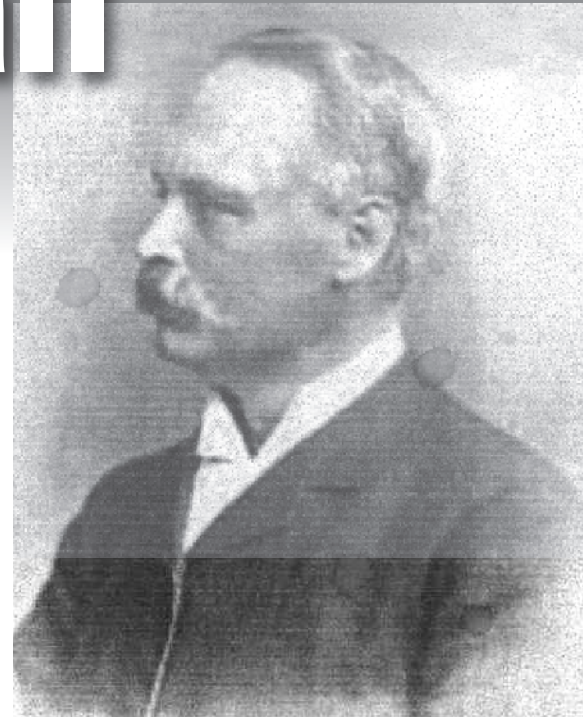
Maskell William Peace followed his father, who was Chief Mining Engineer to Lord Crawford of Haigh Hall, into the coalmining world in a prominent legal position for over 30 years. He was educated at Rossall School and articled to John Mayhew in 1854, a leading town solicitor.

My progress realised a 'figurehead' of a man who created many benefits for the miner in welfare, safer working and environmental conditions, pay structures, legal assistance, and many more including mining associations. In parallel to this, he was also appointed the office of town clerk for Wigan in 1866. He was held

in high esteem and elected Alderman of the Borough and Chairman of the Standish parliamentary committee.

Prior to 1859, a Scottish banker from Fife was commissioned to Lord Crawford's Haigh estate. He was John Wood, and he relocated there with his wife and seven children. One of his daughters, Anne Lindsay Wood, was to become the wife of Maskell Peace, and they were married in Fife (Kilconquhar) on 31 August 1859. He was 25 and she 26 years of age. The 1861 census shows them settled in Moat House, Standish with one servant.

The 1871 census finds them in Greenfield, Wigan Lane, Wigan with three servants. The 1881 census shows the Maskell Peaces and servants in his father's house Ashfield in Standish, where he was born. It is assumed that sometime up to 1891 the family moved to Southport for health reasons living at Lynwood 42 Park Avenue, where he died on 9 November 1892, aged 58. His widow subsequently moved to Edinburgh, where she died on 23 January 1893.



Whilst researching this project, it has portrayed what a wonderful and compassionate man Maskell Peace was. He was wealthy, generous, famous and obviously a godsend to all, especially miners. After many hours searching for this honourable man's burial, he was found in Duke Street, Cemetery, Southport in section G plot 1916. His tombstone reads 'Affectionate Remembrance of Maskell William Peace 9 Nov, 1892 and also of his wife Anne Lindsay Peace 23 Jan, 1893.'

Wigan honoured this man in many ways. I have found a heartfelt gratitude in researching his past and knowing I was related, I am extremely proud to call him cousin.

**Note:** many thanks to friends and my cousin Anne Marie Oldfield for helping me to research, I am grateful for their assistance.





# Tick Tock

By Elene Humphreys

Ave gorr a lickle pocket watch on't table  
An' I've sin better metal types afore  
A know it's cheap but ah would say it's able  
'N' 'ow ah loves fert wind it more 'n' more  
Ah mean bi that it does the job, u see  
Ah pocket watch that tells the time is gradely  
An' shud be cherrish't as it aught t'be

## Mesnes Park Memories



### **HISTORY AND HOTPOT**

Monday 10 December 2012 • 10.30am – 12.30pm

Come along to Mesnes for a nostalgic stroll around Wigan's premier Victorian Park. We begin with a short history walk and talk on the park's restoration, followed by a hotpot lunch in the Pavilion. Bring along any photos or a memento of your visit to Mesnes from days gone by that we can share.

Meet at the Pavilion  
£5.00 per person including lunch and refreshments.

