

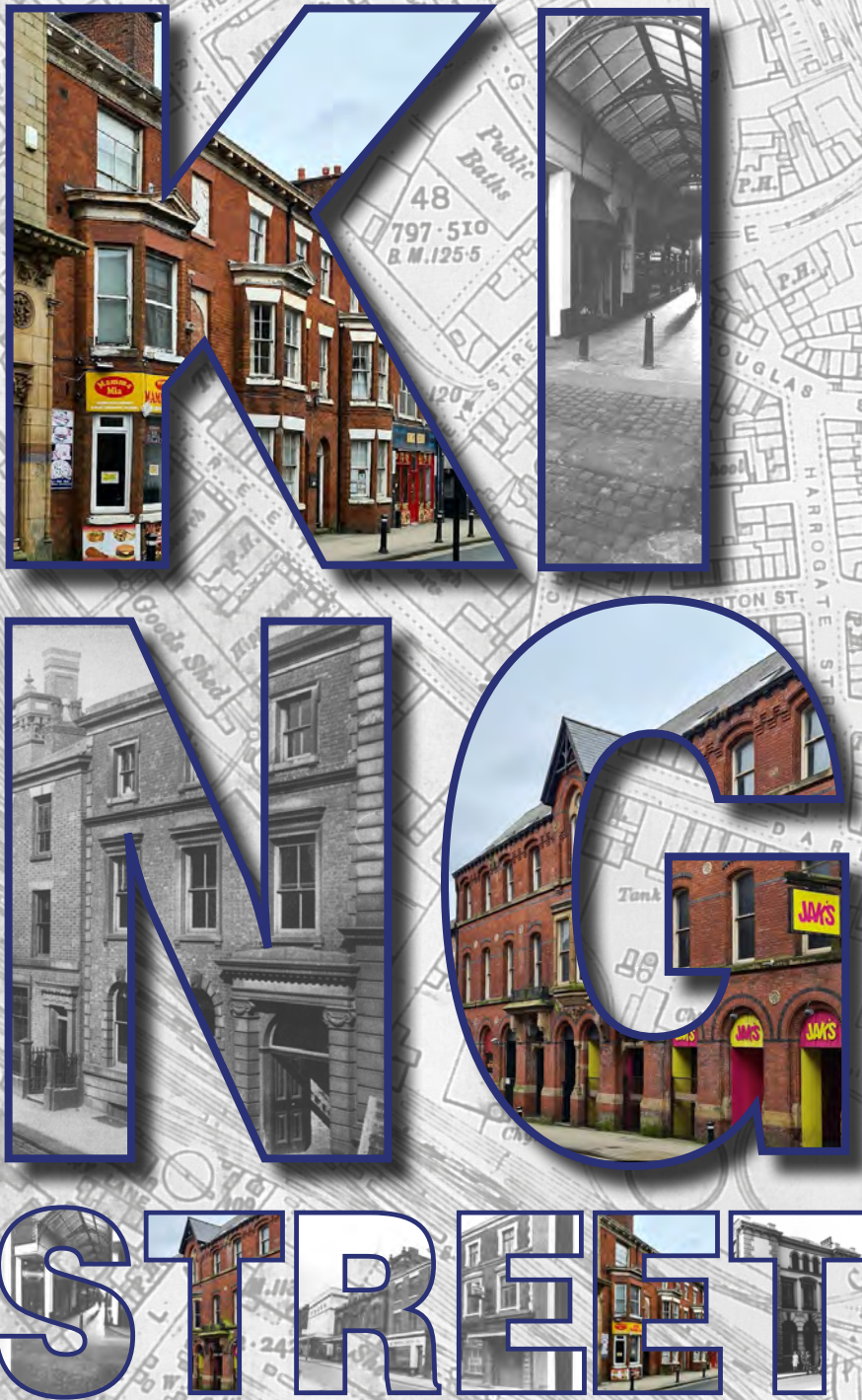
PAST *FORWARD*

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Wigan and Leigh's local history magazine

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FRONT COVER

Colour images of King Street
courtesy of Simon Radcliffe;
black and white images from
Archives: Wigan & Leigh

Letter from the Editorial Team

Welcome to PAST Forward Issue 94.

For my generation of Wiganers, the words 'King' and 'Street' conjure up a very specific set of memories – memories of dancing, fancy dress, vodka & Red Bull from Bentley's Bar, and pizzas at 2am. While pulling this issue together, it's been a pleasure to read about the past lives of this well-known hub – lives that long preceded its incarnation as the party capital of the borough.

As you'll see from Jan Bannister's in-depth overview, it was once a place where professionals of all stripes set up shop, and where retail and entertainment thrived. While it has been in decline for some years, King Street's designation as a Heritage Action Zone is leading to yet another new beginning – see page 3 opposite to find out more.

In this issue, we're also launching a brand new section for young writers, The Young Historian, edited by our very own Archives Assistant, Fiona. We'd love to feature new voices in this section so do get in touch if you love history and don't remember *Rainbow*.

We also have brand new work from regular contributors – Julie McKiernan, Michael Caine and John Unsworth – and some comic relief from our Cartoonist-in-Residence, Chris Murphy.

I hope you enjoy it.

Helen, Editor.

.....

Welcome Ben!

Ben joined the Culture and Events Team in June as Business Partner for Culture, Arts and Heritage. He's had many roles in the heritage sector, including Curator for National Museums, Liverpool and Manager of Fleetwood Museum.



Copy deadline for Issue 95 – Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Monday, 16 October 2023.

KING STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE

‘The King Street Story that Was’: an update By Jan Bannister

Historic England and Wigan Council are gearing up to give several properties a new lease of life through the King Street Heritage Action Zone project. Covering Library Street, King Street, part of Wallgate and Rodney Street, the zone contains ten listed buildings and many more historic and architectural gems. There are three elements to the Heritage Action Zone project – one focusses on King Street’s past, one explores its present, and another sets the direction for the future. Wigan Local History and Heritage Society (WLHHS) are working on the first strand: conducting research to highlight aspects of the area’s past. Our findings will assist with the regeneration of neglected and often derelict buildings. Ultimately, the goal of the project is to create economic growth, thereby improving the quality of life in towns, villages and cities across England. High Street Heritage Action Zone Status will give the King Street area the recognition, and hopefully the lift, it deserves.

The buildings associated with the Heritage Action Zone have been divided into ‘existing’ historic and ‘long gone’ lost buildings. They have all had a part to play in the history and heritage of the town.

From the early eighteenth century King Street played an important role in the town. The buildings were premises for breweries, solicitors’ firms, insurance firms, retailers and religious groups. They were also residential properties and entertainment venues.

From the mid twentieth century many of the businesses left the area and it became an entertainment centre with places

to dine. Theatres changed to cinemas and, more recently, nightclubs.

It is not just about the buildings though; it is about the people who used them, the people who lived in them, worked in them, shopped in them, or had a drink in them. They are all part of the story.

Since April 2021 members from the WLHHS have identified and researched buildings which reflect the architecture, significance and overall contribution made to the history of the town, and linked many to prominent people. Some of these are familiar names within the town today, for example Ratcliffe Ellis and Timothy Coop.

The research to date covers twenty-five properties, twelve lost buildings and at least twelve people. Jim Meehan’s previous article covered The Minorca, Faggy Lane, Grimes Arcade and a Georgian property at 25 King Street.

Over the next few issues, as work progresses, the society will share some of the stories we have found. This is supported by a large database of research, which will be accessible from several sites including Archives: Wigan & Leigh, WLHHS, Heritage England and the Heritage Action Zone project site by April 2024.

We would welcome any memories, photographs or comments from the residents of Wigan, especially anyone who had relations who owned or worked in any of the properties within the Heritage Action Zone area.

King Street, 1892





Enamel sign advert for Rothwell's chocolate

Wigan's Chocolate Factory Rothwell's Grocers – 25 Wallgate and 1 and 3 Rowbottom Square

.....
First depicted on the Mather Map of 1827, a comparison with the OS Map of 1847 and later maps shows little change. This suggests that the current building is the same as it was in the early nineteenth century.

From at least the mid-nineteenth century it was a grocery, the proprietor being recorded as John Rothwell, who is described as a tea, coffee, and wine merchant.

John Rothwell was born on 22 July 1824 in Pemberton, Wigan to parents Martha and James Rothwell. The 1841 census shows him as an apprentice grocer to Thomas Young in Wallgate. He later set up his own business on King Street.

John married Mary Quibell Wells in 1854 in Nottingham. They had seven children: William Henry Quibell Rothwell, George James Rothwell, Mary Alexandra Rothwell, Charles Arthur Rothwell, James Joseph Rothwell, Thomas Taylor Rothwell, and William Rothwell.

By 1851 he had moved to 25 Wallgate and was employing two apprentices, one of whom was his brother James. They were selling a full range of quality groceries. The company also made their own products, specialising in cocoa and chocolate items. In 1885 a cocoa works was opened at Sharp Street and Wilcock Street in Wigan. The works were managed by John Rothwell junior, the eldest son, until his death in 1888 aged twenty-eight.

Later, a second factory was opened in Harvey Lane, Golborne manufacturing Welco Cocoa, Red Cow Chocolate, and their own brand of Rothwell's chocolate.

Well known in Wigan, John senior was a local councillor and prominent member of the Wigan Parish Church congregation. Two of his sons, William and James, continued the grocery business, whilst a third son studied at Cambridge and became a clergyman.

John died at Orrell Road, Orrell on 15 February 1901, a grocer and chocolate manufacturer. His son James moved to Golborne to manage the factory. In 1935 the closure of the Golborne factory was announced, and it was

auctioned for £2,800 in March that year.

Various photos of the building demonstrate some of the different businesses that have used the building since its origins as a grocery. A photo from 1920 shows it was still called Rothwell. In a 1950 photo it appears to be a men's outfitters. A photo from 1964 shows it as 'Weaver to Wearer', and in 1981 an optician. And in the 1990s it was Bridgeford's estate agents.

Meek's Building – 17-19 Wallgate

.....
Designed and built by James Fairclough in 1861, the large-scale building extends back to Arcade Street and Rowbottom Square. It housed Meek's General Drapery Establishment.

The business was founded in 1831 by a prominent Wigan Wesleyan family. It would appear that throughout the life of the business the Meek family adopted their Christian beliefs in the employment of staff with indentured apprentices and living-in, respectable, accommodation on the premises.



Wallgate showing, from right to left, the Minorca, Rothwell's and Meek's

Joseph Meek was born in 1810 in New Malton Yorkshire. He married Sarah Higginbottom (1818-1893) and had ten children: George, William Ombler, Sarah Elizabeth, Sarah Josephine, Clara Elizabeth, Mary Ann, Frances Elizabeth, Joseph Herbert, Benjamin Owen, and Sarah Emmeline. The family were Wesleyan Methodists with most of the children being baptised at the Wesleyan Methodist Wigan Circuit.

In 1841 the draper's business was in Market Place under the management of Joseph Meek's sons, George and Joseph, and employed five apprentices and three servants.

By the 1851 census the Meeks had moved to larger premises in Standishgate, the business was flourishing and employed four assistant drapers, eight apprentice drapers, one nurse and three servants.

During the late 1850s discussions took place concerning the design of a new building to address the immediate and future growth of the business and future accommodation requirements. A suitable site was found and procured in Wallgate and architect Mr J. Ainscough was engaged to design the new building.

The business continued to grow and in 1861 was still at 11 Standishgate employing seven assistant drapers and six apprentices, along with a cook, nurse, housemaid and a nursemaid.

In July 1862 the new, and very extensive, building opened for business at 17-19 Wallgate, (the building still exists and has stood the test of time). By 1871 the building housed Joseph's son William and his wife Emma, along with his brother George. His staff comprised twelve assistant drapers, eight apprentices, one cook, two housemaids and one waitress.

At this time father Joseph had moved to St Paul Street, North Meols, Southport with his wife, two of the children, Mary and Benjamin, and his brother and sister-in-law, William and Mary Higginbotham.

In 1867, Joseph's brother, George, left the company to pursue his lifelong vocation to become a Methodist minister. The company changed the name from G & J Meek to Joseph Meek & Sons. At this point, Joseph's son William took a leading role in the operation and the future direction of the company, diversifying into other products and services including sewing machines.

William continued to run the business and Joseph went into retirement and took up residence at Swinley Hall, where he died on 7 May 1885. The hall, now demolished, was situated opposite St Michael's Church in Swinley.



Meek's Building, 17-19 Wallgate



Meek's Cellars, 1890

In late August 1884, gossip and rumours were rife in the town concerning the impending closure, and possible liquidation, of the company. The rumours proved to be correct and an Official Receiver was appointed, Mr T. J. Ridgway. His initial work identified a shortfall of assets against liabilities of around £7,600. The causes of the failure were given as: bad debt, money locked up in buildings, book debts, and having to substantially reduce the bank overdraft.

So ended a much-respected company with a fifty-year history that had greatly contributed to the retail business of the town.

The large and extensive building remained empty for several years until 1890 when the Bonds Company took up the cellar area, under the name of Meek's Cellars. The entrance to the Cellars was via the Old Post Office Yard and operated until the 1920s.

George Heaton (1840-1910)

‘Foresight, sagacity and thoroughness’

by Anthony Pilgrim



George Heaton, architect

In 1874 George Heaton was appointed architect for the Victoria Buildings in King Street, Wigan, and had established an office there by 1877.

The end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth century was a period of momentous change in Wigan. New legislation in the spheres of public health and education combined with

technological advances and industrial prosperity to create a substantially altered urban environment. Dilapidated and insanitary housing in the town centre was swept away to be replaced by new streets lined with grandiose public and commercial buildings, reflecting the wealth and confidence of Wigan's more prominent citizens and benefactors.

A significant proportion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings still standing in Wigan town centre and the wider Wigan Metropolitan Borough are the work of local architect and engineer George Heaton. Active between 1865 and 1910, initially alone and then in partnership with W. C. Ralph and son F. G. Heaton, he designed 'numerous flamboyant buildings using the Old English and Renaissance Revival styles and materials fashionable at this period'. His legacy includes several Grade II listed properties plus seventeen others in the town centre 'deemed to be of significant townscape merit and... possible candidates for future listings', as well as numerous buildings and examples of transport/sanitation

infrastructure situated elsewhere in the borough and beyond.

George Heaton was born on 9 March 1840 in Pemberton and is listed on the 1841 and 1861 census returns as a resident of Goose Green together with his father, a 'paviour', and siblings. In 1862 he married Jane Rogerson at the Church of St John the Divine, Pemberton. Together they would have seven children before Jane's death in 1879. In the meanwhile he had become a pupil of the Wigan Borough Surveyor J. L. Hunter, and oversaw the construction and/or renewal of the Corporation's waterworks, sewage mains and outfall works.

As the Wigan Observer would later note in its obituary, it was by this means that he gained valuable engineering experience and came to the notice of the celebrated engineer and sanitarian Sir Robert Rawlinson, spending a short period in Sir Robert's service in London and – it was reported – being offered by him 'a highly lucrative and influential position in Egypt'. George, however, 'found it ever against his inclinations to seek public honours and distinctions, and preferred to come back and devote his talents to work in his native town'.

Commencing practice on his own account in the late 1860s, George was engaged as surveyor for the former Hindley Local Board and oversaw various public works in that and the neighbouring townships. In 1877 he designed a Wesleyan school for approximately one hundred children. Other design and construction projects attributed to him during this period include St Peter's Schools and the cemetery, lodge and chapel at Hindley (respectively 1873 and 1878-1880); the Scarisbrick Street Baptist Schools (1875); 5-15 Swinley Road (c.1876, now Grade II listed); and Wigan Public Baths (1881-2).

