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**Secondary Education and the Working Class: Wigan 1920-1970.**

**By Malcolm K. Heyes, B.Ed. (Hons.), M.A.**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy.**

**Faculty of Social Sciences.**

**University of Durham**

**January 2004**

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## ABSTRACT OF THE STUDY

This study traces the development of educational provision for working class people in Wigan from 1920 until 1970. The main investigative tool of the study is oral evidence, gathered from interviewing a wide cross-section of people who attended different schools, triangulated against primary archive sources. The main theme of the study is that there was a clearly identified 'dual' and 'differentiated' system of secondary provision for children in the town. For a small minority of pupils education was delivered in the selective grammar schools, who had access to a superior curriculum with clearly defined outcomes and qualifications. This was undertaken in establishments that were well equipped, and was delivered by teaching staff, who were all university graduates. And contrasts strongly with the lower status non-selective schools, which the majority of working class pupils attended, where the curriculum and ethos were constantly changed and experimented with, to address a growing concern regarding the attainment and progress of the pupils who attended these schools. The establishments that the non-selected pupils attended were poorly equipped, and pupils were taught by non-graduate teachers. The study will also highlight how this 'differentiated' and 'dual system' was maintained by the highly contentious 11+selection process, reinforced through the social and financial restraints on working class families which pertained whenever the opportunity arose for their children to attend a selective school. In addition, the study reveals how pupils' experience of discipline was influenced by their gender and the status of the school they attended. The witness testimony and primary archive material reveal how the emergence of the welfare state, alongside the increased prosperity and affluence of working people after 1945, contrasted sharply with the abject poverty and hardships that working people experienced during the inter-war years. Nevertheless, despite the post war gains of the Welfare State, the secondary education system remained a mechanism of social differentiation and control. The consequences of this were made a profound impact on the experience, identity and life chances of working class people.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those people who have shared their experiences with me of being educated in the different schools found in Wigan between 1920 and 1970. This includes those people whose experiences are comprehensively represented in the thesis, but the many more whose memories I have been able to use only briefly in the work. I would like to pay tribute to the help and assistance I received from all the staff in the libraries in Wigan, particularly the Standish Branch Library, along with the staff at the Wigan Record Office (Archive Centre, at the Town Hall, Leigh).

Lastly to all my family, including the dogs (Jess, Holly and Sophie) for their continual help, support and encouragement in compiling and completing this thesis, even when I had serious doubts and misgiving of ever completing it over the last few years.

For the contents of the thesis I am, of course, solely responsible.

**IN MEMORY OF A DEAR MOTHER: MARGARET MARY HEYES**

**BORN 10.06.24. – DIED 30.05.03.**

Since the completion of this thesis, the author's mother, Margaret Mary Heyes passed away on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2003. A discerning, talented and intelligent woman Mary Heyes (nee Heaps) was denied the opportunity of fulfilling her true talents and potential through the accepted educational policies of successive governments throughout the twentieth century. She was born in 1924, and grew up in a social, economic and educational climate that clearly differentiated particular schools for particular classes of people. The principal argument of this thesis is the educational provision being offered to the 'ordinary' or 'average' working class child in the twentieth century.

Mary Heyes certainly was typical of her kind. She was educated in the lower status schools of the interwar years, that were 'changed' and 'experimented' with by successive governments, to meet her particular needs in her formative years, and prepare her for a prescribed adult life. Her talents were never fully realised or exploited through this educational experience, both her own and those of the community she lived in. She certainly would have benefited from a 'full' secondary education in the grammar school of her day, or a comprehensive high school education of a later generation.

This thesis is a testimony to similar people, who undertook their education in a totally 'unfair' and 'unjust' system of schooling that did not serve the full and aspiring talents of a person like Margaret Mary Heyes. The witness testimony and archive sources recorded in this work are dedicated to people like my mother, and will attempt to recover the experiences and feelings of their school days from the early part of the twentieth century.

## PREFACE

In recent years I have successfully completed two degrees at different institutions, experiences that have completely altered my life, both personally and professionally. I have thought many times about the people I have met over the years who could also have benefited from such experiences. The title and the location of the study are intertwined with my own professional and personal experiences.

My parents were both hardworking people who had married in 1951. Both of them had served their country during World War Two. I was born on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1952, followed by my sister three years later, in 1955. My sister and I both experienced the educational system of that period in Wigan. In common with our parents, my sister and I failed the 11+scholarship examination. We were thus relegated respectively to the boys' and girls' department of a Secondary Modern School, which, ironically, is now an outstanding and much sought after Comprehensive High School in the Wigan area.

When I arrived at the Secondary Modern School, I was subjected to a harsh, disciplined regime. Corporal punishment and verbal abuse ran alongside a very limited and book-based curriculum that was intended to prepare me for adult life. Admittedly it was a period of full employment, and the Beveridge Welfare System was still in place, as it had been for nearly twenty years. This meant that on the completion of my four-year statutory course at the Secondary Modern School, there were a wide number of semi-skilled manual and trade occupations for me to choose from, to start my working life.

During my early adult life as compositor at the local weekly newspaper, I tried to analyse why I had arrived at this situation, and I began to think! To think was hardly a skill I had been taught in contrast to people who had attended grammar schools or universities, two of whom I bring to mind, journalists who had attended colleges at Cambridge and Oxford. They recognized some 'latent' talent in me, which had not yet been tapped. Indeed they were a source of help and

inspiration when I was studying for 'O' and 'A' levels, during my efforts to gain entrance to teacher training college.

Going back to the beginning of my early life and school career, my vague recollections were of school, church and Sunday school. These meant annual 'church walking days' around the neighborhood of the school and church, which I hated and dreaded, and still do to this day. Education at my church aided primary school was basic, possibly poor, in terms of pupil attainment and progress, if judged by current OFSTED standards. I understood from an early age that passing the 11+scholarship examination was considered very important by my parents, my relatives and all the other adults I knew in my early childhood.

My downfall was that the school was taken over by a new head teacher during my early junior years. He thought that country dancing, singing and school plays were going to get me a place at the prestigious Wigan Grammar School. Naturally it didn't, and Brian Simon's (1971) excellent book *'Intelligence, Class and Education, A Marxist Perspective'*, made the inadequacy of this head's philosophy even more apparent. It was no compensation to discover whilst conducting interviews for this thesis that he was considered by his contemporaries to be a 'failed actor' and 'theatrical' in his manner and in his teaching. However, I hope I can be mature and objective in my outlook, as the people I interviewed for this thesis have been about their experiences in Wigan schools.

My next experience was a brutal Secondary Modern School for Boys. Apart from one or two notable exceptions, my educational progress here was even worse than at primary school. Although an Aided CE School, and (apparently) Christian in ethos and character, the actual teaching and curriculum were extremely limited. In the present educational climate the levels of attainment would just about be considered Key Stage 2, Level 4. Along with the brutal corporal punishment it was an existence which made you think 'one day I will leave!' This happened on 7th July 1967. I felt relieved to have left this school, and to be able to pursue my early working life as a young adult in a less disciplined and controlled way. I realized a year or even two years before I left that what I was being taught was

meaningless. This was confirmed when I interviewed a former teacher who saw the school transformed from a Secondary Modern School to a Comprehensive School in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He indicated that teachers who had taught at the Secondary Modern School were very limited in their skills, and struggled to teach 'O' level and 'A' levels in the new Comprehensive School.

My subsequent experiences of gaining basic literacy and numeracy in my working life as a compositor made me reflect on what I had encountered. It certainly left me with life-long aversions to pomp, ceremony, and anything with a performance element. In particular, I dislike coerced children appearing in school productions. I can however appreciate a professional or willing amateur at work in their artistic fields. My experiences have bitten very deeply. I frequently ask myself what I could have achieved in a much fairer system. Possibly I would have arrived at my current status quicker, but missed out on some of the wonderful experiences and people I've met during the course of my life. These have ranged from people who were very highly educated, to people like myself who were given the absolute minimum of education.

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to trace different people's experience of the 'dual' and 'differentiated' system of secondary education that existed in Wigan, from their own life stories, against the backdrop of national events. These will include a World War, a General Strike, the Depression and post-war affluence, and the impact of the Beveridge welfare reforms; and, of course, personal expectations weighted against the individual problems that each person faced in his or her particular family, or school he or she attended. It may air in a very small way the need to give every chance to pupils to develop their own lives and potential. The people I interviewed gave honest answers and reasons why they received a particular education, and their subsequent post-school experiences. They reflect a host of wasted opportunities, for various reasons, which usually come down to economic ones in the end. This history reveals a society very different from ours today, where the last and current governments are keen to promote Lifelong Learning and expect people to change employment and

acquire transferable skills, expectations underpinned by the current government's philosophy of 'Economic Instrumentalism', which is currently seen in all primary schools with the teaching of the 'literacy' and 'numeracy' hour each day.

A recent interview I had with one lady reminded me of Sid Chaplin's (1987) observation that 'every ordinary Joe has an extraordinary story'. Kathleen Sherrif's life story of her education in Wigan illustrated Chaplin's point, and justified the purpose (I hope) for conducting and undertaking this thesis:

"There was, of course, the 11+ examination. Horrors of horrors. Your whole life depended on one exam. If you didn't pass, and only a very small percentage from each school did, you were virtually consigned to the scrap heap. Approximately 1% of children went on to Grammar School. There was a lot of snobbery around, and former classmates, when they got their Grammar School uniforms on, would sneer 'you're not clever enough to pass the exam'. The fact that no one else wore uniforms they stood out. I was one of the unlucky ones. You got another chance, two years later, to take an exam to go to Wigan Technical College, the range of subjects taught were the same with some specially designed for the workplace, nobody wanted to go. I had a chance to go at the age of 14 but rejected it. How I now regret that decision. Instead, when I left school at 15 I went privately to learn shorthand, typing and bookkeeping. These subjects would have been of great help if they had been taught in school. Boys came off a little better; the ones who got apprenticeships learned their trade from their employers."

(Kathleen Sherrif aged 75 years.)

This captures in essence the experiences of working class people who failed their 11+ examination in an industrial town like Wigan. It resulted in attendance at a lower status school, with a distinct curricular and discipline ritual, which had lasting effects on both their personal lives and choice of occupation through the limitations it put on any ambitions and aspirations they may have had.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

#### Purpose of the study

The research for the thesis was originally intended to be focused on the North West of England. However, as I interviewed people who lived and were educated in Wigan between 1920-70, I recognised that their life stories represented a microcosm of educational history in England and Wales during a major part of the twentieth century. Indeed, one could see where the material went beyond not only local but national boundaries, encompassing, for example, accounts of service life in World War Two in various parts of the world. Some of the witnesses gave vivid accounts of the General Strike of 1926, and the rise of affluence in the post-war period. Indeed, my own life experience gives insights into this. Wigan provided a clearly framed context to explore some key themes in the educational history of working class people in this country.

There is wide range of literature on the education and schooling of working class people, which contain a number of key themes similar to those of this study. Studies include *Education and the Working Class* located in Huddersfield, by Jackson and Marsden (1966); and *Social Relations in a Secondary School* by Hargreaves (1967); and *Hightown Grammar: The school as a social system* by Lacey (1969). There are also a number of biographical and reflective works of literature depicting life in the secondary modern school, with the celebrated example being Edward Blishen, and his novels *Roaring Boys: A Schoolmasters Agony* (1955), *The Task of the Secondary Modern School: Stonehill Street* (1957). There have also been contributions by William Taylor (1963) and Harold Dent (1952 and 1954); along with Stephen Humphries's book (1981) *Hooligans or Rebels?*, which reveals how some pupils and their parents resisted the disciplinary methods employed in schools from the 1890s to 1939.

In recent years there has been new research and literature on the educational experiences of working class people. For instance, McCulloch and Sobell (1994) in *Towards a social history of the secondary modern schools*, have researched

how the secondary modern school evolved following the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act. Much of this study is concerned with the education of working class people in lower status schools, and they reveal: ‘Surprisingly little attention has been given by historians to secondary modern schools’ (1994 p.245). McCulloch and Sobell (1994) also indicate how the secondary modern school was an integral part of an historical tradition of providing working class people with an education that was planned to meet their future needs. As they go on to say: ‘Secondary modern schools may therefore be related to a long-term plebeian or banausic tradition of educational provision, one with its roots in the nineteenth century and a potential to persist into the twenty-first’ (1994 p.278). This is revealed in the emergence of the Higher Grade schools of the School Boards of the late nineteenth century, followed by the central or senior schools of the interwar period, which provided post elementary education for working class children. The authors go on to say how the secondary modern school was part of a tripartite educational system, and reflected the ideas of Plato, who advocated that different classes or sections of people in society should be educated to meet their specific needs. McCulloch et. al. also show how educational policies, which spanned from the Bryce Report in 1895 to the Newsom Report in 1963, all have a similarity in language and tone when describing the education for the average working class pupil. They conclude that: ‘The coding, if not always the actual language, of these initiatives and reports and the debates that surround them strongly suggest ideas about discrete and distinctive needs of working-class children’ (1994 p.281). My study will help in gaining further insights into how these schools functioned, and what their origins were before their inception in 1945 in Wigan. This topic is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

In addition, there has also been the use of oral history to help gain fresh insights into educational history. Philip Gardener (1991) uses oral history and primary archive material to research how the owner of a private school for the working classes was forced out of existence by the persistence of the Chief Superintendent of the Attendance Department in Birmingham. In *Our Schools*; *‘their future’*. *The case of Eliza Duckworth and John Stevenson*, published in the History of

Education Journal, Philip Gardener reveals how working class parents viewed state education as authoritarian. Similar opinions are expressed in my study, in that there are official views of what happened in Wigan schools, which are recorded in log books, punishment books, HMI Reports and in records of educational committee meetings. My study adds to this record the testimony of witnesses who experienced schools from a first hand perspective, particularly those educated in a variety of lower status schools that were available to them during the period being researched. This situation is very vividly described by Philip Gardner (1991) when comparing the established view of a local official, against those of the local community the school was situated in: 'The features assembled in these recollections, and which identify Miss Duckworth as a traditional working-class private school—the low fees, the unclassified mixture of ages, the domestic atmosphere, the lack of system, the flexibility, the resistance to bureaucratic authority—were the same characteristics which incensed John Stevenson' (1991 p.179). Such experiences are related to this study, and are discussed more fully in Chapters 4 to 6.

Other research papers include a study on educational policy between 1935-45 by Keith Burgess (1993) *Education policy in relation to employment in Britain 1935-45: a decade of missed opportunities?* This is discussed in Chapter 4, in which the theory and idealism of that period are assessed against the practical experiences of different witnesses in a variety of lower status schools. Another article in the History of Education: *McNair's lost opportunity: the student-teacher scheme and the student-teacher's scheme experience* by Peter Cunningham, Phil Gardner, Bobbie Wells and Richard Willis (1995), reveals through oral history how two teachers experienced the change from the pupil-teacher training system to college based training support when teachers undertook teaching practice in different schools. In this work, the authors reveal how oral testimony is an important piece of evidence when undertaking historical and educational research on the impact of the McNair Report on teacher training: 'Why not seek out survivors from the training cohorts of the interwar years, and ask them to reflect on their experiences of training in the 1920s and 1930s, and to explore what their training had meant to

them in terms of personal and professional development? Survivors of that experience are still within our reach—just. But they will not be for much longer. The documents could wait; the oral history element of the research could not’ (1995 p.222). Much of my study is exploring the experiences of witnesses during a period that covered a major part of the twentieth century. The authors further endorse the use of oral testimony; particularly when this experience can be used to help to formulate better policies for the future: ‘The purpose of our current research is to listen to the voice of that experience now, 50 years later. If this is a voice which, at the time, had no substantial impact on the formulation of policy, then perhaps now it can play its legitimate part in the formation of historical understanding’. This quotation by Peter Cunningham et al. (1995 p.221) is at the heart of this piece of research, in that it can help future educational planners at all levels, and can avoid the experiences that many witnesses interviewed for this study underwent when being educated in schools in Wigan, during the period being researched.

In addition, Wigan was one of the few locations nationally that undertook to build and incorporate a Secondary Technical school into its educational system. Although strongly advocated by the then Director of Education in Wigan, Reese Edwards, and discussed in his book in 1960 *The Secondary Technical School*, the school only had a tenure of 10 years before it was amalgamated with Wigan Grammar School in 1963. In his book *A The Technical School?: Usable Past* (1989), Gary McCulloch reveals how this Wigan school was always viewed with suspicion by parents as being second best, when they had to choose between sending their child to Wigan Grammar School or the Thomas Linacre Technical School, despite its performing well in the examination system. Local archive material, particularly on 11+scholarship success or failure reveals how ‘borderline’ pupils were considered for the Thomas Linacre School rather than the Grammar School. The reasons for the building of this school and its location near the technical college and grammar school are discussed in Chapter 4. Such schools as the Thomas Linacre, which had specialist buildings and facilities, and a specialist curriculum, reveal how schools and education were ‘experimented’ with

and then eventually replaced with another type of school, offering a different but nonetheless stratified educational experience. This is best described and summed up by Gary McCulloch (1989 p.91) as: 'Not only were they fragile and exotic plants in often hostile environments; they were also subject to changing attitudes and policies that were completely outside their influence. Within twenty years of their introduction they were discarded and forgotten'. Although Secondary Technical Schools are not the main focus of this study, their history reveals parallels and similarities with the changing provision of non-selected lower status schools for the majority of working class children in Wigan. For the main part of the twentieth century this type of school was 'experimented' on and 'changed' as different generations of pupils passed through them.

What both the accepted literature and research papers reveal is that there is still much more to research and identify, particularly with regard to the continuation of underachievement, inequality and underperformance that still exists in schools today. Against a background of this literature and using witness statements, my study will demonstrate how differences in curriculum and discipline in the two types of school (higher status and lower status) were based on distinct class differences and cultures. The higher status or selective grammar school was associated with the middle classes, professional occupations and the universities, whilst the lower status or unselective schools were associated with the working class and manual occupations. The investigation will also highlight how this pattern of difference was maintained by the 11+selection process, which was operating in the Wigan area during the period under investigation.

Although there will be similar themes to those explored in the literature quoted above, I will attempt in this research to gain a deeper and further insight into the actual educational and school experience of particular witnesses in Wigan schools by the use of oral history. This study also offers insights into how recent legislation and initiatives in current educational practice, both locally and nationally, still do not appear to have countered the continuing divisions and inequalities in both society and education, experienced by the majority of the witnesses I interviewed though perhaps in different ways. To quote Gary

McCulloch (1998 p.159) ‘class based provision (of secondary education) has persisted through changing circumstances, surviving relatively unscathed the educational reforms of the twentieth century’. This remark gives justification for undertaking this study of educational provision in a town like Wigan. It may offer further insights into why there is still a sense of frustration and injustice felt by many people, both of the contemporary generation, and by older people when they discuss their education.

To help understand the variety of schools available in Wigan during the period under research, it is important to recognise and understand what it meant to receive a full secondary education. Before 1945 it was obtained in the Grammar School, but following the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act there were a number of schools that had the words ‘secondary’ placed in front of them. For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of a secondary education was one that had a prescribed length of attendance until the age sixteen, and offered pupils the opportunity of gaining qualifications at the end of their course of study, with the opportunity of undertaking advanced studies until the age of eighteen, which could be used as entry into university. This type of school was named a secondary grammar school or secondary technical school. To attend such schools a child needed to have passed the 11+scholarship examination. Other types of schools mentioned in this study are described as lower status schools. How they came into being or how they were replaced is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 of this study. Table 1 below gives an overview of the different schools available in Wigan between 1920 and 1970.

**Table 1. Different forms of secondary and non-secondary schools in Wigan between 1920-1970**

<b>1920-1932</b>	<b>Grammar School 11 –16 years</b>	<b>Junior Technical School 13-15/16 years</b>	<b>Central Schools 11-14 years</b>	<b>All Age Schools 11-14 years</b>
<b>1932-1945</b>	<b>Grammar School 11-16 years</b>	<b>Junior Technical School</b>	<b>Senior Schools 11-14 years</b>	<b>All Age Schools 11-14 years</b>

		<b>13-15/16 years</b>		
<b>1945-1970</b>	<b>Secondary Grammar School 11-16 years</b>	<b>Secondary Technical School 11-16 years</b>	<b>Secondary Modern School 11-14 years (up to 1947) 11-15 years (after 1947)</b>	<b>All Age Schools 11-14 years (up to 1947) 11-15 years (after 1947)</b>

The primary archive evidence from the Report on Secondary Education Provision under the Education Act, 1944, reveals how Wigan County Borough's Education Committee had a 'Development Plan' with which to implement the 1944 Butler Act. It certainly acknowledged that there was to be a difference between Primary and Secondary Schools, which was enshrined in the 1944 Butler Education Act. The following extracts in the introduction to the Report by H. R. Bennett, the Director, in February 1945, reveal how the Act was going to be implemented: -

“Section 11 of the Education Act, 1944, requires an Education Authority to prepare a Development Plan showing the action which is proposed to be taken for securing that there shall be *sufficient* primary and secondary schools available for their own area, and the successive measures by which it is proposed to accomplish that purpose”.

“It is the purpose of this report to present to the Wigan Education Authority views upon Secondary School provision in the county Borough. The Fundamental aim of Report has been to suggest a coordinated scheme of educational provision at the secondary stage, which shall adequately cater for the needs of all children according to *age, aptitude* and *ability*, and which shall at the same time afford full opportunity of advancement upon the “*educational ladder*” to every child – upon which ever branch of secondary education he (or she) may embark at the age of 11 years”.

Source: County Borough of Wigan Minutes and sub-committee, page 355, November 1944 to October 1945.

It is also interesting to note that the County Borough of Wigan’s Education Committee intended to ensure there was both transfer of ‘Technical Tops’ from Modern Schools, which is shown in Table 3. “The Educational Ladder of Advancement”. The actual building for a Technical Secondary School was only completed in 1953, 8 years after the passing of the Act. The statistics in Table 2 show how in 1945 the majority of pupils would be educated in the Modern School, whilst for the minority of pupils there would be an education in the Grammar or Technical School. In fact the Education Committee was keen to implement a ‘Bilateral Secondary Education System’ of a combined Grammar and Technical School.

**Table 2. The present distribution of Borough senior children (1945) among the three types of secondary education can this be summarised: -**

<b>Grammar School Type</b>	<b>Technical School Type</b>	<b>Modern School Type</b>
Now on school roll 881, Group leaving at 16 881	Now on school roll 102 Group leaving at 15 102	Now on school roll 3,316, also 1,000 pupils from R.C. senior schools
Percentage of whole senior age range 17%	Percentage of whole senior age range 1.9%	Percentage of whole senior age range 81%

Source: County Borough of Wigan Minutes of Education and sub-committee, page 356, November 1944 to October 1945.

“It becomes immediately noticeable from this statement (i) that the percentage of children receiving Grammar School type education is upon the liberal or high side (as compared with the generally recognised percentage of 15%), and (ii) that the Technical School Type education is numerically deficient”.

“The authority are strongly recommended carefully to consider the claims of the bilateral Secondary Education system, outlined under heading (3) above. Somewhat unique as the plan may at first appear, it is outlined to the trends of modern educational development. Furthermore, the plan would substantially contribute to that equality of status and esteem in the Secondary Education field”.

Source: County Borough of Wigan Minutes of Education and sub-committee, page 356, November 1944 to October 1945.

The Report also acknowledged that a large number of pupils in the town will proceed to a Modern School, after being tested for aptitude and ability. It is interesting to note how the Report describes these pupils as ‘secondary school pupils’. The statistics from Table 2 reveal how there were 1,000 pupils still being educated in All Age Roman Catholic schools, before the building of Modern Schools 15 years later.

“This report would not be complete without reference to the problem which will have to be faced – and solved as a result –of the transference of the brighter and more promising pupils to the Grammar School and Technical School”.

“These children – by far the majority of the secondary school pupils – who have not been selected as being suitable to proceed to the Grammar and Technical School upon the basis of aptitude and ability, will attend the Modern School”.

“The problem, therefore will be to provide in the Modern School an appropriate course of education, of a character sufficiently wide and general in scope to cater for the needs of *all* those children, of *all* types of aptitudes and ability, outside the range of the Grammar School and Technical School. Such an education must be designed to afford the maximum opportunity for beneficial progress and advancement”.

“ . . . would be to ensure adequate educational facilities for the more promising children, who show evidence of development and progress in their later years at school, by the provision of what might be termed ‘Technical Tops’ in Modern Schools. Technical Tops would be advanced classes for ‘A’ level pupils’, appropriately staffed with specialist teachers, properly equipped as regards apparatus and material, and offering educational training and facilities approaching towards the standards of the Technical School”.

Source: County Borough of Wigan Minutes of Education and sub-committee, page 357, November 1944 to October 1945.

**Table 3. Diagram of Wigan’s LEA ‘Development Plan’ for educational reorganisation of its schools following the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act.**

**THE “EDUCATIONAL LADDER” OF ADVANCEMENT**

**THE PRIMARY STAGE**

**NURSERY SCHOOL 2 Years**

**INFANT SCHOOL 5 Years**

**JUNIOR SCHOOL 7 Years**

**THE SECONDARY STAGE 11 Years**

<p><b><u>GRAMMAR SCHOOL</u></b>          Grammar School Course,          School Certificate 16 years,          Employment, or          HSC – University,          Employment          Full-time course at          Technical College</p>	<p><b><u>TECHNICAL SCHOOL</u></b>          Technical Commercial or          Domestic Course,          Employment at 16 years, or          Full-time course at Technical          College</p>	<p><b><u>MODERN SCHOOL</u></b>          Modern School course          Employment at 15 years or          Full-time course for          “Technical Tops” at 16 years</p>
<p><b><u>BILATERAL SCHOOL</u></b>          Combined Grammar and Technical          School</p>	<p><b><u>LATE DEVELOPER</u></b>          Transfer from ‘A’ stream in Modern School of          “Technical Topper” into Technical School.</p>	

Source: County Borough of Wigan Minutes of Education Committee and sub-committees, page 369, November 1944 to October 1945.

Although this primary archive material of 1945 offers an analysis of educational improvement, and forward looking educational progress with which to educate future generations of children in Wigan, the reality was somewhat different and is discussed more fully in Chapters 4 to 6, using oral evidence and primary archive sources. What these chapters reveal is continuing inequality in the educational experience of working class children before and after the 1945 Education Act. They reveal similarities in the experience of taking part in the 11+scholarship

examination process over a major part of the twentieth century, an experience which decided their educational fate, personal identities and career destination. Their testimony reveals similarities in approaches to teaching and delivering the curriculum, and how different generations of teaching staff used similar methods of punishment when disciplining pupils in their charge, which were varied according to gender and the status of the school. This study reveals how Educational Acts throughout the major part of the twentieth century had little or no impact on a town like Wigan, and in fact helped retain an unequal and unfair educational system for generations of working class children who lived in the town.

### **The choice of Wigan**

Wigan is representative of many towns and cities in Great Britain, with its great twentieth century markers being the First World War, a worldwide depression, the Second World War, and the post-war affluence for ordinary working class people from the 1950s onwards. This was indicated in the experiences of the witnesses, who despite having had minimal educational provision before leaving school at 13 or 14 years of age, have acquired comfortable homes, cars, and are enjoying continental holidays. Many of these older people remember their youth as a bleak and drab domestic home life, complemented by the barest and harshest schooling, which their grandchildren would have difficulty in comprehending. My own recollections of my life during the 1950s and 1960s would appear to a younger audience to be very harsh and disciplined, whether in the home, at school or my early working life in a print factory. Of course, there were and still are significant numbers of deprived minorities and continuing pockets of misery and deprivation in certain areas of the town, but overall the people of Wigan live reasonably comfortably, all having benefited from the advancements of the last decade of the twentieth century and early twenty first century.

Wigan is in South West Lancashire, geographically in the middle of the British Isles, and is in between the two large cities of Liverpool and Manchester. Historically it dates back to Roman times as a small settlement on the main

Roman road from Chester (Deva) to Carlisle. It received a town or borough charter in the thirteenth century during Henry 111's reign; and Charles 11 conferred on the town the motto "Ancient and Loyal" in 1660, for its loyalty to the Crown during the English Civil Wars, of the 1640s. It is similar to other towns and cities found in the North of England, and the industrial West Midlands. Its population size and importance exploded during the Industrial Revolution. The coming of the canal in the later part of the eighteenth century followed later in the nineteenth century by the advent of the railways provided transport links for its major industries of cotton and coal.

This resulted in it becoming part of a huge industrial conurbation in the North West of England, with large parts of the town having two up and two down Victorian slum housing situated near to the large cotton factories and coalfields. Most of these were still in existence when George Orwell visited and wrote his famous book on the town, *The Road to Wigan Pier* in 1937. The book revealed that the levels of poverty and squalor were similar to and representative of other towns and cities in the North of England during the depression years of the 1920s and 1930s. The oral evidence I gathered from witnesses who experienced the depression years in Wigan supports accurately Orwell's findings of this period in Wigan's history. Some witnesses revealed that during this period they were unable to take the opportunity of going to the Grammar School or High School, as their parents were unable to afford the fees of about 3 guineas a term.

The population of the town rose throughout the nineteenth century and twentieth century to around 80,000 during the period under study and research. The age and sex structure of Wigan was similar to that of other towns in England between 1920-70. Wigan was (and still is) a working class town, with an overwhelming majority of its adult working population employed in the manufacturing and service industries, which have replaced the mines and cotton factories. Only a small proportion of the town's population was employed (and still is) in professional or managerial occupations. Although the town was industrialised in the last 150 years, the staple industries were in decline from the 1950s onwards. From the 1960s onwards, the town was successful in attracting different industries

such as food producers, engineering factories, textile and carpet manufacturers which were all medium-sized organisations, as opposed to the large monolithic industries of coal and cotton of the earlier part of the twentieth century.

The town and town centre have undergone enormous change since 1920 as testified by the interviewees. As in many other towns and cities the town centre has been redesigned with a new shopping centre and a new Market Hall. The former Wigan Grammar School building has been sold and is shortly to be opened as the Outpatients Department of Wigan Infirmary. There are also different examples of commercial supermarkets, D.I.Y. stores, and restaurants in and around the town's boundaries. The local area in which my primary school was situated along with old Victorian slum housing has been cleared, and is now a series of small-localized industrial units. In addition, the increasing volume of traffic since 1970 has meant there are now more roads, traffic lights and other measures for containing the flow of traffic through the town from the major motorways in the region.

The town centre contains its full quota of nightclubs and public houses each with a doorman outside the entrance to these establishments. Again these have changed since 1970, but their purpose is still the same, that of giving the young people of the town a night out which reflects the current youth culture. In the town centre are the same number of High Street stores, which have changed or remained depending on the economic situation and change in consumer taste of a particular item or commodity to be purchased by the Wigan public. There are police stations, libraries, council offices, hospitals, magistrates' courts, schools and colleges, which all fulfil their civic responsibilities and duties for all the citizens of Wigan.

Sporting interests are now centred at the new and ultra modern JJB Stadium, which houses the local Nationwide soccer team and Super League Rugby League team. Both clubs had separate grounds, which have been demolished and replaced with a supermarket and housing estate respectively. The new JJB Stadium is in the middle of the new development area, which contains a wide variety of stores and family entertainment and reflects life at the turn of the twenty first century.

There is a wide range of housing in the town from expensive luxury housing to council housing in the more deprived areas of the town. Wigan also has a wide range of schools and colleges in the town with a mix of denominational schools and local authority schools.

Overall, Wigan remains a working class town, and has a predominantly homogenous white population. There are no ethnic minority populations in the town, as there are in the neighbouring towns of Bolton and Preston. As in the past, there are number of exclusive estates which cater for the small percentage of middle class families, mainly situated to the North and West of the town. Therefore, there continue to be distinctive educational experiences for different social groups in Wigan, which are associated with class and culture. Although these experiences have changed from previous generations, for mainly social and economic reasons, along with changes in educational policy and initiatives, they nevertheless confirm the common pattern, which is being explored in this study.

### **Individual experience of schools**

The above observations of life and changes in the Wigan area are reflected in schools and education. There are regular school inspections of educational provision in Wigan by O.F.S.T.E.D. Results of G.C.S.E's. and 'A' level examination results are regularly published in the local newspapers. Most parents are keen for their children to attend schools that will ensure they get the best education and start in life. The Local Education Authority attempts to ensure that all recent government initiatives are implemented in its local schools, reflecting what is happening across the country. This relates and refers back to my theme of Wigan as a microcosm of the national educational scene. What is (or was) happening in Bury, Ely, Birmingham, Stourbridge and Manchester is (was) also happening in Wigan, through each setting reveals it own local colour.

R. H. Tawney noted in his book *Equality* (1931: p.144 to 145):

'English educational policy had been carried out in the main by men few, if any, of have themselves attended the schools principally affected by it, or would dream of allowing their children to attend them'.

Tawney was arguing in 1931 about an education system that was devised to cater for the needs of a small minority of pupils who attended selective higher status schools, whether in Wigan, or elsewhere in England. The results listed below for pupils' success at Wigan Girls' High School or Wigan Grammar School from 1929 to 1932, show how many pupils were actually successful in gaining success in the prevailing examination system of that period.

**Table 4. Examination Results, Wigan 1929-1932.**

Examination Results. The following comparative results were submitted to the education and sub-committee.

<b>Wigan Girls' High School</b>	<b>1929</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>1931</b>	<b>1932</b>
Higher School Certificate	1	1	6	3
Matriculation	11	10	22	11
School Certificate	17	21	14	19
<b>Wigan Grammar School</b>	<b>1929</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>1931</b>	<b>1932</b>
Higher School Certificate.	15	14	23	13
Matriculation	28	16	26	21
School Certificate	24	33	26	27

Source: County Borough of Wigan. Minutes of education committee and sub-committee, November 1931 to October 1932.

The results also indicate how few pupils actually attained this success in a town with a population of over 80,000 people. The majority of pupils in Wigan attended non-selective lower status schools, of which there many under a number

of guises available to pupils during the inter-war period. Many of the witnesses interviewed for this study attended such schools, and their experience will be analysed in Chapter 4, using both witnesses' testimony and primary archive sources.

Table 5 indicates pupils' successes in the current examination system throughout all the secondary schools in Wigan, and indicates that there are still examples of only moderate achievement, despite the advancements in educational policies and provision both locally and nationally.

**Table 5. Examination Results, Wigan 2000.**

Number of pupils obtaining GCSE's and 'A' passes in secondary schools, sixth form colleges, in the Borough of Wigan, 2000, along with national average.		
General Certificate of Secondary Education	A* to C grade	46.7% Wigan LEA 49.2% National Average
Advanced Level Certificate	Level 1 to 4	8.8% Wigan LEA 10.1% National Average

Source: Department of Education and Skills, 26.10.01.

Although the class inequalities obvious to observers in the 1930s have changed (see the earlier reference to affluence and foreign holidays currently undertaken by working class people born in the interwar period), educational inequality still remains a feature of life and experience in Wigan. The study will examine this problem across the experience of different generations in the town. This will be undertaken by following four key themes that stand out in the witnesses' accounts of their experience.

The four key elements of this study of the period between 1920-70 focus on teaching and the curriculum, approaches to discipline, success in public examinations and changing experiences of life in general captured in the idea of the lifeworld. Changes to the educational system, which were made nationally or

at the macro level, were the same in Wigan, and for the different schools found in the town. The town's educational authority and elected committees reacted and dealt with Acts of Parliament, recommendations, circulars and initiatives in a similar manner to those of other local authorities nationally. There were clearly differences in provision and in how each local authority dealt with a particular situation or problem. But broadly speaking the national patterns exemplified themselves locally.

The first element of the study relates to the differences in the curricula and teaching offered in the different schools found in Wigan. For the majority of witnesses, the type of curriculum they received in their lower status school was both minimal and basic, and was intended to prepare them for early or premature work in the staple industries found in the town. The teaching style was of a banal or mechanical nature, based on teaching approaches developed in the Elementary School of the nineteenth century. This was in direct contrast to the curriculum and teaching offered to the minority of pupils who attended the higher status grammar schools. This was an educational experience, which had a prescribed length and clear outcomes for the pupils who received it, along with a clear professional destination and status.

Another theme of the study is the type of discipline employed in schools in the period under review, which was very similar across the country. It depended on gender and the type of school. For instance, pupils, particularly boys in an All Age School, or Senior Schools and their successor the Secondary Modern Schools, were subject to very physical discipline, with a purpose behind it. There was a long tradition of ensuring that the education of the working class was ordered and systematic dating back to the 1870s. Just as the teaching and curriculum were basic and sufficient to meet the needs of the future factory worker, or miner in the case of Wigan, so as to contribute to the success of the particular organisation he or she was working in, so any problem that a pupil created was dealt with quickly and severely. Richard Farley (1960) in his book *Secondary Modern Discipline* advocated that the teacher should keep the activity or lesson simple, when teaching a secondary modern pupil, so that discipline

could be both administered and managed easily. This was my personal experience in the 1960s in a Wigan secondary modern school, and that of many other witnesses who attended similar schools and were interviewed for this thesis. The purpose and rationale behind this type of approach to discipline and punishment was to ensure that pupils were compliant in school and arguably in their future working lives (Willis 1977).

In the Grammar Schools, pupils were treated differently. This reflected their different occupational and professional destination, particularly for the more able pupils found in such schools, although Colin Lacey (1969) in his work *Hightown Grammar*, revealed that there was considerable underachievement by pupils found in the bottom classes. This is further endorsed by the experiences of one witness at Wigan grammar school in the 1960s. He describes the learning experiences of pupils in such classes as 'suffering communal neglect', and believed they would have made better progress in a secondary modern school. Punishments such as detentions, missing games periods or writing lines were given as opposed to the more physical approach of the non-academic schools. Again this difference did not only occur in Wigan, but in every town and city in England. Issues of different types of discipline encountered by witnesses and recorded in primary sources are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

The third element of this study reveals how different witnesses undertook the 11+scholarship examination, and experienced either success or failure. The experience of being prepared and tested for such a major examination is explored, and there were differences in how pupils were prepared schools, which is vividly recounted by individual witnesses in Chapter 6. Oral testimony recovered in this study also reveals how witnesses became aware of the boundaries placed on any future aspirations they may have or develop in their later lives through their performance in this examination. Log entries triangulated with oral testimony provide an explanation of how school difference was both legitimised and celebrated, and was part of the accepted educational process that every child encountered when he or she attended school.

The same could be said of social experience. The people of Wigan experienced the social and economic changes of the twentieth century in ways that would be recognisable to people living elsewhere in the country. However, the unique industrial base of the town provided a distinctive twist to their experience. Because of mining, witnesses recall poignantly the 1926 General Strike, and other witnesses can recall the conditions in the town when George Orwell wrote his famous book, *The Road to Wigan Pier* in 1937. Therefore an effort has been made in the study to relate the experiences of people in Wigan when they were being educated at various points in time, to the wider context of that history, is explored in Chapter 3, 'Lifeworlds: Social observations and experiences'.

### **Social differentiation of witnesses**

I spoke to people of all ages, the oldest, a woman in her late eighties; the youngest, a man in his late thirties. Interviews were conducted with people of all classes, from a man who was a former 6th form lecturer (incidentally lectured and taught by Asa Briggs, now Lord Briggs, the historian), to a retired miner, worn and physically broken after a lifetime of heavy labour in the heat and dust of the mines. They included people in the professions, and people who worked in the factories; people with different political and religious beliefs and persuasions, including atheists, from the highly educated to the poorly educated; people whose tastes are different as it is possible to imagine, and the balance I tried to strike was, again, a representative one. I gave a preponderance, I hope, to ordinary working class people because there were more of them to interview. It was a help that I had been born in Wigan, that my parents and many of my uncles and aunts still live in the town, and gave me useful introductions in interviewing witnesses. It should be acknowledged that many of the public institutions such as education or the police force, for example, in a town like Wigan in the period under investigation, were inward looking, particularly in the promotion of key personnel or officials to important positions of authority. This was particularly well known in the police force, for example, where being a member of the Roman Catholic faith was considered an important requisite for promotion. My own father can

recall how certain people received promotion on such 'qualifications', particularly during the Second World War and well into the 1950s. There was also a bias toward the promotion of men, with little opportunity for women to hold key positions in any sphere of public or social life. For example, Fred Foster reveals how Methodist Chapels of the 1930s and 1940s were male dominated in their decision-making, with little responsibility given to or consultation with female members of the chapel and congregation. He also remembers one elderly male member of the Chapel refusing permission for a billiard table to be placed in the Chapel's Youth Club, in case it inspired young men to gamble!

The people I interviewed for this thesis, who all attended different schools in the Wigan area, could be considered as a representative sample of what was happening nationally in schools between 1920 and 1970. They all underwent their schooling and education in the prevailing climate of this period. They all endured similar and different types of discipline depending on what type of school they attended. Everyone between 1920-70 experienced the 11+scholarship examination, which resulted in the different types of curriculum and teaching.

The experience of the witnesses constitutes an historical archive that can be analysed to illuminate how structures of educational and social inequality were sustained for over half a century. The essential theme and argument running through the thesis is that through curricular provision, differentiation of resources and forms of discipline and control, a 'dual' and 'differentiated' system of educational provision existed in Wigan. This is vividly exemplified in the experience of teachers and pupils in classrooms, in which schools taught people of Wigan their place in terms of their particular occupation and role in later adult life.

To develop the issues discussed in this introduction, the thesis has been organised into six chapters. Chapter 2 will discuss the methodological approaches used in collecting data and evidence for the thesis, and how it was used and analysed to produce this piece of work. Chapter 3 will retell, using oral testimony and primary archive material, the social and economic circumstances under which different generations of children were educated. This will help set the scene for the

educational debates, reports and education acts that were passed to help improve the educational experiences of working class children. Chapters 4 to 6 will deal with issues and themes relating to teaching and the delivery of the curriculum in different schools in Wigan; discipline, its use and application in the different schools in Wigan; the 11+selection process, and lost opportunities.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY

This is a study using oral history to investigate how working class people were educated and how they experienced the 11+scholarship process. The study also investigates how witnesses experienced the disciplinary methods, which were employed in the different schools they attended. It analyses and records their social observations and experiences of their lives in and out of school. There have been many such studies of working class experiences of schooling and education, with a number having been undertaken in the North of England. For example, Jackson and Marsden (1966 ed.) in their work *Education and the Working Classes* undertook research of the educational experiences of working class people in Huddersfield.

A recent example of how oral history can provide further insights and dimensions into the educational history of working class people was a piece of research written by Peter Cunningham, Phil Gardner, Bobbie Wells and Richard Willis (1995). In this research the authors use the oral testimony of two teachers to chronicle their experiences of college based training with which to help them prepare for a teaching career, as opposed to the earlier pupil teacher system with its origins in the nineteenth century. Another example of how oral history can assist with a further understanding of working class education is research undertaken by Philip Gardner (1996). In this work, Gardner (1996) recovers the oral testimony of former teachers who taught in elementary schools of the interwar period, and their experiences of how corporal punishment was used as an established disciplinary sanction in these lower status schools. It also helps provide another perspective, indicating how corporal punishment was perceived by teaching staff, as opposed to the memories of witnesses who received it, which are recorded and discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

What this study is attempting to recover using oral history is how the actual 'experience' or 'voice' of the recipients of a particular policy, report or educational act, can be used in building up a fuller picture of working class

education and schooling. Much is already known about the education administered to working class people through previous studies undertaken in a variety of locations and schools, but there is still much more to discover to gain a clearer insight and fuller understanding of how working class people experience and respond to the education process. The use of oral history and the evidence gathered from a wide cross-section of witnesses enable further insights to be made into how working class people, in a predominately working class town like Wigan, actually experienced their education, and their reaction to it.

**Oral history: the rationale**

Oral History gives history back to the people in their own words. And in giving a past, it also helps them towards a future of their own making.

Paul Thompson (1977 Frontispiece) *"The Voice of the Past"*.

The majority of the people interviewed (including me), received a minimal education considered suitable for their needs. The best way to find out what they experienced, from the horse's mouth so to speak, was the use of oral history. The people I interviewed for this research attended a variety of schools in the Wigan area. The research identifies what type of teaching and curriculum they received, along with the forms of discipline and punishment that were used, and the reasons given for its use. Listed below is an interview plan used to indicate how many people I had interviewed across the fifty years of the study.

**TABLE 6.**

**THE TYPE OF SCHOOLS WITNESSES' ATTENDED BY PERIOD**

DECADE	SCHOOL	MALE	FEMALE
	Grammar		
1920's	All Age	1	1
	Other		

	Grammar	2	2
<b>1930's</b>	All Age, Senior	5	1
	Other		
	Grammar	3	2
<b>1940's</b>	All Age Sen/Mod.	3	1
	Other		1 (Wigan Tech).
	Grammar	1	2
<b>1950's</b>	All Age Mod.	1	
	Other		
	Grammar	3	1
<b>1960's</b>	Mod	3	1
	Other		

I want to retell the educational experiences of ordinary people in Wigan in their own words. Although there is a considerable primary archive resource at the local Record Office to supplement witnesses' evidence, the main purpose and focus of the thesis is to give people who contributed to it their 'own voice' (Thompson 1977). I wanted to explore my personal history, and create an archive for future use by educational historians, from people's recollections of their experiences. The focus is on how they felt it, how they experienced it, and what was left inside them. This is the history recovered in this study.

Paul Thompson (1977) and Philip Gardner and Peter Cunningham et. al. (1996) have provided the main methodological approach for this piece of research and highlight its power to evoke the past. Read, listen and feel 82-year-old Jack Lathom's very vivid description of the experiences he encountered in his daily life at an All Age School in the 1920s and early 1930s, to see how powerful oral history can be:

“ . . . when I went back to school (after a serious illness during the summer), I was taught by Mrs. F., in Standards 6 and 7 (last classes in an All Age School, pupils were usually about the age of 13 to 14 years). A very tall masculine lady, who terrified us all. Her first job when she

arrived at school in the morning was to get the cane out of her cupboard, and hang it at the back of her chair. She only hid the cane when the scripture inspector/examiner was coming tomorrow. The cane was hidden behind some books. That was the only day we didn't get the cane." [Laughter]

" . . . if Mrs F. saw you talking, she would come dashing down the desk corridors, everybody would have to duck, because they would get the cane on their heads. She was very quick and vicious with the cane. She was a very strong woman. Nobody got the better of her. I remember 2 lads at school, 13 or 14, she was caning them, one of them tried to punch her (kick her) with his clogs (everyone wore them in those days) . . . so of course he got more cane . . . so much so, his parents came at the end of the school day at 4. 00 p.m. We saw these 2 boys' mothers laying the law down to Mrs. F. All I can say (remember) is them pointing their fingers at her. 'You touch our boys again . . . if you do . . . I will give it you. All this 'gang' of us went into the 'entry', and when Mrs F. got on the bus, we booed her. [Laughter] The following morning we all had to stand up. She didn't cane us for that, because she would have been outnumbered. [Laughter] She put the fear of God up us. It happened regularly that lads' or girls' mothers' coming to threaten her. Nothing went to court. It was a regular occurrence, caning and parents coming at nights to argue and row with Mrs. F.'" [Laughter]

The testimony of Jack Lathom gives us an idea of the resistance, humiliation, fear and brutality of schooling and education, which he encountered in 1932. His own voice adds authenticity, veracity and uniqueness to this general point that education was coercive but nonetheless resisted in a variety of ways. What Jack Lathom was experiencing was an education in which the control exercised by the teaching staff was more important than what he was actually being taught in lessons. His occupational destination had been clearly identified as being in manual work, due to his failure in the 11+selection examination. He was therefore being subjected to social control through an inadequate curriculum to follow

orders in his working life rather than being further developed and educated. The essence of this thesis, of the 'lost opportunity' through a kind of educational socio-economic lottery, is clearly demonstrated by this testimony. Jack Lathom encountered this situation in the 1920s and early 1930s. I encountered it in the 1950s and 1960s, a thirty-year gap, but essentially the same frustration of being in a grossly unfair educational regime. It was a regime that Gary McCulloch (1998) describes as being 'experimented' and 'changed', to give to the mass working class population a perception that educational provision was being improved. In reality, there still remained a vast difference in the educational provision for the minority and that being offered to the majority and to people like Jack Lathom and myself.

Jack Lathom's story also illustrates how working class parents would complain if their children were being unfairly treated or punished by teachers. It can also provide and develop insights into teaching styles and curriculum content found in the different schools during the period under research. It can also help give insights into and glimpses of the enormous changes, both economic and social that impacted on the lives of ordinary people during this time. For example, Jack Lathom mentions 'clogs' which were worn by the two boys resisting 'Mrs. F.'s physical chastisements'. The wearing of clogs by witnesses in their childhood and adolescence indicated a level of poverty in their family; clogs were hard wearing and relatively inexpensive footwear, and lasted over a long period of time. Both adults and children wore them, and they were passed down to the next child, particularly in large working class families, well into the 1950s.

Oral evidence from witnesses, gives a very vivid description of what it was like to be educated in a Wigan school, and provides a much 'fuller' description for wider analysis and interpretation. Oral testimony can provide deeper insights into educational experiences. For example, what was the significance of attending a Grammar school, and being taught and receiving a curriculum that had elements of the "tripos" i.e. the classics, sciences and moderns? How did this compare to a curriculum that was offered in the All Age Elementary School or Senior Boys' or Girls' school, which had no examination at the end of a particular course or year

group? There were also the disciplinary methods used in these schools, and the occupational destinations that the different schools would offer the people who attended them. I interviewed the widest cross-section of witnesses to get a detailed account of schooling and education by analysing their oral testimonies alongside primary archive evidence, and through comparison to that offered by other published secondary educational sources.

In the last 25 years historians from several fields have come to realise there is a dearth of information on the lives of working class people, including their schooling and education. Oral history provides a good way to rectify this. Paul Thompson (1977), George Ewart Evans (1969), Trevor Lummis (1983) and Jeremy Seabrook (1982) have all contributed to historical study with their use of oral history. They have enriched the accepted and received historical educational sources, such as Dent (1976), Lawson (1973) and Lowndes (1969), at both the local and national level, by providing evidence from a different point of view. Oral historians have used the individual's experience of their school life and later adult experiences to give further insights into what the schools actually provided for the pupils, particularly in the lower status schools. This was explored by Penny Summerfield (1987) in a paper using oral evidence, on *Gender, Class and Education* in North Lancashire, 1900-1950. One of the themes she attempts to recover in the work is how people who attended non-selected schools were physically punished for any non-compliance in everyday school life. What Penny Summerfield (1987) describes 'as being taught by the cane'. Philip Gardner's (1996) research on the experiences and reaction of young teachers to the use of corporal punishment in the elementary schools of the interwar period, gives another perspective and viewpoint on physical punishment in lower status schools. It helps give a balanced view of how much physical punishment was used in lower status schools, and helps collate pupils' oral testimonies and set them against primary sources such as school logs and punishment books. The corporal punishment inflicted was in direct contrast to the experience of pupils who attended selective schools, with their middle class ethos and values. In the case of girls, there was no physical punishment used whatsoever, but there was

psychological pressure by teachers to ensure that the pupils conformed to the values associated with these schools. Boys, were physically punished for misdemeanours, but the punishment was administered by a senior member of staff, which resulted in it being used less frequently. Personal testimony is needed, to explore for instance, an individual's sense of frustration, anger and humiliation which he or she may have felt at school, refuting for example Lowdnes' (1969) *Silent Social Revolution* analysis and explanation, which argued that everything improved progressively throughout the extension of state education. This argument makes major untested assumptions about an individual's personal experience of the education and schooling he or she received.

By using oral history I have attempted to investigate sympathetically and with empathy working class people's experience of schooling, and education between 1920-70 in the Wigan area. I have also attempted to identify the established codes or social structures that were significant in both Wigan schools and nationally. Those witnesses who were pupils and young adults between 1920-50 tended to blame the collective poverty they experienced for their failure in education. It governed not only where they lived in Wigan, but the length and nature of their education, including their success or otherwise at the 11+selection examination. This in turn dictated very often the kind of jobs and employment they entered on leaving school. Those who went on to think about the roots of their poverty and who perceived their lives in terms of exploitation, saw themselves as being oppressed, particularly those employed in heavy staple industries. To a lesser extent, the school hierarchy itself was blamed. People who were conscious of their exploitation interpreted it in terms of a 'class conflict', which manifested itself in the educational system due to the class boundaries it created.

Paul Thompson (1977 p.32) has argued that 'oral testimony serves to emphasise the complexity and variety of working class experience of schools and the tangled webs of social stratification of which they were a part'. For every generalisation exceptions can be found, but one can also discover patterns of behaviour and attitude. The historian who uses oral history encounters the problems of bias,

contradiction and interpretation in evidence he collects. Above all, he is brought back from the grand patterns of written history, to the awkwardly individual human lives of ordinary people, which are its basis, and indeed the basis and foundations for this thesis. For example, the experience of Rita Dandy, helps capture a personal memory of school and education in St. George's C. E. Primary School Hall, when taking her 11+ scholarship in 1952:

“ . . I remember taking the 11+scholarship examination in the school hall. It seemed to be about ticking boxes, and consisted of mathematics, English and puzzles. I remember one boy, Keith Riding, who copied a girl's name who sat in front of him, Barbara Parkes. He then fell asleep on his desk.” [Laughter]

I know that Mrs. Rita Dandy passed her 11+scholarship examination, attended Wigan Girls' High School in the fifties, and enjoyed a successful career at the local Wigan Hospital as a laboratory technician. But what happened to Keith Riding in his future schooling and education? What career path did he tread? Was he successful, and if so did he owe it to the educational system in operation during this period? In addition, both educational and social history suffers from two fundamental disadvantages when it uses only official sources. Firstly, society and social problems are seen from the top downwards. This needs to be counterbalanced, to provide a different perspective with the view from the opposite direction. Oral history provides this different perspective.

### **The strengths and weaknesses of using oral evidence**

This leads to an assessment of the accuracy of oral evidence and testimony, and any inherent bias. Like all other types of historical evidence at either the primary source, or from accepted secondary sources, oral evidence is a source from which the historian can reconstruct or create an interpretation of a particular field of historical study. Witness evidence cannot be regarded as 'the absolute truth', any more than newspaper reports, private letters, or published biographies. However, Spaul (1988) argues how oral history can be a useful research tool for the educational historian: 'as studies of schooling and social class edge towards the

twentieth century, the availability of oral sources will add new research dimensions to the history of education' (1988 p.76).

