



HISTORY SOCIETY

WINTER 2013/14

Foul weather alert!

In past years, when for example there has been a heavy fall of snow or it's been particularly icy under foot, members may have been uncertain whether or not the Sunday talk would go ahead. Now, LHS Secretary Fred Forrest has helpfully suggested that, in the event of the weather on the day being particularly bad, you are welcome to 'phone him on 0151 474 6561 to check if the meeting has been cancelled.

2014 Journal: call for articles!

The Society has now appointed a new Editor for its Journal (re-named this year as *Liverpool History*). Many of you will already know Marie McQuade as she was one of the team that compiled the Journal for a number of years up until 2010. Marie has already started work on the 2014 Journal and would remind members that the deadline for the submission of articles is 31st January 2014. Contact Marie at: mariemcq@yahoo.co.uk

Sales of LHS publications

A number of items are available at meetings and also through the post from our Secretary:-

- Paper copies of the current journal plus those for 2012, 2011, 2010 and 2008 @£3 per copy (some are in short supply).
- A DVD copy of the 2009 Journal for computer use only @£1 per copy (short supply).
- A DVD copy of our 5 journals from 2002-2006 for computer use only (c.64 A5 pages each) @£6 per copy.
- Graham Jones' *In the Footsteps of Peter Ellis* @£24 per copy. BUT half-price (£12) to LHS members!

- Hugh Hollinghurst's *Classical Liverpool – language, sculpture and architecture* @£3 per copy.
- Hugh Hollinghurst's *Classical Liverpool – an inside story* @£4 per copy.
- A DVD for computer use only entitled *78 vintage and rare books on genealogy, social and general history of Liverpool* (mainly 18th & 19th century books and including *Picton's Memorials*) @ £6 per copy.

N.B. Any orders to be sent through the post will be subject to a charge for postage. Please contact the LHS Secretary on: fred_forrest@hotmail.com or 0151 474 6561 or at 32 Rugby Drive, Aintree Village, Liverpool, L10 8JU.

The one that got away

Our February, 2014 talk by Dr. Charlotte Wildman is called: *The cathedral that never was? Lutyn's cathedral in 1930s Liverpool*. Well, here is what it would have looked like had the project gone ahead. Unfortunately, only the crypt was built before the Second World War, and costs that had escalated from £3 million to £27 million, forced the abandonment of what would have been the second biggest cathedral in the world.



20 October 2013 – Hugh Hollinghurst

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON AND LIVERPOOL

Meeting report:
Mary Harrison

LHS member Hugh Hollinghurst entertained us with his illustrated presentation of many of Audubon's beautiful bird pictures and an interesting account of the painter's life and experiences in 19th century Liverpool. Hugh is also the author of *Birth of an Elephant: Audubon in Liverpool 1826*, currently out of print.

John James Audubon was born in 1785 on his father's sugar plantation on the French island of Saint-Domingue, now Haiti. His father was French Navy Lt Jean Audubon, and his mother an illiterate French chambermaid, Jeanne Rabin, his father's mistress. They named him Jean Rabin, but Jeanne died soon after his birth and he was sent to France where Audubon and his wife formally adopted him and renamed him Jean Jacques Audubon. He was adored, and spoilt, by his stepmother and allowed to roam the countryside where he observed and drew birds in their natural settings. When he neared 18, the age for conscription into Napoleon's army, he was sent to America where his father set him up in business on his estate at Mill Grove, Pennsylvania. There he anglicised his name to John James Audubon.

Here he met Lucy Bakewell, the daughter of his next door neighbour, who shared his interest in birds and painting. They soon fell in love and despite some family objections eventually married. They had two sons, and Lucy stayed at home caring for them, while for the next nineteen years Audubon went on long trips, hunting, shooting and drawing birds. Lucy would sometimes wait up to two years before she saw him again. He shot birds and used wire to prop them into natural positions, as if caught in mid-flight, so that he could draw them. Amongst the birds he hunted were Passenger Pigeons, once one of the most abundant birds in America, and the Carolina Parakeet. Both species became extinct early in the 20th century. Another was the Snowy Egret, (one of many beautiful bird pictures we saw), which were popular prey as their valuable tail feathers were in demand to decorate women's hats.

