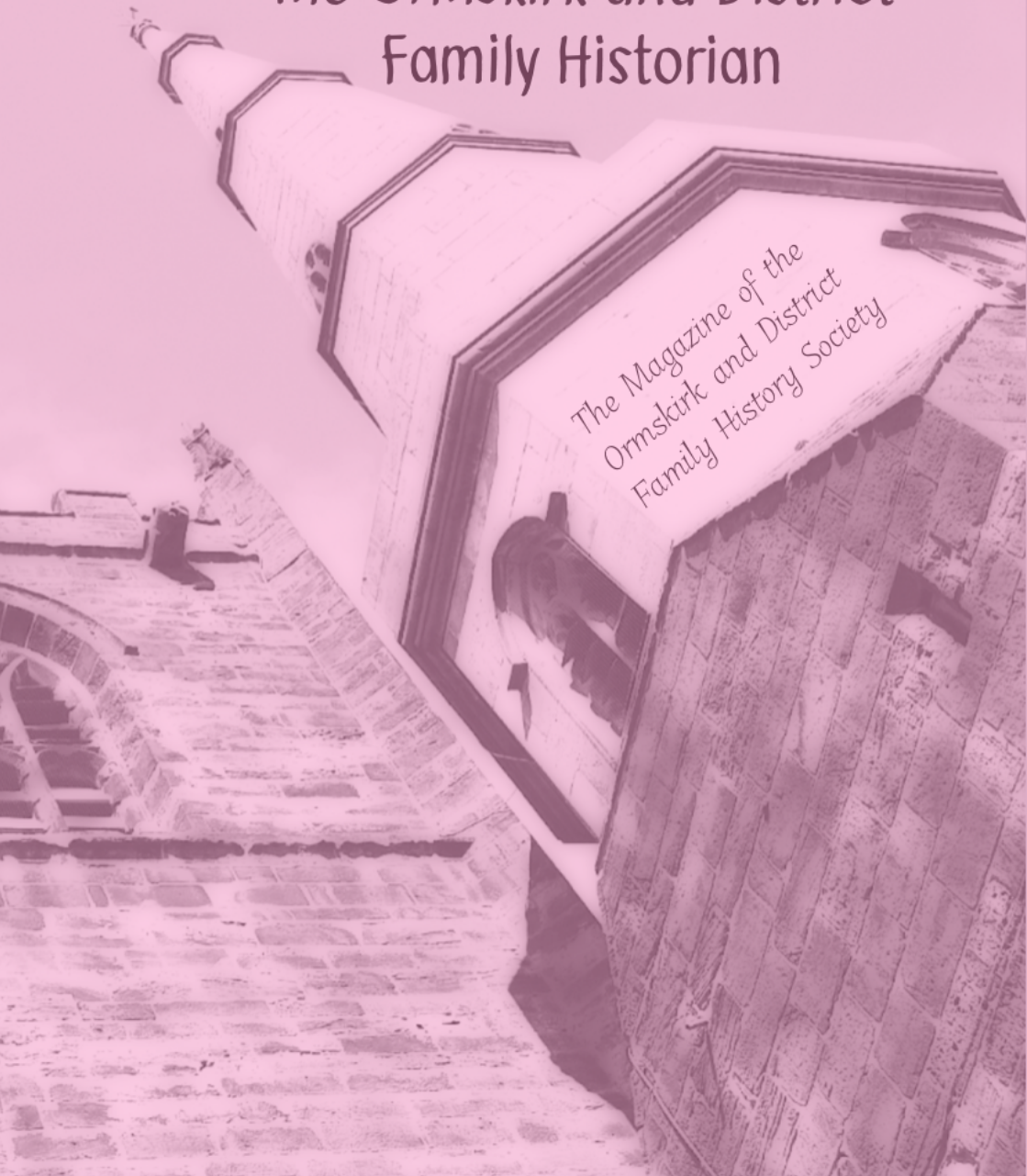


Issue 99
March 2026

The Ormskirk and District Family Historian

The Magazine of the
Ormskirk and District
Family History Society



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

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Facebook page: www.facebook.com/OrmskirkDistrictFamilyHistorySociety/

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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

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"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

Every time I write my welcome to a new ODFHS magazine, I know that it may be a few weeks before you, our Members, actually read it - making sure that it isn't out of date before we go to print is critical, and this seems more relevant now than ever. In July 2018, I wrote my first Hello From The Chair column; now I'm writing my last - and what changes have we seen along the way!

A recent decluttering session on my laptop unearthed all the publicity material for our 2019 Dig Up Your Roots in West Lancashire event (a whirlwind of a day when we pressed every table we could find in the Langham Hall into service) and I'm constantly wavering over whether to delete the back-up video files that, to my amazement, have made our YouTube channel so successful, but one of my enduring memories of my time as Chair will always be the COVID-19 pandemic.

For two years, ODFHS "shut down" - and yet we still existed. Panic subsided, Zoom Chats and virtual talks took over from Library Help Desk sessions and in-person meetings - and it modernised us, too. Today, I can't imagine ODFHS without the Digital Library on our website, Kathryn MacDonald's carefully curated artefacts displayed at events and meetings - or Zoom committee meetings that allow members beyond far Lancashire to remain involved. The loss of Bill Huyton (our longest serving Chairman) in 2021 heralded a technological change; Bill knew that data CDs were giving way to USB sticks; we moved on again, to digital downloads. I've seen so much innovation since I became Chair in 2018; long may it continue!