This retrospective oral evidence of events nearly 75 years ago in some cases, should not present any intrinsically different problems from those of newspaper reports, court hearings, published biographies or recorded interviews. The context of perception is separated from that of the presentation of the evidence, but the bias introduced by this later social context of presentation does not necessarily increase with time. Many social pressures against openness diminish in retrospect, and the last years of life for many people are a time for reflection and special candour. Oral evidence can also give the historian an opportunity to reveal features of the social structure and social deference of the witness's childhood and youth. For example, Jack Lathom gives a snapshot of life in the 1920s and 1930s as he was growing up in a mining area, with class distinctions very apparent even to a youngster in school:

“ The vicar from Shevington came to the school, and we had to stand up when he came in. The first vicar, Mr. Hopkins wore gaiters, and we had to say ‘good morning Mr. Hopkins’. Then he went talking to the headmistress, and then he would go. He never spoke to us. He was chauffeur driven; his vicarage was in Shevington, at St. Anne’s down Gathurst Lane. The chauffeur was Mr. Billington, he was a Standish Lower Ground man. The second vicar was Mr. Crabtree. He had no chauffeur, he had a motorbike, and he was younger man, keen on tennis. And I remember a relation of mine, well, a close friend of my family, and when he died he was taken to Shevington church to be buried. And the vicar (Mr. Crabtree) he had forgotten about it, he was playing tennis on the nearby court. The family had to go for him, and he came with his white flannels on, he threw his cassock over them, and conducted the funeral service. He had forgotten about it. [Laughter] We didn’t bloody matter, we were just ordinary working folk! Mr. Crabtree carried on after the war. He was never married, he lived with his sister in the vicarage. They don’t have that vicarage now, I don’t know what it is now?”

Jack Lathom's vivid description of the role and social status of the local clergy during the 1930s and 1940s gives an indication of the differences between middle and working class people. When Jack Lathom unintentionally makes the point 'we didn't bloody matter', it conveys a clear perception of how an old man remembers how he and his kind felt when they were younger. It is a telling episode revealing the subjective dimension of class stratification. It does, however, raise a cause for concern and suspicion about the accuracy and authenticity of using oral evidence when constructing an argument or analysis in a research study. Imprecise general questioning on schooling and education will encourage subjective answers and retrospective bias, inviting the witnesses to answer 'young uns today don't know they are born', particularly in relation to discipline in today's schools and their general material advantages. This type of questioning needs to be avoided so that witnesses are not selecting what they think the researcher wants to hear. More purposeful questioning on, for example, the 11+scholarship examination, or the comments in their reports, helps people to give more detailed descriptions of their everyday life and events in school, and also makes for a much reliable and useful evidence base.

When witnesses are interviewed they are typically vague about dates and years when they were attending school, unless it coincided with a particularly important event in national history, for example, the General Strike in 1926, or the outbreak of World War Two in September 1939. Ordinary working class people do not necessarily arrange their lives as a professional historian does. To counter balance this and ensure the evidence is reliable, I encouraged witnesses to tell me their particular story, and ensured that I covered a list of detailed points and questions regarding their particular schooling and education at particular periods in time. These were essential for comparison with other witnesses' testimony, besides being intrinsically useful for securing a fuller story when a particular question was being asked. Although the interview schedule was reasonably short, it required some three to four hours to gain an overall picture and analysis of a witness's experience. As far as possible, I tried to counteract the social bias and selective memory of the witnesses, which could arise during a long discussion with some of

the older interviewees. Lastly, I found that the people who were used to presenting a public image were less likely to be candid about their schooling and education. For example, I found a former Director of Education of Wigan very difficult to interview. He only gave me a bland and general account of his schooling and education, rather than a vivid and full description, which the other witnesses gave. Oral historians must pay attention to the narrative devices people employ to reconstruct their memories of their past, when analysing their evidence (Gardner and Cunningham 1997).

Another important feature when interviewing people to gain their oral testimony of their experiences of education and schooling is to gain a balanced view of what is being recovered. In this study, it is the experiences of different generations of working class children who were educated in different schools in Wigan between 1920 until 1970. The testimony of the witnesses will reveal the type of curriculum they received, and the teaching styles used to deliver it, including views and experiences of the different disciplinary measures used in the different schools. Testimonies will also reveal how the 11+scholarship examination process was used to decide which school a witness would attend at the age of eleven. But the views of the teaching staff who taught these witnesses in the different schools in Wigan, are missing, and those of the educational administrators and members of the education committee who set the educational agenda in the town. This study, like that of Stephen Humphries (1981), has relied mainly on the experiences of the pupils, rather than balancing this view with reasons why teachers' taught in a specific way or style. Teachers' views would help counterbalance the viewpoints of why such harsh and physical punishments were used in the lower status schools, for example. Also the idea of 'resistance' which some witnesses testify to in this study, and is recorded more fully in Chapter 5, and emphasised by Humphries (1981), has been challenged by other historians, who note a high level of acquiescence and even positive endorsement for working class schools from many memories and oral sources of the earlier part of the twentieth century (Rose, 1993). This study reveals people who enjoyed their education and school days. For example, Harry Richardson and Ronnie Foster had positive views and

endorsed their educational experiences of the senior school during the interwar period.

Oral history has the potential to provide educational historians with evidence from different perspectives and positions. This study is looking at the experiences of working class people in Wigan, and the different schools they attended over a fifty-year period. One of the themes being explored is the different types of punishment used, including physical punishment that was encountered in the lower status schools. Research by Philip Gardner (1996) using oral testimony of young teachers during the inter-war period, reveals their experiences of encountering the practical reality of seeing corporal punishment used in elementary schools. This type of evidence gives the emotional feeling of these witnesses (either male or female), of seeing savage punishments being used on pupils. Many of the witnesses in Gardner's (1996) research also give very vivid examples of sadistic head teachers who seemed to take a particular delight in punishing pupils in their charge. This is explored more fully in Chapter 5, when evidence gathered for this research is contrasted to the oral testimony used in Gardner's research (1996). Gardner acknowledges several practical difficulties involved in interviewing former teachers; for example, the relatively smaller number of teachers compared with their pupils, their relatively greater age and sensitivity of the topic, as well as the generally distorting effects of memory. On the other hand, he argues: 'The memories of such individuals promise a source of intimate and detailed information capable both of refining the bland messages inscribed in the official documents and tempering the pained, passionate classroom recollections of former pupils' (1996 p.144). The conclusions of Gardner's research based on these teacher accounts suggests that corporal punishment was 'a more prominent part of classroom life than the documentary record can ever admit', but was at the same time not as universal, intensive or uncontrolled as might be implied in pupil recollections such as those of Stephen Humphries in his 1981 work *Hooligans or Rebels?* (McCulloch and Richardson 2000).

Another question would be, how did the administrators and teaching staff prepare children for the 11+scholarship examination system? Did they just let pupils sit the examination on a preordained day, as some witnesses have alleged, without any preparation, and meet the quotas set by the education committee for places in the higher status grammar schools? In order to gain an overall and balanced view when using oral testimony in this study, it is necessary to listen to both those being taught, and those undertaking the teaching, including the people who were dictating educational policy. Gardner and Cunningham (1997) in their research on teachers' professional practice, emphasise that it was necessary to employ the oral history interview as their 'principal methodology tool' (1997 p.331). They suggest that oral history holds 'unique promise' for conceptualising research questions and for methodological design (1997 p.332). They also point out the potential problems involved in this approach: 'Engagement with data produced by the agency of memory and dialogue presents us with enormous challenges, as well as great promise (1997 p.340). Nevertheless, they insist, 'if we can use such data carefully and creatively alongside our more familiar documentary sources, then we may be able to go beyond histories which are locked into unitary paradigms . . . and look for more challenging ways of rethinking the problem of structure and agency' (1997 p.340). This would assist the educational historian gain a much better historical analysis of working class education and schools, and would complement the orthodox sources at both local and national level.

### **Data collection**

The main method of research used in this thesis was that of oral history. It also included information about a person's later life, in order to build a much broader and clearer analysis of how a particular type of education and schooling, had influenced his later life and career.

I used the following research instruments for data collection:

\* interviews with 34 witnesses who attended and experienced different schools in and around the Wigan area between 1920-70;

\* reviews of available literature, and empirical research at a national level, and how this compares with oral testimony and primary evidence gathered for this study;

\* reviews of available local documentation, which was directly linked and related to the purpose of this research/thesis, such as school logbooks, local authority documents, reports, H.M.I. reports, etc.

The rationale behind the framing of the questions in Appendix 1, for different interviewees to answer, was to gain a fuller insight into the educational experiences of in the case of some individual witnesses nearly 70 to 80 years ago. Incidents, which involved resourcing and discipline, needed to be highlighted, to show the continuity of experience of working class children in the lower status schools – the senior school, and its successor, the modern school, which was in direct contrast to the children who attended well-resourced higher status schools, which had a different ethos and disciplinary code for children who attended them. The next point to follow-up with different witnesses was the occupational status that they achieved following a particular educational route. It was necessary in particular interviews to ask witnesses certain questions in a negative way, so that an assessment could be made of how effective their education had been in preparing them for their later working and adult life.

Since the individual's evidence, interests and viewpoints were direct from their experience, with all its frustration and emotions, it was necessary to take the feelings of people into account. These often distort their perception of the past and it is vital, therefore, to gauge their strengths and significance. Using oral testimony in this thesis is further justified by, and fulfils the very important requirement of respecting yet learning from a person's experiences. Although the sample of witnesses interviewed for this study were not a representative sample of people who attended the range of schools available from 1920 until 1970, it does, record the experiences of people, who attended a variety of schools, particularly the lower status schools that were available to working class people in the period under review. Their testimonies are negative in their content and tone. Counterbalancing this negative picture of education and schooling in the lower status

school in particular, there are some examples of positive experiences and memories, such as those of Jack Wolley, Alan Mitchinson and Muriel Heyes. It is essential to get a feel of the atmosphere and ethos of these lower status schools, whether it is positive or negative. Of the witnesses interviewed who attended higher status schools apart from Winifred Jones, Fred Foster and Frank Dandy, the majority remember their school lives in the grammar or high school with mainly negative feelings and memories.

The primary aim in compiling witness testimony for the production of this thesis was to get people to talk freely and openly about their experiences and views of their particular education and school days. When interviewing or discussing an aspect of a person's life such as education, health or employment there will be an element of misgiving expressed or resentment at the way he or she was treated by an individual or an organisation, particularly when that experience is viewed retrospectively and contrasted with contemporary provision. The sample of witnesses interviewed for this thesis reflects this pattern, and on balance offers an overall negative view of schooling and education in a major part of the twentieth century. But if the reader reads individual testimony carefully, there are examples of people enjoying their education and school days, pleasure which remains with them throughout their lives. This gives the reader the opportunity of reflecting and judging the alternative views held by different witnesses who were negative about their school life.

The evidence supplied to me by witnesses was triangulated against other oral testimony of a similar nature. For example, witnesses who were former pupils of Wigan Girls' High School all remember their strict social code of dress and behaviour, both in and out of school. Another example was the testimony particularly of boys who left at 14 or 15 years of age in the non-selective lower status schools, and of the physical nature of punishments. It was particularly important to ensure that I had the widest cross-section of witnesses, both male and female, who attended All-Age elementary schools, infant and junior schools, senior schools, secondary modern schools and grammar schools. Their evidence could then be triangulated against local primary archive source material and

secondary source material, to ensure authenticity and accuracy of the witnesses' testimony. This data then could be analysed against national evidence and a theoretical analysis of some of the key themes of the study.

In interviewing people, I took into account the nature of my professional and personal relationships with individuals in terms of their willingness to express honest opinions about the schooling they received. They were given my assurance of discretion in their discussion of people and their professional performance, and so they talked openly and frankly, as I have done with my own experiences, which are recorded in this thesis. There was no use of pseudonyms for either the names of witnesses or the schools they attended. The questions I presented to witnesses when I was interviewing are set out in Appendix 1.

I confirmed with those I was approaching for interview that my sole purpose was scholarship and that their comments would be used with appropriate academic discretion. I made it quite clear there would be no misrepresentation of their experiences in the schools they attended. All the witnesses gave their full permission for their actual names and the school they attended to be used. I then informed them that their oral testimony would be placed into separate chapters of the study. I then handed the interviewees a brief interview schedule (see Appendix 1). An example of this is an interview I had with Mrs. Mary Appleton. She revealed her frustration at not being allowed to go to the Convent after passing her 11+scholarship examination:

“I loved reading and English, and I was always in the top three in the class, but because my family were so poor, I couldn't go to the convent, this has affected me and lived with me all my life.”

Here is a telling example of a deep-seated feeling of regret that this person has had all her life. Time and again, witnesses talk about their education in powerful emotional language that history must acknowledge. I taped the interviews (most witnesses did not object), and also took notes to supplement the taped conversation. I also left a copy of the interview schedule (with a space after each question), along with a stamped addressed envelope and my telephone number in case interviewees wished to add any further comments, and send them on to me

afterwards. This occurred in most cases, as some witnesses were reconstructing events and experiences over half century ago. I emphasised that I wanted to hear anything they wished to tell me and would prefer to spend most of the time on what they felt was important to them (which was not always relevant to my research and its purpose). I did not want those who knew me to feel pressurised into co-operating, so I tried to emphasise the voluntary nature of such co-operation. I also stated that the reason for the research was to explore what was being offered to people between 1920 and 1970, and this research could be used to influence future planning and debate in the educational arena.

I then carried out the interviews over a period of 5 years. They were conducted in an informal way, and sometimes seemed to offer an opportunity for general reflection, on which witnesses sought a clearer view of their own life experiences. I tried not to lead, but lack of time meant that I occasionally had to draw people back (very gently and subtly) to what I needed to cover (particularly with the older witnesses). I was, however, relieved that interviewees found it easy to talk about their experiences, and in a very dispassionate way, despite the highly subjective focus and nature of the research. Quite often there were moments when an interviewee would say, 'You know yourself, being a teacher/inspector. . . and you would feel or react in this or that way'. At these times, I found it appropriate to lapse into discussion - this, I believe, helped to prevent abruptly truncating a potentially sensitive or emotional flow; and I made it clear that we were talking 'off the record', and this evidence would not be used in compiling the thesis.

The interviews represented a very large time investment. The length of interview time proved important to put individuals (particular the older witnesses) at ease; essentially making time for them, respecting and empathising with what they experienced. and not patronising them. I had no real difficulties in this respect, and it helped offset a 'getting through the questions' atmosphere. Talking things slowly helped in establishing a rapport with witnesses, and simultaneously the collection of both subjective and objective evidence. In all the interviews (after breaking the ice), the individuals were comfortable and eager to express their views about their schools and educational experiences.

### From data to analysis

The advantages and strengths of utilising the very vivid descriptions and experiences of witnesses as the main methodological approach for this thesis are clear, once we have acknowledged though, the main pitfalls of 'selective memory' and 'reinterpretation' by witnesses. Oral history has helped change the scope and dimension of history in the last 50 years. The lives and experiences of working class people are being included in historical research, alongside the political and administrative focus which are included automatically by historians. Until the twentieth century, the focus of all history was essentially political, a documentation of the struggle for dominance and power in which there was little evidence of the 'Ordinary Joe' (Chaplin 1987). Documentary sources portray a top-down view of the history of education, and take for granted inbuilt power balances. They record in the main the dominant views and assumptions of policy makers and administrators (McCulloch and Richardson 2000). Such an approach leads to a view that educational history is seen through the eyes of the 'winners' of conflicts over the nature and purposes of education.

In his study of British working-class education in the nineteenth century, Smelser noted that the sources constitute a 'recurrent and inevitable difficulty' (1991 p.5). This was due, he suggests because, 'Most of the things recorded about the working classes were written by representatives of other classes. This occurs in all societies, by virtue of the unequal distribution of literacy, power, wealth, and access to authorship'. Therefore, according to Smelser, 'Methodologically this behoves historians to consult sources produced by representatives of those classes themselves and perhaps to distrust sources produced by others' (1991 p.5-6). He also warns against interpreting this principle too narrowly, and concludes, 'The problem of the reliability of different sources does not admit of any definitive solution, but rather invites a practical and sceptical approach to all of them'. In general, it is often argued that official documentary sources tend to exclude or marginalize the losers, especially the working class, women and ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples (McCulloch and Richardson 2000).

Therefore, the main sources used were the ones which presented a view of educational history written by those who held power, either locally in Wigan, or nationally. There was little use in recording the ordinary person's experience of school. Even if historians had wished to write a history from the ordinary person's perspective, this would have been very difficult. The raw materials from which history is written would be from the established sources. Therefore the more personal, local and unofficial a document, the less likely it was to survive. The actual memories and experiences of people who attended schools in Wigan between 1920-70 are unlikely to be recorded. However, the local school logs, records and minutes of meetings, which influenced the interpretation of the established viewpoint, certainly do survive. To put it another way, it was the view of paid officials, teaching staffs, local education committees and governing bodies, rather than those of ordinary people that survive in the educational record. Now school reports, and old photographs can be used as sources, alongside oral testimony, to help give fresh insights or focus to a historical study. This is illustrated by Mr. Ronald Foster, who kindly loaned me a photograph of the laying of a foundation stone for a separate boys' and girls' senior school in Ince, near Wigan. He also told me in an interview that he had a photograph of his maternal grandfather supervising the laying of the foundation stone of a new senior school in Ince, with the following comments:

“I have a photograph which shows him supervising the actual laying of the Foundation Stone. My Grandfather told me that when the school was in the process of being built in the thirties, depression years someone came up to him and said ‘They could do wi gien us summate eite, never mind building palaces for kids’ . . . ”

What this comment indicates, is that during the depression years of the 1930's, working class people in Wigan would have preferred public money to be spent on relieving their own personal hardships and sufferings, and gives an indication of how working class people viewed education during this period. Their first priority was to keep themselves fed, clothed and housed, with the basic essentials and

necessities of life. Education and school was well down their list of life priorities, and would remain so until the establishment of the welfare state after 1945.

The evidence I gathered from the interviewees was transcribed into texts and ordered to explore a variety of key themes, which underpin the key ideas, and analysis of this study. The themes were decided from the material I had generated from the interviews, and fell into four broad categories. These key ideas explore the different types of curriculum available in different schools in Wigan, disciplinary methods employed in schools, and the opportunities then offered to pupils. I then used the social observations and experiences that witnesses recalled from their school days. I interpreted this evidence by triangulation against other witness's evidence, and compared it with actual written records from the Wigan Record Office (situated at Leigh Town Hall, near Wigan), to ensure there was both accuracy and authenticity in the ideas and analysis I was presenting in the thesis. The term 'triangulation' originates from psychological reports of Campbell and Fish (1959) to refer to a situation when 'a hypothesis can survive the confrontation of a series of complementary methods of testing' (Webb et. al. 1966 p.174). In some instances this triangulation was further enhanced by the available literature found in secondary sources. For example, Gary McCulloch in his book *Failing the Ordinary Child?* (1998) gives clear insights into the type of curricular and disciplinary approaches in the secondary modern school, by highlighting the works of Harold Dent (1952), Richard Farely (1960) and Edward Blishen (1955). In his book *A Schoolmaster's Agony: Roaring Boys* (1955), Edward Blishen gives a personal account of teaching in a boys' secondary modern school in London. He gives a vivid description of the disciplinary and curricular methods used. He explains how the teaching objective in lessons was kept simple, and how miscreant pupils' were quickly dealt with by the use of corporal punishment. Blishen also recalls how the school he taught in was locked during the school day, and only opened when the pupils went home at the end of afternoon school. This was clearly the experience of a number of witnesses, including myself, who attended such schools in Wigan at the end of the 'great experiment' or 'adventure' of the secondary modern school in the 1960s, considered at the time to be an

‘alternative’ and have ‘parity of prestige’ with the grammar school in the 1960s (McCulloch 1998).

The key analytical themes of the study were interlinked. In as much as all pupils were taught a syllabus, there were still distinct differences in and outcomes from the curricula they received. There were also similar rituals of assemblies, uniform and discipline in schools, which underpinned distinct moral codes. The ‘liberal’ education of the selective grammar school had a ‘content’ and ‘ritual’ that was ‘framed’ (Bernstein 1971) and ‘taught’ to its pupils so they could undertake and achieve academic success through the passing of examinations before they left the school at 16. This contrasts with the experiences of the pupils who attended the lower status schools, where the schools were firmly rooted in the ‘elementary tradition’ of providing a minimum and basic education for early employment in the staple industries of Wigan. These differences and similarities were achieved through the approaches to and delivery of the curriculum to pupils in the different schools. Each type of school gave what Bernstein (1971) describes as a ‘collection code’, presupposing a hierarchical social order and clear boundaries between subjects, which fitted the participants to a particular occupational identity and role in society. The curriculum contains disciplinary approaches and forms of control that are clearly defined in the rituals of that school. Passive punishments, such as the use of lines, detentions, and the missing of prestigious events, together with explanations and reasons for the punishment in the grammar school, contrast with a more physical approach taken in the lower status schools with little reasoning or explanation given.

Oral history is built around people, individuals, about which accepted secondary sources do not write other than as the ‘generalised masses’. It allows everyone from a particular town or community to have their experiences told, not just the successful ones passing 11+scholarship examinations, or going to university, which were celebrated in the school log or in the local newspaper. The ones caned and humiliated regularly each day of their compulsory schooling and education also come into view. Those who were not given the education reserved for the ‘elite’ should be recognised, and this may in some way restore some dignity and

self-confidence to them. Between 1920-70, educational acts were passed and school leaving ages raised, but there was little meaningful or radical improvement for the 'non academic' pupil of either gender (McCulloch 1998). The broader perspective offered by oral history helps give what Paul Thompson (1977 p.57) describes as 'shared meanings to people, and makes them fuller human beings'. It helps them locate their experience in a particular epoch or generation. Oral history challenges the accepted arguments and interpretations of history, and can help provide a radical transformation of the social meaning of the past. This thesis hopes to contribute in a small way to the field of working class educational history.

Finally, oral history helps provide something which is unique and more fundamental to history. It transforms the 'object' of study into 'subjects', which makes for a history that is not just richer, more vivid and heart-rending, but more accurate. It also provides data for much more detailed description, which cannot be found in official sources at either the secondary or primary archive level. An example of this is the memory of Ronnie Foster of his first day at school in 1934. It is interesting to note how he remembers the smell of disinfectant, and how he associates this with a local cinema called 'The Bug'. There were a large number of cinemas in the Wigan area, commented on by George Orwell (1937) in his book *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Also, the remembered aroma of unwashed bodies and carbolic soap also gives an indication of the social habits of working class people during the inter-war period. They possibly only had one bath a week in their two up and two down slum dwellings, which had no provision for central heating and bathing facilities, apart from coal fires for heating water.

“ . . . only half remember being introduced to my first teacher, a Miss Kay, a red haired lady of about 40, but I remember vividly the smells. Strongest was the same of kind of disinfectant smell, as at the local cinema the 'Ince Picture House'. Popularly known as 'The Bug'. [Laughter] Next the aroma of unwashed bodies, then carbolic soap, the smell of those who had been washed. The classrooms for the infants were divided by sliding partitions, the wood was varnished pitch pine.”



### CHAPTER THREE

#### LIFEWORLDS: SOCIAL OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

The principal argument of this thesis is based on the experiences of working class people who encountered the 'dual' and 'differentiated' system of secondary education that existed in Wigan for over half a century. To understand the experience of different generations of working class pupils in different educational establishments, it is vital to understand something of the circumstances of their lives, and how these changed throughout the period of study. Although the educational experiences of working class children did change during the course of half a century, there is contained in these experiences a continuity and similarity in the way of how these educational policies impacted on their lives. This chapter describes the broad setting in which working class children in Wigan would live and from which experience their education and schooling.

It also illustrates how the notion of a 'Lifeworld' (Williamson 1998) provides a good account of how working class life changed during the period under investigation. It traces how the post-war welfare reforms of 1945 dealt with the hardship and poverty found in Wigan during the interwar period. This chapter also reveals how the technological improvements in transport and health care for example, helped transform the lives of working class people in the post-war period. This period was one of full employment in the town, in the many medium sized and small companies that were replacing the large employers of coal and cotton of the earlier part of the century. Another noticeable feature were opportunities for women to become wage earners, initially in munitions work during World War Two, and in the many opportunities that became available in Wigan after 1945. All these factors were impacting on the need for a much fairer and better system of education and schooling for children in Wigan.

However, the educational opportunities offered to working class children following the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act had many similarities to those of the inter-war period, which virtually remained unchanged. There was a

clear system of higher and lower status schools, which was perpetuated through the 11+scholarship examination in Wigan, which resulted in distinct teaching and curricular styles and ethos, each with different behaviour and disciplinary codes and social expectations of the pupils' attending them. In understanding how these codes functioned it is important to know how working class people lived their lives in a dynamic and evolving social and cultural context. All the people who contributed to this study, whose experience was triangulated by primary archive material, provide an illuminating account of the evolving background of social and economic changes in the Wigan area. Jeremy Seabrook (1982) and Bill Williamson (1998) describe how working class people experienced and reacted to changes in their lifestyles from their initial education and home background to their contemporary position today. So it would be remiss not to retell witnesses' more general testimony, alongside their educational experience, which is discussed and retold in more detail in chapters 4 to 6 of the thesis.

The majority of witnesses interviewed for this study underwent an education in lower status schools, which had their origins in the nineteenth century. It was an education that was cheap and basic, and provided the witnesses with a particular outlook on their future role in life. It denied them access to a full secondary education with the potential of academic success and all the opportunities that brought with it. It was an educational experience that was planned with a view to early recruitment into the staple industries of cotton and coal found in an industrial town like Wigan. This educational experience had the effect of placing boundaries on a person's potential future, in terms of how they perceived themselves and how they approached life through a shared working class culture. This was due to the prevailing discourses and policies for the educational provision and schooling for the mass working class population. It was reflected in the quality of teaching and curriculum they received, and was reinforced by the established disciplinary methods in the schools they attended. This was still the experience of Tony Perkins and Muriel Heyes in the mid to late 1960s, who both experienced 11+rejection and post-primary education in the 'elementary tradition' of a 'secondary modern school'. This experience has been researched by Halsey,

Heath and Ridge in their 1980 work *Origins and Destinations*, in which they concluded that the 1944 Education Act had failed in providing a fairer educational system. They conclude in their study: 'the 1944 Education Act brought England and Wales no nearer to the ideal of meritocratic society' (Halsey et. al. 1980 p.210). However, the use of the term 'meritocratic society' in this context might itself be considered problematic. As McCulloch and Richardson (2000 p.60) point out, another sociologist, Young, invented the word 'meritocracy' in 1958, and he had a very different view of its social affects, which suggest that even well respected and experienced sociologists such as Hasley can be guilty of anachronism or distortion.

These witnesses also experienced a childhood that Jeremy Seabrook (1982), describes as 'shared' and 'collective', which can be traced back to the early part of the twentieth century when it was experienced by Jack Lathom, Harry Richardson and Mary Appleton. It was childhood that never experienced a sustained commercial exploitation of working class people and their children by the established capitalist system. It was what Jeremy Seabrook (1982 p.18) describes as 'an apprenticeship of hard work and discipline' before they left school and entered the adult world of work. Any distractions in their lives, however small, were used as an opportunity to escape their humdrum lives at school or in their local environment. It was a time when corporal punishment was used, people 'knew their place' and were educated according to that particular status. Of course the school experiences that have been retold by the witnesses were in many cases accompanied by a home life of financial hardship and constraint, particularly for those who were young in the inter-war years. These witnesses give vivid descriptions of the misery and poverty endured by working class people at this time. This was clearly evident in the oral testimony of a number of witnesses such as Mrs. Gregory, Harry Richardson, Mary Appleton and Bert Ollerton. These experiences had the effect of giving people a sense of injustice or what Sennet and Cobb (1972) describe as the 'hidden injuries of class'. It provided the patterns of their future lives. Witnesses who were born after 1945 enjoyed some of the post-war reconstruction, which included the newly

established welfare state system, and the increasing affluence of the working class people in the 1950s and 1960s.

It was these factors that played an important part in shaping both educational resources and policies that witnesses had to endure and accept as 'normal' until the late 1960s and early 1970s. These external factors impacted on their internal and personal lives, which created their individual 'Lifeworlds' (Williamson 1998), from which they experienced and observed the world they lived in. They also explains some of the feelings of anger, self-doubt and frustration which are recorded here and in other chapters of this study, and which placed constraints on their future occupational status, as well as limits on their role in society at large. Bill Williamson gives a definition of what is meant by a life experience or 'Lifeworld' in his book *Lifeworlds and Learning* (1998 p.24): 'The Lifeworld is constituted of thoughts, ideas, feelings, identities and beliefs of individual people. A full description of it would clarify how people make sense of their past, how they see themselves in time. It would extend further to clarify how they see the future, how they co-ordinate their present-day preoccupations with their hopes for the future'. The issues of anger, frustration, self-doubt and denigration, which were experienced by the people, interviewed for this study, helped create a 'Lifeworld' through the associated educational experiences that different witnesses experienced in the period under investigation. They are what Bill Williamson describes as being 'clustered around the central theme of class inequality in British society and the destructive ways in which it erodes self confidence, holds people back, devalues their achievements and depresses the fuller development of society as a whole' (Williamson 1998 p.79).

Another piece of research by sociologists, which captures the educational progress in Wigan from 1945 onwards, and the introduction of the comprehensive system, was undertaken by the education group at the Centre for Contemporary Studies (1981). The research entitled *Unpopular Education: Schooling and Social Democracy in England since 1944*, attempts to explain the apparent failure of Labour policies on education since the 1940s, which had allowed the Conservative party to regain the initiative in driving forward the educational agenda in the late

1970s. It argued that: 'The failure of Labour Party to muster more than a minimal opposition either to the challenge to or subsequent dismantling of the post-1944 consensus has dramatically confirmed our major theses – that the old repertoire of Labour Party policies is largely exhausted in the forms in which it is currently conceived and presented' (CCCS 1981 p.7). According to *Unpopular Education*, the settlement around the Education Act of 1944, was a consensus of all the political parties, which gave way to a more radical and socialist settlement in the 1960s that was not fully realised. This was undermined and replaced by a Conservative-based consensus that stressed the need to promote educational standards and economic productivity, rather than social equality and justice. However, not all educational historians were convinced by this account. For instance, Silver (1981) launched a powerful criticism of using a 'strong theory', arguing that it was more concerned with developing theory than with history itself, and this led it into errors and distortions (McCulloch and Richardson 2000 p.62).

The witness testimony also exemplifies and reveals different sections of the working classes at different points of time in this study, and how school experiences that were offered to them also helped differentiate them. Raymond Williams, in his book *Marxism and Literature* (1970), identifies different class structures and saw three strands: the dominant, the residual and emergent. Many of the witness accounts of the interwar period echo a residual working class culture of poverty, such as those of Mary Appleton and Martin King. Through their failure in the 11+scholarship examination, these witnesses experienced a curriculum and disciplinary regime in a lower status school, which gave them clear and distinct boundaries and identities throughout their lives. This continued in the period after 1945, when a residual working class culture could be found in the immediate post-war years associated with an education in a secondary modern school. Jack Wolley and Derick Smith still experienced failure in the 11+scholarship examination and the discipline in a lower status secondary modern school, which impacted on how they perceived themselves. They may have emerged from this residual working class culture by entering a trade and gaining

an apprenticeship. I myself, for example, began working in the printing industry as an apprentice in 1967, and mixed with professional people who had been educated in the dominant strand of the grammar school and university.

For the minority of witnesses who passed the 11+scholarship examination there was the opportunity of being educated in the grammar or high school. This resulted in them emerging from such an education with an identity and culture perceived to be respectable. Whether it was Roger Taylor and Winifred Jones in the 1930s, or Christine Mosley or John Duckworth in the 1960s, they emerged from the dominant strand of culture of the grammar school, and became upwardly mobile by entering professional careers. This gave them a different sense of identity and self-perception in their personal and working lives, and lifted them above the mass residual section of working people, who were educated in lower status schools. Through different curriculum content, discipline approaches and selection, witnesses had different social worlds presented to them, and were reinforced as people by the schools they attended.

What the oral testimony and primary archive sources triangulated alongside each other reveal are the daily struggles of individual working people and their children against the 'inequality' in society, which impacted on their everyday lives. This had the effect of establishing a clearly defined culture, with definite patterns for both genders in a working class family. This was true in the period of a 'collective' or 'shared' experience up to 1945, or the more 'individualistic' one, associated with increased earning power, of the late 1950s and 1960s. The common thread that runs through all the witness testimony which creates an individual 'Lifeworld' (Williamson 1998), is one of a 'working class culture' that was 'patronised', 'exploited' and 'abused' by a 'ruling or established elite'. The ultimate effect was one of the working class being given a culture that was immediate and appropriate to its perceived needs (Hoggart 1957). The working class was continually 'exploited' and 'patronised', whether in the interwar years or in the 1960s. It was an attitude, that denigrated and undervalued working class culture, and resulted in that culture always being subordinate to the 'established' or 'elite' culture, a situation that some witnesses experienced in their selective

grammar schools. All the testimonies and primary archive sources recorded below give an indication and flavour of the evolving pattern of working class life and culture in a town like Wigan, over fifty years.

### **1920 - 1936 World War One to Orwell**

The years from the end of the First World War to the visit to Wigan of George Orwell in 1936 are characterised by widespread unemployment in the Wigan district. This was due to a number of interrelated factors, which included a worldwide depression, and the loss of international markets of the staple industries of coal, textiles and iron associated with the Wigan area. What the primary evidence gathered for this study reveals are the extreme poverty, hardship and squalor experienced by working class people, and the inadequacy of both national and local government to deal with such a phenomenon as 'unemployment'. This is recorded in George Orwell's (1937) famous book *The Road to Wigan Pier*, in which he observed and chronicled the daily struggles of ordinary working class people against such appalling adversity. This period also included national disputes with the 'coal owners', as well as the General Strike of 1926, which are vividly described by witnesses such as Jack Lathom and Harry Richardson. These disputes proved unsuccessful, the workers eventually being defeated by the coal employers and the coalition national government of 1926.

The two tables below list the number of people registered as being 'unemployed' at the Wigan Labour Exchange from 1923 to 1940, and the number unemployed nationally as a proportion of the population. The only noticeable drop in the numbers of unemployed people during this time was due to the emergency created by World War Two, which had the effect of ensuring all employable people were involved in Essential War Work. This is discussed in the next section of this chapter. In the years from 1920 to 1936, there was relief for the unemployed, but this included the dreaded 'means testing' to establish a person's entitlement to a weekly payment of national insurance or 'dole'. George Orwell best describes this existence with his succinct sentence 'The life of a single unemployed man is dreadful' (1937 p.71). In essence, all the available evidence gathered for this

study, including George Orwell's analysis in 1937, indicates the total inadequacy of government action in intervening to relieve such a difficult and dreadful situation. There are parallels in the then government's approach to the main theme of this study, that secondary education provision for working class people continued to be antiquated, class ridden and entirely inappropriate. Similarly, action taken to relieve unemployment by successive national governments was still rooted in the nineteenth century. Successive governments during this period were more concerned with retaining existing but outdated class structures, rather than making the necessary and innovative social provision to improve the situation, both nationally and locally.

**Table 7.**

**Ministry of Labour Gazette**

**Registered Unemployed at Wigan Labour Exchange 1923-1940**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Men</u></b>	<b><u>Women</u></b>	<b><u>Juveniles</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
October 1923	1,510	3,757	715	5,982
October 1924	3,019	2,941	549	6,509
October 1925	8,266	2,546	695	11,507
October 1926	5,816	3,031	436	9,283
October 1927	5,966	2,507	477	8,950
October 1928	8,735	2,262	357	11,354
October 1929	6,310	2,455	398	9,233
October 1930	9,460	4,132	634	14,226
October 1931	11,563	2,018	542	12,793
October 1933	10,233	2,018	542	12,793
October 1934	10,347	2,274	624	13,245
October, 1935	9,584	1,674	576	11,834
October 1936	9,197	1,445	518	11,160
October 1937	7,528	1,484	340	9,352
October 1938	7,497	2,250	448	10,195

October 1939	5,223	1,742	205	7,170
July 1940	1,131	1,947	62	3,140

**Table 8.**

**Population and Unemployment in United Kingdom 1921-1939 (all figures in millions)**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Unemployed</u>
1921	44.0	2.5
1926	45.2	1.5
1933	46.5	2.5
1935	46.9	2.0
1939	47.8	1.5

Statistics taken from 'The Age of Industrial Expansion' 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1976), by A. J. Holland.

The witness testimony and primary archive material of this period reveal the attempts by local schools and charities to keep the suffering at an acceptable subsistence level. For example, the charities led by the Mayor and Chief Constable helped provide some relief for the worst affected families. The education that witnesses received, gave them clearly marked parameters as to how they lived their lives, within a distinct working class culture of hard work and discipline in the home and workplace, and of knowing one's place in society. This mind-set was reflected in their encounters with any civic or local government organisations, which had their origins in the nineteenth century, and in which working class people were expected to show deference in return for patronage. It was a culture that was inculcated early in their lives, when they experienced the 'elementary tradition' of schooling, which clearly indicated how they should approach such people and organisations. The log entry for Aspull St. David's C. E. School in 1927 records that a Mr. Cherry was cautioning children about being absent from school, and reveals precisely the paternalistic attitude to which children should defer. Martin King reveals this attitude, when he vividly and

emotionally describes his 'inherited' family feelings towards authority figures in his mining community in the earlier part of this century.

Despite this, there were examples of change impacting on the lives of working class people through technological improvements, such as the emergence of motorised transport, and the use of cinema to provide people with cheap entertainment. There are numerous references to the emergence of the motorcar in school logs, and the police talking to children about safety on the roads in Wigan, and coach excursions to places of interest. George Orwell (1937 p.8) also indicates how the 'picture houses' were used to provide a source of cheap entertainment for working class people, particularly the unemployed, 'In Wigan a favourite refuge was the pictures, which are fantastically cheap there'. Cinema was also used for educational purposes, as the log reference for the National Bluecoat School on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1935 reveals how pupils watched a film on 'Road Safety'. It was a period when there was little money to spend on luxuries, and every opportunity was taken to enjoy any incident that was observed in everyday life. Joe Brookes, for example, gives a very vivid description of street entertainment in the Scholes area of Wigan, during the 1920s and 1930s.

It was a lifestyle that Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as a 'repeating pattern' that reoccurred well beyond 1945, in which the very clothing and footwear were clear symbols of both class and culture. Witnesses in their oral testimony such as Mrs. Gregory and Bert Ollerton describe how clogs were the common footwear of working class people, and this is triangulated and confirmed by numerous school log entries of this period. Entrance through the 11+scholarship examination to Wigan Grammar School in the 1930s, required Bert Ollerton's parents to apply to the British Legion to obtain a grant for him to be suitably attired in a suit and pair of shoes. The fact that many of the witnesses' parents had fought in the First World War was not recognised or rewarded by successive national governments during this period. However, George Orwell's (1937) very negative account of the situation in Wigan during this period has been challenged by Bert Ollerton, who vividly and proudly describes 'the pride, the spirit, the humour' shown in defying their appalling circumstances.

Nevertheless, the impact of World War Two, and the full employment of both men and women resulted in changes to this pattern of working class life. This change is reflected on by Jeremy Seabrook (1982 p.18) who identifies the 'decay of the old working class function and identity; and the substitution for these of definitions and identities of the market place. If these things disconcert those raised to discipline and work, they damage the young, who have not felt social purpose and cohesion other than the fantasies of the market place.' Witness testimony and primary archive material reflect Seabrook's sentiments, as the impact of the war helped to return working class people to full-time employment, with increased earning and spending power, and are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Log entries from the Aspull Wesleyan All Age School from 1920 to 1936 cover a wide variety of incidents and experiences which are vividly remembered by witnesses in this section. The log entries give an indication of how they often provided a glimpse of excitement, a change in timetable, which helped pupils in combating the boredom and routine of the teaching and the curriculum that was found in such a school as this, (only ceased being an All Age school in 1960, with the opening of Aspull secondary modern school). Also, as seen below, give examples of the hardships faced by working class people in Wigan, particularly at the time of the General Strike in 1926, and how the emerging school welfare and medical services were being developed. As the school was a Wesleyan School, it was imbued with the Methodist tradition, and the log has numerous entries from temperance visitors who gave the pupils advice on what to drink and eat as part of their daily lives as practising Methodists. Lastly the entry for 6th March, 1936, gives an indication that the motorcar was here to stay, and was a real danger to young children, as a Police Inspector came to give a talk to the pupils in the school. This type of entry is found in other school logs of the period, for example, St. David's C. E. All Age School.

1921 1<sup>st</sup> March Doctor Barker and Nurse Williams again at school examining children with defects noticed by teachers. One child, Horace Houghton, was

ordered to remain at home for some time on account of St. Vitus Dance. Certificate of Exclusion not yet received. Certificate received today—Period of exclusion 28 days.

1926 The days from 19, 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> December were extra days granted by the Education Committee on account of the feeding of necessitous children.

1928 24<sup>th</sup> January Mr. J. A. Hutchin B.Sc. Lecturer for the Lancashire and Cheshire Band of Hope and Temperance Union gave a talk on 'Alcohol and the Human Body' to the children of classes 1, 2 and 3 this afternoon from 1.45-2.30.

1929 22<sup>nd</sup> June Four girls Annie Langton, Mary Langton, Vera Flinn and Annie Rigby spent the week at the Wigan Education Committee's Camp at Birkdale, Southport, under the auspices of the Lord Mayor of London's Coalfield Distress Fund.

1936 6<sup>th</sup> March Inspector Thomas of the Lancashire County Constabulary visited the school this afternoon at 3.30 and gave the children a lecture on road Dangers and how to avoid them.

Log entries from St. David's C. E. All Age log reveals how an educational official cautioned children about being absent from school. The children were possibly supplementing the family income, by part-time work on local farms in the local area of the school.

1927 1<sup>st</sup> March Mr. Cherry called. Cautioned several children about being absent.

Mrs. Gregory gives some interesting observations of how a pupils' social status and class could be identified by footwear and clothes, including the non-ownership of a swimming costume for lessons at the swimming pool in Wigan. It also reveals how family incomes of the working classes could not run to paying for luxuries such as swimming costumes and shoes, in comparison with the better off middle class families. She goes on to recall her painful experiences:

“ . . . going to the baths to swim was awful. My mother could not afford to buy me a swimming costume so I had to borrow one from another person. It never fitted. Other children laughed at me. Teachers took us to

the field to play rounders. This was good. A sort of freedom. [Laughter] The school monitors were all those children who had nice clothes and came from the wealthier families in the area of Springfield. All the poorer children including me had to wear clogs! All the well off had shoes! [Laughter] Clogs were better for making slides on the ice in winter. Those with shoes were not allowed on the slide!" [Laughter]

Mrs. Gregory also give some insights into how the Church of England helped poor families, and in particular, children, who were given free meals in the local vicarage at St. Andrew's in Wigan. As she recalls memories of nearly 80 years ago.

" . . . the vicar used to come into school a lot, Reverend J. M. Buckmaster. He used to invite poor children to the vicarage for a meal."

During Jack Latham's early years at Standish Lower Ground All Age School, at the age of six, he can recall an incident that was related to the General Strike of 1926. It must be remembered that in the early part of the twentieth century, a large majority of the population of Wigan, including its surrounding villages, was employed in the coal mining industry.

"When I was six (1926), the Strike was on, the General Strike . . . and all the children's fathers, who were not working, they had soup given to them at 'Dinner Time'. Being a lad of six, I wanted to stay too. But if you father was working you couldn't . . . it was for those whose fathers who were on strike who got this soup. My father worked, because he was an engine winder, a maintenance man. They had to work. They really struggled because it was a long strike."

"They (the strikers) were stopping all the traffic, two of the kiddies' fathers were stopping traffic, and this van came up. These two pitmen came to stop the van, and out of this van road (came) about five or six policemen. Of course they got hold of these two strikers, put them in the van and took them away you see. It was two of the kiddies' fathers in school, who went in the back of the van, I remember that."

This last piece of testimony by Jack Lathom is a telling example of the use of the police force by both central and local government, to bring under control the militancy of the 'striking miners'. It also gives an indication of how the rights of working class people, were easily dismissed and brushed aside, even if they had a legitimate cause, in the early part of the twentieth century

The log entries from the Hindley Common Methodist All Age School confirm the depths of poverty remembered by witnesses in the inter-war period, particularly when industrial disputes in the mining industry were occurring. It is also interesting to note that the log entries make a comment on the wearing of clogs by working class people. Clogs continued to be popular until the 1950s, until footwear became cheaper and accessible to the working class population at large.

1921 22<sup>nd</sup> April The number of children whose parents state they are unable to provide them properly with food is 112 in this school.

1922 21<sup>st</sup> August Lack of clogs and clothing is very acute at present as seven or eight children have not attended since the holidays for this cause.

Log entries for Warrington Lane Council Jerusalem Infant and Junior school, chronicle the events of a school serving a well-established working-class area of Wigan. This school was situated very near the lodgings that George Orwell stayed in during his visit to the town in 1936. The log interestingly records the weight of 'necessitous children' who received free half-pint bottles of milk. The entries regarding Tommy Platt, a troublesome pupil, indicate that neither the school nor the authorities knew really what to do with him. It is obvious that the Headmistress was determined for him to be removed, in order to lessen his influence on other pupils in the school.

1930 24<sup>th</sup> March Tommy Platt who was taken away by two Police Officers last week to be brought before the magistrates for stealing a violin from Grimes—Musical Dealer, King Street, was acquitted and today returned to school. Dr. Davies, the Director of Education is trying to get him into a special Residential

Institution but has so far failed in his efforts: two such institutions having refused to take him.

1931 15th June The distribution of half-pint bottles of milk morning and afternoon to necessitous children commenced this morning 15 morning and pm. A record of the weight of these chd. has been made in the account book.

Ronnie Foster gives a comprehensive catalogue of incidents he remembers from his infant and junior education in the 1930s. Apart from the 'fun' with the frozen water pipe he describes vividly how personal hygiene was monitored and dealt with by the school nurse.

"We had playtime in the infants school. The playground (a concrete yard) was reached through a kind of porch; I remember there was in the corner a cast iron enamelled sink with a lot of the enamel chipped off. Pressing it on the top operated the tap on the sink; the pressure was kept low to avoid water splashing over the sides of sink. However one winter when a pipe froze the plumber who repaired it, turned the stop tap full on, quite a few of us got rather wet." [Laughter]

"From time to time the school nurse would visit, she temporarily ousted the head from his office. She set out her stall with sticks, a little like tongue depressor (to poke down the back of shirts, jersey, dresses), so as to look at the back of the neck. Next a look in the head for nits, scabies and other nasties. She must also have looked for knock-knee and bow legs and other deformities but she only as much I can remember touched us for heads and necks."

"The nurse left instruction for certain treatments for various pupils. For sometimes during the year when I was 10 I was considered to be ahead in composition and something else, so I was delegated to take 5 or 6 of the younger (or were they about my age?) pupils to the clinic. I was given an envelope, handed over with some gravity by the head, and told to take these pupils to the clinic which was about a mile away by the shortest route, on arrival I was to hand over the envelope and wait. After

about half hour or so the patients as I shall now call them started to arrive, one boy had a bald clipped patches on his head, which were painted 'Bright Violet'! Another had some awful smelly stuff somewhere about his person. One by one the invalids returned and we set off back to school. Funnily enough I never remember anyone making fun of the poor unfortunates."

Although there was no formal or free National Health Service in operation during the inter-war years, there was an emerging or embryonic schools' medical service, which is clearly identified in this testimony by Ronnie Foster. Its purpose was to identify the worst cases found in any pupils, so that they would not spread throughout the entire school. The reference to an envelope given to the young Ronnie Foster by the Head of his school, indicates that the nurse identified pupils who needed to attend the school clinic.

"All these events took place in the early and mid-thirties, two of my classmates, both boys, had 'Irons up their legs', as we referred to them. I know now they were suffering from the deficiency disease 'Rickets'. The irons were about 3/8" inches domestic and had leather straps in two or three places the bottom was bent at right angles and fitted in a hole in the heel of tall leather boots. I met quite a few children so afflicted in my formative years, but never thought anything of it. It was just one of those things."

Unknowingly, what Ronnie Foster was acknowledging as being 'just one of those things', was a common ailment of young children in the inter-war period. It was caused through a poor diet, and the inadequate primary health care system of the period. There were examples of milk being made available to 'necessitous pupils', but the cost of a 'halfpenny' may have been a prohibiting factor for parents to provide their children with milk on a long-term basis.

Log entries from St. Thomas's C.E. All Age school (Infant and Junior in 1932), reveal how the pupils at the school suffered hardships, and received assistance from a number of sources. For example, it reveals how pupils attended the

Summer Camp at Southport, which many witnesses attended, until the 1950s; and the Mayor's summer outing in 1922, from which over 70 children from this school attended. The school was situated in an inner part of Wigan, and contained a large proportion of slum dwellings, which were located near a number of large cotton factories, which were demolished in the 1960s and early 1970s.

1921 30<sup>th</sup> August Eleven girls have proceeded to the School Camp at Ainsdale under the charge of Miss Anderton.

1922 11<sup>h</sup> July The Mayor's Summer Outing for Poor Children take place this afternoon. There are 70 scholars going from this school and 3 teachers: - Miss N. Higham, Mr. A. Swift and myself.

1923 8<sup>th</sup> January I shall leave school at 3.30 pm. to attend a meeting of Hd. Teachers called by the Director of Education to make arrangements for the feeding of necessitous children.

The log entries from the National Bluecoat All Age school (Infant and Junior school in 1932), as with other such schools during this period, reveal the high levels of poverty, and attempts to combat it were being experienced everywhere throughout the Wigan area. It also refers to a trip to the Summer School at Southport, which was well subscribed to by children from all over the Wigan area. There is also an entry stating how pupils were experiencing the new phenomena of cinema in 1935, as part of their curricular provision.

1923 8<sup>th</sup> January Headmaster left school at 3.45 pm. this afternoon to attend a meeting of Head teachers in the Technical College. The arrangements for feeding necessitous children were explained by the Director.

1930 14<sup>th</sup> June 19 boys in charge of Mr. Yates leave for a week at the Summer School at Birkdale.

1935 14<sup>th</sup> February Classes 3A and 4A attended the Princess Cinema at 10.00 am to see a 'Safety First' film.

James Smith also indicates that the use of the telephone was very limited in the 1930s, when his headmaster used him as a messenger to take letters to

neighbouring schools in the Platt Bridge and Hindley area of Wigan, instead of sending them by post.

“In my last year at school, Mr. Rimmer, the science master, then headmaster used me as a monitor. You must remember that telephones were a rarity, and Mr. Rimmer use to write letters to Argyle Street School in Hindley, and Hindley Grammar School, and I had to walk 2 miles each way! This was about twice a month, with a letter, I never questioned why he didn't post them!” [Laughter]

The log entries from Moss Lane All Age School reveal that along with other schools in the Wigan area, they had a number of children who were entitled to attend the Poor Children's holiday camp at Rhyl, and also a family excluded from the school due to having the contagious Scarlet Fever. Perhaps the most interesting entries are the ones regarding the six-year old boy sent to an industrial school in 1922 for stealing. Platt Bridge was a well-established working class area of Wigan, and there would have been the nineteenth century Workhouse tradition approach to all public provision for the working classes. Certainly the use of an 'Industrial School', as a form of punishment for the six-year old boy was in this tradition.

1922 23<sup>rd</sup> September A boy, Edward Bilshaw, 85 Victoria Road, Ince, has been sent to 'Industrial School' for 6 years, for stealing.

1925 26<sup>th</sup> June Today, the Poor Children's Holiday Camp at Rhyl opens, and from this school 6 boys and 4 girls have been selected to share the privileges of the Camp.

1929 13<sup>th</sup> June A boy, Edward Pennington, was drowned while bathing in the canal.

The last entry for 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1929, reveals how the working class used the local environment, such as the local canal to swim in, rather than newly emerging municipal swimming baths. This was another example of how there was a lack of finance from working class budgets to offer their children some simple pleasures

such as swimming. In the case of this unfortunate boy, he did not have the benefit of adult supervision.

As a six year old in 1926, Harry Richardson has powerful memories of the General Strike, how it was policed and particularly how the police took a proactive role in suppressing the striking miners near their places of employment. This evidence triangulates the testimony of Jack Lathom who also remembers similar police activity and action near his home and school, and how working class people had what Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as having 'shared experience' of this period in the industrial history of Wigan'.

“ . . . . one of my earliest recollections before starting school was of mounted police often being seen in the vicinity of Blundell's Coal Pit, which was next to where I lived and was also the place of my father's employment.”

Martin King, who lived in Haydock, a mining village near Wigan, gives an insight into what the 'popular feeling' was in working class areas (particularly mining districts), about the use of police in mining and industrial strikes. He gives a powerful insight into why this was such a wide spread feeling.

“ . . . . he (Martin's father) always detested men in uniform, the police or soldiers, because the government used them against the miners. During the strike (General Strike, 1926), my parents told me about police using truncheons on women and children who were picking coal of the 'Stuff Rooks' (waste heaps).”

This feeling is reinforced by the observations and experiences of Jack Lathom and Harry Richardson. It gives a revealing glimpse of how the police and military were used to quell any militant action in the disputed mining areas during strike action. It also gives a feeling that any deviance from an accepted standard of behaviour by working people would be quickly dealt with in whatever sphere.

Martin King gives an insight into why his family didn't like any dealings with the local Roman Catholic clergy. There was resentment over the collection of parish subscriptions by the local priest, and the incident when his family won a raffle at the local church. It is quite clear that Martin King's family were what Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as not 'conforming to' or 'respecting' the local institutions such as the police, church and school, and would offer resistance if they felt they were being patronised or victimised, as with the comment by the priest over Martin King's father not attending church on a particular Sunday morning.

