

LIVERPOOL FAMILY HISTORIAN



Volume 47 No. 4



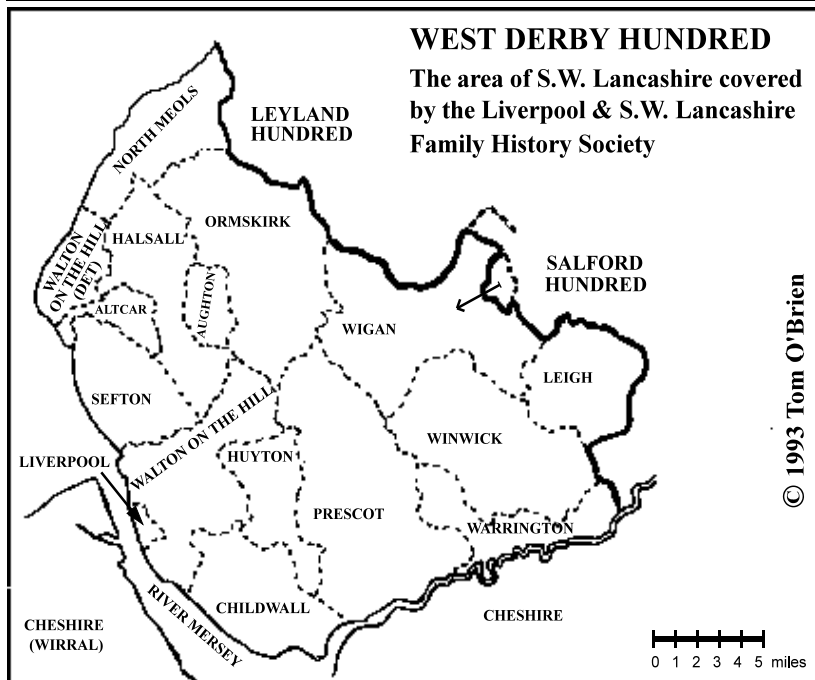
December 2025

THE LIVERPOOL & S. W. LANCASHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Founded 27 May 1976

Covering

“the area of interest shall be that part of the ancient
County of Lancashire known as the Hundred of West Derby.”



Website: www.lswlfhs.org.uk



Front cover:

Christmas Lights in Chinatown, Liverpool—17 December 2015

The Archway leading into Liverpool's Chinatown at Christmas

This file is licenced under the CCA 2.0 Generic Licence and attributed to
Bob Edwards

Liverpool Family Historian

Journal of The Liverpool and S. W. Lancashire Family History Society

Published quarterly - December 2025, Vol. 47, No. 4

ISSN 0260-759X

Member of the Family History Federation - Registered Charity No. 512906

Regular Features

Editorial	170
Book Reviews	181
Help Desks	221
Help Requests/Letters to the Editor	218
New Members & Members Interests	220
News from the Groups	222
Obituaries	179 & 192
Officers of the Society	224
Society News Items	171
Zoom Meetings	195

Articles

A Liverpool Love Tragedy	183
Richard Meadows	196
Genealogy Gold!	201
A Nurse's Life	205
The Plight of the Roumanian Jews	210
The Messina Earthquake 1908	214
Working Life in a Burnley Cotton Mill	193
Applying for War Medals	219

© As per copyright statement on page 171

Editorial

Hello everyone and especially to our new members and welcome to another edition of The Liverpool Historian.

Once again, this year seems to have flown past with Christmas just around the corner. I hope you are all prepared for the big day! If you are after some small gifts for genealogists then why not have a look at our website shop and see if anything is suitable for you to purchase.

I've put together a packed edition of the Journal, yet again, and I would like to thank all the contributors for their wonderful and varied articles. Without them there would be no Journal.

Looking forward to next year, July 2026 is the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and I had an idea that it would be appropriate if we could mark the occasion by devoting the June 2026 issue to articles or stories of any of your ancestors who may have taken part in the Battle. They may have been soldiers, doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, in charge of the horses, digging trenches. Their stories are important and we should not forget them and the sacrifice they made us. I feel that the occasion shouldn't go past without us honouring the men and women who took part in what was a most horrendous part of our history. For those of you who have never written an article I am always available and happy to help.

2026, is also the 50th anniversary of the founding of L&SWLFHS and we have a request from our Chair, Susan **Atkins**, in the AGM Chair's Report on p172 and more details on p178. Please let us know your thoughts.

Some very sad news to report is the death of our Vice-President and co-founder, David **Guiver**, who passed away in September. Our condolences go out to his family and friends. He will be greatly missed by us all. Please read his obituary on page 179.

As ever, if you have any ideas or suggestions for the Journal, then please let me know.

Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.
Alison Anyon (Editor)

Society News Items

New 2026 Membership Fees

Over the past few years there has been a steady increase in the cost of production and distribution of the quarterly journal and so following the vote at the AGM to accept the proposal to increase membership fees it was agreed that the Society should operate a 2-tier membership fee structure from the 1 January 2026.

Therefore, the fee will be £10.00 for all members irrespective of their location, but for this they will receive the journal digitally for downloading via their preferred method of reading e.g. PC, laptop, phone or Kindle. For those members who wish to continue to receive a printed journal via the post, the price will be £20.00 for UK residents and £28.00 for all non-UK residents.

The website is being updated to reflect the new fees, but if you pay by standing order then this will need to be updated in line with your preferred method of receipt.

Geoff Bibby
Membership Secretary

Copyright

It is not the intention of the Society to enforce copyright, although individual contributors may wish to exercise their rights. Contributors retain their copyright but must expect editing to suit the requirements of the journal. The Society will be satisfied if due acknowledgement is given when extracts from the journal are published or used elsewhere.

However, if extracts from other publications appear in this journal the permission of the original copyright holder must be obtained prior to reproduction of their material.

ATTENTION!

A reminder that Santander have closed our bank account with them.

We have new bank details for those members who pay by standing order.

To continue receiving copies of the Journal uninterrupted from January 2026, please check your bank account now and (if necessary) update the details to:

Sort Code: 60-83-01; Account: 20466637

Please quote your membership number as the Reference

We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause but this has been totally out of our control.

Ann Croft , Treasurer

ZOOM AGM 2025

Chair's Report

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to David **Guiver**, our Vice President, who sadly passed away on 24 September this year. As well as setting up the Southport Group many years ago he also served as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. He was very knowledgeable about the history and the running of the Society and would willingly pass on his help and knowledge to anyone who requested it. He will be very much missed. Maybe could we pause for a moment in remembrance of him.

What else has gone on—We have a new Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Members Interests Secretary as Agnes resigned as Treasurer at the last AGM and Annette who was Membership Secretary and Members Interests Secretary gave notice that her resignation would take effect from 2025 AGM. Ann **Croft** very kindly agreed to take over as Treasurer early in 2025. Geoff **Bibby** & Sandra **Roberts** have also very kindly come forward to cover the Membership Secretary and Members

ZOOM AGM 2025 (Cont'd)

Interests Secretary. They were all co-opted onto the Committee and wish to continue in their rolls subject to agreement from this AGM unless anyone else would like those jobs. Thanks to Ann, Geoff and Sandra for volunteering.

The Society has had two opportunities for publicity this year—at a History & Heritage Fair at Port Sunlight and as part of a 'mini' Family History Fair at the Guild of One-Name Studies Conference in Liverpool in April. Both gave the Society good publicity. Thanks to everyone involved with running the stands at those events.

The Society will be 50 years old at the end of May 2026. There is going to be the usual conference hosted by Warrington Group on 10 October 2026. As it is a special anniversary, I would like suggestions for what else we could do to celebrate or would everyone prefer just the Conference. Please let me know—my email address is chair@lswlfhs.org.uk

Finally, my very grateful thanks to everyone on the Committee, all those that run the Groups and Help Desks and everyone else involved in the smooth running of the Society who are all volunteers and give up their spare time.

Susan A Atkins *Chair*

Secretary's Report

Our Chair, Susan, has already paid a fulsome tribute to David **Guiver** but I would also like to place on record my personal appreciation of David as someone who, when I took on this position, was always there to offer advice and encouragement when it was needed.

The Society also suffered a further significant loss over the last year with the passing of Pat **Bellas** who, as many of you will know, served for many years as Projects Co-ordinator and was particularly instrumental in setting up a team to research the transportation of female convicts to Australia.

You will be aware from Susan's report of the change of Officers on the General Committee, and I believe we should take this opportunity to

thank the retiring Officers, Agnes **Ingram** and Annette **Urwin** for their valuable contributions and hard work during their respective times in office; and to welcome their successors, Ann, Geoff and Sandra, in their new roles.

Each of our six local groups continue to meet on a regular basis and offer both a varied programme of talks and visits, with external Help Desks being offered by four of the Groups.

To quote just a few examples, Skelmersdale have hosted talks about Kirkdale Industrial School, about a family member who had served on the Titanic and on the Tawd Valley Mining Disaster.

Southport, in their programme, have included presentations on Agricultural Servants and Farm Servants, on the Frustrations of Family History Research and on Family Tree Resources, as well as fitting in a visit to the Liverpool Records Office.

Similar programmes have been put on at the other local groups, with all the details advertised in the Journal.

The regular Zoom presentations arranged by Mary **Allan** remain as popular ever and continue to explore such diverse topics as Who Lived in a House Like This and The Mormon Trail.

On other matters, the last year has seen significant cost increases in all areas of life, and our Society has been no different to anyone else. The cost of hiring rooms and of the licences required to use our software to support the website and Zoom presentations are just some examples. The largest increase, however, has been in the costs associated with printing and distributing of the Journal.

This was recognised at last year's AGM when it was agreed to increase membership costs for this coming year. It was also accepted that ***“should there be any further significant increase in costs in 2025 the Committee may use its discretion to update the proposed membership fees accordingly with any further increase being sanctioned at the 2025 AGM”.***

Unfortunately, there have been further cost increases over the last twelve months both in postage which has increased three times, and in the costs of paper and printing. As a result, the Committee undertook an

exercise to evaluate the actual costs of the Journal now and assess again their effect on membership fees.

As a result, a revised proposal has been presented for voting on at this AGM which you will have seen on the Agenda for the AGM.

Barry Peacock
Secretary

Treasurer's Report

The balance sheet and year end accounts are available on the website in the members only section. All had read the balance sheet and end of year account figures.

Ann introduced herself and her background. Ann has been a member for over 25 years and has been helping at the help desk in Liverpool.

2024 has shown a loss but was kept down to £858 mainly due to Agnes putting some funds into savings accounts so it earned more interest, and it was the interest that stopped the loss being as bad as it could have been. Ann thanked Agnes for doing this. 2023 showed a profit of £765. 2024 had a loss of £858. She also explained that the banks had been a nightmare to deal with since taking over.

The 2024 accounts showed an increased depreciation because we've changed the method to come in line with accounting standards.

Membership was lower but the cost of printing and postage was higher.

The Membership Secretary said that we have 887 members.

Skelmersdale came in at a loss.

We no longer have a storage unit so the cost of that will disappear by next year.

A lengthy discussion followed:

One about the rise in conference expenses and computer subscriptions.

The reply was that it is down to how expenses are classified in the accounts but also that costs had gone up.

Another question was asked; What is the plan to do with the money? And what would happen to that money if the society were to close given that our membership is going down gradually?

In the Constitution it states that all funds held by a society must be donated to a similar charity. It was suggested that it would be better to use the money. The Chair commented that the money would be used as there may be one or two items coming up in the near future. Examples were asked for, and the reply was to possibly have a new website designed professionally which would be quite expensive.

It was asked if the society must have a certain amount in reserve. According to the Charity Commission it is recommended that the amount is 3 times the income for the minimum reserve (approx. £45,000) and the remainder should be used for projects and capital items such as the rebuilding of the website etc and the updating of computer and electrical equipment. It should also be used for special projects which is up to the membership. It is not intended to subsidise current expenditure.

