



PRESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Winter 2025 | Issue 33

PROMOTING LOCAL HISTORY ACROSS NINE DECADES

Patricia Harrison



My background is education; teaching in schools, HE and advising and writing books for students and teachers for over 30 years. A member of PHS for many years, I joined the Committee in 2022 with the aim of increasing membership as post Covid numbers had declined dramatically. I founded Friends of Winckley Square in 2016, both roles keep me pretty busy.

Gill Coward



Originally from Chorley, I settled in Penwortham over twenty years ago. I was inspired to research my family history when the 1901 Census was released online. I work for a national museum, contributed to Lostock Hall Medical Practice's Doctor Doctor local history project and carry out research for others. I love a good sort out of 'stuff'!

Alex Miller



I'm the Archives & Resources Manager at Lancashire Archives. After 15 years and leading the delivery of a new archive facility at Archives: Wigan & Leigh, I moved over the border in 2022. I lead the team which oversees the management and provision of access to the county's 900 years of archival records.

Michael Akers



Preston born and with a background in education, I'm passionate about local history. I regularly give talks, lead guided tours and contribute articles for local history publications. I am equally passionate about live music and theatre; frequently appearing in productions by Preston Opera and both Preston and Blackburn Gilbert and Sullivan Societies.

Richard Ainscough



I was born and have spent much of my life in Lancashire. I'm a Chartered Accountant by profession with my family genealogy and local history one of my main areas of historical interest post-retirement. Educated at Preston Catholic College and currently a Governor at Cardinal Newman College.

Lesley Scoble



I 'emigrated' north in 2021 from Devon, following my daughter. When she decided to move back south, I realised I had fallen in love with Preston and Prestonians, so I stayed. I am PHS treasurer, and you will regularly see me on registration and stewarding guided walks. My passion is Northern Soul dancing.

James Eastwood



I am a 'thoroughbred' Prestonian; having been born and always lived here. I teach in a local primary school and love to teach Preston's incredible history. I have a special historical interest in pre-history – artefacts including flint tools, a log boat, and Neolithic objects were discovered near Preston Docks.

Jack Southern



I'm a lecturer with the University of Lancashire, primarily focussed on local and regional approaches to studying history. I'm a Committee member with the Lancashire Local History Federation, and a Trustee of the British Association of Local History, alongside being a Trustee of Bibliography of British and Irish History.

Peter Wilkinson



I'm the archivist for Preston Historical Society, archival advisor for the National Gas Archive (Warrington), Friend of Winckley Square, Chair of The Friends of Hurst Grange Park and ex trouble shooter for British Gas.

Emily Castle



I am the Chair of Friends of Edith Rigby and a co-founder of Preserving Preston's Heritage. I joined the Committee with the prime focus 'to engage younger audiences'; knowledge of Preston's past is crucial in understanding the present if younger generations are to play a part in shaping a better future.

Merry Christmas
FROM THE COMMITTEE

THE STORY OF

PRESTON'S ART DECO CO-OP

FROM ANCIENT EGYPT TO PRESTON VIA GERMANY AND FRANCE

BY MICHAEL AIKERS

A WELCOME DECISION

Preston City Council's recent review of the Market Place Conservation Area saw **Lancastria House** on Lancaster Road re-instated as a heritage asset worthy of protection. A previous appraisal back in 2019 had removed the former Co-op building from the protected list and subsequently there were plans to demolish the structure to make way for the new Animate Entertainment Centre. When plans for the new development were scaled back Lancastria House was temporarily reprieved, and so the news that its status has once again been upgraded is, I think, very welcome.



Fletcher Road Co-op opened in 1878:
Preston Digital Archive

IN THE BEGINNING

The Rochdale Pioneers, a group of 28 working-class men, founded the first successful consumer cooperative society in 1844. Their small grocery shop sold good quality, unadulterated goods at fair prices to local millworkers. They then shared any profits in the form of dividends with their members (their customers). The model was effective and acted as a catalyst for a Co-operative Movement that spread across the nation. A Co-op grocery store opened on Geoffrey Street off New Hall Lane in Preston in 1869; the first of many in the town. Gradually, the small independent co-op societies merged to provide a more efficient service. In 1863 the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS) was established to provide local branches with their own Co-op in-house products.

