

What's on?

The Harris is closed now for some time (the Library service has relocated to the Guild Hall) but there will be exhibitions elsewhere. One of these is at Lancaster City Museum: REGINALD ASPINWALL: a troubled landscape. This runs until 7 November 2021. Aspinwall was born in Preston in 1855, moving to Lancaster in the 1870s to study art. He was a prolific artist, inspired by nature. However, his talent was curtailed by his addiction to alcohol. The last few years of his life were marked by financial hardship, which forced him into Lancaster Workhouse. He died in 1921 in Lancaster Moor Hospital. He is buried in Lancaster Cemetery. South Ribble Museum, Lancashire Archives and the Museum of Lancashire all seem eventless and quiet. Details of events arranged by the Friends of Winckley Square are at www.winckleysquarepreston.org/Lancaster University's Regional Heritage Centre lists local events at www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/events/. Events and talks announced include: Saturday 20 November 2021: Saints' lives and medieval history in northern England. Online event with live Q&A; Saturday 5 February 2022: Outsiders looking in – visitors' impressions of the North West 1600–1939 with Dr Alan Crosby; Saturday 5 March 2022: 49th Annual Archaeology Forum; Saturday 30 April 2022: We do like to be beside the seaside – tourism and coastal towns in North West England; Wednesday 25 May 2022 (to be confirmed): Regional Heritage Centre excursion – the battle of Clitheroe 1138. A guided visit with Dr Fiona Edmonds. The Atkinson, Southport, has a lively programme of exhibitions and events, well worth checking. From Saturday 13 November 2021 to Saturday 19 March 2022 they are showing *I Grew Up 80s*. This is nostalgia for the over-forties! Marvel over Rubik's cubes, leg warmers and Transformers.



winckleysquarepreston.org/Lancaster University's Regional Heritage Centre lists local events at www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/events/. Events and talks announced include: Saturday 20 November 2021: Saints' lives and medieval history in northern England. Online event with live Q&A; Saturday 5 February 2022: Outsiders looking in – visitors' impressions of the North West 1600–1939 with Dr Alan Crosby; Saturday 5 March 2022: 49th Annual Archaeology Forum; Saturday 30 April 2022: We do like to be beside the seaside – tourism and coastal towns in North West England; Wednesday 25 May 2022 (to be confirmed): Regional Heritage Centre excursion – the battle of Clitheroe 1138. A guided visit with Dr Fiona Edmonds. The Atkinson, Southport, has a lively programme of exhibitions and events, well worth checking. From Saturday 13 November 2021 to Saturday 19 March 2022 they are showing *I Grew Up 80s*. This is nostalgia for the over-forties! Marvel over Rubik's cubes, leg warmers and Transformers.

DO YOU REMEMBER?



Another fine photograph of Preston's Market Square and Cheapside in 1966 by David Ayres. Judging by the ladies' coats it may be chilly but a clear wintry sun is shining.

The smart young lady has a fashionable beehive hairdo popularised by the singer Dusty Springfield. A maroon Preston Corporation Leyland double decker is waiting

outside the Harris about to depart for Pedder's Lane (route A). Crystal House looms over the square. Parked by the market stalls is a Wolseley 16/60 car (9716 MD) with stylish Pinafarina-designed bodywork. MD was a Middlesex registration; what was it doing in Preston? Do you remember any of the stall holders?



Preston Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

PROMOTING THE STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY IN PRESTON AND LANCASHIRE

Issue 18

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Roman Roads of Lancashire



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.

