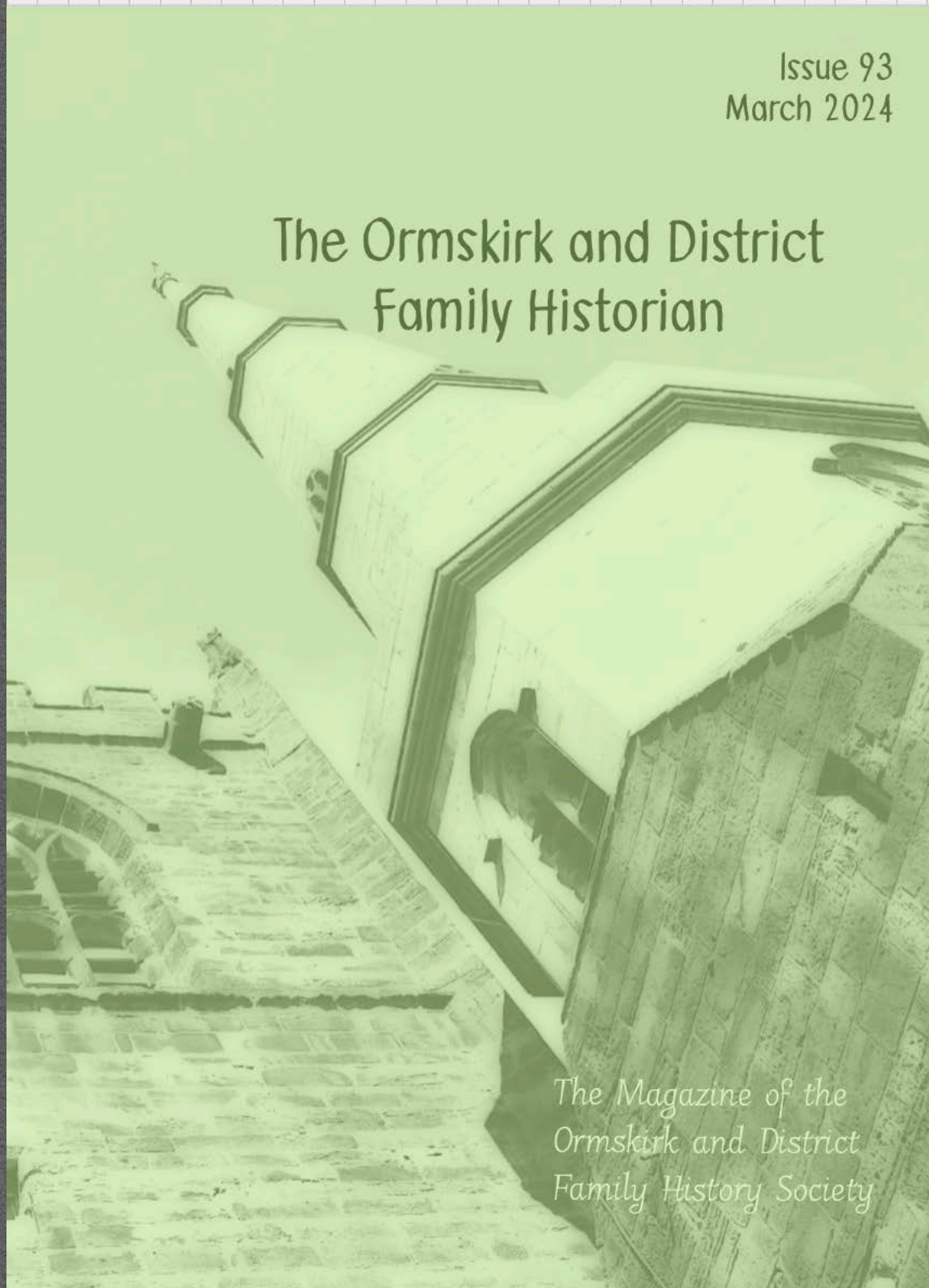


Issue 93
March 2024

The Ormskirk and District Family Historian

*The Magazine of the
Ormskirk and District
Family History Society*



The ODFHS Useful Information Page

Ormskirk and District Family History Society was inaugurated in 1980.

Registered Charity (No. 1004895). Member of the Family History Federation.

ADDRESS FOR ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Ormskirk & District Family History Society
c/o 27 Bath Springs, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2XP

website: www.odfhs.website boat families: www.boatfamilies.website

Facebook page: www.facebook.com/OrmskirkDistrictFamilyHistorySociety/

OFFICERS

Hon. Chair	Kate Hurst	
Hon. Secretary	Pam Richardson	secretary@odfhs.email
Hon. Treasurer	Colin MacDonald	treasurerodfhs@gmail.com
Librarian	Kathryn MacDonald	librarianodfhs@gmail.com
Assistant Librarian	Jean Gidman	
Membership Secretary	Keith Broadbent	membership@odfhs.email
Website Manager	Alan Cooper	
Magazine Editor	Kate Hurst	editor@odfhs.email

SECRETARIAT TEAM

June Dean Golics, Sally Dean, Pam Richardson, Keith Jenkins, Kate Hurst,
Eunice Woof, Dot Broady Hawkes, Kathryn MacDonald, Alan Cooper,
Norma Gregson, Keith Broadbent, Emma Davison, Alison Ackland

Could You Contribute To Our Magazine?

Articles for the Ormskirk and District Family Historian are always welcome. If you'd like to send something for publication, please contact the Editor using the e-mail or postal address above, with your name and membership number. We will do our best to look after all items (and will return them on request) but we suggest that you retain any original documents.

The Ormskirk and District Family Historian

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"Not to know what happened before we were born is to remain perpetually a child. For what is the worth of a human life unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the recording of history." - Cicero (106-143BC) sent in by Jean Haikalis (1946-2017)

View From The Chair

As I welcome you to what I think of as our “Spring” magazine, I’m reminded that its publication almost coincides with the anniversary of the very first ODFHS meeting, on 27 February 1980. These milestones often make us stop to reflect on past achievements and the changes we have seen.

Recently, I’ve been sorry to see a number of long-standing family history societies (some of them fellow members of the North West Group) being wound down, or facing that possibility in the future. My optimistic side hopes that some of “the next generation” will come forward to help those groups survive; it’s a curious thing that (although I turn forty this autumn) the family history world is one of the few environments where I’m seen as “the young one”! With this in mind, I’m grateful that, as ODFHS approaches its forty-fourth anniversary, our future looks promising.

2024 offers many opportunities for ODFHS to attend community events - so many, in fact, that sometimes we’re a little short of volunteers. Keith Broadbent (Membership Secretary) has suggested the creation of a “casual volunteers list”, so that event details could be circulated, with willing members helping out on dates that suit you - with no need to join our Committee. As a taster, the Easter Weekend will see us attend both the first post-pandemic Images of Burscough Exhibition, and the inaugural event of the new Beconsall Living Museum (on 1 April), and we expect the Ormskirk Mediaeval Festival to be held in May. If this is something that might interest you, please get in touch.

