



Preston Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

PROMOTING THE STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY IN PRESTON AND LANCASHIRE

Issue 15

Spring 2021

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

Covid-19 pandemic

All Preston Historical Society lectures are postponed until further notice. Your 2019–2020 subscription membership is extended to 2021.

When we are able to resume in some way we will let you know. In the meantime, on behalf of the Society, I thank you for your understanding and I sincerely hope that you all keep well and in good health.

David J. Hindle President

Remembering St Joseph's

An interview with Mrs Shirley Houghton



Shirley Houghton, on the right, with a nursing colleague.

Hello Mrs Houghton (née Taylor). Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed for the Preston Historical Society Newsletter. I was looking through the locked gates of the former St Joseph's Hospital, Mount Street, at all the rubbish and dereliction. It's a great pity that it has

got into this state now. You worked there as a nurse in its heyday. I wonder what was it like? It was a lovely, happy place or hospital to work in and the staff were like a happy family. I worked there with some great people. I respected the nuns, they were very good to me.

You were a nurse. When did you start? Can I ask how old were you? I started as a cadet nurse at St Joseph's Hospital in October 1957 at the age of 15 and a half years old and left in April 1960 to start my SRN [State Registered Nurse] training at the old PRI in Deepdale Road, Preston.

How did you join? Was there an interview? Did you have to apply? Who interviewed you? I applied by letter and got an interview with Sr Winifrede, the then Matron at the time. Not all applicants were accepted. I was born at St Joseph's Hospital in April 1942; my brother also in 1938. At Preston Royal Infirmary the Matron interviewed you.

How did you feel? Was it a job you felt proud to do? I enjoyed my time at St Joseph's Hospital very much. I got on well with the nuns. They were very kind to me and gave me time off on Sundays to go to my own church. I was not a Roman Catholic. I was very proud to have been a cadet there. When I nursed at St Joseph's they sent me for a pre-nursing course

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one day a week at Alston Hall, Grimsargh, which was an educational college then.

How many other nurses started with you? I started my SRN training at PRI in April 1960 with about 21 other girls; five of them came from Sharoe Green Hospital. There were two separate training schools in those days. The first three months were at Brindle Lodge.

How long was the training? Did you become an SEN or an SRN? I did my SRN training. It lasted three years, but if you wanted a PRI Hospital Diploma and a PRI badge you had to do a further year's service. When PRI and SGH joined together in the late 1980s they had a new hospital badge. There will not be many of the old PRI badges about now.

Was there a ceremony when you qualified? Did your family come along? What was it like? Yes, there was a ceremony at the PRI only for those who completed the four years. Family were invited. It was a dignified ceremony and we all went up separately to receive our diploma and badge and felt very proud.



Did you wear an SRN belt? Yes.

Nurses' uniforms in those days must have looked smart. What was yours like? Did you have a uniform cloak? Nurses' uniforms were very smart and dignified. Caps, cuffs, collars and aprons had that much starch in them you could hear them rustling all down the corridors. We had cloaks for night duty only.

Did you enjoy being out in the uniform? Were you in any of the Guilds or in a procession? We had outdoor uniforms: navy blue macs and caps. I never walked in Guilds or processions. We were too busy working long hours.

Did you live in a nurses' home or hostel? Where was it, please? The first three months' preliminary training

we lived in at Brindle Lodge, then after it was at our individual hospitals. I went to the PRI nurses' home with the rest of PTs and we all lived in the nurses' home. Many of the girls lived out of town. Only a few came from Preston.

What was it like? Did you get on well together? Were there Catholic nuns? Most of us got on well together, with some better than others. Religion was never discussed. We had two nuns from a Blackpool convent doing their training with us.

Did you eat in a canteen? What was the food like? We all ate in the nurses' only canteen. It was very regimental, each year of training having their own tables. Sisters had their own tables. We all had to stand up when the Matron entered and left, and Grace was said. The food was quite good.

