

# Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

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## **Next society lecture, Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February, after the AGM, (2.30pm)**

### **Meols: The Archaeology of the North Wirral Coast by Dr Rob Philpott, Head of Archaeology, Museum of Liverpool**

The first lecture in the 2013 series will be by Dr Rob Philpott who will be speaking about the archaeology of the north Wirral coast, and the finds retrieved as a result of coastal erosion in the Meols area in the 19<sup>th</sup>



*'Museum of Liverpool'*

century. These objects range from the Neolithic to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and show that Meols was an important port from as early as 500 BC. Traders came from as far away as Gaul and the Mediterranean in search of minerals from the North West and Cheshire. Roman soldiers used Meols as a harbour for their attack on the Druids of North Wales and to control the northern tribes well before the fortress was built at Chester. Throughout the Roman period traders on the dangerous west coast route used the port as a safe haven. This illustrated lecture will explore the evidence, such as large numbers of coins, brooches and other objects which show that Meols was also an

important local market place.

There are hundreds of finds from the Medieval period and also a remarkable group of Saxon and Viking artefacts. Meols' importance through the ages was due to its coastal location beside the Hoyle Lake, a haven on the Irish Sea coast where a busy trading community existed for many hundreds of years. Ships sailing the coast of Britain would have stopped off to pick up goods and raw materials and trade pottery and other items, linking the Wirral to other locations around the Irish Sea and far beyond.

The **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** of the Society will take place in the **Museum of Liverpool**, The Pierhead, Liverpool on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2pm.

The agenda will include the annual report on the society's activities and the decisions made by the Society's Council, the audited financial statement for 2012, the election of officers and ordinary members of Council.

Council has proposed the following for election:

<i>President:</i> Professor J Belchem	<i>Treasurer:</i> Dr A Wilson	
<i>Secretaries: (to Council)</i> Mr R.C. Hull,	<i>(membership)</i> Dr J Hollinshead	
<i>(programme)</i> Dr L Stewart	<i>(newsletter)</i> Mr C Jones	<i>(publications)</i> Dr DE Ascott
<i>Transactions Editor:</i> Dr A Grit	<i>Reviews Editor</i> Z Alker	<i>Web Editor:</i> P Newman

*Ordinary members:* Dr C B Phillips, Dr P Sillitoe, Prof. D Szechi, Prof. J G Timmins, Mr P Young, Dr S Haggerty

Any other business properly notified by society members to the Secretary to Council R C Hull.

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## Reports of Society Visits and Lectures

### **Mr Paul Booth, 'Toxteth Park: A Place with a Difference',**

at Toxteth Ancient Chapel, Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> September. *Report by Fiona Pogson*

Over twenty members assembled on a very wet afternoon at Toxteth Ancient Chapel to explore this historic building and hear Mr Paul Booth explain the intriguing history of the surrounding area. Toxteth, once part of West Derby forest was one of only three areas left subject to forest law after King John disforested almost all of south Lancashire. It appears to have become a park extending to more than 3,000 acres and certainly held deer during the 1520s. Toxteth had come under the control of the Stanley family during the fifteenth century, but the earl of Derby's attempt to dispark and sell the land in the 1590s to help resolve his financial problems ran into difficulties. The Duchy of Lancaster's inquiry in 1604 into the use of the land confirmed that it had indeed been disparked and converted into farmland twelve years earlier; the report helpfully provided the names of the tenants. The sale then went forward and Toxteth Park was bought by Sir Richard Molyneux of Sefton. The surviving plan of Toxteth Park dated c. 1769 shows the straight line boundaries apparently laid out by the late sixteenth-century surveyor. In some cases these boundaries survived the eighteenth-century development by the earls of Sefton and were retained in the nineteenth-century development of the area - Princes Park Avenue, for example.

By 1611 there were at least twenty families in the community, a large part of whom had come from Bolton. The fact that Toxteth was not part of a parish made it easier for the 'hotter sort' of Protestants to live and worship undisturbed, at least under James I. The chapel itself was built in or around 1618, following the establishment of a school, and its first minister was Richard Mather of Lowton who went on more famously to become minister at Dorchester, New England. Mr Booth noted that the early-seventeenth century community included watchmakers, skilled in very precise, technical work. One of these families produced Jeremiah Horrox, arguably the father of English astronomy. The Chapel had an interesting Restoration history, firmly established as a place of worship for dissenters and, at one stage, housing both Presbyterian and Congregationalist groups. During the 1770s the congregation became Unitarian and has remained so ever since. This decade also witnessed the substantial rebuilding of the Chapel with further alterations being made in the 1840s following the demolition of the school.

