



ALTRINCHAM HISTORY SOCIETY

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Hello everyone,

I'm looking forward to our next meeting on Tues 11th March and a talk on **Cheshire's Contribution to winning WW2**. This will be at the Altrincham Conservative Club, on Market Street.

Our AGM comes up in May 2025, and I would like you all to consider if you could help the society by joining the committee. A number of members help without being on the committee, but we do need a minimum number of people to make a quorum. Also, **we will need a new Chairman** !. I have been chairman since I retired in 2011 and Don Bayliss talked me into it. People asked what I was going to do after work and I said I had about four books to write – I've not achieved any yet. I would like to be able to concentrate on at least one. So please consider and talk about finding a new chairman.

What's On

Thursday 20 February, 2pm (on Zoom) FREE 'Surnames, Language and Identity in Cheshire', by Dr Harry Parkin. This lecture on the history of surnames, surname distribution and local dialect is provided by Cheshire Local History Association (CLHA). As our society has a subscription to CLHA, our members are eligible to apply to join the Zoom talk for FREE. (If you haven't used Zoom, you will need to load it and then log in early to allow time to get used to it.)

If you would like to join this talk **please email** smvareyclha@outlook.com giving your full name and personal email address, and that you are a member of Altrincham History Society. The zoom link will then be emailed to you 7-10 days before the event.

Exhibition 15 Feb – 18 May 2025 at Grosvenor Museum, Chester .
'Illuminated: Trena Cox in Chester' - 20th century stained glass artist Trena Cox spent her entire career in Chester. This exhibition highlights her work.

Thursday 27th March at 7.30pm Looking ahead, STAG's first talk of 2025 is on Roman Manchester by Norman Redhead. Please note STAG have changed some of their meetings from Friday to Thursday evenings, at the headquarters behind The Old Hall Hotel, Stockport Road.

It's been interesting watching what's happened with the canal breach, with videos on YouTube. Here's one: "Breaches and the Bridgewater Canal" – an interesting programme on the history of the canal, its construction and breaches. c. 10 minutes with extracts from records and photos. By Heatherfield Heritage https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=6Sr-VE7gvmo&d=n&fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR3yEU5naMJbEh1LHMwqvNQbMfzk7REH_FXF6WodF8Szu88q57dT0qDqIl4_aem_dybtCMSfpOWI91Iwrc1tAA

Then there has been a building collapse on Ashley Road in Hale. Three storeys, it was built in 1903, and the last use was as a wine bar. It was to be re-opened as a private medical practice and had planning permission for a rear extension to the ground floor and basement. This involved the removal of the existing 'kitchen at

the rear basement level to provide for a lower ground floor landscaped courtyard at the rear.’ The back wall cracked then collapsed. A good example, not to mess too much with older buildings ! *Altrincham Today* has online articles:

<https://altrincham.todaynews.co.uk/police-fire-and-court/2025/01/24/part-of-hale-village-cordoned-off-after-large-cracks-put-former-bar-at-risk-of-collapse-2/>

<https://altrincham.todaynews.co.uk/police-fire-and-court/2025/01/27/hale-building-collapse-road-set-to-remain-closed-until-controlled-demolition/>

The National Archives Newsletter

Listen to a short podcast about letters, papers and artefacts taken from ships captured by the British between 1652 and 1815.

<https://news.eneews.nationalarchives.gov.uk/NLI/ViewHtmlEmail.aspx?a=6E46B8072A601DEE95792396CBABF96F&b=9158F81B5F7FB174AC4F0D114B0EA470>

On YouTube

“Anglo-Saxon and Romanesque Carvings in Leicestershire & Rutland” and also elsewhere. 36 minutes, by Bub Trubshaw. (Includes the three hares motif on floor tile – see example from Chester.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkM0D-YVCkw>



“Viking Age Bloomery find in Egremont, Wirral”. A 10 minute video of the Wirral Archaeology CIC dig on the foreshore of the earliest type of iron smelter. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUCSdRdWJVg>

“How I solved an English Mediaeval Mystery”. A video about Oxted Surrey, about 18 minutes long. Why is the mediaeval church of Oxted not in the mediaeval village of Old Oxted. This video exploration using maps and old photos, showing how villages move around, is by ‘Walkabout with Rob’ (ignore the Australian accent, it’s good). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCeAsO7b4ig>

England’s Lost Country Houses” 19 minutes video of three great houses, their architecture and history of owners, buildings, parks & gardens. Includes Eaton Hall, Cheshire, with good drawings, photos and plans. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY9bfHjYrsk> by Kings & Things, narrator has slight accent but clear.

