

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2017 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

15 October	Lewis's Department Stores	Arnold Lewis
19 November	Affrays, tussles and bloodwipes in Prescot at the time of the Civil War	Nigel Gilmour QC
10 Dec	Dark Medicine in the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade	Dr Stephen Kenny

Meetings will take place at 2pm in the ground floor lecture room 001, Cornerstone Building, Hope at Everton, Shaw Street, L3 8QB (the former St Francis Xavier College building). Doors open at 1.30pm.



U-Boats appeared near the Isle of Man and approached the Mersey Estuary just prior to D-Day, but were tracked and targeted from Derby House. Even so, more than 2000 British and Allied ships were sunk in the North Atlantic during the war.

In 1945, as the need for surveillance of the Western Approaches reached its end, some of the rooms in the bunker were opened to the public for the first time. For a week in July that year, six parties per day consisting of 100 people in each, were allowed to venture underground to see for themselves something of the secret HQ below the streets; no doubt they listened with amazement to the explanatory talks given by naval and RAF personnel. Entry was free, but a collection was made in aid of service charities.

On 15 August 1945 the bunker was closed, and the building was mostly converted back to office space. But the reinforced central bunker proved to be too difficult and expensive to demolish, and remained in suspended animation for half a century; in 1993 it was restored and opened to the public, probably the most important wartime structure still surviving in Liverpool. It contains innumerable items of authentic wartime equipment, from switchboards and telephones to bunk beds, gas masks and ration books. Under new management since 2016, the museum provides a realistic and moving depiction of the crucial wartime role played by this corner of our city. A Liverpool History Society visit in 2018 is being organised.

Ann Clayton

Library Additions

Members will be aware of a generous donation of books by Veronica Gibson. Earlier this year, several Committee Members met at Fred's home to sort through in the region of 1000 items – mainly books, but also pamphlets, magazines and other ephemera. Eventually about 300 books were chosen as useful additions to the Society's Library, which have now been catalogued, and are on the shelves for you to browse.

The collection covers a wide range including general history, specific places such as Garston, West Derby and Prescot, and specialist topics such as transport, politics, the slave trade, maritime history, the arts and biographies. Asterisks (*) mark each item, for ease of use.

There are some wonderful gems too – the 19th century account of a trader in East Africa; notes about Liverpool and the Castle published in 1910; a pamphlet on the new Cunard Building; two interesting books on the building of Liverpool Cathedral; and political comment from Derek Hatton and Margaret Simey.

I strongly recommend that you look at the catalogue on line to see if there are any books that are of interest to you. The Library now has around 670 books together with five box files of pamphlets and other slim volumes available for you to borrow at the Liverpool Central Library.

Allan Williams

Schools Prizes - Postponement

I am disappointed to have to let you know that the committee member who was going to organize the annual essay competition prizes for Merseyside youngsters in the names of deceased members Veronica Gibson, Brenda Murray and Russell Molyneux-Johnson that were announced in the last newsletter is no longer willing / able to do this.

We have no option, therefore, but to postpone the start of the competitions until we find someone else to take over and would appeal to members to consider taking up the baton with this.