As always, this edition includes your membership renewal forms, and I very much hope that you’ll stay with us during the coming year. In addition to local events, on 22 June 2024 Alison Ackland and I will represent ODFHS at the Family History Show in York. We’re really looking forward to our first live national event in eight years; if you’re interested, why not take advantage of the “early bird” ticket price detailed on page 28. The timing means we’ll need to order extra copies of this Magazine to offer visitors - and that tiny administrative detail leads me to another

important reminder.

Several months ago, Pam Richardson decided to step down as our Honorary Secretary at our May 2024 AGM; as yet, no one has expressed interest in taking on the role. I’d like to encourage anyone who is considering it to contact me, if you need more information about what is involved. I can promise that our new Secretary will be fully supported by the Executive Committee; we’re all friendly and we’ll give you as much help and advice as you need.

Besides our “usual” routine of meetings, Zoom chats and library help desks, our Sharing People’s History of West Lancashire project is making excellent progress. In just a few months, our team of volunteers have moulded a rough idea to create two attractive booklets into a structured, organised enterprise. It’s taking shape, developing a look and a theme, and I really enjoy documenting it with Facebook posts and YouTube video updates. If you haven’t seen the videos yet, why not turn to page 24 for details of how to find them?

After such a gloomy winter, I hope the inclusion of a 1920s newspaper report on the Aughton May Queen will create a springtime feeling. It’s packed with the names of local adults and children - notably, a young Donald Scott (of D.C. Scott, the butchers on Church Street, Ormskirk) and Edith Norris (instantly identified by her son - our very own Website Manager, Alan Cooper!) If you can’t find a relative in that article, perhaps the faces of the Tower Troupe of Morris Dancers on page 9 will be more familiar?

Looking ahead, our summer magazine is likely to have a sporting theme; if you’ve discovered any athletic ancestors - a cricketer or a member of one of the local football teams in days gone by? - I’d be delighted to include their story. Meanwhile, this edition contains everything from ODFHS activities and memories of relatives to book reviews and useful resources. I hope you find something to interest you - and maybe further your research, too!

Kate Hurst
February 2024

Members' Interests Directory

by Keith Broadbent, Membership Secretary

The Members' Interests Directory has been updated. The latest version is now available in the Members' area of the ODFHS website.

The following members' interests have been added to the Directory since the last update, with authority to include the member's name and interests in the magazine.

- *Alison Ashford* - HUYTON, LEA, ORME
- *Heather Cooper* - BRERETON, HOWARD
- *Ian Hargreaves* - BOND, HARGRAVES, HARGREAVES
- *John Holden* - CARTMELL, DOBSON
- *Jill Lewis* - DARWIN, HARRISON, TINSLEY
- *Robin Moore* - BERRY, BIRCH, BIRCHALL, BRADSHAW, DRAPER, GRAYSON, RIMMER
- *Gail Pullyblank* - ALLMAN, BANKS, CARTLEDGE, HARRISON, LEA, MONK, PYE, STRETCH

In accordance with ODFHS policy, the published Directory contains only the membership number(s) of members interested in a particular surname, rather than full contact details.

Anyone wishing to contact other members about a particular surname interest should contact Keith Broadbent at membership@odfhs.email or Pam Richardson at secretary@odfhs.email via e-mail or our postal address on page 2; we will provide the appropriate details. Only details specifically authorised by members for release to other members will be passed on.

Membership Renewals

Membership for 2024/25 will run from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Renewals for 2024/25 are now open and should be submitted by 31 March 2024.

We have recently introduced a new online membership renewal process. **For online membership renewal, please visit the Membership page of our website at www.odfhs.website/index.php/membership**

Subscription rates are:

- £11 - Worldwide membership with digital magazine
- £15 - UK membership with printed magazine
- £20 - Rest of World membership with printed magazine

Payment may be made by card or PayPal via Parish Chest, by bank transfer or by cheque. Cash payments may also be made in person at a monthly meeting.

Library Notes

The Tower Troupe of Morris Dancers in the 1950s

Morris Dancing was once a very popular pastime in Ormskirk; indeed, groups still exist in the area today. One of the most successful and well known troupes in the 1950s was the Tower Troupe, founded in 1949 by Robert HESKETH; ODFHS member, Sylvia Shacklady (née RAWSTHORNE), and her sister Christine were members throughout the 1950s, and Sylvia kindly allowed us to copy the beautiful albums documenting the many competitions and events they attended.

Sylvia remembers travelling by bus to locations in the North West to take part in Morris Dancing competitions; the Tower Troupe were very successful, winning a host of cups and trophies. They practiced at the Moorgate Guide Hut in Ormskirk on a Thursday evening. Mrs. HESKETH, the wife of founder Robert HESKETH (known as Bobby), would stand on a raised stage with a wind up gramophone to play marching tunes. Mr. and Mrs. HESKETH also made the costumes for the dancers.

Sylvia attended Ormskirk Grammar School between 1953 and 1958, enjoying school trips and taking part in school plays. In 1955 she wrote an article for the Ormskirk Grammar School Magazine (Vol. 27 (2) July 1955) about Morris Dancing, and was delighted when it came to light recently in one of the Grammar School magazines donated to ODFHS - over 65 years later!

For five years my sister and I have been members of the Tower Troupe Morris Dancers of Ormskirk, so called because of the many Towers around Ormskirk. We have a Junior and Senior Troupe, with 32 girls between the ages of 8 and 17. During the winter months we have a weekly practice, and also an out-of-doors practice in the competitive season. This begins in early May, when

we usually visit the Knutsford May Festival, a traditional Gala day. The procession of Bands, Troupes and horse-drawn Tableaux winds through the old world village streets, and we try to catch the eye of the T.V. Camera man who may be there.

From then until the end of September we travel about 1,000 miles, in our private double-decker 'bus to Carnivals and Shows all over Lancashire, Cheshire and sometimes Shropshire and



Sylvia Rawsthorne and her sister Christine with their trophies

Wales. Of course, we support the local events, and the Liverpool Show, held in July at Wavertree, has a very keen competition. The famous Edge Hill Brass Band provides music for the dancing, and we have won several prizes there. Sometimes we are not as fortunate as this: at Haigh Show there was a band of Scotch Pipers, at Norris Green a Seaman's Concertina Band, while at Coppull, when it began to rain, the local band refused to play, and we were left dancing to the singing of the troupe supporters.



