

**A**  
**WINDOW**  
**ON**  
**WIGAN'S HISTORY**



**A BETA Research Book**

**BETA presents**

**A WINDOW  
ON  
WIGAN'S  
HISTORY**

**Researched and written by**

**BETA**

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Adults**

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## Research from

### Visits to:

Wigan Town Centre and Wigan Town Hall,  
Wigan Parish Church and the Bluecoat School  
Wigan History Shop and Wigan Library,  
York, Yorvik Viking Centre, Roman Bathhouse museum  
York Minster, Richard III museum  
Chester and Chester Roman Soldier tour  
Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey  
Tower of London and Buckingham Palace  
Oxford  
Lancaster Castle and Lancaster Priory  
Knowsley Hall and St. Francis Xavier Church 'Held in Trust' Exhibition, Liverpool  
Manchester Museum of Science and Industry and Manchester Cathedral,  
Manchester Town Hall and History Walk  
Liverpool Museum and Walker Art Gallery  
Liverpool Museum of Slavery and Liverpool Maritime Museum  
Speke Hall and Tatton Hall  
Archaeological digs - Roman, Viking and Medieval  
Roman Re-enactment and Chester Roman Soldier Walk  
Viking Re-enactment at Tatton Hall  
Norman invasion Re-enactment day  
Sealed Knot Re-enactment battles at Nantwich and Gawthorpe Hall  
Visit of some students, staff and volunteers to Rome and Pompeii

### History Books:

The Making of Wigan - Mike Fletcher  
Wigan History & Guide - John Hannavy  
Potted Guide to Wigan's History/Window on Wigan - Geoffrey Shryhane  
Women in Anglo Saxon England and after 1066 - Christine Fell  
History of Wigan - David Sinclair (published 1882)  
The Registers of Wigan Parish Church  
A History of the County of Lancaster  
Haigh Hall and the Bradshaigh family - Peter Riley  
The Legend of Mab's Cross - Fred Holcroft  
The House of Stanley - Peter Draper  
The English Civil War around Wigan and Leigh by Fred Holcroft  
Wigan Parish Church magazine and articles by Enid Bannister  
The Wigan Borough Charters and Regalia - Wigan Heritage  
Wigan - A Historical Souvenir by Bob Blakeman  
The Story of Chester by James Williams

### Internet history research sites:

Wigan Archeological Society  
BBC History  
BBC Lancashire  
Wigan Parish Church  
British History Online  
History Learning Site  
Cotton Times  
Feet of Fines for Lancashire  
Wars of the Roses  
Lancaster Castle Online  
Early British Kingdoms - David Nash Ford  
Standish History  
Le Norreys Family  
Geneology Rootsweb  
Medieval Sourcebook - Fordham Education  
Recusants' Handbook - J. A Hilton  
'Townships: Wigan', A History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 4 (1911),  
The Gunpowder Plot Society  
Visit Chester.com  
Knowsley Council

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# PREHISTORIC WIGAN

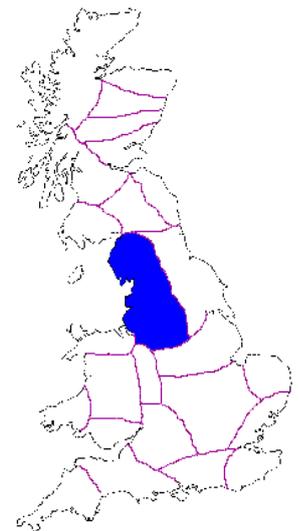
Little is know of Wigan in prehistoric times, but several items have been found in different parts of Wigan Borough.

Two polished stone axe heads found at Leigh cricket ground and Boar's Head Railway Station; a bronze age battle axe found in Walkden Avenue Swinley, Wigan; a flint spear head found in New Springs, Wigan and a flint scraper found in Winstanley. A large prehistoric ditch has been unearthed by Manchester University archeologists at Gadbury Fold, Atherton. In the bottom of the ditch was a large prehistoric flint scraper. These items are stored at Wigan History Shop.

Before the Roman invasion, Wigan was in the province known as Brigantes and occupied by the Britanni Celtic tribes. Celtic place names still exist today, Bryn meaning hill, Makerfield and Ince meaning water meadow or island.

The Britanni did not build towns or cultivate the land, but lived by hunting and gathering the fruit of the trees. Wigan was an area of forest and marshland and the wild animals would have been bears, wolves, wild boars and beavers.

The dark area shows the Brigantes province and looks almost the same as Lancashire today.



# *ROMANS IN WIGAN - Coccium*

## **Roman Remains Found in Wigan**

In 2005, during the excavations for the foundations of The Grand Arcade, Millgate, Wigan, extensive Roman remains were found. Oxford Archeology North uncovered a huge 2<sup>nd</sup> century colonnaded building which was thought to be a Mansio (a Roman hotel). This contained a hypocaust (Roman central heating system) and a bath house. Nearby they found hearths where lead was processed and 2000 pieces of Roman pottery and 1½ tons of Roman building material.

In 1982 the remains of several Roman buildings were found in the Wiend. These buildings date from the first century A.D. The Wigan Children's Library has since been built on this site. In 2007 further Roman remains have been found behind the children's library in the Wiend.

Other Roman 'artefacts' have been found in Wigan, 'pagan idols' were found under the parish church in 1551 and part of an altar to the Roman god Mithras is now built into a wall of the church tower. It was traditional for Christian churches to be built on the site of pagan temples.

Roman coins were found in the Market Place in 1837 and in 1850 a very rare gold coin of the emperor Vitellius (who only reigned for a few months in AD69) was found in Mesnes Park.

In 1822 Roman Cremation urns were discovered during the building of the gas works in Chapel Lane and archaeologists believe this to be the site of a Roman cemetery.

## **Coccium**

The Romans first visited Britain peacefully in 43 BC, but in AD 43 Emperor Claudius invaded Britain. In about AD70 the Romans arrived in the North West and decided to erect a fort near a river. They called the settlement Coccium. This name is mentioned by Antonius, in his book of the second century AD, as being 17 Roman miles from Manchester. It was an important military station.

Wigan was chosen for the site of a Roman fort because it had hills and the River Douglas, which would have been wider than it is now. Other reasons for choosing Wigan were the natural resources such as cannel coal and iron ore. The Romans were the first to mine coal in Wigan.

Wigan was also important to the Roman communication system as it was between Chester (Deva), Lancaster and Manchester(Mamucium). The Romans built roads to/from Coccium. The Roman Road is still named as such on ordnance survey maps (now the A49) and went to London (Londinium), Chester (Deva) to Ribchester (Bremetennacum) and Carlisle (Luguvallium), all large Roman Settlements. All Roman roads led to Rome (eventually).

## Roman Life

In Pompeii we saw small pieces of white marble in the Roman roads, these were the very first "cats eyes" as we call them today. The lanterns on the Roman chariots would shine on the white marble and show up the road. The Roman roads had pedestrian crossings which were like large stepping stones. These crossings were usually at crossroads and also made the chariots slow down as the wheels had to fit between the stones, just like we have "speed bumps".

All Roman forts were built the same, rectangular, beside a river and on high ground. Inside the fort would be the soldiers' barracks, the hypocaust, bathhouse, food store, hospital and headquarters.

It is believed that one corner of the Roman Fort was the junction of King Street and Rodney Street. From this corner you can see the Gas Works, the site of the Roman Burial Ground which would have been outside the fort. The Temple would have also been outside the fort and the Parish Church is just off Wallgate which is believed to have been one of the walls of the Roman fort.

A pub would also be built outside the fort and this is where soldiers could relax, drink and meet women. The punishment was very severe if a Roman soldier was drunk on duty. He would be whipped and so would his friends for allowing him to get drunk. If a soldier deserted his post, his friends would be ordered to beat him to death.

The Roman soldiers had no problems with the local people especially as they would have been killed or sent to be galley slaves if they had protested. The people became slaves to the Romans and were divided for work according to their abilities. The strong were put to building the fort and roads, they were also sent to mine cannel coal. Women were divided, some growing food, others put to work cooking and cleaning as house slaves, the prettiest became "soldiers' friends" and worked in the Roman 'pub'.

The Romans didn't like being in the North, it was much colder than their home in Rome, Italy. They tried to grow vines for wine, but these crops failed. They had to rely on deliveries brought in by ship from Italy, then along the River Dee to DEVA (Chester).

Roman soldiers could read and write. Tabulae have been found near Chester. A Tabula is a small wax tablet within a wooden case on which a message is scratched into the wax. This can be re-used by warming the wax with a finger and rubbing out the message. There was also a postal service so that the soldiers could send messages home. Some of the messages found in Chester were from Roman soldiers complaining about the cold conditions in the North of Britain and asking for warm underwear from their parents. Roman soldiers served for 25 years, after which they received a pension. Auxiliary soldiers were those who came from Britain and other parts of the Roman Empire.

At the end of their 25years' duty Roman soldiers were given a pension, granted full Roman citizenship and their marriage was recognised.

Roman ladies used make-up, small ampula have been found containing perfume. Items of jewellery have also been found. The Roman women preferred clothes and material sent from Italy as the material in Britain was very coarse. Evidence has been found that the Romans collected broken glass and this was then re-cycled. Romans believed in being clean and hygienic and looked after body and mind. They grew herbs for medicine. The Romans had underfloor central heating, indoor plumbing and toilets. Bathhouses were very popular and Roman soldiers were encouraged to go to the baths and have massages with oils.

Some of the students/staff have visited Pompeii and Rome. Pompeii was petrified or frozen in time when the volcano Vesuvius erupted in 79 a.d. In Pompeii we found shops that had made and sold pizzas, the shops had ovens and a counter. We think the Romans were the first to have fast food shops.

In Rome we saw the temples, Palaces, Colliseum and Forums built by the Romans. The Roman Forum was like our Houses of Parliament, this is where the Senate met. Rome was a republic and ruled by the Senate. Senators were voted in by Roman citizens, but women and slaves did not have the right to a vote. The Romans were very proud of their Senate and it was similar to our democracy. All Roman citizens had a right to a trial and could hire lawyers to defend them. All laws were voted upon as were taxes and whether to go to war or not. The Romans kept written records of everything that happened in the Senate. In Rome today the city council still use the abbreviation SPQR which stands for "Senatus Populesque Romanus" - The Senate and the People of Rome, this can be seen on grids, public buildings etc. A colliseum was like a theatre and Wigan's nearest colliseum was in Chester. Gladiators put on displays of fighting each other or fighting large animals.

The first Christians were persecuted by the Romans and in Rome were put into the colliseum to be eaten by lions. Whilst excavating the Roman fort in Manchester archeologists found the Sator Rotas stone which dates back to 185 a.d. This stone is a Roman word square of the Pater Noster (Our Father) and is the earliest evidence of Christianity in Britain. The stone is in the Manchester Museum.

In 306 a.d. Constantius, the Emperor of Rome, was visiting York with his son Constantine. Constantius died and his son Constantine was declared Emperor of Rome. In 312 a.d. Constantine became the first Christian Emperor and Christians were then able to practise their religion without fear of death.

The Romans left Wigan and Britain in about 430 a.d.

# *KING ARTHUR and WIGAN*

According to our research, in 520 a.d. King Arthur and his knights visited Coccium (Wigan) and set up camp on the banks of the River Douglas. We think he must have camped in the Roman fort which was on the banks of the River Douglas. In some books, the river is called the Dhu Glas, in others it is written as Dubglas, meaning black water.

Nennius, was an eighth century historian and monk who was the first to write about King Arthur. He wrote about Arthur's 12 battles "Arthur along with the kings of Britain fought against the Saxons in those days, but Arthur himself was the military commander ["dux bellorum"]. His first battle was at the mouth of the river which is called Glein. His second, third, fourth, and fifth battles were above another river which is called Dubglas and is in the region of Linnuis."

David Nash Ford, who holds an honours degree in history and archaeology, states that "some theorists have argued that *Linnuis* simply means "Lake Region" and therefore River Douglas near Wigan in Lancashire could have been the site of King Arthur's battles".

King Arthur was a Roman Christian who lived in the sixth century about 500 a.d. He became King of Britain after the Romans left.

We think that the people of Coccium changed the name to Wigan when the Romans left. From our research we have found that Wig means war and Wiga means warrior. Today, Wigan's Rugby League players are known as the 'Wigan Warriors' and their first rugby ground was Central Park, which is on the banks of the River Douglas. Wigan people see the rugby players as the new knights doing battle for the honour of Wigan.

King Arthur believed in justice and that all people are equal. For his meetings with his knights, King Arthur had a round table made so that no-one could sit at the head of the table, everyone being equal. He set up courts of justice for all, whether knight or serf.

Unfortunately for the people of Britain, King Arthur died in 539 and his ideas of equality and justice died with him.



Reconstruction of Wigan's Roman Bathhouse



Wigan's Roman Hypocaust as excavated  
This was the central heating system  
now displayed at The Grand Arcade



Roman Pottery found in The Wiend  
Now on display in Wigan's History Shop



Part of a Roman Altar found under Wigan's  
Parish church and now displayed inside



Roman street in Pompeii showing crossing and chariot wheel grooves



Roman sandal imprint in tile  
York Bathhouse museum



Reconstruction of Roman Kitchen  
in the London Museum



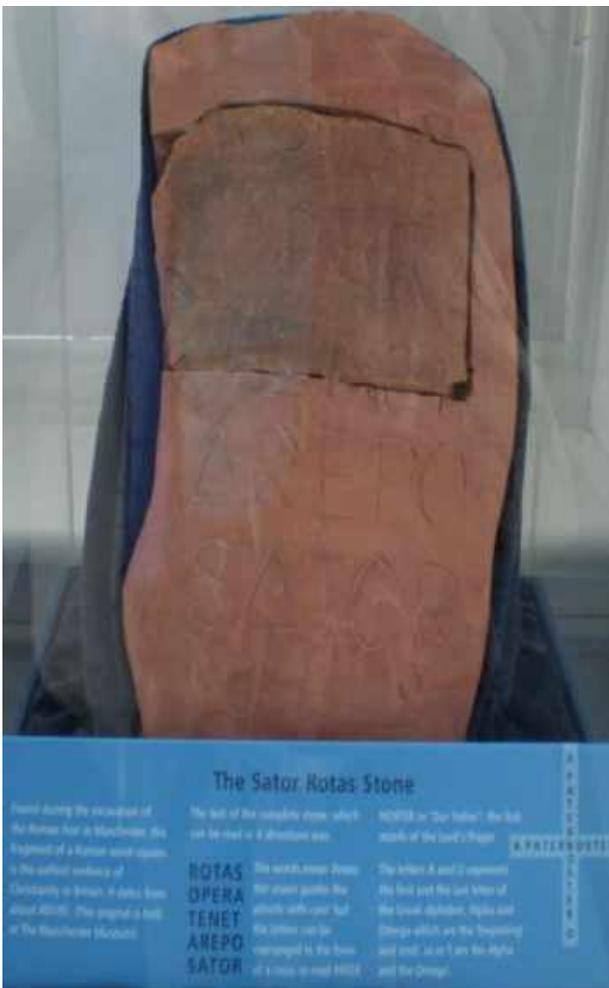
Roman Shop, Pompeii



Roman mosaic in Chester



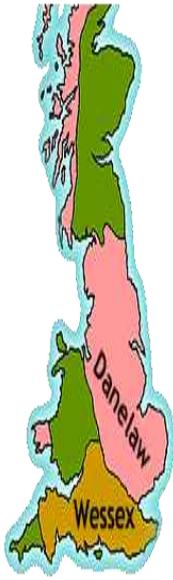
Roman soldier shows a tabula



The Sator Rotas stone found in Manchester Dated 185 a.d. now in Manchester Museum



Roman lead pipe found in Manchester now in Museum of Science & Industry



Area of  
Danelaw



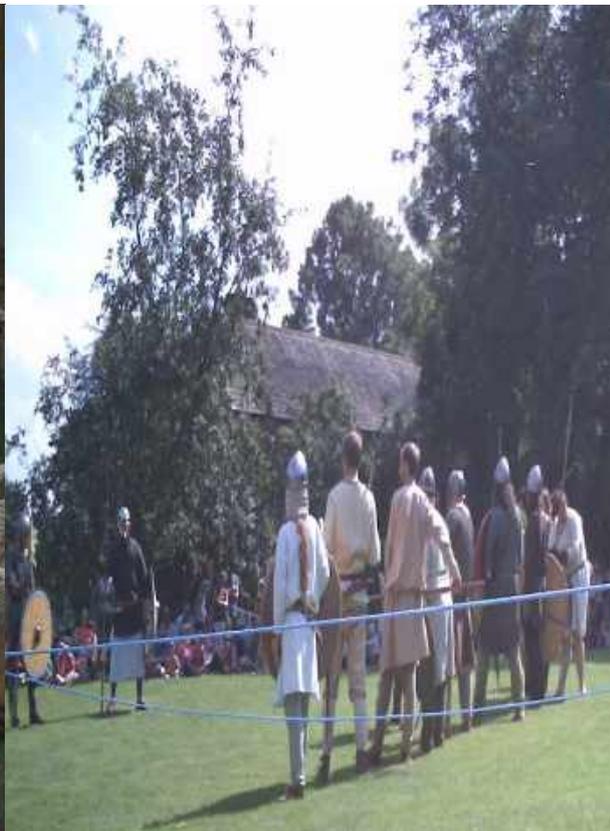
Viking Remains, York



Making a Viking Meal - lapkaus  
(lobscouse)



Viking camp and getting ready  
for battle



Re-enactment of a Viking battle  
against the Saxons

# *ANGLO SAXONS and the VIKINGS*

## **Anglo Saxon Life**

After the death of King Arthur the Saxons invaded and settled in Wigan. The Saxons came mainly from Germany. The people of Angleland, (England) became known as the Anglo-Saxons. Wigan was in the Anglo Saxon kingdom of Northumbria.

Daily life was far from easy for Anglo Saxons and most people didn't live past their 30's. Women especially had a high death rate because of the dangers of pregnancy, miscarriage and childbirth. Women did try to look after each other and manuscripts have been found offering medical advice such as pregnant women not eating anything too salty or sweet and against riding a horse, drinking strong alcohol, eating fatty foods or pork.

In Northumbria the rich lived on large estates with halls made of timber surrounded by the small dwellings and workshops. People were divided into classes, Lords, Freemen and slaves.

Slaves in Northumbria were mainly those captured by the Saxons when they invaded or captured in battles. Children of slaves were also slaves and you could be sold into slavery by your family or to pay off debts. It was possible to attain or buy your freedom, but this was at your lord's will.

Food was mainly wheat, oats, rye and barley supplemented by carrots, turnips, peas, beans and apples or pears. Honey was the sweetening ingredient and was also used for the alcoholic brew Mead. Barley was used in brewing beer. Meat came from farm animals such as cattle, sheep and goats and butter and cheese came from their milk. Pigs also provided meat and hens, ducks and geese were kept for eggs.

Simple linen or woollen tunics were worn by men and long dresses for women, fixed with brooch-pins.

## **Anglo Saxon Rights for Women**

Anglo Saxons had legislation for the rights of women and a prospective husband had to pay "morgengifu" in money or land to the woman herself who would have control of this. People were allowed to choose their spouses.

Girls and boys were considered equally important. The fine for killing a man or woman (wergild) was identical.

# Anglo Saxons and The Vikings

## **Alfred the Great**

Alfred the Great was born in 849 and died in 899. The story of King Alfred burning the cakes whilst pondering how to beat the Vikings is well known. Alfred is credited with uniting his people, founding the navy, pioneering education and setting up courts of law to administer his laws and the punishments for those who broke them.

## **Alfred's Courts**

Alfred's courts did bring justice, but there were no prisons and punishment was a fine, mutilation like a hand cut off or death. The Christian church did not like capital punishment so it was usually mutilation or a fine. Alfred worked out financial penalties for his courts, but these did depend on class.

If a free woman was attacked the penalty would be 10 shillings given to her, but if a slave woman was attacked the fine would be 5 shillings given to her lord.

## **Education in Alfred's time**

Alfred mourned the loss of education, especially reading/writing and craftsmanship. He spent money on a school for his noblemen's children and teaching the lost crafts such as woodwork, boat-building, engraving and jewellery making. He started building up the libraries that had been destroyed by the Vikings and even wrote some of the books himself. Women from wealthy families were well educated and literate. There are accounts in manuscripts of women owning private libraries even though books were rare in those days.

## **Danelaw**

The Vikings would have succeeded in conquering the whole of Britain, but for Alfred the Great. In 878 The Vikings under Viking king Guthrum invaded and Alfred with his army fought them and won. Even though he was victorious Alfred made peace with Guthrum and divided the country in two with the Vikings in the North and East, which became Danelaw ruled by King Guthrum and the South called Wessex ruled by Alfred.

This was the original North South divide. York was the capital of the Viking Kingdom and they called the city Jorvik.

Wigan along with all Northumbria became part of Danelaw and so under the rule of Guthrum. When Guthrum made peace with Alfred he also converted to Christianity.

As the Vikings settled they became peaceful and set up trade routes throughout the known world.

## **The Vikings in Wigan**

Our research has shown that in about 893 a.d. the Vikings settled in Wigan. The Vikings made their settlement, not in the remains of the Roman fort, but on the opposite side of the River Douglas. This area of Wigan they called Scholes from the Scandinavian word "skali" meaning hut.

The Vikings introduced some of their own food into Wigan. The most famous is a stew of meat and vegetables the Vikings called lapskaus or lobscouse. Wiganers still make this meal today with the addition of potatoes, but without barley, calling the meal lobbies. In Liverpool they now add potatoes with the barley and it is known as scouse.

On our visit to York and the Jorvik Viking centre we found out about Viking life. The Vikings arrived in longboats sailing from Scandinavian countries such as Denmark. They raided towns and villages, killing people and stealing goods and valuables.

Many street names in Wigan have Scandinavian names such as Hallgate, Millgate and Marketgate. The word 'gate' is Scandinavian for street so Millgate would be the street of the mill. Days of the week are named after Viking gods such as Tuesday after Tyr, Wednesday after Odin, Thursday after Thor and Friday after Freya.

The Vikings upheld many of the Anglo Saxon laws and class system.

### **Vikings and Anglo Saxons at war again**

In 899 a.d. Edward, (known as Edward the Elder), the eldest son of Alfred became king, but Aethelwold his cousin rebelled against him and went North and found support from the people of Danelaw where he was proclaimed king. Aethelwold attacked Mercia and Wessex, but was killed in 902 a.d.

Although King Edward the Elder made peace with the people of Danelaw, in 909 a.d., he became more aggressive towards the Vikings and started raiding the North West which included Wigan.

The following year he took his Mercian and West Saxon army and marched north to Danelaw where he defeated the Vikings. He was greatly helped in this victory by his sister Aethelflaed of Mercia. For 8 years she led an army and pushed the boundaries of Wessex and Mercia northwards into Danelaw, building a fortified town in Derby. Aethelflaed died in 918 a.d.

In 922 a.d. King Edward built and strengthened old Roman/Anglo Saxon forts including one in Manchester and some researchers think he also visited Wigan.

# Anglo Saxons and The Vikings

## **The Beginning of Lancashire**

In 937 a.d. the Vikings again went to war, but were defeated at the battle of Brunanburh (thought to be either Burnley or Bromborough, both 30 miles/50 kms. from Wigan) by Alfred the Great's grandson King Athelstan.

After the battle Athelstan limited the southern boundary of Northumbria to the River Ribble. The land between the River Ribble and the River Mersey became land belonging to the King and a neutral Royal domain. It was divided into six wapentakes or baronies - West Derby, Salford, Blackburn, Leyland, Warrington and Newton. Wigan was in the wapentake of Newton.

## **The First King of England**

Athelstan was proclaimed King of the Saxons and the country was ruled as one nation - England. Athelstan was the first to be called King of England.

In 939 King Athelstan died and he was succeeded by his half-brother Edmund who died in 946. Then followed kings of England - Edred, Edwig, Edgar, Edward and Ethelred know as the Unready. Ethelred didn't like the Vikings and bribed them to go to Denmark, but they came back. Then he wanted to massacre every Viking in England, of course this made the Vikings in Denmark furious. On Ethelred's death he left England bankrupt and occupied by the Vikings. His son Edmund Ironside became king, but the Vikings fought him and eventually King Cnut, King of Denmark was appointed King of England in 1016 until his death in 1035.

## **King Edward the Confessor**

King Cnut's sons became Kings of England: Harold I (1037 to 1040); Hardicnut (1040 - 1042) and Edward the Confessor (1042 to 1066).

