

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2016 MEETINGS PROGRAM

21 February	Bootle Through Time	Hugh Hollinghurst
20 March	Liverpool Botanic Gardens 1802 – 2016	Stephen Lyus
17 April	The Japanese Consul	Steve Smith
15 May	The History of Abercromby Square	Dr Chris Williams

All meetings will take place in the Grace Room, 1st Floor, Hope at Everton, Shaw Street, L3 8QB. This is the former St Francis Xavier College building. All talks start at 2pm (doors open at 1.30pm).

NOTE: The May meeting is preceded by the AGM at 1.30pm (doors open at 1pm).

UNESCO's Memory of the World programme

Martin Porter, an LHS member living in France and working with UNESCO, has brought to our attention this ambitious programme, launched over 20 years ago and a sister project to the more famous World Heritage Programme, with an encouragement for enthusiastic Merseyside-based members

to become involved in developing a *Memory of Liverpool* section to that programme. A pdf copy of Martin's detailed letter is obtainable upon request to me via my membership secretary e-mail address.

Graham Jones

Thanks to two

Ron Jones' departure earlier this year as both our Journal and newsletter designer and editor in order to concentrate upon his own publishing business left the committee with a very considerable hole in its skill base. Ron's voluntary work over recent years has been immense and the committee – and hopefully the wider Society – is hugely grateful for all that he has done to produce such high quality publications. Following an emergency edition of newsletter #43 by our over-worked

chair and admin secretary, Fred Forrest, we have been extremely fortunate to obtain the services of Matthew Duddington (the designer of the Society's 'In the Footsteps of Peter Ellis') in order that the Society can revert to producing a newsletter to Ron's high standard. Newsletter #44 is thus the first of the continuing series.

Graham Jones

LHS library loans

If you wish to borrow LHS books, visit the Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Central Library, and complete a loan form which you will find in the 'Return Books' box. All books are on loan for 30 days. Send me an email (allandwilliams@hotmail.co.uk) when you have book(s) out on loan and, if you wish to extend the loan for a further 30 days, email me again and I will authorise it, unless someone else has reserved the title. You will find 'How to borrow a book' information on the LHS website under the Library heading, together with details on its location and Library hours of opening. There is also a section on 'new books' recently added to the library. Remember to take your Programme card for identity when you visit the Library. If you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact me.

Allan Williams

Christmas competition

1. What was the name of the commander of submarine U-20 which sank the Lusitania?
2. What street lies buried beneath Holt's Arcade in India Buildings?
3. In which street can you find the remains of a druid circle?
4. Who first occupied the two houses shown in the photograph?
5. In which cemetery is the Liverpool sculptor Edwin Lyon buried?
6. Which New Zealand banknote bears the portrait of Liverpool-born Kate Sheppard?

The answers can be found in the 2015 Journal. Send your entry to the membership secretary by post or e-mail. Closing date 31st March 2016. Entry is limited to life members and those who have paid their subscriptions by that date. The prize for the first correct entry drawn from a hat will be two complimentary copies of the next Journal (available in mid-2016) for giving to friends or relatives.



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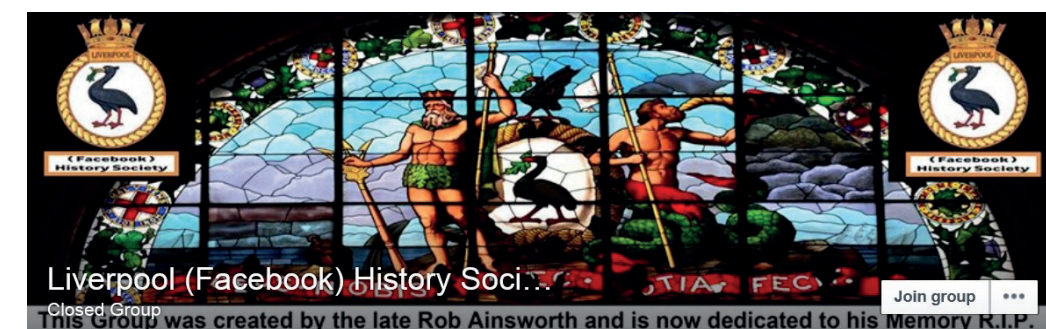
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An online companion to the Liverpool History Society

The Liverpool (Facebook) History Society is an online history forum that has gone from strength to strength since Rob Ainsworth created it in 2011 by adapting the Liverpool History Society name. Sadly Rob died in 2012 (LHS newsletter #34), and Kevin Aspinall and Keith Lloyd subsequently developed the site and dedicated it to Rob's memory. Since then they have steadily increased the group membership, retaining the name that Rob gave it (although it remains not officially attached to the LHS).



