

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2017 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

21 May	The Rainhill Trials	John Hatfield
18 June	Visit to The Bluecoat	led by Gul Turner
July & August	Summer break, no meetings	
17 September	Why not drown Liverpool?	Dr Graham Jones

The May and September meetings will take place in the ground floor lecture room 001, Cornerstone Building, Hope at Everton, Shaw Street, L3 8QB (the former St Francis Xavier College building).

The May meeting will be preceded by the AGM at 1.30pm (doors open at 1pm).

On 18 June meet at The Bluecoat at 2pm.

In 1958 Alan Sytner married and moved to London. Finding it difficult to run the club at a distance of 200 miles, he sold the lease the following year to accountant and fellow jazz devotee Ray McFall whose aim was to make Liverpool the number one jazz hot spot after London. However, eventually bowing to the inevitable, McFall introduced all-beat sessions on Wednesday nights with Rory Storm and the Hurricanes (Ringo on drums) playing the first night on 25 May 1960 – the Beatles (calling themselves the Silver Beetles at the time) were 400 miles away that night backing Liverpudlian pop star Johnny Gentle on his tour of Scotland.

From the beginning of 1961 the Cavern's famous lunchtime sessions were solely rock and roll. By the end of January 1964, the Cavern was completely 'lost' to rock and roll with no sign of even the token jazz band that until then had graced its stage on Sunday nights. By then the Beatles had long gone having played their final gig the previous year and 'conquered' America in February 1964.

The Cavern's toilets and drainage had long been a problem and in 1966 a Public Health inspection decreed that costly remedial works were essential if the club was to remain open. With interest in beat music waning and unable to meet his current debts, let alone expensive public health improvements, McFall was forced to submit to the will of the bailiffs and the club was closed down.

Legendary DJ Bob Wooler immediately launched a 'Save the Cavern' appeal that reputedly only raised £1500 (disgraced millionaire DJ Jimmy Savile contributed

£1) and the club was sold to two local entrepreneurs. With much ceremony the Cavern was reopened by Prime Minister Harold Wilson on 23 July 1966. Amazingly, some 50 bands, artists and personalities turned up for the celebrations that began in the morning and ended with an all-night session. The new owners had invested heavily in carrying out improvements to the club and not just to the sanitary arrangements. Importantly, it was licensed to sell alcohol and so lost its original 'innocence' and some of its atmosphere. The reopened Cavern continued successfully until, once again, it was forced to close (in 1973), this time because British Rail claimed the site was needed in connection with the construction of the rail loop under the city centre. Except it wasn't and for years served as a scruffy little car park.

For many it was the cultural equivalent of Memphis knocking down Elvis's Graceland or Stratford-Upon-Avon sweeping away Shakespeare's birthplace. A relocated Cavern Club opened on the opposite side of Mathew Street, finally being replaced in 1976 by renowned punk club Eric's which itself was shut down in March 1980 after a raid by the drugs squad. Fast forward to 1984 when the Royal Insurance Company's Cavern Walks development, the brainchild of local architect David Backhouse, was opened. The most newsworthy aspect of the scheme was the recreation of the Cavern Club using bricks salvaged from the original basement club. Whilst not in exactly the same position – a graphic some yards further down Mathew Street pinpoints the original entrance – and the

interior layout is different, it's the nearest to the original Cavern Club that we are likely to get. Indeed, many of the 800,000 or so visitors who yearly descend the steps into the darkness below are blissfully unaware that it isn't the Cavern where the Beatles performed close on 300 times. And so here we are 60 years on with the Cavern Club going from strength to strength, seemingly safe in the hands of Cavern City Tours, its owners since 1991. Interest in the Beatles, and Liverpool as an international visitor destination, show no sign of waning so hopefully in 2057 the dingy basement club made famous by those 'Four lads from Liverpool' will still be here to celebrate its centenary.

