



HISTORY SOCIETY

SUMMER 2011

New Museum of Liverpool Opens

And so, after many years gestation, a few false starts (remember Will Alsop's 'Fourth Grace' Cloud building?), much architectural controversy (the row about its impact on our World Heritage waterfront still rages), a few spats (the original Danish architects were given the heave-ho) and a bill of £72m (almost as costly as the transfer fee for Man United's Ronaldo!), the sparkling new Museum of Liverpool (MOL) is finally open. Or, at least the first galleries are open with others scheduled for later this year – History Detectives, City Soldiers, Liverpool Overhead Railway and the Great Port Gallery.

The question is, was it worth the wait and the cost? The full, considered answer must await the opening of the remaining galleries since, at the moment, it is very much a work in progress. In spite of its half-readiness, over a quarter of a million visitors poured into MOL in the first four weeks of opening; after all, it has been hyped up as – "The largest city museum in the world".

Its style is very much 'museum modern', i.e. strong on graphics, and audio-visual content, less so on actual artifacts. It appears to be aimed primarily at schoolchildren, locals on a nostalgia trip (nothing wrong with that!) and daytrip visitors. For those wishing to dip their big toe in the 'Pool of Life', it will undeniably press all the right buttons. Local historians and others perhaps seeking depth and insight are less well catered for. e.g. Liverpool's innumerable links with the American Civil War are allocated just three paragraphs of text.

Other important areas of Liverpool's history seem to have been missed altogether, particularly some of the ground-breaking developments of the 19th century, perhaps because so much emphasis has been placed on 'pop culture', including sport?



Some galleries get congested very quickly whilst, conversely, there is a lot of wasted space, especially in the central core of the building. Other gallery areas are positively gloomy e.g. The Beatles' display. Surely in the 21st century there are ways of illuminating artifacts without causing them to fade?

However, there is much to like about MOL. A few 'old friends' from the former Museum of Liverpool Life have reappeared as has the cheeky 'Wish you were here' sculpture first seen at the International Garden Festival in 1984 – it never fails to raise a smile no matter how many times one has seen it before!

The panoramic views from the galleries are spectacular and the café with its outdoor patio area seems to work well – I can personally recommend their 'Scouse breakfast tea'!

Interim report and photograph by the Editor, Ron Jones.

Gateway to Paradise

Praise must go to Liverpool City Council and all involved in the long-running campaign for the return and restoration of the highly ornate entrance gates to the former Liverpool Sailors' Home. The gates left the city 50 years ago following the demolition of the Sailors' Home, which opened in 1850. The gates were officially unveiled at a ceremony held on 18th August. And what a magnificent sight they are! They are located at the John Lewis end of Paradise Street and a visit is highly recommended.



Parks Police Stories?

New members John and Jean Hutchinson are seeking stories and photographs about the Liverpool Parks Police service which operated in the city from 1832 until 1972. For example, do you have any photos of relatives who were Parks Constables?

John has put together an excellent website about this little-known facet of Liverpool's history and a visit is highly recommended: www.liverpoolparkspolice.co.uk

Liverpool-Irish Stories?

Irish family history researcher Ann Hilliard is looking for stories, photographs, documentation and memorabilia relevant to the Irish Community living in Liverpool over the past two hundred years. Contributions will be exhibited on 22nd October as part of the Liverpool Irish Festival. All contributions will form part of an archive to be used for future talks, publications, exhibitions and events. (email Ann at: irishfamilyhistory21@yahoo.co.uk)

17 April 2011 – Keith Thomas

SEFTON CHURCH AND THE MOLYNEUX FAMILY

Meeting report:
Mary Harrison

Keith Thomas, Guide to St Helen's Church, Sefton, began by declaring that for him, the Church is "The Wonder of Merseyside". He then treated us to a fascinating, well-illustrated account of its history and treasures.

