

# PAST FORWARD

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£2

## WONDERS OF THE WORLD EGYPTOLOGY IN WIGAN BOROUGH

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### FRONT COVER

18th Dynasty Egyptian, gilded coffin face, 1550-1292 BC. Part of the Sir John Scott Egyptology collection, donated to Wigan Museums service in 1924 by Sir Leslie Scott. Sir John Scott, was born in Wigan in 1841.

## Letter from the Editorial Team



### Welcome to PAST Forward Issue 68.

After our special commemorative issue, we're back to the normal collection of varied and fascinating articles about all aspects of the Borough's local history.

We are delighted to announce the winners of the Past Forward Essay Competition, kindly sponsored by Mr and Mrs John O'Neill and the Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network. The entries received were of the usual high standard and we would like to thank everyone who contributed an article.

The winners were announced at the Environment and Heritage Network annual prize giving and are:

1st Place: Anthony Pilgrim; 2nd Place (joint): Thomas McGrath; 2nd Place (joint): Alf Ridyrd; 3rd Place: Tom Walsh.

You will find the first and third placed articles published for your enjoyment in this edition; the joint second placed articles will appear in Issue 69 in April.

Elsewhere in the magazine you will find some details of our successful joint event with the Wigan Horus Egyptology Society to celebrate and raise funds for work on the Museum's Egyptology Collection, a reappraisal of George Orwell's visit in the 1920s, an examination of the history of Gullick Dobson in Wigan and fond memories of life in weights and measures in Leigh.

We hope you will find much to enjoy – and remember that a Past Forward subscription makes a wonderful gift for Christmas for those difficult-to-by-for friends and family members!

**So on that note, Merry Christmas from everyone at the Archives and Museum!**

Information for contributors, please see page 22

## NEW ADDITION TO THE ARCHIVES & MUSEUMS TEAM



We're delighted to be able to welcome Becky Farmer to the Archives and Museums teams.

Becky is joining us as our new Digital Archives Trainee, and will be working with us for the next year, part time at the Archives and part time at Archives+ in Manchester. Becky's post was created as part of a three year programme administered by The National Archives and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund's, Skills for the Future scheme.

This unique project gives people the skills they need for future careers in archives, and aims to open up the profession to wider audiences. The programme has created 12 traineeships at archives around the country, including in Wigan. It will offer trainees the opportunity to develop practical archiving skills focused on areas such as community engagement, collections development, online interpretation and digital preservation.

Becky's role will involve working with digital collections held by the Archives & Local Studies – both those born digital records and those that we have digitised from paper records. She will be running our social media pages, working on our First World War digitisation project and tackling the catalogues of some of our hybrid paper-digital record collections. Becky's background is in biology and nature photography and she has a wealth of new skills to bring to the service; we look forward to working with her over the next year.

Becky Farmer, Digital Archives Trainee

## PAST FORWARD Subscription Form

### Copy Deadline for Issue 69

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Sunday, 1 March 2015.

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# Ashton's First World War 'Alien Enemy'

BY ANTHONY PILGRIM

August Reiss was born in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, in 1877. At 14 he moved to England and began working at his brother's pork butcher's shop in Crewe. In 1907 he married Rose Heinold and in 1908 secured his own premises at 59 Gerard Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield. Council minutes confirm the award of a 'certificate... for the use and occupation of a slaughterhouse' at that address on 19 November. The couple settled in above the shop, and became popular with their neighbours and fellow-worshippers at St Thomas' Church. The business thrived.



Gerrard Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield, circa 1920.

By 1914, Britain had about 50,000 German-born residents. Many, like the Reiss family, had migrated for economic reasons in the nineteenth century, establishing communities in Liverpool, Manchester and elsewhere. The internment of those deemed 'alien enemies' began immediately following the outbreak of war. Among the first to be detained, August Reiss was taken to a disused factory in Lancaster and kept there for five months. His stay coincided with that of Robert Graves, captain of a detachment of Welsh Fusiliers, sent to guard the internees. Graves later remembered the camp as, 'a dirty, draughty place, littered with old scrap metal and guarded by high barbed-wire fences'. He wrote: 'About three thousand prisoners

had already arrived there, and more and more crowded in every day: seamen arrested on German vessels in Liverpool harbour, waiters from large hotels in the North, an odd German band or two, harmless German commercial travellers and shopkeepers. The prisoners resented being interned, particularly family men who had lived in peace in England for many years... But after a while [they] settled down to sullen docility, starting hobbies, glee parties, games and plans for escape.'

The criteria for internment changed as the war progressed. Security considerations, public opinion and detention capacity all played a part in shaping the policy. By autumn 1914 the camps were full and a risk-based approach was

adopted. Lord Lucas told Parliament: 'When the question of the release of any particular individual has been raised inquiry is made by the Police, and if the Police report does not show that the individual is either dangerous or destitute, the question of his release is considered by the Home Office and... War Office in conjunction'. 3000 internees were released on this basis between November 1914 and February 1915, among them August Reiss.

When it emerged that several prominent Ashtonians – including the town clerk and vicar – had signed a petition calling for August's release, there was outrage in the town. Rev. Pollock-Hill felt obliged to write to the

papers, defending himself against 'attack... malice and personal abuse'. Another petition circulated, calling for a public meeting on the issue.

In fact, two meetings were held on 8 February 1915. The first, a special meeting of the Council, considered a resolution of Councillor E. Walkden, 'That this Council places on record its strong disapproval of the action of its Clerk, Mr Albert Sykes, in signing a testimonial to the Home Office praying for the release from internment of an alien enemy who resided in this township'. Mr Sykes said he had signed in a private capacity and because he considered it the right thing to do as a Christian. Councillor Walkden thought this explanation 'more an insult than anything else', but having made his own position clear, agreed to withdraw. A 'Citizens' Meeting' then followed at Ashton library. August Reiss' doctor said he had signed the original petition because, 'Reiss was suffering from a weak heart, and he (Dr Jones) thought that if he was interned it would probably injure him for the remainder of his life'. Another speaker commented – incautiously, perhaps, given the mood of the meeting – that the King himself was of foreign extraction. He too appealed for 'Christian tolerance'. However,

these voices were drowned out by others calling for August Reiss' re-internment. After 45 minutes of 'vigorous speeches on both sides', the following resolution was 'carried by a large majority':

'We, the citizens of Ashton-in-Makerfield, enter our strong protest against the action of the few townspeople who signed a memorial which was despatched to the Home Secretary praying for the release of an alien enemy, August Reiss, and we petition the Home Secretary to reconsider his decision and re-intern the said August Reiss'.

Despite extensive searching I have been unable to discover August Reiss' ultimate fate. A brief survey of the subsequent social, political and legal developments may allow us to speculate about this. Anti-German sentiment had already spilled over into violence in October 1914, when attacks were made on the shop belonging to August's brother-in-law and other German businesses in Crewe. Serious rioting, involving many thousands of people, broke out in Liverpool following the sinking of the passenger ship Lusitania by a German torpedo on 7 May 1915. This quickly spread to other places, the shop belonging to August's brother Charles in Earlestown being the target of rioting there.

*Wigan Observer & District Advertiser, 9 February 1915*



On 13 May the Prime Minister announced that all adult German men 'should, for their own safety, and that of the community, be segregated and interned, or, if over military age, repatriated'. By 1918, over 24,000 had been interned, most at Knockaloe on the Isle of Man. Repatriations reduced the total German-born population to about 22,000 by 1919. With regard to property, the Trading with the Enemy (Amendment) Act 1916 enabled the Government to close any business 'carried on wholly or mainly for the benefit of or under the control of enemy subjects'. Assets could be sold and the proceeds held in trust by a Public Custodian.

What is clear in regard to August Reiss is that, already by September 1915, a 'Mr Francis Webster (pork butcher)' was in occupation at 59 Gerard St and was applying in his own right for a slaughterhouse licence. He was still there when the Seed's Wigan & District Directory for 1925-1926 was compiled.

#### Note On Sources

*Panikos Panayi, Professor of European History at De Montfort University, Leicester, has written extensively on the experience of Germans in Britain around the time of the First World War. I consulted several of his books and articles for background information, in particular 'The Lancashire Anti-German Riots of May 1915' (Manchester Region History Review, 1988/9) and 'Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War' (Berg, 1991). Information about the Reiss family was found in the Ashton-in-Makerfield UDC Minute Books (Wigan Archives, ref. UD Ash/A/A1), RootsChat.com, various trade directories and back issues of The Wigan Observer & District Advertiser, The Wigan Examiner, The Newton & Earlestown Guardian and The Amsterdam Evening Recorder. Robert Graves' description of the internment camp at Lancaster is from his autobiography 'Goodbye To All That' (Jonathan Cape, 1929). A visit to Lancaster City Museum was also instructive.*



BY TOM WALSH

# Memories of Scholes: A Town within a Town



Interior of John Gee and Sons, Grocers, at 239 Scholes, Wigan. Stanley Ashall (owner) is in the centre, c. 1950.

I have very fond memories of Scholes. Born in McCormick Street, named after the second parish priest of St Patrick's, this in itself made me part of the history of the township. I describe the area as a township because that was what it was, a separate community in every sense. People had a feeling of belonging to Scholes first, and Wigan second.

The majority of men were miners, many women worked in the cotton factories both in Wigan and further afield, travelling to local towns by coach, putting hours on to the working day because the pay was slightly better. I remember hearing the knocker up rousing households and not leaving until a response was forthcoming. The lady who filled that role in the streets surrounding my home was Agnes Wynn and she charged a shilling a week. Agnes lived locally and because of her job, went to bed early; children were instructed not play near her house, she needed her sleep. If she overslept half the parish would miss a day's work!

Scholes itself had shops of every sort, so much so that many older people would rarely visit Wigan town centre as almost everything could be sourced locally, from ladies fashions – Vi Almonds – to motor bikes – Millers – we had two cinemas, countless public houses and grocers, a Chinese laundry and a myriad other businesses. Locals say that if they had put a roof over the street in its heyday, it would have been the first Trafford Centre!

Many shops had nicknames, 'Pie Joe's', being one. It's a wonder he didn't go bankrupt; I remember going there, sent by neighbours for a meat pie, they would send a large jug with the instruction to fill it with gravy, free in those days. I think the surplus was for use on the Sunday dinner! Another amusing name was, 'Polly do out', a clogger, it was said she could put a clog iron on a bladder without bursting it! One of the less hygienic shops often had a cat sat on a flitch of bacon. Needless to say most housewives avoided that shop's delights. Scholes even had a temperance bar, though fair to say it wasn't the most frequented of venues. Public houses

seemed a more tempting prospect to most. Similarly many of these had colloquial names – the two most famous, the Dust Hole (Rose and Crown), this establishment was reputed to sell the best pint in the district and was one of the last ale houses, and the Kill and Cure (the Regent), the latter because it was near to Dr Hoey's surgery.

Whilst times were difficult for many the feeling of community was tangible. Even though many struggled and had little for themselves they would share what they had. Anyone without family who fell ill would be cared for in the neighbourhood. People could leave the doors unlocked; in my Mother's case she would leave the rent on the sideboard for collection. I never heard of a house being burgled. When recounting this fact the reply often comes back, 'there was nothing to steal'. On the contrary, every house had a gas meter full of money – talking of which, after the gasman had emptied the meter and left the rebate there was usually spare money in the parish and children armed with shillings bombarded the local sweetshops. If we ever put a foot out of line, there were no need for ASBOS as 'I'll tell your mother', or the even more potent 'I'll bring Farther Lappin' – the respected parish priest of St Patrick's – was enough to bring the most unruly youths back to the straight and narrow.

The overwhelming majority of houses were very well kept. Women would mop the step daily and woe betide anyone who walked on their newly cleaned labours. Monday was washing day. Few had washing machines; dolly tubs and rubbing boards were the order of the day. It was said that there was a rainbow over Scholes on Mondays! There was great excitement when the first launderette opened. It was half a crown for a 9lb wash. The price alas put it out of the reach of many families – the cost of the wash would have bought fish and chips twice in the early 1950s!

Every day was a different task – washing, bedrooms, baking, another day and so forth. Thursday in our house was the day Mother would black lead the Yorkshire Range. I remember the cleaning agents Zebo and Brasso, each with its own distinct smell. On another day out came the Mansion polish for use on our on well cared for furniture.

From early on I was aware that people not from the area looked on Scholes with some misgivings, to say the least. They were not aware of the warmth and honesty of its populous, believing the many negative



Aerial view of Wigan and Scholes, showing Central Park, the River Douglas and Derby House, flats built in the redevelopment of the Scholes area. The cross-road at bottom of the image is the meeting point of Millgate, School Lane and Scholes Road going through to Whelley.

comments made by commentators who had never visited the locality. Some choose to concentrate on the less pleasant aspects. George Orwell's book, 'The Road to Wigan Pier', certainly didn't do any favours for Wigan as a town and the township of Scholes in particular. It was generally agreed in Scholes that Orwell, who claimed to be a socialist, was a charlatan who used his so called socialism as a way of easing his conscience. Could someone who attended Eton (scholarship boy or not) possibly have the slightest empathy with the beleaguered working class of the 1930s?

Orwell's demeaning comments prove that he didn't. He sought out the poorest-of-the-poor, to suit his own agenda. In the book, he says, 'If there is one man to whom I feel inferior to it is the coal miner'; that sentence ought to have 'stuck in his craw'. They trusted him, he betrayed their trust, for profit and self promotion. In afterlife he may feel he owes Wigan an apology.

I am proud of my background, and wouldn't wish to have been reared anywhere other than my beloved and much maligned Scholes of yesteryear. Maybe you had to be born within the sound of St Catherine's or St Patrick's bells to fully appreciate the wonderful atmosphere and sheer goodness of the people who lived and worked there. I am often accused of looking back with rose tinted spectacles. I suppose there is an element truth in that, but better that than looking back in anger.

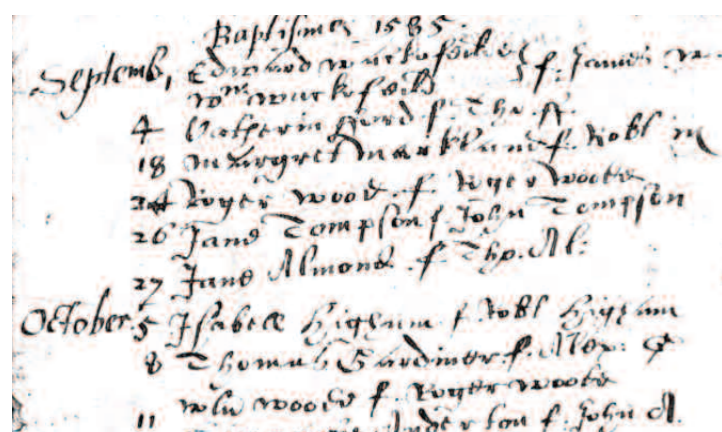


The focus at the Archives and Local Studies is still very much on the First World War. Volunteers at all the venues are to be thanked for their hard work in compiling the full List of the Fallen that we hope to release early next year, together with our updated Wigan Images Online website.