**Booking essential telephone 01942 487098**

# LEIGH AND WIGAN LOCAL STUDIES

## Upcoming Events



The Make It, Spin It, Can It exhibition in 2013 will look at the borough's manufacturing history with a family friendly exhibition. To coincide with the exhibition we will be hosting a coffee afternoon on March 20 from 1.30pm-4.00pm in the Derby Room, Turnpike Centre, Leigh. The aim of the session is to collect local business records so if you have any photographs, documents or books you would like to deposit, then please do get in touch. We will also have volunteers on hand to collect oral histories from anyone who has a tale to tell about their working days in the borough. We will be asking questions about your working life, such as the conditions, the products you made and how, the skills needed for your job, what your relationships were like with colleagues and superiors, and any training you may have received. We will also have local history and archive displays and a reminiscence session from 2.30pm-3.30pm.

For more information on the event please contact Leigh Local Studies on 01942 404559 or by e-mail on [H.Turner@wlct.org](mailto:H.Turner@wlct.org)

All of the 2012 Family History Workshops have been booked up. We have added more to the 2013 programme and we are taking names of anyone who is interested. To book please contact Leigh Local Studies on 01942 404559 or by e-mail on [H.Turner@wlct.org](mailto:H.Turner@wlct.org)

## Volunteer Projects

### Electronic cataloguing and electoral registers

The Leigh Local Studies open access collection has now been matched, tagged and catalogued electronically thanks to the support and hard work of Leigh Local Studies volunteers. You can search the catalogue here <http://prism.talis.com/wigan/> Anything listed as Leigh Local Studies Upper... is available in the open access collections.

Leigh Local Studies houses many of the East side of the borough's electoral registers from 1889 onwards. Electoral registers are lists of names of people entitled to vote, arranged by address. Each entry shows the person's full name, their residence and the property on which they qualify to vote. There is no name index to any of these electoral registers so researchers need to know the residence of the person they are looking for.

However, some very kind volunteers have agreed to start indexing the early registers. This will be a mammoth project, the results of

which will not be ready for some time but when completed it will make searching the registers easier.

We have also started to digitise these early registers as well, to help preserve these unique and useful records. A big thank you to all who have volunteered their services.

## Recent Acquisitions

Here are some of the recent acquisitions accepted into Leigh Local Studies:

- Some flowering plants of the Leigh area of Lancashire by T Edmonson
- Pubs of Leigh revisited by Cyril Ward
- Bridgewater 250: The archaeology of the world's first industrial canal published by Salford University
- Far East from Westleigh by William Stowell
- Review of polling districts and stations in the Wigan Borough
- Pot of Gold by Arthur Dinnan

If you would like to view any of the above please contact Leigh Local Studies on 01942 404559 or by e-mailing [H.Turner@wlct.org](mailto:H.Turner@wlct.org)

  
HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL DAY

**Friday 25 January**

This year's national theme is 'Communities Together – Build a Bridge'.  
The following Ceremonies of Commemoration will take place.

10.30am Council Chamber, Town Hall, Wigan (Hewlett Street entrance)  
1.30pm Derby Room, Turnpike Centre, Leigh

These events are **free to all** and we invite you to join us  
For further information please ring **01942 828128**.



# Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network

# Celebration Evening

The Network, an umbrella group for the many Borough wide environment and heritage groups, held its second annual celebration evening at the Museum of Wigan Life on 1 November 2012. Awards for outstanding work were presented by the Worshipful Mayor of Wigan.

The recipients were;

## Leigh Ornithological Society

Conservation work at Pennington Flash.

## Stubshaw Cross Residents Group

Redevelopment of waste land into park amenities.

## The Bridgers of Howe Bridge

The development of a QR (quick response) historical trail in Howe Bridge and Atherton.

## BETA (Basic Education and Training for Adults)

A Civil War enactment of the Battle of Wigan Lane to commemorate the 350 anniversary of Wigan's 1662 charter, and a booklet produced by their students.

Each gave a short presentation on their projects and the benefits they had brought to their local communities.

Individual awards were made to **Geoff Jones**, for his work over a long period at Astley Green Colliery Museum, and to **Richard Sivill** for heritage work in Atherton, Howe Bridge and Kirkless.