LANCASTRIA HOUSE: AN ART DECO SHOWPIECE

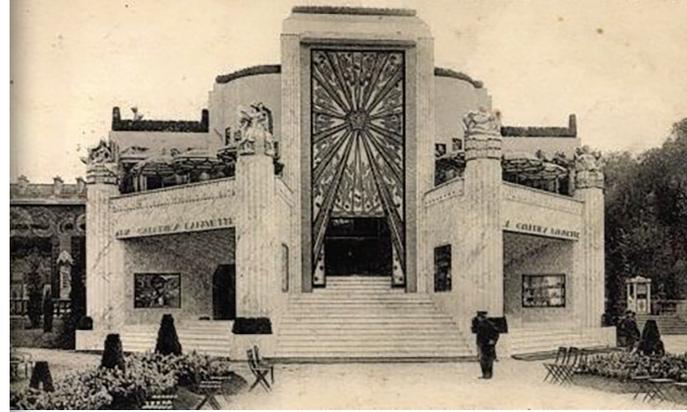
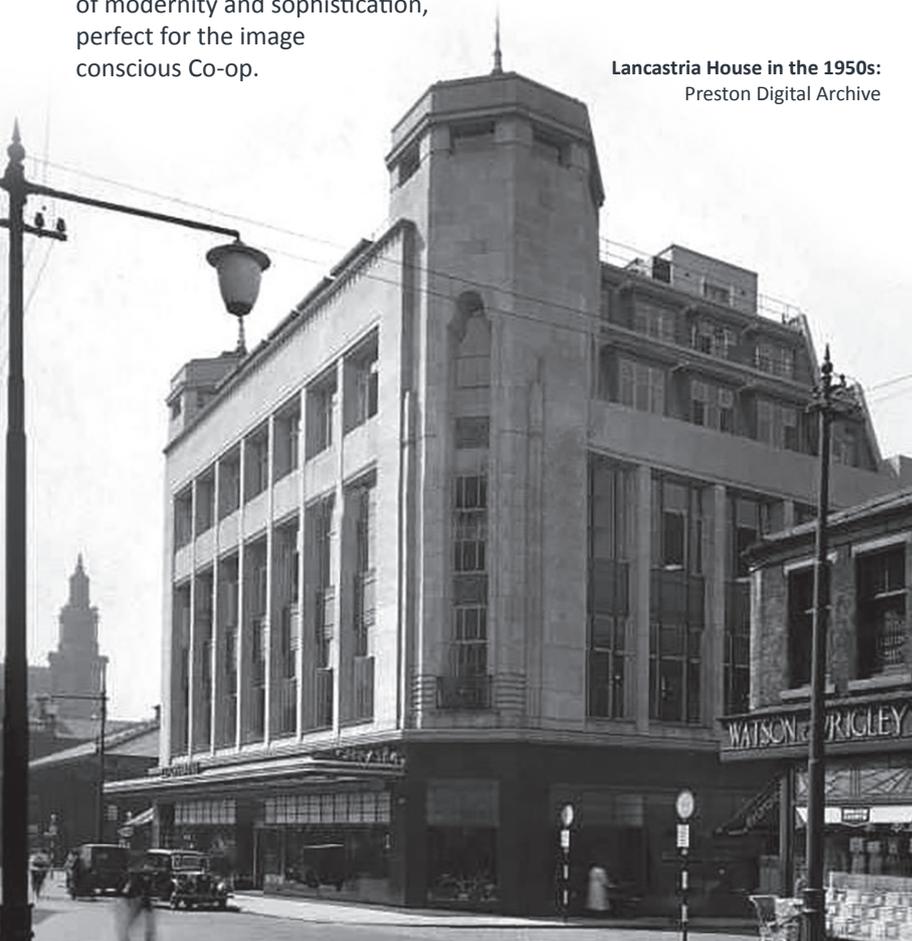
While it might not appear particularly striking or innovative to the casual passer-by today, when it opened in 1938 Lancastria House was a prestigious and conspicuously modern addition to Preston's otherwise largely Victorian and Georgian townscape.