It was suggested that the Committee look at a proper investment policy in the coming years as it was agreed that we shouldn't be using the surplus funds and interest for the day to day running of the Society.

Some members were not happy with this.

Election of Officers

The election of officers was carried by a majority vote and acceptance of officers was confirmed.

Proposal to amend membership fees

There was much discussion on this topic and the reason behind the proposed increase i.e. increase in ongoing costs to the Society over the past years.

It was noted that there has been no increase in membership fees for over 10 years.

A quorum of 20 members with voting rights will constitute the AGM. 40 members had logged in to the meeting.

The result of the vote was:

26 in favour; 12 not in favour. Therefore, the proposal was carried and the increase in membership fees will commence on 1 January 2026.

Please see page 171 for the new membership fees.

AOB

Peter **Jolliffe** was proposed by Glenys **McLellan** and seconded by Mary **Allan** to become Vice-Chair of the Society. Peter accepted.

50th Anniversary

Susan **Atkins** asked for suggestions for ways of celebrating the 50 years since the group was founded on 27 May 1976. Various suggestions put forward so far are: a visit to somewhere, a conference, a meal out (lunchtime), a walk with coffee afterwards.

Any suggestions can be emailed to Susan at chair@lswlfhs.org.uk

The meeting ended at 8.35pm

2025 Conference

Hosted by Leigh & District FHS

On Saturday 11 October 2025 the Leigh Group hosted our Annual Conference at St Mary's Community Hall in Lowton, a very good venue as it was easy to get to and plenty of parking available.

There were four talks through the day, the first being by **Mr Alex Miller, Archives and Resources Manager of the Lancashire Archives in Preston**, who was able to tell us about a lot of holdings that we didn't know about. He encouraged all of us to visit the archives and get to know more about what is available first hand.

The second talk of the morning was “**Do you know your Divi number? The History of the Co-operative movement, the Rochdale Pioneers and how Co-operation affected ordinary people's lives in the Victorian era**” by **Prof. Tony Webster, Historian, Northumbria University**. Most of us remember shopping with our mother and many remember the Divi number we handed in at the Co-op. Professor Tony Webster gave us an in-depth insight into the beginnings of the Co-operative Society and surprised us with just how widespread it is.

After an excellent buffet lunch came a light-hearted, dramatic

exploration of the history, mystery & magnificence of the West Derby Hundred, a humorous dialogue with presentation by **Ms Julie McKiernan & Mrs. Corrie Shelley of “Heritage with a twist”**.

At the end of the day **Louise Wade** gave a presentation about “**Great Victorian Inventions (and Disasters)**” which as you can imagine gave us all a good laugh and which we enjoyed tremendously.

We all went home with a goodie bag filled with interesting magazines from the Wigan and Leigh Archives, notebooks and pens and pencils. Included was a strip of raffle tickets, prizes being annual subscriptions for some of the larger online subscription sites as well as many smaller prizes.

A good day was had by all, and we send thanks to the Leigh Committee for arranging such a grand event.

Mary Allan

Liverpool and Southwest Lancs FHS 50 years Anniversary Celebration

On 27 May 2026, the society is celebrating its 50th anniversary. We would like to mark the occasion by holding an event or two (!) during the summer months. We already have scheduled the **Conference** in Warrington on **10 October 2026** and the **Zoom AGM** on Wednesday **14 October 2026**. Members and Branches are cordially invited to suggest some informal event in their locality and would like to invite other society members to join. Please contact chair@lswlfhs.org.uk with your ideas.

Some suggestions so far, are:

- A ‘picnic in the park’ at one of the historic houses in the region i.e. Speke Hall
- A visit to the Atkinson Arts Centre Museum, Southport
- Pub lunch at Ring o’ Bells, Daresbury followed by a visit to the Lewis Carroll Centre and All Saints Church, Daresbury, nr Warrington
- An extra Zoom meeting to commemorate the anniversary perhaps on the two different faiths in Liverpool or on the local Smedley Hydro, the GRO Records Office for BMDs

Obituary

David Peter Jack Guiver

4 June 1932—22 September 2025

It was very sad to hear of the passing of David. His membership No. 1215 must imply that he had been a member of the Liverpool & SW Lancashire Family History Society since about 1984.

David was first mentioned in minutes of the Society as representing the Southport Group in 1986. The following year he was appointed Treasurer of the Society and held that position until 2002. In January of 2002 he was Acting Secretary as well as Treasurer. In 2003 became General Secretary when a new Treasurer was appointed. He continued as General Secretary until 2007 when he stood down and was appointed Vice President of the Society.

David stood in as Chair of the Society in 2011 when the Vice Chair, due to take on that role died unexpectedly. He retired as Chair at the AGM 2012 but continued to attend Committee meetings in his role as Vice President.

David was a gentle, gentleman who was always able to quietly research the Society's past minutes and point out to the Committee what had the Society's past minutes and point out to the Committee what had been decided at previous meetings many years ago.

He will be sadly missed by the Society.

The following is an extract of more details about David that his family have provided.

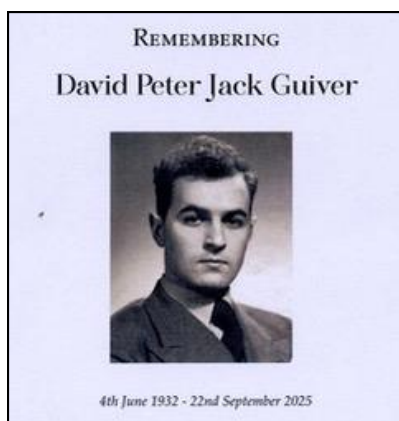
"David attended the Cambridgeshire High School for Boys. Whilst there, he joined the Scout Troop and eventually became a King's Scout; he also joined the Naval Cadets.

During his National Service, he served as a navigator in the Royal Air Force. Afterwards, he joined the Royal Insurance Company; working first in Cambridge, then London and then Liverpool. Moving to Formby, he became Scout Leader for the 8th Formby troop.

David retired at the age of 58 and enjoyed a long and happy retirement. Going straight into work after his national service, he missed out on university so decided that a History degree with the Open University would be interesting. He was eventually awarded first class honours.

Genealogy interested him, and he served on the committee of the Liverpool and S.W. Lancashire Family History Society.

A loving husband, father and brother to Jimmy. We mourn our loss."



Your Journal Needs You!

Please send us your articles, pictures, help requests, website reviews etc. Our journal depends on your contributions if we are to maintain the high standards we have all enjoyed for so many years.

DEADLINES

The cut-off dates for material to reach the editor, for potential inclusion in the next issue are:



MARCH	Jan 25th
JUNE	Apr 25th
SEPTEMBER	July 25th
DECEMBER	Oct 25th

Book Reviews

This month we have two book reviews for you.

The first one I received a while ago and had hoped to include the review in the September 2025 Journal but I ran out of room. So, my apologies to Mike Smears for the delay in publishing the review.

The Unremembered by Mike Smears

This story is about the plight of refugees who were forced to flee Ireland to Liverpool during the Irish Famine and is mainly set in Liverpool in the nineteenth century. A young woman, Mairead Kelly, lives in a village in County Tipperary, and at the age of seventeen she flees, starving after she is left alone; the story tells of the dreadful suffering endured by the emigrants, both in Ireland and on arrival in the poorer areas of Liverpool.

It focuses on the history of that period and has many references to past and current local topography, including specific localities such as Walton. The novel tells of the contrasting experiences of rich and poor at that time; the struggle for Mairead to rise above the miserable, grinding poverty for a better life for herself and her daughter and the whole question of Irish identity and the issue of English Irish relations. The novel also portrays the differing local reactions to refugees and emigrants and has a deep resonance even today.

Having read this book, I can't say that I enjoyed it, but it showed me how awful the living conditions were in Liverpool at that time and how difficult it was to try and better yourself. I believe the book would be of great local interest, for those who are interested in the Irish Famine or indeed those of us who have Irish ancestors who were affected by the famine.

Mike Smears was born and grew up in Old Swan, Liverpool in a family descended from Irish ancestors, and although he now lives in the south of England, he still retains a keen interest in his home city.

The book is available on Amazon in book form and for Kindle.

Just a Liverpool Lad by Peter McArdle

This book was gifted to the Society by the Author.

Inspired by family stories and old photographs of Liverpool, Peter, who grew up in the Dingle, had a love of writing from his early days and had a passion to recreate his dream. In February 2023, his book of *'Liverpool Memories, A Boy on a Donkey'*, was published. Now Peter follows on with more memories and tales in this new book, which is illustrated by his wife, Maria, along with family photos.

The book is a collection of stories and poetry based on the author's memories of growing up in the 1940's, moving on to an apprenticeship with his uncle followed by a stint doing his National Service. Some of the stories are whimsical, some are sad and others came about from reminders of the author's childhood. My favourite story is called *'1960—A Visit to Old Ireland'* on page 94. Also, Maria's illustrations are very good.

The book was published on 12 June 2025 and costs £8.99.

ISBN 978-1-0369-1637-4

It is available to order online from Waterstones, Foyles and all good bookshops. Signed copies can be purchased direct from the author for £8.99 including P&P. Please contact the author by email at:

PEJOMAC@aol.com

Alison Anyon

Editor

Disclaimer

The Society does not sponsor any professional genealogist or service provider, whether members of the Society or not. It cannot be held responsible for the quality of service given by those who advertise in the Journal. Members intending to purchase goods or services from advertisers should make their own enquiries and arrangements regarding payment before agreeing to pay for services.

The Liverpool Love Tragedy

Gert's Memoirs

My mother's aunt, Gertude **Bell**, in her later years, wrote down her memories so she could pass on information about her early life in the **Bell** family. She also included some recollections about the **Heron** family, as Gert's older sister, Georgina **Bell**, had married my maternal grandfather, James **Heron**, in 1915.

Gert's memoirs are a fascinating insight into her family's interactions. However, while some of her memories aren't quite correct in some details, they are an excellent starting point for research. She probably gained some of her information from family members, and it's likely some parts became either embellished or lost. She was three years old, when the tragedy occurred, that she later referred to in one line of her memoirs. It's about the **Heron** family.

"An elder brother's girlfriend committed suicide on discovering she was pregnant."

My grandfather, James had an older brother, William Lee **Heron**. William was born in 1884 to James McCormick **Heron**, a policeman originally from Scotland, and Margaret **Heron** (nee **Lee**). The **Heron** family lived in various locations in Liverpool. It's not known why they moved, possibly to fit in with James McCormick **Heron**'s police duties. By 1905, they were living in Juvenal Street, in Everton.

William Lee **Heron** and his girlfriend, Laura Stephens **Chapman**, died in tragic circumstances in 1905. An Inquest was held promptly. The deaths were reported in several newspapers including the Liverpool Echo. This is a transcript of the Echo's report of the Inquest, published on Tuesday 23 May 1905.

THE LIVERPOOL LOVE TRAGEDY

INQUEST AND VERDICT

PARENTS IN THE WITNESS BOX

*The Liverpool city Coroner (Mr T. E. **Sampson**) held an inquiry today*

concerning the deaths of the young people, William Lee **Heron** and Laura **Chapman**, who were found dead together under such tragic circumstances in the house of **Heron's** parents, 56 Juvenal Street on Sunday last.

James **Heron**, a pensioned police-constable, said William Lee **Heron** was his son, aged twenty-one years. He was a pawnbroker's assistant and a healthy man, but very sensitive. Since last November, he had been keeping company with Laura **Chapman**. Witness had not interfered in any way with the course of the courtship. About five weeks ago his son left his employment of his own accord and since then had been frequently out of town looking for employment. On Friday night witness heard his son tell his mother that he was going to begin work on Monday at Chester. Witness did not again see him alive. He did not see his son on the Saturday, but on the following day he found him lying on the parlour floor partly on his right side and partly on his back with his feet towards the sofa and his head in the direction of the fireplace. He then saw Miss **Chapman** lying on the sofa on her right side with her head bent down into the chest and was very much discoloured about the face and hair. Witness examined them both and found them cold and apparently dead. There was a strong odour of carbolic acid in the room, and afterwards he found a bottle and cups (produced) which had contained some of the acid. Witness recognised a letter (produced) as that written by his son, and which was received by his wife on the Sunday about midday. The whole letter was in the handwriting of his son, with the exception of the signature of **Chapman**. Witness admitted that the letter contained certain insinuations about him having wanted to part his son and his sweetheart.