They are pictured here with the Worshipful Mayor of Wigan



*They always introduce themselves as the Two Eileens! Beta*



*David Shallcross and Tony Bishop, Leigh Ornithological Society*



*Terry Daly, The Bridgers who also won an RHS In Bloom Gold Award*



*Ken Barston and Sheila Brown, Stubshaw Cross Residents Group*



*Richard Sivill*

# 2013 HERITAGE SERVICE CALENDAR



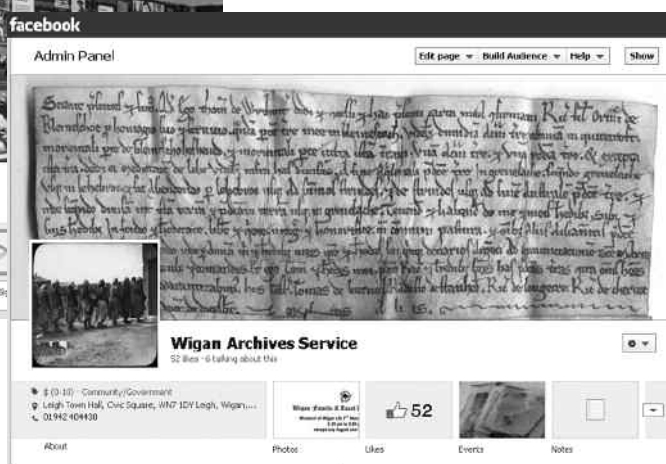
Our 2013 Heritage Service calendar is now out and available at the Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan Archives and Leigh Local Studies. Price £3.99. Mail order can be arranged; please call 01942 828128 for details.

## Museum of Wigan Life and the Wigan Archives Service on Facebook



You can now follow the Museum of Wigan Life and the Wigan Archives Service on Facebook. We will be regularly updating the pages with details of events, activities, exhibitions and interesting items from the collections.

You don't have to join Facebook to view the pages, so come and have a look.



<http://www.facebook.com/WiganArchivesService>  
<http://www.facebook.com/MuseumOfWiganLife>



## **Aspull and Haigh Historical Society**

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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 for further details on 01942 222769.

## **Atherton Heritage Society**

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Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month in St Richard's Parish Centre, Mayfield Street, Atherton at 7.30pm. Members £1, non members £2, refreshments included. Contact Margaret Hodge for further information on 01942 884893

8 January  
The Last Lighthouse Keeper  
Speaker – Mr M Medlicott

12 February  
The Indian Mutiny and the Third Opium War  
Speaker – Pt W Tomlinson

12 March  
The History of Preston Docks  
Speaker – Mr M Tranter

## **Billinge History and Heritage Society**

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Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. There is a door charge of £2.

Committee includes:  
Mr Geoffrey Crank (Chairman),  
Dr Charles Mather (Vice Chairman),  
Mrs Jennifer Budd (Secretary)  
and Mrs Susan Mather (Treasurer).

Contact us on 01695 624411  
or 01744 892430.

## **Hindley & District Family History Society**

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Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.00pm at Tudor House, Liverpool Road, Hindley. Please contact Mrs Joan Topping on 01942 257361 for details for details.

## **Leigh & District Family History Society**

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

A weekly Help Desk is run by members of the Society each Monday from 1.30pm-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 or email: leighfhs@blueyonder.co.uk

## **Local History Federation Lancashire**

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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**

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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**

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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 St George's Church, Water Street, Wigan WN1 1XD. Contact Mr A Grimshaw on 01942 245777 for further information.

## **Wigan Family & Local History Society**

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New venue - Meetings are held at the Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU on the second Thursday of each month (6.30-8.00pm). No meetings are held in July and August and December. Charge £2 for both members and visitors. For further information call (01942) 713146 or visit [www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory)

## **Wigan Archaeological Society**

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We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm, in the Standish Suite at the Brocket Arms on Mesnes Road - on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August) at 7.30pm. There is a car park adjacent on the left. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. For more information call Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342. You can also visit the website [www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk](http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk)

# YOUR LETTERS - CAN YOU HELP

## Dear Editor

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Many thanks to Derek Winstanley for the excellent article on Gerrard Winstanley.

