



## Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

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

1. Number of Members present and Apologies for absence:

17 members were present.

Apologies were received from Paul K, Sheila R, Jim M, Derek W.

2. Minutes of previous meeting February 2021:

The minutes were circulated via email prior to the meeting.

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

Proposed by Andy L and seconded by Neil L

3. Matters Arising:

Completed:

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

**FebAP2: Send out pdf copy of King Street HAZ slides to all members – CK.**

Ongoing:

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

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

4. Projects update:

**The Wigan Buildings Website:** still needs volunteers to photograph and research buildings.

As last month:

**Gidlow Sisters project:**

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.

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

Clare K reported:

No further updates until the next meeting 17<sup>th</sup> March.

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

NL reported:

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 prioritize funding.

Two representatives from Historic England (funding project) attended the last meeting and informed the group of its interest in Grimes Arcade. They intend to do an onsite visit in April if possible.

Grimes Arcade has previously been identified by this group and by other groups as being a key building which is key to the success of the project, linking King Street to important parts of the HAZ area, to Rowbottom Square, Wallgate and to Library Street, however it has been blocked off by the owner.

Buildings of particular interest to the group located in this area are Arcade Chambers, the site of Timberlakes, the driveway into the once showrooms can still be seen from the street. Meeks Building is also a building of interest.

A question was asked about the outcomes: Neil L suggested it is a way of seeking capital to improve buildings and to get the street moving.

Clare K added: that the outcome for the 'Street That Was' working group is to contribute to a legacy project for future generations which will be kept in the Archives to document the history of the buildings and the lives of people who once lived and worked there.

The working group along with Wigan Council is planning an event to take place in Heritage Open Day week in September. This may involve opening up of some of the buildings but this can only happen with the cooperation of the owners and licensees. Representatives of the Council will be pursuing this with the business owners.

### **Archives:**

Andy L reported on progress:

Archives is very pleased to be working with WLHHS.

A volunteer project is being set up between the Archives and WLHHS. Alex Miller has proposed five points on the best way to move this forward:

An advert and job description will go out to members of WLHHS, members will register an interest with Peter F, email addresses will be forwarded to Jilly and Alex. Supported induction and training will commence in Local Studies at Wigan.

Volunteers are required to help with cataloguing collections, indexing resources, digitizing documents and research.

A scanner has been purchased through Historic England to assist with research for the 'Street That Was' project. It is planned that it will be situated in Local Studies at Wigan, and along with this a laptop has also been purchased via Brighter Borough Funding from Wigan Central Councillors Lawrence Hunt and Mike McLoughlin. This complete scanning unit will be used to scan documents to upload to the Society website for the enjoyment of the general public. It will also be available to members following training.

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

Slides were shared with the members and Clare K gave an outline and summary of the launch Meeting.

An issue regarding local listings of buildings of interest was identified.

### **Wigan Pier Project:**

Peter F reported on some dramatic action which had taken place following the Wigan Pier presentation given by Derek Winstanley last week.

Neil L has since been working informally looking at the information available on buildings around the Pier. Information on Historic England regarding the ages of the buildings appears to conflict with information provided by Derek.

A working group is to be set up to clarify the information.

### **March AP1 – Set up a Zoom Meeting for members interested in working on the Wigan Pier Buildings Project – Neil L**

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

#### 6. Websites and Social Media Reports:

Peter F reported on the growing numbers visiting the WLHHS website with a total of over 2.5K visits last month from a total of 28 different countries and 318 different cities.

48% of these has been from outside the Wigan area, making the website a global network resource.

A news section has successfully been introduced with lots of interesting information.

A scanning trial document publishing a 1968 Wigan Directory has had a lot of activity.

The History of Beech Hill and the Thicknesse Family has also attracted a lot of interest and is a credit to Graham Taylor and Andy L for his support.

Clare K reported on the success of the FB and Twitter Pages with the number of new followers growing every day. 1800 followers on FB and 537 on Twitter.

Some very popular posts are shared so many times that the reach numbers are usually around 12K and the History of Wigan Little Theatre was particularly popular with a reach of over 26,000.

AS a result of this combined success membership has continued to grow steadily with a total of just over 80 members.

#### 7. Discussion regarding reports:

Wigan Pier Complex.: Andy L has been informed that very little interest has been shown in the modular homes priced at £285K. The road is one of the busiest routes in Wigan. A notice has been published regarding in the routing of traffic stopping traffic turning right off Wallgate going up Miry Lane. There is a concern that it will impact significantly on local business.

#### Launch of Historic Environment Strategy:

A long and detailed discussion took place around the subject of an authorised list of Local Listings for Buildings of Local Interest within the Wigan Borough.

Examples of good practice within the neighboring GM Councils of Salford and Stockport were discussed. Within these neighbourhoods the local community decides what it is in their area that contributes to its character and local historic legacy and as such that they would like recognised as a local heritage asset. These buildings are given some degree of protection through the local planning system.

It was pointed out that Wigan Council had produced such a list several years ago, but this has not been approved and as such is not authorised. This list was shared with Wigan Buildings Preservation Trust to populate its website. It was understood at the time that the Council would also associate itself to the list, but this has not been the case. Andy L showed a copy of a leaflet which had been produced by Wigan Council but had not been implemented.

Concern was expressed that on the Council website it is misleading to have a link to Historic England under the heading of Buildings of Local Importance when there is no such link for locally listed buildings.

It is felt that with the newly launched Historic Environment Strategy and its intention to work with the community now is a good time to contact the Council regarding Local Listings.

It was suggested that the Society should raise the issue and get something in writing.

**March AP2 – Organise a meeting between members to put something in writing to the Council to take the matter of Local Listings forward – Clare K.**

Grimes Arcade:

A discussion took place regarding the blocking of Grimes Arcade.  
Approved planning applications were looked at. The plans were never put into place.  
Further discussions will take place with Phil Machin.  
If necessary an application for a public right of way will be considered by the group.

8. A proposal to commission a piece of art work in dedication to Wigan Cotton Workers.  
It was decided to move this to the April meeting.

9. Any Other Business:

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April at 7pm via Zoom