Audubon's epic ambition was to publish a book of paintings depicting every species of bird in America. He aimed to paint the birds life-size set in their natural habitats. Hugh demonstrated the size of the 'Double Elephant' folio by holding up a 39.5" x 28.5" piece of cloth. Nevertheless, the large size of some birds, such as the American Flamingo and the Golden Eagle, presented Audubon with problems as he contorted them so as to fit on the page.

Unable to get his book published in America, he saved enough to take all his pictures to England and landed in Liverpool in 1826. He encountered some difficulties; he was French/American (with a strong French accent) at a time when England had been at war with both countries for many years; his history of illegitimacy and slave ownership told against him, he had little money and no formal education and he lacked confidence and social connections. But he also had some advantages; he had letters of introduction from traders in America to the influential Rathbone family and, like them and many of the elite of Liverpool, he was a Quaker. Above all, he was strikingly exotic. Tall, handsome, with long flowing hair, he dressed distinctively as a backwoodsman and was able to regale his new-found friends and their children with colourful stories of his life in the wild among the Indians. The ladies of Liverpool found him particularly alluring! More importantly, his paintings were much admired. The Rathbones, William Roscoe and Lord Stanley (later the 13th Earl of Derby) helped him to exhibit and sell his work and introduced him to many influential people. Liverpoolians took him to their hearts and, as Hugh explained, gave him the confidence and connections to achieve his great ambition.

At this point Hugh showed us images of many of the landmarks in Liverpool that would have been familiar to Audubon – Salthouse Dock where the Rathbones had their offices, a Georgian building still remaining in the heart of Victorian Castle Street, Heywood's Bank in Brunswick Street, the Lyceum and the Bluecoat, the last remaining back-to-back houses in Duke Street, Abercromby Square etc. Audubon would have recognised present day Seymour Street since his first port of call was to his sister-in-law Ann Gordon (née Bakewell who was married to a Liverpool cotton broker) in nearby Norton Street where, incidentally, he received a very frosty reception. And he was taken to the Town Hall and the Exchange where he was shown Nelson's memorial.

The Rathbones took enormous interest in Audubon and he often stayed with them at the family home at Greenbank, then set in open countryside, and presided over by the matriarchal Hannah Mary Rathbone, nicknamed 'Queen Bee'. He took a shine to William Rathbone's unmarried sister, also named Hannah Mary, and sketched the self-portrait above for her. He also named what he thought was a new species of warbler after the family. Unfortunately, "Rathbone's" Yellow Warbler turned out to be simply a young Yellow Warbler. As a mark of his fondness for them Audubon gave them a set of *Birds of America* which was subsequently sold by the family.

Following successful exhibitions in Liverpool, he travelled to Manchester (which he hated!), Edinburgh and London in search of subscribers to fund the creation of his book and people skilled enough to engrave the copper plates to produce prints which then had to be individually hand-coloured. His trials and tribulations were many but his single-mindedness won through. *Birds of America* is one of the most remarkable books ever printed. It consists of 435 hand-coloured, life-size prints showing nearly 500 bird species. Hugh told us that the present-day value of the books produced by Audubon amounted to £2 billion. In 2010 a copy of *Birds of America* was sold at Sotheby's for £7.3 million, a record for a printed book. Of the original 200 produced, only 120 copies are known to exist, one of which is in Liverpool Central Library, on permanent display in the Hornby Library.

After producing an octavo size version of *Birds of America* Audubon's final work was the *Viparious Quadrupeds of North America*. By 1846, his eyesight started to deteriorate and he was descending into senility. Five years later, aged 65, he died at the family home he had built in Washington Heights, New York, cared for by his wife Lucy who outlived him by 23 years.