"My father also didn't like men who wore their collars back to front, every Sunday when the priest came for his weekly donation he would say now Martin, I didn't see you in church this morning. My dad would say no, but tha seeing me now whilst tha getting thee tanner (sixpence or two and half pence). Another occasion I won a Christmas raffle at the church on the ticket it read 'Bottle of Whiskey'. When it was collected the following Sunday, it was only a half a bottle." [Laughter]

Joe Brooks gives a vivid description of life as a child in the streets of Scholes, a well-known working class area of Wigan, during the 1920s and 1930s. This area was subsequently redeveloped in the 1960s and 1970s, but remains basically as Joe Brooks knew it seventy years ago. Joe's descriptions of simple pleasures, such as watching the horse being fed and its wagon being changed during a dustbin collection, and the antics of a street entertainer, give insights into a 'shared childhood experience' of growing-up as working class children in the 1920s and 1930s in Wigan.

"As kids we loved bin collection day. The dustcart, horse drawn, would come up Greenough Street, turn left into Turner Street and stop just round the corner. Although the horse would be given his nosebag, kids from nearby would come with tit-bits; broken biscuits from Mortons the grocers, carrots, crusts, the odd lump or two of sugar etc. The horse seemed to love these 'starters' before tucking into his oats and putting up

with small hands patting and stroking him. While all this was going on the full dustcart was being unhitched from the shafts and the empty one, which had arrived on a wagon, was being winched down on metal ramps and hitched up to the horse, a full dustcart on to the wagon and taken away. What a performance.” [Laughter]

“We had a busker/singer, our very own Caruso, who included Greenough Street, on his regular rounds. He had two props; one a bucket, painted red, to add a touch of glamour, two, a leather or rubber skullcap. He would, with great aplomb deposit his bucket on the pavement, secure his skullcap on his head and then proceed to stand on his head in the bucket and start singing ‘Twinkle twinkle little star’, and other long forgotten ditties. When he eventually stood up, his face. . . well I can only describe it as similar to a very bloated, creased and crumpled tomato. He was then grateful for the odd copper that was tossed in his bucket. With a grand gesture of thanks he picked up his bucket and moved on to his next pitch. What entertainment!” [Laughter]

Joe Brooks gives a view that coloured people were treated equally and accepted as part of a homogenous town like Wigan; such as the coloured player who represented Wigan Rugby League Club, and the Sikh door salesmen.

“Coloured people were very few and far between in Wigan in those days, but we took for them for granted the few who were there. There was, for example, a coloured lad playing for Wigan R.L. even then. One day I opened the front door to see who was knocking and there before me stood this seemingly very tall gentlemen with a big beard and coloured turban. He was holding an open case in which were displayed various sizes writing paper, envelopes, wooden pens, boxes of nibs, ink, rubbers, etc. I called for mother to come and see him.”

“Unfortunately the Sikh didn’t make a sale at our house because all the goods he had we could buy at the Post Office next door but one. The Post Officer and his wife (the Shepherds) kept a vast array of goods, including the bamboo canes that our Headmaster at St. Mary’s used on

us. [Laughter] I remember this well because he used to give me money to buy canes from the Post Office and take them back to School.”

Bert Ollerton, who now lives in Broadstairs in Kent, gives another view of conditions in Wigan when George Orwell visited in 1936. He raised the issue of Orwell’s choice of lodgings in Sovereign Road, which was considered very poorly kept in terms of hygiene and cleanliness. Bert Ollerton defends the ‘collective pride’ taken by families, in what he describes as ‘appalling social and economic conditions’. He also goes on to describe how housewives kept their homes clean and tidy. I let Bert Ollerton tell his own story and recollections of that period in Wigan’s history:

“It is ironic that George Orwell stayed in the same neighbourhood of Wigan, where I lived, and then wrote his book, *The Road to Wigan Pie*, but significantly failed to describe the sort of people among who he briefly lived. Orwell certainly gathered his statistics to show house size, cost of living, and the level of income, which dominated the lives of many Wiganers at the time. Missing is an account of the pride, the spirit, the humour, and the determination to survive, which characterised these folks! But does that really matter, now in the twenty first century.” [Mr. Ollerton shakes his head several times.]

“It matters to me for two reasons. First, the vision left by the book and Orwell does less than justice to the many families who overcome appalling social and economic adversity. Second and more importantly, it would have brought into perspective the so-called hardships being suffered in the 1980s and 1990s.”

“The most serious indictment made by Orwell, admittedly based on a singularly unfortunate choice of lodgings (Royal George Lodging House, in Sovereign Road) concerns the attitude to hygiene and cleanliness. Did Orwell never see the housewives on their knees at their regular ritual outside their front doors? With bucket, mop, and scrubbing brush, they cleaned the first line of flagstones outside their door and with rubbing

stone (Donkey brand) produced a whitened finish to doorstep and outside windowsill. Indoors there was the daily Zebra black-leading of the fireplace and oven.”

Bert Ollerton also gives a vivid insight into how the ‘embryonic welfare state’ of the inter-war period impacted on the lives of ordinary working people in Wigan, giving a very clear picture of the period. It is interesting to note how he describes ‘safety nets’ in operation during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and how he received free meals at school and a free pair of clogs from the Chief Constable’s Clog and Stocking Fund. It is interesting to note how many working class people wore clogs as their main type of footwear well into the 1950s. An analogy with present day wearing of ‘training shoes’ with a particular manufacturer’s brand, but without the enormous cost. Bert Ollerton couldn’t wear clogs at Wigan Grammar School, but his suit, provided by the British Legion, marked him out him out as distinctly working class. He also gives insights into the very inward looking recruitment policy of the Wigan Police Force of that period, which only recruited ‘Catholic Irishmen’. On a personal note, my father joined the Wigan Police Force in 1947, after serving with the Grenadier Guards during World War Two, and commented on the need to be of a particular religion to gain promotion.

“We did have some safety nets against the greatest rigours of poverty, and they are reminders about the real nature of change since Orwell came to Wigan. From 1925 to 1932 I attended Warrington Lane Council School, just around the corner from George Orwell’s lodgings in Sovereign Road. Prominent amongst many memories is a free meal services we received. Four days a week, Monday to Thursday, week after week, a month after month, we were given thick green pea soup. [Laughter] The high point of the week was the meat and potato pie served on Fridays. I have since had many dietary experiences around the world, but never shall I forget that pea soup, nor will I ever eat pea soup again.” [Laughter]

“A happier memory is that each year I received a free pair of clogs, which I collected from Monaghans, the cloggers in Warrington Lane.

The gift came not from the state, the local council, or some wealthy benefactor, but from the chief constable's Clog and Stocking Fund. Whenever I saw Mr. T. Pey, the Chief Constable, who with his helmet and sword looked the spitting image of Kaiser Bill as he walked in the mayor's procession, I thought of my free clogs. Come to think of it, I rather liked our local bobbies who patrolled Scholes and School Lane where I lived. I knew them by name Bobby McNulty, Bobby Maguire. I once asked why they all seemed to be Irishmen. The answer I got was you had to be Catholic to be in the police force and get promotion. These memories indicate the relationship between people and their children in hard times with police."

"The third example of a 'safety net' starts with my arrival home one day with the news that 'I had passed the scholarship for Wigan Grammar School'. This was no time for rejoicing. I couldn't wear clogs, my regular footwear, at the grammar school. As for a suit, this simply was unattainable. The solution was suggested by my father's workmates at the Wigan Coal and Iron Works, who suggested that, as an ex-serviceman, he should join the British Legion and I would be fitted out free once a year. This he did. I was measured up and duly arrived in my first year suit at Wigan Grammar School, in September 1932. At assembly in the school-hall, it didn't take me long to spot the other lads similarly attired. After all, this small arrowhead motif was pretty unmistakable—trainee convicts, we said we were." [Laughter]

### **1936 –1945 Re-armament and War**

The evidence of the years 1936 to 1945 reveals a period in the history of the town, in which schooling and other normal patterns of life were interrupted through involvement in the war, and enemy action over Wigan. Interwoven in this evidence is how the national coalition government began to improve the public and social services offered to working class people. It reflects the mood in the country in that the war was being fought by every section of the community,

either on the front line, or on the home front, and working class people needed to be rewarded with a better social and welfare system than that of the interwar period. This brought about the passing of the 1942 Beveridge Act, which was aimed at curing the five evils of Want, Ignorance, Disease, Squalor and Unemployment', which had been prevalent in Wigan only a decade earlier. There are vivid examples of how the town suffered received enemy bombings, and how one witness, Harry Richardson, had to tell parents that their son had died after a ship had been sunk in the Mediterranean. John Scully describes how the town saw different nationalities pass through, either as allies or as prisoners of war. Perhaps his most telling comment is the one regarding the working mothers in the munitions factories in the town, and the lack of discipline in the home and school. It also confirms what Richard Hoggart (1957 p.57) wrote in his book *Uses of Literacy*, when he warned about the dangers of removing established working cultures and patterns of life, 'it is easier to kill the old roots than to reproduce them with anything comparable.' Hoggart was arguing that cheap, easily obtainable entertainment would replace the older and well-established traditions of working class life, as was seen once. People in Wigan now had full-time employment and more money to spend on their personal lives than they did a decade previously, through working in Essential War Work.

Harry Richardson's vivid experiences of wartime service in the Royal Navy illustrate how this impacted on the lives of people both at home and abroad. For instance, he had to tell the parents of one his friends, who lived in the same mining village, how their son had met his death when H.M.S. Barham was sunk in the Mediterranean.

“ . . . I had the unpleasant task of going to see Mr. and Mr. Gerard, the parents of the Wigan lad who was sunk on the Barham. I won't dwell on the meeting with Jim's parents, to say the least it was traumatic, but they were grateful for my visit.”

Harry Richardson also retold an event, which had a happy ending on board the H.M.S. Racecourse during the Battle for the Atlantic, and how it remained with

him for the rest of his life. This piece of testimony gives a clear indication of how oral history can recapture in very personal terms what was happening on international or global terms.

“ . . . . we sighted a small object whilst in the Atlantic on one occasion. We approached the vessel with care and at the ready it could have been an enemy sub or surface vessel, but as we got nearer, it turned out to be a small boat containing nine merchant seamen, whose ship had been torpedoed some seven or eight days previously. The survivors were half-dead as their water supply had all gone, but I’ll never forget the cheer they gave us as we went alongside their lifeboat and rescued them. I put this incident down as possibly my happiest experience of the war, as I talk about it now, I can still hear their cheers!”

Kathleen Sherriff’s experiences on the Home Front in Wigan complement Harry Richardson’s experiences abroad in the Royal Navy. She attended a Roman Catholic All Age Elementary School, near the town centre of Wigan. Kathleen Sherriff started her formal school in 1938, and she remembers the impact that the war had on her education and school days.

“We weren’t to know, but World War Two was looming, and it wasn’t long before school life was disrupted. By 1940, a lot of the teachers had been called up to serve in the forces and there was a massive shortage of teachers. The outcome of this being that all children went to school, part-time, mornings one week, afternoons the opposite week. I don’t remember how long this situation continued only it seemed a long time. It was probably about a year although with a child’s perception of time it could be less. [Laughter] The other, more serious reason for part-time schooling was the absence of air-raid shelters. Shelters were hurriedly constructed in the playgrounds and only when they were completed were we allowed to resume full-time education.”

Interesting to note that Mrs Sheriff remembers part-time teaching, because of the acute shortage of teachers in Wigan during the war years.

“All during the war we had to carry our gas masks backwards and forwards to school. This was rigidly imposed and if you forget it you were sent home for it. We also had air-raid practices. The bell would ring in the corridor and we would all get our coats and gas masks and file out of the school into the yard where we were directed.”

The log entries of Aspull Wesleyan All Age School are very similar to other primary archive source material of this period in that they all contain details of how pupils were reminded about carrying gas masks, the building of air raid shelters, and efforts to raise money for the war effort. They also triangulated witness testimony of schools only opening well into the autumn term of 1939.

1939 28<sup>th</sup> September School re-opened today with only half of children allowed to be present as no shelters have yet been provided for against air raids.

1940 7<sup>th</sup> November It has been arranged with the Aspull ARP authority that the upper class children shall have a weekly lesson in First Aid until a suitable course has been completed.

1943 25<sup>th</sup> October School reopened state of emergency for farmers declared so all children over twelve absent assisting in potato fields.

It is interesting to note, in the last entry of this log, that the tradition of allowing pupils over the age of twelve to help with emergency farm work in the lower status schools was an accepted part of school life. It gives a clear indication of the occupational status and destination of these pupils when they officially left school, at the age of fourteen.

Mary Appleton's experiences of school meal provision at her Roman Catholic All Age School, before and during the Second World War, reveal how the state was beginning to intervene in the welfare of pupils in schools, particularly that of pupils whose parents were working at the Euxton munitions works, about 6 miles north of Wigan. They also reveal how far school menus have advanced in choice in the last 60 years. In addition, it was interesting to note that both Mary Appleton's parents worked. Less attractive is the information that not only did

they eat their full quota from the family ration books, they actively encouraged her to ask neighbours for assistance in essential food provisions. Any extra money was taken from Mary, for their own individual pleasures; these were what Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as the 'non-conforming' or 'non-respectable' working class.

"School meals were the same all the time—a pudding bowl with a few chopped potatoes in oxo cube stock, a thick slice of dry white bread, and semolina as a pudding or sweet. During the years 1939 to 1945, the children whose mothers worked at Euxton munitions, mine didn't, could have their tea at 4.00 p.m. at school, it consisted of thin jam butties and two biscuits and a glass of milk."

"... during the war when we had ration books—the ration was all eaten by mum and dad because they were working. I was sent to 'borrow' half a loaf and half a jar of jam from neighbours. Some gave it to us out of pity, and my mum sold clothes' coupons for ale money. I used to go to 'Meadow Dairy' store in Wigan once a week for rations because one of the assistants lived in Platt Bridge (where Mary Appleton lived), and she used to put extra butter, sugar, tea and tea in my basket to take to her home in Moss Lane, and gave me '4d.' for the bus fare I think, and a shilling which my mother took off me! I never questioned this, but my mum told me not to tell anyone about it. It was like going to Southport to get out of Platt Bridge for an hour." [Laughter]

Betty Houghton reveals that, on the declaration of war in 1939, a few of the 'old boys' who attended her mixed Grammar school at Up Holland, just outside Wigan, left University and volunteered for the armed forces, and this was to have a direct and lasting impact on the parents of these 'boys'.

"... my last year at school in 1939 saw the start of the World War Two, and a few of the 'old boys' who had gone to University before my year volunteered for the Forces and regretfully a few of them were killed in the early days."

June Foster adds to the experiences of Kathleen Sherriff, in describing her experiences at a Girl's Senior School, and Wigan Technical College. She remembers vividly the compulsory wearing of gas masks, regular air-raid training, and gifts from the U.S.A. She also provides insights into the use of injections and health checks during the war, which gives further evidence of how social reconstruction by central government was being planned. As she goes on to explain:

“We were constantly reminded to wear our gas masks. My dad was a member of the ARP, and my friend's dad was called up into the services. We had separate playgrounds and the boys would attempt to urinate over the centre wall. [Laughter] We played alphabetical guessing games in the air-raid shelters at ‘practice time’. I particularly loved school dinners. Once we received, in our classes, approximately 4oz. of cocoa powder and sugar as a gift from the U.S.A. We all used sticky fingers to eat this. [Laughter] A nurse called regularly. One girl had many sores on her scalp, and I remember seeing lice scurry across these. One boy in our class died from diphtheria. We all had injections and inoculations except for small pox.”

Jean Ashton remembers getting her Wigan Girls' High School uniform with coupons during the war, and found it difficult to obtain a ‘hatband’ to complete her uniform. It is interesting to note that attendance at a higher status school was considered more compulsory, even when there was an acute shortage of everyday materials due to of the war. It was through Jean Ashton's mother speaking to a customer who came into the family shop that she was able to obtain the vital hatband so as to ensure her daughter received what Jackson and Marsden (1966 ed.) describe as her full ‘educational inheritance’.

“When I joined the High School, clothing was on coupons—but uniform was essential. My parents were sent a list of clothing to be purchased from Lowes of Wigan. The only item we could not buy was a hatband. The headmistress told us to ask around pupils who had left the school to

see if we could locate one—at last my mother managed to obtain one from one of the customers who came into our shop.”

Martin King remembers working in the war as a surface worker at a local pit in the Wigan area. He was continuing what Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as a ‘non-conformist’ resistance to authority figures and people in charge of him when he was a young worker employed in Essential War Work. This resistance had begun in his All-Age Elementary School, and continued through his early working life. He defied the supervisor over instructions as to how to put the tub back on the rails, and refused to go underground as a surface worker when instructed by the manager, and was subsequently dismissed.

“I started work at 14, Easter 1941. Having done six days a week, my father kept pigs, poultry and a firewood round. That was my seven days a week a job, beside the pit. I collected potato peelings from house to house, and waste food from the Bevin Boys Hostel. I hadn’t been working long, when one cold blistery day we were sending tubs of coal and dirt from Wood Pit to Lyme Pit screens. This day a tub came off the track, up to the axles in mud. Anyway we were struggling to get the tub on the track, when the under-manager, a man of 6 foot odd height came to see what the trouble was. He was standing there with his hands in his pockets. Do this and do that. I was only a little lad of 14, so I said if you take your hands out of your pockets and help us lift this tub we will get on better. I was immediately sacked, but with a war on and ‘Essential Works Order’ being in force, I could not be sacked, but he found the dirtiest and wettest job at the pit for me.”

It is interesting to note how undermanned the mining industry was during the war, and how a custodial sentence was used to persuade young people like Martin King to go underground and work alongside the ‘Bevin Boys’ who had been conscripted to help with production in the pit. Martin King got his wish to leave the mining industry, and joined the R.A.F. in 1947.

“A short while after that, the manager called six lads to his office, and he informed us that we had to go down the pit. The following Monday we did not go, so we were recalled to his office, and he told us we were all sacked. The following Friday because of EWO (essential works order), he told us to carry on with our own jobs. Eventually two of us were too young to be drafted down the pit. The other three went to jail for a week, before they decided to go down the pit. We were redeployed in the Lyme Pit Dusty Screens. At 16 I went with a mate to Liverpool to join the Merchant Navy. But because of the EWO, I was rejected because of my reserve occupation. My friend was accepted. When the government started the Bevin Boys Scheme, as a lad of 16 I used to train the Bevin Boys, some a lot older than me, to lash the rains of coal to the endless haulage rope to Lyme Pit Screens. After the war, when EWO was lifted, I joined the R.A.F. on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1947.”

Fred Foster observed the differences between an urban area like Wigan and a rural area like Wrightington, about five miles north of Wigan. It is interesting to note how agricultural work was labour intensive, and how the horse and cart was still the normal system of transporting crops on a farm. Fred Foster reveals that the little cottage in Toogood Lane, Wrightington, had no running water or electricity installed.

“I made new friends in 3B, Frank Weir, Norman Bentham, who both came from Newtown, and Ronnie Slater who lived in Wrightington. Ronnie Slater lived in a little cottage in Toogood Lane; they had no electricity, and no running water. I went to Ronnie’s house on quite a number of occasions, it was really olde worlde. His dad worked in the silk mill at Ecclestone, but didn’t enjoy good health; in fact he died while Ronnie was at school, leaving Mrs. Slater with two boys and two girls to bring up.”

“They kept goats for the milk and also for the meat. When a ‘Billy Kid’ was born, it was killed, and the meat eaten, the skin was cured and put

down for a mat. Water was drawn from a well at the bottom of the garden, and oil lamps illuminated the house. I remember going there during the summer and being taken to Ronnie's uncle's farm. All Mrs. Slater's relatives were farmers. We assisted in getting the hay in, I had a wooden rake to gather the hay into heaps into in the field, and then the men came with the cart and pitchforked it off."

Ethel Prone remembers wartime shortages of teachers and air-raid shortages at Wigan Girls' High School, and how some of the pupils and teaching staff went pea picking in a rural part of Wigan to contribute to the war effort. It is also interesting to note that the teachers had to undertake 'fire watching duties' on the school roof which brought the concept of 'total war' and 'concentrated bombing' home to staff and pupils on the home front.

"We had to go to school part-time because of a shortage of air-raid shelters. Some girls went pea picking to help with the war effort and teachers' went with them to Parbold. They slept in tents and cooked meals on a big old-fashioned stove with a chimney on top. They got paid 1s./9d and 6d. for baskets, and the money was used to pay for their food. My friend's sister taught Domestic Science at the High School and the teachers had to do their turn at fire watching on the roof. We never got trips from school during wartime, nothing at all compared to the holidays school children now get."

Fred Foster remembers school crazes, how boys from his grammar school made water pistols during the war years. As with all young people, they were very innovative and used what was available in the local shops. His memories also reveal how the market and capitalism had not yet begun to influence the spending habits of young, people as it began to do in the 1950s and more so in the 1960s.

"There were all kinds of *crazes* at school, I recall once that someone discovered that the rubber bulb on the end of an old style fountain pen filler would fit nicely on to the drinking fountain, and once filled, it

made a perfect water pistol. Starrs, the stationers must have been clapping their hands to sell all their old stock being bought up Grammar School boys, little knowing what use it was being put to.” [Laughter]

“Another bright idea for a water pistol was the small oilcans that were sold by ‘Singers’, the sewing machine people in Market Street. In no time at all, the entire stock of these had been brought up by pupils.”

One of the revealing social observations that Fred Foster remembers as a grammar school boy was the introduction of the ‘British Restaurant’ into the towns and cities of the country during World War Two. Fred Foster who went into one during the war, vividly describes the clear purpose of these restaurants. The important social point justifying their introduction was that the whole population was working towards victory on all fronts in the war. This was a clear message from the coalition government of the war years, which was attempting to redress some of the social injustices found in the inter-war years in northern industrial towns like Wigan.

“It was about this time (last two years at Grammar School) that I started to use the British Restaurant for my dinners. I tried one of the cafes in town, but it was too expensive, as Mam only gave me a shilling (5p) for dinner each day. The Rendezvous was owned and run by George McCandlish, and was situated about half way between Pendlebury’s and Woolworth’s, in Standishgate. One day, I decided to give it a go and off I went with two other boys, Tony Dickson and Jimmy Walkden. Didn’t realise at the time but these two had ‘well off’ families who weren’t stuck for a bob or two. When we arrived for our meal, they had a reserved table on a raised part of the floor, but when I looked at the menu, all I could afford was a solitary meat pie. I was hungry for the rest of the afternoon!” [Laughter]

The experience of Fred Foster not being able to afford a proper meal at the ‘The Rendezvous’, reminds us that there were still enormous differences between the spending power of the middle and working classes. Despite being at war, there

were still examples of 'well-off families' having more money than the average working class families.

"That finished me off trying to 'keep up the with the Jones's'. [Laughter] I went to the British Restaurant, which was situated in King Street under the Court Hall. This was a wartime innovation where a working man or women could get a meal, without frills for a reasonable price. It was an unusual place, dark and sweaty, with two large extractor fans let into the outside wall. As you entered, there was a queue to join on the left hand side, which led to the pay-box. When you finally got there, you shouted out to the lady in the kiosk, *white, blue, yellow, black!* These were the colours of the plastic discs that were to be handed in for various components of the meal, and the nett cost was a shilling (5p). White was for soup, inevitably brown in colour, blue was for a small dinner, red was for a large one, yellow for sweet, and black for tea. If you wanted coffee, it was a brown disc. The main course was usually 2 blobs of potato, a couple of pieces of meat or mutton, carrots, and gravy over the lot. Mostly the sweet was a Manchester Tart, liberally smothered in lumpy custard, doled out from a white jug. After leaving the kiosk, one would go to the table where the cutlery was kept, and then would begin the search for a fork with straight prongs and no food stuck on it. A knife that didn't have a jagged blade, and a spoon with a straight handle. [Laughter] Once the meal had been loaded onto a tray, the search would start for a vacant table, amongst the sweaty, noisy mass of humanity eating their dinner. It may not have been 'posh' but it was at least more filling than a small meat pie." [Laughter]

John Scully has very vivid wartime memories of how Haydock Park Race course and the adjacent Lord Gerard's estates were used as transit camps for exiled soldiers of Eastern Europe, and for prisoners of war from both Italy and Germany. It is interesting to note how the actual horrors of events in Eastern Europe were

brought home to Wigan residents when John Scully vividly recalls the facial expressions of the young soldiers after reading newspaper reports.

“ . . . I remember as an eight year-old boy on Haydock Racecourse (near Wigan), seeing exiled soldiers from Poland and Czechoslovakia. It was easy to feel sorry for these people—many being boys very little older than myself. The tents they were billeted in were no larger than the ones we had for camping-out, as young boys. Each and every night, two or three hundred of them would be waiting the arrival of the evening newspaper, and one would translate the news to them. There was never a sound, as they heard of home. I used to find it hard to sink in, why many of these soldiers would be weeping unashamedly. It was a few years later when we all found out why they were upset.”

“After them, about 1940, came the ‘Free French’ sailors. All had berets with a small red bobble on top. I got to know one who stayed on in Ashton, after the war. He was known to virtually everyone as ‘French George’—a gentlemen in every sense of the word. What I found quite striking was the great number of them who marched to St. Oswald’s R.C. church every morning for mass. All three lots of foreign soldiers and sailors had their own priests.”

“Some would argue that the French were followed into Haydock Park by the Americans, in 1943. This was not correct, the troops from the U.S.A. were stationed across the road in Ashton, on Lord Gerard’s Estate. They always seemed flush with money. Maybe that was one reason why the girls from miles around made a bee-line to the camp almost every night!”

[Laughter]

It is also interesting to note how the stereotypical profile of enemy soldiers didn’t actually match reality when Wigan people met both the Italian and German soldiers, some of whom settled in the local neighbourhood. On a lighter note, John Scully also recalls how young people of both sexes were keen to meet up with each other, even if it led to some tensions on the return of a hometown servicemen.

“Then came the Italian prisoner-of war, who took the place of the Americans on Lord Gerard’s estate. The interests of the Italians, in general, seemed to go no further than the local girls, who were always hanging around the camp gates. [Laughter] In fact, on one occasion, there was a near-riot. I daresay it was understandable when young servicemen come home on leave to find loved ones they had left behind ‘involved’ with the ones many had been at war against. It wasn’t long before the Italians were moved on.” [Laughter]

“Then came the German prisoner-of-war. Most were extremely well behaved—much different than we had been led to believe. In fact, one still lives in Ashton, where he ‘married and settled’ after the war was over. I meet him most days, and we do have many interesting chats. Anyone who worked in the coalmines alongside him, will tell you that he was a great worker.”

William Foster can remember carrying gas masks, and undertaking gas mask practice at school. He can also remember bombs being dropped on Wigan, in the Goose Green area of the town, near St. Paul’s church. It is interesting to note that his home had an ‘Anderson’ type shelter to use when this raid was on; a possible explanation for the raid was an attempt to bomb the munitions factory at Gathurst, some 2 or 3 miles to the Northwest of the town centre.

“During the war years we had to carry gas masks, and we used to have gas mask practice. We all had to have our gas masks on for about 10 minutes. We all had to go into the air raid shelter when the sirens sounded. We did not suffer any daytime air raids, but sirens were sounded for practice purpose. The only raid that I remember was the bomb that landed on St. Paul’s Church yard at Goose Green. This was at night, and we were in our home shelter. This was the ‘Anderson’ type, built on our backyard.”

Jack Wolley remembers receiving food parcels from the U.S.A. during the war. His evidence shows how long it took to transport food across the Atlantic, and its condition on arrival, as well as the acute shortage of food during the war years.

“ . . . I remember getting food parcels from America, they were given to families of miners and contained some biscuits (hard as nails) some chocolate (even harder), [Laughter] and some powdered potato. Also at junior school we were given a bag of sweetened drinking chocolate weekly.”

Alan Mitchinson reveals how his Headmaster, Mr. Kennedy, helped the ‘war effort’ by using his accentless German, gained in the 1920s at Heidelberg University, in an unspecified way as a broadcaster with the BBC. The information on pre-decimal money given to me in the interview seems almost trivial when compared with evidence of a person who may have been making a major impact on the war effort through propaganda to the German people, or people in occupied Europe.

“The Headmaster of Sacred Heart R.C. Junior and Infant School was Mr. T. Kennedy. Late in life, when I was an undergraduate and Mr. Kennedy was retired, he told me that he attended the University of Heidelberg in the early 1920s and that he had worked in World War Two as a broadcaster for the BBC’s German service, a job which he was able to fit in with being a Headmaster. In 1970 I had just finished my degree and had a summer job at Haigh Hall. Two of the older men who worked there volunteered this little story about ‘Conk’ Kennedy disappearing from school for a few days during the war, and that it later became known that his accentless German was being put to use by the BBC.”

John Scully gives his insights into the lack of discipline today through the lack of parental supervision during the war-years, when women were employed in munitions work, and wanted to enjoy themselves at the weekend. There were several of these factories in and around the Wigan area. It is important to

remember that government had great powers during the war, under the Essential War Work Order and could actually demand that women undertake essential work during a national crisis such as a World War, when there was a shortage of available labour. As John Scully goes on forcefully to express his opinion:

“It is my opinion, after studying the levels of indiscipline that abound today, it began during the war-years, when the women of the home, had to get work in the ‘Essential Works Rule’ of the period, for the war effort. Most were working all week, mostly in the munitions works, that abounded around this part of the country. When the weekend came, they wanted some pleasure, as a result of this, and particularly as the man of the house was in the forces, they would leave their children, to have a hour or so, with their older family relations or family. If the children wanted money, it was no trouble to ‘treat’ them out of their hard-earned wages.”

#### **1945 – 1959 Austerity to affluence**

The testimony of witnesses who were born after 1945 included life experiences and social observations that were fundamentally different from those of the older witnesses. This resulted in their ‘Lifeworlds’ (Williamson 1998), containing similarities with regard to the educational opportunities being offered to them, but differences in the welfare and materialistic opportunities now being made available to working people in the course of their working lives. These changes were brought about by the direct intervention of central government, establishing a national welfare system for working class people, including a failed attempt to establish a better and fairer educational system for the mass working class population. These changes also reflect advances in technology across a wide variety of fields in the 1940s and 1950s, particularly in the fields of medical science and the care of people to ensure their general well being, in contrast to the experience of working class people from previous generations. The most striking and compelling changes that were making inroads into working class lives were the developments in capitalism, and targeting the increased earning power of

ordinary people. Initially it was only a gradual change, as the immediate post-war period was one of austerity for the working class population in Wigan as this is well described by William Foster, Jack Wolley and Derrick Smith in their memories of immediate post-war life in Wigan.

What the witness testimony and primary archive material indicate overall is that, in the space of two or three generations, an established working class culture and pattern of life was slowly being dismantled. It was a culture that had clearly defined boundaries of educational experiences and outcomes, premature employment in the staple industries, and a subsistence lifestyle with humour, adventure, anger, frustration and sadness. It was this post-war generation and their children, which was to experience the new phenomenon, the evolving market place and its impact on their values and family life in the second part of the twentieth century. This was also a period when their educational provision was about to be changed and what Gary McCulloch (1998) describes as being 'experimented' with, so as to provide a better life for ordinary working people's children.

William Foster gives an example of how post-war reconstruction and the development of welfare state provision began by making milk free following the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act. Previously it had cost 1/2d for a third bottle, which would have been a considerable cost to families living in the inter-war years when the economic depression was at its height.

"School milk was available at 1/2d. per 'third bottle of milk'. We could have milk mornings and afternoons. After the implementation of the 1944 Education Act, school milk was free, but was limited to 'one bottle per day'. For comparison purposes 2lb. loaf of bread cost 'four and half pence'. The cost of milk on present day basis would be 20p."

William Foster remembers a free holiday at Southport, when his father was incapacitated due to an accident in the mining industry. The allocation of free holidays is well recorded by other witnesses, and triangulated by log book entries,

in, for example, the Aspull Wesleyan All Age school, when children in the town received a week's free holiday at the education committee's summer school camp, at Birkdale, in Southport.

"In 1946 we were asked who would not be going on holiday that year. I wasn't, and was offered a week at the Summer School in Southport. The week was of general educational value. Family circumstances changed during my time at the junior school. Father was working as a Colliery Deputy and met with an accident due to inhalation of powder smoke. He was subsequently X-rayed and was found to have a shadow on his lung. There was no sign of tuberculosis but he had to spend three months in Liverpool Sanatorium in Delamere, Cheshire. The shadow healed but he was strongly advised not to return to work in the mine. He set up a fruit and vegetable round with a horse and cart. We also moved into the top of the shop and used it as living accommodation. The shop was at first used for storage, but was later used for continuing the business."

This is a revealing experience. There was no indication if William Foster's father received compensation from the mine owners following the mining accident. This was before the nationalisation of mining in 1947, and presumably he would not have received any financial assistance in setting up his fruit and vegetable business.

Jack Wolley remembers a time when his parents couldn't afford a pair of shoes for him to receive a prize from the Mayor of Wigan in 1947. He had to be content with a pair of 'white pumps', which was the only footwear that his parents could afford. This was for being top of his last class at Pemberton Boys' Senior School or Secondary Modern School, as it became in 1945. The pumps represented an improvement on having to wear clogs for the occasion, and this was a similar experience for everyone who was working-class in Wigan until well into the 1950s. It also indicates that working class people still did not have sufficient finance from the family budget, to spend on items such as footwear, in the immediate post-war years of 1945.

“In all my time at school I never ever had a pair of shoes, I always wore clogs, as did most of the other kids as well. I remember the Headmaster of Pemberton Senior, a Mr. N. K. Smith (‘Owd Nick’ to all pupils), he was feared by everyone, being a strict but fair disciplinarian. So imagine my surprise in later years when he asked me to be a ‘House Captain’ (the school had 4 houses Eton, Harrow, Oxford and Cambridge). I was asked to be House Captain of Cambridge. But ‘Owd Nick’ put a proviso in ‘You’ll have to clean them clogs Wolley, and I mean every day!’ As I said earlier I was top of the class in my last year, and as the school prize day was held in the Queen’s Cinema (in the middle of Pemberton, a well-established working class area of Wigan), with the Mayor of Wigan handing out the prizes. I asked my mum if I could have a pair of shoes for the occasion. Mum said we couldn’t afford shoes so I received my prize, a book on cricket, wearing new white pumps instead.” [Laughter]

Derrick Smith also gives further evidence of the effects of war shortages, particularly the acute shortages of food and the effects of rationing, and how children were encouraged to eat everything from their plates. He also reveals how food standards and production were not stringently monitored as of today. As he goes on to explain:

“People were not well off due to the effects and after effects of the war years with rationing being in force when I was at school. I also remember the taking of gas masks everywhere, air raid shelters, and Red Cross parcels from Canada being distributed, also due to rationing and food shortages we were made to eat everything on our plates at mealtimes, which reminds me of an incident when I was about 7 or 8 years of age. I cut into a sausage and after the first bit I refused to eat anymore. My mother remonstrated with me insisting I eat it up, and when she cut into the sausage only to find a cigarette exclaiming no wonder the ‘lad’ wouldn’t not eat it.” [Laughter]

Derrick Smith also gives an example of his working class status by memories of visits to a local clogger for repairs to his clogs. The fact that he was wearing clogs in the middle to late 'Forties' suggests his parents had not much spare income. Interestingly enough a visit to the cloggers by Derrick Smith and his family was the exception rather than rule due to the scarcity of money, as he goes onto explain:

"I remember calling at Harold Melling's cloggers shop after school to either get my irons on my clogs refastened or new irons fitted, while I waited of course, otherwise I would have to go home in stockings feet. [Laughter] To go to the clogger was the exception rather than the rule because my Dad would normally do the repairs, as money was scarce in the family during those years."

Frank Dandy remembers a childhood in which use was made of the immediate environment to give him simple pleasures, including bird nesting and raiding orchards. His childhood was what Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as a 'shared experience', in that all the children of his age living in Wigan during this period would have similar opportunities and experiences. There were no consumer led initiatives, in which children felt compelled to purchase or wear a particular item of clothing or footwear to undertake a particular leisure activity. Interestingly enough, he was not allowed to go to the summer school at Southport, because he was in a home that was in full employment.

"My pastimes were swimming in local ponds, the canal etc., couldn't afford to pay at the local baths; ball games such as tick and pass; bird nesting (which I would not do now); orchard visiting and marbles. My father was away serving in the army in post-war Germany, and my mother worked in a munitions factory (was the Tupperware Factory, now Millikens a carpet manufacturing company now occupy the site), which was situated near the main London to Glasgow line. This meant I could not go on the free holiday to Southport. We lived in rented property near the primary school, in the Springfield area of Wigan. It was 2 up 2 down,

but I felt I was better off than the children who lived on the nearby Beech Hill council estate.”

The Shevington Crooke Infant and Junior School log from 1945 onwards, reveals that the school was involved in similar activities that both witnesses remember, and other logbooks record. There were visits to the school by the police on ‘Road Safety’, as well as other matters in the Crooke area, such as the Inspector seeing the ‘Gibbons Family’, and the Constable investigating damage to the Royal Oak. The Gibbons family may have been what Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as a ‘rough’ or ‘non-conformist’ family, whose children were engaged in anti-social acts of behaviour in the Crooke area of Wigan. Historically, the pupils would have remembered the 1953 coronation of the Queen, through receiving souvenirs of the occasion.

1945 2<sup>nd</sup> March Inspector J. T. Aylward in school to see Gibbons family.

1945 8<sup>th</sup> June Sergeant Sharples in school this morning to instruct children on ‘Road Safety’.

1945 21<sup>st</sup> November P.C. Oddie in school re-damage done to the ‘Royal Oak’.

1948 18<sup>th</sup> March Police Constable Oddie in school re-stolen coke.

1953 13<sup>th</sup> May Mr. Edmondson, Mr. Bamford, Mr. Crabric, Mr. Thurley in school this morning to present children with coronation souvenirs.

The school log for Gidlow secondary modern school for girls reveals that even in the late 1940s, pupils were still receiving free holidays at the local authority’s summer camp at Birkdale, Southport. There was still some time to wait before full employment and the welfare state addressed a number of the social issues that still affected many people in an industrial town like Wigan, in the austerity years after 1945.

1948 Monday Aug. 9<sup>th</sup> A number of girls were not in school, having been selected for the Southport Summer School for a period of two weeks, commencing August 7<sup>th</sup>; among these girls were several of the new 1<sup>st</sup> years.

Alan Mitchinson gives a very personal and candid view of school meals and their provision and how it stayed with him for the rest of his life. It also reveals that in the mid 1950s there was still some food rationing, and an insistence that children ate everything given to them in the school dining hall. There was still then a community spirit and a 'shared or collective experience' of eating the same food at mealtimes, which had survived into the 1950s before the real onset of more individual choice through a more commercial approach to food and catering.

"At first I went home for meals, but after two years I began to stay for school meals. This was less than 10 years after the end of the war, and some items were still on ration. I read somewhere that one government minister said publicly that the housewife did not know what was good for her family. Consequently some horrendous, but 'balanced' meals were served." [Laughter]

"At Sacred Heart, infants had their meals in the Parish Hall. They were cooked in a central kitchen and brought to the school in large containers. The infants had their meals supervised by a Mrs. Buckley. Everyone had to have every component of the meal and was forced to eat it completely. On Friday, it was always fish. The potatoes were always mash or boiled, and to maintain nutritious balance, the whole meal was covered with tomato sauce containing butter beans. In the junior section meals were taken in the corridor because there was no other place to eat. Mr. Kennedy supervised this and the same 'eat all' rules' applied." [Laughter]

"I suppose that following rationing and the poor diet of the working class of the 1930s led people to think that children had to eat all of a 'balanced' meal. When I finally arrived at the grammar school I found the 'eat what you like' routine a blessed relief."

The Thomas Linacre Technical School log reveals how the hall was used to put a programme out by a local commercial channel about people who lived in Wigan. It must be remembered that television was relatively new to the majority of

working class people, and this would have created quite a stir to both pupils and the general public. The entry about the school laboratory being on fire, and the need to call for the fire brigade would have created excitement in the school, and was certainly an experience for the boys who were in that laboratory, for their lesson on phosphorous.

1956 26<sup>th</sup> September Programme on people of Wigan put out by Granada Television from school assembly hall.

1957 7<sup>th</sup> March Phosphorous fire in laboratory at 11.30 am. Mr. Benny and Mr. Cooke cutting yellow phosphorous when pieces then stuck, became ignited. Classrooms evacuated; five engines summoned, superficial damage to school. No personal injuries.

Alan Mitchinson remembers going on a trip to London with his Infant and Junior school in the 1950s, and shows how the advancements in travel in the second half of the twentieth century opened new opportunities to the working class to find out about and experience different parts of the country. This is made even more pertinent, when Alan Mitchinson reveals that his mother thought travelling to neighbouring districts was considered 'so far' and a 'major event'. These comments reveal how progress in transport technology had revolutionised the 'life experiences' of working class people within a generation.

"There was a 5 day trip to London in Junior 4. Coming as we did from working class backgrounds, travel was rare. My mother rarely went to visit her sister in Coppull because it was 'so far', and visiting her other sister in Walkden was a 'major expedition'. We were all amazed, therefore, that Mr. Mannion knew what the sights from the train were, but he also knew when they were coming up in the journey."

### **1959 – 1970 Affluence to Prosperity**

In this period, the witness testimony and primary archive sources reveal a much better standard of living and lifestyle when compared with any of the previous periods in this chapter. The social and welfare reforms of the 1940s had been

firmly established, and this was a period epitomised with full employment both nationally and locally in Wigan. This improvement in lifestyle was also manifesting itself through technological advances in the manufacture of televisions, the motorcar, and inexpensive packaged holidays abroad in the 1950s and 1960s. This was fuelled by concerted 'consumerist advertising', based on the market place and the capitalist system of the U.S.A., which was impacting on the lifestyles of working class people, and developing their appetites for more materialistic gains through their increased earning power. This is vividly reflected and described by Ray Gosling (1980) in his book *Personal Copy*, in which he feels a personal guilt at not following his parents' working class culture and pattern of life, which were characterised by personal constraint, discipline and hard work, as epitomised in the evidence from earlier periods. Instead, he copied the consumerists of the American capitalist system, who generated his appetite for purchasing products through their established systems of marketing in the northern provincial town, where he lived. The oral testimonies, which best illustrate Ray Gosling's (1980) comments on the market place are those of Peter Hutchinson and myself, who undertook continental holidays at our secondary modern school, flying or sailing to different countries in Europe. The parents who paid for these holidays could not have undertaken such travel in their school days of the 1920s and 1930s. Although it was advances in air transport which allowed these witnesses to travel to such countries, it was also facilitated by the expanding use in this country of the capitalist system and the market place to target the increased spending-power of the working classes.

This process of allowing working class people and their children to enjoy the material comforts denied their parents and grandparents continued throughout the 1960s. The developing 'beat' and 'popular' music culture influenced young people and encouraged more relaxed attitudes towards dress codes. The sexual liberation of young people increased as the sixties unfolded, as did the attraction of fashionable clothes, footwear, music and hairstyles. More importantly, the process of change was changing their self-perceptions about their own culture and 'Lifeworld' (Williamson 1998). Possibly the most telling example of this

increased earning power of the working class people, is the testimony of Tony Perkins. His most revealing and chilling comments are to be found the later part of his testimony, in which he agrees with Ray Gosling (1980) as to the dire consequences of allowing capitalism and the market place to dictate the pace, pattern and culture of the lives of ordinary working class people.

Tony Perkins is charting the change from a 'community based' working class culture with the distinct aims and values of 'hard work and discipline' characterised in the period up to the mid and late 1950s, to the 'individually' based culture which was characterised by the increased purchasing power of working class people. This was to take a real and permanent hold in the 1980s and 1990s. It was one that Seabrook (1982 p.47) describes as 'The changes that were to have rid us of that old poverty have exacted a terrible tribute and it is the young who pay, in terms of the suppressed abilities, unwanted skills, atrophied development. In the end, it is the static nature of the society that stares us in the face, in spite of all the upheavals. All the talk of change turns out to be changing people so they fit the modified needs of cold economic processes; and the only revolution turns out to be the revolution of the fixed wheel.' This pessimistic view of the changing nature of working class cultural life by Jeremy Seabrook (1982) was also reflected in the failure of the improvements for the 'ordinary' or 'average' pupils when Butler Education Act was passed in 1945. By the 1960s the great 'adventure' or 'experiment' with the secondary modern school had by common consent been judged to be a failure in providing pupils with a better educational experience than their parents received in the interwar years. There were still clear and distinctly differentiated educational opportunities in place in Wigan until 1970, through the continuance of the 11+selection system, and the selective grammar schools. So attempts to match the increasing prosperity and quality of life to a better educational provision for working class children had failed. This had the effect of creating a 'working class culture' that had changed from being a 'collective' one to an 'individualistic' one, but it was still one that was 'inferior' to the 'cultural heritage' of the 'established or ruling elite'.

Entries from St. Elizabeth's school log from 1960 to 1970 relate how young primary pupils were taken on field trips to extend their knowledge and understanding of contrasting environments; and record the celebration of important events in their national culture. There is also an indication that use was being made of the growing services to help pupils through schooling and education. The example of Alan Lenton, mentioned in the log, could indicate his mother's alienation by her own education, and her passing it on to her son. Perhaps the most chilling entry was the testing of the siren audibility, as this was a period of intense cold war activity with the activities in Cuba, by the then super powers in 1962.

1961 18<sup>th</sup> May School closed. Thirty-five children with the Headmaster and Mrs. Heaton went on a journey to Ingleton (White Scar Caves) and Morecambe.

1962 6<sup>th</sup> March Air Raid Siren Audibility Test carried out by Aspull UDC. The school asked to make a repeat on the audibility both inside and outside school (11.00).

1964 16<sup>th</sup> January Mr. Laben Child Educational Psychologist called to discuss the case of Alan Lenton whose attendance has become irregular. From the discussion it appears that much of the instability stems from the mother. Consequently, the Adult Psychologist, Miss Holiday is the hope of getting the mother to see how her attitude was affecting the boy.

1965 22<sup>nd</sup> June School closed to mark the 700<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Simon-de-Monfort's Parliament and the 750<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Magna Carta.

Christopher Dennis remembers the excitement of the beat culture and how it affected his life as a teenager in the early 1960s. He also reflects that life still was hard for many working class people. There was still the legacy of the interwar period, as he recalls the wearing of clogs by manual workers at the pits and mills, which were still major employers in the late 1950s and early 1960s. His most telling comment, however, was the divide in occupational status of the young people who had attended a higher status grammar school, as he did, and those

who did not, a divide which he acknowledges quite candidly, along with the views of the national political leaders of that period.

“Life outside school was great, the Beatles, coffee bars, cinema and earning money on Saturday morning at ‘Jacksons the Tailors’. It had to be Saturday morning because afternoons were sacrosanct—Central Park (the home ground of Wigan Rugby League Club)!” [Laughter]

“Although it didn’t register then, life for most families, including mine were hard. I shared the bus most days with miners—mostly unwashed the sound of clogs still rings in the ear, together with those of mill workers. I don’t seem to remember a high percentage of sixth formers aspiring to university—most who didn’t go went into office jobs, accountancy and similar jobs. I suspect many of my primary school peers who failed the 11+scholarship examination left school at fifteen, and went into manufacturing or mining jobs. What or where these children would be today under the same system I don’t know? In the days when I left school there was virtually full employment and the political message I seem to remember was ‘You’ve never had it so good!’ For some that it is.” [Laughter]

The Wigan Wesleyan Primary School, log entry for March 1965, shows how a trip to London was made more memorable when the then M.P. for Wigan, Alan Fitch, conducted the staff and children around the Houses of Parliament. This triangulates the memories of Alan Mitchinson, who remembers going on a day trip to London in the late 1950’s, and reveals how the improved transport system of the middle years of the twentieth century, was beginning to be used increasingly for commercial purposes.

1965 26<sup>th</sup> March School closed today for ‘occasional holiday’. 63 children and the staff visited London for the day. Mr. A. Fitch M.P. for Wigan took us around the Houses of Parliament. We visited Westminster Abbey. Had a 2-hour coach tour of London ending at the tower where we again had a conducted tour. We also saw

the crown jewels. We left London at 5.15 pm. and arrived in Wigan soon after 9.30 pm. after a most enjoyable day.

Peter Hutchinson remembers how his mother's family background helped him receive a better upbringing in a middle class area of Wigan. His mother was anxious for him to receive what Jackson and Marsden (1966 ed) describe as his 'educational inheritance', similar to the one she received at Woodfield Primary School. It is interesting to note that Peter Hutchinson describes his father as 'respectable' working class and his mother as 'middle class'. As Peter describes in Chapter 6, despite all this planning and manoeuvring by his mother, he still failed the 11+scholarship examination, and attended a secondary modern school.

"I was born in Upholland near Wigan in Lancashire on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1952. My father was from what may be described as a respectable working class background and his profession was that of clerical officer with the Ministry of Pensions. My mother, had enjoyed a more privileged background, which had allowed her to attend the then fee paying Woodfield Primary and Wigan Girls High Schools, prior to qualifying as a pharmaceutical chemist."

"My Mother was anxious that her only child should follow in her footsteps with respect to primary education. Accordingly Mother took the post of resident pharmacist at Hunters Chemist Shop, Kenyon Road, Wigan, which offered accommodation, conveniently within the Woodfield catchment area."

"By the mid fifties Woodfield had been absorbed into the state system, but non-the less continued to attract the progeny of the Wigan Lane *hoi polloi*: my class mates comprised the sons and daughters of local doctors, dentists and solicitors, etc."

The log records of Warrington Lane Jerusalem School reveal that, even in the 1960s, there were still examples of neglect more typical of a previous period, but the welfare provision epitomised in the Beveridge Report of 1942 allowed two



brothers to return to school, after examination by the school nurse. The entries regarding the damage to school property reveal that pupils in the area would undertake vandalism, and cause a stir of excitement within the school community. Lastly, the entry, which said the timetable was suspended to watch the Investiture of the Prince of Wales, reveals how new technology was beginning to impact on pupils' education and to influence expectations regarding their quality of life.

1963 9<sup>th</sup> October Two C.I.D. men came in today to question two boys about the taking of chairs from the shelter belonging to school. The two boys admitted the theft and being a party to breaking up one of the chairs.

1968 26<sup>th</sup> September The 2 Jackson brothers came to school, having been cleaned up and sent down to the clinic for inspection yesterday afternoon. Sch. Nurse rang me up before 9 am to say I could admit them.

1969 1<sup>st</sup> July The timetable was completely suspended today to allow the children to watch the Investiture programme on TV.

Entries from the Aspull secondary modern school log book from 1960 to 1961 contain details of dances and continental holidays, which help in triangulating what other witnesses experienced in their secondary modern schools, for example, Peter Hutchinson and myself at All Saints C. E. secondary modern school. There are also the first indications that the post-war affluence was being enjoyed by working class people, and was shared with their children.

1960 1 Apr. A party of 19 children and 5 teachers went to Paris for a week's sightseeing holiday.

7<sup>th</sup> July School closed for the Summer Holidays. A party of children and teachers left for a week's holiday at the Douglas Holiday Camp in the Isle of Man.

Peter Hutchinson remembers a continental holiday in Belgium in 1966, when he got into trouble with a 'B' stream boy, whom he described as a 'roughneck'. This experience indicates the feel of escapism from the mundane experiences of a secondary modern school in the mid 1960s, and having what Paul Willis (1977), describes as a 'laff' and being one of 'the lads'. Peter Hutchinson's experiences of

being sick by consuming too much alcohol reveal a growing awareness of advertising and its influence on young people to consume their products.

“The generosity of my parents allowed me to participate in no less than three such holidays. My school holiday in Blankenberge Belgium, is etched onto my memory mainly due to two incidents. The first involved a ‘B stream’ roughneck named Tom Grundy. Tom, Mike Beard and myself entered one of Blankenberge’s many novelty shops. The shopkeeper produced packets of sparkling multi-coloured balls of about 1cm in diameter. He then led us outside to the front of the shop, looked furtively up and down the street, whispered, ‘no tell the police’ and then he threw one of the balls, as hard as he could onto the road. The noise the exploding ball emitted was akin to a rifle shot. Wads of money changed hands and pockets were stuffed with Chinese cracker balls. [Laughter] Tom skipped merrily down the street, startling passers by with loud bangs and Mike and I followed, until we came to an intersection where a policeman was directing traffic. Tom spotted his target, darted behind the officer, threw down a fist full of cracker balls and fled. [Laughter] Unhappily for Mike and I, another policeman had witnessed everything from the nearby pavement and unable to collar the very speedy Tom, he made do with Mike and myself. We meekly followed the gendarme but nevertheless managed discreetly to dispose of our contraband in a church hedge en-route to the police station. At the police station we were ushered into an interview room where we were interrogated in French. After much wild gesticulation, we managed to convince the sergeant that we had no explosives secreted about our persons and we were released.”

“Meanwhile back at the Hotel Lion De Flanders, Tom was pelting passers-by with Chinese cracker balls, from an upper storey window.”  
[Laughter]

“The other Belgian incident was the occasion of my first ever intoxication. After consuming a number of pints of Watneys Red Barrel one evening, I was staggering around the sea front enquiring of the

bemused locals “ Oûest le Hotel Lion de Flanders?” When I eventually made it back to my hotel room, I was violently sick (projectile vomit) all over my bed. Ernie Griffiths (teacher) was surprisingly sympathetic and he only suspended my pocket money for two days.” [Laughter]

An entry from the Gidlow secondary modern school log for boys from April 28<sup>th</sup> 1966, reveals that the 1<sup>st</sup> year pupils were late arriving back from the new swimming baths in Wigan, due to the chaotic conditions. This would have added to the excitement of these pupils to experience the benefits of a fully equipped international pool, which was a rarity in the mid 1960s, and added a little glamour to the town’s image and reputation during this period. Also, interestingly enough, the school’s captain attended the installation of the new mayor, which would have been a special event in his young life.

1966 April 25<sup>th</sup> Owing to the chaotic conditions of the new Baths today (‘Ascension Day’), the first year forms did not return from swimming until 12.50 pm.

1966 April 25<sup>th</sup> Our School Captain, Colin R. Doran, attended the installation of the new mayor, Cllr. S. Taylor, this afternoon.

I remember a trip to Switzerland in 1965, when I travelled by aeroplane, a first-time experience then for a member of my family. And in 1967, I remember a trip to Belgium by boat. This was coinciding with an expansion of working class people’s aspirations in life, in particular with regard to cheap package holidays. However, I also remember the interwar philosophy of working for what you get being imparted by parents.