The founder of the Molyneux family, William de Molines, came to England with William the Conqueror and came north with Sir Roger Poitou, newly appointed Earl of Lancaster, who awarded him estates in Sefton. The family crest is based on a representation of a millstone, revealing the family's origins. Recent excavations revealed remains of a 13th. century mill, just behind the Church. The family prospered and became powerful, becoming Baronets (1560), then Viscounts (1594), then Earls of Sefton (1748). They moved to Croxteth Hall in 1760. The title became extinct when Hugh, the 7th Earl, died in 1972.



Sefton Church © Tony Corsini

There are no traces of the Sefton Hall, which once stood just opposite the Church, which was originally the family chapel. Plans exist of the original stone church, dated 1170. No pictures of the original house are known but in the church they have a plan showing the site. It has always been isolated and very few houses were built in the vicinity. The list of Rectors starts in 1204, many of them being Molyneux. During The Commonwealth the then Vicar, Edward Morton was ejected but was reinstated 13 years later. In 1320 the Church was expanded and the Tower added. This is the oldest tower on Merseyside and was once a recognized landmark for seafarers. After the Wars of the Roses the church was demolished and rebuilt but the tower was retained. The woodwork is wonderful and was probably completed after the Reformation of 1535.

We saw interior pictures of ancient parts of the building including the elaborate Screen, very rare in these days. The Molyneux family retained this and the pulpit and galleries, although a picture taken in 1920 shows the pulpit moved to one side. The stained glass windows are Elizabethan or Jacobean. The carvings on the pew ends express Protestant influence as does the English translation of the Bible, decorated with letters of the alphabet. Carvings in the North aisle reflect many different opinions.

Keith showed us many interesting monuments, the earliest, of William Molyneux, dating from 1290. There are fascinating monuments and carvings tracing the whole history of St Helen's Church and Keith is a real enthusiast who regularly conducts tours on Sunday afternoons. He certainly convinced us that a visit to this ancient church would be a treat. The response of our members at question time proved that we found the talk informative and inspiring.

15 May 2011 – Graham Trust

JOHN MOSS OF OTTERSPOOL (1782- 1858)

Meeting report:
Netta Dixon

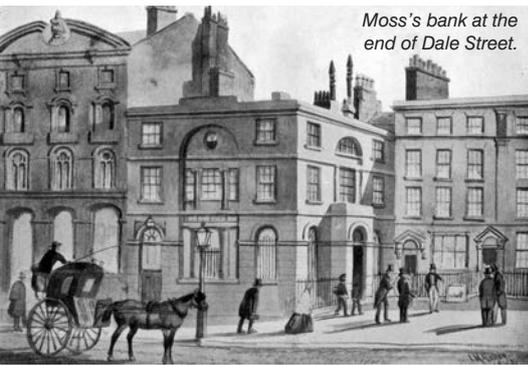
Graham Trust is the author of an excellent book – *John Moss of Otterspool (1782-1858): Railway Pioneer, Slave Owner and Banker*. The book is based on 312 letters which Moss wrote to the influential businessman and slave owner Sir John Gladstone; the letters offered a unique slant on the major issues of the day.

How Graham came to write the first (and only) biography of John Moss is a fascinating story in itself. In 2002 Graham and his wife bought a dilapidated old house in Aigburth whose deeds went back to 1858. The deeds revealed that the house had a connection with John Moss who had been one of the founders of St. Anne's Aigburth (1837) where he is buried in the graveyard. Graham soon became intrigued by John Moss and embarked on a seven and a half year quest to find out all he could about him. He found his obituary in the Liverpool Record Office; this mentioned that he was a railway pioneer, banker and slave owner. Graham made contact with one of John Moss's great grandsons and unearthed a picture of Otterspool House, home of John Moss, which was demolished in 1931. George Stephenson is said to have been a house guest and his friendship with Moss lasted until Stephenson's death in 1848.



