

HISTORY SOCIETY

WINTER 2019

ANOTHER 'LIVERPOOL' VICTORIA CROSS OR AN IMPOSTER?



LHS received a letter from a Mark Anzivino of Rehoboth, Mass., USA enclosing a British Army discharge paper dated 6th March 1895 (plus a pension form) for one Samuel Mitchell, VC. Mark explained that he had found the form in his 'late maternal grandfather's box', going on to say that his grandmother got it from an elderly woman who lived close by, whom she believed to be related to Mitchell. The form, which appears to be genuine and which will be available for inspection at a number of talks,

tells us much about Mitchell's appearance and armed forces career. He was almost 50 years old on being discharged at his own request, 5'10" tall (a crucial detail later) and was born in 'The Parish of West Derby, near Liverpool'. He had served nearly 23 years in the Army and 5 years before that in the Royal Navy. His character is described as "very good" and he had medals for Long Service and Good Conduct, for the New Zealand and Abyssinia campaigns and, of course, the Victoria Cross. His wounds are described as 'bullet wound, left thigh, sword thrust, right

leg, spear thrust above right groin, marks both sides of leg'. This form is signed by the 'Colonel Commanding' of the Royal Marine Artillery, Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth. It has not been possible to find a Merseyside birth record for this Mitchell. The Parish of West Derby in 1845 covered an extensive suburban rural area and was a part of the West Derby Registration District, which covered Liverpool's rural hinterland from Great Crosby to Garston. Samuel Mitchell won his VC in 1864 (when the one above would have been only 19) at the Battle of Gate Pa in New Zealand when he was in the Navy, rescuing his fatally wounded commander at the Hauhau uprising. Various sources record this Mitchell as having been born in September 1841, four years before the person described on the form, near Woburn, Bedfordshire. We are further told that Mitchell returned to England, obtained his discharge in 1865, 30 years before the date on the form, and returned to New Zealand to take part in a gold rush. He subsequently settled in the area, raised a family of 10, 'became a prominent member of the small Mikonui community' and drowned in 1894, the year before the date on the form. The older Mitchell's medal has a curious history in that it was said to have been lost in Sydney when he left it in a sea-chest on returning to England and it did not surface again until about 1908,



Soldiers of the 68th Regiment awaiting the order to advance against the Maori warriors. The photograph was taken at sunrise on 29 April 1864 at Tauranga the day of the Battle of Gate Pa. General Duncan Cameron is leaning on the wheel of the gun carriage (fifth from right).

Courtesy of Tauranga City Libraries, New Zealand.

when it was found in an English officer's collection, bought by Mitchell's family for £70 (over £8000 today) and is now in a New Zealand museum. It does seem incredible that someone would leave such a small yet significant item when going on a few months' voyage to the other side of a much bigger world than it is today. Two letters about Mitchell published in the Portsmouth Evening News in June 1889, kindly supplied to me by member Ann Clayton, only serve to complicate the puzzle further! In the first, a Major Beresford from Eastney Barracks tells the readers that, 'A man in plain clothes wearing a VC and several medal ribbons calling himself Samuel Mitchell' presented himself at the barracks wanting relief, stating that he had served in the regiment and purchased his discharge in 1867. Amazingly, Beresford goes on to say that no such man has ever served in the Royal Marine Artillery and suggests that he is 'trading on public credulity'. In response to this, there is a letter in the same paper 3 days later from a Thomas Pickle of Landport who had served with Mitchell, telling us that the latter was about 5'5" tall, had gone out to New Zealand in 1867 and that he and others would be able to recognise him. Following the drowning in New Zealand, a local newspaper also describes him as being of small stature. Who then was the real

Samuel Mitchell, VC? On balance, it seems that it is the man who drowned in 1894. If this is the case, however, how do we have apparently genuine discharge and pension forms from 1895? After seeing the short shrift Colonel Beresford gave in 1889 to a man wearing a VC, how would an imposter have managed to get discharge and pension forms at the same barracks 6 years later? The forms, of course, might not be genuine. One possible explanation could be that the man wearing the VC when presenting himself at the barracks in 1889 and obtaining the forms in 1895 (be they false or genuine) had stolen the medal from the sea-chest 30 years before and subsequently sold it on. Whatever the truth, there does not appear to be a strong case to claim another 'Liverpool' VC. With today's instant communications from one side of the world to the other, it is doubtful that this scenario could be repeated.

