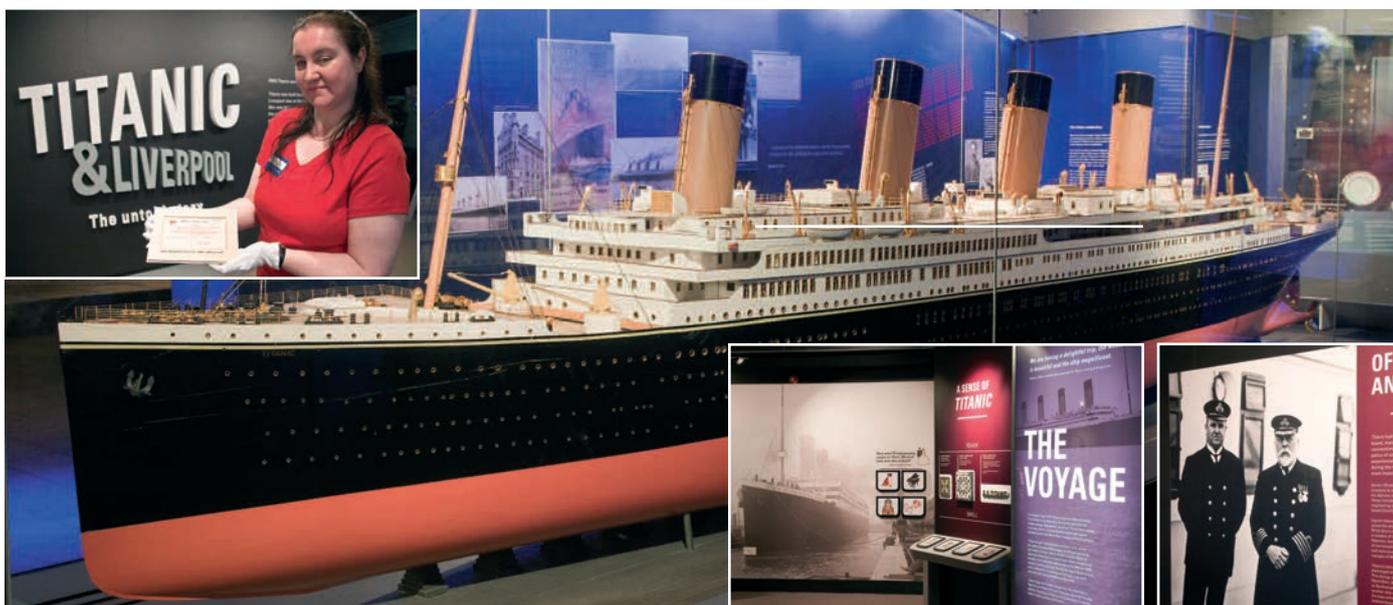




HISTORY SOCIETY

SPRING 2012

# Titanic remembered



Main image: Builder's model of Titanic. Top inset: The Museum's Dawn Littler holds the only known surviving Titanic first class ticket.

**Titanic and Liverpool: the untold story** is the title of a superb new exhibition now showing at the Merseyside Maritime Museum to mark the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Liverpool-registered, 'unsinkable' *Titanic* on the 15th April 1912 with the loss of 1,517 lives.

The whole world knows the tragic story of *Titanic*, the largest and most luxurious liner on earth and pride of the Liverpool-based White Star Line. What is perhaps less well known is just how numerous were Liverpool's links with the ship. This exhibition aims to set the record straight.

Six specially defined areas of the exhibition tell a different story: **Home Port** (Liverpool, of course), **Olympic Class** (the building of the ship and her sisters *Olympic* and *Britannic*), **Voyage** (the

crew and passengers), **Two hours 40 minutes** (the ship's final hours), **Aftermath** (media frenzy and official enquiries) and **Living On** (Epilogue of life after *Titanic*, how survivors coped, films, myths, conspiracy theories and salvage operations).

The exhibition's main strength is its success in telling the personal stories of those who were involved, from the hapless J. Bruce Ismay, Chairman of the White Star Line, to Liverpool-born William McMurray, a first-class bedroom steward.

Complementing this exhibition is the Museum's other *Titanic*-related display: *Titanic, Lusitania and the Forgotten Empress* which features the unique full builder's model of *Titanic*.

