

# INTRODUCTION

In 1698 Celia Fiennes on her journeys round England described Wigan as a “pretty market town built of stone and brick”. Those who are unfamiliar with Wigan may be surprised to find that Wigan is still an attractive market town with numerous picturesque groups of buildings and a proud history. It is hoped that these guided walks round Wigan town centre will reveal and encourage appreciation of its distinctive architectural character and history.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN WIGAN

### Wigan’s Arcades

Wigan is fortunate in retaining three traditional glazed arcades – Grimes Arcade of 1870, Makinsons Arcade of 1898 and Royal Arcade of 1924. These have been sensitively restored recently to provide highly individual and attractive shopping facilities. A short arcade occurs off Wallgate next to the Post Office. The traditional style arcades with glazed roofs and cast iron features have been augmented by The Galleries scheme off Standishgate, Market Street and Hope Street and Marketgate off Market Place in the late 1980’s.



Several examples of Victorian and Edwardian shop fronts occur in The Wiend, King Street and Wallgate.

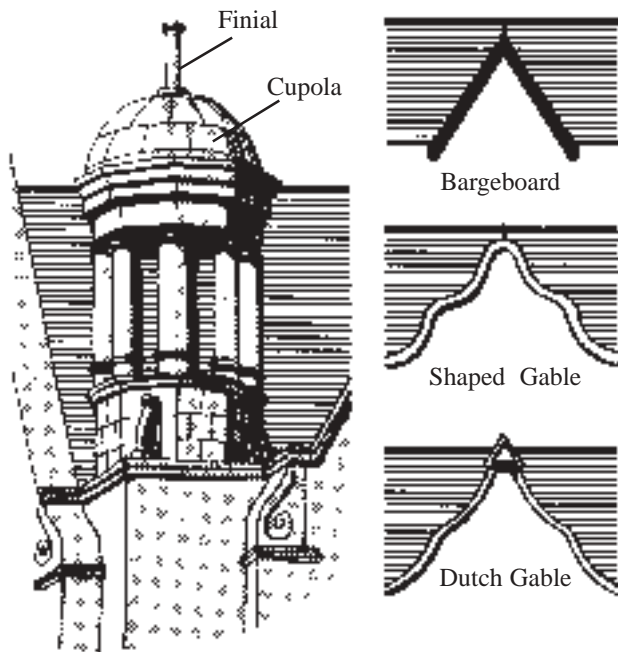


### 54-56 Wallgate

These are characterised by ornamental, architectural details, hand painted signs and finely turned and moulded timber frames. Shop fronts of the 1960’s and 70’s tended to introduce alien materials, overlarge sheet signs in plastic and large sheets of plate glass on which heavy upper storeys appear to float. More recently shop fronts designed in relation to the materials and vertical features of the upper storeys, to give continuity with ground level, have been encouraged with smaller more sensitive signs.

### Rooflines

Standishgate, Market Place, Library Street, Crawford Street and parts of Wallgate have intricate and lively rooflines. Enrichment is provided by either gables – plain triangles or elaborate shapes or features such as turrets with ornately shaped “cupola” roofs, lanterns and ball or urn finials terminating features. Some of these features dominate adjoining spaces or emphasise important corners. Looking up is most rewarding **BUT take care to avoid traffic and obstacles!**



### Building Materials

Apart from the Parish Church, Wigan was traditionally a town of half-timber buildings (with thatched roofs). The town centre retains part of only one half-timber building but several occur in the countryside around Wigan. Later they were replaced or clad in brick or stone. One of the most distinctive characteristics of Wigan especially on Standishgate and Market Place is, however, the large number of black and white, Tudor style, imitation, "half-timber" buildings. These are generally of good quality, even if only a cladding, and give the centre vitality. Most were remodelled in the 1920's but some date from the Edwardian period.

**Brick** production can be traced to the 16th Century and examples of red, hand-made 17th Century bricks can be found behind Cooper's Row, the Wiend and at the Whitesmiths Arms on Standishgate beyond the walks. Hand-made bricks of the Georgian, Regency and early Victorian periods are to be seen on Millgate, King Street, The Wiend and Rowbottom Square. These contrast with the hard, smooth, Accrington and Ruabon bricks with their fiery red colour seen in the majority of Victorian and Edwardian buildings. These brick surfaces are often relieved and enlivened by stone or terracotta details.

The **stone** commonly used for whole facades and details such as window sills is buff coal-measures sandstone which was quarried locally. Occasionally red triassic sandstone from the Liverpool area was used as at the Post Office and Wallgate Station.

**Terracotta** is made in a similar manner to bricks but uses finer, denser clays baked at high temperatures to produce a particularly hard but hollow material ranging in colour from grey and buff to purplish-red. It was used extensively at the turn of the Century in plain or ornate forms, and Wigan had a local producer at the Bispham Hall Terracotta and Brick Works, Billinge.

Small areas of stone sett and flag surfaces harmonising with the buildings can still be found. Examples of ornate iron work (cast or wrought) range from the large portico of Wallgate Station, through railings and shop fronts, to minor

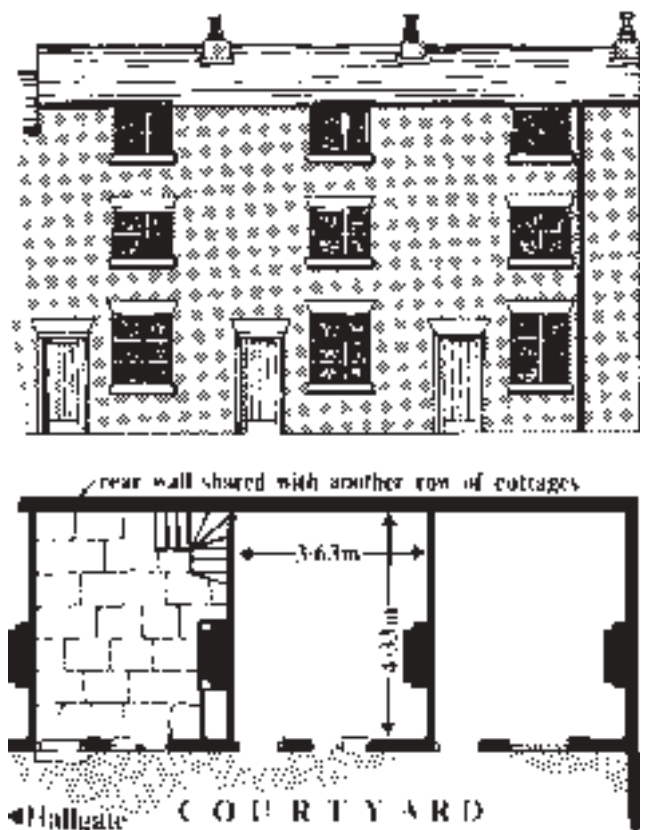
details such as inspection covers and sign brackets.

### Roofs

The early stone and brick buildings were often associated with large, thick, sandstone slates but these now only occur in the Parish Church Precincts and the Wiend. In the Victorian period these were replaced by Welsh blue slates and later, occasionally, green Westmorland slate. Tiles have been used increasingly since the Edwardian period.

### Architectural Styles

Wigan's buildings exhibit a considerable range of styles. Only parts of the Parish Church tower are medieval 'Gothic' and its Walmsley Chapel (1620) and the vernacular style cottages of the Wiend and Cooper's Row represent the 17th Century. Georgian buildings on King Street, Wallgate, Millgate and beyond the walks on Standishgate, Water Street and Dicconson Street are more numerous. They admirably demonstrate Georgian elegance based on satisfying proportions and patterns with a minimum of ornamental details, usually concentrated around the entrance and the junction of roofs and walls, (eaves cornices). Plan 2 indicates that in 1847 most land behind buildings on main streets was occupied by either large gardens or cottages in cramped courts and rows similar to those on The Wiend and behind 35 Hallgate (Present Trend).



Hallgate – former back-to-back cottages behind 35 Hallgate

Between 1865 and 1905 the vast majority of the town centre was rebuilt on a piecemeal basis, though relatively large plots were often assembled. This great rebuilding produced much of today's townscape with most of the Victorian and Edwardian revived styles represented - Norman (Romanesque) with round arches; Gothic with pointed arches, Italian, French, Flemish and English

Renaissance and Baroque with Classical details; Queen Anne and Tudor and Jacobean vernacular – in public and commercial buildings. These revivals vary in the degree of scholarly approach. Style and details were often freely



King Street – Italian Renaissance Palazzo Style

mixed requiring assessment in terms of their picturesque effects, grouping and harmony and visual interest within the facade. Graceful curving lines of the Art Nouveau style (1890-1915) contrast with the clear geometric shapes (squares, triangles etc.) of the Art Deco style of the 1920's and 30's. During the 1920's many buildings were refronted with Tudor style, black and white.

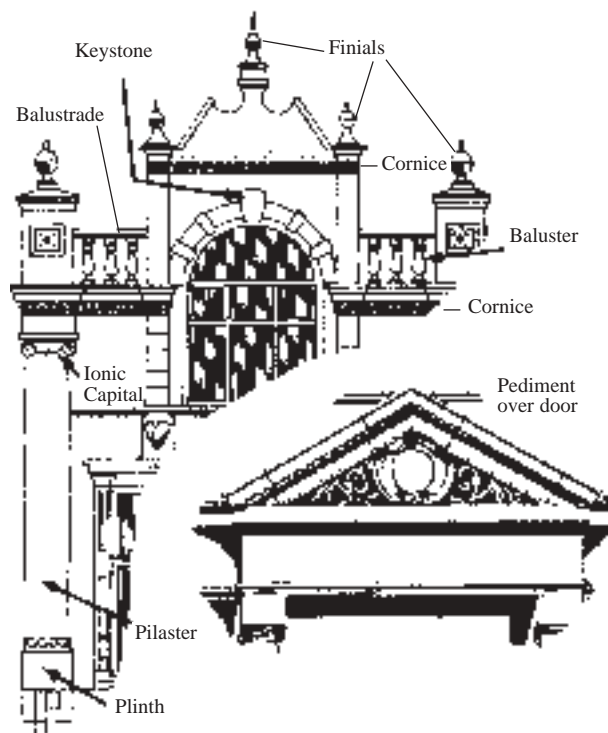
Despite a variety of styles and materials harmony usually prevails in the different areas of the town.

Unlike most towns of its size over the 50 years since 1945 Wigan has escaped redevelopment on a massive scale resulting in a reasonably complete Victorian and Edwardian character. Even so small schemes of the 1960's and early 1970's on most main streets and larger scale developments on Standishgate beyond the walks introduced new and frequently intrusive materials, colours, roof forms, scale, proportions and styles. They often exhibit bad townscape manners with regard to their traditional neighbours and also fail to provide attractive new variety or new dominant features. Careful conservation work by Wigan's Council in co-operation with architects and developers from the late 1970's has led to more sensitive redevelopment and rehabilitation of buildings. Several alien modern buildings have been remodelled over the last ten years.

### Architectural Details

Look up and not only rich rooflines but also a wealth of ornamental details will be seen, especially on Victorian and Edwardian buildings. Cornices, pilasters, capitals, finials, patterning, sculptured panels, pediments, keystones and window frame and door features provide plenty of visual interest, often in three dimensions, to delight the eye. They

also play important roles such as breaking up large buildings or emphasising entrances.



### Wigan's Architects

The Victorian period saw the construction of numerous specialised buildings often of large size and architects arose with national practices to design them. Amongst nationally significant architects whose works are represented in Wigan are Sir Alfred Waterhouse who designed Manchester Town Hall; G.E.Street (London Law Courts); Bradshaw and Gass and Mills and Murgatroyd (Royal Exchange Manchester); Sharpe and Paley (numerous Lancashire Churches); Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (Liverpool C of E Cathedral); Briggs, Wolstenholme and Thornley (Liverpool Docks and Harbour Offices); W Owen (principal architect of Port Sunlight). Other firms such as Walters Barker and Ellis were of regional note (Walters having retired in 1860). The Wigan architect W.E.V. Crompton F.R.I.B.A. might also be mentioned for after designing many distinctive buildings in Wigan and later Southport, he became architect to the Duke of Bedford's Covent Garden estate and was architect to Barclays' Bank for many London and district banks. He also designed many houses in the Home Counties.

It is to a small group of local architects, however, that Wigan owes much of its attractive character, variety and harmony. In particular Heaton and Ralph were responsible for many of the most significant buildings, others being by W.Verity and W.E.V. Crompton. Whilst these architects are not famous they were of great worth in using the range of materials and styles of the period. Some recognition has been given to some of their works recently by listing the buildings as of Special Architectural or Historic Interest on a national basis. Where known, architects or firms are indicated in the trail text.

## Spaces

Wigan retains much of its medieval street pattern – full of irregularities and sudden changes in character – and as a result has a considerable range of attractive spaces. These are open areas which are clearly defined by surrounding buildings.



Market Place – an enclosed 'court' space.

### They vary in terms of their:

- i) **Size**
- ii) **Shape** - whether long and relatively narrow (linear spaces) or square, circular or triangular (court spaces);
- iii) **Degree of Enclosure** - whether fully surrounded i.e. enclosed or partially enclosed, perhaps by a bend or a change in building line;
- iv) **Atmosphere** – whether formal or informal or whether encouraging movement through them, or encouraging rest.

When passing through Wigan's streets try to identify the character of the spaces. Successful townscapes have not only spaces within their street pattern but also **sequences of spaces**. On many routes through Wigan spaces are interconnected one leading into another often with abrupt changes in character – now narrow, now spacious. For instance notice the sequence of spaces – Standishgate – Market Place – Church Gates – Church Precincts – All Saints Gardens – King Street West or – Arcade Street – Rowbottom Square – Wallgate or Church Precincts.

## Wigan's Townscape

The features described above combine so that most street scenes in Wigan town centre display fine townscape. Townscape consists of the relationship between individual buildings and between buildings and the spaces separating them. In general Wigan has a satisfying combination of simple patterns and enlivening variety and complexity, so avoiding monotony.

## ASPECTS OF WIGAN'S HISTORY

These notes draw attention to some of the more interesting features of Wigan's past.

### Early History

Wigan is usually taken to be **Roman Coccium** recorded in the Antonine Itinerary (2nd Century) as lying 17 Roman miles from Manchester. A number of chance finds in the 19th Century certainly point to a Roman settlement at Wigan. These include a cemetery at the gasworks site; coins and pottery from Library Street; an altar in the Parish Church; and bronze and gold coins from the Mesnes area. The site, with steeper slopes than today and more effectively protected by the old course and width of the River Douglas, was certainly an attractive defensive site. Located on the route between a ford over the Mersey at Wilderspool and another over the Ribble at Walton-le-Dale it also had the benefit of local resources especially iron and coal.

