

PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

Issue No. 54

April - July 2010

Discover your new Museum!



£1

WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICES
discover
YOUR HERITAGE

WIGAN
LEISURE & CULTURE
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museum
of **WiganLife**

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FRONT COVER PICTURE

Children handle artefacts in the Grand Arcade Shopping Centre, see page 7.

Letter from the Editorial Team

After an exciting £1.9 million Heritage Lottery Funded refurbishment, the Museum of Wigan Life (formerly The History Shop) will be opening to the public on 9 April 2010. We are pleased to introduce new facilities in the local and family history area, a new permanent exhibition on Wigan Life and a space for changing displays. Come and see the first of our temporary exhibitions 'Revealing Roman Routes', which has been produced in collaboration with the Wigan Archaeological Society.

We welcome back our old customers and hope to see some new faces. Call in and have a look round, take a tour or join in an event (see page four for our events programme).

Carole Tyldesley, Head of Heritage Services welcomes your views and feedback on the redevelopment. Let us know what you think at heritage@wlct.org or telephone 01942 828128.

Information for Contributors

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

- Publication is at discretion of Editorial Team
- The Editorial Team may edit your submission
- Submissions will remain on file until published
- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of, unless you request for them to be returned

- Articles must be received by the copy date if inclusion in the next issue is desired

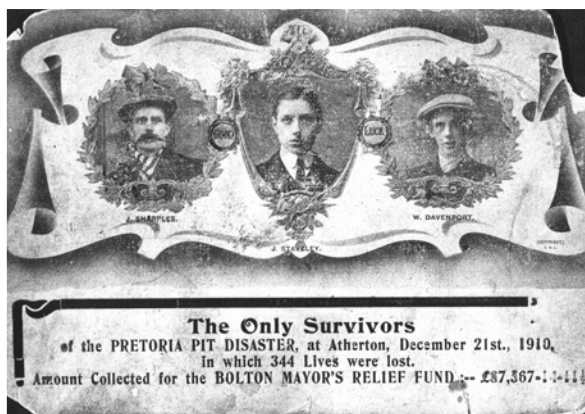
Submission Guidelines

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

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

CONTACT DETAILS

pastforward@wlct.org or The Editor at **PAST FORWARD**, Museum of Wigan Life (formerly the History Shop), Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.



Commemorative card showing the only survivors of the Pretoria Pit Disaster.



Wigan Athletic FC v Grimsby at Springfield Park in 1950.

THEMES FOR FUTURE ISSUES

Football Fever – Issue 55

As World Cup fever grips the country **PAST FORWARD** will celebrate the Borough's football heritage. For this issue we would particularly welcome articles and letters related to this theme. May be you would like to share your memories of playing for or supporting a local team?

The Pretoria Pit Disaster – Issue 56

On 21 December 1910 a massive underground explosion occurred at Pretoria Pit on the borders of Atherton and Westhoughton. 344 lives were lost. We will be commemorating the 100 year anniversary of this tragic event in **PAST FORWARD** Issue 56 and again would welcome contributions on this theme.

The **PAST FORWARD** team would of course continue to welcome contributions on other topics for both issues.

Copy Deadline for Issue 55

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday 18 June.

Step back 2000 years into Roman Wigan. See ancient objects, try on Roman shoes and take part in Roman activities!



'Revealing Roman Routes'

In partnership with Wigan Archaeological Society.

On show from 9 April until November 2010

Opening Times
 Mon/Tue: 10am-5pm
 Thur: 10am-8pm
 Fri: 10am-5pm
 Sat: 11am-3pm
 Closed:
 Wed & Sun

FREE to attend* For further information contact **01942 828128** or visit **www.wlct.org/heritage**

Venue: Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan

museum of WiganLife

WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICES
 discover

WIGAN LEISURE & CULTURE TRUST
 in partnership with Wigan Council

heritage lottery fund
 LOTTERY FUNDED

*excludes special events

WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

Events Programme - April to July 2010

There's something for everyone in our brand new events programme. To find out more or to book a place call **01942 828128**.

Key: MoWL = Museum of Wigan Life, WAS = Wigan Archive Service (Leigh Town Hall) LLS = Leigh Local Studies (Leigh Library)

	Date	Time	Event	Venue / Cost
Family Friendly Regular Events	Last Saturday of the month	11.30am-12.30am	Krafty Kids	MoWL / £3.50
	Second Saturday of the month	11.30am-12.30am	History in the making	MoWL / £2.50
	Second Monday of the month	1.00pm-1.15pm	Object of the Month Talk	MoWL / Free
Adult Regular Events	Third Monday of the month	1.00pm-2.00pm	Meet the Archivist: Get Your Hands on the Past	MoWL / Free
	Second Tuesday of the month	11.00am	Carved in Stone Cemetery Walk	Wigan Cemetery / £2
	Third Tuesday of the month	2.00pm	Going North & Museum of Wigan Life Tour	MoWL / Free
	Last Tuesday of the month	2.00pm	Exhibition Tour	MoWL / Free
	Every Wednesday	1.30pm and 3.00pm	Who do you think you are – Family History Workshops	MoWL / £3
	Last Wednesday of the month	11.00am	Leigh 'Lucky Dip' Heritage Walks	LLS / £2
	First Saturday of the month	11.00am	Leigh Heritage Walk	LLS / £2
	Second Sunday of the month	10.00am	Wigan Town Walk	MoWL / £2
	Friday 21 May and Friday 18 June	2.00pm-3.00pm	An introduction to Handwriting: Medieval to Modern Palaeography	MoWL / Free
	Saturday 15 May	7.00pm-9.00pm	Museums at Night: 'Let there be light' - Suitable for families	MoWL / Free
	Wednesday 19 May	2.00pm-3.00pm	Adult Learner's Week Local History Taster	MoWL / Free
Special Events	Thursday 20 May	6.00pm-7.00pm	Local Studies for Adults Taster	LLS / Free
	Tuesday 1 June	1.30pm-2.30pm	Don't send me away Mummy, Evacuation workshop - Suitable for families	MoWL / £2.50
	Thursday 3 June	1.30pm-3.00pm	The Legend of Mab's Cross - Suitable for families	MoWL / £2.50
	Friday 4 June	1.30pm-2.30pm	Victorian Schooldays - Suitable for families	WAS / £2.50
	Saturday 5 June	11.30am-1.00pm	How to create an exhibition	MoWL / Free
	Thursday 10 June	6.30pm-8.00pm	Have your say...Temporary Exhibitions	MoWL / Free
	Thursday 17 June	6.30pm-7.30pm	The Rafiki Motswako Group Drummers	MoWL / Free
	Friday 25 June	2.00pm-3.15pm	'A History of British Mining' – Professor Geoff Coyle	WAS / Free
	Saturday 17 July	1.30pm-3.30pm	Meet the Archaeologist and Book Launch	MoWL / Free
	Saturday 17 July	11.00am-3.00pm	The Romans Invade Day - Suitable for families	MoWL / Free
	Tuesday 20 July	10.30am-12.00pm and 1.00pm-3.30pm	The Romans Invade II - Suitable for families	MoWL / £2.50
	Wednesday 21 July – 29 September	2.00pm-3.30pm	Introduction to Local Studies Course	MoWL / £20
	Tuesday 27 July and Tuesday 24 August	3.00pm-4.00pm	In the Footsteps of Romans: Temporary Exhibition Tour	MoWL / £2
	Thursday 29 July	6.45pm-7.45pm	Introduction to Roman Pottery	MoWL / Free
	Friday 30 July	2.00pm-4.00pm	What the Romans Did for Us	WAS / £2.50
An Evening with... Lecture Series	Thursday 27 May	6.45pm-8.00pm	'Wigan Casino Soul Survivors' – Russ Winstanley	MoWL / £5
	Thursday 24 June	6.45pm-8.00pm	'A History of British Mining' – Professor Geoff Coyle	MoWL / £5
	Thursday 22 July	6.45pm-8.00pm	'Roman Wigan' – Ian Miller	MoWL / £5

Join us from Friday 9th April

museum

of Wigan Life

Come and find out about the people, places, events, stories and traditions that have shaped Wigan Borough!



- See** the exciting new exhibition on Wigan Life - includes displays on Romans in Wigan
- Take** a tour around the museum - back to its former glory
- Find** out about your family history or where you live
- Touch** objects and documents from the past
- Join** in fun activities for all the family
- Explore** the shop with local gifts to suit all
- Discover** *your new museum* - more for you than you think!

Opening Times
Mon/Tues: 10am-5pm
Thurs: 10am-8pm
Fri: 10am-5pm
Sat: 11am-3pm
Closed:
Wed & Sun

Come in and look around, it's FREE

Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan

For further information call **01942 828128**

or visit **www.wlct.org/heritage**



Your Archives



The Archives Awareness Campaign is an annual project run by the National Archives, designed to inspire interest in Archives and help people get to

know the rich Archival Heritage of the country. The theme for 2010 will be Discovery – Archives in Science, Technology and Medicine. The Archives will be planning several events, to include a small exhibition, talks and workshops using the collections, so watch this space for further details.

Most researchers, at some point or another, will have encountered the problem of indecipherable records. The main problem is usually the handwriting. A basic knowledge of handwriting types is an essential skill for any local or family historian, and this study of old handwriting is known as palaeography. Almost all documents can be read easily when you have the right tools at your disposal and a little patience.

The Archives will be running a series of introductions to modern palaeography at the Museum of Wigan Life, with a view to a longer course if enough researchers are interested. We will be offering practical tips and working through original documents from the collection to show you how to decipher documents and build up confidence when using original sources, everything from 16th century apprenticeship indentures to Victorian correspondence. Contact the Archives or the Museum for more information.

Recent Acquisitions

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

- Music and photographs of the Falcons Dance Band (Acc. 2009/81)
- Ken Morris slide collection, images of Leigh, 20th century (Acc. 2009/83)
- J & J Hayes, correspondence of Miss Ann Hayes, 1916-1944 (Acc. 2009/85)
- Wigan North By North West (NXNW), festival poster (D/DZA/166)



The Falcons Dance Band in 1948.

- Library collections received from Alderman Birtles (Acc. 2010.1)
- 'A Regional Study of Hindley', E.C. Hayes, 1938 (D/DZA/168)
- Photographic booklets, Hilton Park and Leigh Rugby League (Acc. 2010/6)

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

Collections Corner

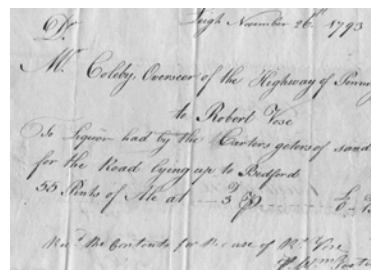
Township Records

Anyone with a real passion for local history should get to know the collections of Township Papers in the Archive collections. Not only do they provide some of the earliest records available for family historians

looking for local ancestors, but in many cases they give an incredibly detailed insight into the everyday activities of local people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The township, as we refer to it, was the major form of local administration for smaller districts from the 1600s until the formation of the Local Boards and the Urban District Councils in the nineteenth century. The church also played a major part in some administrative functions within the townships, and in many cases important local civil documents were stored alongside ecclesiastical records in the parish chest.

Townships were responsible for much local governance, including the maintenance of the poor (as dictated by the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601), the upkeep of the highways, and the enforcement of law and order within the area. These duties required the appointment of local people to hold office, and so the creation of the Overseer of the Poor, the Highway Surveyor and the Constable. These appointees were responsible for raising rates, carrying out their duties and balancing the books at the end of their period of service; and they were held personally responsible for any shortcomings in the accounts. In some township collections, such as Atherton and Pennington, the records survive in such detail, that we can see exactly who money is paid out to in poor relief, who was removed from the parish as paupers, how much furniture was in the workhouse, or who donated money to the Leigh Indian Famine Fund.



Highways Overseer's receipt, 1793.



A Roman Adventure

Question: What do you get when you cross a giant cat with a Roman centurion?

Answer: The adventures of Marcus and the golden brooch of course!

The Golden Brooch is a Roman adventure story written by a group of local children and their families, in conjunction with Wigan Heritage Service and the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) Council. The children, many with visual

impairments, learnt about Roman life during a themed workshop, handling real Roman artefacts found in the Borough. The group then wrote their own imaginative Roman story with the help of storyteller Dominic Kelly.

Dominic Kelly performed The Golden Brooch story for the first time at the Heritage Service's Roman Invasion event in the Grand Arcade Shopping Centre held in the October half-term holidays. The story was also recorded in a professional studio. You can listen to this recording in the 'Revealing Roman Routes' temporary exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life. There is also a limited supply of CDs of the story available. If you would like a copy please contact Jenny Broadbent on 01942-827594 or e-mail j.broadbent@wlct.org.

'Discover your Wigan' at the Grand Arcade

On 18 February, Wigan Heritage Service once again descended on the Grand Arcade Shopping Centre. Over 1000 local people attended the 'Discover your Wigan' event. Geoff Jones and Carole Bankes gave presentations about coal mining and Haigh Hall respectively and children took part in washdays sessions. Heritage Service staff answered local and family history queries and the engineers from Trencherfield Mill were on hand to tell people about the working textile mill engine. There were displays of objects from the museum collection and people had the opportunity to handle real artefacts and documents.