The Tower Troupe at Westhead Carnival, 1954

There are at least 150 Morris Dancing Troupes in existence, and as each troupe has its own supporters, you will realise that there is quite a large following of this pastime. The spectator can easily distinguish the troupes by the uniform, for no two teams dress exactly alike. Our troupe wears red skirts and ecru blouses, with small caps, and our plimsolls must be sparkling white, to show off the red laces and shining bells. The first prize money is sometimes £25 with a Silver Challenge Cup, and medals are usually awarded to the best Troupe Leader. My own

troupe has about 40 medals. If you are lucky, your troupe may be asked to give an exhibition at a dance for the delegates in the Floral Hall. Many troupes have helped to raise money for deserving charities in this way.

Sylvia Rawsthorne, 2E

More photographs and information can be found in the ODFHS Gallery page; we would be very interested to hear from anyone who can put a name to any of the faces in the group photographs (librarianodfhs@gmail.com)

<https://www.odfhs.website/index.php/2-uncategorised/427-rose-queens-and-morris-dancers>

New Books from Skelmersdale Heritage Society

In recent months, our colleagues at Skelmersdale Heritage Society have published three new books about different aspects of the town's history.

The History of the Tawd Vale Colliery Company by Geoff Boden

A detailed look at the company that was once Skelmersdale's biggest employer from the coal boom of the mid 19th century to the 1897 disaster that threw hundreds of people out of work overnight.

Price £7.50

Churches of Old Skelmersdale

Following the rapid growth of Skelmersdale in the mid nineteenth century, churches of numerous denominations were built for the town's residents. This postcard-size book contains pictures of all of them, including those which have

long since vanished from the map.

Price: £6.

To order any of these books, please e-mail SkelmersdaleHeritage@gmail.com

For further information about Skelmersdale Heritage Society, please visit their website www.skelmersdaleheritage.org.uk or their Facebook page, Skelmersdale Heritage Society.

The Original Ormskirk Gingerbread?

by Kathryn Baird (B102)

In August 2023 I saw a post on the Paul Smith Ormskirk Museum Facebook group showing a newspaper cutting for 'Dorset's (Late Orritt's) The Original Gingerbread Shop'. Having ORRITTs in my father's family tree, this sent me into a flurry of research involving gingerbread, Ormskirk and the ORRITT family.

I knew my 3x great grandparents, Ralph GERRARD and Ann (nee ORRITT), had lived at the Windmill Inn in Wigan Road in the late 1860s, and they both died there in the 1870s. There was a tendency for men in the GERRARD and ORRITT families to be paviors or inn-keepers. So, who were the ORRITTs who had made Ormskirk gingerbread?

I discovered that William ORRITT, my second cousin 4x removed, was indeed part of the ORRITT family making gingerbread in Church Street in the nineteenth century. The *Liverpool Standard and General Commercial Advertiser*

announced his marriage at Ormskirk in 1840 as ‘Mr W Orritt, boot and shoe maker, to Miss J Smith, confectioner, both of Ormskirk’.

How did Jane ORRITT (nee SMITH) learn to make Ormskirk gingerbread? In the 1841 Ormskirk census, Jane’s sister, Mary SMITH, was apprentice confectioner to their widowed aunt, Ann GOGIN, in Church Street. By 1851, Mary had married and moved away, but Jane took her place. William and Jane ORRITT then lived in Church Street; William working as a shoemaker and Jane as a confectioner.

In 1861, Jane was no longer listed as a confectioner (perhaps the decision of the census enumerator?) but her occupation re-appears in 1871, and it’s also the occupation of three of their daughters: Eliza, Lydia and Mary. Life in the shop in Church Street was not without drama, as a report from the *Ormskirk Advertiser* (24 June 1869) reveals:

‘AN AUDACIOUS VAGABOND. On Tuesday at noon, a young man, decently dressed, entered the shop of Mr. ORRITT, confectioner, Church Street, and pointing to some Eccles cakes in the window, said, “I want four of those”. “Will you have them wrapped up?” A negative reply was given, the cakes were handed to him, and he at once began eating them. Miss ORRITT requested payment for the cakes, but was told by her customer that he had got no money. Mr. ORRITT then interfered and the young fellow at once crushed up in his hand what remained of the dainty morsels. A policeman was sent for, and the rogue taken into custody. Yesterday morning he was brought up at the police court, before Dr. ASHTON and C.P. SYMONDS Esq., and charged with theft. The prisoner gave the name of John DAWSON, but would not state definitely where he came from. As the cakes were given to him at his request, the charge of theft could not be sustained, and he was sent to prison for 21 days with hard labour as a rogue and vagabond.’

I recently bought *A Slice of Gingerbread*, the lovely new booklet from ODFHS about Ormskirk gingerbread sellers. It paints a fascinating picture of thriving businesses with many confectioners, bakers and shops claiming to sell the original gingerbread. What about the claims of my own ancestors?

I found out about that through an article about Ormskirk in the *Wigan Observer and District Advertiser* (5 December 1873), which had previously been published in the *Liverpool Weekly Albion*:

‘To one Mrs ORRITT, however, of Church Street, the palm of superiority is usually assigned. A signboard claims for her premises the dignity of “The Old Original Gingerbread Shop” and the good lady herself can prove that her mother, her aunt and her great grandmother before her have made the genuine article for over 170 years!’

I wish I could confirm these claims! It’s also worth bearing in mind that the recipe came from Mrs. Jane ORRITT, whose maiden name was SMITH.



Church Street c.1920s. A sign outside Orritt’s shop proclaims, “Orritt’s Ye Old Original Ormskirk Gingerbread Shop Est. 1784”.

The Ormskirk Advertiser printed an advertisement in February 1879 which shows the transfer of the confectionery business to a new family. It reads: *'Please to notice – this is the renowned and original gingerbread shop, established 1784. BEESLEY and Co., respectfully thank the Residents of Ormskirk and the surrounding District for the kind and liberal patronage afforded to them since they succeeded to THE CONFECTIONERY BUSINESS, No 2, CHURCH-STREET, ORMSKIRK, so long and satisfactorily conducted by Mr and Mrs ORRITT. The Premises, Nos 2 and 4, Church-street, have been recently much enlarged and important improvements made, including the erection of Patent Ovens, etc, so that orders can now be executed with the utmost promptitude. BEESLEYS, BRIDES', CHRISTENING, AND BIRTHDAY CAKES'*

William ORRITT died in Cottage Lane, Ormskirk on 30 June 1880, aged 61. Jane ORRITT (nee SMITH) died on 1 January 1888, aged 72. They are buried in Ormskirk Churchyard, together with their daughter, Lydia.

Memories of My Grandfather

William Langton Rockliffe

by Andrew Rockliffe (R67)

introductory note by Keith Broadbent (Membership Secretary)

We have received the following letter from an ODFHS member, and he and I would like to share it with you:

My name is Andrew Langton ROCKLIFFE and I am searching for information on my grandfather William Langton ROCKLIFFE (I think it was Bill to his friends). The information I have so far is that he was born in 1906, and lived on a barge

registered at the Ring-O-Bells; he lived in Burscough his whole life. I know he lived at Mill Lane (presumably as a worker) until WW2. He is mentioned in a book entitled *Wheeled Odyssey* because he was the first casualty of the Italian campaign. He was in the reconnaissance corps, so this was ahead of the front line. His injury was caused by shrapnel, which was embedded in his spine. Over the course of his life this condition (paralysis) deteriorated.

