



HISTORY SOCIETY

WINTER 2009/10

New £50m Redevelopment is Biggest in History of Liverpool Libraries



Liverpool City Council has announced the go-ahead for a massive redevelopment of the William Brown Street Central Library which includes the Liverpool Record Office. Visitors nowadays may notice that the library has fallen into a state of disrepair over the years – buckets can sometimes be seen catching rainwater from the leaky roof!

The Grade Two listed parts of the building, which date back to 1850, will be restored to their former glory. These include the Victorian facade and the Picton, Hornby and Oak Reading Rooms. However, virtually everything else will be swept away and replaced by a 21st century state-of-the-art facility which will do justice to our erstwhile European Capital of Culture.

The building is due to close in June 2010, and it will take three months to empty before construction work begins.

The new Library, including the Record Office, is scheduled to re-open 'sometime in 2012'. But what about access to the

collections during the construction phase? Unfortunately, information about this vital aspect is thin on the ground at the time of going to press. Various options have been considered (including, perhaps bizarrely, the Cheshire Salt Mines!). Details will be announced as soon as a decision has been made.

In the meantime, a public consultation exercise will be held at the Central Library throughout December. It's your opportunity to make your voice heard about these plans!

Here are the main highlights:

- New entrance to main library, including a 'literary pavement' and front and rear access
- Five new floors with better access including escalators, lifts, toilets, meeting rooms and café
- New conservation studio for repairs to the city's masterpieces
- New rooftop atrium and terrace with superb views overlooking St. John's Gardens and the city centre
- Re-opening of historic internal entrances to the Picton Reading Room
- Re-opening of the International Library, to original design, as a new children's zone
- Room dedicated to John James Audubon's celebrated book *Birds of America*, a 4-volume set of which the library owns
- Doubling the number of public computers
- New light wells at front and rear to allow library to be naturally lit from above
- New 24 hour on-street, drop-off book service
- Five new floors with capacity for 20 years of new archive space. Currently, they account for nearly 9 miles of shelving

Volunteers Needed! Mike Brian gave notice some months ago of his intention to relinquish his position as Treasurer, a role he has fulfilled for many years. If there is anybody amongst our members with a digital abacus who would be willing to take on this important position, could he or she please email Mike at michaiebrian@hotmail.com. The Society is also in need of an Editor for its annual Journal. Production of the next edition of the Journal is already in hand so the new editor would be involved in putting together the 2011 edition. Anybody interested should send an email to: enquiries@liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk

Liverpool Bookshelf The Liverpool History Society has recently published a new book: *John Foster and Sons Kings of Georgian Liverpool*. "John who?" most Liverpudlians would ask. LHS member and author Hugh Hollinghurst is about to change all that with this book and give John Foster Junior and Senior the recognition which they so richly deserve. In its 110, A4 pages, illustrated with over 100 photographs, illustrations and maps, Hugh tells the fascinating story of the Fosters who together held the office of Surveyor of

Liverpool Corporation for 47 unbroken years. Their fall from grace is also covered. As Ramsey Muir pointed out in *Bygone Liverpool*, for a time – "The Foster family almost ran the town." Available to LHS members at the reduced price of £8.

● Liverpool University Press (LUP) is offering LHS members copies of Alan Scarth's new book *Titanic and Liverpool* at the reduced price of £7 (or £9.95 by post from LUP, 4 Cambridge Street, Liverpool L69 7ZU).

Copies of both books will be on sale at LHS meetings.

20 October 2009 – Hannah Barker, Professor of British History, University of Manchester

LIVING OVER THE SHOP – HOME AND BUSINESS IN LIVERPOOL 1760-1820

Hannah Barker conducted her research on small family businesses during the Industrial Revolution, but in this lecture confined herself to Liverpool.