Fred Forrest

Samuel Mitchell's VC citation: For his gallant conduct at the attack at Te Papa, Tauranga, on the 29th of April last, in entering the Pah with Commander Hay, and when that Officer was mortally wounded, bringing him out, although ordered by Commander Hay to leave him, and seek his own safety. This man was at the time 'Captain of the Fore-top' of the 'HARRIER' doing duty as Captain's Coxswain; and Commodore Sir William Wiseman brings his name to special notice for this act of gallantry. Portrait of Samuel Mitchell courtesy of Puke Ariki Museum, New Zealand.

Meeting Reports

15 September 2019: Dr Glyn Williams

TOURING OPERA IN 19TH CENTURY LIVERPOOL

Liverpool...is now the most musical and theatrical town in Great Britain, after London'. So said the 1856 *Liverpool Year Book*. Fifty or so years later a breakdown of performances showed that they took place in no less than 73 venues: 32 variety houses, 28 theatres in Liverpool plus 6 venues in Birkenhead and Bootle. Glyn's source for this and much else in his talk was R.J. Broadbent's *Annals of the Liverpool Stage* (1908). There were no touring opera companies based outside London at that time and Glyn's focus was on touring opera companies' visits to Liverpool from 1811 to 1890. Initially, these were limited: just four visits between 1811 and 1829 increasing to 24 visits in the 1880s, by which time the growing opera-loving middle class also desired quality concert halls and theatres.

A tour in 1811 by the Italian Opera Company, based in London, visited Cork, Manchester, Edinburgh and Liverpool. These tours could be arduous and involved journeys on land and by sea. By 1888, with improved means of transportation, the Company undertook 106 engagements between July and October, including performances in Moscow and twelve performances in Liverpool from 6-18 August.

Main opera venues in Liverpool during that period, all of them now gone, were the Theatre Royal, Williamson Square (1811-81), the Royal Amphitheatre (1826-81 – succeeded by the Royal Court, built in 1881 and rebuilt in 1938) and the Royal Alexandra, Lime Street, on the site of the present Empire Theatre. The Royal Alexandra took over the mantle of the Theatre Royal for drama and opera, opening in October 1866. This was eventually demolished in the early 1920s and replaced by the new Empire Theatre. Opened in 1923, it remains Liverpool's main theatre for opera and music drama.

Other theatres staging opera included the Prince of Wales in Clayton Square, the first Liverpool theatre to present the ever-popular *Carmen* by the Carl Rosa Company in April 1880. That Company also performed at the rebuilt Rotunda Theatre, Scotland Road, in December 1878, performing *The Lily of Killarney* by LPO conductor Julius Benedict. The Rotunda Theatre had its origins in 1863 on a floor above a pub. It was first destroyed by fire in 1877 and rebuilt. Its long and illustrious career ended when the building was destroyed by fire during the May Blitz of 1941.

A new Theatre Royal, on the corner of Breck Road and Breckfield Road South, opened on Christmas Eve 1888 with *Bohemian Girl*, and served only until 1891 as an opera house. It continued as a variety venue until 1923, eventually becoming a picture house, then a bingo hall in 1970, and is now a carpet warehouse.

There were two London-based touring companies; one, the Royal Italian Opera Company, was based at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, the other at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden (now the Royal Opera House). Both were directed at different times by Sir Henry Bishop (1786-1855) and Sir Michael Costa (1808-84). The duo Pyne and Harrison (soprano Louisa Bodda-Pyne and tenor/impresario William Harrison), who founded the Royal English Opera Company, paid six visits to Liverpool between 1850-68. The Carl Rosa Opera Company, formed in 1873 by a German impresario, was based in Manchester and paid at least seventeen visits to Liverpool, mostly to the Royal Amphitheatre and the Alexandra.