In the spirit of further transformation, thanks to Alan Cooper (our Website Manager), we're beginning 2026 with a brand new website; not only a different address - but also a new look that (I think) strikes a great balance between the Society's historical interests and a clean, modern design.

Emma (one of our committee members) once observed that, with rapidly changing technology, much is expected from any modern website. It must work on

tablets and smartphones, as well as computers, and Alan's revamped site does it all! It certainly works on Safari on my iPhone, but we would love to know how you're getting on with <https://ormskirk-fhs.co.uk/> if you're using any device that isn't a computer.

ODFHS is certainly a busy society these days; as you will see from pages 13 to 15. Our "Ormskirk at War" Open Day in November attracted an impressive number of visitors; although a bad cold prevented me from being there, I know that Kathryn MacDonald's wonderful displays are proof of how varied and captivating our library collections can be, and why it's so important that we share them.

In recent months, Kathryn's passion for local history has gone far beyond our Research Library; with her husband Colin (our Treasurer) and Dot Broady-Hawkes (a member of our Committee and Programme Group), she has founded the Ormskirk Heritage Hub, a new Community Interest Company. Rather than try to cram their plans in the very limited space here, may I direct you to a fuller description on page 22?

This being the first Magazine of 2026, it's only fitting to include some "housekeeping" notes. Hopefully, you'll find your membership renewal form enclosed, and I sincerely hope you will stay with us for another year. The second-place entry in our 45th Anniversary competition (authored by Michael Dawson) begins on page 10; the third place entry will follow in a future edition.

Our next Magazine will be a huge milestone in ODFHS history - Issue 100! - and we're hoping to make it a special one, themed around Ormskirk Market. If you'd like to submit material for inclusion, I hope the notice on page 21 will inspire you.

As I end my final View From The Chair (the twenty-third, in fact!), I'll simply say that the past eight years has been a great experience - and I look forward to seeing where ODFHS goes next.

Kate Hurst
February 2026

New ODFHS Website

Thanks to the hard work and patience of Alan Cooper (our Website Manager), we are delighted to announce the launch of Ormskirk and District Family History Society's brand new website. You can now find details of our forthcoming meetings, events, gallery pages, online membership applications and contact forms, our members' area and more at <https://ormskirk-fhs.co.uk/>

Membership Statistics

January 2026

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

Renewal of memberships for 2026/27 are now being taken (primarily to spread the workload on the Treasurer and Membership Secretary). **The due date for renewal of subscriptions is 31 March 2026.** Subscription rates for 2026/27 are unchanged from 2025/26, ie:

- UK membership with postal magazine £15
- Worldwide membership with postal magazine £20
- Worldwide membership with digital magazine £11

Members' Interests Directory

February 2026

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:

- *Alison Ackland* - BARTON, BATTERSBY, BEESLEY, BIRCH, KENYON, LUNT, PILKINGTON and WEBSTER
- *Lynne Lomas* - DISLEY, DRAPER, GASKELL, GLOVER, GRICE, HALTON, HOWARD and MEADOWS
- *James Nolan* - BARROW, MERCER, NOLAN and O'NEILL

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.

Magazine Trivia

The first ODFHS Magazine was published in Spring 1991. Twelve different members' queries were printed in the Help Wanted section!

Family History Societies on YouTube

February 2026

The following family history societies are just some of those in the genealogy community who have created YouTube channels, and upload videos on a variety of topics. In some cases, these include talks by visiting speakers.

- **Cape Town Family History Society** @ctfhsociety9512
- **Dallas Genealogical Society** @dallasgenealogicalsociety6540 (USA)
- **East Galway Family History Society Woodford Galway**
@eastgalwayfamilyhistorysoc8982
- **Irish Family History Society** @IrishFamilyHistorySociety
- **Jewish Genealogy Society of Long Island** @jewishgenealogysocietyoflo8447
(USA)
- **Kentucky Genealogy Society** @kentucky1792 (USA)
- **Newcastle Family History Society Inc.** @newcastlefamilyhistorysoci2923
(Australia)
- **Quaker Family History Society** @QuakerFamilyHistorySociety
- **Queensland Family History Society** @queenslandfamilyhistorysoc221
- **Shetland Family History Society** @shetlandfamilyhistorysocie2399

Interesting News

WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON GROUNDS FOR APPEAL PROJECT

Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre have received a £234,000 National Lottery Heritage Fund grant for their “Grounds for Appeal: First World War Military Service Appeal Tribunals in Great Britain” project. Running until January 2028, the project aims to combine records of 43 regional tribunals which heard the cases of men who believed they had grounds to claim exemption from conscription under

the 1916 Military Services Act, to create one searchable database. The applications include appeals on grounds occupation, ill health and serious hardship to family or business, providing a fascinating insight into wartime society. This volunteer-led project will be undertaken in partnership with Essex Record Office, Gwent Archives, Gloucestershire Archives, Lancashire Archives, National Library of Wales, Norfolk Record Office, North Yorkshire County Record Office, Portsmouth History Centre, Staffordshire Record Office, Suffolk Archives, Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, Warwickshire County Record Office, Wandsworth Heritage Centre and Wigan Archives.

NEW ADDRESS FOR LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND FHS

On 28 January 2026, Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society opened their new research library in the Gwen Cooke Room, 2nd Floor, Clarence House, 46, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, LE1 3PJ (the AGE UK building). The new venue is accessible by lift; a kitchenette is available for visitors' tea and coffee breaks. Opening hours 10.30am to 3p.m., Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The nearest car park is at Lee Circle, LE1 3RE, 0.6 mile walk from Leicester Railway Station; 175 yards from Haymarket Bus Station; 600 yards from St. Margaret's Bus Station.

