



# THE HISTORIC SOCIETY OF LANCASHIRE & CHESHIRE

## Newsletter

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*Researching Local History: Your Guide to the Sources*

After a year of difficulty it is pleasing to have the newsletter back in print at the beginning of the Society's 175<sup>th</sup> year.

This issue has contributions from Dr P J Cox (formerly of this parish), Dr Marc Collinson (Reviews Editor), and Dr David Moore.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with ideas, reviews, and research projects for the newsletter via email ([newsletter@hslc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@hslc.org.uk))

– James Evans, Newsletter Editor

### Annual General Meeting 2023

The Council wishes to notify all members of the forthcoming AGM. It will be held in-person at the Liverpool Athenaeum at 14:00 on the 15<sup>th</sup> March.

Please ring the bell for access. The meeting will take place on the second floor. A lift is available from the ground floor.

Further details and tickets are available on the Society's Eventbrite page.

### HSLC online

Don't forget to find us online at the following locations:



Search 'Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire' on Facebook or use this address: <https://bit.ly/3WPYm15>



Visit our Eventbrite page at this address: <https://bit.ly/3djZ3zk>



Our website can be found at the address: <https://hslc.org.uk>



Visit our twitter page via our handle @HSLC1848 or this address: <https://bit.ly/3kVAgb4>

### Miscreants in the Diocese of Chester

If you have ever wondered what your Tudor ancestors in the diocese of Chester got up to my new website (<https://www.chestercausepapers.org.uk>) may provide some answers. The website aims to make freely available copies of the sixteenth-century church court records, together with transcripts and translations.

Reputation meant a great deal at the time, but people were not averse to trading insults in the street. Sometimes these arguments ended up in court and if the insults concerned someone's morals, then the court in question might be the church court. There was a big rise in such cases during the sixteenth century and this is reflected in the records.

The church courts were responsible for a wide variety of matters, not only the spiritual and moral welfare of parishioners, but also anything



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involving church buildings, including disputes about seating and misbehaving during services. We may find it hard to believe that fights broke out about who sat where in church, but it was all to do with social position, as important at the time as reputation.



Child marriages were not uncommon, and it was not only children married off by their parents who later regretted the arrangement, but sometimes children made their own arrangements; in one case a girl offered an apple to a little boy if he would agree to marry her.

Some financial disputes such as arguments about payment of tithes ended up there too and from those we can see what crops and livestock were farmed.

These records show that while many contemporary worries may seem alien to us, other concerns are still with us today, ranging from the safety of family members to catering.

There are so many records that the work of uploading them will take some time, so what you can see now on the website just the start, so do visit and keep coming back as more material is made available.

What is understood to be the oldest complete church court room still surviving in England can be seen in Chester cathedral, and although it postdates the records on the website it is a remarkable survival and well worth a visit.

– Dr P J Cox

## **A. Raymond, *Researching Local History: Your Guide to the Sources*, (2022)**

Stuart A. Raymond's excellent new introductory study on local history sources is an excellent addition to the canon of local history reference works. A useful reference guide, this tome is well organised and structured and engages with up-to-date scholarship from key journals such as *The Local Historian*. It is an excellent addition to Pen & Sword's 'Family History' series.

Unlike older works, such as Hoskins or Stephens, Raymond is alive to the effect of the internet on the contemporary study of local history. There is a clear imprint of the experiences many of us experienced with lack of archive and library access during the pandemic. However, this is seen as a positive, not negative, trend. Moving forward, Raymond explores how online access can revolutionise the work of the local historian 'from the comfort of...[your] study'. Technology should, after all, make scholarship easier, not harder.

In many ways, this mirrors comparable changes in the methodology of university-based historians and emphasises the reality that they affect us all. Furthermore, this reviewer's recent teaching experiences confirm that these issues will continue to affect coming cohorts of traditional-age undergraduates, who are sometimes not always as 'techy' as some assume, as much as mature scholars. After all, desk-based study has both its constraints as well as liberations and works like *Researching Local History* can help all historians address this.

Raymond's book encourages us to think through problems and consider how we can pursue scholarly research through more effective and efficient use of our often-limited time. It is both a welcome primer and refresher for anyone wanting to think about the study of the past in the twenty-first century.

