



Preston Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

PROMOTING THE STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY IN PRESTON AND LANCASHIRE

Issue 14

Winter 2020

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

The President and Committee of
Preston Historical Society sincerely hope you all have
a happy and healthy Christmas and please do stay safe.
We extend our very best wishes
for happier times next Year.

Beatrice Blackhurst

by Patricia Harrison

The fight for female suffrage was supported by women of different classes and political allegiances. Support often took different forms but the goal was a shared one. Three local women prominent in the struggle had links to the Winckley Square area.

Edith Rigby, about whom lots has been written, was a suffragette and a socialist. Her life was typified by direct action. She lived at 28 Winckley Square. Beatrice Todd was a leading Liberal. She had lived in Starkie Street and taught on Winckley Square before marrying James Todd whose head office was 7 Winckley Square. The Todds subsequently moved to Penwortham Hall and then Farington Lodge but Beatrice's activities had a major impact on Preston. Thirdly there was Beatrice Blackhurst, a prominent Conservative who lived at 29 Ribblesdale Place.

Beatrice Blackhurst was born Beatrice Boyce in Goosnargh; the eldest of five

children. Her father George worked as a farmer for Thomas Birchall of Ribbleton Hall. When Mr Birchall died George moved on to become the publican at the Railway Hotel at Gamull. The children grew up in the pub.

George died when Beatrice was 13. Her mother Elizabeth died within two years. Beatrice then worked as a servant at the Railway Hotel. Her fortunes changed in 1895 when Beatrice married Alfred Blackhurst of Grimsargh, a solicitor. Alfred's father was President of the Preston District Licensed Victualler's Association. Perhaps the connection with pubs led to their meeting – an unusual union crossing a social divide. They lived in Garstang where three children were born before the move to Ribblesdale Place in 1910.

The membership of the Liberal and Labour Parties was largely supportive of female suffrage. The Conservative

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Party's leader, Balfour, was in favour but many members were opposed. In 1909 The Men's League for Opposing Women's Suffrage was founded within the Conservative Party, leading to the Party being in danger of becoming squarely anti-suffragist.

Beatrice was one of the women who supported the franchise for women and was determined that her party should not take that path. The Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association was formed. Beatrice was a committee member of the CUWFA. It was a single issue association, created in November 1908, and open to members of the Conservative and Unionist Party who supported the 'extension of the Franchise to all duly qualified women'.

At a local level women from different political parties worked together on social issues. Both Beatrices (Blackhurst and Todd) were active in the Free Buffet Association on Preston station and in the establishment of the Infant Welfare Association in Preston in 1915, which provided free meals for expectant mothers and dental treatment for mothers and children.

Women's Citizens Associations were established across the country during the years 1913 to the end of the war. Their aim was to stimulate women's interest in social and political issues in order to prepare them for active citizenship once the franchise was won. It was a movement which saw the winning of the franchise as the start of something not its end point. In 1919

Beatrice was the Honorary Secretary of the Preston Women's Citizen's Association. Beatrice Todd was the hon treasurer of the national association.

Candidates for local election were nominated in Preston and other Lancashire towns by the Association to stand on 'non-sectarian and non-political' lines. Meetings were held in the YMCA Hall in Fishergate and the Orient Café, Friargate.

In her report to the local branch in June 1921 Beatrice Blackhurst bemoaned the fact that Preston had lost its two female police officers to better paid posts in Nottingham and the Watch Committee had failed to replace them. She also warned the 214 members that:

'During recent years women's questions have been much to the front, and great enthusiasm has been shown. Now reaction has set in, the vote has been gained, and women seem inclined to rest on their oars.' *Lancashire Evening Post* 3 June 1921.

Alfred died on 7 May 1942 in Fulwood. Beatrice moved to 2 Agnew Street, Lytham St Annes where she died on 2 February 1955. The family name continues at Blackhurst Swainson Goodier, 10 Chapel Street, Preston and in Lancaster.

You can read about Edith Rigby and Beatrice Todd in the Heritage section of the Friends of Winckley Square website. Beatrice Blackhurst will be added shortly. If you wish to receive regular updates about Winckley Square please email me and I will add you to my mailing list. patricia@winckley.corg.uk



Preston Station Free Buffet, during the Great War. Beatrice Blackhurst is at the right end of the front row bench.

