

Issue 98
November 2025

The Ormskirk and District Family Historian

*The Magazine of the
Ormskirk and District Family History Society*

45TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR . 45TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

The ODFHS Useful Information Page

Ormskirk and District Family History Society was inaugurated in 1980.

Registered Charity (No. 1004895). Member of the Family History Federation.

ADDRESS FOR ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Ormskirk & District Family History Society

% 15 Greethey Hill, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2DP

website: www.odfhs.website boat families: www.boatfamilies.website

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/OrmskirkDistrictFamilyHistorySociety/

OFFICERS

Hon. Chair	Kate Hurst	
Vice Chair	Keith Broadbent	
Hon. Secretary	Ruth Mercer	secretary@odfhs.email
Hon. Treasurer	Colin Macdonald	treasurerodfhs@gmail.com
Librarian	Kathryn Macdonald	librarianodfhs@gmail.com
Assistant Librarian	Jean Gidman	
Membership Secretary	Keith Broadbent	membership@odfhs.email
Website Manager	Alan Cooper	website.manager@odfhs.email
Magazine Editor	Kate Hurst	editor@odfhs.email

SECRETARIAT TEAM

Sally Dean, Pam Richardson, Keith Jenkins, Kate Hurst, Dot Broady Hawkes,
Kathryn MacDonald, Alan Cooper, Norma Gregson, Keith Broadbent,
Emma Davison, Alison Ackland, Ruth Mercer, Colin MacDonald, Geraldene Hayes

Could You Contribute To Our Magazine?

Articles for the Ormskirk and District Family Historian are always welcome. If you'd like to send something for publication, please contact the Editor using the e-mail or postal address above. We will do our best to look after all items (and will return them on request) but we suggest that you retain any original documents.

The Ormskirk and District Family Historian

Issue 98 – November 2025

View From The Chair	4
ODFHS Chair - Forthcoming Vacancy	6
The Ormskirk Highwayman - <i>Derby Mercury</i> , 11 November 1743	6
Members' Interests Directory - October 2025	7
Membership Statistics - 3 October 2025	8
The Babies of Burscough - <i>Lancaster Gazette</i> , 27 October 1808	8
 ODFHS 45th Anniversary Competition	 9
Mary Reynolds by <i>Wesley Hedges</i>	10
A Tuesday Morning at Knowsley Hall by <i>Julie Broadbent</i>	12
Henry Spencer's Hair - <i>Carlisle Patriot</i> , 11 July 1818	13
Out and About with ODFHS by <i>Kathryn MacDonald</i>	14
 Talk Reports	 16
What's Coming Up? Winter 2025/26	26
Library Notes - September 2025	27
Beating the Bounds from the <i>Aughton Parish Magazine</i>	27
 Ormskirk Gingerbread Festival - 13 July 2025 by <i>Julie Broadbent</i>	 30
Reverends Burrows, Haward and Pizey from the ODFHS Archive	32
Advertisements	34
Subscription Rates and Society Facilities	35

"Not to know what happened before we were born is to remain perpetually a child. For what is the worth of a human life unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the recording of history." - Cicero (106-143BC) sent in by Jean Haikalis (1946-2017)

View From The Chair

As I welcome you to our Autumn Magazine, I can't help but think how much has changed during the past few months - amongst other things, I am now the proud aunty to my very first niece. Perhaps, in future years, I can encourage her to take an interest in our family history!

The end of 2025 approaches, reminding me of the many changes that the Society has seen during my seven years as Chair. Reviving our Dig Up Your Roots In West Lancashire event in September 2019 feels like a distant memory. It still delights me that our lockdown-era virtual YouTube talks are still clocking up new views, and - of course - I really appreciate the little band of regulars at our Zoom Family History Chats. (Some of you have been known to stay up late - or get up in the middle of the night - to join us from a different time zone!)

When I became Chair, my original plan was to serve three terms; of course, that became four, but as I've become increasingly busy running my own business, the time for me to step down is coming, and this I will do at our AGM in May 2026. Whoever succeeds me will be supported by an experienced Committee who are innovative, practical, hard-working and dedicated to promoting both the Society and the history and heritage of Ormskirk and its surrounding townships. I encourage anyone with an interest in standing as Chair to turn to page 6 for further details, and to contact me or Keith Broadbent (Vice-Chair) for an informal discussion.

I've often thought that everyone must have an interesting story in their family tree, so I was delighted to see nine entries submitted for the ODFHS 45th Anniversary article-writing competition. Putting on my Magazine Editor's hat, it has been a pleasure to add first prize winner Wesley Hedges' account of the life of Mary Reynolds to this Magazine; hers is a story that makes me think it deserves to be made into a feature-length film, and Members can expect to see the second and third place articles in our 2026 magazines. They really do show that family history

is far more than names and dates.

A kind donation of audio recordings made by member Michael Dawson at our July meeting has resulted in two YouTube videos (details on page 28); many thanks are due to our speakers Peter and Barbara Snape for a wonderful evening - it isn't often that we can say our meetings are musical, so we're delighted to be able to share a flavour of the night with those of you living beyond West Lancashire. Separately, our new Ormskirk Gingerbread Festival 2025 video features background music, and our new, beautifully designed, Ormskirk Gingerbread information boards.

As of late September 2025, Alan Cooper (our Website Manager) is busy creating a brand new version of the Society's website. Our current site is around ten years old, so the upgrade will doubtless involve a significant amount of digital "spring cleaning", and the now common use of tablets and smartphones alongside laptops and desktop computers is sure to have an impact on the new site! We'll keep you updated on any major developments.

Some of you may receive this Magazine before our Archive Open Day on 8 November, at New Church House, near Ormskirk Parish Church. Themed around "Ormskirk at War", it will be a wonderful opportunity to showcase some of the unique documents in our Research Library, all of which are lovingly curated and cared for by our very capable Librarian, Kathryn MacDonald.

Some time ago, Kathryn came across a photograph of three Methodist ministers, taken by Ormskirk photographer, J. Taylor in c.1886, which we've reproduced on page 36. We know who the men are, but not why they were in Ormskirk at that particular time; if you can solve the puzzle, we'd love to hear from you!