DESFORD HERITAGE

Desford Heritage's Family History Group meets at Desford Library and Community Hub, Main Road, Desford (between Leicester and Market Bosworth), LE9 9JP on the first Monday (10a.m.-12p.m.) and 3rd Monday (7p.m.-9p.m.) each month; the Local History Group hosts regular talks at Desford Free Church every other month. Guided walks are planned during 2026. Galleries of Street Views, Churches, Public Houses, Desford Railway, and World Wars One and Two. Please see www.desfordheritage.org

NEW WEBSITE FOR SUFFOLK FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Suffolk Family History Society recently launched their new website. Updates from their branches in Bury St. Edmunds, Haverhill, Ipswich, Lowestoft and Sudbury, forthcoming events, details of Suffolk FHS publications, a list of Suffolk research resources, an online shop, and more can be found at www.suffolkfhs.co.uk/

Eric Alfred Dean

by Michael Dawson

Eric Alfred DEAN was the son of Joseph and Minnie Constance DEAN. They lived near the railway crossing adjacent to Daisy Lane and Meadow Lane in Lathom. My father (William DAWSON) as a young boy knew him well. He told me his family was very poor, as were many people back in the 1940s. He can remember Eric with old shoes full of holes, stuffed with cardboard.

Eric worked at Burscough Hall Farm, which used to be next to St. John's RC Church, Chapel Lane. It was from this employment that Eric enlisted in 1943 to serve his country, joining the RAF, attaining the rank of Sgt. (Air Gunner). My dad, then aged 13 or 14, took over Eric's old job and it was some months later, while working at the farm, that my dad recalled the day Eric came back to visit, this time not in his old shoes, but a proud young man in a very smart RAF uniform!



On 29 December 1943, Vickers Wellington X3883 of 20 Operational Training Unit (OTU) took off from its base at RAF Seighford, Staffordshire on a Bullseye Exercise. This exercise involved co-operation between the OTU and ground defences. A crew would be given a course to follow to a target city in Britain and an aiming point to photograph. The ground defences had to locate the bomber and illuminate it with searchlights. While on the flight, the

Eric Dean in uniform
(photograph courtesy of Richard Houghton)

aircraft's starboard engine failed.

This left the crew with two options: to make an emergency landing - they were very close to the Relief Landing Grounds at RAF Tatenhill and RAF Hoar Cross - or to bale out. The pilot did neither, but made the fatal mistake of attempting to restart the failed engine which caught fire causing the aircraft to go out of control and crash at 21.40 hours near Hoar Cross. Out of the six-man crew only Sgt F. COLLET survived; his five crewmates were killed - Sgt. T.B. JOYCE, Sgt. J. WHITEHEAD, P/O J.W. LORRIMORE, Sgt. H.W. MILLER and Sgt. E. A. DEAN. Eric was 20 years old when he died, and is buried at Stafford Cemetery.



*Sgt. Eric Alfred Dean's funeral
at Stafford Cemetery, 8 January 1944*



Prior to 2004 the name of Sgt. Eric Alfred DEAN did not figure on the Lathom and Burscough War Memorial in Burscough. The reason it appears now is due to my father (William DAWSON). Late in 2003 my father contacted Richard Houghton (renowned local historian) to ask, had he heard of Eric Dean, whom he had not. Richard said, *"as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is not searchable by residence or birthplace then, unless a name is proposed, there is no way of knowing that anyone is missing from any memorial with a WW2 association"*.

I was asked, did I think it would be possible to have his name commemorated at Burscough. I was intrigued by this request; we discussed the said Sgt. in detail. Sure enough, he was from Lathom and missing. I recall asking William, how did he know of this serviceman? His reply was, *"because he was my pal"*.



William Dawson at the grave of Eric Arthur Dean, 31 March 2012

It was late 2011 when we eventually found out what happened to Eric and where he was buried, after a lot of research work, so a visit was arranged for springtime, and on Saturday 31 March 2012, 69 years after Eric died, my father got to visit his 'pal's' grave for the very first time and lay some flowers. Sadly this story has one final sad twist. Soon after arriving home later that day, my father suddenly became

ill and in the early hours of the following morning, my father William DAWSON (aged 83) passed away.

He never forgot his boyhood pal; indeed, it is a simple fact that the name Eric DEAN is on the Burscough and Lathom War Memorial, is due to him.

Congratulations to Michael Dawson, whose article on Eric Alfred Dean was awarded second place in our 45th Anniversary Competition.

ODFHS Archive Open Day

8 November 2025

New Church House was the perfect venue for our latest Archive Open Day, carefully curated and organised by Kathryn MacDonald (ODFHS Librarian), and themed around “Ormskirk at War”.



We were delighted to welcome the Mayor, Councillor Anne Fennell, and Mayoress, Councillor Sarah Lawton, who spent a very generous amount of time viewing the exhibition and talking to volunteers. Joseph MacDonald and Jamie Lee Wright Jones presented flowers to the Mayor and Mayoress.



The Mayor and Mayoress with Keith Broadbent (Vice-Chair), Dot Broady-Hawkes, Joseph MacDonald and Jamie Lee Wright Jones



Members of Lathom Park Trust supported us on the day, and the assistance of Mike Glover, who loaned us the Women at War exhibition, was very much appreciated.