Fred Forrest

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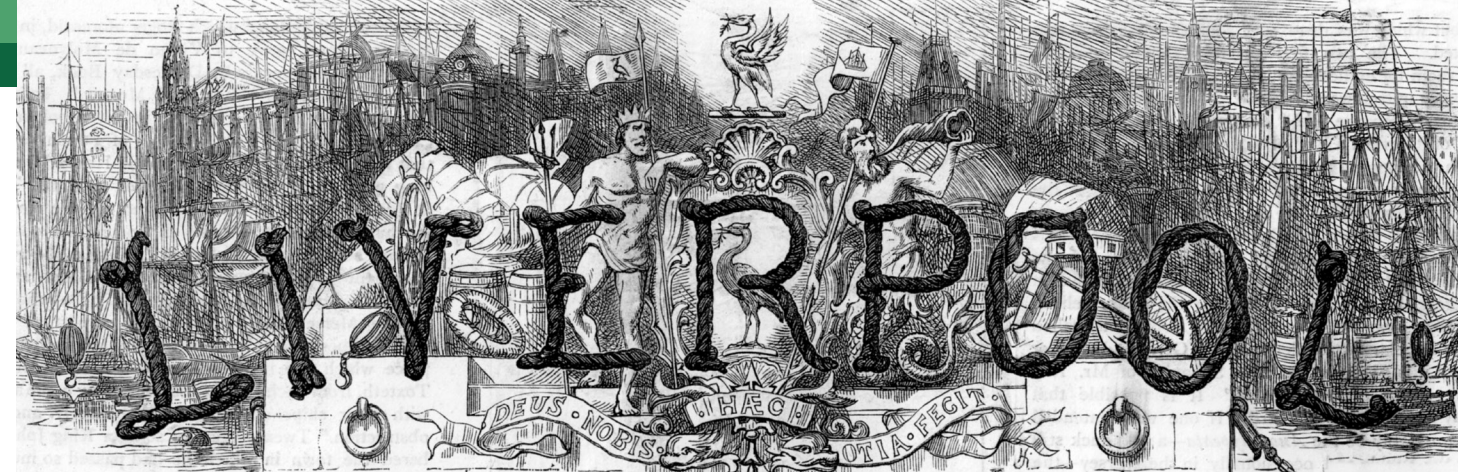
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LHS would like to thank C3imaging, Liverpool, for generously printing this issue at a reduced cost to the Society. Visit the company's website for full details of the wide range of photographic, digital printing, exhibition, display and signage services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

www.c3imaging.com

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HISTORY SOCIETY

SUMMER 2017

The Western Approaches Museum

During the Second World War the port of Liverpool, already established as hugely important for Britain's peacetime mercantile marine, became a crucial centre of operations for our national survival. It was the main port of entry for imports of fuel, food and raw materials, as well as for the support of naval vessels patrolling the Irish Sea and the North Atlantic, and for the arrival of thousands of overseas military personnel.

By 1941 both sides of the Mersey and its hinterland had been hit by seemingly endless bombing raids, which had begun in August 1940 when Prenton, Birkenhead suffered the first Merseyside casualties. The sea lanes bringing convoys of ships to Britain's west coast from the Atlantic and particularly round the north coast of Ireland were known as the Western Approaches, and were under enormous threat from U-boats hunting in those areas. At the start of the war, these sea lanes were monitored and controlled from Plymouth, but Plymouth was clearly too vulnerable to attack from enemy forces based in Occupied France, so on 7 February 1941 Area Combined Operations (RAF and Royal Navy) were moved, at Churchill's insistence, to Derby House in Rumford Street.

This building, which had previously been a somewhat nondescript 1930s-built office block, was described in the press at the time as one of three sections of a "skyscraper" block of offices planned for the Exchange Flags area; housing solicitors' offices and the like, its electric lifts were the fastest in Britain. To accommodate Combined Ops, the building was reinforced with the construction of a bomb- and gas-proof "bunker" in the basement; the roof at ground level was seven feet thick, the walls were three feet deep, and in total there were 100 rooms covering 50,000 square feet. Churchill himself frequently visited the "Citadel" or "Fortress" as it became known; he said after the war that the U-boat threat was what worried him most - victory in this "Battle of the Atlantic" was vital to Britain's survival.

In the main Operations or Maps Room, fifty Wrens would be on duty, 24 hours a day, monitoring Allied ships' positions and enemy vessels' movements on a huge display board. Visitors can see this room exactly as it would have been at the height of the battle; other rooms on view include the Switchboard/Signal and Phone Exchange (a line linked directly to the War Cabinet, in London,