“ . . . I remember doing a morning and evening round of newspaper deliveries, remember there was no examinations or homework to do when you got home from school. I enjoyed the holidays and was excited as a 13-year-old boy when I flew to Switzerland in 1965. I remember that the pop music and fashions were similar to those seen in Britain at the time, and long hair was common among all the younger generations

in both countries. The underlying theme from my parents was that it was good training for when I commenced work on a full-time basis, when I left school at 15, and realised that you needed to work for something before you actually got it. Looking back it was an old-fashioned idea of the poverty and hard-times they both encountered in the inter-war years.”

Tony Perkins, in his social observations of when he was at primary school in a very poor area of Wigan, reveals a glimpse of a ‘shared childhood’ of ‘poverty and want’, even in the 1960s. The memory of games like marbles and double jacks, the visit of the school nurse, and parents still on National Assistance gives something of a feel of the inter-war years, rather than the more affluent 1950s and 1960s.

“I remember all the injections we had to endure and the rough and unsophisticated way they were carried out. Also, the school nurse coming once a year and inspecting our heads for lice and those who had the dreaded ‘lurgy’ could not hide as their heads were often shaved and baked in lacquer. School meals were another source of embarrassment for some pupils whose dads were on National Assistance had to queue separately from others; this was another source of psychological torture and divisive policy. There were also some funny pastimes, games played in the schoolyards. For example, marbles, doubles, jacks, odds and evens. Another oddity was an old piano tuner, or he appeared to be older, and he was blind. I remember two boys sang a duet with the hit Cliff Richard song at the time ‘Summer Holiday’. A rather sadder event was when a very poor lad who came from a family of 12 went missing. This lad was always shabbily dressed, kicked, abused and tortured by other kids. After he had been absent from school several weeks, news came back that he had been found dead in a ditch in a Parbold. I recollect that his body had been there for a couple of weeks, hidden by the snow. This was very peculiar as Parbold was an outlying district from Wigan, 8 or 9 miles from his home in Scholes.”

He also reveals something of a culture in Wigan of Rugby League, as opposed to any other types of sport, such as association football, that may have interested pupils such as Tony Perkins.

“Association football was a swear word in this school, and I loved it! The Head teacher despised it—I feel because he knew it was a far superior to rugby and was played in every part of the world. I remember him saying—‘I had the misfortune of watching Bolton Wanderers last night. I warn you now—never mention soccer in this school’. This was hard to swallow, here was a nation on the verge of staging and winning the World Cup, and all his pupils were collecting ‘World Cup Willies’.”

Tony Perkins remembers, when he was a pupil at John Fisher’s secondary modern school, receiving the threat of a thrashing if pupils entered certain shops in Wigan, which contained sexually explicit pictures in magazines, or if he sang songs from the ‘Hit Parade’. It is also interesting to note how powerless schools were in preventing pupils watching the controversial films that were being shown in Wigan cinemas. It was perhaps the start of the loosening of the disciplinary codes that were exercised in schools, due to the ever present and growing commercialism in the entertainment industry that was targeting working class young people.

“Sex was taboo at this school (secondary modern) and although it was an all boy school, I never witnessed or knew of any leaning towards homosexuality. There was of course an openness that I feel would have not been present within a mixed forum. In the late sixties we began to be introduced and weaned onto all sorts of sexual images through the media and films. I remember the Headmaster forbidding anyone to sing Yoko Ono Band’s hits, which mentioned or in his eyes defamed Jesus. Similarly he banned pupils entering ‘Smith’s’ bookshop in Wigan, because they sold ‘Playboy’ and ‘Parade’. He also threatened to discipline and thrash any boy who went to watch a controversial film ‘Helga’ being shown at the ‘Ritz’ cinema. I of course went there out of

sheer curiosity to witness and ogle naked woman for the first time. The film was a huge disappointment as it concentrated on the intricacies and general brutality of a women giving birth. I cringed throughout the whole 90 minutes but pretended to enjoy it in front of my sexually starved mates.”

When Tony Perkins finished his interview with me in May, 1998, he gave me a general statement about his thoughts about today’s society. He is quite clear on what he thinks are the main reasons for many of society’s ills, and his discourse and arguments are similar to those of Jeremy Seabrook (1982), about how capitalism has exploited the working classes and their new won affluence after the hardships of the inter-war years. He also has some comments on how young people are being brought up into an ever expanding ‘youth culture’ which requires the latest fashion item, inevitably costing a high price for its particular ‘brand-name’. It seems a far cry from the wearing of clogs, and the purchasing of a suit with assistance from the Royal British Legion, to attend the grammar school, which some of the witnesses who attended that school in the inter-war years had experienced.

“Until the poor grab their community of interest and become more politically motivated and involved in their children’s education then nothing changes. As long as the working class are unconcerned and passive in their attitudes to the closing of public facilities, for example, libraries and parks, whilst at the same time being besotted in the consumption of materialism we have little hope. The poor are given an antidote of pornography, 100’s of useless TV channels, drugs, cheap alcohol, striptease, and bingo to deflect and quieten them. These have replaced eighteenth century cock fighting, street fights, bear baiting, gambling etc. Along with all this we have witnessed a cultural change towards the ‘Americanisation’ of everything. Fast food, baseball caps, three strikes and you’re out, ship prisons, crap music, etc., we seem to be in bed with America when we should be courting Europe. The formation

of Quangos and non-accountable bodies supports this theme, and makes it more workable deceiving the public that they have a choice.”

Muriel Heyes remembers her upbringing in a working class area of Wigan, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. There is a vivid sense of a ‘collective childhood’, in which all the children that Muriel Heyes knew played with on her working class estate of Worsley Mesnes; they had similar clothing and toys, and there were none of the material items that later generations enjoyed. The fact that her mother had a variety of jobs indicates the full employment of the period, and the need for one of the parents to be in the home environment in the earlier part of her childhood. The important point from her testimony is the freedom to enjoy her childhood, without being frightened, and to enjoy playing with one of the local ‘tearaways’.

“I was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1955, at 1 Mesnes Avenue, Worsley Mesnes, Wigan. I was born into a working class family background, my father Maurice a Police Constable who served in the Wigan Borough Police force for 30 years from 1947 to 1976, and mother Mary who started her working life as a seamstress at ‘Brown and Hagues’ and subsequently after that had many jobs—ranging from working at Wigan International Swimming Pool to working at Whelans Supermarket.”

“I have fond memories of my childhood, mainly because of loving and committed parents—in those days, late fifties and early sixties, we didn’t have much materially, but nevertheless my brother and I went short of nothing, our stomachs were always full. The beauty of living in that era was that all the kids were socially in the same boat; nobody was any better off than the next child. Nobody could boast that they had ‘designer’ coats with swanky labels, no computers, mobile phones, and video computer games—there was no rat race, where one child had to out do another. I remember with fond memories Ronnie Teasdale who was a real character as a child and a bit of a tearaway, all the kids would pester him relentlessly to play out, and one day children were knocking on the front door of his house, and he wouldn’t answer the door and the

next thing Ronnie just jumped out of the boxroom window and ran off—  
miraculously not breaking his neck in the process.” [Laughter]

### Conclusion

The above testimonies reveal how the earlier witnesses experienced a childhood that was seen as an apprenticeship for disciplined hard work and a corresponding lifestyle. It was characterised by poverty, hardship and limited horizons which offered hardly any opportunity to escape. The social deprivation was supplemented by an education that reinforced these values, and instilled in the children distinct boundaries regarding employment opportunities and future cultural lifestyles. It was what Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as a ‘repeating pattern’ of working class experience or ‘Lifeworld’ (Williamson 1998). The witnesses born after 1945 also experienced the emerging influence of the market place and capitalism, alongside better and improved social and welfare services. Economic progress initially evolved slowly in the austerity of the late 1940s and early 1950s, but by the 1960s was firmly established. It had the direct effect of changing the perspective of working class culture from that of being committed to a ‘community’ of shared and agreed aims and values, to that of the ‘individual’, seeking to improve oneself, through material advancement and increased prosperity. This was also the period when attempts to readdress some of the inequalities of the educational system were being made, initially in what Gary McCulloch (1998) describes as ‘experimenting’ with the secondary modern school in the 1940s and 1950s, and later with the introduction of the comprehensive education in the 1960s.

Although successive national governments from the period following 1945 were publicly committed to improving the lifestyles of working class people, recovery from the economic effects of World War Two, and the enormous cost of establishing and introducing the welfare state, inhibited such declared intentions of different governments. The emerging capitalist system also promised through mass advertising an improvement on the lifestyle of working class people from that experienced in the interwar years. In reality, those in power had no interest in

the actual progress and the development of a common culture for ordinary people. Interest was centred on exploiting the working classes and their increased spending power, through blatant use of commercialism and the market place, which in turn benefited the financial interests of the 'ruling elite'. This 'ruling elite' educated their children in the private sector in independent schools, or in the public school system. Jackson and Marsden (1966 ed.) describe this as the 'enclosed garden' of schools and education, which ensures that such children receive a 'cultural heritage', superior to that of working people's children educated in the state system. The oral testimonies of witnesses triangulated against primary archive sources reveal that witnesses who were young between 1920 and 1945 had to struggle against an education system that provided them with a 'Lifeworld' (Williamson 1998), which contained experiences and social observations of a 'shared and contained' working class cultural experience. This compares with the ones born after 1945 who saw the 'Lifeworlds' (Williamson 1998) of their parents and their children changing through an evolving market place of materialism and personal gain, and the culture of the working class changing to an 'individualistic one'. The one most important factor to remember from the above oral testimonies and primary archive sources, is that it was a culture that was always inferior to that of the 'ruling elite', one that was both 'patronised' and 'exploited' throughout the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A DUAL SYSTEM OF SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION IN WIGAN SCHOOLS BETWEEN 1920-70.

#### Argument of thesis in relation to Wigan 1920-70

The principal argument of this thesis is to reveal how the majority of the working class population in a town like Wigan received one particular type of education in lower status schools, whilst a minority received another type in a higher status school. To gather this information, it has been necessary to interview people who attended these different schools during the period under investigation, and this oral evidence has been triangulated with available primary archive sources. It agrees with the analysis of Middleton and Weitzman (1976 p.369) who argue that 'the development of State education is the consistent social process to minimize the provision of more educational opportunities for the children of manual workers'. The clear intention of this type of educational policy outlined by Middleton and Weitzman (1976) was to perpetuate and reproduce a clear class based education system, with lower status schools associated with the children of the working classes, and the higher status school associated with the middle classes. Another feature associated with lower status schools was the experimentation and change that took place as they evolved during the twentieth century; which was in direct contrast to the higher status grammar school, which remained virtually unchanged during this same period.

The number of schools that were available in Wigan during the period under investigation is given below. The most telling point from this information is that no precise number of the lower status schools can be given. This is due in some part to the loss of accurate records at the local Education Department and archive centre, but in the main is due to their closure and change of status as they evolved and were renamed during the twentieth century. Conversely a precise number of higher status grammar schools can be identified, where there was no

‘experimentation’ or ‘change’ made in the way they operated and delivered the curriculum.

There were approximately 70 All Age Schools in the Wigan area in 1920. Some of these became infant and junior schools in 1932, when senior schools were introduced, which in turn became modern schools following the 1944 Butler Education Act. There were approximately 12 senior schools, and after the 1944 legislation, modern schools in the Wigan area. There were only 5 grammar schools serving the entire population of Wigan, either in the county borough, or in the Lancashire administrative county of Wigan. It is very difficult to put an exact number on the non-selective lower status schools, because throughout the period under investigation, schools were closed, renamed or newly opened. For example, Aspall secondary modern school was only opened in 1960. However the five selective and higher status grammar schools remained intact throughout the period under investigation, with no changes being made to their buildings, curricular provision or staffing. The only change occurred in 1963, when the Thomas Linacre Technical School was amalgamated with Wigan Grammar School. It was in fact a selective school itself, and had followed a mainly grammar school curricular approach during its 10-year tenure in the Wigan area.

### **Public policy--social differentiation**

The formulation of a state education system began in the nineteenth century, when two clearly identified systems of schools were established, the grammar school system for the middle classes, and voluntary society schools for the children of the working classes. This ‘dual’ or ‘binary’ system was the beginning of a differentiated school system, and in surveys and commissions of the 1860s, it revealed that about half of children in certain areas of the country were not attending school. Public demand led to the passing of the 1870 Education Act, which for the first time financed a state educational system of elementary schools from public funds, allowing children of the working classes to attend them.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, two vital and pivotal matters dominated in state education. One was concerned with achieving and providing

universal and free compulsory education, and the other with raising the indifferent standards of the schools so that working class children could have an opportunity of an education beyond the elementary stage. But this was firmly resisted by middle class interest groups, which made educational reform difficult to achieve locally and nationally. The class divisions on which the actual system was based also further hindered reform. The managerial or owner classes who sent their children to the higher status grammar schools wanted to contain the rising aspirations of the working classes, who were sending their children to higher grade or central elementary schools. They did not want these types of schools to achieve the same status as the grammar school.

Even after the passing of the 1902 Education Act, the education system was still not delivering an effective and equal school experience for the working class child. Although a small proportion of free places was provided for boys and girls from elementary schools, this was basically intended to improve the education of prospective elementary school teachers. The school experiences for the majority of working class pupils was being served through the All Age Schools, and through the emerging central schools for more able working class pupils in the 1920s. There was such a school opened in the Hindley area of Wigan, and it existed for six years. It was not until the end of World War One, with the passing of the 1918 Education Act, and the extension of the Vote to include the working classes, that educational provision began to improve for working class children. This was manifested in the building of Senior Schools, which took the remaining three years of an All Age School's population up to the age of fourteen. But this improvement was blighted by economic conditions, which curtailed any further progress until after the Second World War. It was a period when theories and reports on educational provision for adolescents were in vogue, but had little practical impact on actual provision during this period.

Even the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act, which was designed to address the class discrimination in education, ultimately failed. It helped build up during the 1950s and 1960s a much fairer and more equal learning environment in the infant and junior schools. But it was in secondary education that the

'inequality' continued to exist through the continuance of a 'dual' or 'differentiated' system. This was due in the main to the length of a secondary course, and the outcomes achieved by the pupils when they left a particular school. For the successful higher status grammar school pupil, there was either the school certificate or general certificate of secondary education, with which to pursue a career in higher education or the professions. For the majority of the secondary school population, educated in the newly formed modern schools, there was nothing to show prospective employers of what they had they achieved. There had been no successful adoption of a sound educational approach for the non-academic or ordinary pupils, to achieve parity of esteem with grammar school pupils when they completed their course of education. This was translated into a public feeling that attendance at a secondary modern school meant low attainment and only modest achievements. Also, major employers complained of the low standards of literacy and numeracy of new employees coming from the secondary modern school.

The feeling was imbued in the public consciousness that a secondary education, which resulted in the attainment of public examinations, was only for a 'selected' few. Or as Harold Dent (1954 p.76) so forcibly and succinctly puts it: 'it was not as many people appear to imagine, the result of a modern passion for administrative tidiness, nor, as even more seem to believe, a sinister plot to deprive 'working-class' children of their educational opportunities which are theirs by right,' but more a 'a manifestation of the 'traditions of society', with long and deep historical roots, and should be treated as such.' In this passage, Harold Dent (1954), explains how long held beliefs about educational differentiation through different schools were in some way an inevitable part of whatever class or culture a pupil came from. They were passed on to successive generations as being part of a person's early young life, and ultimately controlled a person's future occupational status.

The remainder of this chapter has been divided into four periods, which reflect how this 'dual' or 'differentiated' system was maintained in Wigan for well over half a century. The first period, from 1920-1932, reveals how the majority of

working class children in Wigan were educated in All Age schools. These were clear reminders of the nineteenth century and are reflected in the type of curricular provision that were available to the pupils who attended them. They also reflect the subsistence lifestyles of many working class people in Wigan during this period. The period 1932-1945 reveals how there were attempts to improve the opportunity of working class children with the opening of Senior Schools in the town in 1932, which took pupils from the last three classes in an All Age School. But this period was beset with financial restraint and difficulties in attempting to improve schools, and was more concerned with theories and reports about what type of school different children should attend. This theorizing reflected the ideas of the Greek philosopher, Plato, who argued that a society was based on three categories or types of people, who should be educated accordingly to their status. These ideas played an important part in shaping the 1944 Butler Education Act, and in particular, the role the secondary modern school, which was a central strand of educational provision between 1945-60. The final period between 1960-70 reveals how the Butler Act, and in particular the secondary modern schools, had failed the majority of working class children, and this failure needed to be addressed through a comprehensive approach. This includes the appearance of a qualification for the first time for the 'ordinary' or 'non-academic' child who attended a lower status other than a grammar school .

### **Teacher Education and Social Differentiation**

The training and education of teachers varied, and ultimately depended on the type of school in which they were going to teach. All the witness testimony and primary archive sources indicate that this was the position in Wigan, in common with schools across the country. So the system of a differentiated curriculum for different schools and classes of pupils, established in the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth century; was mirrored in the different types of teaching staff found in them. This meant in practice that the gown and mortar worn in a higher status school indicating graduate status, as opposed to the 'certificated' or 'non-certificated' teacher of the lower status school, also

indicated a discrepancy in the status of teachers. The reason for the introduction in the late 1960s and early 1970s, of a Bachelor of Education degree, was to ensure a 'parity of esteem' between all teaching staff, in whatever school they taught.

The teachers who taught in Wigan schools between 1920 until 1970 would have been trained in establishments associated with a university. The two main universities near Wigan were Manchester and Liverpool University, along with Edge Hill College of Education, which was a teacher training college, near Ormskirk. All the logbooks and HMI reports of grammar schools scrutinised for this study reveal entries with teachers having a degree, or being 'certificated'. The HMI report of 1949 for Wigan Girls' High School, stated that 'out of a staff of 22 mistresses, all are graduates, 13 with honours'. This contrasts with log entries for lower status schools, in which the teaching staff are described as either being 'certificated' or 'non-certificated'. This was a clear legacy of the 'pupil-teacher system' of the elementary school of the nineteenth century, in which the student teacher learnt how to become a teacher in a school, and if they were successful in passing an examination, they could attend a training college to supplement their training in school. This practice was described by the Headmaster of Moss Lane All Age School in the school logbook in 1924, as 'learning the skills of teaching'. There were also various records in school logbooks of people on teaching practice and observation, as part of the government's 'One-Year Emergency Training Scheme' towards the end of the Second World War. This is demonstrated in the school logbook for the Whelley Senior School in August, 1944, when it stated 'a Mr. Kelly of the RAF has arrived for a period of observation, and is interested in the Gvt. Scheme for the recruitment of teachers'. During this period the Headmaster of Wigan Grammar, Mr. Smith, was seconded to lecture at Worcester Training College for the academic year 1945-46, for people being trained under this scheme. Many of the 'One-Year Emergency' trained teachers of the immediate post-war period commenced their teaching careers in lower status schools. For example, staff in the secondary modern school that Peter Hutchinson and I attended had been trained in such a 'scheme' and subsequently remained at the school for over twenty years. Two witnesses interviewed for this study Peggy

Hurst and Ronnie Foster, were trained to teach in lower status schools in the 1960s. Both were trained at Chorley College of Education in three-year courses, which was an extension on the two-year course offered to intending teachers. The training offered to both these witnesses reflected how there was still a perceived difference between teachers in the different types of schools found in Wigan during the 1960s.

Although there were a variety of training courses and qualifications to obtain in order to teach in a school in England or Wales in the period under investigation, it is relatively simple to analyse and make conclusions about this provision. To teach and become a 'master' or 'mistress' in a grammar school, a person needed to have a 'ordinary' or 'honours' degree, which took four years to achieve. To teach in a lower status school, you needed to undergo a two-year training period at a Teacher Training College. This was increased to three years in the 1960s, as the example of the two witnesses training at Chorley College of Education revealed. But this was part of an 'experiment' to ensure that, by the early 1970s, all teaching staff and proposing teachers had the opportunity of taking a degree, to attempt to ensure there would be parity of esteem among all teaching staff in the future, in whatever schools they taught.

### **1920-1932: Legacies of nineteenth century provision**

The period from 1920 until 1932 saw the educational experiences of the majority of working class children confined to the All Age School. These schools had clear legacies from the elementary school of the nineteenth century, pupils entered at five, and left at thirteen or fourteen years of age. The classes children were taught in were referred to as 'standards', and were taught and delivered by either 'certified' or 'uncertified' teachers. The curriculum offered in these schools evolved and changed during an era of experimentation, until their demise in 1944. The actual provision and conditions prevailing in this type of school are clearly described in the oral testimony of Jack Lathom and the logbook entries of St. Thomas's All Age School. They give a clear insight into the limited learning environment and facilities being offered to the pupils who attended them. There is

also a prevailing assumption in the activities being offered to these pupils, such as gardening and woodwork activities, that they would be most suited to manual and practical work, rather than being employed in an office or undertaking clerical work. It was during this period, before the introduction of the senior schools in the Wigan area in 1932, that there was an experiment in the Hindley schools to provide 'more able' pupils from the All Age schools with more advanced work at a Central School. The work of this school is vividly described by a visiting H.M.I. in 1923, and is recorded below.

Entries for the school log of Hindley Central School Log from August 1919 to July 1925 reveal how a post-elementary central school was set up for the children who lived in the Hindley district of Wigan. The first two pages of the log list the number of pupils on roll, and the list of contributory All Age elementary schools from which they came. Perhaps the most important revelation in the HMI report for 9<sup>th</sup> July 1923, is the one which details the requirement for pupils to take an examination to attend the school, and to stay for the three-year course. The visiting H.M.I also made the most telling comment at the end of the report '... the school is justifying the experiment made when it was established.' This comment reveals how the educational history of working class people is one of experimentation, particularly in providing some form of post-elementary education in a town like Wigan (McCulloch 1998). It also reveals how these types of schools were short-lived and quickly replaced by another experiment, in this case the senior school, which was the forerunner of the secondary modern school in the 1940s and 1950s.

School Report - Hindley Central School Aug24th/23 H.M.I. Mr. V. Ball. Date 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1923.

“Central Classes. This selective central school was recognised temporarily in 1919. About eighty children are admitted annually, on the results of a carefully organised examination, which is taken by every child of eleven in the local education authority.”

“Some of the scholars admitted hitherto have left after two years. It is suggested that in the future, parents be asked to give an undertaking that their children shall remain for three years at least.”

This comment reveals the prevailing values of working class parents, who wanted to have their children in work and earning an income as soon as they attained the age of 14 years. There is a feeling in the comment made by the HMI, that working class parents still don't have a full understanding of the need to complete the full course being offered to their children at this central school.

“Arrangements might also be made for admitting boys and girls who leave the school into suitable evening classes. It should not be necessary for them to take courses designed for pupils from these standards.”

“Until the L.E.A. is in a position to provide more extensive facilities for advanced instruction in accordance with the approved scheme, the premises may be regarded as satisfactory for the purposes of a Central School.”

The above comments by the HMI about the provision for admitting boys and girls to suitable evening classes when they withdraw from the school after two years, reveal how there is a perception that the education that these boys and girls have received still needs building and developing, to ensure further progress without repeating what had been learned earlier. Also the comment on providing more 'extensive facilities' is again very telling. Although pupils were selected to attend this particular establishment, the school was still viewed as a school for the working class, and was therefore funded as such. It was closed down in 1925, and there was no mention in either primary sources or witness testimony as to what happened to it.

“In mathematics a subject in which the Head teacher is specially interested, the work of the older boys reaches a high level. Besides being keenly interested they show much intelligence in tackling problems. The mathematical drawing deserves a special word of praise. The girls, though not equally well advanced have been carefully taught.”

“The science of the older boys is also good, but the girls have not made satisfactory progress. The teacher of the girl’s classes appears to work hard, but she has had little previous experience of teaching science. The girls’ classes tested in the subject had little knowledge.”

“On the whole, the school is justifying the experiment made when it was established.”

There is an overtone of sexual discrimination found in the comments about the older boys being offered better teaching and learning opportunities in mathematics and science, when compared to those of the girls. There appears to be a received wisdom or hierarchy of thought in this period to produce suitably educated tradesmen or journeymen, recruited from these boys. The girls would receive an education suited to working in the less demanding role offered in commercial occupations, such as working in a shop or commercial store.

The log entries for Hindley Common Methodist All Age School over a short period from 1921 to 1927 reveal how the elementary tradition of the nineteenth century still remained intact in the All Age School of the inter-war years. All these schools describe classes as ‘Standards’, and the teachers as either ‘certificated’ who had attended a training college to receive both training and education to make them better equipped in the elementary classroom, or ‘uncertificated’ which reveals whether they came from the ‘pupil teacher’ tradition. The important distinction to draw from this is that the teacher in the grammar school would certainly have been a graduate, and would have possibly received some training in how to teach in a grammar school. Possibly the most important differences between the selective and non-selective school is the activity recorded in this log revealing that the pupils are involved in gardening. There is also a telling assumption about ordinary working class pupils undertaking gardening activities, and the gender division with girls being given flowers to look after. This is taken as an unspoken truth, even by H.M.I. of that period.

1921 9<sup>th</sup> September Copy of Report from HMI on School Gardens in Hindley received today (by Head teacher of school). 'not a large garden but rather difficult to work. In good order, and well cropped. Girls have a border for flowers. Some experimental work, and co-ordination'.

This would not have been the case in a higher status secondary grammar school. There is a reference in the Hindley Common Methodist log to a pupil passing the 'Labour Examination' in 1921, recognition of the pupil being allowed to leave school at an early age to commence work.

The logbook entries for St. Thomas's C.E. All Age School (became Infant and Junior in 1932), reveal a school that was truly from 1870, in the 'elementary tradition' of educating the working classes. The HMI report of 1921 describes the neighbourhood as 'poor and sordid', and the curricular approaches of the teaching staff were so lacking that pupils did not reach the appropriate Standard 7 when they left the school. A Report by HMI Mr. Turnbull 4<sup>th</sup> March 1921, on St. Thomas' notes:

"This department suffers from several drawbacks. The premises which are on two floors, are old and rambling; while the neighbourhood of the school is poor and sordid. There have been constant staffing difficulties with vacancies for considerable periods; and the want of strong male assistants has during the war had its effect on the training of the older boys."

"The present Headmaster, who was an assistant here, has now on his return from military service been in charge for about one year. He has applied himself to the task of carrying on and developing the good work of his predecessor. The Geography and Nature Study schemes now in hand are to broaden the children's outlook in these subjects."

"In organisation the separation of senior boys and girls is an improvement. But there is a large number of children old for their classes generally throughout the school, and too few reach the 7<sup>th</sup> Standard. It is satisfactory to note that children in the lowest classes are receiving

attention appropriate to their needs; and the preparation of apparatus to continue the Infant training for the less advanced children is creditable.”

This is evidence of the ‘Headmaster’ trying to improve the school but the language of the report is revealing. There are references to the ‘lowest classes’ and ‘less advanced children’ presupposing a natural hierarchy of abilities. This language is highly gendered. The worlds of boys and girls are continued very differently. The report notes:

“The Senior Girls’ Classes are in good hands. The written work in these classes is up to a good level, and the literature has made a considerable appeal to the imagination.”

“Not such thorough work is done by the elder boys who need more stimulating and systematic teaching.”

“It is noticeable through the school that the oral response is weak and needs definite attention; and systematic training in private study and preparation is hampered by insufficiency of suitable test-books in senior classes.”

“The teaching of Needlework has much improved in the school during recent years.”

The report alludes intriguingly to the need for better management now that the school has a more settled staff following the shortages created by World War One. Reports such as this one are deeply revealing of prevailing attitudes to All Age Schools and the pupils who attended them.

“Inequality between class and class points to the need of closer supervision by the Headmaster; now that there is a more settled staff, this should be possible.”

The Aspull Wesleyan All Age school log entries provide many illustrative examples of how the daily life in a lower status school was organised and administered. We can read for the period of the 1920s of visits to the local technical college, of inspections, admissions, visits by education advisers, placements of trainee teachers and, tellingly, of a women teacher giving up her

post on marriage. The log entry for the 1930s, however, reveals some important assumptions within the curriculum about the relationship between school and work in the local area. The entry for 1932 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> July reads: Part of HMI Richardson's report 'Having regard to local industrial conditions, and to the type of child which constitutes the majority of the school population, the work of the school (described by HMI Richardson as a 'full range school') is on sound lines.' There is an explicit assumption by the visiting HMI that the school fitted people well for their jobs in the local pits that surrounded the Aspall area of Wigan.

Jack Lathom triangulates the above primary archive material together by providing an insight into what the teaching and curriculum was like in All Age School in Crooke from 1924 to 1934. Interesting to note that his 'highlight of the week' was to travel from Crooke to do woodwork at Wigan Technical College on Wednesdays:

"I enjoyed geography at school, and they seemed to stress the 'red bits' the world map, and be very proud to be British. Everywhere you could see on the world map (prominently displayed in each classroom) belonged to Britain, they were our colonies. The sun never set on the 'British Empire', we were the best in the world. Queen Victoria, King Edward, and King George and Queen Mary discovered these lands. Two teachers could play the piano. Most of the lessons came from the blackboard. How great our Empire was . . . . they didn't say how we got it. We got the impression that these countries were at the bottom and we at the top. How we helped India achieve greatness I am sorry to say as I grew up it was the other way round. [Laughter] The only thing for music was a paper on with 'do ray la so.' We had to write in the notes. You couldn't call it music as such. Easy for me, because I was having piano lessons at home. I used to do the other kids papers when they came round." [Laughter]

What Jack Lathom describes is an absolutely dreadful educational experience. It has the feel of the 'Elementary School' of the nineteenth century about it. There is

a clear suggestion in his testimony that his class of people accepted this type of education as normal practice in their young lives, that they had been fortunate to be ‘children of the empire’ when receiving this absolute minimal schooling to help them in their later adult lives.

“We had no playing fields and no ‘man teacher’ to encourage us. The only thing we had was a cricket bat and wickets and we played on the soil in the school yard. There was no swimming baths trips . . . . we were lacking in sport. No gym work, or P.E. work at all. No athletics or competing against other schools. Nothing, no encouragement, it was just a matter of routine. The teachers had only one little bowl that the kiddies used to wash their hand and face with. The toilets were outside in the yard. There was one which was locked, which was used for the teachers. There was no washing facilities, other than this little bowl. There was no staff room, very, very basic. The teachers always examined our clogs to see if they were clean”.

This is a telling evocation by Jack Lathom of poor resources, such as hardly any sporting equipment, and limited washing facilities and toilets, and a strong feeling that they were only worth this type of resourcing and accommodation.

“The highlight of the week was every Wednesday we went to do woodwork at Wigan Technical College [in recent years converted to become Wigan Town Hall]. Every Tuesday night we got tickets for the bus ride into Wigan. The girls went to Shevington Senior School to do ‘cookery’, for half a day. There were no facilities at Lower Ground. It was the best part of my school life this ‘woodwork class’. There was never any bother with the lads that Wednesday morning”. [Laughter]

The above testimony reveals that there were clearly differentiated curricular activities for boys and girls. The girls undertook cookery lessons at a local senior school, whilst the boys undertook woodwork at Wigan Technical College. This type of curricular provision went unchanged in both the higher and lower status schools, until the advent of comprehensive education in the early 1970s in Wigan. The boys enjoyed practical work that would fit them for future jobs. Even then

Jack Lathom highlights that it was only a very limited part of the curriculum that was actually any use in the work place.

“I left school in the Easter of 1934, and after two weeks I had got a job, and went straight in the Tailoring Trade, I’ve never been on ‘National Health’ (Social Security) in my life. The only part of my schooling, which prepared me for life, was work in Standards 3 and 4 on arithmetic and mental arithmetic, and the woodwork classes helped in the job. Talking to customers I picked up and learnt when I left school. I went to ‘Night School’ for Tailoring and Cutting, one night a week at Wigan Technical College.”

The school log of St. David’s C. E. All Age Elementary School reveals crucial pieces of evidence about the ages when pupils could leave the school and prevailing attitudes about the ability of children. In 1924 pupils left school when they attained the age of 14 years, and in 1947, they left when they attained the age of 15 years. This is a clear sign that at the national level educational planners were trying to improve the provision for lower status pupils, but it remained on an ‘experimental’ basis. There was no reference to the children as ‘secondary’ pupils, they were simply known as ‘seniors’. They were destined for a particular occupational status and role in society after such an educational experience.

1924 15<sup>th</sup> August Removed four names from Registers as the children had gone to work being 14 years old. Another girl left district.

1933 29<sup>th</sup> September Report by HMI R. C. Steele Esq. Inspected 14<sup>th</sup> September 1933. No. 244 Regd. No. E20/244/3

“There are 75 children in this school under a Headmistress and two assistants.”

“Considering the natural ability of the children, which appears to be below average, the attainment in the fundamental subjects is thoroughly satisfactory and bears evidence of sound teaching.”

“At present the boys receive no training in Woodwork, but it is hoped that a number of them will shortly be taken at a centre.”

Kathleen Sherriff's schooling and education experiences at Sacred Heart R.C. All Age School parallel those of Jack Lathom and triangulate the primary source evidence from this period. There did not appear to be any difference in the inter-war years between the different denominational 'All Age Elementary Schools'. This is confirmed by the evidence of All Age school logs, which indicate the need to travel to centres to receive instruction in cookery if you were a senior girl, or woodwork if you were a senior boy.

"We had no facilities for sports or domestic science. P.E. which wasn't much more than running around the schoolyard, jumping up and down leap frogging, etc. There was no greenery at all in the school grounds. Everything was paved with flags. This caused lots of injuries. I cut my knee on several occasions, but never remember any first-aid being done by the staff. We probably never mentioned it. It was the way we brought up. [Laughter] Rounders were played on a field about 10 minutes walk from the school. During the winter months we walked, in crocodile fashion, to Mesnes Park to play netball on the courts there. The boys played on football on a different field a few minutes away from school. These fields are now housing estates."

These observations by Kathleen Sherriff reflect a real lack of educational provision, they reflect those of Jack Lathom. Little money had been spent on investing and improving the environment of pupils like Kathleen Sheriff in her lower status school.

"Cookery was a bit of an adventure because we had to travel by bus into Wigan and then walk to St. George's school behind Central Park (the then Wigan Rugby League ground, and now demolished, houses a Tesco supermarket now). Can you believe it—carrying a bowl of soup back to school on the bus! I can't believe no one thought of using flasks. These journey backwards and forwards to St. George's were all unaccompanied. We would be about 14 years old."

“I enjoyed art, but the most complicated thing I did was a ‘1’ lino cutting—yes 1 inch, that was all that was available just after the war. Most of the time it was just drawing and painting.”

The log entries for Moss Lane All Age School indicate that it is a non-selective establishment, and is firmly entrenched in the elementary school tradition of providing education for the working class. However, it is a school in which more able pupils are provided with opportunities to attend a higher status grammar school, through the quality of leadership of the Headmaster. The clearest reference to this is the one by the HMI in 1922, regarding the number of pupils who receive scholarships from the school in comparison with other elementary schools. 1922 19<sup>th</sup> June HMI Report Mr. V. Ball HMI Moss Lane Mixed Department.

“The high standard which has been the distinguishing feature of this department, since it was opened seven years ago (1915), continues to be maintained.”

“The influence of the Headmaster is seen throughout the school. The work of the staff is effective especially at the top and the application of the children leaves little to be desired. The fact that nearly half the scholarships obtained by the elementary schools of the Authority have gone to this school is evidence of the good work done here.”

There is also the visit of older pupils to either woodwork or cookery centres that witnesses such as Kathleen Sherriff and Jack Lathom remember. An interesting entry is the one regarding the Mr Hurst, a student teacher, who according to the Headmaster was not interested in gaining the ‘requisite skills’ of being a successful teacher. It would be interesting to know whether he was a pupil-teacher or from a training college. Later entries in the school log reveal that he was transferred to St. Peter’s to complete his teaching practice.

1922 19<sup>th</sup> May The teacher of Cookery of my request supplied me with marks obtained by each girl attending the centre. The teacher of Woodwork also gave mark to the boys in the woodwork class from this school.

1924 25<sup>th</sup> January The student teacher—Mr. H. Hurst has from the first taken little interest in acquiring teaching skills. He shows neither aptitude nor liking for the work, and makes no appreciable progress, not withstanding repeated efforts to help him.

### 1932-1945: Theory and idealism and practical reality

During this period, ideological pressures became more noticeable, and they were concerned with emphasising equality of opportunity in secondary education for all children, and moving towards the idea of distinct primary and secondary phases of education, which are continuous. But this contrasted with the actual reality of the different schools that existed in Wigan during this period. They had distinct educational routes for the particular classes and types of children they taught. The lower status elementary schools were considered the most appropriate establishments for the mass of working class children, whilst the higher status grammar schools were considered the most appropriate establishments for middle class or the very able working class child. Therefore, all the ideas and theories proposed were set against this dictomony, with a dilemma as to how to improve the existing minimal provision of the lower status schools, but maintain the superior status of the grammar school.

As early as 1906 the TUC passed a resolution demanding secondary education for all up to the age of 16. Indeed, in 1922, R. H. Tawney put forward a coherent policy in *Secondary Education for All* which also had some effect on the 1926 Hadow Report, *The Education of the Adolescent* (HMSO 1926). Tawney was a member of the Hadow Committee, which stressed the need for unity and continuity of primary and secondary school curricula. More importantly, the report was the forerunner of the tripartite idea, which had distinct views on the type of secondary education that should be offered to different pupils. This idea was taken up in the 1938 Spens Report and developed even further by the Norwood Report of 1943, which favoured three types of school with three different kinds of curriculum for the 'academic' pupil, the 'technical' pupil and the 'essentially practical' pupil (HMSO 1938, 1943). But what these reports were

really trying to achieve was an alternative secondary school course and system for the majority of the school population, while retaining the exclusive and higher status grammar school for the minority.

Both these reports had a major impact in framing the legislation of the 1944 Butler Education Act, and were reflecting what happened in previous attempts to make an improvement in some form in post elementary education for working class pupils. The desire to improve can be traced from its origins in the higher grade schools of the nineteenth century elementary school, the senior elementary school, right through to the 'great adventure and experiment' of the secondary modern school of the 1940s and 1950s. Their provision and curricular content, length of course and outcomes could be changed to suit whatever was the political or social need at a particular period in educational history. This is best encapsulated by a comment from R. S. Wood, (in a Ministry of Education memorandum of the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1937), in which he was critical of the recommendations of the 1938 Spens Report which was reporting on how post-elementary education could be organised to include the working classes: 'it may be urged that any scheme such as that outlined above (Spens Report), is nothing more than an elaborate attempt to spoof the public mind, and by giving them a new wrapper and a new name persuade them to accept the cheaper articles as the higher goods'. The justification of this observation can be clearly seen if one traces the historical development of both elementary and secondary schools and their distinctive curricular provision from the beginning of the twentieth century. The recommendations of the Spens Report were enshrined in the 1944 Butler Education Act, which will be discussed in the next section, and which stated that these types of secondary schools would be known as the secondary grammar, secondary technical and secondary modern, corresponding to the three different types of pupils. Children would attend primary schools until they were 11, and then through the 11+selection process, would go to the school that best suited their particular abilities.

The idea of a tripartite system is an echo of the ideas of Plato, the Greek philosopher, and assumes that there were three divisions or classes of people, who

should receive an education best suited to their abilities. Thus the witnesses such as Fred Foster, Betty Houghton and Roger Taylor, who attended the higher status grammar school in this period, received the 'liberal education' associated with the middle classes. As working class children they received this education by passing the 11+scholarship examination, or paying fees to attend such a school in the case of Ethel Prone, whilst the majority of working class people received the vocationally prescribed curriculum of the elementary school in whatever its contemporary guise. This either took the form of attendance at a newly established Senior School, established in Wigan in 1932, or in some cases continued in the All Age Schools described in the previous section. However, as witness evidence suggests, there was a considerable difference between the theories justifying these schools, and the actual reality of being educated in them, and the type of curriculum being delivered. Research by Keith Burgess (1993) reveals how educational policy between 1935-45 reflected the dilemma of how to give young people an appropriate education, which would equip them for suitable employment during this period. There is also oral evidence of witnesses who attended the newly formed infant and junior schools, which were opened in 1932, following the establishment of the senior school system in the Wigan area. But the reality was they were housed in former All Age Schools, and followed that tradition in delivering the existing curriculum rather than adopting approaches suggested in the Hadow Report of 1933.

Harry Richardson attended Highfield C.E. Senior Boys' School, where he enjoyed academic success, in particular competing with another boy for top position in their class. In contrast to Jack Lathom, he benefited from the impact of a male teacher to inspire his sporting prowess and ambitions. Also, from the point of view of oral history, his testimony reveals that people remember positive things, such as in Harry's case, success in English, that were in some ways marginal for a pupil in this lower status school.

“ . . . at the Senior School, where I did quite well, getting good reports on most subjects. I well remember that right throughout the school

(every form and three examinations per term) a lad called Tommy Pycott finished top in English, and I was second—this never varied throughout our school career. Those positions were pretty much the same for the overall examination for every subject, although I once beat Tommy for a merit prize on a year's work. Incidentally, there were about 36 to 38 pupils in our class. Sports wise, I had an early disappointment. When I started at Highfield I was very keen on rugby, and I thought had a good chance of eventually making the school team. However, Mr. Gaskell, our sports master, had a disagreement with the Wigan School Rugby League Committee and he withdrew the school from the League and concentrated on soccer, which proved very successful for Highfield, as they won many trophies during the ensuing year.”

An HMI Report of 1935 for Gidlow Senior School for girls provides an insight into the provision for pupils who were receiving an alternative education to those pupils in the grammar school. This type of school provision was the reality behind the reports and theories of the interwar period that were attempting to create an equal secondary education for the majority of working class children in Wigan. In addition, the school is staffed by thirteen teachers, but only three are graduates, and the leaving ages of pupils are still considerably lower than those of the grammar school.

HMI Report, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> July 1935 by Mr. E. J. Watson, HMI No. 30

Regd. No.125/30/46

“Senior Girls’ Department This school was opened in 1932 in new premises. The building consists of 8 classrooms, 3 craft rooms, 2 laboratories and 2 rooms for the teaching of Domestic subjects. The hall and playing field are shared with the boys’ school an arrangement that handicaps the instruction in Physical training and Games. At the inspection there were 264 girls on the roll organised in 9 classes. A special class exists in addition, its members being drawn from the other

classes for certain lessons only. The Headmistress is assisted by a staff of 13, 3 of whom have University degrees.”

“Girls are admitted at the same age as in the other Wigan Senior Schools, viz. between the ages of 11 and 12 or, in certain instances after reaching 10 years and 9 months, Of 119 girls leaving in 1934-35, 12 stayed over the age of 14  $\frac{1}{4}$ , 1 over 14  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and 2 over 14  $\frac{3}{4}$ , and none over the age of 15. This is a disappointing result for the efforts of the Authority and the staff to induce girls to take further advantage of their educational opportunities. The minimum length of course is about 2  $\frac{1}{4}$  years and the maximum about 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  years.”

The comments above reveal the feeling of disappointment by the visiting HMI, on the premature leaving of girls to take up employment. Even the improved provision, an improvement on the All Age schools, could not prevent pupils leaving as soon as they possibly could. It reveals a feeling of frustration that the working class parents did not view education as a passport out of their economic plight during the inter-war period.

The Reverend Roger Taylor, who now lives in Ipswich, was a pupil at Wigan Grammar School during the 1930s, and gives some insights into how he used his time at the school, and what he made of the education he received in later life. He also gives some illuminating, and often damning insights into the personalities and teaching methods of the staff, who had taught other witnesses interviewed for this study. An example of this would be Bert Ollerton, who reveals he had a much higher opinion of the staff at the Grammar School during his period. In fact I never met Reverend Taylor as I did all the other witnesses, because he was living in Ipswich during the course of this study. I used letter and telephone to follow up a line of enquiry I had with him. I found him one of the most interesting witnesses to interview, and his evidence highlights the particular strengths of oral history with its vivid revelations of the immense differences that existed in the educational provision offered to different social classes of people in a town like Wigan during the interwar period (Thompson 1977). To start with, Reverend

Taylor gives a very frank insight into his own personal family history, illustrating how he was involved in a repeating pattern in his experiences in both family life, and in his education and schooling.

“My grandfather was Chief Constable of Leeds but as he never married my grandmother, my mother was illegitimate. She made a bad marriage in 1913. My father, an old boy of Wigan Grammar School made such a mess of his life that he fled to America in 1922. It meant that I grew up with my grandmother, who left school at 13, and my mother who also left school at 13. I say this as a comment to you, could such a background cope with a Grammar School education? As things turned out when I was 21 years of age—two years before my conversion—I saw with anguish how I had wasted the years till then. I began to study from that point and have never stopped. Where did that come from? Wigan Grammar School? The men I detested or the men I loved? Who can say?”

What is revealed in this first paragraph is how the home backgrounds of pupils could have a detrimental effect on what was being taught at a higher status school such as Wigan Grammar School. This was certainly the case with this witness, who only realised the value of what he was being taught when he was much older. As with other pupils from a working class background, he received no help or support from his family when he was attending this school.

“ As I wasted much of my time at Wigan Grammar School, even though I left at sixteen with matriculation, I have always looked with rueful envy at a few of my contemporaries who like Bert Ollerton made the best of Wigan Grammar School and went on to enjoy successful professional careers. Bert Ollerton came from a disadvantaged family, but always made the best of his academic opportunities being generally in ‘A’ streams and in 1937 passed the Civil Service examination. He was immediately earning more than his father who had four mouths to feed. Again I recall that in the war he was a conscientious objector. I know he

went onto higher things after the war and attained a high grade in the civil service, including becoming head of one its training colleges.”

Another telling comment from this witness testimony is that as soon as Bert Ollerton began his working life in the Civil Service, he was earning more than his father. This is another clear example of how certain avenues of employment were immediately closed down, if you had not been educated at a higher status school and obtained the recognised qualifications associated with these schools. This would not have been an option to people educated in lower status schools.

“Our diverse attitude towards our education at Wigan Grammar School: his recollections were positive, mine jaundiced; he had clearly made the best of everything and held masters, who to me had been cold, distant figures, in the warmest esteem. He rode nicely year after year, I was up and down, top one year, bottom another, kept down altogether one whole year before matriculating a year late, and then my ‘matric’ was lopsided, history and English being my saving graces. In retrospect my family background figures very much with me, as having failed, not culpably, but simply because to my people, grammar school was a world beyond them. And for me which they were not fitted to monitor, criticise or advise me.”

“Matriculation prepared me for working life only in that in those days, ‘matric’ was an end in itself and, when a small minority went to University, conferred status. But it was quite unrelated to the careers which after school I followed other than as a badge, so to speak, that, helped my self-esteem, made entry into theological college and upon degree courses easier and, played a routine part in my ‘developing persona’ which I cannot regret.”

The above two paragraphs give a clear indication of the educational experiences being imparted at this grammar school to the pupils who attended it. They are in direct contrast to those of his grandmother and mother, who were both educated in lower status schools. Their perceptions of what education could achieve for a child attending a grammar school would be limited and shaped by their

experiences of their own education. This witness did not have a high opinion of the masters who taught him. But this attitude was coloured by the fact that he had not come through the recognised route of Woodfield, the Grammar School's recognised preparatory school. Or as he put it to me when I spoke to him on the telephone, he was 'from the wrong side of the tracks'. His distinct working class background, including his British Legion suit, set him apart from the more middle class pupils, whose parents paid for their attendance at the school, including all the requisite equipment associated with attendance at such a school. Another very clear example of how secondary education, particularly up to 1945, was the prerogative of the middle class, rather than the rewarding of any innate ability.

Although Ronnie Foster passed his 11+scholarship examination, he was unable to take up his place due to his family's economic circumstances, and his father's refusal to take charity from the local authority. Despite this, Ronnie Foster remembers his senior school education affectionately; he recalls the improved provision when compared with his infant and junior school, and vividly remembers teachers and their approaches to the curriculum. As with those of Harry Richardson, these memories reveal that Ronnie Foster was happy and contented at his 'new school'. Ronnie Foster reveals how the shortages of food during the war years resulted in large areas such as the school field being used to grow vegetables, to help feed the large urban population around the Rose Bridge area of Wigan.

"Rose Bridge Senior School popularly known as the 'New School' was quite a change from Belle Green infant and junior. The head teacher was Frank Staveley who was a benevolent head teacher, in fact Rose Bridge was a happy school and most of the teachers were characters. There was 'Little Sid', Sydney Occleshaw who taught sciences, maths and games. As it was during the war, part of the school playing field had been dug up to grow vegetables."

"Then there was the wood work and Tec drawing teacher Mr. Harold Dickinson. He was struggling to keep us busy during the war, as

materials were hard to come by. He used to cadge old furniture to break up.”

The above comment on the acute shortage of wood at Rose Bridge Senior School is in direct contrast to the facilities available to pupils who attended Wigan Grammar. For example, the testimony of Fred Foster reveals that Grammar school was well stocked with a variety of different woods during the war years. This is a very revealing insight into how funding by the local authority was viewed and distributed to the different types of school in Wigan. Although this can't be confirmed with official documents (none available), the oral testimony of these witnesses does indicate that there was a considerable difference in the funding of higher status schools in comparison with lower status schools such as a Senior School.

Log entries for Whelley Senior School for girls reveal that the school was considered by an HMI report of 1929, when it was a Central School, to have a 'relatively inexperienced staff' to provide advanced instruction in this lower status school. As with the entries for Gidlow senior schools for both boys and girls, there were clear indications that it was providing a shorter course than that found in the grammar school, and the entries indicate how the pupils were being prepared for occupations in the staple industries of the town. This could also have been interpreted as the school offering what both the parents and their children wanted. This is made clear from the visit in March 1936 by a representative from a major employer in the cotton industry in the town. But the most interesting entry was the one for 1930 when an official from the Juvenile Employment Bureau visited the school to offer pupils advice on choices of future employment in the town.

1930 11<sup>th</sup> December For the first-time in the history of the school an official from the Juvenile Employment Bureau visited the school to interview girls who were leaving at the end of the term and to discuss with the parents, in the presence of the Headmistress, the occupation for which they were most suited.

1935 26<sup>th</sup> August A number of children who were exempt at the end of the summer term, but who have not succeeded in obtaining employment, have also returned to school and special provision being made for them.

1936 2<sup>nd</sup> March At 10.00 am. A representative of Messers Rylands Cotton visited the school and gave a talk to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Year girls on the preparation of Cotton for Spinning.

When Betty Houghton commenced her education at Up Holland Grammar School, she remembers learning subjects such as Latin, algebra, modern languages and trigonometry, which she had not encountered at her lower status All Age School. She also goes onto explain how very few pupils went on to university during the inter-war years, due to economic constraints.

“At the Grammar school, same routine as the All Age school of morning assembly, hymn and prayers and then the lessons which included and contained many extras such as algebra, geometry, trigonometry, etc., physics and science, modern languages, P.E., swimming—undertaken in the town baths—hockey, netball, cricket, football, rugby, etc. One had to attend school until the age of 16 when they sat an examination they called the ‘matric’, which you took so you could go to university if you passed - if there were any parents who could afford to send their children. There were not so many who went to university in those days.”

The comment on the ability of parents to send their children to university is a telling one. Even if parents could manage to afford to send their children to grammar or high school, there was a further prohibitive cost of allowing them to go on and attend university. This reinforced the common belief by working class people that secondary and university education was the preserve of the middle and upper classes, not because of educational ability, but the fact that only families from these classes could actually afford them.

William Foster remembers starting at his Nursery class in 1939, and how he had the opportunity of going to bed after lunch for a rest. But this was halted with the

outbreak of World War Two in September 1939. He also chronicles the type of curriculum offered to pupils before they left at the age of eleven after the 11+scholarship examination. It basically consisted of a diet of the three 'R's' and a little geography, history, art and P.E. Perhaps the most telling point to come out of his testimony is how classes were still called 'Standards', which is a clear legacy of the nineteenth century elementary school. This school continued to teach its pupils as it had done previously when it was an All Age School. But with the opening of Senior Schools in Wigan in 1932, it only taught pupils up to Standard 4, rather than Standard 7.

"The infant teachers were called Miss Holland, Miss Broomhall, and Miss Starkey. The school curriculum was reading, writing, arithmetic together some geography, history and nature study. The junior teachers were Mrs. Savage, Miss Hitchen, and Miss M. Barton and Miss E. Barton. The teaching staffs of both infants and juniors were female. The four junior classes were known as Standard 1, Standard 2, Standard 3 and Junior 4. The external examination known as the 11+ was then known as the Scholarship was taken in Junior 4. The subjects studied in the juniors were arithmetic, English, history, geography, nature study and handiwork. Science did not enter into the junior curriculum."

Ethel Prone reveals how her father paid for her to attend Wigan Girls' High School between 1937 and 1942. As she candidly admits, not many children passed from the infant and junior school she attended, and her father, a businessman, was able to send his daughter to the grammar school, at 3 guineas a term. The junior school she attended was situated near the Royal George Common Lodging House where George Orwell stayed during his visit to Wigan in 1936, prior to writing *The Road to Wigan Pier*. When Ethel Prone progressed to the grammar school she found the examination system a 'nervous time', and as she honestly admits, she would have benefited from an education that would have prepared her for the business world of the office. The type of education that Ethel

Prone required was clearly outlined in the Spens and Norwood Reports as being the education for a technical child.

“I started school at St. Stephen’s Primary School in Whelley, but when I was 8 my parents bought a business in Warrington Lane in 1934, and I went to the Warrington Lane Jerusalem School. I don’t think anybody passed the 11+ examination scholarship at the school, so my father paid for me to go to Wigan Girls’ High School.”

“One of the teachers who taught R.E., Miss Smith, used to say ‘Girls you must read, learn and inwardly digest the bible’. [Laughter] We had our own locker and coat hook, and had to wear soft indoor shoes inside school. We had our own desks where we kept our own books and the teachers came to our form except when we went to the Art room and laboratory for science.”

