

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER No.43, SUMMER 2015

YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!

Those of you who did not attend our AGM in May and received your new journal through the post will already have received the following plea from me following the amicable exodus of no fewer than six members from our Committee:- "I am writing to you as the new Chairman of LHS to let you know that, although the Society has had a successful year in respect of a journal, newsletters, talks and finances, this has been achieved because of the strenuous and selfless efforts of a very few members. Also, there has been a very high turnover in the last year in the key posts of Treasurer and Membership Secretary. A number of holders of key posts and a long-serving committee member retired at the recent AGM and, although there has been some success in attracting new people (most notably the return of Graham Jones as Membership Secretary), the Society desperately needs new faces to come forward and get involved in its day to day management via our committee".

In past years the committee has enjoyed a few months break from LHS business during the summer but this year those of us left have met 4 times to ensure that we have, amongst other things, a talks programme for 2016, sufficient articles in course of production for our next journal and, of course, this newsletter (which you will have noticed is not up to Ron Jones' 5 star plus standard!). Graham Jones has also been working tirelessly to make sure the records for our 300+ members are brought up to date so that we can communicate with you easily (and distribute newsletters / journals etc at meetings and afterwards without too much fuss!). Only work deemed absolutely essential is being undertaken and items such as the further development of our website have been put on hold.

Although our bank account remains healthy and we will be paying someone to act as journal editor and bring together the articles we finally receive, we are still far from out of the woods and desperately need more members to take part in the day to day administration of our Society in order to ensure its survival.

Fred Forrest, Chairman, Admin. Secretary & (temporary) Editor

AN INVITATION FROM THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY

Liverpool Regional Group 1965-2015 - 50th Anniversary Dinner & Lecture

The Liverpool Group of the Victorian Society was the first regional group to be established. A Golden Jubilee Dinner is being held on Tuesday 10th November to celebrate this anniversary. The event is to be held at Aloft Liverpool Hotel, the splendidly restored former headquarters of the Royal Insurance Company. This sumptuous neo-baroque building of 1896-1903, was designed by local architect James Francis Doyle. He was awarded the commission in a competition assessed by Richard Norman Shaw, with whom Doyle was then working on the White Star building, and Shaw was subsequently appointed as an advisory architect for the Royal Insurance building.

The Group is delighted to have as its guest speaker Professor Andrew Saint, the distinguished architectural historian and author of the definitive architectural biography of Richard Norman Shaw. In the evocative setting of this former palace of commerce, diners will be treated to the leading authority on Shaw speaking about this great architect who did much impressive work on Merseyside.

The closest Merseyrail station is Moorfields. There are several public car parks in the vicinity. For hotel disabled access arrangements please contact Diana Goodier (details below) Tickets for this event are priced at £39 each, which includes a three-course meal, excluding drinks. A licensed bar will be available throughout the evening. Arrival is from 6.30pm and the dinner is at 7pm, followed by the talk. A warm welcome is extended to non-members.

A MESSAGE FROM THE LHS LIBRARIAN

Please feel free to let me know, either at meetings or via my e-mail address, of any library queries you have or books you might be willing to donate. I have recently updated the catalogue online and hope you will take a look at it. LHS members can visit and use our library in the Liverpool Record Office on production of an LHS membership card.
allandwilliams@hotmail.co.uk

ENQUIRIES RECEIVED VIA OUR WEBSITE

The following are amongst the enquiries received recently:-

Hello, My name is Shannon Kyle and I am a ghostwriter and journalist. A publisher I am working with is looking for ladies who might be interested in telling their life story for a book project. Anyone taking part would be paid for their time and trouble. In particular the publisher is looking for a woman who worked in post-war Liverpool (40s/50s/60s) perhaps in the docks or factory who would like to share her and her friends/ families story? This would involve the lady being interviewed at length by myself and her life story turned into a book! I realise this request is a little out of the blue, but if you know of any ladies who might be interested please do get in touch. Call me on: 07538 835 340 or email: contactshannonkyle@gmail.com. Please look at my website for other details of my work: <http://www.shannonkyle.co.uk> Many thanks for your time and I hope to hear from someone soon. (Perhaps, if you reply to Shannon, we'll be reviewing a book about you one day!? ,,,, Editor)

