



PRESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring/Summer 2026 | Issue 34

PROMOTING LOCAL HISTORY ACROSS NINE DECADES

Under the Radar: The Volunteers Behind Our Talks

Every month, our volunteers make everything run smoothly. The team arrives early to set up; Lesley and Di welcome visitors and take card payments, while Janet, Grace, Karen, Dot, Helen and Patricia efficiently take turns to register members—especially as numbers have grown in recent years. Behind the scenes, Lesley, our Treasurer, keeps accurate records, and Pat, our Membership Secretary, maintains attendance and keeps you informed.

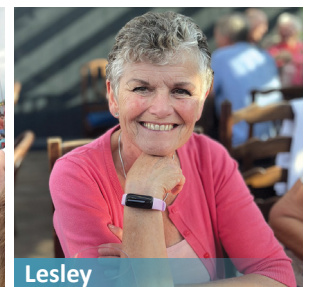
Sue and Steph keep refreshments flowing, Peter ensures the AV runs seamlessly, and Emily and James capture photographs to share our work more widely. Gill, supported by Lesley and Peter, is doing a fantastic job developing the PHS archive, while Gill and Karen run the book stall—well worth a visit at the start of each talk. Michael and Patricia are always happy to hear your ideas for the newsletter.



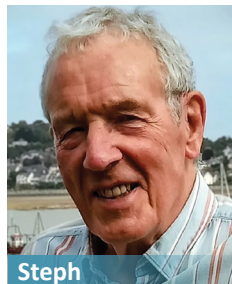
Patricia



Michael



Lesley



Steph



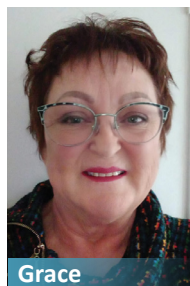
Karen



Di



Gill



Grace



Janet



Emily



James



Helen



Peter



Dot



Sue

Much of this work happens quietly behind the scenes, but it is what makes everything possible. Volunteers are the heart of PHS, and everything we achieve depends on their time, energy and dedication.



We would love more members to be part of this!

Whether you can offer a little time, share a skill, or simply lend a helping hand from time to time, your contribution will make a real difference to the Society and the community we serve.

Get involved: patricia@prestonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

PRESTON'S PNEUMATIC PIPELINES

by Michael Akers

'The Story of Preston's Art Deco Co-op', featured in our last newsletter, generated a great deal of interest but also took us in an unexpected direction.

A request for further information was shared on social media by Peter Smith of Preston History website, alongside the interior photograph of the shop featured in the article. This prompted one respondent to ask about a curious-looking device positioned in the centre of the China display.

I must admit, I had been so taken with the striking Art Deco clock behind the display that I hadn't noticed it at all. Once pointed out, however, I found myself drawn into the fascinating, and now largely forgotten, world of pneumatic cash systems.

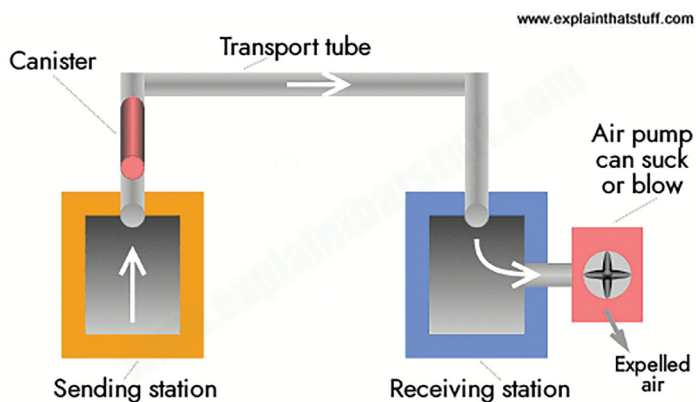
This method of transporting money, cheques, and receipts quickly and securely within large department stores was widely used by retailers in the early C20. A quick search online led to a succinct description of how a similar system operated in a Co-op store in the North-East:



When we speculated whether such cash carrying contraptions had once been commonplace in other Preston stores, there were over 60 responses. Recollections identified their use not only in a number of local Co-op stores, but also in Lingards, Woolworths, Owen Owen, Sharps and Booths. Goobys department store on Church Street, used an overhead wire system for the same purpose - perhaps this was an older version?