From John of Gaunt to Winckley Square

Steve Harrison

Just prior to Lockdown in March 2020 Pat and I were in London. We visited the Queen’s Chapel of the Savoy. When this pandemic is over, we recommend a visit if you are in London. The chapel is open to the public including attendance at public services on Sunday.

The Queen’s Chapel is a ‘private chapel in right of the Duchy’. It sits on Duchy of Lancaster land where John of Gaunt’s Savoy Palace once stood (destroyed in the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt). Henry VII had a hospital built here but all that now remains is the chapel.

Lancashire was once on the front line of the English kingdom, subject to potential threat from the Scots. Northumbria, including Lancaster and its castle, was in the hands of David I of Scotland in the 12th century and the Lune in effect became the border. English monarchs (and others across Europe) would often secure their borders by granting Palatinate powers to powerful nobles. A Palatine is where the powers of the Palace (the monarch) are granted to a noble. In effect a Palatine becomes a kingdom within a kingdom. The County Palatine of Lancaster was established in 1351 in the reign of Edward III.

John of Gaunt, Edward III’s third surviving son, inherited the Duchy of Lancaster through marriage. He became the most powerful man in England after the King. John’s son Henry Bolingbroke later overthrew Henry IV and determined that the Duchy would always be held by the monarch separately from the rest of the kingdom. In effect as a personal possession of the monarch. The County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster are still in existence. The Queen is Duke of Lancaster. Income from the Duchy provides an annual personal income.

So what has this to do with Preston and with Winckley Square? As a kingdom within a kingdom the Duchy had its own courts. Chancery Courts were particularly concerned with matters of Trusts and Land Ownership. Until the relatively recent past wealth and power were based largely on land ownership. Retaining rights over land was a central concern of the wealthy. It was a factor in the importance of primogeniture and in effecting suitable marriages. Many families ensured sons trained as lawyers to protect family interests.

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Fishergate bridge under repair in the 1950s. Not much health and safety here: not a cone in sight. The traffic is interesting: an Atkinson wagon owned by Parkin’s (who were they?), followed by possibly Wolsley cars, an Austin A40 and an Austin A30, perhaps a Commer van, and a maroon Preston Corporation Leyland double deck bus. What is the heavy-looking car in the centre: a Ford? Why are there so few women in the picture?

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The county, through its own chancery, could issue writs under its own seal and even had its own dating year running from 6th March 1351, the date of the establishment of the county palatine. Specialist laws required specialist lawyers and specialist courts where issues could be settled. The Duchy of Lancaster had Preston as its administrative centre in Lancashire.

Preston was noted for the number of lawyers living and practising here. The fact that the wealthy landowners of Lancashire often had town houses or lodgings in Preston meant much Chancery work was carried out here. Lawyers in Preston would practise both here and in London. William Cross, the man who had the vision for Winckley Square, was one such land-holding lawyer. The Squares he saw in London inspired his plan to create one in Preston.

The first six homes in the Square were built by lawyers. All six held office in the Duchy. Landowners were specific that the laws governing contracts were to be those of the Duchy. William's Widow Ellen Cross when selling land to Isaac Wilkinson insisted that if he did not abide by her conditions she would be applying: '... to the High Court of Chancery for the County Palatine of Lancaster for any injunction to restrain or reform such a breach'. The Court of Chancery of the County Palatine of Lancaster was merged into the High Court as recently as 1972.

By the way, if you do attend a service at the Queen's Chapel you will sing the National Anthem but the lyrics are amended to 'Long Live Our Noble Duke.'

Acknowledgement: We are grateful to Thomas Leyland, Steward of 'The Queen's Chapel of St John the Baptist in the Precinct of the Savoy', the Strand, London for his support and for the provision of images shown here.* Office-Holders in the Duchy and County Palatine of Lancaster from 1603, Robert Somerville 1972 P. XXXIII

Editor's note: Why 'of Gaunt'? John/Jan/Jean was born in Ghent/Gent/Gand in Flanders.

Some things disappear from our streets without our hardly noticing. Think of cigarette vending machines, policemen on point duty, and phone boxes. Billboards are now in steep decline. They are no longer economic as advertising revenues drop and switch to digital platforms. The traditional 48 sheet billboards at the corner of Friargate and Ringway have recently been cut down. The board on Corporation Street has been taken down too. It's hard to think of other billboards still in use in Preston. Gone are the days of Benson & Hedge's Gold adverts, 'Persil washes whiter' and 'Mine's a Guinness'.

