

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2017 MEETINGS PROGRAM

19 Feb	Early Victorian Railway Excursions to Liverpool	Sue Major
19 March	Viking Merseyside	Prof. Steven Harding
23 April	Liverpool Cowkeepers: a Family History	David Joy
21 May	The Rainhill Trials	John Hatfield

All meetings will take place in the Grace Room, 1st Floor, Hope at Everton, Shaw Street, L3 8QB. This is the former St Francis Xavier College building. All talks start at 2pm (doors open at 1.30pm).

NOTE: The May meeting is preceded by the AGM at 1.30pm (doors open at 1pm).

Book Review: *Aintree. The History of the Racecourse*

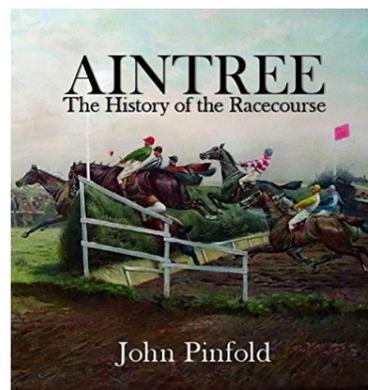
This book, a “coffee table” tome and a true labour of love written by an LHS member who has published several other books on the same subject, tells the definitive story of the racecourse from its early days almost 200 years ago right up to today, when it is one of the country’s most successful horse racing venues. Appropriately perhaps for the history of a steeplechase course, the book covers all of its many ups and downs, racing and otherwise.

Prominent amongst the latter are two fascinating chapters on the course’s requisitioning for military and other purposes during two world wars. One particularly interesting piece from WWII is a German military map (derived from a 1928 British Ordnance Survey) highlighting potential bombing targets near the course. Fortunately Fazakerley Isolation Hospital and Fazakerley Cottage Homes are marked with a Red Cross symbol. This map is just one indication of the depth of the research carried out by the author in order to discover unusual aspects of the Aintree story, covering such unexpected areas as the early history of women’s football and the development of powered flight.

This is a book which will undoubtedly appeal to the horse racing fraternity, the local historian and the general reader. As one who has lived on the edge of the racecourse for 35 years and thought he knew much of its history, reading this book has certainly been an eye-opener.

Fred Forrest

Aintree. The History of the Racecourse. John Pinfold, 2016. Medina Publishing, 360 pages, approx. as many pictures and maps in colour and black & white. Hardback with loose cover. ISBN: 978-1-909339-71-2. £30.00.



Special 2017 Newsletter

Articles on personal memories of Liverpool are sought from members for an extra newsletter for distribution to all who renew their subscriptions by 31st March.

Canal Bicentenary

Our thanks to Jo Crist for providing these photos of her attendance at the 23rd October celebrations at the Eldonian Village, where Kennet led the flotilla of boats which had completed the 127 miles from Leeds.



2017-18 Auditor required

A big thank you to Brian Coghlan, our auditor for many years, who will be standing down at the 2017 AGM. Please contact the committee if you would like to help the Society by taking on this important role.



HISTORY SOCIETY

WINTER 2016

Newsletter

#47

Those were the days – when American midgets were sold on Lime Street!

Illustrated is a postcard I recently added to my collection of images of old Liverpool. It’s of Lime Street, probably taken around 1900, and shows the old Empire Theatre.

Closer examination shows that next to the theatre, on the corner of Lord Nelson Street, was an establishment called the ‘American Midget’. A bit of digging around revealed that ‘American Midgets’ were not vertically challenged Yankees but small photographs roughly the size of passport photos that were sold at the ‘American Midget’ photographic studio. Why were these tiny photographs so evidently popular? As they were so small perhaps they were also inexpensive? Maybe people bought them because they were small enough to carry in a purse or wallet or to cut up and use in a locket? Who knows?

Like fellow collector, Colin Wilkinson, our speaker at LHS’s December talk, who knows a thing or three about historic photographs, I too have long had a fascination with photographs of old Liverpool. Whilst Nicéphore Niépce took the world’s first photograph in 1826/7, photography only really got going when Louis Daguerre invented the daguerreotype, widely used from the early 1840s to the late 1850s. At that time Liverpool, second city only to London, was at the forefront of the arts and sciences and this begs the question, ‘Just where are all the early photographs of Liverpool that must have been taken by local photographers in the 1840s/50s?’