Archaeological excavations in 1983 produced firmer evidence at **The Wiend** including a **Roman road, traces of large timber buildings, pottery and hearths with iron and cannel coal deposits**. These suggest that Wigan was a military and industrial settlement of considerable size and importance.

Following the Romans, settlement in the area is indicated by Anglo Saxon names such as Bryn, Makerfield and Ince and Scandinavian names such as Scholes

### The Medieval Period

Although Wigan is not named in the Domesday Book of 1086 it is usually taken to be the "church of the manor" of Newton. From 1199 the names of the Rectors are known. Charters in 1245 and 1258 established a market and two annual fairs and a **Charter of 1246 made Wigan a Royal Borough**. The Rector of Wigan was also Lord of the Manor with great power over the town. As a Royal Borough Wigan's townspeople enjoyed various rights and privileges. The burgesses or freemen, for an annual rent of 12d, received burgage plots of land of 5 roods (about 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres); the right to feed pigs on the common land and to take timber from the woods; exemption from market tolls; the right to form merchant guilds and to elect a common council of a mayor, aldermen, bailiffs and clerks. The burgesses had to grind their corn at the Rector's mills and bake bread in his oven.

In fact Wigan is **one of the four oldest Boroughs in historic Lancashire and ranked equal to Liverpool, Lancaster and Preston**. By 1635 Wigan was the wealthiest, paying Ship Money Tax of £50 compared with £25, £30 and £40 for the other towns. These were the only towns in Lancashire (of 120 in the whole country) able to send representatives to parliament. In 1295 William le Teinterer and Henry le Boocheur went to parliament from Wigan and upon their return, after providing proof of having done their duty, were paid 2/-. Apparently the burgesses did not think it was worthwhile since for many years after 1306 no members were sent.

At this period Wigan's economy was based on the market which served a considerable area of south Lancashire; **local agriculture** and already a **number of small scale industries**. These included **pottery** – in 1310 "Adam the

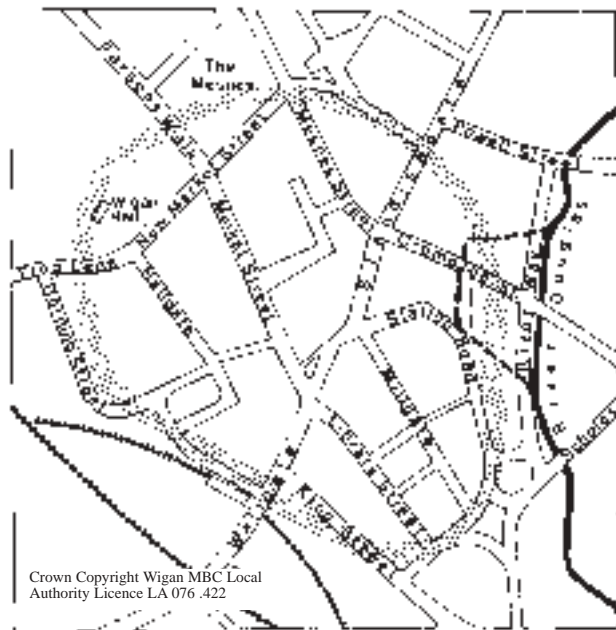


potter of Wigan” held a house and half an acre of land on Marking Place - brewing, tanning, **woollen textiles** – indicated by the presence of fullers and by 1300 two water walk fulling mills – **linen** using locally grown and imported Irish flax; **felt hats** – in 1482 mills were built for this trade, previously carried out in cottages; – and **coal mining** – mentioned in deeds in 1350 when Robert de Standish reserved “fyrston (fire stone) and secole (seacoal)” in an exchange of land; in **1434 in Pemberton and Orrell and in 1450 in Wigan**. Metal working including iron, pewter and brass also began in this period.

By 1538 John Leland was able to describe Wigan as “as big as Warrington but better builded. There is one parish church amid the town. Some Marchaunts, sum Artificers, sum Fermers” and “Mr Bradshaw hath a place called Hawe a myle from Wigan. He hath founde moche Canel like Se Coal in his grounde very profitable to hym”.

Physical features of the town included:

i) **the town wall** – probably in the form of an earth bank and ditch – enclosing an irregular oval shaped area roughly bounded by the River Douglas (old course), Dicconson Street, New Market Street, Wigan Hall, Dorning Street – King Street West – King Street;



**Town Wall (estimated location)** .....  
**River Douglas (old course)** - - - -

ii) **the Parish Church and Market Place** – probably separated by buildings from the medieval period;

iii) **the Manor House** (Wigan Hall / Rectory) – probably moated and **the Moot Hall** (first mentioned in 1422 in Market Place) as the seats of government;

iv) **four main streets** – Standishgate and Wallgate leading north and south from Market Place; Hallgate leading to Wigan Hall and Millgate leading to the River Douglas, the lord’s water cornmill and Manchester. Alleys led off these main streets as seen at The Wiend;

v) **the burgage plots** leased by the burgesses were long narrow strips of land with the narrow end to the street. As the town developed buildings on the street tended to be subdivided and the backland infilled with rows and courts

of houses. Many backlands, however, remained as small agricultural holdings, gardens or orchards.

Medieval documents also mention other features such as a second watermill at Coppull Lane; granaries at Hallgate and Stairgate; a Holy well off Millgate prior to 1293; a Jewish settlement in Jews Yard off Millgate; a windmill and in the garden of a house on Standishgate a **dovecot** – an important source of fresh meat in winter.

### Industrial Growth 1500 to 1800

Much of the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries was associated with prosperity and expansion. Infilling of backlands continued to produce a tightly packed central area. In 1595 the Rector complained that the wastes and commons were being built on by the burgesses “who erected and builded houses there upon and have rented the same and have placed tenants therein”. In the 1630’s Wigan’s population of about 4,000 was considerably larger than Liverpool’s and the number of burgesses increased from 140 in 1627 to 290 by 1640. From 1500 to 1800 the feudal society dominated by the Rector as Lord of the Manor declined and industry expanded to make Wigan one of the more important manufacturing centres outside London.



**The Molyneux family of Hawley Hall by A.Devis c.1750. (Private collection). Richard Molyneux, like other members of the nobility and gentry from the area around Wigan, was an ‘out-burgess’ of the town.**

By the 16th Century many of the Lord’s rights were already in the hands of the Corporation especially in the courts including the use of the ducking stool, scold’s bridle, whipping post, stocks and sentencing to the Bridewell Prison on Millgate. Under various Rectors, disputes arose as to the powers of the Corporation - in 1618 a Royal Commission divided responsibilities for the courts, markets and fairs roughly equally between the Rector and Corporation. Gradually the Corporation increased its responsibilities and purchased the Rector’s remaining rights in 1860.

From the 15th to 17th Centuries Wigan specialised in **woollen bedding textiles** produced in cottage hand-loom shops. “England Described” of 1788 stated that Wigan was “formerly famous for the manufacture of coverlets, rugs, blankets and bed ticks” but that now “very considerable quantities of linens, checks, calicoes, fustians etc. are manufactured” and an account of 1795 stated “the Wigan checks were in much estimation, nor have they lost their superiority over those of Manchester”. Wigan gave its name to a stiff open canvas like fabric used for stiffening and a

kind of twill sheeting. Cotton was clearly replacing the old woollen products with the first mill opened on Princess Street. By 1818 there were 8 mills in the Wallgate area.

Wigan was also famous for its **coal**. In 1595 the Rector complained that the burgesses were “digging coal pites and taking coals out of the same to great value”. The first known coal pit in the town centre itself was dug in Millgate in 1619. By 1635 the Rector had to forbid digging for coal under the streets or any part of the waste within the town and manor. “Back garden” mining was common leading to many disputes in the courts. In 1700 “Christopher Baldwin, pewterer, complained that Richard Naylor, maltster, had sunk a coalpit within five yards of his back door in Standishgate and was imposing on his neighbours and encroaching on the highway in getting quantities of coal”. In the 17th Century Wigan **Cannel coal** was known throughout the country and exported to America. (Also see Point 43). Cannel was used not only for heat and light but also for making buttons, spoons, candlesticks and paving church floors. Before 1650 there were at least 12 commercial collieries within 5 miles of Wigan. By 1771 Nathaniel Spencer wrote “coals are in great plenty here. . . **the coal dug up in the centre of the town is perhaps the best in the universe**”.

The metal industries expanded greatly in this period. Brass was important for everyday items such as pots and pans and for parts for clocks and machinery. This industry also gave rise to other industries such as cross-bow making; **bell founding** – Wigan’s bells were sent to all parts of the country in the 17th Century – and watchmaking. The first watchmaker in Wigan was admitted as a freeman in 1662 and during the 1700’s it became an important industry. The first reference to a pewterer in Wigan was in 1470, by 1627 the Wigan Company of Pewterers was founded and 250 makers are recorded in the 17th Century. Wigan was, after London, one of the most important centres for pewter products (widely used) supplying the northern half of the country. In 1683 the Company petitioned for a Royal Charter equal to that of the London pewterers. In 1696 an Act for the Improvement of Coinage led the London Royal Mint to purchase two machines of advanced design made in Wigan for stamping pewter.

In addition in 1670 John Ogilby wrote that Wigan was “**noted for its ironworks**” and in 1771 Spencer “there are many forges for the making of iron”. An account of 1788 stated “the brazery, pewtery, brass foundry and iron forgery business find employment for great numbers”. Apart from iron the majority of these declined in the 19th Century.

Another industry which flourished in Wigan in the 17th and 18th Centuries was pottery. A document of 1619 referred to pottery “because the burgesses are many of them potters.” They were given rights to dig clay from the wastes provided they filled in the holes. These rights were reaffirmed in 1666. Of greater significance, the famous potter, John Dwight (1630-1698) who founded the English porcelain industry and Fulham Pottery, lived in Millgate, Wigan from 1662 to 1687. During this period he took out patents for a “transparent procellane and opacous redd and dark coloured porcellane” using local clays in his experiments. The industry declined during the 19th Century but a circular pottery kiln was still located at Pottery Road, Wallgate in 1847.

Many of these industries, especially coal, were stimulated in the 18th Century by **water transport facilities**. As early as

the 16th Century records show that **the River Douglas** was used to transport iron and oats to Wigan. In 1720 the River Douglas Navigation Act was passed as part of a scheme designed to make Wigan a great inland port. The Douglas Navigation, developed between the early 1730’s and 1742 and including a short canal – Leigh’s Cut, linked Wigan with the Ribble Estuary. Leigh’s Cut was incorporated in the **Leeds - Liverpool Canal** in 1774 to link Wigan with Liverpool and the river was replaced entirely by canals in 1777. Wigan was linked to Leeds in 1816 and Leigh in 1820.

Wigan also retained **traditional service trades**. For example in 1634 there were 51 Inns, and cattle on route for London passed through Wigan. The Wigan horse fairs in the late 17th Century attracted people from the West Midlands and Yorkshire. In addition in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries Wigan was known as a **medicinal spa town**. A severe set-back occurred during the **Civil War of 1642-1651**. Wigan was predominantly Royalist and was the headquarters of the Earl of Derby. Several Parliamentary attacks were repelled but the Earl was defeated in 1643 when “great heaps of cloth” were amongst the loot captured. The Earl was finally defeated at **the battle of Wigan Lane in August 1651**. A monument erected in 1679 to Sir Thomas Tyldesley, killed in battle, stands near to the site in Wigan Lane.



Georgian Town Houses

In contrast to the infilling of cramped backlands were a number of public buildings of the period. These include the New Town Hall (1720) in Market Place; a new Grammar School (1723) on Rodney Street re-placing an original school of 1596; the provision of a water supply from reservoirs at Coppull Lane (1768); The Cloth Hall (1784) off Wallgate; the Commercial Hall (1816) off Market Place; Wigan Brewery, King Street (1780); **Wigan Dispensary** (1798); Wigan Savings Bank (1821); St Mary’s Church (1818) and St. John’s Church (1819). In addition the wealthy and gentry were building **elegant town houses** during the Georgian period and several of these survive. The construction of **King Street** in the early 1790’s marked a major break with the infilling process. This planned street was aimed at high class commerce and houses but was not fully developed until the 1870’s.



## The 19th Century



Collier and Pit-head Lasses c.1890.

Between 1801 and 1901 Wigan's population rose rapidly from almost 11,000 to almost 61,000. The growth was associated with the development of **large scale industry especially coal, cotton and iron**. In 1870 Baines' account of the cotton industry stated that most people in Wigan were employed in "the carding and spinning of cotton in power looms, weaving of jaconets, muslins and calicos, the weaving of coarse linen and checks, for which they have long been noted". Twenty-six spinning and weaving mills employed 11,000 people when trade was brisk. Similarly in 1863 there were 48 colliery companies operating in Wigan producing nearly 4 million tons of coal each year and employing over 11,000 men in 1871. The use of deeper shafts and greater output stimulated other engineering industries such as William Park and Co. and the Wigan Wagon Company.

Wigan also possessed large scale ironworks at Kirkless, from 1858 to 1931 which formed part of the massive Wigan Coal and Iron Company, Pagefield and on a smaller scale Haigh Foundry which may have built the Laxey Wheel for the Isle of Man. These industries were stimulated by not only the canals but also the **arrival of railways** in 1831 to North Western Station; 1848, Wallgate Station and 1892, Central Station for which the River Douglas was diverted from the Station Road / Watkin Street area.

In the first half of the 19th Century Wigan was characterised by **tightly packed courts and rows of 2-3 roomed cottages**. These are seen on plans of 1847 (Plan 2) and described in reports of around 1850. Various commissions considered Wigan to be one of the unhealthiest towns in the country with abnormally high death rates. A Board of Health report in 1849 stated that "the whole town and in some parts especially is ill supplied with water, imperfectly



Mill Girl – Rylands Mill Warping Room.

drained, unpaved, badly lighted, very ill provided with privies and from the presence of pigstyes, dung heaps and open cess pools, in a dirty condition". Ninety privies deserved special notice – they ranged from rather filthy (2) to disgustingly filthy (26). There were 27 slaughter houses in housing areas and 38 lodging houses – 17 in areas described as seats of fever. Of a total of 5,366 houses in Wigan, 4,264 were of "working class type", 1,149 were back to back (having a shared back wall with windows and a door in the single outer wall); 647 others were without windows at the back; 60 were cellar dwellings and **520 had cellar weaving shops**.

In contrast in the second half of the century national laws and local action including Public Health Acts; the Library Act (1876) and Wigan Improvement Act of 1874 brought radical changes in the town centre. Indeed **most of it was redeveloped between 1865-1905**, King Street West and Market Street (1877), Station Road (1892), Library Street and Mesnes Street (1895) were constructed and large housing areas beyond the town centre developed. **Municipal enterprise** flourished in Wigan in this period.