Kate Hurst
October 2025

ODFHS Chair – Forthcoming Vacancy

Having served as our Chair since 2018 Kate Hurst will be standing down at our next AGM and is not seeking re-election; therefore, we are seeking a new Chair to serve from May 2026. The initial appointment is for a period of two years which may be extended.

The Chair is both an ambassador for Ormskirk and District Family History Society and the leader of the Society's management and administration. They are supported by an able and experienced team of Officers (including a Vice-Chair) and senior Executive Committee members who undertake a portfolio of responsibilities such as Secretary, Treasurer, Membership, Librarian, Website, Events, Speaker Programme, Social Media and others.

Further details will be announced over the coming months but anyone who thinks they may be interested can contact Kate (chairman@odfhs.email) or the Vice-Chair, Keith Broadbent (membership@odfhs.email) for an informal discussion.

The Ormskirk Highwayman

Derby Mercury, 11 November 1743

They write from Lancaster, that last Saturday Mr. George GORTON, a Manchester Factor, was robb'd by a Highwayman dress'd like a Country-man, near Ormskirk, of seventeen Guineas, who cut the Girths of his Saddle and then rode off. He seemed by his Behaviour to be an old Practitioner in that Way of Business.

Members' Interests Directory

October 2025

The Members' Interests Directory has been updated, and the latest version is now available in the Members' area of the ODFHS website; a printed copy is included with this Magazine for members who receive them. The following members' interests have been added to the Directory since the last update, with authority to include the member's name and interests in the magazine:

- *Mary Cliffe* - GILL
- *Carole Davison* - HECKLE
- *Carol Gillespie* - HAMPSON
- *Terri Grice* - CARRINGTON and WILSON
- *Pat Harwood* - BARTON, BLUNDELL, BRIGHOUSE, HESKETH and WRIGHT
- *Neil Hayward* - CARR, GREGSON, HAYWARD, HEYES, LEWIS and WYNN or WYNNE
- *Elaine Howarth* - ALTY, EDEN and FORSHAW
- *Lynne Klein* - BUSKE, BUSKEY and BUSKY
- *Ruth Mercer* - HOWARD, MERCER, RAINFORD, STOPFORTH and TASKER
- *John Phillips* - LEA

In accordance with ODFHS policy, the published Directory contains only the membership number(s) of members interested in a particular surname, rather than full contact details.

Anyone wishing to contact other members about a particular surname interest should contact Keith Broadbent at membership@odfhs.email or Ruth Mercer at secretary@odfhs.email (or use our postal address on page 2). Only details specifically authorised for release to other members will be passed on.

Membership Statistics

3 October 2025

Total paid-up membership	165
Of which:	
overseas members	15
(not including UK offshore islands)	
local members	89 (L, PR, WA, WN postcodes)
free members	5 (libraries etc)
new members for 2025/26	21
with Gift Aid	91
with digital magazines	55

A total of 30 members from 2024/25 did not renew for 2025/26, of which 19 were deleted having not responded to multiple reminders by 1 October 2025.

Renewal of memberships for 2026/27 will be available from 1 January 2026 (primarily to spread the workload on the Treasurer / Membership Secretary). Agreed subscription rates for 2026/27 came too late for inclusion in this magazine but will be set out in a forthcoming e-newsletter.

The Babies of Burscough

Lancaster Gazette, 27 August 1808

Last week, a poor woman was taken in labour on the road between Burscough and Ormskirk, and was delivered before she could be conveyed to any house; and the same night a young child was left at the door of a cottage in the same parish; the officers of which have taken it into their care. No traces have as yet been discovered of its unnatural parent.

ODFHS 45th Anniversary Competition

As you will know, we're celebrating our 45th anniversary this year, and a big part of that has been our writing competition - we think it's the first one held by ODFHS, but please get in touch if you know differently! It's been a brilliant experience for us to read the stories of those West Lancashire ancestors.

The idea came about because we Committee members often find ourselves talking about the intriguing discoveries that members have shared with us - the coincidences, common experiences, and - of course - the West Lancashire background. We knew you'd have some special stories, and you didn't disappoint us!

But the entries that came in gave us more than we expected - we were moved by personal stories of courage, achievement, determination and resilience; intrigued by connections with great nineteenth-century developments in industry, infrastructure, transport, science and standards of living; impressed by links to great events and people. And starting from our West Lancashire base, you took us on journeys in the UK and overseas but the family connection was always solid, often drawing on family stories that launched your investigations.

The judges did manage to establish the three best entries, and we're publishing these in the next three editions of this magazine, starting with the entry from our overall prizewinner, Wesley Hedges. Wesley is one of our Australian members, and some of you may have met him and his wife Rita at our June meeting when he was visiting Ormskirk on holiday. Others will have read about him in Keith's Special Announcement that went out on line (and those not on line will get a paper copy with this magazine, if you haven't had a copy already by other means). It was a great pleasure to meet Wesley and we're delighted to publish his prizewinning entry, with our thanks and warmest congratulations.

Mary Reynolds

by Wesley Hedges

This is the story of my three times great aunt Mary REYNOLDS, who endured so much hardship and misfortune in her relatively short life, yet she remained steadfast to the love she had for her children.

On a cold New Year's morning in 1786, in the town of Ormskirk, Lancashire, a child named Mary REYNOLDS drew her first breath. The daughter of James REYNOLDS and Mary CHEW, Mary was born into a deeply Christian family, she along with all seven of her siblings were baptised at St. Peter and St. Paul's Church. It was a life anchored by tradition, faith, and the enduring rhythms of rural English life.

But Mary's soul was not one to remain tethered to the ordinary, with work hard to find and the lure of the industrial revolution starting to take hold in Lancashire, Mary struck out for Preston around 1810, in search of employment. There, in the haze of factory smoke and the hum of city life, Mary's path twisted away from the one her family had imagined. She became involved with a man named Joseph SUDELL. To the outside world, she may have been merely his servant. But behind closed doors, a more complicated relationship bloomed—one that led to the birth of three children, all fathered out of wedlock.