In 1880 George married second wife Tabitha Margery Holden, with whom



The Powell Museum and Library, Station Road (now demolished)

he would have another ten children. By 1884 he had been admitted to membership of the Manchester Society of Architects and to associate membership of the Institute of Civil Engineers, and in 1889 he was initiated into the United Grand Lodge of England Freemasons, Antiquity Lodge, at Wigan. About this time he and Tabitha moved with their children to 54 Earl Street, a self-built family home in the Gothic Revival style featuring an Italianate door surround and an exposed gable truss. His Jacobean Revival-style public baths at Bootle were completed in 1888, this following execution of his designs for the Rock Hotel at Warrington Road, Lower Ince a year earlier.

In 1892 George formed a partnership with the London-born architect William Chasen Ralph (1848-1913). Some of the projects undertaken by the pair included the fitting out of three newly-erected shops at Ashton-in-Makerfield (1891); the Ship Inn and stables on Millgate (1892-3); the 'rich Flemish Renaissance Style' Wigan Reform Club at 15 King Street West (1893); the Royal Hotel at the junction of Standishgate and Station Road (1893, now lost); the Yorkshire Bank (originally Powell's Chambers) at 35-37 Market Place (1892); the Grade II listed St Mark's Church at Newtown (1891-2); and the Church House - now Tudor House - on New Market Street (1893).

With the addition of George's eldest son, Frederick, in 1894, the partnership entered a prolific phase during which some of Wigan's most well-known town centre buildings were designed and constructed. Among others these included Makinson Arcade and 54-56 Market Place (1897-8); 1-5 Market Street and 26-38 Market Place (1904-6, now Grade II listed); 2-14 and 25-29 Library Street (1899-1903); the Prudential Assurance Building at 16 Library Street (1905, Grade II listed); 2-5 King Street; the Westwood Estate Office at 5 Rodney Street (1896, Grade II listed); Cowling Buildings and Market Buildings for Richard Makinson on Mesnes Street (1895); the Powell Boys' Reading Room on Station Road (1895, now lost); auction rooms on Bretherton Row (1897); and the building - now the Anvil - at the corner of Dorning Street and Hallgate (1898).

Terraces of workers' houses designed by Heaton Ralph & Heaton were also built

during this period, as well as residences for 'the better sort' such as those at 12-22 and 38-41 Bridgeman Terrace and 6-20 Spencer Road. Further afield, the firm was responsible for the Britannia Bridge Council Schools; St George's Parish Schools (1895); water mains at Haigh (1895); police stations at Higher Ince and Spring View (both c.1900); the Coach and Horses at Lower Ince; the Victoria Hotel at Platt Bridge (1904); the workhouse/infirmary at Billinge; the Conservative Club at Ashton-in-Makerfield (1905); and the 'mildly Arts and Crafts'- style vicarage for the Church of St John the Evangelist at Hindley Green (1910).

On 8 October 1910 George Heaton died at his home, 54 Earl Street. A funeral service at St Michael's Church was followed by interment in the family vault at Lower Ince cemetery. Notifying its readers of these events, the Wigan Observer stated that:

'Mr Heaton was a prodigious worker, and had little time for pursuits apart from his business. Probably he had also as little taste as time for public positions. Yet he... will be a greatly missed figure, for he represents a link with past forms of local government and old associations of Wigan and the surrounding districts. He was an eminently capable engineer and

surveyor, whose work remains to give proof of his foresight, sagacity, and thoroughness...'

Sources

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Powell, P: *'Firmness and Delight: Heaton and Ralph of Wigan and Their Buildings in St Mary and St John Parish Magazine (Part I Autumn 1996, pp.18-20; Part II Winter 1996/7, pp.18-19)*

Wigan Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal, April 2010

<https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk>

<https://historicengland.org.uk/>

www.jwconservation.co.uk

<https://pubheritage.camra.org.uk>

The Wigan Observer & District Advertiser

The Wigan Examiner

Wigan Building Preservation Trust

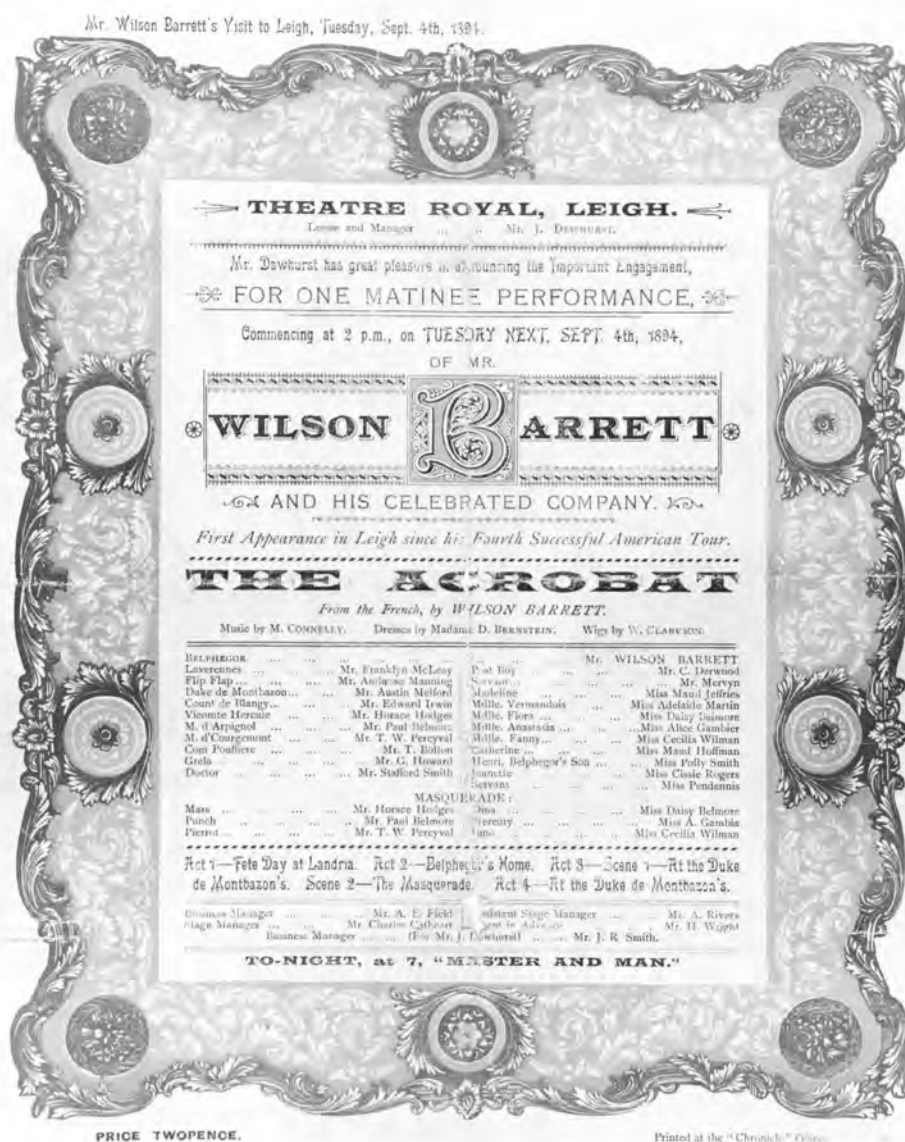
For a more complete list of the buildings designed by George Heaton visit <https://www.wiganlocalhistory.org> Wigan Local History & Heritage Society



The Westwood Estate Office at 5 Rodney Street, 1896, Grade II listed

BUILT TO LAST

BY JULIE MCKIERNAN



Advertisement for the Theatre Royal, Leigh, 1894

I have always been fascinated by old buildings. Each is a representative of the society that designed and built it, from the substandard slums thrown up by inhumane industrialists to glittering twentieth century skyscrapers. But unless buildings can change and evolve like those who constructed and used them, they can lose their purpose and function. A lot of people protest about old buildings that have been demolished to make

way for new ones and, whilst I understand their pain, I also think that buildings have a natural life span. After all, if we'd preserved every old building in our towns, then we wouldn't now have the glorious mix of eras that makes each of them so unique. A perfect example is Leigh's Civic Square. Here the parish church of St Mary's, with its medieval foundations and Victorian construction, faces the classic Edwardian Town Hall, and

rub shoulders with the brutal modernist library. The contrast between these very disparate buildings creates an energy and a feeling that – here – anything is possible.

But what of the buildings that are demolished? How do we know when they have reached their natural end? And how do we come to terms with their loss? We all have emotional attachments to buildings, particularly those we visited in our youth such as dance halls and nightclubs. The buildings which housed two of Leigh's most famous nightspots, 'the Casino' and 'the Garrick', are long gone but their history is a snapshot of the way that entertainment venues reflect the changing interests and attitudes of society.

In 1884 the wooden 'Theatre Royal and Peoples Music Hall' in Silk Street was replaced by J. C. Prestwich's brick built 'De Castro's Theatre of Varieties'. It staged drama, variety, opera, musical comedy, and pantomime. When Lowton's Shakespearean actor Jonty Dewhurst became manager he extended the stage and the auditorium to include 2,600 seats, and changed its name to 'The New Theatre Royal and Opera House'. Its visiting acts were mainly 'legitimate' theatre but did include a circus with elephants, which were stabled in the nearby railway arches at night!

But touring companies gradually disappeared, hastened by the disruption of the First World War, and growing competition from cinema. TV, bingo and working men's clubs led to a further decline in audiences, and in 1954 Councillor W. Woolstencraft JP, manager and lessee for thirty-six

years, sold the theatre to Robert Brown of Wigan.

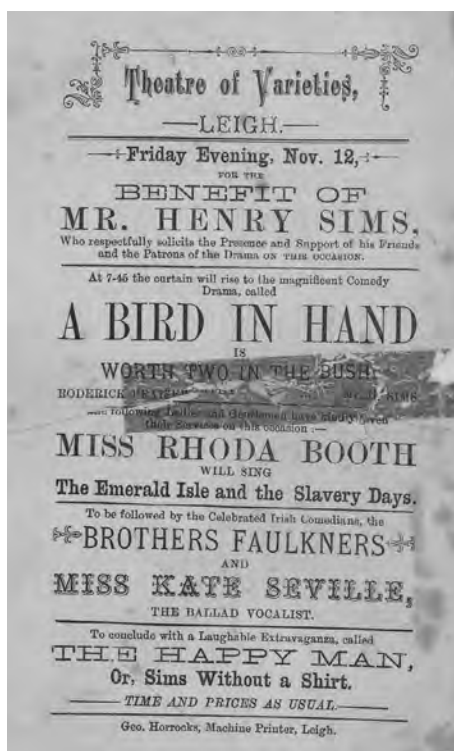
Brown, who already had an 'interest' in several Lancashire dance halls, could afford to spend thousands of pounds on converting and modernising 'the Theatre Royal'. The circle was replaced by a shallow balcony running along the back of the building which contained a refreshment buffet and alcoves, and a sprung Canadian maple floor was installed. The new 'Casino Ballroom' opened on 24 August 1955, with Johnny Prior and his band playing for Old Tyme dancing and modern dancing, with novelty spot prizes and paper hats.

In the 1950s Saturday night was the highlight of the week, but no alcohol was served, and dancing finished at 11.00pm. Friday night dances continued until 1.00am but these were usually taken over by a factory, charity or other organisation, such as Ward and Goldstone.

In the early sixties, Joe Brown took over as manager with his wife, Win. They quickly realised that they had to move with the times and introduced Monday 'Pop Nights'. The most famous act to appear was the Beatles in 1963. It was a sell out with parked coaches lining the surrounding streets and the entrance swamped by hopeful, but ticketless, fans.

When cabaret replaced pop music as the new entertainment craze, Joe and Win made 'the Casino' a members' club and introduced gambling in the Rainbow Room, and 'something special for the gentlemen' on Fridays to lure them away from the town's new cabaret club, 'the Garrick'.

When Joe died in 1973, Win turned 'the Casino' into a disco and, following her retirement in 1982, it was renamed 'Reubens Nightclub'. This closed in 1996, perhaps because its former customers were now occupied with more demanding jobs or children, and the younger clientele who would have replaced them preferred the freedom and spontaneity of 'raves'.



Programme from the Theatre of Varieties for the benefit of Mr Henry Sims

After standing empty for years, it was demolished and replaced with a sheltered housing block, Reubens Court, in 2009.

Rival club, 'the Garrick', was accessed via a ginnel off Leigh Road. The building was once the first Timms Garage with a showroom and workshop but was Fosters Shirt Factory when businessman Roy Jackson bought it in 1961. He named it 'the Garrick' after his sons Gary and Eric, and spent £10,000 transforming it into a 'soft lights and sweet music centre'. Opening act chart topper Ronnie Carroll nearly didn't make it after the car he was travelling in

blew a tyre near Howe Bridge and crashed into a lamp standard.

The club quickly attracted some of the biggest acts of the 1960s, and drew a regular clientele who were willing to queue to see a three or four act cabaret, seven nights a week, with food - in a basket!

Roy was a tough businessman who sacked P. J. Proby for appearing drunk one night, and called Gene Vincent an 'old American rock and roll has-been'. Famous artists who played there included: Val Doonican, Adam Faith, Billy Fury, Tom Jones, Sandie Shaw, Jerry Lee Lewis, Les Dawson, Ken Dodd, Bob Monkhouse and Mike Yarwood.

Roy retired in 1976 due to ill health and sold the business to Geoff Cordell from Bolton.

But the advent of disco, the convenience of watching big names on TV, and blockbuster films led to the decline of live light entertainment and Cordell closed the business in March 1978. The building became a storehouse before being demolished in the 1980s.

Even though we remember it fondly, none of us can live in the past. Each generation finds new ways to enjoy themselves, part of the pleasure of which is doing something different to those preceding them. But whilst not every building can survive - our memories will.

Reubens nightclub, 2005



Lions Bridge

Leigh's Bridge of Myths and Mythstakes

BY MICHAEL CAINE



Atherton Hall and Lions Bridge c. 1726.

(Painting courtesy of David Sykes and Atherton Hall/Lions' Bridge group)

Atherton Hall was built between 1723 and 1745, first by Richard Vernon Atherton, and then by his brother-in-law, Robert Gwilym. Its estate was laid out with gardens, walks, pastures, and a carriageway, (the Avenue) from Leigh Parish Church to the hall itself. The small valley of Hindsford Brook was dammed to create a lake below the hall, and an ornate bridge built to carry the carriageway across the lake. This was Lions Bridge, later to feature, both intact and collapsed, on photos and local postcards up to the 1920s.

So, what is the first 'mythstake' about the bridge? It's a minor one, but Lions Bridge wasn't in Leigh originally, it was in Atherton. While the hall site remained in Atherton, the bridge site, and a sizeable chunk of land, were sold by the Atherton Local Board to

Leigh in 1894. It was an area dependent on Leigh for vital services i.e., sewage and gas, and Atherton 'sold' it for an agreed sum of £350 annually for twenty years. The new civic boundary then moved to the right of the bridge, i.e., to the east, and it became part of Leigh: a sort of 'Atherton Purchase' and substantial civic expansion!