The major news from the Archives & Local Studies is that all of our Wigan and district parish registers have now gone online on Ancestry. This is the culmination of a long project to digitise and transcribe all these records, dating from 1580 and including more than 600,000 entries. The records digitised are those for whom the Archives hold original registers as a Diocesan Records Office for the Diocese of Liverpool. This includes Church of England Churches in Abram, Ashton, Aspull, Bickershaw, Billinge, Golborne, Haigh, Hindley, Ince, Lowton, Pemberton, Platt Bridge and Wigan.

We hope these are an invaluable new resource for family historians – and remember that if you do not have an Ancestry subscription, you can access all these records online and free of charge at Wigan Local Studies and Leigh Local Studies, and make use of the expert advice of staff whilst you are there!

*Page from the Wigan Registers, now online with Ancestry.co.uk*



## Recent Acquisitions & Accessions

### Wigan Archives

- Records concerning Wigan Waterworks and Makerfield Water Board, 1897-1972 (Acc. 2014/61)
- Gerrard & Green, hosiery manufacturers, Hindley, 1909-1916 (Acc. 2014/70)
- Martha Hogg Collection, midwife, councillor and magistrate (Acc. 2014/71)
- Beech Hill Library, records, 1961-1986 (Acc. 2014/74)
- Wigan Mechanics Institute, records, 1838-1880 (Acc. 2014/77)
- St. John's, Abram, parish records, additional deposit (DP/1)
- Wigan Council Public Relations and Marketing Photographic Collection, 2000-2013 (Acc. 2014/79)
- Edna Stephenson Photographic Collection, of Wigan, Orrell and Haigh, and Wigan Girls' High School (Acc. 2014/80)

### Wigan Local Studies

- Catholic Directories, 1826-1903 (incomplete)
- Irish Catholic Directory, 1893
- St John's RC Church, Wigan, Registers on microfilm, Baptisms, June 1870 – December 1940; Marriages, January 1865 – December 1940
- Lancashire Parish Register Society, Volume 180, The Registers of Horwich Chapel, 1660-1843

## News from Mindart about a First World War inspired installation

The community art group Mindart worked with artists from Redfolio to create the installation inspired by research into the First World War.

The group visited the Borough Archives and looked at original war records, including personal diaries and letters, hand drawn maps and photographs. Art sessions developed skills using creative discussion, printmaking, calligraphy and creative writing.

The final installation is displayed in an old handmade carpentry box which works as a backdrop for the ideas explored by the group. Maps and fragments of poems have been rolled and tied and stand upright to reflect the idea of looking down the barrel of a gun, but the words and images within the rolls are precious and represent the unspoken feelings of the men in the trenches.

The simple string used to contain the paper rolls reminds us of the makeshift way that boundaries are formed during wartime, as well as the way that individuals make temporary homes in a hostile environment. A recreated love letter to a sweetheart back home has also been included in the box, as well as a hand-bound book of printed images and hand-printed crosses depicting casualties and war-dead.

The members of Mindart who took part in this art project are: Linda, Lyn, Tricia, Karl, Seirlea, Mark, Paul, Philip, Dianne, Keith, Clive, Heather, David, Colin.

Mindart meets weekly for creative sessions at The Turnpike Gallery Studio Space in Leigh. The group provides peer support for adults who have experienced mental health issues and making art helps the participants to maintain their wellbeing and happiness.



*The installation by Mindart, on display at Leigh Library*

## The Young Soldier

To take a boy from all he knows  
And send him to a field of woes  
Far away on foreign shores  
In combat with aggressive foes

He lies in trenches that run with blood  
To cope with flies and rats and mud  
The mortars explode and all around  
His fallen comrades make no sound

There's barbed wire on the crest above  
In no mans land, the next big shove  
Keep your head down, shield that light  
The sniper waits to glimpse a sight

Thoughts of home run through his mind  
Of loved ones that he's left behind  
They knit him socks and send supplies  
In every parcel a small surprise

He reads about the rationing  
The zeppelins, the blackout rule  
The letters try to play them down  
But he knows better, he's no fool

The fear returns, it makes him wonder  
If the next big push is where he'll go under  
The panic rises, a tangible fear  
Will he see them again? Will he feel them near?

He wonders why, if there's a god above  
He allows the carnage, in place of love  
For a fellow man, any race or creed  
That's the evil that this war's decreed

He stiffens his shoulders and straightens his spine  
Tomorrow it's his turn to hold the line  
He hopes when it's over, mankind will learn  
That it's love that's important and let peace return

*Commemorative poem,  
by Mindart member, Linda Boylan*



# Home Front to Battle Front

WIGAN BOROUGH AT WAR, 1914-1918

This year marks the centenary of the beginning of the First World War and a new exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life commemorates this terrible event.

With many people expecting it to be 'over by Christmas', the conflict had a devastating affect on Wigan Borough with thousands of men serving on the Western Front, Gallipoli or further afield. Men from all walks of life signed up to fight, from cotton workers to the 27th Earl of Crawford. Sadly, many never returned. Local men often served in the 1/5th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment or the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers and were encouraged to sign up with friends or colleagues into the famous 'Pals' Battalions.

It was the first war to be fought on an industrial scale and men battled conditions, illness and fatigue as well as the enemy to stay alive. Terrible losses saw over 600 Lancashire Fusiliers killed on the first day of the Gallipoli landings (1915) and over 100 local men dying during the Battle of the Somme (1916). Women volunteered as nurses and for war work. More than 3800 local men and women were killed.

The war was not only fought on the battlefield. It also had a huge impact on those left behind. Women became skilled in munitions and other roles and the

war came first hand to the Borough with the arrival of Belgian refugees, a Prisoner of War camp in Leigh and the Zeppelin raid over Scholes.

The commemorative exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life explores how the war affected every aspect of local life. Visitors can learn about the bravery of local men and the struggle faced by those at home. They can also discover how grand houses such as Haigh Hall were used as hospitals and convalescent homes and about sportsmen who went to war.

Highlights include William Kenealy's Victoria Cross, one of the famous 'six before breakfast' awarded for bravery at Gallipoli, which is on display until 10 January 2015. There are also papers from conscientious objector Arthur Turtle and Lord Crawford's original war diary. There is a prosthetic arm belonging to local soldier Robert Marsh as well as medals, trench art, a wooden grave cross, a German pickelhaube helmet and trench dagger.

For schools and families there is an interactive trench with a tunnel, war sounds and real objects. There is also original footage of the Battle of the Somme and German Prisoners of War marching through the streets of Leigh. A special 'Our Borough, Our Story' oral and video history project funded by Wigan Council's First World War Fund features local residents sharing stories of their ancestor's wartime experiences at home and abroad. Many of these stories will be available online soon.

The Museum's collections will also be on display at libraries throughout the Borough during the centenary as part of the 'Moving Histories' project funded by Wigan Council.

'Home Front to Battle Front – Wigan Borough at War 1914-1918' is a free exhibition and suitable for ages. Current – 28 March 2015. To bring your school, book a group or find out about accompanying events please call 01942 828128 or visit our website.

*By Joan Livesey,  
Exhibitions & Display Officer at the Museum  
of Wigan Life*



## Museum of Wigan Life

### wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

The Museum of Wigan Life team are very excited to announce that a new project working with young people at the Museum has received £37,200 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The project will engage children and teenagers with Wigan Borough's rich and varied history through the Museum's collections, in particular the pottery collection. The project will culminate in a temporary exhibition at the Museum in 2015 and a subsequent touring exhibition that will travel around the Borough.

A Potter's Tale: Everyday Wigan life told through fragments of history will give young people from Wigan Youth Zone the opportunity to develop a temporary exhibition using Museum collections. Participants will be supported in handling Museum objects from Roman pottery to twentieth century ceramics. The Museum has a range of pottery items marking the history of the Borough from the 5000 year old Ur Pottery brought here from modern-day Iraq to the 2000 year old Roman tiles made in the area. The collection contains a range of Roman archaeological items imported from elsewhere in the Roman Empire and found in the area. These include Black Burnish ware from Dorset, glossy red Samian ware from Gaul (France), Amphora which would have contained wine, fish sauce and food, Mortaria used to break down herbs/wheat for cooking and the handheld Roman lamps which are such common finds throughout the Roman Empire. Digs around Wigan town centre have also revealed samples of medieval and early modern pottery.

Alongside collection-handling and historical research, the young people will learn key skills around project management, marketing and curating as part of the project. They will record their experiences of the project on a special digital table which will form part of the exhibition and will be a legacy following the project. Working together with Museum staff and an external designer, the group will shape the content, look and feel of a professional exhibition.



The Potter's Tale (working title) exhibition will open after the existing 'Home Front to Battle Front – Wigan Borough at War 1914-18' exhibition closes in March 2015. Alongside Wigan Youth Zone the Museum will work in partnership with CraftWorks in Standish and Creativity for Change CIC. Working with CraftWorks, young people will develop pottery pieces that tell the story of our Borough and mark the history of ceramics in the Borough from Roman Coccium through to modern techniques. The new artworks will help paint a picture of domestic, working and daily life in the past and today – whether it be watching a rugby match, working in industry or spending time in one of the parks. The young people will select items that they feel best illustrate this side of Wigan's past, helping to tell their own story and reflecting on more recent history.

This is a fabulous opportunity to get more young people involved in their heritage and we hope to create a 'Young Ambassadors' team after the project who can help work with the Museum in the future. Other legacy aspects of the project funding include the digital table and a high quality Museum case which will continue to make Museum collections more accessible long after the project finishes.

The funding has been granted under the HLF's Young Roots programme, which supports projects that engage young people, aged 11 to 25, with heritage in the UK. The Potters Tale (working title) will run from April – June 2015. For more information about this project please contact the Museum on 01942 828128 or email: [wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk)



By Joyce Hayes

# A Life of Service:

## William Blackshaw and the Leigh Spiritualist Temple

William Blackshaw was born in Wigan in 1870 and passed away in 1944 at the age of 74 years. Although he was a most important figure in the history of Leigh Spiritualist Temple in particular and of Spiritualism in general, he was in fact brought up as a Wesleyan and trained as a local preacher. He was elected to the Leigh Town Council in 1924, as representative for St Paul's Ward and three months before his passing was elected Alderman following the passing of Alderman J L Prescott.

A man very interested in the welfare of children, he was associated with the Leigh Children's Holiday Camp, providing holidays for children of poorer families in the borough. He was naturally on the Education Committee (as Vice-Chairman) and was Chairman of the Education Finance Committee and the Electricity Committee. During the Second World War he served on the Food Control Committee. He was also on the Leigh Area Assessment Committee and Leigh and Atherton Joint Sewage Board.

Leigh Grammar School and the Leigh Girls' Grammar School were each fortunate to have him on their board of governors, and at one time he held office as Chairman of both boards. Education was always of great interest to Mr Blackshaw and for several years he was



*William Blackshaw, J.P., 1870-1944, President and Founder Member of Leigh Spiritualist Temple*

manager of King Street Methodist School and Windermere Road Council Infants' School in the town centre. He was also an active supporter of Leigh Infirmary and Leigh Swimming Club.

In 1926, this already busy man was appointed one of Leigh's representatives on the Lancashire County Council, holding office until March 1940, when he retired. Retirement is perhaps not the correct word, for it was then that he was appointed a Borough Magistrate.

In 1935, he and his wife were made Mayor and Mayoress of Leigh. The Mayor was well respected in the town and known to be even tempered and seldom ruffled. Needless to say, during his term of office, Mr Blackshaw was still very active as President of Leigh Temple. His favourite hymns were 'Abide with Me' and 'Onward Christian Soldiers'.

He moved from Wigan to Atherton at the age of 20, but lived in Leigh for over 40 years. It is not clear at what age he became a Spiritualist. What is clear though, is that having decided to change his religion, he went all the way in his endeavours on behalf of Spiritualism. It is a matter of record that the Spiritualist movement in Leigh, under his leadership, was one of the forerunners of Spiritualism in this country.

Leigh Temple was opened in 1914 – 2014 is its Centenary year – and William Blackshaw was very much involved in the movement and in raising funds to build the Temple.

His religion was the mainspring of his life, and he was an indefatigable worker in the cause. In 1914, although many others were also involved, Mr Blackshaw was primarily responsible for the erection and opening of the Temple. He was President from then to the day of his passing – a total of thirty years.

He was well known in the town and during the spring and summer months, would always wear a straw hat. A great advocate of physical fitness, he believed that the mind could only function properly in a healthy body. He was a popular figure in Leigh, particularly in the working-class homes which he visited in the course of his work. He had a cheery word and a happy smile for everyone he met. "Be happy", was his motto and he referred to it frequently in public speeches.

His funeral service was held in the Temple, attended by family members and friends. Mr Tom Gregory of Leigh conducted the service and prayers were offered up by Mr Tom Connor of Bolton, who also gave the address. He spoke of the affection they all had for Alderman Blackshaw, whom they regarded as, 'Pa Blackshaw' and spoke of him as the leader of modern Spiritualism in Leigh. He praised William Blackshaw's great services to the town as Councillor and Mayor, finally speaking of the fine example he showed throughout his life and the help he had given to others.

The hymns were, 'How pure in heart', and Alderman Blackshaw's favourite, 'Abide with me', played by the organist, Mrs Hainsley.

Simultaneously with the Funeral Service, a Memorial Service was held at Leigh Parish Church, attended by the Mayor, members of the Council and officials and representatives of public bodies. The service in the Parish Church was conducted by the Rev. J. E. Low, with the address being given by Canon L. Spencer Murdoch, Rural Dean. Other clergy attending represented Bedford Church and XII Apostles Church.

When the cortege left the Spiritualist Temple, they were joined by the congregation from the Parish Church, and the entire group proceeded together to Leigh Cemetery.

On the day of the Funeral, at the Leigh Borough Court, many kind tributes were paid to Mr Blackshaw, noting his devotion to any duties he undertook and how his loss would be felt by all who knew him. They could always rely on him being fair, an extremely able magistrate and a very kindly man.