A few Christmases ago, while staying at my brothers-in-law's farm outside Chipping, we decided to escape the torpor of turkey sandwiches and Boxing Day TV sales adverts for DFS leather sofas and to explore the line of the Roman road, marked on the Ordnance Survey map, which crossed the farm. The road ran from beneath Jeffrey Hill and crossed the Hodder river to continue north. Using David Ratledge's LIDAR mapping we found the line of the road easily, including the shallow 'agger' which reveals the profile of the Romans' road. It seemed to have vanished from one field which we discovered later had been recently deep ploughed three times, leaving a pile of large stones in a corner. Oops! Both the LIDAR and OS lines cross the Chaigley road where they exactly follow the line of a field hedge. One of the advantages of walking on family-owned land is that you

can stray from the public footpath. At the end of the hedge we came to a curious twist to the north-west down to the Hodder. Why? David Ratledge's LIDAR mapping reveals that the practical Roman engineers avoided building an expensive bridge in a remote area by diverting down the gradient to cross the river at an angle before climbing to the opposite bank in a north-east direction and then to resume their direct path northwards. It was a thrilling moment to realise that LIDAR mapping accurately revealed, after over more than a thousand years, the precise line of a vanished road built when we were governed from Rome. You can be certain that David Ratledge's talk about the Roman roads of Lancashire, revealed by light detection and ranging (LIDAR) mapping, will be as revelatory and stimulating as it was for us standing in that wintry muddy field. ATB

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**

Forgotten Harris treasures

The Harris Museum and Art Gallery is now closed for some years. In our new series Julie Foster looks at some forgotten treasures in the Harris and reveals their remarkable stories.



From Iron to Israel: 'The Delivery of Israel out of Egypt' by Francis Danby, 1825 (The Harris)

This 7ft (94 inches, 2.13m) picture hangs above the second floor stairway of the Harris. Listed in the 1948 Harris 'Pictures' Catalogue, it was given to the Museum by Mrs Margaret Gregson. The gift was reported in the Lancashire Evening Post, 2 November 1932. It is perhaps the only oil painting by the artist held in a public collection in the North West (Gallery Oldham have two water colours)

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1825, it was described by reviewers as 'one of the most extraordinary pictures ever painted'. It was so popular a wood-cut version was featured as a frontispiece to *The Saturday Magazine* in 1833. The painting, also called Pharaoh and his Host overwhelmed in the Red Sea, was first owned by the Duke of Sutherland of Trentham Hall and Stafford House, London. It was later sold at Christie's in 1908, fetching fourteen guineas.

Who was Mrs Margaret Gregson? She was the daughter in law of James Gregson d. 1906, machine maker and partner in the Vulcan Iron Works, Gregson and Monk Ltd., off North Road Preston. He built the grand Highgate Park House in 1876 (demolished in 1962 to make way for a housing estate) Highgate Park, Fulwood. James gave land for Fulwood Lawn Tennis Club in 1891. Margaret's father was Ralph Hutchinson, merchant, of Lytham. John James Gregson and Margaret Hutchinson were married at Christ Church, Blackpool, in 1904. In 1939 age 66 she was widowed and living at Highgate Park with her brother and two servants. In 1957 the *Lancashire Evening Post* reported a later gift to the Harris of a watercolour by Thomas Faed Good News (1863) from her son James Gregson. The report states the picture originally belonged to his grandfather.

The artist Francis Danby (1793–1861), born in County Wexford, exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1821 and 1860. He ended his days at Shell House, (now demolished, with blue plaque on the site) Exmouth, Devon, painting sunsets and building boats. *Julie Foster*

BOOK NEWS

Keith Johnson has another well-researched new book published. It is *Celebrating Preston* (Amberley, 2021 £11.45). It's about the many ways that Preston has enjoyed sporting and other memorable events such as Guilds and Royal visits.

David Hindle's book about the *West Lancashire Railway Lament for a branch line: the Preston to Southport Railway* (Silver Link, 2021 £30) was published in the summer. It has many photographs of stations and trains on the line. There are lots of images of locomotives, as you might expect, but there are striking photographs of remote rural stations such as Hundred End and other local landmarks. Do you remember the Cephos bridge, Penwortham? What was Cephos anyway? An ideal Christmas present for rail enthusiasts.



Hundred End station in the 1950s. (Gordon Howarth)

'TOUCH' DUCKWORTH

Review by Bob Dobson

The Lancashire Bare-Knuckle Fighter and Livery-Stable Keeper; the Life and Turbulent Times of 'Touch' Duckworth 1800–48

Stephen R Halliwell
(Minster Park Publishing, Preston, 2021)
£12.99

It can fairly be said that, prior to the author discovering this larger-than-life character in the Preston newspapers, his active life had gone unnoticed by local historians in his (their) native town and across much of the county. It seems that his life had been chronicled only by early journalists and archivists.

