

## Wigan Local History and Heritage Society

Minutes of the meeting held on: Monday 13th January 2020 at 7pm.

### 1. Presentation:

A local historian, John Gostellow, gave a very interesting and informative presentation on The Man in the Park - The Life and Times of Sir Francis Sharp Powell:

John talked about Powell's birth in Wigan in 1827, outlining his family and his education in Wigan, followed by a period he spent at Sedburgh School and then his graduation at Cambridge University

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He practised law, and became a JP, and then an MP for Wigan.

During his time in Wigan, he supported the Wigan Mining and Technical College, which opened in 1858, and was the first institution of the type in the country; he funded the building of the children's library, and gave a large donation to the building of St George's School. Following a mining explosion in Haydock he contributed a considerable sum to support the families of victims. He was involved in legislation to try to give working people a healthier life.

He was honoured with the Freedom of the Town in 1895.

After his retirement in 1911 he became more feeble, but still struggled on with his work and commitments until his unexpected death in 1911.

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his first election as MP for Wigan, a bronze statue was erected in Mesnes Park, and it is a long standing superstition that the rubbing of the protruding shoe will bring a person good luck.

The vice-chair Paul Kenyon, thanked John for an excellent presentation.

This was followed by a short interval and guests were then invited to remain for the members meeting which followed shortly after. The secretary pointed out that this would be in an observatory capacity only as guests would be unable to take part in any voting procedures.

### Members meeting:

### 2. Apologies:

Apologies were received from Sheila Ramsdale, Gordon Ramsdale, Ken Scally, Elizabeth Scally, Carl Middleton, Marianne Howell, Nick Howell, Eric Curless and Ann Curless.

### 3. Minutes of last meeting held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Agreed as an accurate account by Paul Kenyon and Audrey Welsh

### 4. Matters arising.

There were two matters arising:

- Projector screen: two projector screens have been kindly donated to the Society, one by a guest attending the last meeting, and another by Ron Hunt. However, the new manager of the Cricket Club Clare, had provided the club's screen for our use.
- December meeting: Members attended a Christmas Quiz party at Forbes on The Lane, where a very enjoyable evening took place. A special thanks was given to all those who contributed a raffle prize, Eric for the quiz, Ron for his excellent oratory, and Ken for his musical entertainment.

### 5. Election of unfilled Officer Posts:

1.Treasurer 2. Membership Secretary

The Posts remain unfilled and the election will be carried over to the next meeting.

6. Treasurer Report.

The treasurer reported a bank balance of £230.57

7. Secretary Report - Clare Kenyon.

No report this month.

8. Wigan Historic Buildings Preservation Trust Report - Peter Fleetwood.

- Peter gave an update on a visit to the Wigan Council Secure Unit, accompanied by Bill Varty to view the Common Seal Stone, which had been saved from destruction during the demolition of the town hall, (1870's Moot Hall with Latin inscription) It is in two halves and will require sympathetic cleaning and bracing together. It is 6' tall and 9' wide. Louise Atahan, has agreed to a revisit to enable the group to move the project forward. Peter is to ask the three Ward Councillors, plus any other interested member to attend.
- It is very disappointing to hear that records of the Gidlow Sisters paintings and the stained glass window from Wigan Infirmary cannot be found in the archives. It has been suggested that they may have been stored in the cellar in the Elms. It was agreed that the matter will again be followed up by Peter and the group, until these artefacts and assets can be tracked down.

9. Wigan Local History and Heritage Hub Network update. - Peter Fleetwood.

Peter outlined the details of a meeting held in December between Peter Fleetwood, Clare Kenyon, Ron Hunt and Brian Elsey of Wigan World, to discuss the next steps required to set up the Hub. A discussion took place about IT requirements which Brian agreed to look into, a mission statement which Clare agreed to draft, and a logo which Peter has been investigating. He recommended that we use the Charter Mural sketches by Gerald Rikards, which can be seen on display in the History Shop, Wigan. Peter has gained permission to use these to create a logo for the Hub.

10. Programme of Speakers for 2019-20 based on the specific interests of members.

A discussion took place and a schedule of speakers has been agreed. See list.

11. Any other business.

There were two items of business:

- The date of the April meeting clashes with Easter Monday Bank Holiday, so it was agreed unanimously to change the date of this meeting to the third Monday of the month, which is 20<sup>th</sup> April. The secretary has changed the booking with the manager of the Cricket Club to ensure that the room is available for the meeting.
- Rita Fell informed the meeting that Sheila Ramsdale is currently visiting India, to present to a hospital in Chennai, a copy of a book she has written about a Wigan nurse. Sheila will inform the next meeting of the details which led up to the writing of her book, and copies of the book will be available for sale.