When I knew him (I used to stay at his house during the summer holidays as a small boy in the mid 1960s) he could hardly walk, could barely lift his head, and his hand was so contorted that he sometimes had to place a piece of foam rubber between his fingers and palm to stop them breaking the skin. After the war he moved to Truscott Road and worked at the Railway Depot as a carriage cleaner. I assume he was no longer fit to work at the mill and as he could not drive, his workplace had to be nearby. You could tell which was his house because the privet hedges and lawns were immaculate.

My memories of him are of a lovely man, a true gentleman, and a fantastic grandfather. He used to take me fishing for sticklebacks in the canal, bowling at the bowling green near the memorial, and often into Burscough village. Remember, by this time he was almost crippled and in constant pain, yet was always immaculately dressed and never, ever complained.

He used to read me stories at night, which I adored. However, it is only recently that I discovered that although his stories were based on other stories (such as Hiawatha), he changed them to make them directly relevant to me. That is something very special.

More surprisingly, this lowly born man with little formal education used to sit in front of the telly smoking his Embassy cigar while answering every question on University Challenge. He was an enigma. More importantly, he was a genuine hero. I am simply looking for anyone who knew him and can provide any information that can help me get a little closer to him. It may sound strange, but the older I become (I am now 60), the more I miss him.

Talk Reports

After writing the article above, Andrew contacted us again with an update which proved that his connection to William wasn't as straightforward as he thought:

"During the course of researching my family tree, it has become evident that my father was listed as an 'evacuee'. Given the date (1939), he was possibly part of the 'kindertransport' scheme at the start of the war. Unfortunately, researching this area is quite difficult as the records are not freely available. Anyway, it now appears that William Langton Rockliffe was not my natural grandfather after all, although that obviously does not detract from what he means to me. In fact, taking in an evacuee makes him even more of a hero in my mind."



Records show that William was born on 26 December 1906, the tenth of fifteen children born to Edward and Mary Jane (nee LANGTON). By 1921, the family had moved to 46, Mart Lane, Burscough. He married Sarah Ann GLEAVE at Ormskirk in 1930 and they moved into his family home at 46, Mart Lane with his father, presumably now widowed. They had moved to 10 Mill Lane, Burscough by 1939. This photograph (above) of William and Sarah was probably taken just after WW2, when the paralysis had started to take hold.

We're hoping that Andrew's evocative letter will prompt recollections or stories from some of our members. If so, please e-mail Keith Broadbent at membership@odfhs.email, or write to us via the Secretary.

27 September 2023 - Workhouse Ancestry by Louise Wade

Louise's lively and engaging talk discussed the career of John LIVESLEY, her 4xgreat-uncle, setting it against a detailed examination of the workhouse system. As John LIVESLEY wasn't her direct ancestor at all, Louise asked the question, "Do I want him in my direct line - do I love him or loathe him?" She invited her audience to share their thoughts at the end of the talk.

Her first illustration showed a familiar-looking image of a dominant, uniformed figure, tugging a small boy by the hand. The figure (actually a beadle) clearly suggested the role of workhouse master, prompting negative reactions such as, 'Oliver Twist', 'very strict', 'pretending to be religious', 'mean', 'drinking', 'self-important', 'firm but fair' - the exact intention of the Poor Law Commissioners. Their 1832 report required workhouses to be places of hardship and degradation, the absolute last resort for those unable to survive; the people employed there had to embody that image.

Audience members joined Louise in recollecting stories from their own family histories, horrified at even the possibility of life in a workhouse. In 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act set up Unions, under which the workhouse system operated until 1929, when responsibility for the poor passed to local councils.

John LIVESLEY was master of the Hayfield Union Workhouse in the late 1800s. Built in 1838 to a standard design (like the Ormskirk workhouse), it included a central area for catering, ablutions, eating, medical care, laundry and storage, and was flanked by two separate wings with male and female dormitories. The strictest segregation was enforced by age and gender.

Only 90 beds were available for 150 inmates; men had a bed each, but women, girls and boys had to share. Seven cells provided accommodation for one night only to homeless vagrants. Photographs from the Southwell Union Workhouse

Museum in Nottinghamshire (which Louise recommended for a visit), illustrated the stark conditions.

The unpleasant admission process included physical searches for weapons, forcible bathing in reused water, hair cutting, insensitive medical examinations, and uncomfortable, often unclean clothing. Inmates faced a relentless daily routine of hard, unpleasant work from 7am to 12 noon and 1pm to 6pm, with minimal free time, except for mealtimes. The monotonous, unhealthy bread-based diet was accompanied by gruel or broth, with cooked meat three times weekly, and suet pudding on Saturday. However, Christmas usually brought roast beef and plum pudding, and the possibility of special gifts like tobacco, snuff and toys from benefactors, plus a present of three old pence for all inmates, and currant bread for tea. Census records for 1861 showed that one inmate endured this life for at least twenty-nine years.

Louise noticed some curious details about John Livesley's recruitment right from the start. A grocer and commercial traveller was a surprising choice as workhouse master. The Livesley family included Methodist lay preachers and a general Methodist background, yet masters were required to adhere to the Church of England. He lacked experience as a manager and authoritarian, in enforcing discipline and order over large numbers, or in overseeing welfare and healthcare. It was specified that a married couple applying should have no dependants, yet John and Christiana Livesley had a daughter, Martha, who was allowed to live with them in the workhouse after their appointment.

The Livesleys received the highest number of votes from the Board of Governors; John's success cast doubt on the fairness of the process. Louise's research revealed further questionable developments during his time as Master; three of his brothers were awarded contracts to supply the workhouse with goods, which looked suspicious. To say the least, the family as a whole did well out of the workhouse.

Over several years, local newspapers reported other concerns. Financial issues, repeated claims from the couple for wage increases well over the agreed rate, assaults, "*friction and unpleasantness*", violence and ill treatment, along with nurse

resignations and suicide attempts. Suspicions about the Livesleys' recruitment were reinforced by these accounts of workhouse life.

Christiana Livesley died in 1891, and her daughter Martha took over as Matron, although the post was only meant to be available for the spouse of the Master. After John's death in 1897, however, the unmarried Martha did not continue - at last, a rule that was followed. The Hayfield Union workhouse still survives; a present-day image of the modern block of private flats gave no obvious indication that it was a conversion of the old workhouse building, complete with the cells for vagrants.

