

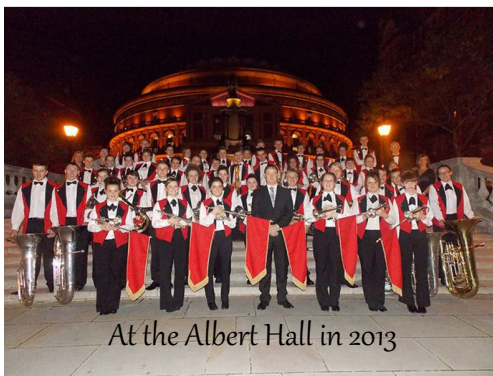


Wardle and Smallbridge History Group

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Newsletter

Everyone in this area must have heard of, or heard the brass bands which have become a tradition of Wardle High School, now Wardle Academy. We are delighted to have recently become the custodians of a collection of memorabilia covering a number of years. If you or a family member have been involved in any way, please let us know as we're sure you'll find something to bring back pleasant memories.



At the Albert Hall in 2013

Once again we are taking part in the Heritage Open Days scheme. We'll be at the History Centre on Wardle Road on **Saturday and Sunday; September 9th and 10th between the hours of 10.00 am and 3.30 pm.** There's lots of interesting things for you to see and talk about.

Visitors are always most welcome during our regular Wednesday morning meetings; just drop in to say hello and have a look around. If you can't make it in person then visit our Facebook page; its popularity is constantly growing, we now have over 800 members. See the link below.



The intriguing story of the Anabaptists in Wardle has been researched by a local historian and we have arranged to visit some of the places involved and to hear their story. Meet on August 23rd at 11 am at the Watergrove car park. Some walking will be involved. All are welcome to join us on an informal basis.

Contact us

Wardle & Smallbridge History
Centre
110 Wardle Road
Rochdale OL12 9ER

We're *almost* always there on Wednesdays between 10am and 12 pm – pass straight along the corridor, then up the stairs for a friendly chat and a look at our exhibits.

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07522 739388

Please leave a message and
we'll reply ASAP

Our Facebook page continues to be most successful, once again covering a wide range of subjects with enthusiastic support from far and wide

There's no need to subscribe to Facebook as you can access it by simply going to our website at www.washg.co.uk and clicking on the link,

.... while you're on the website, you can also download this newsletter

Find us on facebook

Three quarters of a century ago in 1942 the British Navy desperately needed more warships to protect the Atlantic convoys. Local communities were given the seemingly impossible challenge of raising the money during Warship Week. Read the story of how Wardle and Littleborough worked together to make HMS Meadowsweet possible, and read some of the tales of men who served in her in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The article will be available on our website or contact us by email and we'll send you a copy.



Over the years the group have been given a number of Home Movies. Although some of them are in rather poor condition in places, excerpts from them show fascinating scenes of Carnivals, Parades, Fetes and everyday events in Smallbridge and Wardle from the 1960s onwards; see if you can put a name to the faces and perhaps name the young boy who shouted 'Are we on t'telly' back in the 1980s? They are now being released through our links to [YouTube](#) either directly or through our [Facebook](#) page and already have received a considerable amount of interest.



In early October we are having a day trip to Clitheroe then on to the picturesque village of Downham. Members of the Downham and Twiston History Group who visited us recently to see our 'Skerrett' banners have promised to show us around the historic St Leonards Church.

Our archives contain a wide range of articles, stories, and images of days gone by. Many are of family life, school, Chapel and Church but included among them are more personal tales of life in our area.

Starting on the next page we intend to bring a regular selection which we hope you enjoy. If you would like to know more, or would like to contribute something, please get in touch by any of the means on Page One.

Jim Tweedale – A Wardle Reporter



Jim was born in 1901 on Halifax Road, Smallbridge and lived there until he married and moved to Elm Grove, Wardle. He always worked in the cotton industry and later in life became the Wardle and Smallbridge columnist for the Observer. After retirement he wrote many articles on local life and history for the Observer and also gave talks to local groups. We have a collection of over a dozen of his articles and many can be found on our website. Jim died in 1986 aged 84 years. Here are two excerpts about Wardle and Smallbridge.

