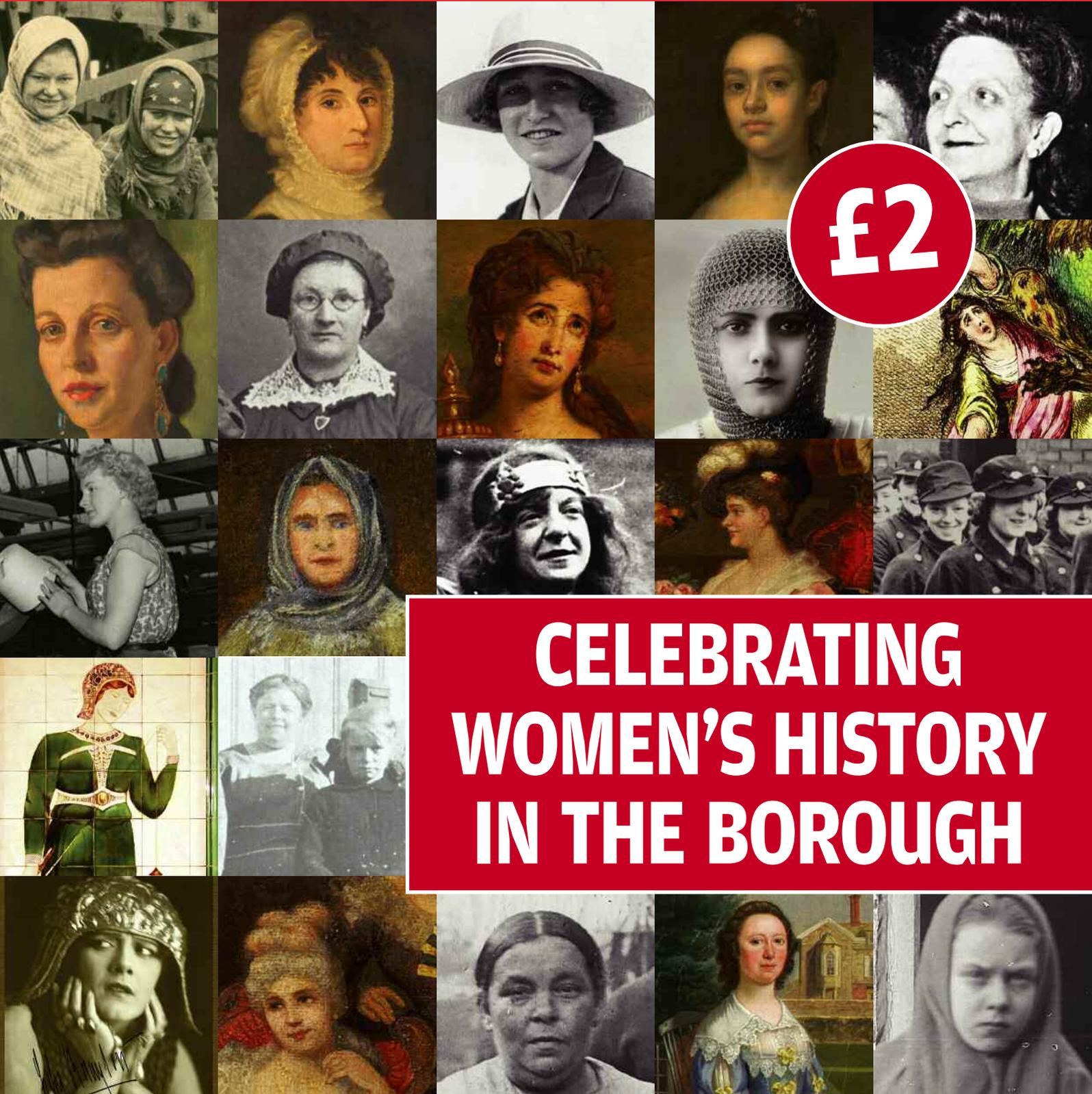


PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Museums & Archives

Issue No. 71

December 2015 - March 2016



£2

**CELEBRATING
WOMEN'S HISTORY
IN THE BOROUGH**

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FRONT COVER

Images of women from the Wigan Archives and the Museum of Wigan Life collections.

Letter from the Editorial Team

Welcome to **PAST Forward** Issue 71.

In this women's history themed edition of Past Forward you will find the local history competition winning essay by Denise Colbert. Denise wrote an article on Mary O'Shaughnessy, a Ravensbrück concentration camp survivor. You will also find articles about women's football during the First World War, women and miners' relief in Lancashire, and examples of Roman women in the Museum Collections. We are pleased to have an introduction from Councillor Joanne Platt.

BELIEVE IN HER

Women's rights through movements like the Suffragettes and later legislation calling for equal pay may seem like many years ago but sadly the prejudices still remain.

Gender equality is very much in focus at the moment, from the pay gap, equal parenting, violence against women and equal representation in business and politics. The term "everyday sexism", which grew out of social media, has now become a project, cataloguing instances of sexism experienced by women on a day to day basis.

This is why Wigan Council launched its **#BelieveInHer** campaign earlier this year, which calls for equality between men and women and also to recognise the achievements of women across our villages and towns and further afield on a worldwide stage. This is something I'm sure many of the women in our rich history have proven that they can do just as much as the men who would fill the annals of the borough's story.

We hope in years to come, in these photographs of the campaign being backed by many of our present sporting stars (such as Jenny Meadows, Heather Frederiksen and future prospect and England footballer, Charlotte Newsham) will be remembered.

The latest backer for our campaign is award-winning actress Maxine Peake. She has spoken about how important it is for women to not

Maxine Peake backing Believe In Her



Information for contributors, please see page 17

Believe In Her Grand Arcade Launch

feel like they have to conform to outdated stereotypes.

Speaking about #BelieveInHer Maxine has said: "For me it's really about encouraging women that they have amazing skills, I think women instinctively have the skills to get to the top in management or the arts for example and it's about tapping into that and encouraging women to use their strengths and not be afraid of them."

Looking back through our borough's history it is clear to see that there are many women who have embodied the spirit of #BelieveInHer and in this edition you will get to find out more about inspiring women like Lady Cotton who was a great philanthropist and donated land for community use.

We want men and women to remember and celebrate this rich history and be part of our campaign to inspire future women to achieve to their potential. It is easy to pledge your support to the campaign by visiting www.wigan.gov.uk/believeinher.

You can also support the Twitter campaign by taking a picture of yourself holding an A4 piece of paper with the reason you support the campaign. Post it to @WiganCouncil and use the hashtag #BelieveInHer.



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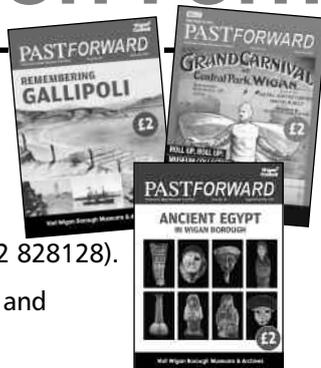
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Mary O'Shaughnessy

AN UNSUNG HEROINE

by Denise Colbert

Leigh lady, Mary O'Shaughnessy, worked as a nanny for a Provençale family in France at the outset of the Second World War. Clearly a woman of spirit, Mary had left England for France as a teenager, seeking adventure and independence. She had just one arm so was accustomed to dealing with adversity from a young age, which stood her in good stead for the years ahead of her.

In 1940 Mary was living in Angers with her employers family and was watching the events now collectively known as the Battle of Belgium with great interest. As matters escalated further and France surrendered, Allied troops beat a hasty retreat, many heading south. Mary aided a local resistance cell wherever she could; hiding stranded British servicemen and directing groups that had lost their way down escape lines to the Pyrenees.

When the country was under German occupation, Mary continued to work with the Resistance, helping many airmen who had been shot down return to the UK. She cared for one particular pilot for months, until the injuries that were preventing him from travelling healed and they successfully affected his escape.

Eventually her work came to the attention of the Gestapo and before long she was on their 'wanted list'. While she was in Paris, Mary was informed by members of the Resistance that her apartment had been searched. Sensing that it was time for her to leave France, she made arrangements to return home via Spain. Sadly, these plans were never implemented as she was betrayed to the Gestapo by a supposed friend and arrested in March 1944. Taken to Mont Luc at Lyon, Mary was interrogated for ten days for information, which she would not give. Frustrated, the Nazis then sent her on a cattle truck with hundreds of other prisoners to Ravensbrück concentration camp.

Ravensbrück

Located 56 miles north of Berlin, Ravensbrück was the only major Nazi concentration camp for women. Upwards of 132,000 women and children were incarcerated here, around only 20 per cent of which were Jewish. The conditions in this camp were as shameful and difficult as in all the other concentration camps; death by starvation, beating, torture, hanging, and shooting happened daily.

Soon after her arrival at the camp, Mary was called out of her block by a female guard who spoke to her in German. In Mary's words '...I did not understand, and then she punched me violently on

Mary O'Shaughnessy in 1945. Mary is stood at the back of the photograph.

This image has been reproduced courtesy of Auto Images SVT.



either side of my face, breaking some of my teeth. She then came back at me again as I was still standing up and hit me across the face with her fist, breaking my nose. I have seen many of the prisoners smacked across the face with whips by SS women.' She added that the striking of prisoners by male and female guards 'was too common an occurrence to be worthy of note at the time'.

Women who were too weak to work at Ravensbrück were transferred at the Uckermark Youth Camp located nearby, thus named because up to the end of 1944, it had been used for German girls and young women who were deemed to need 're-education'. Selection for the Uckermark apparently happened every two or three weeks. The SS commandant and doctors of the camp had the women lift their skirts over their hips and run in front of them. Those with swollen feet, injuries or scars, or simply too ill or too weak to run, were immediately selected for a 'recovery' period in Uckermark. This actually consisted of being jailed in sealed barracks without medical care and food. Those that were still alive once they got there faced selection for the gas chamber. Sometimes, prisoners were gassed in vans transformed into mobile gas chambers. The exhaust pipe of the engine was directly connected to the van's freight compartment, and gassing was done in 15-20 minutes.

Mary was sent to the Youth Camp as a result of her disability, along with British citizens Cicily Lefort (an accomplished yachtswoman and Special Operations Executive) and Mary Young (a 60 year old Scottish civilian nurse, who had served in field hospitals during the First World War) her two closest friends at the camp. When they arrived, Mary and her two friends were crammed into one of the smaller blocks with about 70 other women. The guards inferred

**Leigh Woman Tells of
Nazi Camp Horrors**

Miss Mary O'Shaughnessy, of Leigh, gave evidence at the Ravensbruck concentration camp trial on Wednesday.

Miss O'Shaughnessy, who was working in Angers, France, as a governess when war broke out, and later helped British officers and men to escape, told of the horrors of life in a Nazi camp.

She mentioned in evidence the names of two British victims at Ravensbruck—Mrs. Cecily Lefort, an Englishwoman married to a Frenchman, who joined the W.A.A.P. parachuted into France and was captured, and a Scots-woman named Mary Helen Young a civilian. In Ravensbruck she met about ten British subjects, of whom six or seven died.

Girls Were Shot

In January, 1945, she was told that three British girls who had been parachuted into France had been shot.

Miss O'Shaughnessy said once an S.S. guard struck her repeatedly, breaking her teeth and nose, and then looked at her and said: "I've made a mistake, I thought you were someone else."

"The last day at Ravensbruck I saw 12 to 15 bodies being thrown like sacks of dirt on to a hand cart. You could not call them bodies—just bags of bones."

Miss O'Shaughnessy was taken from the camp in April, 1945, by the Swedish Red Cross.

Article which appeared in the Leigh Chronicle during December 1946.

that it was a temporary arrangement while their permanent quarters were made ready. Instead they were left there for three days with no food or water for the first two, and with no way to comfortably relieve themselves, excreta covered the floor. Mary later said that during those first 48 hours, at least three women in her block died and their bodies remained where they lay. On the third day, the women received a splash of watery soup and a scrap of bread before they were moved into a larger block. The beds were planks fixed to the walls which allowed each woman a 15 inch space, and the straw mattresses were lice-ridden and wet through.