A variety of workhouse records are available for researchers, including admission and discharge records, creed registers, along with the standard records of censuses, births, marriages and deaths and newspaper reports. Louise also recommended the website www.workhouses.org curated by Peter Higginbotham, whose excellent books are well worth reading.

Louise concluded by repeating her opening question - did she love John Livesley, or loathe him? The reaction from the audience members was emphatically in favour of loathing, and Louise agreed. "*In it for what he could get*" was her verdict.

23 October 2023 - Clothing the Skeletons by Ernie Savage

In his entertaining talk, Ernie Savage shared his experiences as a family history researcher-turned-writer, vividly illustrating the process of transforming facts that are familiar to every family historian into creative writing. He began by explaining his title, 'Clothing the Skeletons'. The skeletons, the bare bones, are the basic facts that family historians work with, such as dates and places of births, marriages and deaths. The 'clothing' process builds on these facts, moving through interest, speculation, a search for possible explanations and creative invention, leading to the final process of writing.

Ernie included lively readings from his published work, *Lost Lives* (twelve short

stories) and *Secret Lives* (a novella, plus other short stories), and provided copies of his family tree, highlighting the people whose stories he transformed into fiction, to help the audience members follow the relationships in his work.

Ernie's work was sparked by a discovery, one that most family historians can relate to; a "six month pregnancy", with an eldest child born soon after marriage. The reaction of his close relatives - half-amused, half-scandalised - prompted him to wonder about the full story. Had the bride been seduced by a wicked stranger, abandoned, then rescued by a kind suitor? His theory was reinforced by a photograph of the less-than-radiant bride around the time of her marriage - the sign of a guilty secret?

The baby's fate was a sad one; after several seizures he was confined to a lunatic asylum, and died as a young man. His younger siblings fared better, living long lives. Ernie considered reasons for this difference; possibly the first baby's health suffered because his mother wore tight corsets to conceal her pregnancy? From these first speculative imaginings, Ernie's creativity began to 'clothe the skeletons' of various people in his family trees, inspired by basic details of their documented lives in his fictional writing.

Ernie read excerpts from his stories that drew on encounters, conversations and situations in visits to graveyards, archives or places of interest. As an example, the release of the 1901 census online in 2002 is remembered by many who experienced difficulties and delays as the website struggled to deal with massive numbers of family historians seeking newly-released data. Ernie used this as the background to a scene where relatives waited beside a computer to discover long-hidden facts that could unlock a family secret.

Similarly, social encounters arising from research (e.g. a visit to a remote small village to investigate the records of a family member, introductions that resulted, a situation that developed) could be used for dramatic effect.

Ernie emphasised the potential of family documents; old photographs, letters, wills, financial records, Bibles, and legal paperwork can be invaluable for

deepening a researcher's understanding. Inheritances offered particularly fertile ground for drama, even when the sums involved were small. Arguments and grudges could be explained or understood, and the possibility of a family tree drawn up specifically to resolve a legal dispute offered endless opportunities to create a backstory. Ernie's own discovery of a half-completed novel by his mother was an unusual example; uncommon, but certainly intriguing.

Examples were given of family situations that could prompt the creative imagination, either from Ernie's own experience or those he had heard from others, including the death of a wealthy childless lady (who inherits her money or property?), old photos of family events (is anyone's position, posture or expression remarkable?), visits to Record Offices (what happens or is discovered there, or does new knowledge direct the plot?), the impact of a premature birth, the discovery of illegitimate children, or even the discoveries made when clearing a house after the occupant's death.

To conclude, Ernie gave examples of how he prefers to leave his stories with unresolved endings, so that the reader's imagination can finish it according to their own instincts. His own interest lies in questions over how things happened (or what came next), what became of a person, or who they really were.

Kate Hurst (Chair) thanked Ernie warmly for his talk, which struck a real chord with both her own research and her hobby of writing fiction. Similar reactions from other audience members made clear that Ernie's account of his work had given them much to reflect on as well as a most entertaining evening.

September and October talk reports by Julie Broadbent.

22 November 2023 - Quiz and Social Evening

Our 2023 programme was rounded off by a quiz, hosted by Colin MacDonald (our Treasurer). Assisted by the ODFHS projector, Colin posed several sets of questions on themes designed to get everyone thinking - from picture rounds to answers that

were all linked to the number 23. For the first time in recent memory, we had not one but two winners, as two teams scored eighty points each (each team member received a box of Chocolate Orange Truffles as a prize); the runners-up boasted a very respectable sixty points. The time and effort that Colin had put into preparing his questions was much appreciated by all who took part in what has become a pre-Christmas tradition for ODFHS.

In addition to tea, coffee and squash, a buffet of crisps, cheese and grapes on sticks, cocktail sausages, mini pork pies and other savoury snacks added a festive touch to our last meeting of 2023, whilst those with a sweet tooth could enjoy iced Christmas cake, chocolate truffles, mini cookies and Tunnock's marshmallow teacakes. Many thanks to Julie Broadbent and Jackie James for such a wonderful spread!

The raffle was so enthusiastically supported that several people had multiple tickets drawn, leading to the familiar cry of, "Put it back in!". Those who did wish to claim their prize could choose from a selection of edibles (wine, chocolate and a pink gin gift set), toiletries, candles and a set of nature-themed prints designed by local artist Angie Thompson (who provided the artwork for A Slice Of Gingerbread). An incredible £41 was raised for Society funds, with a further £7 being added through donations. All in all, a great night!

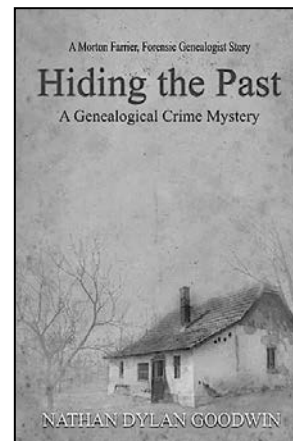


Raffle prizes at our November meeting

Book Review

Hiding the Past by Nathan Dylan Goodwin

review by Kate Hurst (H101)



Unable to trace his family beyond his late parents, James Coldrick pays forensic genealogist Morton Farrier an extraordinary sum to find out who he really is. A day later, he cancels the commission - but not the payment - and ends his own life. Even so, Morton attempts to uncover James' true identity . . .

As a crime mystery, *Hiding The Past* would be compelling without the family history angle - it's *Who Do You Think You Are?* meeting an episode of *Lewis* - but family historians will also appreciate the attention to detail as

Morton tries every avenue to solve the puzzle, from the internet to a covert DNA test. Closing time at the archives and restricted records are just some of the obstacles in his way. You don't have to be familiar with the resources he uses to understand why he checks them - a "transcript" of James Coldrick's probate record furthers the plot, and a casual mispronunciation tells you how to say "microfiche" correctly! For family historians, the attention to these little details makes *Hiding The Past* that bit more interesting - the author definitely knows his subject!

