

# PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Museums & Archives

Issue No. 73

August-November 2016



## Cabinet of Curiosity: Treasure at the Museum

£2

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### FRONT COVER

*Writing tablet decorated with gold crowns and inscribed 'James T' (James III)*

## Letter from the **Editorial Team**

### Welcome to PAST Forward Issue 73.

Our new exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life – and the subject of the first article of this edition – takes visitors (and readers) into the more unusual parts of the Museum's wonderful and varied collections.

The Museum team have followed up the wonders of the Ancient Egypt Rediscovered exhibition with a recreation of a 'Cabinet of Curiosity'. The well stocked display cases show some of the most beautiful and unusual objects from across the borough and far overseas, everything from relics of the Old Pretender to the Pennington glass collection and a well preserved pufferfish...

Elsewhere in this edition we head back to the Crimean war and mark Black History Month with a look at the visits to Leigh of Reverend J H Hector; Ted Dakin takes us back into his family history and we mark the 375th Anniversary of All Saints' Church, Hindley.

We feature a two final articles from the 2015 Essay Competition, by Anthony Pilgrim and Derek Winstanley, and we're pleased to remind would-be Past Forward writers that the Essay Competition will return for 2016 thanks to the generosity of Mr and Mrs O'Neill.

The Essay Competition is a great way to get involved with local history writing and there are prizes ready to be won! You can find all the details on how to submit your entry on the opposite page.

Finally, we are launching a major project to redevelop the Archives at Leigh Town Hall and need your support. We will be working on a second round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to expand and modernise both the Archives' public research facilities and specialist collection strongrooms in the building. Key to convincing the HLF to invest in our project further will be public support – so please have a look at the details on page 14 and let us know what you think.

If you have any ideas for new features, things you'd like to see more of – or less of – please contact us at [pastforward@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:pastforward@wigan.gov.uk)

We hope you enjoy reading Issue 73.

Alex Miller  
Archives Manager

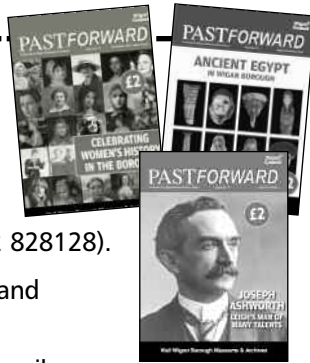
Information for contributors, please see page 20



# PAST FORWARD Subscription Form

## Copy Deadline for Issue 74

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Sunday, 16 October 2016.



### Past Forward Subscription

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

**Return to:** The Museum of Wigan Life, Past Forward Subscription, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU or email us at [archives@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:archives@wigan.gov.uk)

Name   
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# Write 1000 words - Win £100!

*Do you have a passion for local history? Is there a local history topic that you would love to see featured in Past Forward? Then why not take part in Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network's Local History Writing Competition?*

### Local History Writing Competition

- 1st Prize - £100
- 2nd Prize - £75
- 3rd Prize - £50

Five Runners-Up Prizes of £25

*The Essay Writing Competition is kindly sponsored by Mr and Mrs J. O'Neill.*



*Winners from the Wigan Borough Environment & Heritage Network, Essay Competition 2016, with the Former Mayor of Wigan Borough and Councillor Susan Loudon.*

### Criteria

- Articles must be a maximum of 1000 words.
- Articles must focus on a local history topic within the geographical boundaries of Wigan Borough.
- By entering the competition you agree to your work being published in Past Forward. The winning article will be published in Past Forward and other submissions may also be published.
- If selected for publication the Past Forward Editorial Team may edit your submission.

### How to enter

- Articles must be received by e-mail or post by Thursday 1 October 2016.
- Electronic submissions are preferred although handwritten ones will be accepted.
- You must state clearly that your article is an entry into the Local History Writing Competition.
- You must include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if applicable). We will not pass your details on to anyone.

- It will not be possible for articles to be returned.
- You are welcome to include photographs or images however they cannot be returned.

### Submit to

[pastforward@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:pastforward@wigan.gov.uk)

OR

Local History Writing Competition,  
Past Forward, Museum of Wigan Life,  
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

THE EXTRAORDINARY.

**TREASURE**

TO THE EVERYDAY.

**Lynda Jackson, Community History Manager**

*'Treasure – The Extraordinary to the Everyday' opened on Saturday 2 July and is **FREE** to enter. For more information, please contact us at the Museum at [wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk) or on 01942 828128.*

The new exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life, 'Treasure - The Extraordinary to the Everyday', reveals a huge range of art and artefacts. The show presents the museum collection as a unique 'Cabinet of Curiosity' with many special objects from our borough.

From the Renaissance to the eighteenth century, wealthy individuals created collections of weird and wonderful objects from nature, science and art. Their 'Cabinets of Curiosities' contained the eccentric and the obscure: bird skulls; paintings; clocks and scientific instruments; alongside crocodiles, 'mermaids' and shrunken heads.



These 'Wunderkammer' or 'Wonder Rooms' were early museums, their creators attempting to categorise the world around them in a new age of global exploration and colonisation. Cabinets of Curiosity often contained new and old artefacts side by side. Ancient Greek and Roman art was displayed alongside modern scientific instruments like clocks and automaton (self-moving machines). In the later nineteenth century the Victorian passion for categorising the world into separate academic disciplines in public museums would make 'cabinets' seem quirky and unscientific and many faded into obscurity.

Today there is a new passion for 'cabinets' and artists are increasingly using taxidermy in their work or drawing inspiration from unusual collections held by museums. The new exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life presents a 'Cabinet of Curiosity' with some of the most beautiful and quirky objects, many of which have not previously been on display, from across the borough and further afield. The exhibition includes artefacts from collections including those of Captain Edwin Kerfoot,

Pennington Hall and the Leyland Library and Museum in Hindley.

Some of the most fascinating items in the exhibition are 'Jacobite Relics', donated to Wigan Library by the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire in 1940. The objects include a gold and enamel mourning ring with cameo of skull and crossbones, a locket containing a lock of hair thought to be from James III (the Old Pretender) and a set of ivory writing tablets in a filigree case bearing the name of the Old Pretender in monogram form, 'James T'. The tablets were presented by James to William Dicconson (1655-1718) of Wroughtington. Dicconson was under-governor at James' court in exile at St Germain and chevalier during his minority (1700-1708), as well as later holding office as treasurer and receiver-general to Queen Mary, widow of James II.

Artefacts from the museum's popular Ancient Egypt Rediscovered exhibition are now on permanent display at the Museum of Wigan Life.

Exhibition curated by Joan Livesey, Exhibition Officer and Graphic Design by Kevin Lloyd Design.

*'Wonder is the beginning of wisdom'* Socrates, Ancient Greece



### Locket

Gold Jacobite mourning locket containing a lock of hair, thought to be from the Old Pretender. The 'Old Pretender' was the nickname for the son of James II who sought to regain his father's throne after the Glorious Revolution. The back has a black enamel base with a forget-me-knot in gold set with rose diamonds.



### Portland Vase

19th Century

This is a nineteenth century copy of the 'Portland' or 'Barberini' vase by Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795). Wedgwood's vase was itself a copy of the Roman vase (1-25AD) in the British Museum.

### Greek Bronze Figure of Aphrodite

1st - 2nd Century AD

Professor Joann Fletcher, author and academic, picked this fine quality bronze as one of her favourite artefacts in the museum's collection



### Gold ring with skull and crossbones

Jacobite mourning ring with cameo of skull and crossbones.

The ring is thought to commemorate Edward Dickinson who is buried in Standish. The Dickinson family may have been involved in the Jacobite Rising.

### Writing tablet

With ivory writing surface set in a gilt filigree case decorated with gold crowns and inscribed 'James T' (James III). James Francis was the son of James II, who was replaced on the throne by William of Orange.

He was nicknamed the 'Old Pretender' and sought to regain his father's throne through the Jacobite Rising. He was followed by his son, Bonnie Prince Charlie.



# THE LIFE OF 'THE BLACK KNIGHT' AND OTHER VISITORS TO VICTORIAN LEIGH

BY BRIAN JOYCE

The population of British port towns and cities included black residents during the Victorian period. In some cases, in Merseyside and in Cardiff and Bristol for example, small black communities developed. However, the textile and mining towns of this part of Lancashire are not obvious candidates for being localities with a historical black presence.

Nevertheless, although I have only been researching locally for a matter of months, I have already found examples of black visitors and possible residents in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. One such person was Harry Miller, an African-American singer at the Lilford Hotel in Leigh in 1900.

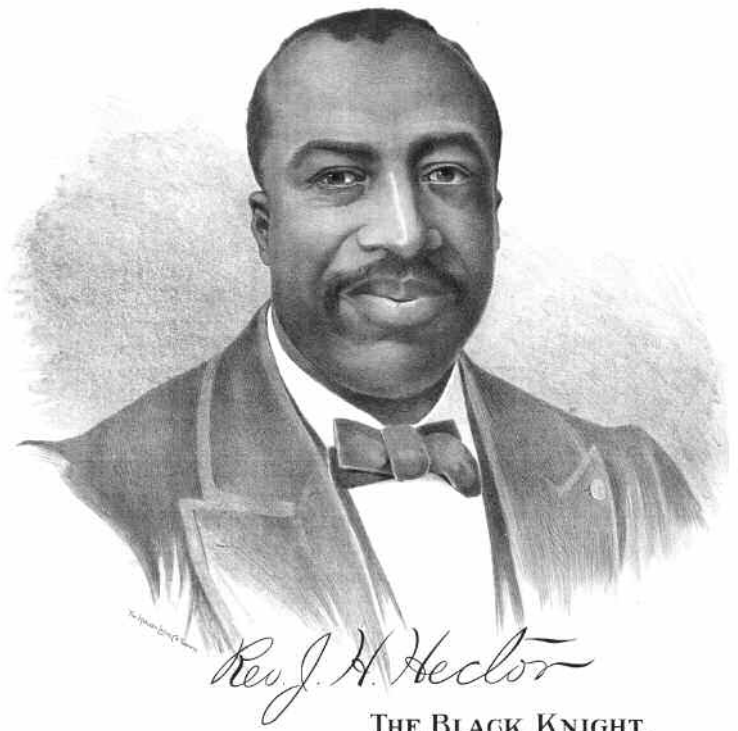
However, it was in the areas of religious evangelism and fund-raising that I have found the largest number of black visitors so far.

The Fisk Jubilee Singers were a group of African-American performers of spiritual and plantation songs, originally formed in 1871. Their purpose was to raise funds for the impoverished Fisk University for black students in Nashville, Tennessee. The group's American tours were popular and they performed for President Grant in the White House in 1872.

They undertook several British tours. On one Sunday evening in October 1899 they performed at Leigh Baptist Chapel. The singers repeated this for the next few evenings at Leigh Assembly Rooms, Tyldesley Conservative Club and the Volunteer Hall in Atherton.

Well-known songs such as 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot' and John Brown's 'Body' were performed alongside hymns such as 'The Old Ark's A-Moving' and 'I've Been Redeemed'.

The Leigh Chronicle's opinion was that: "The most weird native melodies are wedded to the words of revival hymns, and the effect is at once



inspiring and grotesque...The audience was evidently highly charmed."

The Fisk Singers were not alone in their fund-raising ambitions. The Canada Jubilee Singers performed at Atherton Mission Hall in July 1885 to get money with which to build a college in Chatham, Ontario. It was hoped that the young black men trained there would undertake missionary work in Africa.

Charismatic black preachers also lectured locally. The Reverend Peter Stanford, the son of slaves who was Virginian by birth but Canadian by adoption, had settled in Britain. He conducted a lecture tour in 1886 and had a successful fourteen day mission in the Leigh area. He then moved to Westhoughton for a further two weeks.



Stanford's usual lecture appears to have been entitled, 'The Past and Present Condition of the Negro Race and Wedded Life Among Them'.

The following year in Birmingham, he became the first black pastor appointed to a Baptist Church in Britain.

Perhaps more overtly entertaining for local residents was the so-called 'Black Knight', Reverend J H Hector, who was described by the Leigh Chronicle as, 'a real black orator of pure African descent.' He performed a fund-raiser over two evenings at the Leigh Assembly Rooms in September 1896. He returned to the area the following year with two evenings at Bedford Wesleyan Chapel.