Her third child, Thomas, was born in 1814. With a heavy heart and the burden of secrecy, Mary sought help from her younger brother John and his new wife Sarah, asking them to raise the boy. She returned to Joseph SUDELL's service—until betrayal shattered her fragile peace. Joseph accused her of stealing some items of clothing that belonged to him. On April 17, 1817, Mary stood before the Lancashire Assizes, Quarter Sessions and pleaded guilty. Her sentence; seven years' transportation "*beyond the seas.*"

For a year, she languished in prison. Then, in May 1818, she was transferred to

Newgate. Shackled along with 127 other women, they were packed into hackney coaches for the eighty-mile journey to the ship *Maria*, docked at Deal. On May 18, they set sail for the other end of the world - Sydney, New South Wales.

The voyage to Australia took nearly four months, and somewhere between the endless swell of the sea and the salt-laced winds, Mary found an unlikely companion in a crewman named Joseph LEBURN. Whether it was love, survival, or something in between, their bond endured. When they reached Sydney on September 7, 1818, Mary began work as a housemaid. Nine months later, on May 10, 1819, Mary and Joseph were married at St. Philip's Church in Sydney. She was a convict; he, a sailor. Together, they dreamed of a new life.

Joseph returned to sea for another four years, while Mary remained behind serving the remainder of her sentence. In 1823, Joseph came ashore for good, purchased the Welch Harp Hotel, and began a new chapter as a publican. A year later, in April 1824, Mary was granted her certificate of freedom. But Mary's heart had never left Lancashire.

Driven by longing, she used her modest savings to book passage home on the *Harriet*, determined to find the children she had left behind. Her return was bittersweet. A few days after arriving, Mary unknowingly used counterfeit sovereigns purchased in good faith before she left for England. She was arrested and for two harrowing weeks, had to await judgment. Finally, the magistrate cleared her of any wrongdoing.

In 1826, hope blossomed. Mary was reunited with her eleven-year-old son Thomas. Clinging to the maternal bond that had survived distance and shame, she wrote to the Secretary of State for the Home Department in England, pleading for passage back to New South Wales for the two of them. In 1827, Mary and Thomas sailed aboard the *Hervey*, chasing a new life on the far side of the world once more. Mary worked as a laundress at the Welch Harp, now her husband's bustling hotel. In 1830, they moved again, this time to the Sheer Hulk—a new business, a new beginning. A year later, Mary's brother James (my 3xgreat grandfather), his wife Margaret, and their two sons arrived from Ireland to join them in Sydney. For the

next five years surrounded by family and a loving husband, Mary's life was bliss. Although her life had been marked by scandal, exile, love, and loss, Mary never gave up. Not on her children. Not on herself.

On November 17, 1835, at just 46 years of age, Mary REYNOLDS - then Mary LEBURN - passed away. Her headstone reads simply: "*Mrs Mary Leburn, wife of Joseph Leburn of Sydney, died 17th Nov 1835 aged 46 years. Leaving a husband and 3 children.*" Mary bore no children to Joseph, but the inscription shows that she kept the three children she birthed always in her heart.

A Tuesday Morning at Knowsley Hall

by Julie Broadbent

Three cars meeting by the back gate of Knowsley Hall, Tuesday 18 February 2025. In the first car is Rose Halsall, Chair of the Trustees of Ormskirk School Foundation Trust. In the second are Annie and Kezi, conservator and digitiser at Lancashire Archives. In the third is Keith Broadbent, Vice Chair and Membership Secretary of ODFHS, plus me. I'm Julie, Keith's wife, and I'm an onlooker at a pivotal moment of Ormskirk history. Today's the day when the decision's made to leap across the centuries and digitise the contents of a handwritten record book with a first entry date in 1614.

Rose leads us through intercoms and behind-the-scenes areas until we reach the office of Stephen Lloyd, Knowsley Hall Archivist and current custodian of the Register of Ormskirk Grammar School. It's not a school register as we would know one, it's more a record of events and people over hundreds of years, the latest made by Rose herself in 2022. Mostly it's known as 'the Book'. Stephen's giving it house-room at Knowsley Hall at present while its future is decided, since the Earl of

Derby is also a trustee, like all previous Earls of Derby since the Trust was first convened in 1612.

We introduce ourselves and the Book is produced, carefully covered. It attracts all eyes; it's beautifully clad in worn chestnut brown leather, sized 25cm by 40cm by 10cm. It's 400 years plus of history and I'm absolutely thrilled and impressed to see it. Annie and Kezi scrutinise and analyse it while Rose, Keith and I look on and Stephen resumes his work. We learn a huge amount from Annie and Kezi's meticulous assessment. We're all sharing a feeling of astonished delight that this chunk of history is here with us.

Some things are clear, others puzzling; assessments are made, conclusions are drawn, options become decisions. A way forward is agreed, and Rose will take it for approval to the next meeting of the Trustees in March. If approved, the contents of the Book will be digitised to become part of the Trust's website and, to our delight and by the kind permission of the Trustees, of our own website at ODFHS.

The Book itself will be kept securely in a carefully controlled environment at Lancashire Archives and, if all goes well, at least one facsimile copy will be made to preserve its current wonderful state of survival. A significant part of Ormskirk's history will be safe and made available for future study.

Henry Spencer's Hair

Carlisle Patriot, 11 July 1818

Henry Spencer, of Skemsdale, *[sic]* near Ormskirk, aged 95 years, is at this time afflicted with the smallpox. It is a singular circumstance, that he has for many years been bald-headed, but since he has been attacked with the above complaint, his hair has grown as fast as during his youth.

Out and About with ODFHS

report by Kathryn MacDonald

Over the last few months ODFHS has been running a short series of "Starting Your Family History" sessions at Ormskirk's Hope Street Cafe Community Hub. Our volunteers have helped the group uncover some amazing stories, from highway men to Crimean war veterans, laundry maids to gingerbread ladies, unknown Welsh connections and family secrets.