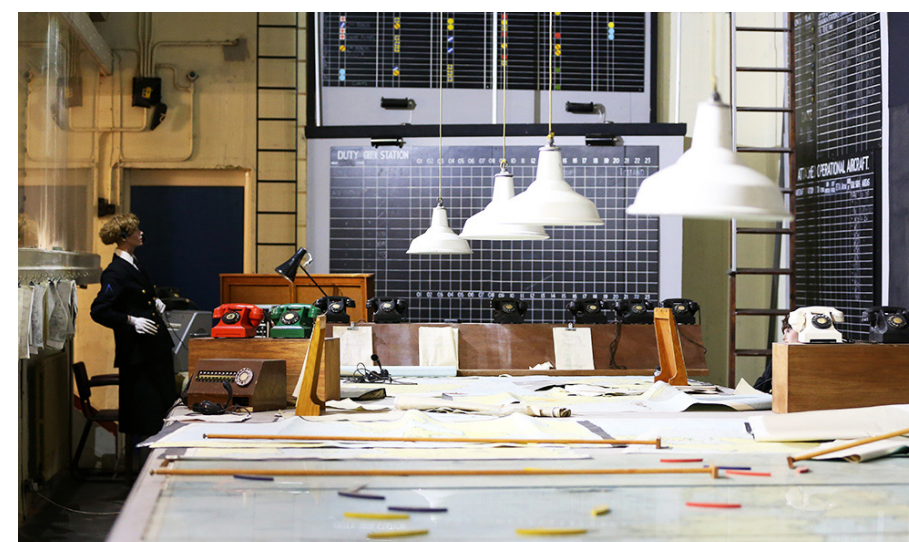


may still be seen), and the Codes and Ciphers Room which housed an Enigma Machine, whose secrets were being revealed at Bletchley Park. From these two rooms the hunting and final sinking of the *Bismarck* were directed, and the movements of innumerable surface raiders and blockade-runners were plotted, enabling "necessary action" to be taken. So important was the facility at Derby House that a duplicate was established underground at Knowsley Hall, known as "House X", in case Rumford Street should suffer serious bomb damage. Luckily, this Knowsley "Plan B" was never needed. A Sun-Ray Room provided treatment for staff who regularly spent at least fifty hours a week underground.

During the war more than a thousand convoys arrived in the Mersey, and much repair work to damaged shipping was carried out on Merseyside, involving thousands of Scousers in this aspect of the national war effort. And all the time Liverpool and Birkenhead were subjected to some of the worst raids from the air suffered by anywhere in Britain. The American and Canadian troops which landed in France on D-Day in June 1944 came through Liverpool, their safety ensured by the work carried out in secret in the bunker below the city streets.

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Images courtesy of the owners of Western Approaches.



VIKING MERSEYSIDE

Meeting report:
Mary Harrison

Wirral born and bred, Professor Harding, from Nottingham University – honoured by King Harald of Norway in 2014 – treated us to some fascinating and amusing glimpses of our Viking Heritage. He assured us that the stories of Viking aggression were just myths, and that the invaders were merely seeking land in which to settle. He did however, show us an amusing list (from the back of a Cain's beer mat, commemorating the 1100th anniversary of Vikings coming to Merseyside) entitled 'How to avoid a Viking attack on the way to the library.' He then described his most recent project, working with the University of Oslo in helping to save the badly decayed artefacts from the Oseberg Viking Ship – Norway's national treasure.

The Viking tribes who settled our area had originated in Norway, and first attempted to settle in Ireland. Expelled from Dublin in 902, they negotiated permission with Queen Aethelflaed to settle in lands between the coast and Chester. They landed first on the Wirral Peninsular, where they established many substantial settlements, and hundreds of our present day place names date from this period. The most important of them is Thingwall, an old Norse name meaning Assembly Field, and here they conducted their 'Parliaments'. They later began to look across the Mersey to West Lancashire, and here again we find another Thingwall (Thingwall Hall, Knotty Ash) together with many other Viking names such as Toksteth ('Toki's landing place'), Mell ('sandy', giving us Meols at Southport), and Aintree ('one tree').

Archaeologists can have a field day with amazing artefacts of the period: the 11th century hogback tombstone of a prominent Viking still stands at St Bridget's, West Kirby, whilst a damaged stone Viking cross has been reconstructed using laser technology to reveal the touching image of a Viking couple embracing. Literature from the area showing the persistence of the Norse dialect and Viking culture includes the 14th century poem, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (where some of the action takes place in Wirral). At this time many local people were still using Norse family names: two which appeared in rent books of 1398 were Mabilla Raynaldesdoghter and Johanna Hondesdoghter.

From 2002-2008 Stephen led the Genetic Survey of Wirral and West Lancashire project, selecting families with old surnames that were present in either area prior to 1600 and focusing on the Y-chromosome of men possessing these surnames. We saw some very colourful 'pie charts' which revealed that up to 50 % of the DNA admixture of the old population on both sides of the Mersey was Norse in origin.