As a child of former slaves, Hector began his lectures with dramatic accounts of his parents' experiences, their escape into Canada and his own upbringing in the USA after the Civil War and abolition of slavery. He apparently fell victim to the demon drink but was redeemed and became a Methodist minister. The 'Black Knight' then railed against the evils of alcohol, calling for prohibition.

Clearly, though, Hector delivered his message in an entertaining way. "He has a fund of what may be called Yankee humour and his audience on Wednesday laughed loud and long at some of his efforts in the wit and humour line", were the words of the Leigh Chronicle in 1896.

Hector had then turned his guns on tobacco smoking, "...in forcible if not exactly elegant language". He argued that smokers should not be allowed to become clergymen or teachers and,

ahead of his time, the 'Black Knight' claimed that smoking increased the risk of heart disease. Even so, the local press believed that it would take more than this to detach the people of Leigh from their pipes and cigars.

On the second night of his engagement at the Bedford Wesleyan Chapel in 1897, the Black Knight's lecture was intriguingly entitled, "A Good Wife and How to Get One."

Some former white missionaries, who lectured on their experiences in Africa, brought Africans with them. A preacher did just that at the Baptist Chapel in Golborne in 1898. The Leigh Journal told its readers that, '...an African student spoke in English and sang several native tunes'. Earlier, in 1887, two African boys had accompanied a white Congo missionary, the Reverend W Hughes to his talk at Tyldesley Assembly Rooms. The boys sang hymns in three languages, including Welsh, the latter presumably designed to appeal to the many miners from Wales living in the town.

My research into the historical black presence in this part of Lancashire is still in its early stages and is ongoing. Even so, I have been able to reach some tentative but provisional conclusions. Most local people did not attend the lectures by the 'Black Knight' or the Fisk Singers' performances. Nevertheless, it is possible they would have seen the visitors around their towns. At the turn of the twentieth century, black people would not have been unfamiliar to the residents of Leigh and the towns and villages around it.



*The Fisk Jubilee Singers*

BY YVONNE BITHELL

# ALL SAINTS PARISH CHURCH, HINDLEY



This year celebrates the 375th Anniversary of All Saints' Church – originally known as 'Hindley Chapel'.

There has been a church on the site since 1641, with the present building dating back to 1766; hence it is 250 years old this year.

The church has had a rich and colourful history since its inception during the English Civil War (1642-1651) when Hindley was considered 'no man's land', lying between the Royalists of Wigan and Parliamentarians of Bolton, so it was viewed with suspicion by both parties.

It was built to be a 'chapel of ease' to the parish church of Wigan so that local folk did not have to walk so far to attend an Anglican service. The church grounds were consecrated for burials as Hindley's only cemetery for all denominations, and the first recorded entry in the chapel's burial register was that of "an unknown souldier beinge a stranger slaine" and buried on 11 December 1642.

It was said to be one of the last chapels to be built anywhere in England before the outbreak of the Civil War. In Lancashire this was mainly a religious conflict between the Presbyterians and the Anglicans, who were supported by Roman Catholic gentry.

Against all this turmoil, the Chapel's early years were marked by division and strife, which continued throughout the Civil War and Commonwealth and flared up again at the close of the century.

By 1643 the Chapel was already in the hands of the Presbyterians and remained so until 1662 when the Act of Uniformity led to the ejection of the minister along with all other Presbyterian colleagues in chapels and churches throughout Wigan. From 1662-1668 the chapel stood vacant and from 1668-1690 the Living was held by numerous conformist ministers. After seven years of wrangling and litigation, on 7 March 1697 the Duchy Court at Westminster issued a decree stating that the Chapel had been built for



Anglican worship and that its founders and donors had been conformists.

In the mid seventeenth century, alterations and additions to the old building had proven to be a temporary solution, so permission was granted to demolish and rebuild the Chapel on a larger scale. This was done in 1766 with the total cost of the rebuild being £789 13s 3½d, which was met by the sale of land, the sale of pews and subscriptions.

Records show that workers enjoyed the customary bonus of a pint of ale (2d) to mark the completion of the major work – an incentive even in those times!

Whilst some commented that the Georgian Church building was “rude and crude...with many weaving sheds presenting a finer appearance”, the author, Nikolaus Pevsner, in his recorded ‘Buildings of England’ speaks of All Saints as:

*“...this delightful red brick chapel which faithfully reflected the religious thinking of its age, in which the pulpit mattered more than the communion table and in which the accommodation of a congregation and not a ritual was foremost in the architect’s mind. The oblong building with galleries is the Georgian standard, as the box pews.”*

One writer in the Wigan Examiner of 5 May 1875 comments that:

*“...the worst kind of Pewsyism sticks to this church (All Saints). There is the rich man’s pew, cushioned and closed, replete with its furniture, luxurious but for its dirt. There is also the poor man’s perch, wherein he may pray under the gaze of better dressed sinners.”*

Services and sermons were, by today’s standards, very long with a strong emphasis laid on preaching and the large, three decker pulpit, which obscured the altar, was the focal point.

One story told is about a preacher whose sermon was so long that the congregation began to leave the church until only one person was left. When the Churchwardens went to him – they found he was dead!

Another story tells of the ‘Bobber’ whose official duty was to walk the aisles during the sermons and to ‘tap’ or ‘bob’ with his stave those who had dozed off and were snoring too loudly!

After the rebuild of 1766 five rows of seats in the west gallery were reserved for the choir. The instrumental section consisted of two violoncello, bassoon and clarinet, but on great occasions fiddles, French horns and hautboys (oboe) were requisitioned – showing that

music groups in worship are no ‘new thing’. An organ was installed in 1840 replacing the musicians.

A few notable wealthy families including the Leyland, Eckersley and Penningtons, who were generous benefactors of Hindley, have graves in the churchyard and thanks to Ralph Peters, All Saints became one of the first churches to establish Sunday Schools, which later became the nucleus of our church day schools.

In 1868 an explosion occurred at Springs Colliery, Hindley Green, in which 61 men and boys were killed. Forty-two were buried at All Saints and the whole community was in mourning. Seventeen were aged between eleven and sixteen. There were several fathers and sons buried together including two sets of brothers aged fifteen and thirteen, and fifteen and twelve. Their names are recorded in church.

Throughout its history All Saints’ Church has had its problems, divisions and controversies, but it has served the community well – not only the spiritual welfare but also the educational and social needs of the parish. As part of our anniversary celebrations we have produced a time-line from 1641 to 2016, from the reign of King Charles I to the present Queen Elizabeth II.

The time-line incorporates various displays from our schools, Scout and Brownie organisations, the local history society, who have displayed items relating to our cotton and coalmining heritage and many other interesting facts and figures. We are holding numerous social events from April through until November, with monthly speakers.

Our history is something that belongs not to the ‘dead past’ but is very much part of our life that makes us what we are today and we are delighted to share it with others.

*The writer is indebted to:*

*Mr J Lowe, ‘The History of All Saints’ Church, Hindley’*

*Mr J Leyland, ‘Memorials of Hindley’*

**The Church is open to visitors every:  
Wednesday – 9.00am until 12 noon  
Saturday – 10.00am until 12 noon**

Extended opening on our Heritage Day, Saturday 10 September (10.00am until 3.00pm) when the parish registers will be available to view.

*Please see local newspapers/posters/programme of events from Church or check the website.*

*For further information, telephone the church vestry on 01942 700166.*

By Alf Ridyard

# A Talbot Road Celebrity

Talbot Road, a row of terraced houses at the pit end of Plank Lane, would not generally be noted for having a celebrity connection, but a certain Jack Fort, born in 1888 at number 26, certainly changed all that.

Young Jack started a promising junior football career with St Andrew's Mission Youth Team at Morts Field, Plank Lane - the field being where the old Plank Lane Working Men's Club was built in later years. By 1907 he had moved up the ladder to play for Atherton Football Club in the Lancashire Combination and stayed for three years. His parents moved to 128 Plank Lane in 1911.

Jack then made another step up and moved south to join Exeter City, then of the Southern League, who were part time professionals. By 1914 he was on the move again to Millwall but not before he had toured Argentina and Brazil with Exeter. The team won eight matches on tour, with one draw and two defeats. The draw, with no score for either side, was against the Argentine national team. A 2-0 defeat to the first ever Brazilian national eleven was bad enough but as they left the field news reached them of the outbreak of the war in Europe. On their return to Britain, their ship came under attack from a German battleship and had to divert to another port.

Another of the games in Brazil was against Corinthians, a team then formed of mainly British expats. Exeter won 5-3 but the centre forward of the Brazilian team was another local lad from St Helens, Harry Welfare. After a short career with St Helens Town, Liverpool and Tranmere Rovers, Welfare took up a teaching post in Brazil. He scored a hat trick that day and his efforts in the



*Harry Welfare*

game did not go unnoticed by the Brazilians, soon after signing to play for Fluminense, who to this day are one of the top Brazilian teams who turned out for home games at the Maracana stadium with crowds of 150,000 in the 1960s.

Harry Welfare later became a hall of fame member for the club after scoring 163 goals in 166 games; he passed away aged 77 in 1966. Another player to make his mark locally was the Exeter goalkeeper Dick Pymm, who in 1920 signed for Bolton Wanderers and played in the iconic 1923 FA Cup Final, as well as winning three England caps in 1925. Dick Pymm died in 1988 aged 95 and is still the longest lived England player.

Jack Fort, like thousands of others did his bit in the First World War but still managed to play games in the war time league with his new club, Millwall, who he joined in 1914. By 1920, the professional game was on the rise and Millwall became a fully professional member of the Third



*Exeter in Brazil*

Division South. The club competed well, finishing third in 1922, 1924 and 1925. Jack Fort continued to rise. In 1921, he was selected to play for England against Belgium, the result being in a 2-0 win in Brussels. It was a rare occurrence even in those days for a third division player to be selected for England.

Jack still holds the Millwall club record for appearances with 332 games. His last appearance was in 1930, aged 42. He continued with the club until 1965 giving 51 loyal years of service as player, coach, trainer, groundsman and finally chief scout. He passed away on 23 November aged 77, a few weeks after leaving the club.

Jack is also a member of the club's hall of fame. His Plank Lane connection doesn't end there though; his nephew Bill Fort, who was the steward of the Working Men's Club in the 1950s, says the club was built on the spot where young Jack started his epic footballing journey. Bill Fort proudly wore Jack's 1927



*Jack Fort*

Third Division Championship winners medal on his watch chain.

Not a bad career for a lad born on Talbot Road, Leigh.



# Jane Sullivan

## An Irish Woman in Scholes

BY HILARY BARKER

The problem with researching poor people is that apart from the births, marriages and deaths of their families and perhaps a few stories, they don't leave much evidence behind them.

They were often illiterate and there is little in the way of letters, diaries or photographs. Poor women don't tend to feature very prominently in social life, so their stories in particular can only be uncovered by inference and guesswork.

Jane Sullivan was my great grandmother. I knew very little about her apart from a few sketchy details passed down as family stories by my mum, Winifred Hollingsworth. I didn't even know her name was Jane until I started examining records such as censuses, marriages and deaths.

I knew she was of Irish descent, from somewhere in the north and that she had walked barefoot with her three sisters to Dublin, fleeing the potato famine. They stayed in Liverpool with relatives to begin with before moving to Wigan where they lived for the rest of their very hard lives.

I understood that there had been brothers but that they had emigrated to America while the parents and the girls stayed in Wigan.

Jane liked to sing about the 'mountains of Mourne' sweeping down to the sea and died young.



*The Manor House, Scholes c. 1890*

She was very well respected by her neighbours in Scholes and on the way to St. Patrick's for her funeral service they all lined up on John Street to pay their respects. She was said to have been very kind with a heart of gold, always ready to help anyone in need.

I first found Jane aged 18 on the 1871 census and living at 48 John Street. There were twelve living in the house. Those of you who remember the houses in Scholes will appreciate how crowded that must have been!

Properties were basically one main room with a scullery downstairs and two small bedrooms upstairs, with shared toilets outside at the back.

In the house were three separate but related families. Jane's sister

Mary had married Thomas Malone and they had three daughters. Her mother Ann and her sister Bridget were there, plus Thomas Malone's brother Philip, his widowed sister and her two children.