In 1855 the Council bought the waterworks and in 1866-7 the town hall was erected as the "Borough Courts". A School Board was created in 1872 and the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary was opened in 1873. The gasworks established in 1822 was purchased in 1875. Wigan's Market Hall and extensive Market Square were opened in 1877 followed by the Central Library and Mesnes Park in 1878 and the Swimming Baths in 1882. The Wigan and District Mining and Technical College moved to new premises on Library Street in 1903.



Miners' Children at the Chief Constable's Soup Kitchen - 1893  
Miners' Strike.

It is to this period that Wigan owes much of its present character but with a little knowledge glimpses of its earlier form can still be found whether in terms of elegant Georgian town houses, humble 17th Century cottages or its medieval street pattern.





# FIRST WALK

## The Medieval Core

Numbers refer to observation points on Plan 1 on the back page (fold out).

Start on the lower part of Standishgate near its corner with Mesnes Street, opposite McDonalds.

The walk lasts 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours – it can be varied to suit individual needs.

*Route directions are in italics.*

Dates and names in brackets are those of the building's date and architects.

\*\*Buildings scheduled as of special architectural or historic interest.

Plan 2 on the back page provides a comparison with Wigan in 1847.



1. The walk starts opposite McDonalds on the lower part of **Standishgate**, which as the main shopping street and north-south route through Wigan had 12 public houses in 1894. The large stone and brick facade opposite was the **Roebuck Inn** ( 1900 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton ), dating back to the early 1800's. Note the buff stone (coal measures sandstone) details at the balustrade and semi-circular pediments on the skyline and the two projecting "oriel" windows. The building appears to have three floors but in 1982 it was redeveloped retaining only the front with a modern building, on two floors, behind. This sensitive scheme retained Wigan's character and provided modern shops. The right hand shop sign is more sensitive than that on the left. For many years the premises were used by Mark Williams pork butchers with an abattoir behind. Distinctive white advertisements were painted on the windows daily.

*Turning to the right walk along Standishgate and cross Mesnes Street.*

2. The large **cast iron lamp post** with ornate lanterns was erected in 1985 as part of the Standishgate pedestrianisation scheme. It used to carry power lines for Wigan's trams.

The new floor materials provide interest and comfort through variations in colour, texture and pattern and their human scale. The red pavements contrast attractively with the small flags of stone colour and texture. Monotonous lines and pattern are avoided by half-bonding most flags across the pavement. The rougher flags aid partially sighted and blind people. The scheme also introduced cast iron street furniture, wall mounted street lights and trees.

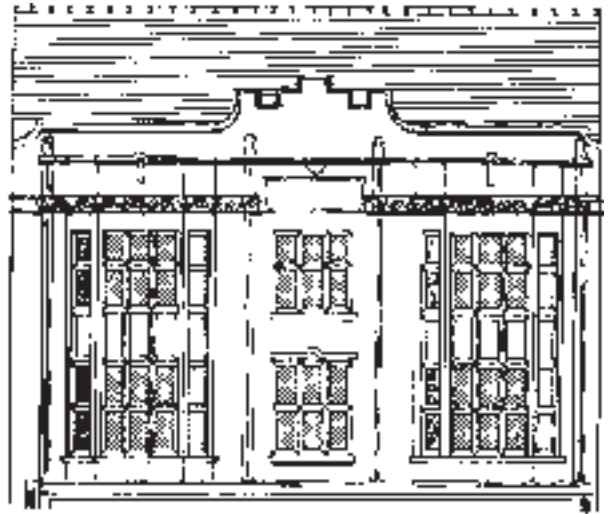
*Walk about seven metres along Standishgate to the Royal Arcade.*

3. **The Royal Arcade** (Norman Jones, Southport 1924) is one of several arcades visited on the trail. When open walk along the arcade, noting the individual shopfronts, hand painted signs and the steel trusses supporting the

glazed roof which provides the light airy atmosphere of the arcade. Most of the shops are small and are occupied by specialist traders. Compare the character of this arcade with those visited later. *Return to Standishgate and turn right.*

*Proceed to a point near the kerb opposite Marks and Spencer.*

4. **Marks and Spencer's** (Norman Jones 1931) building has Tudor and Jacobean features such as the "oriel" windows with vine trails and large mounded mullions and transoms (vertical and horizontal divisions); lion shield-bearers and the shaped, moulded parapet. The extension on the right is a rare example in Wigan of 1960's/70's buildings thoroughly modern in style but sympathising with its older neighbour especially in terms of scale, materials and the oriel windows (compare it to the adjoining shop to the right for instance).



**Marks and Spencer 1931**

Marks and Spencer have a long association with Wigan. In 1891 Michael Marks, the originator of the famous penny bazaars, moved from Leeds to Wigan which was better placed for expansion of the Yorkshire and Lancashire based business. A distribution warehouse was built in Great George Street in 1892. The Marks and Spencer partnership was established in 1894 when Thomas Spencer paid £300 for a half share and until 1897 Wigan remained the headquarters of the fast expanding firm. In Wigan the firm occupied stalls 82-83 in the Market Hall from 1891 to 1907; 19-21 Makinson Arcade from 1900 to 1931 and the present store from 1931

To the left is a narrow passage. In the 19th Century it led to a long row of cottages – Douglas Terrace – which ended at the old course of the River Douglas. In 1847 many of these appeared to have originated as hand loom weavers' cottages with cellar loom shops. The large department store to the left is an unusually large scale building for Standishgate.

Facing up the hill Standishgate forms an attractive linear space enclosed by the stone and brick and black and white buildings facing Standishgate. Their rich roofline, especially the cupola on the corner, acts as a visual magnet, dominating the space in front of them. The angle of the building line provides a hint of a further space to be entered in Market Place.



Standishgate West Side



Standishgate - towards Market Place.

*Cross Standishgate and face away from Marks and Spencer.*

On the other side of Standishgate notice numerous **black and white, Tudor style buildings** with stout timbers, white plaster panels, gables with barge boards and refinements such as carved brackets, wooden pegs, oriel windows, leaded windows and occasionally “jetties” formed by projecting upper floors. These frontages, whilst only skin deep and dating mainly from the 1920’s, give Standishgate and Market Place a distinctive character and vitality. Each building has individuality but complements its neighbours.



Galleries arcades

The largest of these black and white facades, opposite, is the Standishgate front of the **Galleries** (Leach, Rhodes and Walker 1983) which incorporates two shop fronts and at the centre an entrance to two arcade routes through

the development. When open go through the entrance a short way and note the glass and iron work of the high roofs and the traditional arcade atmosphere of these modern arcades. The left hand arcade climbs to the first floor shopping level and because of Wigan’s hilltop site it is possible to emerge from the first floor at ground level at Market Place. The right hand arcade leads to Hope Street and Wigan’s Market Hall. The shape of the development at this point relates to the medieval burgrave plots in the area as do the older arcades. The Three Crowns occupied part of the site with an alley at its side prior to the Galleries.

*If you have entered the Galleries return to Standishgate and turn right, proceed on the left hand side of Standishgate uphill and stand opposite the National Westminster Bank.*

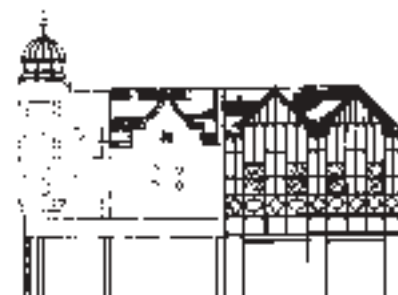
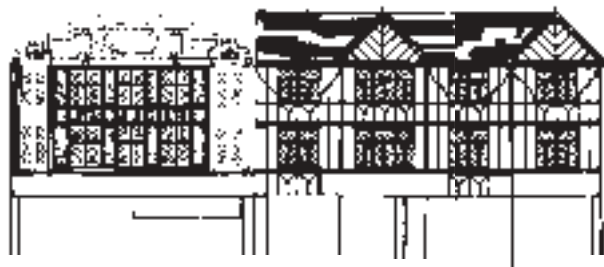
- The National Westminster Bank** \*\* (William Owen, Warrington 1898) was built as a branch of Parr’s Bank. It has a flamboyant French Renaissance (Loire) style with rich carvings in coal measures sandstone. Also of note are the hanging sign and classical features inside. From 1792 Thomas Woodcock, Sons and Eckersley were bankers here until they amalgamated with Parr’s Bank Limited in 1874. In 1847 (Plan 2) it was known as Wigan Bank.

In the 17th Century Standishgate and Millgate contained most of the wealthiest burgesses’ (freemen) homes. An account of 1695 describes this section as having “a sumptuous house belonging to the late Justice Entwisle and over against it a spacious and neat built house by Alderman Baldwin” – from one of Wigan’s leading pewter families.

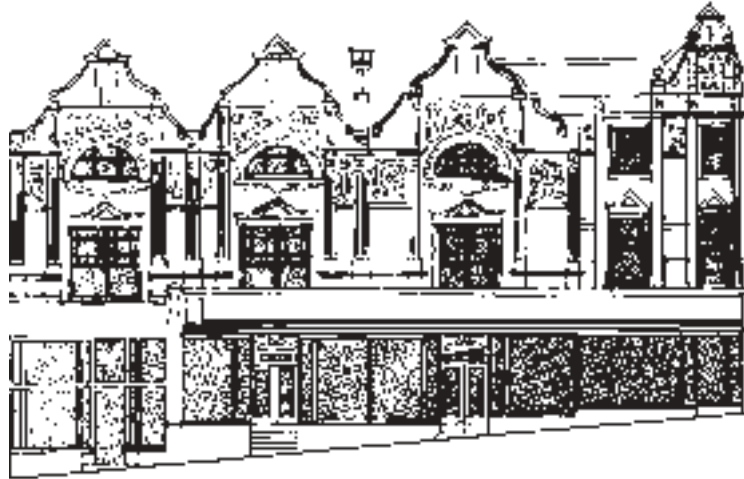
The painted render finish of the black and white building left of the bank covers brickwork of about 1800 – the modillion (bracketed) cornice at roof level is typical of the period.

*Proceed to the corner of Menzies at the junction of Standishgate and Station Road.*

- Menzies newsagents** has a lively half-timber facade of 1925 with decorative curved braces and elaborate barge boards on the gables. Prior to 1925 this was the **Royal Hotel** incorporating the Eagle and Child Inn in an elaborate Flemish Renaissance style building with decorative strapwork. The side to Station Road, with a Royal Coat of Arms over a former entrance, remains. It had been rebuilt in 1893 (Heaton Ralph and Heaton) after Station Road was opened to Central Station (demolished). The Eagle and Child was Wigan’s oldest



known public house being mentioned in documents of 1619. Later the Royal Hotel was the scene of major social events such as County Balls and less polite political speeches.



The Royal Hotel - Standishgate elevation.

On the opposite corner of Station Road is Powell's Chambers (1892 Heaton and Ralph) in a similar style with ornate stone especially in the window lintels. Structural problems required the rebuilding of the building in 1988 as a faithful copy of the original.

Turning further right observe the details of the **corner building** (1896 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) **opposite Powell's Chambers**. Notice the success of the corner oriel window and cupola roof in emphasising and turning the corner to link the street scenes. Also notice the carved panels, mouldings and shaped 'Dutch' gables. Extensions in 1984 continued the style of the corner building on both sides. The new horizontal, stone, mouldings lead the eye to the oriel window and thence up to the cupola. The cupola's shape is emphasised by ribs. The extensions contain only two floors – modern shops rarely require more – but the gables provide extra height. Having attracted attention from further down Standishgate (Point 4) these details sustain attention.

Turning further right again, across Market Place is the elaborate **Makinson Arcade** (1897 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) in brick and terracotta with French and English Renaissance features. Notice the shaped gable, the urn finials on the roofline, the arched windows and decorative frame and stained, leaded glass above the entrance. The ornate canopy was added in 1996.

Clearly Heaton, Ralph and Heaton made a major contribution to Wigan's character in this area. By variations in style, details and materials these four buildings form a fine essay in "harmony in variety".

A further space beyond Standishgate was indicated at Point 4. To the left Market Place is now revealed.

Turn left into the narrow Millgate and proceed to Yates'.

7. **Yates'** (1893 Heaton and Ralph) was known as **the Ship Inn** until 1985. Ship Yard at its side led to the old course of the River Douglas (now Station Road) which was navigable to Wigan. Earlier in the 20th century a cattle market was held in the rear yard. Unfortunately the pub's fine Victorian interior was removed about 1985. Uphill

observe the Library tower and the classical triangular pediment at the top of the distant chimney. Looking back towards Market Place note the relationship of the corner building on the left and Makinson Arcade.



Former plaster plaque at Ship Hotel

*Cross Millgate and look at Yates'*

Notice the large gables - Dutch since they are shaped and have pediments at the top – with scrolls along the sides contributing to their shape. The right hand gable has strapwork and the left hand gable used to have a ship. Restoration of this feature is necessary. The building is a fine complement to the architects' other buildings in the area.

*Return to Market Place and turn left for 20 metres to the far end of the black and white building on the left.*

8. **The black and white building** on the left was rebuilt in the style of the previous building in 1982. A modern brick building beyond this black and white building was remodelled in 1991. This transformed an alien building by adding a pitched and gabled roof and a 'timber-framed' skin so relating it to the character of the area. The original brickwork can be seen along the side – its colour being inappropriate in this red brick town. The site was formerly occupied by the **Old Dog Inn** and near the corner with Millgate stood the **Ring O' Bells**. Between these was Wigan's fishmarket – comprising fishstones (Plan 2) – removed in 1866. Wigan's medieval Market Cross is believed to have been located near the corner with Millgate.

The enclosed 'court' space of **Market Place** is dominated by the upper part of the **Parish Church tower** with its clock, blind arcading either side and crocketed pinnacles on the roofline.

On the right hand side of Market Place the Marketgate Centre has greatly enhanced this important space by remodelling an early 1970's shopping centre known as Centre Arcade. The **Centre Arcade** used to conflict with its neighbours regarding absence of first floor windows, its brick colour and roofline. Now the **Marketgate Centre** (Edmund Kirby 1990) uses modern materials (glass and steel) and details to provide a distinctively modern facade which relates to its traditional neighbours. The large gable successfully bridges the former roofline gap between the low gable to the right and tall buildings to the left. The removal of the floor above the entrance section and a new glass roof provided ingredients of a traditional arcade character especially natural light. The amount of detailing on the front is also important. The new front received rare praise from Bill Bryson in "Notes From a Small Island".

This site was formerly occupied by the **Market Arcade** (Little Arcade) and Commercial Yard. At the arcade ends, at Market Place and on Woodcock Street, was the Legs of





The building on the right from Market Place to the public house was the **Kings Head Inn**. Much of the building is Georgian and was the town house of the Earl of Derby, used by the family when visiting Wigan.