At the meeting of the Town Council a resolution was moved deploring the death of Alderman Blackshaw, placing on record an expression of appreciation of the valuable services rendered by him as a member of the Council and tendering their sincere sympathy and condolence to his widow and family in their bereavement. It was very rarely that he ever gave offence to any member and carried out splendid work whilst serving on various committees. His work for education would always be remembered. The tributes were many and given with affection, recognizing the many qualities of this kind man. The staunch support he had from his wife was also acknowledged.

**'Leigh Spiritualist Temple - A History', by Joyce Hayes, is now available. Please contact the Editor for further details.**



Back to the Pits

# Wigan Collieries in 1923

Part Two

By Ted  
McAvoy

*Ted McAvoy continues his examination of the collieries in the Wigan area in the early 1920s; see Past Forward Issue 66 for Part 1.*

Two big companies dominated the pits around Abram, Platt Bridge and Bamfurlong. The Moss Hall Coal Company was part of Pearson & Knowles, the Warrington company which merged with Wigan Coal & Iron in 1930. They owned pits at Low Hall and Maypole and controlled Wigan Junction Colliery nearby, with a combined labour force of 2,931.

Cross Tetley & Company owned Bamfurlong and Mains collieries. For about 40 years, Bamfurlong was a large and productive pit and it still employed 1,424 in 1923, while the same company's Mains Colliery had 1,081 on the books.

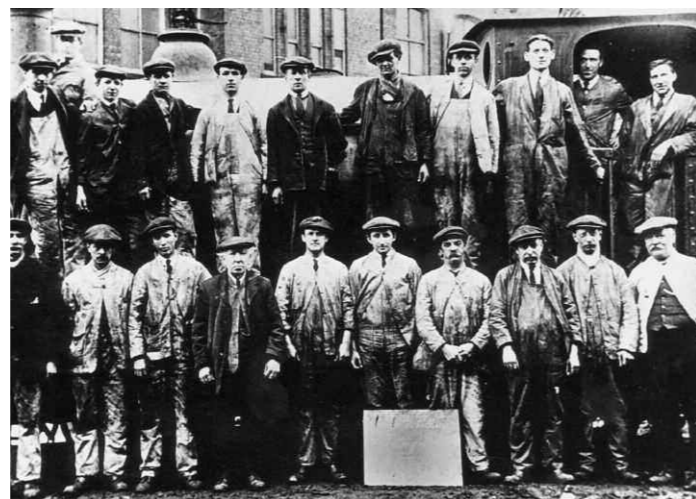
By the early 1930s, all the above pits had fallen into the hands of the Wigan Coal Corporation.

The area around Amberswood Common was worked for coal in the 1840s but the pits did not last long. New, deeper, pits were sunk in the area, mainly by Crompton & Shawcross and their unusually named Strangeways Hall Colliery was still active with 887 men, while their Grange pits employed 467. Cromptons sold out to J. E. Rayner, but the pits were closed before the Second World War.

We're approaching Ince now. A look at Victorian maps of Ince shows a complex, tangled web of collieries, works, railways and canals – one of the most densely packed industrial areas in the country. Only one small pit now bore the name Ince Hall; sixty years earlier there were Ince Hall collieries all over the place! Mining was far from finished though as the large complex of pithead gear at Moss Colliery testified. Moss had six active shafts and employed no less than 2,402 men. It also became one of the Wigan Coal Corporation's properties in 1930.

Stretching away from Moss towards Ashton was a lunar landscape of dirt heaps, smoking chimneys and colliery buildings. When the collieries eventually closed, the whole area lay derelict for a few years. Wandering around in my early teens, I was dumbstruck by it all. Nearest to Ince was Brynn Hall colliery (note the double 'nn' in Bryn). The epitome of a scruffy colliery, Brynn Hall employed 616 in 1923, but its neighbours were on a larger scale. Garswood Hall had grown and spread out. Its Number Nine shaft was a long way from the main site which itself had five working shafts. Altogether, the sprawling complex employed 2,912, more than any single-site colliery in the Wigan area. It was owned by Garswood Hall Collieries and, not far away, the rival Garswood Coal & Iron Company had their Long Lane Colliery. This pit was largely unknown to people outside Bryn and Ashton, but it was a major contender with 1,653 men on the books.

Beyond Bryn, the next railway station is Garswood, then home to Park Colliery, owned by J. & R. Stone right up to nationalisation. Not far away is Haydock, which was the epicentre of Richard Evans mining empire. Evans' Haydock pits comprised Old Boston, Lyme and Wood (then called Newton). The employment figures for Lyme are muddled



*Fitters and locomotive at Pemberton Colliery, 1924*



*Coal haulage in tubs linked to a rope haulage system, Bamfurlong Colliery, Ashton-in-Makerfield, c. 1920*

by the inclusion of hundreds of men who worked in Evan's extensive Haydock workshops, but the Haydock group still had over 2,500 miners, as well as satellite collieries at Edge Green and at Golborne. The latter was very successful and didn't finally close until 1989.

Heading back towards Wigan, there was a once very large pit between Bryn and Goose Green. This was Park Lane, whose glory days were in the past, though it still employed 1,273 and would survive into the late 1950s. In the late nineteenth century, mining engineers and mining journalists were keen to visit Park Lane because of its size and reputation. Only a mile or so from Goose Green was another colliery every bit as renowned – Pemberton Colliery – which had mined close on 750,000 tons a year in its prime. In 1923, 2,392 miners made their way up Pemberton's streets to the pit. My grandmother remembered the early morning noise of hundreds of pairs of clogs and boots up Victoria Street. From the late 1920s, it rapidly declined as the workable seams were exhausted but the site remained largely unchanged in 1970, twenty four years after the colliery closed.

Heading from the Pemberton site towards Winstanley we could have found the last vestige of the Winstanley collieries, owned for generations by the Bankes family of Winstanley Hall. Theirs was the colliery railway which ran all the way down to Wigan Pier! Leyland Green was their last pit and when it closed in 1927, 206 miners had to find work elsewhere. North of Pemberton was another rarely-photographed pit – Worsley Mesnes, with 906 men. Latterly, it was owned by the company which

owned Winstanley Collieries and it was to close very soon after Leyland Green. The Wigan Pier railway, which they shared, was ripped up soon afterwards.

To tidy things up, we need to travel from Winstanley through Upholland again to Skelmersdale and Bickerstaffe. Bickerstaffe had two sizeable collieries – Bickerstaffe and Blaguegate, with 1,133 men between them. Skelmersdale had a history of marginal pits and this was still the case in 1923, but the clock was ticking and large scale mining here would be finished before the Second World War. The White Moss Coal Company's pits at White Moss Arley & Park Number Two were the last sizeable pits in Skelmersdale, still with 482 men between them.

Excluding the little drift mines and pits mentioned in Part 1, just under **Forty Seven Thousand** people worked in our Wigan collieries in 1923 and even that figure fails to tell the whole story. Hundreds of local men worked on the intricate web of main line railways serving the pits. Hundreds more worked at Walker Brothers, John Wood, Clarington Forge, Pepper Mill Foundry and other firms whose engineering business depended on the mines. Many thousands of tons of timber were imported, stockpiled and sawn for use underground. Horses and carts and a few ex-wartime lorries delivered coal to tens of thousands of houses. J. H. Naylor churned out miner's lamps... and the list of ancillary businesses could go on and on. If you lived anywhere round Wigan in 1923, the chances were high that you either worked in the pit or were part of a mining family.



BY BILL MELLING

# EDWARD HALL

## WAR AND PEACE

*We continue Bill Melling's examination of the creator of Wigan Archive Service's famous diary collection*

After organising the Christmas festivities for 73 Squadron, Edward was granted home leave and was reunited with his family, showering them with gifts and souvenirs. With his pay as an officer, Edward had money in his pocket and was able to return to France without any financial worries. For the first couple of months after his return things remained quiet. Life changed dramatically in April 1940 when the Germans launched their surprise Blitzkrieg through Holland and Belgium.

Caught completely unawares, the Squadron awoke one morning as their airfield was bombed and strafed by enemy aircraft. The Squadron was in the thick of the fighting. Ground staff fell back and organised makeshift airstrips as the Germans advanced. In mid-June the French surrendered. Defeat was inevitable and the remaining Hurricanes were ordered to fly back to England. The ground staff were ordered to destroy any equipment that might be of use to the enemy and make their way independently to the coast and get home as best they could. After destroying the airfield they split into small groups, one of which was commanded by Edward, and which he led to the port of La Rochelle. Here he found two small British cargo boats that had been used for delivering coal from South Wales. They were about to leave but he managed to get his party aboard the S. S. Philip M, along with hundreds of other stragglers and refugees. After a slow and uncomfortable voyage they eventually arrived safely at Newport in South Wales.

The squadron's aircraft had flown back to Church Fenton in Yorkshire and the surviving ground staff made their way back there. Some of them had been lost in the sinking of the Lancastria by German bombers, when

over 4000 lives were lost. Unfortunately for Edward, now that the squadron was operating from a fighter station as part of a larger group, they no longer required a separate adjutant and so he was out of a job. Fortunately his old Wing Commander from France got him a job as adjutant to the Barrage Balloon Centre in Cardiff. Balloon barrages were a passive form of defence designed to force enemy raiders to fly higher, and thus bomb much less accurately. Their HQ was in a requisitioned Hall called Bryneithen. Edward was able to rent a nearby cottage and was able to move his family there away from the London blitz. Both Em and the children hated the quiet country life and the heavy bombing of Cardiff in early 1941 meant that they were no safer than they were in Surbiton. In May 1941 they returned home leaving Edward bored and lonely, a state of mind that led him to apply for service overseas. This resulted in an appointment as Personnel Officer to 260 (Balloon) Wing, a group that was being formed to go out to Egypt and act as a central HQ for all the balloon squadrons in the Eastern Mediterranean sector.

The group sailed from Liverpool on 15 August 1941 on the troopship Strathnaver, arriving at Suez, via the Cape of Good Hope, on 4 October. Edward kept a detailed diary of the

voyage. The group were based at Ismailia, the main British base on the Suez canal and Edward enjoyed a comfortable time there. In early 1942 a fellow officer was going on a tour of inspection of balloon squadrons in Palestine and the Lebanon and Edward took some of his leave to accompany him on a sightseeing tour that took in Jerusalem and Beirut. Whilst in Beirut he found out that the squadron there had a vacancy for an adjutant and he successfully applied for the post. Whilst he was there his sightseeing travels ranged from Tel Aviv to the Turkish border and included a visit to Damascus. When not travelling around he divided his leisure time between the Officers

Club and the French Club, but he again became restless and in mid-1942 he applied for and obtained a position at the Operations Research Section at Airstaff HQ in Cairo. The office collected and collated information on RAF operations in the sector and issued reports on these activities. During October 1943, following the advance of the 8th Army, the section moved from Cairo to Tunis. By Christmas 1943, Edward was very depressed. There were problems at home and he applied for compassionate leave, which after a certificate from Em's doctor, was granted. He left Algiers on the troopship Ormonde on 13 February 1944, arriving at Liverpool on 18 March 1944.

The Edward Hall who came out of the war was a very different man from the one who was called up in 1939. He was financially solvent and his years of service as an officer had restored his self confidence. After the war he got a job at the Air Ministry where he remained until he retired. He also started dealing in ancient manuscripts, at first as a side-line, which by the time he retired he had built up into a prosperous business and one that he enjoyed. In a letter at the time of his seventieth birthday he said he had achieved his life's ambition – 'to dabble in manuscripts' – and in another in March 1969 that 'he had a vast stock of MSS', was 'not penniless' and had 'more than enough customers to keep him fully employed'. He owned his house and seems to have been comparatively well off financially. He had a number of customers, all dedicated collectors, whose particular interests he was aware of. He bought old manuscripts wherever he could and matched them up to the needs of his clients to whom he sent them on a sale or return basis.

A number of his customers were wealthy US collectors with whom he developed personal as well as business relationships and with whom he exchanged visits. In 1947 Edward made a gift of 40 manuscript diaries to the Wigan Library and in succeeding years there were further gifts including some of his own diaries and papers. This was to form the basis of the Edward Hall Diary Collection and Edward's portrait hung on the wall of the Archive Service's

first Searchroom in 1974. Edward eventually disposed of his own collection of ancient manuscripts in 1977 which was valued at £8000.

After the war Edward and Em settled in Gravesend. Their children had flown the nest – Joan had married an American Officer, John Jacob Enders, during the war and lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico and came to England on visits to her parents who also went over to see her. Their eldest son John, lived in Gravesend and was a pilot guiding ships in and out of the Port of London. Their youngest son qualified as a doctor and became a Consultant, specializing in liver diseases at a hospital in Exeter. They had numerous grandchildren who were frequent visitors.