Thomas was a tailor; Bridget and Jane were cotton factory workers as was Mary, Philip's widowed sister. Philip was an agricultural labourer. Where they all slept, I can't imagine!

Jane must have arrived between 1861 and 1871. It is interesting to note that by 1861 Wigan had settled into an industrial pattern of coal, cotton and steel. In 1861 the workforce was comprised of 24,000 male workers and over 9,000 coal-miners, 2,000 cotton textile workers and nearly 1,500 farm labourers. 7,000 more



## Regenerating Wigan Archives

We are in the process of forming exciting plans for developing the Archives and Local Studies in Leigh town centre.



We are delighted to have received initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the Regenerating Wigan Archives and Local Studies project.

The project aims to redevelop the Borough's Archives, based at Leigh Town Hall, with the creation of a new public searchroom, heritage exhibition space and expanded specialist storage strongrooms for the archive collections.

Initial funding of £51,000 towards professional development of the plans has been awarded to help Wigan Council and the Archives progress plans to apply for a full grant.

The project aims to develop a full scheme to carry out work in the following areas:

- The creation of a new modern searchroom for access to the archives for customers and volunteers on the ground floor of Leigh Town Hall;
- A new museums and archive exhibition space and community room in the vacant shop units on the Market Street side of the Town Hall;
- New and renovated storage to increase archive capacity within the Town Hall for the Borough's 800 year old collection of historic records;
- New conservation facilities for new and existing volunteers to help us conserve, catalogue and digitise collections cared for by the Archives;
- A new cafe space in the foyer of Leigh Town Hall;
- Facilities for groups, talks, workshops and schools wishing to visit the Archives;
- A programme of outreach and engagement activities, helping the Archives to both raise awareness of the Borough's history and to encourage people to donate records to the Archives for preservation.

This project web page is now live, so if you would like to find out more or learn about how you can support the project, please have a look at the page or get in touch with a member of the Archives team, <http://www.wigan.gov.uk/regenerationproject>

## Made in Greater Manchester

For many people around the world, Greater Manchester is synonymous with industry. The Greater Manchester that we know today was built upon the foundations of industry, and the growth of the region went hand in hand with the arrival of people of many nationalities and ethnic groups who were drawn to an area that promised employment and prosperity.

These industrial businesses have left a legacy of archives and photographs which document not only business transactions, products and industrial processes but the working lives of men, women and children across the region. Unfortunately many of these important business archive collections are currently uncatalogued, and as a result are inaccessible to the public.

This is why we are thrilled to announce that Wigan Council have been awarded a grant of over £70,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to catalogue and digitise a selection of business records from across Greater Manchester.

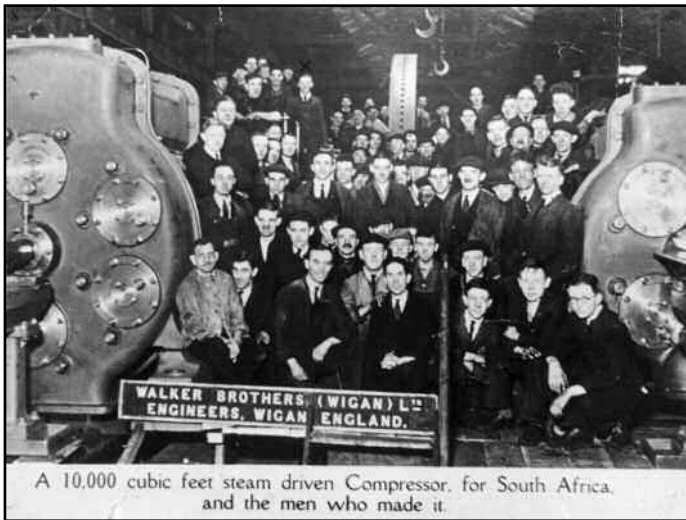
The project is being implemented on behalf of the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership. Each of the ten services within the partnership has selected one collection of business records which they believe to be historically important.

These collections will be catalogued, digitised and transcribed by groups of volunteers, and then made available to the public for the first time via our online catalogue, Greater Manchester Lives. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to put together blog posts for our Made in Greater Manchester blog, as well as research and write articles for a book which we intend to publish about local business histories.

Archives+, based at Manchester Central Library, will be cataloguing and digitising Manchester Ship Canal and Bridgewater Canal records. These collections are vital in illustrating how and why the North West became such an important centre for industrial growth over the last three hundred years.

Tameside Archives & Local Studies will be digitising and transcribing the fascinating 'Manchester Studies Collection', a series of oral history tapes covering issues such as domestic service, health, poverty and the cotton industry. They will also be taking a look at the records of the Senior Service cigarette company, which was formed in Manchester in the 1920s.





Bolton Archives & Local Studies will be cataloguing and digitising the records of Magee, Marshall and Co. Ltd., a family-owned brewery established in Bolton in 1888, and Bury Archives will be focussing on the records of Thomas Robinson & Co. Ltd. of Ramsbottom, bleachers and dyers.

Trafford Local Studies have chosen a collection of photographs relating to two major industrial areas - Broadheath, located in Altrincham, and Trafford Park, which at its height employed 75,000 workers.

Oldham Local Studies & Archives have chosen the records of the leather roller manufacturers Clegg and Mellor, and Rochdale Touchstones will be cataloguing and digitising the records of Petrie and McNaught, manufacturers of steam powered engines.

Stockport Archives will be concentrating on the records of Robert Arundel, a textile machine manufacturer from Stockport. Not only does this collection provide information on how the textile machinery worked and was developed, it also gives a brilliant insight into industrial unrest in the 1960s.

Wigan Archives & Local Studies have chosen to catalogue the records of Walker Brothers Ltd., a major heavy engineering business in the Wigan area. At their peak, Walker Brothers employed hundreds of people at their Pagefield Ironworks and designed and manufactured machinery that was sent around the world, from the Peruvian Railways, to South African mines. There are currently three pallets worth of Walker Brothers' engineering drawings, plans and blueprints waiting to be listed in the basement of Leigh Library. These records are vital to the understanding of Wigan's industrial history, and once catalogued will be a fantastic resource for researchers.

Overall, we hope that the Made in Greater Manchester project will bring together volunteers, researchers and

archive professionals across the ten Greater Manchester districts to conserve, catalogue and digitise our important business archives and make them available for everyone to use and enjoy.

## New Accessions and Collections

### Wigan Archives

- Records of Golborne Cricket Club [Acc. 2016/47]
- Records of Astley Methodist Church [Acc. 2016/44]
- Bedford Church School and Bedford National School [Acc. 2016/43]
- John Brown of Wigan, publications, 1815-1816 [Acc. 2016/42]
- Alderman Kearney Mayoral Photograph Album [Acc. 2016/39]
- Alan Davies Mining Collection [Acc. 2016/35]
- Highlea Secondary School/Tyldesley Highfield School [Acc. 2016/33]
- Lowton, St Mary's Church, Church magazines, 1899-1904 [Acc. 2016/30]

### Wigan Local Studies

- Michael Bold, 'A Consideration of the Property Rights of the Stallholders Occupying the Indoor Retail Market Hall in Wigan'
- Chris Heaven, 'Wigan Dispensary, 1824-1873, Charitable Healthcare Provision Prior to Wigan Infirmary'
- Heritage for Health, Trenchers Times,
- David Jackson, 'The Industrial Relations Implications of Management Re-structuring of Higher Education in Wigan, 1988-1992'
- David Long, 'British Ambulance Flotillas of the Great War. The use of barges by British and French forces to treat and transport WWI casualties, Waterways Journal, Volume 18
- NCB North-Western Division No. 2 (Wigan) Area Safety
- Souvenir Programme of the 69th Annual Procession of the Catholic Parishes in the County Borough of Wigan, Monday 3 June 1968
- Walker Brothers (Wigan) Ltd., The Walker 6 Ton Cruiser Type Mobile Crane. Operating & Maintenance Instructions

Please check our online catalogue for more items available at Wigan & Leigh Local Studies, <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/wigan/home>

# A Life in Westleigh: James William Slater

AS TOLD TO HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER, JADE SLATER

'My name is James William Slater. I was number three in a family of five, born 30 March 1940.

We lived at Hill View, number 10; they were very old houses.

An old lady who was in her 90s called Hill View the 'old row' when she was a girl.

The houses were 'two up two downs'. They were wet, damp and cold and had only one fireplace, as well as one tap that provided cold water.

We had only one gas light in the front room and candles for light in the bedrooms. The toilet was 15 yards away across the backs away from the house and we had pots under the beds for night time.

Due to poor nutrition in my early life I had brittle bones and was prone to bad fractures. When I was very young I fell and broke both legs. They had to be set in traction at Leigh infirmary.

The nurses used to shout at me and say to my mother I was a bad child because I was always crying. When they took the cast and traction off I had pressure sores near down to the bone; that's why I had cried in agony when the nurses tightened the traction. The scars are still visible even now.

As I was sickly as a child I missed much schooling. When I went to senior school, West Leigh, I couldn't read or write. However, I developed my learning, learned to read and write and

discovered I was good with numbers and math.

I also discovered I was a good runner and won the cross-country championships, running against boys two years older than myself. During the race I ran in cut off wellington boots whilst other boys were running in bare feet as we were that poor. Out of embarrassment the school later provided spikes for us to run in.

My mother had a very hard life bringing us up. She also had both poor eyesight and hearing. It led to complete blindness in later life. She was a good mother and cared for us as well as she could despite her disabilities. When my father got injured in the pit, we had some very hard times but we were always looked after with my mam. She often went without for us.

Grandma Slater was the midwife for a lot of women in Westleigh. She told me how she had a clean pillow slip and a clean bed sheet for any women to have their babies on. She always kept this for the poor women who had didn't have any for themselves.

She also laid the dead out - another thing she did for the poor families within Westleigh.

Later on in her life she would put shows on for the old age pensioners in Westleigh Labour Club and put food on as well. How she did all of these things I do not know but she was well known around the area.

Grandma's name was Annie Rhodes before she married. She originally came here around 1885-1886 from Ashton-under-Lyne. She had very little schooling.

When she was twelve years old she went to live with two spinster aunts on a sheep farm. By seventeen she had gone to work as a kitchen maid in the large house of a solicitor in Manchester, where she worked her way up to become the housekeeper. I do not know how she met



*James' father and grandmother*

Grandad Slater but he came from Atherton. I think his name was Joe Slater. They had three children, James, William and Annie, and there may have been one more that died soon after birth. Grandad Slater went to fight in the First World War and grandma was left to live in a very poor place in Westleigh called 'Physic'.

I remember the houses on the Physic. They were in bad repair when I was young. The Ring O' Bells pub was at the back of the houses. I was told by my dad that they did not have ale on pump but brought it out in jugs. I think that the council still moved the night soil at this time for some of these houses.

The houses were very old even at Grandma Slater's time. She had nothing when she went to live there. She told me she went down to Leigh Market and got two small wooden boxes, one used as a table and the other as a chair. She slept with the two lads on the floor and the baby had a drawer for a cot.

My Dad looked after William and Annie, the baby, when Grandma Slater went out to work at Leigh cable works. I think they made 'ammo' there for the war.

They sent Grandad Slater home with shell shock. He had his rifle and ammo just as he had come from the war. I do not know the date this happened. Grandad did not live much longer. He killed himself in one of Hayes' factory lodges. Grandma took the rifle and ammo and gave them in to Leigh Town Hall.

Sometime later grandma was wed again to Jim Ashall. He was very good to her. He was a crown green bowler and won the old age pensioner cup at Blackpool, the Waterloo Cup.

My Dad James Slater was the oldest of the three children. He always worked in the pit. He



*James as a baby with his brother Joe and sister Lily*

worked at Howe Bridge pit for some 33 years as a drawer and a packer. He went to work at 7.00pm down the pit and came up again at 2.30am the next morning.

I never knew my Grandad Slater. Grandad Ashall was the Grandad in knew when I was a child. When Grandad Ashall died I would go and sit with Grandma and she would tell me all of the history of our family.

My Mother came from Twist Lane, Leigh. She was a Fairhurst before she was married. I do not know what happened to Grandad

Fairhurst. My Mother's Mother had re-married again to Mr Dyke. This was the Grandad I knew. He was a Welshman. He was a man who could go out without any money around Leigh and could come back drunk – because he was a very good singer he would sing in the pubs in return for his drink.

