

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2019 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

12 May	The Napoleonic Invasion Scares of the Early 1800s	Dr James Crossland
June & July	Summer break, no meetings	
August	Details of the tour will be provided at the May meeting	
15 September	Opera in Liverpool during the 19th Century	Dr Glyn Williams

Meetings take place in the Grace Room, 1st floor of the Cornerstone Building, Liverpool Hope University, Shaw Street, L3 8QB (the former St Francis Xavier College building).
The May talk at 2pm will be preceded by the AGM at 1.30pm (doors open at 1pm).
The September talk is at 2pm (doors open at 1.30pm).



Liverpool Daily Post, Saturday 7th June 1975

The polls closed at 10pm on Thursday 5th, and on Friday 6th the *Daily Post* reported, under the front page headline ‘*Shares Rocket on Yes ‘Banker’*’, that ‘A late share buying spree gave stockmarkets a near £700 million boost yesterday as the pollsters predicted a landslide vote for Britain in Europe. The rush came after the official close of business and gains of around 6p a time were quickly recorded against leading industrial issues’.

On Saturday 7th, under an impressively large ‘Yes!’, the *Daily Post* confirmed that, ‘*The British people have voted by a massive two to one majority in favour of staying in the Common Market. And after most of the votes had been counted last night, Prime Minister Harold Wilson declared that the result meant that 14 years of national argument was over.*’ 64.8% of Merseysiders turned out to vote of which 62.7% chose to remain in the Common Market, close to the national figures of 64.7% voting and 67.2% ‘Yes’.

In the subsequent years Merseyside went on to benefit hugely from European funding – money that might never have been allocated to projects by our own government.

Graham Jones

Britain on Film

The British Film Institute is launching its new *Britain on Film* crowdsourcing platform. It will encourage people to share their unique knowledge by ‘pinning’ locations to an online map. In doing so, they will improve the accuracy and depth of the geo-tagging of films within the *Britain on Film* national collection, and will enhance the understanding of the films themselves, as well as charting the evolution of our towns and cities. To find out more, visit: contribute.bfi.org.uk or e-mail: alexbingham.bfi@gmail.com

Stephenson’s Rocket

Described as ‘a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see an iconic symbol return to the site of the world’s oldest surviving passenger railway, the terminus of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway which is now home to the museum’, further details can be found at: www.scienceandindustrymuseum.org.uk/whats-on/stephensons-rocket

Many thanks to Jo Crist who has visited and recommends this Manchester exhibition.



Undaunted Spirit

Undaunted Spirit is a beautifully produced book by LHS member Phyllida Shaw on the life and work of the Liverpool-born artist Gertrude Alice Meredith Williams (1877-1934). It traces her career from the early days in Liverpool and Paris to the end of her life in Devon (see the article in this year’s Journal). Phyllida’s earlier book, *An Artist’s War. The Art and Letters of Morris and Alice Meredith Williams*, covered the work of Gertrude’s artist husband in portraying the Great War in his distinctive way and included their correspondence and some of Gertrude’s work. It was so highly acclaimed that readers’ requests for a sequel have resulted in this fuller account of Gertrude’s career. Hardback and in full colour, 250mm x 210mm, the 160 pages of *Undaunted Spirit* contain 290 illustrations of more than 120 works, and the Society’s library copy can be inspected at LHS Sunday meetings. Highly recommended, it is obtainable from Phyllida’s website for £28 but, as a special offer, members can obtain a signed copy for £24 (incl. P&P) by confirming their LHS membership: go to alicemeredithwilliams.com for more details.



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www.c3imaging.com

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HISTORY SOCIETY

SPRING 2019

The Day of Destiny

On 1st January 1973 Britain joined the ‘Common Market’ under Edward Heath’s Conservative Government. On 8th May 1975, during Harold Wilson’s Labour Government, legislation received the royal assent for a national referendum on whether to continue membership, with voting to take place a month later. Leading up to the vote, the *Liverpool Daily Post* carried extensive coverage of the views of politicians, Merseysiders and the business community.

Peter Shore, supporting the view of Clive Jenkins, claimed that the plot of the ‘Eurofanatics’ was to ‘build a West European Federal State, a new power bloc in which Britain inevitably would be reduced to an offshore island province’. For Edward Heath, withdrawal from the EEC ‘would be the biggest blow to the defence of the West in the past 20 years’, and William Whitelaw noted that ‘Our NATO allies, including the USA, urge us to stay in the Community’. The *Daily Post*’s Business Editor wondered why ‘in the middle of the biggest economic recession since the war, is industry so sure that EEC membership is something which must be retained at all costs?’ The answers he received clearly satisfied him, one of which was that membership was actually protecting British jobs rather than lengthening dole queues, in contrast to the argument put forward by Tony Benn.