Coroner: I suppose you and your son were always on the best of terms?
- Always.

Do you know of there being any trouble or difficulty beyond what he has stated? - No certainly not, not to my knowledge.

THE MOTHER'S STORY

Mrs **Heron** said she knew her son was courting Miss **Chapman**, although the girl had visited the family but twice. From letters shown to her she judged that this couple were very fond of each other. Witness was conversant with the contents of the letter produced, but she had not discouraged his courtship, nor had anyone else as far as she knew.

He came home on Friday afternoon, when he was handed a letter appointing him as salesman at a shop in Chester. He went to Chester to make arrangements and arrived home late at night. Witness had not seen him look so queer before. After sitting down for a short time, he got up and walked out quickly without saying anything. This conduct alarmed witness, especially as he did not return for an hour. On Saturday morning witness's son-in-law told her he had found William in the kitchen at six o'clock but that he went out at nine. He came in later and was asked by his mother to come home to tea, and he said he would. Witness did not see him again until about one o'clock on Sunday morning when her daughter called her attention to the couple passing along on the other side of the street.

*Eventually the deceased came into the cellar kitchen, the window of which was open, and when asked where, Miss **Chapman** was said she was outside and would stay there that evening. This did not please witness, who however let them remain in the sitting room. Witness heard nothing unusual during the night and the next morning she received a letter from her son. Her daughter read it for her and the witness looked upon the contents as a joke. Later the same morning she saw two cups in the back kitchen which smelt of carbolic acid. The cups were clean and looked as though they had been washed. She asked her husband to take some tea to her son and **Chapman**, but he called out that they were both dead. Before she went to bed her son said something to the effect that everybody was against him.*

Coroner: *I suppose you told him there was no ground for any such suggestion? – Yes.*

And what he said in the letter was simply imagination? - Yes, that is what it was.

*Mary **Deane**, sister of **Heron**, said that on Friday afternoon deceased said that Miss **Chapman**'s brother-in-law was "at the bottom of all this". He said this hurriedly and went out as he was going to Chester. About one o'clock in the morning witness saw the couple in the street, and later her brother got into the house through the kitchen window. Witness went down, and on asking the girl who she was the latter replied "Laura" saying that Will had brought her there. Witness then said, "You don't think much of yourself to come to a strange house at this hour of the night".*

William then said the girl would stay that night, adding to his mother, "if she never stops again". Taking hold of the table with both hands, he went on, "Furthermore, I will never be any more trouble to you after tonight". Witness thought he was referring to going to Chester and attached no importance to his words. There was no truth in the suggestion that the relatives were against the young couple.

*The brother-in-law to **Heron** said he knew of no reason for the insinuations in the letter. Personally, he thought the deceased got a great deal of his own way.*

Coroner: *Did you ever hear anything against the courtship? - No, I always thought they could get married anytime. You see no reason why he should do this? - No.*

Police Constable 58D said he saw the couple passing and re-passing the residence of the first witness. The officer overheard part of the conversation between the parties, and subsequently saw the deceased man get into the house through the window. He did not interfere.

A CHESTER MAN'S EVIDENCE

*George **Pearson** of Chester stated that the deceased girl was his sister-in-law, and she was twenty-one years of age, and a single woman. Deceased had got her living by selling literature on commission, and during the past seven or eight weeks she had resided in Mill Street, Crewe. He knew that Heron was courting her.*

Coroner: *There seems to have been some impression in the mother's mind that you persuaded him to leave his situation? - That was not true. He said he had been to Crewe with me, but I've never been in the town.*

Continuing, witness said he always extended a hearty welcome to the young couple, and did not throw any cold water upon the courtship.

DECEASED GIRL'S FATHER IN THE BOX

*Richard Stevens **Chapman**, a blacksmith, of Pit Brook, Gloucestershire, said the deceased girl was his daughter, who he last saw alive about eighteen months ago. The letter (produced) which he received yesterday was in his daughter's handwriting. Ethel **Jardine** said the girl **Chapman** had lodged with her in Crewe for some eight or nine weeks during which time **Heron** visited the girl several times. **Heron** appeared to be*

somewhat depressed at times, but the girl was always cheerful. Everything was quite straight during these visits. She knew of nothing that would interfere with the girl's courtship. Last Tuesday she left her house, saying she was going to Liverpool to celebrate the coming of age of a friend. Witness never saw her again.

THE PURCHASE OF THE POISON

A registered chemist of Fox Street Liverpool, said the deceased **Heron**, who he knew as a customer, came to his shop on Saturday afternoon, and said "I am in luck again." remarking that he had got a situation in Chester. Deceased then asked for some carbolic acid, saying he wanted it to paint an old mahogany bedstead. Witness sold him sixpenny worth and cautioned him about the poison. **Heron** who seemed to be quite rational, replied that he would be careful.

The **Coroner**, addressing the jury, said that the two letters which Miss **Chapman** wrote to Crewe seemed to show she was perfectly competent to write the same, and perfectly sensible. But the case was complicated from the fact that they did not know who was the survivor of the two persons; for according to the law in such cases, if they knew which was the survivor that person would be guilty of murder, and the other of suicide. It struck him that in the case before them it was a deliberate act, and if so they could not say it was temporary insanity: but they had to bear in mind that the father of the young man had said that deceased had suffered from time to time with pains in his head, and there was also to be borne in mind that they said everybody seemed to be against them. Were these two young person's two silly, sentimental people, and did the jury think that from some sentimental ideas they had come to the conclusion to take their lives? Did they think the couple were so eaten up with love that they became insane? It looked very deliberate.

VERDICT

A verdict of "**Felo de se**" (suicide) was returned in both cases.

The Letters

These are extracts from The Weekly Dispatch (London) article, 'To Die Together', published on Sunday 28 May 1905.

William's Letter

Dear Father and Mother, I am sorry to cause you trouble or pain, but it seems that everybody wants to part my darling sweetheart and myself, and certain people have told lies about us, and you believed what they told you, and made it miserable for me, but, dear mother, I cannot blame you in the least.

And now my darling sweetheart and myself have decided to die together, as we love each other so much, and now as nothing but misery seems to follow both of us wherever we go we cannot stand it any longer. Why do people try to separate us?

Now you must leave our dead bodies in the position they die in, and let Laura's people see us, and they will know how much we loved each other.

Leave my photo round Laura's neck, and the hearts around both our necks, and do try to bury us in the same coffin, as we do not wish to part even in death and order the turnout from Ward's and let Joe Burchell drive us to our resting place.

Think well of them as long as you live; so good-bye for ever. God bless you one and all.

*We remain your inseparable lovers,
William Lee **Heron** and Laura S. **Chapman***

Laura's Letter

Will and I love each other far too much to let anyone part us; no one ever will now. I love him with all my heart; in fact more than life itself. He loves me just as much. I have never loved anyone so much in my life before, and only for Willie my life did not seem worth living.

He has been a darling true sweetheart. Dear, everything, as you see, seems against us, so we have decided to die together tonight. I am going to Liverpool to his house, and so when you get this don't worry, as Willie and I will be dead and quite happy.

It may seem wicked to you, but don't think badly of us will you? as it seems the only way of keeping our happiness.

The Funeral

The couple's funeral was covered in several newspapers. This is an extract from The Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic's report, published on Saturday 27 May 1905.

GENERAL DISTRICT NEWS

BERKELEY LOVERS SUICIDE, REMARKABLE FUNERAL SCENES

*Remarkable scenes were witnessed in Liverpool on Friday at the funeral of William Lee **Heron**, a pawnbroker's assistant, and Laura **Chapman**, sweethearts, of Pitbrook, Berkeley, Gloucestershire, who committed suicide together last Sunday at **Heron**'s father's home by taking carbolic acid. Thousands of people congregated at the scene of the tragedy and also at the Cemetery. In a joint letter left by deceased suggestions were made respecting their interment, and as far as possible these were carried out. The hearse was driven by a man named in the communication, and the funeral conducted by the firm of undertakers also mentioned. In accordance with **Heron**'s last message, his chums were invited to attend the funeral. Both coffins were interred in the same grave. A verdict of '**felo de se**' was returned at the inquest, but three Church of England clergymen, the chaplain of the cemetery, and the vicar and curate of the parish where deceased lived took part in an extempore service.*

Further Research

Following on from the discovery of these events, I researched various people who had been mentioned in the Inquest. One person in particular seemed worthy of further investigation, "**George Pearson of Chester**". In the Inquest, Mary **Deane**, sister of William **Heron**, recalled that on Friday afternoon deceased [William] said that Miss **Chapman**'s brother-in-law [George Pearson] was "**at the bottom of all this**".

I wanted to find out more about George **Pearson**. Why was he "**at the bottom of all this**"? What motive might he have for opposing a courtship which could lead to a marriage? Was he genuine when he claimed he "***always extended a hearty welcome to the young couple, and did not throw any cold water upon the courtship***"?

Cui Bono

Cui Bono is a Latin phrase, and it means "***who benefits***"? It is used in

the context of investigating a crime or a suspicious event to determine who stands to gain from it. With this in mind, I thought, could George gain anything from discouraging the relationship between William and Laura?

I discovered that the Liverpool Echo had spelt George's surname incorrectly. It was **Pearce** not **Pearson**. Also, none of the records I have found so far, have linked George with Chester. George was originally from London. He married his first wife, Jane **Wright** on 15 May 1880 in St Luke's, Victoria, in the County of Essex. Jane can be found, still alive, in the 1911 census.

Despite this, George **Pearce** was recorded as a widower, when he married Laura's sister, Alice **Chapman** on 28 January 1902 in Holy Trinity, Stepney, London.

In 1904, George and Alice, were living in Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool. This was shown on the birth certificate of their son, *John Richard Pearce*. George's profession was recorded as 'Bookseller's Agent'.

In the Inquest, George had stated "*Deceased had got her living by selling literature on commission*".

Could it be that George was supplying Laura with literature to sell, and if Laura and William were to marry, she might stop selling, which would reduce George's income?

References:

¹Gertrude **Hunt** (nee **Bell**), The **Bell** Family, Memoirs, Great Crosby, Merseyside, England, ca. 1990's (assumed), Georgina **Bell**; **Bell** Family Papers, privately held by Phillip **Forshaw**, 2001. Elvin George **Lucy** typed the Memoirs from dictation by his aunt, Gertrude **Hunt**, and later distributed copies to family members.

²St. Mary, Walton on the Hill Parish (Liverpool, Lancashire, England), Parish Registers, marriage of James **Heron** and Georgina **Bell** (14 September 1915); Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool, Merseyside, England, 283 SMW/3, p. 143.

³St George (Everton, Lancashire, England), Liverpool, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1919, (sub-set 1882-1893, p. 33), William Lee **Heron**, born 08 February 1884, baptized 23 March 1884; imaged *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 11 June 2025); citing Liverpool Record Office; Liverpool, England; Liverpool Church of England Parish Registers; Reference Number: 283 GEV/2/3.