Secondly, it is a 'mythstake' to assume there were only lions on the bridge, hence the name, and this is widely believed locally. Above the central arch there were, in fact, two sphinxes, with two lions at either end of the bridge (picture two). The Athertons, wisely or not, chose French sphinxes, which apparently proved strangely irresistible to local youths and vandals, having pronounced female chest attributes. The Romans,

for instance, favoured a flatter profile. The sphinxes' heads are clearly seen on a number of photographs.

Until recently, a headless statue, the largest remnant of the structure, erected in 1993 by the Civic Trust by the site of the bridge, was thought to be a lion. However, photos exist in the Archives of a central sphinx with the repair of an iron collar following damage due to casual vandalism, (picture two again). A letter to the Leigh Chronicle, dated 19 September 1856 states, '...some idle ruffians... knocked the head off one of the sphynxes, (sic), and threw it into the water.' The Atherton Hall and Lions Bridge Group have researched and confirmed that the surviving headless torso is a sphinx, with the remnants of an iron spike inserted so the head could be re-set. Sadly, this head was not recovered after the bridge fell.

A fanciful myth is told about the lions on New Year's Eve, repeated in the local history publication, 'The Old Town of Leigh' (1985). On the stroke of midnight, the lions were said to leap off the bridge into the lake and back up on again. The reality is that at least one of the lions, the one on the left nearest to Leigh, was repeatedly pushed off the bridge by vandals, ending up in the water with just the head visible. Another Leigh



Victorian glass photo showing sphinxes, one with iron 'collar' and a lion in the lake (Archives: Wigan & Leigh PC2016.877)

Chronicle report dated 17 April 1896, states: '...and one of the stone lions was some time ago knocked bodily off the pedestal. Once again picture two bears this out.

Another 'mythstake' is the date of the bridge's collapse and a 'myth' is the event accompanying it. The date has invariably been given as 1900-1905 in local history booklets, and that it collapsed just after a coach and horse went over it. Jonathan Coombes and I found an Archive image, showing the collapsed bridge, dated 1897, (picture three).

The Leigh Chronicle bears this out, saying in its 8 January 1897 edition: 'Within the last few days the centre arch has fallen in, and the other part of the fabric seems doomed.' As for the coach and horses, that was impossible since, 'It was a fortunate thing that Mr Selby

(the agent for the owners, by now the Lilford family) 'railed it off in time...' He had indeed, in April 1896, because of the bridge's poor condition. The 'coach and horses' incident was told me a few years ago by Miss Mary Marsh, a kind and knowledgeable lady, who lived nearby in Atherton Hall cottage.

So, why did it fall down? The answer is neither myth nor mythstake. Vandalism contributed but age, the drying up of the lake, and subsidence from the nearby Bedford Pit's workings compromised the foundations. The rubble core bridge then suffered a severe winter over 1896-97 and the downfall of the central arch occurred, as detailed in the local press, and shown in picture three.

Finally, there is a myth/mythstake that needs dispelling: that one of the lions

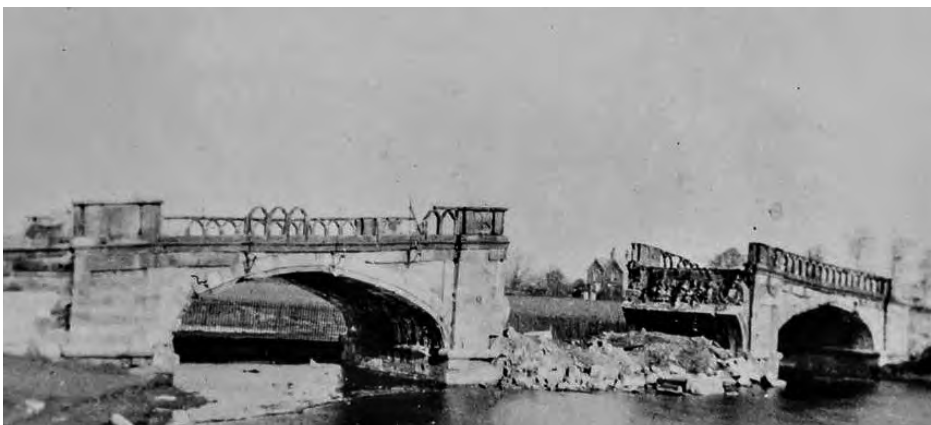
is to be found in Mesnes Park, Wigan, and that a second lion which stood above the entrance to Wigan's old gasworks, both came from Lions Bridge. They are in fact totally different in size and style. How do we know this? Quite easily, because the Lilford estate rescued two of the fallen lions, and they are currently installed at their estate offices in Tarleton, near Preston. Despite entreaties from local bodies, and Andy Burnham, when MP for Leigh, the 'Lilford Two' will not be relocated to Leigh. We must be content with a photo of one of them, as in picture four.



Lion from the bridge at Tarleton Hall, courtesy of Lee Robert McStein.

The remnants of the bridge now lie under the extension of the Avenue which leads up to Orchard Lane and the Long Causeway. Several stones lie with the headless sphinx, (sadly facing the wrong way). Like the original sphinx, the bridge and its history have fostered legends, myths, and 'mythstakes'. Where the other lions and sphinx are is unknown at present. Perhaps they are under the road, but the remaining sphinx, being headless alas, is as inscrutable as in legend. And that is no 'mythstake'.

Acknowledgements and sources: Quotes from Leigh Chronicles of the time: Archives: Wigan & Leigh.



Photograph of collapsed bridge dated 1897 (Archives: Wigan & Leigh PC2015.15301)

Celebrating the Past

Mapping Our Blue Plaque Project

BY THOMAS McGRATH

You may have noticed some new blue plaques appearing on buildings and in public places across the Wigan borough over the past few years. The scheme is managed by Wigan Council to commemorate the link between that location and a notable person, event, or former buildings on the same site, as a way of celebrating our local history and heritage.

It is similar to the 'official' blue plaque programme managed by English Heritage but that scheme is restricted to areas within Greater London. Since 2018, two blue plaques a year have been installed around the Wigan borough. In 2023 a new plaque was unveiled in Ashton-in-Makerfield to celebrate the life of Mary O'Shaughnessy. Another dedicated to James Caldwell Prestwich will soon be unveiled in Leigh.

Mary O'Shaughnessy (1898-1973) was born in Ashton-in-Makerfield and later lived in Leigh, before moving to Angers in France in the inter-war years where she worked as a governess. During the Second World War she worked as a spy helping to smuggle stranded airmen out of occupied France. She was betrayed to the Gestapo and sent to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. Mary's survival in the camp was made even more remarkable by the fact that she only had one arm. She was eventually liberated and later lived in Kenya. The plaque was installed in Ashton Public Library, a building Mary would have known. There is also a memorial bench dedicated to Mary in Jubilee Park.



James Caldwell Prestwich (1852-1940) was born in Atherton, the son of bolt manufacturers. Orphaned by the age of twelve, he was educated at Leigh Grammar School and Nantwich Grammar School. He later studied architecture in London and worked in Sheffield and Barrow. He returned to Lancashire around 1875 after visiting France and Belgium. He designed numerous buildings in and around Leigh including Leigh Town Hall; the Technical College &

Library on Railway Road (with J. H. Stephens); Leigh Infirmary; shops on Bradshawgate, including Leigh Friendly Cooperative Buildings; the Cenotaph; Leigh Infirmary; Atherton Town Hall; and many more pubs, theatres, hotels, houses, swimming baths and a school. He was honoured by the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1911. His plaque is situated on Leigh Town Hall.

How to make a nomination

To nominate a person, building or event for a blue plaque, you will need to complete the online blue plaque nomination form available on the Wigan Council website: (www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Museums-archives)

There are some considerations for each nomination:

- They should be of significant public standing in the borough. A national or international context will strengthen the proposal.
- They should have made some important, positive contribution to the local area.
- Fictitious characters will not be commemorated.
- Commemoration of buildings requires a historic cultural significance worthy of public notice, whether from a historical event or an important cultural significance that's not obvious from its present appearance.
- Plaques can only be considered for people who are deceased. Living individuals are celebrated in a different way, through 'stars' on Believe Square in Wigan, and Civic Square in Leigh.
- The Council will fund two blue plaques per year. Additional plaques may be established if funding has been raised by the applicant.

All submissions will be reviewed by a panel of representatives from the following Council services: Culture, Arts and Heritage; Libraries; Economy; Planning; Facilities; Skills and Careers; Events; and PR. They will then be ratified by the Portfolio holder for Culture and Communities.

Blue Plaques in the Borough

Alderman Thorley Smith –

Smith was the first parliamentary candidate to stand for women's suffrage and the plaque is located at Wigan Town Hall.



Kathleen Mary Drew-Baker –

Dr Drew-Baker was a pioneering scientist specialising in algae. Her plaque is located on Leigh Central Primary School, Windermere Road in Leigh, the street where she was born.

Wigan Athletic Football Club – A plaque was unveiled on Queen's Hall Market Street in Wigan town centre, the location of the club's first meeting in 1932.

Dr Muriel Haigh – Dr Haigh is believed to be the first female doctor to commence her own practice in Wigan. She was the founder of the Wigan Soroptimists and Wigan Music Society. The plaque is located at her former home on Mesnes Park Terrace, Wigan.

Margery Booth – Margery was born in Wigan and had a successful classical music career. During the Second World War she risked her life to supply the allied forces with valuable information from within Nazi Germany. Her plaque is located at Queen's Hall, Market Street in Wigan where she performed in 1935.

Pete Shelley – Pete was one of the UK's most influential and prolific songwriters and co-founder of the seminal punk band Buzzcocks. He was born and raised in Leigh and his blue plaque is located at his former home at Landside, Leigh.

George Orwell – Orwell was the author of *The Road to Wigan Pier* in which he wrote about the challenges faced by working-class communities in the 1930s. The plaque is located in the former reference library at the Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, where Orwell conducted research for his book.



Wigan Casino – This plaque marks the spot of the world-famous Wigan Casino. It was a popular location for Northern Soul music. The building was demolished in 1981 and the plaque is located inside the Grand Arcade shopping centre in Wigan.

Other Commemorative Plaques

There are a number of other plaques across the Borough which were erected by historical societies, community groups, and other individuals to commemorate individuals and events.

These include:

Famous People

Who?	Where?
Birthplace of James Hilton (novelist)	26 Wilkinson Street, Leigh, WN7 4DQ
James Hilton	Leigh Town Hall, WN7 1DY
Near the birthplace of Frank Randal (comedian)	Former St John School, Wigan Road, Aspull, WN1 3PX
Near the birthplace of George Formby (entertainer)	Central Parkway, Wigan, near WN1 3SU

Historic Events & Buildings

What?	Where?
Site of Civil War event 1643	All Saint's Church, Bishopgate, Wigan, WN1 1NL
Site of old Leigh Grammar School Building	St. Mary's Church Vestry, Leigh Road, Leigh WN7 1EB
Site of King's Arms, where the Earl of Derby spent the night before his execution, 1651 (x2 plaques)	Leigh Library, Turnpike Centre, St Mary's Way, Leigh, WN7 1EB



Transport

What?	Where?
Wigan Lock Flight, marking twenty-three locks in a 2 ½ mile stretch of canal opened in 1816	Leeds Liverpool Canal, near Chapel Lane, WN3 4DQ
Site of the first public railway in Lancashire (Stephenson's Bolton-Leigh Railway)	Atherleigh Way/Findlay Street, Leigh, WN7 4EQ
Saddle Junction	Warrington Road, Wigan, near WN5 9AD

'OH, MAGGIE, I LOST MY MIND'

The Tragedy of Father O'Neill by Brian Joyce



*Father Richard O'Neill
(Leigh Journal)*

An American investigative journalist named Elizabeth Banks met a man she called 'a good Irish Catholic priest' when researching hardship in the Lancashire coalfield in 1893. She quoted him as having said: 'Remember, my child, if you ever get into any trouble and need any helping hand stretched out to you, just write to me. And see here, my child, I'm a poor man, but I sometimes have a few pounds put by; so, if you're ever in need, just write and tell me'. She did just that in 1902 and received £4 by return of post. Banks did not identify the generous priest. However, a journalist on the Liverpool Evening Post later claimed that she had named him in a letter as Father Richard O'Neill of the Sacred Heart Church in Hindsford, on Atherton's border with Tyldesley.

O'Neill was born in Navan in County Meath around 1844. After his education at St Finian's seminary in the town, he studied

philosophy and theology in France. He was ordained at Rennes in Brittany in 1867. After serving several communities in Liverpool, he arrived at the Church of the Sacred Heart in 1873.

He spent the next thirty-four years serving the people of the Tyldesley and Atherton areas and appears to have served them well. He was elected a Poor Law Guardian, and apart from a three year period, served from 1879 until his death in 1907. When Atherton Urban District Council was created in 1894, Father O'Neill was elected to represent Hindsford's South Ward, where he served until he died. He was a member of the Education Committee and at various times he chaired the Cemetery and Recreation Grounds Committee.

The late nineteenth century saw an expansion of Catholicism in Leigh and the surrounding area. When the school chapels in Westleigh and Plank Lane were opened in 1880, the Hindsford congregation was praised for its members' subscriptions. Later on, the creation of school chapels in Chaddock Lane in Boothstown and Swan Lane in Hindley Green benefited from Father O'Neill's efforts.

Atherton got its own school chapel in 1890. The purchase of the Mayfield Street site was secured by Father O'Neill from Lord Lilford on what the Leigh Chronicle called 'very reasonable terms'.

Thanks to what the chairman of Tyldesley's Burial Board called his 'indefatigable exertions', the priest obtained a Catholic section in Tyldesley Cemetery in 1879.

Closer to home, the Catholic schools adjacent to the Sacred Heart Church at Hindsford were expanded during O'Neill's pastorate. In 1896, he inaugurated the so-called Harmonious Social Guard to provide respectable leisure activities for local boys as an alternative to the temptations found on the streets.

The respect in which the priest was held was demonstrated in 1888, when large crowds gathered at Tyldesley Railway Station to greet him on his return from a month in Rome. On the silver jubilee of his ordination in 1892, and again in 1900 in a delayed commemoration of his twenty-five years as parish priest, well-attended and widely-reported celebrations were held.

Thus by 1907, Father O'Neill had many achievements behind him, and was clearly admired, both by his own flock and many outside of it. As an apparently healthy and robust man in his early sixties, he could look forward to further accomplishments. As the



*Sacred Heart Church, Hindsford,
with presbytery just visible
on the left*

Leigh Journal had said: 'He came to Tyldesley without a friend to speak to him and without a hand to greet him, and has succeeded'.

However, in December 1906, the priest developed a painful abscess behind an eardrum. He underwent an operation in Manchester after which he spent three weeks convalescing in hospital. He continued his convalescence after returning to Hindsford, where his assistant, Father Lane, conducted his duties for him.

Father O'Neill appears to have downplayed the after-effects of the operation, telling Father Lane that 'fever to the head' was part of the healing process. He told his housekeeper, Margaret Cahill, that he felt a 'numbness' rather than pain in his head. However, she noticed he was obviously suffering from insomnia, having heard him pacing around his room night after night. In early February, Father O'Neill confided to his counterpart in Leigh that he had dreadful pains in his head, making it impossible to even blow his nose.

The priest had few options with which to relieve his agony. In the age before painkillers and antibiotics, more or less the only available pain relief was laudanum, a mixture of opium and alcohol. None of the witnesses at his inquest mentioned this drug. However, even if he had used laudanum, it clearly had little effect. Father O'Neill's torment was so overwhelming that it made the grave offence of suicide the only conceivable way to stop the agonising pain.