On Wednesday 4th, the day before the vote, the *Daily Post* leader was headed, ‘*Why we must make it a decisive Yes*’, and considered the main claims of the anti-marketeers (loss of jobs, higher food prices and the loss of sovereignty - which some letter writers claimed had already been lost). Interestingly, immigration had apparently not been a major issue in the campaign. The leader writer concluded with the belief that ‘*The greatest flaw of this referendum is that it has thrown our membership of Europe into a defensive context... Remember, for 20 years De Gaulle tried to keep us out of the alliance because he feared we would become too dominant a partner.*’



How ironic that seems now. But we can yet prove him right. A massive Yes tomorrow would be the greatest boost to Britain’s international standing and could set us on the road to a new era of greatness. A No would consign us to the role of a small island nation with no voice in the councils of power. This is, unfortunately, one occasion where the beloved British solution of compromise is not available’. And so, the following day the nation faced its day of destiny with the leader writer’s comment that, ‘If the decision of the referendum is to quit the EEC, then we will be bundled out rather more swiftly than many people envisage...’

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Liverpool Daily Post, June 1975.
Top four: Monday 2nd.
Middle: Tuesday 3rd.
Bottom: Thursday 5th.
Courtesy Trinity Mirror.



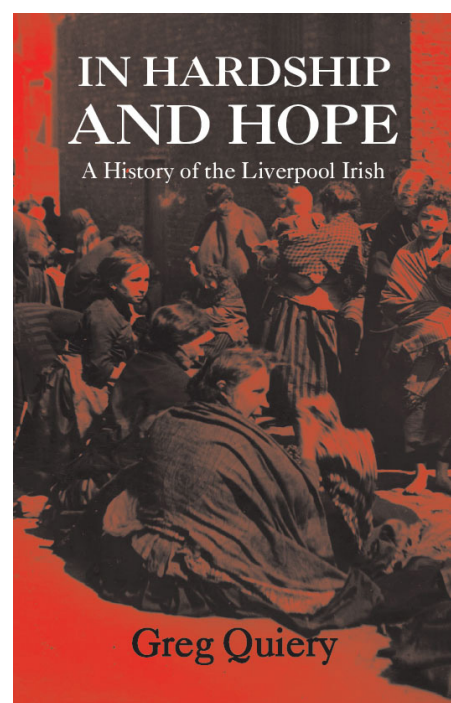
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18 November 2018 - Greg Quiry

LIVERPOOL IRISH. MIGRATION & CONSEQUENCES

Meeting report:
Glyn Williams

To emphasise the huge impact made on Liverpool by Irish immigrants over the years, Greg Quiry opened his talk with a straw poll asking, 'How many people here have links with Liverpool's Irish ancestry?' About 80% of the large audience raised their hands. Systematic migration from Ireland to Liverpool started in 1847, when 1,490 'assisted immigrants' from the Mahon Estate, Strokestown, County Roscommon left Ireland on a ship scheduled for Quebec. They got no further than Liverpool. Nor were they supposed to. It was a cruel scam that ended with a huge number of people abandoned, impoverished, exhausted and homeless. Strangers in a strange land, they found themselves in a city of mammoth proportions, rich and diverse culturally and religiously. The Liverpool Irish population was calculated at 24,000 in the 1840s. By the 1851 Census this had risen to 33,000. Inevitably, there was conflict between the locals and what must have been regarded by many as undesirable aliens. The two communities were very different: the established population was predominantly English, protestant, urban and pro-Empire, while the Irish were mostly Roman Catholics, rural and anti-Empire. Religious hatred was fomented by men like Hugh Boyd M'Neile (1795-1879), barrister and Anglican clergyman, and bodies like the Liverpool Conservative and Liverpool Protestant associations. Spurred on by the Conservatives' electoral success in the 1840s, the local party imposed a 'Tory democracy' aimed at supporting working-class Protestants and opposing working-class Catholics. With help from parish priests, the Irish mobilised committees in Scotland Road and South Liverpool. Irish Nationalist councillors and MPs were elected, the most famous being T.P. O'Connor (born 1848), who represented Liverpool Scotland from 1885 to his death in 1929. (Liverpool remains the only place outside Ireland to return an Irish Nationalist MP.) Socially, Liverpool's Catholic churches provided the Irish community with vital social services. The church stood at the heart of the community, with a majority of parishioners living within a few nearby streets: 60% in the case of St Peter's, Seel Street. Working conditions remained poor and wages static, despite the huge profits made by owners. Industrial accidents were endemic: 41,000 on the docks in 1899 alone. Female workers were badly treated, subsisting on poorly-paid piecework done at home. Women did make inroads into market work.