*Kathryn MacDonald (ODFHS Librarian) with some of the attendees
at the "Starting Your Family History" Sessions at Hope Street*

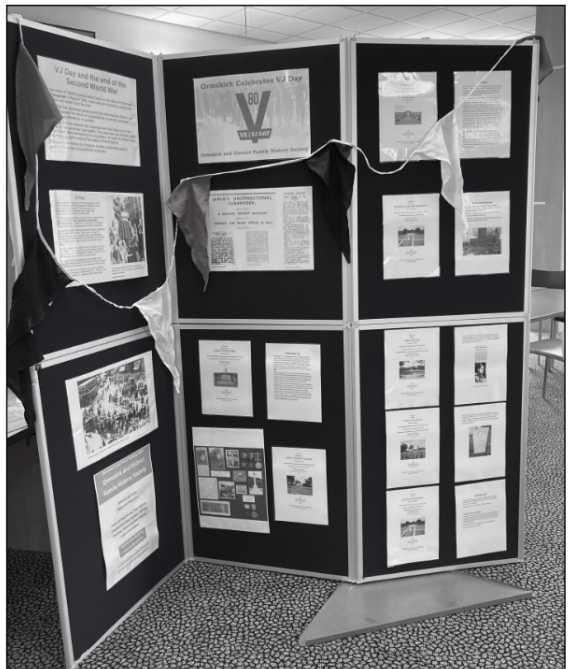
The final session provided a recap of the information sources used along the way and will be followed by a trip to Ormskirk Library to find out about the free resources available to family history researchers. Many thanks to all who volunteered their time to help, and to Hope Street for inviting ODFHS.



Thanks to the team from Brookside in Aughton Street, Ormskirk for inviting ODFHS to their Summer Fair again this year.

The fair was held on 29 July 2025, and proved to be a really enjoyable day, with lots of interest in the Society. The event also provided another opportunity to show off our new gingerbread-themed information boards.

The ODFHS display to mark VJ Day in Ormskirk Library during August 2025. This explained how the event was marked both locally and nationally, featuring research into the men who lost their lives serving in the Far East, from Dot Broadly Hawkes' Nostalgia articles, published in the Ormskirk Advertiser.



Talk Reports

28 May 2025 - AGM followed by the Sharing People's History of West Lancashire Project

Following the AGM there was a series of short talks on our forty-five year history, and one of our most recent successes, the Sharing People's History project in 2023/24.

Kathryn MacDonald began by showing a photo from our first ever meeting on 27 February 1980, followed by more images from the Gallery on the ODFHS website. The earliest was from 1986, and the latest was from April 2025, depicting the Society's display stand at the Rural Museum Lancashire's Open Day, the very successful project of our member Les Rynhart.

We saw images of an ODFHS newsletter from 1984 (before the magazine began in 1991), a group of intrepid members working on our longstanding Memorial Inscriptions project (still a reliable source of income through sales on Parish Chest), a 2009 tour of Ormskirk Parish Church, proud ODFHS members winning a West Lancashire Heritage Association quiz, and our long-standing Chairman Emeritus Bill Huyton (1947-2021).

Finally, images from 2025 showed the Ormskirk Mediaeval Festival, our display at the Ormskirk VE Day 80th anniversary commemoration, and our 45th anniversary exhibit in Ormskirk Library.

Kathryn recalled details of Sharing People's History, in which our motto was 'Our heritage is important and must be preserved.' Between August and October 2023, the online crowdfunder raised more than £1500 from 62 donations. Matched by Lancashire County Council, this became more than £3000, which was used to research, write and produce the booklets *Lost Buildings of West Lancashire* and *Landmarks of West Lancashire*. Over 500 copies of the booklets were given free to the

local West Lancashire community, including 380 distributed by West Lancashire libraries. In addition, 1012 copies have been downloaded from our website, enabling overseas members and many others to share in our project.

Landmarks of West Lancashire was launched in January 2025 in a civic event attended by the Mayor of West Lancashire and local Lancashire County Councillors. On that day, Pam Richardson and Norma Gregson summarised their contributions to the booklet; for the post-AGM presentation they reprised their talks, and were joined by Kate Hurst.

Pam's subject was the Clock Tower in Ormskirk, built in 1876 by the Court Leet (led by the Earl of Derby). She explained the workings of the Court Leet, the predecessor of modern local government, which dealt with rules and regulations, especially concerning the market. Pam spoke about her personal experiences of the Clock Tower, still the centre of Ormskirk as it's always been - the regular meeting point, place for announcements and speeches, focus for New Year celebrations, centre of entertainment in the town - like the trumpeter that Pam had heard earlier that day.

Norma spoke about St. Michael's Church, Aughton. Like Pam, she had a personal connection with her subject, which reminded her of her early life experiences and schooldays. The church is more than 1000 years old, built of grey-brown sandstone sourced from local quarries. Norma showed images of the church, including the original Norman arched entrance, that had had many alterations in its time, including the 1913 work that had produced "*a completely different church*". She also spoke of the many rectors, including the two Mr. Plumbes and also Mr. Chevasse, later Bishop of Liverpool, the father of renowned WW1 Victoria Cross holder Noel Chevasse.

Kate's subject was the Mass House, which had been not a church or a chapel, but a private house where Mass was said, in days before the 1791 Catholic Relief Act made it lawful for Catholics to practise their religion. The story of the Mass House and the date stone which still survives in St. Anne's Church, the life and career of

the eminent builder of the original (since demolished) house, the link with the 1745 Jacobite rebellion and the steps that led to the building of the present church, was so detailed and interesting that it needs a longer account in a future magazine!

Hearing about the Society's past and coming right up to date with our Sharing People's History project was a memorable way to mark our 45th anniversary.

Talk report by Julie Broadbent.