On the evening of Wednesday 20 February 1907, the priest attended a Lenten service conducted by Father Lane, after which he went to bed. At



*Father O'Neill's grave,
Tyldesley Cemetery*

7.45 the following morning, Margaret Cahill knocked on his door, to which he answered, 'all right'. However, the priest did not appear, and at 9.30 the housekeeper heard a crash on the bedroom floor. She then heard choking sounds from inside the room. On entering, Margaret was horrified to see Father O'Neill, still in his nightclothes, kneeling in front of the dressing table bleeding from a gaping throat wound. An open razor lay nearby. He mumbled to her, 'Oh Maggie, I lost my mind for a minute'. Margaret shouted for Father Lane, who helped the older man into bed. They then sent for a doctor who stitched and dressed the wound.

Father O'Neill continued to groan that he had lost his reason and begged Margaret Cahill and Father Lane to pray for him. He died two hours later.

The inquest was held in the nearby Hindsford Co-operative Hall. After hearing evidence from Margaret, Father Lane and others, the coroner advised the jury that there was no doubt that Father O'Neill had committed suicide during a period of temporary insanity. He also reminded them that it was not

in their remit to comment on the moral implications of what the priest had done. A suicide verdict was accordingly returned.

Although suicide was considered a grave offence in Catholic teaching, it appears that the dreadful pain suffered by the late priest, along with the consequent depression and lack of sleep, led to the assumption that he had been incapable of making a clear or rational decision. Father Unsworth of Leigh described O'Neill's action as 'a sudden impulse'. Either way, he was not believed to have committed a mortal sin, and received a full Catholic funeral and burial. As Father Goethal, a former colleague of the priest in Liverpool, put it at his funeral Mass: 'Father O'Neill would be forgiven for his trespasses even as he forgave the trespasses of others'.

A Requiem Mass at Hindsford on Monday 25 February was followed by a procession through Tyldesley to the town's cemetery. It was dinner time at the local cotton mills, and the entire route was lined with thousands of people as the procession, which was nearly a mile long, wound its way along the main streets. It was led by the diocesan band playing the Dead March in Saul, followed by hundreds of Father O'Neill's congregation on foot, and behind them the glass-sided hearse. The procession also included more than twenty coaches containing dignitaries including the Catholic Bishop of Liverpool.

Clearly both the priest's own flock and the diocesan clergy understood his moral dilemma and forgave his transgressions. Father O'Neill was buried in Tyldesley Cemetery's Catholic section which the priest himself had organised nearly thirty years before.

Volunteers' Voice

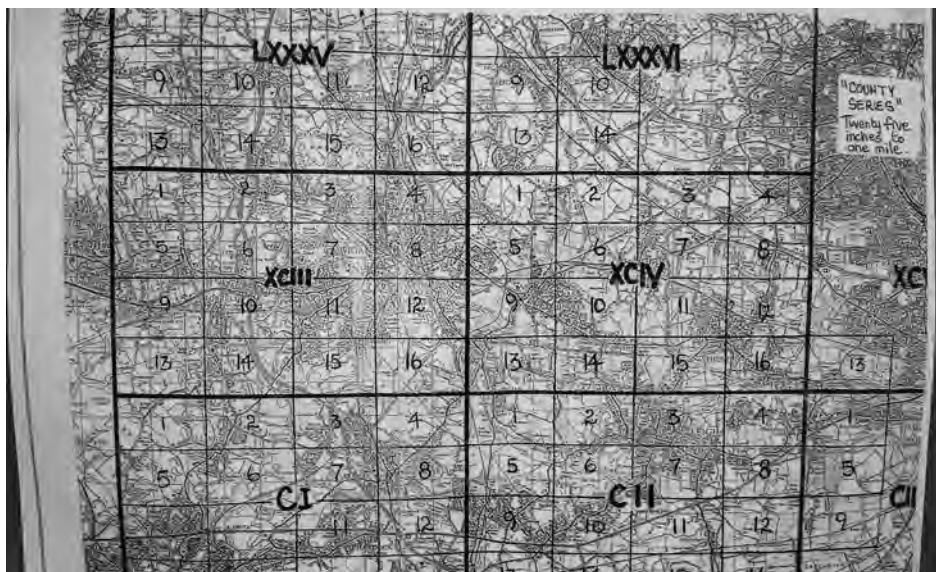
Welcome to the volunteers' page of Past Forward! Across all our cultural and heritage sites, a team of volunteers work hard cleaning, transcribing, and listing our collections. They are always coming across interesting items and stories, so this is the space where they can share their discoveries.

Time Travel with Maps

BY ANDREA FOSTER

I work as a volunteer at Archives: Wigan & Leigh and over the last few years I have enjoyed being involved with many varied projects. When the opportunity arose to catalogue the old Ordnance Survey (OS) paper maps, I was thrilled. Old maps hold a fascination for me, as they do for many people. It's an opportunity to step back in time and see the buildings and landscapes as they existed in our local area over a hundred years ago. From this we can imagine the lives of our ancestors. There are lots of websites and 'apps' where you can view maps online, however I think there is something very special about looking at an old paper map and stepping back in time.

We now take accurate maps for granted. However, there is a long history of development and discovery behind this. One of the first recognisable maps of Britain was drawn by a monk called Matthew Paris in St Albans in 1250. Moving forward, sadly maps owe much of their progress to wars or the threat of war. The word 'ordnance' comes from 'The Board of Ordnance' and they were the department responsible for artillery in the later part of the eighteenth century. War brought the necessity for having very accurate maps detailing land features and height, thereby showing vantage points for tactical military manoeuvres. The Board of Ordnance department was given the task of creating such maps for the



Map from the County Series showing the area encompassing Wigan and Leigh

whole of Britain. Progress was initially slow and expensive, but with technical advances in cartography and the Industrial Revolution, this mammoth task was eventually realised. Steam power meant the production of paper became cheap and colour printing meant maps no longer had to be hand coloured.

The oldest Ordnance Survey maps stored at Leigh Town Hall were surveyed in 1845 and published in 1848. Their scale and format is known as the 'County Series'. The specific 'grid' area covered by the map is noted in large Roman numerals at the top righthand corner of the page.

These County Series maps were created during the period 1842 to 1952 and cover the whole of England and Wales, usually with the scale of 1:2,500 (25 inches represents 1 mile) and

show many interesting details. For towns with a population of more than 4,000 people, the area was mapped in further detail still. Our paper OS maps have been acquired over the years, as it became standard practice for them to be stored in public records' offices. They are now a treasured asset of the Archives and a valuable resource for historians.

Working as part of a small team of volunteers, I have been looking at each map in turn and noting details of the area, main landmarks, the surveyed and published dates, as well as the scale of the map and its condition. The maps are large (roughly 27 by 55 inches) and mostly in good condition and some have been printed on canvas-like material with fabric edging. These are remarkably hard wearing and heavy to

handle. Sadly, a few of the paper maps are ripped and many are in need of a good clean.

All of this information is typed up on the computer, along with which drawer the map is stored in. Once completed it will be easy to find a specific map as and when required in the future. It will also serve to record 'on file' the extent of the Archives' collection. We've only just begun (as the song goes) and with the hundreds of maps stored here, there is certainly plenty to keep us entertained for a while. Stepping back in time, I have selected two of our local maps to talk about. They are from the late nineteenth century and show the area where our two museum buildings are situated now.



Large scale map showing Market Place in Leigh before the Town Hall was built, 1888

This photograph shows a detail from a Leigh map (OS grid reference CII.3.22) surveyed in 1888 before the Town Hall was built. There are two nearby bowling greens and quite a few public houses. St Mary's Church and the Obelisk act as a good



The opening of Leigh Town Hall, 1907

point of reference for gaining our bearings to compare the area as to how it is now. Leigh Town Hall was opened on 24 July 1907 by the mayor at the time, Councillor William Horrocks. The building cost approximately £60,000 and it was designed by James Caldwell Prestwich, the architect responsible for many of the historic buildings of Leigh.



Large scale map showing the area around Wigan Free Library, which later became the Museum of Wigan Life

The Museum of Wigan Life was originally Wigan's first public library and it opened on 7 May 1878. You can see the 'Free Library' building at the bottom of Library Street next to the theatre, opposite the public baths and the Mining and Technical College. The police station and Wigan's County Court can be seen in the top lefthand corner, and tramway and railway lines are prominent on the map. The Hippodrome and Borough Courts can be seen at the bottom centre. This map dates from 1888-92 (OS grid reference XCIII.8).



Wigan Local Studies at the Museum of Wigan Life, July 2022

The Wigan Library building was designed by Alfred Waterhouse and built on the former site of Wigan Grammar School. Costing £12,000 for the land and the building, this was supplied by Thomas Taylor who was a wealthy mill owner. The same sum again for the books was funded by Dr Joseph Winnard. A portrait of Thomas Taylor from 1870 can be viewed in the museum today. From the old photographs we have of the library, the beautiful large reading room upstairs looks much the same then as it does now. I am pleased to say, though, that some things have changed. Apparently, when the library first opened ladies were allowed access to the books, but only with written permission from their husbands.

Worth noting, in our permanent Archives exhibition on the ground floor of Leigh Town Hall and spanning all of one of the walls, is printed a huge map covering all of the Wigan and Leigh district as it was in the early 1900s. Come along and have a look.

Websites for reference

<https://maps.nls.uk/>

<https://shop.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/>

Reference book: OS Maps, a Precise Guide for Historians by Richard Oliver (of which the Archives have a copy).

Library books for reference: History of Britain in Maps by Philip Parker (pictures the map of Britain by Matthew Paris) and Mapping the World (the Story of Cartography) by Beau Riffenburgh (section on British Cartography).

Barbara O'Neill Local History Writing Competition for Children, Young People and Adults 2024

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Do you have a passion for local history? Is there a local history topic that you would love to see featured in Past Forward? Then why not take part in the Barbara O'Neill Local History Writing Competition?

Local History Writing Competition - Adults

Write 1000 words - Win £100!

1st Prize £100

2nd Prize £75

3rd Prize £50

Five Runners-Up Prizes of £25

Local History Writing Competition - Young People

Are you, or do you know, a young person with a passion for writing? This can be about any person, place or thing in our local area! To get your research started visit Past Forward Essay Competition 2023 (wigan.gov.uk) to access some helpful material.

We have two categories for young people: 11-18-year-olds and under 11s. Enter our competition – win a gift voucher.

Prizes for each category:

1st Prize £20 gift vouchers

2nd Prize £15 gift vouchers

3rd Prize £10 gift vouchers

All essay competitions are kindly sponsored by Mr J O'Neill.



Winners from the Barbara O'Neill Essay Competition 2023



First prize winner from the 11–18-year-olds category



Young winners from the under 11s category 2023

Criteria

- Articles:
 - Adults – a maximum of 1000 words.
 - 11-18 year olds - 500 words or fewer.
 - 11 and under - 200 words or fewer.
- Articles must focus on a local history topic within the geographical boundaries of Wigan Borough.
- By entering the competition you agree to your work being published in Past Forward.

The winning article will be published in Past Forward and other submissions may also be published.

If selected for publication the Past Forward Editorial Team may edit your submission.

How to enter

- Articles must be received by e-mail or post by **Monday 15 January 2024**.
- Electronic submissions are preferred although handwritten ones will be accepted.
- You must state clearly that your article is an entry into the Local History Writing Competition.
- You must include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address

(if applicable). We will not pass your details on to anyone.

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

Submit to

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk
OR

Local History Writing Competition,
Past Forward, Leigh Town Hall,
Market Street, Leigh WN7 1DY

The Young Historian

New

Welcome to the Young Historians' Section

Are you a young person living in the Wigan borough who is interested in local history? If so, we would love for you to get involved with Past Forward. You could share an unusual local history story, comment on the current columns in this issue, share a piece on your involvement in local history, a memory of a local place, or perhaps a fun historical fact you think people need to know! Or you can write about something entirely new – these pages belong to you! Each page is approx. 500 words long and we would love to see anything creative – from cartoons to architectural drawings.

If you would like to get involved with the next issue of Past Forward – please get in touch! Our email is:

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

Did you know?

- In 1821 John Horwood was convicted of the murder of Eliza Balsom after he had thrown a stone at her head – he was hanged for his crime. The interesting thing about this case is what happened to John after his death. John was dissected and his skin was used by Dr Richard Smith to bind the papers related to the case. Unnervingly, it was proven in 1869 by the British Medical Journal that it was Dr Smith himself who caused Eliza to die due to the treatment he administered – Horwood, now dead, was cleared of his charges. If you would like to know more about this gruesome tale, we have a book available to read at the Archives which was penned by a local man – Dave Halliwell, *An Unjust Hanging. The Horwood Papers* are on display at the M Shed Museum in Bristol.
- On 7 August 1892, Joseph Pollitt was brought to the Borough Court in Wigan for an attempt to 'murder himself against the peace'. From the quarter session records we know this act was seen as a misdemeanour and one carried out 'feloniously, wilfully and of his malice'. Isn't it strange to see suicide addressed as not only a crime but as self-murder? It makes you wonder what else can be revealed amongst these papers...
- Richard (Dick) Turpin was an infamous highway man who was executed in York in 1739 for horse theft. Interestingly, at the time York, like many other cities, had no full-time executioner. Thus, in these cities the practice arose of appointing one of those found guilty at an Assize to act as executioner in return for a pardon. Turpin was hung by the convicted highwayman Thomas Hadfield. What a curious insight to the justice system of the time!



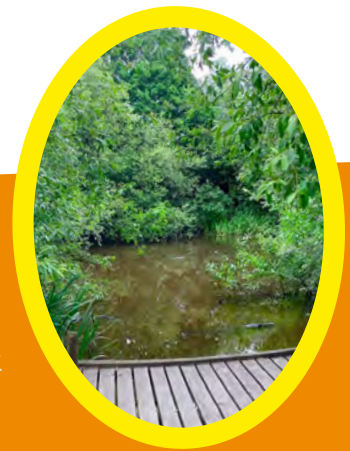
A NEW NOSTALGIA

Whilst working at the Archives, I often hear people sharing stories from their childhood. Stories of places I have never seen – and it has made me think, what do I have to reminisce about? Being in my early twenties, my earliest recollections of my town may differ from others I share this space with – but nonetheless, I have my own special memories.

I put forward this column in hopes that it would invite you, the reader, to think about your own memories of places, whatever age you are, and to take the time to reflect upon the ever-changing places around you. – Fiona

Lowton - Sarah

During lockdown, my mum and I spent our daily walk roaming the gravel paths behind Braithwaite Park. These paths were my favourite childhood haunt, and a family of ducks and moor hens live in a network of ponds below the trees. The water is often dark and shaded by reeds but in spring ducklings liven the wetlands — a pleasant local walk!



Golborne - Fiona

When I think about nostalgia, I think about 54 Heath Street. During my childhood it was Stan's newsagents (C. S. & M. Martlew Newsagents) – conveniently, it was right around the corner from school. I used to love grabbing a 20p mix before school (or a 50p one if I was lucky) and fighting over the one copy of Kerrang! Magazine (an alternative music mag) with the one other girl I knew that read it.

Stan's, as it was, no longer exists – and even if it did, I doubt that children would still be able to take their sweets into the playground! Stan's is now 'Pure Heat Tanning Lounge' – a place where I'm sure people are now making their own memories.



Orrell - Natasha

For me, the word 'nostalgia' makes me think of Orrell's Book-Cycle. When I was still in primary school, my grandma would let me loose there every Thursday, telling me that I could have 'one and only one' book every time. Years after this, I'd visit with my best friend to hunt down all the cheesy teen romance novels and play a game of draughts to decide who would get the best one.