Although Mary noted that the prisoners were often selected randomly for execution, she lived in constant fear that her missing limb would single her out. Indeed, she only managed to avoid selection when parading, stripped to the waist baring her artificial arm, as she was aided post-count by her sympathetic Blockova (a prisoner appointed to act as an intermediary guard) who hid Mary under a bed at the back of the block. This Blockova, named Ann Seymour Sheridan, helped her on three separate occasions.

All in all, of a total of 132,000 multi-national prisoners, it is estimated that 92,000 of them died in the camp by starvation, executions, or weakness. Mary met around ten fellow Brits in the camp, six or seven of whom died, including her friends Cicily and Mary (who were both selected for gassing) and three female parachutists who were shot.

Mary survived her ordeal and gave evidence about her time there at the Hamburg Ravensbrück Trials in 1946. Like most other survivors, Mary found that after the war, nobody wanted to hear about the camp. She hoped to write a book about what she had witnessed, but was told by a friend in Fleet Street that the British public would not want to read it. What a shame she didn't write it anyway.

Additional sources:

'If this is a woman: inside Ravensbruck: Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women' by Sarah Helm
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/print/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/52/a2082052.shtml>

The Stars and Stripes, Friday Dec 13 1946, Page 13. Accessed via Ancestry 07/04/2012

Leigh Chronicle

<http://www.jewishgen.org/ForgottenCamps/Camps/RavensbruckEng.html>
www.axis-history.com

THE MAB'S CROSS LEGEND

by Bill Melling

One of the most famous women in Wigan's long history is Lady Mabel Bradshaigh whose story has been passed down through countless generations of Wiganers as the Mab's cross legend.

I first heard the story from my grandfather. He was a wonderful story teller who would always respond to my pleas to 'tell us a tale grandad.' He had a fund of stories mainly about local history amongst which my favourite was always the story of Mab's cross.

As I remember it, after over seventy years, the story he told me concerned Sir William Bradshaigh and his wife Lady Mabel, who lived at Haigh Hall during the Middle Ages. William went away on a crusade to try and recapture Jerusalem and nothing was heard of him for several years until a Welsh knight arrived with the news that William had been killed in battle. He comforted the heartbroken Lady Mabel and soon they were married and he took the title of Lord of the Manor of Haigh. Two or three years later a pedlar arrived at Haigh Hall and revealed himself to the servants as Sir William and they confronted the bigamous couple. On seeing him Lady Mabel broke down in tears of joy and the Welsh knight fled in terror, hotly pursued by Sir William who eventually caught and killed him at the top of Standishgate. A stone cross was erected to mark the spot and every Sunday morning Lady Mabel walked barefooted from Haigh Hall to the cross as a penance for her sins.

As I found out in later life, my grandad's story was generally in line with the accepted version of the legend, minor differences being that the Welsh knight was killed at Newton and that Sir William returned dressed as a palmer – a pilgrim

who had visited the Holy Land who carried a palm leaf attached to his staff. Until I started to research this article, I had accepted the story at face value. After all, the tomb of Sir William and Lady Mable is there to be seen in Wigan Parish Church with carvings on its sides of a woman kneeling in front of a cross and one of a knight being slaughtered. Also, the remains of the actual Mab's cross are there for all to see.

However a visit to the internet revealed that local historians had, for nearly two hundred years been trying to connect the legend with actual historical events. As early as 1829, John Roby, in his 'Traditions of Lancashire' realized that the Crusades had finished many years before the events in the legend took place. The first real

Dame Mabel of Mab's Cross by Angelica Kauffmann.



study of the historical record was by the Rev. T.C.Porteus, the vicar of Coppull from 1912 to 1934, who published a number of papers on the subject and his work provided a foundation on which later local historians could build. What follows is a very broad summary of their work.

There can be no doubt that Sir William and Lady Mabel actually existed. William was listed as one of the knights involved in the failed, so called Banaster rebellion of 1315, against the Earl of Lancaster, the King's representative in Lancashire. In its aftermath, he was one of those charged with the murder of Sir Henry de Bury and when he failed to appear for trial he was declared an outlaw, which meant he could be killed on sight, the two men charged with him were both hanged. William fled the country and for several years disappeared from the historical records. It is possible that he went to Wales and served as a mercenary in the King's service where Edward II was engaged in putting down the rebellion of Llewellyn Bryn. Such service was often rewarded with a royal pardon. Williams's land and property at Haigh and Blackrod were seized by his enemies although Lady Mabel still seems to have been allowed to live on them. No record can be found of her remarrying although in a court case in 1319 she declared that her husband was dead.

By 1322 the political situation in Lancashire had changed completely. The Earl of Lancaster had fallen foul of the King who had him executed and William, with a royal pardon, was able to return and reclaim his lands and property. One of his retainers who came back with him was named Henry de Palmer, a possible link to the legend which has William coming back disguised as a palmer.

There is no evidence of William seeking revenge or killing anyone on his return, but for the next ten years, he was involved in many bloody clashes with his neighbours. At this time, a state of anarchy existed in Lancashire with various factions battling for supremacy and settling old scores. In 1333 at Newton, William was killed in a skirmish with the descendants of Sir Henry de Bury who William had been accused of murdering in 1315.

After her husband's death, Lady Mabel devoted her life to holy and charitable causes endowing chapels at Wigan and Blackrod. The last time



Lady Mabel and her husband in All Saints Church, Wigan

her name appears in the records is in 1348, the year of the Black Death. As for the actual Mabel's cross itself, there is a reference to a cross at the top of Standishgate in 1277 possibly serving as a boundary marker which proves that it was not erected to commemorate anything to do with Lady Mabel. However in 1403, some fifty years after her death, there is reference in a land deed to 'Mabcrosse'. The use of the nickname so soon after her death suggests that it could have originated in Lady Mabel's lifetime. This and the image on the side of her tomb strongly suggests that she actually did the penance as told in the legend.

Given the true facts – the existence of the main characters, William's disappearance and return and Lady Mabel's penance - it is easy to see how the other facts got twisted in the telling to make a better story, casting Sir William in a more favourable light. In a way it is reminiscent of the old Morecambe and Wise joke; when Andre Previn criticizes Eric's piano playing only to be told, "All the right notes are there but not necessarily in the right order".

In this article it has only been possible to give a broad outline of the historical facts. For anyone wishing to learn more, there is an excellent book by Fred Holcroft, 'Murder, Terror, and Revenge in Medieval Lancashire', available and there are also some interesting articles to be found on the internet.

Regenerating the Archives & Leigh Local Studies

Regular readers of Past Forward, or anyone following the Archives on social media will have seen information about the major project to provide new public and storage premises for the Archives & Leigh Local Studies.

Over the summer we carried out two public consultation meetings and an online survey, with researchers from around the world sending in their feedback on our proposals.

We are now pleased to let readers know that we have submitted our proposals to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and will be seeking a substantial grant from the HLF – with a contribution from Wigan Council – to help us realise our ambitions for the service.

Our proposals offer an exciting future for the Archives and will allow us to create a service that better meets the demands of modern visitors. The Archives will remain based in Leigh Town Hall, with shared services with Leigh Local Studies – Wigan Local Studies at the Museum of Wigan Life will continue to run as normal.

In essence our project will focus on four areas: a new ground floor public searchroom, new museum/exhibition space in the vacant Town Hall/Market Street shops, new strongrooms in the basement of the shop units, new small café space and conservation to the Town Hall foyer.

We want to open up access both to the Archive collections and to the Town Hall building, putting museum and archive collections on display in Leigh town centre and helping to improve the look of Market Street and the Edwardian shop fronts. The new searchroom will have modern furniture and equipment, with better facilities for our wonderful team of volunteers. The searchroom and exhibition will be linked by the Foyer,

which will feature a small café and we hope to encourage people into the building. Finally we will create a suite of new strongrooms in the shop basements, linked to the existing Archive stores, giving us sufficient capacity to allow us to continue accessioning new collections many years into the future.

If successful, we will have further news in spring next year concerning our First Round HLF application. We will then enter a development phase to produce a full and comprehensive application. If we get to the second round stage, your ideas and feedback on the plan will be vital in demonstrating to the HLF that researchers locally and further afield want our proposals to be realised and will continue to support them – we will certainly be in touch. If you would like further details on the project at this stage, please contact us.

Dylan Lawson: Digital Archives Trainee

The Archives & Local Studies are delighted to welcome our new Digital Archives Trainee, Dylan Lawson, to the team.

Dylan joins us from the Library service in Telford

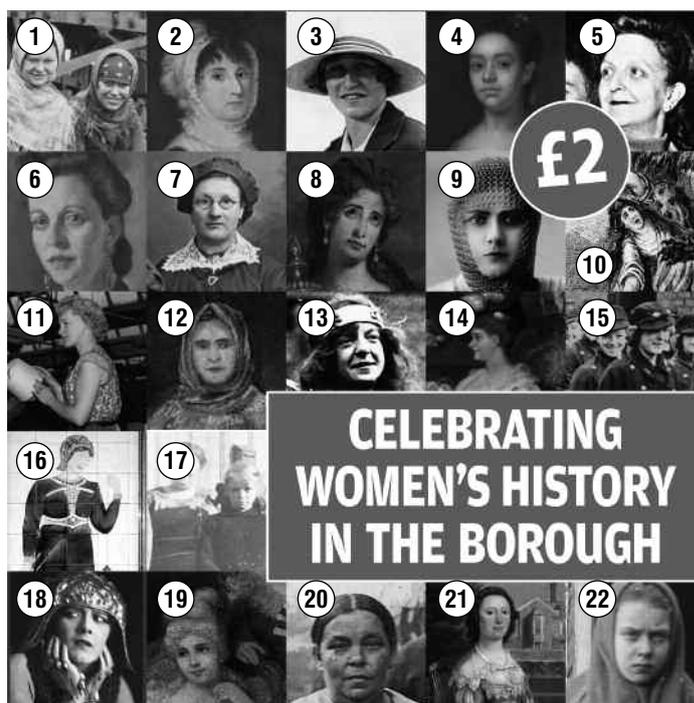
where he has worked on several outreach and engagement projects, including work on commemorating the impact of the First World War in Shropshire.

Dylan will be working with us thanks to the generous funding of the Heritage Lottery Fund and The National Archives, as part of the Skills for the Future project.



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The Beginning of the British Women's Temperance Association in Leigh and District

BY TONY ASHCROFT

In March 1876 'Mother' Eliza Stewart, the well-known temperance orator and anti-whisky crusader from America, was invited by the Leigh Branch of the Independent Order of Good Templars to deliver a lecture in Leigh. This took place in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Bradshawgate (The site later became the Empire Cinema and is now Iceland). The chapel had earlier connections with the temperance movement however, as this is where George Okell (known as the rector of the obelisk) became one of the first men in Leigh to sign the temperance pledge.