- ⁴ "The Liverpool Love Tragedy," *Liverpool Echo* (Liverpool, Lancashire, England), 23 May 1905, Inquest and Verdict.
- ⁵ "To Die Together," *The Weekly Dispatch* (London, England), 28 May 1905, Sweetheart's Pathetic Letters Explain a Fatal Resolve, p. 4.
- ⁶ "General District News," *The Cheltenham Chronicle & Gloucestershire Graphic* (Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England), 27 May 1905, Berkeley Lovers Suicide, p. 4.
- ⁷ St. Luke's (St. Luke's Square, Victoria, London [E16 1HT], England), "Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials ... Parish Records," 1875 - 1884, D/P 602/1/16, George **Pearce** and Jane **Wright**, married 15 May 1880; imaged *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 08 March 2024); citing Essex Church of England Parish Registers, Essex County Council, Chelmsford, Essex, England.
- ⁸ 1911 Census of England, Essex, Canning Town, Jane **Pearce**; image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 06 June 2025); citing The National Archives, RG14/9487, sch 192.
- ⁹ Holy Trinity (Stepney, London, England), "London, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns," 1754 - 1940 (sub-set 1895 - 1907, p. 140), George **Pearce** and Alice **Chapman**, married 28 January 1902; imaged *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk> : accessed 06 June 2025); citing London Metropolitan Archives, (London, England), London Church of England Parish Registers, Reference Number: P93/TRI/021.
- ¹⁰ England, birth certificate (image) for John Richard **Pearce** born 17 May 1904; registered June quarter 1904, Liverpool District 8b/112; General Register Office, Southport.

Regarding copyright in the published works used, my understanding is:

- 1 The newspaper articles were published in 1905. As they were published 120 years ago, this is well over the 70 years required for copyright to expire.
- 2 The articles were not attributed to an author, otherwise copyright would expire 70 years after the author's death.
- 3 I transcribed the text from the newspaper article images myself, so no one else can claim copyright in the transcriptions. e.g. The British Newspaper Archive claim copyright in the transcriptions that **they** produce even if copyright in the original work has expired.

Phillip Forshaw (9542)

Obituary

James Cormac Murphy

James **Murphy** was born in Liverpool on January 6th in 1946 to an Irish Catholic family. He was the sixth of fifteen children. He was educated at St Mary's College, Crosby. After university he worked as a college lecturer and as a consultant in the oil industry. He was a writer, once saying *'there's a story in all of us but sometimes it's a case of wheedling it out like tackling a periwinkle with a pin'*.

James made two significant contributions to local studies. In 2001 the Bluecoat Press published **'The Murder of Julia Wallace'**. The brutal murder of Julia, the wife of William, who was tried for the murder in 1931, has long been a source of considerable fascination. It remains the only *'not proven'* murder case in English legal history and the question of William's guilt, or otherwise, has long captured the popular imagination and the interest of many investigators. James **Murphy's** conclusion, based on an impressive depth and thoroughness of research and the examination of an exhaustive range of source material, will reward those long puzzled and perplexed by the possibility that this was the perfect murder.

In 2008 Pen and Sword published **'Liverpool VCs'**, a landmark study of the twenty-three Liverpoolians to have been awarded the highest honour for gallantry. Again, hallmarked by meticulous research and an eye for detail, the book, beautifully written, is a wonderful tribute to the heroism and courage of these men in the most arduous of circumstances. The book is much more than a record of military exploits, expertly recorded as they are. Family circumstances and background, comparatively neglected before 2008, are explored with genuine understanding and compassion, shedding light on the characters of ordinary men who went on to perform extraordinary acts of bravery. The compilation proved to be a valuable resource when, between 2014-2018, the city of Liverpool laid flagstones to honour its heroes.

James also wrote three 'Cold War' novels, his 'tree ology': **'Cedar', 'Juniper' and 'Ash'**. His final book was **'Vale of Tears'**, a study in the

demise of Princess Diana.

James, a lifelong Evertonian, spent his final years in Barrow-in-Furness and remained very close to his family, by whom he will be greatly missed, and his roots. He had been ill for some time and died in 2025.

Tom White (9656)

Working Life in Cotton Mills 1852

NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES.

The following were the regulations for a Burnley cotton mill office in 1852:-

- (1) Godliness, cleanliness and punctuality are the necessities of a good business.
- (2) This firm has reduced the hours of work, and the clerical staff will now only have to be present between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays.
- (3) Daily prayers will be held each morning in the main office. The clerical staff will be present.
- (4) Clothing must be of a sober nature. The clerical staff will not disport themselves in raiment of bright colours, nor will they wear hose, unless in good repair.
- (5) Overcoats and top-coats may not be worn in the office, but neck scarves and headgear may be worn in inclement weather.
- (6) A stove is provided for the benefit of the clerical staff. Coal and wood must be kept in the locker. It is recommended that each member of the clerical staff bring 4 pounds of coal each day during cold weather.
- (7) No member of the clerical staff may leave the room without permission from Mr. Rogers. The calls of nature are permitted and clerical staff may use the garden below the second gate. This area must be kept in good order.
- (8) No talking is allowed during business hours.
- (9) The craving of tobacco, wines or spirits is a human weakness and, as such, is forbidden to all members of the clerical staff.
- (10) Now that the hours of business have been drastically reduced, the partaking of food is allowed between 11.30 a.m. and noon, but work will not, on any account, cease.
- (11) Members of the clerical staff will provide their own pens. A new sharpener is available, on application to Mr. Rogers.
- (12) Mr. Rogers will nominate a senior clerk to be responsible for the cleanliness of the main office and the private office, and all boys and juniors will report to him 40 minutes before prayers, and will remain after closing hours for similar work. Brushes, brooms, scrubbers and soap are provided by the owners.
- (13) The new increased weekly wages are as hereunder detailed:-
Junior boys (up to 11 years) 1/4d., Boys (to 14 years) 2/1d., Juniors 4/8d., Junior clerks 8/7d., Clerks 10/9d., Senior clerks (after 15 years with owners) 21/-s.
The owners recognise the generosity of the new Labour Laws, but will expect a great rise in output of work to compensate for these near utopian conditions.

Transcription

Notice to Employees

The following were the Regulations for a Burnley cotton mill office in 1852:

- 1) Godliness, cleanliness and punctuality are the necessities of a good business.
- 2) This firm has reduced the hours of work, and the clerical staff will

now only have to be present between the hours of 7am and 6pm on weekdays.

- 3) Daily prayers will be held each morning in the main office. The clerical staff will be present.
- 4) Clothing must be of a sober nature. The clerical staff will not disport themselves in raiment of bright colours, nor will they wear hose, unless in good repair.
- 5) Overshoes and topcoats may not be worn in the office, but neck scarves and headwear may be worn in inclement weather.
- 6) A stove is provided for the benefit of the clerical staff. Coal and wood must be kept in the locker. It is recommended that each member of the clerical staff bring in 4 pounds of coal each day during cold weather.
- 7) No member of the clerical staff may leave the room without permission from Mr Rogers. The calls of nature are permitted and clerical staff may use the garden below the second gate. This area must be kept in good order.
- 8) No talking is allowed during business hours.
- 9) The craving of tobacco, wines or spirits is a human weakness and, as such, is forbidden to all members of the clerical staff.
- 10) Now that the hours of business have been drastically reduced, the partaking of food is allowed between 11.30am and noon, but work will not, on any account, cease.
- 11) Members of the clerical staff will provide their own pens. A new sharpener is available, on application to Mr Rogers.
- 12) Mr Rogers will nominate a senior clerk to be responsible for the cleanliness of the main office and the private office, and all boys and juniors will report to him 40 minutes before prayers, and will remain after closing hours for similar work. Brushes, brooms, scrubbers and soap are provided by the owners.
- 13) The new increased weekly wages are as hereunder detailed: Junior boys (upto 11 years) 1/4d; Boys (to 14 years) 2/1d; Juniors 4/8d; Junior Clerks 8/7d; Clerks 10/9d; Senior Clerks (after 15 years with owners) 21/-d.

The owners recognise the generosity of the new Labour Laws, but will expect a great rise in output of work to compensate for these Utopian conditions.

Ah, the so-called good old days!! Whatever would the workers of today make of this?

My thanks to **Allan Tweedle (8207)** for sending this to me. He found the document amongst his aunt's belongings after she passed away in 2014.

Alison Anyon
Editor

Upcoming Zoom Talks

Welcome to the listings for our Zoom talks coming up in the next few months.

Members will receive an invitation each month with a link to go to Eventbrite and book their ticket, which will arrive a day or two before the talk from the Zoom Admin email address. If you don't receive these invitations, please check that you have renewed your membership as that list is provided for the invitations to be sent to.

Generally speaking, we will hold these talks on Wednesday evenings, starting at 7pm, but this may vary depending on the time zone the speaker lives in. However, if it is at an unusual time we will usually ask the speaker if we can record their talk and place a link in our Members Area for everybody to catch up with.

Upcoming Zoom Talks

10 Dec	Curious Christmas Stories & Traditions	Ken Pye
14 Jan	Just a sharp jab!	
	A Brief History of Vaccination	Louise Wade
18 Feb	Williamsons Tunnels	Tom Stapledon
18 Mar	Funeral Trains	Nicholas Wheatley
15 Apr	AI for Family History: What it Can (and Can't) Do For You	Linda Hammond
30 May	Family Search	Darris Williams of Familysearch
June	No Meeting	

Richard Meadows

of Abbey's Old House and the Old Roan Inn

My 2x great grandfather, Richard **MEADOWS**, was born in Abbey's Old House, Aintree, and baptised on 23 November 1827 in Melling Parish Church of St Thomas. Abbey's Old House stood near the Old Roan Inn, on land which until recently was occupied by Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School. It was a farmhouse that had remained standing after a new farmhouse, simply known as 'Abbey's Farm', was built in the seventeen hundreds. I wasn't able to find out how much older than the 'new' house the 'old' house was, but it may have existed for hundreds of years before Abbey's Farm was built. The two houses stood next to each other with Aintree Hall as their immediate neighbour. The old house, the farm buildings and the Hall were demolished in the 1930s when a compulsory purchase order resulted in the hundred-acre farm vanishing beneath the growing urban sprawl. Only the eighteenth century 'new' farmhouse remained. It was used for storage space by the caretaker before the school closed (he was kind enough to show me around it once) and is currently occupied by the Aintree School of Music.

In 1805 farmer Isaac **EDWARDS** (c1774-1859) of Abbey's Farm married Richard's paternal aunt, Miss Ann **MEADOWS** (1771-1844) of Abbey's Old House, uniting the two families. After being forced to sell Abbey's Farm Isaac and Ann's descendants started again in Worrall House Farm, Flatmans Lane, Downholland. Eventually, they diversified from agriculture and transformed the farm into *Farmer Ted's Adventure Farm* (Edwards – Ted – get it?). But I digress, back to Richard.

Richard worked for his father, tenant farmer Thomas **MEADOWS** (c1788-1849), who leased land on Copy Lane from the **Earl of Sefton**. Halfway between Abbey's Old House and the Copy Lane fields stood the Old Roan, a 16th/17th century coaching inn, which Richard must have passed daily on his way to and from work. When the innkeeper, Paul **MOLYNEUX** (1824-1851), died, Richard married his widow, my 2x great grandmother, Frances Bardsley **MOLYNEUX**, nee **SEDDON** (1826 - 1869). With his marriage to Frances, Richard became innkeeper of the of the Old Roan, tenant farmer of the agricultural land that came with it,



LIVERPOOL & S.W.LANCASHIRE

FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No: 512906

MEMBERSHIP FORM

About the Society:

Founded in 1976

Worldwide Membership

Six groups holding monthly meetings in: Leigh, Liverpool,
Skelmersdale, Southport, Warrington and Widnes

Details of each group's meetings are published in the quarterly
journal and on the website

Regular help desks are held at several libraries in our area

Membership includes:

Quarterly journal: "Liverpool Family Historian"

Online bookshop

Members' surname interests

Donated certificates service

Preferential access to our Zoom talks

Annual membership: January to December

For further information contact:

General Secretary, E-mail: secretary@lswlfhs.org.uk

www.lswlfhs.org.uk

LIVERPOOL & SW LANCASHIRE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Registered Charity No: 512906

*I AM A NEW/RENEWING MEMBER

If renewing: MEMBERSHIP NUMBER:

Name:

Address:

.....