He also made fishing rods and birdcages which he then sold. He too was in the Great War and his name is on Leigh Cenotaph but I do not know how this came about – other than to say he was posted as missing but he later came home.'



# Lawrence Cox

## Soldier & Policeman

by John Hesford

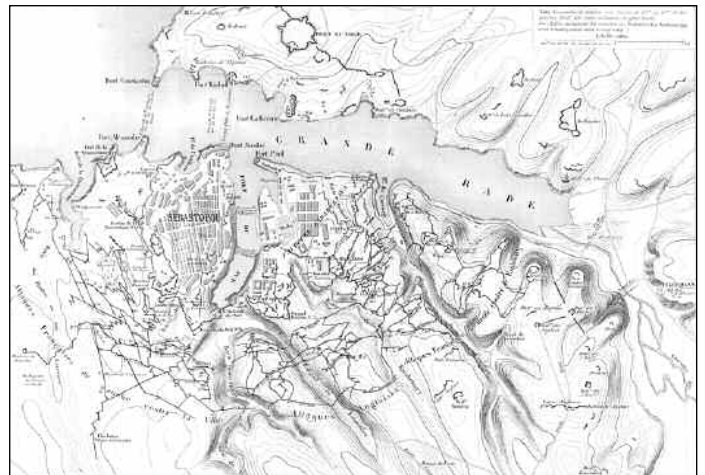
In the first of a two-part article, John Hesford explores the life of a remarkable local character. The first part of the tale traces his military career; the second in the next edition of *Past Forward* will look at his life as a policeman in Leigh (1875-1889), where his strict attention to duty, his geniality and good nature, combined with his admirable social qualities gained him hosts of friends.

Many volumes have been written on military campaigns by both retired and serving officers but by virtue of widespread illiteracy, little is recorded of the trials and ordeals of the common foot soldier. Lawrence Cox, however, was the exception to the rule, when in 1890 he related his life as a soldier and later policeman in graphic detail.

Lawrence was born on Christmas Day, 25 December 1837 at Boyne, North Roscommon, Ireland. His father was a soldier and he travelled with his parents to wherever his father was stationed in the British Empire. Immersed in military life it was inconceivable that he would choose any other career than that of a soldier. On 15 July 1851 at the tender age of thirteen and a half he enlisted as a boy soldier in the 1st Battalion 14th Regiment stationed at Dublin. In March 1852 he transferred to his father's old regiment, the Princess Victoria Royals Own Irish Fusiliers, known as Blaney's Bloodhounds from their perseverance in tracking down the Irish rebels in 1798, when the commanding officer was Lord Blaney.

His first detachment was to Hanlbowline a small island and naval victualing station for the navy near Queensland and from there, on the 25 April 1854, he embarked for Gibraltar on the sailing ship *Gomelya*. This was a penal stage where long term prisoners would spend one to three years repairing public works before being sent to Australia. Up to 900 convicts were housed in a three building fortification and were guarded with bayonet and loaded gun. While he was stationed here he was recommended for the Humane Society Medal for saving the son of the gaol keeper who had fallen into the harbour; sadly the boy died a short time after.

Following the outbreak of war, Cox, together with the 94th and 17th foot embarked for the Crimea and on arrival at Constantinople they replaced their old Minnie rifles with the new 1853 pattern .577 Enfield. On landing at Balaclava they found that the battles of Alma, Inkerman and Balaclava had already taken place. They were supplied on that first night with two blankets, but they were of little use due to the muddy conditions. To make things worse there was a heavy storm, during which time they were



*Map of Sebastopol Lines 1855*

attacked by the Russian light cavalry which was quickly repulsed. They got no sleep that night and in the morning they marched to the front. Each man had to carry his cooking utensils, 56lb of luggage and 60 rounds of ammunition and before setting off each soldier was given two drams of rum.

The ground was so bad here that only three and a half miles were covered on the first day and although it was only seven miles to the front, it took two days to arrive there, somewhat tempering Cox's excitement of the action to come.

The formation of the lines saw the French occupying the right of the English, with the Sardinians on the Balaclava plains and Cox's regiment forming part of three divisions. During that winter, the soldiers were in the trenches twelve hours a day without food or drink and were generally treated very badly.

Daily rations consisted of 1lb of hard biscuit and 1lb of pork with a little coffee, the latter being green and unground. There was nothing to cook the food with and they had nothing warm to eat or drink for several days, living on biscuits and sugar; they also got two drams of rum a day, three when in the trenches.

There was no one to tend the sick and injured, cholera and diarrhoea raged, the infected just sickened away and died; there were initially eighteen to a bell tent, but this number soon dwindled to six or seven. The weather was so severe that many died from exposure and frostbite. The tent flap opening froze as hard as iron and could not be closed at night and the drifting snow swept into the tents. Cox did

not take his clothes off for three months and only survived due to his strong constitution. Coming off duty he could only tell if his sleeping comrades were alive or dead by putting snow flakes on their lips to see if they melted. Those that had died were sewn in blankets and placed in a hole in the ground with no chaplain in attendance.

The cavalry were mainly used for transporting provisions. When a horse died it was dragged to a brook or stream. It soon became frozen hard and became a stepping stone. Out of the 900 men of Cox's regiment, after the second month only 50 were in modest health. Come spring life became better; they received drafts from home and were supplied with flannel shirts, drawers and sheepskin coats, some soldiers even received wellington boots that reached the knees. In summer, the men worked hard to prepare for bombardment. Shot and shell were carried from the parade ground to the trenches.

The bombardment of Sebastopol began on Easter Monday 1855. Cox at that time was in the second parallel and for the next few days the air was darkened by shot and shell. The Russians replied by making sorties and keeping up a heavy bombardment on the British lines to raise the sailors' battery to the ground.

That night the French advanced in glittering lines to take the Malakoff, but although they gained temporary possession of the fort the enemy fire made the position untenable and they had to retreat with heavy losses. On the night of 17 June, 300 soldiers including Cox marched out to a place called 'the graveyard', situated in front of the Redan where they waited as a work party until a storming party had taken the Redan. The burst of a rocket was the signal for the assault and the British storming party advanced under murderous fire. They were repulsed and Cox's party were forced to fall back into the main body. Cox spent three nights in the trenches as they expected a great sortie and on 17 June the Russians attacked the Allied positions but were repulsed at every point.

On 5 July Cox was reunited with his father in the trenches, but the latter was so badly wounded he was shipped back to England. Cox himself had many narrow escapes from death. On the night of the bombardment, he and three others were all sat down in a circle. A man named Perry



*Siege of Sebastopol*

was telling a tale when they saw a shell alight some 100 yards away. They went to find cover and got clear just as a huge piece of shell struck the exact place where Perry had been sitting, deep into the earth.

One night he returned back from the trenches to his tent. He was the youngest of three, and consequently slept in the middle, by far the most uncomfortable place. One of his comrades got up for night guard and never returned as he was seized with cholera and died at his post.

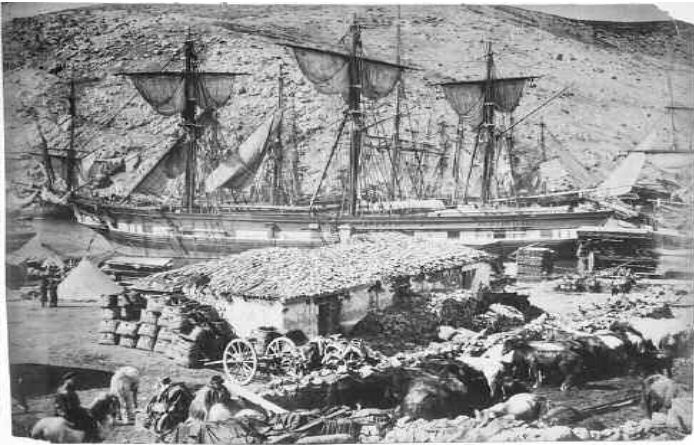
Discipline was rigorously maintained. If a man was found drunk he was court-martialed. His regiment would form a square so the men could see what to expect. The prisoner was stripped to the waist, tied to a triangle and flogged with a cat o' nine tails. Two dozen lashes was the general rule, at the end of which the soldiers back was a mass of lacerated wounds.

The battle of Tchernaya almost cost Cox his life. The Sardinians who occupied the plain were driven back by a combined attack. The Russians got to within one and a half miles of the town of Balaclava where the British stores were stationed. The 300 British and French (including Cox) were cut off from the army and death or imprisonment stared them in the face. The aide-de-camp was very nearly killed and they had to flee leaving everything behind. For eight miles they had to run at the double with the grey coated Russians close behind them, until they reached the Turkish lines in safety. They then manned a battery, but the Russians never arrived, so still fearing an attack the party took up a position on the Heights of Balaclava. When they got to the Height they observed the Russian army beneath them. No wonder Prince Gortchakoff saw fit to withdraw his men, well did he remember Alma, Inkerman and Balaclava where he erected a stand so that the Russian ladies might see him drive the British women (as he described the kilted Highlanders) into the sea and how these terrible men in skirts bounded up the hills like deer and smote the gunners hip and thigh.

After his narrow escape Cox and his comrades did duty in the trenches until the 8 September 1855. That day, following a terrible struggle in which many lives were lost, they captured the Malakoff. At the same time, the British



*British Monument Great Redan Crimean War 1856*



*Balaclava*

attempted to take the Redan but the Russians were reinforced by the men who had lost their positions and retreated. The captured Malakoff was the key to taking the Russian positions; the enemy was well aware of this and blew up the Redan with mines.

The town of Sebastopol with all its wealth was now at the mercy of the allies. To maintain discipline a ring of soldiers was placed around the town to prevent looting. With the French this was different, it was harvest time and they rushed into the town carrying off whatever they could lay their hands on, while the English looked on. After the capture of Sebastopol, Cox's regiment was sent to the Heights of Balaclava where it remained during the winter of 1855-1856. It left Balaclava in May 1856 and returned to the old quarters on Windmill Hill, Gibraltar, where to the lasting disgrace of the British Government they were supplied with new kit at their own expense - their own kit being lost in the Crimea during the hasty retreat from the plains of Balaclava. They were stationed at Gibraltar until July 1856 when in

company with another regiment, the 89th Foot, they were despatched to combat unrest in South Africa.

They came to anchor at East London, a town on the Eastern Cape at the mouth of the Buffalo River, but the surf was so dangerous they had to land in boats. They made camp about three quarters of a mile from the shore and found that the heat was so great they had to get a light suit of summer clothes, again at their own expense.

The duties were very severe and the food consisted of 1lb of boiled beef and coffee sweetened with treacle. The presence of the soldiers prevented the black South Africans from breaking out in open insurrection but the Africans were by no means deterred in picking off stragglers.

One morning a soldier was found dead near a village – or kraal – on the sea shore. The dead man was one of four brothers named Farrell who were very popular in the camp and the soldiers swore to have their revenge. The men marched into the village and burned down all the huts they could find. When this affair was circulated amongst the native population, word came to the camp that they were mustering in their thousands and were only waiting for a favourable opportunity to annihilate the British. Whether they feared the military was not known, but they did not attack the British camp and never attacked another soldier.

After some thirteen months stationed in Africa, Cox and his regiment were ordered to depart for India to quell a mutiny.

***The second part of Lawrence Cox's story will be published in the next edition of Past Forward.***

*Sources: Leigh Chronicle, 1890  
Encyclopaedia Britannica*

## Information for Contributors

We always welcome articles and letters for publication from both new and existing contributors.

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

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

## Submission Guidelines

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

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

### CONTACT DETAILS:

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



This year, we're celebrating extraordinary lives at the National Coal Mining Museum for England.

**BE INSPIRED FROM 28th MAY**

**FREE ADMISSION!**

[ncm.org.uk/heroes](http://ncm.org.uk/heroes)

#WhatIsHeroism



# THE NATIONAL COAL MINING MUSEUM: Heroes and Heroines Exhibition

Who do you consider a hero of mining? Maybe it is someone who showed you the ropes when just starting out in mining, or a relative that worked hard all their life to provide for their family. Perhaps it is someone that you have read about; an inventor, a social reformer or a rescue man going above and beyond.