“One geography teacher never got off her chair, she swivelled round on it to draw a map on the blackboard. We did P.E. in our blouses and knickers inside the hall, and in our tunics and blouse when playing outside at netball, rounders and tennis. I could do the work during the term, but was nervous when it was exam time, and didn’t stay on for the 6th forms.”

“The day I left school in 1942, I went to the Labour Exchange as it was called to sign on. J. W. Wild Limited, the builders merchants wanted a clerk urgently because the managing director’s daughter who worked there was leaving, she was expecting a baby in two weeks. I had been to the Crescent Commercial College for a short time for typing and shorthand, but we had a lot of homework so I gave over going. Anyway, Mr. Wild took me on; I stayed till I got married. With hindsight I think would have been better going to the Technical College for business studies instead of the High School, although I enjoyed school, I hadn’t a lot of confidence.”

Even though Ethel Prone did not stay on to study in the 6<sup>th</sup> Form at the High School, she did manage to obtain employment as a clerk, rather than working in a

factory or shop. Even if she was nervous at 'exam time' the fact that she had attended a higher status school gave her an advantage in gaining employment in an office environment, rather than a 'shop-floor' one associated with a lower status school.

Jean Ashton remembers her education and school days at the Wigan Girls' High School in the early 1940s, with happiness and affection. She remembers being instructed in public speaking when chosen by the form to read the lesson, and taking part in a school play. Her recollections indicate how her attendance at a successful infant and junior school like the Wesleyan School in the centre of Wigan, followed by the Wigan Girls' High School, ensured that Jean Ashton received her full 'educational inheritance', (Jackson and Marsden 1966 ed.)

"My days at the High School were happy ones, with a few incidents which I still remember. The first incident was that during the school year each form was allowed to help in assembly. One to play the piano for the hymn, which our form had chosen and a pupil to read the lesson. The form chose me to read the lesson—Miss Smith, the senior mistress, said to me 'Girl can you read audibly and will we be able to hear you from at the back of the hall'. [Laughter] I had to go along to the library with Miss Smith so she could hear me read—I passed the test and eventually read at Assembly."

"Another incident occurred whilst I was in the lower thirds—my first year at school. The English mistress said she would write a play from the Dickens's book we were studying—'Great Expectations' and volunteers were asked for by the teacher, to stay behind after school and write out the play which was written on the blackboard in sections—over a period of a few weeks. At a later date the play the play was cast and I was very lucky to be selected to play the part of 'little Estella'. I feel that the teaching and discipline of the Methodist school and High School put me in good stead for the days ahead when I started my working life."

Frank Dandy gives an account of his Infant and Junior school, in which his reading of the then popular comics and children's literature, gave him a good start in his education. School log entries, and other oral evidence of witnesses triangulate his account of a basic primary curriculum, which follows the 'elementary' tradition of that established in nineteenth century.

"I always did well in the Infant and Junior School. I started reading comics early on in my life, the Hotspur, The Beano, the Eagle, I had 20 free copies, worth quite a bit if I had the sense to keep them. [Laughter] The main parts of the curriculum were Reading Writing, Arithmetic, and also Artwork, R.E. and Games. The standards allocated to work were good, very good and excellent, which were stamped on your work."

Fred Foster gives a very clear description of his first day at Wigan Grammar School. It is interesting to note that Fred Foster had the 'culture shock' of seeing masters, as they were called, in gowns with mortarboards. This clearly signified that they were graduates from University, having studied for at least three years, as opposed to the two-year training or less that the teachers would have received when Fred Foster was at Highfield Infant and Junior School. Fred Foster also gives a vivid account of the 'House System' at Wigan Grammar School. All the 'founders' of the school were recognised in the house system, along with boys who were in 'Linacre' who paid to attend the school even if they didn't pass the 11+scholarship examination. To put it another way, it was an opportunity for middle class parents to ensure their children received a grammar school education even if their sons had not quite got the qualities to pass the 11+examination. However, I will let Fred Foster explain himself the feelings of a working class boy on his first day at a selective grammar school; it helps create and capture the atmosphere of such a school:

"Finally the day arrived when we started at our new school. We newcomers had the school to ourselves for the first day as all others only started back on the Tuesday. We made our way into the hall and the thought it to be very grand, in fact in those days the Grammar School

was a pretty modern building, having only been open about eight years. There was a 'two manual organ' at the foot of the stage where the Headmaster and two more sat to take assembly. The head came in on the first morning dressed in a dark suit, complete with mortarboard and gown. I was having mixed feelings about the school already. We all were allocated to our classrooms and form teachers, our names being called out, last names of course, we didn't use first names. I was placed in 3A to start with, and our form master was H. R. 'Dick' Nutt, a really nice man and a good teacher."

"The first day passed quite quickly and we didn't have any homework set. The next day, however when we arrived at school, it was like bedlam! 490 boys from 11 to 17 in age, all milling around, waiting for the assembly to start. We filed into the hall and stood by our seats. The prefects, in their little black gowns came in followed by the rest of the staff. Everyone dressed in their gowns, a feature that was a bit awe inspiring to someone from elementary school where the teachers were ladies in dresses. All remained standing until the Head accompanied by H. W. 'Pat' Lemon, the assistant Head, who incidentally came from Northern Ireland, and W. G. 'Willie George' Allanson, the senior master, came on to the stage from the rear. I. W. (Curly) Johnson, the music and maths master was seated at the organ and assembly would begin."

"I was placed in Powell house, the house being called after the school's founders, so you had Powell after Sir Francis Powell who had been an M.P. for Wigan in the nineteenth century, and whose statue was in Mesnes Park. Bridgeman after Sir John Bridgeman a freeman of the borough, Bridgeman Terrace was named after him. Eckersley so called because of Nathaniel Ffarington Eckersley, the pit and mill owner of the town, also know as 'Owd Nat. [Laughter] Crawford after the Earl of Crawford, and Balcarres another pit owner and builder of Haigh Hall. Leigh after Sir James Leigh, and Bankes, so called after Squire Bankes of Winstanley Hall. There were 6 houses in the school, another house

was Linacre, after Sir Thomas Linacre, another freeman of the Borough, but this was just for the boys who started at nine, and whose form mistress was Miss McCartney, affectionately know as 'Muck Cart'. [Laughter] The boys' parents were paying fees to attend the school, even if they didn't pass the scholarship examination, they could continue right through the school. Miss McCartney was an accomplished piano player and used to play for singing practice. The piano was a 'Baby Grand', and this was something else that I had never seen before."

It is interesting to note how simple things like having a 'House Meeting' and the keeping and signing of minutes seemed so strange to Fred Foster. But, as he acknowledges, it was to prepare the boys for a professional future in the world of business and commerce. It also reveals the great 'cultural divide' of working class pupils being brought into contact with pupils who received their full 'educational inheritance' (Jackson and Marsden 1966 ed.), by the very fact some parents could afford to pay fees for them to attend this school from the age of nine. It didn't matter whether the pupils had the required abilities to attend a 'selective' school; it was based purely on the ability to pay. This very fact made an education at either the grammar or high school a preserve of the middle class, and therefore out of the reach of most working class families.

"Powell house met every Friday in the 'Lecture Room'. Here the house policies were discussed and formulated. It all seemed so strange to me to have meetings where the chairman would ask the secretary to read out the minutes of the last meetings. I didn't even know what minutes were, other than marks around a clock face! [Laughter] I can visualise it now, 'Will someone propose that the minutes are signed as correct?' 'Will someone second that proposal?' Mr. Chairman, I beg to second that proposal'. Will all those in favour please show'. I didn't realise at the time that this was to prepare boys for the outside world of business."

### **1945-1960: The 1944 Butler Education Act: A quest for parity and equality**

The 1944 Butler Educational Act was a genuine attempt to achieve the objective of equality of educational opportunity, but it contained the continued unfairness in the 11+-selection process, which created social divisiveness, and is vividly highlighted by witnesses' experiences which is discussed in Chapter 5. One of the great hopes was that the secondary modern in their 'great adventure' or 'experiment' would develop a new kind of curriculum, non-academic and free from the restrictions of external examinations. It was an attempt by national government to readdress the previous inequality in secondary provision, by providing equal but different secondary education for all children over the age of eleven. However, in retrospect, it was clear that the secondary modern schools were doomed to failure from the outset - primarily for social reasons and the stigma of having attended such a school, and their role in occupational selection. There were also concerns expressed by nationalised industries, such as the National Coal Board and Electricity Board, regarding the results of reports on the poor attainment and progress of pupils who attended such schools (McCulloch 1998).

The social implications and the divisiveness of attending such a school have been set out clearly by Olive Banks in her book *Parity and Prestige in English Secondary Schools* (1955), in which she argues that there would not be parity of esteem with a high status grammar school with its clearly differentiated curriculum producing doctors, solicitors, teachers and other highly qualified professional workers, whilst the lower status schools produced semi-skilled and un-skilled workers. Therefore, as long as society accorded a different prestige to the outcomes of one school over another, it was a complete sham to suppose that they should be regarded as equal but different. The curricula of most secondary modern schools lacked clear objectives, or were based on vague aims that could not be translated into clear objectives. There was also the added problem of secondary modern schools being housed in buildings which had previously been All Age schools or senior elementary schools, and were unsuitable for lessons and activities that were being undertaken in the grammar school.

This was clearly demonstrated in the oral testimony of Frank Dandy, who attended Wigan Grammar School just after the end of World War Two, and describes the facilities for each subject and lesson as 'superb'. If this is compared with the HMI Report for Gidlow Secondary Modern School for girls in 1948, which found that there were 'certain additions' and 'adoptions of certain rooms', needed in this newly established secondary modern school. This reveals that there is a clear discrepancy in the provision being offered to different schools during this period. This is clearly demonstrated by Harold Dent (1958) when he classifies five different types of secondary modern schools through their accommodation and curricular provision. Such schools had a clear legacy from the nineteenth century in that they were always viewed and observed as being of a lower status than the grammar school.

According to Dent (1958 p.29, 33, 35) secondary modern schools fell into five general categories that were closely associated with the kinds of pupils that they served. The first group of schools remained what they had been previously in all but name, and continued to fulfil the function of public elementary schools. The second group of schools, which provided 'highly effective senior elementary education' Dent (1958), either served 'culturally poor neighbourhoods'; or were in areas where they received the 'rejects' who were left behind while the grammar schools attracted the most able pupils. The third group was a large group of schools that were attempting to work out official policies and ideas in practice. These taught academic subjects in much the same way, as the grammar schools'. However, they omitted some of these subjects, such as foreign languages and specialized physical sciences, and gave more time to art, handicrafts, and social and cultural activities. The fourth group, a small number of schools, made one particular activity, such as music, dancing or art, the key dynamic of the pupils' work in school. The fifth and final group of schools offered vocationally biased courses to some or all of their pupils, as the secondary technical schools also attempted to do. Such differences among secondary modern schools served to highlight the importance of the school environment and local neighbourhood.

Despite being powerfully endorsed by Ellen Wilkinson and David Hardman of the 1945 Atlee Labour Government, and described as an 'adventure' or 'experiment' and 'different but equal', these schools ultimately failed. As Olive Banks (1955) argued forcefully, how could there be 'parity of esteem' between all secondary schools, when one was considered to be far superior to the other, i.e. the grammar schools in Wigan, as opposed to the secondary modern schools. In addition there was a complete failure to provide enough technical schools, which might have made the tripartite system work. The only attempt in Wigan to establish a technical school was the Thomas Lincare School. This only lasted a decade, and was eventually amalgamated with Wigan Grammar School in 1963, having always been in the 'selective' tradition of the grammar school.

What follows is the reality behind the reports, theories and political machinations that drove the framing and passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act. It reveals clearly that, despite all the ideology and propaganda the Act was in fact perpetuating what had been the situation in 1870, 1920 or 1948. The provision for the education and schooling of the mass working class population was still encompassed in the domain of secondary modern schools, which had histories and legacies of providing the absolute minimum educational provision; but in political and social terms was providing what was considered most appropriate for this class of child. McCulloch and Sobell (1994) argue that a more detailed social history of the secondary modern school and its wider social context would be: 'crucial in helping to explain the reasons for the emergence of secondary modern schools in the 1940s, their characteristics, successes and problems as educational institutions, and the reasons for their early demise' (p.276). The combined primary oral testimony and primary archive sources clearly clarify these. In essence the evidence reveals a clear determination, both nationally and locally, to maintain a 'dual' and differentiated' system of education as found in Wigan. The next section in this chapter reveals how this 'historically sustained' unfair secondary education system had to be addressed to give all children equal opportunity.

An HMI Report of 1948 on Gidlow Secondary Modern School for Girls reveals that the immediate post-war period was a very difficult one for schools trying to change former senior schools into modern schools, and attempting to give pupils a curriculum and education that was both 'equal' but 'different' from that being delivered in the grammar schools of the period. One of the most important considerations was the acute shortage of staff after the Second World War. This is revealed in this report: "In common with others this Department has experienced abnormal conditions during the past decade. For a period the building was shared with a junior school whose own premises had been taken over for war purposes. Staff changes have been numerous and since the Department was opened in 1932 the annual intake from the contributory schools has declined. It occupies a relatively modern building which, with certain additions and the adaptations of existing rooms could be made to conform with present day standards for a two, possibly a three form secondary school."

The above quote that refers to 'certain additions' and 'adaptations of certain rooms' is a telling reference by the visiting HMI, in that the existing building needed some improvements, after only sixteen years of being built.

Frank Dandy's memories of Wigan Grammar School in the immediate post-war period, reveal that it was middle class and an elitist institution, with masters wearing their university gowns. He reveals it was a superb environment to learn in, with facilities appropriate for a higher status grammar school, along with a variety of clubs and out of school activities. This selected education allowed him to undertake a professional career as a medical microbiologist at the local hospital in the Wigan area.

"When I went to the grammar school, I had no great ambition I just cruised along. It was only in the last year I really tried and worked hard. I realised that it was important to get some qualifications and pass my 'O' levels. I was most impressed with the Wigan Grammar School; it was a superb environment, most impressive. We were streamed into 3 classes, A, B and C. I was put in the bottom class, the C stream. The

school had superb facilities. It was very structured and regimented. Each lesson was 40 minutes long. There were two before morning break and two after. After lunch, there were four more with an afternoon break. I was made to feel 'elitist' and 'middle class'. All the masters wore cap and gown of the University they had graduated from. There was a 'House System' in the school, with inter-house games and competitions. We received reports, which were brief and encouraging. There was a terrific range of 'Out of this World' activities, run by masters, such as Gym Club, School Weather club, Bee Society, Swimming Club, Fives, Water Aero Club, Photography Club (helped me develop a life-long interest in the subject), Stamp Society and Library. I was interested in gym, athletics and cross-country running whilst I was at school."

The comments by Frank Dandy on the superb facilities and environment at the grammar school are in direct contrast to the facilities found in the lower status school, such as Gidlow Secondary Modern School for girls. Frank Dandy attended grammar school in the late 1940s and 1950s, and if his memories are compared with the HMI report for the Gidlow school in 1948, which was critical of the building and facilities, they reveal a vast difference in the funding of the different schools by national and local government during this period. Another telling comment is how each master wore a cap and gown, another direct contrast to the teachers in the lower status school, who had been 'trained' rather 'educated'.

"The facilities for each subject and lesson were superb. Science laboratories, which were well equipped, art room, history and geography rooms. The assembly hall had wooden panelling; the gym had ropes, a vaulting horse and wall bars. The food at mid-day was superb. Cooking was done on site - 'TUREEN SERVICE'. I was always good at mathematics and science, and I gained 8 'O' levels. I didn't want to go University, but I couldn't because I had not got Latin, which you needed for University entrance in those days. In my last year I won two prizes, one was for science and one was a form prize. I managed to start a

professional career as microbiologist at Wrightington Hospital, and then moved to Wigan Hospital later in my career.”

The selective educative that Frank Dandy received allowed him to take up a professional career at a local hospital. Interestingly, the fact that Frank Dandy did not have Latin, meant he could not go to university, whether he wanted to or not. This was another way of ensuring that university education remained ‘elitist’ and only for a selected minority from the grammar school itself.

In the log entries for Wigan Grammar School from 1945 to 1960 the statements are very brief and terse, but nevertheless make it crystal clear it was a selective school. During the period the entries were being made in to the school log, several witnesses attended the school such as Fred Foster, William Foster and Frank Dandy. There are limited references to disciplinary matters, apart from visits by parents to see the Headmaster. The fact it was a higher status school is illustrated by a log entry of a 6<sup>th</sup> form pupil being successful in gaining an open scholarship to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In addition there are references to the school being used for teacher training, and the Headmaster returning in 1946 from duties at Worcester Emergency Training College.

5<sup>th</sup> July Mr. W. Smith terminated duties on secondment as Lecturer to Worcester Emergency Training College.

20<sup>th</sup> Dec. D. A. Appy (6thQA) elected to an open scholarship in classics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

1951 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. School opens. Six state scholarships as result of GCE.

1952 11<sup>th</sup> March Visit of Black (Tutor to Mr. Rothwell).

The official Commemorative Brochure of the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1953, for the opening of Thomas Linacre Technical School, gives an indication of the difficulties of building and developing the ‘Technical School’ in a town like Wigan. It had to accommodate pupils from surrounding districts, and also had to work closely with the local mining and technical college, which was being built and redeveloped on its present site near the new Thomas Linacre School. It was

also opposite Wigan Grammar School, and became closely linked with the 'ethos' and 'status' of such a school, with pupils being 'selected' to attend it. The official brochure gave an indication of this selective nature with the following comments: 'training the new middle class of technologists and industrial managers, and so drawing exceptional able boys from their former close adherence to administrative and professional careers'. It however failed to win over the local community, and despite backing from the then sympathetic Director of Education Reese Edwards, it was forced to close and join forces with the Grammar School. The technical school was to be an important part of the tripartite system, alongside the grammar and modern schools, but the fact it was never housed in with Wigan Grammar School, to create a bilateral establishment, gives some possible explanation of why it never developed enough to make the 1944 Butler Education Act arrangements work nationally. In his book *The Secondary Technical School* (1960), published before the Thomas Linacre School closed, Edwards argued that the key difficulty for Secondary Technical Schools nationally was their characteristic poverty of resources. Yet the Thomas Linacre School was a completely new building, with the 'best designed block of workshops and stores' that Reese Edwards had seen (Edwards 1960 p.38). Another possible explanation for the failure of the Thomas Linacre School was the severe and modern design of the building, and the curriculum being offered, in direct comparison with the reassuring and traditional Wigan Grammar School building and curriculum (McCulloch, 1989).

1954 24<sup>th</sup> February Staff meeting to consider GCE entries.

1958 1<sup>st</sup> December Headmaster absent—Technical subjects Panel of Schools Examinations Council.

1960 4<sup>th</sup> July H. T. Marsh (1953-56) and B. B. Braddock (1953-57) awarded B.Sc. Tech. With 1<sup>st</sup> Class Hons. in Chemistry at Manchester University.

1961 21<sup>st</sup> March Mr. Rhodes took party of sixth formers to Messrs. H. J. Heinz Laboratories—biology.

1963 2<sup>nd</sup> September the school amalgamated with Wigan Grammar School.

The fact that the technical school was closely linked with the selected grammar school can be identified with the entries regarding the G.C.E. examination, and the recruitment of teachers with university degrees. This is a clear indication that to attend this school you need to be 'selected'. Possibly the most telling comment is a visit by the 6<sup>th</sup> formers to the Heinz factory to look at the laboratories. Entries from the lower status schools, such as Gidlow Secondary modern school for boys reveal that they observed production methods at the factory, rather than abstract ideas and concepts associated with the laboratory.

The HMI report of 1949 for Wigan Girls' High School gives an indication that there existed in the inter-war system the opportunity for boys and girls to pay for a preparatory education in the junior school, prior to its closure in 1945, following the Butler Education Act. These two sentences reveals how the school was an 'exclusive' and 'selective' school, which provided pupils with an extensive education and curriculum, whether pupils attended on merit through examination success; or through fee paying, such as Ethel Prone, who attended between 1937 to 1942.

“Though the nature of the school has altered little its scope has broadened and its size increased since the last Full Inspection in 1934. Then there were on roll 364 pupils including 54 girls and 18 boys under the age of ten in the Junior School, and only 18 girls were in the Sixth Form. The Junior School was closed in 1945, when the few remaining boys left, and all girls now on the School have attained the age of eleven years. There are 468 girls on roll, 89 over the age of 16 of whom 52 are in the Sixth Form.”

“Girls are admitted annually on the results of the Secondary School Entrance Examinations set up by the Wigan Education Authority for the Wigan pupils and of the corresponding examination set by the Lancashire Local Education Authority for the Lancashire pupils. About 85% of those now in the School formerly attended maintained Primary

Schools. This percentage has steadily increased since the closure of the Junior School.”

“During the past four years twenty-eight girls have entered Universities: two of these have been awarded open scholarships and ten have gained Borough scholarships. Fifty-five girls have gone to Training Colleges and a few to other establishments for Further Education. Most of the remainder, about 60%, entered national and local government services and other clerical occupations.”

The comments on how many girls attended university reveal how the state was beginning to increase the number of pupils who went to university. During the interwar years attendance at university was dependent on the ability of the student to pay the full cost. This is brought out in the testimony of Betty Houghton who revealed that relatively few went onto to study at university before World War Two, because of the prohibitive cost. It is also interesting to note how the grammar school was seen as providing the suitably educated and qualified personnel for schools, and both national and local government, while the primary source material and oral testimonies for the lower status school, show that pupils there had choices of either a trade or semi-skilled employment.

The log entries for Wigan Girls' High School 1948 to 1960, by the Headmistress, Miss Holland, were very brief, and similar in content to Wigan Grammar School log entries. The log entries give very clear indications that this was a higher status school, which provided and equipped the girls who attended it, with an appropriate 'educational inheritance', through either school certificates or GCE's (Jackson and Marsden 1966 ed.). Witnesses who attended the school, such as Peggy Hurst, Rita Dandy and Christine Mosely received this 'Gold' type of education, epitomised in the ideas of Plato which were popular in educational thinking in the first half of the twentieth century. An example of the clear cultural difference in the learning opportunities being offered to these 'selected' pupils, is the lecture on 'Tragedy in Seventeenth Century France' given by a university professor.

1949 24<sup>th</sup> February U6 girls to Manchester University in the evening to see 'La Guerre de Trie n'aura pas lien' by Jean Giraudaux.

1949 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> April SC Compulsory French oral examination.

1951 General Certificate examination began.

1951 5<sup>th</sup> July Miss Holmes spoke to girls who are leaving about joining the Old Girls' Club.

1955 A party of Sixth Form girls attended M.L.A. lecture at Manchester University. Professor Knight of Swansea University College spoke on 'The conception of 'Tragedy in seventeenth century France'.

1956 10<sup>th</sup> June Upper Sixth Form and members of staff celebrated Hilary Nicholson's winning of Open Scholarship at Somerville Oxford, by visit to Library Theatre Manchester to see 'Ring Round the Moon'.

Rita Dandy attended Wigan Girls' High School, where a streaming system was in operation with different languages being taught in each stream in the early 1950s. She certainly remembers the school as being 'elitist' and 'middle class', with posture strips, prize giving, and school reports that had brief and terse comments on them, and the end of term 'summing-up' by the Headmistress, which could be humiliating if your name was mentioned, when she read through each class in order of attainment.

"There was usually an intake of about 100 girls at Wigan Girls' High School, which were divided into 3 classes A, B, and C. The 'A' stream did French and Latin; the 'B' stream did French and German; whilst the 'C' stream did French. But this apart, all the classes did the same work, it was 'identical'. Initially the curriculum was very wide, but gradually narrowed to suit your particular interests, needs and talents. Examples being chemistry or biology, history or geography. We always had one afternoon at Ashfield Park for sport and games. A bus came and took you up to Standish. We walked down for swimming, to the swimming baths in Wigan. For six months we did Home Economics, which was compulsory at St. George's, my old school."

“The school was certainly ‘middle class’ and ‘elitist’. It had a house and prefect system. All the ‘houses’ were named after ex-Headmistresses—Banks, Cheetham, Briers, and Matherson. There were posture strips for walking properly and prize giving. Reports sent to your parents were brief and to the point. But I remember an end of term ‘summing-up’ the Headmistress of each class. It was humiliating if you were at the bottom of the class. Your name was mentioned publicly by the Headmistress, as she worked her way through each class.”

The last statement by Rita Dandy reveals how there was a competitive spirit in this ‘middle class’ and ‘elitist’ school. Despite all the posture strips and learning how to walk properly, she was expected to perform to the best of her abilities in all subjects during her career at the school. The public humiliations were to keep all the girls performing to the best of their abilities, and use the enhanced learning opportunity provided by the school to their best advantage.

Derrick Smith chronicles his career in school during the 1940s and the early 1950s in his primary and secondary modern schools. The overlying theme of his education was an acute shortage of materials and books, due to the effects of World War Two. There was certainly an imperialistic theme about his education and in the focus of the curriculum being offered to him. The fact that it was very teacher oriented and blackboard based and prescribed, reinforced in the pupils the need to respect the established social order and culture of the period, and engendered a ‘conformist’ view towards this culture in their later adult working life. There was a clear focus for these pupils to fit into a clearly presented social pattern, and adopt a clearly defined role through the type of curriculum being offered to them.

“The curriculum and teaching methods used at the primary school were basic due the acute shortage of resources and materials to teach with. I remember the lessons mainly consisted of arithmetic and English and with a bit of history and geography. I particularly remember a large map of the world and we would bring in a sticker or labels to identify where

different countries and continents where. I can vaguely remember a bit of physical education and handicrafts being taught.”

An interesting point about Derrick Smith’s educational experiences at Rose Bridge Secondary Modern School, apart from the paucity of materials and poor quality of teaching, was the very important cultural differences of his own personal language development, when he tried to read and make sense of Shakespeare’s ‘King Lear’. However, this acute lack of resources would have been the same for all types of school in the immediate period following the end of World War Two.

“I do remember during this period at Rose Bridge, that an aunt gave me a book about Shakespeare’s King Lear in English of course, but it might as well as have been in Latin for all I could understand it. [Laughter] Our teaching standards were relatively poor due to an acute shortage of teachers and teaching materials.”

“We were taught to respect H.M. the King (George 6), the Union Flag, the government of the day and our elders. We also had a morning assembly during which prayers were said and hymns were sung, this included being given any school briefing for the day.”

William Foster indicates how success and failure in the 11+scholarship examination decided your educational fate when you left your initial school, and how it affected a person’s early friendships and later ones. He also indicates how it was possible for aspiring, possibly middle class parents, to ensure that their child received an ‘elite’ education by paying for them to attend a type of preparatory school at the Grammar School. This coincided with the year groups of Standards 3 and 4 in the then educational system. However, in July 1946, following the passing of the 1944 Butler Educational Act, and the end of the Second World War this practice was eventually stopped. It is interesting to note in William Foster’s first sentence to me that the Grammar School was completely different from his infant and junior school. As with other working class pupils, he came across the cultural divide from his ‘common’ or ‘basic’ infant and junior

school to the 'elitist' grammar. He also reveals how personal misfortune such as illness were not taken into account and no additional help was offered to such pupils when they returned to school.

"After Standard 4 the children seemed to be spread to the four winds. To Wigan Grammar School, Wigan Girls' High School, Highfield Senior (Boys), St. Marks (Girls), Pemberton Senior (Mixed), Ashton Grammar and Up Holland Grammar. Friendships and relationships were changed with these movements of pupils from my school. The Grammar School was also in a state of change. The prep-school (Forms 1 and 2) had closed in July 1946, and pupils coming to the Grammar School now had to pass the Scholarship examination. Grammar school education was now based on a pupil's ability and was free. Up to a point fees had been means tested in the past. My brother who is 4 year older than me was at the Grammar School also. My father was a colliery deputy and was working substantial overtime. The test was activated and fees of 3 guineas were levied on my parents whilst my brother was at the Grammar School."

"I then went through the 'B' stream by way of 5B and 'Tans. B'. We were the first year of the new GCE examination. The old School Certificates had been swept away and a new era dawned. Wigan Grammar School had always operated a fast track system of four years to school certificate and did not see any reason why they should deviate from this. G.C.E. was however considered so important that a candidate had to be 16 years of age when the examination was taken. The powers that be were so out of touch with the education system that the calendar year was chosen, not the school year. This meant that in the 4<sup>th</sup> year some were eligible and others were not. My birthday was February so I was not eligible. School decided that the whole year would take the examination and the papers of the ineligible pupils would be marked internally. The results would determine whether those wishing to do so could proceed to the 6<sup>th</sup> form."

The fact that Wigan Grammar School was considered to be out of touch by William Foster, in its approaches to the new G.C.E. examinations, triangulates the comments made by John Duckworth who attended the school some ten years later. What both these witnesses reveal is an inward looking approach to teaching and delivering the curriculum in this higher status school.

Rita Dandy reveals how she progressed through St. George's C. E. Infant and Junior School between 1944 and 1953. She describes the school building as imposing in this inner part of Wigan. It had previously been an All Age School before the introduction of Senior Schools in the Wigan area in 1932. It is interesting to note in her testimony there was an emphasis on the 3 'R's', which is a direct link to its previous history as a lower status school for working class pupils

"The school was a large imposing building, which had two tiers and a basement. The bottom tier housed the infants, whilst the top tier housed the juniors. The emphasis was on the 3 'R's', reading writing and arithmetic. I remember getting free milk, and Mr. G. was the Headmaster of the whole school."

Rita Dandy remembers the use of precise setting to indicate your place in the class when she was in the juniors. She accepted the traditional teaching styles adopted by the school of class teaching, and the competitive spirit and culture of competing against local schools in this inner working class neighbourhood of Wigan.

"I enjoyed it better in the juniors. There was 'competitive' attitude. The school was divided up into 'Houses'. I was House Captain of 'Alexandra House', and Head girl in my second 4<sup>th</sup> year. I seemed to remember a lot of chalk and talk, and double desks, in which you left all your books, pencils, etc. I remember using 'First Aid' English a lot, and when I started my second 4<sup>th</sup> year, I was set different work than the others along with five others. We were sat in desks around the class, which reflected your position in class, 1<sup>st</sup> to bottom of class."

It's interesting to note in her experiences at St. George's, how Rita Dandy was prepared for her next phase of education according to the 1944 Butler Education Act, which was passed when Rita commenced her compulsory education at St. George's.

### **1960-1970: 10/65 Comprehensive ideals to readdress previous unfairness**

Witness evidence and log entries indicate that by the early 1960s modern schools were considered failures, and needed to be addressed in a variety of ways. In a sense, the leading examples of successful secondary modern schools, such as the Greaves Secondary Modern School in Lancashire, and Champion Secondary Modern School in Buckinghamshire, were to provide the solution to the problem in as much as they became and evolved into comprehensive schools in the 1970s. One of the proposals to take things forward and improve the situation in the secondary modern school was to provide a qualification for pupils to offer to prospective employers on leaving school. The new qualification was to be called the Certificate of Education (CSE). Following the recommendations outlined in the Beloe Report of 1960, CSE was introduced in the 1965-1966 academic year. Peter Hutchinson was asked to undertake such a course in 1966, along with 14 pupils in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year 'A' stream form. 'B' stream pupils like myself were not invited to undertake such a course of study for a qualification, presumably because it was felt by the teaching staff to be beyond their capabilities. There are mentions of the new qualification in the secondary modern school logs, which were scrutinised for this investigation. However, it took some time for the schools and general public to accept such an examination, which possibly needed to be met in a new educational environment. Evidence from witnesses and log entries also indicate that initially schools and pupils were cautious to take advantage of undertaking work for the CSE, with only nine pupils taking the examinations in 1965 at Gidlow secondary modern followed by ten the next year. A possible Explanation for this cautious reception of the new course was that it was still considered a sub-standard qualification compared with the GCE.

Log entries and witness evidence reflected that the attainment and progress of pupils in such schools in Wigan needed to be scrutinised and challenged. The type of modern schools that witnesses such as Peter Hutchinson, Tony Perkins and Muriel Heyes attended were in the 'Group 3' category of modern schools from the 5 distinct types and categories of secondary modern schools that Harold Dent (1958) identified and listed in his book *Secondary Modern Schools*. They taught academic subjects to a lower standard than that found in the grammar school, and attempted to work out public and official policies for such a category of school. This is quite obvious from log entries from Gidlow secondary modern school for boys, which clearly indicates both streaming and visits to local factories in the Wigan area, in which it was likely that pupils would undertake future employment. However, the most damning piece of evidence from the log is the HMI report of 1965, which is quite critical of both the building and teaching methods being employed in the school. It also must be remembered that Gidlow secondary modern school was housed in a former senior school, built in the early 1930s, which, along with all the other senior schools in Wigan, had been converted to modern schools in 1945.

Log entries from Gidlow modern school for boys in 1970 revealed that Wigan local educational authority was going to embark on a 3-phase educational plan to embrace the comprehensive idea, which was fashionable in the 1960s. There was a primary phase to the age on 9 years, then the middle school up to 13 years, and then the comprehensive high school up to 16 or 18 years of age. This system was short-lived, and was another example, of how the 'ordinary child' was again failed (McCulloch, G. 1998). It lasted about 15 years in Wigan, and was abandoned in 1985 as unsuccessful. Another interpretation might be that it was a 'theory' that had been used to 'experiment' on the pupils in Wigan, and it had again failed them.

A study of the 'Crown Street' schools in Merseyside by John B. Mays (1962) in the early sixties emphasised the local variations in provision of SMS's, and the different groups outlined by Harold Dent (1958). In working class districts of Liverpool, it was observed by Mays (1962) 'Horizons are apt to be narrow, the

sights aimed low, ambitions and curiosity limited to the local and the concrete'. This was certainly the case in Wigan, in which the least funding possible was given to the non-selective school. Most of the secondary modern schools in the town would fit into either the second or third categories listed by Harold Dent (1958). All of them had previously been senior schools, and were situated in different localities in the town, and provided pupils with curricula that were associated with that type of building and environment. Only two new secondary modern schools were built in Wigan during the early 1960's, and could be seen as the 3<sup>rd</sup> group of schools identified by Harold Dent (1958). Political and public disaffection with the existing grammar school model of the curriculum was not enough to produce a suitable alternative until the 1960's.

Although one of the comprehensive ideals had been 'freedom from examination', it was not long before examinations came creeping back—first of all O-level GCE for 'A' stream pupils, found in the grammar school; and the other kinds of lower level examinations for the 'ordinary' or 'average' child in the secondary modern school (Rowe, A. 1959, and Crowther Report of 1959). This conflict between original theory and later practice was so great that the Beloe Committee (on Secondary Schools Examination other than the GCE) recommended in 1960 a new system of examinations for the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) to cater for the 'average' or 'ordinary' child below the GCE standard pupil. In one respect this new examination reinforced tripartite thinking and tended towards A, B, and C streams for GCE, CSE and non-examination types of pupil respectively, to be found in the grammar school, 'A' stream of a secondary modern, and the other streams of the secondary modern school.

Only two witnesses interviewed for this study, both in 'A' streams at their secondary modern schools, actually undertook the examination. One witness informed me that his class was not allowed to take them, because the headmaster at his Roman Catholic secondary modern school considered them an inferior qualification, in comparison with the GCE taken in 'selective' grammar schools. This would appear to confirm a number of contemporary opinions by Chief Education Officers on the validity of such a new examination in the 1960's

(McCulloch, G. 1998). The main thrust of the Chief Education Officers' arguments were a weakening of the position of the grammar school, in which public examinations were exclusively taken, and the emergence of a 'sub-GCE examination', which every secondary modern school would be expected to offer pupils in their 'A' streams. They also argued forcefully that it would be associated with the secondary modern school, when pupils were competing for future employment positions with grammar school pupils.

The CSE was an examination which had been envisaged as giving both teachers and pupils more freedom of choice in what was learnt and how it was examined. This was an attempt to establish the principle of understanding what is learnt rather than facts, a move away from rote learning of the established 'elementary tradition' and still found in the secondary modern school. It was also to address complaints and concerns expressed by major employers in British industry in the 1950s and 1960s about recruits from secondary modern schools. These concerns were also highlighted by two influential reports of the period: the Crowther Report in 1959 and the 1963 Newsom Report, which expressed concern about the curricular provision of the 'average' or 'ordinary' child found in the secondary modern schools. This could be considered a reaction to the intransigence of successive conservative governments from 1951 to 1964 to change their stance on the modern schools over their preference for maintaining the grammar school, (McCulloch 1998).

Log entries from Gidlow secondary modern school for boys from 1945 until 1970 reveal that the school was run along the lines of the policies advocated nationally for such a school. The clear evidence for this is in the visits to local factories, which would possibly have a direct impact on the pupils' working lives, and also being interviewed by the Youth employment Officer. The clear evidence from the log that this was a 'non-selective school' is boys leaving as soon as they reached 15 years of age to take up employment opportunities at Christmas and Easter. The school was housed in a former senior elementary school, which was built in the early 1930s, and an HMI report of 1965 was quite critical of the way the building

had been neglected, and the rigid type of teaching and curricular approaches by a well established staff which had not changed for a considerable time. The references to the introduction of the new qualification for the modern school are also highlighted, along with the local authority's approach to reorganising the town's schools on comprehensive lines with the introduction of the middle school system in 1970.

1952 Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> The fourth-year boy 'A' boys visited Messrs. Lord and Sharman's Slipper Works, with Mr. Sharrock the 'B' steam boys visited 'Triangle Valves' with Mr. Pollard.

1963 November 20<sup>th</sup> A visit to the Heinz factory works at Kitt Green was made this morning by form 4B, in charge of Messrs. Brown and Fraser. I attended a meeting at the Grammar School regarding the new Certificate of Secondary Education which I am to commence in 1965.

1963 Nov. 25<sup>th</sup> Mr. J. Houghton interviewed the four boys eligible to leave at Christmas this morning, this being the last year in which there will be any 'Christmas leavers'. Mr. Houghton afterwards addressed the remaining fourth-year boys.

1964 Jan. 14<sup>th</sup> The Youth employment Officer, Mr. J. Houghton commenced interviews of the Easter leavers today.

1966 Aug. 17<sup>th</sup> The results of the first examination for the Certificate of Secondary Education have been received, all five boys have achieved good results. There are ten boys in the new fifth-year form.

1970 Jan 27<sup>th</sup> School closed today at 3.15 pm. to allow members of staffing serving on the Middle School Subject Parties to attend a meeting at the Grammar School, (as arranged by the Chief Education Officer).

Extracts taken from HMI report 2<sup>nd</sup> June to 4<sup>th</sup> June 1965, reveal how this secondary modern school had embraced the new CSE examination. However, it is interesting to note that it only had nine boys in its first fifth year, with an expectation of more starting on in the following year. There is still a prevailing feeling that an extended education was not really of any purpose to a working class boy, with only an initial uptake of nine boys when first offered in 1965 at

the Gidlow modern school. Peter Hutchinson was offered this as an 'A' stream pupil, and only fifteen boys choose to stay on at his secondary modern school. As a 'B' stream pupils I was not offered this opportunity. This I feel was another assumption by the school's hierarchy that pupils like myself were not socially or academically fitted for such an opportunity.

"1. The School There are 202 pupils in the School now, compared with 332 in 1960. A fifth year was introduced in August 1965, and this contains nine boys who are preparing for the examinations of the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes; there are expected to be more staying on for the next school year when this examination will be replaced by the Certificate of Secondary of Education. The future of the school is uncertain, as the reorganisation of secondary education is now being considered by the Local Education Authority. Whatever should be ahead, many of the serious physical inadequacies from which School suffers need to be dealt with urgently."

There is also an indication of a sub-culture by some pupils, in adopting the current fashions of the period, instead of wearing the school uniform. The HMI report states that some boys were dressed in an 'unbecoming way', which may indicate that they had become uninterested in school, and had become what Paul Willis (1977), would describe as one being one of the 'lads', and would defy the Headmaster and staff in any way they could, initially by wearing 'donkey jackets' and 'windjammers' on hot days in June and by not providing the necessary 'maturity' at the 'upper end' of school.

"Some of the boys are dressed in an unbecoming way, wearing 'donkey jackets' or 'windjammers' on a warm day; repeated efforts by the headmaster have not succeeded in achieving a common policy by the staff on this matter. Certainly many boys were friendly in conversation, showing a fairly wide vocabulary and an ability to think quickly and clearly, but it seems that too often the drab physical inadequacies of the school have had their effects on both pupils and staff."

“111. General In a four-year school, there is apt to be a lack of maturity and experience at the upper end. Now that the fifth year course has been instituted, this may have been remedied, and the new captains and prefects, by their bearing and example, can do much to lift up and maintain the tone of the School, whatever organisational changes be further ahead. What remains abundantly clear is that in facilities and equipment, and in the quality of staffing, a very great deal will have to be done if this school is to provide a full secondary education for boys within the whole ability range.”

“The Headmaster is conscious of the shortcomings mentioned, and has frequently mentioned them to those responsible. He has been at the School since 1947, and besides being Head, takes a most praiseworthy part in the mathematics teaching. There has been considerable stability of staffing, only two masters having joined since 1960. There is the obvious danger of unimaginative rigidity in teaching in such a situation, and this is sometimes the case here. However, there is also some highly imaginative and stimulating teaching, which is quite exciting to see. The loss of the peripatetic teacher of backward children is regrettable; there are quite a number of children in the School who could benefit from special teaching.”

What is quite obvious from the observations of the HMI when they visited Gidlow modern school is that the building and facilities of the school were totally inadequate to deliver a full and relevant curriculum to the boys attending this modern school. This is supported by the comments of Peter Hutchinson on the provision and facilities he found at All Saints. I can endorse the comments on ‘unimaginative’ and ‘rigid’ teaching styles found in this school from my personal experience as a ‘B’ stream pupil at All Saints. This weakness was due to a lack of staff turnover, which prevented the bringing of more up to date teaching styles and practice into the school. Possibly where the HMI saw exciting teaching was when they observed a newly qualified member of the teaching staff.

Peter Hutchinson reveals quite candidly the enormous cultural differences he felt when commencing his secondary modern school education in the centre of Wigan. His initial primary education was at Woodfield Primary School, which was situated in a very middle class area of Wigan, and had previously been a preparatory school until the 1950s, providing the middle class children with their 'educational inheritance', (Jackson, B. and Marsden, 1966 ed.). His first day experiences were an enormous 'cultural shock', in which he found the Headmaster being described in not very flattering terms, and the toughness of the boys, who came from the more distinctly working class areas of Wigan, something he had not experienced at Woodfield Primary school.

"I remember quite vividly my first ever break time at All Saints, one of the tough guys who came from Woodfield to All Saints with me, burst into tears! I think the culture shock was too much for him. Gone were the soft refined Lancashire accents with correctly sounded 'h's', these were rough and ready kids who would have no truck with posh ponces! I recall being asked by one of the older boys on my first day, 'oow wus that fat little git on't stage this morning?' "Do you mean Mr. Gillyat?" "Nay lad that, wus Jack, Jack the twat!" I was amazed to hear the Head master referred to by his forename, as for what a twat was, I had no idea, but I was later to whole heartedly support the sentiment." [Laughter]

"The boys of All Saints were mostly a pretty tough bunch and pre-arranged after school punch-ups were a common feature of school life. I can recall, as a 1<sup>st</sup> year, being tuppèd (head butted) by an older boy over the lunch table, I gritted my teeth and held back my tears determined to prove that Woodfield kids were not as soft as they were perceived to be."

His descriptions of the actual school facilities explain many of the problems that were being expressed about the attainment and progress of an 'ordinary' pupil like himself in the secondary modern school of the 1960s. The basic equipment and curricular methods had not really changed since the school was opened in 1932, and had not kept pace with new ideas and initiatives being discussed in the 1960s. It was possibly a case of the Head Teacher not seeing the need to make changes,

and staying with already well tried and accepted methods of approaching the curriculum and how the teaching staff delivered it to 'non-selected' pupils like Peter Hutchinson and myself. Many of the staff had been at the school for nearly twenty years, with many having received only '1 year emergency training' at the end of the war. This inward looking attitude at this school only changed in 1967, with the introduction of the new certificate of secondary education, and its first ever fifth form of pupils. There are overtones of the work of Edward Blishen (1955) and Richard Farely (1960) in his memories of his education at All Saints C. E. secondary modern school, and are triangulated by the evidence from school logs, such as that of the Gidlow Secondary Modern School for Boys.

"The school buildings were constructed circa 1930 and comprised one large two storey classroom block which enclosed two grass turfed quadrangles, separated by the 'Canon Thicknesse Hall', which served as a gymnasium, theatre and assembly hall."

"All Saints was actually two schools rolled into one, with two staffs and two head teachers, the girls' school occupying the classrooms and quadrangle at one side of the Thicknesse Hall and the boys on the other side. Usage of the Thicknesse Hall was shared between the two schools on a rota basis. Pupil access to the schools was via the separate playgrounds at either end of the main building, thereby ensuring total gender segregation. The only connecting routes between the schools were two corridors at the back of the Thicknesse Hall, one on the upper storey and one on the lower. The remainder of the facilities comprised shared playing fields, a Nissen hut containing two classrooms, some sparse gardens and a couple of air raid shelters adjacent to the boys playground, which were used as store rooms."

"The school was ill equipped and the classrooms, furnished with ancient cast iron framed oak desks, complete with porcelain inkwells, would not have been out of place at Dotheboys Hall." [Laughter]

Another feature of life at this secondary modern school was the uniform and dress code that was strictly enforced by the Head teacher. It gives a feel of the

atmosphere that prevailed in this type of school. More attention was paid to the appearance of the pupils than to pursuing the excellence exemplified in the work undertaken at Greaves and Campion secondary modern schools, by pioneering Head teachers and supporting staff.

“A strict uniform dress code was enforced; grey shorts or trousers, black blazer with the school badge sewn onto the breast pocket, a coloured enamel lapel badge which designated which house the wearer was a member of, (yellow for St. Michael’s, green for St. Thomas’s etc.), white shirt, tie and most important of all black polished shoes. Dirty shoes warranted a severe beating, gleefully administered by Mr. Gillyat. [Laughter] Our headmaster made regular hand inspections of boys queuing for lunch and any boy with marginally grubby fingers had them whacked on the spot. Religious education featured heavily within the curriculum, each boy was provided with a Gideon New Testament, learning of the catechism was mandatory and church attendance on Saints days was compulsory.”

“At the end of my third year, boys from my form were offered the choice of staying on after the fourth year and entering All Saints first ever fifth form, in order to take the new C.S.E. examinations. I elected to stay on and selected general science, geometrical & engineering drawing, and engineering workshop theory & practise, for my options. English and maths were compulsory.”

It is interesting to note that the subjects that were selected by Peter Hutchinson were subjects that would help gain employment in an engineering environment. This corroborates the evidence from the Gidlow Secondary Modern School log, when boys were studying for examinations in the Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes, which was associated with trade qualifications.

Aspull Secondary Modern School, which was newly created in 1960 on the outskirts of Wigan, and which was basically built to take the many seniors still found in the All Age schools found in outlying districts of Wigan. Log entries

include the visit of the Head teacher to Liverpool University to discuss the details and issues from the recently published recommendations of the Beloe Report. This report was concerned with giving pupils in secondary modern schools the opportunity of taking a qualification, although there was a considerable amount of debate about its value and usefulness, when compared with the validity of the GCE taken in the 'selective' grammar schools. In fact only pupils in the 'A' streams were considered sufficiently able to take them.

1960 7<sup>th</sup> Jan. This newly created secondary modern school opened. School started at 9.15 a.m. (and not 9 a.m.) because of transport difficulties for children coming from Red Rock. There were 286 children enrolled.

1960 16<sup>th</sup> March Mr. Parr H.M.I. of schools visited the school to examine the building and certify the opening of the school.

1961 16<sup>th</sup> June Headmaster absent all day attending meeting at Liverpool University to discuss the Beloe Report.

Tony Perkins remembered how he was selected and streamed at St. John Fisher R. C. secondary modern school, and was placed in an 'A' stream. His bitterest memory of his time in the modern school was of not being allowed to transfer to a grammar school, after taking the 12+selection examination, in which all the candidates failed. A possible explanation is that only a certain number would be allowed that particular year, and that the grammar schools had received their allotted number. Both witness evidence and primary archive source material reveal that only a limited number of pupils were allowed to proceed from the 'unselective' schools to the Grammar schools.

“The subjects and the lessons improved at this school and I enjoyed mathematics and English but nothing else. While I was in the first year, the second years were given the twelve+examination. I remember this quite well as around eleven or twelve pupils passed and left the school to take their place at St. John Rigby or Wigan Grammar School. The following year we were given the same opportunity. Now there was not any difference I don't think in the pupils and our classes. For example,

out of my class there is now a head teacher of a comprehensive school, however, every pupil ironically failed. I was now not only a failure once, but a double failure.” [Lots of shaking of Tony Perkins head, when he remembers this part of his secondary modern educational experience.]

“The whole ethos of the school was focused around discipline, the teachers in the main were second rate for it was easy to be brutal and instil discipline instead of knowledge. Again as with the junior school I was placed in a special group of four to study mathematics. I remember being in the 4<sup>th</sup> year preparing for the world of work, the mathematics teacher used to teach us algebra, equations, simultaneous equations, formulae, etc., on the blackboard. This I found a source of amusement, for when he started with an example I always made it my business to tell him the answer before he had worked it out. [Laughter] His questions to us four was why we were not we at the Grammar School?”

His memories reveal that his ability in mathematics was not fully realised, and are illustrated by his recollections of the humorous exchanges with a mathematics teacher, who was attempting to teach him algebra and formulae. Crucially, his evidence confirms that by the 1960s the teaching and curriculum in a secondary modern school were not challenging an able pupil like himself. It also reveals growing concerns during this period about the quality of training being given to intending teachers in a secondary modern school.

“When we arrived in the 4<sup>th</sup> year the careers people visited us. They bought some information on various job opportunities and what various occupations were all about. I recall going through the list and finding the occupations that my class were meant to take, fitter, carpenter, wood machinist, plumber, etc. Someone picked out accountancy but that was not an option at a secondary modern school, as we were told you could if you felt really optimistic apply to Gullick Dobson, Leyland Motors, Horwich Locomotives, Pilkingtons or Triangle Value for training in an apprenticeship, but never an accountancy post.” [Laughter]

The comments about the manual occupations being made available to the boys at this secondary modern school are revealing about the type of education they had received. There appears to have been a received wisdom from the 'careers people' about what types of occupations these 4<sup>th</sup> year secondary modern boys could successfully apply for. Although humorous, the comment about becoming an accountant gives a clear indication that certain types of professions were well out of the ability range of the secondary modern pupil. This is further borne out by the evidence from the employment opportunities available to pupils who attended the 'selective' grammar school.

"English was a subject that was fairly well taught at the school. This was another topic that I was not bad at. The rest of the subjects I personally had little interest in. Metal work for example, was a complete shambles, the teacher who took us had a metal leg and we nicknamed him 'Clang'. This man was a complete buffoon - he shouted and bawled and achieved little with his pupils indeed they all played him up in a concerted effort to see him lose his temper. His social skills were 'nil' - he could not communicate with his pupils. The science teacher was even bigger idiot who would jump over and onto tables in an effort to grab a non-attentive pupil. Everyone in the class loved to see his gymnastics and on many occasions pre-planned his performance. Woodwork was a disaster, the form teacher was a kind man but was very short-sighted and not really a competent craftsman."

There are clear overtones of Richard Farley (1960) in the way the teaching staff kept discipline by ensuring all pupils are on a simple and manageable task. There are also clashes of culture and a patronising attitude towards the boys by the teaching staff, which again agrees with the work of Edward Blishen (1955). There is also an element of the boys having what Paul Willis (1978) describes as having 'a laff' at the expense of some of the teachers, such as the science teacher who jumped over and onto desks to get hold of a pupil not paying attention. This reveals that they have reached a point of 'disaffection' with the teaching and education being offered at this modern school.

“Because the headmaster claimed C.S.E.’s were not worth the paper they were written on, and he was probably right, we did not sit any, or gain any of this type of qualification. Paradoxically if these weren’t good enough for us then presumably we should have been taking ‘O’ levels, however we did not and I presume these must have been too difficult for us. In this sense academically we were the nomads of the education system in Wigan. This left all of us un-measured, no bench mark, not knowing one way or the other. I later discovered that it is little good in excelling at a subject if you don’t receive paper work to support and confirm your ability.”

“I feel this description gives a feel of what it was like in a secondary modern school in the 1960’s. The school was run like an army training camp, it consisted of strict rules, lots of varied punishments and a regime that became normalised.”

The fact that the headmaster of this secondary modern school refused to allow his pupils to take the newly formed C.S.E. examinations reveals something of the intense debate that was being undertaken at the national level as to how to provide a suitably challenging education for a pupil like Tony Perkins in the late sixties. What it does indicate is how both national and local planners had no formally worked out policies to cater for such a pupil as Tony Perkins. He had no formal qualifications to show prospective employers about any ‘latent’ ability he may have possessed, for instance, in mathematics. The fact that Tony Perkins went on to higher education and gained degrees and diplomas, reveal quite clearly he had been placed in the wrong school, and was a victim of a clearly ‘differentiated’ and ‘dual system’ of education that had been in existence in Wigan since the nineteenth century.

Malcolm Heyes gives an insight into the curriculum he received in his 1960s Secondary Modern School, and how it continues the ‘repeating pattern’ of a book-based curriculum culture of being filled with essential factors rather than being taught how to learn and take up your civic responsibilities

“I found myself in a school environment in which all activities were heavily prescribed by the teacher. In subjects like history, geography and science it consisted of copying out of textbooks, with little investigation, exposition or discussion. The practical subjects like metal work were on a very prescribed lines until two new teachers came in 1965. Mathematics and English, were again very prescribed and book based, with pupils being moved through a book, rather than meeting my particular needs. Similar comments could be used about all areas of the curriculum. Heavily teacher-dominated and very prescribed, to make pupil discipline and management as easy as possible for the teacher.”

The last comment by Malcolm Heyes is a very telling one. He was in a ‘B’ stream, and all activities presented to such pupils had to remain simple and easily manageable by the teacher. On completion of a piece of work, the pupils would immediately be given another task to complete. It would not be matched to meet the specific needs of these pupils; it would used a time-filler, until the end of the lesson.