Together with the L(F)HS site created by Rob, other Merseyside Facebook groups came into existence such as the Tuebrook History Group and the Kensington and Fairfield History Group which, although successful, have remained smaller due to the more restricted catchment area they cover. In the early days the L(F)HS was itself a small group with just a few hundred members. However, since Rob's death, and with the group administered by Keith and Kevin, it has grown into one of the leading online Liverpool local history groups. With currently over 8000 images of old Liverpool and surrounding areas in its archives, its nearly 6000 members range from a diverse mix of local people to homesick ex-pats living in just about every corner of the globe who are doing some research on the area or perhaps merely looking for a trip down memory lane. From amateur to professional historians, there is something interesting to view and comment on for everyone concerned with the history of Merseyside, and the site has a search bar which enables members easily to discover whether an item of interest to them has been covered by other members.

Many in the group have access to different research tools such as old maps and editions of *Gore's Directory* and they are willing to help fellow members with these aspects or even just with advice in their quest to bring back fond memories of years gone by.

It is a friendly group that always endeavours to help and welcomes questions from members as well as comments, posts, photographs, video clips and stories related to the area.

The group has recently included storylines with photographs on their discussion wall on subjects such as Eleanor Rathbone and her association with the family allowance and the suffrage movement, Jesse Hartley and his Albert Dock and Victoria Tower, Dr Solomon (the quack doctor who made his fortune in Kensington, Liverpool in the 1790s) and his *Balm of Gilead* cordial, the Liverpool Exhibition in Edge Lane in 1886 attended by Queen Victoria, the Royal Liver Building before arrival of the Liver Birds designed by Carl Bernard Bartels, and construction of the Queensway Tunnel opened in 1934 by King George V.

The administrators can be contacted online if problems occur and the site is constantly monitored to prevent any inappropriate posts and comments. To access this group you will need to have an active facebook account. Then follow the link: www.facebook.com/groups/123226627759769 and click on the tab 'Join Group'. Alternatively, simply type into the facebook search bar 'Liverpool (Facebook) History Society'.

Keith Lloyd



Before the Liver Birds



Digging the tunnel

AMERICANS IN WARTIME LIVERPOOL

Meeting report:
Fred Forrest

Beginning his talk, Lee noted that it was split into 3 sections, “*the Good, the Bar and the Ugly*”, and largely covered the American presence in Liverpool from 1942 onwards.

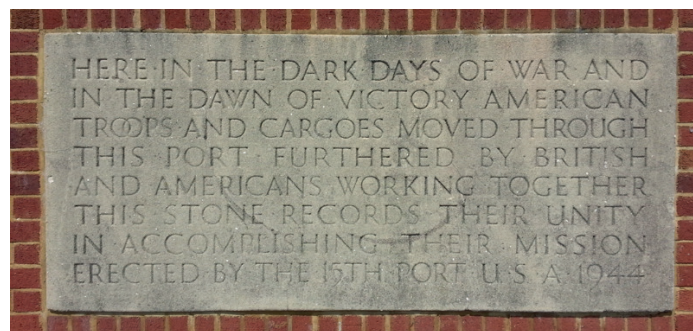
THE GOOD. American uniforms had been seen in Liverpool from early 1941, these being servicemen sent to teach the British how to use American machinery. Convoys of up to 12 ships from the USA often came into the Mersey and about 1.2 million Americans passed through the docks. Many, stationed locally for a time, spent leisure hours in Liverpool, and the local women were captivated by their white teeth and the money in their pockets, leading to many GI brides and babies! Some Americans carried local guidebooks and some with British ancestors even sought out distant British relatives. Not surprisingly perhaps, the British Government’s Mass Observation Unit believed that the American presence brightened up a drab Liverpool.