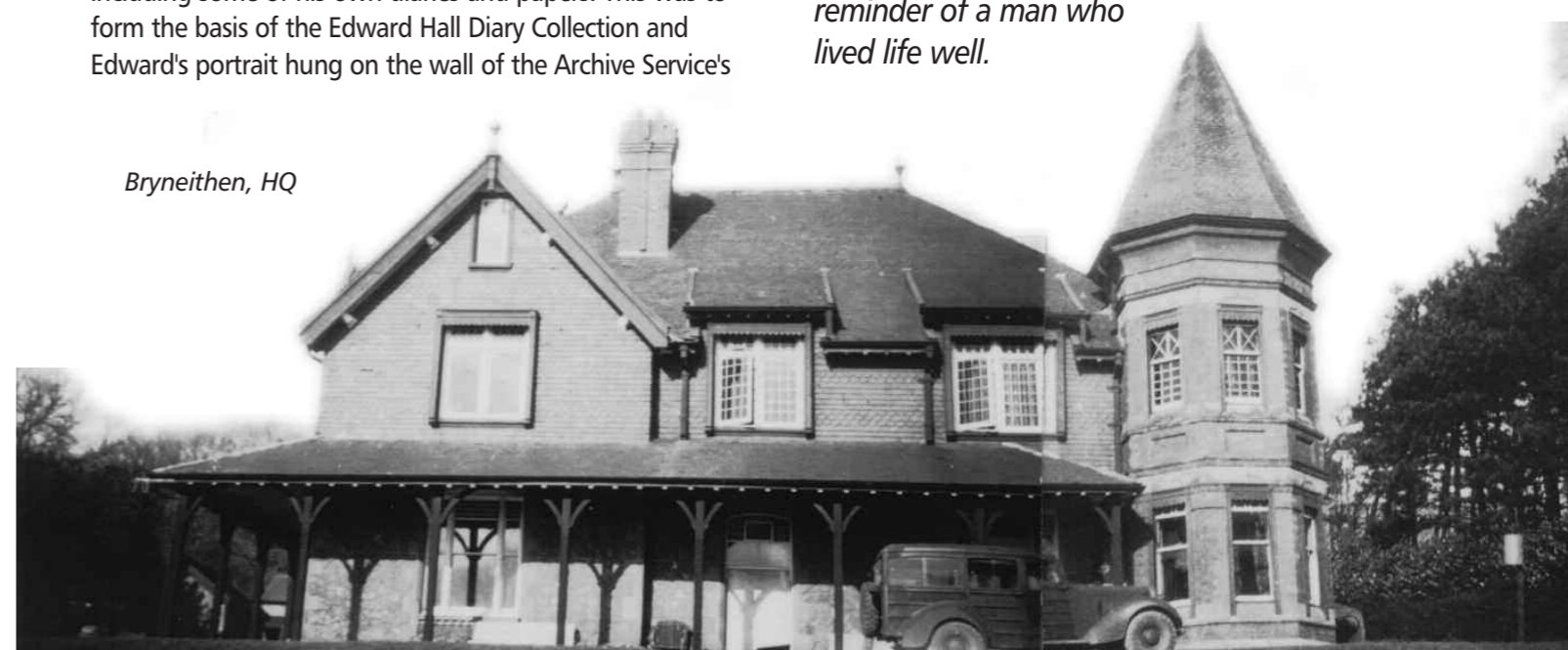
Throughout the post-war years, Edward appears to have been in robust health. He was still cycling at the age of 80. On the other hand, Em was becoming increasingly frail. She suffered from arthritis, calcium deficiency, varicose veins in her legs and from the mid 1970s was showing increasing signs of dementia. She accompanied Edward on a visit to the USA to visit her daughter in 1973. By the summer of 1976 she was increasingly subject to outbursts of anger and with the onset of winter she was confined to bed with muscular rheumatism and eventually was hospitalized. She came home again but now regarded Edward as her worst enemy and in refusing his help she fell and broke her hip. She was again hospitalized, first at Gravesend then in a nursing home at Exeter. She never came home again and ended her days in a nursing home in Rochester where Edward visited her every day. She could converse lucidly but had no idea of what was going on around her. She died in 1979. Edward survived for another six years, eventually passing away in 1985.

*For anyone familiar with the Edward Hall Diary Collection, we hope you would agree that Edward's collection is a wonderful and permanent reminder of a man who lived life well.*

Edward Hall, 'Back from France', 1940



Bryneithen, HQ







**BY CARRIE GOUGH, COLLECTIONS OFFICER  
AT THE MUSEUM OF WIGAN LIFE**

# EGYPT STUDY DAY A Great Success

The Museum of Wigan Life and Horus Egyptology Society held a study day to raise funds for the re-display and conservation of Wigan's amazing Egyptology collection on Sat 8th November. The day featured talks by renowned Egyptologist and BBC Egyptology presenter Professor Joann Fletcher and BAFTA award winning scientist and presenter Dr Stephen Buckley. Joann and Stephen have become great supporters of the museum's collection, generously refusing payment for their lectures and providing free forensic testing of the artefacts. The day also saw presentations by museum staff Lynda Jackson (Community History Manager) and Carrie Gough (Collections Officer) along with John Johnson (founder of the Horus society) and Horus members Rachael

Griffith and Hazel McGuinness who have both worked to interpret hieroglyphs in Wigan's collection.

On display throughout the day was a selection of ancient Egyptian objects from the museum's collection including a yellow female coffin (C900BC), possibly belonging to a priestess, a wooden coffin mask (1300-1400BC), Ptah Soker Osiris statue (300BC) and a pre-dynastic pot (3500BC) along with other small vessels and shabti (servant) figures. Rachael and Hazel from Horus had also reproduced one of Wigan's coffin fragments as a fantastic line drawing depicting how the full size coffin would have looked.

After a brief introduction from the museum team the day began with a

fascinating talk by Prof Fletcher about famous Archaeologist John Pendlebury who had family links with Wigan and led a fascinating life before being tragically killed as a result of wounds after he was shot by Nazis in Greece during the Second World War. Prof Fletcher also spoke about Wigan's key Egyptology collectors, who donated most of the Museum's collection – Sir John Scott and Mrs Hopkins. Sir John Scott was born in Leigh and was a fascinating man and humanitarian. He had immense goodwill toward the native people of Egypt and revolutionised the judicial system during his time as Judicial Advisor to the Khedive in the 1890s. His collection of artefacts, which were likely to have been gifts presented to him during his time in Egypt, were left to Wigan Library



*Prof. Fletcher and Dr. Buckley studying the Wigan Collection*

(now the museum) for local people by his son, Sir Leslie Scott in 1924.

After lunch Dr Stephen Buckley presented some preliminary results from chemical analysis of the Wigan collection. Perhaps the most exciting result so far is that two of the Museum of Wigan Life's coffin pieces at least may be a match, meaning we have the outer coffin face and the mask from the inner coffin of the same individual. There were also interesting findings regarding where the unusual pigments used had come from and what this means. The full results will be explored further in our Egyptology exhibition which we are hoping to hold towards the end of 2015 following conservation work on some of the collection.

John Johnson also highlighted the importance of our fascinating predynastic basalt pot. This pot is approximately 5500 years old and of incredible quality and workmanship. It is one of the oldest objects in the museum collection and hand drill marks are clearly visible

*Affectionately known as 'pointy beard man' this mask may be an inner mask from our large outer coffin face*



upon the inside of the vessel. As John pointed out, at the time Wigan's fantastic gold mask was created, this pot was already approximately 2500 years old!

The event was attended by 120 people and raised over £1000 for the collection. The worshipful Mayor of Wigan Councillor Phyllis Cullen and her son John were also honoured guests. The museum collection contains 38 Egyptian items including some of very high quality and interest. Wigan's Gold Coffin mask in particular is extremely rare and may be only one of 5 known types of this kind in the World! The Study Day was part of the museum's efforts to raise funds to conserve and display this unique collection. We are very excited to have recently been awarded £9800 for a high quality display case from the Headley Trust and will continue to work with the Horus Egyptology Society to raise awareness of the collection. Watch this space for further events and family activities around the Egyptians at the museum!

To support the collection or find out more about the Egyptian collection please call 01942 828122 or email [wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk). To find out more about the Horus Egyptology Society please call 01253 810104 or 07889 189162.

Special thanks to Joan and John Johnson for helping organise the Study Day.



*Preparing the collection for display*



*The mayor, her son, Prof. Fletcher and Dr. Buckley, Horus founders and Museums staff*



## SUPPORTING THE TOWN

by Alan Kaye

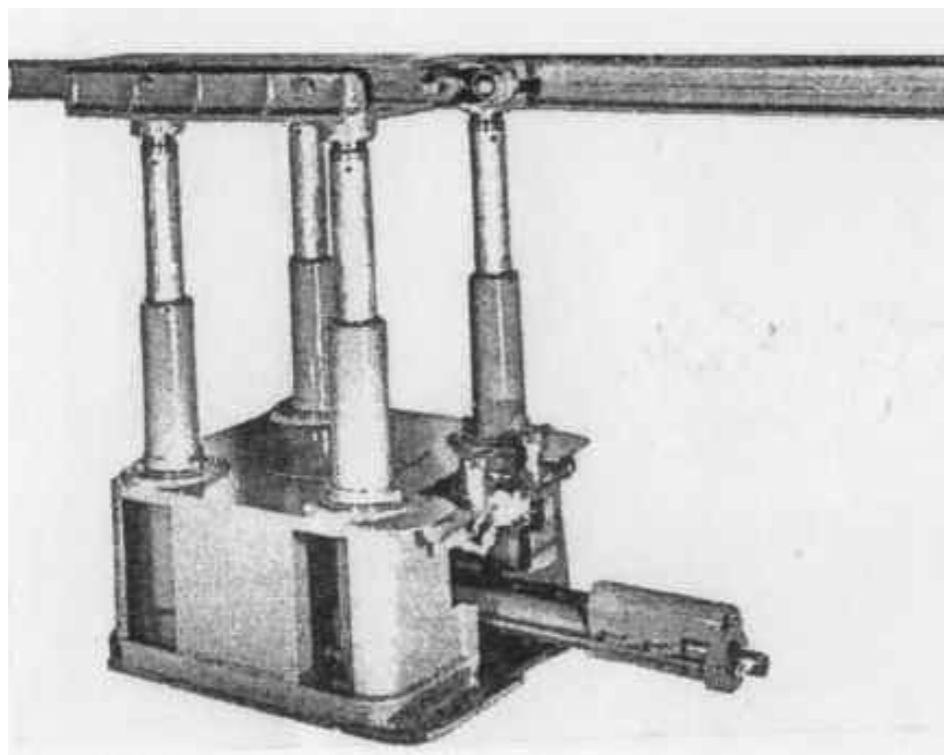
# Gullick Dobson and the British Coal Industry

For a period of nearly 30 years from the early 1960s until about 1990 Gullick Dobson Ltd. was the major employer in the town and by far the largest engineering company in the wider Wigan district. Through the pay packets of its 2000 plus employees and the business it placed with scores of sub-contractors and service providers it injected millions of pounds each year into the town's economy. Through its associate company H. Cotterill Ltd. it employed a further 600 people at various other locations, including a plant at Haydock, manufacturing steel fabrications and precision components for its assembly line. Now a name almost forgotten, Gullick survives in Wigan as a mere shadow of its former self in the form of Joy Global UK Ltd., its international successor. Based at Seaman Way, Ince, Joy Global is a subsidiary company of its USA namesake, a massive international organisation with an unrivalled reputation for the excellence of its mining equipment. Alas, all that exists in Wigan today is the successor design team of the former Gullick Dobson company and some administrative activities.

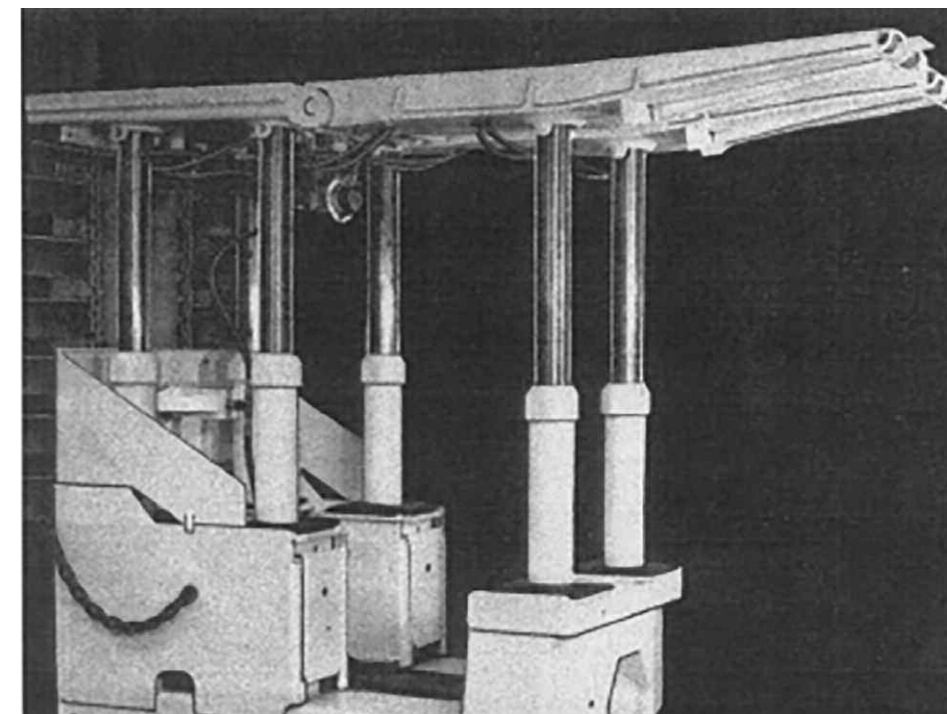
Gullick Dobson, better known simply as Gullick to local folk, made its name and fortune as the biggest supplier to the UK coal industry of self advancing roof supports or chocks, commonly known as 'walking pit props'. It was a product invented, developed, and manufactured in Wigan, from where most of the coal mines in the country were initially equipped. After the very early days of development and

considerable collaborative support of the National Coal Board, the company pioneered its product concept in other major coal producing countries of the world and established important future overseas markets. Its original invention still forms the 'spine' of the highly automated systems universally in operation wherever deep mined coal is produced. At the end of the Second

*This was one of the first 'walking pit props' or 'chocks' ever to be installed in a deep coal mine anywhere in the world. Typically, up to one hundred or more units would be placed side by side along the longwall coal face to support the roof in the area of coal extraction.*



World War, British coal mines were in a run down state and urgently needed investment to modernise production and improve safety. By the time of nationalisation of the industry in 1947, when some 700,000 men were employed in over 950 collieries, both wooden and rigid steel props were still widely used as the roof supports at the coal face and it was a slow and dangerous process to move these repeatedly as progressive coal extraction demanded. The process of modernisation began first with the introduction of mechanised coal cutters and then mechanised armoured face conveyors from Germany brought further improvements. But the speed of face advancement was still retarded by the cumbersome manual system of moving forward the whole of the roof support system. This was improved to a significant extent about 1948 by the introduction of the single hydraulic prop, in effect a self contained hydraulic jack, an invention of the Dowty Group of Cheltenham. This made the wooden pit prop obsolete and thousands of the new hydraulic type were put to work over the space of just a few years. But these props still had to be manhandled, and they worked on the basis of mineral oils which presented an ever-present fire risk.



*This roof support, known as the '6 leg 240 ton chock' had become the workhorse for a large proportion of British coalmines by 1970. Compared with the original configuration, two further hydraulic legs had been added and the base extended to form a safe walkway for the miner.*

## The Self Advancing Roofing Support

By 1948, Gullick Ltd. was developing its own version of a hydraulic prop, this time utilising a water based emulsion and in principle a safer system than the Dowty version. But this was overshadowed when the company came up with the idea of placing five of these water props into a steel frame surmounted by a steel canopy. Four of the props were installed vertically to hold up the mine roof and the fifth one fixed horizontally in the base whose purpose was to push over the face conveyor at the end of each cutting cycle. In 1951 two limited face-end trials were undertaken at National Coal Board mines and they quickly demonstrated the huge potential for speeding up face

advancement. So the self advancing roof support system was born and the first full face was installed at Ormonde colliery in the East Midlands in 1954. It was immediately successful and the concept eventually became the blueprint for over 90% of mines in the country. The number of fully mechanised faces rose from 36 in 1959, to 264 in 1964 and 812 in 1972. This was the basis of Gullick's rapid rise to prosperity. The NCB would not permit a situation of monopoly supply to develop and commercial agreements were established with Gullick which allowed other manufacturers to enter the market. All of them adopted the Gullick central design concept but with their own design variations. Even so, in the 1960s Gullick had difficulty in meeting the



demands placed upon it and significant steps had to be taken to increase production capacity.