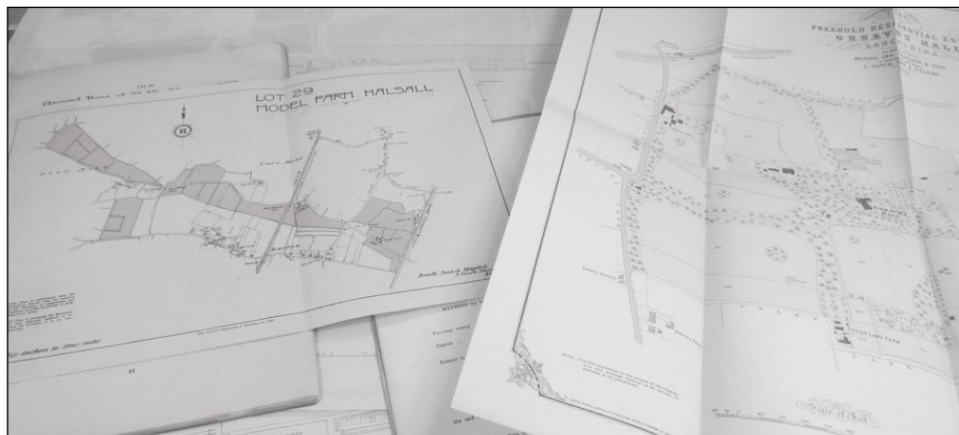
26 June 2025 - Ormskirk Library Facilities for Family and Local History Research by Elizabeth Russ

Elizabeth Russ is the Head Librarian at Ormskirk Library, and a friend of ODFHS who warmly welcomes the Society and hosts events regularly for us. Her talk at our June meeting was a valuable insight into our local public libraries and the wide range of material available to assist us in our family history and local history interests.

Public libraries usually have a local studies collection of material and sources, covering many subjects, e.g. transport, education, local and social history. They welcome visitors and can advise on how best to access the information required. Visitors come from far away - as with the Miles Standish collection at Chorley Library, where Elizabeth previously worked. Miles Standish is famous as the military adviser to the *Mayflower*, whose passengers were the first European settlers to establish a permanent colony in North America. 2020 was the 400th anniversary of the *Mayflower's* landing, so large numbers of American visitors were expected - but the worldwide disruption of Covid spoiled that. However, 2021 brought many, including Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the USA House of Representatives.

The current Ormskirk Library opened in 1960, in its familiar building on Burscough Street, but inside it looked very different from its modern appearance - the original shelves, tables and chairs have since been replaced by space for

personal computers, display space (most recently occupied by our 45th anniversary boards!), meeting areas for local groups of all kinds, interests and ages, with room for visiting speakers, including some from ODFHS. The counter area is still there, a much less formal place than years ago, and counter staff are always happy to answer queries and give out information.



Maps of Model Farm, Halsall and the Greaves Hall Estate on display at our June meeting

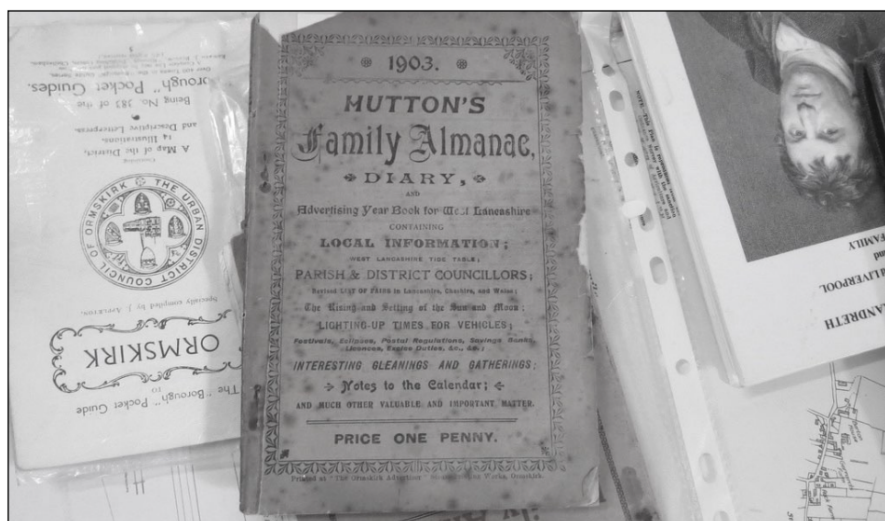
A detailed look at what's available in Ormskirk Library included:

- a collection of local maps, some large-scale, of great value in searching for exactly where our ancestors lived, or for details of Ormskirk's past, e.g. the extensive living courts that are now largely lost, with just a few survivors
- electoral rolls, of special interest for family history and house history
- parish registers (the originals can contain details omitted from computerised records)
- local newspapers and aerial photos from past years
- many online sources, e.g. MARIO online mapping, the Red Rose Collection for Lancashire which holds records of significant places, such as the Lathom Remount Depot
- information on local shops, endowed charities, and distinctive local trades, e.g. clockmakers and watchmakers
- a collection of research theses, including detailed material on many subjects

Further options include specific sources of fascinating material - Elizabeth gave as examples Hutton's Family Almanac 1932 for a snapshot of a lost way of life, and also the plans prepared when local estates went for auction (including Greaves Hall, and the Melling and Scarisbrick Estates).

Access to computer sources for family history such as Ancestry and Find my Past (including the 1921 census) is freely available with no need to book, for users with a library card, and library staff will give help and advice for beginners (there are a few limitations, eg. it's not possible to use the library computers to build your own family tree).

Other online sources include the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *Lancashire Lives*, the *British Newspaper Archive*, *Who's Who* and *Who Was Who*, and the Pressreader App, while there's also a range of magazines, including for family history interests the BBC History Magazine and Family Tree, with lots of other special interests too. Additionally, organisations like ODFHS host drop-in sessions there; our help desk is on the first Monday of each month, 10.30 to 11.30am.



The Borough Pocket Guide to Ormskirk, Hutton's 1903 Family Almanac and a book on Dr. Brandreth - just some of the items in the Library's local history collection

It was great to hear about the mine of information that Ormskirk Library holds for us, and it's sure to have inspired plenty in the audience to investigate new ways of research. Elizabeth told us that she's always happy to talk to visitors to the library and suggest where they could find information they need for their research. In fact, there's far too much at Ormskirk Library to be listed here - it's clear that going along there ourselves is the essential next step!

Talk report by Julie Broadbent.

23 July 2025 - "Down My Way": Emma Vickers, Burscough's Community Hero - her songs stories and humour by Peter and Barbara Snape

We welcomed Peter and Barbara Snape, folk researchers and performers hailing from Chorley who take their traditional folk songs and stories all around the country (see their website www.thesnapes.co.uk for details). For their visit to ODFHS, Peter and Barbara told us of the songs and career of Emma Vickers (1894-1977) from Burscough.