..... Post Code:

E-mail:

(Please print clearly)

Cheque enclosed: £

Signature:

Date:

- * I do / do not wish to Gift Aid my subscription
- * I do / do not wish my details to be published in the Journal

***Please delete as applicable**

Please tick this box to consent to us storing and using your data

☐

Please see next page for our Data Protection Information

Please return the completed form to:

**Membership Secretary
2 Chelford Close
Prenton
Birkenhead
CH43 7NJ**

membership@lswlfhs.org.uk

DATA PROTECTION—INFORMATION

In accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act, your details will remain strictly confidential with the exception of its use within the Society, and will not be used for any other purpose.

If you fail to renew your membership for a period of three years, your details will be removed from our database. If you Gift Aid subscriptions, the records will be retained for six years after the last donation to comply with HMRC requirements.

GIFT AID—INFORMATION

We can reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 of your subscription.

However, for this to happen, you must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the UK for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities that you donate to will reclaim on your gifts for that tax year. Other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.

Please notify us if you:

- Want to cancel your declaration;
- Change your name or home address; or
- No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains

You can gift aid your membership subscription on the application form.

Subscription—Information

The current rates of subscription are:

- **All** members digital membership £10.00
- United Kingdom magazine membership £20.00
- Non-UK Residents magazine membership £28.00

Your subscription can be remitted by:

- Cheque, made payable to Liverpool & SW Lancashire FHS sent to the Membership Secretary; or
- Debit or credit card on our secure payment page on our website: www.lswlfhs.org.uk

New members joining after 30 September will be entitled to membership until 31 December the following year.

Renewal Subscriptions are due on 1 January each year

Renewing members wishing to pay by Standing Order can request a form before 1 December from the Membership Secretary:

membership@lswlfhs.org.uk

Please note we cannot accept foreign currency

MEMBERS INTERESTS—INFORMATION

Members may publish up to ten family names that they are researching on our website, www.lswlfhs.org.uk, and in the Journal. Once you have paid your subscription, you will receive the log-in details for the Members' Only Section. Should you not have access to the internet, you can complete the form which is published each year in the March Journal.

DONATED CERTIFICATES—INFORMATION

The Society currently holds over 3,000 certificates of birth, marriage and death which have been donated by members.

employer of two labourers and a boy, and stepfather to one-year-old Elizabeth **MOLYNEUX** (1850-c1911). Richard took over his father's tenancy when he died and worked the two farms together as one. He grew barley, wheat, and potatoes, willow for basket making, garden beans, leeks, parsley, celery, and parsnips. He also kept chickens, pigs, a milking cow and a couple of horses.

In the 1850s Richard's six siblings, their families and his widowed mother, Jane **MEADOWS** nee **HESKETH** (1793-1864), left England for a new life in Australia. Newly married Richard did not go with them: he had the inn and the land, a wife and family, and life was good in Lancashire, but he lost his entire birth family in one go when they sailed as none ever returned.

As landlord of the Old Roan, Richard featured in the local press several times. This is one example:

Liverpool Mercury, 24 June 1857

*West Derby Board of Guardians: The weekly meeting of this board was held on Wednesday last at the West Derby Workhouse... Mr I. **Edwards** wished to ask the chairman whether there was any room in the workhouse for the keep of breeding sows (laughter). Mr **Meadows** of the Old Roan, Aintree, he said, had five breeding sows which were five or six weeks gone in young, and he wished to know, through the chairman, what the guardians would charge him per head for their keep (renewed laughter). The chairman replied that he did not know that the board had anything to do with breeding sows... pigs were not vagrants (hear hear)... Mr I **Edwards** (smiling sarcastically) said: all I want is an answer for my friend (laughter). Mr **Pitts** (amid considerable confusion) was understood to move that the price for the keep of pigs be the same as he had paid some time ago. [Mr **Edwards** then attempted to get an affidavit in the form of a letter from Richard admitted into the proceedings. The chairman refused stating]: you cannot do anything illegal. [another guardian moved that the letter should not be read] Mr I **Edwards**; why? Are you ashamed? [later adding] that is not fair, that is not fair. [the letter was not read to the board].*

The gentleman who asked the pig question on behalf of Richard was his neighbour and first cousin, Isaac **EDWARDS** (1817-1885) of Abbey's Farm, son of Isaac and Ann. I suspect Isaac had asked his cousin to submit the question to help him illustrate a particular point that he

himself wanted to make regarding workhouse provision.

Frances died on 6 August 1869 and within months Richard was bankrupt. By December he had lost everything. His mother and siblings were halfway around the world, Frances' parents were long deceased, and his wealthy cousin, Isaac **EDWARDS**, either could not or would not help. Richard was ruined with the result that he and his children were evicted, everything they owned was sold to pay back rent, and his six motherless children went from relative wealth to poverty overnight.

Ormskirk Advertiser 16 December 1869

*On Wednesday Next at 10 O'clock
Old Roan Inn and Farm, Aintree
under distraint for rent*

*Mr **Brighouse** hereby announces that he will sell by auction, on Wednesday next, the 22 of December 1869 at the premises called the 'Old Roan' in Aintree aforesaid, occupied by Mr Richard **Meadows**, the following farm stock, furniture and inn-keeper's effects namely:*

*Two excellent carts, 5 in wheels, rails complete, strong whitechapple wil-
lowing machine, oil cake crusher, dung farrow, provender barrow, grass
barrow, 4 diamond harrows [something] swingtrees, seed and other har-
rows, 3 iron ploughs, 2 double-wrested ditto wood plough, 2 threshers,
potato crusher, excellent iron land roller and stone roller, tar sheets,
horse cloths, large stone trough, and pig troughs, tubs, grindstone and
frame, wood and metal buckets, ladders, weigh beam, boards and
weights, trestle, quantity of hurdles, new sacks, new wiskets and ham-
pers, manure spades and forks, steel and other pikles and forks, hooks,
potato shoe, and all the farm tools, and other articles. Also 3 sacks of
agricultural manure.*

Gears:

*Two new carts, saddles, breeches, whitechapple harness, 3 sets of lead-
ing chains, collars, halters, hames, jambles, ridgeworths, belly bands,
and all the gears.*

Livestock:

A fine powerful horse, 6 years old; a useful horse 'Bobby'; red and white

Produce:

*Large stock of barley (off 3½ acres); bay of wheat (off 1½ acres); stack of
garden beans for seed, and about 2 tons of hay. Potatoes – small hole of*

pinkeye kemps, hole of sherry blues, hole of scotch downs, large hole of mangolds, quantity of parsnips, 2 rows of celery, quantity of two-year-old willows, and quantity of one-year-old willows.

Furniture:

Mahogany dining table, chimney glass in mahogany, hair-seated sofa, mahogany corner cupboard, weather glass, excellent eight-days spring clock, 2 mahogany chests and drawers, oak chest, mahogany four-post bed, camp, French and low bedsteads, feather and chaff beds, bolsters and pillows, blankets, sheets, quilts, counterpanes, table clothes, and other bed and table linen, painted toilet drawers, washstands and dressing tables, toilet ware, dressing glasses, birch night commode, engravings (in rosewood, gilt and carved) of the late and present Earl of Sefton, Archdeacon Brooke and other eminent men, upwards of 12 excellent birch rush-seated chairs, 2 mahogany hair-seated chairs, 2 armchairs and odd chairs, cornice, pole and red damask curtains, mahogany card table, painted pembroke table, butler's fall and round deal tables, stair carpet, parlour drugger, desk and drawers, kitchen squab, oak cupboard, painted cupboards, a baker's kneading trough, kitchen dresser, kitchen and parlour fenders and tire irons, American clock, decanters, glasses, jugs, earthenware in great abundance, measures, knives, forks and spoons, 9 iron pans, brass pan, kettles, lamps, brass and other candlesticks, metal tea and coffee pots, shop canisters, scales, and weights, and many other articles throughout too numerous to mention. Also a good old-fashioned mangle; churn and dairy vessels.

NOTE – *all the produce will be sold by the lump, and everything must be paid for cash down.*

The sale will commence at ten o'clock as the lots are numerous. Refreshments provided.

After the sale Richard moved his family to Liverpool, found work as a cotton porter and began a new and vastly different life. In 1871 the family were living in Fortescue Street, off Prescott Street. Fortescue Street was bulldozed in the 1960s to make way for the Royal Liverpool Hospital (now demolished). The road which leads from Prescott Street to the entrance of the current hospital follows the line of the original street.

Richard changed address and job several times over the next twenty

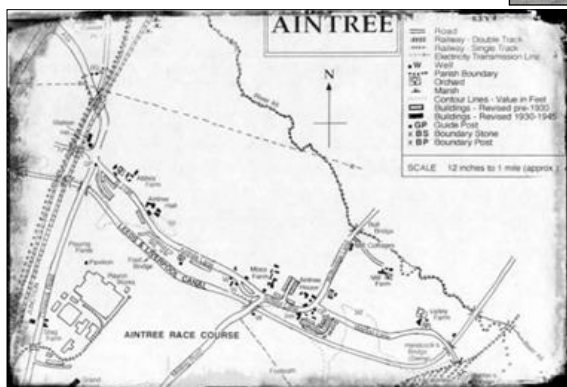
years. In 1891 he was a labourer living in Everton with his daughter, Jane (1857-1940), and her husband, Charles James Eton **WATSON** (1863-1914), but was listed on that year's census as a lodger rather than a family member. Ten years later he was an inmate in Rice Lane Workhouse, (Walton Hospital), but that may not have been because he was impoverished as the function of workhouses was shifting at that time from housing the destitute to providing health care. Workhouses continued to evolve throughout the early twentieth century into the Infirmarys and mental health institutions which eventually became the NHS hospitals we know today. Richard died in 1907 as an inmate in Belmont Road Workhouse (Newsham General Hospital). His death certificate confirms that he had long-term health needs as it records gangrene of the foot and senile decay, the latter a condition which today we would call dementia.

His daughter could have had him buried in Liverpool but instead she took him home, and so on 30 May 1907, Richard completed the circle as he was laid to rest beside his wife and father in the grounds of Melling Parish Church of St Thomas where he had been baptised eighty years before.

The Old Roan Inn



Abbey's Farm 2024



The Old Roan Inn is next to the station. Abbey's Old House is one of the buildings to the left of Abbey's Farm.

Elaine Meadows (2072)

Genealogy Gold!

I love my distant cousins. I didn't know most of them until I started re-searching my family tree. Over the years, I have corresponded with and met many cousins, having connected via DNA matches, family trees or simply being introduced by another relative who said, "You must speak with so-and-so. They know lots about our family history."

Take, for example, my second cousin once removed – Michael. He is a cousin on my **Foster** line (my paternal grandmother's paternal line) and he lives in Belgium. Michael's grandfather, William John **Foster** (1899-1965) was the brother of my great grandfather Robert **Foster** (1892-1958).

Michael shared with me copies of two **Foster** family wedding photos from 1920 and 1921, including pictures of the back of the photos with the names of the people in the photos and that is a big win! These photos show my grandmother as a 7-year-old girl, and her sister as a 3-year-old, as well as her parents – my great grandparents, Robert and Frances **Foster** (nee **Hornby**), 2 x great grandparents, Albert Edward and Cecilia **Foster** (nee **Thomas**) and other aunts, uncles and cousins.

Michael also shared a handwritten family tree created by Minnie **Foster** (Robert and William's youngest sister) in the 1960s. Minnie and my grandmother Frances were extremely close. Whilst Minnie was Frances's aunty, they were born only months apart in 1914, so they grew up more like cousins. As a child, I remember my Nana and my dad speaking about Aunty Minnie.