Ron Jones,
author of *The Beatles' Liverpool*

Gifts and Prizes

Following the death in October 2016 of Russell Molyneux-Johnson, a member of the Society from 2007, his daughters Sue and Fiona, acting as executors, have informed us that Russell kindly left the Society a gift of £500. Following the death in November 2016 of Brenda Murray, a founder member of the Society in 2001, a collection of her binders containing press cuttings about Liverpool have been donated to the Liverpool Record Office and put in the Society's name under accession number 7015. To be named the Russell Molyneux-Johnson, the Brenda Murray and the Veronica Gibson prizes (see newsletter 45 regarding Veronica's gift), later this year the Society will start to award annual prizes to the winners of LHS history essay competitions for Merseyside schoolchildren and students.

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www.c3imaging.com

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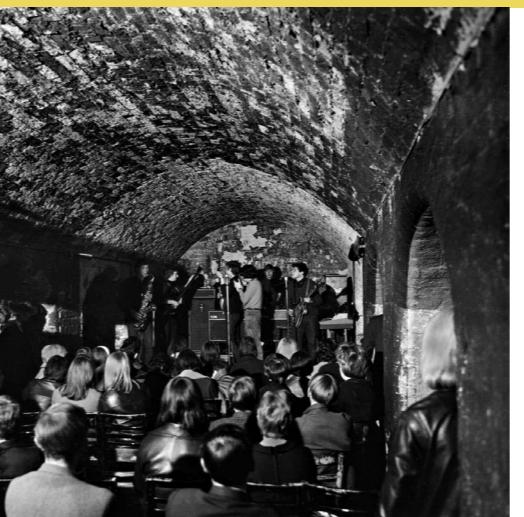


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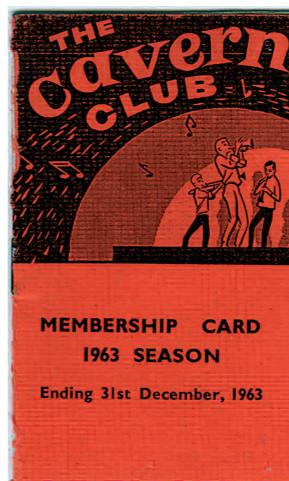


HISTORY SOCIETY

SPRING 2017



Cavern Club interior 1960s.
Courtesy LRO / John Mills Photography Ltd.



Ron's Cavern Club membership card for 1963. One of the inside pages has been signed by Paul McCartney.



Left to right: George, Paul, John and soon-to-be-sacked drummer Pete Best, pictured outside the Cavern in 1961.

Sixty Years On: The Cavern Revisited

"Only in Liverpool could a hole in the ground become the most famous club in the world."

A few years ago, when I was an active committee member of LHS, I calculated that the average age of our membership was 72. Which means that among our 300 or so members, some of us must have gone to Liverpool's legendary Cavern Club as teenagers during the early years of rock and roll in the late 50s/60s. I certainly did; even jived with a girl with a pony tail who became my wife 54 years ago! The reason for mentioning this is that, on 16 January this year, the Cavern Club celebrated its 60th anniversary, accompanied by a birthday bash at the club and a concert at the Philharmonic Hall when 60s tribute band The Overtures performed numbers that famous acts, such as the Rolling Stones, The Who and Queen, had played at the Cavern during each of the six decades of the club's life.

However, the sharp-eyed historians among you will be quick to point out that the original Cavern Club was shut down in 1973

and bulldozed to oblivion, ostensibly as part of what is now Merseyrail's underground Loop Line. But let us not get ahead of ourselves. Jazz aficionado 21-year old Alan Sytner was so impressed with Le Cavaeau de la Huchette jazz club in Paris which he visited on family holidays in the 50s (it's still there) that when he saw 10 Mathew Street up for sale he decided to buy it and transplant a touch of the Left Bank into one of the city centre's dingiest back alleys. The Cavern Club duly opened on 6 January 1957 (annual membership one shilling) with the Merseysippi Jazz Band as the opening act. Formed in 1948, amazingly the band is still playing today, although sadly no longer with the original line-up.

Apart from two other trad jazz bands playing that night, there was the Coney Island Skiffle Group. Personified by Lonnie Donegan, the skiffle craze, emanating from the jazz and blues of America's Deep South, was in full flow by 1957. Indeed John Lennon's Quarry Men skiffle group first played the Cavern on

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IMAGES OF LIVERPOOL: A GLIMPSE INTO BYGONE TIMES



The almost Disneyesque Canada Dock Hydraulic Tower, destroyed in a World War II bombing raid. Photography is often the only record of many of the wonderful lost buildings of Liverpool.