## The Early Years

The Gullick company started trading in King Street in 1920 under the name of 'Gullick Brothers'. The proprietors were Geoffrey and Donald Gullick who had longstanding connections with coal mines in Lancashire and particularly with Pemberton collieries where Donald became managing director and later Chairman. In 1923 the name, 'Machine Mining Services' was adopted and in the early years, as well as undertaking coal cutting contracts, the company became agents for the Leyland and Birmingham Rubber Co. Ltd., distributing and servicing rubber conveyor belting, hose and couplings and accessories for early longwall cutters. Subsequently the company was appointed sales agent for the Consolidated Pneumatic Tool Company and pioneered the introduction of the pneumatic pick and rotary drills into UK mines. This latter activity became a profitable activity and provided the financial and technical base from which future business was to emerge. In 1928 its name again was changed to 'Gullick Limited'. After the war it developed a hydraulic ram arrangement for the advancement of face conveyors, the experience of which was vital to the later invention of the powered support. The catalyst for much

of this work was design engineer Tom Seaman who joined the company in 1926 and who later became a director until his death in 1956. He was the inventor of the Powered Roof Support and his name lives on in Wigan in the form of Seaman Way, the approach road to the former Gullick Dobson factory, Seaman Works.

It soon became clear that the 'walking pit prop' would have increasing financial and manufacturing needs and in 1957 the Gullick brothers decided to sell out to William Park and Company (Forgemasters) Ltd., a much more substantial and long established Wigan engineering company. William Park's Wigan roots extended as far back as the eighteenth century and their businesses included Park Webb and English Tools, later known as Bulldog. But even Park's resources were fully stretched with a team of just 29 Gullick employees at

the time and a reliance on sub-contractors to meet the massive customer demands that lay ahead. When in-house production began at Clarington Forge it soon outstripped the new manufacturing space available and a decision was taken to purchase a large acreage of land nearby in Ince for a completely new factory. By 1964 some 65,000 square feet of manufacturing space had been created and developed over later years into the giant plant known throughout the area as Seaman Works.

*This is an edited extract from the new book on the history of Gullick Dobson by Alan Kaye. In the second part of the history Alan will explore the development of the firm from the late 1960s, through the Miners' Strike and to the take over by Joy Global.*

**The book is on sale in the shop at The Museum of Wigan Life, priced at £3.**

## 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

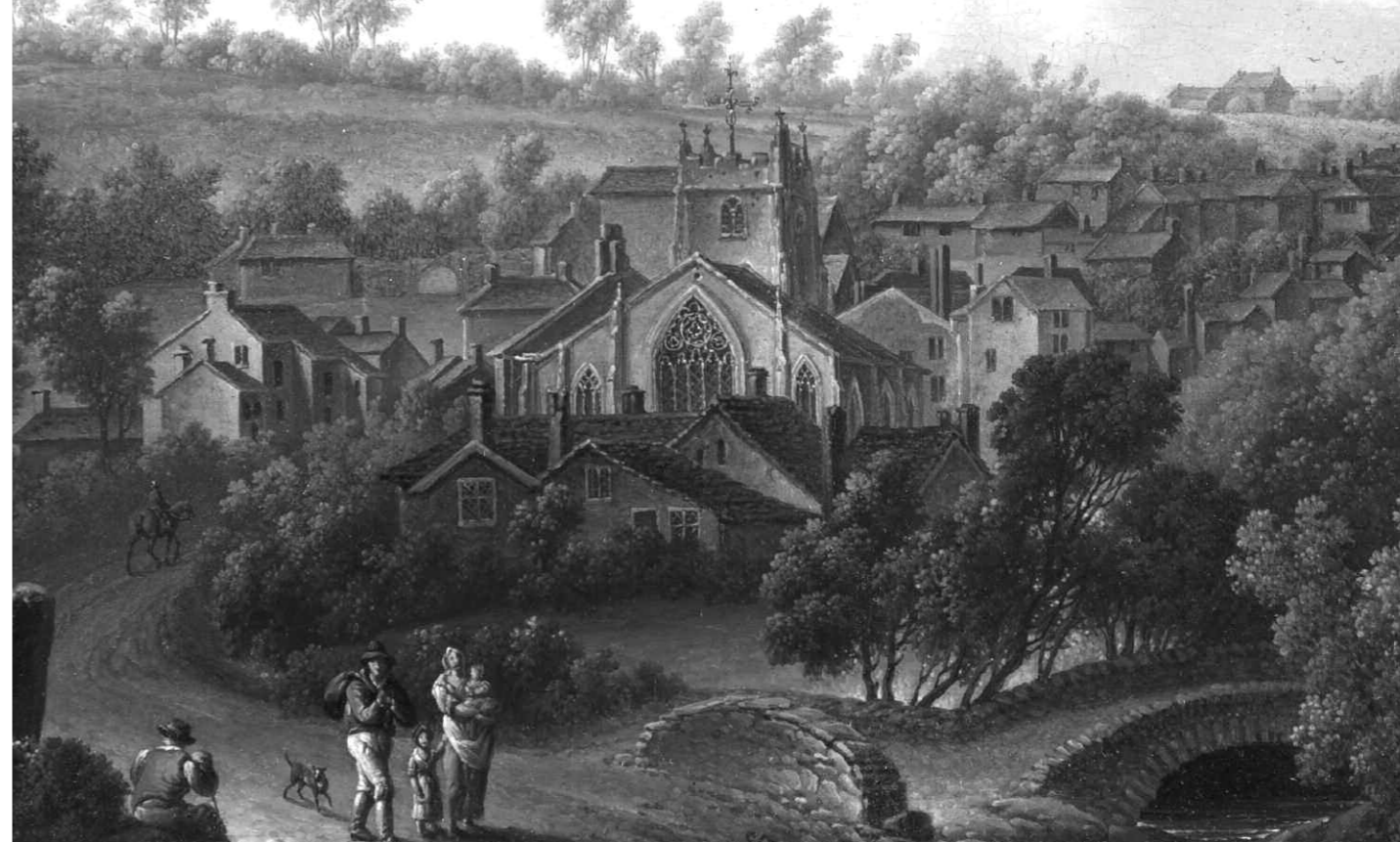
We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

### CONTACT DETAILS:

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk or  
The Editor at PAST FORWARD,  
Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street,  
Wigan WN1 1NU.

## Can You Help?

# Ellen Weeton Needs You!



*'The Priory Church and Village of Upholland' by Charles Towne*

**Is anyone out there able to assist with a short-term research project, of up to 1500 words?**

More senior loyal Past Forward readers may recall a series of articles about the life of Ellen (Nelly) Weeton (1776-1849). They appeared throughout ten issues from 1998-2001 (Issue 20-29), contributed by Alan Roby. Alan has a continuing interest in British social history, in particular during the second half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries, especially that period's theological controversies, as they affected non-conformity. Now retired, for the past 12 months Alan has been writing and re-editing an up-to-date account of Miss Weeton's life.

During the 1930s, Oxford University Press published 'Miss Weeton's Journal of a Governess', in two

volumes. The book was republished by David and Charles in 1969. All have long been out of print. It was first published as a result of Edward Hall's painstaking research through his discovery in a Wigan second-hand bookshop in the 1920s, of an extensive number of 'copy-letters' written by Miss Weeton. For many years Miss Weeton regularly corresponded with certain family members and friends, from wherever she lived and/or worked as a governess. It was her normal practice to write an identical copy of all her letters, each up to 2000 words, into a memorandum book. Her writings also contain autobiographical information. All extant are now safely cared for by Wigan Archives & Local Studies. None of the existing published books contain the conclusion to Miss Weeton's life, which was discovered only in 1994. Alan's proposed book (as a single volume), will not only

include the end of her life – she died in Liverpool in 1849 – it will also include very surprising new information concerning Miss Weeton's grandson.

Alan would love to hear from anyone who has both the interest and the time to assist with two biographical profiles of no more than 1000 words on either of the following two individuals: Edward Pedder, a Preston man and Miss Weeton's employer at Dove's Nest, Ambleside, and/or Aaron Stock, Miss Weeton's cruel husband. (All reference sources to be included). The name of the researcher and reference source/s will be included with the profile to be included as an Appendix at the end of the book.

Please contact in the first instance, The Editor,  
pastforward@wigan.gov.uk or  
01942 404430.



# Slagged Off?

By Bob Blakeman

Every Wiganer knows that George Orwell 'slagged off' Wigan in his book, 'The Road to Wigan Pier'. Even the thousands who have never read it. After all, why read the book when respectable and reliable sources such as 'The Times' newspaper tell us this is so? However, an unprejudiced reading of the book tells a different story.

Britain was in the depths of the Great Depression and the subject of mass unemployment was 'in the air', when the publisher Victor Gollancz commissioned the young author Eric Blair – pen name, George Orwell – to write a book about the condition of the working class in the economically depressed north of England. There were many towns Orwell could have visited, so why did he come to Wigan?

Orwell's visit to Wigan was unplanned. He had written some articles for a magazine called 'The Adelphi', and the editor, John Middleton Murray, gave him the address of that magazine's office in Manchester. The people there gave him the address of Jerry Kennan, an electrician in the collieries, who lived in Wigan. Kennan introduced him to some men from the National Unemployed Workers' Union, who found him accommodation at the home of the Hornbys in Warrington Lane.

However, he had only been there for about a week when Mrs Hornby was suddenly taken ill and had to go into hospital, and Orwell needed somewhere else to live.

He wrote in his diary, 'They have found lodgings for me in Darlington Road [sic] over a tripe shop... Social atmosphere much as at H.'s, but house appreciably dirtier, and very smelly'.

Orwell doesn't state who 'they' were. They could have been the men from the N.U.W.U., or perhaps the Hornbys, who would have been aware of the tripe shop-cum-lodging house, as it was only a short distance from their home. The opening chapter of 'The Road to Wigan Pier' is a description of this lodging house, and it has given considerable offence to Wiganers. The images of it stick in the mind: the unemptied chamber pots; the dead flies from the previous summer in the shop window; the dirty fingers of the landlord as he handed out slices of bread; the beds crammed so tightly in the makeshift bedroom that Orwell had to sleep with his legs bent at the knees. As for the landlord and landlady, they were dirty and lazy, and the landlord was fiddling the benefits system. But not everyone in the house was at fault. The lodgers were decent workingmen who had fallen on hard times through circumstances beyond their control. Such were the two old men driven out of their homes by the Means Test.<sup>(1)</sup>

After spending some time in Wigan, Orwell went to Barnsley and Sheffield, and made brief visits to Liverpool and Leeds. In Barnsley and Sheffield he stayed in working-class homes, and continued collecting information on the hardships suffered by many manual workers: poor working conditions, low pay, slum housing, unemployment, and cuts in benefits. He describes these in the first part of the book, giving examples from various towns, including Wigan. He also paints a vivid picture of the landscapes of these industrial towns: the factory chimneys belching black smoke, the colliery spoil heaps, the blast furnaces, the stinking gasometers, and the filthy canals.

What comes over is his sympathy, even

admiration for the working-class of that time. The men he admired most of all were the coalminers whose work was so awful, and yet so necessary.

'All of us really owe the comparative decency of our lives to those poor drudges underground, blackened to the eyes, with their throats full of coal dust, driving their shovels forward with arm and belly muscles of steel'.

The second part of the book consists of an attack on the class divisions of his day and a critique of British socialism from Orwell's idiosyncratic socialist perspective. Perhaps less than a quarter of the book specifically relates to Wigan, so why did he call it, 'The Road to Wigan Pier'?

It was because Wigan was famous. Or rather notorious. Wigan was a joke town. A comedian had only to walk onto a stage and shout, 'I've just come from Wigan!', to raise a laugh. The joke was based around Wigan Pier. The word 'pier' originally referred to a structure built over water to facilitate the loading and unloading of boats. Wigan Pier was used to load coal onto canal barges. However, from the mid-nineteenth

more pleasant parts of Wigan: Mesnes Park, perhaps, or the upper reaches of Wigan Lane. But this is to miss the point. The book is an exposé of the dark underside of England in the 1930s, not a tourist guide.

Perhaps Orwell suspected that his intentions might be misunderstood, for he wrote that he liked Wigan – the people, not the scenery. Still, disgruntled Wiganers may find some consolation in what he wrote about Sheffield, 'Even Wigan is beautiful compared with Sheffield. Sheffield, I suppose, could justly claim to be the ugliest town in the Old World'.

Note: (1) Means Test: If an unemployed man had a parent living with him the parent was classed as a lodger and the man's meagre benefit was reduced.

