

# Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire

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[www.hslc.org.uk](http://www.hslc.org.uk)

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## New Style of Programme for 2016

Even a glance at our programme for 2016, writes Colin Phillips, a Council member, shows up differences from recent years. Most lectures are to be given in the meeting rooms of the Liverpool Central Library. (Note that the May meeting and June event will be elsewhere.) Furthermore, the February and March meetings are on Thursdays, and the May meeting on a Friday, with the rest on Wednesdays. Please check the start time of events as not all begin at our recent standard time of 2pm. Finally, the Society's AGM is the second meeting of the year, at 2pm on Thursday 17 March. The April and September lectures begin at 6-30pm, and everyone attending will be able to enjoy tea or coffee and biscuits from 6pm, with time to chat with others present. Council hopes that those unable to attend afternoon talks will be able to get to these meetings, which will finish in good time for people to travel home comfortably.

Council will welcome your feedback on the programme (why not use the website), and suggestions for meetings, for speakers, and for visits. Above all, Council needs people to help with organising meetings. To talk about joining the Council programme team, or send ideas, email [programme@hslc.org.uk](mailto:programme@hslc.org.uk), or have a chat with the president or secretary at a meeting.

The varied content of this year's programme covers both counties, and runs from the seventeenth century to the present. (But where are the medievalists?) Two of the lectures extend outside our counties. The April lecture begins what Council hopes will be an annual series in which eminent speakers look at an aspect of British-wide history. Their broader perspective will, it is hoped, cause members to ask questions of our two counties. Here Professor Charles Esdaile

is to look at the ramifications of peace after decades of war. The May lecture also steps outside the two counties to recall the late Mike Stammers, of NMGM, who sat on our Society's Council for a



number of years. You may have gone to his day school on Sefton church, in our programme. The Society is pleased to support his annual memorial lecture on 'Small ports in the nineteenth century', of which there were a number in Lancashire and Cheshire. However, we begin with two lectures on Lancashire. In the first our Secretary, Roger Hull, examines the career of one of Liverpool's greats, James Picton, after whom part of Liverpool's Central Library is named. At our second meeting our editor Andrew Gritt will talk on **the farmer Richard Lathom (1699-1767)**.

Everyone is welcome at these meetings, so ENJOY!

## Annual General Meeting

This year the AGM will take at 2pm on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March immediately prior to the talk by Andy Gritt.

As always the officers and council members for the coming year will be appointed. Additionally the a finance report and brief report of the past years work of the society will be taken.

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## Museums in Lancashire and Cheshire

In past editions of this newsletter we have carried reports about exhibitions being held at museums in the two counties, for example Oldham Galleries and the Rochdale Co-op museum. In future editions we will be including articles about museums across our area – if you have any suggestions or are willing to write a short piece about a museum you know or have visited please contact the newsletter editor at [jsirhc@hotmail.com](mailto:jsirhc@hotmail.com) We start this series, however, with some bad news from Helmshore.

### Lancashire Museum Closures

If a fire had last night reduced Helmshore Mill in the Rossendale Valley to ashes, the loss of a unique record of cotton manufacturing would be widely acknowledged and regretted. It authentically represents the organic growth of Lancashire's cotton textile manufacturing from the earliest use of water-powered machinery, embedded in a typical landscape and community setting, with superb collections. Yet when local councils cannot afford to maintain such sites due to funding cuts, or even discuss raising cash by selling, opposition barely stirs. Queen Street Mill's case is less obvious, but as the only surviving authentic loom shed powered by steam, it continues the story of the industry from its prime to collapse, again in an a representative and dramatic setting. Both are integral parts of a World Heritage Site, even if it is not officially recognised as such by UNESCO. The tiny handful of other 'heritage' mills almost all face the same threat of being too large for local authorities to support. None would fill the gap caused by closing Helmshore and Queen Street Mill. Re-opening would probably never be seen as affordable, so this is a crucial part of our nation's story we are apparently ready to forget.

Yet we are a hugely rich nation, and the heritage boom has funnelled vast amounts of money into stately homes. When Liverpool faced

bankruptcy some decades ago, the threat to its fine art collections led to nationalisation and investment, which then contributed massively to regeneration. A single Italian painting sold for export can create a campaign that raises millions of pounds in a few months, including public money donated through various routes. But historic textile mills that sum up the core experience of an industrial revolution that went on to change the whole world by showing that powered machinery could produce goods on a scale never dreamed of before, and at prices ordinary people could afford? No such claim on the nation exists, except for the National Trust's Quarry Bank, in its rural setting. Otherwise they must compete with Alton Towers as commercial visitor attractions, or local councils must withdraw care from the elderly and close libraries and toilets. The sums of money will make no real difference to the council tax, so the action is largely symbolic.