Thanks are due to Mr Booth for his informative, interesting lecture and accompanying analysis of documentary evidence. Thanks must also go to members of the congregation for making us very welcome, in particular Mr Bernard Cliff who generously shared his knowledge of the history of the congregation, chapel building and grounds.

### **Laura Balderstone, Mapping Memory on the Liverpool Waterfront,**

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October. *Report by Chris Jones*

From the childhood imagination of the dungeons to the life and times of a banana ripener. The richness and diversity of Liverpool's waterfront was revealed to a rapt audience by Laura Balderstone in the October lecture. Laura reported on a project to look at the firsthand accounts of the residents and working people of the last generation of the traditional seaport of Liverpool from the 1950s to the 1980s. The project team, which included film makers, considered a wider range of questions from how memory differed by gender and age (more of the dungeons in a moment) to the use that was made of the abandoned buildings (dungeons, again) and spaces. Questions relating to the stereotypes of 'sailortown' were dealt with. Others outside the team also participated, such as the Women's history group and a gay group, to broaden the viewpoints for viewing and gathering the evidence.

Workshops and interviews were used to gather information. Also Radio Merseyside's Foyer was used with the station asking people to call in, and all the interviews were filmed. The project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Frequently maps were used to stimulate respondent's memories and the team found that the map became central to the whole project.

A number of highlights became obvious during the research. The overhead railway was very fondly remembered, memories of white collar commuters walking anti-clockwise round the decks of the ferries for their morning constitutional were common, and the docklands as a scary and exciting play area for kids – hence the many references to the dungeons, which turned out to be the cellars of the bombed Customs House where everything from the ground floor up had been demolished and removed.

A fascinating talk, with special thanks to Laura for stepping in to make sure that it could happen.

Visit the website: [www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/research/mappingmemory](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/maritime/research/mappingmemory) and follow the mapping memory link. See the small exhibition and watch the video on the first floor of the Maritime Museum.

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**Dr Charlotte Wildman, The Cathedral that never was? Lutyens` Cathedral in 1930s** Liverpool,  
Wednesday 14 November *Report by Chris Jones*

In 1929 Lutyens was asked to design a cathedral by Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool Downey. Downey wished to emphasise the Catholic presence in Liverpool, but his vast £150m (at today`s prices) project was given up in the late 50s, shortly after his death. £50m had been raised but only the crypt built. Was this the folly of an equally vast ego or a genuine attempt to assert the importance of the Catholic community to Liverpool?

Dr Wildman`s lecture explored the background to the project – shorter term problems such as the 1930s recession and the blame frequently placed on Catholics for unemployment. Longer term in the consolidation of the Catholics as a part of civil society with legal rights (which stretched back to emancipation in the 1829 via its centenary commemoration in 1929, and the establishment of the Catholic bishoprics in 1850), and Archbishop Downey`s desire to turn Catholics into an English community, rather than one seen as Irish, with clear links to the English establishment.

There seems little doubt that the project had an enormous impact despite never being completed. The Catholic community of Liverpool embraced the building of the Cathedral and devoted itself to the fundraising with great vigour. This involved it in a growing competition with various other parts of the Liverpool community – a protestant community in decline in the aftermath of the First World War, a protestant bishop keen to remain the most influential Bishop, a council opposed to the purchase of the site. All of which was used to mobilise the Catholic fund raising effort.

The impact on Liverpool`s communities and the wider Catholic one were not the only significance of the Cathedral. Lutyens` design, including its Byzantine style, was to have an impact on architecture. The marketing of the project developed some very modern ideas and would please a marketing guru in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The development of Cathedral branding of everything from cigarettes to tea was quite innovative. However the sale of goods as bigger and better than non Cathedral/Catholic brands could only heighten inter-community rivalries. It seems a long way from the ecumenicalism of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.



‘Contemporary artist’s impression of the Cathedral’

The Cathedral that never was appears to have had a big impact on its times – but its impact on the integration of the Irish Catholic community into the broader community must surely be an ongoing debate.