Was the discipline 'firm'? You would have had a Sister in charge and then a Matron. What were they like? Each ward had one full-time Sister of its own, no part-time Sisters at that time. Discipline was very, very firm. You never spoke to anyone senior to yourself only when spoken to.

Did you have to mind your Ps and Qs? Could you smoke? Did they allow boyfriends? Hospital protocol was very strict. Smoking was only allowed in the recreation room. No boyfriends were allowed in. The nurses' home was locked at 11pm at night.

If a nurse got engaged did she have to resign when she got married? No nurses if engaged got married during their training. There were very few married trained nurses at that time in the early 1960s. There were more in later years.

What were the hours like? Hours were long. Daytime hours were 8am-10pm, but there were split shifts, different every day.

Did you have days off work? One and a half days a week off, not always together. We were allowed to go home then.

What did you do on your days off? Some went home, some stayed at the hospital. We had studying to do.

Did you have to keep your uniforms in good repair? Could you use a laundry? Were uniforms starched? Did you have bonnets or head covering? PRI had its own laundry and we sent our uniforms once a week. Cuffs, collars, and aprons were starched to perfection. We got fresh starched caps every week.

Did you get paid? Was it much pay? We got paid monthly. Our board and lodgings were taken out at source. Pay was very poor, only a matter of a few pounds, but we never bothered.

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What was it like on the wards? Did you do any cleaning or were there cleaners? We had cleaners. We did a certain amount of cleaning medical equipment. No pre-sterilised equipment in those days; each ward did their own. Wards were run very strictly.

Did you have to arrange patients' flowers? Changing water in vases? Ward orderlies did those jobs usually, sometimes very junior first-year nurses.

Was the discipline strict for patients? Were there visiting times? Did they ring a bell when visitors had to leave? Discipline was very strict for both patients and staff. There were visiting times most afternoons and evenings: two visitors for each patient only. A bell was rung at the end of visiting.



What was the work like? Did you move about from, say, maternity patients to others? Work was hard. We changed wards every three months. Maternity was a separate building and separate training: one year for a trained SRN.



Were there diseases, like diphtheria, that have declined now? Infectious diseases were admitted to Deepdale Isolation Hospital, Preston.

What was the most serious case you had to deal with? I cannot think of any one case in particular. There were so many serious cases in those days. Medicine and surgery were not as advanced as today, but there was plenty of caring.



Was it a happy job? What were the best times? On the whole it was a hard job, but a happy one. The comradeship was great and some of the nurses I trained with I still see today.

And what were the worst jobs? There were a lot of bad jobs, but we just had to get on with it with patience, care and dignity. Death was always difficult to deal with.

Did you enjoy your time as a nurse at Mount Street? I enjoyed my two and a half years at Mount Street very much and even when I left and went to do my SRN training at PRI, I often went back for a visit.

What do you think of its present derelict state? I find it very distressing, when I think about how it used to be.

How long were you a nurse there? Did you work anywhere else? I worked at St Joseph's for two and a half years and as a trained nurse for the NHS for 42 years at PRI. When it closed in 1986 we were transferred to Sharoe Green Hospital where I retired in 2002.

What's your abiding memory of St Joseph's? I have some fond memories of St Joseph's and met some wonderful people there who I will never forget.

Well, thank you very much indeed for your time and for agreeing to be interviewed. We have enjoyed a glimpse into a different world in Preston's nursing history. Many thanks indeed.

