

# Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

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## The Historic Society's 2015 programme begins with two talks which focus on the histories of Liverpool's Black and ethnic minority communities:

### 4th March 2.30pm, Museum of Liverpool: John Belchem, University of Liverpool 'Before the Windrush: race relations in 20<sup>th</sup> century Liverpool'

Following the AGM our outgoing President, John Belchem, will speak about race relations in Liverpool in the 20th century. This reflects the recent publication of his book, according to *The Observer* his best yet, *Before the Windrush*.

Liverpool's early reputation of cosmopolitanism is Belchem's starting point: Liverpool was widely known for its polyglot population, a boisterous 'sailortown'. Through the 20th century the Black population of the city grew, but people moving from British colonies

encountered racial discrimination, were left marginalized and disadvantaged. By the later 20th century, in the aftermath of the Toxteth riots of 1981, the once proud 'cosmopolitan' Liverpool stood condemned for its 'uniquely horrific' racism.

The book, and this talk, *Before the Windrush* focuses on Liverpool's history, but is more broadly applicable: *The Observer* suggests it "tells a story from the Mersey that not only speaks to the British present, it roars".

### 1st April 2.30pm: Karen O'Rourke, Museum of Liverpool 'Gallery Tour: Untold Stories: Black families in the First World War'

Curator, Karen O'Rourke, will lead a tour of the temporary exhibition, First World War: Reflecting on Liverpool's Home Front, at the Museum of Liverpool. This exhibition grew out of the HLF-funded 'Untold Stories: Black families in the First World War' collecting project

Liverpool has one of the oldest Black and ethnic minority communities in Europe, in some cases reaching back ten generations, yet photographs of

Black First World War soldiers in local archives are incredibly rare. The Museum of Liverpool's project aimed at encouraging local Black families to research their First World War family histories. Museum of Liverpool has then collected oral histories and people's stories to fill this gap in the archives. The exhibition celebrates the contribution of Black and Minority Ethnic Liverpool families to the war effort.

## Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015, 2pm Museum of Liverpool

The agenda includes the selection of the new Society President

## WEB SITE NEWS

Those of you who have looked at the 'new' site will have noticed that members need a password to log on to the Members' area. The Membership Secretary will allocate temporary passwords that can then be personalised by Members – as soon as it is possible to do this. All Members who have divulged an email address will be notified as soon as the aspect of the website is up and running. Ant other Members should contact the Membership Secretary with their email address should they wish to join this facility.

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## Historic Society Joint Study Day with Liverpool History Society – October 2014

### Prosperity and Private Philanthropy - *How important was social welfare to the merchant community in Victorian Liverpool?*

This study day included a variety of talks concerning members of Liverpool's trading families, their networks of support and their culture, particularly its philanthropic aspects.

#### The Liverpool Trading Community 1750-1815: Networks Near and Far.

Sheryllyne Haggerty (University of Nottingham) set the scene for the day discussing 18th century traders establishing themselves in Liverpool, and the ways in which they built up and used business, social and family networks to enhance their trade and standing. Sheryllyne described the intangible nature of much of mercantile activity – flimsy paper cheques represented much economic activity, and the system was held together by trust, reputation and awareness of risk. The networks of merchants, illustrated by ever-increasingly complicated network diagrams, provided access to knowledge, credit, and opportunities. These personal links were crucial to merchants.

Sheryllyne illustrated her ideas about the role of networks through the examples of a number of individuals, and she analysed their relationships. These well-selected personal stories represented an elite family; a lower level of mercantile trader; and an individual whose personal networks were forced to change. The last example, that of Samuel Rainford of Bidston, demonstrated the importance of networks, when one collapsed this merchant started over rebuilding connections and re-establishing his business.

Sheryllyne touched on the role of social relationships in these networks, and the extent to which gentlemen's clubs, the town council, and charity and philanthropic events would have been important forums for these individuals.



Liz Stewart



Brenda Murray



Graeme Milner

#### The Mercantile Culture of the Late Nineteenth Century

Graeme Milne (University of Liverpool) considered the different individuals who made up the trading community of Liverpool in the mid 19th century. His paper touched on the elite 'merchant princes', ship-owners, businesspeople running small firms, and the role of women in a male-dominated world. Graeme painted a picture of a lifestyle which focussed on public display – lived in the view of peers. This was considered in the context of religious links and activities, the religious drive for philanthropy, social activity, and inter-reliance.

The attendance at church, balls, social events, and the ongoing correspondence with peers was cited as evidence for this reinforcement of status through social activity. The importance of being seen to conform to society's demands was strong, and was a driver in much of the philanthropic work undertaken in the mid 19th century. This social and cultural context to the work of the specific individuals: Rathbones and Mellys provided an important context to the motivation of these families.

### In The Footsteps of Peter Ellis

A supplement to *In the Footsteps of Peter Ellis* (this time called *The Signatures of Peter Ellis*), in the form of a 70 page pdf, has just been uploaded to the Liverpool History Society website:-

[www.liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk/category/news/](http://www.liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk/category/news/)

It is free for anyone to download, not just LHS members.

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## Historic Society Joint Study Day with Liverpool History Society – October 2014

Two further talks looked in detail at two specific families – the Mellys and the Rathbones. In **'The Work of the Melly Family in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century'** Liz Stewart of the Museum of Liverpool considered the work of two Unitarian brothers George and Charles Pierre Melly. The two brothers had very contrasting ways of working for what they saw as the public good. Charles was a campaigner who sought to establish institutions which benefitted both individuals and society at large. He was behind the creation of Ragged Schools and night schools, the creation of sporting facilities such as the Liverpool Athletic Club and the building of drinking fountains (which amongst other objectives could help to keep people away from the pubs). George by contrast was much the political animal. He was a businessman in the cotton trade who entered parliamentary politics as a Liberal for Stoke in 1868 after a number of earlier failures. His mother was from the Greggs of Quarry bank and he married into Merchantile Bright family. He succeeded in business and became very wealthy. Politically he was at the forefront of Parliamentary activity for male suffrage and free universal, non-sectarian education.