In King Edward the Confessor's time the King's Commissioners noted that Wigan Parish Church of the Manor of Newton was endowed with one carucate of land. A carucate is as much land as one team of 8 oxen could plough in a year.

Edward the Confessor didn't have any children and had promised the throne of England to his distant cousin William Duke of Normandy and also to Harold Godwinson.

King Edward was a Christian and became even more religious, he built Westminster Abbey in 1065 and was buried there on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1066.



**Saxon Font, Lancaster Priory**



**Saxon log boat at Ordsall Hall, Manchester**



**Westminster Abbey**



**Edward the Confessor shrine  
Westminster Abbey**



Coronation Chair  
Westminster Abbey



Norman Knight greets his ladies at Re-enactment



Norman Knight



Norman Knight ready to attack Saxons



Norman Knight attacking Saxons at Re-enactment of Battle of Hastings

# ***NORMAN CONQUEST***

Harold was the son of Earl Godwin, the most powerful Anglo Saxon in England and had the support of most of the English nobles. On 6<sup>th</sup> January 1066 Harold became King of England. In September 1066 the Viking king Hardrada invaded the north of England with a big army. Harold and his army marched 250 miles north to meet this army and he defeated the Vikings at Stamford Bridge near York on 25<sup>th</sup> September. This was a great victory for Harold and ended once and for all the Viking threat to England.

## **The Battle of Hastings**

On 28<sup>th</sup> September 1066 England was invaded by William, the Duke of Normandy (Normandy is in Northern France) and his army. King Harold and his army hurried south from York to meet William's invading force.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> October a great battle took place at Hastings on the South coast of England, between William and King Harold of England. King Harold was killed and William became William I of England. The battle and Harold's death (struck in the eye by an arrow) are recorded in the Bayeux Tapestry, which is housed in a museum in Bayeux, Northern France. On 25<sup>th</sup> December in Westminster Abbey, William was crowned King William I of England and ended the phase of Anglo Saxon English history.

The Norman invasion had a great effect on England as French (Norman) Barons took over all the manors and offices of the country from the Saxons. William divided his kingdom amongst his Norman knights who kept the wapentakes, but referred to them as 'hundreds'.

## **Harrying of the North**

William's Barons treated the Anglo Saxons cruelly and taxed them heavily. In 1070 the Saxons in the North of England rebelled. Although William knew his Barons were guilty he decided to crush the Saxon resistance.

As a punishment for the rebellion, William ordered that all the livestock be killed and had the villages and land burned. Thousands of men, women and children starved to death. This became known as "The Harrying of the North" and after this there were no more Saxon rebellions against the Normans.

## **Introduction of Rabbits to England**

The Normans brought rabbits with them when they invaded England. The rabbits were allowed to roam free and bred very quickly.

### **Roger de Poitou**

In 1073, as a reward for his valour at the conquest, King William I gave his cousin Roger de Poitou, all the land between The Ribble River and The Mersey River, (Inter Ripam et Mersham). This contained the wapentakes or hundreds known as West Derby, Salford Warrington and Newton, which included Wigan. De Poitou made West Derby his main hundred and built a large castle. He then incorporated Warrington and Newton into West Derby and so Wigan became part of West Derby and Wigan's status increased.

De Poitou created the Barony of West Derby and made Wigan its administrative centre. The barony of West Derby contained 21 manors including: Wigan, Orrell, Pemberton, Ince, Hindley, Billinge, Winstanley, Ashton, Abram, Haydock, Golbourne and Lowton.

### **The Domesday Book**

Twenty years after the Norman invasion King William the Conqueror ordered a record of all the property and owners in England, this became known as the Domesday Book. Wigan Parish Church is thought to be the church of the Manor of Newton mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Newton was recorded as poorest of the 6 wapentakes and estimated at a value of ten pounds and ten shillings.

The land between the River Ribble and the The River Mersey is referred to as "Inter Ripam et Mersham" in the Domesday Book and was populated by as few as 260 peasant families. The manorial value had declined by 70% which historians think was as a result of the Norman armies "Harrying of the North".

William I died in 1087 and his eldest son, William Rufus, became king. Roger de Poitou took part in a rebellion against William Rufus. The rebellion didn't succeed and De Poitou was lucky as he wasn't punished by the king. In 1100, William Rufus was killed by an arrow whilst out hunting, this was regarded as an accident.

### **The Normans and Women**

Before William invaded, women in England had been more or less equal to men. The Normans decided that men were superior and that women had to obey their fathers and married women obey their husbands. The wife was given in marriage as a token of land-transfer and the husband owned everything.

Children were married off young and women were sold to whoever offered the most to the lord of the manor. Only rich widows had relative freedom to do what they wanted.

Peasants could still marry for love as long as the lord of the manor didn't interfere.

Women had very little, if any, access to education.

## The Normans

### Henry I

William the Conqueror's youngest son, Henry, became King Henry I in 1100 and on his coronation he issued the famous "Charter of Liberties" (In 1215 this was used as a basis of the Magna Carta). This charter gave him the support of the nobles.

Henry married Edith the daughter of King Malcolm III of Scotland and she was descended from Anglo Saxon kings. This marriage of Norman and Anglo Saxon was very popular. Henry was also popular with the common people because of the justice he administered through the King's Court.

In 1123 Henry and his favourite courtier Rahere founded the first hospital in England, St. Bartholomew's.

### Wigan the oldest borough in Lancashire?

Wigan has a claim to be the oldest borough in Lancashire because of a Charter of Incorporation which was given to Wigan by King Henry I in 1100. The charter gave Wigan a measure of organisational independence. This is recorded in a visitation report by the Herald of the College of Arms in 1613. A photograph of this visitation entry is preserved in the Archives. This charter would be connected with the Henry I Coronation Charter.

Roger de Poitou as Lord of the Manor would have had power over everyone living and working in Wigan and as landowner he would also be the employer, tax collector and judge.

The 1100 charter may well have started a period of growth and Wigan became a local trading centre with a local market. The charter gave traders some independence and merchant guilds would have been established.

### Rebellion of Roger de Poitou

In 1101-1102 Roger de Poitou supported his brother Robert of Bellene in an unsuccessful rebellion against King Henry I. For his part in the rebellion de Poitou was banished from England and all his estates confiscated. The Barony of Makerfield was given to the Banastre family.

### **The First English Civil War - Matilda and Stephen**

Henry I died in 1135 after naming his only legitimate living child Matilda, heir to the throne of England. Matilda was married to a Frenchman Geoffrey Plantagenet and had a son, Henry. Geoffrey was called Plantagenet because he used to wear a sprig of broom in his hat and the French word for broom is genet.

The English barons did not want a female monarch and a civil war started between Matilda and her cousin Stephen who was supported by the barons. Matilda was strong and brave and she led her army to win many battles against Stephen and his army.

In the end Matilda gave up her right to the throne on Stephen's promise that her son Henry would be heir to throne of England.

King Stephen ruled England from 1135 to 1154 and the barons got stronger, doing what they liked bullying and torturing the peasants.

### **The Plantagenets**

Matilda's son, Henry II was the first Plantagenet king and was crowned in 1154. Henry managed to control the barons and set up new fairer law courts.

Eleanor of Aquitaine in France was married to King Louis of France, but when she met Henry she divorced Louis and married Henry. Eleanor was strong, beautiful, clever and powerful. Before she met Henry she was involved in crusades to regain the Holy Land from the Turks. Henry and Eleanor had 8 children and Eleanor helped Henry rule England, she was also ruler of Aquitaine (in France). Two of their children Richard, and John, later to be kings of England, were born in Oxford in 1157 and 1167.

### **Oxford University**

In 1168 English students returned from their studies in France. They settled in Oxford which had become a centre of learning and this was the beginning of the university at Oxford.

### **The County of Lancashire**

In 1168 The land between the River Ribble and the River Mersey ("Inter Rippam et Mersham"), of which Wigan was a part, was first termed "the county of Lancashire" by the court of Henry II.



**Original Norman Tower at Tower  
of London**



**Sir Roger de Poitou window  
Lancaster Priory**



**Lancaster Castle**



**Clifford's Tower York**



**Wigan Parish Church today**



**Map of Lancashire**



**Balliol College Oxford University founded 1266**



**Richard the Lionheart statue at the Houses of Parliament, London**

### **Thomas Becket**

In 1170 Henry quarrelled with his friend Thomas Becket who was Archbishop of Canterbury. The king is said to have proclaimed "will no-one rid me of this turbulent priest?" Four of Henry's knights murdered Thomas in Canterbury cathedral on the 29<sup>th</sup> December. Henry was blamed for the murder and accepted a public flogging by the monks of Canterbury. In 1173 Thomas Becket was made a saint and his tomb at Canterbury became the most popular place of pilgrimage.

In 1173 Eleanor supported her sons in their failed revolt against their father Henry, for this Henry imprisoned her for 10 years.

### **Pewter Manufacture**

Wigan was famous for the manufacture of Pewter. Pewter was then made from lead and tin and required a very high temperature fuel to smelt the tin. Although there are no records to show, the availability of coal in Wigan must have been one of the reasons for the Pewter industry. Pewter vessels had replaced wooden vessels in churches so there was a high demand.

In 1175 The Council of Westminster decreed that Pewter vessels should not be used in churches. The Pewter industry found other customers in ordinary people's households. This ensured that the Pewter industry thrived until the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

The main source for tin would be Cornwall and therefore there would have been a good road structure in place. It would be likely that the Roman roads would have been used for the 300 miles to and from Cornwall. Transport by sea could have been used as well possibly via Liverpool then down the coast of England to Cornwall.

### **The beginning of Haigh Hall, Wigan**

Hugh le Norreys (*Norris*) was born in 1150 in Blackrod and it is thought he built Haigh Hall around 1188.

It is documented that in 1194 Hugh held the manor of Haigh in Wigan hundred as well as a manor in Blackrod. The Norreys also had a manor in Speke, Liverpool. Hugh de Norreys became known as Hugh de Haigh.

England was in turmoil as Richard and John, helped by their mother Eleanor, tried to get their father Henry to give up the throne. They didn't succeed and Eleanor was imprisoned by her husband.

King Henry II died in 1189 and his eldest son, Richard became king of England. He became known as Richard the Lionheart and the emblem he had was of three golden lions.

King Richard and his mother were very close and like her he went to the Crusades to try to regain the Holy Land from the Moslems who were led by Saladin. Whilst he was away his brother ruled England.

### **Arthur of Brittany**

Constance was the widow of King Richard's brother Geoffrey of Brittany and they had a son Arthur. Ranulf de Blondesville, Earl of Chester, married Constance in 1189 which gave him control of the earldom of Richmond and the duchy of Brittany. In 1196 King Richard, in his will, nominated the nine-year old Arthur as his heir.

Whilst Richard was in the Holy Land, Prince John attempted a coup for the throne of England. Ranulf opposed John and maintained contact with the partisans of his stepson Arthur.

Although Richard returned to England, he didn't stay long and went to his estates in France. In 1199 Richard died in his mother Eleanor's arms and is buried with her in France. Richard's brother John seized the throne and became King of England in 1199.

### **First Rector of Wigan**

In 1199 Ranulf de Blondesville, Earl of Chester, was the first Rector of Wigan. This is recorded in Wigan Parish Church on the "List of Rectors of Wigan" as "1199 Rannlph". The Rectors of Wigan were lords of the manor of Wigan under the lords of Newton and the rectory was Wigan Hall.

The Rectors also raised and collected local taxes. Most of the early Rectors of Wigan lived elsewhere and exercised their power through deputies. King John appointed Adam de Freckleton perpetual vicar of Wigan on the request of Ranulf.

In July 1202 Arthur of Brittany tried to fight King John in France for the throne of England, but was taken prisoner by John. Arthur was imprisoned in Rouen and mysteriously disappeared in April 1203, his body was found in the River Seine. Legend says that John killed Arthur himself.

In 1202 Hugh le Norrey's (Norris) third son, Alan, was born in Blackrod.

In Wigan, like the rest of Lancashire, there was trouble from landowners making war on each other over claims of land. There were also problems with marauding Scots who roamed into Lancashire taking whatever they wanted.

In these times the average price of a cow was 4 shillings and sixpence, a sheep one shilling and two pence, a pig one shilling and elevenpence, a horse was the most expensive at one pound, five shillings.

# 1215 THE MAGNA CARTA

Eventually, King John was met with the full force of his barons' grievances. The Barons demanded their "ancient liberties" and the renewal of Henry I's Coronation Charter. On 15<sup>th</sup> June 1215 at Runnymede (near Windsor), John was forced to sign "The Magna Carta". "The Magna Carta" curtailed royal power in matters of taxation, justice, religion and foreign policy. The two following Magna Carta clauses form part of English statute law today:

'No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions ... except by the lawful judgement of his peers.'

'To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.'

Ranulf de Blondville had successfully helped King John in his wars in Wales and secured peace with the Pope. Ranulf was one of the barons who witnessed the Magna Carta, but on King John's side.

In 1216 King John was crossing the estuary on the way from Norfolk to Lincolnshire when he lost the crown jewels in quicksand.

King John died at Newark Castle on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1216.

In October 1216 John's 9 year old son was crowned King Henry III of England. Until he came of age in 1227, the government of the country was in the hands of a number of barons.

In 1220 a vast area of land including the manor of Haigh belonged to Roger de Maresheya. (Marsey fee).

In 1225 Ranulf de Blondville witnessed the re-issuing of the Magna Carta.

In 1230 Roger de Maresheya sold his lands, including Haigh, to Ranulf de Blondville. King Henry III confirmed Ranulf's rights to the lands and all the possessions between The Ribble and The Mersey. Ranulf died in 1232.

## **Second Rector of Wigan**

In 1235 Robert de Dunolm became the second Rector of Wigan. He was presented to the position of Rector by King Henry III. He was one of the king's clerks and there is no evidence Robert ever visited Wigan.

In 1239 Alan le Norreys of Haigh Hall married and had a son Hugh who was born in 1240 at Speke, Liverpool.

# *JOHN MAUNSELL and WIGAN's CHARTERS*

John Maunsell(or Mansell) was chaplain to King Henry III and became the third Rector of Wigan in 1242. John Maunsell was a favourite of Henry III and between 1246 and 1247 he was also Lord Chancellor of England.

## **The 1246 Wigan Charter**

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 1246 Henry III granted a charter to John Maunsell that his lands at Wigan be a borough forever. This is the first authentic record of Wigan's corporate existence which constituted the town a free borough.

The merchants became the first burgesses and free men through the charter which gave them freedoms of movement and trade. They were able to set up stalls and sell their wares free of charge not only in Wigan, but throughout the land and without paying tolls on roads and bridges. The burgesses were to have a guild and no one but members of the guild could do business in the borough, unless given permission by the guild.

The charter was witnessed by "Robert Banestre, lord of Makerfield, as true patron of the church". John Maunsell still retained all his rights as lord of the manor.

### *THE CHARTER of HENRY III (1246)*

*HENRY, by the grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, DUKE OF Normandy, Aquitain and Count of Angers; to all archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, earls, barons, justices, sheriffs, chief ministers, and bailiffs, and faithful subjects greeting: KNOW YE that we have granted, and by this, our charter, confirmed for us and our heirs to our beloved and faithful, John Mansel, parson of the Church of Wigain, that his vill of Wygayn may be a borough for ever, and that the burgesses of the same borough may have a Guild Merchant, with a treasury and other liberties and free customs to that Guild belonging, and that no one, who is not of that of that Guild, may make any merchandise in the aforesaid borough, unless of the will of the same burgesses. We have also granted to the same burgesses and their heirs that they may have soke (48), and sak(46), and thol(54) and theam(53), and attachment within the borough, and infangenthef (26), and utfangenthef(58), and that they may be quit throughout our whole land, and through all the ports of the sea, of toll, Custom, passage, pontage (38), and stallage (49), and that they may make no suit of the Counties or Wappentakes (59) concerning their tenures which they hold within the borough aforesaid.*

*We have also granted to the same burgesses and their heirs, that whatsoever traders shall come to the borough aforesaid with their merchandizes, of whatsoever place they shall be, foreigners, or others, who shall be of our peace, or of our leave, shall come into our land, may come safely and securely to the aforesaid borough with their merchandizes and safely there may stay and safely from thence may return by doing there the right and do customs; we do also prohibit that no one may do injury or damage, or molestation, unto the aforesaid burgesses, upon our forfeiture of £10. Wherefore we do will and firmly command for us and our heirs that the aforesaid vill of Wygayn be a borough for ever, and that the aforesaid burgesses may have the aforesaid Guild Merchant, with the Hanaper (23) and with the other liberties and free customs to that Guild belonging, and that they may have all other liberties and free customs and quittances as is aforesaid.*

WITNESSES HERETO RICHARD EARL OF CORNWAL, our brother, ROGER LE PYGOT, EARL OF NORFOLK, PETER DE SABAND, WILLIAM DEFERRERS, RALPH FIT NICHOL, WILLIAM DE CANTILUPO, JOHN DE PLESSET, PAUL PEYNER, ROBERT DE MUSTENGROS,, BARTHOLEMY PECHE, and others BY OUR HAND AT WOODSTOCK, THE 26th DAY OF AUGUST, in the 30th YEAR OF OUR REIGN.

### **The Rector of Wigan's Charter**

In 1247 John Maunsell issued a parish charter conceding some of his powers to the burgesses. Each burgess should have 5 roods ( $1\frac{1}{4}$  acres) of land and granting permission to grind twenty measures of corn in his mills free of charge every year. They could also take wood from his forests and were allowed to graze their sheep, cattle and pigs for a payment of twelve pence per year. This charter suited Maunsell as he was away from Wigan most of the time and the burgesses would then be responsible for managing their affairs.

Robert Banastre as lord of Makerfield and patron of the church and Roger, Bishop of Lichfield, confirmed Maunsell's charter.

### **Archery Law**

In 1252 the 'Assize of Arms' was passed which decreed that every man between the age of 15 to 60 years old were ordered to equip themselves with a bow and arrows.

### **18<sup>th</sup> June 1256 registered in the court at Lancaster**

Between Robert Banastre, plaintiff, and Thomas de Aston, Henry son of Richard, and Richard his brother, Richard son of Adam de Aston, and Syward his brother, John son of Leysing, and Robert his brother, whom Robert de Banastre claimed to be his runaway villeins (villeins were freemen, but under medieval law they, their land and possessions belonged to the lord of the manor).

Robert acknowledged that they were freemen, and granted that they, with all their chattels and sequel should be free and quit of all manner of nativity and secular servitude. For this remission they gave him twelve marks of silver.

### **The Second Wigan Charter from Henry III**

In April 1258 Henry III issued a second charter confirming and extending Wigan's position. The rector was allowed to have a market in the borough of Wigan on Monday every week. The rector could also hold two three-day fairs on the eve, day and next day of Ascension day and All Saints day.

The Provisions of Oxford were a set of reforms drawn up by the barons under the leadership of Simon de Montfort. John Maunsell was one of the four men given great secular power under the 1258 Provisions of Oxford, the other three were the Earl Marshall (Duke of Norfolk), Hugh Bigod and the Earl of Warwick (John du Plessis). These four had the power to elect a council of fifteen to govern the treasury and the chancellery. In 1261 John Maunsell was made Constable of the Tower of London.

King Henry III accepted the "Provisions of Oxford", but did not live by them. In May 1264 Simon de Montfort vanquished Henry III at the Battle of Lewes. At that time John Maunsell was exiled in France with Queen Eleanor, Henry's wife.

In January 1265 Simon de Montfort summoned not only knights from the shires, but representatives (burgesses) from the boroughs to Parliament thus founding the House of Commons. He intended to form a government under the Provisions of Oxford.

John Maunsell died in great poverty on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1265 in Florence and was buried in York Minster.

#### **Fourth Rector of Wigan**

In 1265 Richard de Marklan became Rector of Wigan after being presented by Robert Banastre. Richard de Marklan's family had properties in Liverpool. Sir Robert Banastre was patron and held the advowson (the right to nominate the Rector) of the parish of Wigan.

In July 1265 Richard de Marklan joined with Sir Robert Banastre in assigning an annual pension of 30 marks to the mother church of Lichfield. This was paid annually and in 1887 Canon Bridgeman stated "A sum of £16 is now paid annually by the rector of Wigan to the sacristan of Lichfield Cathedral.

In August 1265 Prince Edward (later Edward I) led his nobles at the battle of Evesham against the rebel barons led by Simon de Montfort. Simon was killed in the battle. One of the knights helping Simon de Montfort was Sir Robert Ferrers, Earl of Derby. Henry III gave all Simon's and Robert Ferrers' lands to his son Edmund. He was known as Edmund Crouchback because he wore a cross on the back of his tunic, when he was fighting in the Crusades.

#### **The First Earl of Lancaster**

On 30 June 1267, Prince Edmund received from his father, Henry III, the honour, county, town and castle of Lancaster. Edmund was also created the 1st Earl of Lancaster. The name the Duchy of Lancaster derives from this part of the inheritance.

In 1272 Henry III died and was succeeded by his eldest son who became King Edward I, sometimes called Edward Longshanks (he was 6'2") and also known as The Hammer of the Scots and The Lawgiver.

In 1274 Hugh le Norreys daughter Mabel was born in Speke Hall.

#### **Fifth Rector of Wigan**

Richard de Marklan died in 1281 and the patronage was claimed by King Edward I, but judgement was recorded for Robert Banastre.

In 1285 Hugh le Norreys, Lord of the manor at Haigh Hall, died and his daughter Mabel was placed into the guardianship of Richard de Bradshagh.

### **The First Wigan Police**

An Act of Parliament was passed in 1285 which meant that Wigan and other towns set up nightwatchmen or sentinels. There were 12 nightwatchmen in Wigan who were appointed by the burgesses who ran the Court Leet. The nightwatchmen walked around the town carrying lanterns and looking for anything suspicious or criminal acts. The nightwatchmen had the power to call on the people of Wigan if they needed help - they would raise a 'hue and cry'. They could apprehend any criminals and take them before the Court Leet. A court leet is a local criminal court presided over by the local lord of the manor.

### **Wigan's Jewish Settlement**

Wigan, being one of the most important market towns in England had a small Jewish settlement in Jews Yard which was just off Millgate. The Jews were money lenders and their signs, the three gold balls, were displayed on their houses. Nobles frequently borrowed from them and were charged 45% interest, which was the legal interest rate.

On 18 July 1290 by an Act of the King in his Council all Jews were expelled from England. All the Jews left Wigan, if they had stayed they would have faced execution. This expulsion of the Jews lasted until after the Civil War when they were allowed back on English soil under the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell.

In 1291 Pope Nicholas IV wanted the ecclesiastical livings of churches valued and Wigan Parish church income was valued at 33 pounds 6shillings and 8pence. Wheat was 6 shillings a quarter, a cow cost 6 shillings, a sheep 1 shilling, chickens  $\frac{1}{2}$  pence, the wage for a labourer at that time was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pence per day. A copy of the bible cost the same as the annual parish church income £33 6s 8d.

In 1291 the benefice of the Rectorship was estimated at 50 marks a year.

Edward I gave Wigan a further charter in 1292, confirming the rights contained in the previous charters.

### **Fifth Rector of Wigan**

In 1292 Adam de Walton became the fifth Rector of Wigan. Adam was appointed to the vacancy when the king claimed the patronage. Adam was also chancellor of Lichfield Cathedral (from 1276 to 1292).

## The Rector is summoned

In 1292, Adam de Walton was summoned to show his title to manorial rights in Wigan. It was asserted that Adam and his bailiffs had exceeded the terms of the charters by trying persons accused of felonies beyond their jurisdiction, when those persons had placed themselves on a jury of their country. It was alleged that the Rector and burgesses of Wigan who were the jurymen, had unduly condemned and sometimes improperly acquitted felons.

De Walton was brought to trial at Lancaster before a jury of 12 knights and 7 gentlemen. They were told of two cases to show the miscarriages of justice. The first case was over a man called Proctor. Proctor was arrested in Wigan because he stole a bull in the wapentake of Salford. The bull was found in his possession and he was imprisoned in Wigan Hall, the home of the Rector.

A merchant called Crowe stood bail for Proctor, who was then released being told he had to report to the court in 3 weeks time. Proctor did not appear at the court so they sent for Crowe who was found guilty by proxy and hanged in Wigan Market Square outside the court room.