Plau beer and gin bar listed



The restored Plau bar, 115 Friargate, was Grade II listed in December 2020. Historic England's listing description says that the Plau is an example of a public house almost certainly created to take advantage of the gin craze of the early eighteenth century. It is associated with Thomas Swindlehurst and his decision to forswear all alcohol, which anticipated the advocacy of teetotalism by the temperance movement, of which he was one of the leading crusaders. The Plau still has its gin mash pit and a stone-lined well which was revealed during restoration. Thomas Swindlehurst (1785–1861) was a pioneer advocate of total abstinence. He was born at Dunsop Bridge. By 1830 he was operating a business making rollers for cotton machinery from what is now Marsh Lane, and in 1841 he was living in Great Shaw Street, both within 100m of the Plough Inn. However, by the autumn of 1830 he was in considerable debt due to drunkenness. One of his creditors, John



Finch, a Liverpool iron merchant, was a member of a temperance society. He persuaded Swindlehurst to become the first man in Preston to sign the temperance pledge to abstain from spirits, and drink ale and wine only in moderation. However, he found it impossible to drink moderately. On 6 March 1832, while drinking in the Plough, he resolved to totally abstain from alcohol for a year, a pledge which he kept for the rest of his life.

1921 Census

We filled in our census forms in March 2021 (except in Scotland which is in 2022). This means that the hundred-year confidentiality rule for census returns moves forward to 1921. The contract to publish the 1921 Census online has been awarded to the British and Irish family history website Findmypast, in association with the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The census, which was the first to be conducted following the introduction of the Census Act of 1920, will be published in early 2022. Taken on 19 June 1921, it consists of more than 28,000 bound volumes of original household returns containing detailed information on close to 38 million individuals. The project will see Findmypast capture

digital images and transcribe text data in a way that will enable family historians across the globe to conduct meaningful searches of these important records for the very first time.

The 1921 census provided greater detail than any previously published because it asked householders to reveal their place of employment, what materials they worked in, and their employer's name. Those aged 15 and older were required to provide information about their marital status, including if divorced, while for those under 15 the census recorded whether both parents were alive or if either or both had died. 1921 brings family history resources into the age of our grandparents for older family history researchers. For more details see:

www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census

Whistler's auntie

We sometimes think that transatlantic travel was mainly one way, from Europe to America. But there were many visitors from the USA to Britain, attracted partly by family ties. One such famous traveller was the artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler RBA (1834–1903). He is famous for his 1871 portrait of his mother which he called *Arrangement in Gray and Black no. 1*. This is now so famous that it's often parodied and imitated. It was even used as US postage stamp in 1934 to honour the Mothers of America.



Whistler became notorious when in 1877 he sued the critic John Ruskin for libel. Ruskin, who was mentally ill, had foolishly said of Whistler's painting *Nocturne in black and gold* 'I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to

hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.' Whistler won his case but he was awarded a farthing in nominal damages and had to pay half his legal costs which bankrupted him.

Whistler had links with Preston where his favourite aunt Winny lived. John Winstanley, a solicitor, from Walton-le-Dale, of 'Winstanley and Charnley', 2 Fox Street, Preston, lived with his wife Eliza McNeil, one of two half-sisters of Whistler's mother Anna Matilda McNeill, at Alston Lodge, Longridge. Eliza died in 1875 and is buried at St Leonards, Walton-le-Dale. Her sister Alicia Margaret Caroline McNeill, a spinster, d.1863, Linlithgow, also lived in Preston with Eliza at Longridge. In November 1829 his mother, Anna Matilda Whistler, sailed to England and stayed with his aunt in Preston. In a letter, dated 14 January 1830, he wrote, 'We have received a letter from Sister Eliza this morning, she is very anxious for us to return home & will meet us at Avenham Colonade on Saturday with the Carriage. Meg you don't know how I long to be again with her! Both Mr Winstanley & herself, pet me so much when I am with them I dare say they have spoilt me for I am happier at Alston Lodge than in any other spot. Still let me do justice to the friends I visit, they are extremely kind. Indeed I had formed no idea of the hospitality of the English until I came among them.'

The Swainsons of Bannister Hall, Higher Walton, chintz cotton printers, were friends of the McNeill Whistlers of Alston Lodge. There is a sketch somewhere of Eliza, his favourite 'Aunt Winny', mentioned in a 1995 Catalogue raisonné held at Manchester University Library and in a 1980 two volume book on Whistler's paintings in the Harris Library basement. Lancashire Archives holds correspondence relating to the will of Aunt Alicia McNeill. Julie Foster has researched much of these sources for which many thanks.