On 9 March 1853, just a few weeks after the Photographic Society of London was founded, seven gentlemen met at the offices of Forrest & Bromley in Lime Street and formed the Liverpool Photographic Society. The names of some of them may be familiar to you: James Newlands, Liverpool’s and Britain’s first Borough Engineer; C H Chadburn, a nautical instrument and lens maker who also sold photographic goods; James Forrest of Forrest & Bromley sold glass, including glass plates for photographers; Francis Frith, a successful grocer who got hooked on photography, set up a studio in 1850 and became a landscape photographer of world renown; Christopher Bell a wine merchant who bought his first photographic lens in Mexico in 1840/1; and George Berry, a chemist and professional photographer and dealer. His 1860 Liverpool waterfront panorama, made from three separate prints joined together, is the oldest photograph in the Merseyside Maritime Museum’s archive. Roughly one-quarter of the image is shown on the right. See the full image at: www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/archive/highlights/liverpool-panoramic-photo.aspx

Within months the Society’s membership soared to over 100 and the first issue of the historic *Liverpool Photographic Journal* had been published. Over the years it morphed into the *British Journal of Photography*. Still published today, it is the second oldest photographic journal in Britain if not the world.

And so we come to the oldest known photograph of Liverpool in the Liverpool Record Office’s archive. It shows St George’s Hall and was taken in 1855. By then there must have been scores of local photographers exploring the art and science of this new wonder of the age. But where are all their photographs now? It is perfectly possible that photographs were taken, for example, of the newly-opened Albert Dock in 1846, but to date not one single photograph of anywhere in Liverpool at any time during the 1840s has come to light and there are precious few from the 1850s or 1860s either.

So, dear reader, can you help us track down any photograph of Liverpool taken during the 1840s or 1850s? If you manage to find one older than 1850, I will personally have it enlarged and presented to you in a handsome frame!

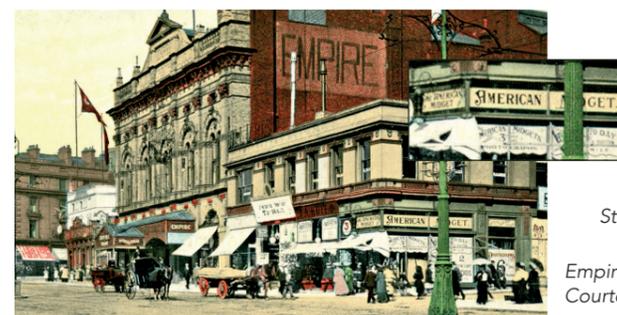
Ron Jones



Section of George Berry’s waterfront panorama. Courtesy National Museums Liverpool



American midget photos. Courtesy Roger Vaughan



Empire Theatre, Lime St, c1900. Courtesy Ron Jones



St George’s Hall, c1855. Courtesy LRO



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LHS would like to thank C3imaging, Liverpool, for generously printing this issue at a reduced cost to the Society. Visit the company’s website for full details of the wide range of photographic, digital printing, exhibition, display and signage services it offers. www.c3imaging.com



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SCULPTURES IN LIVERPOOL

Meeting report:
Ann Clayton

Tom Murphy is an award-winning painter and sculptor who has more than 35 sculptures in the UK and additional works in private collections around the world. Based in Liverpool, his works, especially in bronze, are familiar and impressive features of Liverpool's landscape.

Tom began by noting that Liverpool has more monuments than any other city outside London, reflecting the confidence resulting from the city's commercial success in earlier times. Liverpool has representations of all types of sculpture, from portrait statues to memorials, and from abstract sculptures (as in the Philharmonic Hall) to commemorative fountains.

In the 19th century, public commissions increased in popularity, and the city was eager to demonstrate its national pride and loyalty. By the end of Victoria's reign, Liverpool had one of the most representative collections anywhere, by all the greatest sculptors of the day. Statues were commissioned portraying local dignitaries, funded by the wealthy men in the city, with many being placed in St George's Hall and later in St John's Gardens. Virtually no statues of women were commissioned, apart from those of Queen Victoria, because women had no independent wealth or position in society, were not members of the armed forces or of professions such as medicine and the law, and could not sit on the City Council or in Parliament. Patriotism amongst the city elders was exemplified in 1866, when a posthumous equestrian statue of Prince Albert was unveiled on St George's Plateau, joined in 1870 by a matching statue of the widowed Queen, both by Thomas Thornycroft. The statue of Victoria by C. J. Allen which dominates Derby Square was erected in 1906, after her death, and is Grade II listed.