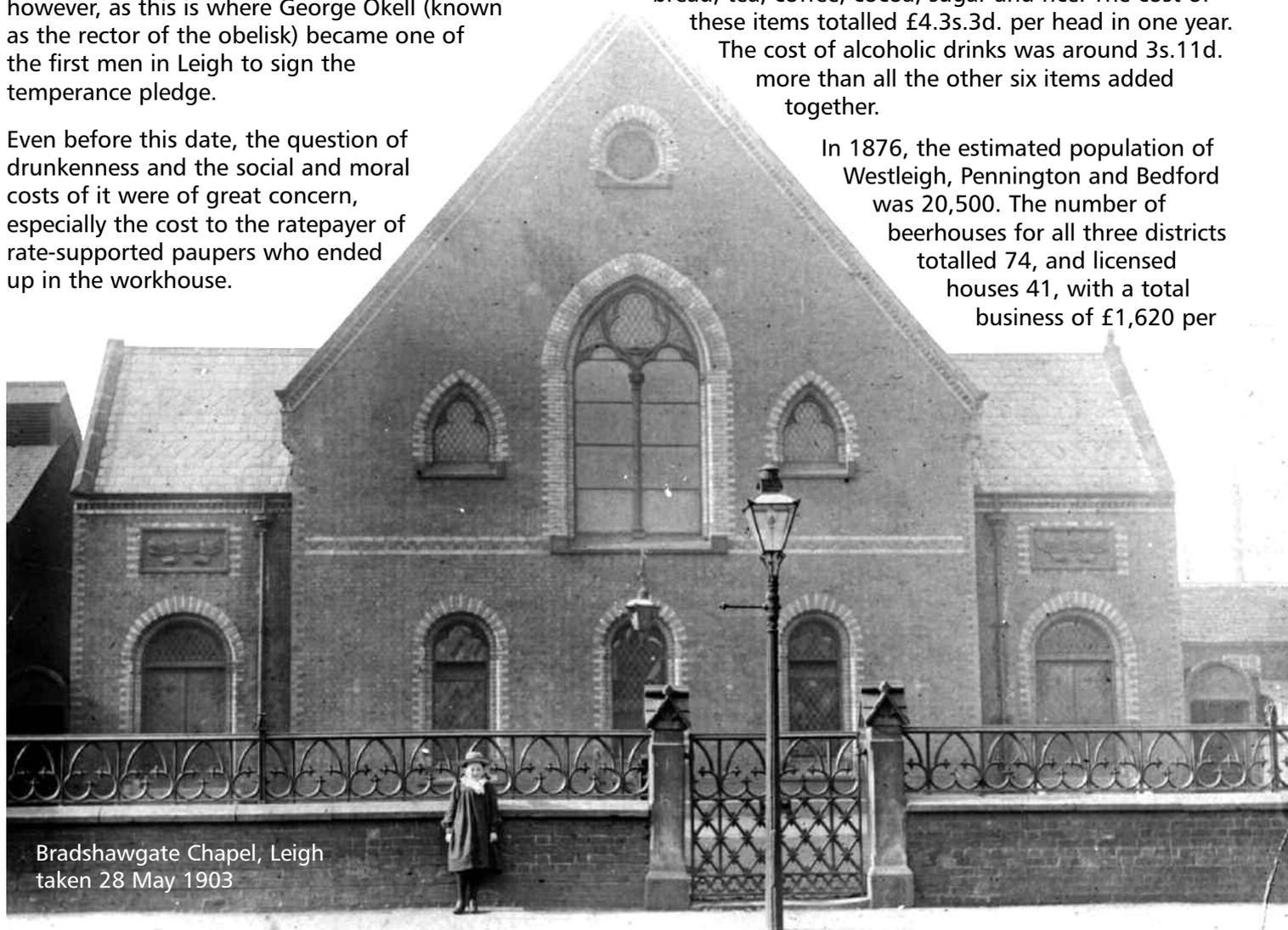
Even before this date, the question of drunkenness and the social and moral costs of it were of great concern, especially the cost to the ratepayer of rate-supported paupers who ended up in the workhouse.

Expenditure on Drink

In 1873 it was estimated that more than 140 million pounds was spent on alcohol in the UK and Ireland, that is a yearly total of £20 by every family in the UK, or else £4.7s.2d. for every man woman and child. This was a large sum especially compared to the cost of the six most common items of food and drink such as bread, tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar and rice. The cost of these items totalled £4.3s.3d. per head in one year.

The cost of alcoholic drinks was around 3s.11d. more than all the other six items added together.

In 1876, the estimated population of Westleigh, Pennington and Bedford was 20,500. The number of beerhouses for all three districts totalled 74, and licensed houses 41, with a total business of £1,620 per



Bradshawgate Chapel, Leigh
taken 28 May 1903

week. This gives an estimated expenditure of £4 per head for each man, woman and child spent on alcohol per week. This however does not include alcohol consumed in private houses.

‘Mother’ Stewart

Eliza Daniel Stewart, to give her full name, began her career in public service during the period of the American Civil War. She was active in promoting the work of Soldiers' Aid Societies and the United States Sanitary Commission during the conflict and helped to establish hospitals in which she served as a nurse. She was also actively involved with supplying foodstuffs, blankets, medicines and other supplies to the soldiers.

After the conflict ceased she became actively involved with the temperance movement, travelling widely both in America and Europe giving lectures on the effects of alcohol. At Osborn, Ohio she helped to establish the Women's Temperance League in 1873. This was to become the first local chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1874.

During 1873-1874 she participated in a temperance crusade. Advocates of temperance reform escalated their efforts to convince their fellow Americans to abstain from alcohol. For example at Hillsboro, Ohio in 1873 about 20 women marched through the town, stopping at every saloon praying for the souls of the barkeepers and their patrons. The women also demanded that the owners sign a pledge to refrain from selling alcohol. By 1873 more than 130 other communities had experienced their marches.

Eliza became a well-known figure in the temperance struggle and this continued for the remainder of her life.

‘Mother’ Stewart in Leigh

The Chairman for the meeting held in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Bradshawgate was J.B. Collinge of Liverpool. Others in attendance were Revs. W. Hancock and D. Wareing (Leigh), T. Savage (Golborne), J.Cockram (Tyldesley) and D. Thompson (Chowbent).

From the extensive report in the Leigh Chronicle of 1 April 1876, Mother Stewart appears to have been a forceful orator who used domestic situations to make her point with religious fervour and humour. She also advocated that women should take a more active role as temperance campaigners and can therefore be regarded as an early protagonist for women's movement.

'Men say, "We will attend to the advancement of the public interests." They say, "We will attend to this. We make the laws, we represent you and we vote for you". Well they have made a muddle of it haven't they?...There is not a woman I believe in this place, if she were left alone and could use her common sense, but would make better liquor laws than you have'.

Formation of Local Groups

Although the British Women's Temperance Association was formed in 1876, the local branches were established in 1878. Two meetings were held in Atherton in March of that year with Mrs. Burrows of Atherton, who was also Vice President of the Bolton branch of the Association being in attendance. Amongst others in attendance were: Mrs. Nuttall (the Vicarage), Mrs. R. Fletcher Jnr. Mrs. Lee (Alder House), Mrs. Hayes (The Limes), Miss Hesketh (New Road House), Mrs. Sephton (Manor House), Mrs. Wright (Lower Oak), Mrs. Frankland and Mrs. Burrows.

It was agreed to form a branch immediately after agreeing that it was important to bring the subject of temperance more prominently before their own sex.

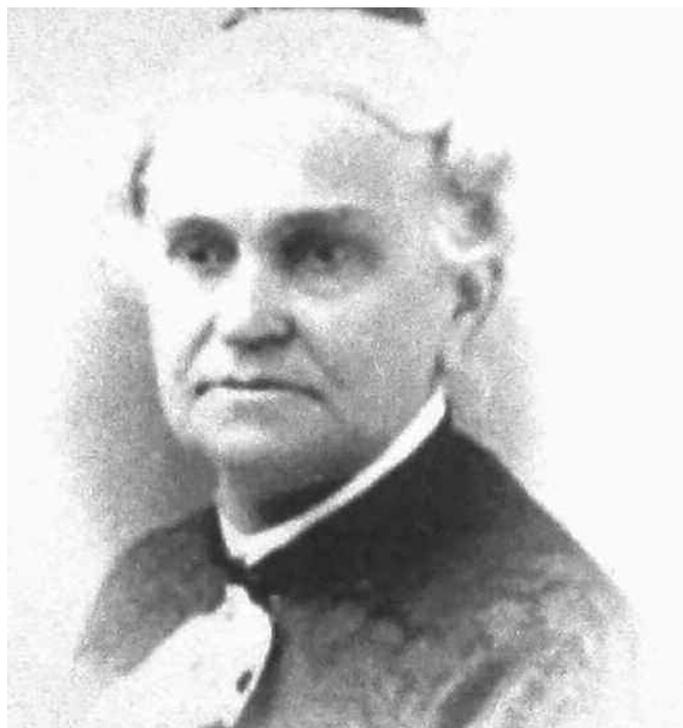
Later that year in October a meeting was held in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Leigh when a branch was established here. Once again Mrs. Burrows played a prominent role with Mrs. Hope addressing the meeting. Mrs.G.Cooper and Mrs. Johns (both of Bolton) and Madame Woyka were also in attendance. Mrs. Johns advocated that they do all in their power to abolish such a damaging trade as drink, whilst Madame Woyka proposed that coffee houses should be established.

The object of such an organisation was to lead by example and to use personal influence and endeavour to reform the intemperate and to discountenance society's drinking customs and to get up a women's petition on any temperance question.

Sources:

Leigh Chronicle 5 January 1876 quoting 'Hand and Heart'

Leigh Chronicle 15 July 1876.



Mother Stewart

South Lancashire Tramways Ladies Football Team During the First World War

BY ALF RIDYARD

As we are still remembering the deeds of locals in the First World War, I would just like to move forward to 1915. With the losses at the front now mounting and the demand for more troops now of paramount importance to the war in France and Belgium, the workforces in some industries were reaching a critical point, many of the engineering places were engaged in munitions work and the workforce was now becoming predominantly female. This of course has had chapter and verse written about it over the years.

One particular job that women took over is one we took for granted from the 1950s onwards, was that of bus conductresses, or "clippies" to give them the term used in the First World War. When the male conductors were called up it left a gap in the workforce and women stepped in. On the 14 May 1915, the unions objected and only conceded to women being employed on the assurance that they were paid the same rate as the men. The only concession they made was that women did not do the early and late shifts.

South Lancashire Tramways Ladies



Once the ladies started it became apparent that they needed some kind of exercise to keep them in good shape for the job. Not only that, the country needed some kind of moral boost and South Lancashire Tramways, the forerunner of Lancashire United Transport based in Howe Bridge, Atherton, became the first company in the world in 1915 to sponsor and promote ladies football.

The South Lancashire Tramways Ladies Football team predated Preston's famous Dick, Kerr Ladies Football Club by almost two years. However, the SLT Ladies team did not enjoy the same longevity as the Dick, Kerr Ladies. Dick, Kerr Ladies played on until 1965 raising thousands for the war effort of both world wars and later many charities.

Ladies football was not a new concept as church teams and other groups of women played the game before the turn of the century. It was seen by male audiences as more of a social sideshow. The Tramways women's team played their home games on the Flapper Fold ground of the Atherton, Lancashire combination team. The initial game ended in a no score draw against an unknown team but it was reported in the local press as being entertaining. A further game against the team from Sutcliffe and Speakman's factory in Guest Street, Leigh also ended with the same result, but yet again, the match was said to be entertaining. The first game was watched by a small crowd and an unspecified contribution was made to the injured soldiers' fund, unlike the second game, which was watched by more spectators and raised the princely sum of four pounds.

Before the war, Sutcliffe and Speakman specialised in manufacturing brick making equipment for the



Vulcan Shell Girls 17 February 1917

building industry. At the outbreak of the war the firm almost collapsed through a decimated workforce as well as a lack of orders as building work ceased. By chance when the new phenomenon of gas warfare was at its height, the company developed the prototype of a carbon filtered gas mask. These early models were very basic hoods with a carbon soaked cloth inside. By the time of the Second World War, the mask became commonplace and standard public equipment such as carbon filters and water treatment, became the staple material and products of the firm's existence after this.

Back to football and we find the Tramways team playing Irlam Co-operative Soap Works at Leigh Rugby League Football Club ground at Mather Lane. The result was a win for the Tramways but not without controversy as Irlam played two ladies who had featured in the Sutcliffe and Speakman side. However, Tramways won with Mabel Brown scoring the winning goal much to the delight of Charlie Collins (the Tramways manager) and the large crowd of over 1,000 spectators.

This is where the plot thickens, as it seems that Mr Charlie Collins was also the manager of the Sutcliffe team, as per a notice in the Leigh Journal testifying to a Mr. C. Collins of 101 Selwyn Street being 'the secretary and coach' during October 1917.

Was Charlie Collins managing both teams or could he have jumped ship?