What's on?

Although the Covid lockdown prevents meetings and museum visits there is a growing number of Zoom and webinar talks and events. Lancaster University's **Regional Heritage Centre** is holding: *Ballad and Song in the History of North West England* (Saturday 15 May 2021); *Refugees in the North West – from the early twentieth century to the present* (Saturday 19 June 2021) in association with Global Link. Details at: www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/events

Ed Glinert is offering an interesting programme of Manchester-based walks (Zoom, and starting outdoors on 17 May) at:

www.newmanchesterwalks.com/category/news

Lancashire DalesRail train services resume on Sunday, 16 May, until Sunday, 12 September. The train leaves Preston station at 9.07am and runs via Bamber Bridge, Blackburn, Whalley, Clitheroe, Hellifield, Settle, Ribbleshead, Dent, Kirkby Stephen and Appleby to arrive in Carlisle at 12.19pm. The return train leaves Carlisle at 4.48pm arriving in Preston at 7.50pm. Lancashire Ramblers are offering guided walks along the route and in Appleby and Carlisle.

Web resources

Peter Smith's excellent *Preston History* on www.prestonhistory.com website gets better and better. It now posts full texts of important local history texts and resources such as David Hindle's 2006 MA thesis *From a 'Gin palace' to a 'King's Palace?': The Evolution of the Music Hall in Preston c.1840-1914* and the whole 663 pages of Anthony Hewitson's *History of Preston* (1883). This is becoming an indispensable online encyclopaedia of Preston's history; it is very well worth a look. We are indebted to Peter Smith for his industry and vision.

Another useful free online e-book is the scarce 38-page *Tales of Frenchwood* pamphlet published by Preston City Council. It was compiled by Margaret Burscough and Jane Humphreys in 2009 for the Council's Area Renewal Team. Regrettably it has no ISBN and there seem to be no copies catalogued either in the Lancashire Libraries or the Lancashire Archives. There is no copy indexed in the British Library catalogue; it looks as if the Team ignored the 2003 Legal Deposit Libraries Act. Fortunately there is an online copy on Issuu at:

www.issuu.com/staugustinesrcchurchpreston/docs/frenchwood-booklet-col_1

It has chapters about Frenchwood's early history, *Frenchwood Hall*, *Lark Hill*, Margaret Burscough, and corner shops. We should be grateful that a copy has been posted on Issuu but it's a pity that copyright copies were not deposited locally and nationally as required by law.

A useful source of online material is the website of the Leyland Society which researches the enormous archive collections of the British Commercial Vehicle Museum. They produce a well-illustrated and edited journal *Leyland Torque* some of which are posted online as pdf files for free downloading. The Spring 2016 edition no. 71 has an article about the colours of former independent bus companies in the Preston area: Viking, Preston; Corless, Charnock Richard; Oliver Hart and Sons, Coppull; Bamber Bridge Motor Services; Scout Motor Services, Preston. The photographs of Starch House Square bus stands are reminders of what a charming place we lost when it was demolished for the Ring Way. Issue no. 71 also has an article about Wellington House, Leyland, used by Leyland Motors as a residential training centre for engineering apprentices. See:

www.leylandsociety.co.uk/torque2016.htm

A new history of Cuerden Hall has been published on Issuu from a link at:

www.lancashirepast.com

It is the Cuerden Hall Conservation Management Plan section on understanding historic development. It pulls together all primary and secondary historic research into one place and sets out the chronological history of the site, including an understanding of the construction of the main hall by Lewis Wyatt in 1816 and its uses in the early 20th century. The author is Rebecca Burrows for Purcell Architecture Ltd. on behalf of Colin Shenton.