Hallo Liverpool History Society! I wonder whether I might draw your attention to a new website that might interest your members/followers – ‘The Liverpool Porcupine [Revisited]’? (This magazine was Liverpool’s “Private Eye” of its day...Editor) It’s still very basic at this stage but I hope – time and PhD priorities permitting – to polish and develop it over time. The (not-very-snappy) URL is: <http://victorianpress.wix.com/liverpoolporcupine> I’m also currently indexing the content of the ‘Porcupine’ between 1860 and 1880 – this is necessarily a ‘work in progress’ but I may be able to help with research enquiries regarding coverage of particular topics or themes! With thanks for your attention ... Lucy Kilfoyle, History Department University of Liverpool . l.kilfoyle@liverpool.ac.uk

BOOK REVIEWS

“The Earles of Liverpool : A Georgian Merchant Dynasty” by Peter Earle and published in 2015 by Liverpool University Press (ISBN 9781781381731) Price from £60 (e-bay)

The book charts the history of John Earle, who came to Liverpool around 1688 and his sons Ralph, Thomas and William. All became prominent merchants in the town generally operating in partnership with others, deal by deal. John traded around Europe and Ireland in wine, fruits, wood and other goods, served as Mayor and went bankrupt twice. Ralph’s business included trade with Russia (which at that time included Riga). Iron was imported from Russia and also wood, for building houses and ships. Thomas settled in Livorno (then known in England as Leghorn), a kind of 2reeport in Italy, his business selling salt, fish, hides and linen and sending sulphur, marble and wood back to Liverpool. William’s main business was the slave trade. As a slave ship captain he could earn good money in salary and commission.

“The Africa trade” involved the export of industrial products to West Africa, the ferrying of slaves from there to the Americas and then the transport of tobacco, sugar and rum back to Liverpool. The number of slaves transported was very large. (900,000 slaves were taken from what is now Nigeria between 1740 and the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807.) Often, two or three hundred slaves were embarked on each slave ship. Many of them died of ill treatment. There were few black people in Liverpool though the children of some of the wealthier slave sellers were sent to Liverpool to learn the language. Other black people were employed as sailors. John’s grandsons were involved in privateering (in effect, acting, with government approval, as pirates particularly, from 1788, against the French).

There are glimpses of life at the time – the merchants’ mansions in Netherfield Road, the coffee houses, the library (avant garde for those days), the cock fighting, the horse racing at Crosby attended by 40,000 people (about the size of a good crowd at an Everton game today). There is mention of the dirt and smell from glass making, the evaporation of salt, herring curing, pottery, brewing and copper smelting in the town. A detailed and absorbing read.

Andrew Pearce, LHS member

“Liverpool Pubs” by Ken Pye and published in 2015 by Amberley. (ISBN 978 1 4456 4260 4 and also available as ebook). £14.99p for print copy. 96 pages.

This book is about 25 broadly city centre “pubs” ranging geographically from “Ma Boyle’s Oyster Bar” to “Peter Kavanagh’s”. It is not in the traditional Amberley mould as it has far fewer pictures than usual so you do get more words

per £! It is also an out of the ordinary book for Amberley in that about 90% of the pictures are modern ones rather than the usual 50/50 split between old and new. The greater than usual word content does give the author a chance to go into the interesting history of the pubs and Ken does, indeed, do this with relish but it was difficult to take seriously what is said in parts when the author waxes lyrical about the presence of ghosts in several pubs. We are also presented with the spectacle of Adolf Hitler as a regular customer at the “Poste House” pub in Cumberland St., sulkily quaffing pints of beer alone in a corner. Whilst it is generally accepted that some of Hitler’s relatives lived in Toxteth around 1912, I was not aware there was conclusive proof that Germany’s future Fuhrer was ever in Liverpool. At times the book seems to take on the mantle of being a good pub guide, especially as a fair number of the pictures are of the pubs’ modern interiors and exteriors and we are even introduced pictorially to some of the current and no doubt very hospitable licensees. This book was undoubtedly a labour of love for LHS member Ken but this reviewer found it a veritable “curate’s egg”.
Fred Forrest