Coal hole cover.

Later it was the meeting place of the Wigan Master Cloggers Association. Clog making flourished in Wigan in the later 19th Century; trade directories show that in 1824 Wigan, Pemberton and Ince contained 5 cloggers; by 1854 the number was 27 increasing to 49 in 1882 and a peak of 63 cloggers in 1909. Even in 1937 the area still had 33 cloggers. This distinctive footwear, with thick wooden soles in alder finished with irons and leather uppers, gave rise to the bizarre “pastime” of clog fighting. This involved “purring”(kicking) and “up and down” (kicking of standing and fallen opponents). Often used to settle trivial quarrels, these fights were still common up to 1900. The combatants were sometimes nude apart from clogs and women were said to form a majority in the audiences!

The open area to the left was occupied by the **Hole in the Wall** which included variety acts. Music Hall developed on the site with a new building – The Alexandra Hall of 1874 which was remodelled as the Empire in 1892. After the decline in music halls the Empire operated as a cinema from 1908 to 1961. Acts appearing at the hall included Vesta Tilley, Madame Petti, Will Fyffe and Tom Foy

*Proceed to the public house on the right which projects into Coopers Row.*



Oyster Bar, Coopers Row.

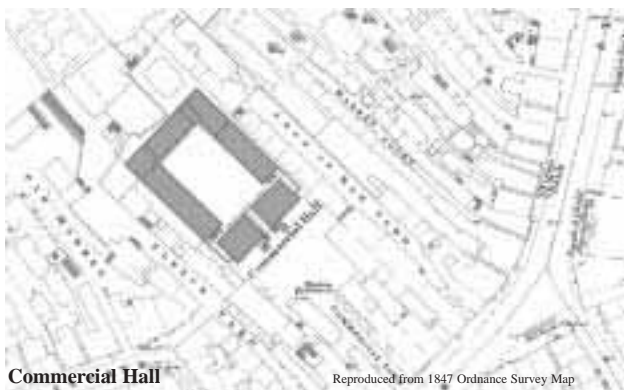
10. This **public house** \*\* originated as three 17th Century cottages – bricks of the period can still be seen inside. At one time it was possible to enjoy an oyster supper in this locality. Today picnickers use the pleasant open space created in the early 1970’s by clearance of the Empire and a dense maze of buildings on the higher ground at The Wiend.

*Proceed uphill and on reaching The Wiend turn left and proceed to The Wiend Centre.*

Before – Centre Arcade    ↗    After – Marketgate    ↘



Man public house (1879) known as the ‘top and bottom legs’ with two entrances about 90 meters apart linked by a corridor over the arcade shops! Commercial Yard originally led to the **Commercial Hotel** and **Commercial Hall**, described in 1829 “as a commodious structure of brick, built in 1816, it was appropriated to the use of clothiers on fair days.” In the 1851 Census amongst residents of Commercial Yard were three musicians and nine strolling players – an area of considerable character.



Commercial Hall

Reproduced from 1847 Ordnance Survey Map

*Pass an alley on the left and Marketgate and turn left into a narrow alley – Coopers Row.*

9. **Coopers Row** has a narrow entrance, typical of medieval streets designed for foot and hand cart transport. The floor has setts with larger stones providing a smoother wheel route. On the left is an ornate cast iron coal hole cover. The public house projecting into the path in the distance enlivens and partially encloses the space.

11. **The Wiend Centre of 1986** contains the childrens' library and playroom. **It replaced** the Powell Boys' Reading Room (1893 Heaton and Ralph) on Station Road, donated by Sir Francis Sharpe Powell, Wigan's MP 1857-9 and 1885-1910. Its form and detailing achieve a vigorous climax to the Millgate hill, enclosure for The Wiend and a sensitive neighbour for the Edwardian buildings further down Millgate.

Excavations on the site by the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit in 1983 provided significant evidence of Wigan's early history. Looking to the right of the library entrance, in the far right hand corner of the site (behind the wine bar) a **Roman rammed gravel road** of the first century and three successive phases of **large timber buildings** of the first to third centuries were found. The first two buildings were of military workshop or storage character and the last was associated with industry, a large number of **hearths** containing iron slag and cannel coal deposits being present. Locally made **Roman pottery and roof tiles** were also found. Deep medieval ploughsoil over these remains produced large quantities of **medieval pottery**. In the far left corner of the site was a late 13th or 14th Century timber lined **well** containing pottery vessels of the period. On Millgate in the vicinity of the library tower was **Wigan Gaol** or Bridewell built in the early 16th Century and demolished in 1868 when the police station transferred to the Town Hall buildings on King Street.



12. **The open area (car park) on the extreme left** was the entrance to Moore's Yard (Plan 2). Records provide valuable glimpses of life in Wigan's courts and side streets before late 19th Century improvements. A report of 1849 described Moore's Yard as "close and crowded with houses back to back. There is court within court, with narrow passages. There are slaughter houses and a tallow boiler." 42 families lived in these conditions in 1851, 10 included 5-7 children in 2 rooms. The residents had a wide range of occupations in manufacturing and service trades, some surprising – a pauper, a scavenger and a surgeon!

| <b>Moore's Yard<br/>Residents' Occupations<br/>In the 1851 Census</b>  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Occupation</b>  | <b>No.</b>   |
| Printer, Milliner, Commercial Traveller,<br>Cook Wheelwright, Plumber, Iron Bolt<br>Maker, Gardener, Chemist, Dyer,<br>Groom, Shopkeeper, Painter, Pauper,<br>Scavenger, Surgeon | 1 of<br>each |
| Bricklayers, Blacksmiths, Cabinet<br>Makers, Coach Builders, Carpenters,<br>Cloggers, Nailers, Carters,<br>Housekeepers, Errand Boys   | 2 of<br>each |
| Shoemakers, Victuallers, Tailors,<br>Factory workers   | 3 of<br>each |
| Laundresses, Colliers  | 5 of<br>each |
| Weavers  | 6            |
| Dealers, Labourers   | 7 of<br>each |
| Cotton Workers   | 12           |
| Scholars   | 38           |
| Other Children   | 32           |

Ironwork based on Wallgate Station Porte-Cochere

Return along The Wiend until buildings occur on both sides

Looking down **The Wiend** to Market Place appreciate this extremely narrow medieval space and its relationship to the tower and green cupola roof in the distance. Notice how low the two storey, late 17th Century cottages (now shops)\*\* on the right are compared to the three storey buildings of c1740 and 1900 on the left. On the left contrast the smooth machine made bricks of the first building (c.1900) with the small, dark, irregular bricks of the middle range of buildings (c.1740)\*\* and on the right the 17th Century hand-made bricks under the windows of the second shop. The Georgian group (nos.5,7 and 9) were vacant for many years and in danger of collapse. Careful conservation of the building by new owners with grants from City Challenge and English Heritage gave the building a new lease of life. The stone slate roof was restored whilst stabilizing the crooked front wall. Flats above the public house have also contributed to the growing number of residents in the town centre.

Also notice the shop fronts. Accessible to the main shopping area, The Wiend has a valuable concentration of small specialist businesses. This pattern has been present for over a century according to 1885/7 directories which list a dentist, hairdresser and umbrella maker, a currier and leather dealer, a herbalist, wire worker and safety lamp manufacturer, an oil and colour dealer, scales dealer and lodging house amongst traders on the Wiend.

In 1848 **Thomas Beecham** lodged at The Wiend and as an odd job man and chemist it was in Wigan that he first manufactured his famous pills (to the relief of so many ever since!) Between 1848 and 1850 Beecham is

recorded as living in the Wiend, Wallgate and Hallgate illustrating the availability of lodgings and mobility of tenants at the time.

*Proceed to the end of The Wiend.*



13. On reaching **Market Place** note the sudden change in character of the spaces - from a narrow linear space to a large, enclosed, court space. This situation is typical of medieval townscapes. Having been attracted by the **green cupola** from The Wiend the full range of Edwardian buildings opposite \*\* (1904-1906 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) and their importance in enclosing the Market Place can now be appreciated. This picturesque group again displays north European Renaissance features especially in the corner tower but this time the architects included imitation half-timber on the top floor. Note the slight oriel windows, the leaded glass and the carved timber mouldings of the enriched gables.

The ground surface of Market Place was greatly improved in late 1997 by removing a large brown brick planter structure and replacing concrete and bitumen surfaces. The area is now covered mainly by stone flags and concrete setts which demarcate a much reduced carriageway. In place of the planter, stone walls with seats denote a stone platform area used as a performance space. Part of the platform floor is occupied by a mosaic stone cross with bronze relief plaques. Designed by the sculptor Sebastian Boyesen with assistance from Wigan Schools, the cross recalls Wigan's early church and market functions and the plaques various elements of the town's heritage depicting scenes from the coal and cotton industries, commerce and the canals. At the centre is a copy of the Royal Charter seal bestowed upon Wigan by Henry III in 1246.

To the left and beyond this feature, on the opposite side of **Market Street** is a distinctive pair of red brick and stone facades of 1886. The left hand shop was **Voses** (United Cow Products) **Tripe Restaurant** for about 50 years from 1925.

**On the left hand corner of The Wiend** the polished granite bank front (1922) is a late example of Edwardian classical (Ionic columns) design expressing grandeur and security. Next door stood the Cross Keys Hotel.

**In the distance to the right and left**, wooded hills of Haigh Hall Country Park and Billinge provide reminders of the attractive countryside immediately surrounding Wigan.

Wigan's four main streets - Wallgate, Standishgate, Millgate and Hallgate led to **Market Place** and with the Parish Church it formed the core of Medieval Wigan. For centuries the Market was a major source of Wigan's growth and prosperity. Royal Charters of 1245 and 1258 granted a market on Monday every week and two fairs of three days at Ascension and All Saints and later another market every Friday. By 1323 the burgesses held markets every day. **Other sources of activity** in the Market Place included **the market cross, town stocks, a whipping post**, the Moot Hall (see point 14) and the New Town Hall (1720). In 1624 Bishop Bridgeman wrote "Also because at the wakes on the day after (Christmas Eve) it has been a use among ye townsmen to have that barbarous and beastly game of **bear-bayting** and the Bear Wards . . . might bayt his beares on the Market Hill . . . after my Monday Market were ended and the people had packed up their wares." In 1715 five Jacobite leaders were executed here.



**The New Town Hall 1720.**

**The New Town Hall** of 1720 was built directly in front of the range of buildings with the **green roof** to replace the Moot Hall. Wigan's two MPs of the time paid over £2000 for it. The ground floor "the shambles" was occupied by butchers shops with the Council Chamber above. This classical style Georgian building was demolished in 1882.

Market Place was also notable for its **public houses**. In 1634 Wigan with a population of about 4000 had 51 inns; 12 of them in Market Place. By 1869 the total was 110 with another 80 beer sellers, 10 being in Market Place. The sites of several have been noted; others included the Queens Head, the Fleece and three more directly in front of the Parish Church. These were the Black Horse adjoining Church Gates, the Bulls Head to the right and next door to it the White Lion. The White Lion advertised "Family Port and Magassar Oil for footballers' bruises" . . . in addition "half-time and final score telegrams for Wigan Football Team."

Market Place was also **the centre of Wigan's tram system**. Horse and steam trams were introduced in the early 1880's but these were superseded by electric trams with overhead wires and rails in the early 1900's. By 1925 Wigan had 24½ miles of tramways radiating from Market Place.

*Turn left and proceed past the cafe to the stone section of the Moon - Under - The Water public house.*





Market Place c.1890

14. Look across Market Place and observe the opening to a narrow alleyway – **Church Gates**. **Moot Hall Chambers** (1884 Issitt and Verity)\*\* to the left has a free French Renaissance style with oriel windows of a later and richer Baroque flavour. These elegantly curved windows with their reeded bases and slender shafts; the pilasters with carved fruit ribbon panels on the first floor and the large modillion (bracketed) cornice at roof level are of particular note. The windows in three sections above the oriels are known as Venetian windows. Originally the roofline was much richer with a stone balustrade and tall, steeply pitched pavilion roofs at both ends and balustrades rose above the first floor windows. The modern office front complements the upper floors in terms of vertical continuity and materials.



Wigan's **Moot Hall**, first mentioned in documents of 1422 stood here. It is illustrated on the old Wigan town seal. The arched **ground floor**, occupied by **shops** by 1600, supported the Hall which was the **seat of local government**. It housed the Borough Treasury; the courts of "Porte Mote" for trade matters, Court Leet for minor offences and Courts of Kings Pleas for financial cases; the market bell on the roof and a balcony for proclamations. Projecting into Wallgate it provided a complex street line and much greater enclosure for Market Place and Wallgate than today (Plan 2). The hall practically fell down in 1719 and the New Town Hall was built elsewhere in Market Place. A later Moot Hall of 1829 was demolished in 1869.



Cross Market Place towards Church Gates and stop at the centre.

Turning to the left observe the tall, narrow **bank on the Wallgate – Library Street corner** (1895 W.E.V. Crompton). Its height is emphasised by the shaped gables with ball finials and the unusually tall cupola on the corner. This complements the other two cupolas which together demarcate the roughly triangular space of Market Place. Among the pale pink terracotta details note the square Tuscan columns at the first floor windows and Ionic capitals. Overall the style is a free Queen Anne Revival. The bank's stone ground floor (1910 T.B. Whinney, London) with its Tuscan columns provides an impressive frontage but is somewhat out of character with the lively upper floors.

Continue to **Church Gates** noting another sequence of spaces – from the spacious Market Place to a narrow linear space of medieval character. On the upper floors away from Market Place the building on the left has a simpler finish.

Proceed to the end of Church Gates.

15. A small, enclosed court space is now revealed. At its centre is the fine **War Memorial** \*\* (1925 Sir Giles Gilbert Scott) of Eleanor Cross type. It has lacy Gothic style details. The **railings** \*\* surrounding the memorial and church are also of Gothic style.

Beyond the memorial note, the wide variety of sculptural roof features including the tower of Jackson's brewery

To the right the space is enclosed by the **Parish Church of All Saints** \*\*. The shallow pointed arched windows subdivided by stone mullions extending the full height of the windows are typical of the Perpendicular Gothic Style of the 15th Century. Also note the upper level clerestory windows, the crocketed pinnacles over the projecting buttresses between the windows and the carved gargoyles in the form of horrific heads or dragons which normally carry rainwater away from the walls. The attractive gates were added to the porch in 1985.

Beyond the porch turn right and right again through a gate in the railings.