I am sure he was right to say that most Wiganers have never heard of him and it prompted the thought why I myself, born (1942), bred and educated (Upholland Grammar School) in the town, didn't get to know of him until I lived in London in the late 1970s. At that time, as part of my church involvement, I regularly visited a young man, a Cambridge history graduate who had been severely brain-damaged in a car accident, couldn't walk or speak, but loved listening to books being read and was able to respond in gestures and just-legible handwriting. A number of us used to read to him and on one occasion, I arrived to great excitement as someone had lent him a book about Winstanley and the Diggers. I read it to him over the next few months and grew more and more excited myself, both at the content and at the fact that here was a fellow Wiganer. I was amazed that no-one had ever introduced me to him as I grew up in Wigan, not least why the left-leaning people to whom I owed so much, including preachers, councillors and teachers, never mentioned him. Since then, I have taken any opportunity to get to know more about him and Derek's article summed up so well what I have appreciated about his work.

These days, in retirement, I work for the Anglican Diocese of Southwark and you may be interested in a discussion there a few months ago. A group of us wanted to celebrate Christian characters that had lived in the diocese and someone mentioned Winstanley, especially his work at Cobham. In the end we didn't include Winstanley as Cobham is in

the neighbouring diocese of Guildford and we didn't know enough about him actually in South London to make a good case.

I am delighted to hear about the possibility of a lasting memorial in Wigan and would be glad to contribute a modest amount towards this if a fund is set up.

I've been an exile now for 50 years but retain my deep love for the town and a pride in its achievements. My wife is used to my mood changing with the Wigan, Orrell and Latics results, I still wax eloquent about Billy Boston and I am never without a supply of Uncle Joe's! More seriously I am grateful to the town and its people for giving me such a great start in life, but why didn't they tell me about Gerrard Winstanley?

John Richardson  
Hitchin  
Hertfordshire

## Dear Editor

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### Brighter Wigan Syncopators

I am trying to find information about the above dance band in Wigan in the 1920s. It was formed by my late granddad, Thomas Heaton of Darlington Street, Wigan. I have a photo of them dated 1927 but am unable to find any more information. My granddad's wife, Evelyn Heaton (nee Taylor) of Schofield Lane, Wigan recently died aged 104, and used to tell me wonderful tales of the music and dancing. I hope you may have some contacts that can help

Mrs Trisha Finch

*Editor's note: if anyone has any information, please contact me and I will pass it on to Trisha.*

## Dear Editor

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In Past Forward Issue No 61, Bob Blakeman provides interesting insight to the street names of Wigan. He concludes that the suffix 'gate' means 'the road to', for example Standishgate is the road to Standish. We do not have photos of Wigan's gates or walls, but we do have documentary evidence.

In his 1889 book, 'The History of the Church & Manor of Wigan', Rector George T. O. Bridgeman, citing from Baines' 'Lancashire' reports that in 1643, Colonel Ashton, leader of the Parliamentary forces, 'ordered the outworks and the foundations of the town to be demolished, and the gates and posts placed in aid of the works at the entrances to Standish-gate, Wall-gate, Hall-gate, and Mill-gate, were pulled up and destroyed.' That was the penalty for being ancient and loyal! According to the Wigan Leger, there also was a Scolfield gate in Scholes.

In his 1882 book, 'The History of Wigan', David Sinclair states that, 'there was in Wigan, just beside the walls and on the site of the first grammar school [built later] a scholastic institution, apparently of no mean repute, called the Wigan College'. Referring to the seventeenth century, Sinclair writes that, 'The walls of the town, battered by storms of ages and assaults of many a foe, still stood, with their bulwarks, hornworks, redoubts, and batteries at intervals. There were four gates, strongly fortified. One, on the great Northern road, was near the present Crown Inn, in Standishgate, another near the present entrance to the London and North-Western Railway Station. The Hall Gate was near the Rectory, and the Mill Gate on the opposite side of the old town, near the Douglas. Outside the walls were tanneries, bleach fields, and many gardens and



orchards. Beyond were dense woods with their wild denizens. The waters of the Douglas were clear, for even the salmon had not forsaken them.' This is very different from last century when the Douglas regularly flowed red, white and blue! Sinclair also reports that the Rector's house was 'a lordly, well defended one outside the walls' and that many of the out-burgesses lived at considerable distances beyond the walls.

Thus, the most credible of historians document that Wigan used to be a walled town with gates.

Derek Winstanley

## Dear Editor

With reference to the letter from Peter Spencer in Past Forward Issue 60 regarding the Hale family bible, I would like to say a very big thank you to Peter for taking the trouble to attempt (successfully!) to reunite the bible with descendants of the family. I should equally like to thank Alan and Irene Stone of Standish for letting me know about Peter's letter. Without their kind thoughtfulness I would never have known anything about the letter, as, I must confess, I had let my subscription to Past Forward lapse some time ago. Many thanks also to Alex Miller at Wigan Archives for kindly arranging for me to meet Peter at the Archives Service office and collect the bible.