Digging deeper, Morton's discoveries have consequences that affect both him and his partner Juliette (a Police Community Support Officer). Someone wants to hide the connection between James Coldrick and his blood relatives; they've got friends in high places and will stop at nothing to keep the secret. There's a twist at the end about James' mother that I never saw coming - but the clues were there all along!

Nathan Dylan Goodwin provided ODFHS with a complimentary copy for review.

£9.99 (plus p&p) from the author's website - www.nathandylangoodwin.com or Amazon

Also available as an e-book or audiobook from various retailers.

Wanted - ODFHS Secretary

In May 2024, Pam Richardson will stand down as our Secretary after twenty years in the role - a major achievement that we think deserves everyone's praise! - and we're looking for someone to take on that role. If you're at ease with answering postal and e-mail enquiries (or forwarding them to the most appropriate person), taking minutes at our Committee Meetings (held via Zoom) and compiling an annual report of our activities for our AGM in May (using items sent in by other committee members), you might be just the person we need! For more information, please contact secretary@odfhs.email or speak to Pam Richardson (Secretary) or Kate Hurst (Chair) at one of our meetings.

Sharing People's History of West Lancashire

As Issue 92 went to print, ODFHS was awaiting the transfer of funds raised during last summer's successful crowdfunding campaign, supported by Lancashire County Council and Crowdfunding Lancashire. A brand new A3 printer and scanner (essential equipment to produce our planned two local history booklets) has been purchased, and a small team of volunteers are working hard to research, write and edit the text of the booklets, which will be themed around "Lost Buildings of West Lancashire". Two short video progress reports can be found on our YouTube channel:

- ODFHS SpaceHive Project | Sharing People's History of West Lancashire | November 2023
- ODFHS SpaceHive Project | Sharing People's History of West Lancashire | January 2024

What's Coming Up?

March to June 2024

Face-To-Face Meetings and Events

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 27 March 2024 | 'Gingerbread': Ormskirk's Lost Victorian Magazine by Roy Bayfield |
| 30 and 31 March 2024 | ODFHS will have a display at the Images of Burscough Exhibition. Main Hall, The Stanley Club, Liverpool Road, Burscough, L40 5TN. 11a.m. to 5p.m. (both days). Free admission. Parking on-site. |
| 1 April 2024 | ODFHS display board on early stages of joint project with new Becconsall Living Museum at their inaugural event. Station Road, Hesketh Bank, PR4 6SP. |
| 24 April 2024 | A 16th Century Presentation by Lizzie Jones |
| 11 and 12 May 2024 | ODFHS will have a display at the Ormskirk Mediaeval Festival on Coronation Park, Ormskirk. 11a.m. to 5p.m. (both days). Free admission. |
| 22 May 2024 | ODFHS AGM followed by a short presentation |
| 22 June 2024 | ODFHS will attend the Family History Show at the Knavesmire Exhibition Centre, York Racecourse, YO23 1EX. 10a.m. to 4p.m. For further details, please see pg.28) |
| 26 June 2024 | Honoured by a King: Maples of The Elms by Kathryn MacDonald |

Our in-person talks are held at the Guide HQ, Moorgate, Ormskirk, and begin at 7.30p.m. All welcome; non-members are requested to make a £2 donation. Refreshments available.

Zoom Meetings

- 11 April 2024 **ZOOM Family History Chat** 12p.m. (BST)
- 4 July 2024 **ZOOM Family History Chat** 6p.m. (BST)

For access details for our Zoom meetings, please contact Kate Hurst (ODFHS Chair) at chairman@odfhs.email

ODFHS Help Desk at Ormskirk Library

ODFHS volunteers run a Family History Help Desk at Ormskirk Library, Burscough Street, Ormskirk, between 10.30a.m. and 11.30a.m. on the first Monday of each month (except Bank Holidays). We are able to access the library computers (including 1921 census records on www.findmypast.co.uk and other family history websites) and can also offer guidance on other useful resources.

The Help Desk dates for 2024 are:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Monday 4 March 2024 | Monday 2 September 2024 |
| Monday 3 June 2024 | Monday 7 October 2024 |
| Monday 1 July 2024 | Monday 4 November 2024 |
| Monday 5 August 2024 | Monday 2 December 2024 |

There is no need to book, and everyone is welcome to make use of the facility. If you would be interested in joining the Help Desk rota, please contact us by e-mail or speak to a Committee Member at our meetings.

Interesting News

NEWCASTLE'S HISTORIC THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS DATABASE

The Tyne Theatre and Opera House in Newcastle has launched an online database of historic productions spanning 1867 to 1919, containing details of thousands of performances, catalogued by local volunteers in 2022-23, with assistance from academics from Newcastle University and Northumbria University. Besides hosting touring theatre and opera companies, the Tyne Theatre and Opera House also staged its own productions, with occasional transformations into a roller-skating rink or a cinema! Their Performance Calendar Database can be browsed by performance type, specific titles or cast and crew members, and by month and year, whilst the Calendar View option offers a month-by-month guide to performances. www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk/about/performance-calendar-database/

NEW WEBSITE FOR LONDON, WESTMINSTER AND MIDDLESEX FHS

In December 2023, the new website for London, Westminster and Middlesex FHS went live. Visitors can find links to their events, research resources and more; the members' area includes a new Surname Index of names from the Society's journal (October 2006 to 2023) and recently published Memorial Inscriptions booklets. <https://lwmfhs.org/>

GORTON AND PHILIPS PARK CEMETERIES WAR GRAVES INDEX

A project to identify fallen soldiers buried at Gorton and Philips Park Cemeteries in Manchester has been published online. The graves of over 600 soldiers have been identified and catalogued in a free searchable database, and the website includes historical information relating to both cemeteries. <http://gortonphilipsparkcemeterywargrave.weebly.com/>

TITHERADGE FAMILY HISTORY WEBSITE

When preparing the ODFHS Facebook Advent Calendar, we came across Ann and Mike Titheradge's Family History Site, an online repository with a focus on the Titheradge surname and its many variants (such as Titheridge, Teatheredge and

Tedridge), as well as notable people with that surname.

<https://titheradgefamilyhistory.wordpress.com/>

EARLY BRITISH CENSUS PROJECT

The Early British Census Project is a work in progress, concentrating on British and Irish census records from the period between 1801 and 1840. At present, various British towns are covered, including several in Lancashire; Bolton-le-Moors (1811 and 1831), Bryn and Haydock (1816), Clitheroe (1801 and 1831), Croston (1801), Elton, near Bury (1811 and 1831), Penketh (1831) and Winwick with Hulme (1801). The data is free to access at <http://ebc.byu.edu/Home>

The Family History Show at York

22 June 2024

ODFHS will attend the The York Family History Show, on Saturday 22nd June 2024 at the Knavesmire Exhibition Centre, The Racecourse, York, YO23 1EX. The event will be open to the public between 10a.m. and 4p.m. Besides other family history societies, genealogy product suppliers, and specialists in various subjects will be in the exhibition hall. One-to-one “Ask the Experts” sessions can be booked. Free talks by guest speakers.