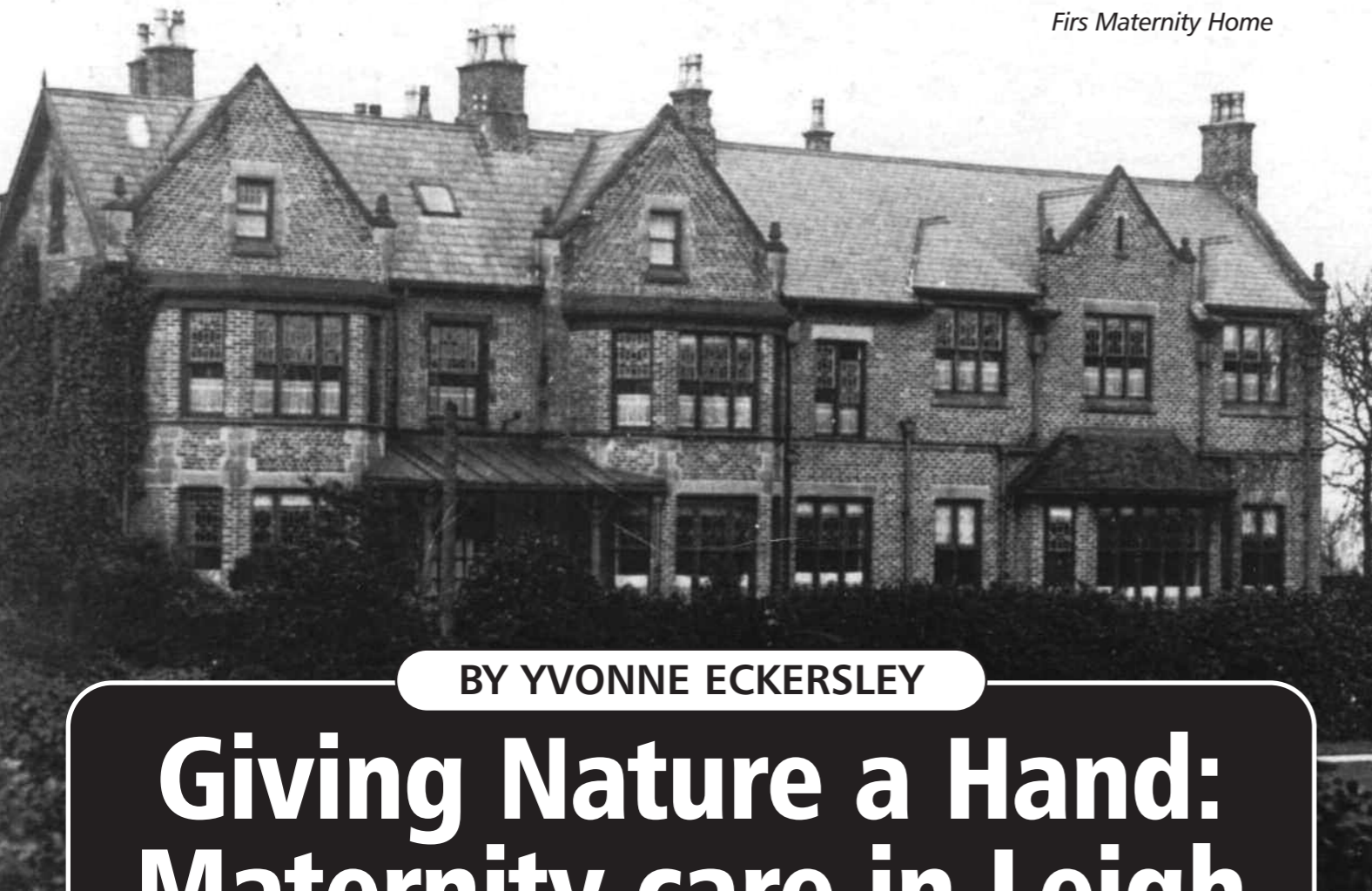
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*The arrival of H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester at Wigan Pier, circa 1937*





BY YVONNE ECKERSLEY

# Giving Nature a Hand: Maternity care in Leigh 1902-1931

In this sister article to 'Saving Leigh's Babies' (Past Forward Issue 66), I offer an overview of how Leigh's embryonic maternity service evolved – stimulated by a high maternal mortality rate – and of factors that worked against it.

Once again I have used Leigh's Medical Officer of Health (MOH) Annual Reports as my main source. Significantly, these Reports show that although maternal and infant welfare were ostensibly of equal importance, until the mid-1920s developing infant welfare services took the lion's share of time, effort and available money. There were a number of emotional, cultural and traditional reasons for this. Predominant among these were that mothers instinctively prioritised their babies' needs before their own. Their experiences during and as a result of child bearing was personal and private; consequently it was hidden. If you add the pervading belief that bearing children was natural; for which women's bodies were designed; that

pain and suffering was inevitable; and that women's bodies recover automatically, then the debilitating and dangerous nature of childbearing could be – and was – easily overlooked.

By 1900 it was becoming clear that the situation was unacceptable. A pregnant woman's medical care began with her first and ended after her last labour pain; time had come to, 'Save Leigh's Mothers'.

## Midwives

The process began by addressing inadequacies in midwifery practices. It was a top-down approach, beginning with the Midwives Act of 1902. From then, each new midwife was to undergo specific training (initially 3 months); be certificated by virtue of that training; and be registered on a Central Midwives Roll, before they could call themselves midwives. From 1910, when the Act was made compulsory, the

Central Midwives Board increasingly regulated midwives work and provided supervising bodies. Initially, Leigh came under the auspices of the Lancashire County Council, later Leigh's MOH.

Loopholes existed, enabling untrained, un-certificated women to deliver babies. Thirty years after the 1902 Act, Leigh still had two bona fide (i.e. un-certificated but registered) midwives, practicing by virtue of longevity of service rather than training. Doctors were free to employ any woman to deliver babies providing he could claim her services were given as a result of an emergency.

Nevertheless it was an important first step in the fight against Puerperal Fever (PF), Puerperal Sepsis (PS) – infections contracted during childbirth – some 'accidents' of childbirth, identification of pre-eclampsia and a starting point for the professionalisation of midwifery.

## 1913: A Pivotal Year

From 1913, as the fight against the major cause of maternal death gathered pace, PF and PS became Notifiable Diseases. Midwives were required to report these conditions but as they could be suspended, fined and lose income if their patient showed signs of infection, there was a certain reluctance to inform the authorities. Midwives were freelance, they did not receive a statutory income until 1947. The 1926 Midwives and Maternity Homes Act attempted to remove this obstacle by paying compensation to suspended midwives.

On a pragmatic level to avoid deaths, Leigh midwives were increasingly supplied with free sterile equipment for each delivery. Affected patient's homes were disinfected and Astley Sanatorium provided compulsory and specialist hospital care.

Perhaps the most far reaching piece of legislation was the extension of the 1911 National Insurance Act. In 1913, its 30 shillings maternity benefit was extended to all mothers, regardless of their insured and/or marital status. The Women's Cooperative Guild's campaign was instrumental in ensuring attention was paid to 'help bring the mother round' after childbirth. The money was to be paid to mothers, not fathers, from the day they delivered. For the first time, poor women had money as a right to provide at least part of the cost of medical care during childbearing.

Claims on this money were not without contention. A constant theme in Leigh's MOH Reports was the lack of a Maternity Home. Mothers requiring or preferring delivery at a medical institution had three options: St Mary's Manchester; Bolton Maternity Home or Leigh Workhouse Infirmary.

At the Workhouse, Guardians felt inclined to claim this money on behalf of their patients. Government protocols prevented this. Guardians moved from the archaic attitude of removing pauper pregnant women from Leigh as soon as possible, resettling them in their original birth town, to refusing admittance to their Infirmary for all insured pregnant women, then finally to supplying services 'on loan'; mothers were to pay their costs once they received the thirty

shillings. Not that the standard of care offered at the Workhouse Infirmary was high. Guardians were rebuked for using inmates as nurses, for the lack of hot water on the Maternity Ward and the absence of night nurses.

## Provision of Care

Despite growing evidence of the inadequacy of a midwife-led maternity service, many of Leigh's doctors remained, 'disinclined to undertake maternity work', among poor women. When they did, they billed the Council. Revealingly, as late as 1930 the Leigh and District Medical Society was refusing to co-operate with Government requests for details of maternal deaths. There were exceptions; Dr Burt ran ante-natal clinics at Stone House in an Honorary capacity – unpaid – from the mid 1920s.

By 1918 Government consternation about the continuing high maternal mortality rate provided the drive and money for maternity homes. It was argued that the provision of a medically safe environment would reduce the number of birthing 'accidents', which at worst cost lives and at best caused chronic gynaecological conditions. Funded by Government and Leigh Council, a five bed maternity wing was added to Stone House Maternity and Child Welfare Clinic, opening on the 1 January 1927. One does wonder how five maternity beds, each occupied for 10-14 days, coped with approximately 1000 births annually. But it was a beginning. Very soon after opening, the service proved inadequate. After three

years, Leigh Council bought 'The Firs' from John Holden for £4000 and with a combination of government grants and borrowed money, converted it into a Maternity Home. The eighteen bed Firs Maternity Home replaced Stone House on the 31 October 1931.

However, home births remained the norm and although numerically the MOH considered Leigh sufficiently staffed, with between sixteen and twenty-three midwives, these were unevenly distributed. Some midwives attended just five births whilst others around a hundred.

What lay beyond the Ministry of Health's control was the harsh everyday life of poor mothers. Although Leigh's MOH Reports acknowledged the factual difficulties working class mothers faced, it was/is the personal testimony of mothers' themselves that reveal the horror some women suffered. Letters by mothers describing their lives were collected by the Co-operative Women's Guild and published in 1915. The tragic reality these letters reveal is that although aware of the damage they were doing to themselves, mothers had no option but to continue. The letters record lives of continual toil and deprivation, of the inability to afford decent medical care, poor nutrition, of leaning over dolly tubs hand washing clothes, lifting heavy pans on and off coal fires; all this right up to giving birth and beginning again almost immediately after. There was much progress to be made.



Delivery Room at Firs Maternity Home, Dick Sutton Collection



# Ballots, Books and Bribes: Using Electoral Registers for your Research

by Rita Musa

With more and more people becoming interested in researching their family history, many people concentrate on Census Returns or Births, Marriages and Deaths. Sources often overlooked are Electoral Registers. Although they aren't arranged by name – but by constituency, ward and street – they are a very useful source of information.

Before Electoral Registers we had Poll Books. They originate from a 1696 Act of Parliament designed to curb disputed election results and fraud. The solution included requiring sheriffs to make a list of voters and the candidate they had voted for. These could then be published as poll books. Poll Books continued to be used until the secret ballot was introduced in 1872.

Name	Qualification	Residence	Business	Occupation	Wife's	Husband's
Bolton, Roger, house and workshop, Standishgate.	1	1				
Bond, John, house and shop, Hallgate	1	1				
Bone, Robert, house, Millgate (tendered)	1	1				
Bonney, James, house, Market-place	1	1				
Bott, Thomas, house and warehouse, Wallgate	1	1				
Bradshaw, James, house, Scholes	1	1				
Brady, John, cotton factory, Millgate	1	1				
Brindle, Ralph, house, Standishgate	1	1				
Brogden, Holmes Thomas, house, Wallgate	1	1				
Bromley, Kershaw, house, Hardybutts	1	1				
Brown, Michael, house, Wallgate	1	1				
Brown, David, house, Wigan-lane	1	1				
Brown, William, house, Standishgate	1	1				
Brown, William, house, Wigan-lane	1	1				
Brown, Samuel, house, Douglas-ter., Standishgate	1	1				
Buckley, Peter, house, Hallgate	1	1				
Buckley, John, house and warehouse, Chapel-lane	1	1				
Buller, Peter, house, Scholes	1	1				
Bullock, Henry, office and factory, Wallgate	1	1				
Bullock, William Hilbert, house, Duke-street	1	1				
Burden, William, house, Wallgate	1	1				
Burgoine, William, sen., house, Great George-st.	1	1				
Burgoine, William, jun., house, Standishgate	1	1				
Burland, James, house, &c., Harrison Meadow	1	1				
Burnet, James, house, Wallgate	1	1				
Burns, Joseph, house, Scholes	1	1				
Byrom, Thomas, house, Market-place	1	1				
Byrom, Peter, house, Wallgate	1	1				
Bullock, John (P)	1	1				
Bancks, William (U)	1	1				
Brown James (B)	1	1				
Caldwell, William, warehouse, Market-place	1	1				
Caldwell, John, workshop and house, Wallgate	1	1				
Cartwright, Joseph, house and shippon, Hallgate	1	1				
Catterall, Thomas, house, Weir-bridges	1	1				
Chadwick, William, shop, Market-place	1	1				
Chadwick, John, house, Wallgate	1	1				
Cheetham, Samuel, house, Chapel-lane	1	1				
Clephan, Thomas, house, Chapel-lane	1	1				
Coates, Thomas, house, King-street	1	1				
Cocker, Richard, house and shop, Market-place	1	1				

Poll Books don't list all residents of an area until 1832; most voters were freeholders and others who could meet property requirements. Poll books only list those who actually cast a vote as can be seen by the example below from the Wigan Poll Book of 1841 at the election of Members of Parliament.

Electoral Registers were introduced by the Representation of the People Act 1832 and evolved over the years as the franchise expanded. The right to vote slowly increased from only a small proportion of the population in the early nineteenth century to the right for everyone to vote over the age of 21 in 1928 (apart from prisoners and members of the House Of Lords). Some people could vote in local elections even if they could not vote in parliamentary elections, for example unmarried women after 1869. Gradually this increased to the present day universal suffrage for those over the age of 18. Registers have been produced annually ever since with the exceptions being during the two World Wars and 1920-1926, when Spring and Autumn editions were published.

As the qualification to vote changed, various types of entries in the registers can be found. Some examples can be seen below.

If the voter had a Business Premises qualification or an Occupation qualification the name and place of abode was listed, as can be seen from the 1929 register for Wigan Market Hall and The Market Arcade. Until 1948 the nature of his/her qualification to vote was also shown.

The Index Letters indicate whether it was a man or a woman, Rw, Bw, Ow Dw indicating a female voter.

POLLING DISTRICT II.	No. 10 or ALL SAINTS WARD.
606 — O	§ Ashton, Thomas 3 MARKET ARCADE—cont.
607 — Ow	§ Hickson, Esther Warburton 4 (abode, 19 Walkden Avenue, Wigan)
608 — Ow	Hickson, Helena Jane 4 (abode, Gienellen, Wigan Lane, Wigan)
609 — O	Forshaw, Giles 6 (abode, 5, Hornby Street, Wigan)
610 — O	§ Gorner, Richard 7 (abode, 1 Ashland Avenue, Wigan)
611 B O	§ Snape, Frederick 4 MARKET HALL (abode, 45, Beech Hill Avenue, Wigan)
612 Dw —	§ Snape, Winifred 4 (abode, 2 Woodville Road, Chorley)
613 — Ow	§ Miles, Mary Ellen 5 and 6 (abode, 8, Norfolk Street, Wigan)
614 — Ow	§ Atkinson, Jane 13 and 12 and 13 (abode, Larches, Wigan Lane, Wigan)
615 — O	§ Rossington, Joseph Henry 16 (abode, 17, Beech Hill Avenue, Wigan)
616 — O	§ Jarvis, Joseph 17 (abode, 13 Meadow Street, Wigan)
617 — O	§ Green, Richard Blaylock 19 and 20 (abode, 33 Upper Dicconson Street, Wigan)
618 B O	Green, John Henry 19 and 20 (abode, "Huntscliffe," Parbold, Wigan)
619 Dw —	Green, Margaret 19 and 20 (abode, "Huntscliffe," Parbold, Wigan)
620 B O	Pepper, Edward 20 (abode, 7 Avonvale Road, Southport)
621 Dw —	Pepper, Frances Mary 20 (abode, 7 Avonvale Road, Southport)
622 — O	McAvoy, Edward 25 (abode, 31 Scholes, Wigan)
623 — O	§ Hamill, Edward 26 (abode, 61 Greenough Street, Wigan)
624 B O	Walker, Harry Killingleck 27 (abode, 29 James Street, Blackburn)
625 Dw —	Walker, Edith 27 (abode, 29 James Street, Blackburn)
626 — Ow	Hargreaves, Sarah Jane 28 and 29 (Florence) (abode, 9 Worsley Terrace, Wigan)
627 Bw Ow	King, Ann 30 (abode, 48 North Road, St. Helens)
628 B O	King, Francis James Heseltine 30 (abode, 48 North Road, St. Helens)
629 B O	Marsden, George 31 (abode, 48 North Road, St. Helens)
630 Dw —	Marsden, Agnes 31 (abode, 48 North Road, St. Helens)
631 Bw Ow	Syner, Esther 35 (abode, 38 Princess Street, Southport)
632 Bw Ow	Hartley, Mary Ann 36-37 (abode, 169 Bacup Road, Cloughfold, near Manchester)
633 — O	§ Hall, Thomas 38 (abode, 316 Woodhouse Lane, Wigan)
634 — O	§ Wearnden, Percy 39 (abode, 39 Meanes Road, Wigan)
635 — O	§ Wearnden, William 39 (abode, 49 Kenyon Road, Wigan)
636 — O	§ Peacock, Alfred 40 (abode, 44 Kenyon Road, Wigan)

- R- Residence qualification
- B-Business premises
- O-Occupation qualification
- D-Qualification through wife's occupation
- Dw-Qualification through husband's occupation

For a few years after 1918, the names of Absent Voters in the services were noted. N.M. next to a name indicates a Naval or Military voter. The 1918 Representation of the People Act had an exclusion that disqualified anyone from voting who was exempted from military service during the First World War as a Conscientious Objector, for five years.