www.issuu.com/hc_purcell/docs/cuerdenhallcmp_19march21

Many images in the Livesey Collection in the University of Central Lancashire have been scanned and are now available online at:

www.jstor.org/site/university-of-central-lancashire/livesey

The Collection is named in honour of Joseph Livesey of Preston, one of the early teetotal pioneers. In 1987, the Livesey Collection transferred to the University of Central Lancashire from the British National Temperance League in Sheffield. Since then it has been enriched by donations from temperance groups and individuals. The Collection is held in Preston, where the Total Abstinence movement began in 1832. The temperance materials form a major part of the archival collections of the institution whose parent establishment Joseph Livesey helped to set up in order to educate and improve the lot of the working classes.

The collection is made up of a significant number of journals, monographs, bound collections of pamphlets and non-textual items. These include lantern slides, posters, banners, textiles, crockery and ephemera. The collection represents temperance societies and culture from the 19th century onwards, from Band of Hope groups to the Rechabite Friendly Societies. Also included in the collection are works relating to non-conformist religious groups in the Preston area.

Three very useful heritage trails of Penwortham can be downloaded for free at:

www.visitcentralparks.wordpress.com/penwortham-heritage-trails

They are Lower Penwortham Circular Walk; Higher Penwortham Circular Walk; and Trams and trains circular walk. Ideal for your Covid exercise, walking?



Guild window: where is it?

An interesting sketch was auctioned – hammer price £190 – in 2019 by art dealers Warren and Wignall. It's a design, by Gerald Rickards for a 1972 Preston Guild window. He was a Wigan artist, specialising in depicting buildings. He was born in Aspull, lived in Billinge near Winstanley College (previously Up Holland Grammar School) where he was Head of Art for 26 years. After early retirement, he devoted all his time to painting from 1985 until his death in 2006. He exhibited widely. Among his works were a mural in the History Shop, Wigan; a panel at Holgate School, Orrell; and a large painting for Newnham College, Cambridge. What happened to his Preston design? Was it ever made? Does anyone know?

An underground discovery

The late Roy Bannistre Parker left this intriguing account, with his friend Anne Bradley, of a mystery literally unearthed in Market Street West in 1963. Subscriber Trunk Dialling (STD), which replaced manual telephone switchboards, was being installed nationally.

The account reflects attitudes of the period.

In 1963 I was a junior engineer working for the British Insulated Callender's Construction Company (BICC). A new telephone exchange was being built in Moor Lane, historically the site of the first cotton mill in Preston. At that period the main telephone trunk cables had terminated in the town centre Post Office confronting the Cenotaph. The manual switchboards were there. We were extending the cables to the new Moor Lane automatic telephone exchange.

To avoid disruption in Friargate, one of the main thoroughfares, we excavated down a very narrow street just east of it, Market Street. It was old, already a busy lane three or four hundred years before Bonnie Prince Charlie came to town. Now it is little known except by those using the car park there or visiting the Playhouse. Few remember Holy Trinity church which in 1963 had recently been demolished. Its first stone was laid by Sir Henry Hoghton in 1814, a substantial building with a tower. Its graveyard was under the present car park.

Excavations three foot deep were progressing nearly as far as the Playhouse. But when I was at the office at no. 8 Grimshaw Street the foreman came to tell me that work had stopped in Market Street: the men had downed tools. I hurried there and observed about a

dozen Irish labourers hanging about at the top of the trench. They were the employees of D. J. Ryan, a firm that BICC were using as a sub-contractor. Payment was by achievement not by time.

What had they found? I was not hopeful of anything of great interest. In all excavation contracts there is a clause concerning the ownership of any articles of value or antiquity that may be exposed during the course of the work. Although I have dug in some areas where one could expect to find such objects I have never had any reports of anything other than Georgian coinage. The labourers pocket the others. At Red Scar Wood, at the former Courtauld's site on Longridge Road, Preston, we found wooden posts marking the footings of a Roman bridge.

