

# PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Archives & Museums

Issue No. 89

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**gerrumonside!**

The passion of rugby league past, present & future

**£2**

**Wigan and Leigh's local history magazine**

# Contents

- 4-7 Care of Friendless Girls and Unmarried Mothers in Wigan 1884-1934
- 8-9 The Portraits in the Archives
- 10-11 Meet the Volunteers
- 12-13 Marital Discord In 16th Century Bryn
- 14-15 A Lad from Scholes meets Queen Victoria
- 16-17 Barry Mason
- 18-20 Simply the Best
- 21 The Road from Wigan Pier
- 22-24 The Gate Lodges of Culcheth Hall
- 25 Stepping Back in Time
- 26-29 John Buckley – The Historian of Tyldesley
- 30 Around the Match
- 31 Tom Price
- 32-33 Lives Well Lived
- 34 Upcoming Events
- 35 Society News

**FRONT COVER**  
*Billy Boston Wigan v Widnes*  
 Image courtesy of Wigan Post / Wigan Observer

# Letter from the Editorial Team

## Welcome to PAST Forward Issue 89.

With Christmas not far away we've a packed edition with plenty of fascinating local history stories and lots to look forward to in 2022.

Our exciting first exhibition in the refreshed gallery is now open at the Museum of Wigan Life, *gerrumonside! The passion of rugby league past, present and future*. You can find out more on page 3 about this groundbreaking new display and if rugby is your passion, John Unsworth delves into the story of Thomas Gerrard, Wigan's supreme rugby photographer (see page 18).

The Borough will be welcoming not only the Rugby League World Cup next year, but the UEFA European Women's Championship – Archives: Wigan & Leigh are working with We Are Willow and The Turnpike on a fascinating new project to celebrate the game and uncover the hidden histories of the sport (page 30).

This edition takes readers from 16th century Bryn to a meeting with Queen Victoria and 1960s chart-toppers – and we're delighted to let you behind the scenes to meet some of the wonderful volunteers at the Archives and Wigan Local Studies to learn more about their valued contributions to preserving the Borough's history.

From all the team at the Archives and Museum, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

### Information for Contributors

We always welcome articles and letters for publication from both new and existing contributors.

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

- Publication is at the discretion of Editorial Team
- The Editorial Team may edit your submission
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of, unless you request for them to be returned

- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition
- Include photographs or images where possible – these can be returned if requested
- Articles must be received by the copy date if inclusion in the next issue is desired
- Include your name and address – we will not pass on your details to anyone unless you have given us permission to do so

### Submission Guidelines

- Electronic submissions are preferred, although handwritten ones will be accepted
- We prefer articles to have a maximum length of 1,000 words but please contact us if you would like to submit an article of a greater length

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

### Contact Details

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk  
 or The Editor at PAST FORWARD, Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.



*Image courtesy of Wigan Post/Wigan Observer*

An exciting new FREE exhibition that celebrates the history of rugby league is now open at The Museum of Wigan Life. A completely redesigned new-look gallery features dynamic displays that follow our local teams' trophy-filled histories, and tells the story of how Wigan, Leigh and Tyldesley left the Rugby Football Union in 1895 to form the breakaway Northern Rugby Football Union.

The family-friendly displays feature original memorabilia from Jim Slevin, Andy Gregory, Jim Sullivan, Phil Clarke, Shaun Wane, Billy Boston, John Woods, Des Drummond, Jimmy Ledgard, and other giants of the game. The exhibition also showcases the rise of

women in the sport, grass roots rugby, and includes medals, shirts, caps and trophies, alongside more unusual items such as a wheelchair from the 2008 Wheelchair World Cup when England lifted the trophy as world champions, an original turnstile from Central Park, and the ball from the famous Prescott match.

Come and walk through the tunnel of champions. You can sit, reminisce, and share memories about past games in the mini-stadium area, while watching original historic match footage of local teams in action. In addition, there is a programme of events and family-friendly activities to explore and enjoy. We would also love to hear your rugby

league memories and stories from recent games, so come and tell us about them when you visit and add them to our fan wall, or share them on the museum Facebook and Twitter using the hashtag #gerrumonside!

**'gerrumonside! – the passion of rugby league past, present and future' is open until 19 November 2022.**

**Museum opening times are Tuesday-Saturday, 10am-4pm.**  
**Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU**  
**E: wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk**  
**T: 01942 828128**  
**W: www.wigan.gov.uk/museum**

**Copy Deadline for Issue 90 – Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Monday 14 February 2022.**

# Care of Friendless Girls and Unmarried Mothers in Wigan 1884-1934

BY YVONNE ECKERSLEY

This article begins in 1884 when Ellice Hopkins came to Wigan. She was the founder of the Church of England's Ladies' Association for the Care of Young Girls (formed in 1876) and co-founder of the National Vigilance Association (formed in 1885). Her visit coincided with a public outcry in response to high profile prosecutions centring around the trafficking of young girls into prostitution. Speaking in Wigan, Ellice Hopkins spoke of the need to prevent and/or rescue young women who might be lured into prostitution in order to earn their living.

She stayed at Mrs Ffarrington's Mariebonne house, where, after her visit, a group of Wigan's middle class women formed the Ladies' Committee, and instigated the formation of the Wigan Deanery Branch of the Liverpool Diocesan Association for the Care of Friendless Girls. Its secretaries were Mrs Ffarrington and Mrs Darlington, two of Wigan's 'leading ladies'. In 1884 they opened the Mariebonne Home for Friendless Girls in a small house in Springfield Street, which had room for seven girls. Later, needing more space, they moved to 97 Dicconson Street West.

The Association's work centred round finding, protecting, then removing vulnerable young girls who had come into Wigan looking for work, from potential danger. For girls who had missed their trains, found wandering the streets with nowhere to spend the night, or generally in need of help, they provided temporary shelter. The girls would spend a night or two in the Home, after which they were sent to rescue homes in Chester or Lichfield. They worked closely with

Wigan's Temperance and Rescue Society; in 1897 Temperance workers sent girls to stay at the Mariebonne Home. In 1885 Wigan's Vigilance Society was formed with similar objectives. They had close connections with the Association. At least one woman, Mrs Ranicar, was a member of Wigan's Vigilance Society and the Association's Ladies' Committee.

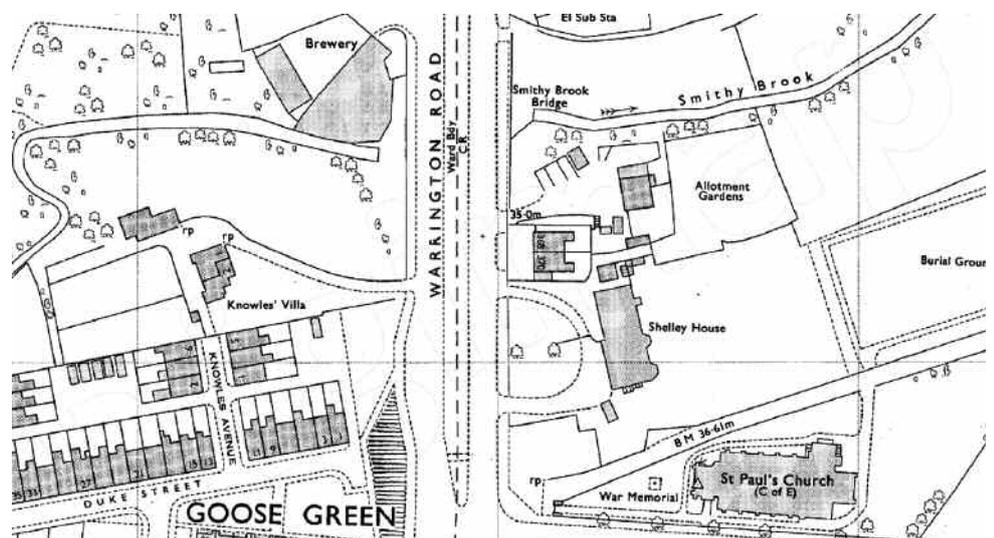
## 17 New Market Street

Then, in 1910, the Home moved to the larger, and more central, 17 New Market Street. A Miss Higson was the Association's organising secretary and they began to provide maternity services for unmarried mothers. Wigan's Poor Law Institute occasionally sent women there to be delivered. Guardians described it as the 'sisters' home', with Miss Stubbs in charge. However, the Association did not feel able to help all the girls referred to them. Their annual report of 1914 states that of the 63 girls passing through their hands, nine were 'unfit' to help and were sent to the workhouse.

## In 1916 the Association moved to another home

St Margaret's Home for Unmarried Mothers, Shelley House, Goose Green (again under the auspices of the Liverpool Diocese Association for Preventative and Rescue Work – Wigan Deanery Council) was the final Home to be run by the Association. It was in a 'commodious' building (in 1934 they housed 17 mothers and babies and three 'preventative cases') with large gardens surrounded by a high wall, and rented for £40 a year from St Paul's Church.

It operated until 1969 when storms damaged the building, making it uninhabitable. On 30 December 1970 St Margaret's Committee officially terminated their tenancy of Shelley House. The Liverpool Diocese reviewed the future of moral welfare work in Wigan, and decided that, because the demand for Mother and Baby Homes was rapidly diminishing, they would end their commitment and sell the building. In September



Map showing Shelley House.

1972 the Charity Commission sanctioned its sale to Wigan Council for 'at least £6000'. Despite being identified as a 'Building of Architectural and Historical Significance', in 1951 it was demolished and replaced by the Ancliffe Care Home.

### Its Work

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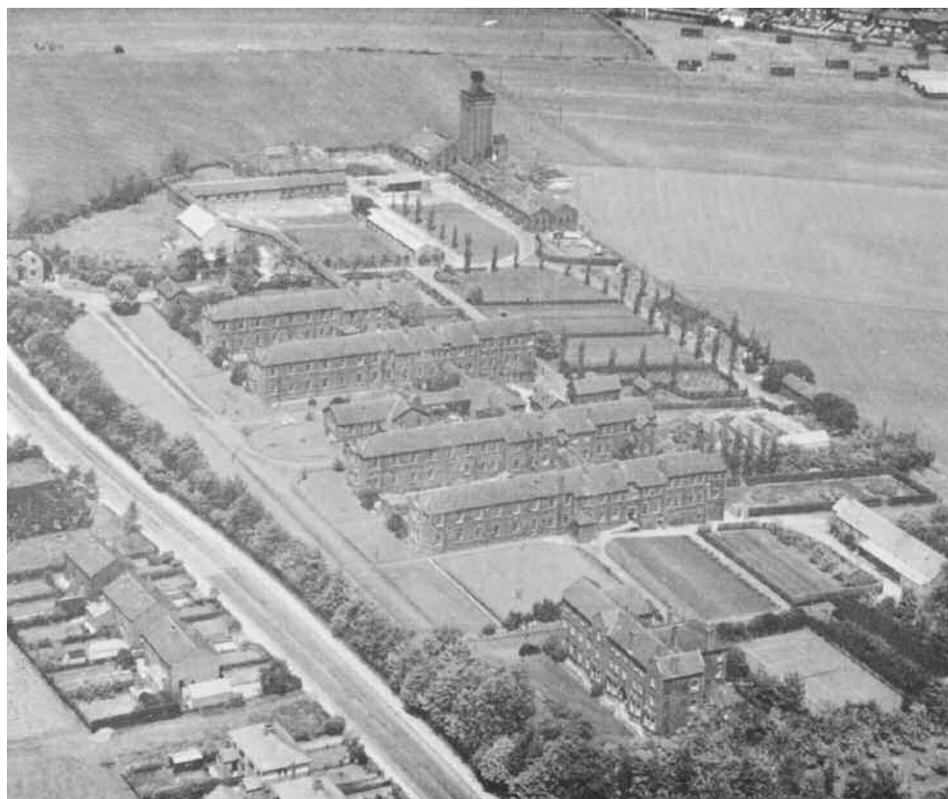
The Annual Report and Jubilee Book of 1934 explains the Home's main purpose and how it operated. It was a Home for unmarried mothers before and after the birth of their first child. The girls were admitted to the Home, then sent to the Wigan Union Hospital at Billinge to give birth in its maternity ward.

When discharged from the hospital the new mothers returned to St Margaret's, where they were encouraged (but not required) to nurse their babies and stay for six months. During, or after this time, many mothers left Wigan to resume life with or without their babies. The Home fostered out the babies left there until they were adopted.

The Home catered for girls in the Wigan and other Poor Law Union districts. Warrington's Rescue Society, with no money for their own shelter, had four beds reserved at St Margaret's. Wigan Guardians charged the Home a fixed sum of 14 shillings a week for young women from other unions for their hospital stay, but were prepared to be more flexible when charging the Home for girls from Wigan.

The girls were referred to the Home by their own Social Purity visitor (in 1934 this was a Miss Vandy), probation and/or police officers, local authorities, churches, lodging house keepers, the Infirmary's clinic, relatives, friends or themselves.

Like its forebears, St Margaret's relied heavily on charity and the work of women. Although Wigan's wealthier class held its prestigious positions (its president was the Countess of Crawford and Balcarres, its Vice Presidents were Mrs Bankes, Mrs Winstanley and Mrs Buckmaster), it was the ordinary women of Wigan who ensured St Margaret's survived.



*Aerial view of Billinge Hospital. Photo by Aerofilms Ltd (PC2015.9651)*

As the Jubilee Book attests, many individual women subscribed small amounts, many as little as two shillings or less. Members of the church or individual groups organised and ran fund raising events; and, as was the norm, it would be them, or like-minded women, who knitted or baked produce for sale, and mainly local women who attended and bought these goods. In many of Wigan's churches, women – often, but not always, members of the Mothers' Union or Church Women's Guilds – organised the collection of small amounts from women on a regular basis and kept a record in collection books. Other women preferred to give as and when they could by putting money into individual collection boxes.

Periodic donations were received by the Wigan Amateur Dramatic Society, police sports, bazaars, and the Wigan Branch of the British Women's Temperance Association among others. Some people donated gifts in kind. These ranged from fruit, vegetables and other foodstuffs to a mahogany sideboard and kneelers for their chapel. In some cases the girls, if formerly employed in work whereby they qualified, seemed to have used their health insurance's maternity benefit payment of 30 shillings to

help pay for their care. And, though there is no written record as such in the cash book, some parents, other relatives or friends may have given money.

Responding to the Government's drive to improve maternity care, from the early 1920s Wigan's Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, with the Ministry of Health's approval, made regular donations to St Margaret's based on the previous year's accounts. Despite these donations the Home remained independent. It was not until November 1926 that two members of the Wigan Maternity and Child Welfare Committee began to sit on St Margaret's management committee. This gave Wigan Council some involvement in the decision making processes of St Margaret's committee. It also marked a turning point, as it was indicative of the move towards regulating the provision of Wigan's maternity services.

At this time the Government, local councils and Poor Law Unions were working together to provide schemes to facilitate the smooth transfer of the responsibilities and services provided by the Poor Law onto local councils. One woman who was a bridge between St Margaret's, Wigan



*The new Wigan Workhouse Infirmary at Billinge. Photo by Harry Parkes, Orrell Post (PC2015.9653)*

Guardians and, increasingly, Wigan Council was Helen Fairhurst. St Margaret's was within the Upholland Poor Law Relief District, with Wigan Guardian Helen Fairhurst, who lived in Knowles Villa close to St Margaret's, a member of the Upholland Relief Committee.