Self-portrait entitled "Audubon at Green Bank. Almost Happy!! – Sept 1826. Drawn by himself." He also painted this robin at Greenbank. Both are on display in the Victoria Gallery & Museum, Brownlow Hill.

17 November 2013 – Stuart Wood

MY LIFE AS A MERSEY RIVER PILOT

Meeting report:
Netta Dixon

Stuart retired in June 2009 after serving 42 years as a pilot in what he called the second oldest profession in the world. The Liverpool Pilotage Service (which incidentally is now Liverpool's oldest surviving corporation) was established in 1776 to guide vessels in and out of the river. Stuart described the Pilotage Service as, "The interface between the staff on the ships and the port operators, in all weathers." Pilots are 'parachuted' onto the ship and become part of the crew.

Between 1988 and 1997 Liverpool pilots were employed directly by the Port of Liverpool, thanks to Sir Geoffrey Stirling, Chairman of P & O. Stuart recalled that during that 9-year period he only received one pay rise...of 1%! Since then all pilots have been self-employed and charge a fee for their services.

Every port in the world, however small, has a pilot, as ships' captains cannot be expected to know every port and the pilots, who have expert knowledge of the river, weather conditions and the state of the tides, make sure that the ships arrive safely in port. Stuart explained that, for economic reasons, pilotage often takes place during the night so that the vessel is docked early in the morning – quite simply, it is more economical to employ dockers to unload ships during the day than at night.

At the age of 16 Stuart intended to study oceanography at Liverpool University, but he was impressed by a neighbour who seemed to be home most of the day and had a nice car which he changed every two years! He turned out to be a river pilot who mainly worked at night. He told Stuart all about the service and took him on board the pilot boat *Edmund Gardner* (now in the Maritime Museum). So, in 1960 at the age of 16, he began a seven and a half years apprenticeship as a pilot. As part of taking his Board of Trade certificate he was required to go to sea, so he signed on with Brocklebanks and went to India; he also went to the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. In those days there were 172 Mersey river pilots, and Stuart had to wait for a vacancy to occur before becoming a fully fledged employed pilot. He was fully qualified at the age of 26 and acquired his first class licence and became a First Class Pilot at 28 years of age. In the meantime, he also sailed on small ships such as a Dutch coaster and learnt ship handling from an old German captain before moving to bigger and heavier ships

His first ship was an oil tanker called *Sunny Queen* in Birkenhead; then Shell took him on as a pilot for its ships and he served with the company until he retired. However, he was still available for freelance work on other ships. In some ports, such as London, the pilot's job is split into four parts – the sea; the channel; the river; and docks and locks pilotage. However, in the Mersey, the one pilot undertakes all four tasks. Moreover, as Stuart pointed out (with Spring tides of around 33ft.), the Mersey is a difficult river with Britain's highest tidal range after the Bristol Channel.

Stuart explained that the type of shipping using the Mersey over the years has changed. Tonnages have increased every year since 1955. By 1965 one container ship was the equivalent of six 'normal' vessels. Containers themselves have grown in size from the original 'TEU' (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) measuring 8ft x 8ft x 20ft to today's containers which are mostly 40ft long. Crew levels had changed too with the modern container ship only needing a crew of about 21 men. Stuart told us that whilst Liverpool handles most trades, chilled food is one that it doesn't, although it did in the early days of Royal Seaforth. That trade is now handled by Medway Ports which, like the Port of Liverpool, is privately-owned by Peel Holdings. A 'new' trade being handled by Liverpool is the cruise liner market and Stuart alerted us to the arrival in the Mersey of Cunard's three Queens (*Queen Mary 2*, *Queen Victoria* and *Queen Elizabeth*) on the 24th May, 2015, to celebrate the company's 175th birthday.