COLLECTIONS CORNER

Peggy the Dog



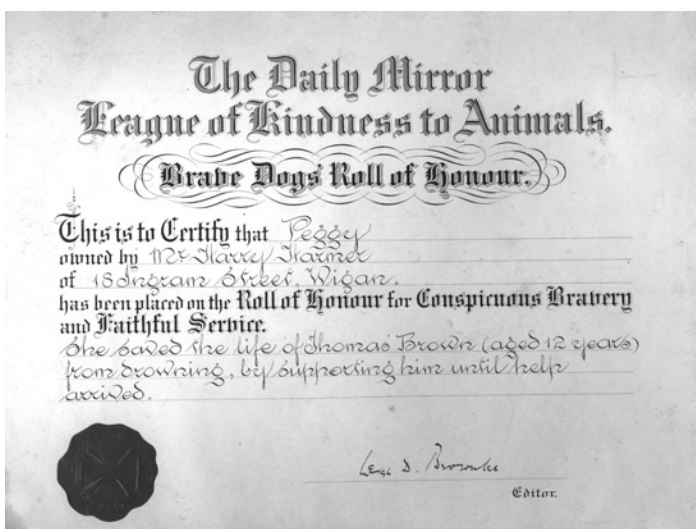
Peggy lived at 18 Ingram Street, Wigan with her owner Harry Harman. On 22 September 1939 she performed a life-saving act.

A young boy named Tommy Brown was collecting blackberries along the bank of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal when he fell

into the water. Peggy jumped in and kept him afloat until help arrived. She was awarded the Daily Mirror Brave Dogs award for saving Tommy's life. For years afterwards Peggy attended the Wigan Carnival to raise money for charity.

We have three items in the museum collection related to Peggy. They are a certificate, a photograph and a collar. The photograph is black and white and in a card frame. On the frame above the photograph is a light blue circle containing a silver cross and the words 'FOR BRAVERY'. On the bottom of the frame in light blue lettering it says 'PEGGY'. Below this in white lettering it says 'Awarded a Daily Mirror "V.C." Collar for Bravery'.

The certificate is mounted on card and is signed by Daily Mirror editor, Leigh D. Brown. It says that



Peggy 'has been placed on the Roll of Honour for Conspicuous Bravery and Faithful Service'.

Peggy's collar comprises a leather band with four medals attached, a silver presentation plate, silver studs and a silver buckle. Two of the medals are from Cruft's Dog Show and were won by Peggy in

1932 and 1933. The third medal is an identity plate provided by the "TAILWAGGERS" Club. The final medal has a cross with the words 'FOR BRAVERY' underneath. The silver presentation plate says 'PRESENTED BY / The Daily Mirror / TO "PEGGY" / FOR BRAVERY.'

The collar recently received conservation treatment at the Lancashire Conservation Studios. The silver elements were showing signs of light corrosion and tarnish. There was also a build up of greasy dirt around the silver studs, which had been stained green through copper corrosion products arising from the base metal within the silver. The leather itself was in good condition.

The grease and copper corrosion products were removed using bamboo skewers and swabs of white spirit. The silver fittings were cleaned with silver dip, rinsed and then finished with a silver polishing cloth. The other metal fittings were given a general surface clean with swabs of white spirit to degrease and remove any corrosion products. The leather was very supple and only required a small amount of surface cleaning with a soft brush.

Come along to the Museum of Wigan Life and see Peggy's Collar for yourself. The Museum of Wigan Life is open from 9 April 2010.

Sources:

Wigan Observer, 22/2/2000

Dog Heroes, by Peter Shaw Baker, p.74,

WSF 420 B1



Additions to the Reference Library Collection at the Museum of Wigan Life

Recusant History vol.29 No.4
179.3 Shryhane, P. A passion for animals (Wigan RSPCA)
320.531 North West Labour History volume 34
338.47677 Wilson, J.F. King Cotton
370.9 Gardner, F. School life in the 1940s and 50s
362.110941 Higgs, M. Life in the Victorian hospital
391.00941 Brown, M. The 1940's look : recreating the fashions, hair styles and make-up of the Second World War
790.0941 Gardner, F. Toys and fun in the 1940s and 50s
796.3331 Gate, R. Billy Boston
796.334 Turner, D. Latics: ten years in Northern Premier League
914.20486 Maconie, S. Adventures on the high seas
920 WHE Whelan, D. Playing to win
929.342 Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Volume 144: Wrenbury wills and inventories 1542-1661.
941.082 Family life in Britain 1900 to 1950
941.082 Working life in Britain 1900 to 1950
941.083 The great silence 1918-1920: living in the shadow of the Great War
941.084 Burch, C. Growing up in World War II: Entertainment
941.084 Burch, C. Growing up in World War II: Getting about
941.084 Burch, C. Growing up in World War II: School
941.084 Eating for victory: healthy home front cookery on war rations
941.084 Hunter, R. A wartime childhood
941.084 Wartime recipes
942.7 Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Volume 157.
942.736 Davies, A. Atherton collieries
942.736 Kuplis, J. Gerrard of Wigan: the history of a Gerrard family from Ince in 2 volumes
942.736 Taylor, J. Pictorial history of Leigh Harriers AC 1888-1971
940.467 Kindell, D. Royal Navy roll of honour 1914-1939 (3 volumes)

Genealogy

Lancashire Parish Register Society Volume 171 Registers of Whalley 1813-37, Darwen 1723-59, Tockholes 1725-58
Lancashire Parish Register Society. Master index to names version 2.2 DVD

Ashton in Makerfield Park lane Chapel
Index to baptisms 1786-2009; Index to Marriages 1963-2007 CD and Transcript
Ince UDC Cemetery indexes: June 1944-June 1988 CD and Transcript

Project Update

From 9 April local and family history services in Wigan will return to our lovely refurbished building now known as the Museum of Wigan Life (formerly the History Shop). Our dedicated team of volunteers and Friends have re-shelved our large book and map collection and helped to return the service from Wigan library to the Museum. There was no lugging of boxes up and down stairs this time (Daleys furniture removal company helped us with this) but there were still 1054 boxes and 358 large parcels to unpack and re-shelve!

Whilst our 'home' has been in turmoil with building works, many volunteers have taken on tasks in Leigh, a few stalwarts have continued in Wigan with workshops, but others have worked at home and elsewhere (even on canal boats!) assisting staff and working on projects. One such project has been lovingly brought along over a period of several years and is now approaching completion. It has been a long cherished hope that we would have an index to World War I casualties as reported voluminously in local newspapers. Even if the date of death was known, it was sometimes difficult to locate a particular combatant. Once the project is complete it will be possible to use the index to find reports of deaths, imprisonment and awards for bravery for the years 1914-1918. Details of wartime regulations during this time have also been added so that a complete picture of the time can be shown. Thanks go to Gerald Marsden, Gerald Hudd, Les Norburn, Kate Irvine and lastly, but certainly not least, Barbara Miller.

When we are fully operational we will be able to offer for public searches the complete indexes to the registers of St Aidan's Church (Billinge), Holy Trinity, Ashton, Standish St Marie and St Wilfrid, and Newtown St Mark. All of these are courtesy of the Friends in partnership with Gerry Rigby's excellent Pimbo Group. There will also be a considerable slice of All Saints baptisms indexed by then. So far we have 1812-37 completed.

Finally, work has now begun on the indexing of Ince Urban District Council Cemetery registers. With the co-operation of Wigan Cemeteries Office staff, Freda Chorlton has produced her first index for 1944 to 1988. Freda has also recently completed a set of indexes to the registers of Park Lane Chapel.

THE STOTT FAMILY

CARRIERS OF ASTLEY AND TYLDESLEY

by Paul Stott



by Paul Stott

A light-sprung cart operating in nineteenth century Leigh (Courtesy of Wigan Archive Service)

In researching my family history by long distance from western Canada the resources and assistance of the staff at Wigan Archive Service and Leigh Local History Desk have been invaluable. By small way of thanks I hope the following story of the Stott Family of Astley and Tyldesley, and the rise and fall of their enterprise will prove a useful addition to the heritage collection.

I was astonished to find that my Stott ancestors provided horse drawn carrying services in the Tyldesley and Astley area for nearly a century between about 1780 and 1874. The originator of the service was my four x great grandfather, Josiah Stott, who might have been born in Westleigh in 1752, but later lived in Astley at Marsley Green (now Marsland Green) just south of the canal. Josiah's parents might not have been native to Leigh and were among the migrants attracted by the nascent textile industry. Josiah was in fact a weaver in early life although his brother, Samuel, was a blacksmith.

Marsley Green, with its proximity to the Bolton-Leigh Turnpike and the Leigh Branch of the Bridgewater Canal, was ideal for a

carrier both as a distribution centre and for horse pasturing. According to John Lunn's history of Astley, Josiah was a tenant of one or more farms in the Town Lane area. It seems likely that Josiah earned some of his investment capital by providing cartage services to the turnpike and canal construction between 1762 and 1776, and perhaps to the local Gin Pit mine. Well paid work on the canal reportedly attracted many migrants to the area.

Eventually Josiah's business diversified from coal cartage and construction services. According to Scholes' 1797 trade directory, Josiah provided a scheduled goods service between Leigh and Manchester on Tuesdays and Saturdays. By 1825 Pigot's

directory lists him as providing service on three days (commencing 4.00 am from the George and Dragon in Leigh) as well as a service between Leigh and Astley on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Josiah's standard of service appears to have been uneven. A reference to him in an article entitled 'Gleanings of Old Leigh' by James Ward in the Proceedings of the Leigh Literary Society dated 29 March 1909 states:

'Among the carriers there appears the name of Josiah Stott, who doubtless by his delays gave rise to the saying of one always late that he was 'like owd Stott'.'

But carriers' timetables during those days could not always be reliable. In 1803 the threat of French invasion led to a standing order, lifted only following the outcome of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1815, to sequester all wagons, carts and draft animals for defence purposes. This could have severely disrupted any carrying business although compensation was supposedly to be made in due course.

Josiah could perhaps get away with uneven service to some degree because the carrying industry was regulated and, prior to 1827, freight prices were controlled by the local Justices of the Peace. Sunday working was banned and prices varied according to the type, bulk and packaging – ranging from 24 shillings to 55 shillings per ton. Loads were supposedly restricted according to the wheel rim width and hence road surface impact but toll road charges were a significant part of carrying costs (and probably encouraged surreptitious overloading).

Josiah's business prospered nevertheless and by the time of his death in 1828 he had acquired several properties at Marsley Green and Blackmoor as well as the equipment and animals of his business. One of his properties was the original Cart and Horse, a beer house located off Town Lane, Astley and hosted by one of his sons, Richard. Another son, Josiah

Jr, was landlord of the Greyhound Inn at Lately Common between 1834 and 1851. Josiah Sr and his wife, Mary Winkley, had nine children of which eight lived to adulthood; a remarkable survival rate for the times and maybe indicative of their relative prosperity and ensuing living conditions.

Following Josiah's death in 1828 many of the horses and carts were sold off. However, business continued to some extent through his son, Thomas Stott, who also farmed in Astley and provided cartage services part-time. Thomas died relatively young in 1838 and the baton passed to William Stott, eldest of his and wife Martha Rigby's five children. William had the foresight in about 1855, during recovery from the lean economy of the previous decade, to relocate the business to a 20 acre site advantageously close to the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) goods yard. This site was known as Tyldesley Banks and was leased from George Ormerod (a descendant of Thomas Johnson, a founder of Tyldesley). It was located between Astley and Well Streets in Tyldesley, by then a busy textile and mining centre. Most likely William became an agent of the LNWR which, unlike most railway companies, used carrying agents instead of its own fleet.

William Stott's business is listed in Slater's directories of 1863 and 1869. For over 35 years, notwithstanding the notorious 'cotton famine' years during the American Civil War (1861-5), it was a busy enterprise operating between Salford and Leigh. It employed many family members as well as others (some of whom became family members through marriage to William's reputedly attractive sisters).

Higham's Square (off Well Street) was a court of ten terraced houses served by two outside toilets and a public tap. Thankfully it was demolished a long time ago! According to the census returns, Higham's Square was the family home for William's sisters, Alice, Jane and Mary, over the next 30 years or so. William was very supportive of his sisters but, indicative of the insanitary conditions of the era, Alice died of typhus at Higham's Square in 1862. She was barely survived by her children and grandchildren who mostly had died by 1872. Two of William and wife Mary Bailey's seven offspring died in childhood also.

From 1864, in addition to the 20 acres at Tyldesley Banks, William leased 20 acres of Moss Farm lands, including the Cross Field adjoining Tyldesley Top Chapel. Figure 2 is a photograph taken around 1867 near Tyldesley



*Fig 2. Stotts Mowing at Top Chapel, Tyldesley about 1867
(Courtesy of Wigan Archive Service)*

Top Chapel. I believe it shows the Stotts taking delivery of a two-horse 'Standard' mower/reaper supplied by Picksley and Sims of Bedford (that would have cost £24 according to Picksley's 1871 catalogue).

The 40 acres leased in total by William would have been roughly sufficient to provide feed for about 10 horses. By the early 1870s William, with the help of his son-in-law Thomas Howarth (then resident at Moss Farm), was maintaining nine horses valued at about £50 each. Draft horses of the era typically worked a 70 hour week and lasted between five and six years. In the city they cost about 12 shillings per week each to feed.

Following deregulation of the carrying industry, competition greatly increased. Capital investment in carrying services doubled during 1850-70 and prices began falling. By 1861 there was said to be nearly 68,000 carters at work nationwide and the wages of a one-horse car man fell to less than 20 shillings per week. Pressures on William's business costs further increased in the early 1870s as the lease for the Tyldesley Banks site expired and the land was developed for housing (redeveloped today as Alexander Street and Maesbrook Drive).

Worse still, his chief assistant, Thomas Howarth, died in 1871 aged just 45. And moreover, his son Thomas died in 1872 aged just 27. The former had been

employed as a youth in an acid production factory which undoubtedly exacted a toll on his health. Thomas Jr succumbed to 'phthisis pulmonalis' or 'consumption'.