By the end of the day, we had welcomed ninety-five visitors - a few more arrived as we were clearing away! Special thanks go to the twenty-five volunteers who gave up part of their weekend to help

Display themed around nursing and hospitals in West Lancashire

out. Jean Gidman and Jan Lennon also had a very successful day in the parish church, with around thirty visitors.

Visitors provided plenty of positive feedback, a testament to Kathryn's hard work and the enthusiasm and energy of all volunteers who helped to set up, tidy away and - just as importantly - take the time to have so many interesting conversations with visitors during the day.

Talk Reports

24 September 2025 - The Stanley Cinema by Kevin and Melanie Whitaker

Restorative history projects all over the UK are rejuvenating lost or forgotten buildings, researching their history and opening them up for new generations to rediscover. In our September talk, we heard about one inspiring project here in West Lancashire from its founders and mainstays, Kevin and Melanie Whitaker, who have been joined by Michael Dawson of Images of Burscough.

They brought along three solid crimson plush original cinema seats (a single and a double) from the Stanley Club cinema in Burscough, the original home of cinema in West Lancashire. Restoring that cinema to full working order is their aim.

The 'Tute' opened in 1902, a men's club with a bowling green, reading room and billiards. The Earl of Derby donated over half of the costs; the rest came from public contributions. The building changed and developed over the years, not least through its developing function as a cinema, but it's still much as it was in the early 1900s.

The first films shown were animations, with live action films later. Serials began in 1915, and then a children's Saturday matinee. With the cinema a going

concern, larger and better projection equipment was needed; a significant extension was built for a substantial well-equipped projection room.

Popular film actors in the 1920s/1930s included Charlie Chaplin and Errol Flynn, but World War Two led to closure in 1939. In the 1950s/very early 1960s, films were probably at their most popular, shown every night of the week (plus the Saturday matinee.) It was the peak success point for the cinema. In the later 1960s it closed, giving way to live music and dances, popular with the new generation. The later 1960s saw it close, giving way to live music and dances, popular with the new generation.

Kevin, Melanie and Michael intend to open it up again - to present affordable films in the restored cinema with proper working equipment, including tours as well as screenings. It's a big job - the area was used for storage and the balcony boarded up, but it was a welcome surprise to find that 105 of the seats had survived; they'll be restored for use. Rewiring, modern power supplies for light and heating, flooring replacement, and much more must be done before restoring the projection equipment - there's a lot of work to do.

A start has been made - tidying away decades of junk, moving the fallen-in roof plaster, clearing rubble; taking the seats apart to see how they can be repaired - and retaining the original numbers on the seats so they can be replaced, once restored.

Another satisfying moment came when the key to the old emergency door was found; Melanie produced it to show us! Replacing the fire escape has been a big (but essential) job. The focus now is on planning and fundraising for the remaining building work, with plans for a Community Interest Company.

*Kevin and Melanie Whittaker
at our September meeting*



Pop-up screenings are planned, with a temporary screen, informal seating and the Stanley Kitchen open for food and drink. A variety of films in the school holidays, currently priced at £3.50 (with free admission for children under 3), popular films, lots of 80s movies, Christmas and Halloween specials. Plans will be based on people's memories and what they want to see. Over 1300 Facebook followers have welcomed the plans, offering both support and memories - first dates, watching the Beatles' films, paying more in the balcony, Batman and Robin, the ice cream in the interval!

Many other memories are already emerging from the project - fund-raising events, sold out Stanley Club functions, support from the Town Council, Images of Burscough and the Lathom Park Trust, great community support. The private screenings already held (for the WI, Scouts, Brownies, Rainbows etc) have been so successful that they're hoping to do many more for birthday parties and other celebrations.



To questions from the enthusiastic audience, Kevin and Melanie told us that the cinema was currently licensed for 180 people, the biggest crowd to date was for Rock Around the Clock, the current plan for Christmas is It's a Wonderful Life, the most popular films were those from the 50s and 60s, and the project's realistic timescale is 2-5 years.

The talk ended with the familiar 'That's All Folks!' - but we know there's much more to come from the Derby Cinema Project. People gave generously to a bucket collection at the meeting, and those who couldn't be at the meeting but would like to support the project, can contribute through their Go Fund Me page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/restoring-the-cinema-at-the-stanley-club>

22 October 2025 - A Day Out With Mona by Dennis Walton

For our October meeting, Dennis Walton gave a warm and humorous insight into his experiences working with Ormskirk's well-known historian, Mona Duggan, as the photographer for three of her books, *Ormskirk: A History*, *Ormskirk Through Time*, and *People of Ormskirk Through The Ages*. We were delighted that Jan, Mona's daughter, could join us, especially as she had travelled some distance.

Mona, who graduated at the age of 66 with a Ph.D. in Local History and wrote several books on the history of Ormskirk and its surrounding area, made great use of detailed photographs in her books. Her original photographer was her husband, Heaton Duggan, but after his death Dennis inherited the role.

At their first meeting, Mona surprised Dennis by suggesting they go out then and there to take some photos, and they took it from there, getting on famously. The first photo Dennis took was of Lathom Park Chapel, followed by a cream scone at the cafe at Warbreck's garden centre - the first of several cafe visits that punctuated the talk.

"Give them what (they think) they want" was Dennis's motto - but he aimed to give them something extra too. A photo taken on a rainy day made them cold and damp (but better after finding a cafe for hot chocolate). When printed, the photo wasn't right - but another visit, on a day with bright blue sky, produced the bonus of a much better photo. Though her publishers usually specified black and white prints, Mona strongly preferred the colour version, and that's what went in the book.