Barbara's lovely warm singing voice and Peter's narration and musical accompaniment told Emma's story, with stirring renditions of five of her local Lancashire songs. The audience were invited to join in, and (as we also had thirteen paying visitors, familiar with the songs) we did very well!

With so many ODFHS members having relatives on the (more than 60,000-strong) Boat Families website, the vital fact about Emma Vickers is her life-long celebration of the canal society of Burscough and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in its heyday. Peter and Barbara gave us vivid images of lively evenings in canalside pubs, singers, clog dancers and hornpipes, melodeon, accordion and concertina players, jovial barge dwellers - a memorable picture from the past.

Much Burscough folk music concerns pace egging, as did three of Emma's songs that Barbara sang for us. An old Easter custom, especially in Northern England,

pace egging (from “Pasche”, Norman English for “Easter”) is named after the traditional dyed and decorated hardboiled eggs. It usually involved a parade or play with a set plot and cast of characters like the Toss Pot, Lady Gay, the Soldier Brave, the Noble Youth, the Jolly Boys. Standard costumes, masks, hats and make-up, wooden swords, props like a false hump and a plaited straw tail stuck with pins, drums, pipes and singing all combined in a whirl of colour and music.

Emma, born into a canal working family, was proud of her roots and traditions in Burscough. She grew up among boatman's mates, barge workers and canalside pubs. The family lived at Burscough Bridge, where her barge captain father Richard Gill and her brother were employed by Ainscough's flour mill.

The family were local dialect speakers, clog dancers, singers and storytellers - Emma said she'd have worked on the boats if she'd been a boy, but as a girl, she was sent to work in a laundry. She married her husband James in 1915, and their daughter Vera was born in 1922. The family owned boats but always lived in houses, a respectable life of town society and churchgoing.

Emma became well known locally for her tireless work keeping many canal traditions alive. She founded the Burscough Morris dancing club in the 1930s, made countless appearances with her songs and stories, including Rose Queen parades, church pageants, charity events, pantomimes and fairs - and famously she led the welcome home for the cup heroes of Burscough FC.

In 1961 the *Liverpool Echo* reported the surprise birthday party given to Emma by the folk community at her cottage in Orrell Lane, with music and singing, clog dancing and traditional entertainers. But this wasn't Emma's only media appearance - she did several radio interviews including the 1970s BBC *Down Your Way* programme, and her wide and varied activities featured regularly in the Ormskirk Advertiser.

ODFHS member Michael Dawson recorded Peter and Barbara's songs at the meeting, and (with their permission) we've made the recordings available on the

ODFHS YouTube channel - we hope this will bring a flavour of the evening to members who couldn't join us. The videos can be found on YouTube under the following titles:

- ODFHS July 2025 Meeting | The Songs of Emma Vickers - Part One | By Peter and Barbara Snape
- ODFHS July 2025 Meeting | The Songs of Emma Vickers - Part Two | By Peter and Barbara Snape

Peter replied to several questions, discussing the related family of instruments including the accordion, melodeon and concertina, the difficulties of finding such an all-round folk virtuoso like Emma today, the preservation of Emma's material - she's in the British Library - and the losses of older recordings as fast-changing technology results in the obsolescence of the equipment they were recorded on.

It was a great evening - and Emma's on the Boat Families website too! Her ID number is I01502.

Talk report by Julie Broadbent.

27 August 2025 - The Lathom Almshouses by Dot Broady-Hawkes

Dot Broady-Hawkes is always a welcome speaker, as a long-term ODFHS member and stalwart advocate of all aspects of local history. At our August meeting, her subject was her own home in the Lathom Almonry, close to where she grew up.

Her talk was an introduction to commemorations marking the centenary of the establishment of the Lady Lathom Almshouses Charity in 2026 - Dot is researching and writing a book on the history of Lathom Almonry, with proceeds going to the charity. There have been interesting finds, but Dot prefers to keep some secrets until the launch of the book next year!

She began with Thomas Stanley, 1st Earl of Derby, who was wealthy and powerful from his close relationship with Henry VII, his son-in-law, who was crowned in 1485. The 2nd Earl of Derby, his son, had the Almonry built in the early 1500s, next to the Chapel founded by the first.

The Almoner was in charge of the hospital and the distribution of food, alms, comfort and aid, to the poor. The foundation provided for 8 bedesmen, retired priests who sang hymns and prayed for the Earl of Derby and his family; they were the first residents in the Almonry. It would have been a cold, simple and uncomfortable life, in stone buildings with thatched roofs that provided basic accommodation, with few comforts and only a small fire. Later, in a post-Reformation age, the Almonry buildings were converted into almshouses, and the residents more likely to be retired workers on the Lathom estates.

It's thought that the Chapel and the almshouses were badly damaged and left derelict after the famous sieges of Lathom Castle in the Civil War. The impoverished Stanleys did not regain possession of Lathom for some time and were unable to restore the estate.

In the 1700s, the property passed to Thomas Bootle of Melling. Later, the Bootle-Wilbraham family restored the estate, renovating the almshouses to making them habitable again. This included building the north range of cottages (including Dot's home). Extensions to the buildings and the addition of a slate roof followed, and they became homes for local workers, including - eventually - the district nurse and midwife for the Lathom, Burscough and Skelmersdale area.

In 1828, the head of the Bootle-Wilbraham family was raised to the peerage as Lord Skelmersdale, and an etching by Edward Lear (from later in the 19th century) seems to show six or seven almshouses, a school and a house for the teacher.

Tenants paid no rent, and were given a few shillings a year from the charity; blankets and fuel were provided in recognition of the cold. Dot told a sad story of an eighty-four year old man who fell asleep in front of the fire and burned to death when his clothes caught fire. As the houses were one-up, one-down, with a ladder

the only access to the upper room, the old man might have slept downstairs out of necessity. Toilets were only installed in the 1930s, and all cooking, washing, etc would have been done in the lower room.