As well as the usual - names, dates and places, Minnie included so many interesting snippets such as:

- Albert (my 2-x great grandfather) was brought up in Glasgow from 6 months old, father was on contract work. He came to Liverpool at 17 years. Met Cecilia (2-x great grandmother) when wearing a kilt
- Albert and Cecila married in Liverpool about 1883. Could have been the old cathedral on the waterfront or St Lukes near the Pier Head [Note: Marriage took place at St Titas on 22 April 1889]

- Cecilia was in service at the home of the organist of St George's Hall (she got £5 a year as kitchen maid – ½ day off once a month)
- Albert Henry (Albert Edward and Cecilia's son) died suddenly in the street June 28th (stet) 1934 due to being wounded and gassed at the Battle of Loos 1915 age 37

Some people like to write up trees with just their direct ancestors, however, including ancestors' siblings and children can link you up with members of your family that can fill in the blanks about your relatives. You too could find some genealogy gold - Photos, family stories, family trees, heirlooms, not to mention new cousins who may become friends.



**Nana Frances Foster
Lucas and her Auntie
Minnie in 1915**



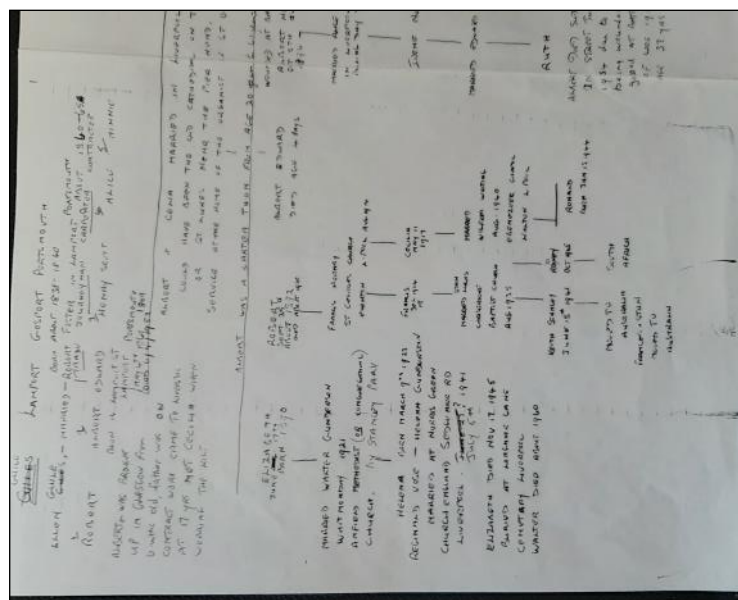
**Frances Foster and Stanley Lucas
with Grandparents Albert and Cecilia Foster**



**Foster Albert
Wedding Photo**



Foster William and Marion Wedding Photo



Foster
Family
Tree by
Minnie
Foster-
Page 1

A Nurse's Life: Florence Turton (1909-1997)



Florence was my aunt. Small in stature, under 5 feet tall, always well-turned out. When I started researching our family history in the early 1990s, I was in my mid-thirties and Flo was in her eighties. I had no information from my father's side of the family, so Aunt Flo was my only reliable source as the oldest surviving sibling. We met up and she provided me with birth dates of family members and a few photographs: her uncle who fought in the second Boer War; her younger brother during his national service in the 1950s, and one of her father, my paternal grandfather. This was the first time I had seen him as he died before I was born.

Flo was born on 21 December 1909, the third child of William Herbert **Turton** (a jobbing builder) and Ellen, née **Duggan**. (See *My Troublesome Grandmother* (Volume 46 No. 4 December 2024).)

Her early life, like many in Liverpool at that time, was one of poverty. Jobs weren't secure, work was scarce, unemployment a constant threat. The family moved home, a lot, though always remained in the Everton and West Derby districts. Flo was to see many social and political changes throughout her life, and to take advantage of them too.

The 1911 Census puts the family – William Herbert (a jobbing pointer), Ellen, son John, daughters Winifred and Florence - at 7 Harrogate Street, Everton, though they had had at least six previous address (according to the children's birth and baptism records) since William and Ellen married in 1905, including a tenancy at 3 House, 1 Court, on Rothwell Street. Flo was born at 23 Thomson Street, and their second son Edward was born at 10 Spurgeon Street.

By 1914, when my grandfather went off to war, the family were back on Rothwell Street, at 2 House, 4 Court. Another son, Thomas, was born there in 1915, and in 1918, a daughter, Ivy (who died at 20 weeks). The family were recorded as still there on the 1921 census, when William H's occupation is "repairs to property", and son John is a tailor's apprentice.

William and Ellen went on to have a further two children, Ronald (1923), born at 2 Windsor Terrace, Rothwell Street (an attempt to 'gentrify' the area by changing the name perhaps). By the time William (my father) was born in 1928, the family had moved to 15 Maiden Lane, Clubmoor. They lost Thomas later that same year.

Rothwell Street has long disappeared, its route lies beneath the car park of the ASDA supermarket, parallel to Breckfield Road South, and starts from Whitefield Road, at the entrance to the petrol station. (You can trace its path on the Old Maps of Liverpool interactive map at <https://historic-liverpool.co.uk/old-maps-of-liverpool/>).

From this unpromising start, Flo was determined to make something of herself. She wasn't going to follow her friends into factory work or work as a waitress or shop girl, though she may well have initially done so between leaving school in 1925/26 and beginning her nursing training in 1929. She had as a role model her mother's older sister Margaret

Duggan, known as "*Aunt Mags*", who, on the 1921 census, was employed by Blackburn council as "*a trained nurse and inoculation sister*".

Aunt Flo never spoke about her nursing career to me. With nothing to go

on, I was advised to search the Register for Nurses (via *Ancestry/Search/Schools, Directories & Church Histories* - using NURSE as the Keyword) which gives the date and place of registration, and the qualifications gained. Her home address in 1943, is given as 15 Maiden Lane, Clubmoor, Liverpool, as the nurses' home was classed as temporary accommodation.

Flo began her training in 1929 at Blackburn Corporation Hospital (aka Park Lee Fever Hospital), but her general nursing training took place at Lake Hospital, Ashton-under-Lyne. the two towns just thirty miles apart. She qualified on 23 June 1932, aged 22, as a Fever Nurse (1929-1931), registration number 5300, and again on 23 November 1934 as a general nurse, registration number 75239. She appears in the Register for Nurses for 1934, 1937, 1940 and 1946 (in Blackburn); and 1937, 1940, 1943 (in Ashton-under-Lyne).

The 1939 Register entry states Flo is a twenty-nine-year-old Ward Sister at Blackburn Corporation Hospital, Park Lee Road. Her entry in the directories (on Ancestry at least) ends in 1946. Though the Royal College of Nursing states records are held up to 1968, I haven't found her, though I believe newly qualified nurses only were included on the register from 1950.

Flo retired from nursing in the late-1960s, ending her career as Deputy Matron of Blackburn Park Lee hospital. She went to live in Hoylelake, sharing a large house on Hoyle Road with her older sister (and *her* husband). She never married, though it was thought she had been engaged to a doctor who died in the war. Flo never said.

She died of liver cancer on 24 September 1997 in Hoylelake Cottage Hospital. She was cremated at Landican Crematorium on the Wirral, and her ashes scattered on the Rose Garden.

But it turns out there was more to her story.

The Kindness of Strangers

The vast amounts of information available on the internet are often conflicting or don't answer a particular question, so we need to consider new ways of finding missing information. In March 2023 I turned to a

Facebook Group called *East Lancs Hospitals Past* for some background history pointers. My post asking for information about the two hospitals where Flo worked caught the attention of several group members (which consists mostly of ex-nursing staff), and they came up trumps with photographs and plans of the hospitals, previously unseen photographs of my aunt, and a booklet produced by another of the group members, all of which added much to Flo's life story.

Thanks, were duly given to Jennifer C for details of the merger of the Blackburn Hospitals, and the image of Ashton-under-Lyne Lake Hospital. Also, to Debbie H and Nigel R who provided useful links to further information. To Gordon H for the group photographs which included Flo (and his permission to use them) and details of a booklet on the history of the 'Corporation Hospital', providing a copy of the one page that mentions Flo, now assistant matron, and for confirming my aunt was indeed the Deputy Matron at Blackburn Park Lee Fever Hospital when she retired.

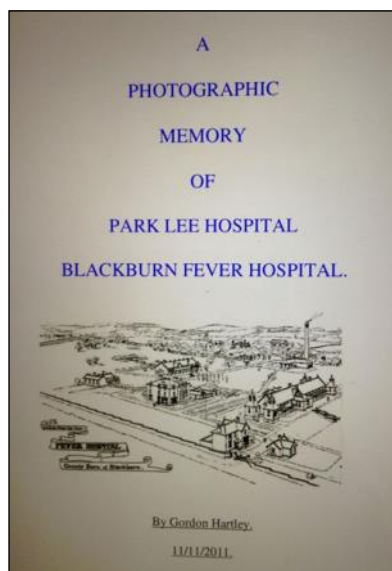
Special thanks were given to Ann S who shared this lovely memory from when she was six years old.

"I was in Park Lee Hospital for a few months November to Easter in 1940 with Diphtheria. I can remember a song we sang "Goodbye Dr. Mountain, goodbye Sister Turton, good by all the nurses etc when we were discharged."

I think Aunt Flo would have been quietly pleased that she was still remembered fondly after 63 years. Updated Extract

Miss F Turton, the assistant matron, was another her changing address. She obtained permission to live away from the hospital, on condition that she did "live in" on occasions when Matron was away. During the 1950's there was a steady fall in the numbers "living in" at the nurses home (as indicated by the electoral role which might however exclude younger members of staff). Nursing was still a career but no longer, perhaps, a way of life.

Matron, the sisters and Sister Tutor had rooms on the first floor; other nurses and domestic's on the second. Rooms were simple - bed, wardrobe and dressing table. On the ground floor were nurses and maids dining rooms, matron's office and sitting room, and a doctors sitting room. It was not until 1956 that a television was purchased for the use of residential staff.



Blackburn Fever Hospital and Margaret Duggan 1912 – aged 30



***Dr Naylor (bottom left seated), Matron Begley (centre front),
Assistant Matron Sister Turton (middle row right) Year unknown***

Eileen O'Reilly (9630)

The Plight of Roumanian Jews

My mother's ancestors on her paternal side, Ashkenazi Jews, hail originally from Roumania. In the very limited, available documentation on family members, they have described themselves as 'Roumanian', 'Yiddish' and hailing from Iasi (Jassy), pronounced 'Zasch'. In terms of family research, this has proven to be the mother of all brick walls. Switching the line of attack, I sought to discover why so many of the country's Jewish community would flee in the latter half of the nineteenth-century.

Iasi is a university city in the northeastern part of Roumania and currently it is the second largest city in Romania, situated near the border with Moldova. This was not always the case. Iasi was from 1765 the capital of what was Moldavia. (Moldavia, later Moldova, was, following the collapse of the Tsarist Russian Empire, mostly part of Roumania until it was occupied and annexed by the USSR, before being ceded to the USSR by Roumania in 1940 after an ultimatum from the USSR. Moldova became an independent country following the break-up of the Soviet Union.)

Iasi's Jewish population had increased as Polish refugees took refuge following the 1648-49 Chmielnicki massacres, atrocities that were to be replicated by Russian Cossacks within Iasi in 1650 and 1652. Then, in 1726 the people of Iasi sacked Jewish houses and synagogues, having been incensed by a blood libel case, an habitual accusation levelled at Jews claiming that non-Jewish blood had been used during Jewish rituals.

Yet, by the end of the 18th century the Jews were concentrated in their own quarter and enjoyed a degree of prosperity. Several branches of commerce (cereals, livestock, wool, honey, cheese) were exclusively handled by Jews and by the middle of the 19th century they had taken the place of the Turks and Greeks as bankers and money changers. Many Jews were also occupied as goldsmiths, tailors, hatters, furriers, and shoemakers with a number of these crafts having their own unions and some possessing their own synagogues. When the Christian tradesmen and artisans tried to limit the activity of their Jewish counterparts, a

decision was issued by the prince in favour of the Jews (1817). In 1831 Jewish merchants and artisans formed 43% of the total number of these occupations, and by 1860 their proportion had increased to 78%. From 1622 to 1832 the affairs of the Jewish community of Iasi were administered by the "guild of the Jews". Such success did, though, only serve to foster resentment and jealousy.

