

A light hearted report for Warwickshire Steam Engine Society on an outing to Wigan.

COACH OUTING TO WIGAN, 1985

What is there at Wigan? A coach party of members and friends went to find out.

On the outward journey, Rodney kept us all in suspense by saying he had a surprise location to visit before reaching Wigan. Rumour was rife, many place names with little thought of geographical position were bandied about. Fodens of Sandbach, Harecastle Tunnel, Barton Swing Aqueduct seemed probable places. Someone more in hope said Blackpool Tower.

Just when everyone thought Rodney was pulling our legs, the coach was brought to rest near a railway bridge at Newton le Willows. Here we were invited to alight and walk down a recently ploughed field to see a memorial erected on the opposite embankment of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway line to William Hutchisson M.P. who was mortally wounded on the opening day of this railway. He failed to realize that Rockets are dangerous.

On rejoining the coach we were soon at the Wigan Pier museum complex. Someone sighting the Pier discreetly hid his towel and bathers.

A canal-side warehouse has been renovated and inside, the town of Wigan is shown as it was at the turn of this century. I think everyone was quite fascinated by the displays, artefacts, rebuilt cottage, saloon bar and classroom where visitors receive tuition in the three Rs.

Nearby is the Trencherfield Mill of 1907. Housed inside is the original mill engine and also a collection of machines associated with the cotton industry.

There are interesting canal-side walks and a water-bus linking the sites.

The five hours allotted to the museum sped by and the coach was about to depart, when it was discovered that Trevor had not returned. Much speculation ensued, was he stranded on the Pier, had he been a bad boy in the classroom and made to write a hundred lines? Or perhaps in a passionate moment had he invited a pit brow lass onto the water-bus. We don't know. Before a search party could be dispatched, we saw him approaching with a spring in his step and a gleam in his eye. As he entered the coach everyone in unison quoted the classroom text: "**Punctuality is the backbone of the British Empire**".

During this hubbub the coach quietly stole away, bringing an enjoyable visit to an end.

Thanks to Rodney for making all arrangements.

Peter Chater