According to Broadbent's *Annals*, the most popular operas were: Balfe's *Bohemian Girl* (6 productions), Wallace's *Maritana* (6), Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (4), Bishop's *Guy Mannering* (3), Donizetti's *La Sonnambula* (3). Probably, most 'foreign' operas were performed in English.

Liverpool did not have to wait long to see new operas: *Madame Favart* (Offenbach) was performed in Liverpool 15 months after its premiere, *Manon* (Massenet) came less than a year after its premiere, *Diarmid* (Hamish McCunn). 6 months post-premiere. *Moro* (Balfe) just 15 weeks after London.

Liverpool welcomed numerous top quality singers including renowned soprano Guiditta Pasta, Anna Bishop, an English soprano who 'sang on all six inhabited continents', Adelina Patti, the Spanish coloratura soprano, and Liverpool-born Sir Charles Santley, the most eminent English baritone and male concert singer of the Victorian era.

Glyn ended his talk by emphasising that Liverpool's experience of opera was typical of many towns and cities visited by operatic touring companies during this period, especially in the growing north and midlands.

Like her near-contemporary, Jenny Lind (The Swedish Nightingale) who performed six times in Liverpool, Spanish-born Adelina Patti (1843-1919) had a sparkling career in the major cities of America and Europe, including Liverpool, where she performed with the Italian Opera Company in September, 1861. At her peak she could command \$5,000 per concert and could easily afford to employ a personal domestic staff of up to 40. She retired to Wales and lived in considerable splendour at Craig-y-Nos Castle in the Brecon Beacons. Portrait by Franz Xaver Winterhalter 1862. Public domain, courtesy of Wikipedia.

13 November 2019 – Martin Strauss

LIVERPOOL-BORN ARCHITECT ALFRED WATERHOUSE (1830-1905)

A big 'thank you' is due to LHS member Martin Strauss who kindly stepped in at extremely short notice when the scheduled speaker had to cancel. The following is based on Martin's own notes for the talk.

The eldest of eight children, Alfred Waterhouse came from a wealthy Quaker family. Grandfather Nicholas and father Alfred made their money as cotton-brokers and lived in style in Everton. The family moved to Elmswood Road, Aigburth, in 1830, where Alfred was born in July of that year. He was educated at the Quaker School, Tottenham, and in 1848 was apprenticed to the Manchester firm of architects, Alley and Lane. This was followed by an extensive European tour in 1853-4. He then set up his own practice in Manchester in 1854, with clientele initially drawn from Quaker family and circles. His early works were in Manchester and the Lake District and embraced designs for private houses, warehouses, banks, churches, chapels and schools. His breakthrough design was for Manchester Assizes in 1859 (sadly demolished in 1957). He moved his practice to London 1865 but continued to work extensively in Manchester, Liverpool and Darlington (family connections) and elsewhere in the north.

Meeting Reports

His major commissions included Manchester Town Hall (1868), Eaton Hall (1869, demolished 1960), Natural History Museum, described as a 'cathedral to nature' (1872), Prudential Assurance Company offices (from 1876 onwards), Universities in Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Oxford and Cambridge. He also designed Strangeways prison, hospitals, hotels, commercial premises and churches.

Waterhouse built for aristocrats, MPs, councils, institutions, charities, industrialists, bankers and Nonconformist movements. He practiced from 1854 to 1901 and was the sole partner until 1890. Probably the most successful of all Victorian architects, he designed some 500 buildings and other works, mostly in England and equally spread between the north and south. He also designed book-covers, sculpture, furniture, stained glass, tiles, plaques, memorials, fountains, sanitary ware, house fittings and wrought-iron work. To add to his seemingly endless talents he was also a highly talented watercolourist and Royal Academician, exhibiting 78 pictures between 1857 and 1901.

He became a Fellow of the Royal Academy of British Architects (FRIBA) in 1861 and was President from 1888-1891. He won gold medals in London, Chicago, Milan and Paris and assessed over sixty architectural competitions

Waterhouse was renowned for his Neo-Gothic style (especially in red brick and terracotta), but he built in many styles with different surface-claddings. He was a prime example of the Victorian work ethic and provided strong, functional and affordable buildings, adopting 'modern' technology and materials and used the best specialists in their fields for stained glass, iron-work, carving, tiles etc.