**"Titanic and Liverpool: the untold story" runs until April 2013. Definitely not to be missed.**

**RMS Titanic and Other Voyages: The Marine Art of Edward D Walker** at the Williamson Art Gallery, Slaty Road, Birkenhead, also embraces the *Titanic* anniversary theme with a fine display of marine paintings by professional Merseyside artist Ted Walker. This long-overdue retrospective exhibition includes 14 of Ted's *Titanic* paintings; not surprising given the title of the exhibition and the fact that he is the official artist for the *RMS Titanic Artefacts Exhibitions*. But there are lots of other examples of Ted's work featuring ships of every description including *Mauretania*, *Alabama*, *Manxman*, *Wavertree*, *Whimbrel* and *QE2*.

**Another not-to-be-missed exhibition which closes on 20th May.**



Reports and photographs: Ron Jones.

11 December 2011 – Ray O'Brien

## MERSEYSIDE ENTERTAINERS

Meeting report:  
Netta Dixon

John paid tribute to a member, Phil Manion, who died recently, and introduced the speaker, Ray O'Brien.

Ray is a retired probation officer and a Beatles enthusiast who has had three books published about the 'Fab Four'. He went to the Liverpool Collegiate School as did Pete Best, Billy Butler, Leonard Rossiter, Brian Labone and our own Fred Forrest. Ray gave us an insight into the lives of some of the famous Liverpool people who appeared in his book *Street Stars*, which tells us about the pre-fame lives and jobs of eighty entertainers; in 2008, Ray was invited to sit on a Liverpool Echo panel to choose the greatest Merseysiders of all time.



Ray began by speaking about Kenneth Arthur Dodd (pictured left) who won the vote as the greatest Merseysider. Ken Dodd, the comedian and singer famous for his frizzy hair, buck teeth, tickling stick and Diddymen, was born in 1927 in Knotty Ash, the son of a coal merchant. The staff at Walton gaol jokingly prepared a prison cell to receive him when he was tried for tax evasion in 1989 but he was sensationally acquitted after a trial of three weeks; his QC was the famous George Carman. Now in his 85th year, Ken continues to give marathon theatre performances, some in excess of four hours!

Lita Roza, the singer, was born in Upper Pitt Street in 1926 and died in 2008; she sang with the Ted Heath Band until 1954 when she went solo; she is famous for her 1953 hit song: *How much is that doggie in the window?* Lita was the first Liverpool entertainer to have a No.1 hit record. In 2003, she unveiled the Liverpool Wall of Fame in Mathew Street featuring 54 No.1 chart hits by Liverpool artists.

Another very famous Liverpoolian was Arthur Askey who was born in Moses Street in the 'Holy Land' off Park Road. Before his rise to fame, Arthur worked in the Education Department checking absences. Arthur presented the 1970s television talent show *New Faces*.

Jimmy Tarbuck was born in Queens Drive, the son of a bookmaker. In 1960, he was arrested and put on probation when he stole a gold-plated cigarette case from Terry Thomas in the Empire theatre.

In Ray's opinion, one of the best Merseyside comedians is Tom O' Connor who tells stories about everyday life on Merseyside.

Ray said a few words about his life in the Magistrates' Court; there he met Liverpool F.C. hero Billy Liddle who earned £18 per week with the club. Billy later became a J.P. and was involved in voluntary work helping out in youth clubs and teaching at a Sunday school. Ray worked with him for three years in the 70s when he was a new trainee magistrates' clerk. During that time Ray was invited to organise a staff Christmas party on the Clubship *Landfall* by Paul O'Grady who also briefly worked in the Courts.

Another Liverpool heroine was Priscilla Maria Veronica White (Cilla Black) who was born in 1943 and lived above George Murray's hairdressing shop at 380 Scotland Road. She worked part-time in the Cavern as a cloakroom attendant at lunchtime until she was signed up by Brian Epstein. Typically, John Lennon called Cilla 'Cyril'.

On a more serious note, Ray spoke of Bishop David Shepherd and Archbishop Derek Warlock who aimed at reconciliation in the city. When the Pope went to the Anglican Cathedral in 1981 he talked to David Shepherd, thinking he was in the Catholic Cathedral.

Ray then spoke of Eddie Braben, a comedy writer and performer who worked in St. John's Market where he observed local life; Eddie worked for Ken Dodd for 12 years.

