



Preston Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

PROMOTING THE STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY IN PRESTON AND LANCASHIRE

Issue 8

Spring 2019

About the PHS

The aims and objectives of the Preston Historical Society are to promote the study of local history in Preston and Lancashire by way of social and natural history talks given by local historians and speakers, various events, and by using social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Meetings usually start at 7.15 pm on the first Monday of each month during the season. The seasonal membership subscription is £12.50. Non-membership admission is £3.00 per visitor.

Contact PHS

Need to contact the PHS for information or to find out any last minute info?

You can now call the PHS on

07504 262497

COMING SOON

**Monday
8 April 2019**

**PRESTON
AS OTHERS
SAW IT**

**Speaker:
Stephen Sartin**

The History of Alston Hall



***Dr Alan Crosby's talk on
Monday 4 March 2019,
will be about the
history of Alston Hall***

Many will remember visits to, or residential stays at Alston Hall College. It had a unique welcoming and friendly atmosphere where adult students could explore new or familiar topics in a congenial environment, with good company and tasty cooking in the College's dining room. All this was within the lovely countryside of Alston above the Ribble valley.

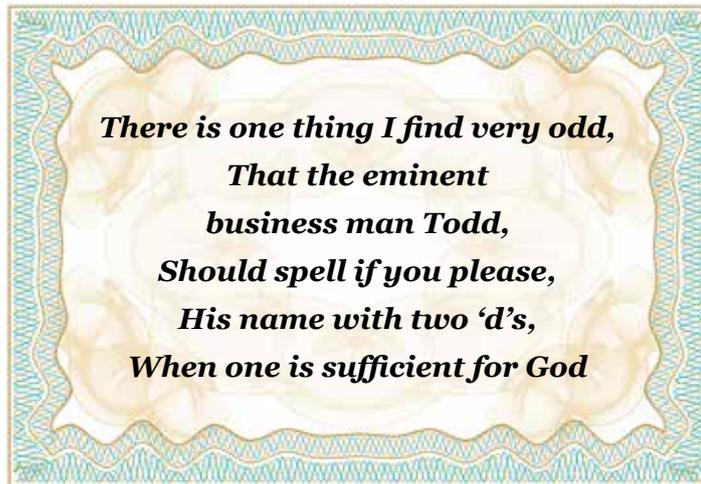
Alan Crosby will talk about the early owners of the Hall: the Mercers, Canon Taylor, William Birtwistle and John Marsden, before its sale to Preston County Borough Council in 1949. Preston's Education Officer, W. R. Tuson, bought the hall for use as a Day Continuation College for secondary students. Did you ever stay there then?

The Hall later became a residential adult education college, owned and managed by the Lancashire County Council. In retrospect, these were the Golden Days of Alston Hall, remembered with affection by the many who stayed or studied there. But the 'Austerity Cuts' caught up with Alston Hall and, after a review of the County Council's activities, the College sadly closed in December 2015. The Grade II listed 1876 building, designed by Alfred Darbyshire, the Manchester architect, was sold to the Patel family for use as a private home.

Shortly after rebuilding work began a fire broke out on 15 March 2017 which destroyed over 60% of the roof. An investigation concluded that the fire was begun accidentally. In hindsight the College's heyday years seem like a lost world of optimistic public service adult education which we are unlikely to see again. Alan Crosby's talk is sure to bring back memories and, perhaps, a few sighs.

The Todds

A Friends of Winckley Square (FoWS) initiative is to tell the stories of the people who have lived and worked in the Square in the last 200 years. One of those was James Todd, immortalised in this piece of doggerel:



James was a remarkable man but he was also husband and father to remarkable women.

James' grandfather was an unskilled labourer. James' father lived in Percy Street in 1851. He was a ropemaker and James' mother was a winder in a cotton mill. His dad went on to be a manufacturer of sack and rope and the family lived in Lune Street when James was born in 1863. He was the youngest of six children and moved with the family to 24 Broadgate, Preston.