We know that the Tramways side was still playing in 1918 as we find a result against Dick Kerr Ladies on the 5 October with the final score being 7-0 for the very professional Dick Kerr Ladies. The Tramways team that day was Nixon, Moore, Ganley, T Cummings, Coleman, Shovelton, C Cummings, Hadfield, Walker, Spence, and Wood. The game was played at Deepdale, Preston North End's ground, and was watched by 1,500 people. We also know Tramways played Vulcan Factory of Newton le Willows, raising money for a field ambulance for the army in France. Reports from both teams describe funds being raised for the vehicle.

Vulcan Foundry like Dick, Kerr and Co. was a steam locomotive manufacturer before the First World War but both were later requisitioned by the war office as munitions factories. Vulcan became a shell filling factory and Dick, Kerr made ammunition and petrol engine trains for the war department. Indeed many of these munitions factories had women's football teams and in the north east of England they had a very competitive cup competition. In conclusion I hope that this article and the pictures shown demonstrate the local teams that made these great strides to women's football and probably to women's emancipation.

BY ARTHUR JONES

Saint or Sinner? Villian or Victim? The Trial of a Wigan Herbalist's Wife



Wigan around the time Nancy Bedford lived there.

Before the 1902 Midwives Act, life for pregnant women in the poorer classes of society could be a hard and distressful time. This is particularly true in the industrialised towns, where poverty and lack of education was endemic. The act only marginally improved the lot of all pregnant women in that it introduced some controls over who could practice midwifery and minimum standards of hygiene amongst the practitioners. The standards were not always adhered to but there was at least some improvement on previous practices.

Contrary to the image often shown in many films and television programmes, the mother did not

always have a nice clean bed in which to give birth, nor was she always attended by a very efficient and cheerful midwife. There were neither ante-natal clinics, nor childbirth classes for expectant mothers. Pregnancies often occurred year after year. Birth control was virtually none existent.

During her pregnancy the woman was still required to continue to perform all her household chores; looking after existing children, cooking, baking, scrubbing floors, washing the family clothes in a tub and then carrying out any necessary repairs to them. She may even also have been going out to work. This would

continue right up to the time of her confinement. If she had an abusive or heavy drinking husband, these tasks would be even harder to perform. After delivery she was expected to resume the same duties immediately.

Her husband's income could be very low and irregular. She would therefore find it difficult to save money to cover the cost of her confinement such as doctor fees, midwife fees, medicines, etc. Very often she would go without food in order to feed her husband and any children already in the family. This did nothing to help her body carry the child in her womb or to give sustenance to the unborn child. Morbidity, stillbirth and infant mortality numbers were very high.

There was no such thing as maternity benefit before the 1911 Insurance Act, which only applied to insured people in employment and when it did become available, it was paid to the husband. It required another act in 1913 before the money was paid directly to the woman. The unemployed still had to rely on charity in one form or another.

Is it any wonder that a pregnant woman could be tempted to seek pills or potions to induce termination of unwanted pregnancies? Many quack doctors and herbalists would advertise such products, preying on the distress and desperation of that poor woman.

One such advertisement appeared in "The London Story Paper" on the 6 March 1897 and read as follows:-

*The Lancashire Female Remedy
(Established 1860)*

*Safe, Speedy and Effective in removing
OBSTRUCTIONS AND IRREGULARITIES*

It relieves in a few hours and NEVER FAILS.

*Price 4/6p, or post free, 5/-: For Pamphlet and List
send stamp to,*

*MADAME BEDFORD, Hope Street, Standishgate,
Wigan, Lancashire.*

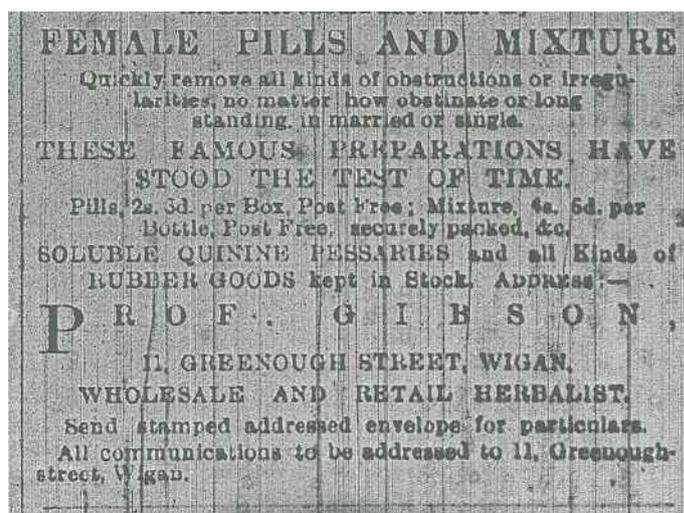
On Monday 20 December 1897, Madame Bedford, real name Nancy Bedford, (wife of a local herbalist) was charged and put on remand at Wigan borough Police Court for unlawfully supplying certain noxious drugs for an unlawful purpose on 18, 19 November and 1 December. She reserved her defence and was committed

to take her trial at the next Borough Quarter Sessions.

Nancy Bedford appeared at Wigan Quarter Sessions on 5 January 1898 where she was further charged with the offence. She was found guilty and sentenced to 6 months imprisonment. The recorder took into account that Nancy had not previously been to prison.

Nancy Bedford is next recorded in the 1901 Wigan census as a Herbalist and a widow. Her husband, James, who had stood by her throughout the trial, had died in November 1899. Nancy Bedford died in Lancaster in 1907 at the age of 64.

It is ironic that, on the day Nancy Bedford was found guilty of the crime and sentenced to imprisonment, the following advertisement appeared in the Wigan Observer.



Many other similar advertisements could be found in contemporary newspapers. Was Nancy Bedford being used as an example and warning to those others who were still pedalling their dangerous concoctions?

In the eyes of the overburdened and desperate pregnant women, Nancy may have been seen as a saint. In the eyes of the hypocritical and male dominated society of the times she was seen as a sinner.

Was she a villain for supplying a solution to a problem for desperate women? Or a victim of the age in which she lived and the needs of those women?

BY THOMAS McGRATH

The Women of Wareing Street

A snapshot into the lives of Tyldesley women in 1911

Wareing Street in Tyldesley would appear to be an ordinary street of nineteenth century housing; even local residents might only recognise the street as being the former location of Tyldesley railway station until 1969. However, from a historical perspective, Wareing Street is an extremely fascinating place to study. The street is named after Susannah Wareing, the wife of Thomas Johnson, Esquire. Johnson inherited the Tyldesley banks estate in 1763 and is credited with developing the formal layout of the town. Housing has existed on Wareing Street since at least the 1830s, with the street being adapted and added to over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

By the time of the census in April 1911 all construction had been completed and the street was a mixture of two roomed dwellings (known as Back Wareing Street), typical 'two up, two down' terraces, larger bay window fronted terraced houses, a pair of semi-detached villas, spacious detached properties (Canonbury House and The Thistles) and at the centre of the street a public house (The Railway Inn). Therefore, in 1911, the street was a microcosm of Edwardian society and a melting pot of the class system at the time, from those who were on the borderline of poverty, to the upper-working and middle classes. I have chosen to use the 1911 census, as a historical snapshot to explore the working lives and employment of ordinary women who lived on Wareing Street.

The Working Women

In 1911 there were some 30 households on Wareing Street and 19 of these households were home to women who were in some form of employment. The nature of their work varies greatly and was very much defined by the social status of the individual or her family. Therefore, the employment roles can be classified as middle class professions (for the most part unmarried, wealthier women who did skill-based work and were largely self-employed, working from home) and working class occupations (women who were dependent on a wage to sustain their household).

A common misconception of gender in Edwardian Britain is the confinement of women in the domestic sphere, either as a housewife or in the 'gilded cage' of the wealthier classes. Amongst the working classes, especially in the industrial north,



it was quite common for women to engage in some part-time or casual employment alongside their domestic duties at home. Therefore it is unsurprising that almost all the women who live in Back Wareing Street work despite having young families. Many of these roles were not even documented on census forms but fortunately the women of Wareing Street largely had their occupations recorded.

Domestic Servants

There were four properties on the street which employed unmarried females as live-in domestic servants. 19 year old Annie Weir was employed at the Railway Inn as a domestic servant. Doctor Thomas Grey, a bachelor at the time of the census, employed both a housekeeper, Annie Steele and a general maid Mary Runnett, to care for The Thistles, the largest house on the street. A few doors along at number 17 (one half of Stanley Villas) 16 year old Amy Grant worked for the Isherwood family. The Gregory family at number 30 also had a maid, 20 year old Agnes E. Sickle; despite being a smaller property than the others it certainly highlighted their social status to their neighbours.

Family Employment

Several of the women on Wareing Street were employed in the family business, which was owned by their husbands. At number 21 lived Ann Chadwick, aged 44 who was listed in the census as an 'assistant in painting business'. Likewise at

number 3 lived 48 year old Jessie Tomlinson who assisted with a dying and cleaning business and 59 year old Miriam Barnes worked at home with her husband and son as an assistant bill poster. With the exception of Jessie Tomlinson, it is unlikely the other two women had taken part in any physical or strenuous activity given the nature of the business, their background and their gender. As the Tomlinson's business was run from their small three roomed house, it is likely that Jessie did her share of labour to keep the household income afloat.

In 1911, 48 year old Martha Hulme was landlady at The Railway Inn and she had been running the pub independently since she was widowed in 1902, as well as raising her seven children. She appears to have been a successful business woman and the census reveals she was assisted at the pub by her maid Annie and also her 15 year old daughter Bessie.

Suitable jobs for ladies?

Other occupations recorded on Wareing Street included more 'respectable' employment for Edwardian women. One example is 22 year old Mary Chadwick (daughter of Ann Chadwick) who was a school teacher. Although deemed a suitable profession, it was one which young women like Mary was expected to give up on upon marriage.

The rest of the 'proper' occupations include; Gwendoline Heywood, age 16, a milliner, Margaret Thompson, age 33, a tailorress and Annie Chadwick, age 23 and Jane Crippin age 19 both dressmakers. The census reveals these four unmarried women are using their skills and leisure time to develop their independence and earn an income, something which would have been frowned upon a generation or two earlier.

For the less fortunate working women, it was the main industries of Tyldesley, the cotton mills and the coal mines,



Wareing Street

which provided them with employment. Nellie Lawson aged 18 and Jane Yates aged 22 both lived in Back Wareing Street and both worked as 'pit brow lasses'. The other women; Sarah Emma Barber, Elizabeth Crippin, Lucy Grundy, Agnes Jones and Jane Ann Thomas, who were all aged between 14 and 38, worked in the towns numerous cotton mills as carders or weavers. Their dirty, physical work contrasts sharply with their contemporaries who lived just down the street.

Overall the 1911 census provides us with a fascinating insight into the past and the lives of our Edwardian ancestors. It exposes the restrictions of class and gender a century ago and reveals the secret history of our streets.

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Author's own photographs (September 2015)

Information for Contributors

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- 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

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Beth Ellis

BY ANNE CATTERALL



Elizabeth 'Beth' Ellis

Elizabeth (Beth) Ellis was born on 17 September 1874 in Wigan and was the second daughter of Sir Thomas Ratcliffe Ellis, a solicitor (Peace and Ellis) who was also the Secretary of the Mining Association of Great Britain. The family lived at 'The Hollies', Wigan Lane and the drive can still be seen today opposite the Orchid Room cafe, although the original house has been demolished. Beth was also the cousin of Lily Brayton, the actress from Hindley.

Beth was very academic, she was educated at Wigan and then Halliwick Manor, New Southgate before studying at Lady Margaret's Hall, Oxford University in 1892, achieving a first class honours degree in English Literature. Although women were not then allowed to be awarded their degrees, a rule that was only changed in the 1920s, Beth was deeply interested in Celtic literature.