Colin Wilkinson's interest in historic photos of Liverpool goes back to 1977 when he set up the Open Eye Gallery in the former Grapes pub on the corner of Whitechapel and Hood Street. Among the many exhibitions he organised were ones relating to the work of Rodney Street-based Chambré Hardman and late 19th century Liverpool street photographer Charles Frederick Inston. Colin eventually established the Bluecoat Press in 1992 and has published over 200 books, the vast majority about Liverpool with most of them having a photographic slant.

Colin gave us a thumbnail sketch of the history of photography ranging from the crude camera obscura, used as a drawing aide by Leonardo da Vinci and Canaletto, to the first 'proper' photograph taken by Niépce in 1822. Louis Daguerre refined that process and developed the 'daguerreotype' which became very popular. Contemporaneously, Englishman Henry Fox Talbot had come up with a negative process which also offered commercial possibilities. Colin told us about a man not known to many of us, Frederick Scott Archer, who invented the collodion process in 1849, the forerunner of the 'modern' gelatin emulsion. This allowed photographers to capture the fine detail of the daguerreotype with the ability to produce multiple copies. This process did much to popularise photography. Scott Archer failed to patent his invention and died penniless. However, curiously, not one photograph of Liverpool taken in the decade 1840-1850 has so far come to light. Colin showed an image which he 'found' in the Record Office of St George's Hall in about 1855 which is the earliest known photograph of Liverpool.

However, we know that photographers from Liverpool were extremely active before this and had even formed their own Liverpool Photographic Society (LPS) in March 1853. One LPS member, Francis Frith, who ran successful businesses as a grocer and later as a printer, sold up and established himself as a full-time professional photographer with a studio in 1850. Frith became a very important figure in Victorian photography. His grand ambition was to create a photographic record of the whole of Great Britain. He also travelled abroad, particularly in the Middle East, where he photographed scenes with his huge plate camera. Sometimes it was so hot that the chemicals which coated the photographic glass plates would boil. The physical effort of photographing in the heat and dust with such heavy and cumbersome equipment, to say nothing of mixing chemicals and coating the 20" x 16" plates of glass, must have been back-breaking. He photographed Liverpool extensively during the 1870s and many of those images were published in a photographic album by Philip Son & Nephew; Colin showed us his prized copy.

As they say, a picture paints a thousand words and each of the wide range of images shown by Colin from his collection of over 10,000 photographs told their own story. It was fascinating to see buildings sadly no longer with us such as Jesse Hartley's amazing Hydraulic Tower at Canada Dock, the Custom House built on the site of the Old Dock and churches such as St Martin in the Fields, in Sylvester Street off Scotland Road. Colin's interest in street photography came to the fore with examples of characterful studies by Inston and City Councillor



One of Thomas Burke's crudely hand-painted studies in the 60-strong series 'Slum Life in Our Great Cities'. Often cruelly titled, this one is called 'Stunted growth'.