Life would still have been difficult for residents, who may have struggled to keep dry and warm, likely resulting in ill health. With little money or transport, living far from shops would have caused other problems. Family members were probably far away, as great country houses tended not to employ locals, (due to concerns about gossip, spreading scandal, etc) so they recruited their staff from a distance, often exchanging staff with other grand houses. Records show short duration of lodgings, with no pattern of who lived there, except for connections with the estate, e.g. a local farmer's elderly mother.

In the mid-nineteenth century, after Lord Skelmersdale became Earl of Lathom, the Lady Lathom Charities were created. With support from the Lathom family and the Earl of Derby, the Lady Lathom Charities succeeded in raising funds for local nursing provision and the Ormskirk Dispensary. In 1926 the Lady Lathom Endowment Fund extended these arrangements, with important support from local dignitaries such as Cecil Maples, prominent businessmen like William Leak Hutton (the son of the founder of the Ormskirk Advertiser), and local solicitors and accountants.

More recently, the almshouses were converted and improved from the original layout (Dot has a 24' long ground floor sitting room, and another similarly sized room above) and bathrooms were built on at the back - and telephones were put in! They are now lovely homes, but Dot stressed that there was no security of tenure.

From questions and discussion, we learnt about current living arrangements in the almshouses, criteria for applicants for the tenancies, local Masonic influence relating to the charity, and the history and growth of the charity. Dot's audience left feeling pleased with a talk that was well up to her usual standard!

Talk report by Julie Broadbent.

What's Coming Up?

Winter 2025/26

Face-to-Face Meetings and Events

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 8 November 2025 | ODFHS Archive Open Day at New Church House
(next to Ormskirk Parish Church), 10a.m. to 3p.m.
Themed around "Ormskirk At War". Free entry. |
| 26 November 2025 | Social Evening and Quiz hosted by Colin MacDonald,
with seasonal refreshments |
| 24 December 2025 | No meeting - but we wish you a very Happy Christmas! |
| 28 January 2026 | Ormskirk Parish Church by Jean Gidman |
| 25 February 2026 | A Guide to the Lancashire Archives by Alex Miller
(provisional) |

Our in-person talks are held at the Guide HQ, Moorgate, Ormskirk, and begin at 7.30p.m.

All welcome; non-members are requested to make a £2 donation.

Please see www.odfhs.website for any changes to our programme.

Zoom Meetings

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 13 November 2025 | ZOOM Family History Chat 12p.m. (provisional date) |
| 12 February 2026 | ZOOM Family History Chat 6p.m. (provisional date) |

For access details for our Zoom meetings, please contact Kate Hurst
(ODFHS Chair) at chairman@odfhs.email

Library Notes

September 2025

Dipping into Parish Magazines always gives an enlightening insight into the everyday life of our forebears. This is certainly the case with the copies of the Parish of Aughton magazines donated to our archive by late ODFHS member, Judy Hyder, shortly before she passed away last year. These have now been catalogued for the collection, and we intend to scan them for the Members' Area Library Resources section of our website. The Aughton Parish magazines in the collection cover St. Michael's, Aughton (the Parish Church) and Christ Church (Chapel of Ease), with selected dates ranging from 1882 to 1942.

A full list of the issues in the collection is given at the end of this article; please get in touch if you would like more information about content for dates mentioned.

Kathryn MacDonald
librarianodfhs@gmail.com

Beating The Bounds

Aughton Parish Magazine, May 1895

Beating the Bounds, May 1895

Picking an Aughton Parish magazine volume at random, in this case 1895, we find the year starting with an address by Rev. C.W. MARKHAM, Aughton Rectory, 1st January 1895, in which he makes reference to the newly elected Parish Council whom he invites to become officially acquainted with the boundaries of the parish

by beating the bounds at *"the proper season in May next"*.

He goes on to explain that on the last occasion of beating the bounds it was resolved that marks be placed *"at certain ill defined boundaries, but the resolution has not been carried out"*. In the May 1895 edition of the magazine we find out a little more about Rev. MARKHAM's earlier comments in an article entitled *"The Perambulation of the Parish"* which informs parishioners that *"this very ancient custom is to be revived this year"*. The last occasion it took place was in the Queen's Jubilee year of 1887 and the arrangements then adopted and which have been customary in the parish, are to be used for the event taking place on Wednesday, May 22nd.



A selection of bound copies of the Aughton Parish Magazine, which we plan to digitise for the Library Resources section of our website

A little background information is provided: *"The perambulation was in early times a religious ceremony, to be made by the minister, churchwardens and parishioners, for the purpose of ascertaining and marking the bounds of the parish. Any parishioners wishing to*

take part should join the clergy and wardens at Robbin's Bridge at 9.30am." It must have been a long day for all concerned as a public tea was to be held at the Stanley Arms at 6.30p.m. for the price of 1s. 6d. a head.

A report of the Perambulation appeared in the June 1895 edition of the parish magazine. It appears that the day was very successful, the weather was favourable and around 25 parishioners of all ages took part. There were some difficulties working out the exact course of the boundaries as in some places they had been effaced by alterations of fields and had to be discovered afresh. At the Halsall boundary, Canon BLUNDELL and Mr. THRELFALL gave valuable help in fixing the precise lines of the ancient boundary which had been completely obliterated in that area.

The Aughton Parish party placed stakes painted white, in conspicuous places in the hope that the new Parish Council would substitute them for more permanent markers. The circuit was completed by 6pm and the meat tea at the Stanley Arms was excellent. The party broke up at 8.30pm *"but not without the hope that another tramp round the parish might be organised before many years passed"*.