Several influential Americans visited Liverpool in the early years. Wendell Wilkie, a failed Presidential candidate, visited the Town Hall and the docks and returned home to report to the Lend Lease Committee. John Gilbert Winant, the US Ambassador to Britain for most of the war, toured the docks and received an honorary DL from the University of Liverpool. Most significantly perhaps, the President’s wife Eleanor visited in 1942, toured the docks, especially the fortress-like Stanley Dock tobacco warehouse, which was well used by US forces, and also inspected US troops stationed in Deyes Lane, Maghull. In November of that year she also broadcast on BBC radio.

Much hospitality was shown by the US troops to locals, especially children, and some GIs went to great lengths to keep the relationships going after the war. At Christmas, local children were entertained by the GIs at Nazareth House in Crosby and parcels were distributed there and in hospitals. 1500 children were entertained at the Paramount Cinema (subsequently the Odeon) and some GIs became ‘uncles’, especially to disabled children. US mobile canteens were also regularly sent to badly blitzed areas.

THE BAR. Segregation was common amongst US forces, reflecting the situation back home, but Churchill found that he could not remind President Roosevelt that racism was fascism. Some Liverpudlians did protest but it was significant that black troops were not cheered when marching along the streets of Liverpool. Some 5000 black troops were stationed in Aintree, Maghull and Huyton in 1943 but were outnumbered locally by white troops. One source tells of white troops booing a black one. White troops used the Grafton dance hall and blacks the Rialto (which eventually became whites only) and colour bars were set in the Aintree Institute and Reeces. Blacks were gradually being excluded, and former West Indian cricketer Leary Constantine was appointed as welfare officer but his protests proved to be in vain. The refusal of Nat Bookbinder, a Warrington Jew, to impose a bar in his club cause a riot. Women were criticised for consorting with black men but some locals did protest against the bar in letters to newspapers. One negro put it down to fear of the unknown.

THE UGLY. There were thought to be as many as 40 reported rape cases by GIs in the Liverpool area, with many more unreported. Giving examples of two convictions of US troops (20 years hard labour for one, a life sentence for the other), Lee summed up this as “*the dark side of the US presence in Europe*”.



The plaque at the Pier Head commemorating the American presence in Liverpool during WW2

MEMORIES OF LIVERPOOL’S COURT HOUSING

Meeting report:
Graham Jones

We were most grateful to Kerry for standing in at extremely short notice to replace Liz Stewart who was unable to attend due to a bereavement. The talk was taken from Kerry’s wider PhD project to investigate how oral history might contribute to an understanding of the ‘housing experience’ in Liverpool’s courts, since slum clearance programmes between the 1870s and the 1960s have left the city with almost no archaeological records. Interviews conducted by Kerry and Liz, and which are now part of the Museum of Liverpool’s *Our Humble Abodes* project, enabled first-hand recollections of the structural layouts of a number of courts to be enlivened by accounts of residents’ memories of life there.

The development of court housing had begun in the early 18th century as a result of the lack of available building land within Liverpool’s old town boundaries, a need for cheap housing for the growing workforce, and the willingness of builders and landlords to construct for that market. As early as 1789, housing in Liverpool was already being assessed and in 1802 Dr Currie made recommendations about minimum court standards, but the 1803 Bill to regulate and enforce those standards was met with opposition from the owners (surprise, surprise). The construction of low-cost courts was particularly prolific between 1820 and 1840, by which time they had become seriously hazardous to health.

Illustrated with early photos from the Corporation archive and modern photos of the sole remnant of court housing in Pembroke Place, Kerry provided details of typical dwellings: houses of varying height, frequently back-to-back with the next court, facing each other across a shared courtyard, entered through a narrow passageway from the street, a shared toilet and ashpit at the far end and a centrally located water standpipe.

