



Number 73

January 2020

Annual General Meeting

The Council wishes to notify all members of the forthcoming AGM. It will take place in the top floor meeting room, Liverpool Central Library at 14:00 on Wednesday 18th March immediately prior to Dr Liz Stewart's lecture.

September lecture report

'Poison is a Woman's Weapon' by Angela Brabin, 18th September 2019

When one hears the word "poison" with reference to 19th century Liverpool the paramount image is of Florence Maybrick, the infamous fly-papers, and the trial. Angela Brabin's lecture, however, discussed a far more insidious poisoning scandal.

Centred on insurance claims in the murky northern suburbs of Liverpool, it was carried out by two sisters, Margaret Higgins and Catherine Flanagan, and a network of both unsuspecting and willing partners. It didn't seem to matter that the victims chosen were young or even relatives. Different insurance companies and different doctors were used to sign death certificates to muddy the waters and hide their tracks.

The persistence of one man, Patrick Higgins, and his inability to accept the untimely death of his brother led to an autopsy in which arsenic was discovered. The two main perpetrators were later hanged in 1884.

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Angela Brabin's book, which is based on this trial, gives a detailed description of the story in the back streets of north Liverpool using the hearing records from the National Archives in Kew, police notes, and newspaper reports of the court proceedings. She invited the audience to ponder whether this really was an isolated case and asked how widespread such insurance claims were in the poverty stricken streets of the north.

– Roger Hull



Gaelic Influence in the Northumbrian Kingdom: The Golden Age and the Viking Age

By Fiona Edmonds (released January 2020)

Northumbria was the most northerly Anglo-Saxon kingdom; its impressive landscape featured two sweeping coastlines, which opened the area to a variety of cultural connections. This book explores influences that emanated from the Gaelic-speaking world, including Ireland, the Isle of Man, Argyll and the kingdom of Alba (the nascent Scottish kingdom). It encompasses Northumbria's 'Golden Age', the kingdom's political and scholarly high-point of the seventh and early eighth centuries, and culminates with the kingdom's decline and fragmentation in the Viking Age, which opened up new links with Gaelic-Scandinavian communities. Political and ecclesiastical connections are discussed in detail; the study also covers linguistic contact, material culture and the practicalities of travel, bringing out the realities of contemporary life. This

interdisciplinary approach sheds new light on the west and north of the Northumbrian kingdom, the areas linked most closely with the Gaelic world. Overall, the book reveals the extent to which Gaelic influence was multi-faceted, complex and enduring.

In recognition of the HSLC's support for this volume, Boydell and Brewer can offer a **special discount**. HSLC members save 25% and pay just £45 plus postage.

Order online at <https://boydell.co.uk/2MGgNji> and use the promotional code BB791 during checkout. Alternatively, call the distributor (Wiley) on 01243 843 291 and use the same code.

Offer ends 29/02/2020. For queries email marketing@boydell.co.uk

October lecture report

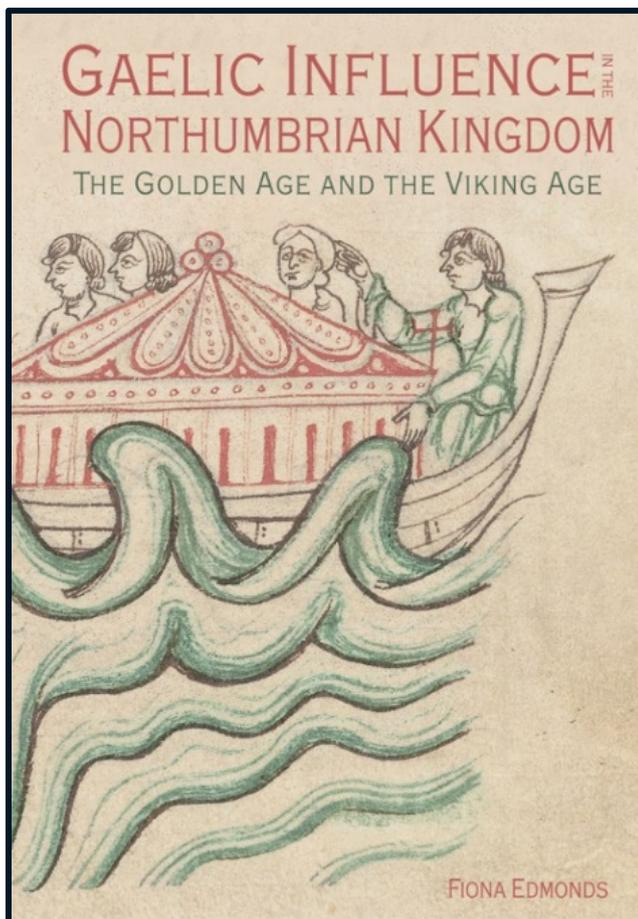
“Orator’ Hunt, radical mobilisation and the Peterloo massacre’ by Professor John Belchem, 16th October 2019

To commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre, Professor John Belchem, a former President of our Society, came to talk to us about the life and reputation of Henry ‘Orator’ Hunt, the star attraction at the ill-fated meeting on St Peter’s Fields in Manchester on 16th August 1819.

Although widely characterised as a conceited, gentlemanly figure, remote from the people whose interests he sought to interpret and represent, such an analysis fails to do him justice.

Hunt did, indeed, come from a gentry family. A life of prosperity and indulgence followed his father’s death, but he came to regret a hasty marriage contracted during this period and in 1802 eloped with the wife of a friend. As a result, the moral convention of the day was outraged, leading to enduring social ostracism which helped to instigate his conversion to radicalism.

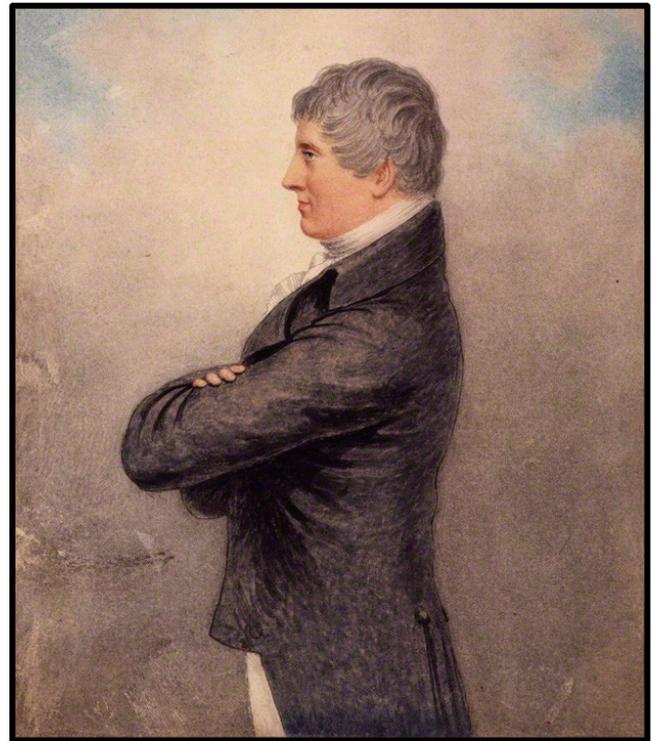
Professor Belchem traced Hunt’s influence in the development of the radical



movement for political reform, especially in response to the hardships encountered after Waterloo, through a series of mass rallies culminating in the meeting at St Peter's Fields. Hunt earned his place as leader of the movement through his charisma and ability to handle large crowds, stressing throughout his refusal to act outside the law and instead the use of non-violent means. His social status was an asset here as many working people felt that only a member of the gentry could lead them.

Following his arrest and imprisonment after Peterloo, Hunt's writings exhibited the vanity and self-pity for which he was criticised both then and now but Professor Belchem suggested that this was incidental to his influence in formulating the methods which dominated popular agitation for political reform until the collapse of Chartism.