Tickets are available to purchase via <https://thefamilyhistoryshow.com/york/> (Tickets are sent via e-mail if booked online.) £8 per head (or £12 for two, with the “early bird” offer), or £12 per head on the day. Under 16s admitted for free. The venue is accessible, with an all-day cafe, and ample free parking on-site.

Out and About With ODFHS

On Monday 27 November 2023, ODFHS marked Lancashire Day by going out into the community. During the morning, Kathryn MacDonald (Librarian) visited Ormskirk Library to give her talk on *The Ormskirk Gingerbread Ladies*. The subject generated a lot of interest, drawing an audience of twenty-seven people, and prompted sales of eight copies of *A Slice of Gingerbread*.



The audience for The Ormskirk Gingerbread Ladies at Ormskirk Library.

That afternoon, Kathryn gave a second talk at Burscough Library, enabling her audience to hear her presentation *Around Ormskirk In Six Objects*, which had its first outing at the July 2022 ODFHS meeting, and was adapted for our Family History Fun Fundraiser in September 2023.



Aughton May Festival, 11 May 1929

Ormskirk Advertiser, 16 May 1929

transcribed by Kate Hurst (H101)

PICTURESQUE CROWNING CEREMONY.

A DAY OF ENCHANTMENT AND HAPPY REVELRY.

[By Our Lady Reporter]

May was ever a magic month, and on Saturday last she laid a spell of enchantment around the church-crowned hill of Aughton; for at about half-past one on that day - a typical May day of gold and green - the denizens of Fairyland and Story Book Land might have been seen tripping lightly along the green lanes of Aughton.

I had with me a small person of the magical age of seven - a great age for belief in fairies - and she was vastly thrilled, and so was I, when turning a corner we came suddenly upon a little fairy with silver wings and crown running lightly along, and in her wake a Scarecrow who had surely left his post of duty in Farmer Brown's wheat-field, and behind them a whole host of fairy folk - Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, Dick Whittington and his cat, Old Mother Hubbard and her dog, Three Blind Mice and a farmer's wife equipped with a truly frightful carving knife, flower girls and fairies, fierce pirates and quaint clowns.

They were going, they said, to the Court of Queen Ada who that day was to be crowned Queen of the May. We knew that that was quite true for nothing else could persuade a Scarecrow to leave his post in the wheat-field. The Small Person and I there and then resolved to write a high romance of a Scarecrow and a May Queen but first we had to pay our respects at the Court of Queen Ada.

THE QUEEN'S DRESS.

Queen Ada, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. F. ROTHWELL, Gawhill Farm, Aughton was elected by the popular vote of the scholars of Christ Church School,



*Ada Rothwell, aged thirteen,
in her May Queen finery.*

Aughton, to be Queen of the fifth May Festival. A bonny English lass, tall and well-built, with a rosy face, a beaming expression and long golden curls, she made a dignified Queen.

The Small Person was informed that her dress was woven of starshine and moonbeams by long-legged spiders, but closer inspection proved it to be of delicate ivory georgette, ankle-length, with a girdle and flower-tracery on the skirt brodered in glittering silver sequins. Her flowing train was of georgette lined with silver tissue and edged with braid. On the face of the train was a flight of swallows in silver sequins. Silver brocade shoes strapped with silver kid were fitting footwear for a Queen of May, and her long curls were crowned with a band of silver leaves.

For ornament she wore a double row of pearls, and a massive gold slave bangle, the latter being the gift of Mrs. E.B. SWIRE, the lady to whom it had fallen the honour of crowning the Queen. A touch of colour was lent to her white and silver *toilette* by her bouquet of pink Lady Love roses and lilies-of-the-valley nestling amid ferns and maidenhair.

A troop of children like a posy of pink buds attended her Majesty. Four were the tiny train-bearers, in two nicely-graded pairs, and four were older girls who discharged the duties of maids-of-honour with a great sense of dignity.



Ada Rothwell with some of her retinue.

All were dressed alike in ankle-length, high-waisted Empire gowns of pink crepe-de-chine with coy little bonnets of pink and silver lace with fluttering pink ribbons. They held sheaves of pink tulips and sweet peas.

The maids-of-honour were Margaret SHOLICAR, Phyllis ROTHWELL and Amy SCARISBRICK, and the train bearers were Myrtle SPENCER, Stella PATTERSON, Edith NORRIS and Irene PALMER.

THE PROCESSION.

The Queen drove down to the Cross, Ormskirk, in a carriage decorated with pink, and accompanied by the train-bearers. An imposing procession set out from the Cross and wound along up the hill like a ribbon of bright brocade, and was witnessed by hundreds of people. The Ormskirk Old Prize Band, conducted by Mr. J. CROPPER, led the way, and a gay stream of Morris dancers footed it lightly in the sunshine. There were the Belles of Aughton (Mrs. SWIRE's Swanpool troupe), fine athletic specimens of girlhood in red and white costumes; the Osborne troupe costumed attractively in mauve and white, and the "Lads from the Village" dancers, sixteen hefty Aughton lads in white suits cross-gartered with blue, and wearing blue gipsy handkerchiefs on their heads.

The Mobberley (Knutsford) dancers in blue and yellow costumes also took part, and a few members of the Lancashire District Cycle Paraders' Guild joined in, wearing fancy costume. The Queen's carriage was attended by an escort of four horsemen wearing scarlet coats and gold helmets with nodding plumes. Mr. George D. KENNEDY, mounted on a white horse, marshalled the procession.

Meanwhile the Small Person and I sought the Court of the May Queen. We found it in a green meadow, where the grass was bright with dandelions like shining fairy-pence, daisies of pink and silver, and the first golden buttercups. A huge ring of spectators had gathered round the green court. At the far end stood the throne-dais, adorned with flowers and foliage and broad ribbons of mauve satin, before it stood the crown-stand, and in the centre of the field a platform for the dancers.

It was an exciting moment when the procession arrived, and swept round into the ring. There came the Morris dancers weaving gay patterns of colour and rhythm on the green grass, there came Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, there came the hundred and one little folk of rhyme and story, there came the ex-Queen, Winnie BROOKFIELD, in a gown and train of blue, attended by pages in velvet suits and powdered wigs, and a quaint little couple in old-world costume, and there came, moving with dignity to the gracious measures of the Minuet in G Minor, the Queen-elect and her retinue. Her subjects having taken up their places around the throne, the Queen passed up the centre of the field to the dais, and just at that moment the sun shone in full splendour and lit up her radiant figure, striking flashes of silver from the swallows on her train. Before the throne, a troupe of Brownies, standing two and two, held arches of blossoms, under which the Queen and her maidens passed.