John Moss, a timber merchant's son, was born in February 1782. He inherited his father's business in 1805. In 1811 he set up Moss's Bank in large premises at the corner of Dale St. and Castle St; this became a premier independent bank in 1897 and eventually became the Midland Bank and subsequently HSBC. Adding another string to his bow, in 1823 John Moss inherited 1000 slaves on the death of his uncle James, a plantation owner in the Bahamas; (the slave trade had been abolished by Parliament in 1807). Moss was a nephew of William Roscoe and had corresponded with William Wilberforce. In 1834, slavery was abolished in all British territories and Moss eventually obtained government compensation of £40,353 18s 3d (worth nearly £2m in today's money) for the loss of his 805 slaves. Controversially, in 1838, he and Gladstone imported 414 indentured labourers from India to work on their plantations in the West Indies. Eighteen died on the voyage and a further 100 were dead within five years.

As the first Chairman of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway Company, Moss was one of the pioneers who eventually established the supremacy of railways over canals; he worked alongside the great engineers George Stephenson and Joseph Locke. In the 1820s, John Moss, corn merchant Joseph Sanders and land agent William Jones proposed that a railway should be built between Liverpool and Manchester. They faced the opposition of canal owners, turnpike keepers, farmers etc., but the region's merchants were enthusiastic. In 1824, Moss was appointed Chairman of the Permanent Committee of the Liverpool Railway. In 1825, the Bill



Moss's bank at the end of Dale Street.

was rejected but passed in 1826, thanks to the influence of Huskisson who persuaded the canal-owning Marquis of Stafford to agree to the railway. Work began in 1826 but by 1829 the directors had still not agreed on the method of traction – locomotives or ropes and pulleys – so it was decided to hold the Rainhill Trials between the 6th and 14th October 1829 with locomotives pulling the carriages. The competition was famously won by Stephenson's *Rocket*. Equally famously, William Huskisson, onetime MP for Liverpool and Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, was mowed down by *Rocket* on the official opening day, 15th September, 1830, thus becoming the world's first railway fatality. The following day, the Liverpool to Manchester railway opened for business. Flying in the face of the original prediction, passenger transport quickly exceeded freight traffic. Transport of goods and materials, which once took 36 hours by canal, now took just two hours and 20 minutes. Moss subsequently became Chairman of the Grand Junction Railway between Newton-le-Willows and Birmingham and was involved in French railways.

John Moss was an indefatigable promoter of railways in this country and abroad. He and his associates had proved the viability of the railway in terms of speed, safety and economy. His great success as a businessman and railway promoter meant that his expertise and experience were much in demand. However, he declined all offers of civic posts.

Graham Trust is to be congratulated for revealing the fascinating, and hitherto largely unknown, life of one of Liverpool's most successful 19th century businessmen and a railway pioneer of national importance.

19 June 2011

VISIT TO THE CUNARD BUILDING

Report and photos:
Ron Jones

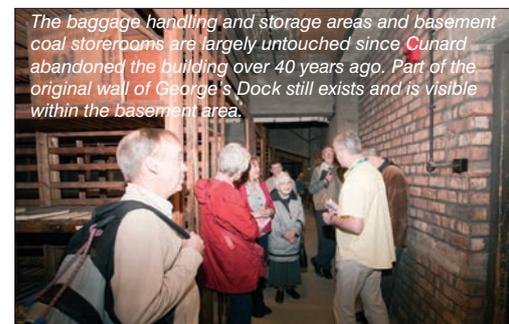
For this 'behind the scenes' visit, we were met in the gorgeous entrance hall by a representative of CB Richard Ellis, the company which manages the building on behalf of its owners for the past ten years, the Merseyside Pension Fund (MPF). In the days when Liverpool was Britain's 'front door', Cunard's first class passengers entered by the doors on the Strand to have their passports stamped. No doubt they were suitably impressed by the sheer quality of the building – the entire floor is covered with Italian marble. The building served both as Cunard's worldwide headquarters and as a passenger terminal and was clearly designed to mirror the company's prestigious reputation as the world's premier shipping line.