For further information on these closures see: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/18112015-lancashire-looks-to-shut-five-museums>

Dr Steve Counce, former museum curator and former Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Central Lancashire.

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## Forthcoming Lectures

Thursday 17 March, 2.00pm

Liverpool Central Library

*Dr Andy Gritt*

Nineteenth-century commentators were highly critical of Lancashire's small farmers, frequently stating that they were uneducated and shunned innovation. The prevalence of small farms, farm servants and family labourers encouraged the assumption that the agricultural system was anachronistic, ossified, and unaffected by agrarian developments elsewhere in England. Although true agrarian capitalism never existed in Lancashire, it is inconceivable that the industrial revolution would not impact upon the small farmers who had much to gain by supplying the markets for both food and labour.

Small farmers are generally seen as either the victims or survivors of economic change and rarely are they allocated a role in studies of agrarian change. Richard Latham provides us with a unique opportunity to demonstrate that the small farmer was instrumental in the early phases of agricultural and industrial change, and through rationality, innovation and experimentation created economic prosperity for the family and a platform on which subsequent generations of smallholders could build and prosper.

**Dr Andy Gritt** has been researching the rural history of Lancashire for 20 years, and completed his PhD at the University of Central Lancashire in 2000. He has published widely on agricultural history and landscape history in journals such as *Agricultural History Review*, *Economic History Review*, *Rural History and Local Historian*. Much of his current research is on poverty and welfare in the North West. He is Academic Courses Manager in History and Heritage at Nottingham Trent University and has been the editor of *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* since 2012.

### Lecture

Thursday 18 February, 2.00pm  
Library

Roger Hull, Liverpool Central

***'One of the most remarkable and useful men Liverpool has ever produced': the career of James Allanson Picton***

James Allanson Picton is one of Liverpool's Giants from the Victorian period. He was a polymath: architect, Councillor, author, promoter of libraries and rose from rags to riches in an almost Dickensian fashion. Although he never became Mayor or an MP or even an Alderman he left an indelible mark on the history of 19<sup>th</sup> century Liverpool.



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### British History Lecture

Wednesday 20 April, 6.30pm (tea, coffee and biscuits at 6pm) Liverpool Central Library  
Charles Esdaile, University of Liverpool.

***Chelsea pensioners and incorrigible rogues: the demobilization of the British army in the wake of the fall of Napoleon***



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## Are you thinking about self publishing?

YouCaxton Publications have been in touch offering their services to any society members who might need some help with a self publishing project. They have recently published *Medieval Weymouth, Growth and Decline* by James Crump, *Was it Yesterday* by A. M. Bown, and *George Butterworth, Memorial Volume* edited by Wayne Smith. which can be viewed at the web pages listed below. They specialise in well-researched books by self-published authors and would be very interested to hear from any members of Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire who have projects of this nature in hand.

[www.youcaxton.co.uk/medieval-weymouth/](http://www.youcaxton.co.uk/medieval-weymouth/)

[www.youcaxton.co.uk/wasityesterday/](http://www.youcaxton.co.uk/wasityesterday/)

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Contact: **Bob Fowke** [editor@youcaxton.co.uk](mailto:editor@youcaxton.co.uk)

## Message from the Membership Secretary

Many thanks to those members who pay their subscriptions by Standing Order.

Otherwise, subscriptions are due now for 2016:

£16.00 for UK members

£22.00 for Overseas members.

This is yet another year when the subscription level has remained constant – a considerable achievement for the Society.

There are 3 options for payment:

✍ by cheque to me using the address and form below;

✍ on-line using the faster payments service to:

Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, Nat West Liverpool A Branch,  
Liverpool L13 3BZ, Sort Code 60-05-25, Account 83199535;

✍ via the Society's web site ([www.hslc.org.uk](http://www.hslc.org.uk)) and renewing membership with PayPal.

I do hope that you will consider paying your subscription promptly as this will save time and cost for reminders later in the year.

Best wishes.

*Janet Hollinshead, Membership Secretary*



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

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