It must have been a difficult task for Halliwell to decide on a title for the book, as, lengthy as it is, the first part of it could also have included the fact of Duckworth also being a brewer, a professional fraudster, a beerhouse keeper and publican, also a horse doctor and dealer. The manner in which he conducted himself often set him apart from others earning their living in similar businesses, as he frequently sailed close to the wind and was well known in Preston and other Lancashire towns to the early law enforcement officers, solicitors and magistrates. All of these, and probably all who knew him, would certainly have described him as a 'rum bugger'. The reader is given lots of opportunities to hear of occurrences in his life and come to the same conclusion.

It seems possible, even likely, that Duckworth gave himself the nickname of 'Touch' as a means of publicising his pugilistic skills, with which he earned a living from an early age in an era before the Queensbury Rules. Fighting in the streets and public places was organised by the betting fraternity with which 'Touch' associated. Likewise, he earned prize money at the horse races which were held all over the county, though not on the track as we know them today. He was a man seemingly able to turn his hand to many trades to feed his wife and family, so it would not have been surprising to find him acting as a bookmaker, though his daily connections with horses as a dealer, breaker and stable-keeper probably showed that that was where his interests lay.

Halliwell gives many examples of his subject's frequent encounters with the police of the day. Duckworth died almost a decade after the new 'rural police' in the county came into being, but in Preston the force had been present since his teenage years. There are few, if any, mentions in any other books of the nineteenth century which record occurrences of interaction between transgressors and constables. Halliwell provides many of these occurrences,

and in that way the book is not just a record of one man's life but gives insight into everyday life in a time before the motor car, when housing conditions were harsh and unhygienic and when social gatherings in the open air and in towns with a rapidly increasing population were far different from those experienced by most of today's town-dwellers.

One significant aspect to the book which other authors would not have been able to comment on are the frequent references to Preston's public houses of the period. This has been possible because of the author's in-depth knowledge of the town's drinking establishments. He has written on the subject and compiled a website devoted to the town's pubs. He is the acknowledged expert on the subject.

Another aspect of the book which I applaud is Halliwell's use of a device or icon showing a small magnifying glass when he seeks to comment on something written by a journalist in order to explain it to the reader. Clever and very useful.

Duckworth, known as Jim and Jem to his associates (I wonder if he was also known as Duck'oth, as is common in Lancashire), ended his days as he had lived. Through his life he had settled disputes with some degree of violence. During a drinking session, he challenged a companion to a fight. The challenge was taken up, and at an early stage, he was forced backwards and banged his head on a stone protruding from a wall. It broke his ribs, which pierced his liver, causing internal bleeding. Despite having been in business for many years, there was no money for his funeral. A public subscription raised the necessary funds.

Throughout the book is mentioned something which somehow throws light on Duckworth being different from other men; he kept a pet. A pet bear. Halliwell gives it a name – Paddington – for most of the book, though at a late stage in his researching he discovered it to be 'Sambo'

Self-published, this high quality paperback book of 136 pages is illustrated with recent drawings in the absence of any recorded pictures of Duckworth. The artist has produced a very believable picture of what he may have looked like. The other illustrations in the book – many of them – are taken from newspapers of the day, and greatly add to the reader's feeling of being present at the time

The author is a retired Preston detective. His book is not the first example of a display of his skills as an enquirer, producing a detailed report on a subject not previously looked into. He has succeeded in showing Duckworth as an intriguing, multi-faceted person set in a period when the news was brought into people's lives by journalists writing in newspapers with a load of 'feel' to them. Some of that news was brought into town on horse-back. There will never be a statue to 'Touch' in Preston but this book will be a memorial to him. One which proud Prestonians will thank Halliwell for.

Copies may be obtained from the author at 29 Minster Park, Cottam, Preston PR4 0BY @ £12.99 plus £2.50p postage. Cheques payable to Stephen Halliwell.

Bob Dobson