This year the National Coal Mining Museum for England is celebrating the heroes and heroines of coal mining. We want your nominations and the tales behind them to fill our special exhibition with the inspirational stories and memories of men and women from across the coalfields.

There are lots of ways to nominate your hero. If you come to the Museum, why not fill out a nomination card or talk to a member of staff. If you can't make it onsite, visit our website where we will be launching our Hero's hub, which includes lots of information such as our hero of the week and of course, a link to nominate your hero. If you are on social media,

you can nominate on the Museum's Facebook page or on Twitter at #WhatIsHeroism.

Visit the Museum from 28 May 2016 to discover a wealth of unsung mining heroes you may never have heard of and add your nomination to them. We want to hear your stories.

You can also submit stories, memories or photographs to Wigan Archives to pass on to the Museum. Please send any information to [archives@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:archives@wigan.gov.uk) or pop in to see us at the Museum of Wigan Life or Wigan Archives (at Leigh Town Hall).

We will certainly be submitting the names of our mining heroes, including Margaret Park, who was Mayoress of Wigan from 1882 to 1887. In 1887 she led a group of pit brow lasses to London to protest about plans to ban them from working on the surface of coal mines. The protest was successful and pit brow lasses continued to work at Wigan's coal mines.

# Wigan Piers & Dock

Wigan Pier gained notoriety through music hall songs and jokes by George Formby Senior, George Formby Junior and George Orwell's 1937 book, 'The Road to Wigan Pier'.

One story about Wigan Pier is that on pulling out of Wigan Northwestern Station, Formby Senior looked down on Wigan and observed a long, wooden, pier-like structure. This could have been the large wooden viaduct on the Bury to Liverpool Railway that then extended from Miry Lane across the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and the River Douglas.

Another story is that passengers on a train from Wigan to Southport saw a long wooden structure that reminded them of Southport Pier. This probably was the 1,050 yard long wooden, overhead gantry from Lamb and Moore's Newtown Colliery that crossed the River Douglas, canal and railway line to Meadows Colliery by Frog Lane. As Wigan is some 20 miles from the coast, these stories poked fun at Wigan.

George Orwell searched in vain for a real railway pier head in the canal basin but it was demolished in 1929. A symbolic replica of a railway tipping mechanism installed on the canal wharf in the 1980s remembers this Wigan Pier.

In researching Wigan Pier's history, we find that there were in fact, three real waterway piers and a dock. These structures were integral parts of Wigan's transformation from a medieval market town with craftsmen and merchants to a leader in the Industrial Revolution.

Wigan's success was founded on coal. Coal production in the Wigan area in the early 1700s was only a few thousand tons per year and the population of the town only a few thousand. In 1882, Sinclair wrote that Wiganers '...were shut up in themselves by the spirit of



Map of Wigan

protection, and enterprise had been foreign to their nature.'

Change was realised by a few Wiganers, such as Alexander Leigh and an increasing number of 'foreigners', such as Liverpoolians Jonathan Blundell and John Clarke. They began to break down traditions and barriers.

The pace of change became overwhelming as laissez-faire capitalism shaped Wigan's economy, society and environment. Peasants and yeomen in the old manorial system were pushed and pulled into becoming workers — some say slaves — in mines, mills and factories. The population mushroomed and the landscape was defiled with spoil heaps, flashes and coal dust.

The history of Wigan Pier and dock reflects sequential improvements in transportation that began nearly three centuries ago. The dock, piers and early railways facilitated revolutionary changes in the export of coal from Wigan and the import

of goods from around the world. The first major transport development was the opening of the Douglas Navigation in 1741, allowing boats to carry coal and other goods to the Ribble Estuary and beyond.

Around 1735, when the navigation was being constructed, a 250-300 yard channel was dug 'from the termination of the dock to the point of pool-bridge' [Parson's Meadow Bridge].

An 1802 map shows two canalised channels branching northwards from the River Douglas. The buildings at the terminal point of these canalised sections formed the end section of the Douglas Navigation and what must have been Wigan Dock. The Leeds and Liverpool Canal was finished in 1794 and by the end of the eighteenth century the navigation was effectively abandoned.

Goods were transported to and from the navigation and canal by horse and cart but as more pits were sunk, the need to transport large quantities of coal stimulated construction of private colliery railways.

In 1822 Thomas Claughton, a Warrington coal mining speculator, sold a portion of his mines and mineral rights to John Daglish, brother of Robert Daglish, who since 1813 operated his steam locomotive, 'The Walking Horse', in Winstanley and Orrell.

John Daglish entered into partnership with Peter Brimelow, a coal master of Wigan, and together they operated Stone House Colliery in the Worsley Mesnes area. It was around 1822 that Daglish 'made and erected a weighing machine, a pier head and tippler upon or near to the banks of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in Wigan aforesaid'.





*Wigan Town Plan*

This was the first Wigan Pier, where the current symbolic tippler is located.

In 1840, Daglish sold his railway leading to the Pier Head, including the weighing machine and tippler, to Meyrick Banks of Winstanley Hall. In 1845, Meyrick Banks extended the railway line to his Winstanley pits forming a three and a half mile railway to the Pier Head.

The Daglish-Banks railway was four foot narrow-gauge and utilised gravity and horse power to

transport coal down to the canal. In 1882, Meyrick Banks introduced a narrow-gauge steam locomotive called, 'Louisa'.

In 1886-1887, the railway was converted to standard gauge and a new standard gauge locomotive, 'Eleanor', was introduced and later joined by several other locomotives.

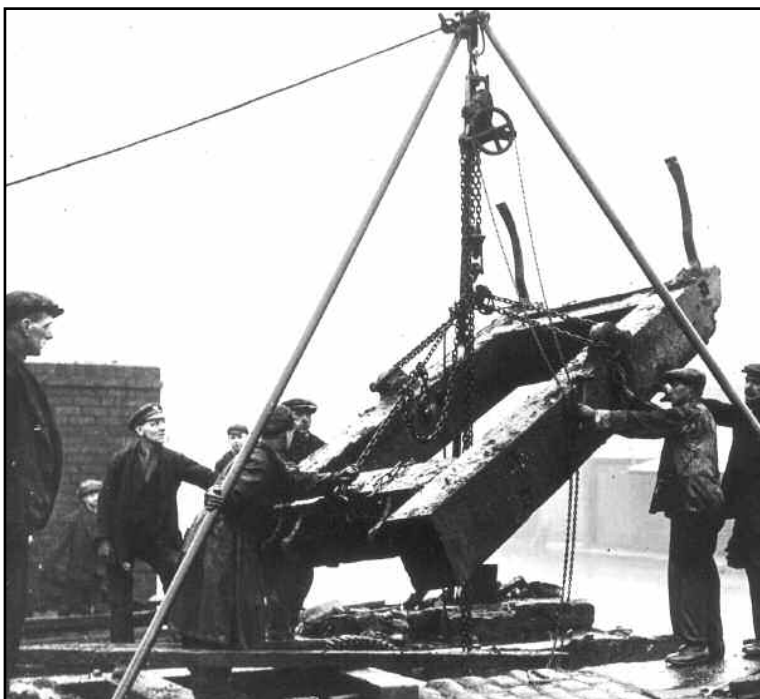
The 1890 town plan suggests that on the south side of the canal basin there are two shunting lines to the east of the Pier Head line. The Pier

Head is shown as a promontory onto the canal. On the line to the Pier Head is a weighing machine and at the Pier Head is a windlass for tipping coal wagons into canal barges.

Independent railways from Germans' Colliery, in the Goose Green-Newtown area and Blundell's Pemberton Colliery were constructed around 1825-1828 along what today is Victoria Street, to separate pier heads on the Canal near Seven Stars Bridge.

Both railways were narrow gauge and worked by gravity and horse power; they did not use steam locomotives, nor did they convert to standard gauge. The mainline railway began to transport Blundell's coal around 1848 and both colliery railways were abandoned in the 1860s; no remains survive.

Mechanization dramatically changed Wigan and created a working class that Orwell said panted at the heels of engineers and speculators marching along a mechanical road of 'progress'. Today, we can ponder whether we are designing the future of our choice, or are at the mercy of 'progress' made by scientists, engineers and speculators worldwide. Only time will tell.



*Dismantling Wigan Pier by Calderbanks Ltd, 12.1929*



*Wigan Pier*

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# The Burnden Park Disaster

## By Bill Melling

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This year is the 70th anniversary of the Burnden Park Disaster, where, on Saturday 9 March 1946, 33 local soccer fans were crushed to death and some 400 more injured.

The occasion was a second leg, sixth round, FA Cup tie between Bolton Wanderers and Stoke City, Bolton having won the first leg 2-0. The match attracted huge interest; this was the first post-war FA Cup competition and with their first leg lead, Bolton had a good chance of reaching the semi-finals.

Another attraction was the presence in the Stoke team of Stanley Matthews, the famous winger whose presence in a team was said to add an additional 7,000 spectators to a match. On that March Saturday afternoon it



*Burnden Park disaster 1946. Courtesy of The Bolton Evening News.*

was estimated that over 80,000 people descended on Burnden Park hoping to see the match, far in excess of the previous best attendance of 68,912 in 1933, and many of whom were from Wigan, Atherton and Leigh. The best attendance previously in the 1946 season had been 43,000.

Three sides of Burnden Park had covered accommodation for the spectators whilst the northern end, where the disaster occurred, was an open embankment stretching the width of the pitch behind the goal. This was crudely terraced with dirt and flagstones and dotted with tubular steel crush barriers. It was backed by the Bolton to Bury railway line, hence it being known as The Railway Embankment. It was separated from the railway by a fence of upended railway sleepers set in the ground.

In normal times, admission to this part of the ground was through turnstiles at each end of the embankment. However, during the war parts of the ground, including the turnstiles at the east end of the embankment had been requisitioned by the Ministry of Supply, who still retained possession, thus ruling out their use.

With admissions restricted to one end the early arrivals claimed the

best viewing positions half way along the embankment, behind the goal. However, as more and more people came through the turnstiles this block of spectators was gradually pushed further and further along the embankment. Naturally, they resented losing their prime positions and there was much pushing and shoving as the congestion increased.

Eventually, at 2.40pm, 20 minutes before kick-off, the decision was taken to close the turnstiles and it was at this point that things started to go wrong. The thousands of fans locked out began to take matters into their own hands; some clambered over the turnstiles, others climbed up onto the railway line and ran along the track to a point where they could climb over into the ground. The situation was not helped by a man inside the ground who, concerned for the safety of his young son, picked the padlock on an exit gate to escape from the crush and in the process let in hundreds of gatecrashers.

When the game kicked off there was a surge in the crowd as people strained to get a better view and such was the pressure that two of the tubular steel crush barriers collapsed. There was then a domino effect with people falling forward only to be trampled on by those behind them

being pushed forward. The crowd spilled over on to the track surrounding the pitch but the game went on for twelve minutes until a policeman ran to the referee and told him that a fatality had occurred. The referee called the two team captains who then led their teams off the field. The dead and injured were removed from the terracing with the dead being laid out along the touchline covered with coats.

The pressure in the crowd on the Railway Embankment terraces was eased by allowing several thousand spectators from there to move to another, less congested part of the ground. At around 3.30pm play was resumed with corpses still lay out along the touchline. At half-time the teams changed ends and continued to play without a break and the match ended as a 0-0 draw. The dead, dying and injured were ferried to Bolton Royal Infirmary in a fleet of ambulances and a temporary overflow mortuary was set up at the Ambulance Station.

An inquest on the thirty three victims was opened within a few

days by the Bolton Coroner assisted by Mr Hopwood Sayer, the Wigan Coroner. The victims, apart from one woman and a 14 year old boy, were all men between the ages of 19 and 65, many of them from townships which form part of what is now the Wigan Borough.

The picture that emerged was that although thousands of gatecrashers gained access to the Railway Embankment Terrace, conditions on the greater part of it, although very crowded, were not particularly dangerous. The fatalities and injuries occurred in a relatively small section of the crowd near the turnstiles and a bar operated by Magee's, the local brewery.

Police on the touchline, on hearing screams had rushed to the scene and proceeded to demolish the fence so that people could spill out onto the pitch to allow access to the dead and injured.

In 1946 there was no public address system, radios or telephone system linking various parts of the ground so

communication was by word of mouth and the dense crowds, particularly outside the ground, made it almost impossible for officials and the police get a picture of what was happening and to order appropriate action.