In the one surviving cash book of St Margaret's Helen is frequently mentioned. Helen, although not an employee, had considerable hands-on responsibility in running the Home. From 1927-1934, the years the cash book covers, she was reimbursed around £6 a month (equating to £350+ in 2021), for money she had spent on housekeeping. And the Jubilee Book lists her as being a member of their executive committee.

At the same time, as a Poor Law Guardian, Helen had been elected a representative of the Guardians onto a subcommittee of Wigan Corporation as they worked to bring a satisfactory end to Wigan's Poor Law Union. This was to be achieved before the 1929 Local Government Act was due to become operational. The Act's Regulation 101 instructed local authorities to contribute to Voluntary Associations providing maternity care. This formalised Wigan Corporation's contribution to St

Margaret's and the amount was fixed at £285 a year. Importantly, as Wigan Corporation had no designated Maternity Home until after 1935, the Home was a valuable resource.

### **The Mental Deficiency Act 1913 and Wigan's Poorest Women**

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 This Act was passed at a time of panic over the perception that Britain's national stock was degenerating. It was influenced by Eugenicists' ideas that the race was being weakened by successive generations of mentally deficient people having children. The Act introduced into the legal system ill-defined categories of feeble mindedness, moral, and mental deficiency. Identifying unmarried mothers as feeble minded, morally, and mentally deficient, they placed them within the same category as people, 'who from an early age, displayed some permanent mental defect coupled with strong, vicious or criminal propensities on which punishment had little or no effect'.

The Act stipulated that mothers of illegitimate children were to be certified as mentally deficient and placed in certified homes for mental defectives, or county lunatic asylums, under Permanent Detention Orders. And although the Act had its critics

from civil liberty supporters - Josiah Wedgewood objected in Parliament that the clause targeted poor women who were dependent on the Poor Law - it was passed fairly easily. The Act required Poor Law Guardians and their Medical Officers to certify, then incarcerate, women who had given birth to illegitimate children in the workhouse.

Furthermore, Guardians were obliged to use Section 1 of the Poor Law Act of 1899 to take over responsibility of their children until they reached the age of 18. Thereafter the mothers were denied all access to their child/children. Babies and very young children were placed in foster care by the Boarding Out Committee, and their welfare overseen by the Visiting Committee. Older children were sent to residential schools throughout Lancashire; the nearest was Greenfield School in Billinge.

Wigan Guardians' minute books from 1914 list numerous unmarried mothers thus certified and incarcerated in asylums such as Lancaster, Whittingham, Prestwich, Rainhill, and, after 1920, Winwick. And many more having their children permanently taken from them by idiosyncratic interpretations of their unsuitable lifestyle, their 'mode of

life'. In no instance did Guardians feel the need to expand on this.

A trawl through the Guardian minute books did suggest that one possible reason could have been alcoholism. At least one Wigan woman was an inmate of Brockhall Certified Institution. This institution had evolved from the Brockhall Institute for Inebriate Women. In 1920, when Brockhall became a Certified Institution for Mental Defectives, they asked Wigan Guardians for extra money for her care, which suggests she had been a resident for a while.

Not all the diagnoses were accepted - three successive workhouse Medical Officers of Health, Drs Mills, Bradley and Litherland, objected to the Guardians' classification. Dr Bradley, after keeping three mothers 'under observation' in 1917, found 'no symptoms of mental disorder' in one of the mothers.

These men were not the only ones to question Wigan Guardians' actions. In 1918, during the Board of Control's Commissioner's routine visit to the Institution he found 19 patients, including three unmarried mothers, without the necessary medical certification and other legal documentation, in their lunacy wards. Then, in 1919, a minute book entry records that the Ministry of Health's Inspector found discrepancies in their Permanent Detention Orders.

### **Wigan's Poor Law Institution became a Certificated Building for Mental Defectives**

In October 1919, after the army had vacated Billinge Military Hospital, Wigan Guardians took the opportunity to reorganise the provision of care for their inmates. A subcommittee was formed and it was decided that, besides its medical role, Billinge was to become a mental hospital and a place where children would be sent. It was resolved that Dr F A Gill, Medical Officer to the Lancashire County Medical Deficiency Committee, would be asked to recommend that the Board Of Control certify the Wigan Poor Law Institute for the treatment of 170 mental defectives, many of whom would

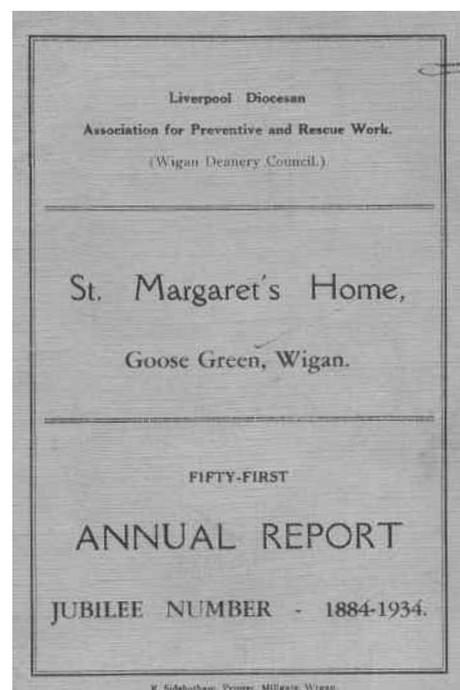
have been unmarried mothers.

Then, in October 1919, Sir Harcourt E Clare, clerk to Lancashire's Mental Deficiency Act Committee, approached Wigan Guardians and formally asked if they were prepared to allow part, or the whole, of their buildings for the retention of mental defectives should the Board of Control grant them a certificate. The cost, estimated at between 16 and 18 shillings a week per patient, would be paid by the Imperial Exchequer. He stated that 'the object of this policy was to prevent Mental Defectives in the Workhouse who were not certified, from being able to claim their discharge when they saw fit'. Given that Dr Bradley had discovered that the Guardians had detained at least one woman whose only 'defect' had been to have an illegitimate child, this was rather chilling. Once it was enacted it would cut off any possibility for unmarried mothers, who had the misfortune to be dependent on the Poor Law when they were confined, to avoid permanent incarceration.

Wigan Guardians agreed that all their buildings could be used and wheels were set in motion. In the Guardian minute books from the 1920s the words 'Mentally Deficient', 'feeble minded' and 'Permanent Detention Orders' were increasingly absent as criteria for women's incarceration. The umbrella term 'mode of life' became the norm. However, the effect seemed to be the same. Minute books list women sent from the workhouse to Billinge, and list women sent from Billinge to County Mental Hospitals, especially Winwick. Winwick, after being reclaimed from the army, had moved from being a private asylum to being one of Lancashire County Council's Mental Hospitals.

Not all unmarried mothers were treated so harshly. The minute books record that the Guardians helped many pregnant women to obtain affiliation orders on the father of their children; and in 1925 one woman was released from her Permanent Detention Order.

The 1929 Local Government Act gave local authorities responsibility for the



### *Annual report for St Margaret's Home, Jubilee Number*

provision and development of health care for their populations. Therefore Wigan's Health Committee became responsible for the services Billinge Hospital had provided. This included its maternity services, and its role as a mental health provider. As the Mental Deficiency Act was not repealed until 1959, and the same bodies, the Board of Control who had had responsibility for the operation of the Poor Law, and the Ministry of Health with responsibility for the nation's health, remained in charge, things did not immediately change.

*Primary sources accessible from Archives: Wigan and Leigh, at Leigh Town Hall:*

*The Annual Report, Jubilee Number 1884-1934 for St Margaret's Home, Goose Green*

*Wigan Board of Guardians Minute Books, 1914-1929*

*Wigan Union Infirmary, Register of Births, 1910-1934 (Redacted)*

*Wigan Union Creed Register, 1910-1912*

*County Borough of Wigan Maternity and Child Welfare Committee Minute Book, 1923-1938*

*St Paul's Church of England, Goose Green archive, 1845-1975*

*Wigan Vigilance Society, 1885*

*Wigan Observer, 1884*

# THE PORTRAITS IN THE ARCHIVES

By Dr Thomas McGrath

Safely shelved in a corner of the Archive's strongrooms sit two portraits of a wealthy Victorian couple in mid-nineteenth century dress. It is not often we are able to come face-to-face with the former residents of Leigh. So, who were this couple who, day and night, keep a watchful eye over the Borough's history and heritage?

## The Greenoughs

Fortunately, each portrait is labelled with the name of the sitter. The gentleman, with his waistcoat and pocket watch chain, is Mr Richard Greenough. The lady, with flowers in her hair and a large brooch containing her husband's image, is labelled as Mrs Richard Greenough. In order to restore some of her identity, we shall refer to her here by her own name, Jane.

Richard and Jane Greenough would have been something of local celebrities in Leigh in the nineteenth century, and their names and faces would have been familiar to both the wealthy and the poor.

Part of the reason for Richard's popularity was that he lived his entire life in the centre of Leigh, in one of its busiest establishments. He was born on 11 November 1814 at the Anchor, a pub which stood next to the old Turnpike at the corner of Market Street and Bradshawgate. The earliest record of the inn dates from 1753 and during Richard's lifetime it was known by a few different names.



*The corner of Market Street and Bradshawgate c. 1863. The Rope and Anchor can just be seen on the left of the photograph. Richard Greenough is stood in the centre, wearing a watch and chain, and holding his lapel with his left hand. (Archives: Wigan & Leigh)*

In 1832 it was named the Blue Anchor, and he later renamed it the Rope and Anchor. The original building that Richard knew was altered in 1863 and eventually demolished in 1895. It was replaced by a much larger and grander building designed by James C Prestwich, which was demolished in 1964. However, part of that building still survives on Bradshawgate, with the motif of a rope and an anchor carved into the decorative frieze.

Richard's mother, Mary Greenough, had run the pub since 1809. Mary Greenough was somewhat of a remarkable woman, and she was no doubt a guiding influence in her son's life. She was a single woman,

although this was not at all unusual in Leigh. Of the 863 baptisms recorded at St. Mary's Church across 1813 and 1814, at least 152 were of illegitimate births, which accounts for around 17% of all baptisms there. Of course, St. Mary's Church served the entire parish of Leigh, which included six townships, but it does demonstrate that quite a large percentage of the population consisted of children born to single mothers.

After the death of his mother in 1832, Richard took over the tenancy of the pub. A few years later, in May 1836, he married Jane Boardman at St. Nicholas' Church in Liverpool. Jane was a couple of years older than her



*Richard Greenough  
(1814-1886)*



*Jane Greenough, nee Boardman  
(1810-1862)*

husband. She was born in Pennington in December 1810, the daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Boardman. Little is known about Jane's childhood, but she had moved to Liverpool by the time she was in her mid-twenties.

Richard and Jane had a very large family together. Their children included: Mary (b.1838), Elizabeth (b.1839), Alice (b.1841), Jane (b.1842), Margaret (b.1844), Mary (b.1845), Martha (b.1847), Richard (b.1849), Thomas Rigby (b.1850), Esther (b.1852) and James (b.1855). Despite the family living at the Rope and Anchor in Leigh, the children were baptised at a number of different churches: St. Mary's in Leigh, St. Luke's in Lowton, and All Saints in Wigan.

Undoubtedly the births of 11 children in just 17 years took its toll on the health of Jane Greenough and she died on 26 October 1862, aged 51. It is not known whether the portraits were painted during the sitters' lifetimes, so before 1862, or if they were completed afterwards. The plaque attached to each portrait explains that they were donated by 'Mrs T R Greenough', the daughter-in-law of Richard and Jane. Mrs T R Greenough died in 1918, so the portraits were commissioned before this point.

## A Self-Made Man

Although Richard was a publican, he also turned his hand to many other business ventures. He kept six cows on Twist Lane, and he sold milk and butter. In 1841 he took out a licence as an auctioneer and he began to accumulate tenant houses. Eventually the firm Greenough & Sons dealt with the sales of houses, businesses, collieries, mills and machinery, as well as valuations of probate.

Richard grew quite wealthy from his business dealings, yet he remained true to his humble roots. He continued to live above the Rope and Anchor, and he never spent more than six nights away from his home in the 23 years before his death. He was also fondly known for his warmth, and he never evicted his tenants even though some owed £50 in rent arrears (well over £5,500 in modern terms).

He was liberal in his outlook, and after the death of Jane he threw himself into local governance. He helped form the Pennington Local Board in 1863 and he served as its chairman in 1866. He later served on the Westleigh Board, and it was supposedly his suggestion to merge the Westleigh, Pennington and Bedford local boards in 1875. He was successful in getting piped water and a reliable gas supply to Leigh, and he

was involved with the formation of the Leigh Fire Brigade in 1866.

Amongst many other roles, one of his most prominent was to be a champion for the poor, a role which earned him the nickname of 'the mayor of Leigh.' Richard was not afraid to challenge the status quo. During the Cotton Famine of 1861-65, a starving woman with several illegitimate children approached her Local Board for relief. Likely reflecting on the stigma he may have faced in his own childhood, Richard was the only one who voted to help her, but he was overruled by the other members. By the time of the next hearing the woman had died, and her children had been sent to the workhouse. Richard was not afraid to admonish his fellow board members, and he referred to them as murderers. His character was summed up simply in just two sentences of his very long obituary:

'Mr Greenough's large-heartedness has often been exemplified, his generosity to the poor especially praiseworthy. He grew into a wealthy man, but his tastes and habits were simple and unostentatious.'

At the time of his death in January 1886, Richard Greenough was the oldest licensed victualler in the area and the best-known auctioneer in Lancashire. Somewhat unusually, he also died in the same room in which he had been born. Thanks to the historic donation of the portraits from the Greenough family, and the careful preservation of these pictures over the years, we can not only put a face to a name but also rightly celebrate the lives of Richard and Jane too.

*Sources:*

*Leigh Chronicle, 22 January 1886*

*Leigh Journal, 22 January 1886*

<https://www.lan-opc.org.uk/>

*Cyril Ward, Norma Ackers and Evelyn Finch, Pubs of Leigh: First Round, (1982)*

# MEET THE VOLUNTEERS

Here at Archives: Wigan & Leigh we have a fantastic team of over 90 volunteers who give up their time to do everything from family history research, collections work, visitor engagement, to supporting our schools when they visit. We want to say a huge thanks to all the volunteers at Wigan Local Studies and the Archives for all of their hard work. We are incredibly proud of our volunteers and wanted to share some of their stories with you today. Welcome to our 'Meet the Volunteers!'

## Peter

### *What role do you have and what does that involve?*

Archive volunteers have a variety of roles which collectively assist the Archives Manager and his professional team in sorting, cleaning, transcribing and digitising the vast array of records stored beneath the newly renovated Town Hall in Leigh. With many thousands of records spanning some 800 years there is plenty to work on.

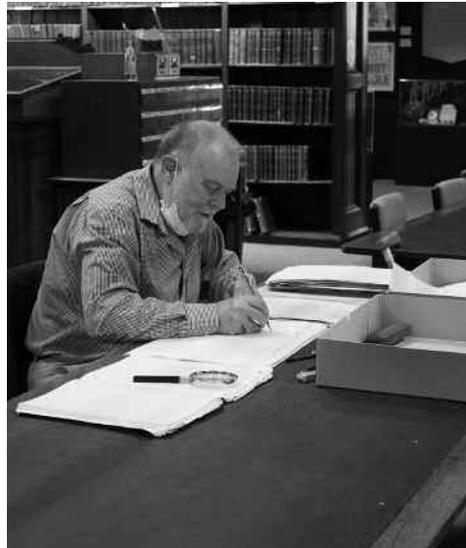
My own task at the moment is to transcribe some of the nineteenth century Wigan Quarter Sessions records so that they can subsequently be digitised for easier public access and research. These documents (indictments, prosecutor's bills, lists of jurors, etc.) yield a rich harvest of names, many of which are still familiar in Wigan today. Working on them shows quite clearly that human nature too changes little over the years. Breaches of the peace, feloniously stealing a chicken, and furious and wanton driving on Wigan Lane all have their modern equivalents.