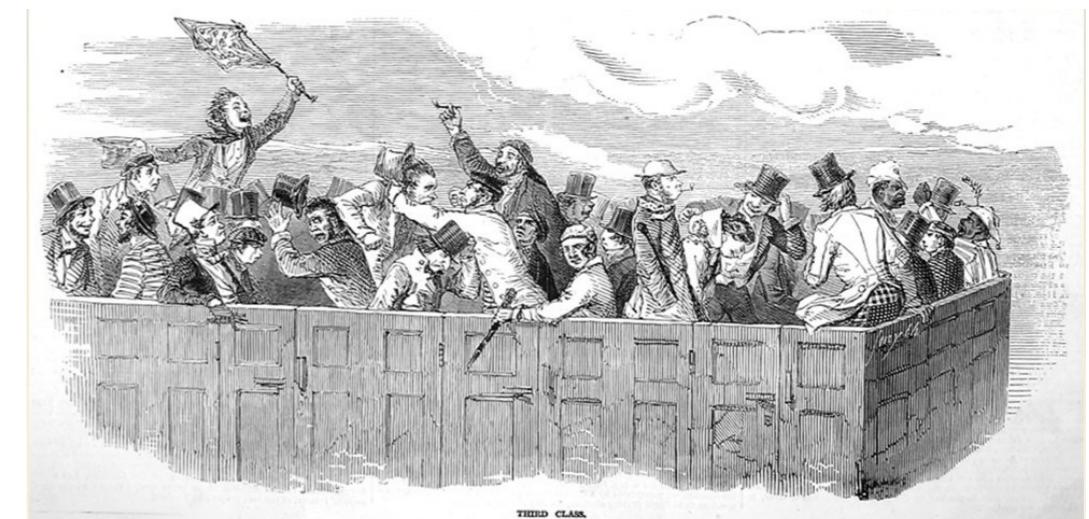


This 1927 image of Netherfield Road is Colin's favourite amongst the 100,000 photographs in the City Engineer's archive held by the Record Office.

Thomas Burke's series 'Slum Life in Our Great Cities'. Bringing us up to date Colin showed us images taken by Karl Hughes, Father D'Andria around the Pitt Street area and Picture Post photographers Thurston Hopkins and Bert Hardy.

Seven years ago Colin set up his superb Streets of Liverpool blog: (www.streetsofliverpool.co.uk) which has brought to light many historic photographs of the city that have been unseen for a hundred years or more. Most of the photographs that accompanied his talk can be seen there and a visit is highly recommended.

EARLY VICTORIAN RAILWAY EXCURSIONS



Third class passengers on an 1847 excursion to the Epsom Races

Courtesy Illustrated London News

Susan Major has made good use of her retirement. In 2012 she completed a PhD at the University of York on early Victorian railway excursions, research now in book form (Pen and Sword, 2015). As its subtitle 'The Million Go Forth' suggests, Susan's work has focused not on the middle and upper classes but on railway excursions for ordinary people seeking fresh air and fun away from heavy industry.

Thomas Cook (1808-92) is normally credited with the invention of railway excursions. But Cook's clientele came from relatively affluent people. Based in Leicester, his first excursions date from 1841, when he organised trips for up to 500 people at one shilling each. Early destinations included Liverpool, Scotland and London. His first international tour came in 1855 when he took two groups on a 'grand circular tour' of Belgium, Germany and France. His company Thomas Cook & Son was formed in 1872.

As far as ordinary people were concerned, however, the 'father of cheap trips' was Henry Robert Marcus (d.1875). Born in London but based in Liverpool, Marcus worked with the LNWR in the 1840s and 50s to provide inexpensive excursions for over one and a half million people. Piling the excursions high and selling them cheap led to a huge rise in 'mass mobility' and gave working-class people opportunities to visit places and see things hitherto unimaginable. At Whitsun week 1846 alone, 400,000 excursionists were travelling in the Manchester area! More importantly, Marcus's trips were cheap.

As Susan outlined, the average wage for manual workers at this time was 18-30 shillings a week. Marcus's prices ranged from a few shillings to £1: cheaper than Third Class rail fares and eminently affordable, albeit with careful saving.

But travelling conditions were often far from comfortable or safe. Open cattle trucks were in widespread use until the 1870s, and day trippers were often 'packed like dogs'. There was no lighting and heating, and passengers travelling in closed carriages were often forced to quit the gloom and stink of their accommodation in favour of the roof. Indeed, some excursions were so oversubscribed that the roof was compulsory – a perilous venture since the clearance between roof and tunnel was as little as three feet! Trips were often run as part of the 'Saint Monday' tradition in which skilled artisans in some areas labouring six days a week often took Mondays off. Susan also passed on a number of amusing anecdotes about the misadventures suffered by travellers (including the young man who lost all his clothes and arrived home virtually naked) and the irony that Sunday school and temperance trips often proved less than chaste or sober.

Apart from London, popular destinations included North Wales, the Lake District, Stonehenge and country estates. Since rural attractions were rarely close to stations, journeys often involved long walks or cart rides. Grand occasions loomed large – like the Great Exhibition of 1851 and Wellington's funeral at St Paul's Cathedral in 1852, when over a million spectators – many of them