Merseyside has its own 'Viking Navy' of enthusiasts trained by the Liverpool Victoria Rowing Club, 50 of whom recently went to Norway to row the 35 metres long Draken Harald Hårfagre – the largest modern Viking ship ever built – back to Liverpool. Unfortunately the mast was blown off as they entered the Mersey, so they moored at Wallasey for it to be repaired, and hope to repeat the voyage in the future.

Stephen is also very keen to promote the St Olave Viking Heritage Walk which take place on 29th July (St. Olave's Day) from St. Bridget's Church, West Kirby, to St. Olave's Church in Chester.
www.nottingham.ac.uk/~sczsteve



Replica reconstruction of the 'Viking Lady' cross at Neston.



Stephen at Thingwall, Wirral, once the site of Wirral's Viking Parliament of Assembly.

LIVERPOOL COWKEEPERS

Meeting report:
Cynthia Stonall

David Joy's story told of the migration of farm labourers during the 19th century, some to the 'New World' and others to the growing city population during the economic decline of rural farm-holdings. The new city dwellers seized this opportunity to sell locally produced milk, butter and cheese by bringing some of their cattle with them from the Pennine Dales to set up dairies in Liverpool's streets. Cattle were transported by the railway, and periodically exchanged by this route with the Dales home-farm stock during their productive life cycle. This also involved members of the dairy family-workers too.

Cows were sent to the cowhouse in full lactation and stayed there for 12-18 months, depending on their milk yield. Then they were either returned to the home farm or fattened up for the local dairy-beef market. The early cowhouses (shippens) were in end-terrace properties that would allow access to back yards where the cows could be kept. Milk was sold from the shop at the front of the property and also loaded onto a horse and cart then taken out on a milk round to be sold in the streets.

Opportunities for grazing were limited in the city centre so cowkeepers had to make use of what was available locally – spent brewery grain, molasses, oilseed cake, and grass cutting from parks and gardens. Cow muck was sold to farms on the edge of the city or was exchanged for hay. Cowkeeping became integrated into the local economy. These Dairies soon became profitable businesses and expanded into the suburbs, requiring more family members from the Dales. Many cowhouses became purpose-built, and some structures can still be seen today.

'100 Years of Delivering Your Daily Pinta'. Photo that appeared in *The Liverpool Weekly News* on 8th August 1963 to celebrate the centenary of the Joy family dairying in Garston. Eric Joy and 'Rupert', taken in Duke St, Garston, outside Wellington Dairy (shippin in background).



In competition, corporate dairy companies emerged bringing in milk from rural farmers by railway ('Railway Milk') to be sold in 'Milk Houses'. However, the urban dairies specialised in 'Fresh Milk' that hadn't soured on its journey from the country, and so they survived economically for a while longer.

Many Liverpool dairies prided themselves on the cleanliness and wholesomeness of their produce, inviting customers in to inspect their premises. These family dairies formed themselves into '*The Liverpool and District Cowkeepers' Association*', taking pride in showing their prime beasts at the annual cattle and agricultural shows in Liverpool.

From the mid-1800s, Liverpool pioneered new practices in public health and was the first city to introduce licensing for cowhouses and dairies. To pass inspection the city cowkeepers had to meet the regulations and achieve high standards of hygiene in all aspects of their operation. Conforming to this regime contributed to the longevity of the city cowkeeper in Liverpool compared to elsewhere in the country. These businesses evolved into the early 20th century with 500 licensed shippens holding 6000 cows and producing 17,000 gallons of milk daily. During WWI many dairymen went to war, leaving their women and Dales folk to carry on the work. Feed shortages were supplemented by park and playing field grazing, and many shippens were targeted during wartime due to their resemblance to factories.

The Joy family kept cows until 1955 and continued delivering milk with a horse and milk float up until the late 1960s. In addition to *Liverpool Cowkeepers*, another of Dave Joy's books, *My Family and Other Scousers – A Liverpool Boy's Summer of Adventure in '69* (The History Press, 2014, ISBN 9780750956406) describes the final summer of Wellington Dairy.

LIVERPOOL COWKEEPERS
DAVE JOY

Dave Joy, *Liverpool Cowkeepers*, Amberley Publishing, 2016, ISBN 9781445663227.