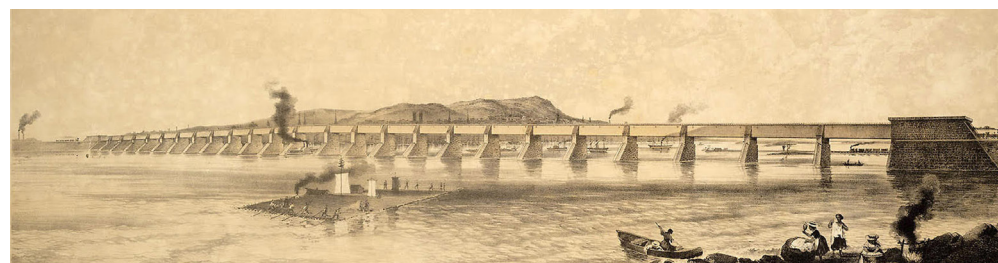
Indeed, as early as the 1850s one market boasted seventeen Irish women out of the eighteen stall-holders. Elsewhere, employment prospects for Catholic women were grim, with those found trading on the streets often arrested for 'obstruction'. Anti-British sentiments reached boiling point when a local Irish committee decided to oppose Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations. The two factions squared up for a fight, with violent clashes breaking out between Catholics and Orangemen. The General Transport Strike of 1911 witnessed similar troubles. The long process of integrating the two communities started during the Great War, when the local Irish enlisted in droves. The 8th Battalion of the Liverpool King's Regiment was largely Irish and served with great distinction. Tensions gradually disappeared. The city council's annual vote to exclude Irish Catholics from becoming Lord Mayor was abandoned; Catholic and Protestant political parties disappeared; and Irish Nationalist candidates were dropped by the Labour Party.

Moving on to the 1960s, Liverpool's cultural renaissance, notably in music and football, helped to abolish sectarianism, and détente between the Catholic Archbishop Derek Warlock and Anglican Bishop David Shepherd served to heal religious divisions. Meanwhile, post-war urban redevelopment and re-housing, with families moving out of the city centre to Skelmersdale, Kirkby and elsewhere, helped to dissolve the old ghetto culture.

9 December 2018 – David Casement

THE LIFE AND WORK OF THOMAS BRASSEY

Meeting report:
Ron Jones



Thomas Brassey was born on 7th November, 1805 in Buerton, south of Chester, and was educated at home before going to St John's School in Chester at the age of eleven. When he was fifteen he was apprenticed to William Lawton to train as a surveyor. After qualification, and whilst working on the construction of the A5 from Shrewsbury to Holyhead with Thomas Telford, he was head-hunted by the Stanley family to manage Storeton Quarries in Higher Bebington which had become a commercial enterprise for the family. During his time at the quarries he met George Stephenson who came to the quarries for the good quality Keuper sandstone to build the bridges on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

In 1829 Brassey submitted a tender to Cheshire County Council to build a road bridge across the Arrowebrook at Saughall Massie. He won the contract and this was his first achievement in what was to be a long career as a builder of public works. As it took so long to get stone from the Storeton Quarries to the Stone Quay at Bromborough Pool by horse and cart, sometimes over three weeks in bad weather, Stephenson suggested to Brassey that he should build himself a tramway to carry the stone. This he did and the journey then took just two and a half hours in any weather. During Brassey's early friendship with George Stephenson, Stephenson encouraged him to tender for railway contracts, his first being the Ditton Viaduct and track which he lost. His first successful tender was that for the Penkridge Viaduct, in Staffordshire, and ten miles of track on its approach. This was the start of a lifetime of contracting to build railways, stations, bridges, docks, warehouses and sewers. After building many miles of railway in England and Wales Brassey branched out into France. His wife, Maria Harrison, of the shipping family, who he married in December 1831, was able to speak French fluently and acted as his interpreter.

Top: Brassey's 1860 bridge over the St Lawrence River, Montreal. Locomotives and railway components were made at his Canada Works, Birkenhead.