The second case was over a man who had stolen a tabard and sword in Preston. He was arrested by the rector's bailiff, Matthew le Clerk, with the stolen goods in his possession. He was brought to trial charged with theft, but the burgesses, who were bound to investigate the case, dismissed the charges.

The Rector was found guilty and the jury decided that the rights of the charter would be taken from Wigan and into the king's hands. The rector's claims for emends of the assize of bread and beer on the market and fair days would be allowed.

The liberties claimed by the rectors were afterwards restored on application of John Bryn, the guardian of John Banastre's land and heir. John Bryn had pleaded that De Waleton was only the Rector and not patron of the parish and had acted without consulting Banastre who was his patron. (*Placita de Quo Warr. p371 20<sup>th</sup> edition I Rot. 2d*)

## **Medieval Well**



*Medieval Well Excavated in the Wiend.*

Recent excavations in The Wiend, Wigan town centre, have revealed the earliest medieval feature ever found in Wigan. This was a square timber-lined well or cistern dating from the 13th century.

The pottery retrieved from its base represent the only artefacts ever found in the area from this period, which is remarkable considering Wigan's historical heritage. The pieces, 3 virtually complete earthenware vessels, are on display in the History Shop.

This well could be the one mentioned in a deed dating from before 1293. The deed refers to "La Hally Well Kar" (or Holly Well Field) "between the land of Nicholas de Tildesleye and the water of Dogles".

## **The Model Parliament**

Edward I introduced parliamentary representation known as "The model Parliament", with this Edward established the basic principles of English democracy. This model Parliament comprised lords, clergy, knights and burgesses representing their towns and shires.

Edward was the first English king to use Parliament as an instrument of government to reform the law of the land.

## **Marriage of Lady Mabel le Norreys to Sir William Bradshagh**

In 1294 Mabel le Norreys married Sir William Bradshagh in Haigh, Wigan. Mabel's great inheritance was passed to Sir William.

In 1295 Sir William and Lady Mabel Bradshaigh had a contest with Adam de Walton, the Rector of Wigan. Adam de Walton had charged that William and Mabel had diverted the water-course between Haigh and Standish to the injury of his mills. William replied that they had only erected a mill by the Douglas which was two leagues from Adam's mill.

The jury found that the new mill had been made by William's father, Richard de Bradshagh, while he was guardian of William and Mabel. They found that it had been to the loss of the rector's mill. (*Assize R.1306,m1321m7d*).

## **Wigan's first elected Parliamentary representatives**

In 1295 Wigan was one of only 129 towns in England and one of the four ancient boroughs (Lancaster, Preston, Wigan and Liverpool) with the power to send two representatives to the first parliamentary meeting at Westminster. The two chosen burgesses elected by Wigan burgesses as their representatives were William Teinterer and Henry le Bocher.

Burgesses did not really want to attend Parliament as it meant leaving their businesses and lands.

The chosen burgesses were paid two shillings per day, but only on their return with proof that they had taken part in the Parliament in Westminster.

In 1296 Prince Edmund, the first Earl of Lancaster, died in France and was buried in Westminster Abbey. There exists a petition by the people of Wigan for the restoration of their franchises made after the death of Edmund, Earl of Lancaster(1296; Anct. Petitions, P.R.O. 316, E).

On Edmund's death, his son Thomas Plantagenet became the second Earl of Lancaster.

## **Lady Mabel and Sir William**

In 1298 William Bradshaigh and Mabel his wife were in possession of the manors of Haigh and Blackrod which were Mabel's right as heir to Hugh le Norreys(Norris).

## **The Sixth Rector of Wigan**

In 1303 Robert de Clitheroe became the new rector of Wigan on presentation by John de Langton. John de Langton afterwards became the Bishop of Chichester. John de Langton was guardian of Alice Banestre the heiress of Newton. Robert de Clitheroe was not ordained priest until he became rector. Robert de Clitheroe was a king's clerk and held several public appointments.

In 1304 The commonalty of Wigan were sued for debt.

Two burgesses John le Mercer and Simon Payer represented Wigan at the 1306 Parliament in Westminster. This was the last time Wigan sent Parliamentary representatives for over 200 years.

In 1307 There were complaints that Welshmen who were returning from the Scottish wars, had been mistreated and killed in Wigan. (*Assize R.422, m. 4d*)

King Edward I died in 1307 and his son became King Edward II.

In 1314, the rector Robert de Clitheroe obtained a charter from Edward II. This charter confirmed the previous charters and restored their rights which had been withdrawn in 1292.

In 1316 Edmund de Standish granted to Aymory the Fuller, land adjoining a narrow lane leading towards the Coppedhull mill( Crosse D.Trans. Hist. Soc., n.27).

### **Early Wigan Industry**

Records exist showing that at this time, the early fourteenth century, Wigan had three "fulling mills" for the town's textile industry, which would have been wool, not cotton.

The fulling process washes and degreases the cloth, closes the weave and "fluffs" the cloth. They used Fuller's earth from Wales for fulling. Two of the mills were on the River Douglas and one on Clarington Brook. A large number of handloom weavers would have been needed and must have lived near these mills.

### **The Earl of Lancaster and Piers Gaveston**

Thomas Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster, was King Edward II's cousin and very powerful. Thomas was one of Edward's chief advisors, but he hated the king's favourite Piers Gaveston. King Edward II preferred Piers to his wife Isabella of France (Edward married in 1308). At King Edward's coronation Piers was given all the gold and jewels the king had received as wedding gifts.

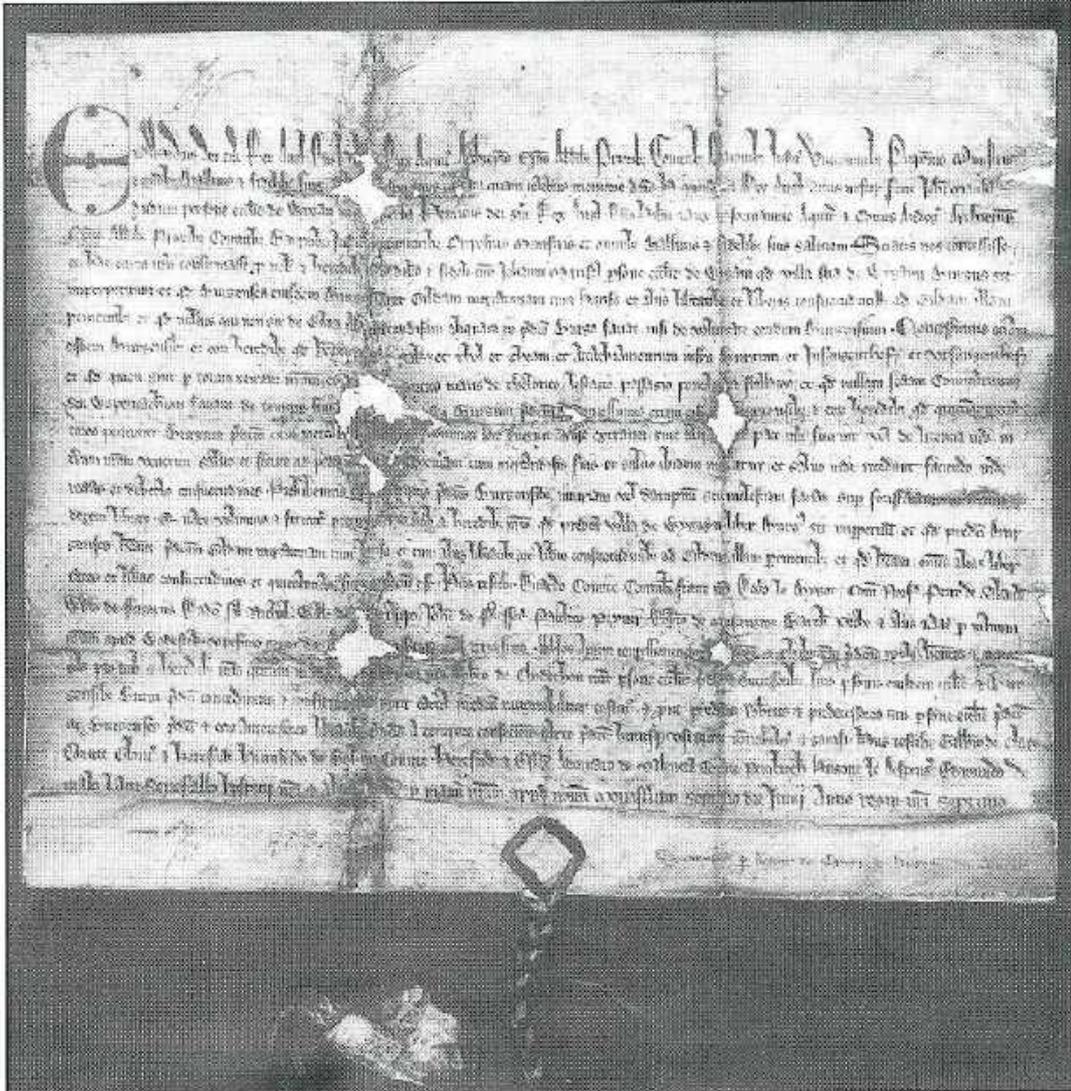
In 1312 Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, was one of the barons who besieged Piers Gaveston in Scarborough Castle. Gaveston was banished but returned to England in 1312 whereupon Thomas raised an army against Gaveston at Scarborough Castle. Gaveston was captured and beheaded.

In 1314 King Edward II was heavily defeated by Robert the Bruce of Scotland at the Battle of Bannockburn. After this defeat, the Earl of Lancaster became, in effect, the ruler of England.

## 1314 Wigan Charter

In 1314 The Rector, Robert de Clitheroe, obtained from King Edward II, a confirmation of the earlier charters.

A copy of this charter is still preserved in Wigan and a copy on display at the Charter Suite, Wigan Town Hall.



*Charter of King Edward II given to Wigan on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1314*

At Christmas 1317 Robert de Holland assigned an annual rent of 29s. 6d. out of his share to Aline the recluse of Wigan for her maintenance.

This payment ceased when Sir Robert's lands were forfeited; whereupon the recluse petitioned for its restoration, and inquiry was made.



Ranulf de Blondville window at Chester



Rectors of Wigan - Wigan Parish Church



Speke Hall Liverpool, birthplace of Lady Mabel



Medieval Cross at Wigan Parish Church



**Mabs Cross, Standishgate, Wigan**



**Original effigy of Sir William**



**Plague tree at the back entrance to Wigan Parish Church**



**Stone effigies of Sir William and Lady Mabel in the chapel founded by Lady Mabel at Wigan Parish Church**

## MAB'S CROSS - The Legend and Reality

To the people of Wigan, the tale of Lady Mabel Bradshaigh and her weekly penance of walking barefoot from Haigh Hall to Mab's Cross in Standishgate is well known. However, there is far more to the story of Sir William Bradshaigh (Bradshaw) and Lady Mabel Norreys(Norris) than many people know.

Throughout England at this time and in particular, Lancashire, there was unrest and feuds broke out between individual landowners. Those who suffered most in these troubled times were, as always, the ordinary people. Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, had a favourite Sir Robert de Holland and he more than any of the other lords, was given free rein to exert his powers over the people of Lancashire. Robert de Holland was hated by many of the other lords and in 1315 a group of the local gentry rose up in revolt.

The revolt against Sir Robert de Holland was led by local knights Sir Adam Banastre, supported chiefly by Sir Henry Lea of Charnock Richard and Sir William Bradshaigh. It was known as the Banastre Rebellion and resulted in the terrorising of any supporters of Sir Robert by pillaging and stealing cattle, corn and goods, even killing anyone who got in their way. One important knight who was killed during this reign of terror was Sir Henry de Bury and following this murder many of the rebels were captured and executed.

Sir William escaped, but it is not known where he fled. The local legend is that he went off to fight in the Crusades, but the Crusades in Palestine were long finished. It is possible he was fighting in Scotland, Wales or France or any other European country where mercenaries were employed.

In William's absence, he was granted a pardon in 1318 by King Edward II, but he did not return to Wigan and Lady Mabel. Was he imprisoned somewhere after fighting in battle or did he think it was still too unsafe to return? After all, many of his companions of the Banastre Rebellion had been punished and executed.

Meanwhile, Lady Mabel was left alone and unprotected at Haigh with all her lands and property, but no man to help defend them. It must have been very difficult for her not knowing if her husband was alive or dead. Some versions of her story say that as a widow she married again or lived with another knight who could offer her protection. Could this be the 'Welsh knight' of the legend, Sir Henry Teuther or Sir Peter de Lymsey or Sir Edmund Nevill? No real proof is offered, but Lady Mabel managed to stay at Haigh when, in 1322 after The Earl of Lancaster had been executed, Sir William returned.

Here the legend takes a different turn - one version states he returns disguised as a pilgrim, finds Mabel remarried, fights and kills the 'Welsh Knight'. Mabel was then forced to do penance for her 'sin' of re-marrying, by walking barefoot from Haigh Hall to a cross at the top of Standishgate in Wigan. This cross was probably a boundary or market cross, but from then on this has always been known as Mab's Cross.

In 1328 Sir William Bradshaigh charged Adam de Hindley in the courts. William said that Adam de Hindley and others had forcibly carried off his goods at Haigh and Blackrod.

Sir William and Lady Mabel seemed to live happily together until Sir William's death in August 1333 when he was killed in a fight at Newton-le-Willows. Legend has it that he died at the same spot where he had killed the 'Welsh Knight' on his return in 1322. This red stone on the main Newton to Winwick road, is known as the Bloody Stone because of the deaths connected to it.

In 1338 Lady Mabel founded and endowed the Crawford Chapel, dedicated to Our Lady in Wigan Parish Church.

Lady Mabel lived another 15 years after her husband's death and no records exist after 1348 of her paying her manor dues. In 1349 the Black Death spread throughout the country so it is quite probable that Mabel died in that year.

The tomb of Lady Mabel and Sir William can be seen today in Wigan Parish Church. On the side is a carving of a woman kneeling before a stone cross and a panel depicting the slaying of a knight (the Welsh Knight or Sir William himself?)

The legend and the reality blend together in this story of two people whose love story has lasted for nearly seven hundred years.

The Lady Mabel legend is mentioned by Sir Walter Scott( who wrote 'Ivanhoe') in his books 'Waverley' and 'The Betrothed'. Sir Walter Scott visited Haigh Hall where he was told about the legend.

Jon Norris from the USA has written 3 books about the Mabs Cross Legend, the third of which is to be published this year.

### **Rebellion against the king by Thomas Earl of Lancaster**

In 1321 Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, rose in opposition to the king. He was eventually defeated at the Battle of Boroughbridge in March 1322. On the night before this battle many of Thomas's men deserted him for the king. The first to desert to the king was Sir Robert de Holland, but this did not please Edward who imprisoned him anyway.

Thomas Earl of Lancaster was tried by King Edward II and two other barons, but was not allowed any defence or to speak for himself. Thomas was executed and his titles taken by the king.

Robert de Holland was later pardoned by Edward III in 1327 and his lands restored to him. On the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1328 friends of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, considered him a traitor and attacked him in Boreham Wood, Elstree and beheaded him.

### **Visit of King Edward II to Wigan**

In October 1323, King Edward II visited Wigan to hold a court (*coram rege*). Edward decided to visit Wigan after his success in defeating Thomas, The Earl of Lancaster. Wigan had been at the centre of the troubles in the North and Edward wanted to regain his authority.

The king's court met in Wigan on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1323 in the presence of King Edward II himself. Two of his most important officials, Sir Henry de Scrope and Robert de Ayleston, got together 48 knights to make up juries. The presence of the king with his personal guards who were heavily armed highly trained fighting men was intended to overawe the people.

As a result of these court cases there were more convictions for poaching than for rebellion. Many offenders escaped unpunished for various reasons such as: claiming privilege of clergy (*clerks in holy orders came under jurisdiction of the church court and not the coram rege*); many refused to appear; some claimed they had been given a royal pardon as they had fought on the king's side; corruption was rife among the officials.

It was also not a crime to kill anyone who was an outlaw. The rich escaped unpunished, but the poor got the heaviest sentences, e.g. execution. Those that were hung were those who were penniless and could not buy their freedom.

Thurstan de Norley was only fined for embezzling £100 from the collection of the king's taxes, but was imprisoned, at the king's pleasure, for poaching 3 stags from the king's private hunting forest at Myerscough.

The details of the court proceedings are written in a mixture of Latin and French on 34 parchment sheets and are kept in the Public Record Office in London. The record starts with The Articles of Inquiry and the King's Writ, which had to be written down to show the reason for the court being held and to prove that it was official and genuine.

King Edward II stayed at the manor of Sir Robert de Holland who was in prison.

### **The Rector of Wigan in court**

In 1323 Robert de Clitheroe, Rector of Wigan, was tried by a jury at the wapentake of West Derby. The Rector had been a clerk in the king's chancery for 30 years and in 1321 had at his own cost, sent two men at arms to the Earl of Lancaster's assistance. One of the men he sent was his own son, Adam de Clitheroe who was accompanied by four properly armed men on foot. Robert de Clitheroe also preached to the people in Wigan Parish church and told them that they owed allegiance to the Earl and must assist him in his cause against the king as it was a just cause. He promised everyone absolution if they fell in battle. This resulted in a number of parishioners joining the Earl.

The Rector denied all the charges and said he was only asking his parishioners to pray for the king and the nobles and for peace in the realm. The Rector was found guilty and fined 300 marks (£200) and imprisoned in Nottingham, but was ransomed for 300 marks. (*Rot.Plac. Coram R. Mich, Parl. Writs, ii App.240*)

Robert de Clitheroe sued for relief of the payment of this fine of 300 marks saying that most of it had been paid, but it had not been accounted for in the Exchequer. He was unsuccessful in his request even though he admitted he had sent an armed man to the Earl's service. (*Rolls of Parl.ii,406*)

Wigan's weekly market had continued to grow and by 1323 it was one of the largest and most important markets in the region.

By an inquisition taken in 1323 it was found that William de Marclan had held two messuages and two acres of land and half an acre of meadow in Wigan of the rector, Mr. Robert Clitheroe, by the service of 12d. yearly, and other lands in Shevington of Margaret Banastre. He granted them to feoffees, who in turn granted a moiety to Robert de Holland.

The Rector was the local judge and he had a prison in the Manor House where judgements were made or prisoners retained until time for the Lancaster Assize court. Public punishments were very common such as the stocks which were at the south entrance to Wigan Parish church. The stocks were for drunk and disorderly persons. Close by the stocks was the pump-well which supplied drinking water to the people of Wigan.

### **Rebellion against King Edward II by his Queen**

In 1326 Henry, brother to Thomas, the Second Earl of Lancaster, allied himself with Queen Isabella. Isabella led a rebellion against her husband King Edward II. King Edward was captured and in September 1327 was tortured and murdered at Berkeley Castle. Edward and Isabella's son was proclaimed King Edward III of England.

As a reward for his service, Henry regained all the Lancaster estates and became the third Earl of Lancaster. King Edward III reversed the conviction of Thomas, Earl of Lancaster and petitioned the pope to make Thomas a saint. Thomas had been very popular among the people of England, but the petition to the pope was unsuccessful.

About 1328 the rector complained that the burgesses, his tenants, every day held a market among themselves, and with strangers, in divers goods, although these be ill-gotten or stolen; taking toll for such merchandise and appropriating it to themselves. They also made assay of bread and tasting of beer every day except Monday, taking amercements and profits by force and power; all to the prejudice of the rector's market.

Possibly, it was on this account that the charter was confirmed in 1329.

### **Seventh Rector of Wigan**

On 4<sup>th</sup> June 1334 Robert de Clitheroe died and was buried in Sawley Abbey. John de Langton became the seventh Rector of Wigan. John de Langton had been made Chamberlain of the Receipt for Edward III on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1327. He was presented to the post of Rector of Wigan by Sir Robert de Langton

In 1341 a goldsmith was killed in Wigan.

King Edward III granted a tax in 1341 called pavage, for the mending of the ways (walkways) to the men of Wigan.

In 1344 charters were awarded by Edward III for the streets of Wigan to be paved and the roads to be cleared of boulders. The right was also given for a bridge to be constructed over the River Douglas. This was extremely important as before the bridge, the river had to be crossed on foot, which was rather risky.

These charters were needed as the roads were in a deplorable state, dangerous for people and horses. The crossing of the River Douglas was by the means of stepping stones. Most of the people of Wigan never travelled more than 5 miles out of Wigan and no-one travelled just for pleasure. These improved roads and new bridges also helped with the success of the town's market and commerce.

### **Eighth Rector of Wigan**

On 13<sup>th</sup> November 1344, John de Craven became the eighth rector of Wigan. He was also a Canon of St. John's Chester.

The third Earl of Lancaster died on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1345 and his son Henry became the Fourth Earl of Lancaster.

In 1345 The Earl of Derby with his army, consisting of many men from Wigan, took part in the invasion of France for King Edward III. This was very successful and they took many towns including Calais

In 1348 Henry Banastre of Walton granted to John son of Oliver (? Amory) the Walker, a strip of land in Wigan, stretching from the Millgate and the Stanrygate(Standishgate) to the River Douglas; also land called the Mill Meadow, with a cottage adjoining Scholes Bridge; (Towneley MS. GG, no. 2221.)

### **Medieval Serfdom**

Serfs were peasants who worked the lord of the manor's land and had to pay the lord dues in return for the use of the land. They had to work 3 days each week for the lord of the manor in return for the use of a small piece of land. For the use of this land they had to pay the lord dues which would usually be in the form of grain, honey, eggs or other produce. Although serfs did not own the land, this land was hereditary. The serfs belonged to the land and if the land was sold, the serfs would also be sold. Judicial power was with the lords as were the local hunting rights.

### **Women in Medieval Times**

Life for women regardless of their social class was certainly not easy and they were totally dominated by the male members of their family. Women were expected to instantly obey not only their father, but also their brothers and any other male members of the family. Medieval girls were beaten into submission and disobedience was seen as a crime against their religion. Medieval Women could not be heirs to their father's titles. All titles would pass from father to son or brother to brother, depending on the circumstances.

With parental permission it was legal for boys to marry at 14 and girls at 12. A betrothal often took place when the prospective bride and groom were as young as 7 years old, but a marriage was only legal once the marriage had been consummated.

Women had no choice and their loveless marriages were arranged. The law gave a husband full rights over his wife and she was his property. A wife was subservient to her husband. Women had a short life expectancy not helped by constant child bearing. The life expectancy of a Medieval woman was forty years. Most Medieval women would become pregnant between 4 and 8 times and women would expect to lose at least one child.

## The Black Death

In the summer of 1349 the plague, or Black Death, reached Wigan and caused great suffering. Like other towns, the people of Wigan knew nothing about how disease was caused and spread.

According to Sinclair's History of Wigan, the town's people would throw their toilet dirt and rubbish into the streets and this would also be carried to the River Douglas. Houses were built very close together enabling the disease to spread rapidly and easily.

The Black Death was the bubonic plague and was spread by rats and the fleas living on the rats then biting humans. Symptoms were high fever, aching limbs, vomiting blood, excruciating pain and large swellings in the glands. From first symptoms death took between three to four days.

The harvest of 1348 had been destroyed by very heavy rainfalls; the poor were hungry and their bodies weak, unable to fight against the disease.

The plague killed poor and rich alike, whole families died. People tried to hide in the woods away from the town, some could afford to travel far away from the town or had their own horses. People were full of despair, thinking it was the end for everyone.

Half the population of Wigan died during this plague. In the grounds at the back of Wigan Parish Church, near the entrance to King of Prussia Yard, there is a large tree marking the spot where all the plague victims were buried.

Nearly two million people died of the plague in England, (the total population before the plague was about 4 million). This had the result of a shortage of labour and labourers were able to command a higher wage.

After the Black Death, many manors were left short of workers. To encourage those who had survived to stay on their manor, many lords had given the serfs on their estates their freedom and paid them to work on their land.