A TELEGRAM TO THEIR MAJESTIES.

The Herald, Edward JOHNSON, very fine in velvet and plumes, solemnly marched onto the platform and announced, "The May Queen desires this telegram to be sent to their most Gracious Majesties, the King and Queen, now at

Craigweil House, Bognor. 'Aughton Festival May Queen and court and some thousands here assembled send greetings of love and loyalty to Your Majesties. - Ada ROTHWELL, May Queen.' " The whole company of Court and spectators (including myself and the Small Person) then rose and sang "God save the King." The Queen-elect was now about to be crowned, and the aforesaid Small Person whispered "Wasn't it awfully exciting?"

The Herald announced that, "Whereas on the first of March, 1929, Ada ROTHWELL was by vote of the scholars of Christ Church School, elected Queen of the May, as Queen of the May she shall now be crowned." This was the signal for Donald SCOTT, the Crown-Bearer, wearing the Scottish national costume, to take the crown reposing on its pink silk cushion on the stand, and bear it to the throne. It was a right royal crown of purple velvet and gold hoops set with pearls and huge precious stones, and edged with ermine.



Ada Rothwell with Mrs. Emily Beatrice Swire, of Swanpool House, Aughton.

The Crown-bearer made three profound obeisances to the Queen-elect, and my small companion had a moment of panic when she thought the crown was going to slip from its pink cushion. However, it got to the throne safely, and

Mrs. SWIRE, who looked very charming in a dress of beige lace, with hat and fur-collared coat to tone, placed the crown on the Queen's head and pronounced her to be Queen of the May. Queen Ada then presented a bouquet of red roses to Mrs. SWIRE, and gave to the ex-Queen a spray of forget-me-nots.

THE REVELS.

The Herald now mounted the platform and blew his bugle for attention, and commanded the revels to begin. Tiny children from the infants' department danced simple little dances very charmingly, Miss K. TIMPERLEY, of Mobberley, wearing a pink ballet frock, gave a clever skipping-rope dance, a team of six smart boys from Aughton-street (Ormskirk) Boys' School danced "Rigs-o'-Marlow" and "Blue-eyed Stranger."

Three bonny girls from Mobberley, wearing white middie blouses and sailor caps, danced a sprightly horn-pipe, and another exposition of the Sailors' Hornpipe was given by Mr. M. PEMBERTON, who is to perform before Princess Mary at Knutsford in June next.

Junior boys and girls of Christ Church Schools twirled and twined the coloured ribbons of the Maypole very expertly; a small child, Joan BOND, in a blue frilly frock, gave an exquisite interpretation of the Butterfly dance, and Olive WINROW, of Ormskirk, in a frock of pink net, posted and moved beautifully in a "Dawn" dance. Mobberley boys and girls danced an Irish jig, a Scottish dance and the sword dance, and a spirited Pony Dance, which was much admired.

There was a grand finale when the three teams of Morris dancers gave a combined display - such a fluttering of short red and mauve skirts, such a stepping-out of shapely limbs, such a splash of colour when fifty gay shillelaghs flashed aloft in the sunshine. Then - once again the stately measures of the Minuet, and the Small Person and I stood on tip-toe to see the fifth Queen of the Aughton May Festival pass on her way to be the Queen for the space of a year. "Wasn't it lovely!" said the Small Person with a rapturous sigh. So say we all!

OFFICIALS AND JUDGES.

Great credit is due to Mr. W. DAGNALL, the headmaster of Christ Church School, and his committee, for which Mr. W. BERESFORD acted as secretary, and Mr. Tom ROTHWELL treasurer. The following ladies acted as judges of the children's costumes, Mrs. Robertson DODD, Mrs. MASON, Mrs. HAMMAND, Mrs. WILLIAMSON and Miss ELSTUB. An interested spectator was Mrs. BLUNDELL, one of the patrons, whose late husband, Mr. G.W. BLUNDELL, was one of the leading patrons and founders of the Festival. Ald. ROSBOTHAM, J.P., paid a visit to the scene and expressed himself as delighted with the spectacle. In the evening, the usual Coronation Dance was held in the school, and the judges of the beauty competition were Messrs. E.V. TAYLOR, F. KROHN, G.D. KENNEDY, and C. HESKETH. Mr. HESKETH kindly lent his meadow in Long-lane for the crowning ceremony.

FOR REMEMBRANCE.

Prior to the Festival a graceful little act of remembrance was carried out, when Winnie BROOKFIELD, last year's May Queen, visited Aughton Parish Churchyard and placed a wreath of flowers on the grave of Mr. G.W. BLUNDELL. The inscription on the wreath was, "It shall be always May."

THE PRIZE-WINNERS.

The following scholars were awarded prizes in the costume parade: - Norman HESKETH, a realistic Scarecrow; Ivy WINSTANLEY, charmingly dressed as a Wedding Cake; Mary PRESCOTT, in the Dickensian costume of Betsy Trotwood; Margaret JOHNSON, Victorian maid, in pretty blue crinoline and poke bonnet; Lilian PARR, Merry-go-round; Joan MORGAN, "Well-matched"; Peggy BOLD, daintily dressed as "My Lady's Butterfly"; Joan SALISBURY, Buttercup; Allan HARRISON, Bedtime; Dorothy May ROTHWELL, a dainty Fairy; T. SAINT, Aeroplane; Walter ROTHWELL, Military Band.

The beauty prizewinners were Miss Doris GERRARD, Aintree; Miss Agnes BUSHELL, Aughton (the first Festival queen); Miss Doris ASPINWALL, Halsall.

Thanks are due to all the helpers, including Mrs. Robertson DODD and the ladies who undertook the decoration of the throne, etc. Mr. W. DAGNALL was greatly assisted by the members of his staff, who gave valuable help in many directions. A word of praise is also due to the parents, who took so much care and pride in preparing and dressing the children.

The gentlemen who acted as the mounted escort to the Queen were Messrs. George BERESFORD, W. FLYNN, John POOLE and J. CROMPTON. The 1st Ormskirk Girl Guides were present, with Mrs. Robertson DODD (secretary), Miss COOKE (district commissioner), and Miss ROCKCLIFFE (captain); and Miss Lois BLUNDELL was in charge of the 2nd Aughton Brownies. Rover-leader J.S. CROMPTON was in charge of the contingent of 1st Ormskirk Scouts, and S.M. HUTTON was present. The winner of the "Jumbled letter" competition was Mrs. THOMPSON, Parr's-lane, Aughton.



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To pay by Bank Transfer:

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Please quote your Surname and ODFHS Membership Number

Society Facilities

Research Library

Located in the Scout Hall, Wigan Road, Ormskirk, a short walk from the bus and railway stations, and local car parks. The Research Library is open by appointment; please contact Kathryn MacDonald at macdonald6465@gmail.com if you would like to arrange a visit.

Ormskirk Library Help Desk

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