Constructed by the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS), it was both a department store and offices for a thriving company, keen to project a forward-looking image through a prominently sited flagship store. With a building like this, no one in Preston could doubt that the co-operative movement had come a very long way since 1844.

Lancastria House was the work of the Co-op's very own architecture department, headed by William Johnson. He was the embodiment of a Co-op man. Johnson's father was the manager of a local Co-op grocery shop in Manchester, and the teenaged William joined the CWS in 1899. By 1924 he was Chief Architect, with a portfolio that included all CWS premises across the north of England and he remained in post until he retired on his 65th birthday in 1950. During his long career Johnson oversaw the construction of a wide range of buildings including bakeries, dairies, a packing factory, a tea warehouse, stables, and an extension to a soap factory. Most notably however, he erected some stand-out department stores in town centres that were unmistakably Co-op.

The style and structure of Johnson's new Co-op department stores were partly inspired by a visit he made to Germany in the 1920s. There he became an admirer of the work of the progressive German Jewish architect Erich Mendelsohn who was busy designing stunning new upmarket shops which reflected the burgeoning consumerism and affluence then sweeping Weimar Germany. Mendelsohn's work challenged convention through his extensive and innovative use of glass and steel as construction materials. Johnson liked what he saw, declaring afterwards, 'Modern architects must use modern materials in a modern way'. Moreover, Mendelsohn was a leading early exponent of Art Deco. This fresh new style was rapidly emerging as a symbol of modernity and sophistication, perfect for the image conscious Co-op.

Lancastria House in the 1950s:
Preston Digital Archive



The Pavilion du Bon Marche, architect L.H. Bolleau, from the 1925 Paris exhibition - officially named the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts: Public domain, Wikimedia Common

Art Deco (the term only came into use in the 1960s) interiors and exteriors initially gained popularity following a highly influential style and design exhibition in Paris in 1925. Here fashionable Parisian department stores like Galeries Lafayette and Le Printemps celebrated their enthusiasm for a new style that looked forward with its geometric shapes, symmetry, and streamlining, but also allowed room for rich and imaginative ornamentation drawn from a diverse range of cultures. Johnson's Art Deco - influenced Co-op buildings can be seen in Southport, Huddersfield, Bradford and of course Preston. These modern new department stores must have created quite a stir in these very traditional towns between the First and Second World Wars. The exterior of Lancastria House certainly displays some of the clean vertical lines and shapes characteristic of the then bold new style but wears its decorative accoutrements very lightly. The flourishes associated with Art Deco may have been kept to a minimum, (doubtless cost was a factor) but the understated façade of Preston's store has, I think, an air of sophisticated simplicity.

⌘ DID LANCASTRIA HOUSE BRING A TOUCH OF PARISIAN CHIC TO THE PRESTON SHOPPING EXPERIENCE?

It seems unlikely, and frustratingly I can't say because I have no memory of ever visiting the store when it was a Co-op. The 'Caring, sharing, Co-op' was still very much part of everyday life for millions when I was growing up in the 1960s and 70s, but the dominance of the Co-op was undoubtedly on the wane. Changing shopping habits and competition from bigger retailers gradually made these large, centrally located Co-op buildings obsolete, but this hasn't stopped me still admiring this fascinating building, and especially the lions.

ART DECO'S FASCINATION WITH THE EGYPTIANS



Lions -majestic symbols of strength: Above the entrance of Lancaster House:
Michael Akers