### *What made you decide to volunteer?*

When I retired from the day job I was asked if I would like to volunteer at Hope Community Library which was about to be opened by Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust. Attached to and part funded by Hope School, I thought this was a great concept and volunteered some of my time to help make it work. A Sure Start centre was part of the arrangement which kept the library quite busy but when that was sadly wound up things quietened down. Soon after that I moved my allegiance to the Archives. I am able to do most of my volunteer work in the Wigan Local Studies facility above the Museum of Wigan Life. This is closer to my home than Leigh and records can be taken there for local volunteers to work on.

### *Would you recommend volunteering?*

I would certainly recommend volunteering to anyone with a little



*Peter at work in Wigan*

time to spare, whatever their age or background may be. For those at college or university it can provide useful work experience and looks good on a CV. For those who have taken a break from work, perhaps through illness or rearing a family, volunteering can be a useful stepping stone on the way back and can even lead to offers of paid work.

As a retiree I strongly suspect that retaining some connection with a work place has saved me from becoming a grumpy old man. There are those who would say I've achieved that anyway, but I haven't yet written 'disgusted' letters to the press.

### *What is your favourite thing about being a volunteer?*

What I like best about volunteering with the Archives is discovering the unexpected.

An example of this was my coming across an annual Bastardy Return in a bundle of Quarter Sessions records. Family history researchers can occasionally come to an apparent brick wall with a birth certificate listing the father as unknown, or with the space left blank. It precludes any further research into that side of a family tree. Or does it? Ever since the Poor Laws introduced under Elizabeth I parishes

had attempted to protect themselves as far as possible from the costs of welfare and support, including the maintenance of illegitimate children to which fathers, if they could be identified, should contribute. The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 with subsequent amending Acts brought all this up to date resulting (among other things) in a requirement for yearly Bastardy Returns. The existence of these lists in the mid-nineteenth century is of course well known, but this writer was quite unaware of their detailed content until finding one. They list claims made by new or expectant single mothers against putative fathers for maintenance payments, some of which were rejected, some accepted and some appealed. As both parties are named, and many of the claims are not contested, the fathers of illegitimate children, not named in other documents, can sometimes be identified from these Returns.

Volunteering in general can be an interesting and rewarding pastime but for those with an interest in local or social history volunteering for the Archives Service means working with the very nuts and bolts of the subject, as the above example shows.

## Janice

### *What role do you have and what does that involve?*

I'm a volunteer on the Leigh Family History Society's help desk at the Town Hall in Leigh. Our aim is to help others who would like to trace their family history, or who have come up against 'a brick wall' in their own research. Every enquiry is different and some can be quite challenging. I always enjoy the thrill of the search, never knowing what there is to be found, whether we will find 'the skeleton in the cupboard', an illicit love affair, or a runaway bride.

I always tell our enquirers to keep searching, there's always more to be found; and use your local Archives and

their services, there's a wealth of information within their walls.

My passion continues to be my own family history. After many years I'm still finding something new to add to the file. I've got watchmakers, plumbers, a steeple jack, farmers, and inn keepers galore; a gold miner who died in Ballarat, Australia hoping to make his fortune, and even an old rogue who ended up in court for stealing two ducks from the village pond...

#### ***What made you decide to volunteer?***

I had retired from full time work and wanted to do something to challenge me, to keep my brain active. I'd been working on my own family history for a number of years and always enjoyed finding something new. When a Family History help desk was started I offered to help others delve into their ancestors' lives.

#### ***Would you recommend volunteering?***

Definitely, you meet like-minded people, make new friends and keep in touch with old ones. There's always some 'gem' of a find to discuss over a coffee. I also enjoy passing my knowledge and passion for family history on to new researchers and hope they may become a volunteer in the future.

#### ***What is your favourite thing about being a volunteer?***

My favourite thing is to see the joy on a customer's face as we travel through the old records and see their ancestor's details: where they were born, married, brought up their families, what they did for a living, when they died and where they were buried. It really brings the past to life once again.

## **Betz**

#### ***What role do you have and what does that involve?***

I'm a volunteer, and am typing up the minutes of committee meetings from 1914. It's fascinating seeing the items that were high in demand then, which are commonplace now, and the kind of prices they would go for. Before this, I was digitising construction requests from the 1800s in and around Wigan, which was an amazing opportunity to compare how the layout has changed in the last 200 years.

#### ***What made you decide to volunteer?***

Over the summer, I worked as an intern at the Archives, and it was wonderful. I enjoyed working with the documents as

a view into the everyday past, the smaller events that history tends to miss out. I liked working there so much that I decided to stay on in a volunteering capacity.

#### ***Would you recommend volunteering?***

I definitely would. It's very fulfilling work, and you tend to meet a lot of interesting people with fascinating stories. As well as this, it's important to help sort through some of the documents, as there are thousands of individual pages and volumes of information that would be difficult to search through, whereas once they are digitised they are far easier to access and find specific information. This makes it important for both archivists and other volunteers, as it can save them potential hours of searching.

#### ***What is your favourite thing about being a volunteer?***

Probably the little things: sometimes you'll find a name that was mentioned in a previous document and begin to build an idea of what this person's life was like, and other times you'll find a humorous event that still makes you chuckle 10 pages on.

## **Alex**

#### ***What role do you have and what does that involve?***

I am a Visitor Engagement volunteer at Archives: Wigan & Leigh at Leigh Town Hall. I greet visitors, tell them a little about the archives, the refurbishment, and hopefully give an overview of the current exhibition. I also signpost the archive facilities, searchroom and the opportunity to research genealogy with the family history team. I love to chat and love people. It is very easy to sell the exhibition to visitors as we are so lucky, not only with our rich heritage and archive, but also with the exhibition itself. I love how the routes, themes, and even just the bite size 'cubes' of the exhibition, mean a visitor can dip in and out of it or completely immerse themselves in it depending on their timeframe.

#### ***What made you decide to volunteer?***

I came about volunteering with the Archives almost by accident. Whilst I knew The Turnpike well, I was unfamiliar with the Archives (other than on social media) prior to 2020. Perhaps due to the time lockdowns afforded, and due to spending more time where I live, I found myself

dipping my foot into heritage in another way, setting up a Friends group with other like-minded people who loved Atherton Cemetery. Via this group I met local historian, Dr Thomas McGrath, and it was his time spent researching in the Archives that had resulted in most of the history of the cemetery and chapels I was aware of. It was through him I found out that I was about to have a state of the art archive reopen on my doorstep. For me, volunteering and getting to know the archive could only enrich the campaign we were hoping to undertake.

#### ***What made you decide to volunteer?***

I wholeheartedly recommend volunteering.

Four years ago I left my job in a contemporary art gallery, after having my third child, to spend time with my young children. Leaving the arts sector was a hard decision to make - compromising your career to become more flexible around family is tough, particularly if you feel that that is part of your identity.

As the time approached when I was considering returning to work, I knew I needed to get back into the swing of working, routine, interacting with people and building my confidence back up after not only a break but the enforced break that COVID brought to everyone. I also wanted some current work experience on my CV and to update my knowledge. Equally, if I was able to choose my placement, I wanted it to be in a wonderful and interesting setting. So Archives: Wigan & Leigh was a tick, tick, tick!

I feel a placement at Archives: Wigan & Leigh offers such a raft of benefits it is a gift of a role!

#### ***What is your favourite thing about being a volunteer?***

The team at Wigan and Leigh Archives are such a welcoming bunch and they really celebrate their volunteers in a way I haven't experienced before. I thought the induction experience and training I received before starting was impressive and I really enjoy the number of different activities, projects and events we can get involved in if we want to expand our experience. The number of long-standing volunteers they have is a testament to the success of their programme. I am yet to have the same day twice!

# ‘Don’tcha Get Caught Out With No Two-Timin’ Lover’: Marital Discord In 16th Century Bryn

BY ANTHONY PILGRIM

In 1525 the great and the good of Lancashire gathered to witness the wedding of Thomas Gerard of Bryn to his cousin, Jane Legh. Both were then aged about 14. The match had been agreed by their respective families eight years before, Jane's grandfather referring in his will to the covenant 'made betwene Sr Thoms Gerard Knyght that now is on the oon ptie And me the said Sr Peris and Peris my son and heire apparunt on the other ptie bering dat the xviiith day of July in the ixth yere of the Reigne of Kyng Henry the viiith' whereby the younger Thomas' sister, Margaret, was also promised in marriage to Jane's half-brother, Piers. Such arrangements were common in aristocratic families, serving to cement alliances for the purposes of mutual advancement and security, and to protect property



*Piers Legh of Lyme (1514-1589), half-brother to Thomas Gerard's wife, Jane, and the husband of Thomas' sister, Margaret.*

against claims by rival factions and/or the Crown.

Whether Thomas and Jane were enthusiastic about the prospect of marriage, and whether they lived happily together, at least in the early years, we cannot say. The union produced two children, another Thomas (he of Ashton town-centre pub fame) and Katherine. Any marital bliss had clearly evaporated by 1543, however, when it was found that 'Thomas Gerard of the Bryne hath kept a Concubyne and lyved in Adulterye', and that 'disagreement betwyxt him and hys wyfe hath bene the cose and originall grounde thereof'. At least one illegitimate child resulted, yet another Thomas Gerard – 'base son of Sir Thomas Gerard deceased' – being the respondent in a case brought in 1573 by the legitimate son for recovery of Gerard lands in Ashton and elsewhere.

The ecclesiastical courts of the Tudor period enjoyed much wider powers than their modern equivalents, being concerned not only with church governance but also with the moral behaviour of the laity. Special courts of priests and laymen were periodically commissioned by the Crown to enforce standards, particularly where the conduct of the accused had become locally notorious. These special courts observed ordinary church court procedure, but 'remedies' often more closely resembled the advice of a tabloid agony aunt than that which we might expect to find in a modern

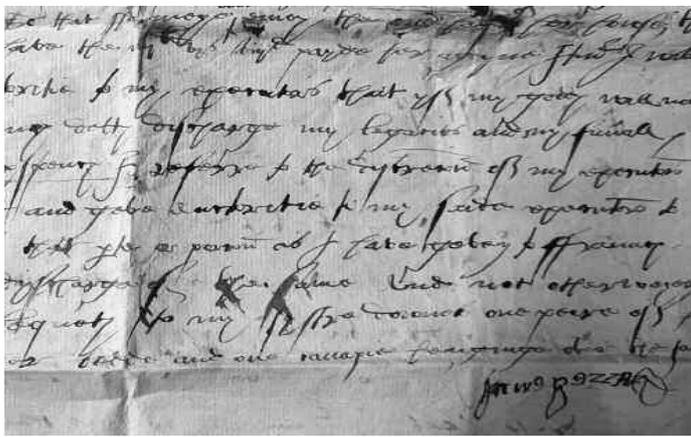


*Margaret Legh (c.1505-1595, née Gerard) with her great-granddaughter. Margaret was the sister of Thomas Gerard of Bryn and wife of Piers Legh of Lyme.*

court order. Compliance was ensured by financial bonds and/or the threat of imprisonment.

A record of the proceedings of one such court at Wigan in June 1543 survives in the form of a nineteenth century transcript at Chetham's Library in Manchester. In the case of Thomas and Jane Gerard the court concluded that: through the 'medyacion of fryndes' and motivated by a 'desyr to plesse god', the parties could be persuaded to 'cohabyt and [a]gree agayne togeder'. It accordingly directed that:

'the sayd Thomas Gerard of th'one ptie and Jane Gerard and Peers Legh her brother of th'other ptie shall not only be faythfull loving and harty fryndes together But that also the said Thomas ... shall forget and



Part of Jane Gerard's original will, bearing her signature.



Costs order of 1550 against Thomas Gerard in respect of his and Jane's 'divorce'.

forgive all fawtes trespasses and offences by hys sayd wyfe heretofore comytted and ye sayd Jane in lyke maner, and they shall knyght in hartys with faythfull love a new and pfecte Matrymony'e'.

To this end:

'the said Peers Legh and his wife Margaret and the sayd Jane Gerard the iii. daye of Julye next comyng shall lovyngly with free and gentle harts come together to Wyndlishaw and there Hunt and make merry with the said Thomas Gerard and his frynds. And the morrow after that is to say the iiiii. daye of July the said Thomas Gerard and Jane his wyfe shall goe agayne to Hunt and make merry with the sayd Peers Legh at Bradley and then return with his sayd wyfe to the Bryn, or whither him pleaseth, and cohabit with his sayd wyfe'.

In the event of breach or disagreement between them the pair were to pay to Jane's brother the sum of £6.13.4. 'Above all', Thomas was to 'kepe no carnal accompanye with hys olde Concubyne nowther take no newe one unto him'. 'Penance' for 'misdemenors heretofore' would be considered at a further trial, when evidence of any 'Amendment' would be taken into account.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, two days of enforced jollity with the in-laws did not bring about the anticipated 'new and pfecte Matrymony'e'. In 1546 Jane formally accused her husband of 'incontinence [i.e. sexual promiscuity], assault and imprisonment'. This was a necessary step towards obtaining the only legal remedy then available to her. Divorce à mensâ et thoro - 'from

bed and board'- did not entitle either party to remarry, but it suspended their mutual obligations as husband and wife and enabled provision to be made for their financial separation whilst preserving the inheritance rights of any children. Whereas a male petitioner had only to prove his wife's infidelity, a woman had to show, additionally, that her husband had acted with 'intolerable' cruelty towards her. Both had to undertake to 'live chastely and continently' pending their hoped-for reconciliation.

An 'Order for Costs against Sir Thomas Gerrard in a Case of Divorce in the Special Court between him & Lady Jane Gerrard his wife', dated 27 November 1550, survives in The John Rylands Library, Manchester. Signed by the Chancellor and Dean of Chester, the document requires Thomas to pay Jane the sum of £10 by the 2 February following and to appear before them on the morning of 16 February to certify that he has done so.

Despite 'knowing nothing of letters', Thomas went on to serve as the member of Parliament for Lancashire in 1562/3. Perhaps maturity had at last tempered what one historian refers to as his addictions to 'hunting, drinking and carousing'. Jane found sanctuary with Thomas' distant relatives in Staffordshire, styling herself 'Dame Jane Gerarde of Bromley in the countie of Staff, widowe of good and pfytt remembrance,' in her will of 1575. Alongside the customary bequests to family members there is, intriguingly, a gift 'unto my s'vaunt John Langton' of 'a baye geldinge called Bruce'.

### Note on Sources

A transcript by F R Raines of an original memorandum of the 1543 proceedings at Wigan is in Chetham's Library, Manchester, ref. C.6.53. The Legh will of 1521, the 1550 costs order and Jane Gerard's will are in 'Legh of Lyme Muniments' at The John Rylands Library, Manchester (respectively Box S 12, Box R B2 and Box S 15). The 1573 order is at National Archives ref. DL 5/15 m. 283; this followed the more detailed 'pleadings' in the case which can be found at ref. PL 17/35 m. 3. The diocesan court books for the period are at Cheshire Archives refs. EDC 1/11 and EDC 1/12 but, curiously, no record could be found there of the Thomas/Jane Gerard divorce. I also relied for background on Thomas Poynter's 'A Concise View of the Doctrine and Practice of Divorce in The Ecclesiastical Courts' (London: J & WT Clark, 1824), G R Elton's 'The Tudor Constitution' (Cambridge UP, 1982) and 'The Gentleman's Mistress: Illegitimate Relationships and Children, 1450-1640' by Tim Thornton and Katharine Carlton (Manchester UP 2019). The observations on Thomas Gerard's character are from the commentary by T W King in 'Lancashire Funeral Certificates' (Chetham Society, 1869).