Inevitably, challenges cropped up. Mona often needed a modern photo to contrast with a much older image, for example in Church St, Ormskirk. Dennis explained some of his techniques to recreate the earlier photo, e.g. the use of a tripod - how high it should be, getting the feet in the right place - and details of lenses, angles, positioning, and different sizes of film. In Church St, the original shot was taken from the south west, so Dennis did the same, positioning the details of chimney, cottage, tower and steeple as they were in the original.

A photo of Coronation Park in 1906 couldn't be recreated to the usual standard, though. The seats by the lake originally faced away from it, rather than towards it as now. Reluctantly, Dennis accepted that he couldn't disguise the change, so that detail remains different.

A steam engine arriving in Ormskirk station from Aintree was the picture to be contrasted with the modern day view from the same angle. In the meantime, much had changed in the surrounding buildings and the station itself - so again, the only option was to show the much more recent scene as it was, with the original rails removed from the other platform, the overgrown areas, and the different background.

Luck was critical to getting the right photo - or maybe Dennis just kept working to create that luck! It was worth waiting for the arrival of a vehicle, a person or even a dog to give the necessary atmosphere, as with the Greetby Hill water tower photo.

Recreating the photo of The Elms on Derby St, he couldn't match the horse and cart, because vehicles can't go in that direction now. But he did recreate the figure of the housekeeper, when he noticed a chap walking around and waited to see if he'd get to the right place, and sure enough he did.

There were quite a few risky situations - usually when Mona needed a particular shot that Dennis had difficulty achieving without incurring personal injury, including

- at the former Barclays Bank to taking a photo of the clock tower and market stalls, getting the right angle meant a precarious balance on a steep narrow stair, with a foot on stairs at two different levels
- in a back alley off Hants Lane, he was up on a wheelie bin to assess his shot, balancing with his arms and camera over the wall, when the wheelie bin moved - he ended up dangling 9' above the ground. He got himself and his camera back up, but it was definitely another time for a cafe! a
- at Scarth Hill photographing the new water tower for contrast with the old, he had to stand in the middle of the busy road for the best angle. He'd agreed

hand signals with Mona to indicate when the road was clear, but after waiting ages for a slow driver to pass, walked into the road forgetting the agreed signal and didn't realise that Mona was telling him a car was coming - it swept by at 60 mph, a very near miss!

The talk finished with a selection of photos reflecting experiences with Mona, together with commentary on the stories behind them, ranging from teapots to chamber pots - and of course, Dennis wanted to make sure we hadn't missed his secondary theme, the cafes!

Comments and questions from the audience drew out more technical aspects of Dennis' photos, including the different effects of lighting, when to make compromises, and his method of taking many different shots so that Mona could choose whichever one best suited her purpose.

We were all glad that Dennis had made it through his hair-raising adventures to give us such a vivid impression of what went on behind the shots. It's fascinating to look again at Mona's books with the benefit of his insights.

Talk report by Julie Broadbent.



*Kate Hurst (ODFHS Chair) with Mona's daughter Jan and Dennis Walton
at our October meeting*

26 November 2025 - Quiz hosted by Colin MacDonald with Social Evening

Thirty-eight people turned out for the last meeting of our forty-fifth anniversary year, when Colin MacDonald (ODFHS Treasurer) hosted another excellent - and thoroughly entertaining - quiz night, including a picture round and a “name the book title” round. The overall winners were a team calling themselves “The Smart Set” (made up of Jean Gidman, Jenny & Dennis Walton and Kate Hurst who romped home with 80 points, thanks to Kate’s unfaltering knowledge of the “Horrible Histories” books!), with the runners-up scoring over 70 points.

Special thanks go to Kathryn MacDonald, who organised an enjoyable and profitable raffle, with a variety of prizes being donated. To add a festive touch to our signing in table, a toy elf stood watch over copies of *A Slice of Gingerbread!*

After several years behind the tea and coffee table, Julie Broadbent and Jackie James signed off from their duties roles with their customarily excellent seasonal buffet of biscuits, fruit juice, mini pork pies, crisps, mince pies and all manner of sweet treats! Their efforts certainly made the evening feel as though Christmas has come a month early.

ODFHS Magazine 100 – Ormskirk Market

The next ODFHS Magazine will be our one hundredth edition - and we want to make it special! 27 April 2026 will be the 740th anniversary of the granting of Ormskirk’s market charter, so we’d love to theme issue 100 around “Ormskirk Market Through Time”. If you’d like to contribute an article - whether about your ancestors’ connections to the market, our own past memories of shopping there, meeting friends, or anything else to do with this enduring part of Ormskirk’s history, please send your contributions to our Editor by 1 May 2026.

Zoom Family History Chat

13 November 2025

Four ODFHS members (including one from New Zealand) covered a host of topics, ranging from emigration to Canada and Australia, a gardener from Pencarrow House in Cornwall who emigrated, the practicalities of sending letters by sea in the past, Catholic ancestors and the 1798 Irish Uprising, whilst the Swarthmoor Quakers (whose number included James Park, b.1590 Croston, and the Fell family) led on to a discussion about George Fox, and seventeenth century embroidery samplers at the Quaker Tapestry Museum in Kendal.

Ormskirk Heritage Hub

We are delighted to hear that three of our members - Dot Broady-Hawkes, Kathryn MacDonald and Colin MacDonald - have taken their passion for West Lancashire's heritage to the next level by founding the Ormskirk Heritage Hub (Community Interest Company no.16659746).