She was particularly interested in individuals and families 'in trade', the lower middle classes rather than 'big business'. People in trade often lived above the shop with apprentices and other employees living in the house. In Liverpool most smaller houses of this period have gone, so Hannah had to base her research on the 1801 Liverpool census and Harwood's Map of 1803, on pictures and watercolours of the period showing Liverpool streets and old houses, and on adverts in newspapers giving the size of the buildings. Fortunately, a few shops can still be seen in Mount Pleasant, Bold Street and Dale Street. She also found evidence of how the buildings were used in the diaries, writings and inventories in the Record Office.

- From the Liverpool Census Enumerator's Book in the Athenaeum she learnt that in five streets, including Lord Street and Bold Street, 162 households were involved in trade with an average of 6.2 people in each house. In Harwood's Map of 1803 she studied Price Street where 118 people lived in 18 households, of which 11 were engaged in various trades including an ironmonger, upholsterer, haberdasher, grocer, sloop seller and draper.
- Hannah came across an 1857 picture by Herdman (see below) showing Lord Street in 1798 with a mixture of small houses and grander buildings. In the Athenaeum she found James Brierley's paintings of old houses in 1828, while in the Record Office Watercolour Collection she found an "Old House on Lord Street in 1789". Newspapers adverts were also a source of information about the size of a particular shop and the arrangement of the rooms. One described a shop in front and family rooms upstairs with a kitchen in the cellar.
- Fortunately a few shops of this period have not been demolished; we were shown Reid's bookshop at 105 Mount Pleasant, a late 18th C. building and 85 Bold Street built in the 1780/90s which is now The Italian Club restaurant. We also saw a picture of purpose-built shops and houses at 87-93 Dale Street, opposite the Municipal Buildings.



- We have evidence of how the buildings were used in diaries, writings and inventories of the period. The inventory of Thomas Dickinson, a chandler, gives details of 11 rooms including a dipping room, moulding room and warehouse, but does not mention a ground floor parlour although there are living rooms over the workshop. The Record Office has the diary of John Coleman who had a business in Batchelor Street off Tithebarn Street. The writings of Joshua Dixon describe his life as an Apothecary's assistant in Castle Street; he complains about the long hours and cramped living conditions – he had nowhere to sit down in the shop and his bedroom was very cold! He also mentions the parlour behind the shop. Although very few of these shops remain in modern Liverpool, from Hannah's account we have a vivid picture of small family businesses in early 19th century Liverpool.

Meeting report: Netta Dixon

18 October 2009 – Dr Joseph Sharples

MERCHANT PALACES

Dr. Joseph Sharples, architectural historian, former curator at the Walker Art Gallery and member of staff of Liverpool University's History Department, is at present Leverhulme Research Fellow at the University of Aberdeen. He has written a number of books relating to Liverpool's architecture and history, including the latest edition of Pevsner's *Architectural Guide to Liverpool*, "Built on Commerce" and "Merchant Palaces". The latter provided the title for today's talk, illustrated with excellent slides.

Eighteenth Century commentators described the architecture of Liverpool as overwhelmingly mercantile in character, and as most merchants and ship owners lived close to the river and their businesses, their homes reflected this. A plan of the house built for Thomas Earle, in Hanover Street in the 1760s, has the offices and warehouse stretching back behind the house. A 1799 painting of Thomas Parr's house in Colquitt Street shows the house in the centre, with offices to the left, the coach house to the right, and the pointed roof of the taller warehouse behind them all.

In the early 19th. Century the town centre was becoming crowded, dirty and noisy, so people began to move away from the centre. Above the town, Rodney Street was developed – William Ewart Gladstone was born in his father's house at No. 62. It was a detached house then but, after Sir John moved to Seaforth House, other houses were joined to it making the present day terrace. Everton became a most desirable place to live, on elevated ground, with wonderful views. There were not yet gardens beside the houses, but Abercromby Square was built with a common garden in the centre. Then the town spread beyond the surrounding farmland. Princes Park was formed and impressive houses, some of which still stand, were built overlooking the park, and a fashion arose for living in gated leafy areas. Other examples included Grassington, Waterloo Park and Rock Park, across the river. Improved ferry services and the new railways encouraged the steady exodus.