I am especially indebted to Dr Bernard Capp, Emeritus Professor of History at Warwick University and an inspirational tutor during my time there as a student. An online appeal for help with transcribing and translating one of the manuscripts brought me back into contact with him after an interval of 35 years.

The title of the essay is from the lyrics of '90s dance classic 'Hideaway' as recorded by De'Lacy and remixed by Deep Dish.

# A Lad from Scholes meets Queen Victoria



*The Harp Inn, Scholes, 1901*

During the lockdown I took some of my walks in Wigan Cemetery (no trouble with social distancing). On one walk I spotted the grave of Robert Richards – the inscription read ‘Mayor of Wigan’. I couldn't resist finding out more, and his is a fascinating story, taking him from Scholes to Buckingham Palace.

Robert's early life had not been easy. He was born in Wallgate in 1831. The family moved to Scholes, presumably to be near to his maternal grandparents. His grandfather was licensee of the Harp. This public house was to play a major part in his later life. He was educated at St Catherine's School. Sadly, his mother died when Robert was just seven years old. The following is a brief look at his story. It also led me to look at the other licensed premises in Wigan, and in Scholes in particular. Readers will remember many of the public houses mentioned.

In the 1890s there were over 60 public houses in the Scholes area alone, not to mention umpteen others across the Borough. My father was born in such an establishment: the King's Arms. However, this story centres on one particular pub on the Scholes thoroughfare itself: the Harp, and its

landlord, Robert Richards, who was to serve as Wigan's mayor for two consecutive terms.

Whilst a Conservative himself, I doubt if he thought he would be mentioned in the same breath as Sir Randolph Churchill, Sir Winston Churchill's father. Sir Randolph had made a speech (House of Commons, 1892) on the dangers of alcohol, calling everything concerned with the trade as devilish; strange, when both he and his son enjoyed a tippie, or three!

Robert Richards was the licensee of the Harp at the time of his mayorship. He was the first man from that trade to become mayor. His appointment, however, wasn't welcomed by everyone, particularly the temperance movement, and many, mainly from the nonconformist churches, objected. Robert himself was a prominent member of the nearby St Catherine's Church but this did nothing to stop the criticism.

The significance of Robert's position did not go unnoticed outside the Borough either. Rev. C F Alked, a nonconformist minister, delivered a sermon in Preston on 31 October 1897 primarily against the appointment of the Lord Mayor of Liverpool who, like Robert Richards, was involved in the

licensing trade. In his sermon he made particular reference to Liverpool where protests were being voiced in response to the similar situation of a 'brewer and publican' being proposed to fulfil the post of next Lord Mayor of Liverpool. During the sermon he urged the churches of Liverpool to boycott their proposed Lord Mayor, saying that 'the city would never disgrace themselves by allowing a liquor seller to preside over their meetings'.

The Reverend gentleman continued his sermon, referring to the quote from Sir Randolph Churchill which had called the liquor business a devilish and destructive trade. He went on to say that decent people could not help but be ashamed that a man engaged in such a trade had been engineered into the mayoral chair, as a consequence of which Liverpool would become contemptible in the eyes of the great cities of England. He followed this with a tirade against our town: 'The second city of the empire had fallen to the level of WIGAN, and like that drink cursed town had found its chief magistrate is a publican'. I ought to explain that at that time anyone elected mayor automatically became a magistrate.

Robert Richards' first term in office in 1897 was to be very eventful. This was the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. On 23 June 1897 he attended Buckingham Palace and was formally presented to her. Six days after meeting Queen Victoria he was presented to, and dined with, the Duke of York.

The following March 1898, during his second term of office, Robert had the honour of being presented to the Prince of Wales (later to become King Edward VII). This was during the Prince's visit at Garswood Hall, the home of the Prince's friend, Lord Gerard. Not bad going for a lad brought up in Scholes.

In 1897 Robert was also involved with one of the biggest retailers in the country. He and the then Chief of Police, Captain Bell, gave a character reference in connection with Michael Marks' application for naturalisation. As result of their intervention, it was granted on 5 May 1897.

I thought it would be interesting to take a look at licensed premises in Scholes at a different time. Fast forward 53 years to 1950. From the Scholes traffic lights to Greenough Street traffic lights, a distance of only a few yards, were 12 public houses: the Bluebell, the Kings Arms, the Crown and Sceptre, the Black Swan, the White Swan, the Windmill, the Fleece, the Angel, the Shamrock, the Conservative Club, the Harp (now rebuilt), and the Rose and Crown, always known as the Dust Hole. The reason it had such a nickname was because it was frequented by miners coming home from the work in the days before pit head baths and who, consequently, would shed some coal dust.

The taproom (public bar) in Wigan was usually known as 'the vault' and a woman would never, and I mean never, be seen in 'the vault'; it would have been considered sacrilege. Whilst a single man would never enter 'the snug'.

Most pubs had a 'singing room', complete with a piano, and would hold a Mugs' Concert every Saturday, a forerunner of



*Robert Richards, Mayor of Wigan*

karaoke. In Wigan County Borough music was not allowed on Sundays, though it was permitted in Urban District areas. This led to the ridiculous farce of pubs yards apart having to obey different rules; an example being the Crispin on Birkett Bank, which would have been in trouble if they allowed a note to be played on 'the Sabbath', while less than 25 yards away in Higher Ince the pubs would be rocking!

Another strange thing younger readers may find unbelievable was that in all the pub rooms it was waiter service only. On the back of the seating, dotted round the room, there were bells. When you rang the bell, in would pop a waitress or waiter, tray in hand, to take your order and deliver it back to you in short order. Drinks were a penny extra in the room to help pay for the cost of the waiter service.

Another anomaly was that some pubs were labelled as 'ale houses', meaning that they could only sell beer and porter (stout). The Dust Hole was in this category. Several landlords applied for a full license. On one occasion the application was refused, the reason given by the Justices being that the premises only had outside toilets!

I'll finish my story with that refrain heard (but not always welcomed) thousands of times in Wigan pubs, not least from Mrs Brown in the Park Hotel: 'Time ladies and gentlemen, please'

# BARRY MASON Songwriter

(12 July 1935 - 16 April 2021)

Barry had had just one hit in the charts, Tommy Bruce's 'Ain't Misbehaving', when he moved into my bedsitter in Earl's Court in 1967 with a suitcase containing all his possessions.

I was Barry Mason's second wife. We had met in 1965 at the 'Gioconda Coffee Bar' in Denmark Street, London, famous as 'Tin Pan Alley,' and we lived together for 13 years. I was an aspiring singer and songwriter who wrote the adapted, 'Following You Around', one of the theme tunes for Morecambe and Wise's TV show.

All his success came during the next few years, and I was privileged to share it, and to help him write many of his songs during that period.

During these early years, Barry had a radio show on Radio One called 'The Barry Mason Show.' He was a complete novice when he started the show and, apart from a couple of hilarious gaffs, did very well with it. On one occasion he wished Prince Philip a very happy birthday - only it wasn't his birthday, and the BBC switchboard was flooded with phone calls. Another time he read out a request for a listener whose partner was in hospital. "Let's make this request for everyone everywhere in hospital today," Barry said kindheartedly, as he cued the next song which he had, unfortunately, failed to notice was 'When I'm Dead and Gone' by McGuinness Flint.

A string of hits followed and, with the royalties now coming in from Tom Jones' 'Delilah', we were able to purchase 'Kinfauns', Beatle George Harrison's first home in Esher, where we were married and lived from 1970 until 1975, during which time our daughter Aimi was born.

We renamed the bungalow 'High Walls' because of the huge, ancient wall that surrounded what was once the kitchen garden of a stately home. It also had a very high wooden gate that George used to pull across for privacy, in order to seal the house off from the dozens of fans who used to come and steal the gravel from the drive, take photos of the house, and try and catch a glimpse of him. On one or two occasions someone would scale the 10 foot high gate and break a limb dropping down the other side!



*Barry and Sylvan in Lech, Austria*

When Barry was nine years old his father, Cecil Mason, who was a journalist on the Wigan Examiner and Observer, died of tuberculosis aged only 37. After his father's death, he and his younger brother, Max, and their mother, Phyllis, went to live with his grandmother, Margaret Hart (Momma), at Blainscough, in Coppull. He was devoted to his maternal family.

It was where he was brought up, and we made many trips up the M1 to visit them all: his two uncles, Ronnie and Oliver, who were ex speedway riders and ran the successful 'Oliver Hart & Sons' road haulage business; and his brother, Max, and sisters, Lynn and Diane, (from Phyllis' second marriage to a Len Mount, an American GI), who lived nearby with their children. His mother, Phyllis, was an actress, and took part in local amateur theatre drama productions. She remained a close friend and devoted grandmother to our daughter, Aimi, till her death in her late 90s.

We felt very privileged when, in 1968, Barry and I were invited to visit the then Mayor of Wigan in his parlor and, after tea with the Mayor of Wigan and Wigan's Kathleen Winstanley (Miss UK and Miss World runner

up), they presented Barry with the chair that his father used to sit on in the Wigan Council, and we all dressed up in the ceremonial robes for a photograph.

In 1970 we wrote and recorded a duet called 'When You Do What You're Doing' (<https://youtube/QjTSTfzKA8Y>), and appeared together on several TV shows in Bratislava, Malta, Africa and Germany.

Our holidays were also spent in Malta, where my parents had emigrated to and lived. Barry, who had originally aspired to be a singer, used to appear frequently in cabaret (something he loved doing) at 'Whisper Farmhouse', which belonged to our friends, Benny and Maria; and I would sometimes accompany him on stage with my guitar. It was there, following lunch, that Ernie Wise asked Barry to produce his and Eric's LP vinyl album 'Get Out of That' in which my song 'Following You Around' was featured. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tudMA1uf3Vs>)

The last song we wrote together that got to number one was 'Love Grows Where Rosemary Goes' in 1972. There were no further songs in the charts after we separated, though Barry stayed involved with other musical enterprises and activities, and enjoyed touring with his one man show, singing and talking about his hits.



*Sylvan, Barry and Kathleen Winstanley (Miss UK and Miss World runner-up), dressed in the Mayor of Wigan's ceremonial robes*

After we divorced Barry was romantically linked with Manchester born, 60s Top of The Pops Disc Girl, Samantha Juste, with whom he went to live briefly in California; Diane McCarthy Budd, heiress to the Salt Lake Tribune; and ITV Executive, Joan Erikson.

He and I remained on friendly terms and shared our daughter Aimi, who was at his bedside when he died earlier this year.

# PAST FORWARD

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# Simply the Best

## Wigan, Rugby League and the Thomas Gerrard Collection

The Lancashire town and Borough of Wigan is famous for many things: coal, cotton, and, in the Middle Ages, bell making. However, the town prides itself on other distinctions.

There is our most famous son, George Formby, born in Westminster Street and the highest paid British entertainer in the 30s and 40s. And he had grit too, once performing, despite death threats, to an all-Black audience in South Africa. Now he's a lad to be proud of!

We even have a pier! Yes, that's true. Or at least according to the Cambridge English Dictionary's definition of the term. Quote, 'a low structure built at the edge of water, used especially for getting into and out of boats'. Well almost! The actual 'pier' is a wood and metal jetty left over from our industrial past and jutting out into the canal basin near Wallgate. I don't know how important it is to Wiganers but I suspect it represents the town's character, tough, immovable and constant - and open to a joke. And there have been many songs and jokes written about Wigan Pier that have

kept countless music hall performers (George's dad among them) in pies and porter.

Then we have another famous son, who is actually an uncle, and is the eponymous possessor of the world famous brand of syrupy, treacly toffees manufactured in the town by Santus & Co. Ltd., Uncle Joe's Mint Balls.

Wiganers have been sucking them by the ton since 1898 when they decided that even they needed something to warm the cockles. However, the mints are not really spherical but, ahem! oblate spheroids. How posh is that.

Then, of course, there is our famous, or infamous, nickname – pie eaters. A word on this. Many believe, Wiganers included, that the sobriquet refers to the main staple of the Wigan diet – the pie. Mushy peas, I assure you! The term has negative connotations that go back to the miners' strike early in the twentieth century when Wigan miners apparently gave in and returned to work. The newspapers reported that the bosses had made them eat 'umble pie. However, with a practicality born in countless

mine shafts and cotton mills, Wiganers have succeeded in turning a negative into a positive. Umble pie ain't on the menu anymore (if it ever was). If you are peckish we can do you a tasty meat and potato, or a steak and kidney, or even a chicken and mushroom. All served with a warm Wigan smile. Your change madam. Next!

When it comes to sporting achievements Wigan has more than its fair share of successes. We have our famous daughters too. June Croft, swimmer, born in Ashton in Makerfield, represented Great Britain at three consecutive Summer Olympics, starting in 1980, bringing back to Blighty a bronze and a silver medal. More recently, record breaking athlete Keely Hodgkinson from Atherton won a silver medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, aged 19.

And then there is Wigan Athletics, proud winners of the 2013 F.A. Cup, beating Manchester City 1-0 four minutes into stoppage time, breaking Manc hearts and putting the ultimate piece of silverware in the Latics' trophy cupboard.

However, the one sport that is synonymous with the town, at which Wigan has no peers, is Rugby League, the sport of commoners. Formed in 1872 as Wigan Football Club, and a founding member of the Northern Rugby Football Union in 1895, Wigan Rugby League Football Club has a sporting pedigree as long as Abraham's family tree. First Division and Super League winners on 22 occasions, 19 times Challenge Cup holders (8 of them consecutive wins), and another 80 trophies and titles to add to the list. They are arguably the most successful Rugby League club in the history of the world, or at least as far back as Abraham.

Caparisoned in their traditional cherry and white strips, although over the years there have been other variations, muddied and bloodied, they have slugged and slogged, battled and brawled their way to the top, with the help of some of the greatest players in the game - Jim Sullivan, Joe Egan, Cecil Mountford, Billy Boston, Sean Edwards, Frano Botica, Sam Tompkins and Sean O'Loughlin, to name but a few.

And, as frequently happens with fame and success, the scribes and chroniclers work overtime penning articles and histories of this renowned body of men, now christened the Warriors, and setting to paper tales of prowess and



*A Wigan fan in fine fettle at Wembley, 1929 (PC2018.5415)*

valour on the 74 yards wide by 122–133 yards long swathe of green battleground. But a picture, as the saying goes, is better than a thousand words. Enter a man from Hindley whose life work centred around capturing on film and still images those players and teams from the past whose legacies have been the bedrock of Wigan Rugby League Football Club.

Thomas Gerrard had two consuming obsessions – photography and rugby league. And in a period covering over three decades

he was able to combine both of these passions by creating a photographic record of local sporting events and fixtures, especially of his beloved Wigan Rugby League Football Club.

He travelled to numerous Northern sporting venues taking literally hundreds of photographs, and moving images, to capture and record for posterity the great players and teams of the past, together with the fans who followed them. Thomas even ventured down to London on occasion, as Rugby League

enacted its own annual quest for the Holy Grail - the Challenge Cup Final at Wembley.