This new enterprise aims to explore, record and celebrate the history and heritage of Ormskirk and surrounding districts, and they've already made an impressive start, by setting up a micro museum in a disused traditional red phone box (now stationed by Ormskirk's Clock Tower in the town centre) and making plans to publish a booklet on the Clock Tower to mark its 150th anniversary later in 2026.

Find them on Facebook at Ormskirk Heritage Hub, or visit their website at <https://e-voice.org.uk/ohh/> to find out more!

The Spinning House Project

Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire FHS, who celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2026, are embarking on a new project inspired by one of their recent talks.

Caroline Biggs' presentation on her book, *The Spinning House*, explored the history of the University of Cambridge's gaol. In 1628, a House of Correction (or "bridewell") was built for the joint use of the University and the town; after the construction of a new gaol in 1829, the old building, by then known as the "Spinning House", served as the Vice-Chancellor's prison. In practice, it was used for a very specific class of prisoner - women suspected of 'walking with undergraduates'; in other words, those accused of prostitution.

Several ancient royal grants had given the University Proctors the right to seek out and apprehend these women, in an effort to police the manners and morals of members of the University. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the arrangement came under increasing criticism, and was abolished in 1894, after Daisy Hopkins sued the University authorities for wrongful imprisonment.

The Spinning House was dismantled in 1901 and replaced by a Police Station, now used as Council Offices.

Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire FHS are seeking volunteers to transcribe the Spinning House records. No travelling is involved, as all work can be done on personal computers (or equivalent devices); the only requirement is an ability to transcribe 19th century handwriting. Anyone who feels they have the time to help can contact Terry Garner (CHFHS Projects Officer) on projects@chfhs.org.uk

The Spinning House: How Cambridge University Locked Up Women in its Private Prison by Caroline Biggs was published on 4 December 2025 by the History Press, ISBN 9781837051243. £17.99 (paperback); £12.99 (e-book).

What's Coming Up?

Spring/Summer 2026

Face-to-Face Meetings and Events

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 25 March 2026 | Moments In Time: The Effects on Aughton in 1911
by Norma Gregson |
| 22 April 2026 | Roman Catholics in Maghull and Lydiate by Kate Hurst |
| 10 and 11 May 2026 | ODFHS will attend the Ormskirk Mediaeval Weekend,
on Coronation Park, Ormskirk. 11am-4p.m. Free entry. |
| 27 May 2026 | AGM followed by a presentation on Ormskirk Heritage
Hub |
| 24 June 2026 | Uncle Tommy by Dennis Walton |

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. Refreshments available.

Please see <https://ormskirk-fhs.co.uk/> for any changes to our programme.

Zoom Meetings

- | | |
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| 14 May 2026 | ZOOM Family History Chat 12p.m. (provisional date) |
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For access details for our Zoom meetings, please contact Kate Hurst
(ODFHS Chair) at chairman@odfhs.email

Lancashire – A World Leader in Record Keeping and Protection of Archives

by Anne Pennington and Julie Broadbent

At the Lancashire Archives 'At Home' event on Saturday 15 November 2025, Dr. Alan Crosby, Chair of the Lancashire Local History Federation, gave a detailed introduction to the history of archives, with specific reference to Lancashire.

Our home county has a proud place in this regard, since Chetham's Library in Manchester, established in 1653 with a major collection of books and manuscripts, is the oldest library in the English-speaking world. Indeed, the idea of keeping records in Lancashire goes back even further, to the late 16th century/early 17th century, beginning with the acquisition of the records of the Bretherton-Hawkshead-Talbot family of Chorley.

Formal record-keeping was first developed for legal purposes, to preserve information about decisions taken in court. Later, records were kept by administrators dealing with official business, and for historical record to enable research. Clerks referring to the stored documents ensured they could find them again by leaving written notes on the covers, e.g. "*Preston Sessions beginning October 1689*", and might also make short notes on the records to guide those looking at them again later.

The documents were stored in the buildings that housed the courts, but when consulted after some time in storage they were often found to be damaged beyond recovery. Gradually it became clear that conservation was an essential part of record keeping, but before the 20th century this wasn't understood or practised as it is in modern times.

Progress was made in 1808 when Lancashire County Magistrates instructed the Clerk of the Peace, the magistrates' clerk who was responsible for record-keeping,

1872. However, serious losses from poor storage continued, e.g. the account of the Pennington Tollbar and other key records. Eventually, in 1903, the County Sessions House opened in the centre of Preston with a dedicated store room, which was nearer to the sort of modern records office that we know today. This enabled local government officer George Betch, in 1907, to produce a report to the County Council on the state of the records and he once more renewed concerns that they were not properly kept.

George Betch was then appointed to catalogue the collection. He did it in three years which was, and is still, considered very quick! While this was suitable for internal use, however, the need for a clearer, more detailed catalogue was identified in order to make the contents available to the public, including students, researchers and family historians. The act of cataloguing the collections then highlighted that substantial material had disappeared since the previous listing, which had been carried out in 1872. Serious losses included the Sessions Rolls from 1500 - 1700, which have never been recovered. At this point, the need for not only preservation, but security, was recognised.

Modern record offices were beginning to be opened on a county basis in the early 20th century, with broad acceptance that records should be conserved systematically. The first was Bedford, in 1913, followed by several others into the 1930s. In December 1937 a petition to Lancashire County Council was sent by the Preston and mid-Lancashire branch of the Historical Society, requesting that the Council agree to "sanction and establish" a depository for documents of local historical interest.