What's on?



In Covid tier 3 Preston very little indeed. **Lancaster University's Regional Heritage Centre** has issued a provisional list of events for 2021. They are also trying out digital events and publicising other groups' events. Details are at <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/events/>. Thanks to the eccentricities of local government boundaries Southport ('Liverpool City Region') and Warrington ('Cheshire') are in tier 2. Their local art galleries and museums are open to visitors as are those in Liverpool: www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker-art-gallery. The Atkinson, in Southport, is showing *Fatal attraction: Lilith and her sisters*. This is about classical art images of women. It runs until Saturday 27 March 2021, open Monday–Saturday, 11am–4pm. Free entry. www.theatkinson.co.uk/exhibition/fatal-attraction-2020 The Friends of Winckley Square website has been busy with new local history articles, such a recently posted piece about Thomas Duckworth, the sculptor: www.winckleysquarepreston.org

Lost Preston



Preston and slavery

Aidan Turner-Bishop

What connects Atherton Road and Vernon, Greenbank, Birley, and possibly Harris Streets? They may all be linked to Preston's involvement in the slave trade. An essay about Preston's role in the Transatlantic slave trade by Aidan Turner-Bishop has been posted in the members' article section of the PHS website.

Details on the names of slave owners and their beneficiaries are online in the revealing and often disturbing database site *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs When the slave trade was abolished slave owners were compensated, under the Slave Compensation Act 1837, by the British Government for the loss of their slaves; the cost was only finally written off by the Treasury in 2015! These records are now online in the *LBS* database. There we discover that Preston's leading family of slave owners were the Athertons of Greenbank, an elegant house located near the site of the UCLan car park, Greenbank Street, formerly Goss's printing machinery works. Richard Atherton owned the Green Park sugar estate in Jamaica with 550 African slaves and 302 head of cattle for which his family received generous compensation from the Government when slavery was made illegal. Atherton was Guild Mayor in 1782; he is said to have donated silverware to Preston Corporation's civic plate collection. It may be held in the Town Hall.

His son William (1703–1745), who inherited the Jamaica estates, and his wife Mrs Atherton were painted by Arthur Devis in a fine portrait displayed at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. They are every inch the wealthy and stylish couple.

John Vernon, a relative, owned an estate in Antigua with many slaves. One record which intrigues us is an award paid to the Rev R. E. Harris, 'rector' who



Slaves in a sugar plantation, Jamaica.



*Mr and Mrs Atherton (Arthur Devis, c.1743)
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Where did the money
come from to pay for such a fine gown?*

received £19 10s 10d on 25 January, 1836, for one slave on the Trelawney Estate (Parliamentary Papers 1836, page 77). Can this be Preston's celebrated Rector of St George's, the Rev Robert Harris (1764–1862)? More research may be needed.

Profits from the slave trade were often reinvested as capital in the cotton industry, manufacturing, railways, collieries, land, and country properties, in Britain and across the Empire. An example of this were the Kirkham flax merchants, such as John Birley, who invested with Lancaster slavers in the slave trade at Preston and Poulton. They exported sailcloth and twine needed for the slaving vessels. Merchants like Birley switched to exporting through Liverpool after slave ships ceased sailing from the Ribble and Wyre. Birley later went into partnership with John Swainson to erect in 1828 a huge cotton mill in Fishwick known as 'The Big Factory'. Fishwick Mill prospered and grew. Birley is recalled today in Birley Street in the city centre.

As late as 1860 over 60% of the cotton used in the Lancashire cotton industry was imported from the southern slave states of America. When this supply was restricted by the American Civil War 'Cotton Famine' many workers in Lancashire were impoverished. To create work public schemes were set up. Avenham and Miller Parks are a lasting legacy of this period.

An interesting beneficiary of William Atherton's will was Mary Southworth of Preston. She was a 'mulatto' (mixed race) woman who was granted an annuity of £20 (worth £855 today). She was related to Thomas Southworth of Green Park, Jamaica, from whom the Athertons inherited their estates. She may be one of the earliest records of a named Black Preston woman. What happened to her?