William decided to 'decline business' and his business assets were advertised in the Leigh Chronicle of 14 Feb 1874 for sale at auction. The well-known auctioneer, Richard Greenhough presided. Among the items described were the nine horses, Tinker, Dick, Smiler, Gilbert, Darling, Boxer, Charlie, Tommy and Jack. Other livestock and the abovementioned Picksley and Sims mower were also to be sold. But the stress caused by his family losses and business difficulties may have been too much for him, and he died suddenly of a heart attack the day before the auction. At that time William was living comfortably in a shop house at 167 Elliot Street, Tyldesley. Remarkably, for the centre of a town, it included a shippon at the rear, possibly for dairy cows.

Our family lore has it that William, facing ruin, had instructed his wife to burn his business papers on his death. Obediently she did so, including his 'accounts receivable' which left the business unable to collect its debts. This thereby ensured subsequent bankruptcy and, in April 1874, a further auction, this time of the shop and household assets. Regrettably, almost 100 years of private enterprise ended thus. Family members formerly employed as carters took up jobs as cotton workers and miners, and despite her advanced years even William's widow took up paid housekeeping.

Josiah, Thomas and William, and their families and many descendants are buried at St George's, Tyldesley. Among the 46 Stotts interred there, one of the last was my great-great grandmother Mary Stott who passed away in 1896. (The very last was her married daughter, Martha Eckersley, licensee of the Federal Arms, Hindsford from 1879 until her death in 1913). Mary Stott's son, my great grandfather Thomas Stott, gathered up his family of eight and moved them, on foot with the help of a handcart, to Rochdale. Rochdale was the former home of his wife Ellen. Here a new generation began afresh mainly as cotton operatives. My grandfather Joseph Stott became, in 1923, the manager of the State spinning mill running over 120,000 spindles.

The story of the Stott family's role in the early industrialisation of Leigh, and the many of the challenges they faced, was unfortunately long forgotten by the time my curiosity was piqued. Thanks to the excellent resources of the Wigan Archive Service and Local History Library it has been possible to recreate some of that story. Making sense of the available facts has required some assumptions, not to say imagination, and the author takes full responsibility for any errors in this brief telling.



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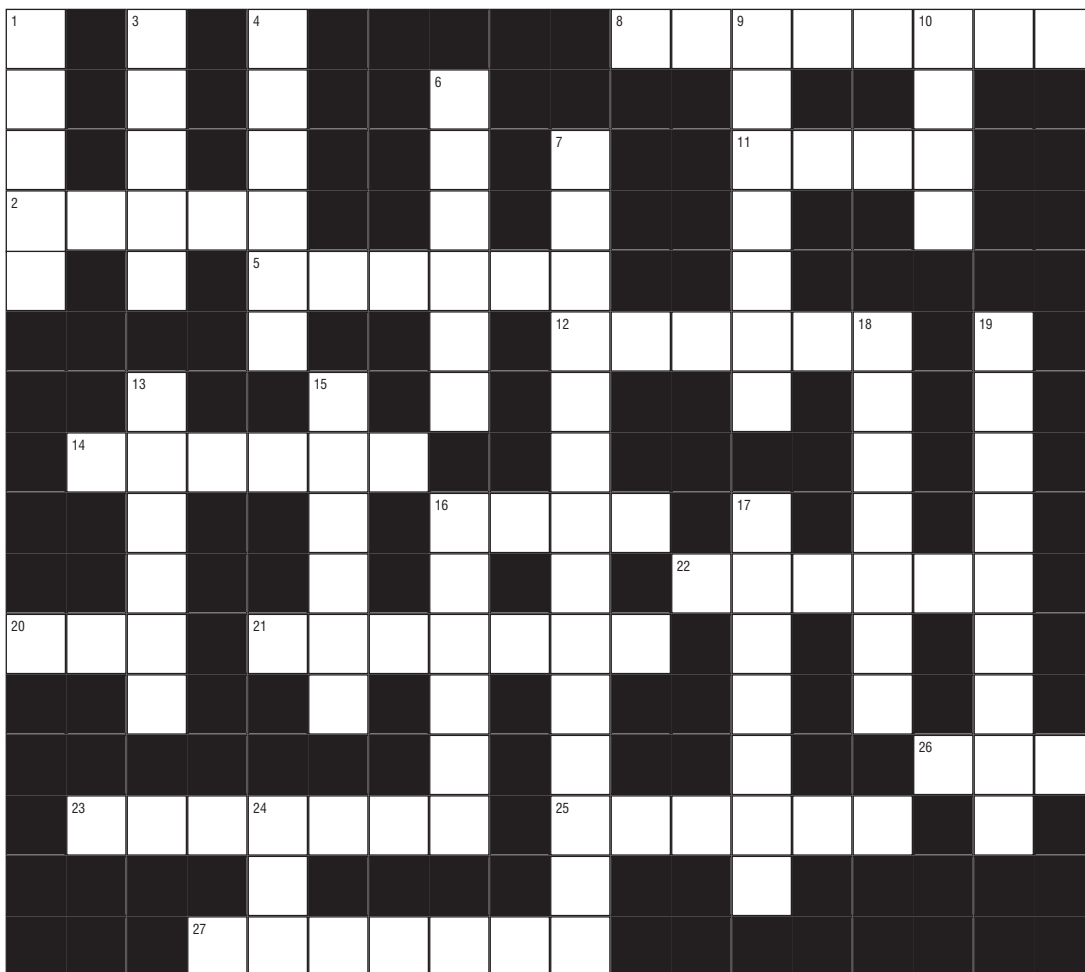
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NOTES

Across

2. Nigel ____ chess player from Leigh who became a grandmaster aged just 19.
5. George ____ author of 'Road to Wigan Pier'
8. Surname of 'Lord of the Rings' actor, now a 'Sir' who spent formative years in Wigan
11. ____ Kane, champion boxer with a Golborne town centre square named after him
12. Wigan born lead singer with 1980s pop band 'Kajagoogoo'
14. Billy ____ Wigan Rugby player originally from Cardiff and awarded MBE in 1986
16. see 21. across
20. ____ Gormley, NUM leader and labour Peer born in Ashton-in-Makerfield
21. and 16. Blues and jazz singer and keyboard player born 'Clive Powell' in Leigh 1943 (7, 4)
22. Thomas ____ provided the funding for Wigan's first library, now Museum of Wigan Life, to be built

23. Pete ____ leader of punk rock band the Buzzcocks
25. see 18. down
26. and 9. down Wigan born actor who died in Spain in 1988 whilst filming 'The Return of the Four Musketeers' (3, 7)
27. Thomas ____ chemist who first manufactured his famous pills in Wigan

Down

1. Surname of Hearsay singer and Coronation Street actress
3. Theodore ____ modern artist and President and founder of Wigan Art Club in 1952
4. James ____ author of 'Goodbye, Mr Chips' and 'Lost Horizon'
6. Francis Sharpe ____ whose statue with a lucky foot stands in Mesnes Park
7. Reverend who was a keen amateur photographer in 19th Century Wigan (7,7)
9. see 26. across

10. ____ Brayton famous Shakespearean and musical actress born in Hindley 1876
13. see 24. down
15. Tanya ____ name of character played by Eva Pope in Coronation Street
16. Surname of famous banjolele-playing comic and actor born in Wigan
17. Stuart ____ author of 'Pies and Prejudice' a book on Northern life.
18. and 25 across Another Coronation Street character played by Wigan actress Jennifer Moss 1949-1974 and for some time the only child in the street. (7,6)
19. Lawrence ____ prolific Wigan painter
24. and 13. down Lynda ____ columnist for Daily Mail and OBE from Leigh (3, 6)

Solution can be found on page 21.

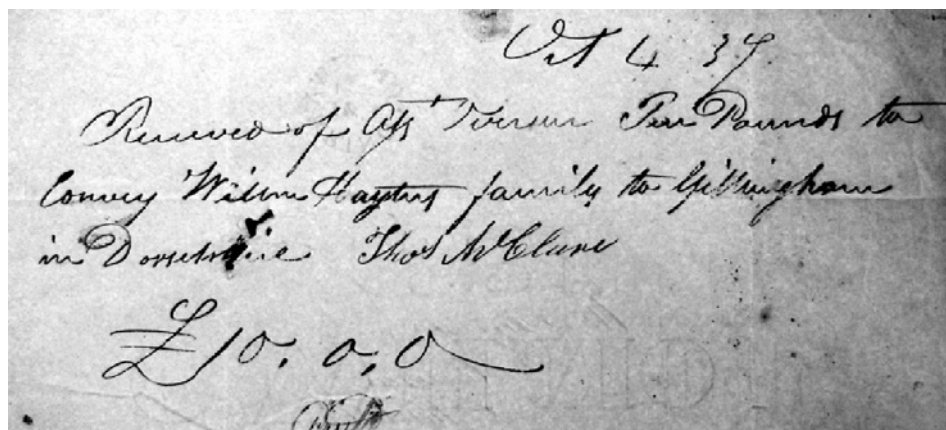
Where

By Bob Evans

Do I Belong?

Atherton Settlement Examinations

Today one hears concerns about the 'post code lottery' which can limit eligibility for medical treatment and social care. Some two hundred years ago there was a far greater degree of uncertainty about the availability of even the most basic help at times of desperate need, particularly for people who moved away from their home townships to seek a better standard of living. Such people as a result of ageing, injury, sickness, or unemployment in periods of trade recession could find themselves destitute and no longer able to support themselves or their wives and families.



As nowadays ratepayers were concerned that help should only be available to those entitled to it and this generally applied only to people whose forefathers came from the township in which they were living. Mid 17th century legislation gave these people 'settlement rights' and they were said to 'belong' to that township, and hence able to obtain help in times of need from their local overseer of the poor. An overseer required anyone not 'belonging' to his township to be taken before the justices and provide evidence to establish which township should assume responsibility and to which they should be returned to receive relief.

Settlement examinations in the Atherton records refer to both people who had moved away from Atherton and others who had come into Atherton. They provide a brief summary of the life of the claimants

(referred to as the 'examinants') to allow the justices to determine on what grounds a particular township should be held responsible for providing relief. These statements often contain comments on the economic and social conditions of the period, the poverty which many were forced to endure, and sometimes include intimate personal asides as people sought to justify where help should be provided. Typical examples illustrate these aspects.

Settlement rights could be transferred to another township by securing continuous employment there over twelve months. Several of the examinations

include accounts of long periods of working away but in each case those being questioned appear to regard their original township as their settlement. In 1807 James Radcliffe had been in Warrington for many years. Now 66 and seeking relief he said: 'he was born in Atherton.....to which township he understood his father belonged.' In the 1830s Benjamin Parr gave a lengthy account of work in a sugar refinery and on the docks in Liverpool together with the costs

of property he had rented, but in regard to each employment stated that: 'I was at liberty to leave at any time.' He made clear: 'I was born at Kirk Hall Lane in the Township of Atherton and I continued to reside with my Father whose settlement was in Atherton until I was nineteen years of age.'

In 1832 Lewis Davies had become a labourer in Atherton but stated that he came from Welshpool in Central Wales where he had worked and previously received relief. On the document the Atherton overseer, Henry Shepherd, recorded delivering the order to send him back: 'Served the Copy of removal Order and Suspension on John Jones, Church Warden of WelchPool Montgomeryshire the 16th day of October 1832.' An even longer journey was necessary to return William Harter, his wife and five children, to Gillingham in Dorset. At the age of 18 he had joined the army, and after his discharge in 1829 had worked

THE said *Robert Pollitt* — — complaineth and saith, that the above named *Betty Collier* — — is now resident in the said Township of *Atherton* — and hath become actually chargeable thereto, and he therefore prays the Order of us the said Justices, to remove the said *Betty Collier* — — and ~~her~~ family, to the place of her Settlement.

as a weaver and labourer. However, he stated that his father belonged to Gillingham and he had received relief from there while living in Atherton. The receipt for the cost of his removal confirms that he was returned:

Being placed as an apprentice in another township did place responsibility for providing relief there. The purpose of several statements made before the justices in 1803 appear to be to satisfy the legal requirements necessary for such a transfer. Richard Manley in Atherton explained that one of his employees had a brother, James Powell apprenticed to Ralph Hays in Westhoughton, who had expressed a wish also to work for Richard Manley. Initially Manley was concerned and stated he: *'would have nothing at to do with him nor employ him until they (Powell and his Brother) had settled the affair with Mr Hays'*. He added after consulting the Atherton overseer, James Clowes: *'I did not wish to take him in any form that would make him belong to Atherton.'* Ralph Hay's statement makes it clear that he would willingly agree to a transfer as James Powell: *'was idle' and causing family problems. He described how when he was out one day his wife was: 'asking Powell to do something or other, and Powell took up a Stick and said to her damn you if you don't stand further I'll strike you or to that effect',* On his return his wife said: *'that either she or Powell must flit.'* The conclusion to Mr Manley's statement indicates that the transfer was finally agreed for a payment of six pounds.

The situation of married women made destitute following the death or desertion of their husbands must have been particularly tragic, as they had to obtain relief from the husband's township of settlement rather than from where she had originated. One can appreciate the utter despair which in 1839 Betty Collier, aged 66 and a widow for nearly thirty years, was experiencing when stating: *'I have gained my living by weaving Cotton I am now so ill and weak I am scare able to move.'* Her settlement was in Worsley.

In 1833 Anne Catterall, a weaver, was also living in Atherton but said: *'that about six weeks ago examinant's husband ran away and left her and her three children.'* She understood that his settlement was in Upholland as they had previously had relief from there. In 1837 Betty Fearnclough was living in Dukinfield. She had married her husband, Thomas, at

Ashton under Lyne and had three children aged between two and seven years. Only three weeks after his death she was examined and said: *'my Husband ran away and left me and I was obliged to go into the workhouse at Atherton... and they apprehended him and had him committed for neglect of Family for three Months.'* She also said that Atherton had previously provided relief and concluded: *'I have heard my Husband say he was born in Atherton and his Father before him.'* The resultant removal certificate for Betty still exists.