Martin listed some of his Liverpool buildings well-known to LHS members, including: University of Liverpool (6 new buildings and 1 adapted building), Liverpool Seamen's Orphans Institution (Newsham Park), North Western Hotel (Lime Street), The Royal Infirmary (Brownlow Hill), Prudential Assurance (Dale Street), Pearl Assurance (St John's Lane), the Turner Memorial Home (Dingle), New Heys mansion, Allerton Priory, Mossley House (later incorporated into Mossley Hill Hospital, 39 Catharine Street, and Gisburne, 1 Devonshire Road which he built in 1863 for George Lyster, Liverpool's Dock Engineer. There were additions to several other private houses, all now demolished.

See also the 12-page article 'The Waterhouse Heritage in and about Liverpool' by Fred Forrest in LHS Journal No. 13 (2014).



Manchester Town Hall, 1877. Watercolour by Alfred Waterhouse R.A.
Courtesy Royal Academy.

17 November 2019 – Hugh Gault

LIVERPOOL LIVES AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

LHS member Hugh Gault's talk was based on his recently-published book *1900 Liverpool Lives: The Threads That Bind* in which the lives of people who lived in Blackstock Street in Vauxhall were contrasted with those in Courtenay Road, Crosby. The latter were exemplars of Liverpool's mercantile and commercial standing whereas those in Blackstock Street were those who made the city itself function. Hugh's talk was largely about Blackstock Street and aspects of people's lives there at the turn of the 20th century. The 1901 population of Liverpool was about 716,000, some 40% more than today's 500,000 or so, and on a much smaller footprint. In other words, more overcrowding, larger family size, even more unstable unemployment and no welfare safety net: a hand to mouth existence for many, most of whom were not either dockers or one of Liverpool's 5,000 carters. Yet also a city of the very wealthy, a contrast that was often remarked on. In the 1901 Census, for example, domestic service was the single most frequent occupation for either sex, reinforcing this Liverpool class divide. There were links between Blackstock Street and Courtenay Road in Crosby, not least through the connection with the soap firms. It was for this reason that Hugh chose Blackstock Street as the contrast.



Blackstock Street/junction with Vauxhall Road, 2018. The Eagle pub is virtually the only survivor from 1900. The blue sheds mark where Blackstock Street Gardens once stood.
Courtesy Google Street View.

The key questions for Blackstock Street then must have been whether it would rise on the Liverpool tide or sink back, or perhaps how long the rising tide would last in Liverpool and the extent to which Blackstock Street would be dependent on it. In 1901 there were nine factories in Blackstock Street: •Tyson, Richmond and Jones: soap, as was Gossage (HQ in Widnes) •Palatine Engineering: water meters and much else •Irving, Son & Jones: millers •E&W Pearson: oil mill •Liverpool Vesta Cake Company: cattle cake •Liverpool Saccharine Company: sugars for brewing •RG Tickle & Son: wood importers •Smyth Bros: tannery, as well as twelve houses in two courts and fifteen houses fronting the street.

The unhealthy and overcrowded housing conditions were discussed in some detail as were some of the other indicators of poverty and the impoverished existence that many led. There were two pubs, one of which *The Eagle* is still there today having opened in the 1850s on the site of the Appleby brewery. The other, *The Green Flag*, was demolished soon

after WWI to make way for the civic housing complex, Blackstock Street Gardens, which was itself demolished in the 1960s. Father Nugent took over the Bevington Bush baths in the 1890s to set up St Saviour's refuge for 'fallen' women forced out after the 1890/91 police purge of 300 brothels. The lives of a few of the families living in Blackstock Street were discussed in more detail.

Conclusions were reached about •inequality •poverty as evidenced by, for example, pawnbrokers, pubs, police clothing handouts •religion/faith and charity •choice •strong women and stability It may be that, overall, "Change is effected, and history made, by a combination of will and circumstances" as Irish writer Tim Pat Coogan put it. Hugh concluded his talk by pointing out that the impact of luck and good fortune should not be underestimated, both in terms of where people start and the effort they put in along the way.

Our best thanks are due to Cynthia Stonall and Kim Rawlinson, our new Programme Secretary, for producing this splendid programme of talks for 2020. If that were not enough Kim has also introduced, for the first time, a special Summer programme of guided tours.