THE RAINHILL TRIALS OF 1829

Meeting report:
Glyn Williams

If the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway in 1830 proved a commercial success for the north-west of England, the Rainhill Trials of 1829, to determine the engine and contractor for the rolling stock, proved a technological success for the north-east. This is hardly surprising bearing in mind the pioneering work carried out a few years earlier on the Stockton & Darlington Railway. Both lines were designed by north-east genius George Stephenson. The prize went to *Rocket*, of course, built by George's son Robert Stephenson. But the north-east influence went further. *Cycloped*, a machine comprising little more than a horse on a treadmill, was designed by George Stephenson's friend Thomas Shaw Brandreth, and the *Sans Pareil* was built by Timothy Hackworth, an engineer from Co. Durham.

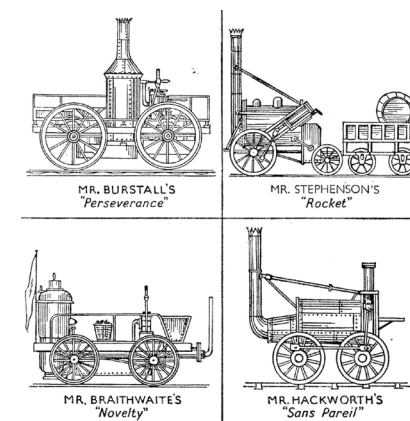
The trials took place during eight days in October 1829. The rules specified a strength to haul three times the engine's weight over 70 miles at no less than 10 mph; that the locomotive should consume its own smoke; a maximum weight of six tons; that it used steam at a maximum of 50 lbs/sq. in.; that the engine must be carried on springs and have two safety valves; a maximum production cost of £500. The prize money was also £500. The 4'8½" gauge, which became standard throughout most of the world, was fixed by George Stephenson and is believed to originate with Roman cart tracks found in his north-east stamping ground. The competition also included *Novelty*, built by John Ericsson and John Braithwaite, the latter a Londoner first introduced to the Stephensons in 1827, and *Perseverance*, by John Reed Hill of London and Timothy Burstall of Leith. Construction of the line cost £880,000 and legal fees to obtain parliamentary approval £70,000.

Experiences on the Stockton & Darlington Railway aside, the trials represented a journey into the unknown. A train being propelled by a horse on a treadmill (*Cycloped*) seems absurd now. As it turned out, it was forced to retire when the poor animal fell through the floor. *Perseverance* was damaged on the way to Rainhill, forcing Burstall to spend five days repairing it. The locomotive ran on the sixth day but achieved a speed of only 6 mph. For living up to the name *Perseverance*, Hill and Burstall were awarded a £25 consolation prize. *Novelty* started as a crowd-pleaser but developed problems with its boiler pipe and had to retire, leaving *Sans Pareil* and *Rocket*.

Robert Stephenson had a hand in both machines, building the *Rocket* and constructing the *Sans Pareil*'s cylinders. As it happened, the engine failed because Stephenson's cylinder developed a crack. Sabotage? Probably not, John assured us.

The three judges (two engineers and a cotton spinner) must have had little hesitation in declaring *Rocket* the winner. It covered the 35-mile course, hauling 13 tons at an average speed of 12 mph, in just over three hours. The L&MR bought it and placed an order with Robert Stephenson & Co. for four more. An updated version called *Planet* followed a year later. The innovations resulting from the project included the wooden and heather hurdles sunk to shore up the ground on Chat Moss and Jesse Hartley's 'skew bridge' at Rainhill, designed for a road crossing a railway line at an acute angle.

John Hatfield's excellent talk guided us through the most important aspects of an event that proved to be a 'step change' in the history of transport comparable to man's use of the horse and the development of flight.



Courtesy M Greenwood, *The Railway Revolution*, Longman, 1955, p21. Illustrated from contemporary sources by S Greenwood.

Courtesy R H G Thomas, *The Liverpool & Manchester Railway*, Batsford, 1980, p71. Suggested from a source via Wikipedia as originating in the Illustrated London News (although the ILN only commenced publication in 1842). Thomas comments: 'Probably conjectural, as the grandstand was ¼ mile east of the Rainhill bridge'.