Preston's pneumatic pipelines were fondly remembered by those contributors who were children at the time, not least because they could briefly enliven an otherwise tedious shopping expedition. Today's 'contactless' tap and go method of payment might be a hundred times faster, but where's the fun? Inevitably new technology brought the cumbersome system of moving cash via vacuum tubes to the edge of extinction, but their use continues in some business areas and hospitals. A working relic of this bygone age of shopping would surely make a fun exhibit in The Harris.

Did anyone just happen to store one in the attic?



'When a customer made a purchase at the front counter, the assistant placed the money and the bill in a pod. The pod was then put into a tube which ran around the store at head height. Through the wonders of vacuum engineering, the pod was sucked along the tube to the accounts department at the rear of the store. The accountant would empty the pod, work out the change, place the money in the pod, put the pod back in the tube and whizz it back to the front counter.' (Northern Echo website)

The pneumatic cash tube system that was used at Williams & Cox, a prominent department store on the Strand in Torquay. It was donated to Torquay Museum when the store closed in 1981.



WHAT'S ON

Summer Workshops at Lancashire Archives

Following the success of last year's Investigating Primary Resources Workshops, the result of a collaboration between Lancashire Archives, FoWS, and PHS, we are delighted to offer four similar workshops this summer. Join us to explore some of the Archives' remarkable collections. No prior knowledge is required, just interest and enthusiasm. You will be guided throughout by experienced members of the Archives staff.



Wednesday 3 June

From Cradle to Page - Vicci McCann

Exploring Childhood in Preston Through the Archives.

Wednesday 17 June

Courts, Community and a little bit of Crime - Kathryn Newman

Exploring Quarter Session Records as a Treasure Trove of Local History.

Tuesday 30 June

Hidden Preston: Health, Housing and a Century of Change - Vicci McCann

Using Borough Records to Explore Preston's Lost Streets and Public Health History.

Tuesday 14 July

From River Ribble to the World: Preston's Maritime Past Revealed - Lee Sanderson

Using Port of Preston and Borough Records to Explore Trade, Travel and Global Connections.

All the above workshops take place at Lancashire Archives & Local History on Bow Lane, from 6.30pm - 8pm

PHS members are FREE but you must book by 14 May.

Contact: patricia@prestonhistoricalsociety.org.uk

TICKET ONLY - Non-members £5 available from 15th May.



PHS Programme of Talks 2026/27

The new season of eight talks has an exciting programme included in the membership fee of £20. Visitors pay £5 each talk.

Talks take place on the 2nd Monday of the month between September to May (excluding January).

14 September 2026

Chaplin, Cowboys and Cotton:
Preston Film Service and Early Lancashire Cinema.

Speaker: **Emma Heslewood**

12 October 2026

The Black British Experience in Britain:
focusing on Preston in the 1950s to the Present Day.

Speaker: **Adrian Murrell**

9 November 2026

Creating a County: the Emergence of Lancashire 700-s1200.

Speaker: **Dr. Alan Crosby**

14 December 2026

A Window to the Universe:
the Past, Present, and Future of the Preston Observatory.

Speaker: **Graham McLoughlin**

8 February 2027

Love, Betrayal, Power, Wealth and the Monarch:
the Extraordinary Story of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Speaker: **Graham Kemp**

8 March 2027

Women & Wills: Lives told through their Wills and Legacies.

Speaker: **Anna Watson**

12 April 2027

Small Town, Big Ideas:
How Preston shaped a global design practice.

Speaker: **Michael Akers**

10 May 2027

History Shorts - *Three members share the floor:*

Keir Hardie's Preston's Constituency Campaign
in the 1900 General Election.

Speaker: **Ben Humphries**

Victorian Country House Gardens: with a focus on Bank Hall.

Speaker: **Janet Edwards**

Woodplumpton War Memorial:
more than just a name on a stone.

Speaker: **Dave Canning**

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.

The Hanging Monk of Whalley Abbey

The tragic fate of a Preston-born brother in medieval Lancashire

by Michael Akers

How could such a thing happen?

'It will be a terror to corrupt minds hereafter,' claimed the Earl of Sussex in a letter to Thomas Cromwell. His men had not only carried out a brutal execution; they had left the body hanging as a dreadful warning to others. The victim was a Cottam-born monk, William Haydock. On 12 March 1537, he was taken from Whalley Abbey and hanged in an adjacent field. Such cruel treatment of a cleric must have shaken the entire community and beyond. His family back in Preston were surely not alone in asking: how could such a thing have happened?