By the mid 19th. Century prosperous citizens enjoyed displaying their wealth, and built their houses accordingly. There would usually be a grand entrance hall, with space for large numbers of visitors. There was often a library, full of book cases, tables and chairs, a billiard room, and sometimes even a private gymnasium, art gallery or music room for recitals. There was always a large dining room for their favourite form of entertaining, the dinner party. Nathaniel Hawthorne, the United States Consul in Liverpool from 1853 to 1857, described a dinner at the home of John Bramley Moore, Chairman of the dock committee, as boring, and Mrs. Hawthorne lamented "...there being no conversation, no china, only plate" They would also have musical performances for perhaps 100 guests at houses such as Streatlam Towers in Princes Road, the home of James Bowes. This house, where the mediaeval met the oriental, was turreted, panelled, with old cabinets, chairs, tables etc., but which also housed the Bowes Museum of Japanese antiquities, – Bowes was the Honorary Japanese Consul in Liverpool and opened his museum to the public.

As gardens became fashionable, they too were used to display wealth and taste. Norris Green, home of banker John Pemberton Heywood was famous for its gardens, with glass houses and kitchen gardens tended by a head gardener and 13 assistants. Mrs Hawthorne was very taken with the – "...velvet lawn, pea green with a lustre". Mr Hawthorne was more concerned with the stark contrast between the Norris Green mansion and its country estate and conditions in the Brownlow Hill Workhouse which he had visited with Mrs Heywood as part of her charity work.

Joseph's presentation provided a fascinating insight into the world of Liverpool's 18th and 19th century mercantile class and the wealth which they lavished on their 'merchant palaces'.

Meeting report: Mary Harrison

15 November 2009 – John Minnion

A PADDLE IN THE POOL OF LIFE



John Minnion moved to Liverpool in 2001 at the end of his career as a newspaper illustrator in London. He was so intrigued by the city and its history that he began to write: 'A Paddle in the Pool of Life'. In this book he wrote of the notable people who have contributed to Liverpool's history, from King John to the Beatles.

In his presentation John used drawings and music to introduce us to his characters and emphasised their salient features in cartoons and short, pithy descriptions.

In Chapter 1 entitled *Liver Birds* we saw a drawing of the monks of Birkenhead Priory and King John who gave Liverpool Letters Patent in 1207. John then showed us John Newton the reformed slave trader who wrote *Amazing Grace* and Edward Rushton a slaver turned abolitionist who founded the School for the Blind, while in modern times John Peel promoted the band Deaf School. We had a musical accompaniment to the cartoon of Gerry Marsden. Next we saw a cartoon of Noel Chevasse who won a double VC and was the son of Bishop Chevasse who organised the building of Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral by Giles Gilbert Scott. Another war hero was Captain Johnnie Walker who protected convoys in the Battle of the Atlantic in World War 2.

In Chapter 2 we saw a picture of the Oratory and St. James's Gardens where Huskisson and Kitty Wilkinson are buried; Kitty set up the first public baths and washrooms in 1842. We saw a cartoon of the famous Dr. Duncan the first Medical Officer of Health in 1842. We were reminded of Liverpool's fame as a centre for medical discoveries, when we saw a picture of Dr. Ross who made the connection between mosquitoes and malaria at the Tropical School of Medicine; the first School for Vets was also established in Liverpool in 1904.

We studied a picture of a horse's skeleton by the artist George Stubbs and were reminded of Liverpool's horse racing fame when we saw Red Rum three times winner of the Grand National at Aintree. This led us to Knowsley Hall where Stubbs learnt his trade, and where Edward Lear painted the animals in the Earl's menagerie before he wrote his limericks and Nonsense Rhymes.

In the final chapters John Minnion told us the story of William Huskisson who was killed by the *Rocket* at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway in 1830; John wondered if there was a connection between the railway tunnellers and the famous Williamson who built tunnels as a job creation scheme after the Napoleonic wars.