The collection was nearly lost to us but providentially this unique and important body of work was rescued from oblivion. It is now housed in the Wigan and Leigh Archives where, equipped with state of the art units and systems capable of preserving for future generations documents and artifacts of social and historic importance, it has been my honour and privilege to catalogue them before they are eventually made available for public viewing.

This entails describing and numbering the photographs and also providing as much data as possible on the people, locations and dates represented in them. With some this has been simplified by the photographer, who has labelled them. But others are untitled making work on them difficult. And that is when the real sleuthing (and challenge) begins - tracking down the names of players, teams, locating venues and searching out the dates of certain fixtures. I believe this to be important, not just for Wigan and Rugby League, but for a greater understanding and appreciation of our social history. Because even though the main body of the work deals with Wigan, there are other local and national teams and players featured in the collection. It is a unique



*...And back again in 1949 (PC2018.5453)*

window into another time and place, rooted in our past and still capable of teaching us valuable lessons about our identity and the traditions and values we have inherited.

It has also been a learning experience for me. These were pictures of my Father's sporting heroes whose exploits he used to regale me with when I was in my youth. Names like Joe Egan, Ces Mountford, Ernie Ashcroft and Billy Boston. But to me, with the arrogance of youth, and coming from the age of the great Wigan teams and players of the 80s and 90s, the players he spoke of seemed like large lumbering dinosaurs, more at home in Jurassic Park than Central Park. How wrong I was.

Through researching the images I have come to realise that my Father didn't just speak out of nostalgia, though this was probably a part of it, but because these were truly great players. Players who had broken records and were legendary as kickers, wingers

or hookers. Teams that had been to Wembley on numerous occasions, made the Challenge Cup their own, and had won the now defunct Lancashire Cup six times on the trot. I did say they were the greatest!

The collection was Thomas Gerrard's own legacy to the bedrock of the club he loved so much. Both town and club, and lovers of sport everywhere, owe a debt of gratitude to Thomas, and so do I. Researching the images has been very rewarding and hopefully will add to the body of knowledge about this era in our sporting history. However, I have another more personal reason why, for me, cataloguing these wonderful pictures has been important. If I am destined to meet my Dad again in the Afterlife, I hope he will ruffle my hair as he used to do when I was a child, look at me and say in his broad warm Wigan accent, 'Tha's dun allreet lad'. And that's reward enough. God bless our town!

# The Road from Wigan Pier!

BY DEREK JOHN BULLOCK

Orwell's sojourn in Wigan in 1936, whilst researching for his important benchmark book, 'The Road to Wigan Pier', which commented on social conditions across the industrial north – had as a backdrop a then real life 'environmental emergency'. The result of almost 150 years of intense coal mining activities, with little thought given to the environmental consequences, had left a legacy of badly polluted air, land and watercourses that badly affected the health of all who lived there.

Wigan, of course, lay at the heart of one of the world's most productive coalfields, with over 1,000 mine shafts surrounding the town – with coal mining taking place over many centuries (possibly back to the Roman era?) and an equally dense parallel rail network that served these mines. These, of course, were worked by steam locomotives churning out noxious smoke, which added to the smoke from factories, and homes with coal fires. Early steam locomotives began operating at Orrell in 1812 with Robert Dalglish's 'Blenkinsop type' locomotive, 'The Yorkshire Horse', with steam locomotives used right up until 1968 on main line railways and later at local collieries, i.e. Bickershaw.

Like Wigan's present Council Leader, David Molyneux, I was born into an Ince that had been described as 'most derelict and polluted' at the time, still resembling the Wigan that Orwell had written about just 20 years before. Although, perhaps, after many pit closures, there was a more derelict and dangerous landscape, the surrounding slag heaps forming a very grey and dismal 'moonscape' that we children of the 1950s played on and investigated!

About this time (which no-one really expected) dramatic changes for the better were underway, which in my lifetime have transformed our local environment, hence this article's title: 'The Road FROM Wigan Pier!'

This started with the 'Clean Air Act' in 1956, in response to the 1952 (the year of my birth) 'London smog disaster', which was thought to have claimed as many as 12,000 lives. I can remember the first 'Smokeless Zones' being talked about as a child, which seemed alien at the time, but of course was a life-saving measure in the years that followed. I believe that my own 'borderline asthma' was a consequence of



*Derek Bullock with his award for work on the Mersey Basin Campaign in the 1990s*

long term exposure to the polluted air we breathed then.

The second, more visible, change was the beginning of land reclamation of vast areas of polluted and degraded land surrounding the town. The first positive reclamation took place near my home in Higher Ince on land that was formerly used for mining and chemical production beside the Leeds-Liverpool Canal - the 'William Foster Playing Field', c.1960 and still in use today.

From this small but important start most of the former dereliction has since been reclaimed and re-used, with large areas now covered in woods where once there were none. Officially these derelict legacy 'carbon' environments are known as 'degraded and restored landscapes'. They exist throughout the so called 'Makerfield Basin', from Goose Green in the north-west to Astley Green colliery site in the south-east.

In 1968, with air quality now massively improved, the widespread legacy of smoke-blackened buildings and infrastructure was targeted across Greater Manchester and elsewhere under the banner of 'Operation Spring Clean'. This has left us with a lasting legacy of a 'washed face' in our urban landscapes thanks to an early example of cooperation between the public, private and voluntary sectors working towards a common goal.

However, this move towards a better, cleaner environment across both Wigan and Greater Manchester was massively

boosted in 1985 with a world first, 25 year, government backed movement – the 'Mersey Basin Campaign', which aimed to clean up the entire Mersey River system. Uniquely from its inception, its strength lay in its three pronged attack on watercourse pollution by the public, private and voluntary sectors coming together equally, and in unison, towards a common goal. This led to the campaign being awarded the first International River Prize in 1999.

It left a lasting legacy of a cleaned up river system and waterside environment, cleaner than at any time since the Industrial Revolution.

I, personally, am proud to have played a part in this world beating campaign as a volunteer with Atherton Heritage Society/Atherton Environmental Projects; as a Mersey Basin trustee; and in promoting and developing the 'Clear Glaze River Valley Initiative' which covered the south of Wigan Borough.

So far I have covered the air quality, land reclamation and watercourse quality, but our area was certainly also lacking in tree cover, especially in Ince, with the exception of Walmesley Park.

However, in 1992 the 'Red Rose Forest' (one of 12 Community Forests across England), as a partnership of six Local Authorities and National Bodies, produced a Red Rose Forest Plan which has led to a greener, healthier, and thriving landscape for both people and wildlife. Just travel by train from Hindley into Wigan and look at the tree cover, where once there was none.

Today we have a legacy of 'City of Trees', 'Mersey Rivers Trust', the Wigan Flashes, and 'Greenheart'; with both electric trains and an increasing number of electric road vehicles, as well as lead being long removed from our petrol, all helping to improve our once toxic air quality.

In my lifetime I've witnessed the dramatic changes to the quality of Wigan's landscapes and air quality and hope that new initiatives, such as my own idea for an 'Urban Greenheart' – a Greater Manchester National Park (which would be a natural progression of 'Greenheart'), be established to complete, and finally protect, Greater Manchester's remaining greenspaces as a legacy for future generations. Hence this journey should be 'The Road FROM Wigan Pier!'

# The Gate Lodges of Culcheth Hall



Map showing the location of Culcheth Hall

Culcheth Hall has a well documented history going back many centuries. In more recent times Peter Withington bought the Hall in 1824 and undertook a major restoration plan, including the building of two lodges to serve the estate.

These two lodges were at the entrance to the Hall itself, now Culcheth Hall Drive, and at the entrance to Culcheth Hall Farm. The lodges were small, only one downstairs room and one upstairs room, and conditions would have been primitive with the WC outside. These two original lodges were known locally as the 'threepenny bit' lodges because they had eight sides, much like the coin.

The lodge to the farm was demolished sometime in the 1950s, and the one at the entrance to the main drive in 1969. By the time they were demolished both buildings were in a state of disrepair, although some attempt was made to find a new use for the Avenue, or Old Lodge, in 1969 but, unfortunately, this attempt came to nothing.

The third lodge, known as the West Lodge or High Lodge, was built later in the mid-1840s, probably to allow better access to the railway station at Kenyon Junction.

The inhabitants of the Hall have been well documented but the people who lived in the lodges belonging to the Hall have escaped such scrutiny. It is the purpose of this article to take a closer look at the inhabitants whose lives impacted both on the local village and the owners of the Hall.

The Hall and its inhabitants are easy to trace, both because of the name itself and the importance of the people who lived there. Similarly, some local landmarks remained constant through time, for example, the Farmer's Arms public house on Warrington Road and, later, the Rectory on Common Lane.

The three lodges were not always designated as such, but were sometimes numbered. For example, the Avenue Lodge was at 406 Warrington Road. However, because the numbering systems also changed over time it is often difficult to pinpoint them in this way. Sometimes occupations can identify a building. For example, coachman or gatekeeper will indicate that the house is a lodge. Likewise, local memories of the families who lived there can also help, and the descendents of these families have greatly helped in our search.

## The Avenue Lodge

The principal lodge, known as the Avenue Lodge or Old Lodge, was the most documented and therefore more easily traced, so I will begin with this building.

We know from a newspaper report that this building was demolished in 1969. It was then owned by Fred Lythgoe, and was finally demolished after a failed attempt to



The old lodge in Warrington Road, Culcheth, which stands empty. The demolition threat has been suspended, and the lodge is now being considered for conversion into a museum for the local secondary school.

convert it into a museum for the local school. As can be seen from this newspaper clipping, the lodge was in a bad state of repair by 1969.

In the past it had been inhabited by a number of people in the employ of the local Squire. In 1841 it was inhabited by a

young coachman, John Edwards, and his wife Rachel. Ten years later James Robinson, also a coachman, was living at what was then designated the second gatehouse; and in 1861 Martha Fearnhead, a gatekeeper, is living at the Avenue Lodge, where she remains for 10 years, although by 1871 the building has changed its name to the Culcheth Gatehouse.

In 1881 it has been re-named yet again as No 1 Warrington Road Gatehouse and Thomas Mallon is living there. Ten years later it is still the Warrington Road Gatehouse, but the occupier has changed yet again and Thomas Grundy is living there with his family. Thomas' wife, Annie, is probably acting as gatekeeper as Thomas gives his occupation as overlooker in a cotton mill.

By 1911 Jane Hurst, a spinster, is living there alone and is acting as gatekeeper. The occupancy of the lodge had changed at least six times in 70 years. There is very little information about these early residents, apart from their names on the census returns, but we know more about the later tenants due to the memories of local people.

Peter Hampson and his cousin have some family stories about a relative of theirs. They remember being told that an ancestor, Mrs Urmston, moved into the lodge after her husband's death, and that the family had some connection with 'Urmston O' th' Meadows', which was somewhere in Leigh. With this information I managed to trace Mary Ellen Urmston through a number of records.

It would appear that her husband had farmed land in Pennington next to a farm called 'Urmston O' th' Meadows'. The couple had seven daughters and one son, all born in different areas of Leigh, but none in Culcheth. William Urmston died in 1910 and in 1911 Mary Ellen, then aged 70, was living with her daughter and her family in Abram. We then lose sight of her until 1922 when she is registered as living at 384 Warrington Road, Newchurch with a man called Stanley Wood, probably a lodger.

William James Sales is living at 406 Warrington Road, the address of the Old Lodge, in that year. In 1923 Mary Ellen, who would then have been 82 years old, is now living at 406 with William James Sales, and remains there until 1926 when she moves to Number 4 off Wigshaw Lane until 1930. She died on 31 July 1933 at this address, aged 93. She was living with her daughter, Mary Hampson, who was present at her death and informed the Registrar. Mary Hampson was the great grandmother of Peter Hampson, the local man who told us the family stories.

Mary Ellen Urmston appears to have been quite a local character, renowned for smoking a clay pipe and her expertise as a speaker of the Lancashire dialect. It appears that the Squire would call on her for a chat on his daily visit to the village, and a local story tells of her stopping a



*Mary Ellen Urmston with two young boys, possibly her grandsons*

runaway horse on the drive to the Hall by waving her 'pinny' at it. She was also something of a local wit, replying to a resident of Culcheth when asked, "How do Mrs Urmston, are you not dead yet?" with "No, I'll decide when I die" – and she did; she put herself to bed and died in her own time.

The Swindells family lived at the lodge for the longest period of time. The 1969 newspaper article reports that Mrs Swindells had lived there for 42 years. Mary and James Swindells probably moved into the lodge upon their marriage in 1927, and she lived there with James until his death in 1955. She remained in the lodge for another 14 years before being re-housed in a local council flat, no doubt more comfortable and easier to run for an elderly widow. She died in 1979 at the grand old age of 80 years old.

As the newspaper article reports, by 1969 the Avenue Lodge was in a very sorry state and was demolished. However, in its early years, as can be seen from this photograph, it would have been a comfortable, if small, residence.

## Farm Lodge

The Farm Lodge was built at the same time as the Avenue Lodge, but would appear to serve the farm rather than the drive leading to the main house. This may have been the reason that this building has been less easy to trace, as it was probably seen as being of secondary importance. Most likely farm workers would have lived in the cottage with their wives acting as gatekeepers.

I was unable to pinpoint the Farm Lodge on the 1841 census, but in 1851 the second gate lodge was occupied by Ellen Parker, a washerwoman. In 1861 the property is listed as New Lodge, Warrington Road, and Thomas Howson, a domestic gardener, is living there.



*The lodge as it would have been in the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century.*

Ten years later the property is called Culcheth Lodge House and Grace Warburton, the gatekeeper, is living there. In 1881 Gatehouse No 2 Warrington Rd is the home of Isaac and Mary Unsworth. Isaac's occupation is railway plate layer, so it is probable that Mary was the gatekeeper. By 1891 William and Kate Carter are living at Culcheth Hall (Farm) Gatehouse and William is the gatekeeper. They are followed in 1901 by Thomas and Emma Turner.

The next part of the story comes within living memory, well, that of Mr William Grimshaw anyway. Mr Grimshaw was born at the Lodge in 1935, his grandfather, Roger Grimshaw, being the farm tenant at the time.



*Mr William Grimshaw as a young child, with his mother and grandmother, circa 1938, with the Lodge in the background.*

The register lists Roger Grimshaw, born in 1865, as the tenant farmer specialising in agricultural and dairy farming. Also at this address is his son, Roger, and his grandson, Roger, born in 1930. Roger Grimshaw had taken over the tenancy in 1917 and on his death in 1944 it transferred to his son, Roger. Roger continued as tenant until his death in 1976, when it was again transferred to his son who continued at the farm until the late 1980s. The Lodge itself was demolished in the mid-1950s.

James Ezra Bentley took over the Lodge from William's father, William, in 1940. Members of both these families still live in the village today.

## High Lodge or West Lodge

It is thought that this lodge may have been built to allow easy access to the railway station at Kenyon in the mid-1840s. I have been unable to find evidence of this lodge in the census before 1871.

In 1871 it is the home of Thomas and Mary Faulkner, the butler and gatekeeper for the Hall. However, 10 years later it is only listed as a house on Common Lane, but we can be fairly certain that James Alderson, who is a coachman and domestic servant, is living in the lodge. Between 1881 and 1891 the Parker family are living at the 'gatehouse' although James is missing from the earlier census. His occupation is given, however, as an under gardener, probably working at the Hall. James and Eliza are not local people though, they are from Boarstall in Buckinghamshire.