Gargoyle

16. **The Parish Church** \*\* is first mentioned in 1199 but is usually taken to be the Parish Church of Newton referred to in the Domesday Book of 1086. The tower, which dominates the Wigan skyline from distant and closer viewpoints, dates from the later 13th Century in the lower parts. It was remodelled in the 15th Century and heightened with pairs of windows and a pinnacled parapet in 1861 (Paley). Note the commemorative plaque, with details of the Civil War, at the foot of the tower. Adjoining the tower is the Walmesley Chapel of 1620. Apart from the original features the Church was substantially rebuilt as a faithful copy (of the **15th Century Perpendicular Gothic Church**) by Sharpe and Paley (1845-60) at a cost of about £15,000.

The Church is normally open 10.30 – 4.00 on Saturdays (Easter to September) and for services at 12.30 Mondays and Wednesdays.

Features of particular note inside are:- the Morris / Burne Jones stained glass window of St.Christopher in the south aisle; the nave and aisle roofs (largely of old timbers i.e. probably original 15th Century); the tiers of heavily carved stalls for the Mayor and Corporation of 1850 at the west end; a 13th Century window and a Roman altar built into the tower; and the effigies of Sir William and Lady Mabel de Bradshaigh in the south chapel formerly a Chantry founded in 1338. Lady Mabel is associated with Mabs Cross on Standishgate and the **Lady Mabel Legend** which involved a penance for bygamy by Lady Mabel who walked barefoot from her home at Haigh Hall to the Cross in Wigan once a week. She had married Sir Osmund Nevil while her husband was away. Sir William returned after 10 years disguised as a pilgrim. He slew Sir Osmund at Newton Park and settled down at Haigh Hall with Lady Mabel.

*Return through the gates in the railings and pass under the stone arch.*

17. The small stone building to the right is Wigan's original **Bluecoat School**\*\* of 1773. Apart from the more recent remodelling of the door the building has the character of a cottage with stone mullioned (vertical divisions) windows. Notice the stone mouldings - dripstones - over the window and door openings which are not only attractive details but also throw off rain. The School moved to a larger building in Hallgate in 1823.

*Now retrace your steps past the end of the Church but turn right before reaching the Memorial Gardens.*



Church Gardens.

18. Church Gardens form a pleasant green space near the heart of the town centre, their tranquility contrasts markedly with the nearby commercial streets. They were originally part of the graveyard. They form another enclosed space in the sequence which started on Standishgate. To the right the gardens are enclosed by the extensive Elizabethan style **Magistrates Court** \*\* (1888 Littler) and the continuation to the left of the County Courts\*\* (1898). The ornate corner roof and lantern (left), the conical tower roof (right), the chimney stacks, gables and stone ball finials produce a spectacular roofline. Notice the 'arts and crafts' style grilles above some of the entrances. The right hand section also incorporated the County Police Station and cost £9,000 to build.



Gerrard Winstanley House and County Courts

The former magistrates Court is now known as Gerard Winstanley House. Gerrard Winstanley was born and educated in Wigan (born 1609) and moved to London as a cloth merchant. He became a political and theological activist publishing tracts, manifestos and pamphlets including "The Law of Freedom" which aimed at English society organized on the basis of common ownership. In 1649 he founded the Digger Movement which cultivated common land as a means of making the earth 'a common treasury' As such Gerard Winstanley is recognised as the father of both Socialism and Communism. During the decades of Communist rule in Russia he was the only Englishman to be included on the Wall of Worthies in Moscow.

The end of the gardens away from the Church is only partially enclosed by trees but the gap provides an extensive vista with Pemberton and the ridge between

Billinge Hill and Ashurst Beacon in the distance. On the left nearer the church notice the brick tower of a former small brewery typical of 'backyard' breweries attached to public houses.

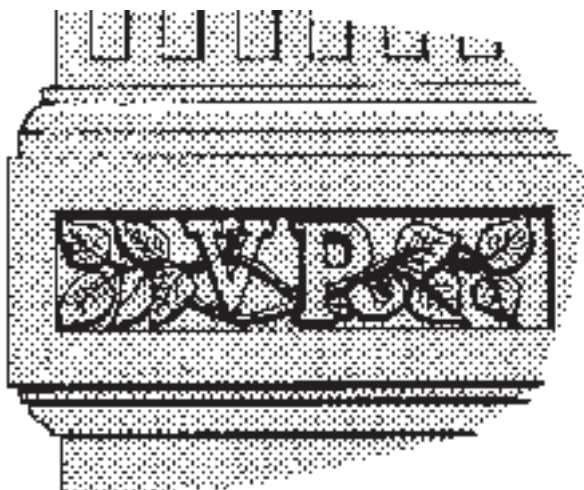
Now return to the memorial and leave by the right hand opening to Wallgate. **Before entering Wallgate** look back and observe how majestically the full length of the Church and its tower enclose and dominate the space.

Pass the *Bees Knees Public House*\*\* and turn right into the alley at its side. Take care to avoid vans reversing into the space.

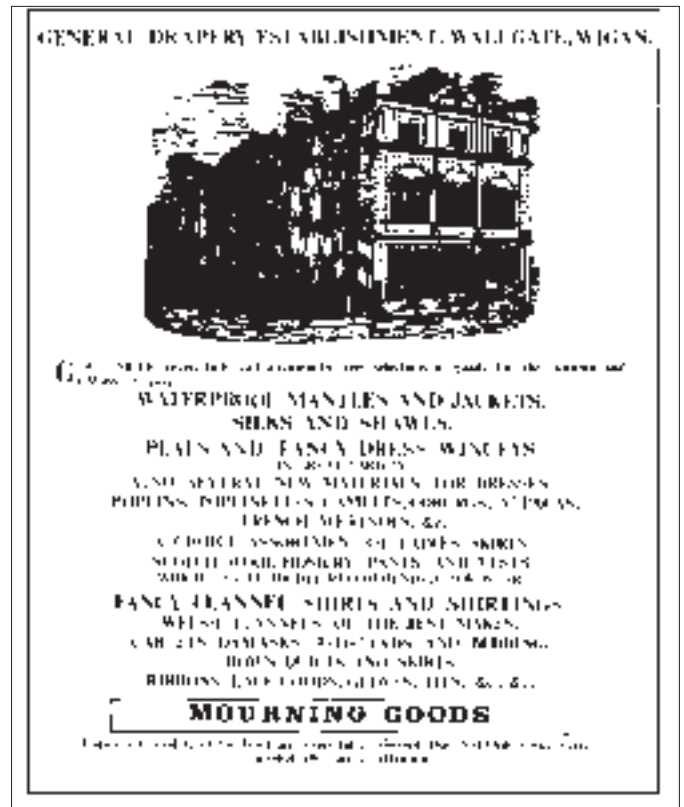
19. About 5 metres into the alley note how the brewery premises at the end relate to the **narrow space**. They have recently been restored with aid from City Challenge and English Heritage. The brewery's survival is important as a reminder that medieval burgage plots did not only fill up with housing to the rear of frontage properties but also a wide range of industrial premises. Until modern times the range of uses in town centres was far wider. Also notice the stone floor; the sculptured date panel depicting a Lancashire rose on the left and the Victorian etched and cut glass in the door on the right showing the pub's original name – the Dog and Partridge Hotel.

Return to Wallgate, turn right and proceed to the Wigan Post Office entrance.

20. **The Post Office** (1884) \*\* has an asymmetrical facade with features of the Italian Renaissance 'Palazzo' (Palace) style and the Queen Anne Revival. Pink **triassic sandstone** from the Liverpool area was used only occasionally in Wigan. Features of interest on the ground floor are: the open, scroll, pediment over the door; the fluted pilasters with Ionic capitals incorporating cloth swags at the sides of the door and arched window; the small carved panels incorporating Queen Victoria's monogram and foliage and the incised lettering "Post Office".



Opposite the Post Office is a building formerly known as **Meek's Buildings** (1861 J.Ainscough). It has a sensitively painted facade with variations in colour to pick out architectural details. The large scale building extends back to Arcade Street and Rowbottom Square. It housed J (later G and J) Meek's general drapery establishment.



Meek's Advertisement 1864 (Courtesy of the Wigan Observer).

Noting the small arcade at the side of the Post Office proceed to the division between the modern and older section of the Royal Bank of Scotland on the right.

21. The old section of the **Bank to the right** \*\* (1890 Issitt and Verity) has vigorous stone details on the upper levels. Renaissance features include the pedimented gables with Venetian windows and the pediments over the second floor windows. The oriel windows with round arches – a means of incorporating the Venetian style - derive from English, 17th Century timber-framed buildings and were often used in the Queen Anne Revival from the 1870's. A complementary building(1889 Issitt and Verity) formerly occupied the site of the new bank section.

Diagonally across Wallgate to the right on the corner of King Street is a **public house**\*\* (**O'Neills in 1998**) which was designed as a bank (1866 Walters, Barker and Ellis, Manchester). In Manchester its architects were leading exponents of the style – severe (as opposed to ornate) Italian Renaissance Palazzo. Ornamental detailing is restricted to architraves around the windows; the cornice at roof level and the unusual chimney .At the base of the walls the massive "tooled" blocks of stone provide weight and a sense of stability. In 1847 Wigan Post Office was here with a Post Mistress – Abigail Lyon an unusual appointment in large towns of the period.

On the opposite side of King street (opened in 1791), **Berkley Square formerly the Minorca Hotel** \*\* (c.1820) is a typical Georgian style coaching inn. Note the prominent eaves at roof level and off-centre 'portico' entrance with its two columns supporting a flat stone roof. As a shop the section on the left (also Wigan Post Office) was occupied by Thomas Wall the proprietor of the Wigan Observer. The Post Office was a more mobile institution than today – from 1860 to 1884 it occupied 4 different sites in the Wallgate area.

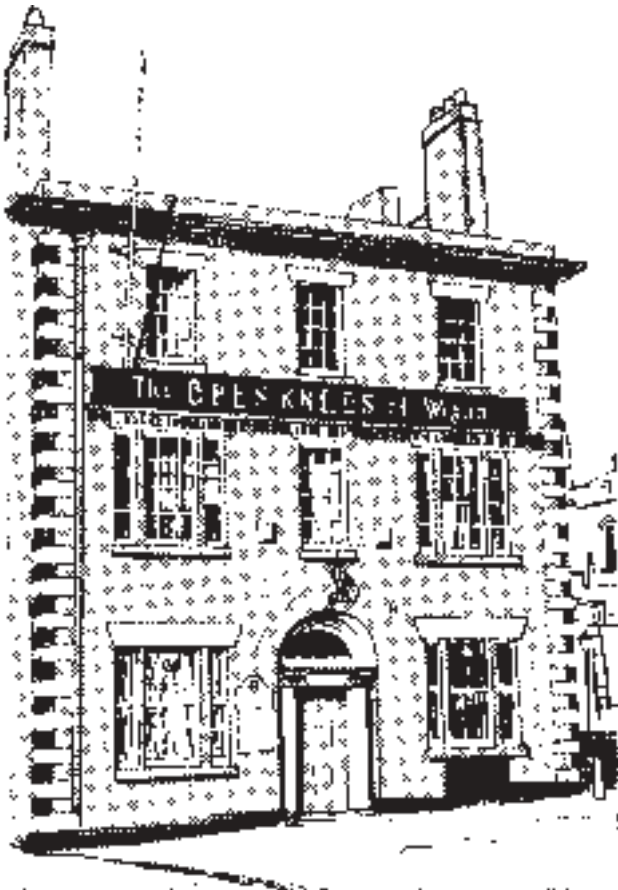


**Looking left**, uphill towards Market Place and near the entrance to the Church precincts, observe the **complex roofline of the corner building**. It originally had a domed lantern above the corner pavilion roof. The complex shape and details produce French Baroque style effects. Built as a shop and office block it was converted to the Union Bank of Manchester Limited in 1908, became the Yorkshire Bank and subsequently a betting office.

*Return uphill to this betting office.*

The **corner betting office** (1884 Isitt and Verity) is notable for the massive, coved cornice at roof level with magnificent, carved festoons of fruit. The later ground floor front (1908 Greenwood, Manchester) – is in Jurassic limestone – characteristic fossil shell fragments are easily seen.

Turning to the left observe the late 18th or early 19th Century facade of the Dog and Partridge Hotel, now known as **the Bees Knees**\*\*. Note its arched doorway with Tuscan columns and on the first floor, the typical Georgian treatment of larger window openings – two narrow outer windows separated by mullions from the wider central section. The large stone “quoins” at the corner emphasise the proportions of the whole facade. Thomas Jackson was the landlord in the mid 19th Century and he operated the small brewery to the rear.



The Bees Knees.

The space in front of the Post Office and Bees Knees contained the medieval Town Well and a set of stocks. City Challenge funding enabled parking to be removed and stone flags to be re-introduced to this area as well as improved and widened paving along Wallgate. Traffic is less dominant and it is more often possible to stop and look and enjoy the buildings and spaces.

*Proceed to Wallgate and to the first shop after the corner.*

23. **The newsagent’s shop front** (1930) is a rare example in Wigan of Art Deco design which flourished in the 1920’s and 30’s and was characterised by geometric shapes and patterns and highly polished surfaces. Note the glass frieze, the street number and surround, the squared fascia letters and debased pediment terminating the polished granite front –the shop was formerly occupied by Ashtons tobacconists. The buildings\*\* (1880) in which it stands include round Romanesque arched windows and features of the “commercial Gothic” style. Cast iron walls separate the shops inside and the modern end unit retains its cast iron columns.

*Proceed to a point opposite the Raven Hotel.*



24. **The Raven Hotel**\*\* (1904 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) has a remarkable rounded pediment of a free Edwardian Baroque style. The sculptured inner portion or tympanum with its raven is of particular note . Inside are art nouveau tiles, glass and polished mahogany and remnants of small cubicle like rooms which once typified Victorian and Edwardian public houses but are quite rare today.

To the right of the Raven stood the equally elaborate facade of the **Golden Lion Inn** (1903 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) cleared in the 1960’s. To the left note two sections in the upper storeys of the bank. The older right hand section was the main shop of Coop and Company until 1908.



Wallgate c.1890 – note the Clarence Hotel and Tote Buildings

# SECOND WALK

## Beyond The Core

Numbers refer to observation points on Plan 1 on the back page (fold out).

Start at the Market Place end of Library Street.

The walk lasts 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hours – it can be varied to suit individual needs.

*Route directions are in italics.*

Dates and names in brackets are those of the building's date and architects.

\*\*Buildings scheduled as of special architectural or historic interest.

Plan 2 on the back of the page provides a comparison with Wigan in 1847.



Wallgate c.1880.