## Ninth Rector of Wigan

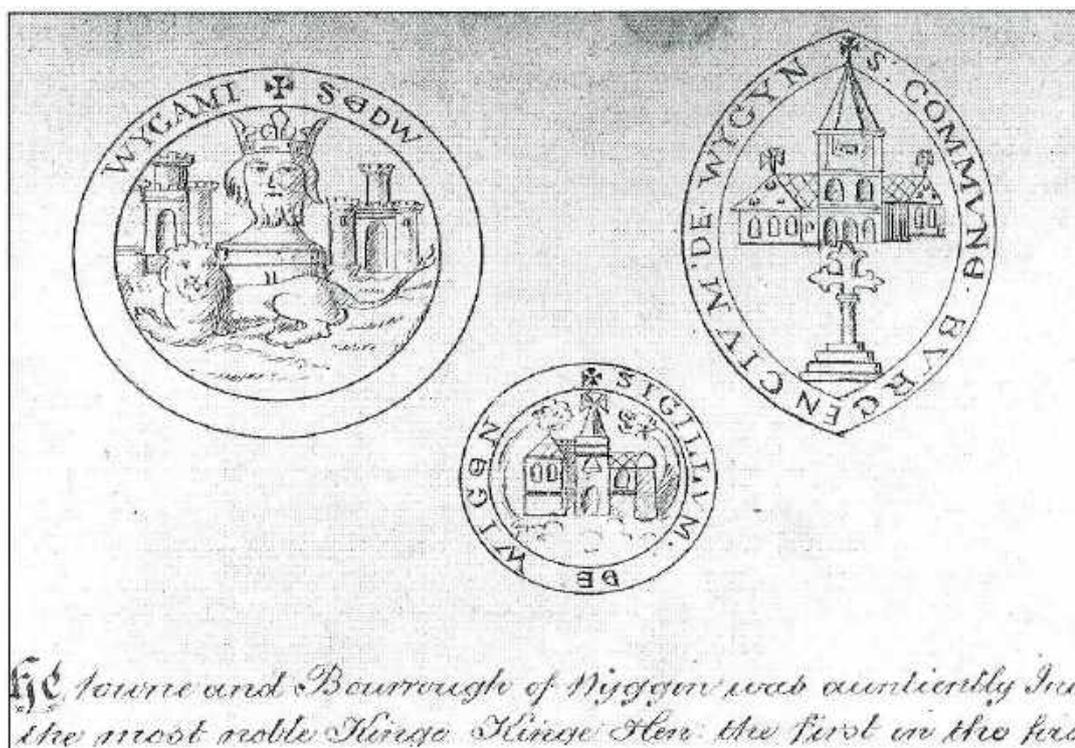
On 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1350 John de Winwick became the ninth rector of Wigan. John de Winwick also held the Treasureship of York Minster. John de Winwick had been presented to the post by King Edward III.

The king nominated de Winwick as patron of Wigan. Sir Robert de Langton disputed this and claimed he was the patron of the parish by right of his marriage with the heiress of the Banastres, Barons of Newton who had been the patrons of Wigan.

The case of the king versus de Langton came before the courts and lasted a year. Robert de Langton failed to establish his claim to be the patron of the parish of Wigan and the verdict was given in favour of the Crown.

The Bishop of Lichfield was then requested to institute the king's "beloved clerk, John de Winwick" to the benefice of Wigan, but the Bishop refused. De Winwick was finally instituted by letters patent from Windsor on 26<sup>th</sup> April. In 1356 this was reversed and Robert de Langton's claim confirmed. John de Winwick still held the living until his death on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1359, he had never sought to gain any benefit from the living.

In 1350 a document mentions coal rights around Standish. Coal would be needed for the other industries around Wigan and coal would be collected from open cast mines. Miners were freemen of the borough of Wigan.



Herald's visitation of Lancashire in 1613. Authenticated copy of official Wigan seals. Centre and left are seals from the 1350 charter.

### **Confirmation of the Wigan Charters**

Further confirmation of the Wigan charters was granted in 1350, with a special indemnity to the rector and the burgesses for any abuse or non-claim of the liberties and acquittances of former charters. John de Winwick was also granted a seal. The seal was in two parts, the greater part was to remain in the hands of the mayor to be elected by John de Winwick and his successors. The lesser piece of the seal to be kept by an appointed clerk.

King Edward III also granted a view of frankpledge, freedom from the sheriff's tourn, cognizance by the bailiffs of the rector of all pleas concerning lands, tenures, contracts, &c., within the borough; with many similar and complementary liberties.

*'Moreover, whereas there has been a frequent concourse at the said borough, as well of merchants and others, for the sake of trading and otherwise,' the rectors, as lords of the borough, might for ever 'have a certain seal, by us to be ordained, of two pieces, as is of custom to be used, for recognisances of debts there according to the form of the statutes published for merchants; and that the greater part of the seal aforesaid may remain in the custody of the mayor or keeper of the borough aforesaid for the time being, or other private person of the greater or more discreet men of the borough to be chosen for this purpose (with the assent of the rector) if there shall not be a mayor or keeper there.'*

As a result of this charter, suits by Wigan people were frequently stopped in the assize court by the bailiffs of the rector appearing to claim the case as one for the local court. In 1350, when Richard de Mitton claimed in the King's Bench a messuage in the town from William del Cross, who had entry by Robert son of John del Cross, the rector's bailiffs appeared, made a statement of the jurisdictions conferred by the charter and drew the case to the local court (De Banco R. 363, m. 203). In subsequent years the same thing happened.

Another result was probably the regular election of a mayor, the language of the charter implying that the burgesses had not hitherto had such a generally recognized head.

### **Sixth Wigan Charter**

In 1351 Wigan was granted a sixth charter by Edward III. This charter gave the Rector, John de Winwick the title of "Lord of the Borough".

### **Duke of Lancaster**

In 1351 Henry, the fourth Earl of Lancaster was given the unprecedented honour of being made Duke of Lancaster, the very first English Duke. As Henry had no male heirs on his death in 1361, Lancaster Castle passed to Blanche his daughter. Blanche was married to Edward III's fourth son, John of Gaunt. Consequently, in 1362 John of Gaunt became Duke of Lancaster and by right of his wife he also became Earl of Derby and Steward of England. Blanche of Lancaster died in 1369 and John of Gaunt married Constance of Castille.

### **Tenth and eleventh Rectors of Wigan**

On 10<sup>th</sup> July 1359 Richard de Langton became the Rector of Wigan. He was proposed to the post by Sir Robert de Langton.

On 4<sup>th</sup> September 1359 Richard de Langton resigned and Robert de Lostock became the eleventh Rector of Wigan.

### **Mayor of Wigan**

In 1361 John Banastre became Mayor of Wigan

### **Twelfth Rector of Wigan**

On 12<sup>th</sup> January 1362 Walter de Campden became the twelfth Rector of Wigan on the resignation of Robert de Lostock. Walter de Campden was presented to the post by John of Gaunt, The Duke of Lancaster owing to the minority of Ralph de Langton.

### **1363 Archery Law**

King Edward III decreed the Archery Law in 1363 which commanded the obligatory practice of archery on Sundays and holidays. The Archery Law "*forbade, on pain of death, all sport that took up time better spent on war training especially archery practise*".

In 1364 Robert le Baxter became Mayor of Wigan until 1371.

In 1367 Rector Walter de Campden complained to Pope Innocent XI about the pension he had to pay to Lichfield Cathedral. The Bishop of London was directed by Pope Innocent VI to inquire into this matter. If it was found to be true the Pope would relax the rector's oath to pay the pension.

1369 inflicted severe social dislocation and caused deflation; severe laws were introduced to attempt to fix wages and prices.

### **Thirteenth Rector of Wigan**

Owing to the death of Walter de Campden, James de Langton became the thirteenth Rector of Wigan on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1370. James was presented to the post of Rector by Ralph de Langton, a relative. The Rector, James de Langton, was ordained a priest on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1371.

In 1371, towns were ordered to pay a subsidy to King Richard II. the parish of Wigan was ordered to pay £1. 2s. 3d. It was subsequently discovered that the amount produced was far too small and the tax on the parish was raised to £5.16s. and this amount was then paid.

In 1371 Thomas de Heywood was Mayor of Wigan until 1376. In 1376 Adam de Byrheheued became Mayor of Wigan. The following year Hugh del Crosse became Mayor of Wigan.

In 1376, 'The Good Parliament' (which saw the election of the first Speaker to represent the Commons) attacked the high taxes and criticised the King's advisers. The ageing King withdrew to Windsor for the rest of his reign, eventually dying at Sheen Palace, Surrey.

### **King Richard II**

Edward III died in 1377 and his grandson Richard became King Richard II of England. Richard was only 10 years old and his uncle, John of Gaunt, Earl of Lancaster, became Regent.

### **Wigan's Charter 1378**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1378 King Richard II gave a charter to John de Langton, Rector of Wigan. This charter confirmed the previous charters.

### **Mayor of Wigan**

In 1380 Adam de Byrkeheued became Mayor of Wigan and each year until 1384

## **The Peasants' Revolt**

After the Black Death manors were left short of workers. To encourage those who had survived to stay on their manor, many lords had given the peasants on their estates their freedom and paid them to work on their land. Craftsmen were able to charge higher prices for their labour and goods.

King Richard II brought out a charter stating that people must go back to receiving the same wages as before the Black Death. This would also mean that many peasants would go back to being serfs i.e. not being paid for their labour.

In 1381 a poll tax was imposed on everyone, 15 years and over at one shilling per head. This was on top of the 4p per head imposed in 1377. Before this, poll tax was paid as a graduated tax depending on your wealth - the richer you were, the more tax you paid. These were the main reasons that led to The Peasants' Revolt of 1381 led by Wat Tyler. This called for the recognition of the peasant workers and an end to the poll tax.

The Peasant Rebels were invited to meet the young King Richard II at Smithfield in London. Ralph Standish, Lord of the manor of Standish, was with the king. Thinking Wat Tyler was going to attack the king, the Mayor of London attacked Wat Tyler who was unarmed. Wat was then killed by Ralph Standish. King Richard II subsequently made Ralph Standish a knight.

## **Mayor of Wigan**

Hugh de Crosse became Mayor of Wigan in 1384 and each year until 1387.

In 1387 Adam de Byrkeheued became Mayor of Wigan again and each year until 1392.

In 1392 Thomas de Dokesbury became Mayor of Wigan until 1395 when Adam de Byrkenheued again became Mayor until 1402.

John of Gaunt's second wife, Constance of Castille, died in 1396. He then married his long time mistress Katherine and their four children, called Beaufort, were declared legitimate.

## **The First Lancastrian King**

When John of Gaunt died in 1399, his first son Henry (by his first wife Blanche of Lancaster) inherited the title Duke of Lancaster and all the lands. Henry was also known as Henry Bolingbroke because he was born in Bolingbroke Castle. King Richard II seized all John of Gaunt's lands depriving them from Henry.

In 1399 whilst King Richard was in Ireland, Henry Bolingbroke led a small army and reclaimed his lands. Henry also forced King Richard II to abdicate and he became King Henry IV, the first king of the House of Lancaster. King Richard became a prisoner. Early in 1400 Richard was murdered.

In 1399 King Henry IV granted Wigan a further charter.

## **Mayor of Wigan**

In 1402 Thomas de Dokesbury became Mayor of Wigan until 1405. In 1405 Adam de Byrkheud was Mayor of Wigan. In 1406 William del Hyde became Mayor of Wigan and again in 1407.

In 1408 William del Wynde became Mayor of Wigan until 1410 when Adam de Byrkehed again became Mayor until 1416.

King Henry IV died in 1413 and was succeeded by his son who became King Henry V.

In 1413 King Henry V granted Wigan its ninth charter.

## **Fourteenth Rector of Wigan**

In 1415 William de Langton became the fourteenth Rector of Wigan.

King Henry V proclaimed that an archer would be absolved of murder, if he killed a man during archery practice!

## **Battle of Agincourt**

In Autumn 1415 Sir William Butler gathered the Lancashire archers in Wigan for the journey to France. In October 1415 they took part in the Battle of Agincourt. King Henry V defeated the French at the battle of Agincourt, with the help of the archers and became King of France as well and king of England.

In 1416 Hugh del Marsh became Mayor of Wigan until 1419. In 1419 Henry de Byrkehed became Mayor. In 1420 Hugh del Marsh again became Mayor until 1422.

In 1422 there is a reference to Wigan Moot Hall.

In 1422 William Orrel became Mayor of Wigan until 1426.

## **Henry VI**

Henry VI succeeded to the thrones of England and France on the death of his father Henry V in 1422.

In 1426 John Byrkeheyd became Mayor of Wigan. In 1427 William Orrel again became Mayor until 1429 when John Byrkenheyd became Mayor again until 1440.

### **Fifteenth Rector of Wigan**

In 1431 William de Langton died and James de Langton became the fifteenth Rector of Wigan. James de Langton appears to have been a violent and lawless man and his name appears frequently in the plea rolls.

In 1442 The sheriff was ordered to arrest the Rector James de Langton and his sons Christopher, Edward, Edmund and Oliver. He was also ordered to arrest Margaret Holerobyn of Wigan who was the Rector's mistress. (*Pal. of Lanc. Plea R.4*).

In 1440 Adam de Hindley became Mayor of Wigan until 1442 when Hugh Orrel became Mayor until 1445. Ralph Hulme became Mayor in 1445 until 1449 when Hugh Orrel again became Mayor until 1450. John Byrkehed then became Mayor until 1452.

In 1450 references were made to coal mining in Wigan, Pemberton and Orrell.

### **Sixteenth Rector of Wigan**

In 1451 James de Langton died and his son Oliver de Langton became the sixteenth Rector of Wigan. Oliver covenanted to pay the £20 yearly to Lichfield cathedral.

In 1452 James Pemberton became Mayor of Wigan until 1455 when Robert Gerard became Mayor until 1467.

In 1457 The Bishop of Lichfield issued a commission to Dr. Duckworth, vicar of Prescott and others to inquire as to the pollution of Wigan churchyard by bloodshed. The Bishop wanted the commission to forbid the use of the churchyard for internments until it should be reconciled. (*Lich.Epis.Reg.xi fol91b*)

In 1467 Henry Byrhehed became Mayor of Wigan until 1475. Laurence Standish became Mayor in 1475 until 1487 when Seth Gerard became Mayor.

## **The Wars of The Roses - 1455 to 1489**

Henry VI, desperate to shore up his ailing Lancastrian dynasty, decided that Margaret Beaufort (granddaughter of John of Gaunt) should marry his own half-brother Edmund Tudor, Margaret was 9 years old at the time. Margaret was the richest heiress in England and had an income of £1,000 per year. Edmund Tudor was a brutal and selfish husband. Only by having a child would Edmund be guaranteed his life's interest in Margaret's land. Just before Margaret's 13th birthday, she became pregnant. Edmund died before Margaret gave birth to Henry Tudor, the future King Henry VII, on 28 January 1457.

In 1483 Margaret Tudor (Beaufort) married Lord Thomas Stanley who was also King of Mann.

### **Battle of Bosworth 1485**

The men of Wigan were made to take up arms by their masters unlike the Burgesses of Wigan who were protected by their Guild and excused from taking up arms. It is recorded that before the big battle, Wigan's archers practised every day on the meadow in front of the Wigan school which was by the River Douglas. This seems to indicate that Wigan had a school in 1485.

The Battle of Bosworth field was fought on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1485 between the House of Lancaster led by Henry Tudor and The House of York led by King Richard III, who was also the Duke of Gloucester.

Lord Thomas Stanley was at the battle with his son Lord Strange and men at arms, many of whom were from Wigan. Lord Thomas Stanley had married Margaret Tudor and was, therefore, step-father to Henry Tudor. Stanley lived at Knowsley Hall and his son, Lord Strange, lived at Lathom House.

King Richard III, was killed, his crown fell onto the field. Lord Thomas Stanley picked the crown up and placed it on the head of Henry Tudor, who was also his stepson. Henry Tudor became King Henry VII of England and the first Tudor king. To thank him for his help at Bosworth field, King Henry VII gave Thomas Stanley the title of Earl of Derby.



*Thomas Stanley, First Earl of Derby*

There is a medieval rhyme about the battle of Bosworth that states:

*Jack of Wigan, he did take  
The Duke of Gloucester's banner,  
And hung it up in Wigan Church,  
A monument of honour*

### **Seventeenth Rector of Wigan**

In 1485 John Langton became the Rector of Wigan. The population of Wigan was 2,600.

In 1486 King Henry VII married Elizabeth of York, thus joining the families of Lancaster and York. The Tudor Rose comprises of the white rose of Yorkshire and the red rose of Lancashire.

In 1499 John Pemberton became Mayor of Wigan until 1506 when William Bradshaigh became Mayor until 1512. Thomas Duxbury became Mayor in 1512 until 1533.

### **Eighteenth and Nineteenth Rectors of Wigan**

On 9<sup>th</sup> August 1504 Thomas Langton became the Rector of Wigan on the death of John Langton. His patrons were James Anderton, William Banastre, Thomas Langton and William Woodcock, feoffees of Ralph Langton deceased.

Thomas Langton died in 1506 and on the 16<sup>th</sup> August, King Henry VII presented Dr. Richard Wyot to the position of Rector of Wigan. Dr. Wyot had been master of Christ's College, Cambridge and was a doctor of divinity.

In 1509 Henry VII died and as his first son Arthur had died at the age of 14yrs, his second son Henry became King Henry VIII at the age of 18 yrs.

Henry married his brother's young widow, Katherine of Aragon. Katherine gave birth to four sons and a daughter, but they all died. Their daughter Mary was born in 1516 and lived. After this Katherine became pregnant several times, but the babies all died.

### **Twentieth Rector of Wigan Dr. Thomas Linacre**

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 1519, after his ordination, Dr. Thomas Linacre exchanged positions with Dr. Wyot. Dr. Wyot resigned from Wigan and took Dr. Linacre's position as Precentor of York Minister. Dr. Thomas Linacre became the twentieth Rector of Wigan.

Dr. Linacre was a very learned and distinguished tutor, physician, priest and author. In 1484 he was elected as fellow of All Saints College, Oxford. He was widely travelled and gained his medical degree in Padua, Italy.

He taught Prince Arthur (eldest son of King Henry VII), Princess Katherine of Aragon and Prince Henry alongside Bishop John Fisher. Later he was personal physician to King Henry VIII, Cardinal Wolsey, Archbishop Warham and Bishop Fox. Sir Thomas More had also been a pupil of Dr. Linacre and he remained a very close friend.

Thomas Linacre was also held in high regard by Erasmus (real name Gerrit Gerritzoons from Gouda in Holland) and Bishop Hugh Latimer.

In 1518 Dr. Linacre had founded the College of Physicians, in his London house, which later became the Royal College of Physicians.



Dr. Thomas Linacre died in 1524 and was buried in St. Paul's cathedral. In 1525 Sir Thomas More became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. On the death of Cardinal Wolsey in 1529, Henry VIII appointed Thomas More Lord Chancellor of England.

### **Twenty-first Rector of Wigan**

Nicholas Towneley became Rector of Wigan in 1528. Nicholas was chaplain to Cardinal Wolsey. In 1531 Nicholas was appointed to a prebend in York Minster. Nicholas Towneley died at Hampton Court (one of the palaces owned by Cardinal Wolsey) on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1532.

In 1533 William Bradshaigh again became Mayor of Wigan until 1538.

### **Twenty-second and twenty-third Rectors of Wigan**

In November 1532 Richard Langton became the Rector of Wigan. Richard died in 1534.

Richard Kyghley became Rector of Wigan on 24 March 1535 he had been presented to the post by Sir Thomas Langton. As had been the ancient custom and paid by Wigan rectors before him, Richard made an oath to pay the £20 to the Dean of Lichfield.

## The Reformation

King Henry VIII decided to divorce his wife Katherine of Aragon as he didn't have a son and he wanted to marry Anne Boleyn. Henry asked the Pope for a divorce from Katherine, (divorces had been given to other kings, like Louis XII of France in 1499), but the Pope refused.

Bishop Henry Standish (related to the Standishes of Standish Hall near Wigan), assisted Queen Katherine with her unsuccessful case against divorce.



Edward Stanley, the third Earl of Derby, was one of the petitioners to the Pope to grant Henry a divorce.

In May 1533 Henry VIII appointed Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury who then declared Henry's marriage invalid. A week later Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn and she was crowned queen. The day after Anne Boleyn's coronation Henry VIII made Edward Stanley, third Earl of Derby, a Knight of the Garter.

In 1534 The Act of Supremacy, Act of Submission of the Clergy and Act of Succession were passed. These recognised that the king was 'the only supreme head of the Church of England - called Anglicana Ecclesia'. The Act of Supremacy set about the dissolution of the monasteries.

Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor and friend to Henry VIII, disagreed with King Henry regarding his divorce and the break with Rome. In 1535 Thomas was arrested and beheaded on the 6<sup>th</sup> July at the Tower of London. Also arrested a little earlier was Bishop John Fisher who was against the break with Rome and the divorce. John Fisher was beheaded at the Tower of London two weeks before Thomas More was beheaded. Wigan has a school named after St. John Fisher and used to have a secondary school named after St. Thomas More.

Henry VIII had Anne Boleyn beheaded at the Tower of London in 1536 and also his fifth wife Catherine Howard in 1542.

Sir Thomas More, Bishop John Fisher, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard are all buried in St. Peter ad Vincula (St. Peter in Chains) chapel in the Tower of London. They were buried in a common grave alongside others who were executed in the Tower of London.

### **Wigan Craftsmen rebel against "foreign" traders**

Wigan market and the Wigan fairs were open to all traders, not just those from Wigan. People purchased goods from traders who were from outside Wigan because they were cheaper than from local traders.

Wigan traders were very angry that they were not selling their goods, but under the charter anyone was free to set up a stall in the market as long as they paid their tolls and dues. The traders from Wigan appealed to local men of influence for help.

At the next Wigan fair in 1534 local prominent figures, Sir Thomas Langton, William Gerard, John Byrshell and friends rebelled against "foreign" traders destroying their stalls in Wigan market and driving them from Market Place. The rebels were arrested, tried at Lancaster and found guilty.

### **Twenty-third Rector of Wigan**

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 1534 Richard Kyghley became Rector of Wigan on the death of Richard Langton. He was presented to the position by Sir Thomas Langton.

### **The Dissolution of local monasteries**

The Act of Supremacy set about the dissolution of the monasteries throughout England. Monasteries were the seats of learning, science and art, many were very wealthy but very mean in their charity to the poor.

In 1536 Burscough Priory was the largest and most wealthy monastic house linked to Wigan, it had been founded in 1190. After the dissolution of the priory, the land was acquired by Edward Stanley, The Third Earl of Derby. The Earl took most of the stone and the rest was left to decay.

Up Holland Priory was also condemned under the dissolution of the monasteries, the land was sold, but the church was allowed to remain intact.

David Sinclair in his book 'History of Wigan' (1882), states that Wigan Parish church was ransacked and burned, although the building itself was untouched.

## The Pilgrimage of Grace

In 1536 Robert Aske, a lawyer from Yorkshire, led an army of rebels including priests, who were opposed to the dissolution of the monasteries. The rebels marched towards London to meet with King Henry VIII. This later became known as the Northern Rebellion or Pilgrimage of Grace.

Edward Stanley, third Earl of Derby, asked Sir Roger Bradshaigh, Lord of Haigh, who was one of the most powerful men in the region, to raise an army to suppress the 'uprising'. Sir Roger gathered a large force from Wigan and the surrounding area and joined the Earl of Derby on the moors of Whalley and Clitheroe.

The army were ready to fight the rebels, but Robert Aske and the rebels surrendered to the Earl without any blood being shed. Robert Aske and the rebel leaders were taken to King Henry in London.

King Henry ordered the execution of 200 rebels, Robert Aske and Lady Bulmer were burnt at the stake. Henry also executed Abbots from the four largest monasteries in the north of England.

In 1538 John Kitchin purchased the right of the next presentation to Rector of Wigan from Sir Thomas Langton. He afterwards sold this to Sir Richard Gresham and Thomas White citizens of London.

Soon after becoming Rector of Wigan, Richard Kyghley leased the rectory for five years for £106 13s 4d, being payable to the curate in charge. The lessee, John Kitchin, a lawyer, had become surety for the first-fruits which had become part of the royal revenue. This caused much dispute as Kitchin was unsatisfied with the short lease and appears to have obtained the promise and the patron's consent of an extension for thirty-three years.

In 1538 Laurence Sherrington became Mayor of Wigan followed by Adam Bankes in 1539.

James Sherrington became Mayor of Wigan in 1543 and each year until 1543.

In 1540 The Rector of Wigan, Richard Kyghley, attempted to regain possession and was resisted. The Rector had taken a number of persons of 'cruel demeanour' with him who had 'in a riotous and forcible manner' entered the glebe lands and turned John Kitchin's cattle out. An enquiry took place and found in favour of the lessee John Kitchin. The Rector then granted John Kitchin a lease for thirty years at the same rent. (*Ducatus Lanc. Rec.Com I, 164, ii, 64*).