## Diary of Forthcoming Events

### **Institute of Local Family History and Lancashire Archaeology Society Conference**

#### *The Archaeology of Poverty*

*Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 10am to 4pm University of Central Lancashire, non-members £27 contact: ifhistory@uclan.ac.uk*

This conference brings together experts from a range of fields to explore various aspects of the archaeology of poverty. Archaeologists can only work with the evidence available to them, and although the survival of physical artefacts is skewed towards the wealthy, there is a surprisingly rich vein of evidence, especially from the last two hundred years or so that provides a unique insight into the lives of the poor.

### **Wirral Local History and Heritage Association Annual History Fair**

*Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April, Birkenhead Town Hall*

### **Institute of Local Family History Conference**

#### *Discovering the North West in the National Archives*

*Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April 10am to 4pm University of Central Lancashire, non member price £27 (£22 before the end of January)*

*Contact: ifhistory@uclan.ac.uk*

The National Archives holds the archives of UK government, and for England and Wales. It is the guardian of some of our most iconic national documents, dating back over 1,000 years. Many of the collections, such as the census records, land survey records and some military service records, are already well-used and recognised as invaluable sources by both local and family history researchers. However, there are thousands of lesser-known series of records offering new insights for researchers, particularly when considered alongside locally-held records. Many key resources held at county record offices, such as school and workhouse records, were produced by local administrative bodies which reported back to central government agencies whose records are held at The National Archives. This conference will focus on some of these collections and how the stories that they tell can add a new dimension to your local and family history research in the North West.

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## Research Project: The Early Years of Scouting in Birkenhead

Along with a few other places, Birkenhead claims to be the town where the first Scout troop/group was formed in 1908. By the 1930s there were many Scout troops attached to various churches and institutions in the town. Such was the impact of Scouting in Birkenhead that Arrowe Park was chosen as the venue for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Scout Jamboree in 1929 – 50,000 scouts and 320,000 day visitors attended.

The intention of the research group would be to explore these early years of the new activity from 1908-c.1939. Hopefully it will be possible to find out why Birkenhead was so involved in early Scouting activity, who were the main supporters and instigators of the movement, where the groups were based, who promoted the Jamboree idea, and whether this activity impacted on the town itself.

Volunteers' should live preferably near enough to meet sometimes in Birkenhead. Unfortunately this project does not lend itself to significant web-based research so more distant membership might be difficult, although email communication would be a great asset. Ideally the group will consist of about 5 or 6 Society members. Should any member happen to have particular knowledge of Scouting in Birkenhead, I should be very pleased to hear from them – whether they wish to join the research group or not.

If you are interested please contact Dr Janet Hollinshead at 28 Tewkesbury Close, Woolton, Liverpool L25 9RY or at [jhollinshead558@btinternet.com](mailto:jhollinshead558@btinternet.com).

### New website for the Society

The HSLC website is undergoing an overhaul and will be launched soon, with a new look and new features, including an online forum for short questions and answers and space for short articles. It will retain all the features of the current website, including past copies of the *Transactions* and the Library catalogue. We would be pleased to hear your comments about the new website once it is live.

### Electronic Newsletter

Would you like to receive your newsletter by e-mail? We will start circulating it electronically to members who prefer from the May edition. If you want to receive it in this manner please send an e-mail to our membership secretary Janet Hollinshead at e-address [jhollinshead558@btinternet.com](mailto:jhollinshead558@btinternet.com).

### Subscriptions

The society's subscriptions are due at the beginning of each calendar year. This enables us to run our lecture programme, produce our newsletter and issue *Transactions*. Therefore 2013 subscriptions are now due and 2012 subscriptions in a few cases are overdue!

**All paid up members will receive volume 161 (2012). Can we request that if you haven't paid for 2012 you do so as soon as possible and consider sending 2013's subscription at the same time.**

To make outstanding payments or current renewal please use the form below marked renewal.



Join *The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* - enjoy the benefits of the annual *Transactions*, lectures, events, access to our extensive library and three free society offprints.

To: JE Hollinshead, 28 Tewkesbury Close, Liverpool, L25 9RY e-mail: [jhollinshead558@btinternet.com](mailto:jhollinshead558@btinternet.com)

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