Reginald Sharpe France, the influential first County Archivist of the Lancashire Record Office, trained as a pharmacist but in 1931 joined Lancashire County Council as a clerk in the Health Department. Interested in historical research, he obtained access to the records in County Hall to inform his presentation and the publication of a paper on "The History of the Plague in Lancashire". This must have made a great impression, since he was then appointed as Clerk in Charge of Records in 1940 and he held a long tenure until 1976.

While Reginald Sharpe France had great knowledge and experience, he had no archivist training and so there were gaps in his collections policy, which seems to have been led by his own interests. For instance, he would visit the great country houses of Lancashire for dinner parties, offering to review their archives, but was less interested in the county's vital and nationally important industries.

As a result, substantial numbers of valuable business records were lost as old-established concerns closed in the post-war years, while other hair-raising stories involved losses of records as buildings were demolished; boxes of records were thrown out without any checks; records were found on a rubbish tip or rescued at night by torchlight, and the complete records of a small East Lancashire town disappeared.

More positively, Reginald Sharpe France established a link between Lancashire Record Office and Liverpool University through being organising lecturer and examiner on their Diploma in Archive Administration course. He was also a founder member of the Society of Local Archivists, both activities being incredibly important in raising the profile of archives and the role of the archivist.

Reginald Sharpe France presided over the construction of the current Lancashire Record Office which was built in 1968/69. Notable for its Brutalist architecture, it provided state of the art facilities with strong rooms, reading rooms for the public, conservation studios and an exhibition space. A striking feature is that the building sits on concrete stilts, in recognition of the propensity of the area to flooding and the importance of protecting the documents stored therein.

Record Offices are now open in Manchester and other Lancashire cities and towns, so that interested people have local access to the relevant records of their own areas. Lancashire Archives, however, remains a great place for us all to know about - its documents are comprehensively listed online so that people can plan what they can access. It's easily found at Bow Lane, Preston (a short walk from the railway station), all are welcome to visit - and there's no charge.

1960s Class at Ormskirk Secondary Modern

submitted by Kathryn Smethurst

In December 2025, Kathryn Smethurst sent in this photo of a class at Ormskirk Secondary Modern, c.1961/62, which includes her father David LEA (back row, far right), who was born in October 1946. We understand that one of the tall boys at the back was a CARROLL, and that he later owned a hairdressing salon on Burscough Street, in central Ormskirk.

David LEA lived in Bickerstaffe, and later moved to Wigan, as did Emlyn DYKES and David MAUDSLEY.



Others in the photo include Charles BOYER (who later emigrated to Australia, David SUBNER (or SUMNER), Donald SNAPE, Harold SNAPE, unknown

WHITEHEAD (back row, far left), John HANKIN, David MURRAY, Roy HANKIN (later employed as a wagon driver by Lancashire County Council, with Kathryn's grandad Robert LEA), unknown KILPATRICK, James LEDBETTER (who lived on Scarisbrick Street) and John SUBNER (or SUMNER).

If any ODFHS members recognise themselves, or relatives and friends, please contact the Magazine Editor at editor@odfhs.email

Thomas Barton's Bankruptcy
The London Gazette, 24 August 1762

Whereas a Commission of Bankrupt is awarded and issued forth against Thomas BARTON, now or late of Ormskirk in the County of Lancaster, Sadler, Dealer and Chapman, and he being declared a Bankrupt, is hereby required to surrender himself to the Commissioners in the said Commission named, or the major Part of them, on the 28th of September next, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon, on the 29th of September next, at Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, and on the 9th of October following, at Three o'Clock in the Afternoon, at the House of Joseph MATTHEWS, known by the Sign of the Ship in Aughton Street in Ormskirk aforesaid, and make a full Discovery and Disclosure of his Estate and Effects; when and where the Creditors are to come prepared to prove their Debts, and at the Second Sitting to chuse Assignees, and at the last Sitting the said Bankrupt is required to finish his Examination, and the Creditors are to assent to or dissent from the Allowance of his Certificate.

All Persons indebted to the said Bankrupt, or that have any of his Effects, are not to pay or deliver the same, but to whom the Commissioners shall appoint, but give Notice to Mr. Thomas RADCLIFFE, Attorney, in Ormskirk aforesaid.

The Entwistles and The Mass House

Part One

by Kate Hurst (H101)

Soon after the Reformation, Edmund ENTWISLE built a house called Foxholes at Wardleworth, near Rochdale. By 1594, Foxholes was home to Edmund's son Richard, the steward of the manor of Rochdale; his eldest son and heir was another Richard ENTWISLE.

According to the Entwistle Family History Association, "young" Richard married Grace CHADWICK, and had a son named John in around 1633. Unfortunately, no baptism record has been found at St. Chad's Church, Rochdale to confirm this, but John must have been a teenager when he married Dorothy, daughter of Robert HOLT of Stubley. The young couple had three children - Richard (1650), Mary (1652) and "Berten" (1655) - baptised at St. Chad's Church, and their address was stated to be Foxholes.

John ENTWISLE had allied himself to an important family. By 1636, his father-in-law Robert HOLT was a Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire, and later succeeded Sir Edward STANLEY of Bickerstaffe as High Sheriff.

A Royalist sympathiser, Robert HOLT appears to have been a close friend of Lord Strange (the Earl of Derby's heir); Lord Strange recommended him as a suitable custodian of the powder magazines in Manchester. Perhaps these connections were enough to draw John ENTWISLE to West Lancashire?