Many spectators in other parts of the ground were unaware of the fatalities that had occurred and only learned of the tragedy from the evening papers or radio news bulletins.

The inquest reached a decision within a few weeks of the tragedy returning verdicts of 'Accidental Deaths' on all 33 victims. An enquiry, headed by Justice Moelwyn Hughes was ordered by the Home Secretary, which opened on the 22 March 1946 and reported on the 25 May 1946. It recommended that Local Authorities should inspect all sports grounds capable of holding 10,000 spectators or more and that agreed safety limits for the maximum number of spectators allowed should be set.

It also recommended that turnstiles should mechanically record the numbers admitted and that grounds should have internal telephone communication systems so that a check could be kept of the size of the crowd.

Whilst the Home Office ordered the report, no official body was willing to take responsibility or to put the recommendations into effect and on another spring day in 1989, 96 people died in Sheffield, in circumstances that sadly echoed those of Burnden Park 43 years before.



*Crowds at Burnden Park. Courtesy of The Bolton Evening News.*

## 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, £1.00, Non Members, £2.00, including refreshments.

Contact Details: Margaret Hodge, 01942 884893.

13 September – The Tunnellers of WWI and Their Story – Richard Sivill

11 October – The Buccaneers – Brian Halliwell

8 November – Venice, The Lake and Dolomites – Malcolm Tranter

## 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](mailto:Gcrank_2000@yahoo.co.uk)

## Hindley & District History Society

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

## Leigh & District Antiques and Collectables Society

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

## Leigh & District History

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 serving 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

The Leigh & District Family History Help Desk is available every Monday afternoon (except Bank Holidays) from 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

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)  
20 September – Archives & Local Studies Redevelopment Project – Alex Miller  
18 October – George Lyon, Upholland Highwayman – Marianne Howell  
15 November – Lancashire Online Parish Clerks – Lynne Ayton

## Local History Federation Lancashire

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

## Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

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

For more information contact Sue Hesketh (Secretary) 01942 212940 or [Suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:Suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk)

## 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 (except January and August). There is a car park adjacent on the left. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. For more information call Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342.

You can also visit the website at [www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk](http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk)

## Wigan Family and Local History Society

We meet on the second Wednesday of each month at St 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, [www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/) or see us at our weekly Monday afternoon helpdesks at the Museum of Wigan Life.

14 September 2016 – The History of Garswood New Hall, Ashton-in-Makerfield

12 October 2016 – How to start tracing the history of a house – Marianne Howell

9 November 2016 – Where does that saying come from? – Louise Wade

## 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](mailto:sheila.ramsdale@blueyonder.co.uk)

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# Memories of School

## Leigh Boys' & Girls' Grammar Schools Project

In 2015, Healthy Arts (a local not-for-profit arts organisation) received Heritage Lottery Funding for the Lilford Park 100 project. We researched, recorded, and explored through dramatic performances, the history of Lilford Park and recorded local peoples' memories, resulting in the centenary weekend celebrations and the heritage boards now installed in the park.

In 2016 we would like to apply for HLF funding to undertake a project about both of the Grammar Schools in Leigh. This year will be the 40th anniversary of the schools closing and we feel that it is important to record memories about both schools, particularly as the youngest ex-pupil will now be in their fifties and ex-teachers are now in their seventies (and beyond).

We would particularly like to involve the pupils of Bedford High School (now occupying the former LGS building) in the project as researchers and performers, and use the results to prompt a wider discussion about the nature, style and delivery of education.

The project could also include research into former old boys and girls and their resulting careers which could be used to inspire local schoolchildren. However, before we put in a bid we need to produce evidence of need and find support for the project from local people. If you would like to express your support for the project or, as an ex-Grammar school pupil or teacher, offer to contribute memories then please email [HealthyArtscontactus@healthyarts.org.uk](mailto:HealthyArtscontactus@healthyarts.org.uk) or ring Martin on 07542 114383.



## *Tony Ashcroft*

As we went to press we learnt the sad news of the passing of Tony Ashcroft on the 12 July 2016. Tony, a former Local History Officer, looked after the Leigh Local Studies collections for over 20 years and was a regular contributor to Past Forward. Tony was an extremely popular, well-liked gentleman, with a huge knowledge of, and passion, for the history of our borough.

We would like to send condolences and fondest wishes to Tony's family.



# Magistrates against Miners: Wigan, 1844

BY YVONNE ECKERSLEY

The appalling reality of nineteenth century miners' working and living conditions is now common knowledge. What is less well known is how legal and pseudo-legal practices were used to create and recreate these conditions.

In 1840s, despite rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, Wigan's legal, organisational and public order structures remained rooted in the hierarchical patriarchal structures of a rural town. A number of magistrates, who were often large employers, assumed as an unquestioned right their authority to exercise absolute power over their workforce. This article looks at how employers and magistrates abused Britain's legal system to consolidate their power and at efforts to counteract their worst excesses.

## Challenges to the Status Quo

In the attempt to improve their conditions, Wigan miners were unionising, and agitating for change. Miners' Association and Chartist leaders held mass meetings and



*Moot Hall*

miners went on strike. In 1844, between eight and ten thousand gathered at Amberswood Common near Hindley; approximately 10,000 miners gathered on Aspull Moor, opposite unpopular Lord Balcarres' strikebound Kirkless Colliery, arriving behind bands, waving flags and carrying banners whilst wearing light blue ribbons (the membership badge of the Miners Association).

At Lamberhead Green, 3,000 met. Speakers at these meetings included Miners' Association leaders, Chartists and William Prowting Roberts. These protesting miners were at risk from the power of the magistracy. Individual striking miners could be summarily arrested and imprisoned and large groups could be dispersed by armed troops prepared to use violence.

One of the most powerful pieces of legislation that magistrates used to maintain their control over miners was the Master and Servant Act of 1825. These acts enabled magistrates to arrest and imprison miners for up to three months with hard labour for leaving their place of work without permission. Miners could be arrested, sentenced and imprisoned, without written or even verbal indictments of their crime, and denied hearings or legal representation in court.

However, the Wigan court was being challenged. William Prowting Roberts was a particularly irritating thorn in the side of the magistrates. Known as the 'Miners Attorney General', he challenged, case-by-case, the everyday sidestepping of legal proceedings that enabled magistrates to use arbitrary imprisonment to control miners. William Roberts was particularly adept at identifying procedural omissions sufficient to halt trials and challenge verdicts. After Roberts applied to the Queen's bench for a writ of Habeas Corpus many sentences were declared illegal and prisoners released.

Magistrates were at liberty to arrest and imprison their own employees. James Lindsay, Colliery owner, magistrate and son of the Earl of Balcarres was particularly keen to retain the status quo. In 1844, as magistrate, Lindsay had his employee William Leigh arrested for leaving work at Lindsay's Ince Colliery.

In court, Lindsay denied Leigh the right to speak in his defence and his request for adjournment to prepare his case. Lindsay sentenced Leigh and a man named Morris to two months hard labour within minutes.



*William Roberts*

William Roberts took up the case, proved Lindsay had acted illegally, successfully applied to the Queen's Bench for a suspension of Habeas Corpus and the men were released.

In April 1845, Roberts successfully sued Lindsay at Liverpool Assizes for Leigh's false imprisonment. Again in 1844, Roberts successfully challenged Lindsay's sentencing of three of his employees – John Gray, Hugh Blaney and John Howard – to three months hard labour for not giving sufficient notice of their intention to quit. After his success Roberts was escorted through Wigan in an open carriage by a procession of miners waving banners and a band playing 'See the Conquering Hero Comes'.

## Miners' Successes

During the strike-riven year of 1844, influential MPs attempted to enlarge the powers of magistrates by extending the Master and Servant Act. New powers authorised magistrates to imprison workmen for, 'any misbehaviour concerning service and employment'. The Miners' Association held mass meetings and its officers, including Wigan's John Berry, organised the collection of two million signatures on 200 petitions, presenting them to Parliament. The bill was defeated at its third reading.

1844 saw colliery owners of South Lancashire attempting to introduce the employment bond. United union action led to the defeat of an attempt by coal owners in St Helens to tie a wage increase with the introduction of an annual Bond hitherto unused in Lancashire collieries. Bonds usually ran from April to April. Before hiring time, colliery owners created an atmosphere of fear and want. They stockpiled coal, sacked a number of their workforce and with the threat of importing labour from elsewhere insisted the impoverished local miners accept a lower wage for

the year. What was particularly advantageous to employers was that the bond was legal and bound men to their pits.

William Roberts, defending miners accused of breaking their Bonds, emphasised the dubious legality of their contracts. He argued that illiterate workmen often did not know what they were signing; if it was a verbal agreement, because there was no written bond the coal owners were culpable by default. Consequently, he argued that as employers had not followed legal procedures the offending miners had no case to answer.

## Women underground workers

After the 1842 act had banned the employment of women underground, the single Inspector employed to police the act recorded that around 200 women were still being employed in Wigan. The same Inspector had recorded that in 1842 there were 794 women working underground in the Wigan, Bolton, St Helens and Worsley districts.

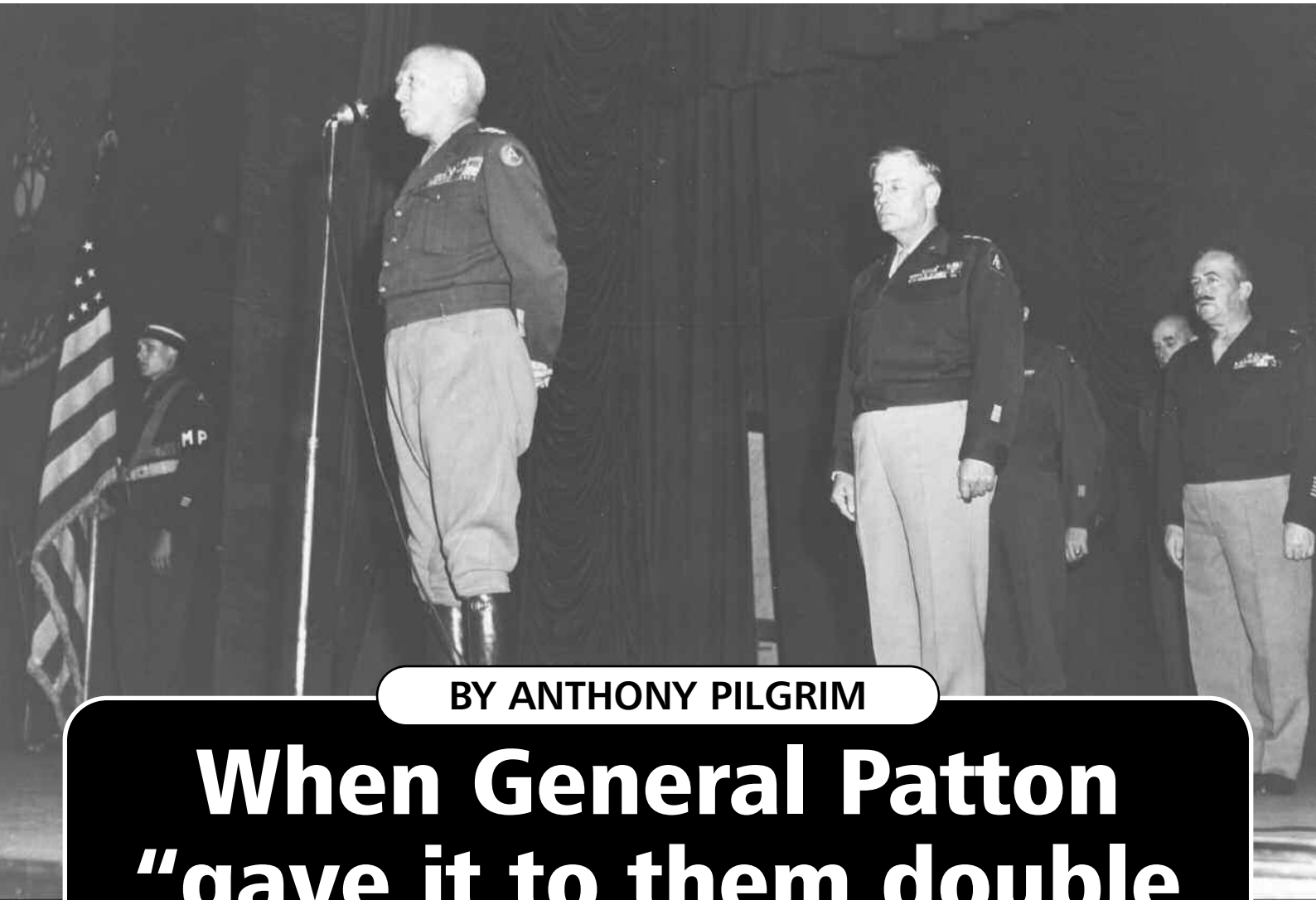
From these figures one can presume that the bulk of Wigan colliery owners felt sufficiently safe from prosecution to disregard Parliamentary Statutes. However, prosecutions did occur. Just one was recorded for 1844. John Bleasdale, a Wigan Colliery owner was prosecuted for employing two women underground. Magistrates John Lord and Samuel McClure fined Bleasdale £10. Interestingly when the Manchester Guardian reported a young woman's death in an anonymous Wigan colliery, there was no comment on the company's illegal practice. Although Wigan women miners were killed underground – Wigan's Coroner's Report for 1844 lists deaths of Jane Gore and Ann Lawson – I could find no reference to a prosecution.