Muriel Heyes remembers her career at All Saints C. E. modern school for girls with affection, and apart from one formidable teacher, she liked the teaching staff. Her memories of the actual teaching and curricular approaches reflect the work of Richard Farley (1960), who wrote it was relatively ‘easy to teach girls, who were happy to copy up their notes from textbooks and the board, even if they didn’t fully understand them’. Muriel Heyes also reveals that on her friends leaving the modern school in 1970, after their four-year course, she was not as happy at the school. As with Tony Perkins, there was a feeling that certain girls in her ‘A’ stream would have benefited from a Grammar school education.

“When I went to All Saints secondary modern school for girls, I had an entrance examination, in which I was successful in being placed in a ‘A’ stream. I remember thinking what a ‘relief’, I would have been a ‘real failure’ if I had been put in an ‘Alpha’ class. [Laughter] But in looking back, as an 11 year-old, I was happy to be at All Saints, and surviving,

rather than struggling at the Girls' High School, and being unhappy. Looking back, I have fond memories of All Saints; I had good friends and a real 'camaraderie' which helped us get through the 4 years at the school. Apart from Miss Bennett, whom I thought was a real tyrant, and taught Domestic Science, the rest of the teaching staff were all right, decent people, who you could approach. There were obviously clever girls in the class, who I felt would have benefited from a grammar school education, even though they took the 13+selection examination, and failed. At exam times, I was 11<sup>th</sup> in my first year, 22<sup>nd</sup> in the second year, top of the class in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year, and 5<sup>th</sup> in my last year at All Saints. All the girls did the same work, which was essentially 'talk and chalk', and consisted of copying off blackboards and our textbooks."

Although the school did provide her with the opportunity of gaining qualifications, which served her well for the rest of her working life, she was glad to leave the school. Although the concept of comprehensive education was an improvement, and a positive step in the right educational direction on the 'modern' schools; it did leave pupils like Muriel Heyes at the end of her modern school career daunted by the prospect of the change to comprehensive education.

The HMI Report on Wigan Girls High School, October 1962, reveals quite clearly that the school was still operating as a 'selective' school. The comments on a quarter of the pupils going onto university or training colleges, and others entering careers gives a clear insight into what was on offer to pupils when they left the school at either 16 or 18 years of age. This is further reinforced with the comment about a girl pursuing a 'liberal General Studies course', in the sixth form, and the possibility of taking an external examination.

"The school has developed satisfactorily since the last Report, in 1949, the sixth form has established itself fully - very rarely now does a girl who would have been capable of sixth form academic studies leave at the end of the fifth year and any girls also enter the sixth form to benefit from a liberal General Studies Course, in which some subjects can be

taken for external examinations. About a quarter of school leavers go to university or training colleges, which is commendable, and other enter a wide variety of careers.”

John Duckworth reveals that the pupils at Wigan Grammar School were organised into 3 streams, and felt that if you fell below the middle strata you suffered ‘communal neglect’, leading him to conclude that they would have fared better in a modern school, with the new CSE qualification at their disposal. He also reveals that although the teaching staff were graduates, they had very limited strategies for teaching boys at a selective grammar school. It is clear that he did not receive enough advice on what careers he could pursue when he left school. He also indicates in the interview that he might have benefited from a comprehensive school education, in which he would have enjoyed a wider and broader curriculum and teaching approach.

“New starters in my year were put into three forms by house for the first term, then tested before Christmas and streamed for the spring term by results. Streaming was part of the culture of Wigan Grammar School. I managed just to keep in the upper section, but pupils below the middle strata were condemned to suffer communal neglect and were expected to fail; they would probably have had a better education in a secondary modern school.”

“Some of the masters could not teach and most never attempted to consider different styles. My already fragile grasp of mathematics was shattered by the sustained mockery of a sadist employed to teach this subject. A later master was able to teach the subject to me and restored some confidence such that I attained an ‘O’ level pass.”

“The inflexible curriculum limited choice of subjects in the middle and upper forms. I could not study both history and geography, my best two subjects, after the 3<sup>rd</sup> year. At entry to the 6th form, history was dropped in favour of French and German. The decision to take modern languages at ‘A’ level was mine. The school provided no worthwhile careers

advice. It was focused on sending Wigan Grammar School pupils to universities and, in subjects such as history and geography; students would become teachers of that topic. I could not have contemplated a career in teaching in institutions like the grammar school. No-one ever told me that I could go and enjoy university and secure a good degree that could be used to begin a career in many areas of employment; later I worked with many people who had done exactly that.” [Ironic shake of head, John Duckworth felt he had missed out on something.]

These are telling comments about the inward looking attitude of grammar schools in the 1960s, in that they saw themselves as a production line to educate and train suitably qualified teachers for future careers in a grammar school. That fact that John Duckworth did not realise that you could go to university and study a degree without having to undertake a teaching career reveals how far the school was behind in current developments in education in the 1960s.

“I completed two years in the 6<sup>th</sup> form, sat three subjects a ‘A’ level (four if General Studies are counted) and considered some form of employment. I was subsequently able to choose from several attractive offers from major employers, who I am sure selected, me as a candidate due to the reputation of the Wigan Grammar School. I received a full education at the grammar school, and the opportunity to acquire GCE passes at ordinary and advanced level, but it should have been much better.”

St. Elizabeth’s C. E. primary school log provides a brief glimpse of how primary schools were run and organised in the 1960’s, including HMI visits, training course and student teachers coming on teaching practice. By this period the education provided in Infant and Junior schools had improved, and in general was giving all its pupils equality of opportunity, unlike the secondary school system that was operating in Wigan in this period. This would have been the type of school that several witnesses such as John Duckworth, Peter Hutchinson, and Muriel Heyes would have attended in the period from the late 1950’s until 1970.

1963 20<sup>th</sup> November Mr. A. F. Parr HMI visited the school during the course of the afternoon.

1967 24<sup>th</sup> February Headmaster on 'Mathematics in the Primary School' course at St. Annes.

1967 8<sup>th</sup> May Miss W. Bourne and Mr. E. H. Cox (C. F. Motte College of Education) commenced three week's teaching practice.

### **Conclusions to evidence from witnesses and primary archive sources**

The essential conclusions to be drawn from the witnesses' oral evidence, and primary archive sources, is essentially that a 'dual system' or 'differentiated system' of secondary educational provision operated in Wigan, from 1920 until 1970. There was an extended education and curricular provision to be found in the five grammar schools for a minority of pupils, whilst the mass of the working class population received a minimal non-selective education and curriculum, in schools with a variety of names and guises between 1920-70. This dualism was reflected in the curricular provision, and quality of the teaching staff who delivered it in both types of schools. It had its clear origins in the nineteenth century and was well established in the 'mind set' of all stratas of society in Wigan. It was essentially based on class, and the education and schooling you received corresponded with this class division. Even though there were attempts to address the inadequacies of the educational system in the twentieth century they remained firmly entrenched and intact. This resulted in the teachers and curricular provision of the higher status schools being regarded as superior to those of the lower status schools.

The evidence from witnesses and the local primary archive sources reveals how the extension of the 'non-selected' schools had to rely on national legislation and the willingness of local authority officials to improve the opportunities for the pupil in these schools. There is clear and unequivocal evidence of this minimal provision from witnesses such as Jack Lathom, Mary Appleton and Kathleen Sherriff, and the primary archive material. This can be traced historically by the emergence of a 'central school' in Hindley in the 1920s, which was described by

a visiting HMI as an 'experiment' to provide a more extended curriculum to the pupils in the All Age elementary schools. This type of provision could be described as the forerunner of the senior schools and later the secondary modern schools, which were established from the 1930s onwards for the non-selected senior pupils. Nevertheless, whatever was proposed was always considered inferior to the provision offered in a selective establishment. This can be identified from evidence from a 1965 HMI report on Gidlow Secondary Modern School for boys, which was critical of the actual building the school was housed in, the quality of teaching and curricular approaches. This evidence can be triangulated by oral testimony of witnesses who attended 'modern' schools in Wigan during the 1960s. These witnesses can also testify to the commencement of a new examination for the 'ordinary' or 'average' pupil in the 'non-selected' schools, called the 'Certificate of Secondary Education'.

In conclusion, the majority of children in Wigan who attended such schools, were given the absolute minimum in terms of teaching and curricular provision, in contrast with the minority who attended the selective grammar school where they received an education which was not only superior but acknowledged as such by society generally. In fact there is evidence that pupils who came from working class families, such as Roger Taylor in the 1930s, were made to feel that they should not have been receiving such a privileged education as that offered by the grammar schools, because they had not come through the appropriate fee paying preparatory schools. There were examples of pupils' working class culture clashing with the middle class values and ethos of the grammar schools, which are explored in much more detail in Chapter 5. In addition, the wearing of mortar and gown by teaching staff in the grammar schools signified they were graduates, in contrast with the non-graduate teachers of the lower status schools, a point which is vividly recalled by Fred Foster on his first day at Wigan Grammar School, in September 1942. There was also a disparity in the funding of the two types of school, with the grammar school receiving greater funding than the 'non-selective' schools, as shown in the HMI report of Gidlow modern school for boys in 1965. Along with less funding, and poorer accommodation, a less academic

curriculum resulted in different occupational destinations for the pupils who attended them. This had the effect of the grammar schools producing pupils that could enter the middle class professions, whilst the modern schools produced the semi-skilled or unskilled workers for the staple industries associated with an industrial town like Wigan. Finally, the basic ethos and academic style of five grammar schools in Wigan remained relatively undisturbed from the nineteenth century onwards whilst the 'non-selective' school was constantly changed, refined and 'experimented' throughout the twentieth century, during the many attempts to improve the quality of education for the majority who attended these schools.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCIPLINE: HOW IT WAS ADMINISTERED AND DIFFERENTIATED IN WIGAN SCHOOLS BETWEEN 1920-70.

It is the argument of this thesis that social regulation and acquiescence were perpetuated through the workings of schools themselves. All schools, whether selective or non-selective, had a distinct historical tradition dating from the nineteenth century of maintaining good order and control in their particular establishment. Both types of schools had the power and opportunity to victimise, humiliate and physically punish pupils, and to make them conform to their requirements in terms of behaviour during their compulsory education. This was achieved through the use of disciplinary sanctions and punishments, which included corporal punishment, which became established as an element of control that was part of the curriculum found in all schools. Corporal punishment was enshrined in British law in 1860, when Chief Justice Cockburn ruled that the force used in chastising pupils at school had to be 'moderate' and 'reasonable'. Therefore, throughout the period 1920 to 1970, education officials, teaching staff, parents and pupils, all accepted corporal punishment as an appropriate and acceptable part of everyday school life. However, the way it was used in different schools in the Wigan area depended on a number of factors, notably the pupils' age and gender, the type and status of a school, and of course the preferences of the particular teachers involved.

The selective or higher status grammar school had clear and distinct boundaries of what was acceptable or unacceptable behaviour in their establishments. There was a clear link with the professions in these schools, and the aim to educate to the required level to attend university. The purpose of punishments administered in these schools were to make the pupils reflect on his or her misbehaviour, or transgression against the ethos of the school. Detention on Saturday morning, missing important school events, or not being allowed to represent the school, or being expelled; are different when compared with the non-selective or lower

status schools, in which the punishments were quick and physical. When physical punishment was administered in a boys' grammar school, a senior member of staff usually undertook it.

Recent contributions to the debate on punishment and on how discipline was administered in schools, the reasons for its use, and pupil and parental reaction to it, include the work of Paul Willis (1977), Stephen Humphries (1982), Richard Farley (1960), Penny Summerfield (1987) and Philip Gardner (1996). They clearly identify how the gender and status of a pupil impacted on what type of punishment a pupil would receive. Much of their work reflects the experiences of the witnesses interviewed for this study who attended lower status schools during the period under investigation. They remember receiving quick and physical punishments, with often little or no explanation as to why it had been given. This approach to disciplining pupils would reflect their future occupational status in the staple industries of a town or city. But the underlying philosophy behind this approach to disciplining pupils in the lower status school, was to produce a compliant and servile workforce, who would take orders and follow instructions quickly, and with due respect and reverence to a superior.

Many of the experiences of witnesses have some similarities and sympathy with research by Philip Gardner (1996). In this research, Gardner (1996) uses oral testimony to reveal how young teachers felt about the use of corporal punishment in the schools where they were initially employed after leaving teacher training college. He explores how they felt when it was being used on pupils in their charge. The research reveals how there were people who used it in a way that was near to a mania of sadistic brutality. For example, one teacher at her first school recalls: 'we had one headmaster who went a bit too far. He'd got a fiery temper, and he'd come round the school with a cane under his arm. He'd look round the class; if there was one child who wasn't attending – Out! Then on to the next room. Well that was wrong, that was very wrong and I didn't like at all' (1996 p.156-157). This was the also the experience of several witnesses interviewed for this work, who attended both lower or higher status schools. They re-tell very

clearly incidents in which a head teacher or individual teacher over-reacted to a situation, and abused their obligation to administer corporal punishment fairly.

What this research by Gardner (1996) does reveal is how young teachers who came from the idealism of teacher training colleges adapted to the practical reality of either physically punishing pupils themselves, or seeing them punished by more senior colleagues. Whether the idealistic young teachers as described by Gardner (1996), agreed or disagreed with its use, they were in no position to challenge the authority of the Head Teacher or more senior colleagues who used corporal punishment on a frequent basis, or when it was, according to their testimony, fully justified, when teaching large classes in the interwar period. It must be acknowledged that the teachers interviewed by Gardner (1996) although abhorring the excessive use of corporal punishment, also liked to make an impression of using corporal punishment if pupils in their classes began to misbehave. Evidence from those who received it, and those who administered it, all promotes an overall conclusion that it was an accepted part of everyday school life. Probably the most intriguing factor to consider is whether it was actually administered fairly to set an example for the majority of pupils. This is the important factor that oral evidence can explore. It reveals more than other primary source material; it helps flesh out the reasons for its use, and more importantly for this research, the social and moral reasons for its use.

Reasons for and explanations of approaches to discipline in the lower status schools will be analysed first, because the majority of the witnesses interviewed attended this type of school. The second section indicates how discipline was administered in the higher status school, and how this was different from that of the lower status school. Where possible, witness evidence is triangulated by primary archive source material, such as the log entries from the Thomas Linacre School and Aspull Secondary Modern School. Unfortunately, most of the primary source material makes little or no reference to the use of corporal punishment in the schools. It was certainly used at Wigan Grammar School, but the log entries from 1945 until 1970 revealed absolutely no reference to it, in contrast to the testimony of Fred Foster, Frank Dandy and John Duckworth. The important

criteria to follow are the gender of the witnesses and the type of school they attended. Another factor bearing on this investigation of discipline in schools is the age and experience of teaching staff, bearing in mind the acute shortage of teachers created by the emergency situation of World War Two.

### **The historical legacy of administering discipline in lower status schools**

The purpose of a school is to prepare the pupils for their adult lives, both occupationally and socially. This was the clear intention of the 1870 Education Act, when the state intervened and opened elementary schools for the mass working class population. Following the opening of these schools, a legacy of physical chastisement of pupils was established and continued in these schools, as they evolved and changed in the twentieth century. Since the social-economic destination of most pupils from the lower status schools was premature employment in the staple industries found in industrial towns like Wigan, it was the clear intention that the education pupils received in these schools was a preparation for their later working lives. This preparation was through control and containment in the school environment, and was often achieved through the use of disciplinary sanctions, including physical chastisement. This was administered by class teachers of either gender, and the tradition and means of controlling pupils were firmly established throughout the twentieth century. Indeed it could be described as a tried and tested method of punishing pupils, or what Jeremy Seabrook (1982), describes as a 'repeating pattern' in schooling and educational culture, particularly of the working classes.

### **Control, resistance and counter culture**

All class teachers needed not only to keep control of the classes they were teaching, but also to be seen to be in control by everyone in the school community. The type of control a class teacher would employ in schools would include physical chastisement, which led to conflict between the teacher delivering the punishment and the pupils who were to receive it. This would result in resistance to discipline by pupils and in particular, to physical chastisement with the cane. This resistance usually took the form of pupils rejecting either covertly or overtly what the teaching staff expected and required of them as they

progressed through school. There were different forms of resistance by pupils throughout the period under investigation. Their youth, exuberance and working-class culture would come into conflict with the disciplinary methods employed in schools, and would often overspill into what Paul Willis (1977) describes as a 'counter culture'. There were common patterns in methods employed in different schools; they usually depended on the age, gender of pupil, and type of school. This is clear from the evidence from witnesses interviewed for this study who attended the evolving lower status schools during the period under investigation.

The type of offences that were punishable were non-attendance at school, late-coming, truancy, smoking, lack of conformity to the school dress code and general anti-social behaviour against the school ethos and reputation. Resistance usually took the form of a sense of injustice about how pupils were treated collectively or individually. For example, Jack Lathom and Fred Foster remember incidents in their schools in which the punishments were either excessive or unfairly administered to certain pupils. It must be acknowledged that most pupils were trying to survive the regime they found themselves in, and were often the children of what Jeremy Seabrook (1982), describes as the 'respectable' or 'conformist' working class who accepted whatever disciplinary system was imposed. Unfortunately, situations occurred in schools in which a particular individual would administer a punishment which was perceived to be particularly excessive or sadistic within the boundaries usually adhered to in that school. This happened to Derrick Smith at his Secondary Modern School in the early 1950's. Unusually he dealt with his complaint himself, despite his father wishing to do so on his behalf.

### **The role of the Head teacher**

The role of the Head teacher in the school would play a significant part in how the boundaries of school's established disciplinary code was administered. Most witnesses testify to their Head teachers being very firm but fair, but as with individual teachers, there was always the exception who would be excessive and gain a reputation both inside and outside the school. Any resistance by the pupils in the form of non-attendance (including church on Sunday), non-conformity in

wearing uniform, poor time-keeping, lack of personal cleanliness, non-completion of work, not having equipment or special clothing, was dealt with quickly and summarily by the pupils being made an example of in front of the class, or the entire school. I, Peter Hutchinson and Tony Perkins can remember such incidents being dealt with quickly and savagely in their secondary modern schools by our respective head teachers. The savage reprisal was seen as breaking the 'negotiated order' (Goffman 1959), of the class teacher and pupils in a particular school, or the breakdown of what Paul Willis (1977), calls the 'moral and social relationship' between teacher and those being taught. Such conduct included the disaffected or calculating pupils in schools, who Paul Willis (1977), describes as 'lads having a laff', or alternatively what Stephen Humphries (1982) describes as pupils' 'larking about', in and around the school environment, or often just beating and breaking down the very dull and dry approach to the curriculum they had to endure in the classroom.

This 'having a laff' or 'larking about', although acceptable in their immediate home or their neighbourhood, was not tolerated in the school environment. This clash of culture would have consequences for teaching staff, pupils and parents. Witnesses gave vivid evidence of how parents did come into school and complain, chronicling the reasons for this happening, and how some pupils took action themselves. Jack Lathom, Fred Foster and Tony Perkins all give vivid examples of both pupil and parental resistance, including reaction to an excessive punishment inflicted by a member of the teaching staff. Other examples include the accounts of Mary Appleton and Martin King, of their non-attendance at church on Sunday. Indeed, Peter Hutchinson ran home from school after a physical encounter with the Head teacher of his secondary modern school, and only returned after his father had spoken to the Head teacher on the telephone. This sometimes, but not always, resulted in pupils being treated differently and more favourably, as was the case with Peter Hutchinson.

### Teacher shortages

Another important factor to consider was the age of teachers, particularly when acute shortages meant there was a large number of teaching staff who were well

past their retirement age, who had been recalled to the classroom due to teacher shortages in World War Two. This meant they adopted disciplinary methods and measures they had employed before they retired. Many witnesses interviewed for this thesis give a variety of evidence revealing how such teachers dealt with classes in their charge; but the most interesting one was the reception teacher who was totally untrained, and adopted Victorian methods of humiliating her young pupils.

### **Preparation for the world of work**

The punishments administered reinforced the principle of deference and knowing your place, in school, your neighbourhood and church, and in the future world of work. The fact that all transgressions against the school's moral and social code were punished with the cane 'on the hand', with little or no recourse to the giving of lines or detention, was significantly different from the type of punishment used in the higher status schools. Witnesses from the 1920s and 1930s right through until the 1960s all give clear evidence that the discipline in the lower status school, whether an All Age School, Infant and Junior, Senior School or Secondary Modern, was physical, and quite different from that found and administered in the grammar schools. All types of pupils were dealt with in the same way, whether they were willing to accept and co-operate with the particular regime of a school or not, and there was a clear moral and social purpose when it was administered.

### **Discipline in the All Age School**

The All Age School was the direct successor of the nineteenth century Elementary School. Therefore the disciplinary methods, which were used and applied in them, came from this well-established tradition. They were used to ensure a compliant workforce for the traditional industries found in Wigan in the earlier part of the twentieth century. There are clear examples in the evidence given below by Jack Lathom, Mary Appleton and Martin King, in that any deviance from the accepted set standard of behaviour would result in physical punishment and chastisement.

These methods continued in the evolving non-selected schools throughout the major part of the twentieth century.

Mrs. Gregory, who attended St. Andrew's All Age school in Wigan from 1911 to 1918, remembers very strict and severe looking teachers, who had clear ideas of what disciplinary actions should be used to modify and prepare pupils for working life. The use of humiliation to punish and chastise pupils was a regular occurrence, along with the use of the cane. As she told me:

“ . . . very severe looking teachers. Teachers used to use a child's surname to address the children or individual pupils. Mr. G. was the Head Teacher (incidentally, was the father of the Head Teacher at All Saints School between 1957-69). Other teachers Miss T, Miss E. was a lovely teacher. Strict but thoughtful, she didn't shout as much as the others. Mrs. Gregory didn't like school much. [Laughter] Teachers too frightening. Children were brought and shamed in front of class. So humiliating for the individual child. Boys were caned if naughty. Cannot remember if girls were?”

Mrs. Gregory shakes her head with a very rueful look on her face; she was 88 years of age when I interviewed her, in April 2000.

Jack Lathom's experience of discipline changed as he moved through an All Age school in Crooke, near Wigan. When he started school at the age of four and half years, his first memories of being punished were of standing in the corner if he had been naughty. It is interesting to note that the college-trained teacher had more enlightened ideas of disciplining pupils in the infant department, than her colleagues in the junior and senior classes.

“I fond memories of my infant teacher. My mother told me many years later, how I cried when I couldn't see Miss B. again in class, who I must say had a wonderful way with children who were good or bad, she was marvellous. If you were bad, you had to leave your little chair and go and stand in the corner . . . but we all loved her, she was a marvellous teacher.

She was college trained. It was a separate portion of the school the infant school.”

“Then I eventually I went into Standard 1, taught by an elderly Miss D., who lived in the village. Miss D. wasn’t a college-trained teacher (pupil-teacher perhaps), but in those days I believe if you passed a certain exam, you qualified as a teacher. She taught me for two years, Standard 1 and 2, which I considered uneventful. She had a pointer for the blackboard, which she used as a cane on your hand if you were naughty. She didn’t use it a lot, because she lived in the village, everyone knew her, you see.”

Even at an early age, Jack Lathom clearly understood and accepted physical punishment as part of his school life if he departed from the expected standard of behaviour in the school he attended. But it is interesting to note that the elderly Miss D. who taught Jack Lathom was subject to what Stephen Humphries (1982) describes as ‘social and parental pressure’. Living in the village with both pupils and parents, she would have been careful in how frequently she used the cane on the pupils in her charge.

A log entry from Wesleyan All Age school, in Wigan, in 1929, gives a clear indication that the Headmistress was unhappy about the parental complaint, and instructions were given not to administer corporal punishment to a particular child. This triangulates the evidence obtained from witnesses from this period, such as Jack Lathom and James Smith, who can remember what Stephen Humphries (1982) describes as ‘parental resistance’ to corporal punishment being inflicted on their children .

1929 21<sup>st</sup> February Joyce James’s father called to object to any punishment whatever being inflicted upon his child. He states the child, who is a clever child, must not be punished at all, but simply left to work at her own inclination. The child is careless, inattentive and inclined to make very little effort and as all means of correcting this attitude to work is taken out of the teacher’s hand, by the father’s attitude, this note is made to that effect.

Kathleen Sherriff has very definite ideas about the type of discipline she encountered in her All Age catholic school in the late 1920s and early 1930s. She indicates very clearly what offences would not be tolerated and how they would be dealt with:

“Discipline was very strict. No one would dare to walk around the classroom, talk or give cheek to the teacher. Any misdemeanour was swiftly dealt with, usually with the cane.”

Mary Appleton experienced physical punishment at her All Age R.C. School in Platt Bridge in the 1920s and 1930s, and this was linked to her poverty and absence from mass on Sunday. The fact she was wearing clogs was a clear indicator of her family’s level of poverty, and of the ‘Muscular Christianity’ approach of her Roman Catholic school in Platt Bridge, a predominantly working class area of Wigan, for non attendance at church on a Sunday.

“Religion was drummed into us every day. Monday morning was the worst; the teacher asked who had ‘committed a mortal sin’ on Sunday by not going to mass? Those who didn’t got the cane, I couldn’t, I had no clothes or shoes, and I only wore clogs. Teachers used to call out our names and if we hadn’t been to mass on Sunday, it was a mortal sin, we had to line up and get the cane—it felt like being in borstal—no wonder old class photographs show all serious faces you were only allowed to breathe—and do nothing, unless you were given permission. [Mrs. Appleton and myself had to laugh on digesting and fully comprehending this comment.] Religion ruled our lives seven days a week—we weren’t allowed to think for ourselves.”

Martin King remembers how discipline was administered at his All-Age Roman Catholic School, and how the staff dealt with his non-conformist working class attitude, which he inherited from his father and grandfather, both militant miners, employed in the Lancashire coalfields of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The idea of ‘knocking out the devil’, and the ‘resistance’ to

attend compulsory church on Sunday would be the reason for receiving the strap, and possibly a 'fist' rather than 'reasonable' physical chastisement when he forgot his gas mask. Certainly Martin King knew a lot about this Headmaster, and his actual travelling habits between home, school and church, which has left strong memories which he related to me in a very forceful way. Another important factor to consider was the attitude of the pupils to the teacher who was considered a 'coward' because he was not in the armed forces. It may have been that he had failed the necessary medical to gain entry to the services and was excused, to resume his teaching career.

"I started school at 5, at the All English Martyrs R.C. All Age School, Haydock, and left at 14. No homework, but at least all of us knew the '3 R's', with the help of the cane, strap and 'School Board Officer'. I remember once we were having an 'Air Raid Drill', and I forgotten my Gas Mask, so I went back into the classroom for it. When I got back in line, I was met with the Headmaster's fist. When we were young, we wore clogs with irons on the bottom of them, we could not afford shoes. Can you imagine how impossible it is not to make a noise as you walked to church? If you did go to church, you could not go to the Baths at St. Helens. The Headmaster cycled to and from school, from Earlstown to Haydock five days a week, plus to church on Sunday. Hail or snow! One Sunday, in 1941, there had been a heavy fall of snow! Instead of going to church I spent the morning with the watchman at a roadworks. Along came the Headmaster on his bike and he saw me. Monday morning I got the strap." [Laughter]

"In my last year at school we got a brand new teacher, his name was Mr. M. Being in his early twenties we all branded him a coward, because he was not in the forces. He turned out be a right bully. The Headmaster used to walk around the classroom armed with a handful of small pieces of chalk, and anybody nodding or talking was caught at the side of the head with a piece of chalk. He had a good aim and very rarely missed." [Laughter]

### Discipline in the Infant and Junior school

Following the reorganisation of schools in the early 1930s in Wigan, teaching staff either stayed in the newly named infant and junior schools, which in reality were the All Age schools, or were redeployed into the newly built senior schools. However, the legacy of the All Age school still remained intact when disciplining and chastising pupils. This is the clear evidence from witnesses who remember being caned for a number of misdemeanours such as talking, being late for school, or having dirty hands and face. It is what Penny Summerfield (1987) describes as 'teaching with the cane'. The clearest examples are the pupils named and the number of stokes of cane administered to them in the Warrington Lane Jerusalem infant and junior school 'Punishment Book'.

James Smith had a similar experience to other witnesses during his education at the junior school he attended at Platt Bridge, near Wigan. He reveals that parents would go in to complain if their children were unhappy at school, although in this case it was unsuccessful, as James Smith was too frightened to tell his mother a second time about his being continually punished by his junior 2 teacher.

"Discipline was very strict, no talking in class. I felt my teacher had 'her knife in me' when I was in Junior 2. I was very upset; my mother went to school because she (the teacher) always asked me to go in front of the class to answer questions, which I didn't know the answer to, then she would hit me all the time. It didn't stop, but I was too scared to tell my mother again."

Fred Foster gives examples of how an over-zealous teacher in his junior school could make mistakes when both deciding what punishment should be administered and to whom. The example of not caning a girl with the force the rest of the class received because of her middle class origins gives further insight into the moral and social impact of punishment to different pupils. It is interesting to note what Stephen Humphries (1982) describes as the 'collective resistance' and feeling by the rest of Fred Foster's class that something was wrong by the

'booing' of this class teacher. Fred also points out that all pupils received the same type of physical punishment in the infant and junior school, but on transfer to selected 'secondary education' at the grammar school, this changed, particularly for the girls.

"I gradually made my way through the infants department, and finally the day came to change department and school. I was put into Miss B's class; she was Dad's cousin and came from Up Holland. She was a good teacher but when she got mad, her face and neck would go red just like a turkey cock! We had two playgrounds in the junior school, one for the boys and one for the girls. In the boys' playground the play area was covered in ashes and when you fell, during playtime, you didn't half make a mess of your knees. Whilst in Miss B's class, we were all running wild one day when she was out on duty, and suddenly she was there in the doorway. Every way went quiet. 'Right,' she said 'I'll cane the lot of you'. We all lined up for one across the hand, but when she got to Dorothy Hughes, who was 'posh' and lived in Winstanley, the cane came down like the proverbial feather!! There was a 'boo' from the class and Miss B's face went crimson. I think that she had realised her mistake." [Laughter]

The entries for punishments listed below were kept in a separate 'Punishment Book', for the Warrington Lane Council Jerusalem Infant and Junior school, and cover a period from the early 1930s to the early 1960s. It was the school that Ethel Prone went to in the 1930s, although the official log entries, as with others of the period, reveal nothing of the corporal or physical punishment inflicted on pupils, usually for nothing more than being late or dirty. It certainly corroborates the evidence of Ethel Prone, who remembers personal hygiene checks by the staff, but more importantly it reveals the strong 'elementary tradition' of preparing the majority of its pupils for a servile occupation in the staple industries of Wigan, with an emphasis on punctuality and appearance. The punishment book clearly

sets out the date, name and age of the pupil, the alleged offence, and how many strokes a pupil received, whether boy or girl.

11.02.31. Will Lund aged 9 clogs dirty repeatedly 2 strokes on hand EMT

11.02.31. Walter Hampson aged 8 clogs dirty repeatedly 2 strokes on hand EMT

11.02.31. Peggy and Evelyn Johnson both aged 8 late every morning 2 strokes on hand every morning EMT

21.03.32. Willie Berry aged 8 dirty shoes 2 strokes on hand EMT

14.11.33. Leslie Cunliffe aged 8 repeated late coming 2 strokes on hand EMT

08.07.37. George Heyes, Roy Poulson, Ronald Dean, Leslie Cunliffe, Ben Cheetham, Clifford Daws all aged 11 coming to school almost every day with dirty and greasy hands all 2 strokes on hands EMT

17.03.48 William Saxon aged 11 coming to school repeatedly with very dirty hands 2 strokes on hand EMT

23.08.50. Joyce Houghton and Maureen Leyland both aged 9 deliberately going to canteen without permission 1 stroke each on right hand Mr. Thomas

14.06.63. Alan Winstanley aged 11 fighting 1 stroke on right hand Mr. Thomas

Ethel Prone remembers the punishments given to misbehaving pupils by her Headmistress at Warrington Lane Council Jerusalem Infant Junior School in the early 1930s. The use of physical chastisement was accepted whether with cane or ruler, and it seemed that to tie down a pupil who would not keep still was an acceptable disciplinary sanction in this school. There was also the 'health and welfare check' carried out by teachers on a pupil's personal cleanliness and hygiene. A little footnote to this witness's evidence is that this is the neighbourhood where George Orwell stayed in 1936, when he wrote *The Road to Wigan Pier*. It is interesting to note how Ethel Prone remembers that Miss T's brother was the Town Clerk in Wigan, which was considered an important position in local government in the inter-war years, well before the local government reorganisation of the 'Maud Report' of 1974.

“Miss T., whose brother was Wigan Town Clerk, was the Headmistress there (Jerusalem Junior School) and was very strict. If any boy misbehaved he had to stand outside her room for a bit and then she would smack his hands with a ruler. One boy ‘Elijah’ wouldn’t sit still so the teacher tied him to a chair. The teacher used to check our hands to see if our nails were clean and our shoes polished, also we had to have a clean hanky. My friend’s father was taking her to London on a day trip, and she had to ask permission to have the next day off because they would be late back. She had to write a composition about what they had seen. She missed the letter ‘i’ out of Parliament and was made to write it out 100 times.” [Laughter]

Fred Foster recalls in an amusing way (but not for him at the time), how he was unfairly punished by his class teacher for what she considered ‘unacceptable’ behaviour on a school bus. Apart from giving all the pupils a clear indication of what was morally and socially required by pupils in their out of school life, she was also reinforcing the ‘functional’ or ‘operational’ status of being in charge of the class. Despite Fred Foster’s plea of innocence he was still punished and humiliated in front of the class and his friends. I suspect there was no parental complaint because of the teacher’s relationship as a cousin to Fred Foster’s father. As he goes onto describe:

“We were used to the cane and its use didn’t usually bother us when we got it, but there was just one occasion when I was on the receiving end, and I cried. It has always stuck in my mind. The special bus that used to take children to Worsley Mesnes and Goose Green was parked up by the gate as we came out of school, and apparently some children had been annoying the conductor by jumping on and off the step. One boy told Miss B. that it was me that had done it, and as a consequence I was hauled out in front of the class and caned for it. I was completely innocent of the charge, and as a small boy who had been brought up

never to tell lies, thus, when I wasn't believed it really hurt me more than the cane could ever do."

Fred Foster gives an example of how working class pupils were punished for persistent lateness at school. There was a clear purpose behind the punishment that the pupils received, as they had to be on time for when the school day started. There was also the social need to inculcate in all pupils the need for good time keeping when the pupils entered the world of work, usually in mining and the cotton mills. Yet as Fred Foster goes on to acknowledge in his testimony, it was the pupil's parents who were the guilty parties, rather than their children. He reveals that there was initial 'pupil resistance' to the punishment from the pupil in question, which eventually led to a thrashing by the very angry Headmistress.

"There was another couple of incidents worth relating, one concerned a little lad by the name of John Jolley. John was habitually late; I suppose that his parents wouldn't or couldn't get up in a morning. Anyway, this day, Miss J., the Headmistress told John that if he was late the following day, she would make an example and cane him in front of the whole assembly."

"The next day arrived, but John didn't! [Laughter] He came in as usual after assembly. 'Right' said Miss J., 'Stand there, John Jolley, while I get the cane'. She went to the cupboard where it was kept, and as she returned, John made a swift exit to take refuge behind the piano, which was at an angle to the wall. Miss J., her face red, went after him, John shod with clogs, lashed out every time she got near him. [Laughter] All children were tittering, and Miss J. was getting madder by the minute, she tried to hook him out with the hook end of the cane, but she couldn't. Finally she managed to grab him out, and didn't she lay on. I felt sorry for the little beggar!!" [Mr. Foster shook his head]

When Fred Foster was going to his Infant and Junior School in the 1930s in the Highfield area of Wigan, it coincided with the visit of George Orwell to the town in 1936. Orwell described the abject poverty and squalor found in Wigan at that

time. Fred Foster gives a very vivid account of one unfortunate boy called Jimmy Dunne, and the school's unsuccessful attempt to improve his situation and personal cleanliness. As Fred Foster describes:

“ . . . we didn't have a lot in terms of worldly goods, but our parents kept us clean and decently dressed, albeit in 'hands-me-downs' at times, but we had in our class, a small boy by the name of Jimmy Dunn, who was the dirtiest boy I have ever seen in my life. It wasn't his fault, but Jimmy's 'dirt' was at least a week old. His clothes were the same, filthy. One day Miss B. told him that if he came to school dirty the following day, she would wash him in front of the whole class. Of course it was a foregone conclusion.”

“Jimmy turned up the next day dirty as ever. She stripped him down to his dirty vest, and with tears running down his face, she stood him in a bowl of warm water and, using a nailbrush, she scrubbed the in-grown dirt from his little body. I don't know why she bothered the next day he was just as dirty!” [Laughter]

Another interesting piece of information that emerged when Margaret Hurst related her experiences at her Infant School, was her account of the disciplinary methods used by the reception class teacher in 1941. They had a clear nineteenth century feel to both the moral and social purpose behind them. There was also something unusual about her qualifications to teach young children as well, but I will let Margaret Hurst explain:

“ . . . during the Reception class the discipline was tough for young children starting school, and since then I discovered that the teacher in charge was untrained. She had been recruited because of the shortage of teachers during the war as a suitable teacher because she was from a family of doctors. If a child was late or had forgotten their handkerchief she hung a cardboard notice around the neck proclaiming the fact, and this had to be worn all day. If a child swore they had their mouth washed out with carbolic soap. If a child misbehaved they were hit on the legs

with a wooden ruler. I don't remember any other teachers doling out punishment apart from the occasional board duster, chalk or exercise book being thrown at the culprit."

There was a clear clash of cultures between the untrained teacher, coming from her own middle class background as a doctor's daughter, who was trying to teach young children from a predominantly working class area of Wigan. Her punishments certainly had the rationale of the previous century, and were how elementary teachers taught unwilling working class pupils in the early Board schools of the nineteenth century. This was clearly indicated by the fact that no other teacher used such methods, having progressed in how to deal with an unruly pupil by the early 1940s, as described by Margaret Hurst. It was also interesting to note how desperate schools and local officials in Wigan must have been to recruit teachers, if the qualification of being middle class and being a daughter of a doctor was considered sufficient to meet needs in the war-years.

As with other witnesses, Rita Dandy reveals that she experienced or saw a physical type of punishment at her junior and infant school, before transferring to the Wigan Girls' High School.

"... there seemed to be little disciplinary problems at St. George's. There was a teacher called Miss J., who was a 'real tarter'. She used physical punishment a lot. Everyone was frightened of her. [Laughter] Every teacher dealt with in his or her own way. I remember Mr. C. throwing a board duster at someone. It was lucky it didn't hit anyone."  
[Laughter]

William Foster remembers very clearly the type of offences which were punishable by a slapped hand whilst he was in the Infant Department at St. Matthew's Infant and Junior School. The possible reason for the punishments would have been to set an example to the rest of the school, to show that any deviance from them would be punished by physical chastisement, whatever the circumstances, including it being your birthday.

“The school was C.E. and we were taken to St. Matthew’s Church on Ash Wednesday, I brought toast for lunch (morning playtime break) and started to eat it in church. I was smacked for this ‘offence’. Overlooking the playground was a large pear tree in the garden of Dr. Readman, a local G.P. If none were stolen during the growing season the school children could go for a large basket of pears. We managed to get a basket on only one occasion. [Laughter] Corporal punishment in the infants was smacking on one hand. On one occasion on my way home from school I ran across the road and slipped and fell in front of a G.P.O. van. The van stopped and I ran away. The following morning I was smacked because I had been seen, and I had crossed the road without proper observation.”

[Laughter]

But as William Foster remembers, when he moved into the juniors, the use of the cane became an accepted part of his junior school life. Even though he had a reasonable excuse for being in the hall, there was a clear social and moral message when Miss B. found him there and subsequently caned him on each hand. He had no proper or official permission to be in the hall, and was therefore punished so as to set an example to the rest of the junior pupils.

“Corporal punishment was administered by the class teachers in the juniors, at their sole discretion. On one occasion on my birthday in Standard 2, I went into the hall at playtime because the other children were trying to pull my hair. Miss E. B. was in the hall and she sent me to her classroom and at the end of the playtime she caned me. One stroke on each hand. I was not given any chance to explain. I burst into tears. I never forgave her.” [Laughter]

Tony Perkins remembers how there was a well-established disciplinary code at his Roman Catholic Primary School in the 1960s. It included the use of physical punishment on young children, and is similar to the evidence of older witnesses who attended schools in the inter-war years. He remembers the insensitivity of not allowing young children the opportunity of going to the toilet. The punishments

certainly seem excessive, with the code of discipline not offering an enlightened approach in this infant department. Possibly the teachers had started their teaching careers before the Second World War, and continued their approaches to both teaching and disciplining the pupils in the same way, without even paying lip service to the alternative methods being advocated in the 1960s, such as the Plowden Report of 1967.

“What does stick in my mind was the discipline. Nobody was allowed to go to the toilet during lessons and I, like many, had to sit through until break restricting the natural. Many though were often taken short and had to endure the humiliation and physical unpleasantness of being wet and squelching throughout the day. In the third year infants class we had a teacher called Mrs. L., who was we invariably called ‘Lenny the Lion’, and she was a total psychopath. [Laughter] If there was ever an apt name, then this was it. This woman bawled, chastised, tortured, and brutalised many of her pupils and she was paid, instead of being imprisoned for her crimes. [Laughter] I hated this woman and was glad to have the misfortune of breaking my arm and missing school for four weeks. How a teacher at a Roman Catholic School was allowed to shout in young seven-year-old faces, hit pupils on knuckles with a ruler, on the crown of the head with her knuckles, chastise pupils by placing them on a chair, cane them and hit them without warning, I don’t know.”

Tony Perkins remembers a very physical approach in his time in the juniors at St. Patrick’s R.C. primary school in the 1960s. He goes onto describe how he defied his Headmaster by not crying after being caned over some alleged misdeed with crayons. It reflects what Stephen Humphries (1982) describes as ‘pupil resistance’ to an over-zealous use of physical punishment by the head teacher of his Infant and Junior School. There was certainly an overtone of a mistrust and deep-seated resentment over the zeal with which the school was run, with its emphasis on ‘Muscular Christianity’ in the name of the Roman Catholic Church. The most disturbing evidence to come out of this interview, was the treatment of the boy called Bryan Salmon, who was forced to dress up as a ‘fool’ all day, and then

being sent home in this outfit, to show his parents, which was almost 'inhuman' as a form of punishment. Tony Perkins goes on to describe these events:

"Throughout the four years of tuition in the juniors I was given form teacher Miss B. for two years and Miss D. for the second two years. At the end of the four years I fully understood the reason they remained Miss. [Laughter] Both were every bit as brutal as that other 'Mrs. L.' and would not, I am sure, have been out of place at Auschwitz and that is not minimising the suffering endured at the concentration camp. Every day we were given the cane on the hand, knuckled on the crown of the head, ruler across the knuckles, systematically shouted at and derided at by these upstanding catholic tyrants. The headmaster was no different and he was called Mr. M., another loud arrogant and brash man. When I was in the third year I was, to feel the extent of this frothing cruelty, being given four stokes of the cane. This occurred after three of us hid all the crayons for the art lesson. He thought we intended to steal them, which was not the case. At the caning in his office he threw all his force behind the cane to inflict the maximum pain on the outstretched, tiny hands, the other recipients, both so-called hard men, started to cry, which I feel gave him satisfaction and although it hurt me, it wasn't enough to make me shed a tear, and even if it had, I wouldn't have given him the pleasure."

"The worst psychological type of torture I ever witnessed was inflicted on a 'B' stream pupil, a Bryan Salmon, who lived down our street. This boy was twelve months older than me but was forced to dress up as a fool wearing a dunce's hat and being fitted with a donkey's tail. The young lad was made to wear this all day and stand in the corner; he was also made to go into the playground wearing the objects of derision and go home in it to show his parents. He couldn't show them, because both had separated and dumped him with his grandmother. Not only had he to suffer the loss of his parents, but his dignity as well."

A log entry from St. David's C. E. Primary School in April, 1961, reveal how the Headmistress Miss Peers had to write in the log the necessity of using corporal punishment on children who had been climbing on the school roof. She does not indicate how she administered the punishment, and if she had any witnesses when it was administered to the children. Certainly the Headmaster from Aspull secondary modern school, Mr. Firth, had no reservations about using corporal punishment, and gave vivid descriptions of how many strokes of the cane were given, who witnessed it, and the reason for the punishment. The entries from Thomas Linacre Technical School, and Aspull secondary modern school logs, are the only schools that give an indication that physical force was used to discipline the pupils. Other school log entries only give examples of the daily running of the school, teaching and curricular issues and 11+selection matters, but there are no references to physical punishment and the disciplining of pupils. Yet evidence from witnesses gives clear evidence of such a state of affairs, with the clearest example being Wigan Grammar School, in which the Headmaster and individual masters used corporal punishment as part of their regular teaching practice, on a regular basis. This possibly underlines the case for using oral history evidence, to either substantiate or triangulate what was actually happening in an individual school.

1961 19<sup>th</sup> April Informed that five children from this school and several from Aspull county secondary modern school, climbed on to the roof and amused themselves by sliding down the roof and dropping onto the yard. As this could have resulted in a serious accident to a child, the head teacher felt it necessary to administer corporal punishment to the offenders.

### **Senior school discipline**

Senior schools were established in Wigan in the early 1930s. This resulted in staff being redeployed from the All Age schools. The methods used were of the 'Elementary' tradition, and this is reflected in the evidence from witnesses who attended such schools. As with other lower status schools, the punishments were

physical in nature, and were accepted as part of the daily life of pupils who attended these schools.

When James Smith was attending his Senior School, he remembers the treatment of a disabled pupil who was caned for talking in class. He also gives a telling comment on the situation that faces teachers today when enforcing discipline in school.

“ . . . I remember on one occasion—a disabled boy with an iron on his crippled leg being dragged down a corridor to the Headmaster’s room to be caned for ‘talking in class’. This upset everyone in our class of 34 pupils. I remember this as clear a bell—and I am 75 years old this year (interviewed in 1998). The teachers wouldn’t dare use this type of discipline today, or they would be in court!!”

Harry Richardson, however, is more philosophical than other witnesses, and gives some insights into how he thinks the establishment of a partnership with parents can create effective school discipline. He also states the abolition of corporal punishment was the right decision in the late 1980s.

“Discipline in my days (1920s and 1930s) was, I should imagine stricter than today’s standards, but generally fair. Yes, I have been caned albeit not very often, and for nothing too serious. This certainly did me no lasting harm, but I think that the right decision was made when corporal punishment was abolished. However, I do think that today’s teachers have a difficult task, mainly because in many instances there is no back up from the child’s parents. Discipline has to be a two-way thing, sadly many parents cancel out any good the teachers may be doing, by taking the least line of resistance with their offspring, in fact many times opposing the teachers.”

A 1929 log entry from Whelley Central school for girls, later to become a senior school in the early 1930s, and then a secondary modern school in 1945, reveals

that a pupil was given four strokes with a ruler on her hand. Throughout the entire log entries for the school, and as it changed its title and status through the subsequent educational legalisation of the twentieth century, there is no other indication of corporal punishment being given to pupils in this school. It may have been an isolated example of an individual teacher losing her temper, and administering it on the spot to give an example to the rest of the class. There is certainly no indication of it having been witnessed by another member of staff, or of any complaint by the pupil's parents.

1929 14<sup>th</sup> November Corporal punishment was administered to Alice Winstanley (Form 2D) for deliberate disobedience and defiance. The punishment consisted of four strokes on the hand with a ruler.

Ronnie Foster's experience at a Senior Boys School was relatively uneventful, in that he thought punishment was only meted out to those pupils who stepped out of line, and he enjoyed the calm atmosphere in the school, which suited his conformist ways and attitude. The school seems to have been rather advanced in its disciplinary approaches for the period. But the most telling comment by Ronnie Foster is the one regarding not being prepared for 'exams', which gives a clear indicator of its non-selective status.

"Life at Rose Bridge was unstressful, we were not being prepared for exams, but at the same time we were encouraged to take an interest in things in general, also a good standard of behaviour was expected of us. In fact the only time punishment seemed to be meted out was if someone had stepped out of line, by behaving badly, or in some other way offended against the smooth running of the school. As a child who enjoyed this sense of order I felt comfortable at school."

Jack Woolly remembers a woodwork teacher at his Senior Boys' school at Pemberton, who threw things at misbehaving boys. He also comments on what his views of education and discipline are currently in comprehensive schools.

“At Pemberton we had a woodwork teacher named Mr. A., who if you misbehaved in class would throw the nearest object at hand, at you, be it duster or a piece of wood, imagine that today, the do-gooders would have him in court on charges of GBH, or abuse of the pupil. That’s probably my only observation about the education of yester-year and today, the watering down of school discipline by the so-called do-gooders. I’m sure that given a class of rowdy and menacing 14 and 15 year olds they would soon alter their stance about discipline.” [Laughter]

### **Discipline in the secondary modern school**

The secondary modern school was the successor to the senior school, and was to offer pupils who attended them a genuine chance of secondary education following the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act. But the reality was that they were staffed by the former senior schoolteachers, who would have carried on teaching and maintaining discipline in a similar fashion to that of other lower status schools of the twentieth century. This point is made by the fact that Mr. Stavely was both head of Rose Bridge Senior School when Ronnie Foster attended in the 1930s; and then Rose Bridge Secondary Modern School when Derrick Smith attended in the late 1940s.

Derrick Smith had a fairly positive view of his education and the discipline administered to him in the early 1950s at a Secondary Modern School (a former Senior Boys’ school built in the 1930s), in a working class area of Wigan. However, Derrick Smith does give examples of excessive physical punishment, which resulted in a formal complaint being made, and a gentle humorous occasion with the Head Teacher. It also reveals that the housing conditions for working class people immediately after the Second World War were both austere and primitive, or Derrick Smith’s father would not have seen the weal marks on his back.

“ . . . discipline was good overall with one or two exceptions like being thrashed across the back instead of the bottom with a very thick cane leaving weal marks, and as a form of punishment after the school in detention being made to kneel on bare knees with arms held up in the air for a long period, thereby causing pain. The person who gave me the weal marks, and made me kneel during the detention was called Mr. A., and my father noticed them when I was washing at the sink. He wanted to go up to the school and speak to the Headmaster, but I persuaded him not to, and I spoke to the Headmaster Mr. Stavely; and after that Mr. A. never touched me again. I also remember being sent to the Headmaster for the cane, and as he went to the mantelpiece where he kept the cane, he came back with a bottle of milk for me, and said don't do it again. [Laughter] I liked Mr. Stavely he was a gentleman.”

Edward Blishen's experiences of teaching in the 1950s, at Archway County Secondary Modern School for boys in North London, and his fictional accounts of *Stonehill Street School* (1957), and his better known novel *Roaring Boys: A Schoolmasters' Agony* (1955); match the experiences of Tony Perkins, Peter Hutchinson and myself, who all attended Secondary Modern Schools in Wigan, during the 1960s. Edward Blishen's descriptions of the buildings and equipment, the cultural differences between staff and pupils, and actually being locked in the school during lesson time, are exactly what these three witnesses experienced at their secondary modern schools. Edward Blishen (1955) argues forcefully that within the secondary modern school, there was the atmosphere and provision of the All Age elementary school and senior school, which were the predecessors of the secondary modern school. By definition the disciplinary methods came from that well-established tradition. The evidence from Tony Perkins, Peter Hutchinson and myself all give clear indications of how their head teachers approached the running and managing the school, and how good order was kept, with particular reference to discipline and punishing the pupils. This oral testimony is triangulated by evidence from a year's entries found in the school log for Aspall

secondary modern school, which had been newly built in 1960. Each witness has some memory of seeing some 'whole school' display of pupils being caned and humiliated, for the good name and reputation of the school. This is recorded very honestly in the Aspull log entry for the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1960 when a pupil, James Marsh, was publicly caned and humiliated in front of all the boys, for stealing fruit and telling lies, with Deputy Head teacher Miss Eastwood also present.

Such practice is endorsed by the views of Richard Farley (1960), who in his book *Secondary Modern Discipline*, gives a clear exposition of how a secondary modern pupil should be treated and approached by staff. Farley makes it clear it didn't matter how old or new the school building and fabric were, he argued that a relaxed and informal approach to teaching and disciplining secondary modern pupils would be disastrous. Any individual teacher who may have tried to adopt a more relaxed approach in their practice, strongly advocated by Edward Blishen (1955), as alternative and the way forward, would have encountered head teachers like the ones described below, and his efforts would have been counter-productive. In essence, the secondary modern pupil would have been disciplined in the 'elementary tradition' that would have continued in the senior school of the 1930s and early 1940s. To quote Richard Farley (1960 p.20), it would have been paramount to approach both curricular and discipline in the following manner:

"Ninety per cent of the work in a Secondary Modern School is control and discipline; the lesson content is, or should be, fairly simple, but if you don't carry out certain checks, then your lessons will be a fiasco. It is wise to keep a check on your cupboards—if you have any—for cupboards get very untidy unless constantly watched and are fair game for any curious malcontent, so keep them locked."

The following evidence from Tony Perkins, Peter Hutchinson, Muriel Heyes and myself certainly substantiates this accepted view by Farley on disciplinary approaches in the secondary modern school. This evidence is triangulated by the log entries of Aspull secondary modern school in the academic year 1960-61.

Tony Perkins remembers a 'public flogging' at St. John Fisher R.C. Secondary Modern School he attended in the late 1960s. It showed that the head teacher of this secondary modern school was not going to tolerate any acts of social misbehaviour or defiance in his school, and such acts would be punished in such a public fashion. The fact he gave three of the pupils an extra six strokes for moving on the final stroke was to reinforce his authority and make clear his position, if any boy attempted to defy him in any way. The point that Tony Perkins makes in the interview and his evidence to me was the wholly excessive nature of the punishment, that left three 15 year old boys very visibly distressed and crying. An important factor to consider was the caning on the backsides of the 4<sup>th</sup> year boys who had been caught smoking behind the bike sheds, rather than on the hand, which was the common method of punishment in the lower status schools. Such acts caused what Paul Willis (1977) describes as pupils becoming 'disaffected' in their last year at this secondary modern school. This was similar to the experiences of Peter Hutchinson and myself, who had seen a 4<sup>th</sup> year pupil caned for the same offence of smoking, but this had been on the hand, which was the normal course events in the school they attended.