By 1848 he had built three quarters of the French railway system and was branching out across the world. He eventually built railways and other public works in all continents except for Africa and by the time he died he had built one twentieth of the world's railways. In all he had undertaken 169 contracts. One contract he drew up was to build a 40-mile railway from Balaklava to Sevastopol to help the starving and ill-equipped British and French armies fighting a losing battle against the Russians. He built this in 60 days and directly helped the British and French to defeat the Russian army in the Crimean War.

Thomas and Maria had three surviving children, John, Albert, and Thomas, who was knighted in 1886 and must not be confused with his father. All three sons went into politics. We see little evidence locally of this great man apart from two streets and a Birkenhead Market aisle named after him. He received three decorations from foreign leaders but politely refused those offered to him by this country. He was a modest man, caring, empathetic, diligent, honest and hard-working who was loved by his employees, so much so that they travelled hundreds of miles to his funeral and openly wept at his passing on 8th December, 1870. The memorial bust of him in the Erasmus Chapel in Chester Cathedral bears a text from the Book of Proverbs 22:29 which reads,

Seest thou a man, diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings.

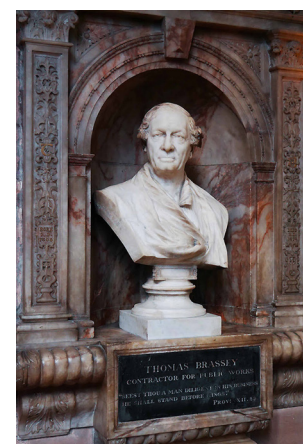


Photo:
Ron Jones.

17 February 2019 – Dr Caroline Withall

THE FORGOTTEN BOYS OF THE SEA

Meeting report:
Sara Leyland

Between 1772 and 1873 nearly 25,000 boys were apprenticed to the Merchant service through the Marine Society. Started by Georgian philanthropist, Jonas Hanway, it originally supplied additional manpower (or child power) to the Navy during the 7 Years War. However by 1820 its primary purpose was supplying to merchant ships, peaking in 1838 with 750 apprentices. So what was life like for these boys? Using documentary evidence taken from the registers of the Society, Dr Caroline Withall presented a fascinating glimpse into their fates.

Average age was between 14 and 16, however during times of war some were as young as 10 and many of the recruits already had prior sea-faring experience before joining the Society. Based in London, the Society predominantly assisted boys from the poorest backgrounds, workhouses and other such institutions. Occasionally in times of great demand appeals to other areas informed Poor Law Unions that for a limited time boys could be sent to sea through the Society. Many boys would walk for several days to reach London to become apprentices, some from as far away as Brighton and Birmingham. However a small number of boys also came from Scotland, Ireland as well as Lancashire. These boys would often arrive destitute and it can only be imagined as to how desperate they must have been to have made such a journey.

But by the 19th century the majority were brought by their parents or other adult guardians. The recorded occupations of these adults illustrates that they were the 'working poor', often in jobs created by the growth in consumerism, advances in transport and other such features of the Victorian age. So why the change? Evidence suggests that this shift in the Society's policy was due to not being able to "provide for boys of depraved habits any longer. They would corrupt the other boys on board the society's ships." The appeal of the Marine Society was that it offered the chance for an education and possibly a well paid career, which in many cases it did. Compared to other child labour occupations, the Society had one of the highest rates of social mobility.



So where did these boys go? Of the 216 boys sent to Liverpool ships, destinations include Africa, Australia, America, Calcutta, East and West Indies and Canada. They were at sea for 4-5 years, however some were only sent for one voyage. Many were sent to the very generous East India Company who requested 'stout boys only'. However many of the Liverpool ship companies also took apprentices, mostly engaged in foreign trade. Pay ranged from £1 to £70 for the apprenticeship term, with a maintenance allowance of some 12 shillings when in port.

Before joining a ship boys spent three months training and were provided with kit, sometimes more clothes than they had ever owned and which some ran off with before going to sea. But overall boys were willing – even desperate to go to sea, even runaways returned. However some went as far as maiming themselves so as to be unfit to work. The fishing ships saw not only the most runaways but also the most death amongst the apprentices, with one poor Liverpool lad dying of extreme frostbite when he was denied food, clothes and bedding by his master. Although relatively rare, such cases were investigated by the Society who advocated on behalf of parents. However there were no monitoring processes in place; once a ship left port the fate of these boy sailors was, until now, relatively unknown.



Marine Society medal awarded to boys who made a success of their training.

'Children's Work in Victorian Liverpool' Caroline's exhibit in The People's Gallery, Museum of Liverpool.