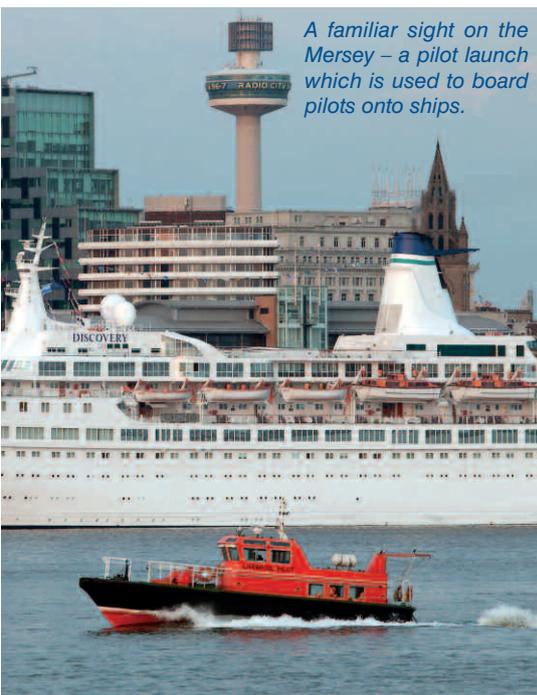
The two exceptions in the Mersey Pilot scenario are the Port of Garston which is owned by Associated British Ports and the Manchester Ship Canal, again owned by Peel Holdings; both employ their own pilots. Stuart also mentioned the Stanlow Oil Refinery, an Indian-owned operation which refines crude oil. He said that 99% of crude oil coming into the Port came from the North Sea and he gave an example of how Stanlow only stored approximately three days' availability of oil, although there was some additional storage at Tranmere.

Stuart then explained the journey of a typical crude oil tanker from the North Sea to Tranmere. First he described how an empty tanker fills its tanks from a pipeline on the sea bed quite some distance from the actual oil platform. The tanker then sails to Point Lynas in Anglesey, where two pilot boats, owned by Peel, are stationed. The pilot, and a back-up pilot, wearing harnesses, climb perhaps nine metres up a ladder in all weathers to board the vessel; documents are exchanged with the Master who has a 'passage plan' which is slightly different from the 'pilot's plan'. They cover the 35 miles to the Bar in three and a half hours. After the Bar, the ship proceeds at a steady ten knots an hour, as they need 9.4 metres depth under them to ensure that they do not ground the vessel. He asked us to consider how long it would take to stop a tanker which is 265 metres long. They need to slow down as the ship approaches Liverpool and sails the five miles to Tranmere. There two waiting tugs bring it in on the starboard side, so that it is easier to manoeuvre when it leaves again. The pontoon at Tranmere is spring-loaded with six arms, and the ship has to approach slowly as the spring is very powerful and will pull the ship if it goes in too fast. The ship is unloaded and out again within 21 hours. The whole process is a highly skilled operation where timing is of the essence. The pilot's fee for such a job would be about £1,200 plus the cost of the back-up pilot.

Finally, Stuart informed us that his fee for today's talk would be donated to the Daniel Adamson Preservation Society. The *Daniel Adamson*, built in 1903 by the Tranmere Bay Development Company, is this country's last surviving steam-powered tug tender.



Stuart Wood.



A familiar sight on the Mersey – a pilot launch which is used to board pilots onto ships.

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY: FEBRUARY TO APRIL 2014

16 February	The cathedral that never was? Lutyen's cathedral in 1930s Liverpool	Dr Charlotte Wildman
16 March	Liverpool's 'Big Society' during the First World War	Marie McQuade/Jo McCann
13 April	Noel Chavasse and other Liverpool heroes	William Sergeant

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. With the exception of the AGM, which starts at 1.30pm (doors open 1.00pm), all meetings start at 2.00pm (doors open 1.30pm).

Bookshelf

Why Spencer Perceval Had To Die

Andro Linklater, 2012. Bloomsbury. 296 pages, 10 illustrations. Hardback. ISBN 978 1 4088 2840 3. £18.99. Also available in paperback at £9.99 and Kindle at £5.14.