*Proceed to a point opposite the Bank.* Across Library Street the **stone public house** has upper facades in the elaborate French Renaissance (Loire) style. As the Manchester and County Bank its original Market Place elevation (1890 Mills and Murgatroyd, Manchester) comprised only the gable and oriel. After Library Street was opened the corner feature and Library Street elevation were added (1895 Mills and Murgatroyd) hence the slight variations in details between the two gables and windows. The ground floor was modern and heavy in character but since remodelling in stone it is more sympathetic and includes public sculpture in the railings by Sebastian Boyesen.



*Cross Wallgate and then Library Street.*

This point provides a good place to finish the first walk which dealt mainly with the medieval core of Wigan. The second walk (points 25 to 64) deals with more peripheral areas.

25. The prospect down **Library Street** is one of Edwardian civic grandeur. Developed mainly between 1895 and 1905 it represented the last major phase of redeveloping the dense courts and rows of central Wigan. The new road linked Market Place with the central library, Borough Courts and Town Hall, cutting through the site of the Queen's Head Hotel on Market Place. In particular notice the extensive and unifying use of **terracotta** for details on many of the facades. Here its colours range from buff to purplish-pink.

*Proceed on the left hand side to a point opposite a narrow street - Barrack Square.*

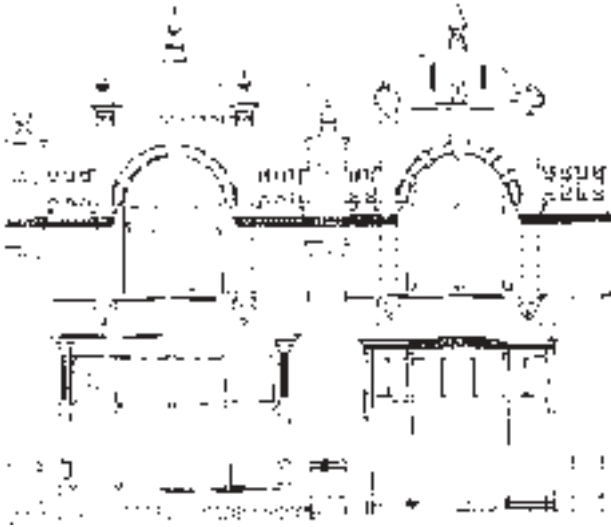
26. On the right side of **Barrack Square** notice the original ground floor finish of the shops and bank (1895 W.E.V.Crompton)\*\* stretching to Wallgate and on the left hand corner the classical style building (1894 W.E.V. Crompton). The two first floor projecting "oriel" windows include **painted leaf designs** in the upper sections. To the left the double gable front (1898 W.E.V. Crompton) displays **buff terracotta** detailing. Along Barrack Square leading to Barracks Yard there is a glimpse of Wigan's late Victorian warehouse quarter. The **large warehouse**, now a public house (1895 W.E.V.Crompton) extends behind the Library Street shops and was occupied originally by corn merchants.

A **Cloth Hall**, opened here in 1784, had been converted to cottages by 1840 and formed a grim housing area. A report of 1849 described it as: "ill drained, ill paved and a seat of fever. . . 45 cottages in a very confined situation, no thoroughfare and closed up at the bottom. They are very small with ground floors below ground level with four privies – all in the dirtiest and filthiest state - serving the 45 cottages with 257 inhabitants (6 per cottage of 2 rooms). It is neither lit nor supplied with water. The yard is always poorly drained, dirty and smells." The landlord was unprepared to take in a water supply at 5/- per year unless a reduced price was arranged.

**Looking down Library Street**, in the distance on the right hand side notice a turret and **dome-shaped terracotta cupola roof** at the corner of Arcade Street.

*Cross Library Street to the left hand corner of Barrack Square and turn to view the far side of Library Street.*

27 Between the stone building and the Prudential Building the **terracotta buildings** comprise 7 gables (1899 - 1903 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton). The variations in the gables and first floor windows reflect phases of development and another of the architect's essays in harmony in variety. The **four gables to the left** are particularly elaborate in an **Edwardian Baroque style**.



The **Prudential Office** \*\* (1905 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) has features of the Flemish Transitional Gothic style but also an impression of the flowing Art Nouveau style. In particular note the **art nouveau name plaque** above the door.



To the right the wide shopfront (1922 Ormerod, Pomeroy and Foy, Bolton) is in a 1920's classical style. The upper floor was originally used as a Temperance Billiard Room – notice the green Westmorland slate on the 'Mansard' style roof and the unusual lanterns above.

The location opposite the Prudential Assurance Office was formerly an extremely cramped court – Bay Horse Yard – with 12 farm labourers amongst its residents.

*Proceed downhill to Arcade Street.* Before crossing Arcade Street notice a warehouse along Arcade Street on the left with detailing around the characteristic central loft doors (1898 W.E.V.Crompton). *Cross Arcade Street.*

28. Near the corner notice the **pilasters** between the shop windows of College Chambers (1901 W.B.Johnson). They are cast iron and were made in Wigan at the **Douglas Forge** next to the river near Scholes Bridge.

Diagonally across Library Street to the left are the **Municipal Buildings** \*\* (1900 Bradshaw and Gass, Bolton) in a flamboyant Flemish Renaissance style. Built mainly in dark red terracotta it has **abundant ornamental details** – notice the gables, the balustrades between the gables, the bay windows, open balcony, arched transoms on the first floor, the **merman figures** and the particularly rich **floral frieze** between the upper storeys. The loss of a large dome from the corner is unfortunate. Today this is one of Wigan's most impressive Civic Buildings but it was built by the Royal London Friendly Society as seven shops with upper floor storage and private offices.

**Looking back up Library Street** the bend enables the **stone corner building** to partially enclose the space and provide a fine climax to the hill.

*Proceed down Library Street for about 10 metres and look across Library Street.*

29. The (new) **Town Hall** was formerly the **Wigan Mining and Technical College**\*\* (1900-3) Briggs and Wolstenholme) and is **Wigan's grandest building**. Following the relocation of the college it was most appropriate that the building's future was secured by its new use as the civic heart of one of the country's largest local authorities. Red brick and terracotta is used in a heavy Flemish Baroque style. Notice the massive scale of the building, the large gables, the segmental pediment over the door, the name lettering, the Art Nouveau gates and **railings**, the alternately blocked (squared) columns to the sides of the door and along Hewlett Street and **four rounded cupolas** over "lookout" turrets at roof level on Library Street.





The interior of the porch, foyer, staircase and hall have stained glass, iron, ceramics and panelling of note – some in the art nouveau style. Viewing of the interior may be possible – ask at reception at the right hand front corner.

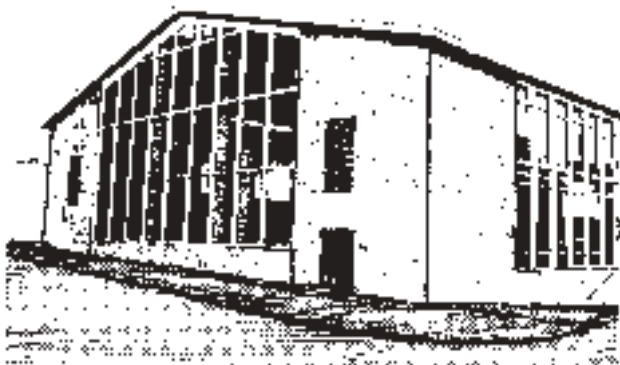
The College originated as the Wigan Mining and Mechanical School or Mechanical Institute of 1857 – **the second oldest School of Mines in the country**. It occupied many buildings until 1882 when land was bought further down Library Street for a college building. As one of the foremost mining schools the need for larger premises led the trustees to build the present building. A commemorative plaque is located near the Hewlett Street corner. It was appropriate that Wigan’s grandest civic building was associated with mining since it was one of the leading mining centres, over 1,000 coal shafts having been sunk within 5 miles of the town centre and over 750 million tons of coal extracted. As late as 1921 over 12,000 men or 28% of the male population and 245 women were employed in mining with others in associated engineering industries.

The site was previously occupied by long rows of cottages in Elbow Lane and Crispins Court. In 1851 one of the men living here was a farmer!

*Cross Library Street and either proceed downhill to Point 31 or proceed uphill, turn right into Hewlett Street, walk to its far end (noting the simpler, later, extensions to the buildings on both sides) and turn right into Millgate.*

30. On the opposite side of Millgate is a Victorian shop and to the right a fine **mid 18th Century town house** \*\* with an elaborate door surround. This comprises a heavy triangular pediment supported by Ionic columns. Contrast the handmade facing bricks on the front to those to the side which are typical of the 17th Century. The side and parts of the interior are in fact a remnant of the fine houses of the most important burgesses (freemen) which lined Millgate as described in 1695.

*Proceed down Millgate, turn right into College Avenue and continue to Library Street.*



**Wigan Swimming Pool.**

31. On the left is Wigan’s **International Swimming Pool**. It’s style is out of character with the street but the uninterrupted span of the modern roof beam design is impressive. Wigan’s was one of the earliest Olympic standard pools in the country and Wigan swimmers have achieved international fame. Its construction illustrated some of the hazards of building in mining areas – a large

earth moving machine disappeared down a shaft! The original Wigan Baths (1882 Heaton) were on the Millgate side of the site, the Library Street section being occupied by the Pavilion Cinema. Diagonally across Library Street is a block of three shops (1901 R.T. Johnson). Notice the shaped roofs of the first floor oriel windows; the terracotta acanthus frieze and the scalloped, rounded pediments at the top.

*Proceed down Library Street to the far end of the Baths.*

32. On the opposite side of Library Street is the **Wigan History Shop** \*\* which was built as the **Central Library** (1878 Sir Alfred Waterhouse). Waterhouse often used the Gothic style on the main front but as on Library Street, a simpler version at the side. The **railings** on Library Street and inside on the first floor, are of note as are the staircase and first floor interior. The library replaced the classical style (Palladian) **Grammar School** of 1723, founded in 1596. The History Shop houses a permanent exhibition about Wigan’s past and various temporary historical exhibitions as well as a shop and sources of information on Wigan’s history. The entrance is on Library Street – a separate visit is well worthwhile.



**History Shop railings.**

Diagonally across Rodney Street opposite the Library, the small office building has fine **ashlar stone** (smooth, precisely squared blocks with fine jointing lines) on the front with contrasting **rubble stone** at the side. Further left across the open space and roads is **Harrogate Street** – a reminder of one of the more surprising aspects of Wigan’s past. In the late 18th Century **Wigan was a medicinal Spa town!** In ‘England Described or The Travellers Companion’ of 1788 the description of Wigan included: “Wigan Spaw or New Harrogate is a strong sulphureous water lately discovered in boring for coal in a field near the Scholes Bridge. It is said to greatly resemble the water of Harrogate in Yorkshire . . . useful in complaints requiring sulphur . . . particularly good effect for sore eyes, **old sore legs** and other old sores; scald heads, the scurvy, itch etc. There is now a very elegant building erected for the use of those who resort to this spring with convenience for drinking the water and using it either as a hot or cold bath.” Coal mining eventually polluted the water.

*Cross Library Street and proceed along Rodney Street to the History Shop door on the right.*

33. Notice the Gothic detailing on the former Library entrance and windows above. On the opposite side of Rodney Street is the symmetrical facade of the former **Westwood Estate Offices** \*\* (1895 Heaton and Ralph). Notice the enriched entrance, the bay windows and their roofs.

*Proceed to the end of Rodney Street and turn towards the left facing the corner of the stone and brick Victorian building opposite.*

34. **The former Wigan Town Hall** and Borough Courts (1866-8 Nuttall and Cook) was built to replace the New Town Hall and Moot Hall at Market Place and the Millgate Police Station. The building cost £12,000. Councillors debated whether the extensive stone or a cheaper brick finish should be chosen. Even with the stone one modern architectural historian was scathing about the former Town Hall. It certainly lacks the overpowering grandeur and setting of many Victorian town halls but is in fact a good example of the Victorian Italian Renaissance Palazzo (palace) style of commercial buildings and was listed as being of Special Architectural or Historical Interest in 1990. Notice the elaborate iron parapet and stone urn finials at roof level, the ornate keystones above each window, the carved panels and the corner panel depicting the original Moot Hall.

Right of the Town Hall in the distance the gas works area was the site of a **Roman burial ground**. Turning to face the opposite side of King Street this area has changed radically since 1945. The large 1960's office block to the left was the site of **Wigan Brewery** – Wigan's first commercial brewery, built in 1780 by the Robinson family. By the 1890's the Brewery owned over 80 public houses in Wigan but was sold in 1893 when the owner was certified a lunatic. Later the **Palace Cinema** occupied the site. Opposite Rodney Street the low, flat roofed building offers a poor terminal feature the street. Much grander was the **Grand Theatre and Hippodrome** (1903 Owen and Ward) which was demolished about 1960.

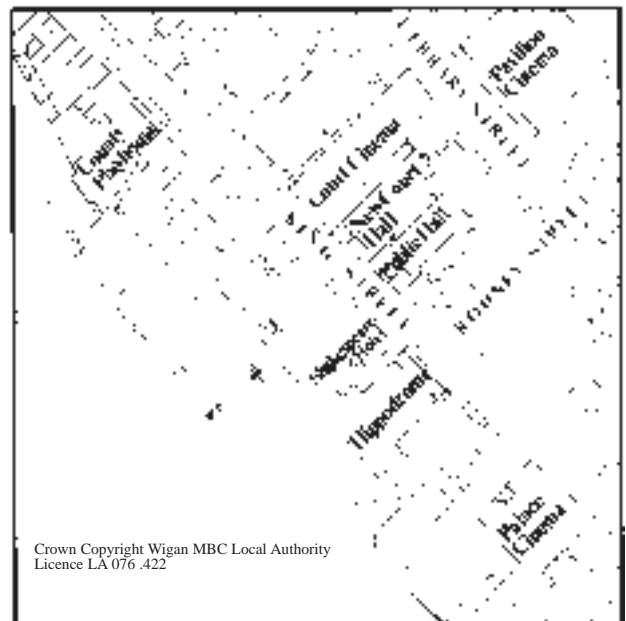
**The Hippodrome, King Street.**



Artists appearing here included Charlie Chaplin, Gracie Fields, George Roby and George Formby Senior and Junior. **George Formby Senior** popularised Wigan Pier in his act and was billed as “The Lad from Wigan or the Wigan Nightingale”. His son was born in Wigan and drew large audiences to the Hippodrome. After the music hall, variety shows were staged and in 1953 revues such as “We Never Clothed” were presented. To the right was the Royal Shakespeare Hotel with the **Theatre Royal** (1850) behind – the first purpose built theatre in Wigan – and **King Street Baptist Church** (1899 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton).