In those days, Cunarders 'parked' opposite the Pier Head entrance of the building and up to the old Riverside Station, where the Mersey Ferries and Cruise Liner terminals are today. Sadly, 1969 saw the last of Cunard's scheduled services depart from Liverpool and two years later Cunard's final cargo ship left here too. But history has a way of repeating itself and Merseysiders have seen the return of Cunard cruise liners in increasing numbers; witness visits in September alone this year of the new *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary 2*, the world's largest passenger liner at the time of her launch in 2004. And we are promised that, on the 4th July 2015, 175 years to the day that Cunard's first transatlantic 'liner' *Britannia* steamed out of Liverpool, all three of the company's 'Queens' (i.e. the entire Cunard fleet) will be moored together in the Mersey.

Built between 1913 and 1916 on an 18 acre site which cost £277k, the building was designed to look like a Renaissance palace, specifically the Farnese Palace in Rome completed by Michelangelo in 1544. There are six floors above ground and three below. Building costs worked out at one shilling and twopence per square foot, a total cost of £280k. Today the Cunard Building is insured for £60m. Clearly not short of a bob or two, the Merseyside Pension Fund has lavished attention on the building, inside and out, in recent years. This has included exterior stone cleaning and few would not agree that the Portland stone building looks as good today as it did when first built nearly a century ago. Refurbishing the six lifts alone cost over £2m with marble for the floors being imported from the same Italian quarry used in the construction of the building.

Among the hidden delights revealed to us were the lower basement, once used as an air raid shelter, and the basement luggage storage area used by steerage passengers. Here we could see luggage racks with signs bearing the names of legendary Cunarders such as the *Mauretania*, *Berengaria* and *Aquitania*.

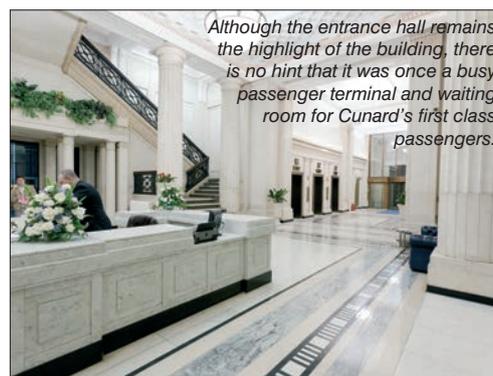
One of the highlights was emerging from the building onto the roof and accessing a viewing area which gave spectacular panoramas of the Pier Head, Docks and across the Mersey to Wirral and North Wales, an experience made all the more enjoyable as it was a beautifully clear, if blowy, sunny day. Our thanks go to MPF for a memorable afternoon.



The baggage handling and storage areas and basement coal storerooms are largely untouched since Cunard abandoned the building over 40 years ago. Part of the original wall of George's Dock still exists and is visible within the basement area.



One of the basement storage vaults has been turned into a mini museum.



Although the entrance hall remains the highlight of the building, there is no hint that it was once a busy passenger terminal and waiting room for Cunard's first class passengers.



This painting of the Queen Mary hangs in the Queen Mary Room and is a reminder that ships such as this and the Queen Elizabeth were conceived and designed here.

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2011 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

18 Sep	Liverpool Sailors on the Waterfront in the 19c.	Graeme Milne
16 Oct	My Year as Lord Mayor of Liverpool	Gerry Scott
20 Nov	Josephine Butler & Women's Rights	Brenda Murray
*11 Dec	Musical Memories of the Sixties	Ray O'Brien

*This meeting, which takes 'Merseyside Entertainers' as its subject, will be held on the *second* Sunday of the month and not, as normally, on the third Sunday.