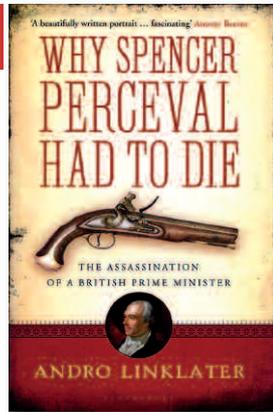
The media has ensured that it would not have escaped your attention that the 22nd of November 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy. However, the 11th May 2012 passed with hardly a mention of the fact that it was the 200th anniversary of the assassination of the leader of the then most powerful country on earth – British Prime Minister Spencer Perceval. History buffs will know that not only was he the only Prime Minister to have been thus despatched but that the assassin was Liverpool merchant John Bellingham, late of 46 Duke Street.

Despite its racy title, this book is a serious, but highly readable, study of what was arguably the most notorious murder of the 19th century – it comes with copious endnotes, extensive bibliography and a useful index and was written by historian Andro Linklater, brother of the journalist Magnus Linklater. In one of those 'goosebump moments', the day I finished reading the book, I happened to read *The Times*, which carried Andro's full-page obituary; he had died on 3rd November, aged 68.

Without giving away too much, suffice it to say that Bellingham's self-justification for the deadly deed stemmed from a Russian business deal that had gone sour and his frustration at the unwillingness of government officials in England and Russia to offer him justice and redress for his financial ruin. Liverpool features quite large in the story, including Bellingham's restraint and immediate identification by fearless Liverpool MP General Gascoyne who "gripped his hand so hard he cried out in pain". In what can only be described as a shameful miscarriage of justice, the clearly deranged Bellingham was thrown in jail, tried, strung up at a public hanging at Newgate Prison, and his body immediately dissected... all within one week of the assassination.

However, the sting is in the tail for this saga revolves around Linklater's own conspiracy theory (shades of JFK!) involving the recently abolished slave trade, the impending war between America and Britain and Bellingham's shadowy American financial backers. Highly recommended.

Ron Jones



Mersey Ferries Through Time Ian Collard, 2013. Amberley Publishing. 96 pages, 180 illustrations. Paperback. ISBN 978 1 4456 1333 8. £14.99.

Did you know? – ● That two Mersey Ferry boats took part in a courageous wartime assault at Zeebrugge in 1918, in which 11 VCs were awarded for bravery? ● That the Mersey Ferries once carried over 30 million passengers a year between Liverpool and Wallasey? ● That the New Brighton Ferry was founded by an Everton builder in 1830?

These details and many more can be found in this illustrated account of the Mersey Ferries, from its inception in 1150 on behalf of the new Benedictine Priory at Woodside, Birkenhead to the less romantic, more regulated but perhaps even more cherished, activities of the present day.

Ian Collard summarises the history of the Birkenhead and Wallasey Ferries in separate chapters, concluding with a final chapter on the years between 1969 and 2012. Each gives a brief overview, concentrating on the more accessible detail available of events in the 19th and 20th centuries. To be realistic, 73 of the 96 pages are devoted to mainly photographic images of ferry boats, piers, landing stages and ferry terminals. It should be described therefore as essentially a visual record of a ferry service once crucial to the greater Liverpool transport system, operating on at least four distinct services across the Mersey.

The high water mark reached in the year ending March 1920, when the combined Seacombe, Egremont and New Brighton Ferries carried 32 million passengers emphasises how important this service has been to the development of both Liverpool and the Wirral Peninsula. The more chastened modern day operations which carry around 600,000 passengers and lose £1 million a year also highlight how Liverpool has changed, with a reduced population and the advent of competing rail and road transport systems.

Those readers searching for a detailed account of the history of the Mersey Ferries need to look elsewhere. The book is sketchy on the pre-Victorian background (both written and visual) and the images are undated and not presented chronologically. On the other hand, Ian Collard's nostalgic compilation does attempt to recapture the romance of the 'ferries across the Mersey'.

Tony Melling



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