Despite what Ann Gregory admitted, her husband's township settlement would still be responsible for her relief. She stated that her husband, William, was an Atherton nail maker who joined the supplementary militia stationed in various parts of the country. While he was away Ann admitted: *'one John Ashurst late of Wigan but now of Bolton le moors.....a muslin weaver commenced a criminal Aquaintance with her and got her with child.'* An accompanying statement from Samuel Hunter who also served in the militia concluded: *'and during all this time Gregory was there and never away – as he believes.'*

Possessing property valued over £10 per year also determined settlement. For this reason the magistrates in 1802 decided Martha Hosker should be removed from Atherton to Pennington because her husband: *'Robert Hosker who has lately deserted her and is now absent from her',* possessed property there. Much earlier in 1700 Richard Hampson then living in Hindley died leaving four children. The removal certificate required that they should be sent to Atherton as Richard: *'did heretofore ffarme an estate in Atherton of the yearly Value of ten pounds'*.

There are other examples where the justices had to consider the fate of orphans. In 1764 they approved a removal order for the three children of Richard Kerfoot, deceased, to be sent from Standish into the care of the Atherton Overseer with the command: *'to receive and provide for the poor Persons'*. In 1832 James Cundliffe died in Atherton leaving two children. His father explained that he and therefore his son *'belongs to the township of Middle Hulton...that he is now receiving relief from that township.'* Though no decision is recorded the implication is that Middle Hulton should assume responsibility for the children.

The first clause prevents the removal of every person from the Parish in which such person has resided for the space of five years next before the application for the warrant of removal.

But in the computation of this period of five years it is provided, that certain periods shall be for all purposes excluded. These periods are as follow :—

The time during which such person shall be a *Prisoner* in a prison ; shall be serving Her Majesty as a *Soldier, Marine, or Sailor* ; or reside as an *In-Pensioner* in *Greenwich or Chelsea Hospitals* ; or shall be confined in a *Lunatic Asylum, or House* duly licensed, or Hospital registered for the reception of *Lunatics* ;

It is difficult to appreciate what significance the justices could deduce from some admissions. In 1834 William Hartley said he came from Whitworth and had married Mary Ridgway of Atherton but had left her *'until October last when he came back to his wife having broken his leg.'* Thomas Higginson living near Hull in 1833 considered that his settlement was in Atherton based on his father's settlement and the fact that he had completed an apprenticeship there as a nail maker. But for some reason he continued to explain that *'he married at West Leigh Church his wife Ann Smith'* but while he was serving in the army she *'married'* another man. He thought that she was then living in Scotland, *'but whether she be alive or dead this Examinant hath not heard.'* At present he was *'married'* to his second wife, Hannah Ramsbottam, but *'that whether his first wife was living at the time of his second Marriage he cannot state but believes she was, but cannot say where.'*

Removal was not the automatic consequence of falling into poverty. Many of the overseer's records, account sheets, vouchers and correspondence indicate that by the nineteenth century relief was provided through payments made to the overseer in the township where a claimant was living. Apart from any humane consideration, a reason for this could be the expense of the legal proceedings. In 1803 Aspull and Atherton appear to have disputed responsibility for William Ratcliff. He stated that he belonged to Aspull having been employed *'a year and had Wages, Meat Drink washing and Lodgings.'* However in this case the legal opinion is attached *'that William Radcliffe and his family belong to Aspull.... But it will not be good for us to appeal against Removal....as expense would be more than £10 and danger of loosing the case.'*

In 1846 an order received by the Atherton Parish officers shows that the circumstances which could result in removal were significantly eased:

SOURCES AND AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The documents on which this account is based are individual examinations in folder TR Ath C3/2 and others attached to removal orders in TR Ath C3/4. The receipt for removal of William Harter is in folder C/2/60 and the 1846 order is C7/27/3. All are in the Atherton Township Records in the Archives in Leigh Town Hall. Individual quotations from the documents appear in *italic print*. The writer appreciates the assistance given by the archivist in making the documents available and for advice with their interpretation.

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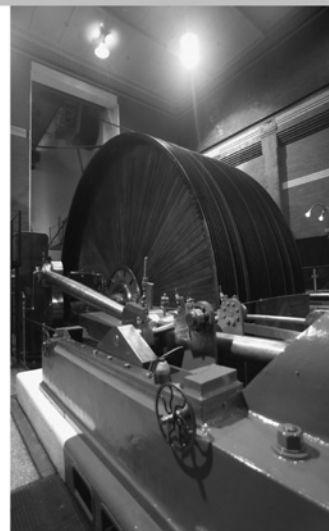
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More Brook Lane Memories

by Tony Berry

Since the publication of my article on Brook Lane in Past Forward Issue No. 50 more memories have come flooding back, which may be of some interest, at least to Lamberhead Greeners; or should it be 'Lom-mera'? (the vernacular pronunciation seems to be closer to the spelling of 500 years ago- 'Londmerhede').

Once a week I would pick up my sweet ration from Auntie Annie's. We were allowed four ounces only, like all the other customers. Another port of call on the way home from school was Newble's newsagents and toyshop. I would stand looking in at the window display, especially at the Hornby train set although I knew, even at that tender age, that the price was way above what my parents could afford. Anyway, our little gang only needed to go down Brook Lane, to the railway line, to see real steam locomotives in action. This developed into fairly serious train-spotting.

Regularly seeing local trains pass by on the Wigan Wallgate-Liverpool Exchange line, as we played in the Nursery, had whetted our appetites. After purchasing copies of Ian Allan's 'Locospotters' books for the princely sum of one shilling and three pence (6p), we began underlining each engine number as it was spotted. The only 'namers' we usually saw on this line were LMS Jubilee Class 'Mars' and 'Dauntless', which took turns to pull the Liverpool-Newcastle morning express. The highlight of the year was Grand National Day when passenger trains passed by in the morning on their way to Aintree at the rate of one every few minutes. One of these trains would sometimes be the Royal Train, although the window blinds would be understandably pulled down for privacy. This major feat of organisation was quite remarkable, long before the days of computerisation, especially when one considers that each engine would have to be fired up and serviced before the assembling of the trains could even begin.

After a while train-spotting in the Nursery began to pall, as we noted repeated sightings of a limited number of engines. Consequently, we spread our sights further afield and made several trips to the main North-South line at Whitley level-crossing near Beech Hill.

We travelled to Whitley via Kitt Green, Martland Mill and Beech Hill Avenue by various means, walking, running, and on bicycles, when we finally managed to acquire them. Being miles from home, without our mothers knowing it, seemed to be a regular occurrence. As long



My 1949 'Locospotters' book.

as we were back in time for meals no questions were asked. But then again they were safer and less hectic times.

From Whitley we next progressed to Wigan North West station where, for the price of the bus fare and a penny platform ticket, we could spot trains under cover and in relative comfort. Here were 'namers' in profusion: 'Pats', 'Jubs', 'Scots', 'Prini Royals' and 'Semis', as we nicknamed the various LMS locomotive classes. At about four o'clock in the afternoon the fish train from Fleetwood would rattle through the station. You could still smell the aroma of fish half an hour later! I remember once, in an interval between arriving trains, we did a rendition of the musical round 'Frere Jacques' while seated outside the porters' room. Our contribution to the cultural heritage of the town was apparently not appreciated as one of the porters came out and told us to push off! Evidently our serenading was less kind to the ear than the roar of passing express trains!

Another place we visited was Springs Branch engine sheds at Lower Ince. We gained access through a hole in the fence but, as I recall it now, we were allowed to wander around without question.

My almost innate interest in steam railway engines could probably have been explained by two things. Firstly, Grandma Berry had many railwayman relatives in Derbyshire. More significantly, my father used to drive the next best thing, traction engines, and I was greatly inspired by the many tales he related about those days.

THE ORIGINS OF Makerfield

By Bob Blakeman

We are all aware of Ashton-in-Makerfield. It is so called to distinguish it from Ashton-under-Lyne and other places called Ashton. Ince-in-Makerfield is so called to distinguish it from Ince Blundell and other places called Ince. Orrell near Wigan was formerly known as Orrell-in-Makerfield to distinguish it from Orrell in the parish of Sefton. Newton-in-Makerfield used to be the alternative name for Newton-le-Willows. But what was Makerfield? What are its origins, and how far did it extend?

To find out we can go back to 1278 when Robert Banastre, the then Lord of Makerfield, reported that his great-grandfather, who was also named Robert, was driven from his manor of Prestatyn by Welsh forces. As compensation for his loss he obtained a grant from the crown of lands within the lordship of Makerfield, including the demesne lands of Newton(-le-Willows), and the rectory manor of Wigan. This earlier Robert was probably only the agent or bailiff of the King's manor of Makerfield, because in 1204 his son Warin paid the crown 400 marks for the land of Makerfield.

This was in keeping with a national pattern. During the two centuries after the reign of William the Conqueror, large numbers of royal demesne manors were granted away. However this does not mean that the crown no longer had an interest in Makerfield. Warin and his heirs had to pay a rental, and provide the King with a certain number of knights, as well as other obligations. But there were also privileges for lords such as Warin, who were known as 'tenants in ancient (royal) demesne'. They were

exempt from the usual obligatory frequent attendance as jurors at the local and county courts, and they could not be made to undergo trial by combat outside their own manors¹. From the details of Robert's grant we learn that Makerfield was a royal estate centred on Newton, containing the church at Wigan, and the lands attached to it. Such an estate occurs in the Domesday Book (compiled in 1086) as the hundredal manor of Newton. As a hundredal manor it was both a manor and a hundred; A manor being an economic unit, and a hundred being a unit of local government at a tier below that of a county. It was not unusual for such estates to have two names, one referring to their manorial aspects, the other to their governmental: in this case Makerfield and Newton Hundred.

At the time of the compilation of the Domesday Book the region between the Ribble and the Mersey consisted of six royal hundredal manors sometimes called Blackburnshire, Leylandshire, Derbyshire (centred on West Derby, now a part of Liverpool), Salfordshire, and the



The arms of Thomas Langton, Baron of Newton-in-Makerfield as recorded in the Herald's Visitation of 1533.

Hundreds of Newton and Warrington. The suffix 'shire' here should not be confused with the modern meaning of the word. Most of the historical English counties were created between the eighth and tenth centuries, but these 'shires' (and we can include the hundredal manors of Newton and Warrington as 'shires' in everything but name) point to something much older.

Huge estates such as these are known to historians as multiple estates. They were large economic and administrative units, each with a capital manor that had a number of dependant manors attached to it. They existed to provide particular goods and specialised services to local lords and itinerant royal households. The population spread in societies such as these was sparse and scattered, with low productive power, few markets, and little coinage in circulation. This was the situation behind the statement in the Domesday Book relating to the hundredal manor of Newton:

'Fifteen men whom they call drengs held the rest of the land of this manor as fifteen manors, but they were outliers of this manor.'

Multiple estates such as these were scattered across northern England and were also found in those parts of Wales outside Anglo-Saxon and Norman influence, and in those parts of Scotland beyond the frontier of the Roman Empire. This indicates that their origins lie in Celtic society.

In our case the name Makerfield has Celtic origins. Ekwall, writing in 1922² says, 'Makerfield is a British place-name identical with the Welsh magwyr -wall, ruin. I suppose 'Macer' was the British name of some place in Makerfield, and was adopted by the Anglian invaders. From it was formed the name Makerfield. The original Makerfield may have been Ashton, near which, are traces of a Roman road, and where a fort may once have been, or it may have been Newton, where there are two ancient barrows, one of which is called Castle Hill'.

However, recent archaeological discoveries have made the Roman settlement at Wigan a much more likely candidate for the original ruin. In this case 'field' would be used in the sense of 'district', as in the Domesday Hundred of Engelfield in North Wales, meaning 'the English district'. The fact that there is, in our area, a cluster of place-names containing Celtic elements (Wigan, Ince, Pemberton, Bryn, Culcheth,

Haydock, and Kenyon) may indicate a district that remained culturally Celtic until a comparatively late period.

By the time Robert Banastre received his grant of land the hundredal aspects of Newton had been absorbed into West Derby Hundred, which means that he would have been bailiff of the manor only, and not of the hundred as well. And during the twelfth century the pattern of landholding in the region underwent a change, with the break-up of multiple estates such as Salfordshire and Leylandshire into a patchwork of small manors. Baronial families such as the Butlers of Warrington, the Bussels of Penwortham, and the Grelleys of Manchester came to hold manors scattered across the region. In some of the former dependant manors of the multiple estates the 'drengs' had been able to assert themselves so as to hold their lands as separate manors. It was during this period that the classic medieval manorial system finally reached south Lancashire.

But Makerfield was virtually untouched by these developments. It remained a compact territorial unit. Indeed, the adjacent manors of Poulton and Woolston were added, so that it now extended from Wigan in the north to the River Mersey in the south.

At the end of the thirteenth century the male line of the Banastres came to an end, and the heiress Alesia married John de Byron. When John de Byron died before Alesia, John de Langton paid 250 marks to the Earl of Lancaster for the right to determine whom she should marry. He had her married to his younger brother, and so the barony passed to the Langtons. It remained in this family until 1604, when it passed to Richard Fleetwood. In 1660 Richard Fleetwood's son, Robert, sold the reputed barony³ to Richard Legh of Lyme, who already owned some land in Makerfield. The barony has remained with the Legh family ever since; the present Baron of Newton-in-Makerfield being Richard Thomas Legh, who lives in Sussex.

Notes

1. *Property disputes were often settled by trial by combat.*
2. Ekwall, E. (1922) *The Place-names of Lancashire. Manchester: Chetham Society. New Series. 81.*
3. *A reputed barony is one in which many of the rents and services which existed in the Middle Ages are no longer enforced.*

Under the 'Greenwood' Tree

by Austin Lyons

In the late 1960s Sunday visitation, especially to the sick and elderly, was the regular practice for many churchgoers.