Another gardener, Thomas Henry Kilminster, is living there with his wife in 1911. The couple have been married 17 years but have no children. Thomas Kilminster is still living there in 1918 when the property is offered for sale.

It should be noted that in 1918 there existed a right of way to Culcheth Hall, which now probably forms a public footpath.

The property was semi derelict for some time before Thomas Barrow bought it in 1978, despite the need for extensive restoration. Having bought the property Mr Barrow extended the original house from two rooms, measuring 12 feet square, with a small kitchen and outside toilet, to the beautiful property we see today. For many years he had greenhouses in the large gardens and grew plants and vegetables. His daughter, Barbara, has built on the side plot and now lives next door to her father. Still very sprightly, Mr Barrow and Barbara welcomed us into his garden to talk about the house and kindly allowed us to copy some old photographs.



*High Lodge, 2021.*

*With special thanks for photographs and family information to Mr William Grimshaw, Mr Peter Hampson, and Mr Tom Barrow and daughter.*

# Stepping Back in Time

BY RACHAEL MORAN & BETHANY MARSHALL

As two Manchester Metropolitan University students, we were given the opportunity to work with Archives: Wigan & Leigh at its new home in Leigh Town Hall. For a period of five weeks, from July 2021, we were privileged to have access to some of the Victorian Quarter Session Records. These Quarter Sessions documents were relating to Wigan court cases from July 1898.

The process involved a number of different stages. As these documents are over 100 years old, many of them were very fragile and dirty so our first step was to clean them. Though we expected magic archivist potions, this actually only involved using specialised brushes, sponges, and rubbers to remove the surface dirt. However, some of these documents were so filthy the dirt had stained them and was impossible to remove. Each document was numbered for future reference.

The next stage was to transcribe the documents. The records varied in style from telegrams and typed letters, to handwritten notes and letters. This meant that some were more legible than others, and the contents were easier to type up.

The next task was to catalogue the Quarter Session records. This involved writing a brief description of each document so that future researchers can easily locate the relevant information. To do this, each document was given a reference code, the relevant date, and a document title.

The final stage in this process was to digitise the records by photographing them. We used specialised equipment appropriate for handling and photographing delicate documents.

Whilst going through these stages, we discovered that there were a range of records, including legal documents, relating to the appointment of Jurors and Justices of the Peace. There were also 'Calendars of Prisoners' for those with previous criminal offences and Bills of Expenses. The majority of the records were Court cases relating to an assortment of crimes including: vagrancy, gambling, theft, assault, obscene language, abuse of animals (donkeys and horses), child neglect, drunkenness and riotous behaviour, indecent exposure, fighting in public, begging, and obstructing the footway.

The outcome of the majority of the cases were recorded as Summary Jurisdiction Indictments detailing the defendant's name, date and nature of the crime, and their sentencing. Sentencing ranged from a small fine to a sentence of hard labour in prison. Imprisonment would be at H.M. Prison Preston.

One of the cases involved the theft of a horse on 1 July 1898 by John Hunt, a Bailee. The horse was the property



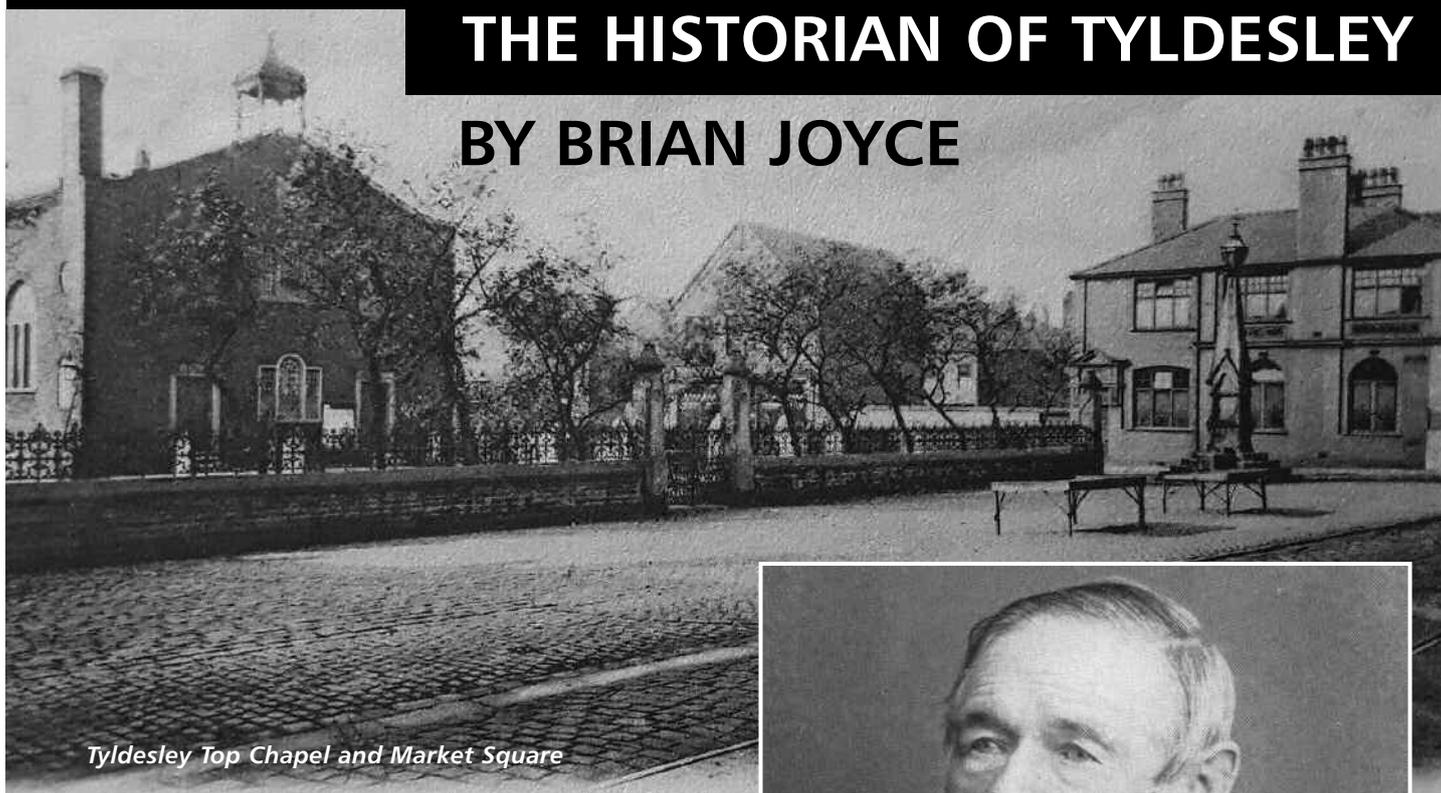
of a grocer, Thomas Stewart of 217 Scholes, Wigan. Under oath he described how he sent John Hunt to Hindley with the horse at 7.30 am, to look at a cow. He returned at 10.00 am without the horse. Hunt told Stewart that he would go and bring back the horse but did not return. Stewart went out and found him in a lodging house at 10.10 pm, and encouraged Hunt to lead him to where the horse was. Stewart describes how they had got some distance when Hunt said, "Hold on, I have sold it". Hunt said he had sold the horse to a man named Hall for £3. In his defence, John Hunt said that he did not steal the horse but was told to exchange it for a cow. He said he could not do so and was told by Thomas Stewart to do his best to sell it. For this, he was committed for trial at the July 1898 Quarter Sessions. The 'Calendar of Prisoners' details Hunt's previous criminal record including the theft of flour (August 1883), theft of a calf (October 1883), breaches of the Education Act (between 1894-1897), and indecency and using threatening words (1877 and 1890). For each of these offences he received punishments ranging from fines to nine months hard labour in prison. However, John Hunt was found not guilty of larceny as Bailee with regards to the theft of Thomas Stewart's horse and the case was discharged.

This experience allowed us a glimpse into the lives of the people of Wigan at the end of the nineteenth century, and the criminal activity at this time. We also gained further insight into the workings of the Quarter Sessions. We thoroughly enjoyed our time here and encourage others to volunteer at Archives: Wigan & Leigh.

# JOHN BUCKLEY

## THE HISTORIAN OF TYLDESLEY

BY BRIAN JOYCE

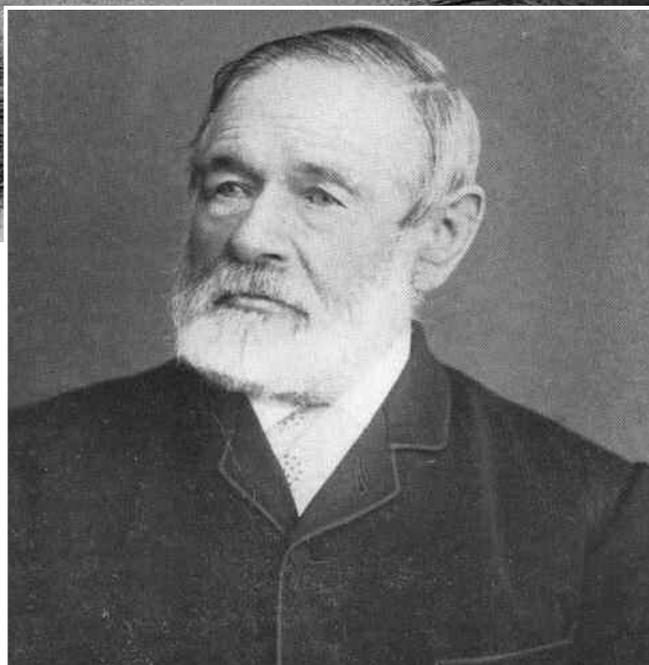


*Tyldesley Top Chapel and Market Square*

When the former weaver and clogger, John Buckley, published his history of Tyldesley in 1878, the Leigh Journal printed a backhanded compliment: 'The work is unpretentious but shows great industry in compilation'. John Lunn, in his own 'A Short History of the Township of Tyldesley', published in 1953, was dismissive of the work of his predecessor, calling Buckley's book 'a naïve account'. He compared it unfavourably (and inappropriately) with George Ormerod's early nineteenth century history of Cheshire. To Lunn, Buckley's book, 'lies humbly outshone by the princely tomes of the landowner-historian'. Lunn continued, 'Ormerod was a doctor of Oxford and Fellow of the Royal Society. Buckley had not even 5s spent on his education'. Buckley himself alluded to this in the preface to his 'naïve account'.

The works of both Ormerod and Lunn, (whose own book consists of gobbets of unrelated facts) have dated badly. Buckley's work might have been 'naïve' and 'unpretentious' but, like theirs, has its own value for the modern reader. The working-class author refers to himself as 'a native' on his title page, and sure enough, Buckley witnessed many of the far-reaching changes that affected Tyldesley during the Victorian period. This alone, with all its advantages and disadvantages, makes his book worth reading, and awakens interest in the life of the author himself.

John Buckley was born in Tyldesley, where he was baptised in the Lady Huntingdon's Chapel in November 1812. In the baptismal register of the 'Top Chapel', he is listed as the son of Nancy Buckley of Shuttle Street. The name of his father is not recorded.



*Tyldesley historian, John Buckley*

Buckley was born into a family of weavers, and as a small boy became a scavenger in James Burton's cotton mill. His work consisted of retrieving the many loose threads which had fallen on the floor. Little boys and girls made ideal scavengers, as they were small enough to crawl beneath the spinning mules while they were operating in order to pick up or brush away fibres.

Buckley often referred to his scavenging days while giving talks later in life. In September 1889, the 77-year-old historian of Tyldesley told an audience of old folk: "When I was a scavenger, I went to the factory at twenty minutes past five. There was no breakfast time and after dinner we would work on until eight o'clock at night". Buckley explained that there was no teatime break as such, but at 3.45pm a bell sounded for 'baggin' – a rest period in which a snack had to be consumed in 15 minutes. He went on: "And what had I a week? You may guess for a month, and if you do you would not guess – eighteen pence".

When he had outgrown his role as a scavenger, Buckley joined the rest of his family at home in Shuttle Street weaving by hand, silk at first and then cotton.

At the event referred to previously – a tea for the old people of Tyldesley given by the heating engineer John Grundy - he reminisced, not without humour, about his weaving days, an account which resonated with many of his elderly listeners:

“When I was a young fellow, I was a little handloom weaver, and we used to have thick porridge in the morning and a little buttermilk, then a few potatoes – not half enough – and a little bit of bacon like a cat’s tongue” [laughter]. “We did not eat a bit of it at first, we merely stroked it over our lips. And then at teatime, if it may be called teatime, we had perhaps a large lump of jannock with a little bit of a loaf (white bread) at the top instead of cheese. Many of you know that is true [cries of ‘Aye, Aye’]. Then at supper time perhaps we had two or three potatoes...”

He claimed that, as a handloom weaver, he had worked much harder than the current generation: “I lit my candle at four o’clock on a winter’s night and put it out at twenty minutes past eight – sixteen hours and twenty minutes weaving. And what for? Both I and thousands upon thousands of us were weaving at that rate and those hours for 7s 6d or 8s a week”.

In Buckley’s youth, there had been no formal education system as such. Like most of his contemporaries who became literate, he received tuition sporadically when and where he could. He remembered his mother paying ‘an old man’ 1d a week to teach him reading. He also recalled that at 13 years of age he walked to the ‘Quaker School’ in Westhoughton, perhaps a Sunday School held in the newly built Meeting House in Wigan Road. In the absence of a Sunday Best outfit, the young Buckley attended the ‘Quaker School’ in his work clothes and clogs.

The census of 1841 reveals that John Buckley, who was by then in his late twenties, was still a weaver living in Shuttle Street. His mother Nancy also resided there. They shared the house with 88-year-old James Buckley, who was probably Nancy’s father. Several other relatives, also weavers, lived at the address.

Ten years later, in 1851, the old man had died, but John Buckley and his mother had remained in Shuttle Street. However, Nancy had abandoned weaving, and her son, though still clinging on to a traditional way of life through his handloom, had exchanged silk, which was in decline, for cotton.

By now, Buckley had formed the political, religious and social views that he was to hold for the rest of his life.

Politically, Buckley was a Radical who identified as a Liberal after the Party was formed under Gladstone in the late 1860s. As such, he was a believer in Free Trade, regarding John Bright and Richard Cobden as friends of the working class after their pressure led to the abolition of the protectionist Corn Laws and, as a result, cheaper food for working people.

Buckley was a believer in the extension of the right to vote, including female suffrage. At a time when the suffrage was based upon the ownership of property, the thrifty and unmarried Buckley spent 16 years saving sufficient money to purchase three houses in Tyldesley, thereby gaining the right to vote. In a speech in 1864, he claimed, as reported in the Leigh Chronicle, that ‘...now he stood equal to the Earl of Ellesmere or anybody else in the polling booth’.

Buckley remained on the Radical wing of the Liberal Party until 1886, when, objecting to the Party’s commitment to Irish Home Rule, he broke with his Gladstonian friends and identified with the breakaway Liberal Unionists.