Last month, I revisited the Book-Cycle to donate (and probably return) some books and I was hit with an overwhelming feeling of nostalgia. Whilst it wasn't as busy as I remember, it still brought me joy visiting and looking at the books that I probably wouldn't have noticed all those years ago.



Spooky Sightings:

The Lowton Ghost - Sarah

In 1883, a gruesome murder took place on Sandy Lane, Lowton. Joshua Rigby, a short-tempered and notoriously cruel farmer, was found in his bedroom with his throat cut and a series of gory head injuries. A few weeks prior to his death, Joshua's nephew, John Gibbons, persuaded him to sign a will, leaving his land, money, and possessions entirely to John. It came as no surprise that John appeared in Liverpool Crown Court on suspicion of the murder. The evidence seemed overwhelming – two doctors testified that Joshua's head injuries may have been caused by the murderer's heavy boots, and one of Joshua's long grey hairs was found on John's shoes. Nevertheless, the trial fell apart and John returned to Lowton a free man.

The vengeful spirit of Joshua Rigby is said to roam Lowton at night, unable to rest while his murder remains unpunished. Local newspapers often reported sightings of the apparition and, in 1885, the Leigh Chronicle appointed a 'special commission' to inquire into the truth of these sightings. Two reporters searched for the spirit on Sandy Lane at midnight, and reported on 31 July 1885 that 'the imagination of an over-heated brain accounts for very many of the stories circulated, which, ghost-like, have no foundation in fact'.

The Leigh Chronicle wasn't the only local newspaper to express scepticism regarding

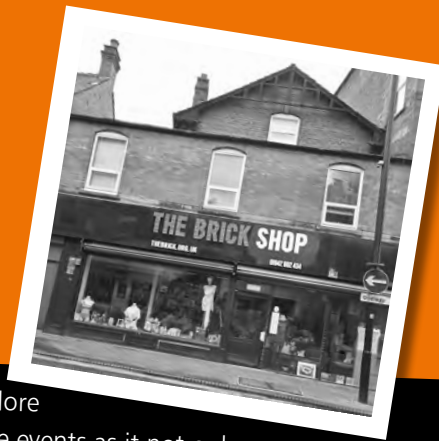
the Lowton Ghost. On 17 July 1885, the Leigh Journal declared that 'it is a pity this superstition cannot be snuffed out. That Old Josh's ghost ever appears, or is likely ever to appear, is just as probable as that, like Lazarus of old, he will rise from the dead and walk home again from Winwick churchyard'. Despite their disbelief, the Leigh Chronicle regularly printed reports of ghost sightings and wrote lengthy descriptions of Joshua Rigby's ghost – a man dressed in a white garment with a death-like pallor. The reports stirred local anxieties about the apparition, and many Lowtonians were afraid to pass Sandy Lane Farm after nightfall. A flickering light was said to appear almost every night between eleven and twelve o'clock.

Newspapers also gathered explanations of the phenomenon. On 24 July 1885, the Leigh Journal reprinted an old story about an alleged recent appearance of 'Old Josh'. This time, however, they suggested that the apparition was nothing more than a workman's white slop hung on a tree stump, or a woman's sun bonnet on the top of a pitchfork. Nowadays, stories of Joshua Rigby's ghost have almost entirely died out, and Sandy Lane is no longer associated with otherworldly entities. Nonetheless, keep an eye out for 'Old Josh' the next time you're in Lowton.



Young Historian Spotlight

Natasha & the History Society



I enjoy learning about history as it lets us explore what life was like in the past and allows us to see how our society has evolved and developed. Being the president of my college's History Society has given me the opportunity to learn more about different areas of history and discuss topics outside of the curriculum with people who have similar interests to me.

As I study ancient history at college, I also find it quite intriguing to chat to my college's modern and medieval historians as they cover vastly different topics, and it is fascinating to see common themes that run through the areas, despite their massive time differences.

As a society, we run many college events such as talks, quizzes, debates etc. and we even have our own

magazine! I adore attending these events as it not only adds to my knowledge, but also allows other people to showcase their love of history to me and their other peers, which is so inspiring to see.

I would say that a highlight, for me during my time as president, was when we organised a French Revolution themed event to collect goods for the Brick (a local charity who help people in need) and, from the drive, we managed to raise an amazing 100 kg (approximately).

Although my time as the society's president is coming to an end, I am forever grateful for this opportunity and I will always cherish my time as president.

My time as May Queen – St Thomas' Church, Golborne

As a child I attended Sunday School at St Thomas', Golborne. What made my time special there was the opportunity to be May Queen. A queen would reign for a year and then the honour would be passed onto the next 'generation'. We would give a speech thanking our previous queen and the crowd for attending the carnival; and then throughout the year we would don our crowns and gowns (which, looking back, looked like mini wedding dresses) again to attend social events such as the peach melba tea and visits to local care homes.

I remember loving the carnival – we would not only have our crowning ceremony, but also several activities such as tombola, lucky duck, funfair rides, and performances from the brass band and Morris dancers. Even the build up to the arrival at the carnival grounds was exciting – there would be a whole procession! Back in the day, when health and safety allowed it, we even had lorry floats with people on there playing drums, making music, and having fun. I distinctly remember that one year we even had an Elvis who followed along shouting 'thank you very much' from his white car. Even the rain couldn't stop the fun, we'd simply move to the inside of St Thomas C Of E Junior & Infant School and be crowned on the stage in the school hall.

I have been involved with a part of Golborne history which will carry on long after my 'reign' (in fact the last Golborne carnival with a crowning of a May Queen was on 14 May 2023). My participation makes me feel connected to a special piece of local history and it is amazing to be able to reflect on its ever-changing nature from past to present. Do you perhaps remember your time at Golborne carnival?

Fiona



A group of children on a Barrow's lorry during the celebrations of Golborne Carnival, Golborne, no date. (PC2010.3423)

Visions of The Mine (Annotated): Sketches of Real Life At Our Collieries

BOOK REVIEW

by Samuel Woods, edited by Ronan Beckman.

Published by the editor, March 2023.

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Trade unionist, lay preacher and politician Samuel Woods was born at Peasley Cross near St Helens in 1846 but lived for most of his adult life in Bryn. The son of a miner, he first accompanied his father down the pit at the age of seven. Whilst working at the Johnson brothers' Laffack Colliery, he came under the influence of a Baptist minister and began attending evening classes given by him for the benefit of local miners and their families. Later he took on the role of 'checkweighman' at the Park Lane Colliery near Bryn and began to represent his fellow colliers in negotiations with the mine-owners regarding pay and conditions.

The above experiences inspired a series of short stories which, initially, were printed in the Wigan Observer during the autumn of 1887, the author signing himself 'S. W., P. L.'. In 1891, having been 'repeatedly pressed by numerous friends who read them on their first issue', Woods consented to having the earlier stories combined with four others and republished by J. Starr of Wigan as *Visions of The Mine: Sketches of Real Life at our Collieries by Samuel Woods, Miners' Agent, Park Lane, near Wigan, Lancashire*. In his preface Woods identified a 'two-fold' motivation for his writing: first, 'to give the world more accurate and a fuller knowledge of mining life'; and second, 'to expose certain fallacies enunciated in public journals and through other tainted sources'.

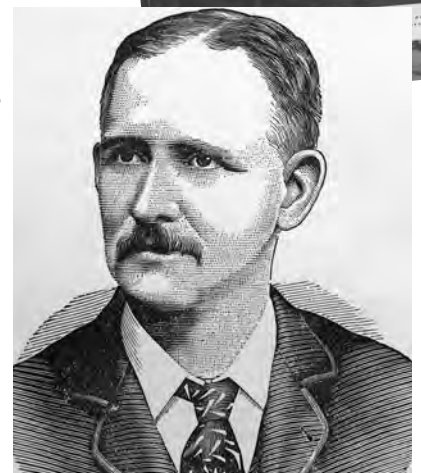
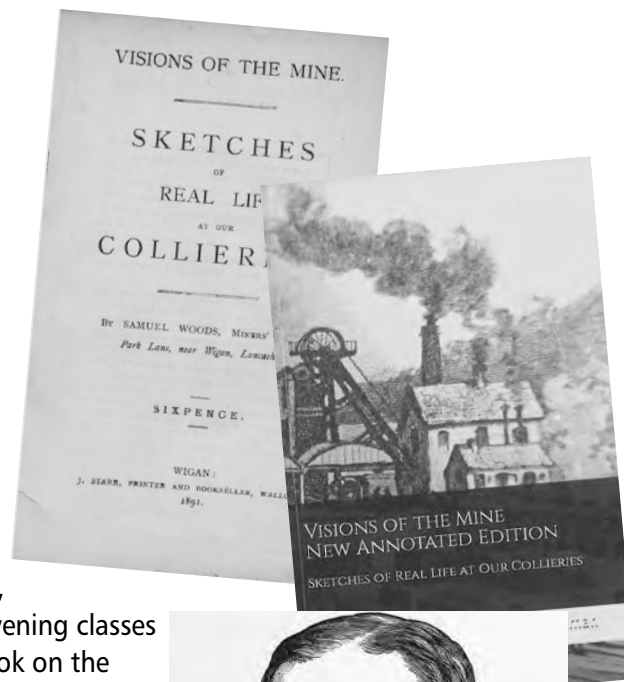
The practical application of statutory rules governing the operation of mines, the influence exerted by mine-owners over the legislative process in Parliament, and scientific theories such as the role played by coal dust in underground explosions are all considered and commented on. The style is nevertheless light and engaging for the most part, the stories - some of them told in the local dialect, which Woods attempts to convey by spelling out the words phonetically - containing a good deal of humour and wit. Many are clearly autobiographical in nature. The fictional 'Tom Jones' is very obviously a young Sam Woods. 'Owd Tummus O'Wilks' and 'Jona Tumason' are stand-ins for the middle-aged Woods of the Park Lane Colliery years, the former perhaps also containing elements of the writer's father.

A copy of the 1891 edition of *Visions of the Mine* is available for reference at Wigan Local Studies located above the Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan.

In the years after the book's publication Woods went on to serve two terms as a member of Parliament, first as MP for the former Ince constituency and then as MP for Walthamstow. He was also, for many years, secretary to the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, in this capacity representing the TUC at the American Federation of Labor convention in Cincinnati in 1896 and playing a key role in the formation of the modern Labour Party. He died at his home in Bryn in 1915.

Earlier this year *Visions of The Mine* was edited and republished by the historical fiction-writer and biographer, Ronan Beckman. Containing illustrations from various contemporary sources (many of them likewise unseen since their original publication in the 1890s), the 2023 edition includes a new introduction and a short biographical sketch of Samuel Woods, both written by Mr Beckman. The biographical sketch is based in part on materials collected by Woods' living descendants. It is available in both paperback and Kindle formats from [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk), priced at £5.99 and £1.99 respectively.

Anthony Pilgrim

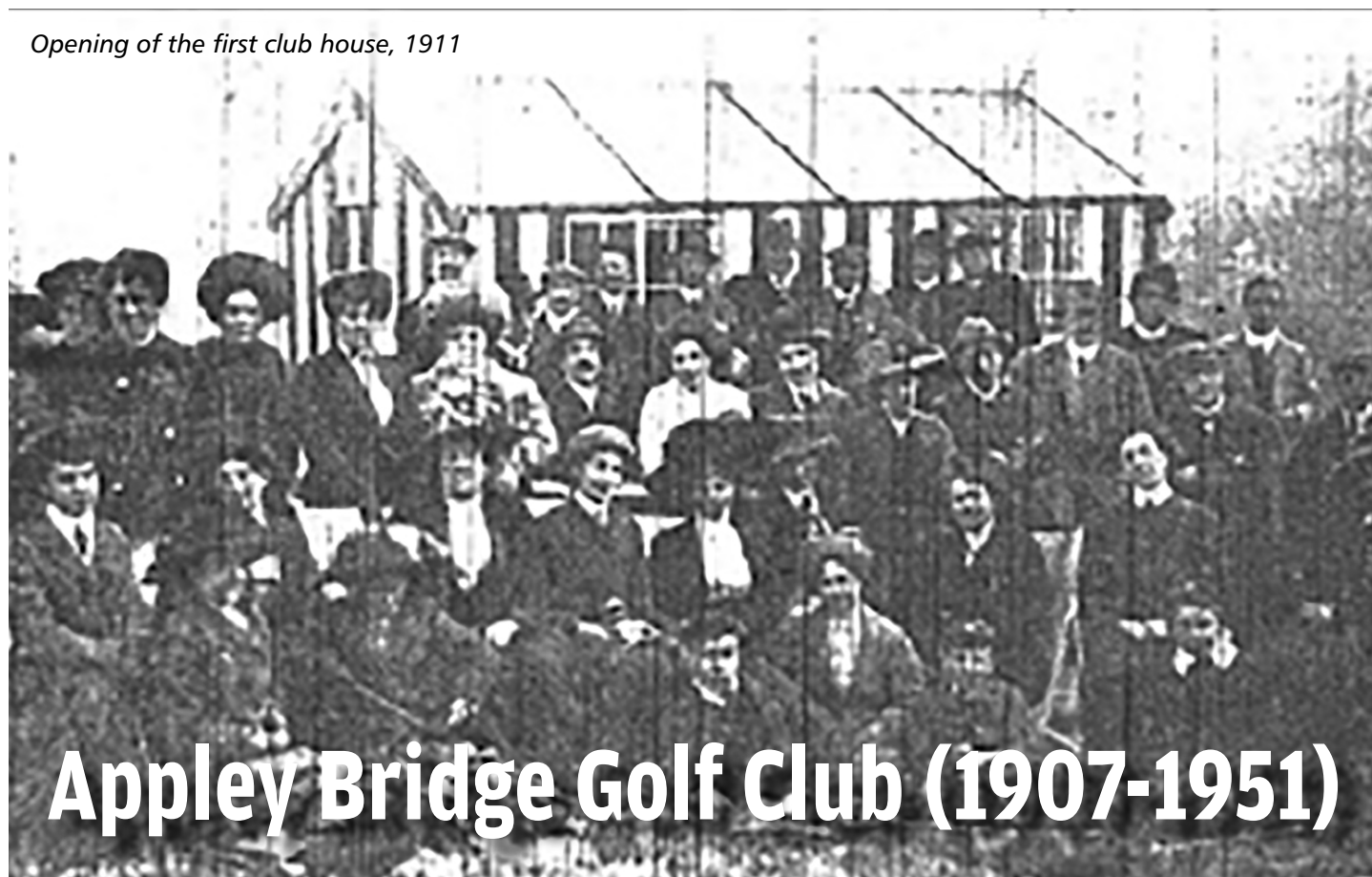


Samuel Woods, author of
Visions of the Mine

Unearthing the Past

Searching Douglas Valley's Lost Golf Course

Opening of the first club house, 1911



Appley Bridge Golf Club (1907-1951)

Growing up in Appley Bridge during the early 1950s we knew there had once been a local golf club. It was frequently a subject of conversation by village elders and was always referred to as the golf links rather than the golf course or the golf club, but that may well have been because by the mid-1950s the club had long gone, and the course was rapidly morphing into pastureland. *'I walked to Parbold the other day via the golf links but returned by the canal towpath' and 'I took the dogs for a walk in Fairy Glen last weekend and ended up on the old golf links'*, were two such examples of village elder conversation.