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2020 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

January	NO MEETING	
9 February	Womenhood, Vice, Urban Immorality & Social Control in Liverpool c1900-76	Dr Samantha Caslini
8 March	Equestrian Drama in Liverpool	John Pinfold
19 April	Cinderella Soldiers – Liverpool's Irish Fighting on the Western Front	Colin Cousins
17 May	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING then talk: Rich & Poor in Victorian Liverpool	Roger Hull
16 June	NO MEETING: however, a guided tour of The Mansion House, Calderstones Park has been arranged. Further details to be announced.	
July	NO MEETING however, a guided walking tour on the theme of Liverpool and the Slave Trade, led by Laurence Westgaph, is being arranged – details will be published in the next Newsletter.	
18 August	NO MEETING: however, a guided tour of Knowsley Hall for a maximum of 30 has been arranged at a cost of £17.75 (inclusive of transportation from Liverpool City Centre and tea and biscuits). Further details to be announced.	
6 September	The Kirkdale Prison Hangings	Martin Baggoley
11 October	Dark Medicine in the Era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade	Dr Stephen Kenny
15 November	Films Made in Liverpool	Prof Julia Hallam
6 December	The History of Liverpool Tidal Institute.	Prof Phil Woodworth

All meetings start at 2pm (doors open 1.30pm)

with the exception of the May Annual General Meeting, which starts at 1.30pm (doors open at 1.00pm)

All meetings will take place in the Grace Room, 1st Floor, Hope at Everton, Shaw Street.

This is the former St Francis Xavier College building.

Any changes to the above programme will be announced on the Society's website and in future Newsletters.

Help! A message from the Chairman, Fred Forrest: "We have not yet managed to appoint a new editor for our newsletter. The reports of the talks are almost entirely from the speakers' own (edited) notes. This is because we are struggling to find volunteers to take 'proper' notes at talks and contribute items for the newsletters. Ron Jones has kindly stepped in to produce this edition of the Newsletter. We also usually have a similar lack of volunteers to help serve refreshments at talks and there is a danger that this service may not be available at future meetings. Without more volunteers coming forward to get involved in all aspects of the Society's work, it is not going to survive let alone progress. I am pleased to report, however, that member David Hearn and his son Richard, who has experience in graphics and printing, have stepped forward to edit our next journal. Remember, it is YOUR society so please get in touch with me if you feel you can help in any way.

Books for sale Our new Journal Editor has produced and is offering for sale facsimile copies of two Liverpool books that have been long out of print. He'll have them for sale at the December talk...or you can contact him direct by email: davidp.hearn@talktalk.net They are: William Enfield's – *History of Liverpool 1773*. A4. 116 pages. £15 (post-free) & *Priestley and Sons: A Merseyside Photographers Images of Merseyside 1880-1930*. A4. 87 pages, 84 photos, £12-50 (post-free)

Worth a peep?

An English lady's Wardrobe at the Walker Art Gallery until 1st March 2020. This major exhibition offers new insight into Liverpool's wealthy Tinne family, showcasing clothing and accessories purchased by Mrs Emily Margaret Tinne (1886-1966). It also features costumes belonging to her children as well as outfits worn by the family's servants. Admission charges apply (NML members free).



Chairman and Administration Secretary: Fred Forrest (fred_forrest@hotmail.com) ● **Membership Secretary and Webmaster:** Keith Lloyd (membershipsecretary@liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk) ● **Programme Secretary:** Kim Rawlinson (talks@liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk) ● **Treasurer:** Fay Carter (treasurer@liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk) ● **Librarian:** Allan Williams (librarian@liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk) ● **Postal Correspondence:** Fred Forrest. LHS Administration Secretary, 32 Rugby Drive, Aintree Village, Liverpool L10 8JU. ● **LHS email:** enquiries@liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk

LHS would like to thank C3imaging, Liverpool, for generously printing this issue of the newsletter at a reduced cost to the Society. Visit the company's website for full details of the wide range of photographic, digital printing, exhibition, display and signage services it offers – www.c3imaging.com



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