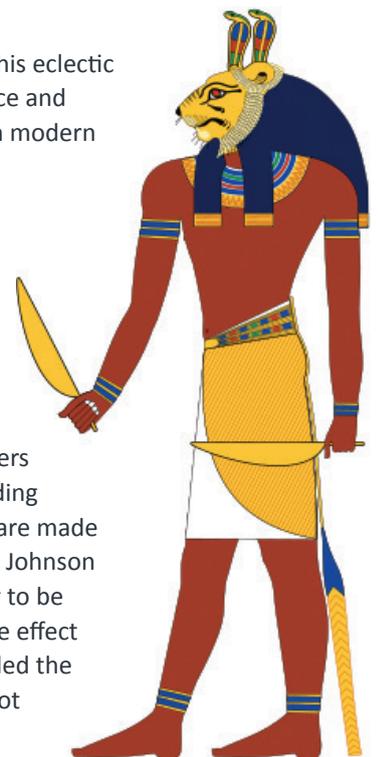
In 1922 archaeologist Howard Carter and his team uncovered the tomb of a long-lost pharaoh, King Tutankhamun. It was the archaeological event of the century. The unparalleled Ancient Egyptian treasures Carter subsequently extracted from the three-thousand-year-old burial chamber, and tales of their exploits, sparked an insatiable global interest in all things Ancient Egyptian. Pharaoh mania was just in time to have quite an impact on the aforementioned Paris exhibition. Art Deco may have espoused modernity, but for decoration Ancient Egyptian tokens, patterns and motifs were a perfect fit. Over the next decade, ancient embellishments, from sphinxes to scarabs, were redesigned with a modern twist. This eclectic ornamentation added a touch of elegance and romantic exoticism to Art Deco's smooth modern surfaces.



The Chrysler Building, New York built 1930:
Wikipedia

LIONS WERE A POPULAR IMAGE.

For the Ancient Egyptians and the pharaohs, the lion was a symbol of royal authority and divine power. Preston's old Co-op building has six of them. Three guard each of the two corners of the building on Lancaster Road, including the main entrance. I'd like to think they are made of bronze, and that's probably the effect Johnson was looking to create, but they are likely to be simply painted cast iron. Their decorative effect is subtle; they may well have once guarded the entrance to a royal tomb, but they are not fierce enough to stop anyone thinking twice about entering the store.



Maahes, the Egyptian God of War: Wikipedia

FIFTY YEARS AFTER CARTER'S DISCOVERY, ANCIENT EGYPTIAN FEVER RETURNED TO BRITAIN.

In 1972 an exhibition of Tutankhamun's treasures at the British Museum attracted a record 1.5 million visitors and reignited a passion for mummies, hieroglyphics and pyramids. As a schoolboy at the time, I was enthralled but had to be content with a pull-out colour supplement from a national newspaper and a commemorative postage stamp.



My Tutankhamun postage stamp



Ceremonial throne of Tutankhamun:
The Egyptian Museum

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF LANCASTRIA HOUSE?

After fifty years, the Co-op finally closed the Lancaster Road store in 1988.

Today the four-storey building stands empty, with, I believe, the original interior features now lost, and the exterior fabric visibly deteriorating. Art Deco, however, remains an easily recognised and popular 'retro' style, of which Preston has very few examples. The future of Lancastrria House remains uncertain. Hopefully the building can be properly maintained until a new use for it is found. For now, though, Preston still has in Lancastrria House a fascinating historical and stylistic link to Parisian glamour, early European modernist architecture and an ancient civilisation. I also still have my Tutankhamun stamp while the Co-op lions, although looking a little weary, are still there keeping a watchful eye on passersby.



The China Department:
Lancashire County Library and Information Service

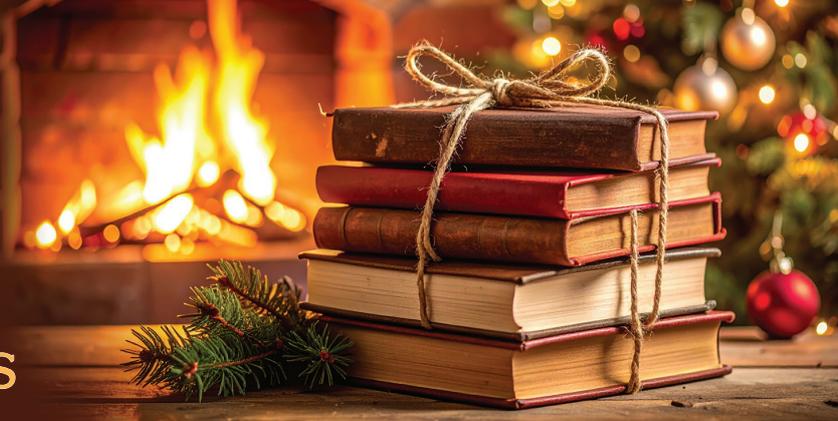
CAN YOU HELP?

If you have any specific memories or information about Lancastrria House please let me know. Similarly, do you remember another popular department store, Goobys on the corner of Tithebarn Street and Church Street?