The statue to Noel Chavasse in Abercromby Square.

By the time the Three Graces were built at the Pier Head, the fashion for "coat and trousers" statuary was over, and the Liver Building was topped by two birds. After the Great War thousands of memorials in stone and bronze were constructed commemorating the great sacrifices made by so many. The Liverpool War Memorial by Tyson Smith on St George's Plateau was notable when it was erected, not least because its positioning necessitated the removal of Disraeli's monument to the steps of the Hall. It remains a remarkable piece of work and is one of only five such Grade I listings in the whole country. After WWII, only a trickle of sculptures appeared in Liverpool, one of the most extraordinary being Jacob Epstein's "Resurgence" figure on Lewis's rebuilt store.

However, as Liverpool has been regaining its confidence, there has been a renewed wave of sculpted works in the city. Tom Murphy's first commission was of Mrs Thatcher (1989), but his first Liverpool work was of John Lennon, originally situated in Clayton Square (1996). Further commissions followed, including John & Cecil Moores (Church Street, 1996), Bill Shankly (Anfield, 1997), Captain Walker (Pier Head, 1998) and Dixie Dean (Everton FC, 2001). A striking feature of all of Tom's work is his attention to detail, for example in the Victoria Cross memorial (Abercromby Square, 2007) depicting Captain Noel Chavasse, a stretcher-bearer and a wounded soldier on the Somme battlefield: the badges, webbing and footwear are all portrayed with convincing realism.

Tom's sculpture of Ken Dodd meeting Bessie Braddock (Lime Street Station, 2008) contributes a measure of mischief to the concourse, counter-balanced by the Memorial frieze to the Liverpool Pals (2014) which overlooks the same space but whose message is one of tragedy remembered. The same theme pervades Tom's memorial to Hillsborough (bottom of St John's Gardens, 2013) – a moving tribute to all those affected.



Tom with the Chavasse model after his talk.

HISTORY OF SPEKE AIRPORT

Meeting report:
Mary Harrison

Dr Gilbertson delighted members with his account of the history of Speke Airport which began in 1927 when the Council investigated several possible sites for a municipal airport. One was Aintree Racecourse from which flights had taken place before WWI, and the final choice was a farm on the Speke Hall Estate. In May 1929 the Council bought 2200 acres, of which 600 acres were adapted, and work started in June 1930. By 1933 an 800 yard runway had been laid and the farm buildings became the Terminal building and first hangar. On 1st July Imperial Airlines arrived for an impressive opening ceremony, with an air show and parachute jumps, and Air Lord Londonderry flew from London in an open cockpit Hawker Hart light bomber.

Two initial services were instituted; twice daily to Blackpool, and Hooton Park to Speke and then on to Dublin. The Irish Sea flights were much in demand, but they only operated for 6 weeks. By the following year Speke had services to London, the South West, Scotland, Belfast and the Isle of Man, whilst Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) opened a service to Amsterdam via Hull (the first foreign airline to fly domestic services in Britain with connections to the Continent).

Most of the planes using Speke were fairly small, like the Dragon Rapide, flying at 100 mph, although KLM flew the DC-2, which was faster, had a longer range and took more passengers. In 1935 the airport was extended, another hangar built, and a new control tower added. In 1936, Aer Lingus set up flights to Dublin but they only lasted a month.

Prior to WWII, Speke Airport was acquired by the MoD. However, it was ill equipped, the pilots were minimally trained and Liverpool was left unprotected. The RAF concentrated its defences on the South and East coasts, as the theory was that German planes of the time could not reach Merseyside, despite the fact that once Germany had occupied France its bombers were just across the English Channel. Tony spoke of the experiences of Liverpool people during the bombing, which several of us remembered vividly, quoting statistics from Richard Whittington-Egan's book, 'The Great Liverpool Blitz'. A German Junker 88 which was spotted and shot down was the only enemy plane credited to Speke during the whole war.

With a lack of planes to defend Britain, the Rootes Group set up 'Shadow Factories' to assemble aircraft under supervision. The first Blenheims came to Speke in 1938, but were replaced in 1942 by Halifax Bombers. These were too big for Speke's grass runways, so tarmac was laid down. American planes were transported to Britain by ship in kit form, then reassembled and transported by road on lorries.