James was articled to accountants and his subsequent rise was meteoric. The Institute of Chartered Accountants was established in 1880. Prior to 1880 many companies had bookkeepers but it was increasingly necessary for growing companies to employ qualified accountants. This looks like a classic case of James being in the right place at the right time. In the early 1880s James was a partner in a chartered accountancy firm, Blakey & Todd. He became sole owner in 1886: J. Todd was established.

By 1891 James was living with his mother at No 2 East Cliff. He opened offices firstly at No 12 Winckley Street, then at No 3 Winckley Square and finally at No 7 Winckley Square (now Napthens Solicitors). He was a pillar of Preston society; a leading Liberal; wicketkeeper and treasurer of Preston Cricket Club; the treasurer to Preston Chamber of Commerce; and a member of the Winckley Club, while at the same time building a business empire in engineering centred on aero engines and 'motor cars'.



He established offices in London, Manchester, Chester and Blackpool. He had dealings with the pre-Bolshevik government of the Russian Empire and supplied the British, French and Italian governments in and after World War I. He was the chairman of various companies including STD motors (Sunbeam, Talbot & Darracq) from 1920 to 1931. His filing cabinet, which is preserved by the current partners of James Todd and Co, Chartered Accountants in Adelphi Street, Preston, has drawers for Paris, Turin & Moscow.

At a national level James was a 'man about town'. He appeared in the London magazine, *Mayfair*, sporting a bow tie and holding a large cigar.

He married aged 44. His wife was Beatrice Rickward. She taught at the Preston High School for Girls (then at No 5 Winckley Square). Beatrice was 31, a graduate (rare for women then) and a Liberal. James and Beatrice had three daughters. A painting of the three girls is in the Harris collection.

During the First World War Beatrice Todd, a Liberal suffragist, and Beatrice Blackhurst, a prominent Conservative suffragist, were leading lights in the Preston Station Sailors and Soldiers Free Buffet which provided refreshments for over 3 million service personnel. Photographs from the time clearly show Beatrice Todd's name as the licensee selling tobacco. Beatrice Todd was the driving force behind the Preston Infant Welfare Voluntary Women's Association. By 1916 over 2,000 babies in Preston were being seen and supported each year.

The family settled at Farington Lodge (now a hotel). The three daughters appear to have lived a gilded life but, despite all the benefits of money and possessions, they were never close to their parents. Beatrice dreaded the days when the nanny was off and neither parent visited the girls when they were at boarding school. James and Beatrice would holiday in Monte Carlo and send the girls flowers.

However, all three girls developed a high degree of self-confidence and independence.

Judith the eldest was a communist and on Hitler's hit list. The Gestapo had a list for 'Priority Arrest' if Britain had been invaded. She volunteered and drove ambulances in London during the blitz. Ursula, the middle daughter, was told by her mother to have a two-year engagement. She defied her mother and after six months was married at St Mary's Penwortham. At the outbreak of World War II Damaris, the youngest, left her job and drove ambulances in London. Once the blitz was over she joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service and was posted to Cairo where she drove trucks for the armed forces across Sinai. When the war ended she moved to Austria and drove mobile canteens for the army.

In 1930 James' world was rocked. The whole board of STD was forced to resign. Even so, he was at Haydock Races (where he was also on the board) when he had a fatal heart attack. His estate was worth £1.8 million in today's money. His ashes were placed in the front wall of No 7 Winckley Square. There they remain, marked by a simple stone plaque reading 'J.T. 1863–1931'. Beatrice asked for her ashes to be placed alongside them. Judith chose not to.

Steve Harrison, Friends of Winckley Square
The FoWS website will be live later in 2019 with much more about the Todds. If you are interested in researching get in touch with patricia@winckley.org.uk

To Heal the Sick

NURSING IN THE NHS IN THE 1960s



Jane Dean

To Heal the Sick by Jane Dean, is a remarkable story brought to life by the voices of student nurses in the swinging sixties. The author describes how the rigorous specialised training equipped her for a career in nursing and midwifery, before finally establishing 'A Breath for Life Children's Charity' to provide hyperbaric oxygen treatment for both children and adults.