It was sadly destroyed by fire in 1965. Please contact me at michael@prestonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Christmas Presents

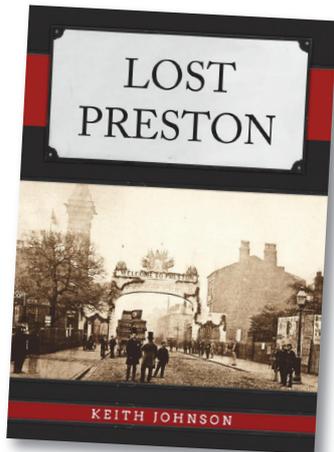
for Local History Lovers



Lost Preston

by Keith Johnson

Keith Johnson is a prolific author, and his great passion is the History of Preston. Keith, and his publisher Amberley, produce consistently readable titles that are highly illustrated and extremely well researched. In *Lost Preston* (pub.2025) Keith's starting point is the Edwardian era; the first decade of the 20th Century. Using contemporary sources Keith paints a picture of pre-WWI Preston. A town growing in size, still dominated by textiles but with a powerful presence in engineering and a port that looked like it might at last deliver a return on capital. A town that still served as a market town with excellent transport links.



Focussing on various themes, Keith chronicles the changes that have occurred both to the built environment and to the way the people lived their lives.

Although Preston has seen significant redevelopment over the last century the three main thoroughfares, Friargate, Church Street and Fishergate along with the Flag Market and covered markets all remain. As does the mediaeval street pattern south of Church Street. This helps enormously when we view the series of images that record change over time.

There are striking images of women selling shrimps. The women, dressed in traditional garb, travelled from Southport by train to sell their shrimps and other locally landed seafood. It's remarkable to see that, right up to the second world war, these women are still wearing long established outfits that seem to hark back to the 19th Century. As ever with Keith Johnson, he discovers some fascinating imagery that is not widely known.

For me, this is a 'dip into' book. Keep it to hand. For most of us there will be a place, event or time shown that triggers personal memories. One that resonates with me is the image of the Beatles at the Public Hall in 1963. I went to see them. Actually, I went to hear them sing as well, but all I heard was screaming.

Every image is underpinned with helpful text. The title is 'Lost Preston' and it reflects the physical loss of iconic buildings, of forms of entertainment, of jobs and of dress. But in producing this book and bringing together so many memorable images Keith ensures that although they are lost, they are not forgotten, and for some they will trigger memories- some silent, some ear-splitting!

Review by Steve Harrison

To purchase a copy visit:
www.amberley-books.com

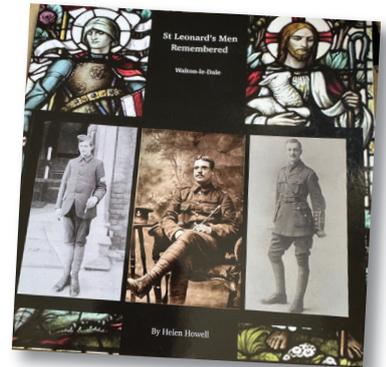
Price:
£14.39
plus postage

St. Leonard's Men Remembered

Walton-le-Dale

by Helen Howell

'We will remember them.' We all know the words but actually remembering them isn't always easy. Time, distance and memory all play a part in what we remember, even when we come across the name of one of the fallen. A beautifully produced book by local historian (and PHS member) Helen Howell enables us to remember them as more than a name. The text brings them back to life through their personal stories.



The book is in three parts. Its range is the men of Walton le Dale who died in World War I. We start with a focus on the two beautiful stained-glass windows in the nave of St. Leonard's Church, high on Walton Law. The windows feature the loss of men from two local families: the Woods and the Croziers. The canvas broadens in part two where we are introduced to Walton le Dale immediately before and during the war. There are fascinating nuggets such as the number of eggs laid in Walton at Easter 1916, 1,028, all boiled and dispatched to wounded soldiers. Some of the 'underage boys' are identified. Discovered to be underage, they were discharged and came back home until they reached 18 when they promptly re-enlisted.