But it was not just the older generation who knew of the club's former existence – we children soon learnt where to find long abandoned golf balls. The following comment

by Frank Goodwill appeared on the Wigan World web site in November 2017:

'I lived on Stoneygate Lane and used to go through Fairy Glen to the former golf course searching for golf balls with my mates. We would come back with maybe up to one hundred golf balls between us. This would have been in the mid-1950s. At that time there were cattle grazing on the course, but the greens were still visible, and there is still a right of way right across what was the golf course from the boundary of Fairy Glen to the bottom of Parbold Hill opposite Lancaster Lane'.

Fast forward seventy years. We are no longer children attending Appley Bridge Infant School but are now in our late seventies and retired. With time on our hands, we decided to find

out what we could relating to this former golf course before all knowledge of it is lost, and this is what we have found.

Appley Bridge 9-hole Golf Club was founded in 1907 on the lower slope of the Douglas Valley, just west of Fairy Glen, north of the Wigan to Southport railway line, south of Parbold Hall, and east of the Parbold quarries. The land was most likely owned by the Gerrard Dicconson family who also owned Wrightington Hall and was leased to the golf club at that time for £45 per annum.



O.S. Map Revised 1938; © Crown Copyright
(year of publication 1947)

Founding a golf club in the early years of the twentieth century was not unusual. Between 1890 and the commencement of the First World War over 1,000 new golf clubs were created in England – nearly one new club per week for over a quarter of a century, and over 750 of those clubs are still in existence today. Gathurst Golf Club, just a couple of miles



Official Opening of the Golf Course in 1907

west of Appley Bridge, was founded in 1913, and Dean Golf Club, just three miles south of Appley Bridge, was founded in 1922, both incidentally still in operation. See previous photograph of the official opening of the Appley Bridge golf course in 1907, courtesy of 'Golf's Missing Links' web site.

In the initial days of the club's history some rooms on the ground floor of Parbold Hall were rented for use by club members, as a club house was only opened in 1911. The photograph at the top of page 24 is of the earliest club house taken at its official opening, courtesy of the Wigan Examiner Supplement, Saturday 15 April 1911. The early structure was very small but invaluable to the club.

'On Saturday about forty subscribers of the above links and a few friends assembled on the occasion of the formal opening of the new Golf Pavilion. Mr F S Hammersley, the captain, explained that Mr T Bold had kindly offered to give the structure and had further very considerably altered and improved it at his own expense while certain other members and friends had given all the inside furniture and fittings so that the useful building would cost nothing to the subscribers. Mr F S Hammersley specially emphasised Mr T Bold's generosity, and then called on Mrs Bold to formally open the Pavilion after presenting her with a key. Mrs Bold made a brief speech and then declared the Pavilion open.'

Unfortunately, club captain Mr Hammersley, who had done so much for the club in its opening years, had to leave the district just one year after the opening of the club house. His official departure was marked by a celebrated event held at the Farmer's Arms in Bispham and recorded in the Wigan Observer and District Advertiser, Thursday 27 June 1912:

'A pleasant party of about 40 members (ladies and gentlemen) of the Appley Bridge Golf Club assembled at the Farmer's Arms, Bispham on Tuesday evening, the occasion being a presentation of a solid silver tankard to Mr F S Hammersley, a prominent member

and ex-captain of the club who is about to leave the district.'

Further interesting information can be gathered from the 1913 Annual General Meeting of the club held in the Mission Hall, Appley Bridge on Saturday 5 April, with about twenty members present - abstracted from the Wigan Observer and District Advertiser:

'Mr J A Baldwin, (Captain and Hon. Treasurer) presented his income and expenditure account for the ten months ending 28th February 1913, during which period about £100 had been spent on the course. He also announced that the Hon. R J Gerard-Dicconson had consented to act as President for the next year.'

'The chief competition, The President's (Mr Herbert Haworth's) Cup was won by Mr J T Rigby, who is I think the most improved player in the club, the runner-up being Mr T A Holker, while other prizes were won by Mr S M Haworth (Captain's Prize and Mr L Griffith's Prize), Mr George Barlow, Mr W A Holker, Mr A M Shaw, Mr H Rigby, Mrs Rigby, Miss C Furness, Miss Hibbert and Miss Ablett.'

Fencing surrounding the greens was the main focus of the meeting:

'The fencing of the greens with ropes has proved unsatisfactory, so in order to make this thoroughly satisfactory, your committee, after obtaining consent of the Hon. R J Gerard-Dicconson, have had the greens enclosed with wire and we expect that the work now done will be of a satisfactory and permanent nature. In this connection I have to say that it would have been a financial impossibility to fence the greens had it not been for the generosity of the Hon. R J Gerard-Dicconson, who presented us with nearly sufficient iron standards for all the nine greens, whilst Mr J Hart has obtained from the Central Wagon Co. Wigan, the struts and baseplates for the corner posts. In fact, in various ways, Mr Hart's assistance has been of material help to the committee. Mr Wright Prestwich also kindly presented the nuts and bolts for the corner posts, and Mr T Smith bored the holes in the iron standards free of charge.'

'Concrete rollers for almost every green have been made and the greens were pegged out

prior to the fencing, much of the material had to be carried down from the hall to the various greens and altogether it has been a very arduous and exacting period.'

'The committee has also taken a room at Parbold Hall for the convenience of members, particularly those living outside Appley Bridge. Mr J Hart has come to the assistance of the committee once more by obtaining from the Ince Wagon Works the promise of a cupboard. Mr S M Haworth has been good enough to present another cupboard, Mr E C Witter has had the floor covered with a very serviceable linoleum, and Mr Arkwright has provided a table and wallpaper necessary for decorating the room.'

'Although our financial position is serious, we are going forward feeling certain we can provide a really good golf course with satisfactory greens and that new members will be forthcoming.'

Further information on the club can be gained from the 1914 Annual General meeting held this time within a room in Parbold Hall in March and recorded by the Wigan Observer and District Advertiser, Saturday 21 March 1914. Clearly the club was expanding, now renting more room in Parbold Hall in addition to the club house erected in 1911:

'The Hon. Secretary, (Mr Spary) reported steady progress. In addition to the club room we have also taken over a further portion of Parbold Hall thus making it possible to provide large rooms for both ladies and gentlemen. This adds to our financial obligations, but we have secured the extra accommodation on very reasonable terms.'

The fixture list for 1914 includes two valuable prizes given by the President, the Right Hon. Gerard Dicconson viz, a handsome silver cup to be won outright by any of the lady members and a silver mounted cigar case for competitors among the gentlemen. While the Howarth Cup will, with the consent of the donor, be transferred to the lady members for competition.'

'a most efficient groundsman has been engaged and a course-cutter will be required which will apparently be the chief item of capital expenditure this year.'



The photograph above shows members of the Appley Bridge Golf Club taken on Sunday afternoon following the final of the Gerard Cup which was won by Mr A M Shaw. The cup was presented by the Hon. Mrs Gerard-Dicconson as shown in the inset. (Wigan Observer 25 July 1914)

The following list shows that the majority of known club secretaries and professional green keepers resided in Appley Bridge throughout the life of the club.

	Secretary	Professional/Greenkeeper
1914	C Spary, Lyndale, Appley Bridge.	
1923/24	J H Shuttleworth, Grove House, Appley Bridge.	
1925	W O Fillingham, Ashfield, Appley Bridge.	H James (g)
1926/30s	J H Lipton, "Glenside" Appley Bridge.	
1926/31		T Bamber (g)
1932/40		G Clements (g)
1930s (mid)	J Stopforth, Greg-Na-Baa, Parbold, Wigan.	
1940	J F Barnes, Lyndale, Appley Lane, Appley Bridge.	

In 1914 an entry fee of £1-1s-0d was charged for men and 10s-6d for ladies; annual subscriptions were £1-11s-6d for men and 15s-0d for ladies. Visitors' fees were 1s-0d per day, 3s-0d per week and 10s-0d per month. No play was allowed on Sundays. The number of members registered in the early days is unknown but by the mid-1920s the figure stood at around 150, probably with the majority coming from Appley Bridge and Parbold. This figure rose to a maximum of around 165 members by the mid-1930s.

As part of the war effort the club participated in a competition in December 1939 in aid of the Mayor of Wigan's War Comfort Fund and a large crowd followed the players. After the match the golf balls were auctioned off at 14s-0d each for the same cause. Interestingly, this match was played on Sunday 17 December so one must presume that the 'no Sunday rule' was either ignored for this special event or had by this time been suspended.

James Bamford kindly provided the following information on the club during the 1940s just prior to his passing in 2021:

'One vivid memory I have is of the club house. I doubt the club house I knew was the original. From what I remember, it was constructed of strip lap-board wooden walls painted white, and the roof comprising pinkish diamond shaped asbestos cement tiles made by a Trafford Park manufacturer. Club member Jack Guest of Ashfield Terrace used to work for this company and may have been instrumental in obtaining building materials at cost price.

I have no memory of the interior of the club house, because as a scruffy teenage caddy and lacking a collar and tie, I was politely discouraged from entering! I always thought this a trifle unreasonable having lugged a driver, a brassie, a niblick, mashie-niblick, a sand wedge and a putter all-around the damn gold course, but such is life.'

The club continued operating until around 1950 with some uncertainty about exactly when. In 1949 the club had 160 active members and by 1951 it had closed. Village folklore suggested that loud and uncouth behaviour through drunkenness may have caused its closure but that would seem somewhat unlikely in rural Lancashire in 1950. Probably the real reason for its closure is explained in the Liverpool Echo of Friday 10 November 1950 as follows:

'Appley Bridge Golf Club is to be wound up at the end of the year. The landowner has told the club that he cannot renew the club's lease because he needs the land, his other farm having been acquired compulsorily for housing.'

.....

Morrison, M. (2022) *The Great English Golf Boom 1864-1914*. Self published obtainable from Mike.Morrison57@outlook.com

Appley Bridge Golf Club - Golfsmislinks.co.uk website

Chris Murphy cartoonist

Any visitor to Archives: Wigan & Leigh will soon notice our resident artist by the window. Unlike most of our searchroom regulars, Chris Murphy isn't poring over Guardian minutes books or scrolling through microfilm – he's busy creating wonderful comic strips that blend his knowledge of Wigan's past with wry observations of the modern world.

Chris began volunteering at the Archives in 2014, when some nineteenth century photos of miners and pit girls caught his eye and inspired Past Times

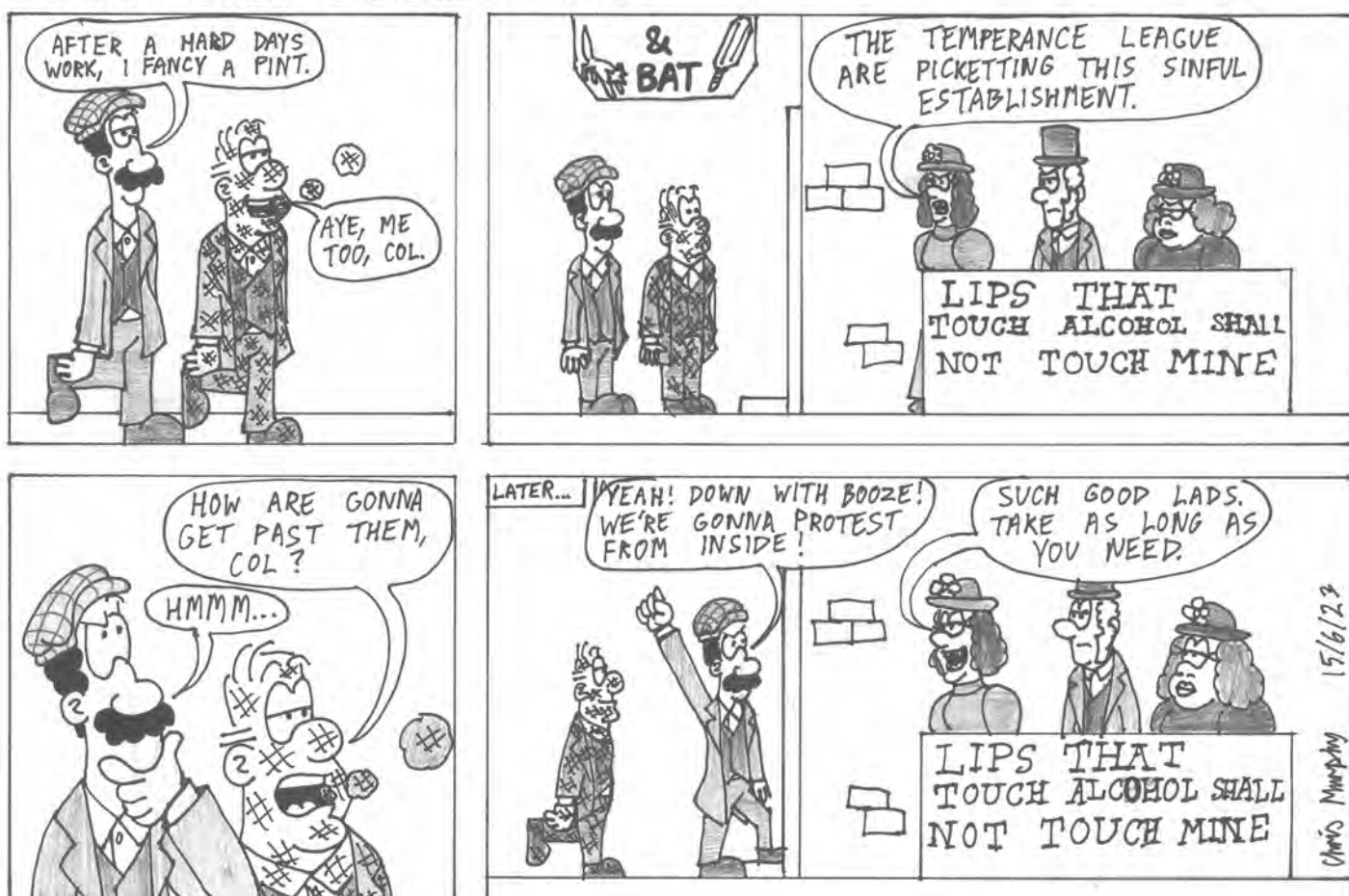
– a strip which evolved into a kind of soap opera featuring cavemen, bickering Roundheads and Cavaliers, and a passionate but witless witch finder. He later created an Andy Capp-style coal miner named Colin, whose main joys in life are sarsaparilla, pub banter and winding up the knocker-upper.

In the next few issues of Past Forward, the team will share some of our favourite strips from his back catalogue – here are a few.