The tranquil ruins enjoyed by visitors to Whalley Abbey today stand in stark contrast to the events of that day nearly 500 years ago. The outline of the monastic complex, begun in the late 13th century, remains visible, and two magnificent gatehouses stand as testimony to the abbey's former status. Whalley Abbey, along with Furness, was a key monastic site in Lancashire, although neither compares with some of the great powerhouses across the county border in Yorkshire. Whalley may have housed around 25–30 monks at any one time; Fountains Abbey, by contrast, perhaps upwards of 200.

Whalley Abbey's tranquil ruins today:
Michael Akers



Neither monks nor friars could escape the greedy grasping hands of a tyrant king

The monks at Whalley were Cistercians. The 'White Monks' were committed to a simple life of manual labour, self-denial, and prayer. They lived in isolated, self-sufficient communities; hence the choice of what was then a remote site beside the River Calder. In contrast, the 'Grey Friars', just 14 miles away in the bustling town of Preston, lived among the people, serving the sick and needy, and were entirely reliant on the charity of the townsfolk.

Much has since been made of the subsequently alleged 'cloistered' comfort enjoyed by many monks within the confines of their abbey walls, yet neither monks nor friars could escape the greedy, grasping hands of a tyrant king.



Cistercian monks were committed to a simple life of manual labour, self-denial and prayer: From a C13th German manuscript. Wikimedia Commons.

The Path That Led William Haydock to the Gallows

When William Haydock entered the gates of Whalley Abbey to embrace a life of monastic seclusion, he could scarcely have imagined that such a violent and shocking end awaited him.

While we can know nothing of the personal faith that drew William to this life, we do know that, as a second son of the landed gentry, his career choices were somewhat limited.

William's father was Lord of the Manor of Cottam, where the family home was a moated, half-timbered hall. Cottam had been the ancestral seat of the Haydock family since the late 13th century (around the same time the first monks had settled at Whalley). William's elder brother, Gilbert, was set to inherit an estate extending beyond Cottam to Ingol, Woodplumpton, Ashton, and Lea. Dividing the inheritance was never an option.

Younger sons were expected to make their own way, usually in the army, government, law, or the Church. By the early 16th century, however, monastic life had become an increasingly unattractive choice for landless siblings, as withdrawal from the secular world offered little opportunity to enhance a family's prestige or influence. Moreover, monasticism itself was already in decline, with numbers falling, influence waning, and support diminishing.

Nevertheless, this was William Haydock's path.



The home of the Haydock family for around 400 years. An artist's reconstruction of Old Cottam Hall, based on the 1838 Tithe Map and descriptions of the Hall among the Haydock papers (after O'Hanlon 1985): Oxford Archaeology 2003.

The Crown's Brutal Reckoning

Whalley with an income of around £500 wasn't directly affected, but Henry's actions provoked widespread disquiet. From October 1536 to January 1537, open protest, known as the Pilgrimage of Grace, erupted in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Most of the leaders were landowning gentry concerned about the threat to the traditional way of life and the growing power of the king. It was a major challenge to royal authority. Inevitably the monasteries were swept into the maelstrom.

Down by the River Calder at Whalley, the monks presumably carried on with their daily tasks. One wonders whether wiser heads urged them to keep a low profile.

Then Nicholas Tempest arrived at the gates of Whalley Abbey. A Clitheroe landowner and active participant in the Yorkshire uprising, Tempest had a band of 400 men at his side. According to some accounts, the monks at Whalley initially tried to block his entry, but this did not prevent John Paslew, Abbot of Whalley, from later being accused of assisting the rebels. Willingly or not, all the monks at Whalley were now implicated in rebellion against the king—and it would not end well for any of them.

When negotiations with the rebels resulted in a truce and royal pardons, there may have been cause for optimism that Whalley would survive. However, in early 1537, sporadic opposition broke out once more. This time, Henry ensured that his retribution would be swift and brutal.



One of the graves uncovered at the site of the long-lost Preston Friary. Bradley, J. and Rowland, S., 2020, *Brothers Minor: Lancashire's Lost Franciscans* - Investigations at Preston Friary, 1991 and 2007.