– Dr M Collinson, Bangor



## Is the Liver Bird a Moorcock?

‘As far back as the history of Liverpool reaches, with it is found associated the family of Moore ... the Moores of Liverpool can fairly lay claim to the honour of having been through-out five centuries the most important family of the town’ Irvine (1899).

Randle de la More (born about 1220) was the Reeve (sheriff) of Liverpool from 1246 to about 1307, and every generation thereafter served Liverpool as mayor, burgher, MP or magistrate, or all four, for five centuries. During this time, members of this family were Lords of the Manors at Kirkdale, Bootle, West Derby, Fazakerley, Litherland, Little Crosby, Elle (Lancaster), and Walton. They owned many streets and properties within Liverpool and extended their interests to Chester and the Manors at Appleby Parva in Leicestershire, and Kentwell at Long Melford in Suffolk.

The glittering progress of the family came to an end when all these estates were sold to pay off huge mortgage debts. The vendor was spendthrift Sir Cleave More. In desperate need of cash, More not only married an heiress without her father’s permission, but after the wedding had his father-in-law declared a lunatic so that he could access his wife’s estate immediately.

Sir Cleave More put in hand preparations to sell the estates in 1717 and sold them in 1724/5. The Lancashire estates were sold to Lord Derby in 1725 to pay off mortgage debts worth about £2.5 million in today’s money.

The heraldic arms of the More family of Bank Hall are discussed at length by Stewart-Brown (1911). Avoiding all extra family trimmings, the armorial device of Sir Edward More, when he was made Baronet in 1675, is defined in heraldic terms as: ‘...the arms of the Moores: argent, three grey hounds courant in pale sable, collared or’ Wotton, Kimber & Johnson (1771).

This describes the family shield, being the ‘device’ painted on the noble warrior’s shield to identify him (and would also have been displayed by any additional men-at-arms the family contributed to a fighting force).

What I am concerned with in this note is the crest above the shield in the family coat of arms. This was a symbol that could be worn on the

helmet of the knight-in-armor to identify him personally. It was usually supported on a twist of cloth, called a torse, customarily shown in heraldic drawings with six twists.

The ancient crest of the More family of Bank Hall is stated to have been a moorcock volant. A moorcock is the traditional armorial ‘icon’ for a family named ‘More’ or with ‘Mor’ in their family name (Moreton, Morris, Moorcroft, etc). The More family armorial crest was recorded in 1567 as [my ‘translations’ in square brackets]: ‘...a moorcock argent [white], guttée sable [sprinkled with black drops], membered [when the legs differ it is termed ‘membered’] and watted gules [red fleshy folds (wattles) hanging from the neck], holding in the beak a branch of carnation [a flower; usually depicted as a round blob on a stalk with two leaves] erect, leaved vert [green]’ Raines (1870).

### February lecture

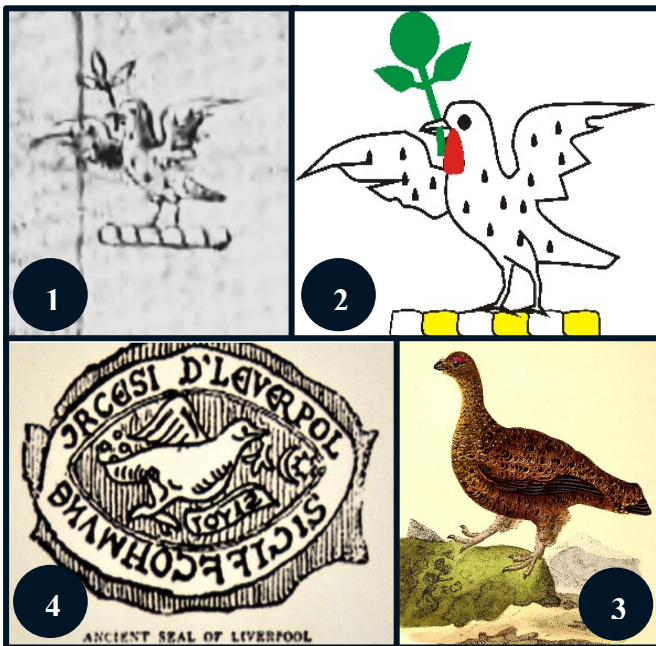
‘Framing the Past: Updating the North West Regional Research Framework for the Historic Environment’, Dr Mike Nevell (Ironbridge Gorge Museum and University of Salford), **22<sup>nd</sup> February at 14:00**

This event will be held via Zoom at 14:00 on the date given. Tickets are to be booked via our Eventbrite page (available via this address: <https://bit.ly/3djZ3zk>). Further details are available on the Society’s website.