“Bootle Through Time” (ISBN 978 1 4456 1511 0) (2014)

“Waterloo, Seaforth and Litherland Through Time” (ISBN 978 144561510 3) (2014)

“Crosby & Blundellsands Through Time” (ISBN 978 1 4456 1340) (2013)

All by Hugh Hollinghurst and published by Amberley. Each priced at £14.99p for print copy. All 96 pages.

LHS member Hugh has obviously been busy writing over the past few years and it gives this reviewer much pleasure to comment upon books written by one of his Classics’ teachers at Liverpool Collegiate School in the 1960s!

Unlike Ken Pye’s book above, these three are firmly in the usual Amberley style, each containing a 2 page potted history of the area in question followed by 2 pictures per page with a few sentences in between. Amberley’s motto could well be, “If a picture paints a thousand words”! The pictures in all three are about a 50/50 split between old and new. I believe Amberley authors have to source (and finance) their own pictures so this can no doubt be a time (and money) consuming process but Hugh has obviously gone the extra mile as many of the old pictures are ones I’ve not seen before. Hugh also uses his word ration well in all three books, often bringing up obscure and intriguing facts.

The books cover three contiguous areas in the north of Merseyside and, as well as illustrating the changes in each, a reading of all three makes us appreciate just how the areas have melded together and expanded over the years, the Bootle book taking us as far as St Benet’s in Netherton Village, to which area many Bootle residents were decanted from the 1950s onwards, and Aintree racecourse.

The obvious weakness in the usual Amberley housestyle is that so few words inevitably mean that those who are looking for a detailed history of an area will not find it in one of their books. The importance of Bootle’s groundwater source to Liverpool around 1800 is not mentioned and Bootle’s success in remaining separate and independent from Liverpool, while the latter took over vast tracts to the east and south of it, is hardly touched upon. Ironically, Bootle’s 1868 Charter did not enable it to retain its seashore for long and much of the areas covered in the other two books managed in turn to remain separate from Bootle until 1974, when all became part of Sefton MBC.

Three commendable efforts, Hollinghurst. Keep it up! (Better than he wrote on my school reports!)
Fred Forrest

RECENT TALKS

Dandy Rats at Play John Pinfold, 12 April 2015

The very first (flat racing only) meeting took place in neighbouring Maghull in July 1829 at a time when the racecourse was set in open countryside. Steeplechasing was introduced in 1838 and a map of the time showed that the course was roughly as it is now. The Grand National itself dates from 1836. From the outset, the race crowd was noted for its rowdiness with brawls and unruly behaviour the order of the day. There were even riots with the police being attacked on one occasion: reinforcements were called who chased the mob around the countryside. Organised gangs of “thimble riggers” would fleece racegoers with their rigged game of finding the pea under one of three thimbles. By 1840, 150 police were employed to prevent them getting onto the course. Other “sports” included a shooting gallery using live ammo, bare knuckle fighting and prostitution – there was a free and easy atmosphere, almost an “alternative reality” that encouraged people to behave in ways that wouldn’t normally be tolerated. As Bagley said – “All rogues and vagabonds went to the races but all racegoers were not necessarily rogues and vagabonds” Hugh Shimmin, the *Liverpool Mercury*’s great social commentator, was appalled at the behaviour of the crowd. He noticed lots of ragged children in the crowd, disgusting language and hard drinking. “Loose women” advertised their availability on printed lists and even wore their own special colours for ease of identification.