At the far end of Park Road, Hindley, lived Jim Eckersley, who following the death of his wife Mary found himself with the task of having to care for his frail and aged mother-in-law. She was in her late 70s and with failing eyesight. Every Sunday morning, following the last Mass at St Benedict's Church, Hindley, Jack Greenwood and his wife would make a call at the Eckersley home. Then the weekly ritual started.

The old lady would struggle to the kitchen, put the kettle on and prepare for the usual 'cuppa'. She would walk in carrying the large teapot, used only on such occasions, and start pouring the tea. The weight of the teapot caused her to wobble dangerously in the process. Jim Eckersley, always feeling rather anxious at this time, was relieved when it was all over; even though the Greenwoods, on leaving, were always keen to say how well his mother-in-law was coping in spite of her difficulties. The visits continued as usual, then one Sunday, as the old dear started to serve the tea, the wobble became more severe, resulting in not only filling the cups but overflowing into the saucers. Unaware of the mishap, she handed the flooded crockery to her visitors. Not wishing to embarrass the old lady, Eckersley faced his visitors and grinning away, exclaimed "How are you doing Greenwood?" as the tea splashed about in their saucers. So ended the 'Wobbly Tea

Party'. By some strange quirk, this event gave birth to an expression which caught on almost immediately and went the rounds of the family in double quick time. It even impinged on business activity. Anyone who had a difficult task to perform would be greeted with the phrase "how you doing Greenwood?" which always caused a smile of complicity.

Here's another tale from 'Under the Greenwood Tree.' One of the meetings I regularly attended were those organised by the Chamber of Trade, of which for a number of years I was President. Our social highlight of the year was the Chamber's annual dinner and dance held at the Monaco Ballroom. To help defray some of the costs involved, a Grand Raffle was held with prizes usually donated by members of the Chamber. The draw would usually take place at the interval of the dance. As President, it fell to me to draw the prize winners. The Master of Ceremonies would call out the numbers, and my wife would present the prizes. At one of these events, a prize-winner was Jack Greenwood's brother,

who ran a gents and boys' outfitters shop on Atherton Road, Hindley. As my wife handed him the prize, he didn't seem to be enjoying the moment and as he left the stage I thought I heard some low muttering. It was sometime later before I learned the full story. It seems Greenwood's Outifitters, had had an unsalable item in stock for a few years, it was a scarf. It had been frequently displayed in the shop window, had been reduced in price and had even been included in the annual shop sale, all to no avail. Finally, when one of the Chamber's officials came to collect a gift for the raffle it was this particular item that he donated. "I felt relief as I handed it over" he said, "and look what's happened. After all that time I've won the blooming thing back in a raffle, I don't believe it!" grumbled Greenwood.

No wonder I heard his muttering that night, he obviously recognised his own wrapping paper around the prize. If I might borrow a phrase, "How you doing Greenwood?"

PAST FORWARD

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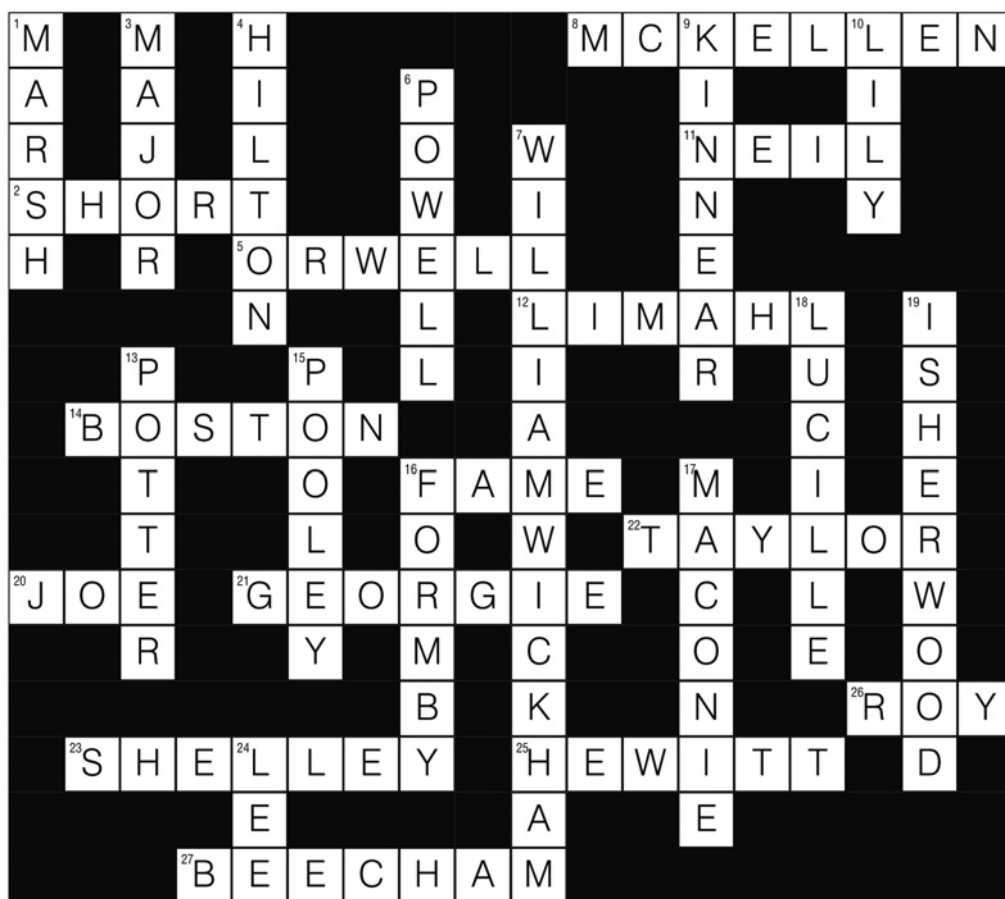


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Efforts of the volunteers working hard to digitise Wigan Heritage Services' photographic collection were celebrated at the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust's Staff Commendation Awards ceremony on 19 February 2010. They won a special honorary award for 'Excellent Service and Performance'. The volunteers and other award winners tucked into a well-deserved celebratory lunch after the award ceremony. Congratulations and thanks to the volunteers for all of their hard work!



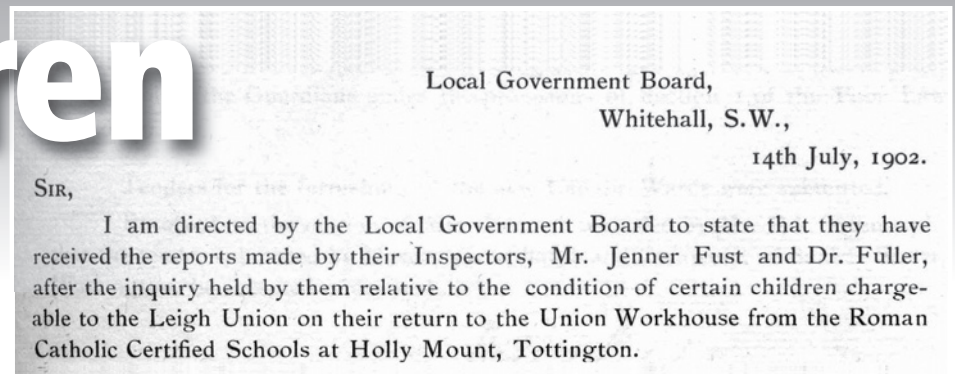
The Neglect of Leigh Workhouse Children

By Yvonne Eckersley

The neglect of Leigh (Poor Law) Union's children by the Sisters of Charity at Holly Mount Schools in Tottington, was deemed as resulting from 'no wilful neglect' but through an 'absence of proper administration'. This was the verdict of the Poor Law section of the Local Government Board (LGB) Inquiry held in Leigh and Bury during May 1902.

Poor Law Unions and local Boards of Guardians were established as a result of the 'New Poor Law' of 1834. Local Guardians administered poor relief, maintained workhouses and had a responsibility for destitute children. The LGB Inquiry, besides assessing neglect, indicated how little Leigh Guardians knew of the regimes at Holly Mount Schools. The inquiry noted that little effort was made to monitor the children's well-being and no effort was made to discover how the children spent their days.

Questions arise. How did this neglect happen? Who was to blame? Could it have been prevented? Did the Leigh Workhouse Children's (Disposal) Committee fail to develop an



effective administrative system for ensuring the safety of Leigh's 'Children of the State'? Or did the blame lie with the LGB?

Removal of Workhouse Children

National guidelines encouraged local Guardians to place their children in institutions away from the negative influences of workhouses. Most relied on an assortment of voluntary, philanthropic and self-administered institutions, which were inspected annually but only for their provision of food, clothing and space.

By July 1901 Leigh's Committee had inspected sixteen institutions and chosen eight. The main criteria for selection appeared to be that the institutions matched the children's religion and were in Northern England.

There were thirty Leigh children who, by virtue of being orphaned, deserted or abandoned were eligible for disposal. Of these, ten children went to Holly Mount

School in August, October and December 1901. On 4 February 1902 they returned showing obvious signs of neglect.

The Guardians met to discuss the contents of a detailed report on their condition. The children were extremely dirty, ill nourished, inadequately and dirtily clothed (two older girls had no 'drawers') and were in poor health. Some had fared worse than others. Catherine Mallon was considered unlikely to live, Mary O Donnelly was so thin Dr Hall took evidential photographs and Ellen Haisley had no hair, her head 'covered from front to back with one solid scab'. Many were very weak. According to the nurse the 'little ones screamed as they were put in the bath' they were so sore. Two year old Joseph Smith was 'raw between the legs'.

The Regime at Holly Mount

Holly Mount was a 'Barrack School', a type condemned for decades for their rigid routines and regimes. Holly Mount

children were not allowed to speak in workrooms, classrooms, dining room, corridors and dormitories where they spent most of their days. Children were not allowed to call each other by their Christian names; 'each child answers to a number'. Their days were strictly timetabled between waking at 5.45am and bedtime, (6pm for younger, 8.20pm the older children). Ellen Haisley spent most of her time isolated in a small sickroom from 8.30am until teatime. Children were confined to the classroom for two and a half hours at a stretch, which may have been the cause of certain children's 'filthy habits' and the soreness in their nether regions. Their food, ostensibly regulated by the LGB, seemed to consist of potatoes mashed with water for five dinners a week, peas and water then rice and water on other days. Breakfast, tea and supper was invariably bread, butter, and sometimes treacle with black tea.

Medical Care

The Inquiry revealed the failure of the LGB to provide a comprehensive system of medical care for its destitute children. They provided no method of ensuring its ill-defined guidelines were followed at local level. Despite the LGB requiring workhouse doctors to examine the children, there was no requirement that this information be recorded or passed to places like Holly Mount.

Institutions like Holly Mount were not required to keep local Guardians informed of the children's health and when they did no checks were made that the reports were truthful.

Leigh Guardians' sins were the sins of omission. As Holly Mount did not request medical profiles they simply did not supply any. The School's doctor made a few cursory notes on four of the children on their admittance. These notes did not dictate any aftercare. Dr Poole considered his weekly three hour visits, during which 230 children filed past him, in five separate rooms, sufficient medical examination. His wait-and-see approach to Catherine Mallon's noted 'incipient pyhsisis' was not the treatment he would advise for private patients. He reasoned 'the same does not apply where there are a number of children in a home'. This 'sufficient' examination did not identify Ellen Haisley or Elizabeth Smith's conditions; these were pointed out by the Sisters. The outbreak and extent of the highly infectious ophthalmia, was identified by Chorlton Guardians. The ease at which Dr Poole could hide the extent of the disease at Holly Mount is indicative. He reported to the LGB Inspectors that there were just three cases when there existed a great many more. Sister George estimated of 230 children, only 84 were free of the disease whilst Mr Moorson, LGB Inspector, put the number at 49 out of 212.

Leigh Guardians

Leigh's Guardians worked hard, attending numerous meetings, visiting children in the Workhouse regularly, corresponding with, visiting and selecting suitable institutions. Locally elected and unpaid, they were given little training, guidance or supervision from the LGB to fulfill the task set them. It was out of their remit to develop systems of their own.

This commitment to the children was not shared by all. Father O'Neill continually attempted to undermine the investigation against Holly Mount. This included the attempted bullying of Dr Hall as he gathered evidence; aggressive disruption during discussions of the children's condition; abusive behaviour to the Master and falsifying evidence to defend the School. Father O'Neill's behaviour resulted in the Guardians' Clerk instructing the Master 'he must order him ou'' of the workhouse if it continued. Another Guardian, Mr W Unsworth, seems to have been a rather gullible man. Evidence he gave was so contradictory to his pre-inquiry actions, the Leigh Guardians' barrister requested he be considered a hostile witness.

Holly Mount lost its LGB certified status as a result of the inquiry. Unfortunately this did not mean they were compelled to reform their practices or refrain from taking workhouse children, indeed they continued to do so.

References

Leigh Board of Guardians Minute Books for 1901 and 1902 (Wigan Archives Service, Leigh Town Hall)
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Webb, Sidney & Beatrice, The Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission, 1909
Webb, Sidney & Beatrice The English Poor Law Policy, 1910



Leigh Union Workhouse in 1902

Birth of a Church

By
Dr. David
Lythgoe

At the junction of Upholland Road and Crank Road, in Billinge near Wigan, there stands a stone built Methodist Church. It has been there for the past one hundred and sixty four years.

The foundation stone above the entrance proudly proclaims that it was erected as a Wesleyan Chapel in 1845 by William Holt of Bispham Hall. Sir Nicholas Pevenser, in his monumental work 'The Buildings of England' describes it as 'Italianate, with arched doorway and windows', which was unusual for a Methodist building. In fact, the location, form and size of the chapel do not conform to the usual pattern of chapel building of that period.