This philanthropic work is shared with ten of her former colleagues who embarked on a nursing career at Preston Preliminary Nurse Training School (P.T.S.) in September 1968, and who all make valued contributions to Jane Dean's manuscript.

Reading the book, the author's devotion to her chosen profession immediately becomes evident: 'For as long as I can remember I was going to become a nurse and I never once doubted it would happen.' As to be expected of a former nurse, who was devoted to healing the sick, the author triumphantly brings it off with style and dignity. Fittingly the author has dedicated her book 'To our Tutors and Ward Sisters of the time.'

Jane recalls her student nurse days serving on many of the hospital's wards including Brown Ward with my late wife and writes: 'Sister Hindle was different; she was young, vivacious and married.' I for one would certainly not disagree with that heart-warming observation which rekindles many memories.

The Preston Royal Infirmary's Brown Ward a busy male surgical ward. Historically the ward was named after Sir Charles Brown (1836–1925) a Preston Doctor, who was later appointed as a member of staff at the Preston Royal Infirmary. He was a great benefactor who donated in excess of £40,000 to the hospital.

While dwelling on her own experiences and perceptions the author undoubtedly has both affectionate and stoical memories of nursing in the 1960s and the title 'To Heal the Sick', is particularly fitting. Indeed, my perception of the author is that of her total commitment to nursing excellence, notwithstanding the countless hours of working on the wards of a busy hospital, without flagging energy levels and professional knowledge.

The author ingeniously embellishes her book with personal anecdotes, interesting and amusing snippets of local history and quotes from distinguished consultants, including Mr Ken Tutton the famous pioneering brain surgeon. The author puts on record fascinating accounts of the life-saving work and revolutionary surgical procedures and operations undertaken by surgeons whilst working as a student in theatre: 'Occasionally we were privileged to operate with Mr Garden, an eminent consultant orthopaedic surgeon who created the Garden classification of hip fractures and developed the Garden screw used to repair certain hip fractures. His work was followed by orthopaedic surgeons throughout the world and brought huge recognition to PRI as a progressive orthopaedic centre.' My wife spoke very highly of Mr Garden too and rightly informed me that his son was Graeme Garden, one of the three 'Goodies' of television fame.

Apart from being a well-illustrated and charming guide to the Preston Royal Infirmary, this new publication ranks highly as a welcome addition to the portfolio of books examining the social history of Preston. The book incorporates a good selection of interesting photographs of life on the wards and the amazing staff who were thoroughly dedicated to 'heal the sick.' Furthermore, this new and original concept about nursing in the 1960s encompasses plenty of new material, hitherto not in the public domain. The book will appeal widely to different tastes, not just to nurses and social historians but to those simply interested in the history of the National Health Service.

I can thoroughly recommend *To Heal the Sick* with its substantial narrative, it is an absorbing and captivating read. It may be obtained from Halewood & Sons bookshop, Friargate, Preston, or as a Kindle ebook and a paperback, on the Amazon website. Furthermore, with a cover price of £7.99 it represents excellent value. I especially like the attractive laminated cover design portraying a nurse's belt. To me it symbolises so much dedication, the high standards that mirrored a strict regime and utter professionalism of an era, now sadly lost in the mists of time.

David J. Hindle

Do you remember?



This slightly fuzzy photograph shows Bernard's kiosk, Ashworth Grove (off London Road), Frenchwood. The late Paul Swarbrick found the image on an old computer hard-drive of his. The kiosk sold ice creams, pop and sweets to passing children and riverside strollers. Bernard had a unique way of displaying small sweets. At child level there was a grid of boxes labelled A–G across the top and 1–8 along the side. If you want a few pennorth of Black Jacks or aniseed balls you asked for some of D4 or B6. The kiosk was demolished in the 1990s when the present houses and flats were built.