Here the trouble was human bones. Malarchy, the foreman, said the men refused to dig. These were older than the contents of the Holy Trinity graveyard. It had probably been a medieval plague pit, outside the precincts of the town. After a short discussion it was decided that they would seek the professional help to hand at St Mary's RC church in Friargate (now also demolished to make a car park. The last service in the church was in July, 1990).

Everyone was solemn; some perturbation but not the usual ready Irish tongue. It being afternoon, help had been immediately available and we soon saw a little fat priest emerge from under the arch opposite St Mary's dressed in his black cassock and biretta, the squares of its stitched crown coming together in a tuft at the top. Dipping a whisk or wand in a container he sprinkled holy water in the trench mumbling a bit of Latin. This rite seemed to satisfy the men who all jumped back into the trench and continued digging, bones and all.

Dannie Ryan would have given strong approval to the proceedings. He recognised me in the former Marsh Lane pub, the Oak Tree, and offered me a drink. With the bonhomie of an Irishman with money in his pocket he included everyone else who was standing around.

Editor's note: perhaps the labourers came across the remains of a military field hospital from the 1715 battle of Preston?

The Harris closure



The Harris museum, art gallery, and library has been awarded £4.5 million by the National Heritage Lottery Fund towards the *Re-imagining the Harris* Project. This means that the building will be closed for some time during its reconstruction. We don't know yet what will happen then to the local and family history book and other resources collections and the contents of the *Story of Preston* Gallery.

BOOK NEWS

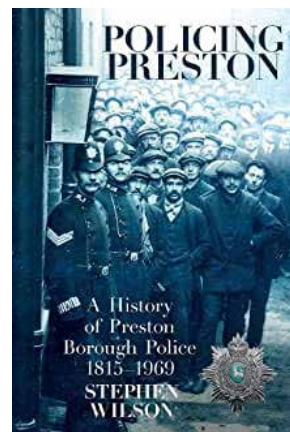
POLICING PRESTON: A History of Preston Borough Police 1815–1969

Stephen Wilson 2021

This book is not solely a history of Proud Preston's police force but it also covers events such as strikes and riots at local and national level, making it a history of the city itself. Much coverage is given to murders, acts of bravery, and Guilds. The Preston-born author's parents and brother all served in the borough force. Stephen Wilson worked throughout Lancashire during his police service between 1979 and 2007. He has spent much of his spare time in retirement researching the borough force's history.

Preston's first Superintendent was Thomas Walton who, by 1832, supervised six police constables. Wilson describes Walton's successors. The term 'Chief Constable' did not come until 1882 when the sixth chief officer was appointed. He was the first with a military background and one of 44 applicants for the post. In those days the force was controlled by the Corporation Watch Committee.

I was struck by the depth and width of the author's research, which he shows in the footnotes, lengthy bibliography and list of suggested further reading.



It came as a shock to me to learn that the force had no motor vehicles at the time of the General Strike in 1926, and that it was not until the 1930s that a system of police box pillars was installed to contact the officers working the 22 beats at these points and that the public could use them to contact the police station.

By 1969 the force had grown to an establishment of 283 officers, 34 civilian members of staff, and 29 vehicles. It operated from its headquarters at Earl Street and a number of operational bases throughout the town. It had its own traffic patrols, dog handlers and CID departments, underwater search unit, and stolen vehicle squad.

The Corporation's Watch Committee did not want their force to be amalgamated with the Lancashire Constabulary and other forces within the county on 1 April 1969, but the Home Office overrode its wishes. The author provides a list of the 283 bobbies and 34 civilian members of staff serving on the appointed day. They, and members of the Special Constabulary, were proud of Preston's force and had every reason so to be.

Book review by Bob Dobson

Policing Preston is available in paperback (£20) and hardback (£25) post free from the author at info@stephenwilsonpublishing.co.uk Or phone 01772 687197. Payment can be made by cheque, bank transfer, or Paypal. It is also available online from Amazon.