Having begun researching my family history almost thirty years ago, I was delighted to see the family details hand-written in the bible, including the marriage of my great-grand parents and the births of their children, in particular that of my grandfather, Sam Hale (born in 1871) who for many years had a grocer's shop in Market Place in Standish. The last entry, recording

my great-grandmother's death, was made in 1904 and we have no idea as to where the bible has been all these years, but it is in remarkably good condition and we are absolutely delighted to have it back in our keeping.

With thanks again to all concerned,

John Kevill,  
Bromley Cross  
Bolton

PS I have now renewed my subscription!

## Dear Editor

It was with great interest that I read the article (Issue 61) dedicated to Basil Tierney written by his daughter Philomena. My mother, Mary Clarkson (nee Bootle) was also born in 1908 and attended Sacred Heart RC School, in Throstlenest Avenue, Wigan. Mary often spoke to me of her friend Basil, whom she greatly admired and told me what a wonderful job he was doing raising his family single handed.

Below is a school photograph (circa 1914-1918) taken in the classroom at Sacred Heart. Mary is far right on the front row. I seem to recall her saying that Basil was the tall lad second from the left on the back row. Mary worked in Winnard's confectionery shop on Gidlow Lane when she left school.



## Customer Service Excellence Success

Libraries, Heritage and Arts have reached the required standard and retained their Full Compliance at the recent Customer Service Excellence Standard – Surveillance 2, to maintain their certification.

This is an exceptional achievement considering the difficult circumstances faced during the last year and shows that customer excellence remains at the heart of the service.



The Government Standard

She had a beautiful soprano voice and was involved in musical societies as was Basil. Mary later married Bill Clarkson who was church organist at Sacred Heart for over fifty years. Perhaps Philomena has a copy of this photo and can confirm that it is her dad.

Mary (Clarkson) Molloy

# How to Find Us



## Museum of Wigan Life

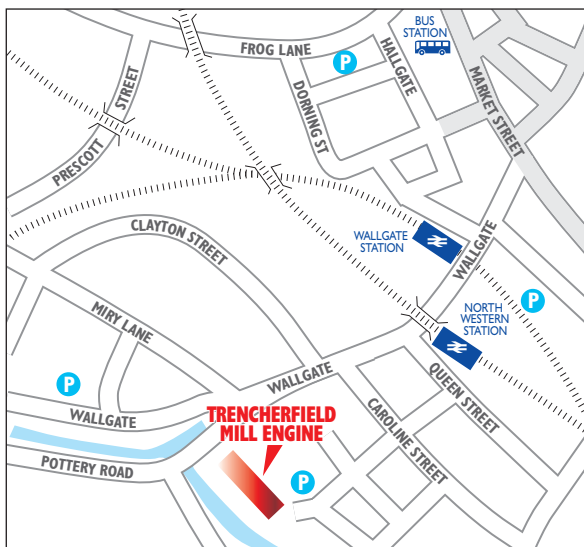
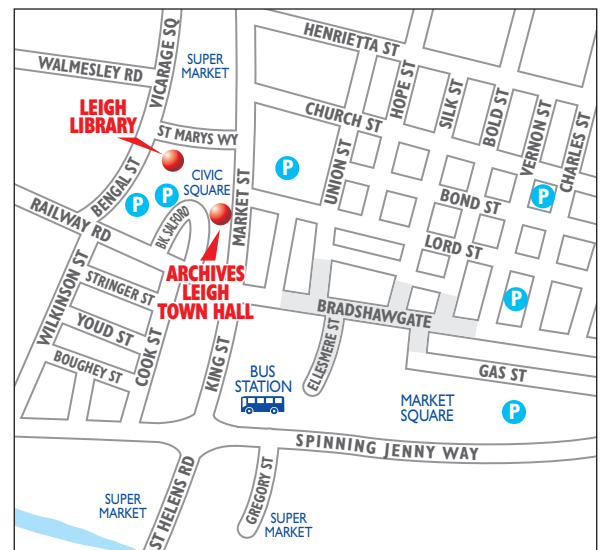
Library Street,  
Wigan WN1 1NU  
Telephone 01942 828128  
heritage@wlct.org

## 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  
b.rowley@wlct.org