The Museum of Liverpool has on display household



© National Museums Liverpool

items from the Melly's Abercrombie Square home of the 1820s to 1850s.

Developing some of the themes seen with the Mellys, Brenda Murray looked at a father and daughter in her talk **'The Contribution of William and Eleanor Rathbone to Victorian Liverpool'**.

This Quaker family were deeply rooted in the daily misery surrounding them. William (the sixth of that name, 1819-1902) walked the streets to observe the life of the poor. He became an MP in 1858. He was involved in setting up the District Provident Society to provide community nurses for the poor as well as educational initiatives such as Liverpool University College.

Eleanor was left a fortune by William and was able to be a full time campaigner and charity worker around women's issues. She was a leading proponent of the Family Allowance, fought for financial support for women left in possible destitution when their men went off to fight in the First World war. She raised assistance

for refugees include those from Spain in 1938, took up the issue of female circumcision and saw women's self organisation as vital to these campaigns. She went from local councillor to (in 1929) becoming an MP.

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## Reports from Society Meetings

### **Tories Divided: Lancashire and Cheshire and Inter war Imperial Reform – Neil Fleming**

This fascinating talk and paper discussed the severe splits which developed in the Conservative Party in our region as a result of proposals relating to Tariff Reform and greater autonomy for India between the two world wars. Using the minutes of Conservative organisations in the region Neil has been able to construct a detailed account of the control!ticularly supported by the Birmingham wing of the party where Chamberlain was influential.

In the same period Conservative die-hards lead by Winston Churchill were vehemently hostile to Indian autonomy as being a major threat the Empire and the British interest. By 1933 the two issues were seen as linked by Lancashire Tories, and a Lancashire based group – The Cotton Trade League – was applying pressure for protective tariffs around the regions cotton industry. There was a strong feeling that the government was indifferent to the fate of the region. In was in the early stages of this controversy that Ghandi staged his very popular visit to Lancashire.

In many ways the grand finale to the developing tensions in the party came to a head when Randolph Churchill stood as an independent on a pro tariff, anti India Bill platform. He secured 10,000 votes to the official Tory's 13,500 and Labour won the seat. Despite this high vote the pro tariff faction could not bring enough pressure to change government policy and most Tory leadership loyalists kept their seats in the 1935 election.

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## Rochdale Pioneers Museum

Coopography is the most recent temporary exhibition the Rochdale Pioneers Museum has developed. Using their skills whether amateur or professional, we asked members of the public to photograph their favourite co-operative building and to submit it via email or social media. The birth of 'Coopography' had begun!

The process began with an intense social media frenzy with Museum staff using the distinctive hashtag #Coopography to create a buzz on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Press releases were also sent to local history societies, local newspapers and the co-operative press to reach out to history and photography enthusiasts to encourage them to share their snaps with us.

The images arrived within days of the appeal with Twitter and Facebook the most popular means of communication, probably due to the ease and simplicity of sending an instant picture. Staff then began the task of categorising and researching the origins and locations of buildings they didn't know existed, that had been captured by enthused members of the public.

Clare Hirst, Museum Officer says "TheCoopography initiative was a great success as we managed to

collect a wide range of images from a variety of co-operative buildings including stores, houses and factories. A large number of the images submitted were from the Lancashire and Cheshire areas from Marple to Morecambe, Rusholme to Reddish and Colne to Manchester's Co-operative Quarter! Images were also submitted from across the UK and even as far away as France and Italy!"

Jack Kirby who submitted an image of the Bear *Café in Todmorden* said "it is great to be part of this exhibition. I hadn't realised quite how many co-operative buildings there were in the past and are surviving today. They are still an important part of our streetscapes."

In addition to photographs the exhibition is supported with artefacts from the Museum's collection consisting of commemorative crockery pieces with images of co-operative buildings, a banner made by the Women's Co-operative Guild Bury Branch depicting an unknown co-operative building, as well as homemade models of the original Rochdale Pioneers store made by pupils from a local Primary School.

The exhibition runs until 28 February 2015 and is open during regular Museum opening hours which are Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm. For further information go to [www.rochdalepioneersmuseum.coop](http://www.rochdalepioneersmuseum.coop)

### From the Membership Secretary

Thank you to all of those members who have paid their 2015 subscriptions by standing order. As I am sure you will have noticed, the Society has maintained the level of subscriptions for many years. *Transactions*, in particular are great value for your money.

For all other members, subscriptions are now due: £16.00 for UK individuals and £22.00 for overseas individuals.

Please send a cheque payable to the 'Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire' to me - together with the form at the end of this letter;

Or, the Society is now offering payment by bank transfer. Do make sure that the Treasurer will know exactly from whom the payment has come;

Or, it is now possible to pay via PayPal using the Society's website.



Join/continue membership of The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire - enjoy the benefits of the annual Transactions, lectures, events and access to our extensive library.

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

I/We wish to join the HSLC and enclose cheque/postal order for the annual subscription of £16, payable to:-  
'The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire'.

For new members - Please send my list of Society Off-Prints, from which I may select three.

Signed: .....

Name and address: .....

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Email: .....