"This school was again run in a disciplinarian way but did not seem quite as vicious as my junior school. On looking back, I am unable to decide on why this seems so. Perhaps the only reason I felt like this is because the events that follow were being played out on a considerably more mature mind. By this time, a lot of the young lads had begun smoking behind the bike sheds. I had not attempted this at this stage of my life and if, I had been genuinely thinking about it, a public flogging in the assembly hall quickly extinguished this. This was implemented on six fourth year pupils all were given 'six of the best' on their behinds. The last three pupils, unfortunately for them, moved on the sixth stroke. Mr. M.'s, reaction as the head teacher, was to repeat the process giving them all three an extra six lashes of the cane. All three of them burst out crying in sheer agony and this was a spectacle that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Consequently I never smoked at school or since. But it was

not this that affected me but the uncouth brutality and shaming of four boys that I looked on as big at the time, reduced to babbling children. The difference now is that I realise that they were children but the Headmaster, a religious fanatic, a grown and so called educated man failed to recognise this. A few weeks ago (May, 1998), I met an ex-pupil who was one of the 'six,' and we discussed this event at some length. Obviously, he had told this story many times to his friends and they did not believe him, he asked me out of the blue did I remember it and I described this event the way it happened; in front of his friends without prompting, the man was delighted with my rote account."

The Aspull secondary modern school log for the academic year 1960 and 1961 contains very forthright evidence of how pupils were dealt with by the Head teacher Mr. Firth, who, it appears from the entries, was the only person who had the authority to administer corporal punishment. The interesting detail is how he caned on the buttocks rather than the hand, which was the accepted way in the lower status school. A possible explanation is that he was conscious of causing the most pain on the pupil, but avoiding serious injury; and he may have previously worked in a selective grammar school before taking up this post. He also insisted that his deputy Miss Eastwood was present when he punished pupils, to safeguard against any allegations of excessive chastisement in the delivery of the punishment. It certainly triangulates the oral evidence of witnesses who attended modern schools in this period, including the public punishment of one pupil for stealing fruit and telling lies. The other interesting detail is how the girls were caned on the hand, and one had her prefect badge removed for circulating a 'dirty poem', which had a clear social and moral message to the rest of the pupils in a mixed school. All the punishments listed below are for anti-social acts, which go against the ethos of the school, and the pupils are all physically punished with the cane. The log records also reinforce the point that many of the offences are similar to those that were punished throughout the period under review in lower status schools, such as truancy, stealing and telling lies.

1960 27<sup>th</sup> Jan. The following boys were caned for smoking during the dinner hour:- F. Melling, G. Southern, W. Grundy, A. Riley. All received three strokes on the buttocks. The punishment was witnessed by Miss B. Eastwood and administered by me (Headmaster).

11<sup>th</sup> Apr. Lester McAndrews was caned for having absented himself from detention on Friday last without reason. He received 3 strokes on the buttocks. Miss Eastwood witnessed the punishment.

13<sup>th</sup> Sept. James Marsh was publicly punished for stealing fruit from a neighbouring orchard and for telling several lies about the incident. He received four strokes on the buttocks. The punishment was witnessed by Miss Eastwood and all the boys.

1961 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan Roger Cutler caned (2 strokes on buttocks) for removing a marking knife from woodwork room.

27<sup>th</sup> Feb. Keith McMahan caned (3 strokes buttocks) in the presence of his father for truancy.

28<sup>th</sup> Apr. Stocktaking has shown that a small number of textbooks use for homework are missing. Children were asked to search for these at home.

19<sup>th</sup> June Barbara Rolly lost prefect badge and Irene Burns and Margaret Holt were caned (two on strokes on hands) for circulating a dirty poem.

The log entries from Whelley mixed secondary modern school reveal only one entry with a disciplinary overtone in it. It concerns a boy who left school without permission, and was eventually found at home at 9.00 pm. There were no other entries as to what happened to the pupil, and what disciplinary action, if any, the school took.

1968 26<sup>th</sup> September Boy Halligan ran out during dinner hour. Not discovered till 1.30 pm.—apparently home at 9pm.

Peter Hutchinson remembers as a 1<sup>st</sup> year at All Saints C. E. Secondary Modern being taken by his Headmaster for a mathematics lesson and being hit over the head for 'squashing up' his date when using antiquated dip pen nibs. It is

interesting to note that when his father complained about this savage punishment to the Headmaster, he apologised and said he would never hit Peter Hutchinson again. As Peter Hutchinson candidly reveals, his father was a tough, and much older man than his peers' parents, and he was frightened about what he would say when he learned about his running away from school. However, he was surprised at the way his father reacted and dealt with it. I suspect that Peter's father, a product of the All Age school or senior school, who had lived through the depression in 1930s Wigan, and wartime service in the navy, knew his son had come up against the proverbial 'bully', and had probably told the Headmaster in no uncertain terms to leave him alone. This had led to the apology and the very light rebuff of 'slow down Peter' when he was later discovered running on the quadrangle corridor. As with all bullies, who also happened to be Headmasters, he carried on in his usual way of asserting himself to all the pupils in the school, such as the public thrashing of Paul McCracken, and the thrashing of two boys for misbehaving in one of his assemblies, which are highlighted later in this section. Peter Hutchinson's testimony confirms the view of Richard Farley (1960), that in teaching and disciplining pupils in a secondary modern school, it was essential to keep the class task or activity manageable and easy to discipline. This was certainly the view taken by this Headmaster, in his approach to both teaching and disciplining boys in the secondary modern school. As Peter Hutchinson goes on to vividly recall his grim memory of being hit over the head for squashing his date up:

“During my time at All Saints, the teaching staff were all men and by and large middle aged or approaching middle age. They were led by our esteemed Headmaster, Mr G., a person more unsuitable for any kind of position remotely associated with education, one cannot imagine! He did however maintain strong discipline, completely achieved through a reign of terror. Mr. G. was a short, round, bald man with beady eyes and thin cruel lips, who rarely smiled and always seemed to be attired in a beige suit and trilby hat. He had a peculiar way of speaking, managing to deliver whole sentences through clenched teeth, with no perceptible

movement of the lower jaw, punctuated by a smacking of the lips and a reptilian darting out of the tongue.” [Laughter]

“As first year ‘A’ stream pupils we enjoyed the dubious privilege of a mathematics lesson, delivered every Friday afternoon, by Mr. G. The lesson always began with the ‘pen ritual’, Mr. G. would march around the classroom thrusting ‘dip pens’ from a wooden box, into the hands of each pupil, whilst we stood rigidly to attention by our desks. Not for us the luxury of using our personal Parker fountain pens and Heaven forbid any boy who dared think about soiling a page of his maths book, with one of those new fangled ballpoints. Writing in Mr. G.’s lesson could only be performed with a wooden handled implement that wouldn’t have looked out of place between Bob Cratchit’s fingers. Each pen would be fitted with one of the three varieties of detachable nib, sharp, italic and fountain pen style. Writing with the sharp nib was virtually impossible and the only profitable use such an equipped pen could be put to, was that of a dart! The impertinence of requesting for an alternative when given the sharp variety was far too dangerous to contemplate.” [Laughter]

“During the first of these lessons I recall raising my hand in response to the question, from our revered pedagogue ‘What is the area of a triangle?’ ‘Sir is it half one side times half another?’ I ventured. ‘Sit down boy; you’re a fool’ came the reply. The lesson continued in much the same vein until Mr. G. declared ‘You’re all fools and I’m going to get my cane.’ His most treasured teaching aid was placed on his desk, presumably in the belief that its magical powers would imbue us with the combined mathematical prowess of Newton and Leibnitz!” [Laughter]

“It was some weeks later that I was to learn the efficacy of procuring the appropriate dip pen nib from another classroom, before entering Mr. G.’s maths lesson. I drew the short straw, or should I say sharp nib and after much feverish dipping in the porcelain ink well and blobbing onto blotting paper, I managed a somewhat truncated spidery version of the

date at the top of a page of algebra. Bang my head hit the desk and I saw stars, 'Date crushed up Hutchinson,' snarled Mr. G. through his clenched teeth. The second blow had me cowering on the floor under the desk. I scrambled back into my seat and tried to continue with my work on the ink blotched and tear stained page. The following Monday we learned that Mr. R., the teacher who taught us maths throughout the week, apart from what had become the Friday algebra lesson, was off sick. The realisation that Mr. G. was to take 'all' of our maths lessons, was too much for me, so I bolted from school at lunchtime and went home."

This is a clear example of a Headmaster who had overstepped the mark in dealing with a simple mistake when using outdated pens, when a pencil would have been more appropriate. The fact that he used his hand when hitting this pupil reveal tradition and a personal trait of his teaching when disciplining pupils in his care. It is a clear example of how such methods were considered the most appropriate in dealing with pupils in the lower status school.

"My Father who was 45 when I was born and was 12 years older than my Mother, had lived through the thirties depression and served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. He was quite a stern and unaffectionate Father and I was concerned as to how he would react when Mum explained to him why I had run away from school. He surprised me with his understanding and tenderness. 'You're not going to school tomorrow and I shall speak to Mr. G. on the telephone in the morning, don't worry lad it'll be alright.' The next day when Dad came home from work, he said to me 'You are not to repeat this to anybody, I have spoken to Mr. G. and he has apologised, he said he lost his temper, but he won't hit you again.' Some time later when running in the quadrangle (a hanging offence), I rounded a corner and bounced off the rotund countenance of our beloved headmaster, 'Slow down Peter,' was the only admonishment I received!"

This is a clear example of how a combination of both 'pupil' and 'parental' resistance had an impact on how the Headmaster of this secondary modern school

treated this particular pupil in the future. But as Peter Hutchinson goes on to reveal, this did not change or modify the way he treated other pupils who did not conform to the boundaries he had established in this school. Possibly the boy publicly caned was from a family that Jeremy Seabrook (1982) describes as 'non-conforming', but did complain or resist the punishments meted out in this particular school on their son.

"Throughout the remainder of my schooling I had virtually no contact with Mr. G., other boys however were not so fortunate. I remember vividly the day McCracken was caned by Mr. G., on the stage during assembly in front of the whole school. The crime that warranted a public flogging was that of smoking behind the bike sheds. No one present could possibly fail to see the hypocrisy of the situation, here was a man who smoked so heavily, that the left corner of his mouth was permanently nicotine stained! After much theatrical lowering and raising of McCracken's hands, He was much taller than the head; Mr. G. wielded his cane with as much vigour as his short chubby arm could muster. This was no ritual humiliation; the intention was clearly to inflict as much pain as humanly possible. To McCracken's credit, although red faced and clearly in pain, he did not utter a sound or shed a single tear throughout the whole sordid ordeal and as he nonchalantly left the stage, I'm sure every boy present issued a silent cheer!"

I was present at this event as a 1<sup>st</sup> Year in the 'B' stream, and agree with Peter Hutchinson's memories and assessment of the situation, and shake my head with Peter Hutchinson in disgust at this treatment of this 4<sup>th</sup> Year 'B' stream boy, McCracken, by Mr. G. There was another point made being made in this public thrashing by the Headmaster. It was to ensure that all the boys in his school would conform to the boundaries of behaviour he had established. And any boy who did not would be punished in such a fashion. In essence this Headmaster was following a clear tradition of quick and physical punishment, which he had learnt and used during his entire career in lower status schools.

I personally remember an incident in which the Headmaster of my secondary modern school was swift in administering punishment in the name of 'Muscular Christianity', after some misbehaviour by two boys in an assembly. The Headmaster's reaction was very prompt and the message behind his punishment very clear, 'this is what happens to anyone if you misbehave in his assembly'.

"One incident remains as clear and vivid today to me as it did 35 years ago when I was a 1<sup>st</sup> at All Saints' C. E. Secondary Modern school for boys. Each Friday afternoon in the boys' department, the school week was finished and completed with a prayer, hymn and comment on the week's work by the Headmaster, reflecting the Christian ethos of the school. One particular Friday in early January 1964, when the final prayers were being completed, everyone heard one or two masters shouting at two boys to get out! There was a shuffle of feet, and one could hear the headmaster giving instruction to a senior master, Mr. G. to take over from him on the stage. On being dismissed each class saw the two culprits, who were visibly crying, distressed and upset after receiving, I suspect, a thrashing from the Headmaster."

The incident mentioned above, I feel, gives an indication of the type of punishment meted out in a secondary modern school in the 1950s and 1960s. A clear understanding of knowing your place and limitations in the school and society at large, and giving deference to your elders and the establishment was very clear. I feel this gets to the essence of people's frustrations of talking about their school experiences, and the actual education and treatment they received. Taking this one point further, there was limited or moderate parental complaint; I suspect the parents of my peers had undergone a similar experience in their youth, as my parents had, and there was a 'shared' feeling of deference to the school's staff and hierarchy. I remember my father complaining to the Headmaster during my 'Third Year' about my progress in the school, but it was brushed aside, with my father arguing with the Headmaster. As ever the Headmaster's superior education and position ensured he was always in the 'driving seat' in any

argument about education and methods of punishment in the school, with parents like my father. It was the 'repeating pattern' in successive generations of deference to the establishment, to the people in control. You had a distinct place in society, and in effect the school was socialising and preparing you for your place in both society and work.

The work of Richard Farley (1960 p.122-123) on discipline in the modern school suggested that girls tended to be on whole more 'docile' and 'civilised' to teach than boys. However, as Farley goes on to say 'teaching a girl's class is often an uneventful affair: the girls write out notes, listen, look at the board and at the end of the lesson haven't much idea about the subject of the lesson. Their range of behaviour is narrower than that of boys' class: one has less idiots and hooligans and less original thought'. However, he warned, 'when one had a really difficult girl, she can cause more trouble than half a dozen boys, and . . . this is a matter for a mature and experienced women and not a man'. These comments certainly agreed with the testimony of Muriel Heyes, who chronicles her education at All Saints' C. E. Secondary Modern School for girls', which eventually became a comprehensive school in 1971, the year before she left. There were certainly strong and mature lady teachers who taught Muriel Heyes, and her classmates, such as Miss B. and Miss L. Muriel encountered trouble herself at the end of a P.E. lesson, when a ring was taken from her. This dispute was eventually resolved after a confrontation with the Head teacher, and the P.E. teacher herself. Whether there was any backlash to the subsequent complaint by her mother, Muriel Heyes can't remember, but she did say she was not good at P.E. and games, and this could have been a possible source of conflict between herself and the teacher. As she goes on to explain:

"As an 'A' stream pupil, Domestic Science was a daunting prospect. The teacher was Miss B., whose famous quote was 'take an order mark', which culminated into going into detention on Wednesday afternoon after school. She was a formidable teacher, small and short, and feared by all the girls in the school. [Laughter] One example, I can recall

vividly to this day, is Miss B. pushing Susan Atherton's head into a cooker because she had not cleaned the stove properly." [Laughter]

"One incident which I admit was from a second hand source, involved two girls, in a 'Alpha' stream (similar to a 'B' stream), and were both emotionally disturbed, and could be disruptive in class. One of them Elizabeth E. was considered frightening to other girls in the school. The story goes that Elizabeth E. and Susan C. had got hold of a 'window pull' and threatened the domestic teacher with the 'window pull'. As far as I know they were not disciplined, because of their disadvantages and disabilities. I feel they should have been in a 'special school'."

"My last year in school, was as a sixteen year-old, which by this time was a comprehensive school, and had changed its name to the Deanery. As a pupil who complied with everything asked of me in school, the only real problem I encountered was in a P.E. lesson, with a new teacher to the school, called Mrs. D. At the end of a games lesson, and I emphasise the end of the lesson, she insisted on taking a valuable 'signet' ring off me, which really upset me at the time. So much so, I walked from the Sports ground, which was two miles away from the school, to report this to my mother, who worked in a large supermarket in the middle of Wigan. This resulted in the ring being given back to me, after my mother complained about the incident to the Head teacher. I can't remember whether there was any comeback from this teacher, I was not very athletic, and P.E. and sport was not really my thing."

"The only really physical or corporal punishment I saw concerned a girl called Hilary Webster, who had been reported as smoking in the toilets. Mrs. F. had told the new Deanery Deputy Head teacher, Miss L., who gave Hilary a very hard and severe caning on the hand. It certainly had the effect of putting the 'Fear of God' to anyone watching this spectacle. I know it left a nasty taste in my mouth at the time, and did not help Hilary, who at the age of 20, died of a heroin overdose, in 1975."

Muriel Heyes's facial expression, and body posture during this part of the interview, revealed a sense of frustration at and the needless use of corporal punishment in this way. Another revealing feature of this physical punishment was it was in the lower status school tradition of being quick and physical, to have an immediate effect on the pupils observing it.

### **Differentiation of discipline and punishments in the selective schools**

If the experience or degree of deference of witnesses who attended lower status schools is compared and contrasted with the experiences of witnesses who attended grammar schools, a significant difference in the types of punishments administered emerges. Firstly, the female witnesses give accounts of missing important school events if they committed any misdemeanour in or out of the school, and being given both implicit and explicit warnings about maintaining the ethos and reputation of the school in regard to their everyday conduct. This was clearly the case when, for example, Margaret Hurst and Christine Mosley, both pupils of Wigan Girls' High School, committed an offence, which went against the, values and accepted traditions of the school. They made no mention of physical punishment apart from in the primary stage of their education, before being transferred at 11 years of age to their selective secondary education. Male witnesses give evidence of physical punishment or chastisement, delivered on the buttocks, usually by the Headmaster or Deputy.

### **Lines, detentions and prefects**

Other forms of punishment were the giving of lines, missing games on Wednesday afternoons, and detention after school. One witness revealed detention could include a Saturday morning if one received three 'black marks' in a week! Another clear difference was the mention of prefects by witnesses of either gender as a means of establishing an orderly and disciplined environment. This was another subtle difference, in that a prefect of eighteen would have more impact than one at fourteen or fifteen in the lower status school. As with other schools there would always be the teacher of either gender who over-stepped the mark or the established boundaries in a particular school, when punishing pupils,

and these are vividly recorded by the witnesses concerned below. Any ‘larking about’ or ‘having a laff’ in the grammar school would be dealt with and the pupil reminded of ‘his’ or ‘her’ privileged position in the school.

Winifred Jones’s experiences from attending a mixed Grammar school at Hindley, near Wigan in the 1930’s, reveal that there were not only teachers but also prefects that administered discipline, which indicated a clear social division between the lower status schools, and the grammar school.

“The staff I remember with respect and some indeed with affection. We were in awe not only of the staff, but also the prefects, this could be sometimes be irritating, but on the whole it was a humbling experience. The teachers treated us like adults, but we were always aware that they were in complete charge, we never overstepped the mark. I always treated them with respect. I think one can dislike, but still respect.”

Betty Houghton, like Winifred Jones, attended a Grammar school in Up Holland, near Wigan, but she gives a slightly different version of such a school, compared to that of Winifred Jones. Betty Houghton gives an insight that reveals that the grammar school had a clear culture and ethos for pupils attending. As Betty Houghton goes on to explain:

“. . . all the pupils had to wear school uniform if attending Grammar Schools . . . no concessions whatever were made. No make-up or permed hair. But this was at Up Holland Grammar, where the Headmistress was very strict and terrifying to all the pupils.” [Laughter]

Fred Foster got an early insight into how punishment was administered when a pupil misbehaved during his first year at Wigan Grammar School. As with a lot of other witnesses, his experiences of being taught during the war revolved round the acute shortage of teachers, which resulted in retired staff being invited back to teach again in schools. The interesting thing to remember about how Neville Wood was punished is that he was hit on the ‘backside’ rather than on the hand.

Fred Foster remembers being punished is that he was hit on the hand in his Infant and Junior school. The punishment was carried out by the Headmaster rather than an individual teacher. Perhaps this was the retired master's way of safeguarding his status as a Church of England vicar.

“The man who taught us General Science at the time was Rev. (Dippy) Preston, a Church of England priest, who was helping out due to the fact most of the staff of conscription age were away on active service. We hadn't been at school for more than a week when Neville Wood, a boy who lived in Newton-le-Willows, was messing around in the junior chemistry Laboratory. We were all there, waiting for the teacher to arrive and Wood was playing around with the swan necked tap, he had it turned on and with his thumb under it was liberally spraying everyone who was unfortunate to get in the way. In walked Dippy, ‘Boy come here!’ he said. ‘What's your name boy?’ ‘Err, Wood sir.’ ‘Come with me Wood’. They disappeared in the direction of the Headmaster's study. Soon they were back and Wood was tearful, rubbing his backside where ‘Two of the best’ had been swiftly applied. He didn't play with the taps again! [Laughter] Neville later in life became an inspector in the police force.”

Ethel Prone remembers a teacher at Wigan Girls' High School in the late 1930s and early 1940s who threw a duster at the girls when she got cross with them. The most important memory was the wearing of hats at all times of the year, and never to be seen eating ice-cream, which was considered to lower the esteem and reputation of the school. This was a view that was supported by all witnesses who attended selective schools, such as the grammar or high schools in Wigan. The whole ethos of this type of school permeated the lives of the pupils who attended them, both inside and outside the actual buildings.

“Our mathematics teacher often threw the blackboard duster at us when she got annoyed. We had to wear our school hats when walking outside and never take it off and carry it, even in summer, and never eat ice

cream in the street. We hadn't to run along the corridors and never to go outside school without permission."

Jean Ashton, remembers what was considered the normal standard of behaviour at Wigan Girls' High School in the 1940s. Implicit in all these rules was the school's ethos and reputation, particularly outside the school environment, when wearing hats and not walking three abreast were considered very important for pupils attending this type of school.

"At each lesson we had to stand when the teacher entered the room, and also when she left at the end of each lesson. We were given a list of rules to follow, i.e. no running on corridors, we had to change into indoor shoes whilst in school. We had to wear hats whilst going to and from school, and never to walk in more than three's." [Laughter]

Fred Foster remembers an incident in which a manipulative pupil (Etzioni 1961), managed to avoid being punished after a scuffle on the floor. Interesting to note how the teachers believed him and didn't punish him by caning on the hand. Fred Foster's memories of this experience reveals all discipline was intended to set a precedent and model of what was expected in the grammar school classroom. He also vividly remembers one unfortunate pupil who was punished for being on the wrong page during this incident.

"There was one incident concerning Brian Santus that is worth relating, and this is one when I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> form. We had a science lesson coming up and we were waiting for the master to appear. I do believe that at the time it was Mr. K. who was taking us. Brian Santus and another boy were scuffling on the floor. I can't remember who the other boy was, but Mr. A. came in and stopped the fight. 'Right' he said, 'come with me to Mr. L.'. Mr. L. was Deputy Head and must have been standing in for the Headmaster. Mr. A. looked around the class; everybody was head down, reading their books. He looked at Alan Everingham and said to him, 'What page are you reading?' Alan was in

the wrong page! 'Right' he said 'You can come as well'. When they got back, Alan and the other boy had been 'Whacked' with two strokes apiece, but crafty Brian had got off without being caned. 'You can't cane me' he said, 'I've got diarrhoea'. Of course he hadn't but they couldn't take the chance!" [Laughter]

Fred Foster remembers two alienated pupils (Etzioni 1961), from the grammar school that were expelled or 'sacked' from the school. These coercive pupils were punished first and then expelled from the school. Fred Foster reveals how one 'notorious' pupil got the better of the Headmaster and the Deputy Headmaster, by assaulting the Deputy and vaulting over the desk, never to return to the school. The other pupil used his knowledge from chemistry lessons to create a very dangerous situation in a washbowl using potassium. It is interesting to note that a higher status school could remove or expel pupils, but I have no verbal or written evidence of any pupil being expelled from any of the lower status schools available to pupils in the period under investigation.

"I don't remember many boys being asked to leave or to be 'sacked' as the boys put it. [Laughter] One notable one was John House, whose exploits were legend. How much of the tale is true I can't say, because the legend was passed on through many times of telling and no doubt with embellishments as it was told. The story was that House was taken to the Headmaster's study for some misdemeanour, whereupon he was told that he was to be caned by the Headmaster. House would not bend over to receive the cane. The Headmaster said to House 'Do you want Mr. L. to assist you?' As Mr. L. was about to do this, House slugged (hit) him on the jaw with an uppercut, vaulted over the Headmaster's desk, left the building, and never returned!" [Laughter]

"There was only one other notorious case, and that concerned Jim Knight, whose father was a boss at Lord and Sharman's slipper works in Pemberton. Knight had stolen some potassium from the laboratory. He had taken it into the toilets near the gym, and had put it into a washbowl, filled with water. The property that potassium has is a great affinity for

water, and as it met the water in the bowl, it began to spin round the bowl very fast, some of it was spat out and nearly blinded another innocent bystander, Knight was caned and then given the boot.”

Frank Dandy reveals in his years at Wigan Grammar School in the late 1940s and early 1950s, how inconsistencies and discrepancies occurred in the giving of lines and detention. The use of lines and detention are hardly remembered by witnesses who attended lower status schools. It also indicated the personality factor that came into disciplining of pupils, no matter which school a pupil attended.

“Punishment was occasionally physical, the Chemistry and P.E. master particularly so. Mainly lines and detention were used. Although there were discrepancies in this. One would be given 50, whilst another would give 500 for a similar misdemeanour. These were given for late coming and poor attendance.”

Fred Foster reveals how as a conformist pupil (Etzioni 1961), he largely kept out of trouble and avoided any disciplinary action. However, he reveals as a sixteen-year-old how he was seen smoking by the Headmaster. He avoided physical chastisement for his misdemeanour, and was told to see the Headmaster after taking his School Certificate examinations.

“So far at school I had kept out of trouble, except for the odd run in with authority, but I nearly came a cropper when, during the time I was taking the School Certificate, I had the unfortunate chance to meet the Headmaster with a cigarette hanging from my lip. As soon as I saw him, I threw it down and stubbed it out. ‘That was a foolish thing to do boy!’ said the Headmaster. ‘What’s your name?’ I told him and he said. ‘I’ll see you after the examinations’. I thought ‘Not if I can help it’.”  
[Laughter]

This idea that a grammar school education was preparing you for a different occupational destination and class identity from that provided by a lower status

education, was clearly indicated by Margaret Hurst, who remembers being put into detention for one hour after school, for eating chips in the street in Wigan after a school party in the late 1940s. As she explains:

“ . . . on the one occasion that I had to be disciplined I, along with about twelve other girls had to miss the one and only staff entertainment production given during my time at the school. We had to repair old textbooks using brown-gummed paper. The reason we being punished was that we had been caught eating chips in the street. This was about 9 p.m. after the school party (not much food for hungry girls). [Laughter] We were not wearing school uniform but we were unfortunate to be recognised by the Headmistress who happened to be in town that night. Your hair had to be short or tied back. The Headmistress would check each girl and if the hair touched your collar you were given string to tie it back at once.”

The moral and social purpose of the code of discipline that Margaret Hurst received was to reflect what was required of a pupil who attended Wigan Girls' High School. The implication behind the punishment that Margaret Hurst received was that people who undertook manual work rather than a profession, and pupils who received a non-selective education frequented a fish and chip shop. It was a similar moral and social meaning that Christine Mosley received when she was at the school a few years later.

Rita Dandy remembers in her selected education at Wigan Girls' High School how it was considered a 'cardinal sin' to be seen without your school hat or purchasing a 1d. loaf from a local shop near the school. There was certainly a middle class culture of elitism attached to this type of misdemeanour, which would have been in conflict with the way of life of working class pupils who attended the school. Rita Dandy also forcefully makes the point about an all 'female staff' and the use of lines and detention to punish girls who have transgressed against the school's disciplinary and cultural system.

“Punishment was either ‘lines’ or ‘detention’, it was an all female staff. Buying a 1d. loaf at a local shop near the school, or being seen without your hat on was considered a ‘cardinal sin’. You would be reprimanded by a teacher/mistress if you were seen doing anything which undermined yourself or the school’s reputation.”

Fred Foster also reveals that there were masters at his grammar school who would administer punishment themselves. Some had a very sadistic nature and method, which went outside the recognised boundaries of what would be expected in a grammar school. As Fred Foster goes on to describe:

“We had in our class a lad by the name of Gordon Thorley, he wasn’t much of an academic and I don’t know what happened to him in later life, except that he went towards London. The incident that I have in mind concerning him was one that is rooted deep in my mind. We were in the Gym one day and the class was being taken by Mr. D. who was an ex-army man from World War One. He would walk about the school ramrod straight, and was in charge of Junior School mathematics and sometimes filled in the gym when required.”

“I’ll never know what misdemeanour Thorley had been guilty of, but the first we knew of it was when Mr. D. came up to him and knocked him to the floor. We all stood there petrified, it was a side of Mr. D. that we had never seen before. As Thorley lay there snivelling, Mr. D. picked him up and hit him again, dropping him like a sack of potatoes! He then stood over Thorley and beat him about the face. We were gob smacked! I’m sure that Mr. D. was a bit of sadist as he liked nothing better than speaking of ‘Six cuts of the cane’.”

Fred Foster shakes his head in disgust about this master, and his approach of how to discipline the boys in his charge. It was also unusual in a higher status school for individual teachers to administer physical punishment, it was usually undertaken by a senior member of staff.

Christine Moseley gives an insight into how discipline was administered at Wigan Girls' High School in the late 1950s and early 1960s. There was a clear emphasis on what was expected from the girls when moving around the school and completing work given to them, with Christine Mosley giving examples of detention for talking and failing to hand in set homework. Interestingly enough, homework was only given to pupils selected for a grammar school education, not to pupils who attended lower status schools, such as the senior schools or secondary modern. As Christine Mosley remembers:

“Discipline in the school was paramount. We were not even allowed to talk, even in the changing rooms at break times. Talking when walking from lesson to lesson was banned. We had to change rooms nearly every time a lesson finished. I remember being in detention numerous times for very trivial offences such as handling in homework late.” [Laughter]

Another factor that Christine Moseley illustrated is the social context and preparation for a pupil who attended such a selective school. Staff and particularly the Head Teacher had a clear idea of how a young lady from Wigan Girl's High School should present herself to both her peers, members of public in Wigan, and particularly visitors to the school. This is clearly indicated when Harold Wilson visited the school, and Christine Mosley was prevented from meeting him as a personal representative of the school, because she had dyed her natural hair 'blond'. As Christine Moseley explains:

“ . . . the one memorable occasion (in the school) I remember is a visit by Harold Wilson, but whether he was Prime Minister at the time I don't know (in fact was in opposition) . . . I was supposed to be one of two pupils from our year who were to meet him, but one week beforehand I dyed my hair blond and the Headmistress (Miss Holland) decided it would not be fitting for me to meet him.” [Laughter]

Christopher Dennis remembers discipline at his grammar school in the 1950s and early 1960s. Interesting to note how three 'black marks' resulted in a Saturday morning detention session. Witnesses from lower status secondary schools of the

period received quick and summary punishment rather than a detention, which impinged on their weekends. It certainly made the point to pupils at Christopher Dennis's grammar school, that your time will be used if you can't make full use of the opportunity being afforded to you at this higher status grammar school. However, when the Headmaster physically punished him for fooling around after school, he was punished on the backside rather than the hand, which was associated with the lower status schools of the period.

“Discipline was very firm at Ashton Grammar School. Throwing missiles and a black mark system, three of these in the week meant attending a special session on Saturday morning! I only once remember being caned, and that was by the Headmaster for throwing and splashing water after school with another boy when I was about sixteen. I received two strokes across the backside, I didn't want any more I can tell you.”

[Laughter]

John Duckworth remembers being 'struck' by the bewildering strict discipline at Wigan Grammar School in the 1960s, and the fact that one pupil actually gave his first name rather than his surname when asked his name by a master. The most compelling difference between the grammar school and the lower status secondary school was the use of 6<sup>th</sup> form prefects to administer discipline. Witnesses from the lower status schools never mention the use of other pupils to help in the maintenance of discipline in the school they attended. Most important was the totally binding commitment to behave to a much higher standard than that of pupils at the lower status secondary modern schools, and the potent reminders of what was acceptable from a pupil who attended Wigan Grammar School from total strangers. It is also interesting to note how there was what Stephen Humphries (1982) describes as 'collective resistance' by the boys, when no-one would own up for the writing of 'rude words' on a school notice board.

“Early days at Wigan Grammar School were bewildering; strict discipline was imposed by 6<sup>th</sup> form prefects visiting from Mount Olympus and the masters were fierce, insensitive and omnipotent. On the

very first day, a contemporary new starter was asked his first name by our form master; the boy gave his Christian name and was sharply told to give his proper name, not what his mother called him.” [Laughter]

“There were always reminders from the school, from family and, sometimes from total strangers (school uniform was mandatory) that grammar school boys were to behave at a higher standard. The whole school was once kept behind for one hour when rude words were added to a house notice and no would own up.” [Laughter]

The log entries from Thomas Linacre Technical School, Wigan, reveal that the permanent Headmaster, Mr. Austin, appeared to support the boys who attended the only Technical school in the Wigan area that functioned under the 1944 Butler Act tripartite arrangements. He went to Juvenile Court to testify for two boys in 1954, and spoke to a parent to guarantee the future good behaviour of his son. On his departure in 1962, shortly before the school joined Wigan Grammar School, the Acting head used corporal punishment on a regular basis, in the grammar school tradition of ‘on the buttocks’, and always had a witness to the punishments. This may have been the case when Mr. Austin was in charge, but he never recorded the use of corporal punishment in the school log; he may have had a more humane profile when dealing with disciplinary problems. This situation obviously changed when an Acting Head took control, and administered it on a regular basis. It must be remembered that Thomas Linacre was a new school, built in 1953, with a new approach to the curriculum, and possibly under Mr. Austin there was a fresh approach to discipline, which was overthrown on his leaving the school in 1962. His successor obviously felt any ‘pupil resistance’, ‘larking about’ or having a ‘laff’ would be dealt with in a much firmer way.

1954 19<sup>th</sup> April H. Clarke and P. G. Brinsmole before Juvenile Court for throwing milk bottle from train. Headmaster appeared to testify for both boys.

1958 4<sup>th</sup> March Discovered that a group of boys had been living in Huyton, and had been truanting and had been writing notes for each other.

1958 12<sup>th</sup> March F. J. Archer (1B) admitted upsetting lockers in form room after two warnings and stealing two separate lots of foreign stamps. Sent home to bring father.

1958 13<sup>th</sup> March Archer readmitted on promise from Archer's father of future good behaviour by the boy.

1962 3<sup>rd</sup> May J. Taylor (3T) caned, in presence of Mr. Rhodes for having exercise book in his possession, for which he had no right. Caned three times on buttocks. K. Taylor warned about consequences of leaving bag about for other boys to use.

1962 4<sup>th</sup> May After assembly all pupils sent back to Form Rooms to have contents of pockets examined. Two keys, which could open school doors, confiscated. At re-assembly the whole school was solemnly warned about being 'in possession of articles to what they had no right'.

1962 31<sup>st</sup> May Maleoy (5S) caned for truancy and for insolence.

1962 4<sup>th</sup> June Morris (4C) caned for leaving school without permission.

1962 21<sup>st</sup> September D. Kelly (3B) caned for setting off firework in school.

1962 26<sup>th</sup> September A. Baldry (4E) caned for truancy and forgery of excuse note.

### Conclusion

In summing up and reaching a conclusion about the discipline used in different schools, the defining factor was the role a pupil would eventually take up when he or she left school to enter the world of work and society as a whole. Whether the school was higher status or lower status, the senior management and staff always had to be in control of its pupils, and have visible and well-established punishments and sanctions if pupils misbehaved or resisted the particular ethos and culture of the school. These would be known and accepted by pupils, parents and the wider community at large. Where problems occurred, which resulted in parental complaint, these could be attributed to over-zealous teachers. The clear differences in the types of punishment administered in schools were directly linked to the status of the school and to a lesser extent the gender of the pupil. There was an underlying assumption and tradition that physical punishment and chastisement was accepted by and associated with the mass working class pupils

who attended the variety of lower status schools available in the period under investigation, whilst the pupils who attended the selective schools would be subject to punishments associated with the middle class. This is clearly indicated in the evidence obtained from pupils who attended the grammar or high school, as opposed to the lower status All Age school, senior school and its successor the secondary modern school.

The regulatory function and force of the discipline that was applied is still clearly seen in the recall of the witnesses. Their sense of injustice, of humiliation and fear is still almost palpable, when they remember the worst examples. The discipline that was applied to them had its justifications in the social hierarchy, the values and patterns of identity of a divided society. Indeed, the discipline imposed provides many telling clues about the tacit, negotiated order of this society. It remains an intriguing fact that the values and ideals and structures of nineteenth century education persisted for nearly another century in public education in this country.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE 11+SELECTION PROCESS AND LOST OPPORTUNITIES.

The main argument of this thesis is that a 'dual' and 'differentiated' system of secondary education was perpetuated for over half a century in Wigan. This was achieved and legitimised by the 11+scholarship process that was employed extensively throughout the town. Educational historians such as Brian Simon (1971 and 1974), Nigel Middleton and Sophie Weitzman (1976), and Gary McCulloch (1998) all reveal an intransigent stubbornness on the part of central government to remove the grammar school from the apex of the secondary educational system until the middle of the 1960s. Although changes were attempted and made at the national or macro level to improve the status of the evolving post elementary or primary schools, they always remained subordinate when compared with the grammar school and the outcomes achieved by pupils on leaving this type of school. This failure in changing national policies to make a secondary education available to all pupils is best described by Middleton and Weitzman (1976 p.369) 'The early realization that schools were expensive and an ignorant working class was more amenable than an informed one, are only two factors in a log jam of obstacles blocking the extension of state education'. This point is further developed by Brian Simon (1974 p.248-249) who argues 'the doctrine that secondary education is not for all, that only for the selected qualify for a complete form of it, that the requirements of the few will define the provision for the many at whatever cost to that majority, that differentiation will prevail even if it negates education, in terms of streaming and classification for the purpose of selection'.

This argument is endorsed by Gillian Sutherland (1984) in her book *Ability, Merit and Measurement*, in which she argues that the differentiation and classification of children was undertaken through the 11+selection examination. As she goes on to state: 'The principal instrument in the process of selection/classification, as practised by almost all LEAs (such as Wigan), was of course a formal examination, which, taking place at the age of transfer, came to be known as the

'eleven-plus examination' or simply the 11+' (1984 p.186). This was historically echoed and developed by the Hadow Report in 1926:

“while we think all children should enter some type of post-primary school at the age of 11+, it will be necessary to discover in each case the type of education most suitable to a child's abilities and interests, and for this purpose a written examination should be held, and also, wherever possible, an oral examination”. (Hadow Report, 1926 pages 169-170).

This premise was taken for granted in further reports such as the Spens Report and Norwood Report, which were influential in shaping and framing the 1944 Butler Education Act, which was concerned with educational reconstruction after the Second World War. Sutherland (1984 p.187) goes on to argue that the 11+selection examination played a 'pivotal role' in a child's future life: 'The eleven-plus examination thus became the pivot between primary and post-primary education; and a strong performance in it might alter, even determine the course of a child's life'. This was the direct experience recovered in the testimony of witnesses, who either attended All Age elementary schools, or infant and junior schools.

It is clear that the 11+scholarship examination played an important part in every witness's educational life that was interviewed for this study. The following oral testimonies show how pupils approached the examination, and the practical, social and most importantly, the financial implications of success in the 11+scholarship examination, are explored. These oral testimonies are triangulated from evidence gathered from a variety of primary archive source material, which reveal that only a very, very small minority of pupils were successful in passing the 11+scholarship examination. In fact, if a pupil was successful the event was celebrated by giving the rest of the pupils in the school either a full, or half a day off school. This was illustrated in the log entries for St. David's C. E. All Age school, which reveal that on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1936, following the success of a pupil called Ivor F. B. Ellis, the school was given the afternoon off. The only school that was successful in getting an above pass rate from its pupils was the Wigan Wesleyan School. This was mainly due to its central location in Wigan, with its

catchment area of aspiring working class and middle class parents who wished their children to attend selective grammar schools. It must be remembered that this had a tremendous effect on a person's 'life-chances'. Some of the life stories of the witnesses indicate what an enormous amount of 'latent talent' was left untapped due to the inadequacies of national educational planning, and particularly the continued use of mental testing as a measure of a pupil's abilities, which impacted at the micro-level, in towns like Wigan.

All the witnesses interviewed for this study underwent some form of 'mental testing' through the guise of a scholarship examination to establish whether they were part of the minority judged suitable for a selective secondary education in a grammar school, or whether they were to join the majority at a non-selective school of whatever kind was available at the time. This was indicated in the logbook for Moss Lane County All Age School, which recorded in June 1925, that only 'five Exhibitions' were available in the Hindley district of Wigan that year, for places at a selective grammar school. Several witnesses can also testify to not being able to answer some of the questions, mainly due to not being taught a particular idea or concept found in the examination paper. For example, June Foster remembers not being able to solve a problem using fractions in 1941, because she had not been taught how to in lessons. In the case of Tony Perkins in 1966, it was a cultural ignorance of not knowing where he should have washed, the 'sink' or 'bathroom'. Indeed Muriel Heyes can remember in the same year, only one pupil in her class at St. Thomas' C. E. Primary School, a Janet Pennington, passing the 11+ examination and this was achieved through private coaching and tuition, paid for by her parents. 'Mental testing' was thus used to distinguish different categories of pupils into those who would benefit from a secondary education, as opposed to those that should remain in the evolving stages of post elementary education, as the state became more involved in the development of education during the twentieth century.

### **'Mental testing' – its historical development for selection**

The development and use of 'mental testing' as a means of selecting pupils for secondary education had a similar background to that of the introduction of elementary education by the state in 1870. Mental testing was very different from the process of accessing different secondary school through social status or 11+entry, which pertained by the early twentieth century. The idea of 'mental testing' through a scholarship examination came from the work of Sir Francis Galton, a Cambridge scientist who had designed apparatus for testing differences of sensation in 1883. Galton then became associated with J. Mck. Cattell, who refined Galton's original work into the measurement of the 'mental capacity' of an individual. This was further refined and improved by the 'correlation method', used by Professor Spearman of London University, which could test the various mental activities of an individual child. This 'correlation formulae', was used on 'elementary' pupils in Oxford and Liverpool, by Sir Cyril Burt, a psychologist, who was testing to see if general intelligence was hereditary or inborn, or could be acquired through education.

Another development in 'mental testing' was made by two Frenchmen named Binet and Simon in 1908, when they put forward their Binet-Simon scale. In this system, each test was classified under an age from 3 to 13, with the results of a specified age being correlated with the child's actual chronological age. For example, if a child of six can manage to be successful in passing the test for a eight-year old, his or her mental age is two years in advance of their chronological age. It was originally designed for the purpose of diagnosing mentally defective children, but had been revised to adapt it for use in other countries, including this country, for the selection of pupils into secondary education following the introduction of the state scholarship system in 1907. Perhaps the most important revision was to make the test a 'group test', which could be administered simultaneously to a large class of 40 to 50 eleven-year olds by a teacher; rather than as an individual test, over a 40-minute duration, administered by a trained psychologist. The test's results were used to determine what Terman, the author of the '*Stanford Revision*' (1916), called the '*Intelligence Quotient*' (Barnard

1961). This was obtained by multiplying the mental age of a pupil by 100 and dividing by the chronological age, so for example, a child of five, who had the mental age of a seven year old would be calculated as  $700 \div 5 = 140$ . Group tests were originally used by the U.S.A. army in the First World War to test large numbers of people in the shortest possible time. This experience, and the developments into the mental testing of an individual, were used to sort and classify large numbers of pupils in schools, most notably in this country for the ones who would receive a 'selective' secondary education, and those who would remain in the post elementary form of education in whatever guise was available between 1920 and 1970 in this country.

It was first used by the Bradford Education Authority in 1919 and became standard practice across the country. This was certainly the experience of all the witnesses who were interviewed for this study, all of whom can give an insight into their experiences, whether it be success or failure. The examination paper would consist of about 100 individual questions and would have a time limit. They would have been printed on a test paper, and the pupils would have been provided with several alternatives in attempting to answer their questions. During 1942, Fred Foster remembers the examination papers being pink and green, rather than the usual white paper which he usually wrote on, which, as an eleven year old he thought was rather unusual. Although group tests, they were partially speed tests designed so that very few children could finish the examination paper in the given time. One witness, Rita Dandy, can remember that a fellow pupil, a Keith Riding, copied the name of the girl in front of him, and then fell asleep for the rest of examination. Rita Dandy also remembers ticking boxes, which was the normal practice, with the instructions from the class teacher being to pick out the correct answer, and either underline or cross the box. These instructions were important since they are an essential aspect of what is called the 'standardised test situation' to assess a pupil's 'mental capacity'. The clear aim was to ensure that all children who undertook the test did so in exactly the same way and circumstances. The underlying assumption was, if exactly the same instructions were given to all the

children, they would react in exactly the same manner, and their performance in the test could be measured accurately.

The type of question found in an intelligence test would be presented in a 'battery' of sub tests, with each sub-test consisting of questions similar in type, but varying from easy to difficult. This increasing difficulty in the questions corresponds with the principle of the test being strictly timed, which ensured that the final marks would vary considerably. There were, however, 'omnibus' tests, in which questions of varying degrees of difficulty were mixed up together, and children persevered to complete them. These differences in the types of test papers presented to children in Wigan can be traced in oblique references in the primary source archives. For example, the Head Teacher of Moss Lane All Age School reveals he had to attend an 'exam panel' on 8th March 1927, whilst the log entry for St. Elizabeth's on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 1960, reveal that new selection processes were being used that year for the pupils taking the 11+ examination. The questions asked in the tests did vary considerably in their detail, but were similar in type and composition to what they were asking the children to answer. The type of questions asked of witnesses who have given evidence for this chapter on the 11+ selection process would have been of the type listed below, and have been taken from previous examination tests for eleven year olds.

#### (1) OPPOSITES

The testee underlines the correct word from those in brackets: sometimes he is asked to pick the most nearly opposite.

1. Hot is the opposite of (wet, comfortable, wintry, cold).
2. Gift is the opposite of (theft, expense, parcel, unkindness, enemy).
3. Famous is the opposite of (poor, failure, ancient, unhappy, unknown, shy).

#### (2) ANALOGIES

The testee underlines the correct word from the brackets.

1. Wear is to clothes as eat is to (hat, table, food, plate, fork).
2. Flavour is to mouth as colour is (ear, brush, paint, nose, eye).
3. Fire is to heat as lamp is to (flame, candle, see, light, soot, dark).

#### (3) SYNONYMS

The testee underlines the correct word from those italics.

1. Big means the same as (*fat, tall, brave, large, heavy*).
2. Kill means the same as (*murder, shoot, destroy, bury*).

#### (4) CLASSIFICATION

Five words are given: the testee picks out one word unlike the others in meaning.

1. Red, green, blue, wet, yellow.
2. And, but, if, now, although.
3. Bread, fruit, meat (*baker, eat, butcher pudding, recipe, delicious*).

#### (5) MIXED SENTENCES

The testee works out the phrase and decides whether it is true or false. Alternatively, he underlines 'unknown'.

1. A rose's odour pleasant have. True. False. Unknown.

#### (6) REASONING

In the first example the testee underlines the best answer.

1. Peter is taller than James. Edward is not as tall as Peter. Who is the tallest?

#### (7) ALPHABET ORDER

1. What letter comes midway between G and O?
2. One day of the week begins with the third letter after T in the alphabet. Write the second letter.

On completion, the test was marked again in a standardised way. The tests were constructed so that all the answers would be either marked right or wrong. This made the process of marking as objective as it possibly could be, with the use of a key, in which the teaching staff totted up the scores. At Shevington Crooke Infant and Junior School, the school log reveals that the school was closed for the afternoon session on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1966, so that the teaching staff could mark the 'selection examination papers'. The score recorded for the intelligence test would be added to the marks gained in the other tests, usually arithmetic and English. An age allowance was then made, which was based on a complex statistical procedure, with the object of being as fair as possible to all the children who undertook the test. Log entries reveal that pupils who had been successful in passing the test at a young age still had to remain at their elementary or primary

school until they attained the age of eleven. For example, the log entries from Warrington Lane Jerusalem Infant and Junior School, for the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1930, reveal that a Clifford Jackson had been entered for the scholarship examination, below his age, whilst a log entry dated 17<sup>th</sup> May 1943 reveals that Mary Sheila Rigby, aged 9, had passed her scholarship examination. The clear object here was to prevent younger children being penalised, and older children being given an advantage. It was from this system that each pupil's individual mark was computed and the final order of merit from which the selection would be made. There are a number of examples in the primary source archives, which reveal the position of the pupils in the overall selection examination system. This is demonstrated in the log entries, such as on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1930, Doreen Thornton from Warrington Lane Jerusalem School was placed in 6<sup>th</sup> overall position for girls in that year; whilst the log entries on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1961 for the Wigan Wesleyan School reveal that Enid Birchall, John Williams and David Smith were 'border zone' candidates. This was the type of selection process that was used in the Wigan area between 1920 until 1970, in common with the rest of the country. The next section in this chapter gives some insights into the experiences of witnesses who undertook the scholarship examination: some experiences are humorous, some could be considered even tragic, but they all show one clear purpose, that of selecting a small number of pupils for a 'differentiated' secondary education in the grammar school, as opposed to the evolving post elementary and primary schools of the twentieth century.

### **50 years experience of the 11+selection process in Wigan**

The actual experiences of witnesses who undertook the scholarship examination reveal how a number of factors which included sickness, not being fully prepared for the examination, and undertaking it in a strange environment, all affected how individual witnesses performed in it, on a particular day. In addition, the witnesses who undertook the scholarship examination in the 1920s and 1930s also had to encounter both a cultural and educational divide, along with possibly the most important one, the financial restraint. This was certainly the experience of

witnesses such as Mrs. Gregory, Kathleen Sherrif and Harry Richardson. They were encountering an attitude that the grammar school was for a selected few, who either paid for it, or were successful in passing the scholarship examination, and really was not for them. The inter-war years was a time when the results of the scholarship examination were widely believed to be an indicator of a pupil's Intelligence Quotient (IQ) for the rest of the school life. Even when a child was successful, as Ronnie Foster was in 1939, due partly to coaching by Mr. Barnes, his Headmaster, he was unable to take his place through his family's financial circumstances and their limited understanding of what a grammar school education could offer their son.

The period after the World War Two saw an increasing dissatisfaction with 'mental testing' through the scholarship examination, as a means of identifying and classifying children for a selective grammar school education (Simon 1971). Several local authorities in different locations in the country abandoned it altogether. However, this was not the case in Wigan, where it remained until the introduction of comprehensive education in 1970. It is interesting to note that an entry from the Wigan Wesleyan School log from the 28th September 1964 indicates that the local authority was aware of the implications on the 11+selection examination in the future. There was also an increasing use of individual coaching, and use of manuals to help pupils cope with the type of questions listed in the above section. Brian Simon (1971) described this coaching method as 'to learn the tricks of the trade' in order to pass the test, as Janet Pennington did in 1966. This however was no guarantee of success, as witness Alan Mitchinson describes in his account. He was expected to pass, but failed his scholarship examination, but through the intervention of his Headmaster Mr. Mannion, was able to gain entrance to a grammar school in a neighbouring town. Alan Mitchinson also reveals how the examination was not a reliable guide to a pupil's attainment or suitability for a grammar school education, when he states that fellow pupils who were considered less able than himself, passed. This inherent unreliability in the accuracy of the examination is also recorded in a number of school logs, which gives details of the number of transfers to either the

technical college to undertake a commercial course, or a grammar school education at a later age than eleven. This is vividly recorded in the school log for Whelley Senior Girls School when a Margaret Jones successfully matriculated in 1943, at the Wigan Girls High School, after transferring from the senior school at 13 years of age.

What follows in this section of the chapter is a range of very personal and individual experience supported and triangulated by primary source material, about such a process of 'mental testing' for selection purposes. Firstly there are very frank and vivid memories of what it was like to be tested, and the preparation different ten-year-old witnesses received for such an important examination in their school lives. Secondly, how the selection process reinforced the need for school difference, which was proclaimed through national policies and discourses of the period under investigation. Thirdly, and most importantly, how such a process impacted on a pupils' individual self-awareness and perception of themselves in their later lives, ultimately their overall life experiences or 'Lifeworlds' (Williamson 1998). Lastly, how the process celebrated the success of individual pupils, and in so doing, legitimated the process of selecting pupils to receive a selected and differentiated secondary education, or left them to continue their education in the 'elementary tradition' of the non-selective lower status school.

### **Experience of being prepared and tested**

Jack Lathoms' experiences of the scholarship system in 1930, at the age of ten, illustrate how much the 11+scholarship examination was a game of 'chance'. Importantly there is the issue of his parents' comments, 'Try your best' which demonstrates what their attitude to school and education were. They would have received their education in the 'elementary tradition' of the nineteenth century, and would have had limited personal experience of how to help their son on how to approach such an important examination. He missed a crucial six months of his school life with an illness, which he describes below:

“Whilst I was in Standard 5, I sat for my 11+ for the Grammar School. Which I failed. But I might add, previous to that, when I was ten years of age, I was off school for six months with an illness. The school doctor came to examine the kiddies, said I needed to have six months off during the summer, to get some fresh air . . . . which at that particular time pleased me, everyday in the fields getting fresh air. I wished I could have passed the 11+; my parents said just try your best. I went with the attitude I couldn’t care less type of thing. I didn’t expect to pass. I only went to keep the other lad company. This was my attitude it didn’t worry me. I just scurried through the exam papers. I did the questions I could do and left those I couldn’t. I didn’t make any great effort, which was wrong on my part. If I could have passed, I would have gone in for education; I was interested in learning, school and children. I enjoyed my school life, and learning. One of the teachers said having six months off held me back a lot. If I had the sense of working at home, I could have probably passed.”

“A neighbouring village school, Crooke always seemed to get a child through the scholarship. Crooke was a very poor mining village. They always had a Headmaster that was very popular. You never heard much of caning from the Crooke School. I never heard of anyone being afraid of a teacher. One girl from our school Mary H. did pass the first part of the 11+, but she did not pass the second part, and stayed at Lower Ground School till she was 14.”

This is a telling comment by Jack Lathom about the popular Headmaster of a neighbouring school, in that he managed in a poor mining village to get at least one pupil through the 11+ examination process. This contradicted his own experiences, who remembers no one from his school during his time there passing the 11+ scholarship examination.

