

What's on?

Christmas and the New Year usually means a period of hibernation. There's no PHS talk in January 2020. However, Lancaster University Regional Heritage Centre has announced a study day on Saturday, 25 January 2020, about *North West antiquaries and the development of historical writing (c.1650-1850)* at the Storey Institute, Lancaster. Saturday 22 February sees *The end is nigh: aspects of death and mortality in North West England 1500-1900* with Dr Alan Crosby. Details, including booking, are at www.lancaster.ac.uk/rhc. Preston Historical Society's next talks are on 3 February (Dr Alan Crosby *A second Waterloo: the Cloughton tragedy of January 1827*); 2 March (Stephen Sartin *Shopping in Victorian Preston*); 6 April (Paul Atherton *Viking voices*). Talks are in St George's starting at 7.15 pm.

Preston not Weston (super Mare)

In August 2019's edition of the journal *History Today* the editor wrote a piece which included the claim that the last battle in England was at Sedgemoor in 1685. Steve Harrison, a member of the PHS, wrote to the journal to correct the error and point out that the last English battle was at Preston in 1715. He noted that the attractiveness of Preston's women proved a major distraction to the Jacobite officers and added that 'Preston's still worth a visit.' In October a correspondent wrote to the journal to say Steve's pride was 'a little misplaced' and that the Jacobites, while retreating north after the rising of 1745, fought a battle at Clifton on the road between Kendal and Penrith which qualifies as the last in England. Prestonians can rest assured, says Steve: Clifton was a mere skirmish; Preston is the rightful holder of the title.

Delia's home traced?

The pioneering electronic music composer and co-creator of the *Dr Who* theme music Delia Derbyshire (1937-2001) was born in Coventry but, in 1940 to escape the Blitz, she was moved to Preston for safety.

Her parents were from Preston and, according to Wikipedia, most of her surviving relatives still live in the area. Do you know any of the Derbyshire or Dawson families? She was very bright and, by the age of four, was teaching others in her class in primary school to read and write. Recent research may have found her Preston home. Her mother's name was Mary Amelia Dawson, born in 1906, and, in 1939, she lived at 232 Inkerman Street. She married Edward Derbyshire in June 1935. Delia is later recorded as living in Inkerman Street; another famous woman who once lived in Preston.

She worked at the BBC from 1960 to 1973, creating the *Dr Who* theme in 1963. She died, aged 64, in 2001.



Delia Derbyshire in her studio.

Lost Preston

We start a new series recording familiar buildings which have just been demolished. Recently Preston has lost to UCLan's ambitions a terrace of charming Georgian artisan cottages in St Peter's Square. The neo-Georgian former labour exchange in Percy Street has been flattened. A quirky survivor went almost overnight in early November 2019. It was the preserved façade of the former Jerry Lobby public house in Salmon Street, off London Road. Liquid Plastics had retained the front within their property but this has not prevented its demolition. Stephen Halliwell, in his 2014 *Preston pubs*, suggests that the unusual name may derive from a lobby or



The former 'Jerry Lobby' public house.

ginnel which led to a communal 'jerry' or midden. It was a pub from 1841 to the mid-1930s. Moral: record today lest it's gone tomorrow.



Preston Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

PROMOTING THE STUDY OF LOCAL HISTORY IN PRESTON AND LANCASHIRE

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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

COMING SOON

Monday
2 Dec 2019

The strategic importance of the River Ribble in the early medieval period

Speaker:
Dr Fiona Edmonds



The Chinese are said to call China Zhōngguó, or 'middle kingdom', since to them it is the most important and central country in the world. Preston might well adopt a similar idea to emphasise our city's centrally influential location in England. Preston is at the lowest crossing point of the strategically important River Ribble. Who controls the north-south Ribble crossing controls England, as King Charles I and his Royalists and, later, the Jacobites were to discover. The Romans built an important logistics camp at Walton-le-Dale. Three Anglo-Saxon hundreds – Leyland, Blackburn and Amounderness – met at Preston. Today, Catholic dioceses (Lancaster, Salford and Liverpool) meet here. The ancient kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria shared a border along the Ribble. In the reign of Scottish King David I, after the 1138 battle of Clitheroe, the Scottish realm extended to the banks of the Ribble. Anglo-Scottish express train crews swap over at Preston. Britain's first motorway was built to bypass Preston. South-north walkers,

cyclists, and other travellers have to pass through Preston: think of Bonnie Prince Charlie, Charles Dickens, Tsar Nicholas of Russia, Dr Barbara Moore in 1960, and Eddie Izzard. But it's not just the north-south axis that's important. The Ribble is an important and central route crossing England and linking into the Irish Sea with its network of sailing highways from Ireland, Scotland and parts of western England. The Vikings, based in their Dublin kingdom and on the Isle of Man, sailed into the Ribble estuary; remember the Cuerdale treasure hoard. Danes and Norse people settled locally: 'Grimr' in Grimsargh, or 'Ormr' in Ormskirk. The Ribble, an important salmon river, tidal to beyond Fishwick, is penetrable by sea-going craft. In her talk on Monday 2 December Dr Fiona Edmonds, the Director of Lancaster University's Regional Heritage Centre, will, in what promises to be an illuminating and stimulating talk, explore the strategic importance of the River Ribble in the early medieval period.

Aerial view of Ribchester by homeonfilm.com

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

For Whom the Bell Tolls ...



