

NEWS FROM WESTHOUGHTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

'Howfen's' History' in county-wide spotlight!...

Established in its current format in 2005 (as successor to two similar precursor organisations operating in the 1980s and 1990s), over the succeeding 17 years WLHG has grown to be one of the largest and most creative heritage groups in our region. Mercifully, unlike many similar heritage societies, WLHG has worked very hard throughout the period of covid constraints to maintain much of the valued momentum built up over the years, and is now well on the way to resuming its long-established and successful pre-covid schedule, although the continuing unavailability of the Group's traditional 'home' at Westhoughton Library (due to on-going major re-furbishment work) remains a frustration.

Despite this temporary setback, the diverse activities of the group (embracing a regular schedule of presentations by guest and in-house speakers, exhibitions, excursions, re-enactments, research projects, publications, DVDs etc.) have not gone unnoticed elsewhere, and in 2021 this led to WLHG being rewarded by a somewhat special and privileged invitation to showcase these eclectic activities to a county-wide audience.

For the last few years, Westhoughton's local history aficionados have represented one of over 80 constituent members groups of the **LANCASHIRE LOCAL HISTORY FEDERATION**, located throughout the 'historic' county boundaries (from Furness in the north, to Stockport/North Cheshire in the south), and annually the Federation's management team invite just one of these groups to host an "AT HOME" event (essentially an Open Day), which allows the host organisation to profile key aspects of its local history to a much wider audience. We are proud and privileged to say that, in 2022, "It's Howfen's turn!"...

The event will be staged on Saturday, 14th May, in the *Arts Theatre at Westhoughton High School*, with delegates arriving from 9:30am for *Registration and Coffee*, before participating in a carefully-constructed *Programme for the Day*, which will span from 10am to 4pm, with a break for 'networking' over a substantial buffet lunch.

Briefly, the *Programme* will comprise four significant presentations by members of the local team, as follows:

1. An Overview of Westhoughton's rich and varied history.

(Pam Wood/ Anne Hodgson/Garth Ratcliffe)

2. The Burning of Westhoughton Mill (the 1812 story of a Luddite revolt)

(Pam Wood, with a little 'dramatic enhancement' by Colin Gradwell)

3. The Bolton to Leigh Railway -1828

(Phil Wood)

4. The Pretoria Pit Disaster – 1910

(Garth Ratcliffe, with a musical prelude by Jim Berry, lead singer, *The Houghton Weavers*)

During the 2022 iteration of "AT HOME", visitors will be able to purchase a range of merchandise from WLHG, including our fascinatingly-informative 2021 publication "**Places of Historical Interest in Westhoughton**" (£6.00), and our perennially-popular "**344 Victims of the Pretoria Pit Disaster – Some Facts**" (£5.00). Authored by our late president, Pam Clarke, this 50-page booklet, crammed with facts and figures about Westhoughton's 'darkest day', is currently undergoing yet another reprint, which will be available prior to the May event.

Members of the Group's steering committee for this special day have been encouraged by early bookings from diverse locations throughout Lancashire, and the attendance on the day will inevitably be boosted by a substantial local representation as well. Anyone wishing to participate is welcome to do so, *but pre-registration is essential*. Further information about the event can be had from the WLHG websites and Facebook page, or *Registration Forms* can be requested by contacting us at howfenhistory@gmail.com, or by phoning 01204 696984 / 07970 131460.

www.westhoughtonhistorygroup.org.uk / www.westhoughtonlocalhistorypresentationsandphotos.com

www.facebook.com/groups/WesthoughtonLocalHistoryGroup

(Notes by David Kaye, Chairman WLHG)