



## Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

Minutes of the Members Meeting held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021 via Zoom at 7:00pm

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from E and AC, J B, C R

2. Minutes of previous meeting January 2021:

The minutes were circulated via email prior to the meeting.

A member pointed out an error and asked that the name Peter Powell be changed to Phillip Powell.

The minutes were then agreed as an accurate account of the meeting:

Proposed by RS and seconded by RF

3. Matters Arising:

A change to the order of planned presentations was agreed as follows:

May: History of The Jireh Church by PT.

August: History of Pony Dick by DW.

The recording of the presentation A History of Wigan Little Theatre by RH needs to be recorded so that it can be uploaded to YouTube. R has kindly agreed to do this.

**AP1. Re-record Zoom Presentation A History of Wigan Little Theatre. – RH**

4. Projects update:

PF reported:

**Gidlow Sisters:**

The Society has assisted in providing images associated with Wigan's Cultural Heritage for the new Community Assessment Unit at Wigan Infirmary and has been instrumental in resurrecting the name Gidlow with the naming of the Gidlow Lounge in the Unit.

The search to find the missing paintings of the sisters and the stained glass window continues.

**Plantation Gates:**

HLF2 no progress to date but Wigan Council is confident of a successful bid.

**Common Seal Stonework:**

No further progress to date.

5. Working Group Reports:

The Chair advised that all the reports should be presented first and then discussions take place after.



## Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

### **King Street Heritage Action Zone:**

NL gave a comprehensive report of progress to date with the help of slides which are to be attached to the minutes.

The KS HAZ covers the area between King Street and Library Street, it has been awarded a budget of £1.2m to make King Street a better place. There is a traffic light system in place to prioritise funding.

Grimes Arcade listed under the colour amber, has been identified by this group and by other groups as being a key building which is key to the success of the project because it links King Street to important parts of the HAZ area, to Wallgate and to Library Street, however it has been blocked off. Discussions will take place with the owner.

The Council is currently in the process of planning a website/page dedicated to KS HAZ which will contain a link to the WLHHS and WBT websites.

Suggested possible outcomes:

Estate Agent type brochures for each historic building, virtual tours, drone footage etc.

Historic England has some end of year budget to help deliver the project which needs to be used before end of March.

A scanner will be purchased to aid the research activities of the group.

A possible group subscription to British Newspaper Archives/Find My Past is also being investigated.

All Working Groups are open to all members and more volunteers are needed to assist with research.

### **AP2: Send out pdf copy of slides to all members – CK**

### **King Street Cultural Consortia:**

NL and CK gave a very brief update on the last meeting attended.

The HE bid has been successful.

There is some overlap between elements of the 'Streets Apart' and the KS HAZ 'Street that Was' project strands.

To prevent duplication Phil Machin the project manager for the 'Street That Was' will attend the next meeting scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> March.

### **Archives:**

AL reported on progress:

Alex Miller the Archivist for Wigan and Leigh will contact the Society to advise on ways members can assist with volunteering.

Project based training relating to KS HAZ research methods will be provided as soon as Covid regulations allow for Wigan Local Studies to reopen.

Volunteers are also required to help with cataloguing and digitising documents.

Training will be given.

### **Wigan Historic Environment Strategy Launch:**

An invitation for a small number of representatives of the Society to attend the virtual official launch of the strategy had been received and was circulated to the 35 members within the Messenger Group. Five members had expressed an interest to represent the Society and those names were duly forwarded to the Council..



## Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

A member had suggested that the invitation link should be circulated to all members and not just to those in the Messenger Group. However, the secretary had explained that the invitation was not meant for a larger number but agreed to do this if it was felt that it was the right thing to do.

### 6. Discussion of the reports:

A discussion took place around the contents of the reports:

Grimes Arcade: why and when was the thoroughfare blocked off to the public?

It was suggested it was done about 15 years ago to put a stop to incidents of anti-social behaviour taking place at night. Maybe the arcade could be reopened to facilitate the success of the KS project, be well lit and gated at night?

Shaping the project needs the supportive opinions of others to give it strength.

It needs to be an impressive development to persuade owners of the need to invest.

Altrincham Market was used as a good example of a development which has attracted visitors in droves to what was once a rundown part of town.

A new member AB is an industrial archaeologist and offered to investigate if any of the buildings were once used as industrial buildings. If this is the case it could qualify for an Archaeological grant.

The area in between King Street and Library Street with its yards and courts is a much older archaeological site, having once been situated very close to a Roman Fort, a Roman Bathhouse, and settlements which would have stretched as far as King Street.

The Society can make a huge difference to the project by telling the stories of the people who lived and worked there, people will then begin to appreciate the place more.

The Society will tell the stories of the street and surrounding area bringing it back to life through its social history. When areas and historical buildings are being analysed and valued it is often the communal value which is overlooked.

Wigan is littered with industrial archaeological sites, it was once the 'Silicon Valley of the Industrial Revolution' Greater Manchester was the incredible centre of the industrial world.

### **AP3. Investigate if any buildings were once used as industrial buildings. AB, BA**

### 7. Websites and Social Media Reports:

PF reported on the growing number of visits to the WLHHS and the WBT websites with a total of over 700 visits last month.

CK reported on the success of the FB and Twitter Pages with the number of new followers growing every day. Currently 1649 followers on FB and over 500 on Twitter.

Some popular posts average around 12K views and some have been over 20K

As a result of this combined success membership has continued to grow steadily with a current total of just over 70 members.

A member suggested that subscriptions should be charged to new members.

The secretary pointed out that a proposal to freeze all subscriptions for the duration of the pandemic restrictions had been unanimously agreed at the AGM in September 2020.

This has been written into the constitution and will be reviewed again at the next AGM in September 2021.

The current overhead for the Society is the cost associated with the ZOOM subscription and there is enough money in the Bank account to cover this for the foreseeable future.



## Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

There will be difficulty collecting future subscriptions as the Society doesn't currently have internet banking facilities set up for members.

It was agreed that this should be set up and running ASAP and before the AGM in September.

### **AP4. Arrange to set up Internet Banking and PayPal facilities to enable members to pay for future subscriptions directly online - SR**

#### 8. Associate Memberships:

Wigan Archaeological Society has agreed that WLHHS members can become Associate members at the reduced cost of £5 per year. This will allow for the same membership benefits as WAS members, however it will not extend to voting rights.

This will be reciprocal for members of WAS who wish to become Associate members of WLHHS.

#### 9. Any Other Business:

We have subscribed to Lancashire Local History Federation

RS has kindly offered to present his research into The Trial of Francis Sharp Powell in October.

#### 10. Date and Time of next members meeting:

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March at 7pm via Zoom