The bulk of the book is devoted to the individual stories of named men. 54 who are remembered on the War Memorial Tablet and a further five who are commemorated on churchyard headstones. Each receives a pen portrait. The fruit of Helen's labours turns a name into a son, husband, father, brother who often had been to a local school. In some cases, we learn his height, in others the personal effects that were returned to the family. Each pen portrait delivers a double impact. The life of a local man lost, and the cumulative effect of the repetition of the dates of death and the tragically young ages. The detail helps us reimagine the living, breathing person who once walked the streets of Walton le Dale.

There are useful appendices, including a rich list of sources, and the book is illustrated with well-chosen images. At £5 this title is excellent value. All proceeds are in aid of the St Leonard's Stained Glass Window Restoration Fund. I found it useful to have an atlas to hand as I read the individual entries. Lads from Walton le Dale dying from Aldershot to Basra. Now remembered once more.

Review by Steve Harrison

To purchase a copy, please email:
historyhelenhowell@gmail.com

Price:
£5
plus postage

We are very lucky to have so many excellent local writers, their books would be a great addition to the collection of a local history enthusiast. Or why not buy them a year's membership for PHS?

If interested contact patricia@prestonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Fighting Jim Crow in Lancashire:

Remembering the Battle of Bamber Bridge 1943-2023

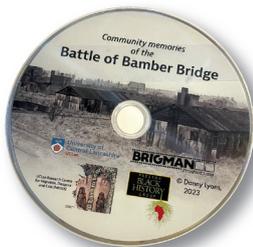
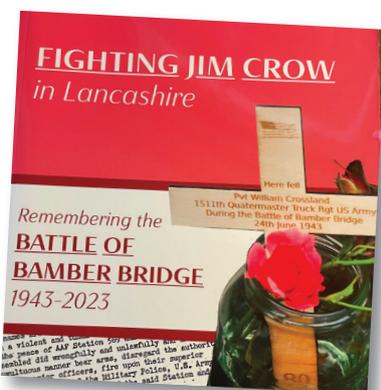
Edited by Alan Rice and Jenny Webster

Published to coincide with the 80th anniversary, this concise and insightful book looks at the events of June 1943 in Bamber Bridge, and the implications, from a number of perspectives. These include eyewitness accounts, detailed court martial records, speeches and creative writing from the commemorative events of 2023. Alan in particular, as he did in his talk to PHS in October this year (for Black History Month), puts the violent confrontation on Station Road between Black American troops and White American military police into context. As Alan, Professor in English and American Studies at ULAN writes, 'Black troops were welcome in Britain, but Jim Crow wasn't'. The so-called 'Jim Crow laws' in the US enforced racial segregation and legitimised discrimination against African Americans. Racial prejudice travelled with the US army, with segregation, which was seen as essential to maintaining discipline, upheld in Britain by the American military authorities. Warmly welcomed in Bamber Bridge and elsewhere, for the young African Americans in Britain, this was often in sharp contrast to their treatment back home. This book remembers the tragic events that unfolded that night in June 1943, and the death of Private William Crossland, but it also celebrates how 'Briggers...not only opposed the attempted imposition of the Jim Crow segregation in their community but kept the memory of their fight for justice alive for 80 years'. This book does the same.

Published by University of Lancashire, 2025.
All proceeds to local Black History Groups.

Review by **Michael Akers**

The book comes with a DVD of Danny Lyons film that interviews witnesses including 107 year-old Eunice Byers.



Molly Brown Britain's Railway Queen 1929-1930

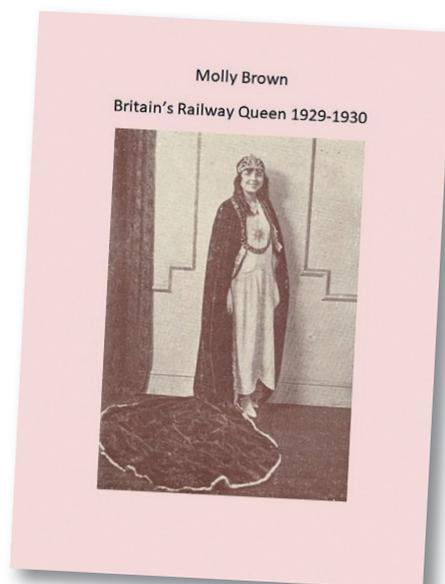
By **Steve Parlanti**

Partly inspired by the century's old tradition of 'May Queens', the very first Railway Queen was crowned in 1925, on the centenary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway. For the next fifty years young girls were plucked from relative obscurity to act as ambassadors for the railway industry. It was a symbolic but prestigious role, with crowds of over 50,000 railway workers and their families attending the annual coronations in the 1920s and 30s. The concept proved popular and other industries quickly followed suit, most notably the Cotton Queens.