The first Baronet, Sir Edward Moore, made his own sketch of the moorcock crest for his coat of arms. It was drawn in about 1650 as part of the instructions Sir Edward gave to glaziers who were being commissioned to make windows for Bank Hall in Liverpool. The original drawing is shown in a photograph in Irvine (1899) (Fig. 1, with my own recreation in Fig. 2, and a 19<sup>th</sup> century rendition of the Moorcock in Fig. 3).

The Liver bird is the symbol of the city of Liverpool; it is a mythical creature specific to Liverpool that really emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though the earliest known use of a bird to represent Liverpool is on its corporate seal, dating from the 1350s (Fig. 4).

The bird shown on this medieval seal is a generic heraldic bird, but the wording of the seal



contains references to King John, who granted the town's charter in 1207, and the armorial devices by the then royal family gave rise to the supposition that the Liver bird was some sort of 'bird of prey' with a sprig of broom in its beak. This is despite appearances to the contrary, as the rudimentary drawing in the Seal (Fig. 4) looks more like an attempted rendition of Fig. 3 than a bird of prey.

However, when the College of Arms granted official arms to Liverpool, in 1797, the bird was portrayed as a cormorant and this is repeated in many interpretations of the symbol, although several (notably the emblem of Liverpool Football Club) distinctly show the short head and curved beak of a bird of prey.

The most famous and accessible depictions, the Liver Birds on the towers of the Royal Liver Building, opened in 1911 at Liverpool's Pier Head (Fig. 5) and their 1870-predecessor, the white-painted Liver Bird on Mersey Chambers, Chapel Street (illustrated by Cottrell (2006); Fig. 6), do not look like cormorants at all.

The bird's species is controversial and has been well reviewed and illustrated by Cottrell (2006), showing that that the bird's 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century depictions incorporate features of the cormorant, sea-cormorant, dodo, duck, eagle, sea-eagle, emu, goose, grebe, heron, ostrich, peacock, legendary phoenix, legendary roc, shoveler duck, spoonbill, and swan.

If it's neither a cormorant, bird of prey, nor any of the rest, could the Liver Bird be a moorcock?

If the early town of Liverpool found itself in want of a symbolic armorial crest at any time after its charter was granted in 1207, it is not unreasonable to assume that the crest already used by the town's most prominent family, the Moorcock, could have influenced the heraldry adopted.

Liverpool has an unfortunate habit of wilfully losing its connections with the past. Referring to its lack of architectural history in his Introduction to Young & Young's *Bygone Liverpool* (1913), Ramsay Muir argued that 'few cities which can boast an antiquity at all comparable with that of Liverpool have so ruthlessly obliterated all the visible memorials of their past'.

Memory of prominent Liverpool families seems also to have been 'ruthlessly obliterated' (aided and abetted by the 10th Earl of Derby, who demolished Bank Hall soon after he bought out the mortgages in 1724).

The Moores may well have been reduced (if that's the right word) from gentlemanly pursuits to honest labour on the farms of North Wales and in the iron foundries and shipyards of Liverpool (as well as those of Belfast and the Clyde, and the locomotive works of Crewe). Although James Stanley, the 10th Earl of Derby, demolished Bank Hall in Kirkdale deliberately, perhaps, to erase the local memory of the More/Moore family in Liverpool, he was not entirely successful in that objective. The More's first manor house in Bootle (More Hall or the Old Hall) is still represented in today's Old Hall Street, and Bank Hall itself is remembered in Bank Hall Street in Kirkdale.

Perhaps the Liver Birds stand as another proud emblem of the medieval More family, symbolising that all memory of them has not been lost to Liverpool's historical record after all.

– Dr D Moore