This 1913 illustration of the Pilgrimage of Grace portrays monks as leading the rebellion against King Henry VIII. In reality, however, monks were rarely prominent figures in the uprising: Wikimedia Commons.

The King's War on the Monasteries

In 1531, Henry VIII declared himself Head of the Church in England, and much trauma ensued. The King, who ironically was also a second son once destined for the Church until his older brother's demise, soon turned against the monasteries. His motive was quite simple: money.

The process by which Henry first discredited the monks, then punished them, seized their assets, and ultimately stripped the monasteries of England is known as the Dissolution. A more candid description might be the Great Robbery. As news filtered through the cloisters at Whalley, there must have been alarm and perhaps resignation. Some monks may have sought solace within the thick, centuries-old stone walls. The world beyond was changing, but surely such long-established institutions and God offered security?

It wasn't to be. Thomas Cromwell, Henry's enforcer supreme, sought and found, the evidence of immoral behaviour among the monks he needed to initiate legal action. In Lancashire however, where the monasteries were still held in high regard, he found little justification to force closures. Reformation historian Christopher Haigh has argued that Lancashire was a relatively poor county with deeply entrenched traditions. Consequently, the few monasteries 'were important social institutions which fulfilled useful functions in a backward and un-sophisticated society' and 'medieval Catholicism was an essential facet of the life of a conservative community'. This was likely true of the monks at Whalley.

Nevertheless, Henry claimed widespread moral failings across the country and, in February 1536, authorised the closure of all religious houses with annual incomes under £200.

Where Treason Meets the Gallows

Lancashire had hardly been a main player in any of these events, but Edward Stanley, the 3rd Earl of Derby whose vast estates near Preston made him the most significant noble in the region, was tasked with crushing any resistance to the royal will. While Derby gathered a force of armed men at Preston, at Whalley, Paslew must have known what was coming. He was arrested and subsequently tried at Lancaster Castle on March 9th. He pleaded guilty to high treason and was hanged on Lancaster Door the next day, alongside the abbot of nearby Sawley. John Paslew, the last abbot of Whalley Abbey, was probably quartered by the executioner. He was a man in his seventies.

Later in the same year Nicholas Tempest was executed at Tyburn, he was certainly quartered, and his head placed on London Bridge.

A Question Without an Answer: Why William?

The remaining two dozen monks at Whalley were simply turned out before the abbey was sold, so why was William Haydock singled out for the noose? Was he second in command to Paslew, particularly outspoken, or simply in the wrong place at the wrong time? The only thing we know for certain is that Tudor justice could be highly indiscriminate. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the monk from Preston was one of perhaps only twenty monks in the whole country to be executed. John Paslew was one of half a dozen abbots, along with two noblemen and roughly two hundred gentry and commoners, to meet a similar fate.

Whalley became one of the largest monasteries to fall in the first wave of seizures. Preston Friary survived until 1539, and by 1540 even great houses such as Fountains had been dismantled. In the end, the resistance of John Paslew and William Haydock achieved nothing.

William's body, it is claimed, was left hanging from the gibbet for several days as a macabre deterrent against resistance. Centuries later, Joseph Gillow, a Preston-born antiquary and descendant of the Haydocks, wrote that

William's body was 'secretly removed by his nephew and namesake to Cottam Hall, where it remained until its discovery when the hall was pulled down in the early part of this century.'

Today, there is no trace of Cottam Hall or of the remains of the unfortunate monk who once lived there, but The Ancient Oak pub would be a fitting place for at least a toast, on 12 March, to his memory.



The approximate site of Cottam Hall. A descendant of William's was the last Haydock to live at the Hall. He was also called William Haydock. He died in 1717: Google maps.

Sources and Further Reading

The Haydock Papers; a Glimpse into English Catholic Life under the Shade of Persecution and in the Dawn of Freedom

Richard Gillow, 1888.

A fascinating, though sometimes unreliable, account. Available online at www.archive.org.

The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace

Christopher Haigh, 1969.

A more balanced and authoritative study. Available online at www.archive.org.

"The Last Abbot of Whalley and the First Large-Scale Maps from Lancashire and Cheshire." Northern History, vol. LIII, no. 1

Bill Shannon, March 2016.

Provides detailed insight into John Paslew. Accessed via www.academia.edu.

Popish Boys and the King's Whore: Faith and Religion in Lancashire 1530–1650.