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

Bookshelf *reviews by Fred Forrest*

Urban Cowboys: Lost Worlds of Doorstep Milk. *Duncan Scott*, 2010. DWS Publications. ISBN 978-0-956344-0-8 £6.99

This book, based on a personal memoir, traces the history of part of a family of cow keepers / dairy people from Sedbergh, Cumbria, who migrated to Liverpool 160 years ago and for many years sold milk taken from cattle kept on their own premises in urban streets. It illustrates well the long, hard labour involved, which seems to have occupied more or less every day of the year and made little concession for births, weddings and even close family funerals. It also shows the surprisingly close relationships maintained with relatives who stayed in the Lake District as well as how these dairy families mingled socially with people in the same trade and farming families in the Liverpool area, often resulting in intermarriage, thus keeping the work in the family. The book finishes with a move to the Lymm area, the hopeless battle against supermarket milk and two tragic family deaths, resulting in the sale of the business in 1993. A fascinating insight into a lost world but a pity that the "eleven pages of addresses of cowkeepers in Liverpool" held by one Alan Passmore could not have been reproduced!

Speke to Me. *David Paul*, 2011. Amberley Publishing, Stroud. ISBN 9871445602103. 160 pages. 40+ b & w photos. £14.99

This book is a personal memoir of the first 16 years of the author's life. Born in 1945 and brought up on the then new Speke council estate, the author was the first in his family to attend a grammar school. Unusually for

the time and place, he appears to have gone on regular holidays with his parents and two siblings, firstly to Hoylake but then by train / boat / train to European destinations and these are covered in depth. The book contains much very personal detail and many family photographs, as well as a handful of local ones. It ends with the author, not unexpectedly, flunking most of his GCE "O" level exams but still managing to become a cadet engineer with the Pacific Steam Navigation Company; truly a different age! Probably a book to borrow from the library and browse through for an hour or two.

Liverpool City Centre Through Time. *Ian Collard*, 2011. Amberley Publishing, Stroud. 96 pages, 181 photos, 134 colour, paperback. ISBN 9781445602103. £14.99.

This book is a "then and now" selection of photos, mostly of the city centre, but starts with a 6-page potted history of Liverpool. Most photos are of the "usual suspects" but there are a handful of interesting, out of the ordinary ones and some have a watercolour quality, probably the effect of colour being added. Many of the old ones are undated and no sources are quoted (perhaps all are author's own collection). In many cases, the "now" photos do not really add anything to the book, which might have been better with just old ones. With the price in mind, this is probably a book to borrow from the library.

Birkenhead From Old Photographs. *Ian Collard*, 2011. Amberley Publishing, Stroud. 128 pages, 226 b & w photos. ISBN 9781848685796. Paperback. £12.99.

This very comprehensive book of old pictures of the wider Birkenhead area starts

off with a 15-page potted history of its last 1000 years. The subjects of the pictures include public and private buildings, people, ferries, piers, ships, docks, buses, trams, churches, parks, aerial views, adverts, sport, trains, railway stations, hospitals and shops. Many evoke life before the age of the motor car. Definitely of interest to Birkonians and those with an interest in the town.

Our Men in Brazil: The Hesketh Brothers Abroad. *Ian Sargen*, 2009. Scotforth Books, Lancaster. 330 pages plus many b & w photos and illustrations (contemporary and modern). ISBN 13: 9781904244530. £12.99.

An intriguing book which includes elements of local, national and international history. The three Hesketh brothers, with Liverpool merchant connections and descended from the Heskeths of Rufford Old Hall and the Fleetwood-Heskeths of Southport, became British consuls in the newly independent country of Brazil in the 1820s, a connection that continued until the 1850s. A fascinating account of the working lives of consuls, who were then in many ways the poor relations of career diplomats and who usually performed the office in addition to and sometimes to the detriment of their main livelihoods, often as merchants. There are also interesting insights, often through primary sources, into the work of four British Foreign Secretaries - Castlereagh, Canning, Palmerston and Aberdeen - with whom all diplomats and consuls had regular (and often compulsory!) correspondence. As far as possible, the story of the brothers' descendants, which includes the author's wife, is carried up to the modern day. An interesting, well-written and well-produced book about a rarely aired subject.



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