It seems that Linda La Plante, who was born in Crosby in 1943 as Linda Titchmarsh, comes back to Liverpool once a year on the anniversary of her mother's death and has lunch in the Caernarvon Castle pub in Tarleton Street, Liverpool city centre.

Another famous actress is Jean Boht who was born Jean Dance in 1936 and is famous for her role as Nellie Boswell in *Bread*. Jean's mother was Teddy Dance who raised £800,000 for Clatterbridge Hospital playing the piano outside Marks & Spencer.

Ray's book *Street Stars* is available in bookshops and on-line from [www.merseyshop.com](http://www.merseyshop.com)

19 February 2012 – Elizabeth Davey

## EDWARD KEMP: PARKS AND PATRONS

Meeting report:  
Netta Dixon

Our speaker, Mrs. Elizabeth Davey, gave an excellent account of the work of Edward Kemp an eminent 19th century park superintendent who was responsible for carrying out Paxton's plans for Birkenhead Park and went on to design other public parks and cemeteries as well as working on private commissions and gardens in the North West and elsewhere.

Edward Kemp was born in 1817 in Streatham, Surrey, the son of a tailor whose three children received a good education. Edward was a student of the Horticultural Society and trained at the Society's gardens in Chiswick where he learnt the Latin names of plants and acquired practical skills. He was always described as Paxton's "amanuensis", his pupil or protégé. Edward worked with Paxton in the late 1830s at Chatsworth where there is a record stating that he contributed a shilling to a fund for a plant hunter. Paxton was involved in publications such as *The Magazine of Botany*, a gardening magazine of the day, and Kemp moved back to Surrey to look after the London end of Paxton's publications. However, in 1843, he moved to Birkenhead. In 1842 Paxton was commissioned to lay out a design for Princes Park, Liverpool, with walkways, carriageways, lakes and gates.

At this time Gillespie Graham was drawing up plans for Birkenhead and said it was important to have land available for a public park. So, the Improvement Commissioners of Birkenhead engaged Paxton to design a park which would have villas with access to the surrounding roads. Paxton was to receive £800 for his work. Compensation would be paid to farmers because of the need to work on virgin land. Paxton engaged Kemp to supervise the work and provided him with a house where he lived rent and rates free.

Paxton tried to create the features used by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and thus he introduced two lakes with islands in the middle and there was to be a range of park buildings, including a Roman boathouse. Material from the lakes was used to landscape the area with banks and hillocks. Formal planting came later and Liverpool merchants brought back seedlings from foreign parts. Features of the park included bridges designed by Lewis Hornblower and lodges designed by John Robertson; one of the lodges was castellated with battlements and an octagonal staircase tower.

The framework of the park was established by 1846 and the grand opening took place in 1847. Frederick Law Olmsted came to Birkenhead from New York and was so impressed by the park that he used it as the model for Central Park, New York. Kemp was told that he was no longer needed when the park was opened but he came to an arrangement whereby he would work for a reduced salary and eventually nothing, while he continued to work in the neighbourhood; Kemp kept his lodge until 1859 when he designed his own house.

Kemp put an advert in the Liverpool Mercury and on August 6th 1847 he was engaged by Thomas Blundell to lay out another residential park in Birkdale; however, this private enterprise did not materialise.

He wrote an update of a *Handbook for Gardeners* for Bradbury and Evans, Dickens' publishers; this became *How to Lay Out a Small Garden* (100 acres). He then undertook a number of private commissions including Lymm Hall where he laid out an orchard in 1849, Stonacres in the Wirral, where he turned marl pits into a lake, the garden at Holmefield (formerly I M Marsh College, now LJMU) in 1850-51, Bolton Hey in Roby for Edward Astley in 1854, Johnson's House in Runcorn by the Bridgewater Canal, Halton Grange in Runcorn, and Norley Hall, Cheshire, in 1850 for wine merchant Samuel Woodhouse.

In the meantime, Kemp continued with his public commissions. He was responsible for the planting in Windlehill Cemetery in St. Helens, Anfield Cemetery and Birkenhead Cemetery where he planted trees and designed chapels and gates.