Tarleton's forgotten branch line

David J. Hindle

The Tarleton Branch railway was built and opened in 1880, primarily for transshipping goods arriving by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and sea-going traffic arriving by the River Douglas to the lower branch of the canal at Tarleton lock and basin. Tarleton lock was built 4 feet wider than the standard lock to accommodate sea going vessels, mainly schooners of 80-90 feet in length. A short-lived passenger service began in 1912. The West Lancashire Railway (WLR) owned at least five barges which operated on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal; goods were carried by canal and railway between Liverpool and Southport and elsewhere.

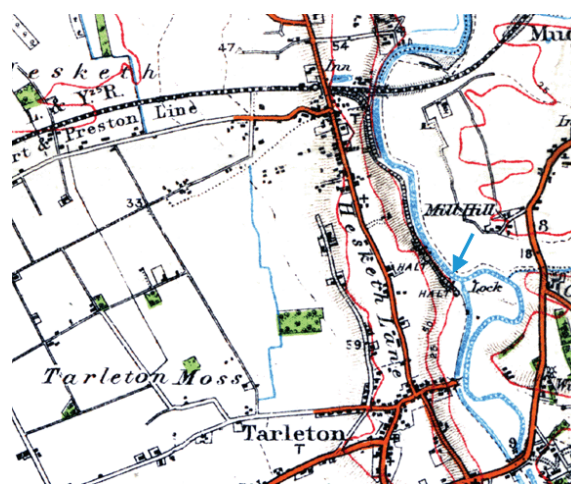
The West Lancashire Railway Act (16 April, 1878) authorised the company to build, purchase, hire, charter, provide, employ and maintain steam vessels to carry passengers, livestock and goods from Hesketh-with-Becconsall (Hesketh Bank) on the River Douglas to Preston, Lytham, St Annes, Blackpool, Fleetwood, Barrow-in-Furness and the Isle of Man and to anywhere on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and to raise capital to the extent of £200,000.

The River Douglas was quite busy in the nineteenth century. It provided a link from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal extension from Rufford to Tarleton lock with the sea, by way of the navigable River Douglas to its confluence with the Ribble. A customs officer was stationed at Hesketh Bank from at least 1818 to deal with vessels loading coal from Wigan for Southport, and unloading various cargoes. Customs returns from 1847 to 1851 show that almost 100 vessels discharged cargo there and 300 vessels were loaded and left for sea a year. However, following the imposition of shipping dues for vessels using the Douglas in 1855, trade declined and the customs officer was withdrawn in 1859.

The railway operated a fleet of cargo steamers between Tarleton and Liverpool. The WLR swing bridge over the Douglas had been constructed with this large volume of commercial and river passenger traffic in mind combined with a new Douglas Bridge station. Under the management of Thomas Gilbert, Manager and Secretary, the River Douglas station was passed fit by the Board of Trade Inspector, subject to a clock and name board being erected, on 13 July, 1878, six months after the original line from Hesketh Park

to Hesketh Bank opened in February, 1878. The River Douglas Station could only be reached by the steamers: there was no public land access to it.

On 30 September, 1879, the WLR Company Carriers advertised that 'the company begs to inform the public that in order to provide for the more convenient conduct of their traffic between Liverpool and Southport they have rented from the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company their spacious warehouse and basin on their canal.'



The Liverpool and Southport Daily News, on 17 October 1879, published an advertisement stating 'Construction of the branch was due to start on the 10 November, 1879, the contractors being Braddock and Matthews (the same firm who were to construct the main line extension from Hesketh Bank to Preston) with a completion set for the Tarleton branch of the 29 February, 1880. *The Preston Guardian* (31 July 1880) reported 'that the line is opened and that traffic is being transferred at Tarleton Lock into railway wagons'. Tarleton Boatyard halt was adjacent to the south west bank of the River Douglas, just fifteen chains west of Hesketh Bank. The branch line was sold on 30 November 1880 to the WLR who obtained the necessary Act of Parliament retrospectively on 3 June, 1881.

The branch was single track, diverting from the WLR south from a point between Hesketh Bank and the River Douglas station. It took a parallel course along the western bank of the River Douglas with one intermediate halt named 'Tarleton Boatyard Crossing' to terminate after only one mile and seven and a quarter chains at a second unstaffed halt Tarleton Terminus lock and warehouse.