**King Street** was constructed in 1791 to replace Faggy Lane. It was Wigan's first planned civic street breaking with the traditional process of infilling plots with dense courts behind buildings on main streets. Intended for high class houses and commercial uses, development was slow – by 1847 much of the north east side was still open land (Plan 2). At the turn of the century King Street

was a **major entertainment area** with not only the Palace, Theatre Royal and Hippodrome but also the Royal Court Theatre, The Court Ballroom, the Public Hall, County Playhouse (1916) and not far away the Pavilion (Library Street) and Princes (Clarence Yard) Cinemas.



**King Street c.1950 - entertainment buildings.**

*Proceed on the right side of King Street passing modern offices (the site of Wigan Public Hall 1857 and 1898 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) to a point opposite a stone fronted building number 47.*

35. **Number 47\*\*** (1891 W.Verity) is a fine example of the ornate Italian Renaissance Palazzo (palace) style. The ashlar stone includes a triangular pediment over the door with a **Venetian window** (three sections) above it; balustrades at roof level and the first floor windows and fine Corinthian columns with elaborate capitals on the first floor. On the ground floor the blocks are **rusticated** (v grooves between the blocks) and alternate courses are **vermiculated** (worm track decoration).

The building was originally **Wigan Savings Bank** established, elsewhere, in 1821. Prior to the Bank the site was occupied by the Wigan Dispensary founded in 1798 by local gentry to provide medical advice, medicine and food for the sick poor of Wigan. A permanent building was erected in 1801. Funds came from annual subscriptions and from 1827 special sermons with collections in the local churches. Subscribers were able to recommend one patient at a time for treatment for every half-guinea (52<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>p) subscribed. It was open twice a week with home treatment when necessary. One thousand patients per year were expected but this number was soon outstripped. In 1891 2,985 patients were referred for treatment, over 2,000 being sent by the clergy, almost 1,200 from the Scholes area alone. The untrained subscribers voted on diverse matters such as appointment of surgeons and the application of leeches!

*Pass an alleyway on the right and cross King Street opposite the Royal Court Theatre.*

36. The red brick **Royal Court Theatre\*\*** with yellow brick and terracotta details was started in 1886 and the lower, front, foyer section was added in 1895 (both

R.T.Johnson). The foyer has Renaissance features including the fluted pilasters between the first floor windows. It cost £18,000 and could seat 5,000 people. Presentations included the D'oyale Carte Opera Company, Sam Hague's Minstrels and Fred Karno's Celebrated Company and lectures by General Booth, Kier Hardy and Ramsey MacDonald. To the left the 1960's building replaced King Street Methodist Church.

*Proceed along King Street, noting the details of shop fronts and a large brick building with rounded arched windows on the left, until the pavement widens.*



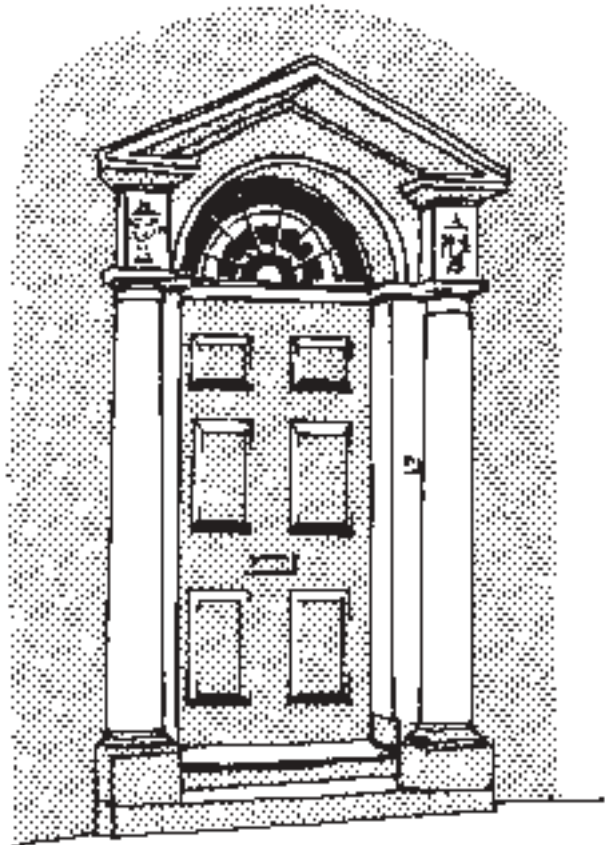
**King Street c.1890 – note the County Court, Royal Court and Victoria Buildings.**

37. On the opposite side of King Street is **Victoria Buildings** of 1877 in a commercial Gothic style with shallow, pointed window openings. 'Decorated' Gothic shafts and **ballflower features** on the oriel windows and eaves cornices. On the left side of King Street the County Playhouse (1916 W. Ellis, St. Helens) has an imposing upper facade displaying faience (glazed ceramics) and incorporating two composite giant orders (columns extending over two or more storeys). An unusual building to be constructed during the 1914-18 War.

*Proceed to the front of the building which projects into the pavement.*

38. This building (**21-25 King Street**)\*\*, with two 20th Century shopfronts at ground level, is a late **Georgian townhouse**. The central **doorcase** is extremely good with a Georgian panelled door, <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Tuscan columns at the sides with finely moulded, draped urns on friezes, a decorative metal fan-light between them and overall a broken pediment. Above the entrance the window has a stone architrave and at roof level is a moulded eaves cornice.

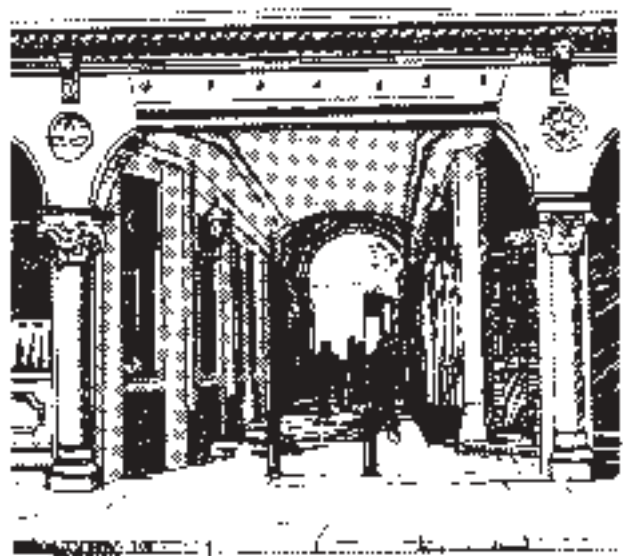
Opposite is a terrace of four late **Georgian style townhouses**\*\* (1851), three of which retain their two storey bay windows finished with dentilled cornices and pediments. To the left is the stone **Grimes Arcade Building**\*\* (1870 R.T.Johnson) in a free Venetian Gothic/ Early English Gothic style. Note the truncated pointed arches, small columns to the windows and horizontal cornices with large nailhead decorations, the upper one on brackets or corbels. Also note the mixture of stones in the ground floor especially the polished granite columns.



*Cross the road and turn to view the front of numbers 21-25 opposite and then proceed to the opening of Grimes Arcade (Arcade Street).*

39. Before turning right into the arcade notice the salmon pink terracotta and art nouveau gold letters of the **Clarence Hotel**\*\* (1898 W.E.V. Crompton) facing the end of King Street and successfully terminating and enclosing the space.

**In the arcade** notice the details in the original (on the left) and the 1980's windows and in the glazed section the arched decorated metal trusses.



**Grimes Arcade - King Street.**

*Proceed straight out of the arcade for about 10 metres and turn to face the open space.*



40. This space, created by demolishing a garage in 1984, is medieval in character. To the right beyond the narrow Bretherton's Row is a terracotta fronted office and **warehouse block** (1897 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) originally built as auction rooms and a corn merchants. Notice the use of contrasting bricks to provide simple but effective detailing. Turning to the left at the side of the tall building is the narrow entrance to Rowbottom Square.

*Proceed along Rowbottom Square* noting the **sequence of spaces** - a narrow alley followed by a small enclosed square leading to another narrow alley all irregular and typically medieval in character. The offices on the left hand side of the Square were occupied for many years by the Wigan Observer continuing their long association with this area having moved here from the junction with Wallgate. From 1870 to 1884 a building here was Wigan Post Office, earlier it was a Temperance Hotel. The ground surfaces of Rowbottom Square and other nearby alleys have been relaid and improved in 1998 as a continuation of the City Challenge Wallgate Initiative.

41. **On reaching Wallgate** notice the sudden change in character and atmosphere of the spaces. To the right Wallgate gradually widens to form a large space partially enclosed by a betting office building which produces narrow entrances to the spaces at the Parish Church precincts and Market Place. Note the relationship of the Parish Church with the Wallgate space. Before leaving the point look back at the sequence of spaces in Rowbottom Square.



Rowbottom Square.

*Turn and proceed down Wallgate towards the distant railway bridge. Cross King Street and stop opposite the junction with King Street West to the right.*

42. Opposite is **Wallgate Station\*\*** (1896 Henry Shelmerdine). An earlier station was opened by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway company in 1848, eventually with lines to Manchester, Bolton, Liverpool and Southport. Shelmerdine as a Company Architect designed Exchange Station in Liverpool. Here notice the large **cast iron and glass canopy** accommodating carriages; the graceful arched openings and the **red sandstone** - conveniently brought from Liverpool by rail.

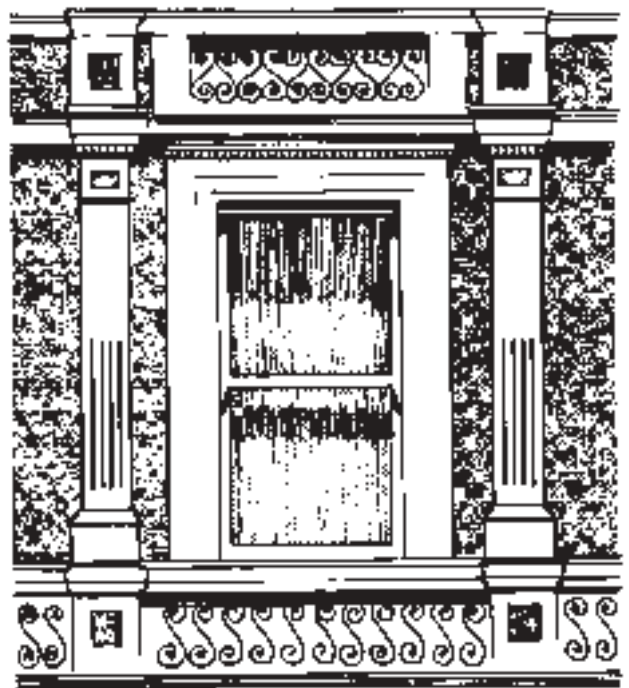


Wallgate c.1900 - note Wallgate Station, the Victoria Hotel and Tower Buildings.

On the left side of Wallgate the long row of shops, York Chambers (1884 Shelmerdine), and the range beyond (1897 Shelmerdine) are partly built over the railway lines. Red Triassic sandstone is used again for details.

*Proceed down Wallgate to a point opposite the Victoria Hotel.*

43. The **Victoria Hotel\*\*** (1894 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) has a highly decorative front and originally had a more impressive roofline. In particular notice the patterned friezes, the fluted pilasters at the end and sides of two windows on the upper floors and the **portico entrance** supported on columns. Originally the finish was stone



Friezes and Pilasters

and brick but the brick has been rendered to produce an attractive painted facade. A Victoria Hotel was here in 1847 (Plan 2) but it was originally an iron merchant's house.

Stand opposite the building adjoining the Victoria Hotel.

44. **Number 54/6, Poole's Cafe\*\*** an early 18th Century building with a deep moulded, wooden eaves cornice. On the ground floor is Wigan's best example of a Victorian Shop front including an elaborate cornice with ball finials and below, ornate brackets. Inside it has late 19th and simple early 20th Century fittings in the style of Mackintosh. Poole's Confectioners have been in business for over a Century and their pies may have contributed to the nickname for Wiganers – known as "Pie Eaters".



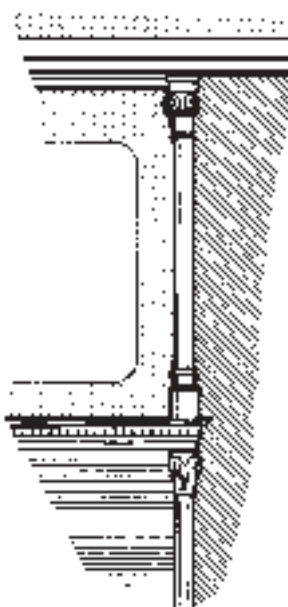
Continue down Wallgate to the modern North Western Railway Station.

45. In order to exploit and promote Wigan's industrial resources **one of the earliest railway lines and stations** in the country was built here in 1831 as a branch of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway of 1826. It later formed part of the main 'West Coast' route from London to Scotland. Two hotels and shops occupied the space outside the Victorian station.

Opposite the station is the massive **Baroque range of Tower Buildings** (1898 Bradshaw and Gass, Bolton). The loss of a dome from the tower is unfortunate but notice the elaborate entrance canopy and the ornate **masks** near the top of the wall. To the left the **Swan and Railway Hotel\*\*** (1898 W.E.V. Crompton) is notable for its rounded oriel windows with Art Nouveau terracotta details above in the gables. The interior is also of interest.



Oriel Window – Swan and Railway.



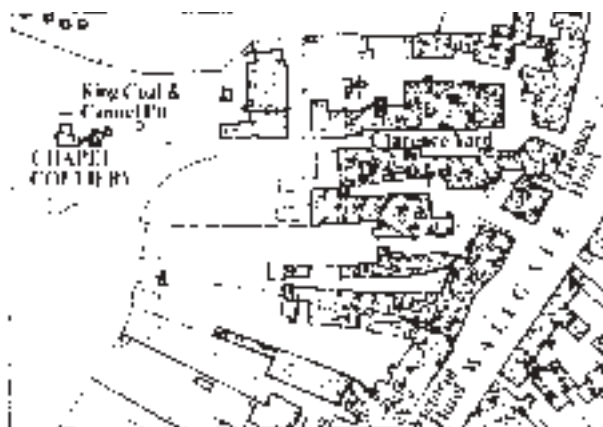
Plaques - Victoria Hotel



Shop front details – Tower Buildings.

Carefully cross Wallgate and proceed uphill to the right. On route on the left notice:- the fine details of three **shop fronts** at Tower Buildings; the shop front and **interior of Poole's Cafe**; two small **plaques** at the Victoria Hotel – the Road and Path Cycling Association and the Cyclists Touring Club – and the details of Wallgate Station. Beyond the station turn left into King Street West and continue for about 25 metres.

46. **King Street West** was built in 1877. The large four storey building opposite (1877 G.Heaton) was built as Barton's Cabinet Works, showrooms and furniture warehouse. The smaller building on the left is notable for the moulded brick cornice at roof level and its **rounded corner** at the junction with Clarence Yard – a situation rarely found in modern buildings!