Colin the Coalminer



Colin the Coalminer



Colin the Coalminer



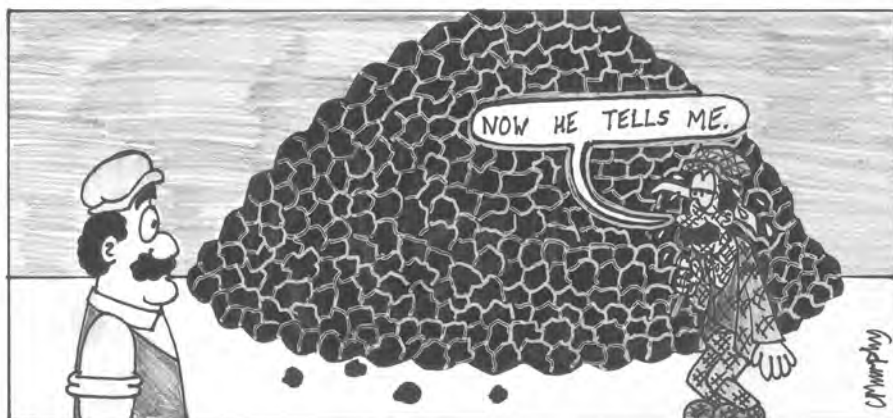
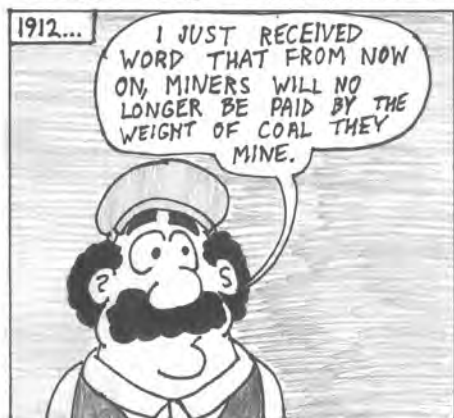
PAST TIMES



Past Times



Colin the Coalminer



Discovering Wigan's Jacobites: the early Jacobites, 1688- 1701

By Cameron Fleming

When you hear the word 'Jacobite', what image springs to mind? To watchers of the popular television programme *Outlander* it is likely Jamie Fraser. To those who studied them in school it is likely to be the bloody field of Culloden in 1746. What comes to most minds is a tartan clad warrior from the Highlands of Scotland brandishing broadsword and targe (shield). The Jacobites were far more than this stereotype suggests, with Wigan at the heart of their story.

The Birth of Jacobitism

Although many elements of Jacobite belief had longer roots, the real birth of the movement arose from the events of 1688. The English Parliament, unhappy with the rule of James II, invited William, Stadtholder (sort of prime minister) of the Netherlands, and Mary (James II's Protestant daughter) to assume the throne. The chief reason for this was an intolerance of Roman Catholics. James had converted in secret to the faith and had been relaxing laws that prohibited Catholics from holding commissions in the army. The trigger was the birth to James and Mary of a son who would be brought up in the Catholic faith. A conspiracy was baked that he was a changeling, and within the year James was forced from the throne and living in France.

Understandably, many were enraged by the events. Despite it becoming known as the 'bloodless revolution', in the years following battles were



James II as King of England, Scotland and Ireland c. 1686
(Wikimedia Commons)

fought in Scotland and Ireland with repercussions that still affect us now.

Wigan was the town with the most Catholics in England in proportion to population. Additionally, it was a traditional stronghold of the House of Stuart. James' brother, Charles II, had passed through Wigan in 1651 to great applause. Local supporters began to organise around the figure of William Standish. Catholics were particularly enraged. They had begun to see toleration of their faith come to fruition, only to have it taken away. The Dicconson family of Wroughton were an example of this with two brothers, Edward and William, both drawn to action. Some Protestants saw William as illegitimate, believing that a king once made could not be unmade. Peter Legh of Lyme,

who held lands in the west of the modern-day Wigan borough, certainly felt this way.

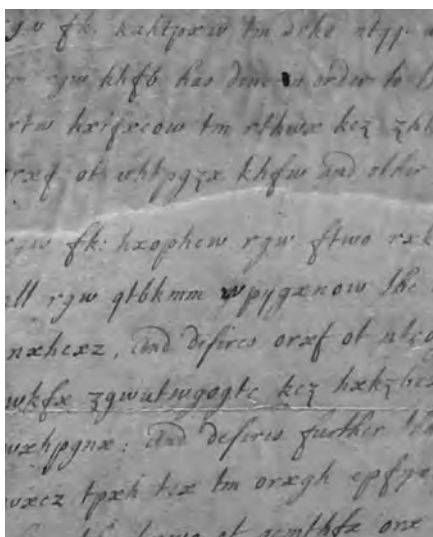
The Jacobite Plot Circle

James ordered Colonel Parker to help train recruits in a secret northern army to help him retake the throne. He based himself during 1690-91 at Standish Hall. A local network of activists recruited soldiers and officers. They petitioned James to send arms, war saddles, and ammunition for the soldiers they were recruiting. This information is found in the Standish plot papers, found in 1757 in a coppice wall at the Hall. They are now in Archives: Wigan & Leigh and document the plotters' activities.

The group included Catholics and Protestants from across Lancashire and north Cheshire. There was also a list of names inviting twenty more Cheshire gentlemen to join their ranks. The Gerrards of Ince were present, as were the Molyneuxs of Sefton and Wigan, and the Tyldesley family of the Fylde and Tyldesley.

The plot papers include blank commission papers. These would have been given to officers and documented what sort of unit they would lead. Many of these were for horse and dragoon companies. These mounted troops would have galloped to nearby towns to establish control over important objectives. One such objective was a military encampment which a plotter had sketched on a piece of parchment.

The most startling aspect of the Jacobites in Wigan was their reach. They communicated through letters directly to France and the Netherlands. News arrived back in code documenting the battle of la Hogue as quickly as it did to London! The Jacobites communicated through Lord Melford, one of James' ministers. They appealed for James to land and promised thousands of Jacobite soldiers from Wigan when he would do so.



An example of the Standish plot papers written in code

The Manchester Trial

However, before the Jacobites managed to see James land, their plot was foiled. Bribed carriers (couriers) hired by the Towneley family gave evidence against key members of the circle. William Standish was arrested by act of parliament and seven members of the circle became defendants in a trial. They were: Lord Molyneux, William Standish, Thomas Eccleston, William Dicconson, Sir Nicholas Sherborne, Sir William Gerrard and Thomas Gerrard.

Held in Manchester in 1694, the trial accused the plotters of attempting to assassinate King

William III. The evidence the court held was inconclusive and the case began to unravel when it emerged that key members of the prosecution had fabricated parts of the case to buy confiscated lands off the seven individuals at rock bottom prices. Lunt, a witness, was also found to be a bigamist and a horse thief, which didn't help matters for the prosecution. Another witness switched sides during the trial. All the accused were therefore acquitted. The judge, seemingly not convinced entirely of their innocence, told them to 'go and sin no more lest a worse thing befall you'.

After the Trial

Following their acquittal, the Jacobites went various ways. William Standish returned home to Standish, passing the Jacobite flame to his son, Ralph. William Dicconson would join King James in France, quickly becoming a favourite of the queen and treasurer of the court in exile. Three members of the Towneley family of Burnley and Edward Dicconson would join the French army as officers in the Irish brigades. These 'wild geese', as they became known, fought

in the French army but hoped to return with James. Edward would later train as a priest at Douay English College in France and remain in the Church.

In 1701, James II died in France. His claim was adopted by his son, James Francis Edward Stuart. To the Jacobites he was James III; to their opponents he was the 'old pretender'. Although some, like Peter Legh, saw their loyalty to the Stuarts vanish, in the hearts of many it continued.

Further Reading:

Standish Plot Papers: AWL: DD/St/M1-M3.

Jacobite Trial at Manchester 1694, Chetham Society, (1853), vol.28.

Porteus, Rev. T.C., New light on the Lancashire Jacobite plot, 1692-4: an account of the plot papers found at Standish Hall, 1757, now preserved in the Wigan Public Library (Wigan: 1936).

Monod, P.K., Jacobitism and the English People (Cambridge: 1993).



The drawing room at Standish Hall - where the Jacobites met. (PC2010.1504)

THE HISTORY OF ST LUKE'S, LOWTON

By Ann Glacki

Parishes were created in England about 636 A.D. Oswald, a Christian prince of Northumbria, had his palace in this area at the time. Winwick Church bears his name, and it is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that Winwick Parish was created shortly after his death. The parish of Winwick is one of the oldest parishes in the country, and includes Croft, Culcheth, Kenyon, Lowton, Newton, Earlestown, Ashton, Haydock and Wargrave. The Domesday Book states that there was a church at Winwick in 1086.

In 1650, when a commission under the Great Seal sat at Wigan, parish churches had been built in Ashton, Newton and Culcheth. There was no chapel at Lowton, but the commissioners thought that one should be built for the townships of Lowton, Golborne and Kenyon. Nothing was done until 1731 when the 'Lowton Chapel Agreement' was concluded on 1 December 1731. Under this agreement, twenty-seven charterers and freeholders within the township of Lowton agreed that eleven acres of waste and common land on Lowton Common and Lowton Heath, near the Locking Stoops, were to be enclosed at their expense. Peter Legh Esq., the Lord of the Manor of Lowton, consented to the erection of a chapel of ease and a convenient schoolhouse.

The annual profits of the enclosed land were to be

used for the maintenance of an orthodox Church of England minister. Overseers were appointed and given the authority to set men to work for these purposes and to see them paid out of the monies to be collected from the inhabitants of Lowton and others who were charitably disposed to contribute to the work.

From the date of 1732 on the church door, the building seems to have been completed within a year, but the chapel was not consecrated until St Luke's Day, which was Thursday 18 October 1733. The Bishop of Chester performed the ceremony as the church was then in the Chester diocese.

The chapel was built for the ease and convenience of the inhabitants of Lowton because Lowton was so far from Winwick, which prevented people from going to church, particularly in the winter. Often, therefore, worshippers would take communion in the chapel which was built on land given for that purpose by Hugh Stirrup, yeoman, of Lowton. At the same time a parcel of land was given for a chapel yard.

The legal transfer of the lands for the maintenance of the minister was not completed at the time of the consecration, and the Reverend Francis Annesley, Rector of Winwick, and Joseph Byrom of Manchester, owner of Byrom Hall, guaranteed to raise the sum of thirty pounds a year for this purpose until the land was transferred or until a grant was obtained from the governors of the bounty of Queen Anne. In 1734, these lands were found suitable in consideration of their value of £400. In 1738, Queen Anne's Bounty gave another £400 which was used for the purchase of lands and buildings, including the rectory and the fields behind it. These lands were then given to the Reverend Robert Rowbottom and his successors, curates of Lowton, forever, 'peaceably and quietly to have, hold, occupy, possess and enjoy'.



St Luke's Church, Lowton

The Deed of Consecration granted the Curate full power to carry out all the services and sacraments of the church, but there were certain provisions which showed that the new chapel was not yet a parish church. For example, no burials were allowed in the chapel or any part of it. The chapel registers were not to be kept permanently at Lowton but forwarded every year to Winwick to be included in the parish registers there. No service was to be held in the chapel at any time when a communion service was being held at the parish church of Winwick without the minister's express consent. Apart from these restrictions, all the benefits of the church were available for the people living in the townships of Lowton, Golborne or Kenyon.

Histories of Lancashire describe the church as a brick and stone building in the form of a cross. The church was enlarged in 1771 and 1813. The chancel was rebuilt in 1856, and the tower added in 1863. The pews were removed in the 1960s. The churchyard was extended in 1832, twice in 1879, and again in 1910. The cenotaph in the churchyard was erected in 1922.

The School House

The school opened in 1751. Its principal benefactor was the Lord of the Manor. Six poor children were educated free of charge, but any others had to pay the schoolmaster. By 1828, there were twenty-five paying pupils. The infants' school was built in 1854. However, an education report from 1865 found the school to be unsatisfactory. The inspector's chief complaint was that no Latin was being taught.



St Luke's Church, Lowton



St Luke's Church, Lowton

The schoolmaster resigned and no trustees could be found to re-appoint another. Consequently, the school closed in 1871, when it was rebuilt and then re-opened with the Rector and church wardens of Lowton and five laymen as trustees.

Division of the Rectory of Winwick

The Division of Winwick Rectory (Lancashire Act 1841) provided that Croft, Newton-in-Makerfield, Lowton, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Culcheth, Kenyon, Golborne and Haydock should become separate ecclesiastical districts. The Act gave these newly formed parishes their full standing as separate ecclesiastical districts and transferred the tithes from the Rector of Winwick to the newly created rectors.

In May 1845, before the parish of Lowton had been separated from Winwick, the 1841 Act was repealed as far as Lowton, Golborne and Kenyon were concerned. Kenyon became part of Newchurch, and Lowton became the parish church of Lowton and Golborne, combined under the name of Lowton Parish. Golborne was to become a separate parish if and when a church capable of holding 500 people was built.

The Reverend John Pennington, who had been the resident curate since 1813, became the first rector of the combined parishes.

In October 2023, we shall be celebrating our 290th birthday with a series of events, including a Heritage Day in church. If you have any memories of St Luke's which you would like to share, or any photos associated with St Luke's, please e-mail lowtongolbornechurches@outlook.com.

We look forward to seeing you!

BY JOHN UNSWORTH

The Politician and the Privateer



The politician – John Lancaster, 1816-1884

John Lancaster was the very model of a mid-Victorian politician, mine owner and wealthy businessman. From humble beginnings he had risen to chairman of the Lancashire Union Railway and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. A key figure in the Kirkless Hall Coal and Iron Company and responsible for building the blast furnaces and coke ovens on the Kirkless site, he later became chairman of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company when the Kirkless Hall Company was amalgamated with the Earl of Crawford's coal and engineering interests. A Liberal politician in his leaning, he became, in 1868, after an unsuccessful attempt three years earlier, the MP for Wigan.

Lancaster had his fingers in many pies. He was a keen mariner who sailed under the banner of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club and was the proud owner of the yacht *Deerhound*, a three-masted vessel built at the John Laird shipyard in Birkenhead.

Made of steel and with a screw-propeller, she had a tonnage of about 190, and engines of a nominal power of seventy horses, giving her a speed of up to 20 knots. Lancaster would frequently take his family out on excursions along the coast and to the continent. It was during one of these trips that the *Deerhound* found itself in the harbour of Cherbourg in France on 18 June 1864, eagerly awaiting the coming morn.

Raphael Semmes was to the sea born. Hailing from Charles County, Maryland, the son of a tobacco farmer, he was appointed a midshipman in the US Navy in 1826 at the age of seventeen, going on to serve in the Mexican War as Captain of the USS *Somers*. In 1855 he was given the rank of Commander, a position he held until his resignation from the navy in 1861 to enlist in the recently formed Confederate States Navy. His first command was the CSS *Sumter*, the first Confederate cruiser. Roaming the northern commercial shipping lanes they bagged eighteen prizes in six months. After the loss of the *Sumter* in early 1862 in Gibraltar, Semmes and several of his officers travelled to England from where, on 13 August 1862, he travelled to Terceira Island in the North Atlantic aboard the steamer *Bahama* to take command of a new cruiser, *Enrica*, soon to be renamed the CSS *Alabama*.

The CSS *Alabama*, or Hull 290 as she was initially designated, was built in relative secrecy at the John Laird Shipyard, birthplace of the *Deerhound*. As a response to the opening of hostilities between the North and the South, the British Neutrality Act, while recognizing the right of the Confederacy to defend itself against the North, also stated that it would not 'interfere' in the conflict. However, the business of Victorian Britain was business. The shipbuilders and their clients (the Confederate States of America) were not going to let a little

thing like politics get in the way of a lucrative deal. And after all, there was a loophole in the Act which allowed the construction of a ship designed as an armed vessel provided that it was not actually armed until after it sailed out of British waters and into the open sea.

After completion, the vessel, which was powered by both sail and two horizontal steam engines, secretly slipped out of Birkenhead bound for her rendezvous with Semmes at Terceira Island. From there, in August of 1862, with a complement of twenty-four officers and eighty-three seamen, many of them British, ordnance comprising six muzzle-loading, broadside, 32-pounder naval smoothbores, and two larger and more powerful pivot cannons placed fore and aft of the main mast, plus 350 tons of coal, she set sail in search of prey.