All the famous footballers had a mention including Dixie Dean and Kenny Dalglish as well as the painter Augustus John, the writers Alan Bleasdale, Beryl Bainbridge and Nicholas Monserrat, the artist Augustus John, the actor Bernard Hill, the radio pioneer Oliver Lodge and the founder of Britain's first mosque Abdullah Quilliam. John mentioned too the effect of the Beatles on Liverpool, especially in recent times. We saw pictures of Billy Fury, Frankie Vaughan and Tommy Handley. We heard too about Liverpool's famous sons the polymath William Roscoe and William Rathbone who entertained the bird painter Audubon at his home. There were pictures also of Bessie Braddock and Eleanor Rathbone, well known female politicians from Liverpool.

We may have been aware of these people already but John's cartoons and caricatures (some of them animated!) made us look at them in a new light. We realised how many eminent people connected with Liverpool have contributed to our national heritage.

Meeting report: Netta Dixon / Illustrations by John Minnion (left to right) : King John, Eleanor Rathbone, Captain Johnnie Walker and Bessie Braddock.

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2010 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

21 Feb	The scrapping of the <i>Great Eastern</i> at Tranmere shore	Peter Bingham
21 Mar	HMS <i>Thetis</i>	Dereck Arnold
18 Apr	A Journey Through Lancashire	Chris Dawson
16 May	What was the Liverpool & Manchester Railway Really For?	Adrian Jarvis
20 Jun	Visit to the Victoria Building, Brownlow Hill, Liverpool	Anne-Marie Clarke
19 Sep	History of Maghull Chapel	Eileen Kermode
17 Oct	Huyton Aliens Internment Camp in 1940	Jennifer Taylor
21 Nov	'Modernise Everything': Thomas Shelmerdine, Liverpool Architect (Joint LHS/Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire meeting)	John Tiernan
19 Dec	Curiosities of Liverpool	Ken Pye

With the exception of 20 June, all meetings will take place in the Grace Room, 1st Floor, Hope at Everton, Shaw St., Liverpool. This is the former St Francis Xavier College building. All meetings start at 2pm (doors open 1.30pm).

Another date for your diary: Wirral History Fair, Saturday 8th March at Birkenhead Town Hall

LHS Visit to the Imperial War Museum North

Wednesday 21st October saw some 30 History Society members and their friends board a coach on Lime Street and head to Salford Quays for a visit to the Imperial War Museum North.

There was plenty to see and do here. As well as the Museum itself it was possible to take a lift to the top of the 'Air Shard', this being the highest point in the building. Some members did this and reported that the view from the top was wonderful. As the Museum is at Salford Quays it was easy to visit the Lowry Centre and also an Outlet shopping mall that is on the same site. These last two were reached by crossing the canal via a special bridge that lifts and falls to accommodate the traffic on the waterway.

The special exhibition, which continues into the new year, is entitled 'Captured: The Extraordinary Life of Prisoners of War'. All agreed this exhibition was excellent, while for some it held particular poignancy as a parent, brother or uncle had been held

in such a place during the last War. Altogether we thought it a well-spent and enjoyable day. (*Jo McCann*)

Family History Day 24th October, St. George's Hall

A busy day; it started with carrying displays and boards, books, maps and countless other things, as well as our laptop, at 9 am into St. George's Hall. We had been invited to host a stand at the annual North West Group of Family History Societies' one day conference in St. George's Hall.

About six of us were there throughout the day. Rob had the Society's laptop and had put an 'advertising' display on it. Many people stopped, attracted by pictures of old Liverpool, just to chat or add their reminiscences about the place. We sold journals and books and we gained quite a few new members. We also renewed acquaintance with a number of people...some of whom we had not seen for a long time. (*Jo McCann*)

THE SOCIETY'S OFFICERS & COMMITTEE 2009-10

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N.B. (P) denotes membership of Publications Sub-Committee, and the year is when current term of office ends.

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