A lively question and answer session followed the lecture. It covered a range of



topics, including Henry Hunt's personal life and whether the yeomanry at Peterloo were drunk, as has been alleged.

- Dr Pat Cox

Belmont Community Primary School Remembers

After re-discovering in 2017 that Belmont School had hosted a number of evacuee children during the Second World War it was decided to investigate the events in more detail. Now, with an award from the HSLC, the school will create a memories board for the project.

The project began in January 2018 with a class of Year 3 and Year 4 pupils. It was intended from the outset that the pupils should be involved sufficiently early in the project to enable them to be part of the research process as the school tried to understand the nature and circumstances of this little-known period in the village's history.

One session of about 45 minutes per week was allocated to the term-long project. The materials and teaching were developed by George Skinner - a School Governor and retired educational researcher - and the class teacher, Mr Luke Ainsworth.

The pupils began by looking at the actual documents which had stimulated the project. Through dramatized readings based on the Headteacher's Log Book and the transcribed personal recollections of one of the teachers who had brought the children from North Manchester to Belmont. Guided analysis of the information gleaned from the school Admissions Register provided children with helpful insights into the value, and the limitations, of historical records and discussion of different kinds of evidence.

While doing this analysis the class actually discovered that one of the families who were thought to be evacuees were in fact refugees from Czechoslovakia. This discovery led to the tracing and eventual correspondence with one of the children from the family - now in his 80s and living in the USA - and later a visit from his younger brother to speak with the children.

Four ex-pupils who lived in Belmont at the time of the arrival of the evacuees were also

Forthcoming events

Liverpool Beyond the Brink: the extraordinary renaissance of Liverpool during the last thirty years

– Professor Michael Parkinson CBE –

Top floor meeting room, Liverpool Central Library. 14:00 on Wednesday 12th February.

Galkoff's and the secret life of Pembroke Place display

– Dr Liz Stewart –

Top floor meeting room, Liverpool Central Library. Following the AGM (14:00) on Wednesday 18th March.

Discovering Coccium: an account of Roman Wigan

– Ian Miller –

Top floor meeting room, Liverpool Central Library. 14:00 on Saturday 25th April.

Mike Stammers Memorial Lecture

The Bethesda Shipping Company and its Liverpool Connections, 1877-98

– Dr David Jenkins –

Liverpool Maritime Museum. 18:15 on Wednesday 13th May.

Internment in the north-west during the Second World War – a family's experience

– Dr Rob David –

Top floor meeting room, Liverpool Central Library. 14:00 on Wednesday 17th June.

Blitzed: Liverpool Lives – stories from the exhibition

– Kay Jones –

Top floor meeting room, Liverpool Central Library. 14:00 on Wednesday 16th September.

Please check the website for updates on each lecture.

identified and provided a unique oral history experience by sharing their experiences from the perspectives of being from a village family and what they remembered of school life during the war.

The Headteacher, Governors, and pupils would like to express their thanks for the generosity of the Society which has made the production of the memories board, and its erection in an accessible area of the school grounds, possible.

November lecture

'Princes Park: Liverpool's first park' by
Roger Hull, 16th November 2019

Princes Park was not really a public park until it was brought into municipal ownership in 1918. It was the philanthropic effort of Richard Vaughan Yates – a wealthy Liverpool businessman who was a member of the unreformed City Council and also was involved with many of the cultural and social organisations of the city in the 1810s and 1820s. The park was part of an estate of surrounding houses which didn't really take off during his lifetime but it was important as it was designed by Joseph Paxton (of 1851 Crystal Palace fame) and set an example for park design which was followed throughout the country.

It didn't immediately stimulate the City Council to follow suit, but the design of the major Liverpool parks from the 1860s onwards did follow the trends set down by Paxton. This took the form of the use of miniature lakes, the careful planting of trees, and the layout of grassed areas. The park design contributed to the debate on rational recreation and what parks should be used for and by whom.

Have an idea or submission for the newsletter? Contact James Evans:
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