John Kitchen purchased the right of the next presentation for Rector from Sir Thomas Langton. Afterwards he sold this to Sir Richard Gresham and Thomas White who were citizens of London.

In 1540 Cannel coal was being mined at Haigh Hall. John Leland wrote that Mr. Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall was finding the mine very profitable.

### **Twenty-fourth Rector of Wigan**

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1543 John Herbert became Rector of Wigan on the death of Richard Kyghley. He was presented to the post by Thomas White. John Herbert had been one of the canons of St. Stephen's, Westminster.

King Henry VIII had allowed his Chancellor Cromwell, who was also vicar general, to organise the printing of the Bible into English and ordered every church to purchase a copy. (In 1452 the printing press had been invented by Gutenberg in Strasbourg and in 1476 William Caxton had brought the printing press to England). Cromwell was executed in 1540 and by 1543 Henry changed his mind about people having access to the Bible.

Henry VIII ordered Parliament to pass a law forbidding women, apprentices and labourers to read the bible.

In 1543 Ralph Bradshaigh became Mayor of Wigan until 1545 when Humphrey Sherrington became Mayor. Mayors of Wigan in 1546 William Fourde, 1547 John Rigby, 1548 Myles Gerard and in 1549 Richard Moore. Richard was Mayor until 1579.

In 1547 Parliament passed an act dissolving all the chantries and appointing commissioners to confiscate their property. When the commissioners came to Wigan in 1548 they found that the plate and vestments given to the Bradshaigh chapel by Lady Mabel were being used in the church. The valuables were seized by the Crown, assessed at £3.5s.10d and sold to John Kitchen who was known for his plundering of church property.

In 1547 Henry VIII died and his son by his third wife, Jane Seymour, became King Edward VI at the age of 9 years.

At the first Parliament of Edward VI Wigan sent Thomas Barlow and Thomas Carus as their Members of Parliament and represented Wigan from 1547 to 1552. Thomas Barlow was from Manchester and Thomas Carus was from Kirby Lonsdale. This was the first Wigan parliamentary representation for 241 years.

### **Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Rectors of Wigan**

In March 1550 John Standish became Rector of Wigan. He was presented to the post by King Edward VI on the death of John Herbert. John Standish does not appear to have paid "first fruits". In 1550 Miles Gerard was Mayor of Wigan.

Richard Smyth became Rector of Wigan in 1551, presented to the post by the King. He paid his "first fruits", but had a lot of trouble with the sub-lessees under Kitchin's lease.

Edward Stanley, the Third Earl of Derby, like many other wealthy men in Wigan, remained true to the Roman Catholic faith. He was opposed to the religious changes made by Edward VI.

King Edward VI died in 1553 after just 6 years as king, he was aged 14 years.

The Duke of Northumberland imposed his daughter in law, Lady Jane Grey, as Queen of England in an attempt to stop Mary from being Queen. Archbishop Cranmer supported Lady Jane Grey to be King Edward's successor. Mary led her army and also had widespread public support, she was triumphant. Jane was beheaded after just 9 days as queen and her body buried in St. Peter's chapel Tower of London.

Mary became the first woman to rule in her own right as Queen of England.

Edward Stanley (3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Derby) was Lord High Steward at the Coronation of Queen Mary I. He was also a Commissioner at the trial of Lady Jane Grey. Edward purchased Lathom House near Wigan and Lathom House became known as the 'Palace of the North' because of its grandeur.

Thomas Gerard, of Bryn near Wigan, was made a Knight Bachelor the day after the coronation of Queen Mary I.

Queen Mary was a Roman Catholic, daughter of Katherine of Aragon and Henry VIII and she tried to re-convert England to the church of Rome.

Queen Mary had Archbishop Cranmer, Bishop Latimer and Bishop Ridley burned to death in Oxford because they disagreed with her and wanted to keep the Protestant Faith and Church of England. Mary also had a number of other people burned at the stake who disagreed with her and the return of Catholicism.



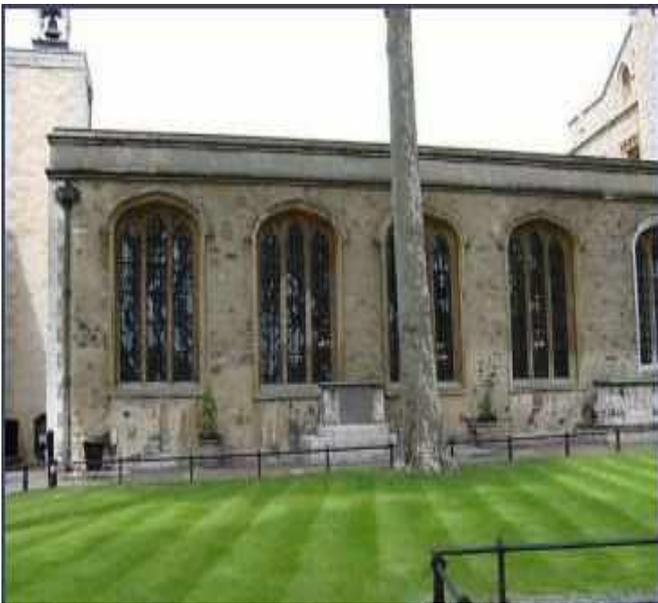
15<sup>th</sup> Century stained glass window  
at Wigan Parish Church



Tudor Lady at Speke Hall  
Re-enactment



Ordsall Hall, Salford - Bedroom, Kitchen, Great Hall



St. Peter ad Vincula chapel  
Tower of London



Executioner's chopping block  
Tower of London



Tower of London



St. Thomas More's hat on display in  
St. Francis Xavier's church Liverpool



Oxford Monument on site  
of burning of Archbishop  
Cranmer and Bishop Latimer



Queen Mary I tomb in Westminster Abbey

### **Twenty-seventh Rector of Wigan**

Richard Gerard became Rector of Wigan on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1554 on the death of Richard Smyth. He was presented to the post by The Earl of Derby, a Roman Catholic. Gerard's patrons were the Earl of Derby, Lord Strange and others under a demise by Sir Thomas Langton.

Richard Gerard was the son of William Gerard of Ince. Speaking of the second Prayer Book of Edward VI, Richard Gerard remarked "This last Communion was the most devilish thing that ever was devised".

### **George Marsh, Protestant Martyr**

George Marsh had been born in Bolton, near Wigan, in 1515 and was a preacher of the Protestant faith.

He was arrested in 1554 by The Earl of Derby. George was first interrogated at Smithill's Hall where Marsh left the famous bloody footprint which can still be seen today. The footprint is said to have been made by George Marsh when he stamped his foot on the floor and prayed that a mark would be left there. Every year the footprint is said to become bloody on the anniversary of his martyrdom.

George was then imprisoned at Derby's home Lathom House, where he was examined by the Rector of Wigan Richard Gerard. George was moved to Lancaster Castle then to Chester where he was examined and condemned by the Bishop of Chester. In 1555 George Marsh was burned at the stake and became a Protestant Martyr.



*Engraving of the burning of George Marsh*

### **The Twenty-eighth Rector of Wigan**

On 10<sup>th</sup> August 1558 Thomas Stanley became the Rector of Wigan on the death of Richard Gerard. He was presented to the post by John Fleetwood and Peter Farrington. He was Bishop of Sodor and Man from 1558 to 1568. Thomas also held other Lancashire rectories in Winwick and North Meols.

Thomas Stanley was the illegitimate son of the first Lord Mouteagle Sir Edward Stanley (fifth son of Thomas, The Earl of Derby).

## **The Elizabethan Age**

Queen Mary I died in 1558 after just 5 years' rule and Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII, was crowned Queen Elizabeth I of England.

In 1558 Wigan's M.P's were William Gerard and Thomas Bromley. William Gerard came from Preston and Thomas Bromley was a barrister from London. Thomas Bromley became Lord Keeper of the Great Seal under Elizabeth I.

Spain built a huge armada of ships in order to go to war against England. In 1558 beacons were built throughout England in order to warn of the approach of the Armada. Wigan had two beacons built, one at Ashurst and one at Billinge.

Queen Elizabeth believed in the Protestant faith and Roman Catholics were not allowed to practise their faith. If they did go to mass, they were heavily fined or imprisoned and the priest would be executed. Most of the wealthy families in Wigan were Roman Catholics, including the Bradshaighs of Haigh Hall, The Gerards of Bryn and the Earl of Derby. They could afford to pay the fines.

In 1569 and again in 1571 Sir Thomas Gerard of Ince, was captured and imprisoned in The Tower of London for planning to free Mary Queen of Scots. After 3 years in the Tower he was released.

## **The Twenty-ninth and Thirtieth Rectors of Wigan**

In April 1569, on the death of Bishop Thomas Stanley, William Blackleach was made Rector of Wigan after being presented by John Fleetwood.

William Blackleach resigned as Rector and on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1571 Edward Fleetwood became Rector of Wigan after being presented by Queen Elizabeth I. He was presented by the monarch because of the minority of Thomas Langton. The opportunity was also taken to place into this very important rectory a staunch adherent of the Protestant Church of England faith. Many Wiganers and most of the wealthy families in the area were Roman Catholics.

Rector Edward Fleetwood resided at the Rectory and he was the first to establish monthly communions in Wigan. He also had benches made from the timber of the rood-loft and placed in the nave. Before this time there were no seats in the church for ordinary people.

Rector Fleetwood instituted various suits for the recovery of the remnants and rights of the rectory of Wigan. In 1571 Rector Fleetwood instituted a suit against Hugh, Gilbert and James Langshaw to recover possession of two ancient water mills which were fulling mills.

The dispute went on for many years and in 1618 the Rector's right to the mills was confirmed by decree.

In 1579 William Bankes became Mayor of Wigan.

In 1580 registers of baptisms, marriages and deaths were first recorded in Wigan.

Rector Fleetwood took part in the persecution of Popish recusants and from the letter printed in *Bridgeman, 166-71*, in 1589 he didn't wear garments such as the surplice. He was also part of the petition to the Church of England synod in 1604, this would seem to indicate that Rector Fleetwood was a Puritan. The Rector was charged with 'neglect and contempt' in not observing the forms of the Book of Common Prayer.

### **Witches in Wigan?**

Sinclair in his book "The History of Wigan" (published 1882) writes about Rector Fleetwood being very concerned that the people of Wigan did not go to the parish church for Sunday Service. He was very angry that instead of listening to his sermons on their wicked ways, people preferred to go the pubs for a small beer or just enjoy themselves.

*"To his horror and disgust Rev. Fleetwood found that at the tolling of the church bell for Sunday services, people came to Market Place then broke off into groups, some to the local taverns like the Black Horse or Bird and Bairn, some to the Common, some to the meadows and many actually to bull-baiting and bear-baiting on his own land". The working class people of Wigan worked hard, a twelve hour day was considered short and they only had Sundays as a day of rest. Rev. Fleetwood approached Wigan's M.P.'s for help and an Act passed and new law made. During the time the Act was in force, there was no piping and dancing in the Market Place during church service. The rector's reforms resulted in a decrease of pubs and compulsion to sell not less than a full quart of beer at once and he fixed the price of this at one penny.*

*During 1585-6 a famine and infectious disease came to Wigan. The Rector, as lord of the manor, felt it his duty to find the cause of these disasters. He said the famine and disease were caused by peoples own lack of morality. He discovered that Wigan particularly and England generally, was abandoned to the power of the Evil One, who had delegated his power to old, wrinkle-faced widows. It was the witches, he found, that brought the disease on the cattle, so woe to the Witches of Wigan. To be ugly was sufficient to be considered a witch and the Rev. Fleetwood said he could smell the brimstone about them. He tormented and persecuted them for his belief that they were the hirelings of sin and he was the servant of sanctity. Woe to wicked Wigan seemed to be his cry." (Sinclair's History of Wigan published 1882)*

At this time Midwives were licensed by the bishop of the diocese upon condition that they attended "any women labouring of child, being married and professing the reformed faith. Neglect or inattention would forfeit their licence.

At Queen Elizabeth's fifth parliament (1584-1585) Wigan's representatives were William Gerard and Thomas Grimsditch. In the next parliament of 1586 Peter Legh displaced Thomas Grimsditch.

Rector Fleetwood decided that he and not the burgesses, had complete control of Wigan. He controlled the market, roads and bridges and collected taxes. In 1589 there were riots in Wigan during the election of Mayor and Rector Fleetwood finally gave in to the Burgesses and allowed them to control the town.

In 1584 Charles Bankes became Mayor of Wigan. In 1594 Francis Sherington became Mayor. Mayors of Wigan in 1595 William Gardiner, 1596 Edward Challinor, 1597 William Gardiner, 1598 and 1599 Humfrey Mather.

### **Escape from The Tower of London**

John Gerard was a Roman Catholic priest and son of Sir Thomas Gerard of Bryn, near Wigan.

He evaded capture a number of times by hiding in "priest's holes" in many houses. One time a house he was in was raided and he hid in the "priest's hole" by the fireplace. The house was searched and guards put in each room for a number of days. At one time the guards lit a fire and John had to avoid the burning embers falling on his head in his hiding place. They never found him on that occasion.

He was eventually captured in April 1594 along with "Little John" Nicholas Owen who built all the "priest's holes". He was imprisoned in the Salt Tower of the Tower of London. Nicholas Owen was tortured to death. Father Gerard was tortured at least three times, but refused to give any information on the whereabouts of other priests.

On the night of 4<sup>th</sup> October 1597 he escaped from The Salt Tower. A rope had been fastened to the Salt Tower from a tower across the moat. John Gerard made his way across the rope to safety although this was very painful due to his torture. He hid in London until he left the country in 1606 and died in Rome in 1637. He was one of the few people to have escaped from the Tower of London.

John Gerard left a detailed account of his torture in The Tower of London.

There is a "priest's hole" on view in Speke Hall. There was a "priest's hole" discovered in the Tudor house on Standishgate (now demolished).

## Shakespeare and The Earl of Derby

Sir Edward Stanley, third Earl of Derby, died, aged 63, on 24th October 1572. His son Henry became the fourth Earl of Derby, but died on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1593.

Henry's son Ferdinando (known as Lord Strange) became fifth Earl of Derby. Ferdinando was a poet and had his own troupe of theatre players, he was a friend of William Shakespeare. The first purpose-built indoor theatre in Britain (the Playhouse) was built in the early 1590's in Prescott (10 miles from Wigan). Elizabethan actors Thomas Pope, Will Kempre and John Hemmings were part of 'Strange's/Derby's men' and later went to Shakespeare's Globe theatre which was built in London in 1599.

Ferdinando died on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1594, believed to have been killed by poison or 'witchcraft'. His brother William was abroad at the time, but returned home to become the sixth Earl of Derby. Like his brother, William was very fond of the theatre and had his own group of players.



*William Stanley, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby*

In 1595, William Stanley, the sixth Earl of Derby married Elizabeth, granddaughter of Lord Burghley and daughter of the Earl of Oxford. His wedding was at Greenwich Palace and attended by Queen Elizabeth I. The afternoon entertainment was the first production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare had written this play especially for his friend William Stanley.

Shakespeare also wrote *Richard III* and *Love's Labour Lost* which contain tributes to his friends the Stanleys.

These plays would also have been first performed at Prescott. A number of people have even said that William Stanley was the true author of Shakespeare's plays.

## **Wigan Grammar School**

In 1594 Thomas Bankes, a goldsmith, bequeathed £30 for the establishment of a free school in Wigan as long as it was built within 3 years. Wigan Grammar School was founded on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1597 and Francis Sherrington was its founder. Francis Sherrington was Mayor of Wigan in 1594 and he donated money of his own and raised money from his friends to buy land for the school and provide a salary for the school master.

The school was for 50 boys and situated at the junction of School Lane and School Street. The boys attended for 2 or 3 years. Wigan Grammar School was for the education of children from affluent families.

*" The school was founded for the better education and bringing-up of the youth within the said town of Wigan, and to advance learning, whereby true religion, virtue and good manners might be the better placed, increased and advanced."* **Francis Sherrington 1597**

A new town seal was designed in 1595. The seal showed the Moot Hall with the Market Cross in front and a bell on the roof. This was the official Wigan seal until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The seal was part of the roof decoration of the new town hall (now old town hall) on the corner of King Street and Rodney Street.

In 1595 Rector Fleetwood complained about the large increase in coal mining in Wigan town centre. The coal mines were affecting the foundations of the town centre buildings. In 1635 a total ban was put on coal mining in Wigan town centre.

Roger Bradshaigh became Lord of Haigh in 1599 on the death of his grandfather. Roger was 21 years old and married to Anne.

In 1600 George Lyon became Mayor of Wigan.

## **St. John Rigby**

In 1600 John Rigby, who was born near Wigan, was arrested for practising the Roman Catholic faith.

He was taken to Newgate Prison in London where he was hung, drawn and quartered. John Rigby was made a saint in 1970 and a Wigan Sixth Form College is named after him.

Wigan like most of England, saw great prosperity under the Tudors. In Elizabeth's time the local population had grown to 4,000. The South East had more prosperity than the North.



Tudor timbers from demolished Tudor House in Standishgate, Wigan



Re-built Billinge Beacon



Elizabethan Armada chest, Ordsall Hall



Father John Gerard escapee from the Tower of London



Locket containing a cutting of Mary Queen of Scots' hair



Ferdinando, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby



Wigan Town Hall Seal from 1595



Door in Wigan History Shop from Crooke Hall dated 1608(now demolished)



Queen Elizabeth I tomb Westminster Abbey, London

In 1603 Elizabeth I died and Mary Queen of Scots' son, James Stuart, became King James 1 of England. Mary Queen of Scots had been beheaded by Elizabeth I and her son was King James VI of Scotland. When James became King of England, this brought about the union of Scotland and England, James was also a Roman Catholic. During his reign both Roman Catholics and Puritans were banned from practising their religion.

In 1603 Mrs. Mary Langton founded the Standish Free Grammar School for boys. Wigan Grammar School was very popular and a new larger school was built alongside the River Douglas on School Lane.

### **Thirty first Rector of Wigan**

In 1604 Rector Edward Fleetwood died and Gerard Massie became Rector of Wigan. He was presented to the post by King James 1.

### **The Gunpowder Plot**

Roman Catholics had hoped that King James would put an end to the laws against Catholics. When King James didn't change the laws, a group of Catholics decided to kill him.

In 1605 they devised a plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament when they were opened by the king on 5<sup>th</sup> November. They rented a cellar under Parliament and filled this with 36 barrels of gunpowder. Guy Fawkes was chosen to stay with the gunpowder and set off the fuse when the king had arrived in Parliament.

Francis Tresham, one of the plotters, was brother-in law to Lord Monteagle (son of Sir William Stanley and kinsman to the Earl of Derby). Francis sent Lord Monteagle a note advising him not to attend the state opening of Parliament on the 5<sup>th</sup> November. Lord Monteagle informed the king and the Houses of Parliament were searched, the gunpowder was found and Guy Fawkes arrested.

Guy Fawkes was hung, drawn and quartered. The king ordered that bonfires were to be set around the country in celebration of his escape from death. Celebrations continue today on every 5<sup>th</sup> November.

After the Gunpowder Plot, repercussions were taken against Roman Catholics. New laws were passed preventing Catholics from holding any offices, practising law or serving as officers in the army/navy. They also did not have any voting rights no matter who they were. It was only in 1829 that Roman Catholics were again given the right to vote.

In 1613 Peter Marsh became Mayor of Wigan. The following were Mayors of Wigan in 1614 James Ford, 1615 Robert Barrow and in 1616 William Foster.

### **Thirty-Second Rector of Wigan**

In 1616 Rector Gerard Massie died and John Bridgeman became the new Rector of Wigan. John Bridgeman had a degree from Oxford his Doctor of Divinity from Cambridge. He married and attracted the attention of King James I and was given the rectorship of Wigan.



*Rector John Bridgeman*

Rector Bridgeman recovered many rights of the church thereby increasing the income of the rectory. In his first year Rector Bridgeman received £16.13s.3d as manor rents and 10s each for seven mortuaries. He was also appointed Bishop of Chester, but retained the rectorship and lived mostly in Wigan.

Rector Bridgeman compiled the "Wigan leger" and ordered the repair of Wigan Parish Church and obtained and installed an organ (this was later destroyed under Cromwell).

Rector Bridgeman re-ordered the seating in Wigan Parish church to rank the 'best' in the highest seats. Placing men on one side and their wives on the other, their children and servants were excluding from sitting with their masters or mistresses. Rector Bridgeman was a strict disciplinarian, but not too harsh to the Puritans.

Hugh Ford, was Mayor of Wigan in 1617.

In 1617 King James I visited Lathom House and stopped for a few days on his way back from Edinburgh.

William, Earl of Derby became Mayor of Wigan in 1618 and in 1619 James Pilkington became Mayor.

### **First Recorded Wigan coal mine**

In 1619 Peter Platt was the first to record a coal mine and this was opened in Millgate. In 1961 during the building of Wigan Swimming Baths in Library Street/Millgate, remains of this mine were found.

Two large mining families, the Bradshaighs of Haigh Hall and the Gerards of Bryn were fighting over coal rights. The Bradshaighs were taken to court when they flooded the Gerard's mine.

In 1620 Robert Barrow was Mayor of Wigan.

## **Myles Standish**

The people of Wigan were divided amongst Roman Catholics and Protestant Church of England. However, Puritanism was gaining in popularity particularly amongst the opposition members of Parliament. In 1620 Puritans felt that they would have to leave England as they would only be free in the New World.

Myles Standish from Standish, near Wigan, was a Puritan and so was asked to be the Military Commander on the Mayflower, the ship that had been procured by the Puritans or Pilgrims as they became known. The Mayflower was to take them to a new life in Virginia, America. They set sail from Plymouth on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1620, but storms blew them off course and they landed at Cape Cod, Massachusetts, America on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1620.

The settlement was later called Plymouth and the area New England. Americans still celebrate this day on the nearest Thursday to the 21st November and it is called Thanksgiving Day.

Longfellow wrote a poem about Myles Standish "The Courtship of Myles Standish".

In 1921 Standish Hall was sold, dismantled and shipped to America. There is a memorial to Myles Standish on the lawn of Standish library.

In 1621 Peter Marsh became Mayor of Wigan. Mayors of Wigan in 1622 William Ford, 1623 James Markland, 1624 James Pilkington.

In 1624 The Rector of Wigan, Bishop Bridgeman, objected to the "barbarous and beastly game of bear-baiting". After a request from the Mayor, he gave his permission to allow bear baiting on condition that they waited until after the Monday market was over and people had packed up their wares".

## **Edward Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall**

Edward Bradshaigh was the fourth son of Sir Roger Bradshaigh, of Haigh Hall, near Wigan. Four of his brothers were priests. In 1619 Edward went to Belgium and became a Carmelite friar. He returned to England in 1626 where he was arrested for being a Roman Catholic priest and sent to London. He appeared before the Archbishop of Canterbury and was put into prison. Many of his friends, including the King of Spain asked for his release. He was released and banished to France.

In 1632, he returned to his family at Haigh Hall. He carried out priestly duties and visited the poor and the sick. It is said he made many converts to the Roman Catholic faith. He died at Haigh Hall on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1652.

King James I died in 1625 and his son became King Charles I.

### **M.P. for Wigan**

In 1623 Sir Anthony St. John was elected to be Wigan's M.P.

In 1625 Hugh Langshawe became Mayor of Wigan. In 1626 Sir Edward Stanley was Mayor of Wigan. Thomas Bankes became Mayor in 1627 followed by William Ford in 1628.

In 1628 Wigan had 138 registered voters and during the election Sir Anthony St. John, a Catholic, won with 65 votes and his opponent Edward Bridgeman, a Protestant, lost with 63 votes. They were both Royalist members and supported King Charles I.

### **Edmund Arrowsmith**

Edmund Arrowsmith was born in Haydock near Wigan in 1585. His parents were Robert Arrowsmith and Margery (nee Gerard). They were both arrested and taken to Lancaster Castle jail for practising the Roman Catholic faith. Their four children, including Edmund aged 1 year, were left and looked after by neighbours. Edmund went abroad, became a priest and in 1613 returned to Lancashire.

He knew he had been betrayed whilst saying mass and tried to escape, hiding his vestments and chalice in a cottage in Sandy Lane, Hindley.

Edmund was captured and taken first to the Boar's Head, Standish, where his captors used 9 shillings of Edmund's money to buy drinks. The next day he was taken to Lancaster Castle, where he was tried and found guilty of high treason.

On 28<sup>th</sup> August 1628 he was taken from Lancaster Castle and hung, drawn and quartered.