The ODFHS collection includes the following Aughton Parish Magazines:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| • 1882 (Feb, May, Sept) | • 1914 (May) |
| • 1888 (Jan, Mar, Jul, Sept) | • 1915 (complete) |
| • 1895 (complete) | • 1916 (Feb) |
| • 1899 (complete) | • 1919 (May, June, Jul, Aug, Oct, Dec) |
| • 1901 (Dec) | • 1920 (April, May, June, Jul, Nov, Dec) |
| • 1905 (Mar) | • 1921 (complete) |
| • 1906 (complete) | • 1922 (complete) |
| • 1907 (complete) | • 1923 (complete) |
| • 1909 (Feb, Dec) | • 1938 (Oct) |
| • 1910 (Dec) | • 1940 (Sept) |
| • 1911 (complete) | • 1941 (June, Aug) |
| • 1913 (complete) | • 1942 (Feb, Sept, Dec) |

Ormskirk Gingerbread Festival

13 July 2025

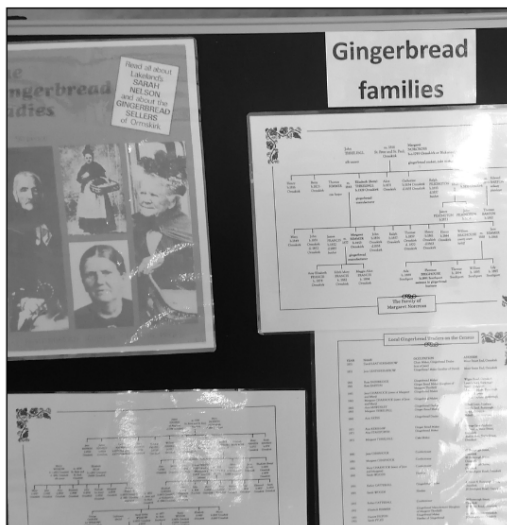
report by Julie Broadbent

Ormskirk Gingerbread Festival is a popular and well-established event in Ormskirk town centre, run by our friends, Ormskirk Community Partnership, that ODFHS has regularly supported over the years with our stall and displays; its name, of course, derives from the long-standing local gingerbread tradition that members will have read much about in this magazine.



It's a popular and well-established event, and its name, of course, derives from the long-standing local gingerbread tradition that members will have read much about in this magazine.

This year our stall and displays (including our new display boards telling the Ormskirk gingerbread story) were grouped together with other local historical societies in the impressive foreground of Ormskirk Parish Church, our oldest local building dating from the 12th century. This was a new concept for the festival, and one we're enthusiastically supporting - it seemed very popular with our visitors too.



(left) the new ODFHS Gingerbread information boards; (above) family trees for known gingerbread sellers

It was one of the hottest days of the summer and Ormskirk was crowded, a perfect atmosphere for the Festival. We had a great time meeting lots of people from Ormskirk and further afield as well as ODFHS members and friends, while our member Jean Gidman, historian and expert on the Parish Church, welcomed visitors to its atmospheric interior and led tours around its intriguing historical features.

A short video of images from the day (including some background music) can be found on our YouTube channel, under the title Ormskirk Gingerbread Festival 2025.

(right) colouring-in sheets being put to good use in our Children's Corner



Reverends Burrows, Haward and Pizey from the ODFHS Archives

Our Research Library is home to some wonderful resources and artefacts that are capable of telling stories about many different aspects of West Lancashire's past. Amongst them, you can find this photograph, dating from c.1886; taken at J. TAYLOR's studio on Moor Street, Ormskirk, it depicts three Methodist ministers.



*(left to right) Rev. Stephen HAWARD,
Rev. Patrick PIZEY and
Rev. Joseph BURROWS*

Rev. Stephen Parkes HAWARD (born c.1822 Dalston, Middlesex, d.1905 Ormskirk) entered ministry in 1845. In 1871, he lived at Louis Street, Potter Newton, near Leeds, with his wife Susanna (born c.1815, Helston, Cornwall) and sister-in-law Sarah RUSSELL (born c.1812, Merthyr Tydfil); ten years later, they lived at 75 Hampton Road, North Meols. We understand that Rev. HAWARD was buried at St. Peter and St. Paul, Ormskirk, on 24 March 1905.

Lathom Park Trust

History Talks available:

- Lathom and the Stanleys
- The Siege of Lathom
- Lathom House 1725-1925

www.facebook.com/lathomparktrust/

www.lathomparktrust.org.uk

For more info contact via:
07306368225

FAMILY HISTORY KATE HURST

RESEARCH

*Independent researcher based
at the Lancashire Archives
in Preston.*

All enquiries welcome.
Searches tailored to suit individual
needs. Price list available.

Other North-West record offices/
libraries visited by arrangement.

01200 422942

kate.hurst@icloud.com

CROSS FARM *Cottages*

*3 Self-Catering holiday cottages set in rural Lancashire,
within easy distance of Southport and Liverpool*

Accessible ground-floor accommodation . Convenient car parking
TV, radio and Wi-Fi . Large field for children's games
Laundry facilities and wet rooms

Mairsough Lane, Downholland, Lancashire, L39 7HT
0151 5261576

lin@crossfarmholidaycottages.co.uk
www.crossfarmholidaycottages.co.uk

Subscription Rates

	UK Membership	Overseas Membership
Receiving a printed magazine	£15.00	£20.00
Receiving a digital magazine	£11.00	£11.00

All payments to the Society should be made by cheque, postal order or international money order, crossed and made payable to Ormskirk and District FHS. Regrettably, payments made directly to the Society can only be accepted in Pounds Sterling.

To pay by UK Bank Transfer:

Sort Code 77 57 01

Account Number 00007974

Please quote your Surname and ODFHS Membership Number

Alternatively, please use our secure online membership form for payments via UK or International Bank Transfer, Paypal, Parish Chest or cheque:

www.odfhs.website/index.php/membership/22-public/438-online-membership-form

Society Facilities

Research Library

Located in the Scout Hall, Wigan Road, Ormskirk, a short walk from the bus and railway stations, and local car parks. The Research Library is open by appointment; please contact Kathryn MacDonald at librarianodfhs@gmail.com if you would like to arrange a visit.

Ormskirk Library Help Desk

Our Help Desk at Ormskirk Library, Burscough Street, Ormskirk runs from 10.30am to around 11.30a.m. on the first Monday of each month (except UK Bank Holidays).

*Covering the Sixteen
Ancient Parishes and Townships
of Western Lancashire*



Published by the Ormskirk and District Family History Society,
c/o 15 Greetby Hill, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2DP
Registered Charity No. 1004895

45TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR . 45TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

www.odfhs.website