Beth was a member of the Wigan Education Committee. She went on to visit her sister and brother-in-law in Burma, the latter being an officer in the Indian Army. Upon her return from Burma,

Beth wrote the first of her books; it was entitled 'An English Girl's First Impression of Burmah'. This book was reviewed as one of the funniest travel books ever written, it told of Beth's adventures in Burma where she scandalised the locals by patrolling the jungle on a bicycle! She regaled the story of how she once joined a shoot but disgraced herself by spending most of it up a tree, wielding her broom uneasily and feeling sorry for the tiger.

Beth went on to publish seven romantic historical novels, one of which was made into a Hollywood film; this was the novel, 'Barbara Winslow, Rebel' which was renamed for film as 'The Dangerous Maid'. Another of Beth's novels, 'Mr. Jarvis', was

produced as a play in the West End of London at Wyndham's Theatre. This play was set in the time of Queen Anne and starred Gerald Du Maurier (father of Daphne); it was reported to be 'capital entertainment but with flaws in the construction'.

Beth wrote a novel entitled 'Blind Mouths' which was published in 1907, the content explored the life of the aristocracy and that of the working class. She championed the cause of the miners and must have gained much experience due to her father's involvement with the mining industry.

Beth married a solicitor, Godfrey Woodford Mensell Baker, at St. Michael's, Wigan on Thursday 17

OBITUARY

October 1908. The weather was fine, the church was decorated and crowded and at two o'clock the bells of the Parish church rang out. The officiating clergy were the vicar of St. Michael's, Rev. H.F. Lloyd and Beth's father-in-law, Rev. Dr. Baker.

The church was decorated and crowded and the choir sang popular hymns of the time. Beth wore a white satin bridal gown, trimmed with lace and wore the same veil that her mother and sisters had previously worn. She carried a bouquet of white lilies and roses which was a gift from the bridegroom and was attended by six bridesmaids.

The three adult bridesmaids wore simple empire gowns of white crepe de chine and black hats lined with pale blue and trimmed with autumn foliage. They carried bouquets of bronze coloured chrysanthemums and wore pearl brooches. The three children wore white crepe de chine dresses trimmed with blue ribbon and lace caps; they carried posies of lilies of the valley and wore gold bangles. The wedding party left the church to Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' and a large reception was held at her family's home, 'The Hollies'. The newly married couple later left for London, en route to Cornwall for their honeymoon.

Sadly, Beth Ellis died in 1913 at the age of 38, in giving birth to her unborn first child; she had only been married for five years. Beth was buried at Berkhamstead. Beth's father, Thomas Ratcliffe Ellis died in 1925 at the age of 83.



Anne Catterall and Sheila Ramsdale

Anne Catterall

Founder member of Wigan Local Heritage and History Group

I first met Anne over 20 years ago when she was a student at Wigan and Leigh College. I was her tutor on a teacher training course she was attending. We immediately hit it off and became firm friends, mainly because we had so many interests in common. Through the years we spent many happy hours researching local history particularly at Wigan Local Studies based in the Museum of Wigan Life. We would go in with the intention of researching one particular area and become distracted and find other interesting sources.

When Anne retired we decided to set up the Wigan Local History and Heritage Group. We held our first meeting in September 2013 at Book Cycle in Beech Hill and were amazed when over 15 people turned up. Since then, the group has gone from strength to strength. Anne was always cheerful, lively, enthusiastic and full of ideas. She was a very positive and supportive friend. When she took ill with cancer in 2014 this did not deter her from continuing to help me run the group, even though at times she was very unwell. She was unstinting in her loyalty.

Tragically, Anne died on 6 April 2015, needless to say she is very sadly missed by everyone who knew her. However, she insisted the group should carry on and we have done. Anne was an inspiration to us all and bore her illness with great fortitude.

Sheila Ramsdale

Chairperson, Wigan Local Heritage and History Group

MARGARET PARK

The Mother of Wigan

by Anne Catterall

Margaret Park was a prominent member of Wigan society in the late 1800s and was the Mayoress of the town for five consecutive years (1882-1887). Her husband, Henry Park, the Mayor, was a staunch Conservative who owned Clarington Forge.

Mrs. Park was born Margaret Richmond in 1835 at Liverpool; she was the eldest daughter of a middle class family and her Victorian education prepared her for being a wife and mother. Margaret married Henry at St. Bride's Church, Liverpool in 1872.

The couple lived in Lower Whitley although Henry was raised in Scholes. Both of them were stalwarts of St. Catharine's church in Scholes. They had two children; a daughter, Margaret, who was born in 1874 and died 11 months later, and a son, Sidney Richmond Park, who was born in 1876.

In 1886 the 'Sunday Chronicle' described the Mayoress of Wigan as having 'a local reputation as leader of every movement for the benefit of the poor and suffering classes'. During her years as Mayoress it was recorded that Margaret was more popular than her husband and that she 'had a kindly interest in the working women of the district which made her loved'. Margaret herself

used the self-referring title of 'Mother of Wigan'.

Margaret's philanthropic works included being the Chair of the British Women's Temperance Association in 1887, women were seen as examples to husbands and Margaret Park had taken the pledge herself. In the same year

Margaret set up the Wigan Kyrle Society which, involved well to do residents of the town giving cheap concerts for the people. She also acted as the President of the local community regarding Queen Victoria's testimonial Jubilee. Margaret supported the 'White Cross Army' which, was an organisation to protect young

A Wigan pit brow lass.



girls and she was also actively involved in the 'Girls' Friendly Society'. The aim of this society was to train young girls morally and religiously and to 'save them from temptation'. Margaret was also involved in Sunday School work. She set up a day nursery in Wallgate for children of millworkers but opposition meant that the scheme failed. Margaret and her husband also gave an annual tea party for the 'deserving poor' of the Borough.

It is though, as champion of the pit brow women that Margaret Park is best remembered. In 1886 the miners of Northumberland and Durham attempted to insert into the Mines Regulation Bill a clause to prohibit women from working on pit brows. In 1880s Wigan just over half the population was female, there was a high birth rate with a large number of immigrants living in the town (many of whom were Irish) and there were 1,300 women pit workers. Female workers on the top, or brow, of the mines were often as young as 12. Although their role was arduous, many women were the only wage earners supporting a family and their jobs had been in jeopardy since the 1842 Mines and Collieries Act.

In May 1887, Margaret Park led a deputation of 16 pit brow women to London to hand in a petition to the Home Secretary. The petition was successful and was reported in 'The Women's Suffrage Journal' stating 'there was nothing to justify the house interfering with an honest and healthy industry'. The cost of the trip was £2.10s each and the women paid for themselves through weekly contributions as apparently



*'Colliery Amazons and Venuses'.
Pit brow lasses.*

they did not want it to be thought that the colliery proprietors had sent them for their own gain.

Margaret led the various protest meetings prior to the London visit. She feared the alternatives if the pit women had to stop working and even said that they were fit for no other occupation. She was somewhat idealistic in her description of these women and made their lives seem easy and trouble free with quotes such as; 'a begrimed garment may cover a white heart and I assert that the pit women are pure, industrious and well conducted. Their homes hold great charms for them because they are out all day'. Margaret had visited the pit brow women for many years and she claimed to watch them in their dinner hour and to have observed their rosy faces compared to those of the mill girls, referring to the 'Colliery Amazons and Venuses' as being 'buxom, happy, modest and sensible looking'. Despite her acquaintance with these women there was a huge gulf

in their lifestyles and the Mayoress condescendingly stated the prevailing Victorian ideology that they were 'noble women doing their duty in the sphere of life in which God had placed them'.

Henry and Margaret Park had many influential friends including mine owners such as Colonel Blundell. Margaret distrusted the Trade Unions and believed their movement was inspired by jealousy and greed, 'their wonderful and mysterious powers for getting their own way, right or wrong'. Women workers were favoured by the colliery owners due to them being cheaper to employ; they did not strike and were not members of the all-male Trade Unions. The unions themselves were also against women workers in their campaign for the principle of a 'family wage', wherein a man earned enough to care for all of his family.

The Park family retired to Southport and Margaret made a speech before leaving the town describing her feelings of both pain and relief at relinquishing their mayoral roles; she said she felt like a mother parting from her family. She had been afraid of the work involved at first but found it hard yet pleasurable, she still wanted to take some interest in the town and not go back into the obscurity she was in before taking office.

The strain of his work as Mayor led to Henry's ill health and he died in November 1890 at the age of 63. Margaret did become involved in Southport society and also travelled to Australia with her son, Sydney, in 1892, but, sadly, died herself the following year at the age of 58.

Cecilia Lady

Bindloss

By Kate Fussell

Lady Bindloss was a member of a wealthy Lancashire family, being the daughter and heir of Sir Robert Bindloss of Borwick, a village near Carnforth. She married William Standish in 1660. The Standish family had the Manor of Standish from the thirteenth century. Cecilia had two sons, the elder died in infancy and the second, Ralph, inherited Standish Hall. This then passed down the female line through Ralph's daughter Cecilia, who married William Towneley. The line died out in the twentieth century. Part of Standish Hall including the chapel was sold to buyers in the USA and the remainder demolished.

Why Cecilia had the title of Lady Bindloss I do not know; as a woman she could not have inherited the baronetcy. Her notebook, which I have been transcribing for some months, is not a diary in the true sense as there are no daily entries: it is, I think, better called a commonplace book. There are several distinct parts to it. I started by reading about her garden and orchard. There are many lists of plants, especially roses, and fruit trees of varieties no longer extant.

Cecilia bought most of her plants from the nursery of Captain Gurlé. According to F A Roach in



Standish Hall.

'Cultivated Fruits of Britain', Captain Gurlé's nursery was situated between 'Spittlefields and Whitechappell'. Captain Gurlé raised a nectarine called "Elruge". Transport was difficult in those days, with terrible roads and no canals. This perhaps accounts for the many deaths among the trees, which Captain Gurlé was required to replace.

I consulted the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society both in London and Wisley, but most of Lady Bindloss's varieties are not mentioned. Roach says that many trees were imported from the Continent and names were inaccurate.

Lady Bindloss grew apples, pears, plums, nectarines, cherries, medlars and grapes, the latter

only for dessert as wine was not made this far north. Some of the varieties have quaint names such as 'Goe (or Seeke) No Further', 'Ladies Buttocks' (pear), 'Sops in Wyne', 'Angells Bitt', 'Loanes Permaine', 'Cadillac', 'Miel en Bouche', 'Tradescant' (cherry) and 'Malecotone' (apricot). Many varieties were grown on walls, grafted on to dwarfing rootstocks, or on quince rootstocks.

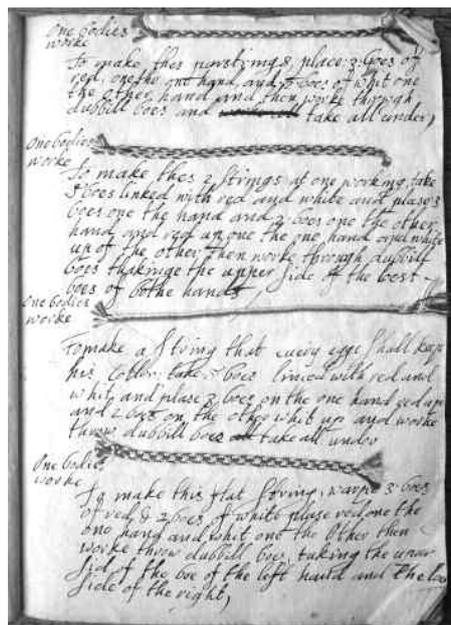
Another section of her notebook is devoted to astrology. As I know even less about that than fruit trees, I consulted books for the signs, symbols and language. She drew up birth charts, which include not only the date and time of birth, but also the latitude. She also drew up charts to foretell the results of races

and the location of pieces of missing jewellery. One is entitled 'si les nouvelles de la mariage de Betty Nedham arrivera'. Whether these were successful she does not say. She was obviously very interested and owned several books on astrology, astronomy and magic.