Kemp continued to design public parks, including Grosvenor Park in Chester, at the expense of the 2nd Marquis of Westminster in 1867; there is a statue in the park of the benefactor. Kemp was also involved in the laying out of Queen's Park, Crewe. Stanley Park in Liverpool and Hesketh Park in Southport are also examples of Kemp's work, as is Castle Park in Frodsham and Victoria Park in St. Helens. In the library in Warrington, plans were found for Massey Hall in Thelwall.

Kemp died at the age of 73 in 1891 and Mrs Davey read out the verses found on his funeral card.



*Paxton's original plan for Birkenhead Park. Courtesy of Liverpool Record Office.*

18 March 2011 – Kay Parrott

## LIVERPOOL WORKHOUSE PROJECT

Meeting report:  
Mary Harrison

John introduced Kay Parrott, a long-time colleague at Liverpool Central Library, informing us that Kay is steeped in local history and has written a number of books about Liverpool and Liverpool people.

Kay spoke about her work on The Workhouse Project, headed by Paul Carter from The National Archives, at Kew. The task was to examine, via computer, the reports and letters from Brownlow Hill Workhouse to The Poor Law Board, which are now stored in the National Archives. This was a fascinating and painstaking project, entitled "Living the Poor Life".

Kay explained that pre-1834 the Poor Law was administered locally and was Parish-controlled, raising Poor Rates and providing Indoor Relief in the Workhouse, or Outdoor Relief with payments, pensions and goods. During the 19th century the growing population, rising costs, migration to towns and a series of poor harvests increased demand for Relief and the aim of the new Poor Law Act of 1832 was to reduce expenditure and offer Indoor Relief only. The workhouse was to be a feared institution, a place of last resort.

The Liverpool Workhouse was run by a Select Vestry, with a Board of Guardians. Housing in the city was the worst in the country. Kay painted a vivid picture of conditions suffered by the poor. During her work on "Living the Poor Life" she discovered a scandal concerning a number of Liverpool Medical Officers and the then killer disease, smallpox. Kay devoted most of her talk to this aspect.

Smallpox was no respecter of persons or class; Queen Elizabeth I caught it and survived but Queen Mary II succumbed to the disease; with children the death rate was about 80%. In the late 18th century a country doctor, Edward Jenner, experimented with vaccinating people with puss from cowpox sufferers and developed a successful vaccine for the disease, in spite of criticism and ridicule. In 1979 the World Health Organisation declared smallpox an eradicated disease.

The Vaccination Act of 1840 made vaccination of children compulsory. In 1851 Medical Officers were appointed who could claim 1/6d for each vaccination. Not all vaccinations 'took' and follow-up examinations were required. By 1852 irregularities in the system were reported and Frederick Cornett and Thomas Ollis were appointed to check the M.O.s registers. They later admitted that they had not checked all the records and were dismissed. The Liverpool Select Vestry investigated and accused four of their M.O.s of dishonest practices, such as adding fictitious names to their lists, taking advantage of illiterate parents by asking them to sign forms which they could not read and also not checking to see if the vaccinations had 'taken'.

The four doctors were named Emmett, Gill, Steele and Donlevy. They were reprimanded and dismissed. They appealed against the findings, claiming overwork and/or carelessness, rather than deliberate fraud, but they lost their appeals. Emmett died soon afterwards, Steele and Gill continued their private practices and Donlevy disappeared.

Kay informed us that all the information discovered by the teams is now freely available to researchers on the National Archive website ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/workhouse.asp](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/workhouse.asp)). The funding for the project has ended but there is hope that the National Lottery Heritage Fund will provide new funding to enable the project to continue.

## LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2012 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

20 May	Annual General Meeting followed by talk about the <i>Titanic</i>	Gervais Stringer
17 June	Visit to the Grade I Listed Ullet Road Unitarian Church	
July and August...Summer recess – no meetings		
16 September	Della Robbia Pottery	Colin Simpson
21 October	Liverpool and the American Civil War	Lee Ruddin
18 November	Chinese People in the Blitz	Francesca Aiken
16 December	The Unique Overhead Railway	Michael Murphy

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

### Bookshelf *Reviews in brief*

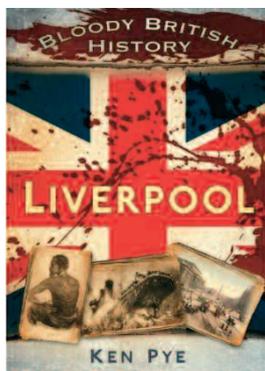
**Bloody British History: Liverpool** Ken Pye, The History Press 2011.