PARISH OF WIGAN. No. 9 or SWINLEY WARD. DIVISION II.				PARISH OF WIGAN. No. 9 or SWINLEY WARD. DIVISION II.			
POLLING DISTRICT II.				POLLING DISTRICT II.			
No.	Name as in Poll Book	Qualification	Index Letter	No.	Name as in Poll Book	Qualification	Index Letter
1	Hugh, James	R		1	Hugh, Robert (Junior)	R	
2	Hugh, John	R		2	Hugh, John (Senior)	R	
3	Hugh, Thomas	R		3	Hugh, Robert (Senior)	R	
4	Chow, Frederick George	R		4	Chow, James	R	
5	Chow, John	R		5	Chow, Charles	R	
6	Smith, David Thomas	R		6	Smith, James	R	
7	Wright, Thomas	R		7	Wright, James	R	
8	Burton, John	R		8	Burton, Charles	R	
9	Clarkson, Leonard	R		9	Clarkson, John	R	
10	Clarkson, William	R		10	Clarkson, George	R	
11	Langton, Ernest	R		11	Langton, Alfred George	R	
12	Hill, Edward	R		12	Hill, Leonard	R	
13	Godet, Douglas Norman	R		13	Godet, Clifford	R	
14	Norman, Robert Norman	R		14	Norman, Fred	R	
15	Norman, Robert Hilford	R		15	Norman, Harold	R	
16	Leah, Ed. Robert	R		16	Leah, Thomas	R	
17	Wright, Alfred Thackeray	R		17	Wright, Herbert	R	
18	Rickett, Sydney Hobson	R		18	Rickett, John	R	
19	Dudley, Thomas James	R		19	Dudley, George Edward	R	
20	Outman, Ernest	R		20	Outman, John William	R	
21	Radford, George Herbert	R		21	Radford, Samuel	R	
22	Malyman, Harold	R		22	Malyman, Frank Henry	R	
23	Amstrong, Charles Alfred	R		23	Amstrong, Percy Francis	R	
24	Longford, James Charles	R		24	Longford, Harry Scumme	R	
25	Langford, William Edw.	R		25	Langford, James Percy	R	
26	Kelly, Edward	R		26	Mosley, Alfred	R	
27	Wigham, Jack	R		27	Wigham, George	R	
28	Rickett, Thomas	R		28	Rickett, John Albert (Junior)	R	
29	Jolly, George	R		29	Jolly, Charles	R	
30	Jolly, Isaac	R		30	Jolly, John Preston	R	
31	McCliffey, Joseph	R		31	McCliffey, Ernest	R	
32	Ramos, Charles	R		32	Ramos, Douglas	R	
33	Wernick, John Charles	R		33	Wernick, Frederick Charles	R	
34	Wernick, John Charles	R		34	Wernick, John Charles	R	
35	Hunt, Jack	R		35	Hunt, Frank Elton	R	
36	Hunt, Philip	R		36	Hunt, William Edward	R	
37	Ward, William Horner	R		37	Ward, George Anderton	R	
38	Yates, Arthur	R		38	Yates, John	R	
39	Casson, Thomas	R		39	Casson, William	R	
40	Brown, Frederick	R		40	Brown, Arthur Charles	R	
41	Brown, Henry Sidney	R		41	Brown, George	R	
42	Melling, Joseph	R		42	Melling, Henry	R	
43	Melling, Joseph	R		43	Melling, Albert Augustus	R	
44	Melling, William	R		44	Widdows, Frank	R	
45	Wood, Charles John	R		45	Widdows, Marcus	R	
				46	Dunnington, Robert James	R	
				47	Dunnington, Richard	R	

An interesting discovery was recently made by Vic Rawlinson, a volunteer at Wigan Local Studies. In the 1885 register for Wigan there is a Corrupt And Illegal Practices List of convicted persons.

The court case referring to the guilty verdicts in the list below was reported in depth by the Wigan Observer over a lengthy period, concluding on 10 March 1894. The Commissioner returned his verdict on the eighth day of the enquiry into a by-election which took place on 20 December 1893 for the Swinley Ward. The candidates were George Rushton and Thomas Worthington; the petition was brought by George Rushton against the return of Thomas Worthington at that election.

The petition alleged that the election of Thomas Worthington should be voided because of bribery. On several occasions bribery took place in the Saracen's Head Inn, Wigan Lane, and involved plying people with drinks and making payments in order to secure votes. There was extensive and detailed press coverage of the proceedings in the Wigan Observer – the proprietors of which had themselves been sued for contempt of court for earlier reporting the rumours which had been circulating at the time.

With boundary changes over a number of years our Electoral Registers cover areas that now lie in other Boroughs, such as Wroughton, Parbold, Skelmersdale, Horwich and Dalton. Researchers may not realise that Skelmersdale, for example, was for a period of time in the Westhoughton Constituency.

For a list of holdings of registers and poll books please see our Guide To Genealogical Sources on our website.

The Wigan Observer is available on microfilm along with our collection of Electoral Registers and Poll Books at Wigan Local Studies. For more information please phone 01942 828020 or heritage@wigan.gov.uk

CORRUPT AND ILLEGAL PRACTICES LIST.				
Borough of Wigan, TO WIT.				
Name, Surname being first.	Description.	Offence of which found Guilty.	Court, before which convicted or found Guilty.	Date on which convicted or found Guilty.
Benson, William	38, Dicconson street, Wigan, Agent	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Smith, Thomas	37, Charles street, Wigan, Provision Dealer, and Schoolmaster	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Hawett, Henry	13, Duke street, Wigan	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Hill, Henry	2, Buckley houses, Wigan, Lampman	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Bond, Henry	9, Buckley houses, Wigan	Corrupt Practices	Court for the Trial of the Petition against the Election of a Representative in Town Council for the Swinley Ward of the Borough of Wigan, County Palatine of Lancaster, on the 23rd day of December, 1893, in which George Rushton was the Petitioner and Thomas Worthington was the Respondent.	7th March, 1894
Postlethwait, Anthony	14, Sterling street	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Middlehurst, William	12, Sterling street	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Jackson, Elijah	8, Sterling street	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Hallwell, George	4, Sterling street	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Cash, James	22, Duke street, Wigan	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Winstanley, John	16, Grayson's yard, Wigan, Collier	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Winnard, Hugh	5, Golden Cross yard, Wigan, Painter	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Taylor, William	28, Duke street, Wigan, Painter	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Murray, Daniel	1, Saracen's Head yard, Shoemaker	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Jolley, Daniel	20, Grayson's yard, Wigan	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Gibson, Alfred	181, Dornay yard, Wigan, Earthenware Dealer	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Johnson, Richard	Rowletton squares, Wigan, and Manchester road, Inos, Mineral Water Manufacturer	Corrupt Practices		7th March, 1894
Corless, Hugh	Saracen's Head Inn, Wigan	Knowingly suffered treating upon his house and premises		7th March, 1894

J. A. CHARNOCK, TOWN CLERK.

OCTOBER, 1895  
PLATT, PRINTER, WIGAN.

## Wigan Borough Environment & Heritage Network 'Our Local Environmental and Heritage Matters'



If you agree, groups and individuals are warmly invited to join our Network. The Network provides:

- Regular Meetings
- Advice and Information
- Site Visits
- Speakers
- Partnership working with Wigan Council, WLCT and other bodies in the Borough

Please contact joe41@blueyonder.co.uk or visit www.wiganheritage.com for more information.



# The Old Police Station Leigh

## Memories of the Weights and Measures Service

BY IAN FERGUS BAILLIE



*Inspector Arthur Wedgwood*

In 1961, having successfully completed an interview with Chief Superintendent Enstone of the Lancashire county Council Police Force, a young man of 17 years, fresh from Grammar School, was despatched to the Weights and Measures Office within the old abandoned Police Station, Leigh. The young man had a burning desire to be a police officer but after attempting to join as a cadet in the forces of both Lancashire County Council and Bolton Borough Council he found himself wanting in height. The Weights and Measures Service seemed to be a second best option although the post was that of a civilian assistant trainee.

I was that young man. Although brought up in Walkden from the age of two I had only been to Leigh once before to visit my uncle Douglas who ran a bakers and confectioners shop there. It was quite

an adventure to not only catch the correct bus but also find my way without the assistance of a street map to the office entrance on Charles Street. The building was so innocuous that I walked past it twice before being accosted by my future senior officer Inspector Arthur Wedgwood. Inspector Wedgwood was born in Glossop and had joined the Police Force in 1947. He had been a sportsman of some quality having captained the Glossop cricket team and he was reputed to have been on the books of Manchester United.

This tall, powerfully built officer was ably assisted by two civilian weights and Measures Inspectors, although we were later joined by another trainee, John Sharratt, the son of a Westhoughton Police Officer and also my lifelong friend. This work force was the entire strength. We had to cover the Warrington Division, which covered an area surrounded by the boundaries of Warrington, Wigan, Bolton and Salford.

I remember the old station well for it also incorporated the local Magistrates Court and was bounded by Church Street, Charles Street, Bold Street and Vernon Street across from The Courts Hotel. The interior area was a quadrangle surrounded by garages used for storage by the charity Toc H and there were the old horse stables. Within the building were the many offices, including the cells and the Court with its ornate chairs still remaining on the bench. The Weights and Measures Office, which to date stands on the corner of Charles Street and Bold Street, is the only remaining feature of the old station now that it has been demolished.

A feature of the office most remembered by our more senior citizens was the cast iron plaque of standard measures of length affixed to the outside wall of the building. Traders could check their own measures of length, or indeed purchasers who wished to ensure that they had received correct measure. Of course they were rarely utilised as there

was a more sophisticated pecking order of standards, culminating in the standard yard derived from the standard metre, and the standard pound now derived from the standard kilogram.

Sadly the plaque is no longer there, a sad demise for an historic relic if it was sold simply for its scrap value, but the office still has a worthy purpose in being currently occupied by the Wigan and Leigh Pensioners Link.

Life in the 1960s was great fun for a young trainee, the music was great, the pop groups were plentiful, and our lunch periods were often spent playing cricket and football in the empty station quadrangle, although once Inspector Wedgwood was at the crease it was impossible to bowl him out.

We also had an affinity with Avery's, the scale makers, who had a repair workshop at the top end of Platt Fold street, it was from their upper storey crane loading bay that I could shout to the girls walking into town from Ward and Goldstones; I was too shy to chat to them face to face.

It wasn't always fun of course; there was a serious side to the work we did. There was the routine maintenance of our physical standard weights and measures in order that we could ensure the equipment used for trade was accurate. This entailed visiting every premise within the Division so if one can imagine all the shops, factories, mills, coal mines, market stalls and petrol stations, it was quite a mammoth task, particularly as our goal was to cover every one each year. During this period we were also furnished with a brand new 30 hundredweight Bedford Van in which we could carry our petrol pump testing measures, a ton of 56lb working standard weights and our coal deadweight machine for weighing sacks of coal. The penalty for this new acquisition was that we now had to cover our Widnes Division twice a week to cater for their heavy industry. Every so often we held what we termed a stamping station within several of the outlying towns. Local traders would bring their weights for re-adjustment, as of course with constant use they eventually lost weight. Every weight was furnished with a sunken lead plug to which extra lead could be added if required. After testing on our precision balance, the plug was then re-stamped with the crown and date.

A most enjoyable day trip for me was the usual Friday excursion with Inspector Wedgwood to the Scale makers in Wigan for testing and re-stamping of repaired machines. At lunchtime the older chaps would tell me endless tales of what happened in the old days, anecdotes from their lives, some funny and some sad. Sometimes they would pull my leg but it was all fascinating to a young man.

Perhaps my favourite venture followed the taking of formal samples of fertilisers and animal feeding stuffs. I was charged with taking these to the public analyst in Preston. This entailed me catching the train from Bolton to Preston and after delivering my samples I could treat myself to quick lunch before hopping on the train home, arriving early enough to be back before my normal finishing time, and for that one day I had been my own boss.

My studies to become a fully-fledged Inspector of weights and measures were somewhat onerous, entailing three nights attendance per week throughout the winter at the Ducie Avenue Evening Centre, Manchester, and this was in conjunction with a correspondence course. Later a weekly one day course at Openshaw Technical College on Ashton Old Road, Manchester, was introduced and was most welcome considering the travelling necessary. Nowadays students take the subjects in modular form and progress by taking additional modules, different to my experience.

Apart from all the routine duties there was an even more serious side to the work of this office and that was the detection of criminal offences. Although weights and measures crime may appear not to have been rife in those days it did happen, either deliberate fraud or through lack of diligence. Short weight loaves of bread were often down to lack of care in the baking process. With old methods of pre-packing foodstuffs in paper bags they often dried out, resulting in loss of weight. Many of our skirmishes were with a minority of coal haulers who would have on their vehicles short weight sacks of fuel, or when delivering to a coal bunker they would omit to drop a bag and therefore be able to sell that for a little beer money. These were of course the days in which the division had many coalmines and it was usual practice to provide mineworkers with concessionary coal as part of their remuneration.

Most dear to many of our clients was the concern that they might not be getting their correct measure





of beer or spirit and to this end we were obliged to utilise our favoured method of detection, the undercover test purchase. Contrary to popular opinion we could never drink the product on duty as it was necessary to allow the beer to flatten and specific gravity beads were dropped into spirits to check the alcoholic strength.