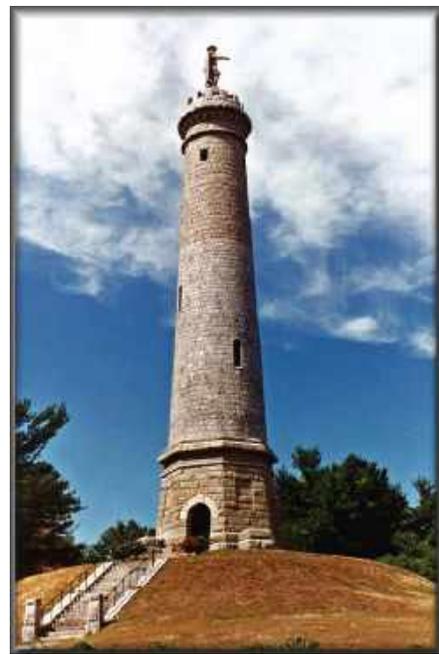
One of his followers managed to cut off his hand and it is now contained in a silver casket kept in St. Oswald's church Ashton in Makerfield. Edmund Arrowsmith was made a saint. There is a high school in Wigan named after St. Edmund Arrowsmith.

In 1629 Gilbert Gardener became Mayor of Wigan followed by Richard Worsley in 1630 and Christopher Banckes in 1631 and 1632.

In 1631 Wigan's Rector Bishop Bridgeman was officially thanked by the town of Wigan for his efforts to keep the area free from plague. He was also successful in having Wigan excluded from paying 'ship-money' (the king's own tax), this was because the town was so poor.



Sovereign's Entrance to the Houses of Parliament



Myles Standish memorial  
Duxbury, Massachusetts, USA



St. Edmund Arrowsmith



St. Oswald's Church, Ashton



The Vestments of Edmund Arrowsmith that were hidden before his capture. Now on display in St. Francis Xavier Church, Liverpool



Tower of Wigan Parish Church



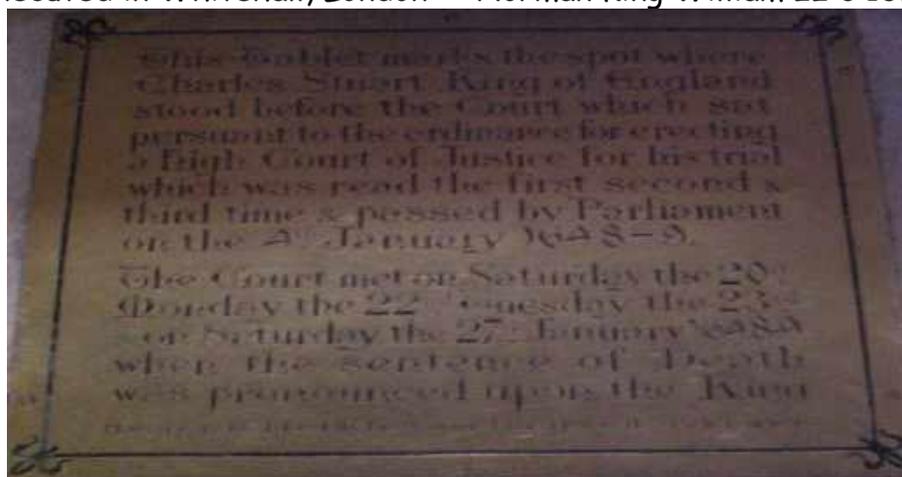
Entrance to church Tower



King Charles I statue where he was executed in Whitehall, London



Westminster Hall first built by the Norman King William II c 1090



Plaque marking the spot in Westminster Hall where Charles I stood At his trial in 1649. Also where the Gunpowder plotters were tried.

In 1633 Robert Barrow became Mayor of Wigan followed by William Forth in 1634, Robert Marland in 1635.

In 1635 Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall decided to write health and safety rules for his cannel coal mines. This was after a number of accidents and would ensure the safety, reduce the loss of his workers and regulate the amount of coal.

In 1636 Ralph Standish became Mayor of Wigan followed by William Pilkington in 1637.

Wigan sent a petition to the Admiralty about Ship Money (the king's own tax), in July 1637. The petition stated that the sum required of £50 was wrong as they only had their small burgages and the making of pots and pans. Wigan Corporation was behind the people and the petition, but the petition was ignored and everyone still had to pay.

In 1638 The Archbishop of York sent an order for a tax on clergy, to the Rector of Wigan. This said that the King wanted a sum of 3s.10d in the pound of the annual value of their livings. The Rector, Bishop Bridgeman, paid £200.

In 1638 John Brighthouse became Mayor of Wigan followed by James Molyneux in 1639.

The Bradshaigh family of Haigh Hall founded a school in 1639 and endowed this with property yielding £50 per annum.

Elections were held at Wigan town Hall. Then the registered voters' names were read out and the person declared his vote verbally.

Of Wigan's 296 burgesses entitled to vote in 1639, 173 were 'honorary' burgesses who had paid to register as voters. Wigan had a population of about 5,000.

Orlando Bridgeman and Alexander Rigby were elected to the 1640 Parliament as M.P.'s for Wigan. Orlando polled 8 more votes than Alexander.



*Orlando Bridgeman*

Orlando was the son of Rector Bridgeman, and was a Protestant and a Royalist. Alexander was a Puritan and a supporter of the Parliamentarians, he later took part in the siege of Lathom House.

In 1640 John Bullock became Mayor of Wigan.

## **THE CIVIL WAR AND WIGAN**

In 1640 King Charles I asked Parliament for more funds for a war against Scotland. The members of Parliament were not happy as King Charles had never consulted Parliament before and this Parliament was the first for 11 years. M.P.'s expressed their dissatisfaction with the king. This was the 'short' Parliament because after only 3 weeks the King dissolved Parliament on May 5<sup>th</sup> 1640.

A new election was called in October 1640 and both Wigan M.P.'s were re-elected, but this time Alexander polled 136 votes and Orlando 128 votes. Parliament met in November 1640 and this Parliament became known as the 'long' Parliament because it wasn't dissolved for 20 years.

King Charles I expected Parliament to provide him with funds and soldiers to use against the Scots. Parliament demanded an Act stating that Parliament should meet once every five years and also demanded the arrest of King Charles' adviser the Earl of Strafford. King Charles had to comply. On 20<sup>th</sup> May 1641 the Earl of Strafford was executed for treason, the King having signed the death warrant. In Summer 1641 'The Triennial Act' was passed, this allowed Parliament to meet without Royal command and declared 'ship money' to be illegal. 'Ship Money' had been a private tax imposed and collected by the king. In November 1641 Parliament led by Pym gave Charles 'The Grand Remonstrance', a document outlining 11 years of grievances against the king.

After his father died in 1641, the young Sir Roger Bradshaigh inherited the Haigh Hall estate at the age of 13 years.

In 1641 Edward Lloyd became Mayor of Wigan followed by William Forth in 1642.

On 4<sup>th</sup> January 1642 King Charles instructed his Attorney General to issue a charge of treason against one peer and 5 members of Parliament. Parliament refused to recognise these charges. Charles sent a group of horsemen into Parliament to make the arrests, but the members had been warned and had escaped. This made King Charles I very unpopular with people and he decided to leave London with his family and sent his Queen abroad to try and raise funds.

In June 1642 Parliament passed 19 propositions calling for a new constitution, demanding that ministers and judges should be appointed by Parliament and that all church and military matters should be under Parliament's control and not the king. In April 1642 Orlando Bridgeman, one of Wigan's M.P.'s, was expelled by the Parliamentarians because of his loyalty to King Charles I.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1642 King Charles I raised his standard at Nottingham and the Civil War began.

In September 1642 the first skirmish of the Civil War was in Manchester by a small Royalist force led by Lord James Strange, the Earl of Derby's son. A few weeks later William Stanley, Earl of Derby died and his son James became the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby.

Lord Derby made Wigan his headquarters and his forces were camped just outside the town centre, with Lord Derby in the town. These forces became known as the "Wigan Cavaliers".

The Mayor of Wigan, William Forth, was appointed General Major of Wigan.

During these early skirmishes of the war, communication mistakes happened. One that is recorded and kept in Wigan's archives, is of a soldier who lost the note from the local Royalist commander asking for re-inforcements.

In early 1643 they tried unsuccessfully to take Bolton, but they did capture Preston from the Parliamentarians.

### **A Parliamentarian Spy in Wigan**

On 13<sup>th</sup> January 1643 Margaret Hulme, travelling from Warrington to her home in Bolton was arrested in Hindley. She was taken to Derby's headquarters in Wigan, searched and found to have £100 hidden on her and a letter.

The Earl of Derby conducted Margaret's interrogation himself. Margaret said the money was from Mrs. Wooley to John Morris of Bolton, she denied she knew the contents of the letter. The letter was from a Mr. Wooley of Warrington warning that there were 800 soldiers, 300 armed townspeople and 80 dragoons in the town and that a further 2,000 infantry and 1,500 dragoons were expected.

The letter also stated that if Parliament was to attack Warrington, Wooley would do his best to undermine the defenders' cause in Warrington and when the Parliamentarians arrived he would guide them in and lead them to the powder magazines.

Margaret admitted travelling from Warrington with a Hindley man, William Aspull, and staying free at his house overnight. Margaret was found guilty of being a spy for the Parliamentarians, but there are no records to tell of what happened to her.

## **Charles I Acknowledges loyalty of Wigan**

On hearing of the loyalty of Wigan, on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1643, King Charles I sent a letter to the Mayor of Wigan stating:

*"Trusty and Wellbeloved Wee Greete you well. Whereas We have received particular information of the singular affection you have lately expressed in your great expense, approved fidelity, and indefatigable industry against the Rebels in those parts, we doe hereby returne Our Royal Thanks for the same and Assure you We will always remember your loyal and faithful Endeavours in Our service abovsайд upon all occasions for your advantage. And soe We bid you heartily Farewell. Given att our Court att Oxford the 25<sup>th</sup> of February in the eighteenth year of our reign."*

On 10<sup>th</sup> February 1643 The Parliamentarians broke through the Earl of Derby's defence and captured Preston. After this Derby attacked Bolton, but slowly the Royalists were pushed back. On hearing that Parliamentary reinforcements were coming, The Earl of Derby left taking with him three cartloads of dead bodies and leaving a dozen dead and mortally wounded.

On 28<sup>th</sup> March 1643 the Wigan garrison again tried to take Bolton, but without success.

The Parliamentarians under the command of Colonel Holland and Lieutenant-Colonel Rosworm, decided to attack Derby's headquarters in Wigan on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1643. The musketeers forced their way into town and the defenders ran.

In Market Place, Wigan, 86 Royalists climbed up to the top of Wigan Parish church tower and continually fired at the Parliamentarians. They killed more Parliamentarians than in the first part of the attack. On hearing that Royalist reinforcements were on their way, Holland gathered up his men to retreat. Rosworm didn't want to retreat and persuaded Holland to stay until the parish church was captured.

Rosworm set up his cannons on a hill overlooking Wigan Parish church and threatened to blow up the church if the defenders didn't give themselves up. The 86 Royalists surrendered and Holland took his men and left Rosworm with only a few men and so Lt.Colonel Rosworm jumped on his horse and ran. The place where Rosworm set up his cannons was afterwards called Longshoot.

As Wigan was the Earl of Derby's headquarters, it was considered safe and about £20,000 worth of money, jewellery and valuables had been stored in the Moot Hall. All this was stolen, the town records destroyed, the Parish church ransacked, furniture destroyed and the Cloth Hall looted leaving a trail in Market Place of linen, wool and cloth. The Earl of Derby returned to Wigan as fast as he could, but was too late so he went to Lathom House to prepare for another siege.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1643 the Parliamentarians again occupied Wigan without meeting any resistance. Sir Thomas Tyldesley had only a small Royalist troop and so retreated to Lathom House. The Parliamentarians burned the newly constructed gates of Wigan and made the people of Wigan swear that they would never again take up arms against the King or Parliament.

Christopher Bankes became Mayor of Wigan in 1643.

### **Thirty-third Rector of Wigan**

During the Civil War Rector Bridgeman supported King Charles I and because of this he was thrown out of the Wigan Rectorship in 1643 by the Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell and fined £3,000. The Parliamentary Commissioners installed James Bradshaw as Rector of Wigan. Rector Bradshaw was the son of John Bradshaw of Darcy Lever and educated at Brasenose College, Oxford. He was never legally the rector. In 1650 James was described as 'a painful, able, preaching minister,' but he had refused to observe the last fast day; (*Commonwealth Ch.Surv.59;Plund.Mins.Accts.(Rec.Soc.Lancs.& Ches.)*)

### **The Siege of Lathom House**

In 1644 The Earl of Derby was in his Isle of Man home, his wife Charlotte, Countess Derby, was in their home near Wigan, Lathom House. The house was surrounded by an 8 yard moat and comprised of 6 foot thick walls and 9 towers each containing 6 cannons. Countess Derby had a company of 300 soldiers.

On 28<sup>th</sup> February, the Parliamentarians arrived at Lathom House together with Wigan's M.P. Alexander Rigby, but Lady Derby refused to surrender. The Parliamentarians attacked and bombarded the house. On 24<sup>th</sup> March Countess Derby was asked to surrender and she sent this reply to Colonel Rigby:

*"Carry," said she, "this answer back to Rigby (tearing the paper), and tell that insolent rebel, he shall have neither persons, goods, nor house. When our strength and provisions are spent, we shall find a fire more merciful than Rigby; and then, if the providence of God prevent it not, my goods and house shall burn in his sight; and myself, children, and soldiers, rather than fall into his hands will seal our religion and loyalty in the same flames."*

On 25<sup>th</sup> May after three months, the Earl of Derby and Prince Rupert (nephew of Charles I) returned and forced the Parliamentarian soldiers back to Bolton. Countess Derby retired to the Isle of Man.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May 1644 Prince Rupert and the Earl of Derby attacked Bolton, a Parliamentary stronghold. Prince Rupert asked the town to surrender, but they replied with cannon fire. After 15 minutes Derby broke into the town with 200 hand picked soldiers. The entire Parliamentary garrison was killed or captured apart from senior officers who got away on their horses.

Wigan's M.P. Alexander Rigby was amongst those who escaped from Bolton.

The Earl of Derby has been accused of not only looting and pillaging Bolton, but of raping and murdering innocent civilians including women and children, this became known as "The Bolton Massacre". The Earl of Derby always denied this accusation, but the Parliamentarians used this as the reason he was executed.

At Bolton, Prince Rupert captured 22 regimental flags and these he presented to Countess Derby in admiration of her courage.

Prince Rupert then went to Wigan where he was warmly welcomed. The Mayor of Wigan, Christopher Bankes, held an official banquet in Prince Rupert's honour at a cost of £20. After his short stay in Wigan, Prince Rupert proceeded onto battles in Liverpool.

In 1644 Ralph Standish became Mayor of Wigan and in 1645 Sir Thomas Stanley became Mayor of Wigan.

On December 6<sup>th</sup> 1645 General Egerton and his Parliamentary roundheads successfully attacked Lathom House and the house was partly destroyed.

In 1646 Robert Markland became Mayor of Wigan followed by Richard Pennington in 1647.

In 1648 Oliver Cromwell and his Parliamentary army visited Wigan on his way to Preston where he was victorious over the Royalists.

Ambrose Jolley was Mayor of Wigan in 1648 followed by Joseph Rigby in 1649.

King Charles I was beheaded on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1649 in Whitehall, London. Colonel Robert Lilburn was one of the signatories on his death warrant.

The king's eldest son became King Charles II.

## **Wigan Devastated by the Civil War**

In 1649 Wigan had been devastated by the war, the plundering by troops of both sides and by plague. Wigan Parish church registers recorded the number of people dying from the plague in 1649:

March - 16 people died

April - 36 people died

May - 11 people died

June - 6 people died

July - 8 people died

The people of Wigan sent a petition to Parliament stating:

*"The hand of God is evidently seen stretched out upon the county, chastening it with a three-corded scourge of sword, pestilence and famine, all at once afflicting it. They have borne the heat and the burden of a first and second war in an especial manner..... In this county hath the playe of pestilence been ranging these three years and upwards, occasioned chiefly by the wars. There is a very great scarcity and dearth of all provisions, especially of all sorts of grain, particularly that kind by which that county is most sustained, which is full sixfold the price that of late it hath been. All trade, by which they have been much supported, is utterly decayed, it would melt any good heart to see the numerous swarms of begging poore, and the many families that pine away at home, not having faces (i.e. being too proud) to beg".(Civil War Tracts, 278).*

In April 1649 Wigan had 2,000 poor people who for 3 months and upwards had been restrained. For them the ordinary course of law offered no relief. In the Wigan registers there are many entries referring to deaths from the plague. On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1649 was the last recording of a burial for someone who had died from plague.

In 1650 Robert Baron became Mayor of Wigan followed by Alexander Thompson in 1651.

In 1650 King Charles II landed in Scotland to renew the battle for his throne.

Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall was only a teenager and hadn't taken part in the Civil War, but after King Charles II landed in Scotland he was arrested as a Royalist supporter.

He was later released after assuring the Parliamentarians he would not help the Royalists.

In June 1651 King Charles II lead a Scottish army into England and on 14<sup>th</sup> August King Charles II spent the night at Bryn Hall the home of Sir William Gerard.

## THE BATTLE OF WIGAN LANE

On the 25th August 1651, the Earl of Derby and Sir Thomas Tyldesley were leading their Royalist forces to join up with King Charles II at Worcester. Parliamentarian commander, Colonel Robert Lilburne, knew of Derby's movements and waited for him beside the River Douglas.

*"The King and the Earl of Derby" cried the Royalists - "Liberty! Liberty!" cried the infuriated foe.*

*There was in the midst of bitter determination, no calling for quarter, for death or victory was the object of the brave. Derby himself was ever in the heat of the battle and seemed to have a charmed life. Again and again he charged past bullets and sword - his horse was slain and he was severely wounded, yet he seemed not to be inconvenienced nor even feel his wounds.*

*Although many of his men were already wounded and submitting as prisoners of the foe, Derby re-mounted on a riderless horse and re-charged calling his men to follow. He was shot at and hacked at with swords, yet he galloped through the masses of the enemy (the wonder and admiration of friend and foe) slaying and wounding as he rode. Again his horse was shot under him and he was wounded afresh.*

*Derby fought all in vain, more hopeless grew the battle. The gallant Cavalier, Sir Thomas Tyldesley, had been no less courageous than Derby. Again and again had he renewed the attack, showing an example of envious bravery yet in a desperate onslaught he was slain and his men fell easy victims to the foe."*

In a few hours the Battle of Wigan Lane was fought and lost. It is said that Wigan Lane ran with blood and this site is shown on maps as the 'Bloody Mountains'. Sir Thomas Tyldesley, the local commander was killed. The Earl of Derby was wounded in the arms and shoulders, but escaped into Wigan town centre and took refuge in the 'Dog Tavern' (later known as the 'Old Dog Inn' or 'Legs of Man' - from Lord Derby's coat of arms - this tavern was demolished in 1971 for the New Arcade, later Marketgate).

Hearing about the Battle of Wigan Lane, Sir Roger Bradshaigh, went to the site of the battle in Wigan Lane. He rescued Sir William Throgmorton who had been wounded and left for dead. Sir Roger took him back to Haigh Hall to treat him and allowed him to stay until he had recovered from his wounds.

Colonel Lilburne's victory for the Parliamentarians ended Charles II's hopes of support from northern England

The Earl of Derby left Wigan that night and fought with King Charles II against Cromwell at the battle of Worcester on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1651. Colonel Lilburne led the Parliamentary forces at Worcester and defeated the king and the Royalists.

The Earl of Derby helped King Charles II to escape and then surrendered to the Parliamentary forces. He was taken to Chester where he was tried and found guilty of the Bolton massacre. He was then sent to Bolton to be executed. The scaffold was built using wood from his home of Lathom House.



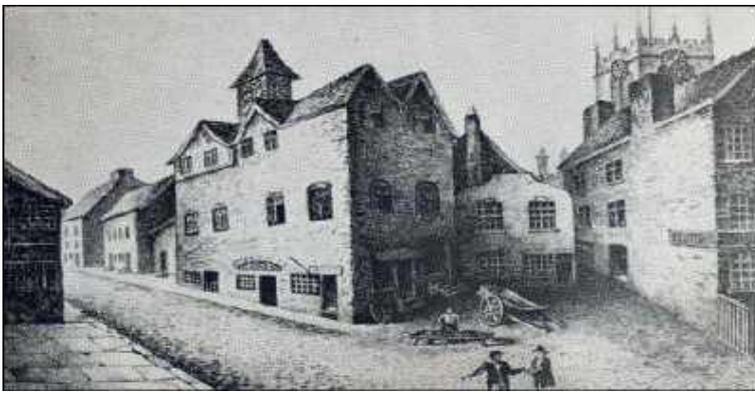
*Drawing of the Execution of the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby (at Ye Old Man & Scythe inn)*

James Stanley, Earl of Derby was beheaded on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1651 and Alexander Rigby, M.P. for Wigan supervised the execution. The Earl of Derby's body was taken to Wigan where it lay overnight, then taken to Lathom House and he is buried in Ormskirk churchyard.

In Bolton, there is a large memorial at the site of his execution. Nearby is the 'Ye Old Man and Scythe' inn where The Earl of Derby had his last drink and they still have the chair upon which he sat just before his execution. The inn was owned by the Stanley family and had been since 1160.

Rector John Bridgeman died in December 1652 at his son's house, Morton Hall in Oswestry.

In 1652 William Glover became Mayor of Wigan followed by James Scott in 1653.



*Wigan Moot Hall 1652*

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1652 Eline Anderton was taken to the Court Leet and had to wear "the bridle" from the Moot Hall to the Market Cross and back. This was because she had left the Moot Hall without leave.

*(The Scolds Bridle was a form of social control, used exclusively on women at a time when the law did not recognise the individual rights of women.*

*Made of metal and with a vicious bit that held down the tongue, women who had spread malicious gossip or nagged their husbands too much in public were often subjected to a few hours in the bridle).*

James Bradshaw lost the Rectorship of Wigan in 1653 because of the legal rector (John Bridgeman's) death. Soon afterwards James Bradshaw was appointed to Macclesfield, where he remained till the Act of Uniformity of 1662 was enforced.

### **Thirty-fourth Rector of Wigan**

In 1653 Charles Hotham was presented to the rectorship of Wigan by the Hotham Trustees on the death of Rector John Bridgeman. Charles Hotham was a son of Sir John Hotham and ancestor of the present Lord Hotham. He was educated at Christ's College, Cambridge. Rector Hotham paid his first-fruits on 9th May 1653.

### **Oliver Cromwell made Lord Protector**

In December 1653 Oliver Cromwell was made Lord Protector. He set out the ideals of the Protectorate; "to act for God and the peace and good of the Nation, and particularly...to consider and relieve the distress of the poor and oppressed". The Protectorate also considered having a written constitution, whether Parliament should have two elected chambers and no religion tied to the state.

Under Oliver Cromwell there was religious freedom, but he did ban celebrations at Christmas and other feast days. He also championed the idea that rulers should be accountable to the people. The House of Lords was abolished and so was torture. Cromwell had also established the New Model Army who were properly trained and good soldiers were promoted to officer status regardless of title or wealth. For the first time working class men could become army officers.



Gerrard Winstanley House, Wigan  
(from rear of Wigan Parish Church)



Oliver Cromwell statue  
outside Houses of Parliament



James Stanley, 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby



Countess Charlotte of Derby



Sealed Knot Re-enactment battles of  
The English Civil War

Thomas Tyldesley Monument,  
on the site of the battle of  
Wigan Lane, Wigan

## **Gerrard Winstanley**

Gerrard was born in 1609 and baptised in Wigan Parish Church. He went to London to make his living as a mercer, but in 1643 his business failed. He worked as a farm labourer during the Civil War and started a commune "The Diggers or True Levellers". The True Levellers cultivated common ground until they were forced off the land by Cromwell.

Gerrard then became a writer and political thinker, expressing views of freedom, justice and equality in pamphlet form. Later he wrote a book called "Law of Freedom" which began with an open letter to Oliver Cromwell, the first paragraph was:

*"Sir, God hath honoured you with the highest honour of any man since Moses's time, to be the head of a people who have cast out an oppressing Pharaoh. For when the Norman power had conquered our forefathers, he took the free use of our English ground from them, and made them his servants. And God hath made you a successful instrument to cast out that conqueror, and to recover our land and liberties again, by your victories, out of that Norman hand.*

*That which is yet wanting on your part to be done is this, to see the oppressor's power to be cast out with his person; and to see that the free possession of the land and liberties be put into the hands of the oppressed commoners of England."*

Oliver Cromwell was unhappy with Winstanley's ideas although they were popular with the people.