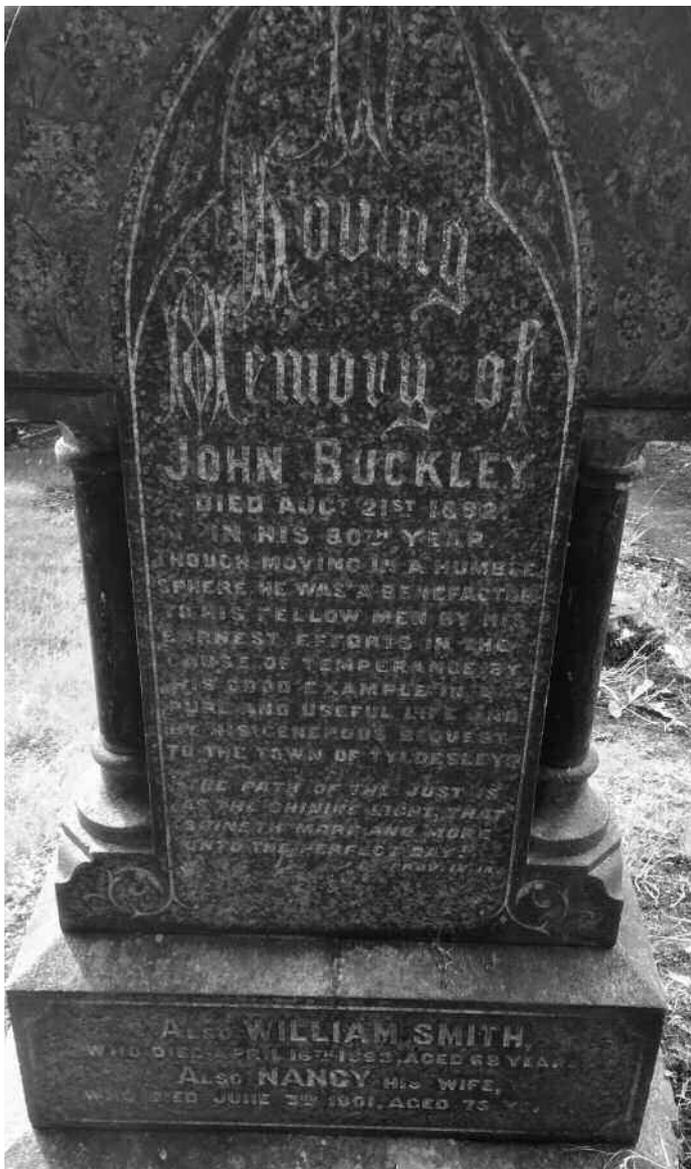
Like many working-class Liberals, Buckley was a religious non-conformist. Although a lifelong Congregationalist, he does not appear to have been sectarian, attending services in a variety of dissenting chapels and churches over the years.

After Buckley’s death, the local County Councillor and mill owner, Robert Clegg JP, commented on the old man’s education. The local press reported Clegg as saying in a speech: ‘They must remember that John Buckley was born at a time when education was almost unknown amongst working people, and if a man wished to acquire any knowledge at all, he had to depend entirely on himself to obtain it’.

As seen above, Buckley was a self-educated man. He was also an advocate of education for others at a time when a formal system was lacking. With like-minded colleagues he helped create the Tyldesley Mechanics’ Institute in the early 1840s. These establishments were formed to provide basic numeracy, literacy, and particularly the fundamentals of science and technology for working men. Libraries were established in the institutes and volunteer part-time teachers recruited. The Tyldesley institute met at first in ‘Connick’s Hole’, a large cellar in Castle Street, and subsequently moved to premises in Stanley Street in the early 1850s.

Mechanics’ Institutes were often financially supported by employers anxious to acquire a better-educated and more productive workforce. Teetotalers like Buckley had their own agenda; by providing respectable and uplifting alternatives to the public house, the Mechanics’ Institutes could reduce the amount of drunkenness, immorality, and poverty that they perceived as bedevilling so much of Victorian working-class existence.

In fact, teetotalism appears to have been the main driving force in Buckley’s life. He signed the pledge to abstain from alcoholic drink at Atherton Baptist Chapel at the age of 21. From then on, he became an evangelist against the evils of drink, denouncing it vociferously at halls and chapels in and around Tyldesley.



*Tyldesley Top Chapel and Market Square*

In 1891, he explained his mission in a letter to the Leigh Chronicle: 'My object is to persuade some of the working classes that are spending part of their hard-earned wages on intoxicating liquors, tobacco, cards, billiards and other games which will never do them any good but at one time or other will bring trouble and sorrow as sure as they practise them, to spend it differently'.

On walking holidays in Wales and the Isle of Man, Buckley's first task on arrival was to find a temperance hotel in which to stay. He sought out fellow teetotalers with whom to socialise and sing temperance hymns written by the American evangelists Ira Sankey and Dwight Moody.

In 1886, Buckley spent a holiday on the Isle of Man with the Tyldesley photographer Thomas Lee Syms. On the return ferry to Liverpool, the pair joined a group singing selections from Moody and Sankey's 'Sacred Songs and Solos'. However, their pleasure was marred by a fight which broke out among a group of drinkers. In a letter to the Leigh Chronicle, Buckley lamented that this experience, '...made me wonder if ever the time would come when men would cease to put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains'.

Not everyone shared Buckley's sense of mission to save the working classes from themselves.

There was a tradition in Tyldesley that teetotalers, led by a band, would parade through the streets on Good Fridays. Although this practice was theoretically illegal, it appears to have been tolerated. However, the Reverend George Richards, the newly appointed vicar in the 1850s, resolved to put a stop to this desecration of a Holy Day. According to a newspaper obituary, he was determined to uphold the dignity of the Church of England, 'and the prerogative of vicars in particular'. Richards threatened to prosecute Buckley and the other organisers, but faced with opposition from abstainers and drinkers alike, he retreated, and the annual processions continued.

Buckley had demonstrated that he was willing to adapt to changing circumstances when he abandoned the traditional but declining occupation of handloom weaving of silk in favour of cotton. In the mid-1860s, during the cotton famine brought about by the American Civil War, he abandoned weaving altogether.

Peter Eckersley, a young man with a clogging shop on Elliott Street in Tyldesley, moved to South Wales with his Welsh bride. He set up a new business in Pontypool, with additional premises about 10 miles away in Brynmawr. John Buckley, who by now was in his mid-fifties and had been a weaver for nearly 40 years, moved with the young couple, and Eckersley installed him as manager of the Brynmawr shop. The weaver became a clogger and was identified as such in the census of 1871.

Buckley remained in Wales for about 10 years, presumably maintaining his chapel-going and temperance work.

He returned to Tyldesley in the mid-1870s. His friend, the County Councillor Robert Clegg, said after his death that thanks to his thrift and temperance (and no doubt his bachelorhood), Buckley had been able to save, 'and take life somewhat easily at that period of existence when labour became a burden to them'.

It was now that he was able to devote time to write a history of his hometown, which was published in 1878.

Buckley also revived his political activism and was sporadically elected to the Tyldesley Local Board, the most important institution of local government before incorporation. He continued to advocate female suffrage and the cause of education. Buckley was still in the vanguard of teetotalism and unsuccessfully pushed for the closure of pubs on the Sabbath. The Leigh Chronicle believed he lost his attempt to be re-elected to the Board in 1884 due to his outspoken language on the temperance issue. When the local controversy over the creation of Public Baths for Tyldesley raged in the mid-1870s, Buckley was very much in favour, a reflection of his own belief in the value of swimming in keeping fit.

A believer in the importance of walking in maintaining good health, Buckley was also in the forefront of the campaign to preserve ancient footpaths for the benefit of the public. He was particularly incensed when Squire

Hulton attempted to close the path between Atherton, Chequerbent and Westhoughton, a controversy which reached the Quarter Sessions before Hulton won the argument.

Buckley embarked upon walking tours around England, Wales and the Isle of Man several times a year. He claimed that he was 'putting money into the Bank of Nature that would return him interest', and afterwards wrote newspaper articles describing his adventures. It was on one such tour that the self-proclaimed 'Historian of Tyldesley' reached the end of his life.

By the 1890s, Buckley's health was beginning to fail, and his heart grew weaker. In the spring of 1892, Councillor Clegg ran into Buckley in the street. On being asked how he was, the octogenarian replied, "Ah, lad! Aw'm noan so well; My bellows pipes are eawt o' tune and wind begins to fail them".

Nevertheless, the old man made one of his regular pilgrimages to his beloved Isle of Man in August, accompanied by Henry Stones, a cotton warper of Meanley Street in Tyldesley. The pair took a ferry to Douglas on Saturday 21 August. On Sunday morning they attended a Presbyterian Church service and, in the afternoon, visited an Anglican church. After tea, the two men went for a walk along the promenade, then

separated, John Buckley struggling up a steep hill towards the Unitarian Church. Eyewitnesses later stated that he appeared to be breathless and was struggling to unbutton his waistcoat when he collapsed. He died on the way to hospital. The next day, an inquest jury found that his death was due to heart disease.

John Buckley's remains were shipped back to Tyldesley and buried in the non-conformist section of Tyldesley Cemetery. Part of the inscription on his headstone reads: 'Though moving in a humble sphere, he was a benefactor to his fellow men by his earnest efforts in the cause of temperance, by his good example in a pure and useful life and by his generous bequest to the town of Tyldesley'.

This bequest was the sum of £200 towards the construction of a drinking fountain for the use of horses, dogs and thirsty travellers. The 'Buckley Memorial' was controversial in its planning and construction and has been moved several times. Although it no longer functions as a water fountain, it still stands, serving as a reminder to modern day Tyldesley residents of their first historian. As the Leigh Journal concluded after John Buckley's death: 'Few working men have a more creditable or honourable record'.

# Write 1000 words - Win £100!

*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**

**1st Prize - £100**

**2nd Prize - £75**

**3rd Prize - £50**

Five Runners-Up Prizes of £25

*The Essay Writing Competition is  
kindly sponsored by Mr J. O'Neill.*



Winners from the Past Forward Essay Competition 2019

## Criteria

- Articles must be a maximum of 1000 words.
- 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 Saturday 15 January 2022.
- 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](mailto:pastforward@wigan.gov.uk)

OR

Local History Writing Competition,  
Past Forward, Museum of Wigan Life,  
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

Photography by Daniel Cheetham



# AROUND THE MATCH

*Whether it's the 1960s or last week, being outside a football ground once the match begins provides an interesting contrast of the senses. Deserted streets filled with a sea of voices coming in intermittent waves from a crowd you can't see, makes for a powerful and somewhat eerie setting...*

*To then push through the turnstiles, and experience the energy and passion of people of all ages and backgrounds pitch side can feel otherworldly.*

A new commission for Wigan and Leigh's hosting of the UEFA European Women's Championship by WE ARE WILLOW creative studio & art collective, in partnership with THE TURNPIKE and WIGAN COUNCIL, celebrating the area's rich history and cultural diversity.

## **THE PLAN IS TO CREATE A NEW TEAM, FILM DOCUMENTARY AND ACCOMPANYING MEMORABILIA**

that offers fresh insight into the women of football in and around the match - the female voices that make the game on and off the pitch. The work will engage with new audiences, sharing histories, bringing generations together, and exploring those special moments associated with the game that affect people long after the final whistle is blown.

### **THE TEAM**

Eleven women of diverse ages and backgrounds brought together to discuss their experiences of the game and what it means to them. Exploring themes of nostalgia, heritage, community, and the future of football.

### **THE FILM**

A documentary featuring a combination of interviews with the new team of 11 interspersed with archive footage of women's teams from the past century.

### **THE MEMORABILIA**

An exclusive team emblem, football shirt and lapel badge, the design based on the interviews gathered with the 11 women.

### **A UNIQUE MATCH PROGRAM**

Featuring photography and stories of the women who contributed to the work as the new football team – celebrating solidarity, inclusivity, and positive community ethos.

**WE ARE WILLOW** is a UK based creative studio and multidisciplinary arts collective, collaborating on projects engaging in cultural, commercial and community interest, on a national and international scale.



For more information and how to apply to be part of the project please email [hello@wearewillow.com](mailto:hello@wearewillow.com)

[www.wearewillow.com](http://www.wearewillow.com)  
[www.theturnpike.org.uk](http://www.theturnpike.org.uk)  
[www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)



# TOM PRICE



*Tom presenting awards in 1999 (fourth from right)*

With sadness we report that Tom Price, the Chairman of Wigan Civic Trust for nearly 25 years, has died. After a long period of illness Tom died on 19 April 2021.

He became Chairman of the Wigan Civic Trust at the Annual General Meeting in October 1996, having previously been the Vice Chairman. Tom was definitely a 'hands-on' Chairman, becoming involved in many projects.

With his engineering background he manufactured and fitted new railings when the Tyldesley Monument was refurbished.

One of the Trust's larger projects was the reinstatement of Standish well. The well had been damaged in the Second World War when an American truck had hit the well causing damage that made it unsafe, so it had been pulled down. The project was to restore the well. Tom made the steel framework for the well at his works in Pemberton; Tony, our Secretary, had provided the drawings necessary; the roof was made of oak and slate by Laurel, a local builder who carried out that part of the job. A team of archaeologists undertook an exploration to ensure the well was in the same place as the original spot.

Tom was passionate about promoting the Trust, and continued presentations of the Wigan Civic Trust Awards. These are given to buildings and projects worthy of the accolade; as a committee we preferred this positive approach.

Tom also represented the Trust on other bodies. One such instance was the Wigan Heritage and Environment Network, a Borough wide group of many voluntary groups which also includes members from the Council. Until he was ill Tom produced the members' newsletter. This quarterly letter reprised the speakers and subjects we had had, and let members know about planning and other concerns. Again, until he was ill Tom continued to host our Christmas dinner.

## WIGAN CIVIC TRUST

In 2025 it will be the 50th anniversary of Wigan Civic Trust, and it would grand to be able to reach that milestone. At present we struggle to keep going having lost committee members and ordinary members in the last few years. I know that many Wiganers and others have a great interest in the heritage of Wigan because of the frequent posts on social media, and also from the many groups that have sprung up, for example, The Wigan Local History and Heritage Society.

**Peter Taylor -  
Peterink@virginmedia.com**

# Lives Well Lived

By Jenny Todhunter

Olive and Alec Hughes were both born and lived their long and fulfilled lives in Lowton. Alec was born in the 'Steps Houses' which are opposite Lime House on Newton Road. There were eight back-to-back houses and the street behind was Hamer Street. Alec was born in the end house and attended Lowton St Luke's Infant School. Each house had a cellar, an iron fireplace, and no hot water.

Reminiscing about his childhood, Alec remembered that in the summer the children would go to Lowton Moss, known as Lowton Lido! Pure sand flowed into the moss pit from the railway cutting. Alec and his friends would spend many a happy hour there learning to swim. There were no toilets, but plenty of bushes. For refreshments a local enterprising farmer's wife sold boiling water to make tea.

Alec recalled how the local children loved watching Peter Eckersley, who played cricket for Lancashire and was the son of William Eckersley, the Atherton mill owner.

Peter Thorpe Eckersley was the captain of Lancashire Cricket Club, who piloted his own aeroplane which was stored behind Lime House. He loved to watch the butler and servants pushing the plane on to a field so he could fly to Liverpool.

As soon as he reached his 18th birthday in 1943, Alec joined the Fleet Air Arm as a Telegraphist Air Gunner (the navy called

them Wireless Ops). He was called up in December and after some months of basic training was sent to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia in Canada to do his flying training. They mainly flew the old Swordfish Biplanes, fondly called Stringbags.

Towards the end of 1944 the training finished and those that qualified were given their 'wings' and promoted. Soon after they were sent home via New York in convoy.