A new *Manning Wardle* 0-6-0 saddle tank was bought in 1882 for goods traffic use on the Tarleton branch. It was numbered 4 and originally named *Sefton* and later *Tarleton*. It was broken up by the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway in 1897. The Tarleton passenger train was a steam railcar; the service ran from Crossens via Hesketh Bank and onto the branch, serving Tarleton Boat Yard Crossing and Tarleton Terminus. The branch carried passengers only from 3 June, 1912 until 1 October, 1913. Goods traffic ceased in November, 1930. Unfortunately nothing of the Tarleton branch survives apart from four short lengths of rail, a cutting and a small section of track bed.

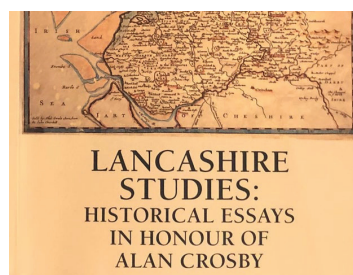
In June 1878 the WLR purchased a 46 ton iron-hulled paddle steamer the *Virginia*, primarily for pleasure cruises along the River Ribble and Douglas to Lytham from Tarleton Wharf calling at Douglas Bridge Station to connect with the trains. These cruises were interspersed with shorter cruises along the River Douglas to Freckleton Naze on the River Ribble. The company promoted a train service between Southport and Hesketh Bank and a combined paddle steamer service crossing of the Ribble estuary to Lytham and Naze Point.

The sailings were advertised in August 1878 locally as 'West Lancashire Railway special rail and steam boat excursion down the River Douglas on that river to Naze Point and back: special express trains leaving Southport (Windsor Road Station) in connection therewith.' The first revenue-earning cruises sailed from the 12 to 17 August, 1878. The paddle steamer sailed along the Douglas at high tide to its confluence with the Ribble at Naze Point before returning to the Douglas railway halt. It was increasingly apparent that the business was not viable, especially as a rival ship was sailing across the Ribble estuary from Southport to Lytham on a regular schedule. The last advertised cruises were on 29 and 30 August, 1878. The vessel was largely tide dependent, the weather was poor, and the public was indifferent. In 1879 the *Virginia* continued to provide pleasure cruises between the West Lancashire Railway's Douglas Halt and Lytham but this service did not survive after 1886. River Douglas station was closed by the WLR in 1886.

The *Virginia* was later used to tow schooners loaded with wood along the River Ribble and it was used in the construction of Preston Docks in 1884. After several changes in ownership, the *Virginia* left Preston for Garston and began working on the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal, prior to being scrapped in 1899.

Alan Crosby celebrated

Dr Alan Crosby, a regular and popular speaker to the Society, has been celebrated in a new book *Lancashire Studies: Historical essays in honour of Alan Crosby*. It contains essays by leading local historians on the Gough map of north west England; Catholic Cliftons and the Church of England at Lund and Lytham; fieldnames of Pilkington; cheese making in Goosnargh in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Quakerism in Victorian Lancashire; working at home in Winckley Square during the nineteenth century; the Worden Hall estate, Leyland; Seward stained-glass studio of Lancaster; local history and the Lancaster Historical Pageant of 1913. The book includes a foreword by Paul



Booth; an extensive list of works by Alan Crosby; and a comprehensive index. It is published by the *Lancashire Local History Federation*. Send a cheque for £19 (£15 each, plus £4 p&p) to

John Wilson, Green Hall, Tatham, Lancaster, LA2 8RB; telephone: 03330 062270; email: j.r.wilson@cantab.net or send a BACS payment to Sort Code: 01-05-31 Account number 32603983. Ensure you quote 'Crosby book' and your surname as reference.

A famous centenary



A hundred years ago on 26 December 1920, Dick, Kerr Ladies football team, based in Preston, played against St Helen's Ladies at Goodison Park, Liverpool, drawing a crowd of 53,000 spectators, a world record for women's club matches that lasted for over 98 years. The team faced strong opposition from the jealous and male Football Association who banned women from using fields and stadiums controlled by FA-affiliated clubs for 50 years. The rule was finally repealed in 1971.