The Government refused to return the Airport to Council control until 1961, whereas Manchester had managed to retain control of its airport in 1939. The major airlines therefore used Manchester after the war, although Starways, Cambria and AerLingus continued at Speke. During the Depression of 1947 a 'Milk Lift' brought milk to Liverpool from IOM., Belfast and Dublin. After BEA's monopoly finished in 1952 British Eagle took over Starways and established services to Europe, whilst the Post Office started a Night Mail service.

In 1966 a new 3 mile runway was opened, and by 1971 passengers were exceeding half a million. A larger Terminus was opened in 1986, the old Terminal became a hotel in 1990, and in 1997 Speke was privatised and renamed 'Liverpool John Lennon Airport'. Easy Jet started flights and Ryanair established a flourishing hub service, whilst the Rumanian Airline Blue Air has a Master Plan for increasing its use of the airport to 2030.



A Hillman Airways' Rapide and Royal Air Mail Service vehicle in front of the terminal and 'control tower' at Chapel House Farm in 1935.

(From Liverpool Airport, An Illustrated History by Phil Butler, with kind permission of the History Press)

HISTORY OF ABERCROMBY SQUARE

Meeting report:
Martin Strauss

Dr Williams' opening slide – 'the square that influenced the world' – posed a challenging title! He argued that it was not so much the architecture but the occupations, influence and legacy of its residents which enabled it to reflect an international fame.

Before the Square and surrounding streets were laid out in the nineteenth century, the area was known as West Derby fenland, or more commonly Mosslake, an important area for the city in earlier times as a source of peat and of water. The stream running down to the Mersey provided scope for mills and was vital in maintaining the level in the town's 'Pool'. In 1309 the Earl of Lancaster, angered by the constant trespassing and thieving from Mosslake, granted the area to the town corporation, its first corporate holding.

By the late eighteenth century, Liverpool was thriving through trade, and many argued for an expansion onto the hills surrounding the town. Mosslake saw the first attempt to plan the town's growth, with a development of prestige streets and houses. Maps show the grid pattern drawn up by John Foster in 1801 and building began in 1816 on land leased by Pritt and Lawson. Houses were not built in a methodical way along each side in turn and the house-numbering changed many times over the years. Three sides of the Square remain much as they were. The fourth side was dominated by St Catherine's Church (1835-47), demolished after bomb damage in the Second World War. A potting-shed provides a fine central feature of the square.

The Square housed many important residents from its inception, who contributed much to Liverpool and to its trading growth. Many were merchants, such as William Rathbone, William Earle and Thomas Ripley. The last-named traded with India, North and South America, and the West Indies, was involved in the slave trade and left a fortune of £170,000 in his will (about £10m today). Perhaps to atone for some dubious commercial activity, he founded Ripley School in Lancaster, his home town; this act of philanthropy was based on the example of the Bluecoat Hospital in Liverpool.

No. 18a was the home of the Borough engineer, James Newlands. Dr Williams praised him as a polymath – architect, chemist, artist and flautist. Perhaps his major legacy was the provision of an extensive sewerage system for the town; 144 miles of sewers helped to reduce the mortality rate and double the average life expectancy of the inhabitants, from 19 years to 38. Newlands also designed Public Baths, provided street lighting and outlined plans for a ring-road for the town, later realised as Queen's Drive.

Another distinguished resident was Henry Booth, Secretary to the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. He deserves credit for co-designing 'The Rocket' and in particular its complex boiler system; he invented screw couplings, sprung buffers and lubricants for carriage wheels. He advocated standardising time throughout the country to permit a co-ordinated railway timetable.

Among other important residents of the Square were: Thomas Waters, physician and sometime President of the British Medical Association; James Campbell Brown, City Analyst and Professor of Chemistry at the University College; George Pritt, lawyer to the Liverpool-Manchester Railway; Charles McIver, ship-owner; Sir Edward Russell, owner and editor of the Daily Post and Echo; and Sir Joseph Rotblat, physicist, member of the Manhattan Project and later a strong advocate for preventing nuclear war, initiating the Pugwash Conferences.

Dr Williams concluded his talk with the hope that the beauty of the square would be preserved and provide a memorial to its distinguished residents who had served the city and a wider world so well.



Abercromby Square south side and the potting shed.