Typically overcrowded and insanitary, such court housing was home to half of Liverpool’s 19th century working class and in 1864 Hugh Shimmin, a journalist with the satirical Liverpool weekly *The Porcupine*, characterised the ‘old, dilapidated



court houses with their... small squalid rooms’ as being ‘destitute of drainage and defiant of ventilation’. With health concerns remaining a priority into the mid-20th century, contemporary accounts – frequently produced by commentators with a

GEORGE STUBBS: LIVERPOOL MASTER

Meeting report:
Graham Jones

Whilst paintings by George Stubbs – Liverpool’s greatest artist – are well represented in the 18th century room at the Walker Art Gallery, and examples of his experiments in painting with enamels on earthenware can be seen in the Walker and Lady Lever Art Galleries, his life in the North West is curiously less well documented. Julie’s talk brought this much-needed history to our attention in a fascinating and well illustrated talk. Although the account was inevitably qualified with a number of ‘possibilities’ – such is the uncertainty surrounding several of the aspects of Stubbs’ Liverpool career – it was clear that her careful research had also enabled Julie to question the reliability of some of the details in a number of biographies, particularly the anecdotal account by Stubbs’ friend and fellow artist Ozias Humphry.

Stubbs (1724-1806) came from a family of curriers, living and working in the old business area around Dale Street and Old Hall Street, and biographers have speculated where he might have been taught. Julie’s research suggests that it is likely that he was sent by his father to be educated at William Smith’s Independent School on Redcross Street where not only accountancy and bookkeeping were taught (important if he was being prepared to take over his father’s business) but also the geometry and science which would later prove to have been essential to the young man in his preference to become an artist. This possibility is reinforced by the fact that a surgeon, Dr Ralph Holt, living but a few doors from the school, is reported in biographies to have given the young Stubbs anatomy lessons and lent him bones to draw.

As the young Stubbs matured, and following initial experience in oil painting gained during a short period at Knowsley Hall under the guidance of Hamlet Winstanley, he travelled to Yorkshire and continued to study anatomy at a hospital in York whilst earning a living as a portrait painter and where he also taught himself to engrave. A portrait of George Fothergill of York in 1846 is the earliest known to be by Stubbs. After a visit to Rome, he returned to Liverpool in 1754 for the birth of his fourth child and to look after his mother until her death two years later.

He then moved to Lincolnshire with Mary Spencer, the woman who became his lifelong companion (not the Mary – of uncertain surname but thought to be Mary Townley – who had given birth to his four children) and it was there that he made the detailed studies of horses through which he secured many commissions and became famous as a painter of animals. A frequent theme was the horse and lion in combat (at least 17 variations are known to exist), and he published *The Anatomy of a Horse* in 1766. An interesting aspect of Julie’s talk was the demonstration that Stubbs often painted scenes which he later copied as backdrops for the main focus of his commissions – the horses and their proud owners.

An illustrious career followed in London and, although exhibiting regularly in the Liverpool Academy, whether he ever returned to Liverpool is unknown. However, it was certainly a Liverpool connection that provided Stubbs with the introduction to Josiah Wedgwood and which resulted in his work involving painting in enamels on earthenware. Whilst most national galleries are proud to have a single item, the Lady Lever has four, and such is their importance that they are currently on a world tour.



From the Walker Art Gallery’s collection, room 5

‘In courts where the sun never penetrates, in alleys where pure air is unknown.’ (Hugh Shimmin)

moralising agenda – tended to label the poverty stricken residents as filthy and blameworthy ‘slum-dwellers’.

A review of Liverpool’s various Sanitary, Sewerage, Public Health and Housing Acts indicated how attempts were made to improve conditions, and how replacement housing was intended to provide for the ‘poorest poor’ who had been faced with forced eviction. But it was Kerry’s account of the responses of ten Liverpool people who had provided oral memories of life in some of the last courts to be cleared which offered a moving insight. Although some unhappy memories were revealed, a number of positive testimonies provided us with a heartening balance to

the ‘mythical Charles Dickens-like existence’ which Kerry felt had perhaps grown up in the Liverpool consciousness and may have limited a fuller understanding. In the midst of adversity there had clearly been a valued sense of community with ‘some lovely fond memories’ and ‘laughter as well as the tears.’

Kerry concluded her talk – the full title of which was *You Can’t Replant Old Trees: Memories of Liverpool’s Court Housing* – by quoting from one of the *Our Humble Abodes* interviewees who summed up his thoughts on the loss of Liverpool’s courts: “*Things now are done in a different way. You can’t replant old trees.*”