John and Dorothy's fourth known child, Edmund, was born at Ormskirk on 20 April 1660, and the registers of St. Peter and St. Paul, Ormskirk noted that the baby was baptised at "*Lathom Chapell*" [sic]. In May 1660, twenty-seven year old John ENTWISLE performed a duty of national importance, when he proclaimed Charles II as monarch at the Market Cross; Will. GRICE, the town's registrar, was

also present. To be entrusted with such responsibility surely demonstrates John's standing in mid-seventeenth-century Ormskirk.

John ENTWISLE rose to become a Barrister of the Middle Temple (one of the four Inns of Court, alongside Inner Temple, Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn), and - from around 1662 until his death - held the post of Recorder of Liverpool, for which he received the colossal salary of £525 each year. This may explain why the Entwistles were included in William Dugdale's *Visitation of Lancashire* (1665), a guide to the pedigrees of significant county families. John's age was confirmed as thirty-two, his eldest son Richard was fourteen, and his younger children were named as "Bertie", Edmund and Dorothy; Mary was not mentioned.

At St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church, Ormskirk, you can find evidence of John and Dorothy ENTWISTLE's mark on the town. Set into an interior wall, a 1668 date stone features the initials:

E
I D
1668



The stone is believed to have been rescued when the family's home was demolished centuries later; in his 1906 article *The Heraldry of Ormskirk Church*, local antiquarian James BROMLEY described it as "a stone house in Aughton Street, Ormskirk, now the *Brewers' Arms beerhouse*". Perhaps we can picture John in his mid-thirties; a father of four, his legal career prospering enough to let him build a home in the centre of a busy market town. Churchwardens' accounts for St. Peter and St. Paul, Ormskirk

show that he sometimes claimed expenses from the parish; in September 1682, twelve shillings was paid for “12 bottles of wine sent downe to Mr. ENTWISTLE’s to treat the Lord Bishopp [sic]”.

On 26 January 1686, John’s eldest son Richard married Elinor CURWEN at St. Peter and St. Paul, Ormskirk, but the couple settled at Foxholes, and had eight children baptised at St. Chad’s, Rochdale: John (1686-1692), Dorathie (1688), Richard (1689), Ann (1690), Robert (1692), Edmund (1693), Henry (1694) and Mary (1698). John - the eldest child - was buried at Ormskirk Parish Church. Richard became a barrister-at-law, remaining at Foxholes until his death, and was buried on 11 October 1725, at St. Chad’s, Rochdale. The funeral of his widow, “Ellin”, took place there on 9 October 1728.

Records at the Lancashire Archives suggest that, in January 1690, John ENTWISLE wrote to Roger KENYON of Peel Hall, at Little Hulton, regarding paperwork relating to Lord MOLYNEUX’s conviction as a “*popish recusant*”. I have found no definite evidence that John ENTWISLE was a Catholic (his name does not appear in the lists of Ormskirk recusants from 1667, 1678, 1679 or 1682) but he seems to have been quite willing to defend local Catholics who did disobey the law that compelled people to attend Anglican church services.

On 24 April 1700, John made his will, describing himself as a “*Councillor of Law now resideing in the Towne of Ormskirk*”. He didn’t mention his heir Richard (already established at Foxholes) but only his younger sons “Bertie” (then living in Wigan) and Edmund, who lectured in Greek and Hebrew at “*Brasse nose Colledg in Oxford*” (Brasenose College) during the mid-1680s. John ENTWISLE survived his wife Dorothy by eight years, and was buried at Ormskirk on 5 May 1710.

Two centuries later, in 1906, James BROMLEY’s article *The Heraldry of Ormskirk Church* included a transcription of the Latin words on the couple’s brass memorial plaque, noting that Dorothy had died on 30 September 1702. The story of their descendants will continue in another Magazine.

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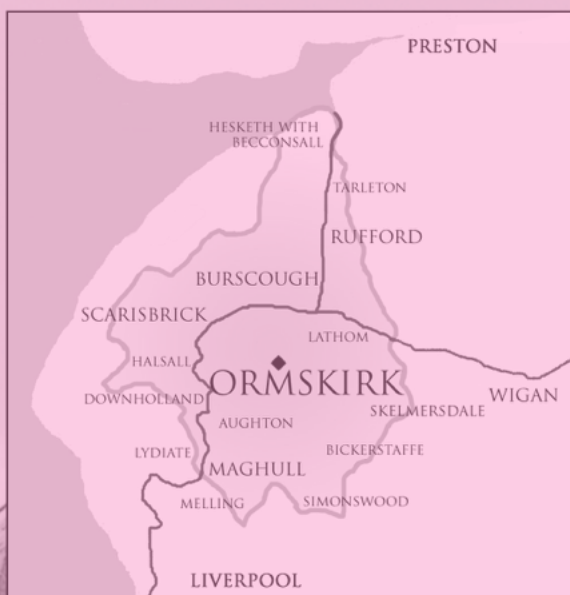
Our Research Library at the Scout Hall, Wigan Road, Ormskirk, a short walk from the bus and railway stations, and local car parks. Open by appointment; please contact Kathryn MacDonald at librarianodfhs@gmail.com to arrange a visit.

Public Library Help Desk

Our Help Desk will be held at Skelmersdale Library, Southway, WN8 6NL from 10.30am to 11.30a.m. on the first Monday of the month (except Bank Holidays).

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