The flying machine that closed the mills

“The story begins on Sunday 4 January 1914, at Belle Vue, Manchester, at 10 am when Mr B.C. Hucks, a famous aviator, and his friend. Mr R.A. Coulson planned to fly to Leeds, a distance of 30 miles. Their machine was a monoplane, a Bleriot 80hp two-seater and a very fragile looking machine it was. They pointed Tornado's nose in the right direction over the Pennines, but within minutes the frail machine was quickly blown off course by the resurgent gale force wind. Tossed and buffeted, and miles away from their flight path, there was only one thing to do in the gathering darkness – make a forced landing. Help was sought and after working for some three hours in the wind and rain with light from storm lamps the willing helpers directed by the fliers had dismantled the plane by removing the wings and rudder. It was then wheeled to the barn at Nick Road Farm, where Mr T. Wild lived. By the following morning, Monday, news of the forced landing had spread for miles around and by early afternoon many eager sightseers made their way to Nick Road Farm. Among them were work-people from Wardle taking an extended dinner break which caused the mills to close for the day. Two mechanics arrived, and after roping the wings and rudder to the body of the machine, they carried it to the main road at Whitworth, helped by a few Wardle people and Mr. Wild. Then they hitched it to the rear of Mr Wild's milk float and Tornado made an inglorious exit from the Whitworth scene. It was towed all the way to a garage at Knott Mill, Deansgate, Manchester.



A matter of honour

'Roses' Match played in ancient style

“The scene – Rochdale Cricket Ground, Dane Street. The day – Saturday 2 June 1951. The occasion – Rochdale Borough Police sports. ... In a full and often exciting programme of sporting activities the highlight was a Lancashire v Yorkshire knur and spell challenge match between William Henry (Bill) Schofield, aged 74, of Hurstead and Willie Clayton, aged 76, of Halifax. ... Bill Schofield took first strike which sent his knur 130 yards. A mighty “clout” by any reckoning and the one which eventually made him champion. So strike followed strike with Clayton's furthest being 40 yards. Bill Schofield



was a worthy champion, and a proud one too as he received the cup from the Mayor. The cup is now a treasured possession of Bill's son, Henry who kindly lent the photographs. It was him who told me of knur and spell matches for side-stakes of anything up to £50 and sometimes more. Small amounts by today's standards but small

fortunes in those far-off days. It was very important to get the wind direction just right; and Bill's way never failed – the proverbial straw in the wind. I have a feeling that Bill Schofield was the Jack Nicklaus of the knur and spell world.

A Memory of Old Smallbridge

Contributed by Geoff Meeks.

In the 1950s, my father Eric Meeks owned a Greengrocer's shop at 393 Halifax Road, Smallbridge. In addition to fruit and vegetables he sold fish, rabbits and at Christmas time turkeys. It was a business that naturally created waste from perishable goods and the preparation of fish and other carcasses. As you will gather the `swill bin` as it was known, could have presented quite a problem. If my memory serves me right there was one refuse collection each week and I've no idea if there was any alternative means of disposal. At any rate it didn't matter as my father and one or two other shopkeepers with similar problems had the answer more or less on their doorsteps.

On the south side of Halifax Road, practically opposite my father's shop was a stretch of open ground that eventually narrowed into a dirt track leading down to Dye House Lane. This path had been used by generations of Smallbridgers making their way to work at the various manufacturing premises in the vicinity of the lane. As they left Halifax Road to cross the spare land, they passed a circular red brick wall about eight

metres diameter and two metres high. It surrounded a disused mineshaft from the former Smallbridge Colliery. Local children; myself included, would often throw things over the wall and as we never heard them hit the bottom, we assumed that it was a bottomless pit. An assumption made also, I presume by my father and his like-minded fellow shopkeepers. When I was in my early teens a tremendous fire destroyed the Clover Mill, off Entwisle Road. It was a spectacular event to watch and hundreds of people gathered in the fields at the back of the mill on the opposite bank of the River Roch.

Subsequently the remains of the mill had to be demolished and tons of masonry and other materials had to be disposed of. That's when Smallbridge lost its own refuse disposal system. Thousands of tons of waste from the fire were transported by wagon and tipped down the shaft until it was level with the surrounding area. The surface was levelled off and that should have been the end of the matter.



Some years later a local resident went to get his car from one of a number of wooden lock up garages erected on the area. It was dusk and as he looked in the direction of his path for reversing, the ground looked darker than normal. He made a closer inspection and found himself looking down into a dark void seemingly without end. It seemed impossible to believe but water flowing through the old mine workings had slowly carried away a substantial amount of the debris tipped in the abyss.

In due course with a view to ensuring the safety of the area, a steel framework was inserted a short distance down the shaft and then topped with concrete. That should be the end of the matter - but who knows?

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We hope you enjoyed these articles; more will follow in future editions of the Newsletter but we would welcome your contributions. Please contact us, even if it's just a suggestion for a topic. As always we can be contacted by dropping in to one of our regular meetings, by email or by phone.