Political change, including under the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia and, after 1862 the United Principalities of Roumania, failed to enhance the prospects for the Jewish community. Consecutive governments, particularly those that emerged between 1859 and 1866, proved to be right-wing, authoritarian and antisemitic and intent on removing any shackles and restraint that external powers had attempted to impose on them. This was particularly the case as Alexander Ioan **Cuza** emerged in a position to exert significance on Roumania's future pathway. Reforms followed that abolished serfdom and started to unite the institutions one by one in spite of the Convention from Paris. With help from unionists, he unified the government and parliament, effectively incorporating Wallachia and Moldavia into one country with a single ruler, heralding the beginnings of modern Roumania. The lack of any meaningful intervention from the Powers was to give Roumania effectively a free hand with regard to its Jewish population. Significantly, the Roumanian leadership did not envisage the Jews as a part of a new united Roumania, and reform was not extended to the Jewish community.

Rather, and worryingly so for the Jewish community, the now autonomous ruling elite, dominated by landowners and merchants, sought to distinguish itself, to appease Russian land occupiers and to nurture a raw and nervous nationalism. In turn, it turned on the Jews with spite and venom. Jews were treated with both brutality and legal marginalisation, as the ruling power in the state became the energising force against the Jews. Little mercy was shown and instead the Jews became, according to David **Vital**, *'the object of an unrelenting campaign of physical, legal and economic pressure and incessant uninhibited verbal vilification the like of which had no parallel in Europe'*. Pogroms and restrictions on civil access became commonplace.

The 1866 constitution, which stipulated that non-Christians would be denied citizenship, confirmed Jewish fears. In short, the new rulers set

out to place Jews outside the law and subject them to a system of arbitrary and punitive rule. All of this flew in the face of the promise of good intentions. made at the Convention of Paris in 1858 of *'equal liberty and equal protection'*. Article VII of the constitution effectively condemned the Jews to second class status and Ion **Bratianu** introduced measures to ensure this would be so. Practical measures restricted jobs in the law, pharmacy to those of Roumanian birth. Jewish businesses were denied the right to tender for public works and were forbidden to trade in tobacco.

Then, in 1867 Jews having no legal documents of residence were declared vagrants and vagabonds, essentially *'a vagabond race'*, and were expelled from the country adding to the initial waves of emigration between 1866 and 1900. The British consul in Iasi at this time reported that the Jews had been *'excluded from the privileges of the constitution and the laws which guarantee the safety of individuals in Roumania, and that they may be treated as outlaws; many persons have meetings where they talked of pillaging and of massacring the Jews as just and allowable acts'*.

Benjamin Franklin **Peixotto**, an American Jew, undertook a voluntary watching brief on antisemitism in Roumania, chiefly in Bucharest, where a pogrom in 1866 had symbolised the determination of the government to turn a blind eye, to condone violent antisemitism, and to deny the Jews political, civil and religious rights. **Peixotto**, meanwhile held in contempt by the Roumanian leadership, chronicled many specific acts of persecution and miscarriages of justice, notably exposing a ferocious pogrom in Ismail in 1872 where police brutalities were accompanied by false imprisonment. His pleas to the Roumania government were dismissed. On a similar theme, Jewish leaders in Iasi informed London that *'without any judicial proceedings, without distinction of age and condition, Jews were put in irons, and with unheard of brutality were transported in troops across the Danube by bayonet'*.

An international conference held in Brussels in October 1872 to consider the plight of the Roumanian Jews achieved little. A promise to promote the social welfare of Jews came to nothing. Jewish leaders drew up a petition but this, bizarrely, was not even presented at a time when anti-Jewish legislation piled up. Further measures against the Jewish community were taken after 1874, banning them from taking part in

elections, limiting service in the army and denying access to the lycée's and universities.

In 1878 the Congress of Berlin was held, the last in an irregularly held series that had started at Vienna in 1815. The right noises were made, but it failed miserably to examine, let alone safeguard, the interests and welfare of the Roumanian Jews and the stipulations of the 1866 constitution prevailed. The Congress was a sorry tale of posturing and prevarication with regard to Roumanian Jews. It was very low on the agenda and there was a disturbing absence of the political will to initiate change. **Bismarck**, the leading figure at the Congress, though outwardly sympathetic, was coldly indifferent to the plight of the Jews. The governments of Britain, led by Benjamin **Disraeli**, himself Jewish, and the United States repeatedly protested the brutal treatment of Romanian Jews and there had been tentative support for the Jewish community from France since 1874, but to no avail and too little, if any, effect. Ultimately, the recommendation of the Congress of Berlin not to recognize Romania's independence, should the Romanian political class refuse to grant citizenship to the Jews, came to nothing and the fear of Roumanian resistance was confirmed.

Quite simply, the Roumanian government regarded Jews as aliens who had no civil or political rights. Romania engaged in arbitrary expulsions of Jews as vagabonds and tolerated violent pogroms against Jews, many of whom fled. Toward the end of the 19th century Iasi, with the University of Iasi, inspired by the far-right leanings A C **Cuza**, had become the centre of antisemitism in Romania. In 1882 and 1884 two economic congresses were held there with the aim of promoting a boycott on Jewish commerce and industry. Through the activities of a "*commercial club*" during this period, 196 Jewish shops were closed down in 1892, and many Jewish tradesmen were expelled from the town. A number of Jews committed suicide in consequence.

Not surprisingly, migration and escape became, for so many, the only solution. Violence toward the Jews and famine in the late 1890s meant emigration did not abate. Young Roumanian Jews formed groups to share resources and to leave the country together. The first was formed in 1899 in Barlad when **Ginsberg** recruited 94 people who became known as the Wayfarers of Barlad. These Wayfarers or Fusgeyers fled by foot and at the Austro-Hungarian border boarded trains to Hamburg, Rotterdam and

Liverpool. Antisemitism was as powerful a push factor as the attraction of the United States and its promise to welcome ‘tired’, ‘poor’ and ‘huddled masses yearning to breathe free’, was a pull factor. For many, the USA would be their ultimate destination.

DNA records on My Heritage and Ancestry, that list over 20.000 relatives of European extraction, suggest this became a reality for many.

Tom White (9656)

Messina Earthquake Disaster

My grandad’s colourful and eventful life afforded him an almost reverentially mythical status within the family, as he spun his tales with humour and self-deprecation and, not least, a sense of mischief. Yet, outside the family grandad had few claims to fame.

Leaving school at 14, he worked as a biscuit maker and a stable boy before, like his three brothers, he joined the Navy as a boy on in August 1904, conveniently, but by no means surprisingly, claiming to be two years younger than he was. His service was similar to that of so many others, playing his part during the First World War taking on the might of the Imperial German Navy, serving on HMS Alert, HMS Dalhousie, HMS Victorious, HMS Cullen and HMS Gibraltar. Indeed, he was no stranger to the odd scrape, spending seven nights in the cells on four separate occasions.

However, Grandad’s most celebrated escapade before the war in 1914, was his involvement in the largely forgotten Messina Earthquake crisis of 1908-9, when he was serving on HMS Exmouth off the coast of Sicily. It remains the deadliest earthquake on record in the history of Europe and Grandad found himself literally in the eye of the storm.

There was little to suspect the unimaginable and utter devastation, ruin and loss that was to follow. Afterwards, some claimed that portents of disaster had been there. As Wright noted “*that night the atmosphere was different.*” Unusually for the middle of the night, dogs had barked, birds had left the roost and the waters in the harbour had lapped and rippled with greater and increasing force than usual. More to the point, records

have indicated that there had been seismic activity in the areas around the Strait of Messina earlier in 1908 with an increase in intensity from 1 November. Then, on 10 December a magnitude 4 earthquake had caused comparatively mild damage to several towns in the Province of Messina.

Disaster struck at 5.20 am when parts of Sicily and Calabria in Southern Italy felt the full force of the earthquake with a momentous magnitude of 7.5 and a maximum Mercalli intensity of XI. The epicentre of the earthquake was in the Straits of Messina, which lies between Sicily and the Italian mainland. As a local doctor observed, *“The profound silence was broken by an extraordinary noise like the bursting of a thousand bombs followed by a rushing and torrential rain”*.

More so, a subsequent tsunami, 30 feet high, generated 6 miles under the sea by seafloor displacement (more recently it is thought that the tsunami was the result of an underwater landslide) created further havoc. Vessels, loosened from their anchors, exacerbated its trail of destruction, as it swept along the coast at 80mph. There were a further 2,000 deaths, as many had fled to the seafront at Reggio to escape collapsing buildings and Messina harbour was said to be full of floating wreckage, dead bodies and animals. In addition, a total of 293 aftershocks took place between 28 December 1908 and 11 March 1909.

The worst affected area was the Sicilian port city of Messina and the mainland city of Reggio di Calabria, and the impact was felt, too, in the surrounding countryside and nearby harbours. The damage and scale of destruction was incalculable: roads, homes, hospitals, schools, civic buildings of note, sewers, and communications were destroyed, and little but debris remained of Messina and Reggio di Calabria. Here, loss of life was 90% and 91% of buildings were destroyed. The number of deaths has been recorded as between 75,000 and 82,000. (Some records put the figure in excess of 100,000). It is thought that a vast number lost their lives, or were dying, in the first 20- 22 seconds.

Crucially, the earthquake struck at 5.20 am when most people were still in bed and the population of Messina had been swelled by those staying overnight having watched a performance of Verdi's *Aida*.

In the immediate aftermath, suffice to say, chaos and civil disorder were commonplace. Many of those in authority had died and it was proving impossible to stem the looting, robbing of corpses, lawlessness and violence that followed the unavoidable release of prisoners and the descent of gangs and bandits that flooded into the cities from the surrounding hills.

Help was soon at hand. Without hesitation the British Navy mobilised to bring aid and assistance to those in need and distress.

HMS Exmouth, on which my grandad was serving as one of a crew of 627, commanded by Commodore Arthur **Stewart**, was at the fore of the rescue operations. At the time it was docked in the Grand Harbour in Malta. Almost immediately on 30 December, it headed east laden with various 30,000 blankets and medical supplies to assist in the relief effort and it was to spend seven days in Messina and beyond. The size and speed of **HMS Exmouth** was well-suited to the demands, using its small boats to ferry supplies to outlying areas. In the days that followed other Royal Navy vessels, **HMS Boxer, Euralys, Lancaster, Minerva, Philomel, Sutlej and Duncan**, later a field hospital, joined the relief and rescue effort, as did the British merchant ships, **SS Afonwen, Drake, Ebro and Chesapeake**. Men from the Royal Navy set to the tasks of digging out the dead and survivors from collapsed buildings, evacuating and treating the wounded, the injured and homeless in the safety of the Messina railway station, the only building still with a roof!

Support became a genuinely international affair with Germany, Denmark, France and Greece arriving to offer assistance. President Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet deviated from its return journey to the USA releasing USS Connecticut and Illinois to provide food, medical supplies and surgeons. Meanwhile, sailors from the Russian battle-ships, **Admiral Makarov, Cesarevitch (Tsesarevich) and Slava**, took it upon themselves to restore law and order and to quell looting and rioting gangs, doling out summary justice with executions not unknown.

In 1908 The King and Queen of Italy, overwhelmingly appreciative and full of gratitude for the efforts made by others on behalf of Italy, decided that a commemorative medal would be struck and presented to those who had helped, as they said,

‘...whether by rendering assistance and medical treatment, or by donating health and administrative services and meeting the material and spiritual needs of the sufferers of the disaster...’.