BOOK NEWS

A. J. Hartley's Preston ghost stories

Dave Canning

Christmas and mid-winter seem to be the right time for a couple of ghost stories. Two books from Preston born author A. J. Hartley may be just what you're looking for. Both are set in Preston in 1978 and are built around various events from local history along with a couple of Preston legends.

In the first book, *Cold Bath Street*, 14-year-old Preston Oldcorn from Ribbleton finds himself dead, but not entirely so. He's entered a world between life and death where he can see the living but can't be seen by them. That's the least of his problems though. More alarmingly, he can see those are in a similar position to himself. He encounters the rather terrifying Bannister Doll, an infamous figure from the city's past, along with a ghost from the Miley Tunnel and various other threatening spectres. He has to overcome all of them

in one way or another, sometimes with their help, to escape the world he has entered.

The second book, *Written Stone Lane* finds Preston Oldcorn and his girlfriend Tracey, who he met in the first novel, grappling with the horrors unleashed when someone misadvisedly moves the Written Stone, which can to this day, still be seen near Longridge.

In this story, the removal causes the Boggart to be released causing death and mayhem. Once again, as in the first book, many familiar Preston locations including pubs and the old Booths café on Fishergate, where there's yet another ghost, are visited at fast paced speed to overcome this monstrous creation.

The interweaving of local history, legends, and locations into two excellent breakneck adventures make for very enjoyable reading. Two of our PHS stalwarts, Aidan Turner-Bishop and David Hindle, are credited by the author for helping provide some of the historical detail used.

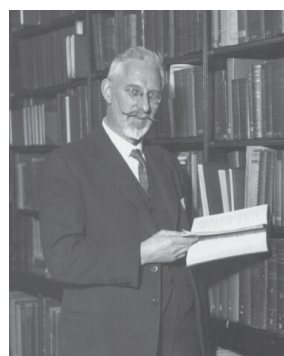
Don't be deterred by the fact that you may see the books listed as 'YA' or 'YAF' (young adult fiction). They are great fun for all ages and so excellent for all of the family.

New books

Keith Johnson's new book *Preston Murders and Misdemeanours* (Amberley, 2020; £14.99) is full of interesting crime reports taken from the local press. Many are Victorian, such as the Annie Kelly murder of 1887, but he does recount some recent cases such as Imraan Vohra's murder (1985) and the Christ Church Street triple killing (1987). He reveals a world of poisonings, corporal punishment, and speedy hangings for those convicted. It is up to Keith Johnson's usual high standards: ideal for grim lockdown reading.

Holding the vision: collecting the art of the book in the industrial North West by Cynthia Johnson is a 44-page booklet, published to accompany an exhibition

at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery this year. It celebrates the book treasures held in the museums in Blackburn and Preston and in Towneley Hall, Burnley. In the Harris, Preston, there are the splendid Private Press and Spencer Collections. Essays describe John Henry Spencer (1875-1952) and the collecting of the Harris Library's finely moustachioed



*Joseph Pomfret,
Harris Librarian.*

Joseph Pomfret (1878-1944). His daughter was Joan Townsend (1913-1993), a well-known dialect poet known as Joan Pomfret. What a pity this exhibition was not shown at the Harris; it is a revelation.

Mike Rhodes's *Preston Deepdale: history of a bus garage* (Venture, 2020 £25) is a history of Preston Bus's Deepdale depot. Naturally it is full of bus and tram pictures but there are some points of general local history interest. The open ground besides the garage, where buses are parked, is called 'the Moor'. The Moor Brook flows beneath it. The cellars used to be linked to a waste incinerator in Argyll Road. In the Second World War it was used as a rifle range. Later it became Preston Corporation's nuclear hideaway. If you saw the Town Clerk hurrying to Deepdale Road bus depot you knew that the balloon was about to go up.

Preston Grammar School Association has published David 'Charlie' Billington's history of Preston Grammar School called *A very Preston affair*. The School was in Cross Street near Winckley Square before it moved to Moor Park. The book costs £7.50 (plus £2.50 p&p if required). Copies are available in the St Catherine's Hospice bookshop and directly from the author (on 07950 142907; captainvolvo@blueyonder.co.uk). You can send a cheque to the author, payable to the 'Preston Grammar School Association', at 12 Coniston Avenue, Ashton-on-Ribble, Preston, PR2 2HS. Include your name and address for posted copies.