Gerard Bankes became Mayor of Wigan in 1654 followed by Ambrose Jolley in 1655 and Edward Sumpnor in 1656 and William Tempest in 1657.

In 1656 Oliver Cromwell and the Protectorate allowed Jews to return to England, they had been banished in 1290 by King Edward I.

In September 1658 Oliver Cromwell died and his son Richard became Lord Protector. Richard summoned a new Parliament and elections began in Wigan.

Robert Baron became Mayor of Wigan in 1658, William Glover in 1659, Nicholas Pennington in 1660.

King Charles II was restored to the throne of England in May 1660.

The Restoration of King Charles II put an end to Gerrard Winstanley's ideas and any discussion on the rights of ordinary people. Gerrard became a Quaker in 1660 and died in 1676. Wigan's M.P.'s offices are located in Gerrard Winstanley House, Wigan.

## **Rector accused of heterodoxy**

Just after the restoration of King Charles II, John Burton was presented to the rectory of Wigan by the king. Charles Hotham was removed and accused of heterodoxy (giving out unorthodox opinions at variance with the official line). On the 8th October 1660 Charles Hotham was reinstated as Rector of Wigan.

In 1661 Sir Roger Bradshaigh was Mayor of Wigan followed by Ralph Markland in 1662.

### **Thirty-fifth Rector of Wigan**

In 1662 Charles Hotham was removed from the Rectorship of Wigan because he refused to comply with the Act of Uniformity. George Hall was presented to the post of Rector of Wigan by Sir Orlando Bridgeman. Rector Hall was also made Bishop of Chester in 1662 and was Archdeacon of Canterbury. Sidesmen of the church are first mentioned during Rector Hall's time.



*Rector of Wigan George Hall*

Bishop George Hall died in 1668 from an accident whilst gardening, when he fell on a knife which was in his pocket. He was buried in the sanctuary of Wigan Parish church.

### **Charles II Charter to Wigan**

In May 1662 Charles II issued Wigan with a special charter and gave Wigan the title of Ancient and Loyal. This charter acknowledged Wigan's help to him and his father (King Charles I) during the Civil War. The charter confirmed the previous charters, but unlike the other Wigan charters this charter gave the rights and privileges not to the Rector, but to Wigan Corporation.

The charter also granted that the Mayor was to act as magistrate for the borough of Wigan and this was to be quite separate from the Lancashire justices. Wigan Corporation had the right to hold 'Pie Powder Courts'. Wigan had always held court leets over its own residents, but this gave them the right to fine outsiders to the town. Wigan was a popular place to visit on market days and fairs and the town was able to collect a lot of money through court fines to visitors.

Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall was confirmed as mayor and the charter also named and confirmed to office the Recorder, 11 aldermen and 2 bailiffs. For the first time a 'common clerk' (later Town Clerk) was defined as a Crown appointment for life.

The charter granted an additional fair to be held on 3 days commencing 16<sup>th</sup> July each year. The Corporation was also given the right to acquire and dispose of real estate.

King Charles II gave Wigan a ceremonial sword to be carried at state occasions. On one side of the sword are the royal arms of Charles II and on the other the arms of Sir Roger Bradshaigh. The sword and charter are kept in Wigan Town Hall.

In 1663 William Daniell became Mayor of Wigan followed by Matthew Markland in 1664, James Ford in 1665, Myles Turner in 1666, Robert Longshaw in 1667 and William Laithwaite in 1668.

### **John Dwight**

John Dwight, the famous potter lived in Millgate, Wigan from 1665 to 1671. John's 3 children were baptised in Wigan between 1667 and 1671. John experimented with local clays and discovered a "transparent porcellane and opacous redd and dark coloured porcellane".

In 1671 he was granted his first patent for "the mystery of transparent earthenware" commonly known by the name of porcelain or china.

In 1671 he moved to Fulham where he founded the Fulham Pottery.

### **Thirty-sixth Rector of Wigan**

In 1668 John Wilkins was presented to the Rectorship of Wigan by the Bridgeman Trustees. John Wilkins was originally a Royalist, but became a Presbyterian during the Civil War and married Oliver Cromwell's sister.



*Rector John Wilkins*

Bishop John Wilkins was a brilliant mathematician and scientist, in 1660 he was one of the founders of the Royal Society. He wrote a treatise about the possibility of a 'flying chariot' going to the other side of the world or even the moon.

In recognition of his theories in "The Discovery of a World in the Moone", one of the mountains of the moon is named after him. On the restoration of King Charles II in May 1660, Bishop John Wilkins again returned to the Church of England.

In 1669 John Leatherbarrow became Mayor of Wigan followed by Myles Turner in 1670, Ralph Markland in 1671, William Glover in 1672 and Robert Baron in 1673.

### **Thirty-seventh Rector of Wigan**

In 1673 John Pearson was presented to the post of Rector of Wigan by the Bridgeman Trustees. Rector John Wilkins had died on 19th November 1672.

Rector Pearson had remained loyal to the king and during Cromwell's Protectorate had hidden in London.

After the Restoration in 1660, he became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge for 11 years. During this time he wrote many essays on doctrine and theology. He wrote "Exposition of the Creed" and this was considered to be a perfect theological work and was re-printed many times.

On being made Rector of Wigan he lived at Wigan Hall for a time each summer. He had three curates carrying out his regular parish work.

In 1674 Nicholas Pennington became Mayor of Wigan followed by James Ford in 1675, Alexander Rigbye in 1676, Ralph Holmes in 1677 and Robert Leatherbarrow in 1678.

On 5<sup>th</sup> October 1678 Potato marketing is first mentioned in Wigan's records. The North West of England was the first part of mainland Britain to grow potatoes, they were first grown in Ireland. Potatoes were easy to grow, easy to cook and very filling.

In 1679 King Charles II created Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh, a baronet. Sir Roger became Mayor of Wigan in 1679.

In 1679 Alexander Rigby, M.P. for Wigan constructed a monument to Sir Thomas Tyldesley on Wigan Lane where the Civil War battle took place and where Sir Thomas died.

Thomas Bankes became Mayor of Wigan in 1680 followed by Sir Roger Bradshaigh in 1681, then William Daniell in 1682, Thomas Turner in 1683 and Sir Roger again in 1684 to 1685.

Recusants were Roman Catholics who were not allowed to practise their faith, they couldn't be members of Parliament, the Judiciary or hold any office or profession. Roman Catholics also had to pay double land tax. In 1681 there were ninety-one recusants convicted in Wigan.

One case recorded is of Anne, the widow of Richard Pennington who was fined £100 for recusancy. As the bailiffs tried to take her possessions, a crowd of 'some hundreds' appeared and for 4½ hours the bailiffs were imprisoned in Anne's house. When the bailiffs left the house, they were set upon and Anne's goods taken from them, the bailiffs escaped with their lives.



Chair Lord Derby sat in before his Execution (Old Man & Scythe pub)



Monument where Lord Derby was executed in Bolton



Charles II sword presented to The people of Wigan now in Wigan town hall.



Scold's Bridle on display in Lancaster Castle used as punishment to women



Wall by Wigan Parish church dated 1683



Market Cross and stocks, Standish



Wigan Hall - home of the Rectors of Wigan



Market Cross, Market Place, Wigan  
Commemorating Wigan's 1246 charter



Clock made in  
Wigan c 1750 now on display at  
Liverpool World Museum

On 6<sup>th</sup> February 1685 King Charles II died and having no legitimate children, his brother became King James II.

### **James II Charter**

In 1685 James II granted Wigan a supplementary charter. This charter extended the privileges of Wigan Corporation and allowed the use of a common seal by the borough to ratify transactions. The Mayor of Wigan was to be chosen annually and Sir Roger Bradshaigh is mentioned and confirmed as the serving Mayor of Wigan.

Lawrence Anderton became Mayor of Wigan later in 1685 followed by Robert Ford in 1686.

### **Thirty-eighth Rector of Wigan**

In 1686 on the death of Wigan's Rector Bishop Pearson, Thomas Cartwright became the Rector of Wigan. He had been proposed to the position by the Bridgeman Trustees.

Thomas Cartwright was also made Bishop of Chester and was a friend of King James II.

In 1687 Christopher Sumpner became Mayor of Wigan.

In 1687 King James II, who had become a Roman Catholic, introduced the Declaration of Indulgence. This gave religious freedom to non-conformists (those not of the Church of England faith). King James sent to prison those who were against this declaration. King James ordered the declaration to be read out in all churches, some clergy refused and were arrested.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1688 Thomas Gerard, a Roman Catholic, became Mayor of Wigan.

King James II, brother of Charles II, was unpopular. On 10<sup>th</sup> June 1688 his second wife Mary, a Catholic, gave birth to a son James, who would be the new heir to the throne. His daughter Mary, now second in line to the throne, and her husband Prince William of Orange were invited to England by those displeased with James II and worried about his being a Catholic.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1688 William of Orange and Mary arrived in England from Holland with a large navy of 250 Dutch warships, they were joined by John Churchill and a large number of the English army. King James II fled with his family, first to Ireland and then to France.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1688, James Scott replaced Thomas Gerard as Mayor of Wigan.

The Rector of Wigan, Bishop Thomas Cartwright was a friend and supporter of King James II and went to Ireland with him when he fled the country. Bishop Cartwright died in Dublin in 1689.

Parliament offered Mary and William joint sovereignty. They were crowned Queen Mary II and King William III. William and Mary accepted a Bill of Rights which limited the power of the monarchy in favour of Parliament and also ensured that no Catholic could succeed to the throne of England. John Churchill was rewarded for his help by being made Earl of Marlborough.

### **St. John's RC church c1688**

In Standishgate, Wigan, opposite St. John's R.C. church, a priest's hiding place was discovered when a Tudor building was demolished. Some of the beams from the Tudor building are now on display in the Bluecoat School adjacent to Wigan Parish Churchyard.

The Tudor building had been a shop and the "customers" would come to the shop to hear mass. At that time the shop had 300 "customers", in 1817 the shop had 3,000 "customers".

When the shop was demolished a "priest's hiding hole" was discovered.

St. John's church celebrated its tercentenary in 1988, but the present church building, which cost £9,000, was opened in 1819.

Eileen Bithell and Eileen Walsh started BETA at St. John's presbytery in August 1991. They bought pens, paper, books and made resources and started with 4 students.

BETA moved to Rodney House in 1992 and over 17 years has helped over 700 adults of all abilities. 30,000 people have been helped in BETA Netc@fe over 8 years since opening in 2000.

In 1689 John Baldwin became Mayor of Wigan.

### **Thirty-ninth Rector of Wigan**

Nicholas Stratford was made Rector of Wigan in 1689 on the death of Bishop Cartwright. He was made Bishop of Chester and was one of the first Bishops to be nominated by King William III.

Bishop Stratford was noted for his tolerance towards dissenters to the Church of England. The Rector, Bishop Stratford, re-built the parsonage house in 1695.

## **The Jacobites and the Standish or Lancashire Plot**

Lancashire was the stronghold of the Jacobites (supporters of King James II). Over Christmas 1689 and the new year 1690, Standish Hall was the meeting place of the local Jacobites who included many of Wigan's wealthy and prominent families such as the Gerards, Tyldesleys, Stanleys, Towneleys and Daltons. Plans were made at these meetings to return James II to the throne.

Amongst those at the meetings was Robert Dodsworth, a Government spy. Robert Dodsworth informed the authorities about the plot. Arrest warrants were issued, but no arrests were made. Robert Dodsworth was later found murdered.

In 1690 King James II and his army landed in Ireland and was welcomed, by the Irish people, but unsuccessfully fought a battle against William. James escaped again to France. James died in France on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1701.

In 1690 Thomas Bankes was made Mayor of Wigan followed by Thomas Cooper in 1691, Sir Richard Standish in 1692, Hugh Jolley in 1693 and Peter Shakerley in 1694.

Queen Mary II died childless in 1694 and King William III reigned alone.

In 1694 William Standish again called the Jacobites together plotting to restore James II and assassinate King William. At Standish Hall he had collected firearms ready for rebellion. John Lunt was amongst the plotters and he was a government spy. John Lunt reported to the authorities and the plotters were arrested, William Standish managed to escape. The plotters were aware that Lunt was a spy and so had dispersed the firearms and taken care about using their real names. When the authorities searched Standish Hall they couldn't find any incriminating evidence against the plotters.

The trial was held in Manchester and all the Jacobite plotters pleaded not guilty. Part of their defence was that they were 'men of exemplary character who wouldn't conspire against the crown'. When John Lunt was brought in as the witness for the prosecution, he couldn't identify any of the men by their real names.

The judge acquitted the prisoners and said "Let me therefore say to you, go and sin nor more, least a worse thing befall you". William Standish returned to Standish Hall. Years later in 1757 during alterations to Standish Hall, papers were found which would have implicated the conspirators in the Jacobite Plot.

In 1695 Gerard Ford became Mayor of Wigan followed by Thomas Ford in 1696. Thomas died on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1697 and Ralph Markland became mayor until October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1697 when James Hervey became Mayor of Wigan. In 1698 Sir Roger Bradshaigh became Mayor of Wigan followed by John Markland in 1699, William Woods in 1700 and William Scott in 1701.

In the 1700-1701 elections to Parliament, Wigan's M.P.'s were Sir Roger Bradshaigh, Tory and Sir Alexander Rigby, Whig. The Tories were later to become the Conservatives and The Whigs became The Liberal Party.

King William III died in 1702 and Mary's sister Anne became Queen. Queen Anne was a popular monarch.

In 1702 Gilbert Ford became Mayor of Wigan followed by Sir Roger Bradshaigh in 1703, Adam Bankes in 1704 and 1705 then Thomas Martin in 1706.

### **Fortieth Rector of Wigan**

On the death of Bishop Stratford in 1706, Edward Finch was made Rector of Wigan. His patrons were Sir John Bridgeman, the Bishop of London, Lord Digby and Orlando Bridgeman.

Robert Hollingshead became Mayor of Wigan in 1707, Thomas Bankes in 1708, Henry Bradshaigh in 1709, Henry Mason in 1710, Thomas Bankes in 1711, William Bradshaigh in 1712 and James Ford in 1713.

In 1709 Rector Finch, who was a musician, installed a new organ in Wigan Parish church. The old organ had been destroyed during The Commonwealth and in its place, the mayor and corporation had installed a pew for themselves. In 1713 Rector Finch resigned and this may have been due to the Mayor and Corporation who were annoyed at their pew being removed for the new organ.

Queen Anne had 17 children, but they all died. The Act of Settlement stated that only Protestants could be contenders for the throne of England. When Queen Anne died in 1714 it was decided that George of Hanover, Germany, the grandson of Charles I sister Sophia and 52<sup>nd</sup> in line to the throne, would become king of England. George could not speak any English, but he was of the Protestant faith. King George I was very unpopular in England partly through the greed of his mistresses and his treatment of his wife. In 1692 he had divorced his wife of 10 years and imprisoned her in a castle until her death in 1726.

In 1714 on the accession of King George I, Sir Roger Bradshaigh left the Tory party and became a member of the Whig party.

## **Forty-first Rector of Wigan**

On 30<sup>th</sup> April 1714 Samuel Aldersey was made Rector of Wigan, he had been educated at Brasenose College, Oxford. He was married to Henrietta daughter of Dean Bridgeman and it was the Bridgeman trustees who presented him to the post of Rector.

Robert Hollingshead became Mayor of Wigan in 1714 followed by Adam Bankes in 1715.

## **The first Jacobite Rebellion**

In October 1715 James, the Old Pretender (son of King James II and half-brother to Queen Mary and Queen Anne), landed in Scotland. With a small force, mostly from Scotland, he arrived in Lancashire in November. The Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire Sir Henry Houghton assembled the Lancashire Militia when he knew the Jacobites were approaching and retreated to Wigan on 11<sup>th</sup> November. In Wigan he tried to rally support and was joined by government forces.

Ralph Standish of Standish Hall, Wigan was, like his father William, a supporter of the Jacobites. Ralph went to Preston with many men from Wigan and joined the rebels. On the 12<sup>th</sup> November 1715 in Preston the Jacobites were attacked by two Hanovarian armies of King George I. After 14 days they surrendered and Ralph Standish was taken prisoner along with many others. James Stuart, the old pretender, managed to escape.

After they had been taken prisoner, the Jacobites were tried and sentenced at Preston. They were then marched from Preston to London, passing via Wigan. When they arrived in Wigan on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1716, five of the men were executed in Market Place, Wigan.

The Wigan Jacobites executed were James Blundell, James Finch, John Macilliwray, William Whalley, and James Burn.

The rest of the Jacobite prisoners, including Ralph Standish, were taken on to London to be tried. Ralph Standish was tried on June 16<sup>th</sup> and found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. Ralph's wife, Lady Phillipa, was the daughter of Henry, Duke of Norfolk. Lady Phillipa had followed Ralph to London and using her influence, managed to get her husband released from prison, although his lands had been taken by the King.

With the assistance of his mother, Ralph was later able to buy his lands back.

In 1716 Henry Mason became Mayor of Wigan followed by William Baldwin in 1717, James Ford in 1718. In 1719 and 1720 Sir Roger Bradshaigh was Mayor of Wigan.

In 1720 Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall and Earl Barrymore were elected as M.P.'s for Wigan. They built a new Town Hall in Market Place, Wigan (this was demolished in 1882).



Wigan Town Hall 1720

Two Acts of Parliament in 1720 enabled Wigan to completely overhaul the roads system to and from the town. At this time Wigan's roads were in a very bad condition especially considering the number of people visiting for the markets and fairs. The 1720 Act stated:

*'by reason of the many carriages of goods and merchandise passing through the same (roads) are become ruinous and almost impassable, especially in the winter season, and some parts thereof are so narrow that coaches and carriages cannot pass by one another'*

Roads were paid for by tolls and Wigan did have toll gates. Burgesses and merchants did not pay tolls on the roads controlled by the Wigan council as long as they asked permission prior to travel.

The Douglas Navigation Bill became law on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1720. This was to make the River Douglas navigable from the River Ribble to Wigan town centre (Miry Lane). The main purpose was the transport of coal from Wigan.



The Douglas Navigation Bill

The commissioners appointed to supervise and oversee the work were all colliery owners - Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall, Edward Holt of Wigan, Hugh Holme of Holland House, Robert and William Bankes of Winstanley.

In 1721 James Brown became Mayor of Wigan, followed by John Markland in 1722, John Baldwin in 1723, Sir Roger Bradshaigh in 1724, James Earl of Barrymore in 1725, Legh Master in 1726, Alexander Leigh in 1727, James Tempest in 1728, Sir Roger Bradshaigh in 1729, Robert Holt in 1730, George Brown in 1731, James Brown in 1732 and James Ford in 1733.

## **Wigan's growing industry**

In 1723 a new even larger grammar school was built in Rodney Street. This was due to the rise in Wigan's population, although this school was still for children of affluent Wigan people.



This is the original Ben Jonson public house built in 1730 on Warrington Road (The Roman Road). The Ben Jonson was a coaching inn complete with stables.

It was common practice in the 17<sup>th</sup> to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century for merchants and colliery owners to issue tokens as part of their employees wages. These tokens could only be spent in shops and pubs owned by the employers. In 1830 an Act of Parliament was passed to stop this practice.

Work started on the navigation of the River Douglas in 1732. For his work, Alexander Leigh was paid 63 guineas a year. Local timber and stone were used to shore up the river. To achieve the right water level, weirs and 7 locks were used and these were made of ash and fir. The cost of the project was £20,000.

In 1734 The Douglas Navigation opened and successfully revolutionised Wigan's transport capabilities especially for the coal industry. In one account in 1741, Sir Roger Bradshaigh paid £4.10s to John Pearson for carting one thousand baskets of cannel coal from Haigh to the River Douglas.

The coal would then be put onto small boats on the river. Coal was used in local industries such as pewterers, ironfounders, bell founders, ceramists (using local clay), brass-workers and glass makers.

James, Earl of Barrymore was made Mayor of Wigan in 1734 followed by James Tempest in 1735, Robert Holt in 1736, Alexander Leigh in 1737, George Brown in 1738, Thomas Bankes in 1739, James Ford in 1740 and Edward Holt in 1741.

## **The forty-second Rector of Wigan**

On the death of Rector Samuel Aldersey, Roger Bridgeman became Rector of Wigan on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1741. He was presented by the Bridgeman Trustees. Rector Roger was the son of Sir John Bridgeman and was educated at and became a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford. He resided at Wigan Hall and was unmarried.

## Wigan's growing industry

Wigan was becoming even more famous for coal, industry and pewter. There was also a large production of clocks and watches which were considered to be of excellent quality.

In 1711 the clockmaker John Burges applied to be a freeman of Wigan which would mean he could open a shop in Wigan. This was rejected even though he had been born in Wigan, married in Wigan Parish church where his children were baptised.

John's father was the clockmaker Henry Burges, although he lived, married and his children born in Wigan, his shop was just outside Wigan town and therefore he was not a freeman of Wigan.

Other Wigan clockmakers at the time were Thomas Bridge, James Aspinwall and Henry Hindley.

John Burges applied again in 1712 for his freedom of Wigan, but this time as a gunsmith and his application was granted. It would appear that there were other clockmakers in Wigan who had objected to his first application because he would have been competition.

John continued to make very fine eight-day hybrid long case clocks and lantern clocks and signed them 'John Burges de Wigan'. John Burges' trademark was an engraved lion's head on the dial and the engraving was exceptional.

John's son Joseph was baptised at Wigan Parish church in 1727. John Burges died in 1754. Joseph continued his father and grandfather's clockmaking and signed his clocks 'Joseph Burges, Wigan'.

Wigan's pewterware was second only in quality to London's. The largest pewterers were the local Bancks family. The Bancks family had property in Market Place, Standishgate and Scholes.



17<sup>th</sup> century pewter dish in the Mayor's Chambers, Wigan Town Hall

Wigan was a popular place to live, but you had to have permission to live or work here. In 1742 the following petition was heard at the Court Leet in Wigan:

*To the Worshipful John Markeland Esquire, Mayor of the Borough and Corporation of Wigan, in the County of Lancaster, and to the Aldermen and Jury assembled at the Court Leet held by adjournment in and for the said Borough, the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of January 1742.*

*The Humble petition of Thomas Chadwick, Linen weaver, Sheweth, - That your petitioner is in very good circumstances, has no family, and is desirous to inhabit and follow his Trade in your Corporation, and for that purpose to be admitted a freeman thereof, he be willing to pay such a sum of money for his freedom as your Worships and the Gentlemen of the Jury think proper.*

*Your Petitioner, therefore, humbly prays you, Gentlemen of the Jury, that he may be admitted a freeman of this your Corporation, he paying such a sum of money for his freedom as your Worships and you, Gentlemen of the Jury, shall think proper.*

*And your Petitioner shall ever pray, &c.*

*We elect him a Freeman of this Corporation, he paying Four Pounds four shillings in a Month's time to the present bailiffs.*

If it was found that someone was working, trading and or living in Wigan without the Corporation's permission, then they were heavily fined and stopped from working or trading. For example, Peter Dykes from Shevington was given 38 days to stop trading and fined 39 shillings per month if he didn't stop.

In 1742 John Markland became Mayor of Wigan followed by William Curghey in 1743, James Hartley in 1744 and Edward Holt in 1745.



*Wigan Marketplace c1750*

### **Bonnie Prince Charlie in Wigan**

On the corner of Bishopgate and Dorning Street Wigan stands a fairly new office building (The Telephone Exchange), Walmesley House. On the building is a small plaque recording Bonnie Prince Charlie's stay in Wigan.

'Bonnie Prince Charlie', was the grandson of James II and known as The Young Pretender. 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' stayed in Hallgate, Wigan, just behind the Parish church, at the original Walmesley House (built by John Walmesley), on the night of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1745. Some of his Scottish soldiers stayed in Rodney Street at the old grammar school. (The old grammar school was demolished in 1939). The Jacobite army had just suffered a massive defeat at Derby.

A few days later, the Duke of Cumberland (the son of King George II), Commander of the King's army, also stayed at Walmesley House.