Alan Crosby, Talk delivered to the Preston Historical Society, February 2025

An engaging and thought-provoking lecture which inspired further research and a visit to Whalley Abbey.

Congratulations David!

We are delighted that PHS past President, David Hindle was awarded an MBE in the 2026 New Year's honours list.

The award is for his services to Grimsargh where he helped create Grimsargh

Wetlands. Some of you will remember David's significant contribution of leading guided walks during the PHS 75th Anniversary celebrations in 2023.





The Tribulations of 'Mad Roger' of Preston

by Janet Rigby

The death of Dr James Cheetham, aged 79, a veterinary surgeon of Nile Street, Preston, was announced in the Preston Guardian on 12 October 1850. The notice recorded that he had once lived in the former home of Lord Molyneux in Molyneux Square, an area that existed before Lancaster Street (later Lancaster Road) was extended southwards to Church Street. The Shambles, which stood there, were eventually demolished towards the end of the C19 to make way for the Miller Arcade.

Beattie depicts his property adjoining the Shoulder of Mutton Pub. A large brass plate on the door read 'Dr Cheetham, Surgeon', prompting much local curiosity about his practice - until it became clear that most of his patients were, in fact, four-legged.



Dr Cheetham's House: Edwin Beattie circa 1892: Red Rose Collection

The Curious Costume of Dr Cheetham

A green coat with an extravagant tail and gilt buttons; a vest with large lapels of an indescribable colour; brown shorts of coarse material; grey woollen stockings; low, buckled shoes; and a pigtail of considerable length. Within the grey stockings were his notably large calves, enclosed in yellow leggings. He carried a walking stick, which he frequently used among the 'little roughs' and also, with little restraint, among the canine tribe, some of which had a marked tendency to bark at and even attack his legs. These encounters often ended with a summons requiring him to appear before his 'betters' to answer charges of cruelty to animals.

The pigtail, or peruke, was a long lock of hair hanging down the back of the head, the longer the more prized, with the end tied into a small bow, usually with black ribbon. The doctor, however, favoured crimson ribbon, except on Sundays, when he substituted the more sombre black. In earlier times, such pigtails had been common among the nobility and 'great folk', to whom the doctor believed he belonged.

Mad Roger's Soggy Surprise

He was known locally as 'Mad Roger' because of his eccentric nature, and he was often tormented by the town's youths. During the dark winter nights, his door knocker was scarcely ever silent from seven o'clock until ten. As soon as he opened the door, he was greeted with cries of 'Well done, Mad Roger!' This nuisance would be repeated again and again, often leading to a chase around the Fish Stones (Market Place.)

Unfortunately, the door of his house was constructed in such a way that, at night, the interior was visible from outside. The doctor would position himself, stick in hand, near the entrance to confront his tormentors. However, the pranksters would stand on a barrel to reach the knocker, with the result that the poor doctor would stumble over it and fall down the steps.

One night, this treatment proved too much. After several chases, the weary victim sat down in despair. The urchins then set a stepladder against the door and placed a large pail of water at the top. The knocker was worked by a string, so that when the doctor came out, he was completely drenched.

His tormentors persisted week after week, and the doctor eventually sent his wife to lodge a complaint at the police station, then situated in Turk's Head Yard. She was not taken seriously.

Bar Room Brouhaha

Youngsters from the neighbourhood, aided by several of their elders, persuaded the doctor to join them. No sooner had he seated himself, with his glass before him, than voices in the street were heard near the window: '*Mad Roger; well done, Mad Roger!*' The enraged doctor rushed to the door, only to find it locked. Turning furiously, he began to vent his anger on tumblers and jugs, smashing them to pieces. His fury increased as the company laughed at his misfortune. This proved too much, and he retaliated by striking out with his fists. It took the landlord, assisted by four others, to restrain him until the culprits were removed. He gradually calmed down, though many who witnessed the scene would long remember and fear the temper of '*Mad Roger*'.

Dr. Cheetham's Legacy

Cheetham Street is long gone but Lord Street and Ward's End are still there forming the southern and northern boundaries of the Guild Hall site.

*He also owned the **Cheetham's Arms** on London Road, which was sold by auction in 1849 shortly before his death.*



Source: Anecdotes of Ancient Preston, written in 1881 by James Myres, describing notable figures of the period; published in the Preston Herald in 1915.

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