Cecilia Bindloss was a well educated woman. She wrote mainly in English, but occasionally in French, including a verse and one page has Greek words written on it. She owned French and Italian dictionaries and her other books include histories of Lapland, Swedland and Poland, the West Indies, Africa and China. She also had 'The English Gardener' by Meager, Parkinson's 'Book of Flowers', the book of Acts of Parliament and Manby's Statutes. She had some medical books and a book by Jo. Speede.

Interspersed in the fruit tree lists are two long sections in English, which appear to be an account of life at the Court of King Louis XIV of France, the

Page from Lady Bindloss's Notebook.



Page from Lady Bindloss's braid instruction circa 1674.

Sun King, a contemporary, although he is not mentioned by name. The names of his mistresses are included, which made it possible to identify the King. I cannot tell if this is original work, a copy, or translation. It is written in the first person, apparently by a man, and recounts his conversations and feelings about the ladies of the Court and also Monsieur the King's brother and Madame.

Cecilia also wrote a long piece of instructions about the making of a quarter-clock to a Mr Kitchen and several recipes for medicines. In addition there are lists of materials such as calico and bombazine, ribbons that she needed and other miscellaneous pieces.

A final section is most puzzling. It is a manuscript about fingerloop braid making, which was very popular about this time and is still popular in some parts of the USA. There have been a number of enquiries

from American braiding enthusiasts who give themselves strange old-fashioned names on online forums when talking about braids! The booklet includes instructions for making braids and samples are stitched to the pages. It has always been thought to be by Lady Bindloss but there is some doubt about whether the handwriting matches between the two documents – as well as some odd spellings, dubbill, middell and boe, though the other Lady Bindloss volumes have few mistakes.

There is a similar manuscript in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which I went to look at a few weeks ago. It came from the Frank Ward bequest to the Museum of Wales, who gave it to the V & A. Frank Ward was very interested in seventeenth century embroidery. With the help of a volunteer the manuscript was located in case 57b on the first floor. It was very dark and even with the gallery attendant's torch I could see little and of course could not turn the pages. However, on the V & A website there are good, enlarged photos. The individual's writing is not like Lady Bindloss and although it does resemble the manuscript we own, I do not think it is the same – and the spelling is more correct! The V & A manuscript is attributed to a date several decades before the Bindloss note book. It remains a mystery.

Lady Bindloss' notebooks can be viewed online on Wigan & Leigh Archives Online at <http://archives.wigan.gov.uk>

Charlotte Ann Fletcher

BY SUSAN SZKLINYK

Charlotte Ann Fletcher, also known as Lady Cotton and later Ann Corrie was well known in her time for her generous and kind nature. She donated land to good causes and took part in many charitable acts around the Tyldesley area and again in Oswestry where she eventually went to live. Peel Hall at Little Hulton was donated by Charlotte for use as a hospice. She donated the Tyldesley allotments and an acre of land for the recreation of the public of Tyldesley in the form of the Union Street swimming pool.

In 1836, Charlotte's father, Jacob Fletcher of Peel Hall bought the Shakerley estate, including farms and land totalling 514 statute acres with 'valuable mines of coal and stone lying under the same'.

Charlotte was born at Peel Hall in 1845. She was Jacob's only daughter and heir. She was also the Granddaughter of Ellis Fletcher. The Fletcher family were landowners and prominent in the coal mining industry.

In 1866 she married Robert Wellington Stapleton-Cotton, 3rd Viscount Combermere of Bhurtpore, son of Colonel Wellington Henry Stapleton-Cotton, 2nd Viscount Combermere of Bhurtpore and Susan Alice Sitwell. Charlotte's inheritance was brought in to the marriage to Viscount Combermere. They divorced in 1879. Combermere Lane in Shakerley was named after him.

Caleb Wright came up with the idea of erecting a swimming pool in Union Street. The pool was

erected at a cost of £1,500 on land given by Charlotte in 1873 and finally opened in July 1876.

According to some sources it was The Hon. R.S.W Cotton (her husband) who willingly gave one statute acre, but in consequence of a change in the lawyers it lay in abeyance for about three



Charlotte (Mrs Wynne Corrie of Oswestry) opened the Tyldesley Parish Church bazaar back in 1910.

years. But we know, as there is other evidence saying, it was Charlotte who owned the land.

The chapel of St Anne was erected at Park Hall in the township of Weston in 1883, the cost of £2,000 being met by Charlotte. However, she was still married to the Hon. Stapleton-Cotton at the time that she acquired Park Hall.

In 1886 Charlotte married Alfred Wynne Corrie in the district of St George, Hanover Square, London. Mr Wynne Corrie was Mayor of Oswestry three times and the family lived at Park Hall, Oswestry.

John Levers, the agent for Charlotte's estates, had worked for her family for 55 years, serving both her father and grandfather. By 1887 Charlotte had estates in Clifton, Kearsley, Shakerley (Tyldesley), Little Hulton and Denton. John retired in this year and Charlotte and her husband presented him with a silver salver for 50 years service to the family and to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee Year.

By the time of her second marriage, Charlotte was a very wealthy lady and it was at this point she became associated with the Oswestry district of Shropshire. She did a lot of charity work around Oswestry where she donated gifts to at

Morda Hospital and ensured that all newborn children in the area received a gift and that the poor and needy were provided with hot soup, which was delivered by her chauffeur in her Rolls Royce. She held an annual summer picnic for all the local children in the grounds of Park Hall and provided pheasants for the needy at Christmas time.

In 1912 Peel Hall, where Charlotte was born, was given to Lancashire County Council by Charlotte to be used as a hospital. During that time it was used as a TB treatment Hospital, and the verandas seen in the photograph were added to the hall to enable the patients to be wheeled out to get some fresh air.

A terrible tragedy took place at Park Hall where she lived in Oswestry. As Charlotte grew older she put on weight and had a lift installed to hoist her up to her bedroom. One June morning in 1913 she got into the lift to descend when the rope broke, sending her crashing down the lift shaft. She remained conscious but two days later she died of her injuries and shock. She would have been 68 years old, a very unfortunate ending for a lady who had done so much to alleviate the suffering of others.

Peel Hall in its hey day. Now demolished. It was built on the foundations of an older building called Wycheaves Hall.



LILY HODSON

By Rita Musa

I first came across Lily Hodson when I was researching someone else in a series of sketches published by the Wigan Examiner in the late 1920s.

Apart from quoting 'Elizabeth Hodson M.B.E.' Lily's obituary published in the Wigan Observer on the 25 March 1977 makes no mention of her illustrious career in the trade union movement.

Lily's MBE medal and certificate awarded in 1948 is in the collections of the Wigan Borough Museums & Archives Service along with a silver candelabra presented to her upon her retirement after 40 years on the Wigan and District Employment Committee, nearly 20 of them as Chairman.

Lily's parents John Thomas Hodson and Elizabeth Kilburn were married in Bolton in 1893. The censuses of 1901 and 1911 show Elizabeth aged 7 and 17 respectively living with her family in Wigan, her place of birth is given as Cumberland where her mother was born.

According to newspaper reports Lily left school at the age of 14 to start work in the tailoring trade, being inspired to take up the cause of her fellow workers after

hearing trade unionists Jim Connelly and Jim Larkin tell of the struggles of transport and dock labourers.

Lily held many positions in both the Garment Workers' Union and Labour Party including shop steward, committee member and vice president. In 1920 she was appointed the first woman President of the Wigan Branch of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, a position she held for three years.

Lily attended national conferences of the Garment Workers Union, was a delegate to the National Labour Party Conference in 1926 and 1928 and was a delegate to the Trades Union Congress in 1927 and 1929 when she was presented with the TUC gold medal, which was awarded annually to the woman who was considered to have had the most outstanding record of service to the union during the year. Whilst carrying out her union duties she was still employed as a machinist at Rawson and Coop Ltd., wholesale clothiers of Britannia Mill, Miry Lane, Wigan.

The Municipal Election held on the 1 November 1926 saw Lily stand as a Labour candidate in St Andrew's Ward, Wigan against the Conservative, James Lowe. Unfortunately the result went against her, losing by 203 votes, 1783 to 1986.

In 1934 she was appointed Women's Organiser for the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers covering the North West area. She was 38 years of age and had been a trade unionist since she started work 25 years previously. She was first appointed to the committee during the First World War. Another of her achievements include being appointed a Magistrate in 1935.

After 40 years on Wigan and District Employment Committee, Miss Lily Hodson retired in August, 1965 and was presented with a silver candelabra at the Grand Hotel, Hallgate, Wigan. She was described as being characteristically impartial and compassionate especially for the unemployed, being able to identify with "unfortunate people". The Mayor of Wigan, Francis Connolly, said that Miss Hodson had always had a deep feeling for the under-privileged 'Because she lived among them and understood them.'

Lily died on the 17 March 1977 aged 83. Her funeral service took place on the 22 March at Wigan Parish Church followed by internment at Westhoughton Parish Church.

Local Celebrities

MISS L. HODSON.



Image of Lily Hodson taken from the Wigan Examiner

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Family History Workshops

Thursdays, 10.30am-12.00pm

Booking essential

Price: £5.00

Wigan Archives and Leigh Local Studies
Discover your family tree through archive documents and online resources. Please book on (01942) 404430 or archives@wigan.gov.uk

Appley Bridge Meteorite Talk

As featured on BBC TV and Radio

Saturday 12th December

1.00pm - 2.15pm

Price: £2.50 including tea/coffee

A special chance to catch this popular talk - join us for a fascinating insight into the fall and discovery of the Appley Bridge meteorite in 1914, as told through newspaper reports and archive documents of the time. The meteorite explosions, fireball, the confusion with enemy Zeppelins, the confiscation of the meteorite by the police and its subsequent release for analysis will all be told. A sample of the actual meteorite will be on display together with the beautiful cast of the meteorite from Manchester Museum. 'The Appley Bridge Meteorite' book includes previously unseen images of the meteorite from around the world. Signed copies will be available for purchase. Places are limited so booking is essential. Please book on (01942) 828128 or wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk.

Don't Stand By - Holocaust Memorial Day

Wednesday 27th January
Museum of Wigan Life and Leigh Town Hall

Join us for this commemorative event to remember the millions of people killed in the Holocaust, Nazi Persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

Chinese New Year

庆祝中国新年

Saturday 30th January

11am- 3pm Free Family Activities

11.30am Chinese New Year

Martial Arts Display in Grand Arcade

12.30pm Lion Dance in Market Place
2pm Lion Dance in Museum of Wigan Life

Enjoy free dances by the Liverpool Hung Gar Kung Fu Lion Dancers and free activities from traditional crafts, object handling and learning tai chi. Supported by Confucius Classroom, Wigan & Leigh College.

Chinese New Year

Tuesday 16th and
Thursday 18th February
1-3pm

Free Drop In

Pop in for some fabulous fun activities as we celebrate Chinese New Year with the Confucius Classroom. Dressing up, crafts and traditional Chinese activities. Supported by Confucius Classroom, Wigan & Leigh College.

An Introduction to Egyptian Hieroglyphs

Eight week course with John Johnson
From Saturday 6th February
Only £32 pp (£4 per week)

Discover one of the world's oldest writing systems and learn how to read basic inscriptions written by the Ancient Egyptians. This friendly course is a great introduction to the language and writings of a unique civilisation. Places are limited so booking is essential. Please book on (01942) 828128 or wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Pit Brow Lasses of the Wigan Coalfield

Tuesday 8th March
12.00-1.15pm

As part of International Women's Day
#BelieveInHer

£2.50 per person including tea/coffee

Alan Davies, author of The Pit Brow Women of the Wigan Coalfield, explores the experiences of the famous Pit Brow Lasses of the Wigan area. Hear how these women battled proposals to ban them from the mines and how their unique working wear made them famous to the great Victorian public. Alan will explore their story from the 1840s until the last Pit Brow Lassie of the Wigan Coalfield finished work in 1966. Places

are limited so booking is essential. Please book on (01942) 828128 or wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Easter Bunnies and Bonnets

Easter Holidays

29th, 31st March and 5th, 7th April
£2.50 per child

Join us for some egg-cellent family fun with creative craft and terrific trails at the Museum of Wigan Life. Make a bonnet or bunny ears and create your own springtime masterpiece to take home. Places are limited so booking is essential. Please book on (01942) 828128 or wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Look out for talks to celebrate the Leeds Liverpool Canal anniversary and lots lots more!