After a short leave, Alec was sent to Ronaldsway on the Isle of Man, where the navy had taken over the airfield to carry out operational training. Here Alec was teamed up with a pilot and observer to train in navigation and to practise dropping bombs, depth charges and torpedoes. It

was here, when on an exercise, that instead of a gun, a camera was used to see how they'd gone on. The radios, however, wouldn't connect to the fighter so they would stand up when the film had finished, and the fighter then left. They would wear a parachute harness without the chute as this would be too bulky; they would clip it on if needed.

After one exercise the pilot rolled the plane upside down and Alec fell straight out! Luckily, he had fastened the safety strap to his harness and found himself hung upside down looking at the ground 1000 feet below.

When Germany surrendered they went back to Portsmouth to join in the victory parades in



*Alec Hughes, back row, on the left*

London, and then back to the Isle of Man as we were still at war with Japan. Finally, Alec went to Londonderry, in Ireland, where they flew out into the Atlantic in twos to carry out an exercise with one of their own submarines. Unfortunately, the other Barracuda flew low over the submarine, lost control and went into the sea. Only the pilot was saved.

In the Pacific the Japanese were so desperate to stop an invasion that they had 'kamikaze' suicide pilots diving their aircraft straight into the aircraft carriers, and if any of their aircrew were captured, they were immediately beheaded.

Alec was then sent on embarkation leave, and after only a few days at home the dropping of the atomic bomb heralded the end of the war.

Olive was also born in Lowton and lived there all her life. She went to the council school where she was teased about her long legs and known as 'Lamp Post Lizzie'. In her teenage years she joined the Marsh Gymnasium and those long legs meant that she became a talented high jumper. Olive became the County High Jump Champion, with medals to prove it.

After leaving school she trained as a shorthand typist and went to work at the BICC. On her first day she was asked her name by her new boss, and she replied, 'Olive'. He said that it didn't suit her and she looked more like a Pat; and so, for the next 40 years at the BICC, she was known as Pat!

Alec also worked at the BICC, where he remained for the rest of his working life, becoming a foreman engineer.

Olive and Alec met at a local dance where Olive only agreed to go out with Alec because he



*Alec Hughes, back row, on the far right*

was taller than her and owned a motorbike and sidecar.

They married in 1948 and Susan, their daughter, was born 18 months later. Their main focus was around Lowton St Mary's Church. Olive and her mother were stalwart members of the Mothers' Union. Alec became the Vicar's warden and was very involved in the building of the new choir vestry. One incident he always strenuously denied was that when he went to repair the amplifier that broadcast the church bells on a Sunday, he tested it by playing Lonnie Donnigan's 'My Old Man's a Dustman', which was supposedly heard by all and even made it into the local paper.'

Alec is well remembered for his work with the Scouts, taking them on camping trips to Criccieth and London. The activity he loved most was the pedal cars, and his garage was always full of boys hammering and soldering – the perfect outlet for his engineering skills. He became part of the National Committee and the Scout Association still run pedal car racing competitions today.

Keeping it in the family, Olive was the Guide Leader, and their daughter Susan ran the Cubs.

Their greatest collaboration was the Gang Shows which ran for six nights a week to sell-out audiences.

With more time on their hands when they retired, Alec became a Governor at Lowton St Mary's School. He was also an enthusiastic member of the Leigh Camera Club and won many competitions. Even in his 90s Alec would be manning the bubble machine at Messy Church.

Olive was secretary at the Leigh Family History Society for quite a few years and helped on the Family History Help Desk at the library. She also raised thousands of pounds through the Children's Society charity boxes.

Alec delivered talks to local groups and societies on 'Old Lowton', and was interviewed by an archivist from Salford University who recorded his memories of Lowton. He also featured on the Wigan Heritage DVD, talking about his memories of Lowton.

Olive and Alec were together for 72 years. Neither wanted to be without the other and they died a day apart. Rest in peace, Olive and Alec Hughes. It was an honour knowing you.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Events coming up at the Museum of Wigan Life. For details of any of these events and to book, please call 01942 828128 or email [wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk)

## Meet the Photographer with Frank Orrell

**Saturday 4 December, 1pm-2pm, free in-person talk at the museum**

Join Frank Orrell, former photographer for the Wigan Evening Post, Wigan Observer, the Reporter group, and Rugby League newspaper, for this fascinating illustrated talk as he talks about his time photographing rugby league.

Please book your place for Frank Orrell's event on Eventbrite; search for 'Museum of Wigan Life'

## Super League Saturdays – family activities

**Starting Saturday 15 January, 1pm-2pm, and then every second Saturday of the month, £2.50 per child**

Join us for fun-filled rugby themed family-friendly craft activities! These monthly activities will include making your own team flag, designing your own badge, and learning rugby league facts. There is also the chance to look around our fantastic new rugby league exhibition and try to solve our exciting trail! Activities will take place on the second Saturday of the month throughout the duration of the rugby league exhibition, starting Saturday 11 January 2022. Places are limited so booking is essential.

## Meet the Rugby League Legends with Shaun Wane, Kris Radlinski, Phil Clarke, and Tony Collins

**Friday 21 January, 7pm-8.30pm, £10 per person**

Join us at the museum for this special one-off live event with rugby league legends Shaun Wane, Kris Radlinski, and Phil Clarke, who will be joined by esteemed historian and author Tony Collins as host and chair. Hear about the highs and lows of their careers, their lives, and love for rugby league as well as their experiences on and off the pitch. This will be a truly special occasion with the chance to get up close and personal with your favourite players. One not to miss!

## Chinese New Year celebrations

**Saturday 5 February, 11am-3.30pm, free drop-in event – no booking required**

Come to the museum for a full day of vibrant spectacle, colour, and activities to celebrate Chinese New Year. There will be a martial arts display, lion dancers, traditional Chinese crafts, tea ceremony, calligraphy, music, dancing, costume and more! Watch the fabulous Chinese dancers throughout the town centre before a special finale at the museum. With support from the Confucius Classroom.

## Chinese New Year half term activities

**Tuesday 22 February and Thursday 24 February, 12pm-2pm, free drop-in sessions – no booking required**

Half term is packed full of family fun with our traditional Chinese craft and costume. Try your hand at activities including lantern making, calligraphy, paper cutting, and then get dressed up in traditional Chinese clothes. With support from the Confucius Classroom.

Events coming up at Archives: Wigan & Leigh. Please book by calling 01942 404 430, email [archives@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:archives@wigan.gov.uk) or search for 'Archives: Wigan & Leigh' on Eventbrite

## A Date to Remember

**Friday 10 December, 10.30am**

Join us for our fourth Heritage & Mindfulness session. This time we will be taking a look at The Garrick - a very popular nightclub which hosted many great acts in its day, including Status Quo, Sandie Shaw, Tom Jones and Diana Dors. Further dates: Friday 14 January 2022 and Friday 11 February 2022.

## Stitch in time: Sustainable Art Sessions

**Saturday 11 December, 1pm**

For December we will be celebrating Christmas traditions and using recycled materials to create a little gift that can be shared with friends on Christmas Day. Learn different sewing skills, such as embroidery, and create a beautiful handmade gift. Further dates: Saturday 8 January 2022, Saturday 12 February 2022, and Saturday 12 March 2022.

## Shared Reading Sessions

Join us and The Reader as we host free shared reading sessions every Thursday, 2-3pm. We'll be celebrating poetry, literature and local stories, with a new piece each week.

## Christmas Time in the Archives

Visit us in Leigh Town Hall to take part in family-friendly activities celebrating Christmas over the Christmas holidays. We are open 10-4pm Tuesday to Saturday until Thursday 23 December.

## Michael Sanders talks about the Piston, Pen and Press project

which aims to understand how industrial workers in Scotland and the North of England, from the 1840s to the 1910s, engaged with literary culture through writing, reading, and participation in wider cultural activities. The project began in September 2018 and will run for three years - Tuesday 15 February, 1pm.

## Archives: Wigan & Leigh Town Hall Tours

**Wednesday 22 December 2021, 11am-11.45am;**

**Wednesday 26 January 2022, 11am-11.45am;**

**Wednesday 23 February, 11am-11.45am;**

**Wednesday 30 March, 11am-11.45am**

Join us for these exciting tours of Leigh Town Hall, and see behind-the-scenes of the new Archives: Wigan & Leigh. Booking essential. Book via Eventbrite <https://eventbrite.co.uk>

## Mindful Mondays

**Monday 10, 17, 24, and 31 January 2022, 10.30am-12.30am**

Join us at Archives: Wigan & Leigh for mindful conservation cleaning of our rare book collection. Tea, coffee and cake provided. Booking essential. <https://eventbrite.co.uk>

Please note that events listed may be cancelled and groups may not be meeting in light of Coronavirus (COVID-19). Please check with event organisers for further information before attending.

## Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Our Lady's RC Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull from 2pm to 4pm.

All are welcome, contact Barbara Rhodes for further details on 01942 222769.

## Billinge History and Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. There is a door charge of £2.

Please contact Geoff Crank for more information on 01695 624411 or at Gcrank\_2000@yahoo.co.uk

## Culcheth Local History Group

The Village Centre, Jackson Avenue. Second Thursday of each month. Doors open 7.15pm for 7.30pm start. Membership £10, Visitors £3. Enquiries: Zoe Chaddock – 01925 752276 (Chair).

## Hindley & District History Society

Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7pm at Tudor House, Liverpool Road, Hindley.

Please contact Mrs Joan Topping on 01942 257361 for information.

## Leigh & District Antiques and Collectables Society

The society meets at Leigh RUFC, Beech Walk, Leigh.

New members are always welcome and further details available from Mr C Gaskell on 01942 673521.

## Leigh Family History Society

The Leigh Family History Society Help Desk is available at Archives: Wigan & Leigh, at Leigh Town Hall. Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month (except July, August and December), contact Mrs G McClellan (01942 729559).

Speakers Programme:

18 January: A.G.M. 'The Working Class Movement' Royston Futter

15 February: 'My Great Grandfather was a Workhouse Master' Louise Wade

15 March: 'Looking for Phyllis & Finding Maude' Ali Ronan

## Lancashire Local History Federation

The Federation is the umbrella organisation for local history in Lancashire and the wider north west. Membership is open to societies and individuals, who receive a quarterly newsletter and news of activities. For details visit [www.lancashirehistory.org](http://www.lancashirehistory.org)

## Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

The group meets at Upholland Library Community Room, Hall Green, Upholland, WN8 0PB, at 7.00pm for 7.30pm start on the first Tuesday of each month; no meeting in July, August and January. December is a meal out at The Plough at Lathom.

For more information please contact Bill Fairclough, Chairman on 07712766288 or Caroline Fairclough, Secretary, at [carolinefairclough@hotmail.com](mailto:carolinefairclough@hotmail.com)

## Wigan Civic Trust

If you have an interest in the standard of planning and architecture, and the conservation of buildings and structures in our historic town, come along and meet us. <http://www.wigancivictrust.uk/>

## Wigan Archaeological Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August), at 7.30pm at the Bellingham Hotel, Wigan. There is a car park adjacent on the left.

Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. For more information call Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342. You can also visit the website at [www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk](http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk)

## Wigan Family and Local History Society

We meet on the second Wednesday at 6.45pm, at St Andrews Parish Centre. Please contact [wigan.fhs@gmail.com](mailto:wigan.fhs@gmail.com) to find out more information. Attendance fees are £2.50 per meeting for both members and visitors.

Our aim is to provide support, help, ideas and advice for members and non-members alike.

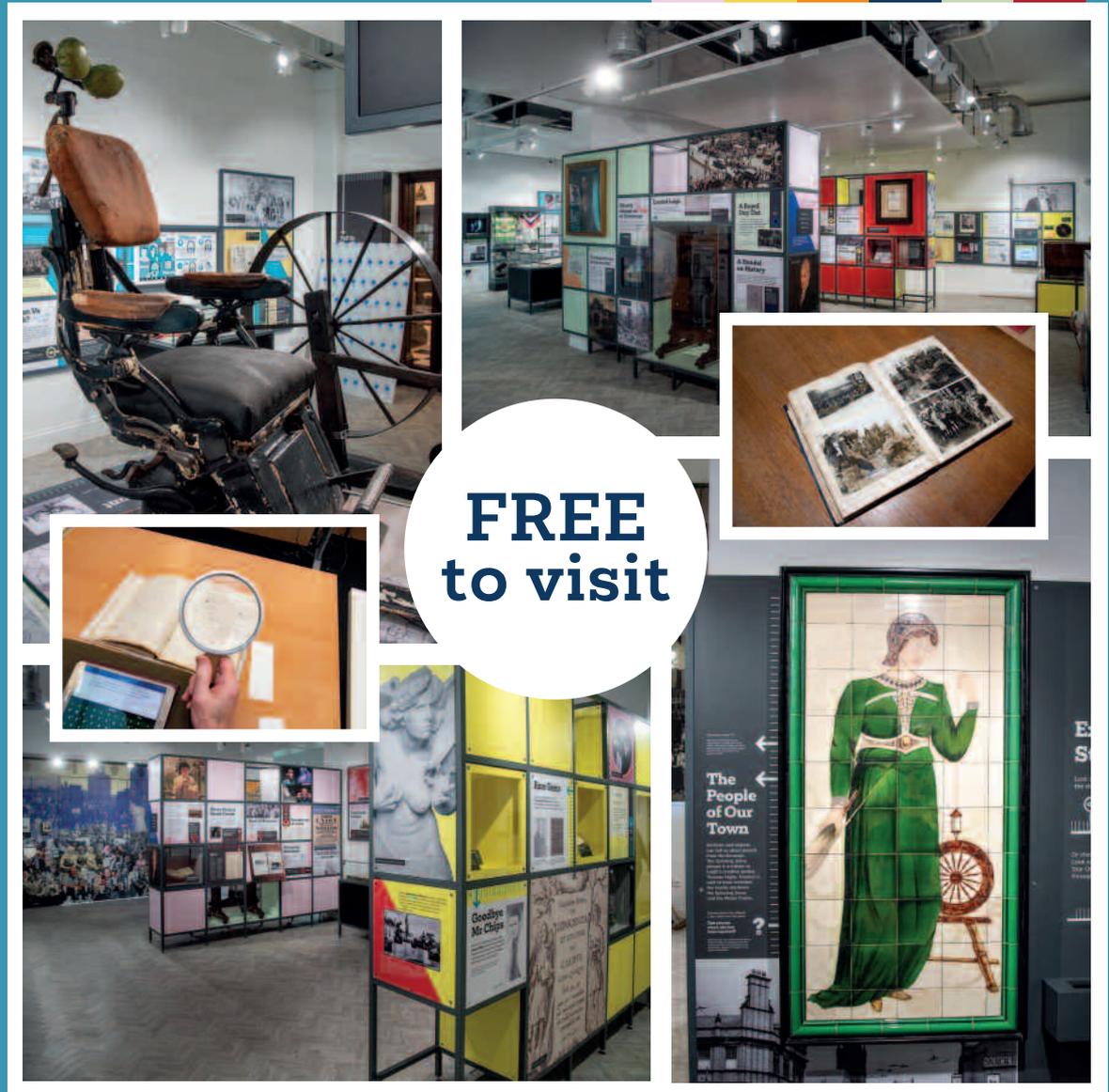
For more information please visit, [www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/)

## Wigan Local History and Heritage Society

We meet on the second Monday of each month, with a local history themed presentation starting at 7.15pm in The Function Room at Wigan Cricket Club. Doors open at 6:30pm. Members, £2.50, Visitors, £3.00 per meeting.

For more information please contact us <https://www.facebook.com/wiganhistoryandheritage/>

# Family-friendly local history exhibition open



**FREE**  
to visit

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

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