Colliery near Clarence Yard 1847.

Near the junction with Clarence Yard stood the Chapel Colliery and King Coal and Cannel Pit. Wigan's cannel coal has been sought since Roman times and was famous throughout the country in the 17th Century when it was also exported to America. It is hard, light weight, highly flammable, makes good fires without ashes and little smoke, is a source of illumination with a long-lived brilliant flame, mined in large lumps, and highly suited to gas production. It could be carved and is clean to touch – a summer house at Haigh Hall made entirely from Cannel could be sat in by ladies with white dresses!

*Proceed past a modern building on the right to a point opposite the next building in stone and brick.*

47. The ornate building was built as **Wigan Reform Club** by the Liberal Party. By the time it was opened the Liberal Party was allied with the fledgling Labour Party!! An architectural competition was held which attracted 13 entries. A leading architect from Liverpool selected, from a short list of 3, a scheme called "Progress" by F.W. Simon of Edinburgh (the architect of Wigan's Hope Chapel, now demolished) but the scheme built was "Onward", the second placed scheme (1893 Heaton and Ralph). It has a rich Flemish Renaissance Style. Notice the carved festoons of flowers and fruit.

*Proceed noticing on both sides of the road stone walls in rock faced, rubble stone displaying snecking or jumper work where occasionally regular courses are broken by larger blocks of stone.*

The impressive building on the corner of Crawford Street to the right is the **Crown Courts\*\*** (1898) described at Point 18. On the left hand side of the road notice the terracotta details and arched openings of the curved building. The original Wallgate Station was located here.



Coop's Factory from King Street West.

48. The space at this end of King Street West is magnificently enclosed by the former **Coop's Factory\*\***. This massive building in a severe industrial Renaissance style was developed in three stages starting with the recessed right hand section (1871 R.Todd, Southport); followed by the central projecting and recessed sections (1888 Issitt and Verity) and a further recessed section on the left (1892 W.Verity). It has 290 windows on the outer elevations and the original section, which was said to be the largest suit factory in England at the time, had a public counter 58 yards long on the second floor! The large elevations are successfully broken up by the window pattern, variations in building line and recesses in the brickwork which form arches at the third and top floor windows, polished granite shafts, and the successful use of cream and red bricks to emphasise the vertical patterns. Large stone blocks at the base plinth give a sense of strength and stability. The doorway is particularly decorative and complex.

The factory was built by Timothy Coop and James Marsden to employ girls redundant as a result of the cotton famine of the 1860's, Wigan being severely hit. Schoolgirls received training in the clothing business prior to full time work. The firm was fairly early in introducing a 9 hour work system in 1872. Unfortunately Coops closed in 1993 and the building remained vacant for several years. City Challenge in partnership with

various organizations has enabled the building to be repaired and remodelled to create a Business Centre, flats, and a Foyer Centre for young residents, together with offices for the Grosvenor Housing Association. The new uses started in 1996/97 and have saved this important building.

*Mint ball enthusiasts should turn left to follow Dorning Street downhill to Point 49, otherwise cross Dorning Street and turn right, uphill to Point 50.*

49. One of Wigan's long established products, as you may well have already smelt, is hand made sweets. Santus's factory is the home of the famous **Uncle Joe's Mint Balls** – they "Keep You All Aglow"

*Return past the front of Coop's factory, continue uphill to the entrance to the Grand Hotel.*

50. The **Grand Hotel** was a Temperance Hotel in the 1880's. On the opposite side of the street the modern section of the **Telephone Exchange**, to the left, in brown bricks has a flat surface character and conflicts with the older building to the right. This displays a complex roof form; good proportions including the window shape and spacing; and brick and stone detailing and recessed windows giving a varied surface.

*Continue uphill to the end of the Grand Hotel at the corner with Hallgate.*

51. This red brick corner building was the **All Saints Tavern** (1894 Heaton and Ralph). On the opposite side of Dorning Street a small plaque on the Telephone Exchange commemorates **Walmesley House** built by John Walmesley in the second half of the 17th Century. On 10th December, 1745, during his retreat, **Bonnie Prince Charlie** spent the night here after the Jacobites failed to take the English Crown at Derby. The Duke of Cumberland, in pursuit of the Prince, spent the following night here. In the 18th Century it was used as a private day and boarding school but was demolished before 1940.

*Cross the roads to the corner with a single storey building – beware of buses!*

52. At this point **Hallgate** forms two sections – a short narrow street lined with shops to the right and round the corner opposite a longer street running downhill. Hallgate was one of Wigan's main medieval streets – it linked **Wigan Hall** – the Manor House and Rectory – with the Parish Church and Market Place. In the distance at the bottom of the long section of Hallgate can be seen the red rooftops and the black and white and stone gatehouse of Wigan Hall (1886 G.E. Street, London). The original hall was probably moated and included a Moot Court and Gaol before the Moot Hall at Market Place was built (c.1422).

**The Rectors** of Wigan as Lords of the Manor from 1246 had large land holdings in the town and exercised great control over its inhabitants – indeed much of Wigan's local history is concerned with the struggle, between the Rector and the town's freemen (burgesses) to control the administrative, legal and commercial affairs of Wigan. The Rectors controlled the use of land and sale of building plots, the markets, bridges and corn mills and held judicial powers in the Courts. The conflict between the burgesses and Rector led to rioting in 1559 on the Mayor's election day and only later did the Rector agree that the burgesses could freely elect the town's officials.



A Royal Commission sat in 1618 and determined that the manor belonged to the Rector but the Court of Pleas and prentice pleas, one annual fair and the Friday Market were awarded to the Corporation, the other Courts, fair and Monday Market were given to the Rector. Gradually the Corporation took on more responsibilities and finally bought the Rector's remaining rights in 1860.

In the early days the Rectorship was held by nationally important men such as Ranulf, treasurer of Sailsbury (1199- 1205), John de Mansell, Counsellor of Henry III and keeper of the seal (1246-1263) but these were normally absent from Wigan. Later the Rectorship became associated with the Bridgeman Family and the Bishops of Chester.

*Continue along Hallgate to the right to a point opposite Jaxon Chambers (on the left hand side of the road next to the Bricklayers Arms).*

53. **Jaxon Chambers** (1878 G.Heaton) has a **Victorian shop front** on the left with a good quality fascia sign using applied letters. To the right of the adjoining shop is a passage which leads to a once enclosed yard lined on one side by early 19th Century, formerly **back to back cottages** – the last remaining court housing in Wigan Town Centre. Following refurbishment the yard is now lined by shops maintaining the process of burgage plot backland infilling and opens on to the bus station.

*Continue to the end of Hallgate.* Originally Hallgate turned right at this point and led to Market Place. The section of Market Street to the left was occupied by Pig Market in 1847 (Plan 2).

*Turn left and walk along Market Street to the first entrance of the Bus Station with its projected sign*



**The Galleries from Market Street**

54. Opposite and along Market Street to the left is the expanse of **The Galleries** shopping centre (Leach Rhodes and Walker 1985). Notice **the gables and other features, the breaks in the roof and walls** (which break up the horizontal scale of the building), the several types of brick used and the **brick detailing** such as at the eaves which provide plenty of interest. Also note how well the car parking floors are built into the slate roof so that they do not dominate the street scene. The overall scale is similar to that of the Victorian buildings on the left hand side of Market Street. About half of the frontage of the Galleries (to the right) was occupied by Wigan Market Hall built in 1877 when the market moved from Market Place.

*Cross over Market Street and turn to face the bus station.*

55. The modern flat roofed office building to the right side of Market Street occupies the site of **W.H.Lever's grocery business** which he established in Wigan in 1884 as part of the expansion of the Bolton business. He later produced soap flakes from which the Lever Brothers empire grew. As Lord Leverhulme he started the Lady Leverhulme Museum collection at Port Sunlight with a figure group purchased for the mantel of this home at 21 Upper Dicconson Street, Wigan. Lever Street commemorates the association. To the left of the bus station notice the ornate gable (1893 W.B.Johnson) with terracotta details.

*Turning left to look uphill along Market Street, on the right hand side notice the brick stone and metal details and gables of the Marketgate shopping centre curving round the corner. These 1920's art deco like features transformed the previous blank brown brick corner. In the distance notice the tall grey cupola roof of the corner bank (point 14) terminating the view along this space.*

*Now turn to face the other end of Market Street and walk until you are opposite the central entrance to the Queens Hall Methodist Mission tower.*

56. Opposite is the **Queens Hall Methodist Mission**. The Queen Anne Revival facade and Edwardian Baroque Tower (1906 Bradshaw and Gass, Bolton) has a splendid lantern and dome in a buff terracotta capped by a decorative metal finial. Note also the large dormer windows in the roof and the ornate central window on the first floor. The building originally formed a foyer for a massive concert hall but the hall itself was demolished



**Queen's Hall**

in 1985 and the foyer area now forms the Chapel. Notice the unusual modern ground floor fronts (AJ Grimshaw 1985) Both fronts are of individual interest but the symmetry of the upper facade is lost.

*Turn and proceed towards the right along Market Street passing under the projecting buildings and stop at the large arched opening to the Galleries on the right.*

57. One of the design themes of the **Galleries** shopping centre involves the use of tall arched openings to arcades with **stone topped gables**. The arcade on the right with a dark blue **Staffordshire engineering brick** emphasising the arch is the Orrell Arcade. The arcades and walks within the scheme are named after the various local authorities which combined to form the Wigan Metropolitan Borough in 1974. In Orrell Arcade note the very high glazed roof – the bridges provide for movement in the upper **car park**.

58. When open pass along the arcade and enter **Wigan Square** which is occupied by **Wigan's Open Market**. Move to the left until you can see across the market. Note the **sudden change in the character of the spaces from a narrow, linear enclosed space to an open, square court space** full of colour and activity. Notice the first floor walkways or shopping galleries with their black and white gables and balconies and in the far left corner the major skyline feature provided by the **clock tower** which contains water tanks. The tower is reminiscent of the bell tower at St. Marks Square Venice with its tall narrow arches or blind arcading.



**Wigan Square**

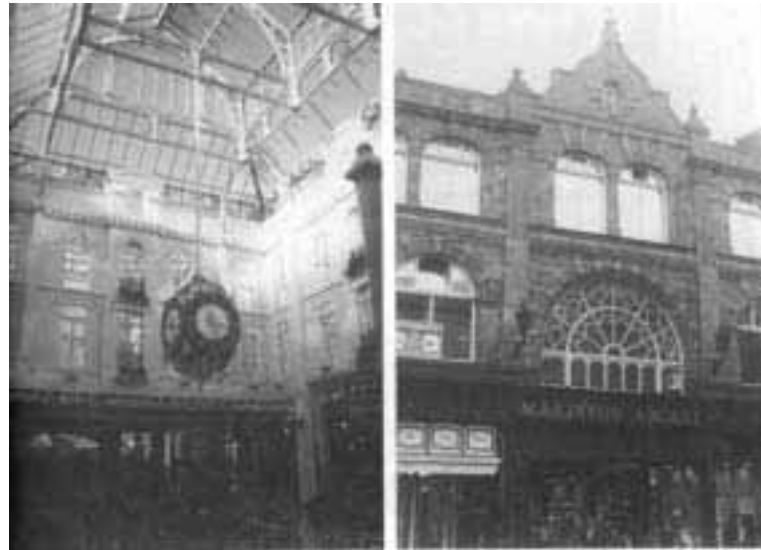
*Walk through the market to the clock tower facing its corner.*

59. To the left and right of the tower are **narrow alleys**, Ince Walk to the right and Hindley Walk to the left. These form yet another dramatic change in the character of spaces – a feature of medieval and modern Wigan and another way in which the Galleries complements and attractively adds to Wigan's traditional townscape. The tower is situated at the corner of Wigan's **Market Hall** which has an attractive **Victorian style exterior**. The relocation of the Market Hall from Market Street represents a continuation of the historic process in which the market moved from Market Place to Market Street in 1877 and so to Hindley Walk in 1987.

*Pass along Hindley Walk to an iron canopy at the entrance to the Market Hall*

60. The **decorative cast iron canopy** was taken from the **1877 Market Hall** and after restoration provides an attractive entrance to the new hall and a reminder of the old hall. When open step a short way inside the market hall and **savour the light airy atmosphere and bustle within**. The Market Hall retains much of the attractive character of its Victorian predecessor but note the modern roof requiring few vertical supports.

*Return to the canopy and walk straight ahead along Hope Street towards the bridge but turn right into Abram Arcade noting the arcade roof and cross the open market diagonally to the far left hand corner gable at the entrance to Leigh arcade.*



**Leigh Arcade**

**Makinson Arcade from Woodcock Square**

61. **Leigh Arcade** is a particularly tall, light and bright arcade with a large glass roof and ornate Italianate stucco walls and ironwork. Note the decorative clock. The arcade stretches up through the car parking levels to produce yet **another distinctive type of space** in the sequence of spaces being experienced in the Galleries.

*Walk to the far end of Leigh Arcade and enter Woodcock Square.*

62. Woodcock Square presents another type of space that of an **intimate court space** with a relatively restful character after Leigh Arcade and as a prelude to the bustle of the Makinson Arcade. Woodcock Square is the open air remnant of Woodcock Street where part of the 1877 open market was located. Notice the ornate classical facade mainly in orange terracotta with ornate window frames, stained glass and giant fluted pilasters of the Makinson Arcade opposite.

*Cross the space to the Makinson Arcade.*

63. **Makinson Arcade** (1897/8 Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) is Wigan's largest and most elaborate Victorian Arcade. It was developed by Richard Makinson. When open enter the arcade, otherwise view it through the grilles. Notice the cast iron columns on the two corner shops. The right hand shop was originally Makinson's Tea Warehouse recalled by the mosaic floor sign at its

entrance. The cafe further along the arcade on the left was **Marks and Spencer's Penny Bazaar** 1900 to 1931.



**Makinson Arcade – Marks and Spencer c.1900.**

The glass and iron roof, the upper walls and the surrounds to the shops with pilasters at the side and fascias and cornices above are original. The floor and shop fronts, however, were refurbished in 1985 and subsequently the scheme produced a wide variety of individual but complementary shop fronts with an attractive blend of old and new materials and styles. Bay windows are used to provide modelling and break up the long length of the arcade and the standard cornices and pilasters between the shops provide unity. Notice the stained glass fan-lights over the entrances at both ends.

*Continue towards the higher end of the arcade.*



**Makinson Arcade**

64. Emerging from the arcade look straight ahead across Market Place to Millgate. Notice the relationship of the two corner buildings with their ornate rooflines and beyond them Yates'. This strong and lively Flemish Renaissance group (1895-1896 all by Heaton, Ralph and Heaton) provides an admirable end for the second walk.