Ted Dakin has recorded nine short stories and written a small book of memoirs. 'A Life in Water' and 'More Tales from Wigan Pier' are a collection of memoirs of Ted's experiences in the water industry during the 1950s. They cost £5.00 each and will be on display at various cafes that support the Alzheimer's Society.

For more information please contact Ted on (01942) 498193 or teddakin139@btinternet.com

You can also contact Dave Hanbury on (01942) 254219 or dave.hanbury16@gmail.com

The 1906 General Election

How Wigan's 'doughty henchwomen' fought Britain's first Women's Suffrage candidate's campaign.

BY YVONNE ECKERSLEY

Why Wigan?

By 1906 Wigan's working class labour organisations' political aspirations were becoming increasingly focused on the need for working men, not women, to have Parliamentary representation. However, though Wigan had a large, powerful and politically ambitious Miners union, a newly established Labour Representative Committee, an active Socialist Party and labour councillors, there was no specific labour parliamentary candidate.

After the miners, women textile workers comprised the largest occupational group and among the expanding textile unions the largest was the weavers. The Wigan and District Weavers Amalgamation, at a time when most textile unions' officials were male, uniquely was run by women for women. Besides providing a foundation for mutual self help and camaraderie,

the skills involved in running their union included; the face to face collection of union dues, the logistics of planning and running meetings, the interpersonal skills, the art of persuasion needed to recruit new members and the assertiveness developed as they negotiated on weaver's behalf with employers, were easily transferable to running a political campaign. These extraordinary ordinary women were to prove the backbone of the campaign.

From 1893 it had a very able and politically minded paid union organizer, and from 1894 its President. By 1906 Helen Fairhurst (nee Silcock) an ex Wigan weaver, was a member of the Lancashire and Cheshire Women's Textile and Other Workers Representation Committee; a member of the Manchester and Salford Women's Trades and Labour Council; an active Socialist and an Executive member of the Wigan Trade Council. She attended

and spoke frequently on labour and women's suffrage issues at Trade Union Congresses, and at times chaired Labour Representation Committee meetings. From 1893 she had been a participant and speaker at important Women's Suffrage demonstrations in Manchester and London. She was to prove an important element in the fusion of trade unionism and women's activism that led to the adoption and support of a Women's Suffrage candidate in Wigan.

The impetus for promoting a Women's Suffrage candidate in Wigan came from the Lancashire and Cheshire Women's Textile and Other Workers Representative Committee. From its establishment in 1903 the immediate objective was to give working women an independent voice in Parliament. From 1904 its work was supported by the influential Manchester and Salford Women's Trades and Labour Council. Women of these organisations formed a network of local trade unionists and women's suffrage workers drawn from and based in, towns around Manchester. It was they who provided the £500 to run the Wigan campaign.

Opposition

Though their candidate Thorley Smith had excellent labour credentials he was Wigan born; its first working-man councillor; Treasurer of the Wigan Trades Council; a prime mover in setting up the Wigan branch of the Labour Representation Committee; frequently chairing meetings called by organised labour organisations; asserted he would, to all intents and purposes, be a labour representative willing to support



An early twentieth century Market Place political meeting.

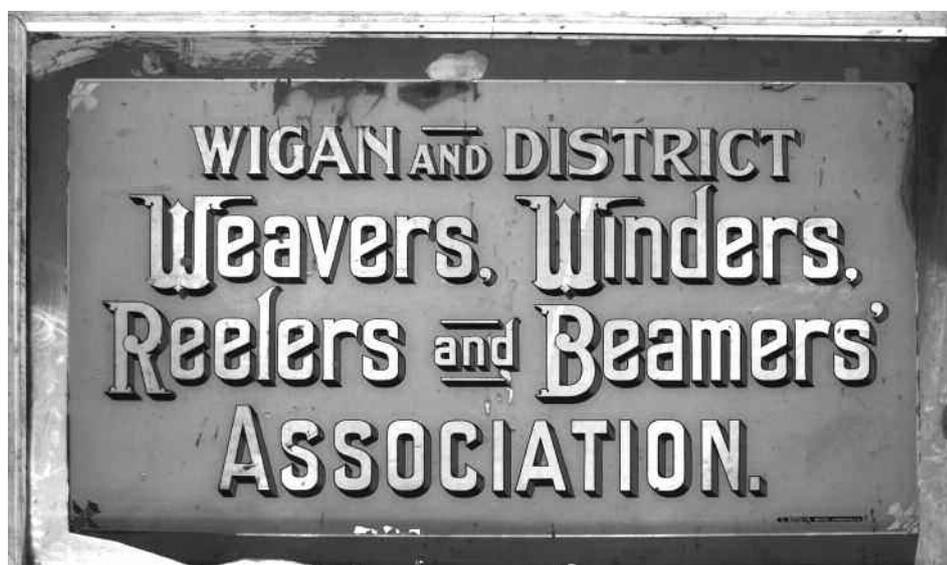
every plank in the labour platform; the organisations associated with the political aspirations of Wigan's working men refused to back him.

In January 1906 Wigan Trades Council called a meeting to consider his candidature. Whilst expressions of respect were made regarding his character, the consensus of opinion was that he had been ill advised in becoming the Women's candidate before consulting the organised workers of the town and district. They accused him presenting them with his sponsor's 'dictum' and refused to consider that it was urgency that led him to begin his campaign immediately. Furthermore some of the larger branches' objections revolved around the accusation that the suffragists came into the field at the eleventh hour, which was odd given that three quarters of their branches had previously voted in agreement when Christobel Pankhurst presented the idea to them. Their assertion that one of their own was an 'unknown new candidate' suggests there may have been another agenda.

Interestingly, it was the miners' delegate who presented the resolution to refuse the endorsement of his candidature. At the same meeting the Trades Council endorsed Stephen Walsh as miners' candidate for Ince (not then part of Wigan) urging all Wigan's working men to support Walsh's campaign, and pointed them in the direction of Walsh's Committee room in Library St. As Stephen Walsh's candidature was part of Ramsay MacDonald's Lib-lab Pact, maybe, like Thomas Greenall in Leigh at the same election (Past Forward issue 51), Thorley Smith fell foul of the Miners' Federation, the Labour Representation Committee and Stephen Walsh's ambitions.

The Campaign

What was remarkable about this campaign was that Wigan's women had the courage to step out of their assigned gender roles to confidently and competently run a political campaign. Ironically the belief that 'Woman's best function was performed when she produced a good and a great man', was so commonplace, it formed part of the



Window panel from the offices of the Wigan and District Weavers. Wigan Museums collections.

opening speech of this woman-led political campaign.

The campaign itself was conducted in the open in mid-winter. Thorley Smith aided by visiting women speakers, held three meetings each evening whilst the ordinary rank and file supporters held four daily lunchtime meetings, outside factory gates, on street corners, at the gas works and Tram sheds – anywhere they found an audience.

However, as is the nature of things, only the more prominent women were named and their contributions recorded. Finding evidence of the efforts, difficulties and successes of individuals in the army of anonymous women workers was difficult. I did find some evidence within Thorley Smith's published post election address, albeit subsumed in the collective. Hence, 'Many smiled at the idea of women running an election, but they did not laugh now, because they realised the earnestness of those women... They had stood on street corners propagating their cause and earned the respect of their opponents...., out in the cold blast of winter... They had fought well and nobly, and could return to their homes content with what they had done on behalf of the people they represented... he felt that from the way they had conducted that campaign, they could fight better than any other body... Even in the Council Chamber that night they had had expressions from men, who said the

women had fought the election better than they themselves could with their organisation...'

As the six 'Amazons' who 'amazed the natives' as they drove through Wigan with Thorley Smith in a carriage pulled by four horses and two women outriders who were leaders of various individuals and women's groups active in Wigan, we can safely assume the campaign workers were not only textile workers. The six were, Mrs Pankhurst (WSPU); Eva Gore Booth and Esther Roper of the Textile Representative Committee and Manchester and Salford Women's Trade and Labour Council; Selina Cooper, Burnley Guardian, Nelson and Colne Suffrage Committee and trade unionist; Sarah Reddish, President of Bolton's Co-operative Women's Guild; and Dora Montefiore of the Social Democratic Federation, whose role was to establish Socialist groups of women.

The 17 January election results astounded many, the Wigan Examiner pronounced 'We cannot believe there are 2,205 women's suffragists amongst the voters in Wigan'. The results were as follows F.S. Powell (Cons) 3573, Thorley Smith (Women's Suffrage) 2,205 William Woods (Libs) -----1,900.

Sources

Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us. Wigan Observer Wigan Examiner.

BY STEPHEN KNOTT

Women and Miners' Relief in Lancashire



Pit Brow Lasses, Parsonage colliery, Leigh, 1928

Of all Britain's coalfields the Lancashire Coalfield was arguably one of the most dangerous to work as accidents were frequent. A report published in 1871, a copy of which is held by Wigan Archives Service, shows that between 1868 and 1871 in the Wigan area alone there were ten major accidents in which 317 miners were killed, leaving 150 women widowed and 314 children without a father. These figures do not include the numerous smaller accidents in which miners were also killed or injured.

Although similar schemes already existed, the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Permanent Relief Society (LCMPRS) was formed in 1872 to give financial assistance to miners who were injured or to the widows, children and other dependent relatives of those who were killed. The Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 may have stopped women from being employed underground but they were nevertheless still permitted to work on the surface. Membership of the

LCMPRS was therefore open to women as well as men. Women however had the option to join as either "full members" or as "half members", a category which was otherwise only available to boys under the age of 14. Half members paid half the weekly contribution of full members and received half the weekly disablement relief if they were injured in an accident and unable to work. Although they may eventually have made a full recovery, members who were unable to work for six months or more were classed as permanently disabled.

As part of its "Counting the Cost" project Wigan Archives Service is in the process of indexing the LCMPRS's permanent disability relief registers. It has soon become evident that the roles performed by women at Lancashire's collieries, which included screening coal and loading wagons and which were often popularised (if not romanticised) by photographs of the so-called Pit Brow

Lasses, were not without risk. Between 1882 and 1896 twenty-six women were unable to work for at least six months due to a workplace injury and claimed permanent disability relief. One member, Susannah Strong, who worked for the collieries of Messrs. Ackers, Whitley & Company near Bickershaw, claimed relief for nearly two and a half years. Elizabeth Baines who worked for Messrs. Richard Evans & Company's Haydock Collieries and Rebecca Gibson from the Woodshaw Pit near Aspull both claimed relief for over three years.

Most women who claimed relief did so as widows. Within the first year of its formation 13 widows were on the Society's registers and by 1882 this had increased to 271. When in 1912 the Society celebrated its fortieth anniversary, General Secretary David Shaw reported that 2,085 widows had received relief totalling £223,846. By the time of the Society's centenary in 1972 it had provided relief for 4,541 widows.

As well as making available relief from its own funds the LCMPRS also helped to administer relief from the emergency funds set up following the Maypole and Hulton colliery explosions. However, widows had to conform to strict rules if they wished to receive financial support, which included remaining chaste to their dead husband and conducting themselves "with becoming propriety" and any suggestion to the contrary lead to an immediate investigation by the Society. The LCMPRS created individual case files, which are now held by Wigan Archives, for each of the victims of the Hulton Colliery explosion. A number of these files contain letters, some anonymous, others not, accusing some widows of a misdemeanour.

Representatives from the Society, for example, visited a widow following the allegation that she had "...misconducted herself with some Man and is in the state that she ought to get married." The widow denied the suggestion, stating that "she has heard this rumour before" and indeed they could find no evidence to support her accusers. Officers of the Society visited the widow again a few months later, when "she admitted misconduct, and stated that she expected to be confined shortly." She named the father of her child, a travelling auctioneer, who had since disappeared. Her widows' relief was subsequently stopped, although she continued to receive financial assistance for her children.