Over the next twenty months the swashbuckling Semmes and his crew, using a cunning combination of gallantry, dash and deception, prowled the high seas in search of Union merchantmen and whalers. During that period they boarded nearly 450 vessels, captured or burned sixty-five enemy ships, and took over 2,000 prisoners. Amazingly without any loss of life on either side! One of the tactics adopted by the Alabama was, upon sighting a potential target, they would hoist the colours of a non-belligerent nation and then, when the unsuspecting victim was within range, raise the Confederate flag. By then it was too

late and the hapless prey was duly bagged.

Out of a total of 657 days on the rampage, 534 were spent at sea with the ship re-fuelling and re-provisioning on the open water or at neutral ports. The Alabama, throughout her brief life, never once docked at a Southern port. The commerce raiders' exploits drew hero worship and vilification in equal measure. In the South she gave hope to a despondent population increasingly becoming aware that their dream of an independent nation was slowly diminishing. In the North she was regarded as nothing less than a pirate ship and the watchword became 'get the Alabama'! At any costs!

However, given her speed and mobility, and the vast expanse of the oceans, this seemed very unlikely. Until, that is, on Sunday 11 June 1864, when the raider, in search of a dry dock for repairs, entered the seemingly relative security of Cherbourg harbour in France. Quickly alerted to this fortuitous development, a Union battle cruiser, the USS Kearsarge commanded by Captain John S. Winslow, raced to block the port's entrance, arriving there on the 14th. Aware of the warship's presence, through diplomat channels Semmes let it be known that because he believed the two ships were 'equally matched' he did 'not feel at liberty to decline' the encounter and he would leave the safety of the harbour on the 19th to engage with the foe. The die was cast!



The sea battle off Cherbourg June 19th, 1864. The Deerhound (centre) is attempting to rescue survivors from the stricken C.S.S. Alabama (right) while the Kearsarge looks on.



The privateer – Raphael Semmes, 1809-1877

There is nothing quite like watching a battle! From a distance that is. And as news of the impending clash rippled out into the wider world Cherbourg became the focus of international attention. Within hours thousands of sensation seeking voyeurs descended on the port and the sea was soon dotted with a scattered flotilla of small boats, while the surrounding land was swarming with spectators. Even the painter Edouard Manet turned up, sketchpad in hand, later dashing off a painting to commemorate the occasion.

Also present that momentous morning was Mr John Lancaster of Hindley Green, Wigan, who happened to be in the vicinity on a pleasure cruise with his family, and who offered his children the option of either going to church or sailing out to watch the battle. Naturally, the little darlings chose the battle. So out of the harbour chugged the little Deerhound with its, no doubt, apprehensive crew, and expectant and excited passengers, to view the carnage.

Lancaster may have had a deeper reason for wanting to get close to the action. It is said that the night before he had entertained the Captain of the Alabama on board the Deerhound, reflecting a strong undercurrent of pro-Southern sympathy in Britain. Some Northern commentators, such as the New York Times reported on 7 July 1864 that, 'We learn that the British yacht Deerhound, which happened to be so opportunely near the Alabama during her fight with the Kearsarge..., is owned by the firm of

FRASER, TRENHOLM & CO., of Liverpool, who are the rebel agents for that port, and that she is thus almost as really rebel property as the Alabama herself. It probably was not wholly accidental that she happened to be on the spot at that particular time'. The so-called chance meeting, it was alleged, was more than just an accident and was designed to undermine the Union cause.

The morning of 19 June saw the Alabama sail out to meet the Kearsarge nine miles off the French coast to do battle. The Union vessel was armed with four 32 pounders, two 11" Dahlgren guns, and a 30lb rifle. The ship's hull had also been reinforced with 720 ft of 1.7-inch single link iron chain. Coming up with each other the two vessels began to stalk each other warily, sailing in seven opposing concentric circles in order for each commander to cross the bow of his opponent to open up with a heavy raking fire. The Alabama was the first to deliver a shot, but the Kearsarge waited patiently until she had closed within 1,000 yards of the Confederate raider. A flurry of broadsides followed, with the Alabama firing 370 shots to the Kearsarge's 173.

However, the raiders' rapid rate of fire was not matched by her accuracy, most rounds missing their target, the most telling shot being a shell that lodged near the vulnerable stern post and would have, if it had exploded, completely disabled the Union warship's steering and could possibly have sunk the ship. Luckily for the Northern ship, the shell failed to explode due to a deterioration of the gunpowder. The fire from the Union vessel was far more telling, and little more than an hour after the first shot was fired the Alabama was reduced to a sinking wreck, forcing Captain Semmes to strike his colours and to send one of his two surviving boats to ask for assistance. The Kearsarge rescued most of the survivors but sadly nine were killed and ten drowned in the action. The Kearsarge had three crewmen wounded, of which one died. Enter Mr John Lancaster.

Signalled by the Kearsarge to help with the rescue operation, the Deerhound, like a seagoing Lochinvar, plucked forty-one of the Alabama's officers and crew, including Semmes, from the murky depths of the channel and spirited them away, heading home for England. The enraged Captain Winslow, deprived of his catch, fumed, 'The Deerhound ran off with prisoners, which I do not believe any cur dog would have been capable of, under the circumstances, since I could not open upon him'.

The night before, it was later rumoured, the English yacht owner had taken on board a number of valuables from the Alabama in the event of the imminent battle going against the Southern cruiser. This, at the time, gave rise to cries from the North of collaboration between the Alabama and the Deerhound (after all, they did hail from the same shipyard) that cast a shadow over Anglo-American relations for many years to come. The fact that most of the Confederate fleet was built in England and Scotland did nothing to lessen the tension between the two countries.

The actions of the Deerhound almost precipitated an international incident. To the US government it was just another example of the duplicity and complicity of the British. After the Civil War's conclusion, in 1869 the American government filed damages against the British for the attacks upon Union shipping carried out by vessels constructed at Birkenhead, Clyde and other shipyards. In 1872, after years of arbitration, the final award, a payment of some \$15,500,000 was paid to the Americans in the form of reparations. The demands for financial restitution were named after, no doubt to the immense satisfaction and pride of Captain Raphael Semmes, the most famous Confederate commerce raider of them all – the Birkenhead built CSS ALABAMA.

*Roll Alabama roll
She was laid in the town of Birkenhead
Oh roll Alabama roll*

*Roll Alabama roll
To destroy the commerce of the north
Oh roll Alabama roll*

*Roll Alabama roll
She sank to the bottom of the ocean floor
Oh roll Alabama roll
Oh roll Alabama roll
Oh roll Alabama roll*

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Name

Address

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Telephone No.

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Signed

Date

WHAT'S ON

There's lots going on across the Council's cultural venues to help you make the most of the autumn days. Here's a selection of just a few events and activities but do keep a look out for the new September to December What's On guide, our website and social media channels for full listings.

Events

Wednesday 13 September 2pm-3pm

Leigh: Between the Wars

Join local historian Michael Caine to explore life in Leigh during the 1920s and 1930s. Archives: Wigan & Leigh, Leigh Town Hall. FREE event Booking via Eventbrite

Saturday 14 October 2pm-3pm

Black Victorians in Leigh and Wigan

Brian Joyce, author and historian, explores advantages and pitfalls of sources for Black History, looking at the historical black presence in Wigan and Leigh during the Victorian period.

Archives: Wigan & Leigh, Leigh Town Hall. FREE event Booking via Eventbrite

Saturday 30 September 3pm to 4.30pm

Wigan Casino: Its influence, its legacy and everything that followed

Q&A Panel event hosted by Dr Paul Sadot, director of 'Once upon a time in Wigan' and advisor for the film 'Northern Soul'. Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan. FREE event Booking via Eventbrite

Saturday 16 September 10am-4pm

Heritage Open Day

The Museum of Wigan Life and Wigan Local Studies Library is housed in Wigan's first public library. Opened in 1878, it is an Alfred Waterhouse design. In 1936 George Orwell researched his book 'The Road to Wigan Pier' in the reference library upstairs. Our curators will guide you through our exhibition, the building, and displays. Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan FREE, drop in

Saturday 14 October 12-1pm

Appley Bridge Meteorite by Russell Parry

The fall and discovery of the Appley Bridge meteorite in 1914. Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan Pay what you feel Booking essential. Ring 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Saturday 14 October 3pm-4pm

Inside Pharaoh's Wardrobe with Professor Joann Fletcher

Following the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922, the tomb's antechamber began to be cleared. Among the wonderful things it contained were chests housing royal clothing and

adornments, some of which were identified in the 1990s by a team which included Jo herself.

Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan

Pay what you feel

Booking essential. Ring 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Saturday 28 October 3pm-4.30pm

Soul Music and Social Change with Stuart Cosgrove

Join Stuart Cosgrove, author of the ground-breaking Black Social History and soul music books 'Detroit 67', 'Memphis 68', and 'Harlem 69' for a unique event that will look at the struggles Black American soul artists faced. Exploring the influence they had on Wigan Casino, the Northern Soul scene in general, and the wider music scene in this country.

Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan

Pay what you feel - Booking is essential

Ring 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

23 November 12-1pm

The Duke of Bridgewater's

Underground Coal Mining Canals, 1760 to date with Alan Davies

The Third Duke of Bridgewater embarked on a system of underground canals, at the time regarded as one of the wonders of the engineering world. The canals branched out to draw coal from the workings of over 35 collieries, doing so until 1887. Over 52 miles of canals were eventually driven. Speaker Alan Davies was involved in the 1999 feasibility study along with the Mines Rescue service, he produced the only colour film ever produced of the canals during the survey. Fully illustrated.

Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan

Pay what you feel - Booking essential.

Ring 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Regular Activities

Soul Time

Join Manchester Camerata for a music and chat group for people living well with dementia and their carers and families. For more information contact info@manchestercamerata.com

Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan

Every other Monday, 1-3 pm, FREE, drop in

Sensory Saturdays

Enjoy our exhibition space in a relaxed setting and borrow a themed sensory backpack to explore with.

Archives: Wigan & Leigh, Leigh Town Hall.

Last Saturday of the month, 10am-1pm FREE, drop-in

Make Some Noise! Exhibition Tours

Fancy something exciting to do during your lunch break? Then look no further! Join us at the museum for our new bi-monthly music

exhibition tours.

12-12.45pm Wednesdays 6 September, 1 November, 17 January.

FREE, booking essential, ring 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Leigh Town Hall Tours

Discover the history of Leigh Town Hall and explore the archives collections on this free guided tour.

Archives: Wigan & Leigh, Leigh Town Hall Last Wednesday of the month, 11am start FREE, book online via Archives: Wigan & Leigh Eventbrite

Museum of Wigan Life building and permanent exhibition tours

Fancy something exciting to do during your lunch break? Then look no further! Join us at the museum for our new bi-monthly building and permanent display tours.

12-12.45pm Wednesdays 2 August, 4 October. FREE, booking essential ring 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Exhibitions

Archives: Wigan & Leigh permanent exhibition

Family-friendly displays showcasing the stories and original objects and archives that make up the local history of the borough. Leigh Town Hall.

Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-1pm and 1.30pm-4pm. FREE

NHS 75

Visit our new temporary exhibition which celebrates the 75th anniversary of the National Health Service. Learn about what life was like in the borough before the NHS and how our healthcare has been shaped in the last 75 years.

Archives: Wigan & Leigh, Ground Floor, Leigh Town Hall

25 July-23 December Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-1pm and 1.30-4pm. FREE, drop-in

Creating Place

Creating Place celebrates our local environment through an interactive exhibition that will evolve and grow over the summer. Join us in the gallery for artist-led activities for all ages, inspired by this year's theme of 'home'.

Turnpike Gallery, Leigh.

1 July-16 September, Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-4pm. FREE

125 Years of Uncle Joe's

Explore how the Wigan-based company has kept us 'all aglow' for 125 years. The display showcases never seen objects and may even reveal a secret or two about how to craft the perfect mint ball!

Museum of Wigan Life, Wigan

21 July-January 2024, Tuesday-Saturday, 10.30-11.30am. FREE, drop-in

Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

When: 2nd Thursday of the month
Where: Our Lady of Immaculate Conception Parish Room, Haigh Road, Aspull, WN2 1YB
Time: 2pm start
Costs: £3
Contact: Barbara Rhodes 01942 222769

Billinge History and Heritage Society

When: 2nd Tuesday of the month
Where: Chapel End Labour Club, 213 Main Street, Billinge, WN5 7PB
Time: 7pm for a 7.30pm start
Costs: Unknown
Contact: Geoff Crank 01695 624411

Culcheth Local History Group

When: 2nd Thursday of the month
Where: Culcheth Community Centre, Jackson Avenue, Culcheth, WA3 4EL
Time: 7.30pm
Costs: £3
Contact: Zoe Chaddock 01925 752276

Leigh Family History Society

When: 3rd Tuesday of the month (no meetings in July, August and December)
Where: Derby Rooms, Turnpike Centre, Leigh, WN7 1EB
Time: 7pm
Costs: Members – £1, non-members – £2
Contact: Mrs G. McClellan 01942 729559
 Volunteers from the Society run a family history help desk at Archives: Wigan & Leigh, Tuesday-Friday, 10.00-13.00, by appointment only.
 Ring 01942 404430 or email archives@wigan.gov.uk

Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

When: 1st Tuesday of the month (no meetings in January, July and August)
Where: Upholland Methodist Church, Alma Road, Upholland, WN8 0NR
Time: 7pm for a 7.30pm start
Costs: £1
Contact: Bill Fairclough 07712766288 or Caroline Fairclough at carolinefairclough@hotmail.com

Tyldesley Historical Society

When: Last Monday of the month
Where: St George's Primary School, Darlington Street, Tyldesley, M29 8DH
Time: 7pm for a 7.30pm start
Costs: Unknown
Contact: www.facebook.com/tyldesleyhistoricalsociety

Wigan Archaeological Society

When: 1st Wednesday of the month (no meetings in January and August)
Where: Real Crafty, 9 Upper Dicconson Street, Wigan, WN1 2AD
Time: 7.30pm
Costs: £3
Contact: www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk

Wigan Civic Trust

When: 2nd Monday of the month
Where: Deanery Church of England High School, Frog Lane, Wigan, WN1 1HQ
Time: 7.30pm
Costs: Unknown
Contact: Peter Taylor 01942 725828

Wigan Local History and Heritage Society

When: 2nd Monday of the month
Where: Real Crafty, 9 Upper Dicconson Street, Wigan, WN1 2AD
Time: 7.15pm
Costs: Membership from £10 per year
Contact: www.facebook.com/wiganhistoryandheritage

Schools' Culture Workshops at the Museum of Wigan Life, Archives: Wigan & Leigh, and the Turnpike

FREE* workshop sessions for SCHOOLS

Time-limited offer until December 2023



Explore the depths of the Archives, Museum, and the Turnpike with your class at one of our workshops designed to support the national curriculum for history and beyond.

Number of free sessions limited per school *free if you engage in feedback with us!

Why not combine a visit to the Archives and Turnpike in Leigh to create an extra special experience? Or a trip to the museum in Wigan with a session in the library.

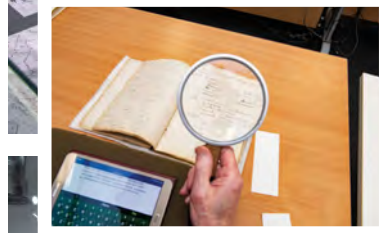


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Family-friendly local history exhibition open



**FREE
to visit**



**Tuesday-Saturday,
10am-1pm & 1.30pm-4pm**

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