The local population was largely engaged in rural pursuits, together with nail making, coal-mining and quarrying. It was from these people that the chapel would draw its first congregations. By themselves they could never have raised the money necessary to erect the building that we know today.

Why then was the chapel built to accommodate, what for the time would be, such a large congregation? Why was it not built at Longshaw where the centre of the nearest village appears to have been, and why was it given its particular and distinctive shape?

William Holt is known to have been a devout and sincere man, and as we shall see, was a stranger to the area. Since the site is almost at his gates and equidistant from the Anglican churches of St Thomas', Upholland and St Aiden's, Billinge, it would have seemed to William an ideal spot for the creation of a new centre of worship. Moreover, it is situated at a road junction and on the crest of a hill, which in 1845 would have had extensive views towards Wigan and Winter Hill beyond. It would also have possessed a more commanding presence on its hill than in a hollow by a stream in the centre of Longshaw.

The chapel is built of local stone and is reminiscent of many Anglican chapels of ease, having a central aisle, a porch, lancet windows and an apse (now filled

by an organ) either for an altar or a communion table. If the chapel was accepted by the Methodists, William would not have to provide preachers on a regular basis, although he probably did. He would not need to travel to worship, would impress passing travellers and provide the local community with a focal point for worship in place of whatever cottage meetings they had attended previously.

To understand how William Holt came to be at Bispham Hall, we need to look at the Bispham family whose name first appears in 1189. The Bispham family is descended from a branch of the Huyton (Heaton or Hayton) family. They lived at what is now Heaton House, situated on the western slopes of Billinge Hill, between Billinge Hall and Bispham Hall. According to W B Savigny's 'History of Bispham Hall', Margaret de Huyton married Roger de Bispham, so bringing the name to the area and the hall.

There are memorial brasses in the church of St. Thomas', Upholland to Thomas Bispham (died 1677) and Frances Bispham (died 1703) although these are at present carpeted over. The many records

of family births, marriages and deaths in the Upholland parochial registers imply that the Bisphams were regular and staunch supporters of the church from 1639 until the death of the last male heir in 1730. During this time the Bisphams suffered as a result of their loyalty to the King during the Civil War and because they were recusants (Catholics who refused to attend Church of England services). A memorial tablet records certain benefactions of apprentices in the area in 1720 by a certain Henry Bispham. Also, a stone plaque, which reads- 'Charity. The Gift of Henry Bispham in Oat Bread, 1728' is incorporated into the wall of a building off Pimbo Lane in Upholland and known locally as the 'Charity Barn'.

With the death of Thomas Bispham, the last male heir, the estate passed in 1787 to the Leigh family, and then to the Holt family via Joanna Holt. Joanna's niece, Mary Holt inherited, then Mary's children, John and Robert. The Holts were responsible for erecting the Waterloo memorial that stands today in the grounds of the Hall. Savigny records that John and Robert were religious, and started a Sunday school in one of the Hall's buildings. Once a month they took their classes to the morning service at St. Thomas'. Neither, John nor Robert married. When John, who outlived his brother, died in 1841, he left the estate to a remote cousin's eldest son, William Mills of Booth Bank, Millington in Cheshire, on condition that they assume the name of Holt.

Savigny goes on to say that William Holt, as we must now call William Mills, had been a small farmer but that 'his deep pity for

men, along with his good-natured heart were the cause of his failure'. What failure is not recorded, but Savigny goes on to state that 'always a staunch Methodist, he now associated in cottage meetings in various parts of Upholland. Preachers he had known in Cheshire were invited to Billinge, and meetings were held among the workmen of Billinge quarry. His religious zeal culminated in the erection of the chapel at the foot of Crank Road.'

Interestingly, Billinge Quarry appears to have been situated about a quarter of a mile from the chapel along Crank Road. It is a reasonable assumption that the stone for building the chapel was quarried there, and if so, then the quarrymen would no doubt have paused a while to refresh themselves at the public house now named the Holt's Arms, but more familiarly as The Foot of the Causeway or even as 't'Foot'. William Holt's opinions on this are not recorded!

On the death of William Holt, the estate passed to his son William Thomas. Both he and his brother

John died in 1857, and the estate was left to be divided between their six sisters, who sold the estate in 1871 to Meyrick Bankes of Winstanley. Fortunately for Methodism, the Holt family had, on 29 December 1870, made a gift of the chapel to the Methodist Wesleyan connexion, the sale being completed on 13 July 1871. The chapel has belonged to Methodism ever since. Although the chapel is little changed externally, its interior has been much altered over the years, the principal changes being the installation of a two manual and pedal pipe organ by Charles H Whitely & Co. of Chester in 1923, and the conversion of a number of windows to stained glass.

Note from the author:

This article is condensed from my book 'A House Nigh Unto Heaven', 133 pages, ISBN 1 873888 80 5, published 1995. I have a few copies available, which I will be happy to give away.

Editor's note:

If any one would like a copy, please contact me, and I will pass your details to Mr Lythgoe.

HISTORY CHAT

History Chat is an informal and relaxed discussion about local history. The group meets each week at either Leigh Local Studies in Leigh Library or at the Archives in Leigh Town Hall. Discussions are based on local themes such as railways, carnivals, pubs and breweries. All of the meetings so far have been extremely popular and well attended.

Suggestions for future themes are encouraged and welcome.

History Chat runs every Wednesday from 1.00pm till 3.00pm and is open to all. To find out more please ring 01942 404559 and ask for Hannah Turner (Leigh Local and Family History Officer).

A Personal Story

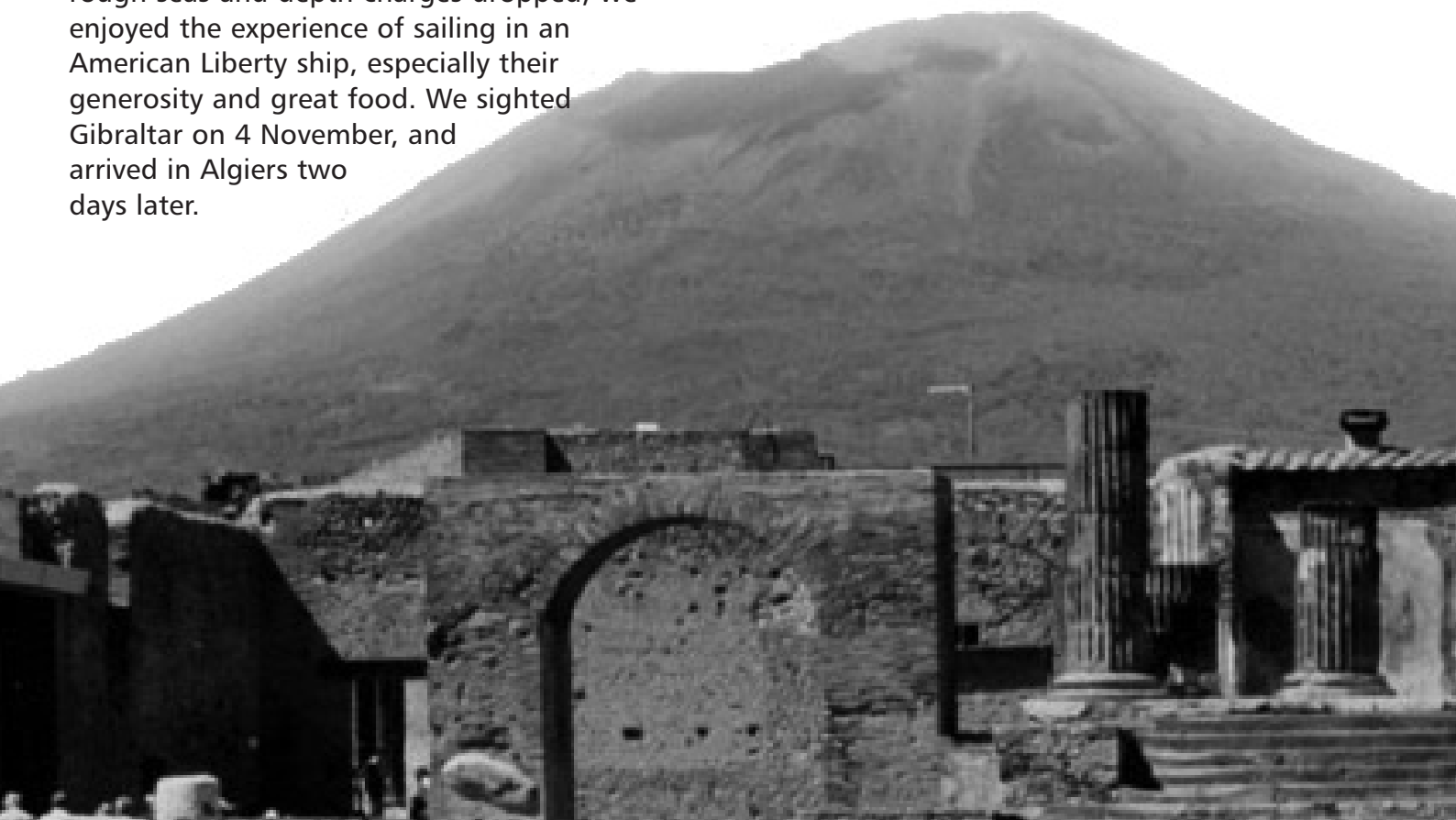
ITALY 1943-1945

by Roy Gorner

After only one year at Manchester University I was ordered to report to Wigan station from my home in Ashton-in-Makerfield on 13 April 1943. We arrived at Carlisle by train and marched up to Hadrian's Camp, only to be told to get to bed early as we would be on parade at 4.30am. It was only then I realised that I was in the army.

We were 'going abroad'. This turned out to be Northern Ireland for six weeks initial training, then to Congleton in Cheshire for a 12-week signals course. After that, down to Woolwich for two weeks leave, then up north to Gurnock, to join a very large and well-protected convoy which sailed on 27 October. We had no idea where we were going, but apart from some rough seas and depth charges dropped, we enjoyed the experience of sailing in an American Liberty ship, especially their generosity and great food. We sighted Gibraltar on 4 November, and arrived in Algiers two days later.

Within two weeks we had moved to Philippeville, Tunisia and sailed for Naples, eventually joining the 100th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment headquarters in a grand hotel on the sea-front at Salerno. This was by far the easiest part of my service in Italy. I was able to visit Pompeii and drive along the magnificent coastal road from Salerno to Sorrento, as well as take five days leave in Ravello. Headquarters moved to the north coast of the Bay of Naples just in time to see the eruption of Mount Vesuvius on 22 March 1944. What a fantastic sight that was! After short-term moves to Foggia and Termoli on the east coast, someone in the hierarchy realised that no German planes had been seen for months, so Heavy Anti-Aircraft was not needed. We were given the choice; Infantry or Tanks, I chose Tanks.



After training I moved to the 1st Army Reinforcement Regiment in October 1944, then joined the 6th Royal Tank Regiment 7th Armoured Brigade; well-known as the Desert Rats. I celebrated my twenty-first birthday in Cassino as we moved up. It was quite a slog in the Faenza area, especially as it was such a bad winter. We soon came out of the line to change our Sherman tanks for Churchill's, much slower but very heavily armoured. In April 1945 we launched an attack on the Senio River. The Germans put up quite a resistance, especially with their 88mm anti-tank guns. It was in this engagement that I was reported the first casualty of the action. Not, I might say, totally due to enemy action, but on lowering myself back into the tank and closing the hatch, I trapped my hand. My finger was badly split, blood all over the place. In the tank, the heat and the fumes, plus the blood, was too much so I managed to pass out over the gun. The next thing I knew I had been thrown out, to be picked up by the Red Cross and taken to a farmhouse. They stitched and bandaged my finger and took me back to the squadron.

The April offensive on the Po River saw us race to Padua and Venice, and on the 2 May 1945 the German 1st Para Division surrendered. The Brigade (2nd, 6th, 8th Royal Tank Regiments) held a thanksgiving service in Padua shortly after. Of course, we were now free to visit Venice, and saw it at its best, no massive crowds.

In June we left for Klagenfurt, Austria, for occupation duties. We found Marshal Tito's partisan army occupying the towns and villages in Carinthia. It was quite a problem forcing him back

to Yugoslavia until we put on a tank demonstration; including flame-throwers and an RAF fly-past. I was also involved in the repatriation of the Russians who had been fighting for the Germans. They were mostly Cossacks. I know that there has been much controversy about this forced repatriation and their murder when they returned to Russia. At the time it did not seem controversial, as they were free to go in and out of their camps. German staff cars had been abandoned as they had no petrol and generally cases full of money. We could use the cars but unfortunately not the money.

On 18 June 1945 I left Austria to join the 8th Royal Tank Regiment, north of Rome. On the way we had two days in Florence, so were able to visit Pisa and Sienna. Officially we were coming home to train for the invasion of Japan, but at Rome airport we heard that the atomic bomb had been dropped. After some home leave and a few months at Catterick camp I was allowed to return to university. After graduation I married my local girlfriend in July 1950, so this year will be celebrating our sixtieth wedding anniversary.

Despite not being the best 'army material' I loved being in the forces. I saw some wonderful places in Italy, the comradeship was very special, and finally I grew up.

Note from author:

I was born in Downall Green, Ashton-in-Makerfield, and attended a local primary school before going on to Ashton Grammar School. After war service and graduation in 1949, I was appointed as a Mathematics and Physics teacher at Hindley & Abram Grammar School.



My First Job

– Bill Melling

It is fair to say that I owed my first job to Adolf Hitler. In the dark days of the early 1940s, when Britain was under the threat of a Nazi invasion, Wigan, like Warmington-on-Sea, had its own Home Guard detachment.