Initially, 300 medals were awarded, but in the months that followed the decision was made to reward all with a medal commemorating ‘*Terremoto Calabro-Sicilo 28th December 1908*’. Gold, Silver and Bronze medals, some 40mm and some 30mm, were presented to all foreign nationals, civilian and military, including 598 to the officers and ratings of **HMS Exmouth**.

So, yes, that’s where Thomas Henry **White**, my Grandad, was in 1908 and it’s heart-warming to know that he played some part, as one of 5,000 RN personnel involved, in the rescue operation that remains the Royal Navy’s greatest support of civilians in peacetime.

(JJ Wilson and Roger Perkin’s ‘Angels in Blue Jackets’, published in 1985, offers the most detailed telling of the harrowing story of the Messina disaster and supplies details of all the medal winners in a very long appendix.

Ken Wright’s article, ‘Angels Came in Ships’ published in 2009 by the Naval Historical Society of Australia provides a very useful commentary. Images of the disaster have emerged on You Tube and a number of newspaper reports are to be found on Find My Past.

Papers have been and continue to be published debating the causes of the earthquake and tsunami.)

Tom White (9656)

Can we help you with your brick wall?

Have you come across a stumbling block in your
Liverpool research?

You are welcome to ask questions relating to your research on our
website at <https://www.lswlfhs.org.uk/no-crawl>

Or on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/LandSWLFFHS>

Alternatively, send your questions to the Editor at
editor@lswlfhs.org.uk and we will do our best to include your
query in the Journal

Letters to the Editor

Jean Alker sent me the following information regarding HMS Serpent:

Jean has been going through some naval research papers and came across several pages of information on HMS Serpent which was wrecked off Cape Finisterre with the loss of 173 lives.

She was given this information with the idea it might help her research into RN Gunboats, but this is much later than her searches.

If anyone in the LFH group would like these papers she will be happy to post them or send them to me to pass on. Attached are some photos of the pages though being copies they tend to be bit dark. *(I have tried to brighten the pages. Editor)*. The written articles are fine though.



The shipwreck and
HMS Serpent and crew



Three survivors of the
shipwreck: - **Gould,
Burton & Luxon**

A Request from America

My name is David Joyce, and I am the Genetic Genealogy Officer of the Barrow Family Association of America (BFA). We are looking for a Barrow male from the region of Burtonwood and Warrington, Lancashire, who is interested in taking a Y-DNA test sponsored by the BFA. It would be through Family Tree DNA. Do you think you could help us in our endeavour? It would certainly help us with our genealogical research concerning the origins of the Barrows. It also would connect the Barrow tester to thousands of new relatives from across the pond.

David Joyce

Applying for War Medals

Applying for a medal:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-medal-or-veterans-badge/apply-for-a-medal>

You need to complete and sign in black ink the application form and send it to the address on the form (*it has to be a wet signature*). You also need to send any relevant documentation. If the person has died, you must provide a death certificate. The application must be from the closest living relative. A list is given on the application form.

The site below has the summary of the medals, or you can download a PDF on the above site.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/merchant-seamens-campaign-medal-records-1939-1945/>

It usually takes up to 12 weeks to receive the medal.

Lancashire Parish Register Society

Registered Charity No. 511396

<https://www.genuki.org.uk/LPRS>



**Find out about your 16th and 17th century ancestors.
Discover where they lived and how they made a living.**

Our 198 volumes and over 200 CDs are the most accurate possible transcriptions of old registers, carefully compared with the Bishops' Transcripts, and fully indexed. Visit our website for details, buy volumes and CDs direct from Alan Powell alan.powell01@gmail.com

New Members

New and old Members' Interests detailed below consist of the membership number and interest in terms of **SURNAME and INITIAL, LOCATION and DATE.**

A maximum of only ten interests can be published for the sake of space. Anyone needing more than ten interests can see the extra numbers published on our website.

Members reading this section who identify an interest they are looking for, should note the membership number of the contributing member and contact them through the **'Members Only'** area of our website:

www.lswlfhs.org.uk

We welcome new members, **numbers 9790-9806** who have joined most recently and wish them every success with their research.

New Members

9790 L McCann	9791 C Bonifas	9792 N Lloyd-Knapman
9793 P McQuail	9794 V Blake	9795 S Stout
9796 P MacFetters	9797 D Maslaczky	
9798 C Sanderson	9799 S Dodd	9800 I Whittle
9801 M Halligan	9802 P Lygo	9803 V Martin
9804 J Koon		

Members' Interests

8860 Fallows	Noah	Toxteth	1849-1922
8860 Whitehead	Margaret	Liverpool	1860-1951
8860 Lee	Hannah	Kirkdale	1874-1953
8860 Milnes	Amy	Liverpool	1871-1960
8227 Kelly	Ina I	Speke/Liverpool	1950
9789 Hassell	James	LAN	1880-2025
9789 Astle	Thomas	Cheshire	1750-1850
9636 Caddie		Any	All
9636 Cuddie		Any	All

Help Desks

Have you hit a brick wall with your research?
Why not visit one of the Society's help desks?

Liverpool Group:

The Liverpool group have volunteers who hold a weekly help desk each Tuesday, 1:00pm till 3:30pm, at the **Liverpool Central Library**, 3rd Floor, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EW.

Leigh Group:

Unfortunately, the Leigh Group has disbanded with effect from 18 November 2025.

Southport Group:

Crosby Library - First and Third Friday in month - 10am to 1pm. Please contact Crosby Library for an appointment.

Maghull Library - Thursday mornings depending on availability. Please contact Maghull Library for an appointment.

Warrington Group:

The helpdesk is based at **Warrington Library**, Museum Street, Warrington on the following Saturdays between 10am and 12 noon:
22 November 2025
24 January, 21 February and 21 March 2026 (provisional dates)

For further details please contact: warrington@lswlfhs.org.uk

The Liverpool and South West Lancashire FHS Website:
www.lswlfhs.org.uk

News from the Groups

Leigh & District

Unfortunately, the Leigh Group has disbanded with effect from 18 November 2025

Liverpool

Chairman: Susan Atkins

Secretary: Joyce Culling

Meetings are held in **Room 2, 4th Floor, Liverpool Central Library, William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EW** on the second Tuesday of each month, except July and August. Doors open 5:30pm for 5:45pm start and meetings finish no later than 7:45pm. £1 for refreshments.

13 Jan

Skelmersdale & Upholland

Chairman: Bill Fairclough

Secretary: Caroline Fairclough

The Group meets at **Upholland Methodist Church, Alma Hill, Upholland, WN8 0NR** at 7:00pm for 7:30 pm on the first Tuesday of each month - unless stated otherwise.

2 Dec Christmas bring & share tea

Jan 2026 No meeting

3 Feb Pills, Potions & Poisons

Louise Wade

3 March Liverpool Women Transported to Van Diemens Land

Ian Mooney

Southport

Chairman: Ian Cooper

Secretary: Paula Reese

Meetings are held at **Birkdale Station Master's House** on the second Friday of each month (unless stated otherwise). Meetings start at 7:30pm.

Coffee/Tea and biscuits from 7.15pm.

Warrington

Chairman: Vacant

Secretary: Agnes Ingram

Penketh (Meeting Lane) Community Centre, Meeting Lane, Penketh, Warrington WA5 2BG, UK. Meetings start at 7:00pm (doors open at 6:30pm) on the fourth Monday of each month, except for December.

24 Nov Members Evening

December No meeting

2026

24 Jan

28 Feb

28 Mar

Widnes

Welcome to our group page from your committee members Claire, Gill and Sue.

Widnes Family History Group was formed in 1994 and is one of the six groups that form part of the Liverpool & Southwest Lancashire Family History Society.

We meet at 7pm on the last Wednesday of each month, except December, at **Upton Community Centre, Hough Green Road, Widnes, WA8 4PF.** Meetings currently consist of members research evenings, with our library available to browse. Help is offered from our committee members and members of the group.

26 Nov Members Research

There is no meeting on 31 December 2025

2026

28 Jan

25 Feb

25 Mar

Officers of the Society

General Committee Officers

President: Joyce Culling Vice President: Peter Jolliffe

Trustees

Chairman:	Susan Atkins Email: chair@lswlfhs.org.uk
Vice Chairman:	Mary Allan Email: liverpool@lswlfhs.org.uk
Hon. Treasurer:	Ann Croft Email: treasurer@lswlfhs.org.uk
General Secretary:	Barry Peacock Email: secretary@lswlfhs.org.uk
Publications Officer:	Shelagh Boardman Email: publications@lswlfhs.org.uk
Editor:	Alison Anyon 19 High Meadows, Newport, Shropshire, TF10 7RY Email: editor@lswlfhs.org.uk
Internet Co-ordinator:	Brian Whitehead Email: webmaster@lswlfhs.org.uk
Minutes Secretary:	Belinda Shaw Email: minutessec@lswlfhs.org.uk

Other Officers

Media Administrator:	Mary Allan Email: zoom-admin@lswlfhs.org.uk
Membership Secretary:	Geoff Bibby 2 Chelford Close, Bidston, Birkenhead, CH43 7NJ Email: membership@lswlfhs.org.uk
Strays Co-ordinator:	Vacant Email: strays@lswlfhs.org.uk
Members' Interests Sec:	Sandra Roberts Email: interests@lswlfhs.org.uk
Donated Certificates Sec:	Val Benson Ailsa Craig, Russet Road, Weaverham, Northwich, CW8 3HY Email: certificates@lswlfhs.org.uk

Plus one representative elected by each Group of the Society



This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic](#) license. **Attribution: The Bluecoat and Christmas Lights by Bikeboy.** This image was taken from the [Geograph project](#) collection. See [this photograph's page](#) on the Geograph website for the photographer's contact details. The copyright on this image is owned by [Bikeboy](#) and is licensed for reuse under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license](#)

Built in 1716–17 as a charity school, **Bluecoat Chambers** in School Lane is the oldest surviving building in central Liverpool, England. The school was founded in 1708 by the Reverend Robert Styth (died 1713), rector of Liverpool, & Bryan Blundell, a sea captain & later twice Mayor of Liverpool (1721–22 & 1728–29). Originally constructed in 1716–17, the building was extended until 1718 to function as a boarding school. By the following year, it had 50 children, with room for 100 more, & construction was finally completed in 1725. After the school moved to a new site in Wavertree in 1906, the building was threatened with demolition. On 3 May 1941, during the Liverpool Blitz, the concert hall & adjoining rooms were severely damaged by an incendiary bomb & during the following night the rear wing was destroyed by a bomb blast. Restoration took place after the war, being completed by 1951. It is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade 1 listed building, having been designated on 28 June 1952. The Bluecoat Display Centre, a contemporary craft gallery, opened in the rear courtyard in 1959. Being known as the Bluecoat Arts Centre from the 1980s, it is now simply called the Bluecoat.

Taken from Wikipedia



Prince Albert Statue, Liverpool Christmas Market

This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic](#) license. **Attribution: Prince Albert statue, Liverpool Christmas Market by Matt Harrop** This image was taken from the [Geograph project](#) collection. See [this photograph's page](#) on the Geograph website for the photographer's contact details. The

copyright on this image is owned by [Matt Harrop](#) and is licensed for reuse under the [Creative Commons](#) Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 license.

The **Statue of Prince Albert** is situated outside St George's Hall. It was erected in honour of Prince Albert, the Consort of Queen Victoria, Designed by Thomas Thornycroft it is cast in bronze and stone and is listed as a Grade 11 monument. **Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha** (Franz August Karl Albert Emanuel; (26 August 1819 – 14 December 1861) was the husband of Queen Victoria. As such, he was consort of the British monarch from their marriage on 10 February 1840 until his death in 1861. Queen Victoria granted him the title Prince Consort in 1857.

IF UNDELIVERED (UK) PLEASE RETURN TO:
2 Chelford Close, Prenton, Birkenhead, CH43 7NJ

Printed by Joshua Horgan Print & Design 01865 246762