ISBN 978-0-7524-6551-7

£9.99 for the paperback edition.

Liverpool History Society member and well known local history author Ken Pye has released his latest book called *Bloody British History: Liverpool*. Described as 'The lurid and gruesome history of this ancient city laid bare', Ken's book is a thoroughly enjoyable and informative read packed with gruesome and astonishing tales of bloodshed, battles, the Black Death, Viking assaults and tales of Liverpool's Victorian gangland riots. The book covers a wide and diverse range of subjects and features many little-known aspects of Liverpool's history over the last couple of centuries.

It is the sort of history book I enjoy, packed with unusual tales of mayhem and murder that was difficult to put down and includes some wonderful graphics. There are more than 70 illustrations including a grim and gruesome



colour section on the infamous Maybrick trial. As usual with Ken's Liverpool history books he never fails to enlighten and satisfy his readers.

Now available from bookshops, Amazon and The History Press, Direct Sales - 01235 465500 or [www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk)

(Rob Ainsworth)

*You know what it's like; you wait decades for a factual, 'serious' book about crime in Victorian Liverpool to appear and then two come along at once:*

**The Monster Evil – Policing and Violence in Victorian Liverpool.** John E. Archer, 2011.

Liverpool University Press. ISBN 978-1-84631-683-8; 281 pages; Paperback £18.99. From the illustration of a punch-up on the blood-red cover, you are left in no doubt about the contents of this book. However, unlike the majority of books about crime in Liverpool, this is a thoroughly researched academic study. Mainly using police reports and local newspapers of the time, especially the *Liverpool Mercury* and the *Porcupine*, Archer paints a quite frightening picture of the underbelly of life in the teeming, poorer areas of the city. Nineteenth century Liverpool had a national reputation for criminality and violence; the national Press portrayed it as a veritable 'den of iniquity', 'The most immoral of all immoral places'. Whether this reputation was deserved or not is what Archer sets out to discover. An exploding population, including a huge influx of Irish and the fact that it was the busiest port in the British Empire, were all factors which boosted the crime figures. For example, in one twelve month period alone between 1884/5 over 21,000 ships docked in Liverpool. Think of all those sailors being paid off, with money in their pockets and a good time on their minds and the legion of ne'r-do-wells lying in wait intent on relieving poor Jack of every penny of his hard-earned pay. Add to that a culture of heavy drinking, a casual, poorly-paid labour force and horrendous housing conditions and it would have been surprising if Liverpool did not have a significant crime problem. The role of the developing police force, the Irish, Liverpool cornermen and gangs and female, juvenile and family crime and violence are

just some of the themes explored in this fascinating book. (Ron Jones)

**The Liverpool Underworld – Crime in the City 1750-1900.** Dr. Michael Macilwee, 2011. Liverpool University Press. ISBN 978-1-84631-700-2; 354 pages; Paperback £16.99.

Here we have another scholarly study of crime in Liverpool – footnotes run to 37 pages and the bibliography to another 18 pages. Inevitably the same ground is covered in Macilwee's book as in *The Monster Evil*, and more besides. There is hardly a category of crime, violence and immorality that isn't to be found in this book. And like *The Monster Evil*, this one is not for the faint-hearted for it is peppered with examples of the depths of evil to which humanity can plunge. The 'demon drink' was the root cause of much of Liverpool's anti-social behaviour and crime. It had been estimated that if all the pubs, beer houses, grogshops and whisky and penny ale cellars were lined up they would have stretched for eleven and a half miles. Hand in hand with drink and maritime rumbustiousness came prostitution. Such was its extent that Liverpool was labelled the country's 'capital of prostitution'. By the late 1830's the police had identified 400 brothels with each averaging five prostitutes. On top of that another 2,000 prostitutes operated out of boarding houses, a total of 4,000 although modern research suggests that this number should be tripled.

Both books are 'strong meat' but make for gripping reading and offer a new insight into life in Georgian and Victorian Liverpool.

And then I picked up the Liverpool Echo and read the depressing daily litany of crime – a drive-by shooting, a murder, a drugs bust an innocent merry-maker kicked senseless on a night out, and so on and thought – "Times change, people don't." (Ron Jones)



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