Author Steve Parlanti has written a book about the 1929-30 Railway Queen, Molly Brown from Preston. By all accounts Molly, just fifteen when she was crowned, embraced the opportunities provided by her role with both hands. She travelled far and wide and was feted wherever she went. According to Steve, 'thousands of people would turn out to see her over the course of her reign; she would usually be dressed in full regalia, with maids of honour and trainbearers in attendance.' Her experiences were quite extraordinary for a working-class girl at the time.

Steve's book brings her unique year of adventures to life. His meticulously researched account makes extensive use of a wide range of source material, from press reports to personal items saved by Molly. Railway Queens are a now largely forgotten aspect of our railway heritage, so Steve's account of Molly's glamorous railway journey is a welcome addition to a genre usually dominated by men and steam engines.

Review by **Michael Akers**



To purchase a copy, please email *obtain from:*
ARice@lancashire.ac.uk

Price:
£10
plus postage

To purchase a copy, please email *obtain from:*
steveparlanti@hotmail.com

Price:
£7
plus postage

WHAT'S ON

Friends of Winckley Square Free Christmas Concert

14 December | 3pm – 5.30pm

Venue: Winckley Square Gardens, PR1 3JJ

Meet up with friends and get into the Christmas spirit. Join in the traditional carols around the Christmas Tree with St Stephen's Choir. Sing along with Preston Ukelele Strummers and Clarkland. The headline act is the spectacular 'Bring on the Fire' who will thrill all the family. Keep warm with mulled wine, mince pies or Peter's Perfect Parched Peas. Hot food supplied by 'Queen of Tarts'.



For details visit winckleysquarepreston.org

Journeys to the Match: Exhibition

24 October 2025 - 8 May 2026

Venue: Lancashire Archives, Bow Lane, PR1 2RE

Celebrate the rituals, friendships, and joy of a match day with the latest exhibition from the National Football Museum. Journeys to the Match is a community focused exhibition, exploring the everyday traditions of football fans and what makes their match day special. From a deep dive into the transport that fans have taken through the years, to lucky charms and match-day mates, this experience celebrates the simple joys that unite us all.



The History Of Penwortham: Talk

23 January | 1pm - 3.10pm

Venue: Kingsfold Library, Hawksbury Drive, PR1 3EJ

Peter Smith will introduce crossing the Ribble from prehistory to the present day followed by Elizabeth Basquill, who will share a deep dive into the Tithe map of Kingsfold in 1841.

FREE: no booking required.

Contact PHS

General enquiries: peter@prestonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Membership: patricia@prestonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Preston Historical Society

Final Talks of the Season

Monday 9 February 2026

Plague and Hunger:
Mortality in the Preston area 1590-1650.

Speaker: **Dr Alan Crosby**

Monday 9 March 2026

Beatrice Blackhurst's Scrapbook: leisure, voluntary action and social change in Preston in the early 20th Century.

Speaker: **Helen Howell**

Monday 13 April 2026

That's Entertainment!
The rise and fall of Preston's Guild Hall.

Speaker: **Michael Akers**

Monday 11 May 2026

Preston and its Region in Domesday Book and beyond.

Speaker: **Prof. Fiona Edmunds**

Central Methodist Church, Lune Street, PR1 2NL

Talks start at **7.15pm** and end at **8.30pm**.
Doors open at **6.30pm** for refreshments and registration. Members FOC / Visitors **£5**.



Christmas Gift Voucher

Do you have a friend or relative who loves local history? Wondering what to buy them for Christmas?

Why not consider a year's membership of PHS £20?

If interested contact patricia@prestonhistoricalsociety.org.uk



 /PrestonHistoricalSociety

 /PrestonHistSoc

 /preston.historical.society