Each Sunday morning they assembled at the territorial army Drill Hall in Powell Street and then marched up Wigan Lane, past the Infirmary to Marylebone. From there they turned right and marched, via Leyland Mill and Basin Lanes, to Haigh Hall. Here, with much smoke and loud explosions they indulged in mock battles in what is now the country park and golf course.

One weekend, someone in the higher echelons of command had an idea, worthy of a script for Dad's Army. To add realism to the proceedings they planned to use regular soldiers to spring a surprise attack on the column as it marched up to Haigh Hall. The spot chosen for the ambush was the bridge over the river Douglas at the bottom of Leyland Mill Lane.

The lane leaves the main road at right angles and plunges steeply into the wooded valley between high walls which open out onto the bridge, before climbing steeply

up the opposite bank. The plan was to spring the surprise when the head of the column was just on the bridge, whilst its tail was still between the high walls. The wall on the left hand side of the lane held back the garden of 'Brentwood', a large house on Wigan Lane; since the garden was level, the wall had to get progressively higher as the road descended to the bridge. At its end the wall was about twenty feet high with the soil of the garden (at that point an orchard), level with the top of the wall. This fact gave some bright spark the idea of planting a small explosive charge in the soil at the top of the wall so that when it was detonated the lane below would be showered with clods of earth to add an further realism to the proceedings.

At that time I was about eight years old and lived nearby in one of the four cottages adjacent to Haigh Foundry on the bank of the river Douglas. Like all the

small boys in the area my regular Sunday morning activity was 'home guard watching' and this particular Sunday was no exception. I observed the whole proceedings from a vantage point in the trees, high up on the opposite bank of the river. The plan worked to perfection. As the head of the column swung on to the bridge there was a fusillade of rifle and Bren gun fire (blanks), a shower of thunder flashes and a couple of smoke grenades. Finally the explosive charge in the orchard was detonated showering the rear of the column with turf and mud. It was at this point that things started to go wrong. Either the wall was weak or the explosive charge was too generous but as the earth rained down on the column a section of wall bulged out and slowly collapsed. It was followed by an avalanche of earth, trees and bushes from the orchard. Fortunately, apart from shock, injured dignity and mud spattered



Wigan Home Guard parading on the Market Square, Wigan, 1940.



Leyland Mill Lane.

uniforms nobody came to any harm but the fact that the road was completely blocked presented a serious threat to the war effort.

Leyland Mill Lane was the only access route to a number of concerns engaged on war work. These included the Blueprinters dye works, the malt works, Haigh foundry and a couple of small engineering firms making parts for aircraft. It was therefore vital that the road be opened as soon as possible and to this end, Albert Austin, the nearest local builder was given the job. By nightfall Albert and his men had cleared enough of the landside to allow a lorry to squeeze through thus averting the immediate crisis. However, the pile of rubble blocking half the road still posed a real hazard during the blackout. With its high walls, overhanging trees and no streetlights, traversing Leyland Mill Lane after dark was like plunging into a black hole. With vehicle headlights restricted to a narrow slit there was a real danger of a pile-up. It was to avert such a disaster that I now enter into the story.

Albert Austin and my father were friends and drinking companions, and both sang tenor in St Michael's Church choir. That Sunday after evensong, when they had retired to the Saracen's Head, Albert asked my father if I could take on the job of looking after the warning lights that needed to

be put in place each night. He said he would pay five shillings a week (25p). At a time when the average working man earned £4 a week, it was an offer too good to refuse.

Having accepted the job I was provided with two red bulls-eye paraffin lanterns and a five gallon drum of paraffin. Each evening I had to light and trim them to make sure the flame was burning steadily. Then I had to carry them the 300 yards up the hill from where I lived and place them at each end of the obstruction. Next morning they had to be collected, cleaned and refilled with paraffin. This needed to be done with meticulous care, as I learned from bitter experience. If there was any dirt on the wick or the fuel ran low then the flame would begin to smoke and the whole of the inside of the lantern would be coated in fine black soot.

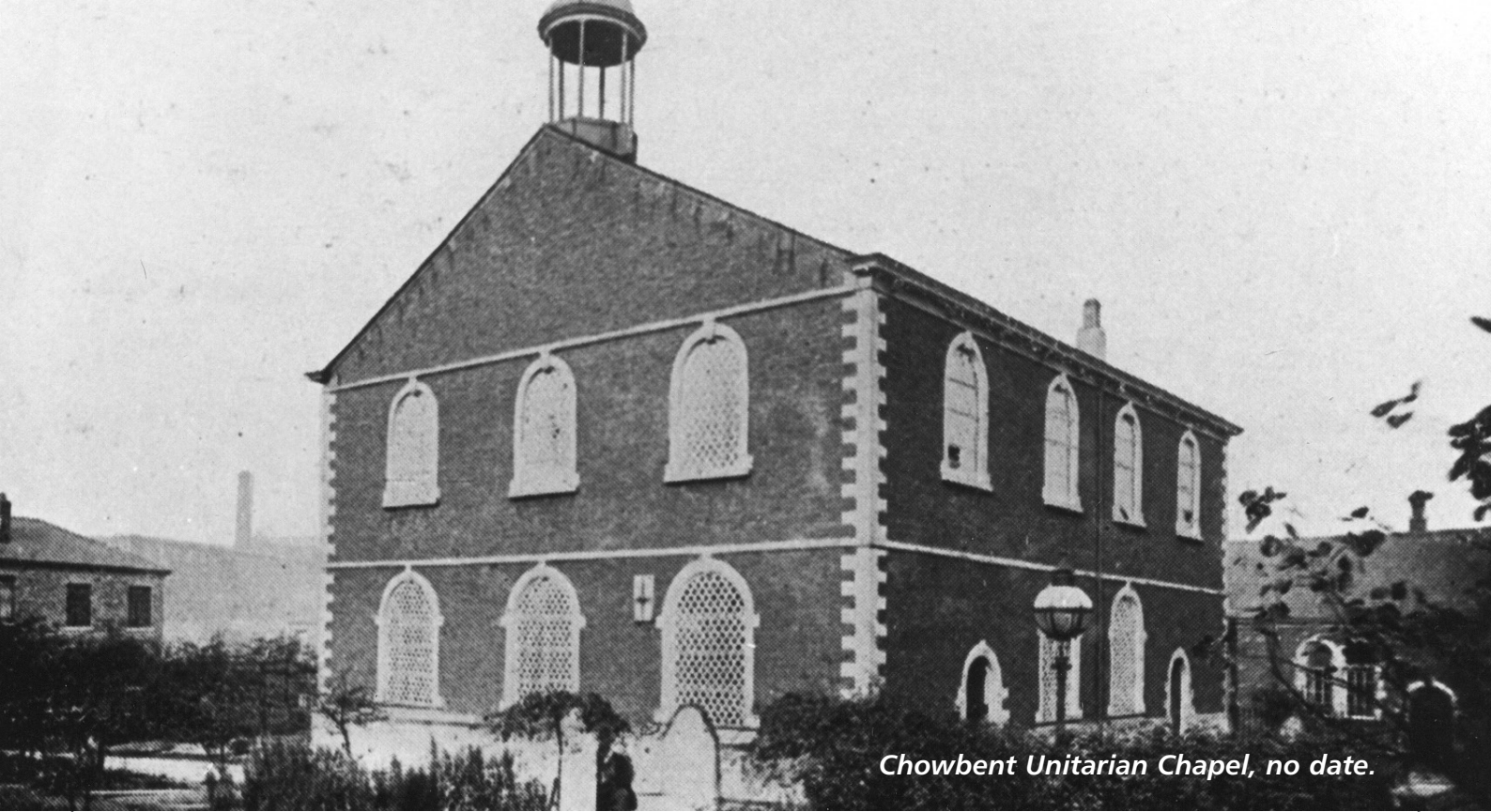
Each Saturday I received a real workman's wage packet containing two shiny half crowns and I was then faced with the problem of what to spend it on. Sweets were strictly rationed, toys were in very short supply and about the only things that I can remember as being readily available were books and periodicals. Looking back, I now realise that most of these were subtle propaganda aimed at boosting the nation's morale, but this did not worry me at the time. I was an avid reader and remember buying books with titles like 'Britain's wonderful fighting forces', 'Britain's glorious navy' and 'The story of the British Empire', all good patriotic stuff. Although I cannot remember for certain I expect I also spent some of my earnings on War Savings Stamps to help the war effort. At school each class had a savings group and every Monday morning we were encouraged to buy as many savings stamps as we could afford. The stamps were stuck in a



The 'X' is lasting evidence for the Battle of Leyland Mill Lane.

book which when full was exchanged for a War Savings Certificate that earned interest and could be cashed in after the war. (I eventually used mine towards buying my first car in the 1950s.) There were frequent special efforts to encourage us to save, such as 'Wings for Victory Week' when the town bought a Spitfire, a 'Warship Week' and many others. These were backed up by visits from members of the armed service who regaled us with stories of their work and told us what a grand job we were doing in supporting their efforts.

When I first got the job I did not expect it to last long but even in the depths of war, bureaucracy still flourished and it was necessary for Albert to get a number of permits and authorisations before work could commence. Eventually all the paperwork was correct, the wall rebuilt and the lights of my job extinguished. All those involved in the incident I have described have long since passed on but one memento still remains. If you walk down Leyland Mill Lane today and look at the left hand wall near the bottom of the hill, you will see a section of wall, inset by a couple of inches and where the courses of mortar do not line up - a lasting reminder of the 'Battle of Leyland Mill Lane'.



Chowbent Unitarian Chapel, no date.

Chowbent Chapel celebrates 'The General'

By Jennifer Whitelaw

On 22 February 2009, Chowbent Chapel, Atherton's oldest place of worship, marked the anniversary of the death of its most distinguished minister, 'General' James Wood.

He served the congregation for 64 years, until the day he died, 20 February 1759, at the age of 87.

James Wood was a son of the manse. His father, also James, became minister at Chowbent Chapel in 1657, preaching reform so that clergy and laity could enjoy 'life and liberty'. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 forbade these nonconformists to preach in their churches and deprived them of their livings. Later Acts forbade them to set up other places of worship and to go within five miles of their former churches.

'General' Wood's father held services for his sympathisers, and had particular support from the Morts of Wharton Hall, who

provided a meeting room. In 1670 he 'was caught and sent to prison'. Two years later, the year his son was born, it is possible that he was once again allowed to preach, following the Declaration of Indulgence. The Act of Toleration of 1689 would certainly have enabled him to return to Chowbent Chapel.

This simple brick building had been erected in 1645 'by the Lord of Atherton and his tenants' where the Parish Church now stands. It was Presbyterian, open to all who wished to worship, and drew its congregation from a wide area. And it was there that James Wood, who later became the 'General', worked as assistant minister, then succeeded his father in 1695.

Atherton at this time was famed for its nail-making. Indeed, local people were nicknamed 'sparrow bills' for the distinctive shape of a nail they manufactured. On Sunday, many of these nail makers walked to Chowbent Chapel to hear the Reverend Wood's solemn sermons.

In 1642, during the Civil War, blood had been spilled at Chowbent. Worshippers were on their way to the chapel when they heard that Lord Derby's troops, who were supporters of the king, were approaching Atherton. They fought these symbols of tyranny and defeated them, and in those troubled times, later turned their nail-making skills to the manufacture of billhooks and battle-axes.

Early in the 18th century, the Jacobites marched from Scotland and made repeated efforts to become the masters of England. A call was made by Sir Henry Hoghton and General Wills, who were in

charge of the defence of the area, for men to defeat the invaders. In November 1715 James Wood led a group of 'hale and courageous men' from Chowbent to Preston, where they defended the ford at Penwortham and the bridges at Walton. They were so effective that it is reported that General Wills regretted that he had not given them more important duties.

Wood, now dubbed 'the General', was rewarded by Parliament with a sum of £100 and returned to his duties as minister of Chowbent Chapel. But his part in the defeat of the Jacobites had angered Richard Atherton, a local landowner and strong Stuart supporter. As soon as he was 21, he took advantage of the fact that his ancestor had not agreed a lease for the land on which the chapel stood and evicted the congregation. They left quietly, taking the communion table and two communion cups.

The caretakers of the chapel were less reticent; it is reported that when Atherton's messenger came to collect the keys they threw them at him, declaring that he could take the chapel keys but did not have those of heaven.

Wood proved himself as 'sturdy a beggar as he was a fighter', travelling the district to ask for funds to build a new chapel, to which he added his Parliamentary grant of £100. Nathan Mort of Alder House gave to his friend 'General' Wood the freehold of neighbouring land and the chapel stands on the corner of Alderfold Street and Bolton Old Road to this day.

The congregation donated money, recruited craftsmen, and worked themselves to erect the treasured building that is Chowbent Unitarian Chapel. The interior of the chapel has a magnificent three-tier pulpit, panelling and dark oak pews, made from wood donated by people in the district. It has been added to over the years, but the original structure remains, much loved by its present congregation.

They have worked to restore the chapel and keep alive the flame of liberty. In February, they travelled to Preston to the site of Wood's sturdy defence in the battle, and held a service to mark the 250th anniversary of his death. There is no known image of the minister, nor is his grave marked. But the memory of his strength of character, his preaching skills and his huge impact on the lives of the people remain.