## Exceptions

Not all Wigan's magistrates were draconian in their sentencing. At the Wigan Quarter Session in January 1845, magistrates exercised discretion and bound 27 men to keep the peace for six months after they had been arrested for violent disorder offences. As sentencing records show these men were tried within a fortnight and the majority were miners I assume the disorder was in some way connected with industrial unrest.

### *References:*

*Wigan Quarter Sessions Records, 1844-5*  
[Wigan Archives]  
*The Pitmen's Collection* [Wigan Archives, D/DZ/A/39/94]  
*'Law and Order in Early Victorian Lancashire',*  
E C Midwinter  
*'The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists',* Raymond Challinor and Brian Ripley  
*'A Radical Lawyer in Victorian England: W P Roberts and the Struggle for Workers Rights',* Raymond Challinor  
*'Chartists, Trades Unions, Radical Lawyers and the Master and Servant Laws',* Christopher Frank



BY ANTHONY PILGRIM

# When General Patton “gave it to them double dirty” at Ashton

The 1970 film ‘Patton’ opens with actor George C Scott, in the title role, delivering a version of the famous pre-D-Day speech with which the General sought to inspire his troops. Like most dramatic portrayals of historical events it is not wholly accurate. The words General Patton used were far more lurid and profane, his speech liberally sprinkled with expletives and ‘blood and guts’ imagery.

As he later explained, ‘When I want my men to remember something important, to really make it stick, I give it to them double dirty. It may not sound nice to a bunch of little old ladies, at an afternoon tea party, but it helps my soldiers to remember.’ He delivered the

speech not just once but on numerous occasions between February and June 1944 as he toured the UK meeting the soldiers who would make up his Third Army. In fact, since Patton spoke without notes, it went through several iterations before attaining the form of which an approximation is given in the film.

I spent the early part of 2015 researching the US Army units that were billeted in and around Ashton-in-Makerfield in the lead-up to D-Day. Mostly these were components of the 79th Infantry Division commanded by Major General Ira T Wyche. I was intrigued by several references in the regimental histories and personal diaries to the men

having heard an address by General Patton during their stay. The published biographies made no mention of a visit to Ashton and I set out to establish precisely when and where this had occurred.

My first lead came from the diary of Colonel Walton Van Arsdale, 311th Field Artillery, who in 1944 was billeted at Golborne Park. He records how, ‘one day, officers and high grade non-commissioned officers were marched to a theatre where we heard speeches from Lt. General George S. Patton [and others]’. According to Patton’s biographers, most of his speeches were given in the open air. Evidently that had not been the case at Ashton.

My next point of enquiry was the library at East Carolina University, repository of the Ira Wyche papers. Several interesting facts were gleaned from Major General Wyche's diary, in particular that a visit originally due to take place on 11 May had been cancelled. The timing is significant because, on 25 April, Patton had made a diplomatic gaffe by appearing to rule out any post-War role for the USSR outside its own borders. His reported comments embarrassed the Allied governments, prompting Supreme Commander General Eisenhower to order Patton to 'keep your...mouth shut'.

Patton wrote in his own diary: 'In consonance of this order, I am unable to talk with either the 79th, 80th, 83rd, or 7th Armored Divisions, a restriction that will surely cost lives.' By the middle of May, however, Eisenhower's tone towards Patton had softened. He wrote: 'I expect you to...exercise extreme care to see that while you are developing the morale and fighting spirit, you will not be guilty of another indiscretion which can cause any further embarrassment to your superiors or to yourself...Go ahead and train your Army.'

I inferred from subsequent entries in Major General Wyche's diary that Patton had actually spoken to the troops at Ashton on 16 May. Confirmation of this came later in the form of staff meeting reports, the report for 15 May also confirming that the venue was The Queen's Theatre on Wigan Road.

A scan of the relevant extract from General Patton's diary, which I subsequently obtained from the US Library of Congress, adds no further detail. It was nevertheless pleasing to see a record of the day's events written in Patton's own hand, knowing as I now did that he was referring to a visit to my home town.

So, what did those gathered in The Queen's Theatre on 16 May 1944 actually hear? Almost certainly it

5-16-44  
Made a talk to the officers  
and Senior Members  
of the 79th Div and  
also to Staff of VIII Corps  
Middleton made a  
good talk as usual

*Extract from Patton's diary regarding the talk at Ashton in 1944*

was a version of what biographer Terry Brighton calls 'the greatest motivational speech of the war and perhaps of all time, exceeding (in its morale boosting effect if not as literature) the words Shakespeare gave King Henry V at Agincourt'. John Beatty of the 310th Field Artillery, then billeted at Garswood Park, recalled how, 'back in Ashton, General George Patton had delivered one of his fire and brimstone speeches to the officers and NCOs saying, 'The Third Army was going to fight, not dig its way to Berlin!''

The official history of the 313th Infantry Regiment – also at Garswood Park – records that, 'in his usual fiery manner, [General Patton] impressed upon the noncoms the importance of their job, and told them in no uncertain terms that the time was soon to come when they would be called upon to actually lead men in battle against a determined and vicious enemy. [He] emphasised the fact that when that day came it would be a case of 'shoot to kill . . . and shoot first.' At the same time he praised the men for the excellent job they had done to date, and assured them that he was convinced they would more than show their worth when the big moment actually came'.

Despite having undergone intensive training, the troops under General Patton's command were mostly untested in battle and needed to be prepared mentally as well as physically for the coming struggle. The effect on the audience at Ashton is confirmed in the regimental history of the 314th Infantry, then camped alongside the 311th Field Artillery at

Golborne Park: 'His famous brand of brimstone oratory, while it was nothing for a family newspaper, was just the sort of blunt locker-room talk the men had wanted to hear'.

As one said after the War, 'we would have gone to hell for Patton because we knew he would have gone to hell for us. And he did'.

#### **Note on sources**

*I am hugely indebted to Professor Ralph Scott, Assistant Head of Special Collections at the Joyner Library, East Carolina University, who patiently complied with each of my several requests to revisit the archives in search of this or that document. Likewise to Patrick Kerwin at the Library of Congress in Washington DC, and to James Van Arsdale of Santa Barbara, California, for extracts from his grandfather's diary. This material is copyright to the Van Arsdale Family, quoted here with permission.*

*Additional information was obtained from the official histories of the 313th and 314th Infantry Regiments and J C Beatty's 'The Politics of Public Ventures: An Oregon Memoir' (Xlibris, 2010). I also consulted several Patton biographies; in particular those by Martin Blumenson (Da Capo, 2009), Carlo D'Este (Harper Collins, 1995) and Terry Brighton (Penguin, 2009). The latter includes a composite version of General Patton's speech based on surviving notes and transcripts.*

Staff Meeting  
6 May 1944

Meeting conducted by Colonel Thomas: Gen Wyche - Gen Group

Colonel Harwood	Colonel Clark
Colonel Harford	Captain Tom
Colonel Johnson	Captain Morris
Colonel Charles	LT Crooke
Colonel (Bierlein)	LT White
Major King	
Major Slevam	
Major McFadden	
Major Yordley	
Major Wheeler	
Major Slevam	

Subjects Discussed During Meeting:

1. Tank Demonstration: Instructions received that G-3s and Bn Commanders will attend on 10 May a tank demonstration.
2. Army Commander's Speech: Officers and first three grade non-commissioned officers will be assembled to hear an address by the Army commander. One group at Harwood theatre (this area) and another at Ashton-in-Makerfield Theatre (Golborne and Garswood). Time: 11 May 1944.

*Date of Patton's talk in staff meeting minutes.*

BY TED DAKIN

# Mam and Dad: Another World, Thomas and Frances



*Ted's 'mam and dad'*

***In the first of a three-part recollection, Ted Dakin remembers the lives of his family in Wigan.***

My Dad, Thomas Dakin, was born in a canal cottage at Spencer's Bridge, Newburgh, seven miles from Wigan, on 24 March 1899. His parents, Richard and Margaret, were illiterate 'water gypsies' who worked a canal boat on the Leeds to Liverpool canal. Both Richard and Margaret came from long established boating families. Richard, was born on a canal boat at Top lock, Runcorn, Cheshire, in 1865.

With the advent of improved rail and road transportation, life and work on the canals fell on desperate times. Richard, in a life-

changing decision, packed his meagre belongings and his family on to his boat and came to Wigan. Dad was 10 years old. They moved in to 21 Horsefield Street, a cobbled cul-de-sac at the bottom of Miry Lane.

The street was brought to an abrupt stop with a ditch and a high wooden perimeter fence that hid railway sidings and locomotive workshops from view. Nearby, situated between the street and the canal, stood Gallagher's glue and hide factory (known locally as the 'boneworks'), a foul-smelling place that traded wholesale in the production of all parts obtainable from dead cattle and pigs; glue, hides, bonemeal and pig guts

(known as 'rops' and used in those distant days as sausage skins). Hordes of rats thriving on fat and bonemeal and drinking from a nearby stagnant pond call 'Owd Nicks' lived and bred there. It was from this dead-end paradise, that Dad, a country lad at heart, began his second life.

For a little while, St Thomas's Church of England School at the bottom of Clayton Street, taught Dad the rudiments of school-work; later, more schooling at the senior school in Caroline Street, gave him the abilities to read, write and do his sums, skills that his parents never mastered. Even so, after leaving school, work was hard to come by and a wage, however



meagre, was essential to a family who had 'nowt'. Ironically though, with the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, and the need for fighting men, work became more abundant.

Aged 15 and tall for his age, Dad managed to find employment at a local abattoir and continued to work there until, on the 10 May 1917 and barely 18 years old, he enlisted in the Welsh Regiment and after a few months training was shipped out to France. It was near the village of Estaires that Dad fell to a machine-gun bullet to his neck which missed his wind-pipe by a mere fraction.

The bullet, lodged in his opposite shoulder and was found later by a matron and removed. The wound would keep him away from the front line until his discharge on 14 January 1919. With a war pension of seven shillings and sixpence and dressed in a thin hospital blue suit, his hopeful return to the only work he knew proved to be futile. His job had been taken. However, after a spell of dole queues and walking the streets knocking on doors prepared to do anything, a tram ride to Hindley finally brought success. He was taken on as a labourer at a brickworks.

My Mam, Frances Leach was born on 6 June 1902 at Low Hall, a dairy farm in Hindley. She was the youngest daughter of staunch Catholic parents, Richard and Bridget. She attended St Benedict's Catholic school, on Castle Hill, Hindley. Her parents were strict disciplinarians and insisted that Mam and her two sibling sisters, Agnes and Annie, do their share of milking cows and delivering milk to the local community.

Soon, though, Mam who had studied shorthand became curious to know what lay beyond the other side of a cow's backside, and becoming somewhat adventurous, found secretarial work at the same

brickworks as Dad. So, two people, both rural bred and destined by circumstances beyond their control, meet amongst a romantic setting of newly baked house bricks and one year later are married at St Benedict's Catholic church, Hindley on 20 May 1922. Mam's wedding ring, a good one, 22ct, cost Dad £5. It was a ceremony that also gave Dad a new faith to abide by: Catholicism.