Attendances were boosted by the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, especially after 1848 when the railway reached the Aintree area; prior to that people were faced with a two and a half hour walk from Liverpool. By 1856 80% of the crowd travelled to Aintree by train. There were rowdy scenes at Exchange Station and passengers even travelled on the roofs of carriages. By the late 19th century the Grand National was attracting crowds of up to 100,000. Along with “the common herd”, there was beauty and wealth. Men of questionable character rubbed shoulders with the landed gentry – pre-race house parties would be held at Croxteth and Knowsley Halls. Even the Prince of Wales graced the event as did Europe’s most famous horsewoman, the Empress of Hungary. Curiously, politicians were thin on the ground – neither Gladstone nor Disraeli ever attended Aintree. By then the vast majority of racegoers were middle class, reflecting Liverpool’s mercantile community. The observation was made that cotton trading and gambling were perhaps two sides of the same coin. Also it was an opportunity for social climbers to come into contact with the landed gentry.

The end of the First World War saw a record 150,000 attend the National with 89,000 paying to go in the stands. The inter-war period races were patronised by more fashionably dressed women and Americans whose ships’ sailings were sometimes delayed to allow them to attend the races. The year before he abdicated, King Edward VIII and Wallace Simpson turned up. The 1960s and 70s were years of mixed fortunes for Aintree. Owner Mrs Mirabel Topham finally sold the course to local property developer Bill Davies in 1973. During his 10-year tenure, attendances plummeted to 9,000 and the condition of the stands descended into an appalling state. Finally, under the new ownership of the Jockey Club, the course and the Grand National, as well as the popular Ladies Day, have been improved beyond recognition and attendances have climbed to the 100,000 mark for the three-day meeting.

Ron Jones

TUNE IN: The Beatles – who, how and where? Mark Lewisohn, 10 May 2015

This was an extremely busy day for a number of LHS committee members as our AGM was sandwiched in between two talks by renowned 'Beatles' author Mark Lewisohn. The first was for over 50 paying members of the public, who, as well as being avid Beatles' fans, were also admirers of Mark and his meticulously researched tomes (a very apt word!). The second talk was a repeat performance for about 60 LHS members. Those of you who chose not to attend, perhaps thinking that the talk would just cover the 'usual suspects' about the Beatles' initial years of fame, 1962-70, might be disappointed to learn that it actually covered the Beatles and their ancestors from 1847 to 1962 and that it was as much about their genealogies as about themselves!

The first picture shown and what he discovered about it illustrated well just what a meticulous researcher Mark is. It showed the Beatles photographed in 1963 on a derelict site immediately adjacent to and to the south of Stanley Dock. Nothing remarkable you might think but Mark had discovered elsewhere that John Lennon's "Lennon" ancestors had, by a remarkable coincidence, lived in back to back, court housing on this very site just after they landed from Ireland in 1847. John, no doubt, was completely unaware of this. Another photograph appeared to show George Harrison complete with police uniform and whiskers but turned out to be his paternal grandfather, to whom he displayed a quite remarkable resemblance. Yet another photo showed Paul McCartney's dad, Jim, a cotton broker's clerk by day and the dinner-suited leader of “Jim Mac's Band” by night, and easily mistaken for Paul. This is just a taste of what we were treated to and I think all present appreciated why over 50 non-LHS members from all over Merseyside and much further afield (one coming by train on the day from south Wales) were more than happy to part with £6 to hear him earlier in the day.

Those who were there might remember that Mark set us a puzzle to discover why there was an Ono (as in Yoko!) Street off Wellington Road, Wavertree. Ron Jones researched this and discovered that the names of Ono and adjacent Nebo streets all have Abyssinian language connections, “Ono” being a house or food and “Nebo” a place name. Appropriately, there was also an Abyssinia St. there. I then found out that Britain had bloodlessly invaded (but not colonized) Abyssinia in 1868 in order to gain more respect from its ruler, King Theodore. It seems probable to me that the streets were built shortly after this and named in recognition of the victory (as the Victorians often did). The houses appear to have been of a much lower standard than later adjacent ones and were demolished in the 1960s. Intriguingly, Ron also discovered a possible Old Testament connection as there are places called Ono and Nebo on old maps of Israel and believes this to be the most plausible explanation but I favour the “Abyssinian one”.

I'm sure Mark found a fair number of new fans amongst LHS members after his talk (me for one!). He is commissioned to write another huge tome on the Beatles, which he expects to finish by 2028!

Fred Forrest