Harry Richardson reveals how he passed the first part of the 11+ scholarship examination, but failed the second part because he got ‘stuck’ on a particular

maths question. Much more revealing was the fact that his parents could not afford the financial implications of Harry attending the local grammar school.

“ . . . I eventually tried for a scholarship. This proved to be a disappointment, for although I passed the first part of the examination and was one of the select half-dozen or so to take a further test, I did not make the grade—I still remember being stuck on one particular maths question which I think made the difference between success and failure. Just the same, had I been accepted for Wigan Grammar School I doubt if my parents could have afforded the price of a school uniform!”

Rita Dandy indicates how her late birthday in August, gave her an added advantage in passing the 11+scholarship examination. She had in effect a ‘second bite of the cherry’, in that she an extra year’s tuition at her primary school.

“ I had to stay in the Junior 4 class, because my birthday fell late on 26<sup>th</sup> August of 1952. Passed the scholarship, whilst in my ‘second’ fourth year in 1952.”

Christopher Dennis remembers going on a Saturday morning for the 11+scholarship examination to a local secondary school. It is interesting to note that this was due to his living outside the then County Borough of Wigan, and living in the County of Lancashire. It resulted in him having to attend a school several miles away in the Ashton area of Wigan, which was then under Lancashire County Council educational control. It was both a strange environment and traumatic experience for a ten year-old, but he was successful in passing the examination, which was to give him the advantage of a attending a selective school, and the status attached to it, even though it was quite a distance from his home in Orrell. As he goes on to recall the events:

“The primary school we attended was in Wigan but four of us lived just across the border in Lancashire County. This meant that when the 11+examination came the four of us had to go to the local secondary school on a Saturday morning, a strange environment, it must have been

fairly traumatic for us ten-year olds! The brown letters arrived on Ascension Day 1955—two of us passed along with about twelve others who took the Borough examination. I was to follow my brother to Ashton Grammar School, quite a distance away, about 8 miles, necessitating two bus rides.”

Tony Perkins remembers failing the 11+scholarship examination at St. Patrick’s R. C. Primary school with considerable bitterness and resentment, particularly over the lack of any preparation for it. There are also overtones of a distinct working class culture that Tony Perkins was experiencing, living in a two up and two down house in Scholes, an old working class area of Wigan. This daily experience was coming into conflict with the middle class values of the examination question, which gave him less chance of being successful.

“The 11+scholarship examination eventually came and we were told about it two days before, obviously no need to prepare. They would fail anyway and lo and behold the self-fulfilling prophecy become true and everyone did! I remember my score was 92, 100 was the pass mark. Not bad I felt with no preparation, no revision, and little enthusiasm because of the oppressiveness of the schooling. Could they not have given us a little more time and put some extra effort, perhaps those eight points, which decided everything, could have been different. One of the questions I recall was ‘Where do you wash?’ There were a few responses—one was in the bathroom, another in the sink. [Laughter] My answer was ‘in the sink’ because that’s where I washed and this was right for me, but not for them. The answer being the bathroom. No one in my class had a bathroom. We only lived in houses with two bedrooms, no hot water, and outside toilet some which were shared.”

### **School differences**

The entries from the Aspull Wesleyan All Age School log from 1920 to 1960 reveal that only a small minority of pupils who attended this school passed the

11+scholarship examination. In fact there was only one entry in 1925 for a pupil passing and going on to receive a grammar school education.

1925 23<sup>rd</sup> May Received result of scholarship examination of the Lancashire Education Committee. William Walls a scholar of this school was one of the successful entrants.

However, in the 1950s there were entries recording pupils' success in passing the selection examination to attend a local Technical College in Horwich. The technical school was an important part of the 1944 Butler Education Act, but never really developed enough to provide pupils with an alternative education to the grammar school or secondary modern school. It is important to recognise that this school was an All Age school, and pupils only transferred to a modern school in 1960, when Aspull secondary modern school opened.

1954 26<sup>th</sup> May Wm. Ainscough passed entrance examinations for Horwich Technical College.

Log entries from Hindley Common Methodist School, between 1921 to 1927 reveal that only a small number of pupils were successful in passing the 11+selection process, and gaining what the head teacher describes as 'exhibitions'. Perhaps the most intriguing entry is the one in June 1921, which describes Alice Taylor as having passed the 'labour examination'. This meant that Alice Taylor could start work at the earlier age of twelve, instead of leaving at the compulsory leaving age of thirteen from this lower status school. As with other log entries there are prizes given for success in the 11+selection process, ironically alongside a prize for producing the best school garden, which was considered the best activity for older lower status pupils.

1921 29<sup>th</sup> June Two of the Standard V11 girls, Alice Wilcock, and Norah Critchley have been successful in gaining bursaries offered by the Lancashire County Council. Alice Taylor (Standard V11) has passed the Labour examination.

1921 11<sup>th</sup> September School closed all day. Holiday given by managers for winning shield (best kept school garden) and gaining scholarships.

Log entries from St. Peter's C. E. Hindley, All Age School, reveal that only a minority of pupils were successful in gaining selection to receive a selective grammar school or high school education. It is also interesting to note that pupils who were successful in passing the 11+selection process had to undergo a 'final hurdle' of interview to ensure they were suitable for receiving such an education. This was removed from the selection process in 1945, when witnesses testify to not having to undertake this part of the selection process.

1926 26<sup>th</sup> May Parthenia Jackson, Joyce Eden and Rachel Tomlinson have been successful in gaining County Council Scholarships.

1929 29<sup>th</sup> March Two-boys—Fallows and Puddy are attending the oral test at the Grammar School this afternoon.

1931 29<sup>th</sup> April Hilda Yates and Stanley R. Price are attending the oral examination at the Grammar School for county Scholarships.

The log for Warrington Lane Council Jerusalem Infant and Junior school has the most telling entry in 1932, when the Headmistress sent a list showing how pupils were 'classified' for 11+selection.

1932 22<sup>nd</sup> January Sent in the list of children eligible for the Preliminary Scholarships, classified according to 1(a) suitable for transfer to Secondary School (b) doubtful (c) unsuitable; 2 Children under 11 but over 10 of exceptional ability; 3 Children over 12.

It is interesting to note that the primary archive sources of the period still referred to the selective education as 'secondary'; and how the tradition of staying at the elementary school if you were unsuccessful continued, and was accepted by all strata of society.

The Thomas Linacre technical school log reveals that there were tests for 'border line' candidates, like Keith Hibbert at the Wigan Wesleyan school in which pupils were effectively given a 'second chance' of a selective education in a technical school. It must be remembered, however, that the grammar school still held prominence over the newly founded technical school, which was considered

second best, but the appropriate establishment for pupils who were considered to be close for selection to a grammar school.

1956 8<sup>th</sup> May Test for 'border-line' candidates.

Success in the 11+scholarship examination in 1932 meant that the Reverend Roger Taylor could work in the office of Lancashire's Associated Collieries, rather than going underground, which was the common destination of lower status pupils in the Wigan area, particularly during the inter-war years. His 'differentiated' education meant that he could train to become a commissioned officer in the Royal Air Force as a navigator. Generally, the pupils who failed 11+scholarship examination become enlisted men, and served in all sections of the armed forces during the Second World War. My own father for example, joined the Grenadier Guards in 1941, and served with the Guards Armed Division throughout the duration of the war, and in Palestine in the immediate post-war period. Roger Taylor describes his first day at his new grammar school:

"The school year began at Wigan Grammar School on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1932. We went in on that day, not in the morning but for the afternoon session which began at 2.10 p.m. Bert Ollerton and 31 others began in Form 3C on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1932. It was pouring with rain. A 'C' form did not necessarily mean the lowest. 3C was the top but I'll explain this later in our conversation."

"I began work as a junior clerk with Lancashire Associated Collieries also on 13<sup>th</sup> September but in 1937, at the concern's Head Office in Manchester, moving to Wigan Office in that April following."

"I was embodied in the R.A.F. on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1942, qualifying in Canada as a navigator with commissioned rank in March 1944. More significantly for my future, I was 'converted' in Winnipeg and 'called to the ministry' in Moncton also in March 1944. I became subsequently a "money-changer in Egypt where I met my wife, a missionary."

The Shevington Crooke Infant and Junior School log indicates that only a small number of pupils received the 'selective' secondary education, with the majority going to the Senior Council School. The most interesting entry was the closing of the school in 1966 to allow time for the teachers to mark the 'Selection Examination Papers', which reveals that despite all the attempts to give all forms of post primary education an equal status, log entries still refer to it as a 'Selection'.

1949 29<sup>th</sup> July 11 children transferred to Broad O'th Lane County School. 1 boy to Hindley and Abram Grammar School.

1950 13<sup>th</sup> June Selection Exam Results. Marian Cheetham, Tom Gill, Brenda and Eric Darwin, Terence Green. (F. Chapman borderline).

1966 13<sup>th</sup> March School closed pm. to enable teachers to mark Selection Examination papers.

Fred Foster gives a very clear explanation of the process of selecting pupils for grammar school education, as opposed to the non-selective type being offered to pupils who were not successful in passing the 11+scholarship examination. It is interesting to note how anything appeared possible, the horizons seemed endless. If you compare this with the experience of then other witnesses who didn't pass the 11+scholarship examination, or whose parents couldn't afford the grammar school fees, there certainly was a vast cultural difference being offered to successful pupils. This is revealed in the testimony of Fred Foster when he aspired to become a 'Midshipman' and his friend a 'Judge,' as opposed to a miner or a mill worker. Another interesting caveat revealed by Fred Foster is the wearing of a tie and being a 'Grammarians'. Fred Foster's reaction at not being allowed to join these 'select' and 'elite' institutions by wearing one before being accepted is another factor which indicates the social and cultural importance of being accepted by these much sought after schools. Considering the acute shortages of staff and resources in all aspects of life, let alone education and schooling, it is interesting to note that the interview that Fred Foster and his peers had to attend was held in Wigan Education Council Offices at the height of the Second World

War, in 1942. But I will let Fred Foster set the scene and capture the importance to him at that particular moment in time:

“During the year 1942, I, along with twelve more pupils at Highfield School, passed the scholarship examination. Some of us were going to Wigan Grammar School, others to the Girls’ High School and some to Ashton-in-Makerfield Grammar. The ones going to Ashton were those who lived in the county, as opposed to the ones living in the Wigan Borough. Those days, the boundary for the borough was at ‘Pony Dick’, so everyone living past there was supposed to go to Ashton. This didn’t always apply though, as some pupils did go to either the Grammar or the High School. As it was, Eric Taylor, Jimmy Taberner, Charles Hughes, Ernie Chadwick, Ronald Rawcliffe and I went to the Grammar at Wigan, Jean Parker, Alice Heaton and Dorothy Winstanley went to the High School, and David Eccles, David Talbot, Gordon Fairhurst, and Dorothy Hughes went to Ashton.”

“I remember sitting the examination, which was taken in the hall and answered on pink and green papers. We thought these rather odd, as we had always written on white paper previously. We had to put our answers down on the actual question paper. [Laughter] Anyway, later on in the year, news came that we had to go to be interviewed by the respective heads of the various school, and this was carried out at the Education office in Wigan.”

“The interviews were made in the order of examination results i.e. the ones who got most marks went first. Jimmy Taberner and Dorothy Winstanley first, on the Monday morning, Eric Taylor and I were interviewed during the afternoon. We were ushered into the interview room and seated behind the desk were the respective Heads of the various school, Mr. Taylor, Wigan Grammar School, Miss Nichlolson, Girls High School, and the Reverend Mother, The Convent, We were asked questions about our ambitions, etc., I said that I wanted to be a

midshipman and Eric said he wanted to be a judge. As it was, Eric came the nearest, as a solicitor.” [Laughter]

“I wore a tie to the interview that had been given to me by my cousin Franklyn, who attended Heywood Grammar School and the tie was one of theirs. The Head of Wigan Grammar School said to me ‘What kind of tie is that?’ and when I told him, he said ‘You shouldn’t wear that until you are fully fledged Grammarian’. I was completely mortified and cried when I got home! I thought that I had blown it and that I wouldn’t be going to the Grammar School after all. I realised since of course that he was only joking. [Laughter] The interview must have been a success because we all got notification to start.”

“I recall going for a walk with Eric later in that year, about August, and feeling very superior as we went past our old school, (we were still on holiday), and listening to the pupils working as we passed the open windows.”

June Foster’s experiences indicated that there was a ‘half way house’ in the inter-war years for those who were neither ‘academic’ nor ‘non-academic’. These experiences of June Foster reflect in broad terms what the Spens Report of 1938, and the Norwood Report of 1943, were both recommending for the direction of national educational policy, and the reorganisation of secondary education in particular. These reports helped shape and form the 1944 Butler Education Act. It is interesting to note that June Foster couldn’t answer a particular mathematical question and, as a consequence, failed her 11+scholarship examination. The argument put forward by Brian Simon (1971), that examinations were not the best system available for judging a child’s suitability for a grammar school education, is proved by June Foster’s winning a scholarship place through examination, to attend Wigan Technical College. Even then a serious illness prevented her from receiving her full allocation of the education at the college. As June Foster explains:

“ . . . I wrote on my examination paper ‘We have never been taught how to do this’. [Laughter] I was a keen student and disappointed to fail. When I passed for the ‘Tech’ I attended an interview and took my book of pressed flowers to show as one of my hobbies.”

“There were approximately 32 members of the class (5 boys), and our class-rooms were on the top floor. I only attended four days before developing tonsillitis and then rheumatic fever, I was later excused games because of this. A full year elapsed before I returned. My mother asked if I might restart with the new ‘incoming’ year, but they said this was not possible as I would be taking someone else’s’ place. I never caught up in lessons.”

The above comment by June Foster gives an indication on the funding available for working class pupils to attend either the grammar school or technical college. There was only a limited and finite amount available, and therefore if it was not taken when offered to a pupil and his or her family, the offer would be withdrawn, as was the case with June Foster.

“I was exceptionally good in Art and English and asked if I might transfer to the Art School. Again this was not possible. I came in the bottom ‘3’ for subjects such as mathematics, science, French and shorthand. Most lessons were a struggle but I thoroughly enjoyed being a student there.”

William Foster compares his two grandchildren’s progress as Year 6 pupils with his own 4<sup>th</sup> year junior experiences in the 1940’s and suggests they were of a similar standard. He also gives a further insight into the process of selection in which pupils had to undertake an interview prior to the 1944 Butler Act, to see if they were suitable material to attend a ‘selective’ school. He was in either the first or second cohort, which didn’t need to undertake this part of the process, as he goes on to describe:

“Having observed two grandchildren pass through Year 6, the standard does not seem to be significantly different. The school had an intake

from the former Wigan County Borough and Lancashire County Council. Children who passed the scholarship had to segregate with Wigan children going to Wigan Grammar School (boys) and the Wigan Girls' High School (girls). The Lancashire children went to Ashton or Up Holland Grammar School (both co-educational). The scholarship examinations were supplemented by a final selection interview before the implementation of the 1944 Education Act. We were either the first or second year not to have to participate in interviews.”

Frank Dandy gives an indication that the working class areas of Wigan didn't send as many pupils to selective schools as the middle class areas. Frank Dandy lived in the Springfield area of Wigan, a predominantly working class area; in comparison with the middle class Woodfield catchment area, situated on Wigan Lane. This was acknowledged by other witnesses interviewed for this thesis, notably the Revered Roger Taylor and Peter Hutchinson. As Frank Dandy states:

“ . . . passed the scholarship at 10 years of age, with about five others from Sacred Heart School. This was in comparison with other middle class schools, which sent about 15 to 20 children to respective grammar schools in Wigan.”

The log entries for the National and Bluecoat school reveal there was a similar pattern found in other primary source material, of only a minority of pupils being 'selected' to receive a secondary education. This certainly triangulates the witness evidence of the limited numbers who were successful, and the procedures involved in the 'selection' process such as being interviewed.

1927 20<sup>th</sup> May Nine boys have been selected for Part 11 of the Scholarship Examination.

1930 20<sup>th</sup> List of candidates for junior scholarships forwarded to Education Offices.

1943 1<sup>st</sup> June Joyce Bannister has been selected for interview for special place at the Girls High School.

Peter Hutchinson remembers failing the 11+scholarship examination at Woodfield Primary School, by half a mark, despite the school's reputation for ensuring as many of its pupils were transferred for a 'selective' grammar education at Wigan Grammar School or the Girls' High School. Woodfield Primary School had been a preparatory school until the 1950s, and was situated in the middle class area of Wigan Lane; and was well known for preparing pupils for a selected and 'differentiated' education as part of what Jackson and Marsden (ed. 1966) describe as their 'educational inheritance'. Older witnesses give evidence to support this view, and this was the choice of school by Peter Hutchinson's parents, particularly his mother, who attended the school in the 1930s, and then attended Wigan Girl's High School, both times as a fee-payer. Even with this choice of school, Peter Hutchinson still failed, despite the pass-rate in the Borough of Wigan being low that particular year. It supports the view of Brian Simon (1971), that the system had considerable flaws in it; as Peter Hutchinson goes onto explain:

“Homework was sparse and I don't recall any specific coaching or mock examinations in preparation for the 11+, it probably wasn't deemed necessary as previous pass rates at Woodfield had always been high. I was the youngest in my class and coincidentally the smallest, in fact it was some weeks after commencement of my first term of secondary modern education that I celebrated my 11<sup>th</sup> birthday. I together with 4 of my classmates failed the 11+. The extent of my failure was initially 3½ marks, however due to an unexpectedly low pass rate throughout the borough; the pass mark was lowered by 3 marks! Thus my educational fate was sealed by ½ a mark.” [Ironic shake of the head by Peter Hutchinson.]

### **Individual self-awareness and aspirations**

Mrs. Gregory can't remember being given the chance of taking the scholarship for a transfer to the selected grammar school during her school days at an All Age School, in a very established working class area of Wigan in 1916. As she goes on to say, it would be doubtful whether her family could have afforded to send her as

they were keener for her to start work as soon as possible, which indicated their attitude to school and education.

“ . . . juniors in ‘Standards 1,2,3 etc. School was considered to be of no use to a job at all. Intention was always to go to the mill as soon as possible. In fact the very next day after leaving school I (Mrs Gregory) started work at the Eckersley’s Weaving Shed!”

On being demobbed from the Royal Navy in 1945, Harry Richardson went to the careers officer in Wigan, in which his failure at the 11+selection process played an important part in his choice of post-war career:

“ . . . I saw a careers officer in Wigan, who specialised in ex-servicemen and he suggested that I went into education, as there was a short supply of teachers. Somehow I did not think that this was my forte and returned to my old job at Leyland Rubber Works.”

During retirement Harry had a full social life, which included taking some G.C.E.’s, which I feel shows clearly how the system of education failed to tap his latent talent and ability. He commented:

“ . . . I took three English examinations, and got a G.C.E. grade 3 in Mathematics. After, the English Tutor had assessed me she could hardly believe that I left school at 14—does that say something about pre-war education?”

Ronnie Foster’s experiences of taking the 11+scholarship examination are linked with the outbreak of World War Two, and although successful in passing the examination for a scholarship place at the Grammar School, he was unfortunately unable to take the place offered to him, due to his domestic circumstances at home, and his parents’ attitudes to education and school. It is important to note that the Head teacher of his junior school coached him. As Ronnie Foster explains:

“When the war started in September 1939, I was ten and schools were closed, whilst at first the holiday was enjoyed, as weeks went by the

novelty wore off. Sometime towards November 1939, Mr. Barnes called on his 28" Wheeled Roadster Bike, told my parents that he was starting special lessons for 11+ pupils possible. There were about 12 of us in what was called the 'scholarship class', and received excellent tuition or rather cramming for the '11 plus examination'. We continued in this privileged position with almost individual tutors until New Year 1940, when school opened again."

"I remember the 11+scholarship examination was held at the 'New School' (the local Senior School), I did quite well it didn't seem too difficult, after all I done perhaps a dozen past examination papers in the last few months and had them individually marked and corrected."

"I passed the 11+examination, but did not go to grammar school, even though I would have like to have gone. My parents were not academically inclined, had very little money owing to a mining accident, which seriously reduced my father's earning power. Even though help was offered by the authorities, I think my father thought of it as charity, and with the war being in its early years, I didn't get to go." [Long pauses during this part of the interview.]

Although Mr. Foster was unable to take a place at the Grammar School, he did give some revealing insights into how education was perceived by his family. Ronnie Foster's parents could not see or understand the importance of a grammar school education for the eleven-year-old son in 1940. They thought it more important for him to start work when he left his lower status school at fourteen.

Winifred Jones's experiences after passing her 11+scholarship examination and receiving a grammar school education provided her with opportunities to fulfil herself both during the Second World War and in her later working life. Winifred Jones was one of the few witnesses who attended a co-educational grammar school in Hindley, near Wigan, and this clearly had a positive impact on her life. The most telling factor which signifies the difference between a selective and a non-selective education was her knowledge of Pythagorean theory, which gave

her the necessary boost to be upgraded to inspector status. As Winifred Jones explains:

“ . . . on leaving school I went to work in an office, and though I enjoyed my job, I decided to volunteer for the W.R.N.S., only to be told that my age group was needed for ‘Industry’. I was ‘called up’ and sent to an engineering training school at Cheetham Hill in Manchester. I was presented with an overall and a headscarf and put to work on a capstan lathe. I thought I gone mad as well! [Laughter] However we took an exam, and on the strength of knowing Pythagorean theorem, we were upgraded to a department training to be ‘Inspectors’. Unfortunately I contacted dermatitis and finished up my war work in the office of Metro Vicks.”

“ . . . my education prepared me for a successful working life in many ways. Having been educated in a mixed school I could relate easily with people and I think I probably had a broader outlook on life. My favourite subjects were English Literature and English Grammar, and I found them very useful in my job. In my schooldays French and Latin were mostly taught in Grammar schools, and I found that some knowledge of French was often an asset and although Latin was considered a dead subject, we found it fascinating. I eventually worked at the U.K.N.R.A. at Risley. It was a daunting experience working with three other girls in the office of a large drawing office comprising eighty or ninety men, draughtsmen and engineers. Discipline was very important because of security reasons.”

Derrick Smith gives a very stark and seemingly outrageous suggestion of religious sectarianism when he was in his primary school. He was brought up in a Methodist household, and was a regular attender at the local Methodist chapel, but attended the local Church of England Primary School. As he recalls this experience, he did so with some bitterness and resentment of the teaching staff, who ignored him completely. It has left a permanent ‘psychological scar’, which

is still apparent today, as Derrick Smith retells his memories of the 11+selection process.

“ . . . as regards to the 11+ examination for a scholarship to the Grammar School, I went to the local Church of England primary school in Ince, and there was a focus and priority for pupils who were regular attenders at the Church and Sunday School. I went to the local Methodist Church and Sunday school, and was therefore overlooked.”

Derrick Smith’s language and facial expression, along with a constant shaking of the head, revealed the intensity of how he felt nearly half century after taking the 11+scholarship examination, and his treatment by the teachers at his Church of England primary school.

Alan Mitchinson remembers failing the 11+scholarship examination by two marks, which was considered unusual for a boy of his ability, but possibly he just had ‘an off day’, and did not perform to his expected levels of ability and attainment on the day of the examination. It certainly leaves a doubt about the validity of such a selection system, and the fact that he was entered for selection for another grammar school, in a neighbouring town, which was due to religious connections rather than local authority ones. Alan Mitchinson also gives an indication of how the 11+selection process got its common name. He believed this was due to its association with schools and education before the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act.

“When I was in Junior 4 1958-59, Mr. Kennedy fell ill and retired quite quickly; Mr. Mannion became Headmaster and was replaced by a young teacher Bill Woodcock, who lived in Gidlow Lane. In Junior 4 we took the 11+ or ‘scholarship examination’—a name, I suppose, which hung over from pre-1944 Butler Act days. I failed this examination by two marks, and everyone at school was surprised that I did, especially when some of the people who passed were not considered as able. In those days, the Direct Grant schools offered places in open competition. These were about 10 to 12 per year. Mr. Mannion entered me for the entrance

for West Park Grammar School, the school run by the de la Salle brothers in St. Helens, which after successfully passing the examination, I attended by travelling daily to St. Helens for the next seven years.”

### **Legitimization and celebration of difference**

Log entries from St. David's C. E. Haigh, All Age School (a primary school from 1960) from 1920 to 1970 reveal that very few pupils passed the 11+scholarship examination in the inter-war years, with the event being celebrated by giving the school a day off. After the war in 1945, the log reveals that children were successful in passing the 11+selection process, but it was still only a small minority of pupils who attended the 'selective grammar school'. This gave the 11+selection process legitimacy, which was reinforced by allowing pupils either a full or half day off to celebrate such events.

1936 17<sup>th</sup> June School closed in honour of junior scholarship won by Ivor F. B. Ellis.

1939 June 19<sup>th</sup> School closed in afternoon in honour of junior scholarship won by Derek Crompton.

1957 Notified that Allan Gibson has passed the county examination for selection to a grammar school. Allan was notified in March that he been selected for admission to the Bolton Boys' School.

The Moss Lane Council All Age School reveals that there were only a limited number of pupils allowed to progress to a selected secondary school and education. This is recorded in the entry for June 1923, when the Headmaster of the school notes that only five Exhibitions were being offered in the whole Hindley area that year. Hindley was a large and very urban area of Wigan, with a high proportion of its working class population being housed near a number of local pits and cotton factories. There is a clear indication that a selective education was what Jackson and Marsden (1966 ed.) describe as the 'educational inheritance' of the middle classes, rather than the working classes. The log also indicates how certain pupils refused the offer of a junior technical scholarship,

such as James Clark on 15th August 1927. As with other schools, there were half-day holidays to celebrate success in the 11+selection process, or scholarship examination.

1923 14<sup>th</sup> June Notification received this morning that two boys Thos. William Pickering, and Alfred Gwilliam—had been successful in the recent Scholarship exams. As there were only five Exhibitions awarded in the Hindley area, the result is gratifying.

1927 15<sup>th</sup> August James Clark, Peter Darbyshire, and Alice Gwilliam have been notified that a Junior Tech (or Com) Scholarship has been awarded to them. Of these James Clark will not take up the award.

1931 17<sup>th</sup> July School closed at noon today. The afternoon was a Scholarship holiday.

The most interesting evidence to be gained from the log of the Wigan Wesleyan School was of the meetings in 1964 and 1965 to discuss the future of the 11+scholarship examination, following the local authority's intentions of organising its secondary schools on a comprehensive system. There is also a reference to national policy by the government being discussed, and how this would affect forthcoming 11+selection processes in the town. The irony of the discussions regarding the re-organisation of secondary schools in Wigan is the number of pupils in this school who were considered to be in the 'border-zone', after the 11+selection had taken place, and would have been more suitably catered for in a fully operating system of comprehensive education to meet their needs fully.

1961 2<sup>nd</sup> April Enid Birchall, John Williams and David Smith ('Border Zone' Candidates) learned that they had been accepted for Grammar schools.

1964 28<sup>th</sup> September Meeting at Town Hall 4.30 pm. between Head teachers, the Director and the Educational Psychologist to discuss the future of the 11+ examination, in view that there is to be some system of Comprehensive Education in Wigan.

1964 11<sup>th</sup> November Meeting of all teachers in Wigan to hear the Director of Education give contents of his Report which is to be presented to Education Committee regarding secondary reorganisation on Comprehensive lines (held in Grammar School at 4.30 pm.).

1965 16<sup>th</sup> September Head teachers' meeting at town Hall 4.15 pm. to discuss form of 11+examination will take this year in view of Government circular and Education Committee recommendations.

The Whelley Senior girls' school log of the 1930s reveals how one pupil, Margaret Jones, who had transferred to the grammar school, had been successful in matriculating, which meant she had the qualifications to attend a University. The Headmistress of the school hoped that future such transfers to the High School would be as successful. Although it must be acknowledged that there was a system of transferring pupils from the senior school to the grammar school, it was only a small number of pupils who transferred, and the log reveals she was the first pupil to be successful in gaining school certificate success from this post-elementary school.

1933 14<sup>th</sup> July Ellen Johnson (2A) successful in winning a scholarship to the 'Junior Commercial School'.

1934 3<sup>rd</sup> September It is gratifying to place on record the success of Margaret Jones, a former pupil of the school, in the recent School Certificate Examination; Margaret has passed and has matriculated. She was the first girl beyond the scholarship age to be transferred to the High School on the recommendations of the Headmistress. Since then similar transfers have taken place yearly, and it is hoped that the results will be equally good.

The log entries for St. Thomas's C. E. All Age school (to become junior and infant in 1932), reveal how in 1926, a William White refused a Technical College Scholarship. There are also a number of references to pupils being offered scholarships to the Technical College, with the phrasing 'tenable', which meant they were offered over a distinct time-scale, in that you had to take them or lose

the opportunity being offered. This was the experience of June Foster, who through an illness in the 1940s was unable to take full advantage of her allotted course at the Technical College, despite appeals from her mother.

1921 26<sup>th</sup> March Robert Wilson and Charles McLeod have been awarded Scholarships tenable at the Technical College.

1926 3<sup>rd</sup> June Junior Technical School Scholarships have been awarded to Harry Quayle, James Brown, Thomas Barlow, William White—refused. Secondary School Scholarships have been awarded to Nellie Pierce, Frances Kettle, Jessie Collier, Alf. McLeod, Jeffery Heaton.

The entries from St. Elizabeth's C. E. Primary school log from 1960 onwards, reveal that only a small minority of pupils' managed to be successful in gaining a place at a grammar school. It is interesting to note how the Head teacher records the successes of the children, as either being 'selected' or 'notified' which gives an indication that it was a superior education than that being offered to the unsuccessful children in the school, when they left at the age of 11 years.

1960 18<sup>th</sup> May Notification received that Madeline Walkden and Terence Hyland had been selected for secondary grammar schools under the new selection procedures.

1962 18<sup>th</sup> June Alan Compton, Anne Shallicker and Sylvia Shrigley notified of acceptance for Rivington Grammar School.

1968 9<sup>th</sup> May Notification received that Ruth Parr and Michael Newall had been selected for a grammar school education

Muriel Heyes remembers as an 11 year-old feeling her world had fallen apart when she had failed the second part of the 11+selection examination in 1966. The only girl that passed had received extra coaching and tuition, to enable her to approach the examination with some confidence and success. There are overtones of Ethel Prone, who some 30 years earlier had been able to undertake a selective secondary education, because her father could pay the school fees. The successful girl at Muriel Heyes's school was able to pass because her parents could afford the

cost of employing a tutor. This is similar to the experience of Tony Perkins, in that Muriel Heyes and her classmates were not told of the impending examination until the week or day it was taken. Primary Archive sources reveal that during the 1960s, the local authority was considering how it was going to approach the 11+selection process, with the impending reorganisation of its schools to undertake a form of comprehensive education. Yet pupils like Tony Perkins and Muriel Heyes were still being allowed to take the examination, and still endure the feeling of rejection that failure at this examination brought with it. It makes the point that children who came from the 'elementary tradition' of education, even in the mid to late 1960s, could still have their school experiences 'experimented' or 'changed', with little thought given to their future lives and careers.

"I remember scraping through the first half of the scholarship examination, along with many others in the class I was in. But after taking the second part I was told I had failed, and I remember telling my mum at Price's Cake Shop, which was near the school in Wallgate. As an 11 year-old I felt a complete failure, and my whole life had collapsed, and I didn't really want to go to a secondary modern school, like my brother did. The only child that passed was a girl called Janet Pennington, whose parents were businesspeople near the school, and she had received out of school coaching to pass the examination. The Head teacher, who took our 4<sup>th</sup> Year junior class, never gave us any special lessons or coaching in how to pass the examination. It seemed looking back that we were just told this week we were taking your scholarship examination, and just got on with it. I can't remember the gap that was between the first part and the second part of the examination."

### **Conclusion.**

All the above witness evidence and primary archive source material reveal that during the period under investigation, it was accepted without question as 'normal practice' that the 'mental testing' system and process, embodied in the 11+scholarship examination, would be used to decide a child's educational fate

from the age of ten or eleven. It was considered the most suitable and efficient way of segregating and classifying children into the different schools they would attend for their secondary education or evolving post elementary or primary education. However, by the 1950s and early 1960s there was mounting criticism about the unfairness of such a system, which was also implicated in the low attainment and limited progress of pupils in the then new 'modern' schools, which is discussed more fully in Chapter 4. The intransigence of central governments, particularly conservative administrations during this period, in their bid to retain the grammar school and a society based on the ideas of Plato, ensured that the 11+selection process remained fully intact in a town like Wigan. It required 'Circular 10/65', from Harold Wilson's Labour Government, to eventually remove the 11+selection process for entrance to the town's selected grammar or high schools. This invited local authorities like Wigan to discuss and prepare for comprehensive reorganisation. Influential reports such as the Crowther Report of 1959, and the Newsom Report of 1963 also helped overcome the system and use of 'mental testing' on children to decide their educational fates at eleven years of age. But essentially, what removed the 11+selection process from the everyday 'life experience' of pupils in Wigan was the introduction of comprehensive education, and the abolition of the grammar and high school system in the town in 1970.

Witness accounts reveal with almost tragic clarity that both success and failure left their mark on the experiences and memories of people that lasted a lifetime. Selection was a powerful tool to differentiate social identities. People carried throughout their lives a perception of themselves as either successes or failures. It is hard now to estimate the real loss of potential and ability – both for the individual and society – that this system allowed. There is no doubt, however, that it was extremely successful in one major respect; it rendered social inequalities into hierarchies of ability, and in so doing made them appear legitimate. It is only later in their lives that witnesses were able properly to see the injustice of it.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS TO THIS INVESTIGATIVE STUDY

This study has chronicled the educational provision for and experiences of working class people in the Wigan area from 1920 until 1970. The provision they experienced is the legacy of the 'elementary' tradition of the nineteenth century, and was 'imbued and saturated into the national consciousness of working class people' as the accepted system of educational provision available to them (Dent 1952 p.93). The use of oral history triangulated against primary source evidence in this study provides a mode of analysis of the provision, very vividly (Thompson 1977). The oral history illuminates too the different approaches to teaching and to the curriculum that resulted in social differentiation when pupils completed their courses. Other chapters in this study include accounts of the experiences of disciplinary approaches used in different schools, the 11+ selection process that was used to segregate pupils at the age of eleven, and the social experiences and 'Lifeworlds' (Williamson 1998) of witnesses during their formative years. In essence, all the chapters point to policies that ensured the continuation of very different educational provision for particular sections of the population.

This study demonstrates that, for the working class population nationally, as locally in Wigan, there was a clear and well-defined tradition of a 'minimal' and 'sub-standard' education. For a minority, there was the opportunity to receive a full secondary education until the age of sixteen, which gave these pupils a superior chance of employment leading to a career and enhanced lifestyle. For the majority, the only opportunity was to leave school prematurely, whether it be at the age of thirteen, fourteen or fifteen, as national policies attempted over time to address and improve the situation of the 'non-selected' or 'ordinary child' (McCulloch 1998). Many witnesses give clear and forceful evidence of such a situation, reflecting experiences from the 1920s until the introduction of comprehensive education in Wigan in 1970. It was what Middleton and Weitzman (1976) describe as a 'caste' or 'binary system' of secondary schooling.

The use of oral testimony allows the opportunity of observing and retelling how such policies and discourses impacted on the lives of ordinary working class people. The testimony helps to highlight how, in a period when national policies were being publicly argued to promote the overall improvement of secondary education for all pupils, in reality policy was concerned with social selection. This can even be detected in periods of affluence and prosperity for working class people in the 1960s, when the 'great adventure' or 'experiment' of the secondary modern schools following the 1944 Butler Education Act had again failed the mass working population. It gave pupils an inferior education, and thus set the boundaries and the horizons of employment and future lifestyles for them. Throughout this investigation into the educational experiences of working class people in Wigan, the overriding theme that emerges is how the education of a non-selected child was continually being changed and experimented with, including the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen in 1947. This can be directly compared to the pattern of education and outcomes of the higher status grammar school, which remained relatively unchanged. It had clear and well-defined outcomes, its curriculum was much more stable, and teaching staff had to be graduates from a university. There was, however, one constant – which offers the most compelling evidence of social selection – the 11+ examination, which remained unaltered from the 1920s until the introduction of comprehensive education in 1970. This clearly ensured 'social differentiation' and helped keep the social inequality and educational hierarchy found in an urban and industrial town like Wigan alive and well for over half a century. It is in some respects paradoxical that this should have happened in a working class area with Labour Party control over local education policy. The absence of a strong local political challenge to 11+ selection perhaps reveals how deeply embedded were the reasons to justify social selection. The politics of this is, however, is the subject for another study.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses of the study**

The key strengths of this thesis are the powerful voices of working class people who experienced an unfair and unequal educational system. Recalling experiences

forty or fifty years after the event can lead to recollections that are understandably not always accurate in every single detail, but what cannot be taken away are the feelings that come from these interviews, and I have tried to capture this intensity. It has been a privilege to listen to the voices of the men and women, some now dead, and to try to bring to life again their vivid memories of their school life. This also helps create an historical archive for future historians to understand what it was like to be taught in the evolving post-elementary and primary schools. It gives very vivid descriptions of the actual provision that the state made for the education of working class people. Interwoven into these testimonies are the very personal and individual experiences of the discipline and selection processes that were employed by the schools and local educational authority. Lastly, the testimonies give some insights into how their schooling affected these individuals' future lives, and how they perceived themselves as either successes or failures.

The use of oral history also helps challenge and redefine some of the assumptions that educational historians make about the development of state education. Pieces of research such as this one help put an alternative view forward, which helps achieve a clearer and more objective view of how working class children were taught, tested and selected, and disciplined. It will also help with future research by giving a clear indication of what has happened in the past, enabling more accurate assessments of any progress in the state education system. However, an avenue of research that was not fully explored in this study was the use of oral testimonies of former teachers, local educational officials, and members of the local educational committees. This would have given an alternative 'voice', revealing how these figures viewed educational provision in the town during the period under review. They could offer explanations as to how they came to the decisions whose force was felt by the witnesses interviewed for this study, and give an insight into how national policies were interpreted against local circumstances; the decision to abandon the 11+scholarship examination, and implement a comprehensive system of secondary education in Wigan during the mid sixties, would be a clear line of investigative enquiry.

Using oral history, I feel I have demonstrated convincingly how a 'dual' and 'differentiated' system of secondary education was maintained and perpetuated in Wigan for over half a century. The vivid testimony of all the witnesses gives an account of how successive generations of working class people experienced similar teaching and curricular approaches which were sustained for over a century. The words and experiences were the witnesses'. The interpretation of these experiences is another matter. The oral evidence does not speak for itself. The framework of interpretation used in this study can be debated. It does at least enable researchers to relate features of national policy and educational practice to the world of experience in the classroom

### **Originality and future research**

As far as the author is aware this piece of research using oral history as an investigative tool is the first to be undertaken in the town of Wigan. There have been studies on schooling and education in the town on a smaller and more limited scale, pursuing different disciplines such as sociology and psychology. Its originality lies in the fact that oral testimonies have been used as an evidence base to gain another view of education and schooling, as opposed to the available primary sources, which are the views of local officials, administrators and Head Teachers in the town. Using this type of research allows the opportunity to gain an alternative view of what it was like to be educated in the variety of schools available in Wigan during a major part of the twentieth century. It also will provide a starting point for future historians of education to add to the oral testimonies used in this study. One such possible avenue of investigation would be to interview former pupils and teachers who attended or taught in a technical college or school. Up to 1953, this would have included testimonies of pupils who were selected to attend junior technical colleges in and around the Wigan area, whilst for a decade, up to 1963, the Thomas Linacre Technical School offered boys the opportunity of receiving an education designed specifically for industry and commerce. Such an inclusion would have provided a complete picture of secondary education in Wigan prior to the 1944 Butler Education Act, and then have furnished scope to observe how the Act operated, offering pupils different

educational opportunities to meet their specific needs and requirements. Such research could also give some insight into why this particular school failed to make the tripartite system a success locally in Wigan and perhaps nationally.

Further research could build on this study by interviewing people who worked as administrators in the local education department, or members of the local education committees. Gaining insights into how they came to decisions and implement policy from a particular political stance would complement this study. Another line of enquiry would be to seek out the view of local employers about how well the recruits had been educated to commence work in specific trades and industries. Did they recruit from different schools? Did a particular school experience affect future occupational status? From this, more detailed research could be undertaken on how witnesses recovered a positive self-image if they had been educated in lower status school. Such studies will help to build an archive from which 'a useable past' (McCulloch 1989) could assist with the education and planning for the current and future generations of young people in Wigan.

A 'useable past' perspective or 'long view' of the state's education provision for the working classes could also be used as a comparison with the way secondary education is currently organised, whether in Wigan or nationally. Closer scrutiny reveals that there appears to be a tripartite system still in existence, which functions similarly to the period investigated in this study. In Wigan, there are comprehensive schools throughout the borough, but a small number have the designation of 'City Technology Colleges'. There is a clear historic link between these schools and the Thomas Lincare Technical School of 1953, and its close association with Wigan grammar school and the selection of pupils to attend these particular schools. The ones that remain as unadorned comprehensives could be compared with the secondary modern schools that were still in existence from 1945 until 1970 in Wigan. They educate the majority of working class children in Wigan, and could be considered the natural successors to secondary modern schools. In towns surrounding Wigan, grammar schools, which have competitive examination to identify the pupils they would like to recruit to their establishments, are still in existence. My study offers future educational historians

the opportunity to contrast the past provision for the education of working class pupils after the age of eleven with that being currently offered to them. Such use of this archive will give clear indicators of future tasks required and improvements needed to ensure a fairer, better educational system. There is still much work to be done in Wigan. But it shouldn't stop there. Wigan is a working class town in the North of England. Similar work needs to be done in other types of settlement, such as cities in the South of England, and in rural areas of East Anglia or the North East, so that an authentic archive can be built up on which to build a more accurate history of education in this country.



## APPENDIX 1

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERVIEW WITH WITNESSES

#### (Confidential nature of the material will be respected and assured)

- 1). Do you remember any particular events in your school life or working life, which you have always remembered, (e.g. war experience or national service, the publication of a novel, performance in a cinema or at a theatre, etc.). Do you have any old reports, photographs, magazines or memorabilia, etc.?
- 2). Did your education prepare you for a successful working life or career? If so, why? If not, why not? Try to give (objective, if possible) reasons why, in your opinion, this was so?
- 3). Did your education have to be updated or added to (e.g. by higher education, further training or education, day release training for an apprenticeship, work related training).
- 4). Can you remember any positive or negative feelings, about your education or school experiences.
- 5). Can you remember any changes, however subtle, to lessons or the way teachers treated you in the daily life of the school.
- 6). What were you experiences of discipline? Was it good or bad? Do you have any comment on the situation that schools are now facing? Is it just poor teaching, poor standards, and badly managed schools? Or is it a problem that society in general is now facing? Or is it a deeply seated culturally strand, that has always been her towards the establishment, authority, schools and education, but has got progressively worse over the last decade?
- 7). What do you think about the current education system to the one you experienced?
- 8) What do you think that children will have to receive that will prepare them for both a working life, and personal development and fulfilment in the future?

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### **UNPUBLISHED SOURCES**

The Wigan Record Office, in which the primary archive source materials for Wigan schools are located, are held at Leigh Town Hall.

### **ABRAM**

Bryn Gates Council: managers' minutes:1921-1948, school roll number 30.

County Primary: manager's minutes:1954-74, school roll number 58.

### **ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD**

Grammar School: managers' minutes:1931-72, school roll number AGS.

### **ASPULL**

Secondary Modern (High from 1977) logbooks, admission registers:1960-1990,

Programme for school events:1960-1972, school roll number 90.

St. Elizabeth's C. E.: managers' minutes 1903-1949, logbooks:1960-82, admissions registers:1886-1982, school roll number 80.

C. E. trustees' and managers' minutes:1868-1982, logbooks:1868-1943, school roll number 82.

Methodist: logbooks:1880-1982, admission register:1892-1982, school roll number 83.

### **GOLBORNE**

Central and Parkside Council: manger's minutes:1905-1925, school roll number 40

County Infants: managers' minutes:1925-1973 school roll number.

County Secondary: managers' minutes:1952-1974, school roll number 49.

### **HAIGH**

Red Rock C. E.: logbooks:1873-1984, admission registers:1877-1984, copy school deed:1949, school roll number 87.

St. David's C. E.: logbooks:1963-1981, admission registers:1846-1981, copy school deed:1949, school roll number 88.

### **HINDLEY**

Argyle Street, Lowe Green, St. Paul's, Castle Hill, Cross Street, Cookery Centre, Moss Lane Council, Hindley Common, Brunswick.

Hindley Green Council: joint managers' minutes:1907-1947, school roll number 29.

Borsdane Brook Special: managers' minutes:1907-1947, 1960-1974, school roll number 51.

Cardinal Newman R. C. Secondary Modern (High from 1977): governors' minutes:1958-1992, admissions registers:1959-1990, plans and elevations:1957, school roll number 91.

Central School: logbooks:1919-1925, school roll number 28.

Hindley and Abram Grammar: trustee minutes:1926-1974, admissions registers:1856-1983, staff registers:1882-1946, school magazines:1922-1966, programme for school events:1907-1980, exercise books:1857-1861, plans:1967, old students' association records:1911-1958, prospectus and brochures:1970, 1980, school roll numbers HAGS.

Princess Street Nursery: managers' minutes:1950-1974, logbooks:1950-1981, school roll number 52.

St. Peter's C. E.: managers' minutes:1903-1979, logbooks:1874-1955, school roll number 73.

### **HINDLEY GREEN**

Brunswick Council: logbook:1919-1927, school roll number 74.

Hindley Green Council: logbook:1927-1970, school roll number 75.

National Evening Continuation: logbooks:1895-1941, school roll number 76.

United Methodist: managers' minutes:1903-1921, logbooks:1921-1938, school roll number 32.

### INCE-IN-MAKERFIELD

County Primaries: managers' minutes:1954-1962, school roll number 59.

County Secondaries: managers' minutes:1953-1971, school roll number64.

Britannia Bridge Nursery: managers' minutes:1955-1974, school roll number 52.

St. Mary's C. E.: managers' minutes:1955-1974, school roll number 53.

Rose Bridge Wesleyan: logbooks:1867-1982, admission registers:1907-1928, school roll number38.

Spring View Central: logbooks1929-1952, school roll number 27.

Christ Church National: logbooks:1868-1945, school roll number 81.

### PEMBERTON

Lamberhead Green Wesleyan: logbooks:1863-1995, school roll number77.

Newtown St. Mark's C. E. Infants: managers' minutes: 1950-1973, school roll number 41.

### PLATT BRIDGE

Moss Lane Council: logbooks:1915-1964, school roll number 26.

### SHEVINGTON

Crooke Board School: logbooks:1872-1985, school roll number 39.

### WIGAN

Grammar (Mesnes High from 1972): logbooks:1945-1962, 1972-1988, admission registers:1891-1987, leavers' registers:1954-1977, staff registers:1891-1970, H.M.I. reports:1906-1974, school magazines:1909-1927, programme for school events:1883-1977, school prospectus:1930, 1980, 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary brochure:1947, school roll number WGS.

Thomas Linacre Secondary Technical (absorbed by Wigan Grammar School 1963): logbooks:1953-1963, examination schedules:1954-1963, school magazines:1960-1961, brochure for opening:1953, school roll number WSC/TC.

Gidlow Secondary Modern: admission registers:1932-1972, school magazines:1948-1959, school roll number 86.

Girls' high School (Whitley High School from 1972): logbooks:1948-1972, staff registers:1904-1942, H.M.I. reports:1908-1968, house magazines:1958-1959, school prospectus:1941,1980, school scrapbook, 1970,1980, jubilee history:1947, school roll number WGHS.

National and Bluecoat: logbooks:1862-1982, school roll number 84.

Poolstock C. E. Primary: managers' minutes, school roll number 43.

Sacred Heart Primary: admissions registers:1932-1963, school roll number 72.

St. James C. E. Primary: managers' minutes:1956-1974, school roll number 44.

St. Thomas's C. E.: managers' minutes:1953-1972, logbooks:1872-1959, admission registers:1910-1945, school roll number 42.

Warrington Lane Council: logbooks 1919-1969, school roll number 34.

Whelley Secondary Modern (middle school from 1972): logbooks:1927-1988, admissions registers:1927-1988, staff registers:1927-1964, pupils' reports:1931-1934, programme for school events:1929-1986, school roll number 85.

Methodist: managers' and trustees' minutes:1903-1952, logbooks:1867-1967, admission registers:1907-1966.

## INTERVIEWS

Interviewed Jack Lathom, 03.01.98., aged 80 years, attended Standish Lower Ground All Age C. E. School, 1924-34.

Interviewed Frank Dandy, 03.02.98., aged 61 years, attended Scared Heart R. C. Infant and Junior School, 1941-48, Wigan Grammar School 1948-1953.

Interviewed Rita Dandy, 05.02.98., aged 59 years, attended St. George's C. E. Infant and Junior School, 1944-1952, Wigan Girls' High School 1952-1957.

Interviewed Harry Richardson, 19.02.98., aged 76 years, attended Highfield Colliery Infant and Junior School, 1925-1932, Highfield Senior Boys School 1932-1935.

Interviewed Winifred Jones, 01.03.98., aged 77 years, attended Argyle Infant School, 1927-1930, St. Peter's Junior School, 1930-1934, Hindley and Abram Grammar School, 1934-1939.

Interviewed Ronnie Foster, 04.03.98., aged 68 years, attended Belle Green C. C. Infant and Junior School, 1934-1939, Rose Bridge Senior School for Boys' 1941-1944.

Interviewed June Foster, 18.03.98., aged 68 years, attended Ince Central C. E. School, 1934-1939, Rose Bridge Senior School for Girls' 1939-1941, Wigan Technical College, 1941-1945.

Interviewed Martin King, 25.03.98., aged 71 years, attended All English Martyrs R. C. All Age School, Haydock, 1932-1942.

Interviewed Alan Mitchinson 30.03.98., aged 51 years, attended Scared Heart Infant and Junior School, 1952-1957, West Park Grammar School, St. Helens 1957-1964.

Interviewed Jack Wolley 03.04.98., aged 61 years, attended St. Mark's C. E. Primary School, 1942-1949, Pemberton Secondary Modern School, 1949-1953.

Interviewed William Foster 06.04.98., aged 63 years, attended Highfield Infant and Junior School 1939-1946, Wigan Grammar School, 1946-1953.

Interviewed James Hilton 10.04.98., aged 57 years, attended S. Peter's C. E. Primary School, 1946-1953, Hindley and Abram Grammar School, 1953-1959.

Interviewed Tony Perkins, 25.04.98., aged 43 years, attended St. Patrick's R. C. primary School, 1959-1966, St. John Fisher R. C. Secondary Modern School, 1966-1970.

Interviewed Barbara Seddon 26.04.98., aged 60 years, Highfield Infant and Junior School, 1943-50, Wigan Girls' High School, 1950-1956.

Interviewed John Duckworth 15.05.98., aged 52 years, Pemberton County Primary School, 1950-1957, Wigan Grammar School, 1957-1963.

Interviewed Kathleen Sherriff 22.05.98., aged 68 years, Scared Heart R. C. All Age School, 1935-1945.

Interviewed Betty Houghton 25.05.98, aged 75 years, Scared Heart R. C. All Age School, 1928-1938.

Interviewed Mary Appleton 29.05.98., aged 68 years, Holy Family R. C. All Age School, 1936-1946.

Interviewed James Smith 01.06.98., aged 74 years, Moss Lane County School, 1928-1931 All Age, St. Nathaniel's All Age, 1931-1938.

Interviewed Margaret Hurst 01.03.00., aged 65 years, Warrington Lane County School, 1940-1947, Wigan Girls' High School, 1947-1952.

Interviewed Fred Foster 13.04.00., aged 69 years, Highfield Infant and Junior School, 1935-1942, Wigan Grammar School, 1942-1947.

Interviewed Christine Mosley 27.04.00., aged 54 years, St. Andrew's C. E. Infant and Junior School, 1951-1958, Wigan Girls' High School, 1958-1963.

Interviewed Mrs. Gregory 27.04.00., aged 88 years, St. Andrews' All Age School, 1917-1928.

Interviewed Derrick Smith 10.11.01., aged 63 years, Ince C. E. Infant and Junior School, 1942-1949, Rosebridge Secondary Modern Boys' Department, 1949-1953.

Interviewed John Scully 18.04.01, aged 71 years, Golbourne and Parkside Council All Age School, 1935-1945.

Interviewed Joe Brooks 25.04.01., aged 77 years, Bryn Gates Council All Age School, 1929-1939.

Interviewed Bert Ollerton 03.05.01., aged 76 years, Warrington Lane Jerusalem Infant and Junior School 1930-1937, Wigan Grammar School, 1937-1942.

Interviewed Roger Taylor 11.05.01., aged 80 years, National Bluecoat School, 1925-1932, Wigan Grammar School, 1932-1937.

Interviewed Christopher Dennis 23.05.01., aged 55 years, St. John's C. E. Primary School, 1950-1957, Ashton Grammar School, 1957-1964.

Interviewed Ethel Prone 11.06.01., aged 76 years, St. Stephens's C. E. Primary School, 1931-1934, Warrington Lane Jerusalem Council School, 1934-1938, Wigan Girls' High School, 1938-1943.

Interviewed Jean Ashton 11.06.01., aged 66 years, Wesleyan Infant and Junior School, 1939-1946, Wigan Girls' High School, 1946-1951.

Interviewed Peter Hutchinson 18.06.01., aged 49 years, Woodfield Infant and Junior School 1957-1963, All Saints' C. E. Secondary Modern Boys Department, 1963-1968.

Interviewed Malcolm Heyes 04.09.01., aged 49 years, St. Thomas's C. E. Infant and Junior School 1957-1963, Secondary Modern Boys' Department, 1963-1967.

Interviewed Muriel Heyes 05.09.01., aged 46 years, St. Thomas's C. E. Infant and Junior School, 1959-1966, All Saints' C. E. Secondary Modern Girls' Department, 1966-71.

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**TABLE 5** Examination Results, Wigan 2000.

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