Seven months later, on 11 December 1922, my sister Kathleen was born. It appears that Thomas and Frances had been rather naughty. Perhaps too, this hasty marriage had been frowned upon, because I have never seen any photographic record of what should have been a happy occasion.

However, their marriage endured and in those early years of poverty, tears, illness, and even death, it never faltered. Right through to old age and better times, they stayed together.

#### **Married for life.**

Their first home (a rented terraced house) was 102 Miry Lane, Wigan, just around the corner from Dad's parents. The house was owned by a Miss Ballard, and was forever in a state of disrepair. Luckily, Dad was in work, just a few hundred yards away at Gallagher's glue and hide factory where, for 8 hours a day, protected by a long rubber apron and rubber boots, he worked as a 'Rop-man' cleaning pig guts with a razor-sharp knife that was kept with sharpening-steel in a wooden scabbard strapped to his waist.

The 'rops' were cleaned in continuous running water. The firm's produce gave off an obnoxious stench that crept into surrounding properties like a lethal gas. In the summer months it became even more unbearable, with swarms of flies that invaded homes and businesses alike, attacking food and drink, with sticky yellow fly-catchers. Thankfully, the rats never strayed from their salubrious residence; and Dad became a walking stink bomb.

After the birth of my sister, Kathleen, Mam did some family planning: Thomas 1925; John 1927; Frances Mary, April 1929 but sadly died of bronchial pneumonia 9 June 1930, aged 14 months and buried in a communal grave at Wigan cemetery; and last in line, me, Edward, 23 March 1931.

These were precarious times. Bringing up a family of four in a two-up-two-down, humble terraced house, with one cold water tap and an outside lavatory 40 yards from the backdoor wasn't easy. Auntie Annie, Mam's older sister had done well in the marriage stakes; she was married to a farm manager and lived in Shevington.

She used to call at our crumbling residence, bearing baskets of food for a hungry brood of unruly kids. It was on one of these mercy trips that Auntie Annie gave Mam the idea of moving house. Apparently, there was a house for rent not far from the farm. Mam, keen to raise her family in a clean and healthy environment, convinced Dad that a better life was waiting just a few miles away. Miss Ballard was informed, arrangements were made. Then disaster. Dad wouldn't budge. On the last minute he changed his mind. Miss Ballard was hastily contacted and we stayed put, still putting up with the stench and grime. Mam must have been seething.



*The Dakin brood*



*From left to right : Ted's grandma, Ted's mum, Ted's sister Kath holding her first born and his brother Tom's girlfriend Kathleen*

Mam never went out to work, but she did take in washing and the few bob earned went with Dad's meagre wage into an old tea caddy on the mantelpiece. Like most housewives in those times, Mam was the one who suffered most. Her working day, every day, was drudgery. She toiled slavishly from morning till night. For a woman dedicated to the needs of her family this meant she had very little time to herself. I never saw her settle down to read a book, use lipstick, rouge or perfume, but I would often see her knitting, sewing, crocheting and patching clothes, all done to ease the family burden of poverty.

She was tolerantly mindful to her family's needs in every way possible, giving Dad and us as much comfort as she possibly could. Even with a lack of money she was never submissive. Dad, in the early days had already relinquished his war pension of seven shilling and sixpence, for a lump sum of £10, and now that was just a memory. Their living standards and conditions hadn't improved much and her favourite quote was, 'we'll manage somehow'.

She took in extra washing, using a dolly tub, dolly leg, rubbing board and mangle, she washed Mondays and Tuesdays and ironed on Wednesdays. At that time her iron

was a gas operated one. She would climb on a chair, then on to our solid wooden dinner table in the centre of the living-room, remove the gas mantle and connect a rubber tube from the fitting down to the iron itself.

Mam was the pivot, the centre of all that was essential to our childhood. Our house may have been rented but she made it hers. Sparsely furnished it may have been, with odd square pieces of carpet on the floor and a black-leaded fire range for heat and baking bread and cakes, but she polished, black-leaded and beat those carpets relentlessly until the place smelled and shone like a country mansion. God knows how she found time for visitors, but she did, and always with a cup of tea and slice of homemade cake.

It was always Mam who went without and we, the family, Dad and all, never appreciated her love, tolerance and dedication, until it was too late. We never kissed or



*Hand drawn plan of Ted's home in Miry Lane*

hugged her and never said 'thanks Mam'. But deep down, we loved her and in later years we came to realize and appreciate how unselfishly she had given her very life to us.

So where does that leave Dad? To be brutally honest, on his own Dad wouldn't have lasted a week. He was honest and firm and a family provider, handing over a labourer's wage but he never did any household chores. I don't remember him ever making a cup of tea. He decorated (using colour wash) and soled and heeled our shoes, renewed the irons on our clogs and cut our hair. He never hit us. Mam did the clouting at our house. Dad was still a force to be reckoned with. One look from him was sufficient enough to deter any roistering or bother. Dad believed absolutely in physical exercise. Walking and gathering herbs from the countryside was his favourite pastime. Later (in the better times), Dad spent precious money on a variety of body building courses. Borough's club (heavy ones) swinging course, T W Standwell's deep breathing exercises, Charles Atlas's 'Have a body like mine' and so it went. Mam persevered.

The years rolled on. Dad's siblings moved on. Grandad became poorly and died in bed in 1946 still wearing a knitted skullcap Mam had made. Dad and Uncle Dick washed his lifeless body and he was buried, like his wife Margaret nine years later, in Newburgh church-yard.

It was the end of an era. In the early 1960s a slum clearance order brought in the demolition men to bulldoze Miry Lane, Horsefield Street and the surrounding area. Mam and Dad, in their dwindling years found some reasonable comfort and contentment in a place, that back in the dark days of poverty and want, they could only have dreamed about: a modern bungalow.

## Leigh For All: Heritage Open Day

Leigh Town Hall & Civic Square,  
Saturday 10 September

Free to visit – some activities may have a charge. Join us for our annual heritage open day celebrations in Leigh town centre, including tours of historic buildings, vintage bus rides and car rally, First & Second World War displays, local history fair, music and much more.

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## On The Go Theatre: Someone's Sons

Leigh Library, Turnpike Gallery,  
Saturday 10 September, 1.00pm  
Tickets free but reservation required, contact  
archives@wigan.gov.uk or 01942 404430

A new local play about the First World War, by Josie Byrne and Kath Bateman, exploring the lives of the women and families left behind when their loved ones went off to war. The play tells the story of the opening of the German Prisoner of War Camp in Leigh and the problems this causes for the Sheffield family when a girl gets involved with a German soldier.

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All talks are £2.50 per person (including refreshments) unless otherwise stated. Booking is required; to book your place please call 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

## Life in the Victorian Workhouse

by Peter Park

12.00-1.15pm, Tuesday 20 September

Did your ancestors end up in the workhouse? What happened to the poorest in society? Our perception of the workhouse is influenced by Oliver Twist but what was it really like to be an inmate? Learn more about conditions in the workhouse and life for the inmates.

## Leeds Liverpool Canal Bicentenary

by Mike Clarke

12.00-1.15pm, Friday 21 October

When the Leeds Liverpool Canal was completed on 22nd October 1816 it was Britain's longest single man-made waterway. The canal gave access to the Wigan coalfields to help power the Industrial Revolution. Celebrate with this fascinating talk then view the 'Kennet' boat retracing the original first voyage along the canal.

## Museums at Night

7.00-10.30pm, Friday 21 October, £3 per person

Forget what you think you know about museums. Come and see culture in a different light where history collides with the digital era. Visit after dark for a drink and see the museum transformed with newly commissioned art installations and cutting edge live music. Try 'speed dating' with our experts or explore the quirky corners for new art works, light shows and soundscapes.

## Dead and Buried: The Wants and Worries of the 19th Century

Deceased by Charlie Guy

1.00-2.00pm, Monday 31 October

Join us on Halloween to dispel the dark myths of the Victorian dead and shine a light on some of the forgotten, outdated and downright creepy funerary practices, traditions and superstitions of the age. From booby-trapped coffins and bodysnatchers to photography and funeral souvenirs, come and explore the fascinating world of the Victorian dead brought back to life.

## Victorian Prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Act

by Brian Joyce

12.00-1.15pm, Tuesday 29 November

While not illegal, prostitution was regarded as a threat to the health, morals and stability of Victorian Britain. Contemporary estimates were of 50,000 – 350,000 prostitutes but no-one really knew the extent of the "Great Social Evil". Who were these women? Why did they go on the streets? And was the Home Secretary (1901) right that "So long as human nature is what it is, you will never entirely get rid of prostitution"?

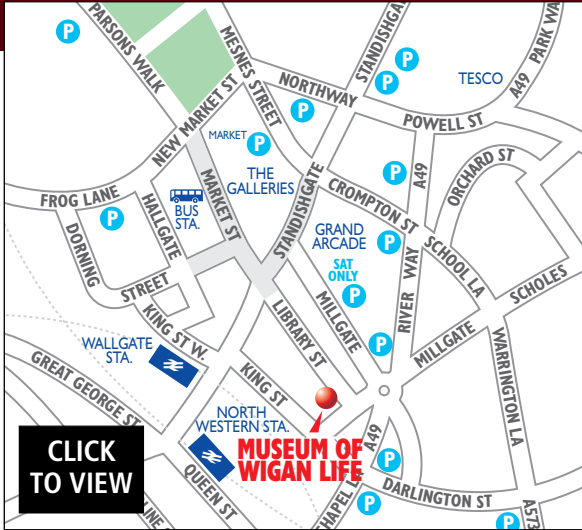
## Your Country Needs You - The Local Experience of First World War Military Tribunals

by Alex Miller

12.00-1.15pm, Friday 11 November

Join us on Armistice Day to find out more about the Military Tribunals which were set up across the country as men's conscription was introduced in January 1916. Find out more about Wigan Archives' unique collection of records.

# How to Find Us

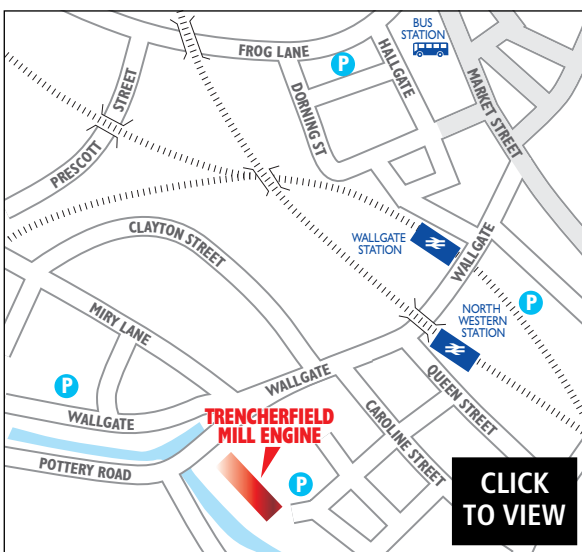
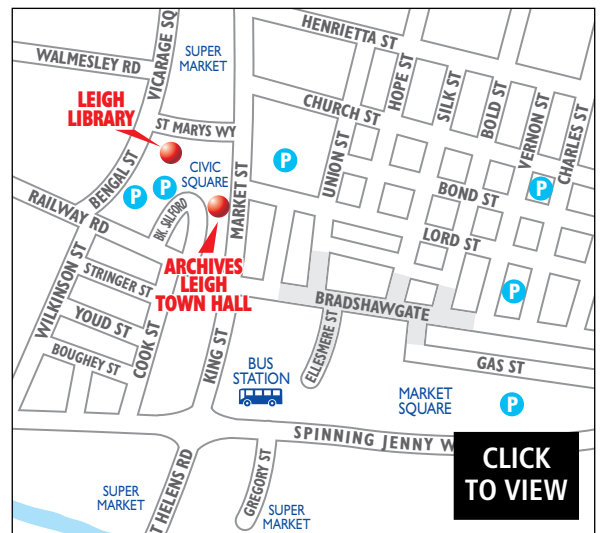


## Museum of Wigan Life & Wigan Local Studies

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## Archives & Leigh Local Studies

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Wigan WN3 4EF  
Telephone 01942 828128  
[b.rowley@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:b.rowley@wigan.gov.uk)

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



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