Harris Community History Library closure

The Community History Library in the Harris will be closed for 'works' until 22 April. Perhaps they might manage to install a public access computer catalogue there so users can find material when the desk is unstaffed?

Roman road discovery

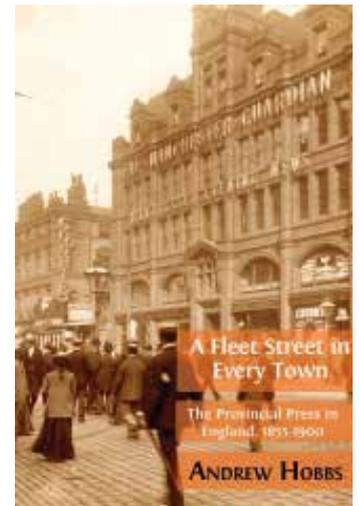


Salford University archaeologists working on the Cuerden Green site, which was intended for a new branch of IKEA, have unearthed a well-preserved section of the Roman road which ran from Coccium (Wigan) to north Lancashire. The team dug six large areas revealing a section of Roman road a metre under the surface and comprised of a gravel surface and a north/south-aligned ditch. The surface of rounded cobbles and gravel, thought to be from the River Lostock, has survived to a maximum extent of 18.32 m by 11.4m – a very wide road showing it was the main highway for the Roman military moving north. Ian Miller, lead archaeologist, said, 'The bit we found was pristine. It is quite a unique survival and we managed to hit the one site that had not been ploughed over during 2,000 years of agriculture. It was really, really well preserved.'

New Preston Bus book

Mike Rhodes, the historian of bus services in Preston, has published a new book *Preston Buses before and after Deregulation* (Amberley £14.99). As you might expect it has lots of pictures of buses (remember yellow Zippy minibuses?) but there are some curious background images such as buses lined up in 1984 in Butler Street, next to the station, before the Fishergate Centre was built, or a 36 trundling along rural Longsands Lane in Preston's lost countryside.

A Fleet Street in Every Town is the title of Dr Andrew Hobbs's recent book, which is about the provincial press in England from 1855–1900. Preston is greatly featured in the book which makes it worth reading by students interested in our city in the Victorian times. Published by Open Book Publishers means you can read it and download it for free on the publisher's website <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/835>



What's on

Lancashire Archives have a lively programme for 2019. Dr Jonathan Healey talks about *The origins of the Poor Law in Lancashire* on Friday 10 May at 7 pm. There's a buffet supper and wine for £13; places limited. Free talks from 12.30 to 1.30 include parish records (12 April), ancestors at sea: crew lists (10 May), church courts and daily lives (12 July), newspapers for family historians (9 August) and beyond Ordnance Survey maps (13 September). More details are at www.lancashire.gov.uk/archives

The Harris has a talk by Prof John Belchem about *Feminism, homophobia and adultery: Henry Hunt MP for Preston and the first petition for female suffrage* at 6 pm to 7.30 pm on 27 March. Hunt presented to Parliament Mary Smith's 1832 petition for female suffrage. Register for this talk through Eventbrite.

South Ribble Museum at Leyland has a talk by Colin Dickinson at 11 am on Saturday 16 March on *Let there be light: the history of the Lancashire electrical industry 1890–1940*. On Sunday, 10 March, starting at 2.30 pm, Dr David Hunt is leading a walk around Leyland about the lost Leyland map of 1740. The Harris's exhibition about the centenary of Ribble buses continues until 7 July in the Discover Preston gallery. Preston Historical Society's 2019 talks include *Preston as others saw it* by Stephen Sartin (8 April) and, following our AGM, *Preston and the Peterloo Massacre* by Dr Robert Poole (13 May). Dr Poole is also giving another but different talk about the Peterloo Massacre at the Friends of Lancashire Archives AGM at 7 pm on Tuesday 17 September. It's free to attend.

ON THE MOVE

Preston Minster is to close for building works soon so Preston Historical Society will have to find a new home for talks. St George's church, off Lune Street, is being considered, so please watch out for an announcement when we find a new venue.