After their rest in Wigan, the Jacobites and 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' went on to be defeated finally at the battle of Culloden in Scotland. 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' escaped after the battle with a £30,000 bounty on his head. He eventually, thanks to Flora McDonald, escaped on a boat from Scotland to France. He lived in Rome until his death in 1788 and he is buried in St. Peter's Basilica alongside his father (The Old Pretender) and grandfather (King James II).

The Jacobites remained loyal to James and his family and as they drank the "loyal toast" they would move their wine glass over the water jug or water glass, thus drinking to "the king over the water".

In 1746 Thomas Bankes became Mayor of Wigan followed by John Auzlark in 1747, Richard Holmes in 1748, John Percivall in 1749 and William Curghey in 1750.

### **The forty-third Rector of Wigan**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1750 Shirley Cotes became the Rector of Wigan on the death of Rector Roger Bridgeman. Rector Cotes was presented to the post by Lord Digby. Rector Cotes was educated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford. He resided at Wigan Hall. His eldest son John became an M.P. for Wigan from 1782 to 1802.



*Wigan Parish church c 1750*



Sir Roger and Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh at Haigh Hall.  
They were married in 1746. The painting is now in Wigan History Shop.



Ballroom of Haigh Hall 2008



Old toilet Haigh Hall



Haigh Hall 2008



Trading tokens found in the Ben Jonson pub which was built in 1730



Bluecoat School next to Wigan Parish Church built 1774



Miniature of Bonnie Prince Charlie containing a lock of his hair cut in 1737  
Now on display at St. Francis Xavier Church, Liverpool



Buckingham Palace

bought by King George III in 1761

In 1751 John Clayton became Mayor of Wigan followed by Richard Holmes in 1752, William Curghey in 1753, John Percivall in 1754, Thomas Leatherbarrow in 1755, William Ollerhead in 1756, William Curghey in 1757, William Ollerhead in 1758, Alexander Leigh in 1759, Richard Holmes in 1760, Edward Clayton in 1761, Robert Ward in 1762, Thomas Barton 1763, William Ollerhead in 1764, John Percival in 1765, James Hervey in 1766, Robert Green in 1767, George Kenyon in 1768, James Scott in 1769, William Ollerhead in 1770, Alexander Radcliffe in 1771, James Scott in 1772, Robert Green in 1773, William Ollerhead in 1774, James Scott in 1775 and Alexander Radcliffe in 1776.

In 1760 the printing press is said to have been introduced into Wigan.

### **The Blue Coat School**

In 1774 the Blue Coat School was built in Hallgate adjoining the Wigan Parish churchyard. This was a church charity school.

The Blue Coat School is still in the same location having been restored in 1986.

### **Forty-fourth Rector of Wigan**

Rector Cotes died in 1776 and on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1776 Guy Fairfax became Rector of Wigan. Rector Fairfax had been presented to the post by Sir H. Bridgeman. Rector Fairfax had been educated at Christ Church, Oxford and was a cousin of Lady Bridgeman. He resided at the rectory, Wigan Hall.

Robert Green was Mayor of Wigan in 1777 followed by John Latham in 1778 and Alexander Radcliffe in 1779.

Larger and deeper coal mines were dug which produced ever increasing amounts of coal. Soon the size of the boats on the River Douglas (30foot long by 6ft wide) was restricting the amount of coal carried. Larger ships were needed and so the Leeds Liverpool canal was planned.

The first part of the canal in Wigan was opened in 1779. The canal ran along quite a large part of the River Douglas enabling the use of the tramways for the shipment of coal.



Cannel Coal carvings on display at Way We Were, Wigan Pier

## **The 1779 Cotton Riot**

The American War of Independence began in 1776 and the British Government put an embargo on Wigan importing cotton from the USA and exporting coal to the USA. This put great hardship on the people of Wigan. In 1779 the situation was so bad that on 27<sup>th</sup> September a mob attacked mills and destroyed machinery in Wigan. The Riot Act was read by Wigan's magistrates and the military dispersed the mob.

Riots again happened in October, some of the rioters were captured and sent to Lancaster gaol. The large number of troops in Wigan stopped the rioting, although protests went on in other parts of Lancashire.

## **Highway Robbery at Wigan**

In 1780 the Wigan Mail was held up near Ashton by John Ready, John Burns and James Weldon. They stole letters containing money that belonged to Edward Burrell. The three highwaymen escaped, but they were eventually caught. They were taken to Lancaster Castle where they were tried, found guilty and sentenced to death. They were all hung.

The judge ordered that James Weldon's body be gibbeted near the scene of his crime, now called Wigan Road. The body was hung there in a gibbet (a full length iron cage), until there was only the skeleton left. His skeleton was taken down and buried by the side of the road. Whilst making Wigan Road in 1830, James Weldon's skeleton was found still inside the iron gibbet.

They buried the body again, but one of the men returned and stole the skeleton. This was hidden in his house until found by his wife who ordered him to get rid of the remains.

In 1870 James Weldon's remains complete with gibbet were in the possession of Sam Ogden, a pub landlord. Sam allowed customers in his pub to drink ale from the skull. Sam left the body to his son and in 1911 it was recorded in a newspaper that the remains, still in the gibbet, were in a cottage in Failsworth.

Robert Green became Mayor of Wigan in 1780, followed by William Ollerhead in 1781, Robert Green in 1782, William Ollerhead 1783, James Hodson 1784, Robert Rowbottom 1785, James Hodson 1786, Thomas Barton 1787, John Vause 1788, James Hodson 1789 and Thomas Barton 1790.

In 1784 The New Cloth Hall was built just off Wallgate.

## **The Last Bradshaighs**

Although Sir Roger Bradshaigh married Dorothy in 1746, he died childless in 1787. The Haigh Hall estate then went to Sir Roger's sister's granddaughter, Elizabeth Bradshaigh Dalrymple. Elizabeth was only ten years old and the estate was held in trust by Sir Roger's widow Dorothy for a further 10 years until Elizabeth's marriage.

At the age of 20 years Elizabeth married Alexander Lindsay, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Crawford from Scotland. After his marriage Alexander Lindsay decided to concentrate on Haigh Hall and its estates, he sold his Scottish Balcarres estates to his brother.

## **Wigan Spa - Article from The Travellers Companion 1788**

*"Wigan Spa or New Harrogate is a strong sulphurous water, lately discovered in boring for coal in a field near the Scholes Bridge; it is said to greatly resemble the water of Harrogate in Yorkshire, only that it does not contain as much saline matter as that does; it contains a considerable quantity of very fine sulphur, and has been found useful in most complaints for which sulphur waters have been recommended; it has been made use of in a variety of complaints, and frequently with good effect: amongst others the following may be particularly mentioned: sore eyes, particularly those of long standing; old sore legs and other old sores; scald heads; the scurvy, itch and many other eruptions or cutaneous complaints, scrofulous sores etc; in all these disorders patients have frequently been known to obtain a perfect cure by use of this water. There is now a very elegant building erected for the use of those who resort to this spring, with convenience for drinking the water, and for using it either as a hot or cold bath."*

*(From "Wigan - a Historical Souvenir" by Bob Blakeman)*

The many local wells provided drinking water for Wigan people, but when the coal mines were drained, this ruined the natural springs.

In 1794 large reservoirs were built at Coppull Lane and Whitley. The water reached the town centre through wooden pipes, (later cast-iron pipes were used) to taps where people were able to get their drinking water. Before the sewage system was available in 1850, raw sewage was deposited in the River Douglas.

## **Forty-fifth Rector of Wigan**

In 1790 Guy Fairfax resigned as Rector of Wigan. On 30<sup>th</sup> July 1790 George Bridgeman became Rector of Wigan. He was presented to the post by his father Sir Henry Bridgeman as well as Richard Hopkins and John Heaton. George was educated at Queen's College, Cambridge.

## **Wigan Ironworks**

In 1790 Haigh Foundry (ironworks) was built on the banks of the Leeds-Liverpool canal and started production. The Haigh Ironworks were built by Earl Alexander Lindsay.

In 1790 Steam pumping engines were being used in Wigan mines.

Robert Morris became Mayor of Wigan in 1791 followed by Robert Rowbottom in 1792.

## **Wigan Bank**

In 1792, the first bank in Wigan, Wigan Bank, was founded by Thomas Baldwin in Standishgate, Wigan. The Baldwin family owned extensive local properties and land. Over the years it has changed its name - Woodcock & Sons, Eckersley's Bank, Parr's Bank. The present building which was built in 1870 is now occupied by the Nat West Bank.

Thomas Barton became Mayor of Wigan in 1793 followed by Robert Rowbottom in 1794.

In 1794 Sir Henry Bridgeman was created Lord Bradford.

Wigan's first miners dispute was in 1792. Miners asked for increased wages and better conditions, if not they said they would destroy the pits. Henry Blundell, a Wigan coalfield owner, asked the Home Secretary for troops. The troops successfully stopped the miners who then returned to work.

In October 1794 Miners formed an unofficial union at Goose Green, Wigan, calling itself a 'brotherly society'.

Thomas Doncaster became Mayor of Wigan in 1795 followed by Robert Morris in 1796.

## **First Hospital for Wigan**

The Wigan Dispensary was founded in 1798 and offered medical treatment for the poor. Later this became Wigan Infirmary. In 1873 it became The Royal Albert Edward Infirmary and was opened by the then Prince of Wales Prince Edward.

Thomas Barton became Mayor of Wigan in 1797 followed by Thomas Doncaster in 1798, Robert Morris in 1799, John Vause in 1800 and William Clayton in 1801.

In 1801 the population of Wigan was 10,989.

The Health & Morals of Apprentices Act was passed in 1802. This covered orphans and their welfare when working in the mills.

Thomas Woodcock became Mayor of Wigan in 1802 followed by William Clayton in 1803, Thomas Woodcock in 1804, Robert Bolton in 1805, Thomas Woodcock again in 1806.

In the early 1800's there had been campaigns for working class children to be given access to free education. Local churches set up Sunday Schools, although these were limited in what was taught and the numbers they could teach.

### **Robert Daglish**

Robert Daglish came to Wigan in 1804 and was employed as an engineer and manager of the Haigh Foundry and Brock Mill Forge by Lord Balcarras of Haigh Hall.

He designed a number of steam engines for pumping and winding in the local colliers. These were hailed as radical improvements on the old designs thus leading to greater efficiency and safety.

In 1814 he left Haigh and was employed by Orrell Collieries. Daglish built a steam powered locomotive following John Blenkinsop of Leeds design. This was known as "The Yorkshire Horse" and replaced the real horses used to pull coal on the tramways.

Each of the locomotives could haul over 30 tons of coal and 14 horses would have been needed to pull this amount. They also saved the colliery owner £500 a year on feeding and stabling the horses.

Daglish's locomotive was built before George Stephenson's first locomotive 'Blucher'. These locomotives built by Daglish were used for more than 30 years.

Daglish was then employed as consultant engineer on many railway projects in England and in the United States of America.

## 1806 MANCHESTER ANTI-SLAVERY PETITION

The first British involvement in the slave trade was in 1562 when John Hawkins the Elizabethan privateer, captured and enslaved Africans taking them across the Atlantic ocean to the Caribbean. Although many other European countries were engaged in similar activities, by the 1730's Britain was the biggest slave-trading nation in the world. From 1690 to 1807 British ships transported about 3.25 million enslaved Africans.

Even at the beginning of the slave trade there had been opposition mainly by the Quakers and non-conformist churches. William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharpe were the leaders of the slave trade opposition. In 1791 William Wilberforce introduced the first bill calling for the abolition of the slave trade. This bill was rejected by 163 votes to 88.

Although Wilberforce was a Tory, he could only rely on the Whig Party to support him. Many following bills calling for an end to the slave trade were also rejected.

Part of the anti-slavery movement was the campaigning by former slaves living in Britain. Ignatius Sancho, wrote letters and Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoana both wrote books condemning the slave trade and describing the violence and degradation meted out to slaves.

In 1806 Manchester's manufacturers raised a petition against the abolition of the slave trade and this was signed by 400 people. A counter petition was raised asking for the abolition of the Slave Trade and this was signed in just a few days, by 2,348 people from around Manchester, the petition was 5 metres long. Lord Derby, the 13<sup>th</sup> Earl, presented this petition to the House of Lords on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1806. He stated that if time had allowed, more than twice that number of people would have signed the petition.

The Abolition of the Slave Trade Bill was passed in the House of Lords by 41 votes to 20 and in the House of Commons by 114 to 15. The Bill became law on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1807, but this did not give slaves their freedom, just stopped the trade.

Lord Derby's son, the 14<sup>th</sup> Earl presented the Slavery Abolition Act to Parliament and on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1834 this was passed giving all slaves in the British Empire their freedom.

In 1807 William Eccles became Mayor of Wigan followed by Thomas Woodcock in 1808, John Hopwood 1809, Alexander Haliburton in 1810 and Joseph Bevan in 1811.



**1806 Manchester Petition against Slavery kept by Parliament. Now on display in Westminster Hall**



**Shackles that were used on black slaves on display in Liverpool Slavery Museum**



**This model was made for William Wilberforce and used by him when he presented his anti-slavery bill in 1806, passed in 1807. The model is based on drawings of the interiors of Slave Ships used at that time.**



**Print of the Peterloo Massacre 1819 (Manchester Central Library)  
Published by Richard Carlisle who was one of the Peterloo speakers**



**Sabres used by the Salford Yeomanry at the Peterloo Massacre.  
Pottery and medals made and sold to help victims of the Peterloo  
Massacre. On display at the People's History Museum, Manchester**

# SOCIAL UNREST

## Luddites burn down Wigan Mills

Luddites were a social group formed against the modern mills which they saw as affecting their employment and livelihood. Their main objection was to the new wide-framed power looms used in the factories. These looms didn't need as many workers or the skilled workers and therefore were operated very cheaply. Large scale job losses and greater poverty resulted.

## 1808 Minimum Wage Bill

Before these new looms, handloom weavers earned an average wage of £1.10 shillings per week in the mid 1790's. In 1808 the average wage for a factory weaver was 8 shillings and that was for an 84 hour week. (*Cotton Times*).

Some shopping prices in 1808 were:

Rent	-	1 shilling and 2 pence;
coal/wood		9 pence;
loaf of bread		4 pence;
tea		2 pence;
cheese(225g)		3 pence;
2 Candles		1 penny;
sugar(225g)		3½pence;
potatoes (2,500g)		1 shilling;
Soap		3 pence.

*(12 pennies to one shilling).*

In May 1808 The Weavers' Minimum Wage Bill asking for a minimum wage of 10 shillings per week. This Bill had the support of Sir Robert Peel, but was rejected by the House of Commons.

In 1811 the population of Wigan was 14,060.

In 1812 a group of Luddites burned down mills in Westhoughton, near Wigan. A number of the Luddites were arrested and sent to Lancaster where they were put on public trial. The prisoners, including a 14 year old boy, were found guilty and publicly executed.

A Wigan Volunteer Troop of Light Horse was raised in 1816 to preserve order following Luddite disorders.

The early Wigan cotton mills were powered by waterwheels and had to be sited by the River Douglas, but steam-power meant that the mills could be built in the town centre. In 1818 Wigan had 8 steam-powered mills in Wallgate.

### **The Miners riots and first miners strike**

Miners were protesting about their low wages and dangerous working conditions. Some rioting took place in Wigan. Lord Derby, the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, was so worried about riots that he held a meeting in Wigan in 1812.

The first miners' strike took place in 1819 asking for an increase in their meagre wages. There was rioting in Wigan and the troops were summoned from Warrington and they stopped the rioting. The miners lost their fight and had to return to work at lower wages than before the strike.

On July 2nd 1819 The Factory Act was passed by Parliament. This act stopped the employment of children under 9 years. For those children 9 years and over their working day could not be longer than 12 hours. Unfortunately mill owners still continued employing children under the minimum age.

It was only in 1825 through the Cotton Mills Regulation Act that all children under sixteen years had their working day reduced to 12 hours.

The 1833 Factory Act reduced the working day to nine hours for children between 9 years and 13 years. Factory inspectors were also employed to ensure mill owners adhered to this new Act.



*The Queen's Head Pub, Market Place, Wigan c. 1820*

## 1819 PETERLOO MASSACRE

In March 1819 The Patriotic Union of Manchester was formed by Joseph Johnson, John Knight and James Wroe. All the leading reformers (radicals) from across Lancashire joined the union. The main objective of the Patriotic Union was Parliamentary Reform. At that time:

- Only men with money and property rights could vote
- **No** women regardless of their wealth could vote
- The House of Lords could overrule any law passed by the House of Commons
- Only men could be in the Houses of Commons and Lords

There was a growing dependence on the working class who kept the factories and mines going. In the political world there was not recognition of their importance and there was a fear of the working class.

The Duke of Wellington, the hero of Waterloo and the wars against Napoleon, was a member of the government in 1819, but he was against parliamentary reform. Wellington did not want rail lines built as these would enable the poor to travel and so have a chance to cause trouble. He believed that "only his 'type' knew how to govern and those not in his class would simply have to put up with it"

The Manchester Patriotic Union decided during the summer of 1819 that they would have a great meeting at St. Peter's field in Manchester. They wanted this meeting for the whole of Lancashire not just Manchester. The main invited speakers were:

**Henry Hunt** a well known orator and campaigner for people's rights;

**Mary Fildes** the leader of the Manchester Female Reform group and involved in the campaign for birth control;

**Joseph Johnson** who helped to set up the Manchester Observer which eventually became "The Guardian" national newspaper;

**Richard Carlile** who published a radical newspaper The Republican which included extracts from Tom Paine's book "The Rights of Man" and had contributions from supporters such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron. His newspaper was so popular it was outselling the pro-government Times newspaper.

The date for the meeting was set for the afternoon of the 16<sup>th</sup> August.

The Manchester Magistrates were very worried about this meeting at St. Peter's fields that they ordered troops to be standing by.

The troops included:

- 600 men of the 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars
- 400 men from the Cheshire Yeomanry
- Several hundred infantrymen
- Detachment of the Royal Horse Artillery with  
2 six-pounder guns
- 400 special constables
- 120 men of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry.

The Manchester & Salford Yeomanry consisted of volunteers who held Tory political opinions and had a deep hatred of Radicals. Their occupations were: shopkeepers, publicans, watchmakers, insurance agents, tobacconists, farriers, horsebreakers and brewers. Their commander was a Manchester factory owner Hugh Birley.

The main speakers arrived at 1.20 p.m. to speak to a peaceful crowd of 50,000 people from all over Lancashire. At 1.40 p.m. Henry Hunt started to speak and the Yeomanry charged into the crowd, slashing with their sabres.

The Yeomanry started slashing at Mary Fildes and her two-year old son William. They killed William and left his mother for dead.

The Yeomanry arrest a number of people including Henry Hunt and Joseph Johnson.

At 1.50 p.m. the magistrates send in the 15<sup>th</sup> Hussars and by 2 p.m. St. Peter's Field is clear except for:

- 18 people dead
- 400 men seriously injured
- 100 women seriously injured
- Two year old William Fildes dead by the seriously injured body of his mother.

This is an eye witness account of the Peterloo Massacre from Samuel Bamford (1788-1872):

*I stood on tip-toe and looked in the direction whence the noise proceeded, and saw a party of cavalry in blue and white uniform come trotting, sword in hand, round the corner of a garden-wall, and to the front of a row of new houses, where they reined up in a line.*

*"The soldiers are here," I said; "Oh," some one made reply, "they are only come to be ready if there should be any disturbance in the meeting." "well, let us go back," I said, and we forced our way towards the colours.*

*On the cavalry drawing up they were received with a shout of goodwill, as I understood it. They shouted again, waving their sabres over their heads; and then, slackening rein, and striking spur into their steeds, they dashed forward and began cutting the people....*

*On the breaking of the crowd the yeomanry wheeled, and, dashing whenever there was an opening, they followed, pressing and wounding. Many females appeared as the crowd opened; and striplings or mere youths also were found. Their cries were piteous and heart-rending, and would, one might have supposed, have disarmed any human resentment: but here their appeals were in vain. Women, white-vested maids, and tender youths, were indiscriminately sabred or trampled; and we have reason for believing that few were the instances in which that forbearance was vouchsafed which they so earnestly implored. sabres were plied to hew a way through naked held-up hands and defenceless heads; and then chopped limbs and wound-gaping skulls were seen; and groans and cries were mingled with the din of that horrid confusion.*

*"Ah! ah!" "For shame! for shame!" was shouted. Then, "Break! break! they are killing them in front and they cannot get away"; and there was a general cry of "Break, break." For a moment the crowd held back as in a pause; then a rush, heavy and resistless as a headlong sea, and a sound like low thunder, with screams, prayers, and imprecations from the crowd-moiled and sabre-doomed who could not escape. Their cries were piteous and heart-rending, and would, one might have supposed, have disarmed any human resentment: but here their appeals were in vain. In ten minutes from the commencement of the havoc the field was an open and almost deserted space.*

Henry Hunt, Joseph Johnson, Samuel Bamford, John Knight and Joseph Healey were found guilty of "assembling with unlawful banners at an unlawful meeting, for the purpose of inciting discontent".

Henry Hunt was sentenced to 2 years and the others to one year. On his release Henry Hunt became the M. P. for Preston, the other M. P. for Preston was Lord Derby.

Joseph Johnson was sentenced to one year in prison. Whilst in prison, Joseph Johnson's wife became ill and died, he wasn't allowed out even for the funeral. When released Joseph was a broken man.

Samuel Bamford was sent to prison for one year. On his release he wrote "Passages in the life of a Radical" which contained his graphic account of the Peterloo Massacre. He was a writer of many books and poems in Lancashire dialect. Whilst in prison, he wrote this poem to his wife:

I NEVER will forget thee, love! Though in a prison far I be;  
I never will forget thee, love! And thou wilt still remember me!  
I never will forget thee, love! When wakes on me the morning light;  
And though shalt ever present be, When cometh down the cloud of  
night;  
I never will forget thee, love! When summer sheds her golden ray;  
And thou shall be my comforter Amid the winter's cheerless day!  
Oh they may bind but cannot break, this heart, so full of thine and  
thee;  
Which liveth only for YOUR sake, and the high cause of LIBERTY

Joseph Healey and John Knight were each sentenced to one year in prison.

Mary Fildes recovered from her serious injuries. One eyewitness described how: "Mrs. Fildes, hanging suspended by a nail which had caught her white dress, was slashed across her exposed body by one of the brave cavalry."

Mary continued to campaign in Manchester for the vote and was active in the Chartist movement. Chartists wanted Parliamentary Reform, i.e. votes for all. Eventually Mary moved to Chester with her grandson Luke and ran the Shrewbury Arms.

Mary Fildes adopted her grandson Luke and he became one of Britain's greatest painters. He painted several members of the Royal family and was knighted. Mary died in Manchester in 1875.

## **Universal Suffrage**

Universal suffrage is the right of all adult citizens to vote at public elections, especially parliamentary elections. This was achieved in:

- 1918 'The Representation of the People Act' was passed. This gave the right to vote to all men over 21 years and women over 30 years. This right to vote for women was subject to clauses such as being an owner of property.
- On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1928 Parliament passed an Act allowing all women over 21 years to vote.



## Acknowledgements

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This research has been obtained from more than one source. As far as we know all information in this book is accurate. The research comes from history books, internet sites, visits to historical sights, historical re-enactments, museums and Wigan History Shop.

The photographs were taken by ourselves during our visits and watching re-enactments. Other photographs/illustrations were by kind permission of Ron Hunt of Wigan World, Wigan Parish Church, Wigan Archeological Society, Oxford University, Chester Council, Wigan History Shop.

As Wigan is so successful at showing Victorian/Edwardian Wigan, we decided we would concentrate on earlier parts of Wigan's history. Within our research, we have also looked at issues of equality and social justice throughout history.

A series of playlets based on this history research have been written and performed by the staff, volunteers and students of BETA (a DVD is available). These were performed at St. Michael's hall with the help of St. Michael's Dramatic Society.

Exhibitions of the history research have been organised displaying items such as the Roman coins we purchased and cleaned, learning materials both purchased and devised by the staff for the project, copies of charters, Roman pots and models made by the students etc.

We do hope you have enjoyed reading this book, we are sure you will have found it most interesting.

***EILEEN BITHELL AND EILEEN WALSH***  
**BETA PROJECT WORKERS.**

# **A WINDOW ON WIGAN'S HISTORY**



**Eileen Walsh and Eileen Bithell**

**Eileen Bithell and Eileen Walsh founded BETA in 1991 to help adults with Basic Skills. In 2000 the Eileens opened the first charity internet café.**

**This has been a BETA 2008 Project**

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