I suppose by its very subject, Weights and Measures, it comes across as a rather boring occupation but the truth was far from it. There was so much variation, visiting every type of industry and witnessing so many different production techniques. With the advent of the Trade Descriptions Act and the plethora of consumer protection legislation that was to follow the job became such that the only constant was continuing change. So this has been a very rough sketch of the type of work carried out from this small unimposing office on Charles Street. My work in Leigh came to an end when I was transferred to the Bolton Division and after several changes of Local Authorities I finally ended my career as the Assistant Director in charge of Trading Standards and The Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures for the City of Salford.

An example of the wall standards  
this one being from the Royal Observatory at Greenwich



However, I never lost my fondness Leigh all those years ago and I often have to visit the town with my grandchildren who live locally. I never fail to bore them by walking past the old office and regaling one memory or another that no doubt they have heard a hundred times before.

## • TYLDESLEY CREATIVE WRITERS •

The culmination of Tyldesley Creative Writers' First World War Commemoration project has been the production of a DVD which covers the 1914-1918 period, at home and at the Western Front.

Nearly thirty people were involved, from ages 16 to 90. The written pieces included letters, drama, poems and accounts of soldiers at the front and families at home. These were bound together by a narration of how the war progressed. The whole production was filmed by university student, Emma Costello, who now works for the BBC in London. Most of those taking part wore period costume.

On 6 November, a presentation evening was held at Tyldesley Library where guests watched excerpts of the 3-hour DVD. Mary Berry, the group organiser and director of the project, was congratulated by Tyldesley Writers before presenting a bound copy of the script to Library staff.

The group, as a token of appreciation to the Library, also donated a television for groups needing to use one for their own future projects. The DVD will be available to all interested parties.

Viewing their finished work for the first time, members said how much they had learned from their research. Particularly poignant was an account by member Diane Brooks of her father who had fought in the war, losing an arm. She took the part of her own grandmother, who expressed her pride in the bravery of her son. On 11 November we attended our usual Creative Writing meeting, and stood for the two minutes silence with Library staff. On this historic day, we had particular good cause to contemplate the sacrifice of both soldiers and their families.



Rudrani Kadiyala prepares to nurse  
the casualties

By Frances Raftery

## YOUR LETTERS - CAN YOU HELP

### Dear Editor

I am enclosing a few details and pictures, which I hope may be of interest to readers.

This is a photograph of my grandfather, Herbert James Pennington, and his five brothers, taken at a time when three of them were in service during the First World War. They are (back row, left to right): Herbert James, Harry Hammond, James Reginald and (front row) Walter, Richard Allan and Sidney Arthur. Walter and Richard Allen returned safely from the conflict.



Sadly, Sidney Arthur, who was called up at the age of 26 in 1914, was killed in action three years later on 23 October 1917, whilst serving in France with the Royal Engineers. He is buried in the Hooze Grater Cemetery, Zillebeke, Belgium. News of his death appears in the Wigan Observer. I also have in my possession a photograph of Sidney with his two young children, Brenda and Lyndon, that he took to war with him. When he was killed it was found and written on the back is, 'To be returned to Mr and Mrs Pennington, 135 Wigan Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield' – Sidney's parents and my great-grandparents.

I always look forward to receiving Past Forward and reading the many interesting articles.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Jean Parfrey

### Dear Editor

This is a picture of my grandad, James Orme (second left, middle row), with his First World War comrades at Catterick Camp in Yorkshire. He survived the war and sadly passed away in 1975. I am trying to find a picture of his brother (my grand-uncle), Thomas Orme. He served in the 2nd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards who went to France in 1915.

A lot of their records were destroyed by fire and they don't have any pictures of him. If any Past Forward readers' ancestors were in the same Battalion perhaps you may have a picture, or any descendants of his may have one in their collections? If anyone can help with any information, please contact me at [lindacarter43@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lindacarter43@hotmail.co.uk)

Many thanks,

Linda Carter





## Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Our Lady's RC Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull at 7.30pm.

All are welcome, contact Barbara Rhodes for further details on 01942 222769.

## Atherton Heritage Society

Monthly meetings held on second Tuesday of each month in St Richard's Parish Centre, Mayfield Street, Atherton at 7.30pm. Admission – Members, £1.00, Non Members, £2.00, including refreshments. Contact Details: Margaret Hodge, 01942 884893.

**13 January 2015**

Lost Treasures – Speaker, Mark Olly

**10 February 2015**

Walkden Yard Colliery Locos – Speaker, Alan Davies

**10 March 2015**

The Mary Rose – Speaker, Harry Eatough

## Billinge History and Heritage Society

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.

Please contact Geoff Crank for more information on 01695 624411 or at Gcrank\_2000@yahoo.co.uk

## Hindley & District History Society

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 information.

## Leigh & District Antiques and Collectables Society

The society meets at Leigh RUFC, Beech Walk, Leigh. New members are always welcome and further details available from Mr C Gaskell on 01942 673521.

## Leigh & District Family History Society

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 helpdesk is run by members each Monday afternoon at Leigh Local Studies, Leigh Library. Contact Mrs G. McClellan (01942 729559).

**20 January 2015**

AGM followed by Reading, Writing & 'Rithmetic – Louise Wade

**17 February 2015**

Leigh's WW1 Military Tribunal Records and New Developments at Archives and Local Studies – Alex Miller

**17 March 2015**

Maximilian Parker – Katherine Carter

## Local History Federation Lancashire

The Federation holds several meetings each year, with a varied and interesting programme. For details visit [www.lancashirehistory.org](http://www.lancashirehistory.org) or call 01204 707885.

## Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

Meetings held at 7.30pm on the fourth Tuesday each month at Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland. There are no meetings in July or August. For more information contact Sue Hesketh (Secretary) 01942 212940 or [Suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:Suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk) or visit [www.liverpoolgenealogy.org.uk/SkemGrp/Skem](http://www.liverpoolgenealogy.org.uk/SkemGrp/Skem)

## Wigan Civic Trust

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

second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. The venue is St George's Church, Water Street, Wigan WN1 1XD. Contact Mr A Grimshaw on 01942 245777 for further information.

## Wigan Archaeological Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm, in the Standish Suite at the Bocket Arms on Mesnes Road - on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August). 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 at [www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk](http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk)

## Wigan Family and Local History Society

We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at St Andrews Parish Centre, 120 Woodhouse Lane, Springfield, Wigan at 7.15pm.

**14 January 2015**

Researching your Family Tree  
This meeting will be held at The Museum of Wigan Life, and we will be in attendance to help you (with assistance from Museum staff) from 4pm to 8.30pm, where you can use all the excellent facilities available at the Museum.

**14 February 2015**

Speaker, Bill Ashurst – Bill will share his thoughts of his Rugby League career in contrast to the present day.

**11 March 2015**

Speaker, Alex Miller – Alex will talk about the Borough Archives Service

Attendance fees are £2.50 per meeting for both members and visitors. Our aim is to provide support, help, ideas and advice for members and non members alike. For more information please visit, <http://www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/> or see us at our weekly Monday afternoon helpdesks at the Museum of Wigan Life.

## Trace your First World War Ancestors

This taster session will help you trace your wartime ancestors by using archive and local studies collections. The workshop will also introduce the different online resources to help you trace your ancestor.

9 December, 10.30-11.30, Hindley Library

20 January, 10.30-11.30, Golborne Library

Free • Contact: 01942 404559 or email

[H.Turner@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:H.Turner@wigan.gov.uk)

## Holocaust Memorial Day

27 January 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. 2015 will also be the 20th anniversary of the Genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia. There will be a commemoration at both the Museum of Wigan Life and in Leigh (venue to be confirmed). The theme for this major anniversary year will be memory.

27 January 27, Museum of Wigan Life

Please call the museum for further details of the commemoration at Leigh. Everyone is welcome to attend both events but please let us know by calling 01942 828128 or emailing [heritage@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@wigan.gov.uk)

## Carry On Cleaning @ Wigan Archives

If you've ever wondered how we preserve historic records, come along to Wigan Archives to join in with our ongoing project to clean and document the records of Wigan's Victorian courts. Join our team of volunteers in revealing the stories of crime and punishment in Wigan and learn how to help preserve the Borough's history.

28 January 2015, 25 February 10.00am-3.00pm

Wigan Archives Service, Leigh Town Hall

Free • 01942 404430

## Stand and Deliver – George Lyon, the Upholland Highwayman

12-1.15pm Thursday 29 January

£2.50 including tea/coffee

George Lyon was the last highwayman to be hanged at Lancaster Castle and 2015 marks the 200th anniversary of his execution. Highwaymen often became folk heroes and hundreds turned up to watch Lyon's execution. He had been convicted for burgling Westwood House in Ince, the home of Charles Walmsley. Come along to this illustrated talk by Marianne Howell which contrasts the fortunes of George Lyon and Charles Walmsley.

A special Crime Month event.

## Good Friends and Good Neighbours – Neighbourhood life 1900-1930

Join author and historian Elizabeth Roberts to find out how our parents and grandparents got along with their neighbours in the early 1900s. How did neighbours support each other 100 years ago?

**How did they stick together in times of need?**

What happened if you fell below the strict social standards expected by the community? Find out about street and neighbourhood life through original oral history interviews.

7 February 2015, 12.00-1.15pm

Museum of Wigan Life

£2.50 including tea/coffee

Book early to avoid disappointment on 01942 828128 or email [heritage@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@wigan.gov.uk)

## Chinese New Year

Join us for a special celebration as we welcome in Chinese New Year 2015 at the Museum of Wigan Life. Amazing activities and fun for all the family with a day of drop in sessions, the chance to get up close to original objects and lots lots more. With support from the Confucius Classroom at Wigan and Leigh College. Please note this is a one-day only event. Contact the museum for exact date and full details.

February half term

Museum of Wigan Life

Free • No booking required

## Chinese New Year Family Fun

Come along celebrate with us the new Year of the Sheep! Children will love trying out some traditional Chinese skills and finding out about the zodiac animals. Investigate the New Year traditions and come face to face with objects from China's past. 17, 19 February 2015, 1.00pm-2.30pm

Tuesday

Museum of Wigan Life

£2.50 per child

Book early to avoid disappointment on

01942 828128 or email [heritage@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@wigan.gov.uk)

## Moving History

This is your opportunity to see everything from trench art to munitions as objects from the museum of Wigan Life go on tour around the Borough. You can get up close and personal with the museum's collections at various library venues.

Spring 2015

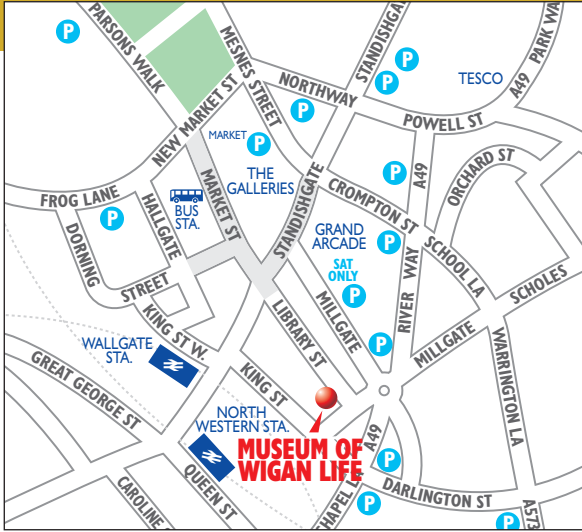
Libraries across the Borough

Free

01942 828128 or email [heritage@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@wigan.gov.uk)



# How to Find Us



## Museum of Wigan Life

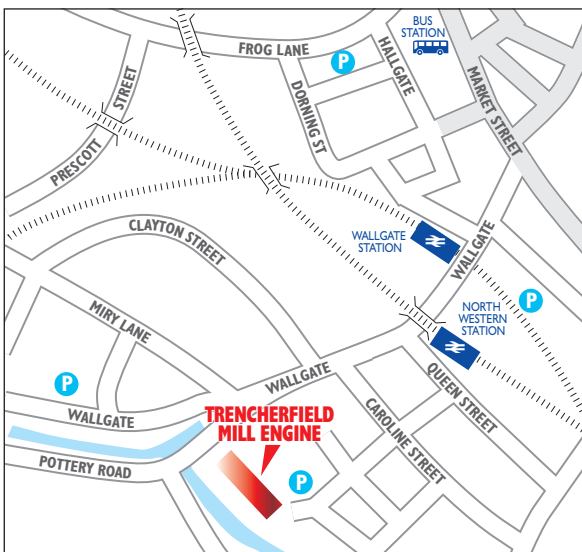
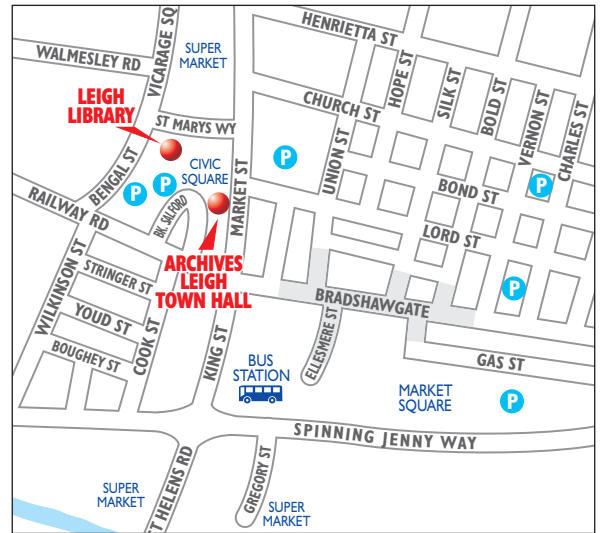
Library Street,  
Wigan WN1 1NU  
Telephone 01942 828128  
heritage@wigan.gov.uk

## Leigh Local History

Leigh Library, Turnpike Centre,  
Civic Square, Leigh WN7 1EB  
Telephone 01942 404559  
h.turner@wigan.gov.uk

## Archives

Leigh Town Hall, Leigh WN7 1DY  
Telephone 01942 404430  
a.miller@wigan.gov.uk



## Trencherfield Mill Engine

Wigan Pier Quarter, Heritage Way,  
Wigan WN3 4EF  
Telephone 01942 828128  
b.rowley@wigan.gov.uk



Bolton Bury  
Oldham Rochdale  
Salford Stockport  
Tameside Wigan

Take a closer look [www.gmmg.org.uk](http://www.gmmg.org.uk)



GREATER MANCHESTER  
MUSEUMS GROUP