References

*J J Wright, Minister Emeritus
The Story of Chowbent Chapel
Lunn, John Atherton*

VIEWS OF ATHERTON



*Atherton Collieries
Carnival and Gala, 1928*



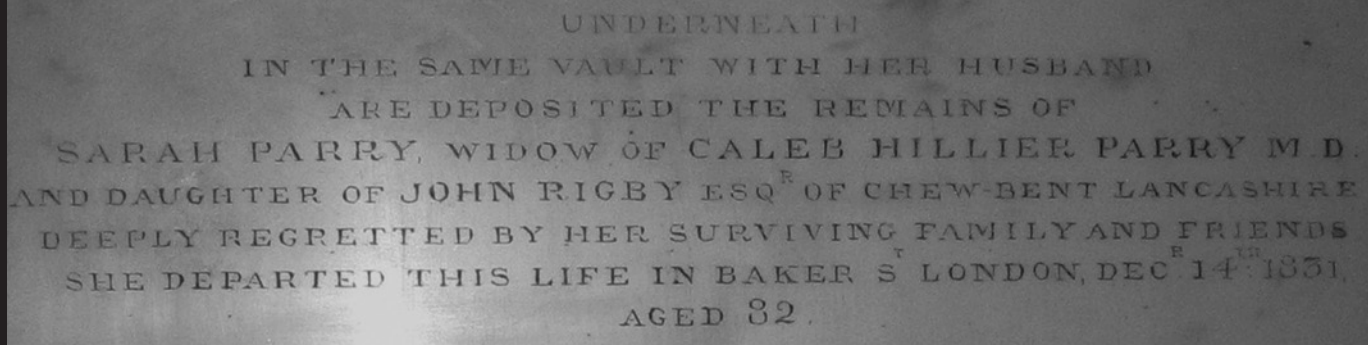
*Leigh Co-op, Church St, Atherton,
no date. The Co-op opened 1862*



*Irish National Foresters walking day,
circa 1904.*



*Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee
Proclamation, Atherton, 22 June 1897.*



Part of the plaque in memory of Sarah Parry in Bath Abbey.

From Chowbent to Bath

by Tony Ashcroft

Recently, when my wife and I went to visit my son, his wife and our first grandson in Bath, we had the opportunity to attend a service in Bath Abbey. After the service was over I had a look around the building and was surprised to come across a plaque to the memory of Sarah Parry (nee Rigby) on the wall near to the exit.

Evidently Sarah was the daughter of John Rigby of Chowbent (spelt Chewbent on the plaque). She had married Dr Caleb Hillier Parry and was the mother of Sir William Edward Parry who was both a rear-Admiral and an Arctic explorer. Parry's account of his 1819-20 expedition supposedly inspired Caspar David Friedrich to paint 'Das Eismeer' (The Sea of Ice).

Sarah's father was John Rigby who had married a Sarah Taylor, her father being John Taylor. John Taylor was a dissenting divine and Hebraist. He was born in 1694 at Scotforth and ordained in 1716 by dissenting ministers in Derbyshire. In 1733 Taylor moved to Norwich where he became a colleague of Peter Finch. At the close of 1757

he returned to Lancashire and became a tutor of divinity at Warrington Academy. Whilst on a visit to Chowbent he died in his sleep and is buried in the churchyard. Taylor was married to an Elizabeth Jenkinson, a widow of Boston, Lincolnshire.

Edward, who was son of John and Sarah Rigby, was educated at Warrington Academy before becoming apprenticed to David Martineau, a surgeon at Norwich. He studied in London before being admitted to the Corporation of Surgeons in 1769, the same year as his marriage. Edward then returned to Norwich where he settled. During his life he published numerous medical treatises. He also travelled to France and other parts of the continent in 1789. As a practical agriculturalist he was a close friend of Thomas William Coke of Holkham. In 1802 he was appointed an alderman, the following year he became sheriff and in 1805 was made mayor of Norwich. He was twice married. His first wife was Sarah Dyal with whom he had two daughters. His second wife was Anne Palgrave with whom he had 12 children.

Edward's daughter Elizabeth was the fifth child and fourth daughter of his second marriage. Elizabeth became an art critic, journalist, letter writer and translator. She frequently wrote under her own name but is perhaps better known as Lady Elizabeth Eastlake after her marriage to Charles Lock Eastlake RA in 1849. In 1850 Charles was knighted. Elizabeth was then admitted to prominent London society whose members included Thomas Macauley, John Ruskin, Sir Robert Peel, the Duke of Wellington and Charles Dickens to name but a few.

Lady Eastlake edited 'Dr Rigby's Letters from France &c. in 1789'. This was published circa 1880 by Longmans, Green and Co. There is a presentation copy to Colonel T H Lewin autographed by Lady Eastlake and dated 1885. A copy of this work is shelved in the Dootson Collection of Leigh Local History Library.

Author's note: Details of some members of the Parry, Taylor and Rigby families can be found in the Dictionary of National Biography should anyone be interested.

A Royal Visit

Dear Editor

In 1938, my wife and I were pupils at St. Thomas' Primary School in Clayton Street, Wigan. On 20 May that year, our class was taken by a teacher to see the visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to Wigan. We were placed under the verandah of the old Market Hall, which in those times was open onto Market Street, and was usually used for the weekend fruit and veg market. A photograph was taken of our class by a newspaper photographer showing both my wife and myself both aged about six. It was later displayed in the window of J B Leach, a newspaper distributor just above Wallgate Bridge.

I can clearly recall being lifted up to view the photograph, but I don't believe we were in a position to buy one at that time. If any reader could help us by guiding us toward a copy we would be most grateful.

Ralph and Kate Hilton

Christ Church, Pennington

Dear Editor

I am a member of Christ Church, Pennington, Leigh and have been asked by the vicar to establish an archive for the church. If any **PAST FORWARD** readers have any reminiscences, photographs or ephemeral material that could be used perhaps they could contact me.

Many thanks,
Tony Ashcroft

Email address: tonyjohnashcroft@tiscali.co.uk

EDITORIAL APOLOGY

I would like to apologise for an error that appeared in Issue 53. It was incorrectly stated that James Hilton, author of 'Goodbye Mr Chips', was also chairman of Leigh RLFC. The author and the chairman are separate individuals bearing the same name.

Images of the 1938 Royal visit.

These images have recently been digitised along with 5,000 other images from Wigan Heritage Services' photographic collection. They will be available to view online soon. See the next issue of Past Forward for further details.



Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

Aspull and Haigh Historical Society Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Our Lady's RC Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull at 7.30pm. All are welcome, contact Barbara Rhodes (01942) 222769 for further details.

Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings held on second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in St Richards Community Centre, Mayfield Street, Atherton. Members £1.00, non-members £1.50. For further information contact (01942) 884893.

Tuesday 9 March 2010

'Ribchester to York'

Speaker John Shaw

Tuesday 13 April 2010

'The History of Hawkshaw Village'

Speaker Jonathan Ali

Tuesday 11 May 2010

'Cunard' - The story of the great shipping line from the beginning to the present day

Speaker Kevin Barger

Tuesday 8 June 2010

'The Grand Theatre, Blackpool' - Memories of the venue and the stars that performed there

Speaker Mr B Band

Billinge History Society

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. For further details visit www.billinge-history.com

Hindley & District History Society

Meetings are held on the second Monday in the month at Hindley Museum in Hindley Library from 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Admission is £1.00 for members and £1.50 for non-members. Everyone is welcome.

The museum is open to the public at least once a week and entry is free. Contact the library staff for times and dates or telephone our Secretary Mrs Joan Topping (01942) 257361 or Mrs Norma Brannagh (01942) 258668.

Leigh & District Family History Society

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

Tuesday 20 April

Members Help Evening

Tuesday 18 May

The Atherton Murder
Speaker Derek Matthews

Tuesday 17 August

Getting Started

A weekly Help Desk is run by members of the Society each Monday from 1.30pm to 3.30pm in the Local History Section of Leigh Library.

For more information contact Mrs M Harrop - Chairman (01942) 743428
Mrs G McClellan - Secretary (01942) 729559
Email: leighfhs@blueyonder.co.uk

Local History Federation Lancashire

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

Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

Meetings held at 7.30pm on the 4th Tuesday each month at Hall Green Community Centre, UpHolland. There are no meetings in July or August.

For more information contact Sue Hesketh - Secretary (01942) 212940 or suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk or visit www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk/SkemGrp/Skem

Wigan Civic Trust

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

Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. The venue is Drumcroon, 2 Parsons Walk, Wigan. Contact Mr A Grimshaw on (01942) 245777 for further information.

Wigan Family & Local History Society

Promotion and encouragement of research into family and local history.

NEW VENUE:

**The Bowling Green,
106 Wigan Lane, Wigan WN1 2LF**

Meetings will now be held at the Bowling Green Public House, on Wigan Lane from 15 February 2010 onwards. We had noticed a loss of members to our monthly meetings, due to the locality of our previous venue. We have therefore decided to relocate back to Wigan to enable us to be more central. Please come and join us.

We meet every third Monday of each month (7.30 for 8.00pm). We have some excellent speakers lined up for the coming months or simply come and have a chat about your family or local history interest.

Monday 19 April 2010

'Autographs'

Speaker Peter Morgan

Monday 17 May 2010

'The History of Chocolate'

Speaker Michael Clarke

Monday 21 June 2010

AGM

No speaker

No meetings in July and August

Please note we do have a small charge for each meeting of £2.00 for both members and visitors. For further information call (01942) 727875 or visit www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory

Wigan Archaeology Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30, at the Upper Morris Street Working Men's Club in Wigan, for lectures and discussions on topics of historical or archaeological interest.

Admission is £2.00 for members and £3.00 for guests. For more information call Tom Glover on (01695) 624372 or Bill Aldridge on (01257) 402342.

You can also visit the website www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk

Wednesday 7 April 2010

Prehistoric Mellor
Speaker Andrew Myers (GMAU)

Wednesday 5 May 2010

Excavations at the end of the M62
Speaker Ron Cowell

Wednesday 19 May 2010

Committee meeting
No speaker

Wednesday 2 June 2010

Roman Roads in North Lancashire
Speaker David Ratledge

Wednesday 7 July

Battle of Preston 1648
Paul Cross

August TBA

Society Trip

Let it snow!

You may have noticed that in January this year, the Borough came to a standstill because of the snow. This is not the first time as these photographs show. Do you have memories of other bad snowfalls in the Borough? Do you have any good photographs of snowfalls gone by? If so, please get in touch!

People walking through the snow on Market Street, Hindley in January 1940.



Snow clearing on North Road, Atherton in February 1955.

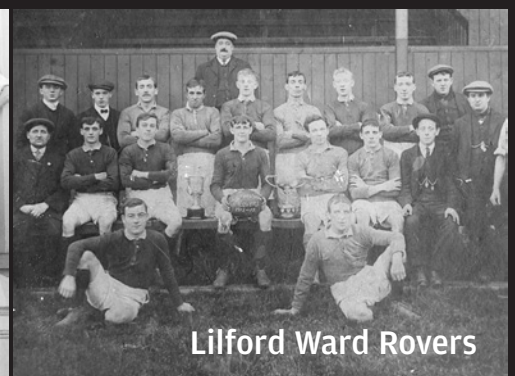
If you have any information about any of these photographs, please contact Lisa Keys on 01942 828126 or email l.keys@wlct.org

From the last issue

Unfortunately there were no responses to our request for information on the Lilford Ward Rovers or the Wigan Holiday snap photographs. If you think you can help in any way, we'd love to hear from you.



Wigan Holiday Snap



Lilford Ward Rovers

How to Find Us



Museum of Wigan Life

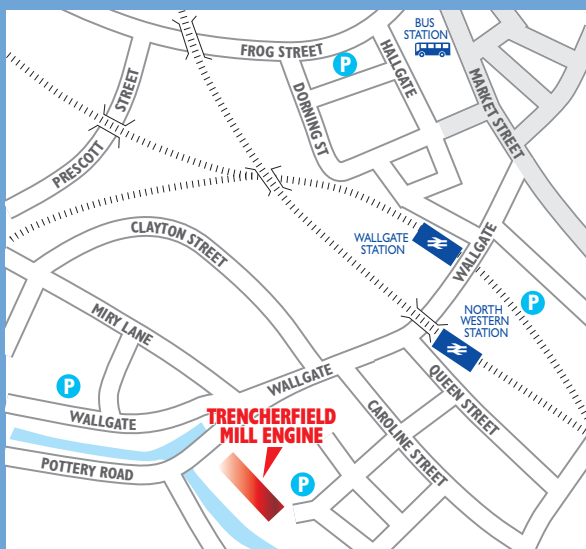
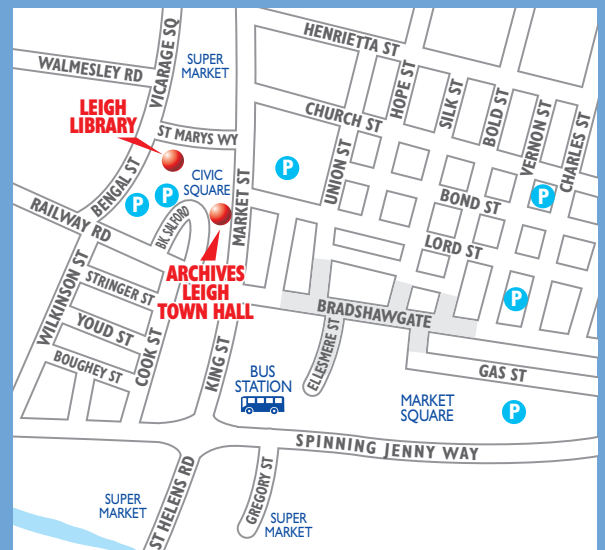
Library Street,
Wigan WN1 1NU
Telephone 01942 828128
heritage@wlct.org

Leigh Local History

Leigh Library, Turnpike Centre,
Civic Square, Leigh WN7 1EB
Telephone 01942 404559
h.turner@wlct.org

Archives

Leigh Town Hall, Leigh WN7 1DY
Telephone 01942 404430
a.miller@wlct.org



Trencherfield Mill Engine

Off Pottery Road,
Wigan WN3 4EF
Telephone 01942 828128