Some accusations proved unfounded. A vicar wrote of one widow living in his parish "this women is living an immoral life...I will give...the necessary information". The man in question lodged next door to the widow and was sixteen years younger. It had been suggested that they had gone to Leigh one Saturday evening and had returned at four o'clock the following morning "all very much the worse for drink." Upon investigation it was found that the man had "behaved himself extremely well" and "all the suggestion as to their going together.....came from [the widow] herself". "His association with her in any way had not been at his wish or

desire" and indeed he had become "so disgusted with [her] and her mode of living" that he had since left the area. Although the Society's officials concluded that the widow had not "conducted herself with becoming propriety" and indeed "never seems to have borne a very satisfactory character" they could find no reason to stop her relief.

Widows were permitted to remarry and although their relief would cease they received a grant of £21, provided there was no evidence of having previously conducted some misdemeanour. Of one widow who had recently remarried the Society reported "she has during the last three years behaved herself in the most exemplary manner, and her conduct has been beyond reproach" and that they would be "quite safe in making the payment". The same could not be said of all widows who had remarried and of one the Society officials wrote "This person...is by no means an angel" but "there are many others who have received the grant and who have been no better".

In special cases, where the victim of a fatal mining accident had been unmarried his mother would receive widows relief instead. When the mother died relief payments could then be transferred to the father. However, they too were subject to scrutiny. In one such case it became apparent that the father had been separated from his late wife for some time and had been living with another woman. On investigation it was discovered that he had left the marital home due to family squabbling and that he was living as a lodger. The Society could therefore see no reason why the relief should not be transferred.

The individual case files are available to researchers and are currently being studied by history students from Manchester Metropolitan University. If you would like to become involved in Wigan Archive's "Counting the Cost" project by helping to index and digitise the LCMPRS records or if you are particular interested in investigating the connection between women's history and the role of the Society, then please contact the Project Archivist, Stephen Knott, archives@wigan.gov.uk or 01942 404430.

*Pit Brow Lasses at Snap Time. By Albert Leather.
Oil on canvas.*



Munitionettes

BY HANNAH TURNER

The majority of the First World War commemorations have focused on the men who died on the battlefield but perhaps it is time to also look at the women who risked their lives on the home front; the munitionettes. These women jeopardised their health and wellbeing on a daily basis whilst making shells in factories across the nation. They had responded to the government's call for workers and many of them went to work in sites known as filling factories which specialised in filling shells with explosives.

Evidently, working in a munitions factory was dangerous. Explosions, fire and poisoning threatened the employees lives though some felt it was their way to serve their country during the war. On being warned that her work would mean she would be dead in two years, one munitionette simply retorted 'well, we don't mind dying for our country'.

Munitions work had a reputation for being well paid. Women working in munitions factories are believed to have earned on average £2 2s. 4d. Lowton resident, Bertha McIntosh, went to work at the White Lund Filling Factory in Morecambe. Before moving to Morecambe, Bertha had worked at the Lowton toffee works and contributed 12 shillings a week to her home. If Bertha was earning the average munition wage her salary would possibly have been almost quadruple her previous salary. This perhaps explains the lure of White Lund for

women who were paid significantly less in other industries. It is interesting to note though that the women still received far less pay than the men who worked alongside them.

The White Lund Filling Factory went into production in 1916. White Lund employees handled the very toxic and very dangerous Tri-Nitro-Toluene otherwise known as TNT. TNT is a poisonous substance which can harm and in some cases prove fatal. It does appear that White Lund put in some measures to prevent their workforce from being poisoned. Employees were supplied with overalls and cocoa given to those starting and finishing their shift (it was widely believed that hungry and ill-fed workers were more susceptible to ill health). The factory also had its own surgery and medical staff. Nevertheless, these precautions were not enough as three young women from the borough died from TNT poisoning.

The first to die was Margaret Silcock. Unusually, Margaret's case had two inquests; a difference in medical opinion had forced the Coroner to order a post-mortem enquiry be performed by the police surgeon. Evidence at the second enquiry revealed that Margaret had suffered from TNT gastritis and anaemia whilst working at White Lund. Despite this though the factory doctor, Dr Bowerman, believed that Margaret had died of tuberculosis but Dr Bowerman waived her belief at the inquest

to prevent a medical controversy. Intriguingly, the Ministry of Munitions appointed expert, Dr Herbert Turnbull, agreed with the police surgeon's findings that the death was due to TNT.

Symptoms of TNT poisoning could be detected through changes of colour to the skin. Like Margaret, Bertha too died from handling the poisonous substance. Shortly after



*Munitionette Miss Jones
from Standish*

commencing work at White Lund, Bertha had TNT rash but after two weeks she was returned to work because the rash seemed better.

Before the Easter holidays, Bertha's sister Ida had noticed that Bertha's eyes had turned yellow. Bertha's symptoms developed and she became sick and nervous. On returning to her family home in Stone Cross Lane, Lowton, Bertha was so ill she couldn't keep down her food. Bertha died in Wigan Infirmary of acute atrophy of the liver despite taking preventative measures such as washing her hands before eating and changing her overalls to avoid contamination.

Explosions also threatened the lives of the munitionettes. The threat of explosion seems to have been taken seriously at White Lund as employees were given uniforms to wear which included rubber shoes. Platforms leading from the entrance of the factory were in place at sites where people worked so feet never made contact with the ground and soldiers were put on guard – presumably to look for any warning signs. Linen buttons were strictly forbidden as they had tin inside and this could potentially cause an explosion.

Unfortunately, these measures proved futile when on the 1 October 1917 fire and explosions took place at White Lund. The explosion sent not only the factory but also Morecambe into a panic; some ran to the beach for the safety whilst others headed to the moors. The Wigan Observer reported that 10 men had been killed but no female workers had been injured. The devastation from the explosion was so serious that production ceased and the employees were

sent home, including a 20 year old woman from Hindley called Margaret Roscoe.

Margaret had been in the hospital on the night of the explosion suffering from TNT poisoning. Margaret left Morecambe and went home to Hindley. Margaret's stepmother, Alice, remarked on her stepdaughter's return home, that her 'nerves seemed shattered' as a result of the explosion. Margaret died in Wigan Infirmary in 1918, her post mortem revealing that the cause of death was indeed TNT poisoning.

The coroners, Mr Hopwood and Mr Milligan, stated that the women had lost their lives in the service of the country just as a soldier who had died on the battlefield, but unlike their male counterparts these workers are not in Commonwealth War Graves. They are in family graves in cemeteries around the borough, except for Margaret Silcock. Margaret is buried in a public grave in Wigan Cemetery. Her widowed mother probably could not afford to put her child in a family grave.

However, volunteers Lilian Wilcock and John Unsworth have been busy helping to commemorate Margaret's story. Archive documents about the Munitionette women who have featured in this article will soon be available online as well the stories of other people from the local area who died on the home front. These documents have been made available thanks to Lilian and John indexing records of inquests and local newspaper reports. These documents will start to be made available online from November 2015 at <http://archives.wigan.gov.uk>

THE FAITHFUL ALLY OF
WAR WORKERS.



THE busy V.A.D.,
toiling farm
worker, and the
grimy munitioneer
need to take special
pains to preserve
their complexions
from injury to-day.

Rub the face, neck, and
hands with Ven-Yusa, the
new oxygen cream, and
note the extraordinary
refreshing effect.

This invigorating toilet
preparation is a great
boon to all war workers.

Ven-Yusa is expressly designed to give the tired skin a
real "oxygen bath," which is obtainable by no ordinary cream.
By its magic powers it restores the bloom of youth, makes
the hands supple and white, and keeps the skin soft and clear.

Being non-greasy, made of the most refined substances,
and agreeably perfumed, Ven-Yusa is everywhere the favourite
of the fair sex. It is ideal for Summer complexion worries.

You cannot do better at this time of the year than make
the Ven-Yusa treatment part of your daily toilet. It costs
only a shilling a jar at your chemist's or hairdresser's.

VEN-YUSA
The Oxygen Face Cream

*An advert from the Wigan Observer
for an oxygen face cream made
especially for women war workers*

Sources

*Thanks to Mr and Mrs Peach for
their assistance with research on
Margaret Roscoe*

Wigan Observer, 1917 -1918

*Inquest Book 1917-1919,
Wigan Archives and Local
Studies Service*

*Civil Registration documents,
Wigan Council*

*Ministry of Munitions. Miss B.
McIntosh, deceased, National
Filling Factory, Morecambe,
Lancs.: compensation to
dependants. [T.N.T. poisoning].
The National Archives,
T 1/12070/27174*

*The Visitor, Lancaster Guardian.
'Women at War', The Imperial
War Museum*

Greco – Roman Women in the Museum’s Archaeology Collection

To follow the theme of this issue I have decided to keep the focus on women and write a little about the beautiful ‘Roman Female Heads’ in Wigan’s collection. We are hoping to research these further and have the ongoing support and assistance of Professor Joann Fletcher and Dr Stephen Buckley.

We have recently rediscovered several of these female heads, as part of ongoing work on the archaeology collection. It is thought that they are probably part of what are known as ‘Tanagra figures’ which often depicted ‘real’ women in everyday dress and styles. The hairstyles of the figures are often reflective of the more every day fashions of the time. Many of ours are represented with high buns and wavy hair. Most of these figures were found in Greece and date from around the fourth century BC. However some were also found in Alexandria.

Originally these figures and heads would likely have been brightly painted but most of the pigments are no longer visible. The heads in our collection may have been part of whole figures (often such figures



Maker’s mark



Roman head

were around 10-20cm high) but some may have been produced just as an image of a head. According to The British Museum the use of these figures could vary but:

‘Most Tanagra figures have been found in graves, where they may have been laid either as offerings to the gods of the underworld, or to provide comfort to the dead. However, the same figures set up in a sanctuary could act as surrogate worshippers for the people who dedicated them, remaining in place long after the dedicators had left’.

A maker’s mark can be seen on the inside of one of our examples and we are looking forward to finding out more about them if possible.

Don’t forget to look out for Wigan’s amazing Egyptian gilded coffin mask on an upcoming BBC documentary presented by Professor Fletcher.

Sources

<https://www.britishmuseum.org>

Wavy hair and a high bun are visible in this image of the head



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 from 2pm to 4pm.

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, Non Members, £2, including refreshments. Contact Details: Margaret Hodge, 01942 884893.

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 7pm 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 History

www.leighanddistricthistory.com
January saw the launch of an exciting new, free, local history website, covering Leigh and the surrounding districts. Still in its infancy, it already boasts a list of births, marriages and deaths, 1852-1856, including cemetery internments, nineteenth century letters from soldiers

servicing abroad, a scrapbook of interesting articles, local railway accidents and an embryonic photograph gallery. There are also links to other sites covering historic and genealogical interest.

Leigh Family History Society

As the Local Studies Section at Leigh Library has now merged with the Archives Department on the Second Floor of Leigh Town Hall, the Leigh & District Family History Help Desk will also be available there.

The first Help Desk will be on Monday 7th September and every following Monday afternoon (except Bank Holidays) from 1.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

There is no need to book an appointment for this Help Desk which can be reached by lift.

Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month (except December). Contact Mrs G. McClellan (01942 729559).

19 January 2016
Annual General Meeting followed by Crime, Murders and Punishment – Edward Forsythe

16 February 2016
Volunteer Projects and Newspaper Collections – Hannah Turner

15 March 2016
Where does that saying come from? – Louise Wade

Local History Federation Lancashire

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

Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

Meetings held at 7.30pm on the fourth Tuesday each month at Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland. There are no meetings in July or August.

For more information contact Sue Hesketh (Secretary) 01942 212940 or Suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk or visit 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 Brocket 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

Wigan Family and Local History Society

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

Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

We meet on the first Monday of each month at Beech Hill Book Cycle at 6.30pm.

Admission to the meeting is £2.50

For more information please contact Sheila Ramsdale at sheila.ramsdale@blueyonder.co.uk