Watercolour of the 'Old' Town Hall, by John Ferguson, 1842.

Courtesy of the Harris Museum, Art Gallery and Library

The above watercolour by John Ferguson shows the 'Old' Town Hall of Preston from the south side of Fishergate.

For six centuries or so the Moot Hall* was the centre of all civic ceremonies relating to Preston's Guild Merchant, a tradition which began in 1179. The first Guild Hall was attached to this building in time for the 1762 Guild.

But in June 1780 the ancient Moot Hall, along with the adjoining Guild Hall, collapsed and the 'Old' Town Hall, using some of the former building, was built on the same site in 1782.

It was decided to rebuild the complete structure with the 'Chimney-piece, with the town's Arms upon the same', with 'The old Cupola, which stood upon the old Town Hall,' should both be repaired and erected on the new building.

By 1813 the 'Chimney-piece' had decayed and was replaced by another similar to that which can still be seen on the former Corn Exchange in Lune Street.

The new Town Hall was rebuilt in 1814, but was far from being satisfactory and in 1857 Hardwick described it as 'a mean edifice for so populous and wealthy a borough'. It was finally demolished in 1860-61, making way for the magnificent and much loved Town Hall, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott in the Gothic revival style popular at the time,

*Moot from the Anglo-Saxon mōt meaning 'assembly or meeting'.



Preston's 'Old' Town Hall in the process of being demolished in 1861.



Photograph by Robin Utracik



It is possible the bell was cast by William Brakell at the Bell Foundry [sic] in Preston, shown on Shakeshaft's map of 1809, overwritten from Lang's map of 1774. The bell weighs just under 1 cwt and in 2007 it was refurbished and rehung in St Mary's Church by John Taylor & Co, Loughborough.



Photograph courtesy of John Taylor & Co

The bell from Preston's 'Old' Town Hall now hangs in the bellcote of St Mary's Church, Lea Town, *above left*.

The letters W · BR are clearly visible and are the first three letters of W · BRAKELL PRESTON, cast on the bell along with the year 1807, *above right*.

and built between 1862 and 1866. Tragically the building was destroyed by fire on 15 March 1947. The decision to rebuild the Town Hall in the same Gothic style was lost by the slimmest of votes and the site has been occupied by the unloved Crystal House (now known as the Cubic) since the 1960s.

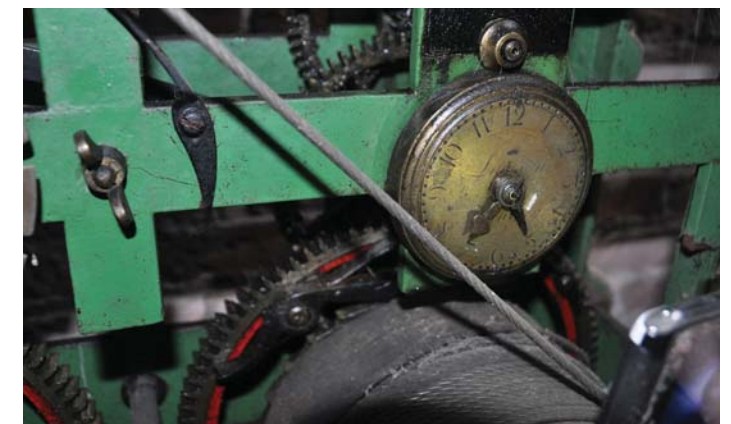
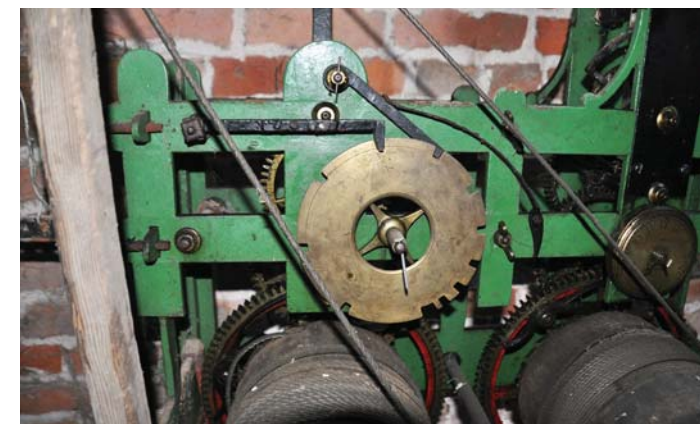
The bell from the 'Old' Town Hall in Preston was purchased by Thomas Finch of Clifton Lodge c.1861, and then presented to St Mary's Church, Lea Town. However, it had not been rung for a long time – because the stone support mounting in the bellcote was unstable. The Angelus, or Ladye Bell is now 'electronically' rung at noon each day of the week, and on Sunday mornings calling parishioners to Mass.



St Mary's Church in Lea Town is a little jewel of a church built in 1804. Approached along a drive, lined with twenty mature lime trees, it nestles in its own grounds, where recently a mulberry tree, one of only two known in Preston, was discovered.

My thanks to John Penswick of Beech Grove Farm, for allowing access to photograph the bell mechanism, also Stephen Sartin, Aidan Turner-Bishop and Edmund Crighton for their support.

Andrew Mather



One of the four clock faces, much remodelled, along with the clock mechanism were removed from the 'Old' Town Hall and installed at Beech Grove Farm, Greenhalgh, c. 1880. It is still in full working order!

Photographs by Andrew Mather