“Angel Meadow: Hell on earth. The home of 40,000 forgotten souls“. 23 minute video by ‘The Dark Side of the Moor’. Exploring St Michael’s Flagg and Angel Meadow Park, with archive photos and contemporary descriptions. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyV2_14GquY

“England’s most controversial gravestone” - an 8 minute video about Sylvia Plath, and the leader of a gang of coiners, in Heptonstall. by ‘Northern Introvert’. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=437KQIGPGO8>

“Mysterious story of a forgotten Trafalgar Hero found ...” a 30 minute video by ‘Bradford Through the Lens.’ Tracing the story of a workhouse to hospital and the research involved to verify and locate the grave. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xY2jtoF4vxg>

“The insane 6-year mission to stop this Cathedral from sinking” – about 12 minutes long, the story of diver William Walker and the underwater reconstruction of Winchester Cathedral. A video by ‘Skill Builder’ from a builder’s perspective. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZnMDLP-mww>

“The Most Famous artwork of WWI looks different now”. This video by Imperial War Museum shows how the painting ‘Gassed’ by John Singer Sargent has been cleaned, and the importance of art from WW1. With film from WW1 and details of other artworks, and the cleaning process. 9 minutes, with sub-titles. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-oCv4ILyPg>

Aerial Photo Explorer

Historic England have just launched an interactive map of aerial photos from the past – Photo number EPW017606 is a 1927 aerial photo of 'St Vincent's Church and environs, Altrincham':

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/EPW017606>

The interactive map can be accessed at

: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/> - you can zoom in and click on the stars/squares to view the images and the information & date.

Shell Historical Film Archive – YouTube has several films from the 1940s including lots about car engines and how an aeroplane flies, but also one “The Secret of the last Cooper”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLrf9YPRxz8&list=PLEPIVJVCfQH2hoYONdHiQIVrvYQ-k4Xay&index=23> and The Blacksmith.

Several called ‘The Regions of Britain’ show Britain in the 1970s. Each about 20 minutes, examples:

The Fens: the Richest agricultural land in England (1977); History of the Cotswolds (1976); The Welsh Marches 1977). Use the link above to access other films on YouTube.

Do you know ‘**The Smoker**’ pub on the Chester Road in Plumley?



I have never been in and was hoping to visit for a meal and a look at the interior – beams, fireplace etc. Then in November I was coming home from Chester and spotted this. The fire destroyed the thatched roof and exposed the roof beams. Piles of thatch on the ground had presumably been pulled off. This was the old method of dealing with fires in thatch and some places kept long poles with hooks on to pull off the burning thatch and lessen damage to the timbers. More here:

<https://www.northwichguardian.co.uk/news/24675476.smoker-pub-plumley-restored-severe-fire/>

Manchester museums launch online collections search

Visitors can browse more than 750,000 objects including many that are not on display, from The Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester Museum and The Whitworth. This is the link for Manchester Art Gallery – I think you need to know who you are searching for here. <https://collections.manchesterartgallery.org/>

Royal Navy Captains’ letters -The National Archives has a project cataloguing these letters from the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. They have completed captains beginning with A and moved on to B & C – including Bligh and Cochrane. Some details are given in this blog.

https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/the-a-z-of-the-royal-navy-captains-letter-project-b-and-c/?utm_source=e-shot&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Weekly+newsletter++23.01.25

As the weather starts to improve (hopefully) here are some walks:

Greater Manchester Walking Trail – called ‘GMRingway’.

This recently developed trail takes in 40 Grade I and Grade II listed buildings, 13 museums and 14 ancient monuments. It totals 200 miles in 20 stages and each one has public transport for start and finish. It has been way-marked and the signs have QR codes for more detail. And there is more detail and maps on the Go Jauntily App. [I’m not into apps yet, need to get a smartphone not my old Nokia.] Lots more on the website:

<https://www.gmringway.org/>

North Wales Border Walk – Hawarden circular - 4 miles.

<https://www.greatbritishlife.co.uk/magazines/cheshire/24658432.north-wales-border-walk-hawarden-circular-4-mile-route/> Article from *Cheshire Life* - Includes bits of information about the Hawarden Castles – old and newer. This looks an interesting walk.



Or why not explore more locally.

Take a walk along Green Walk from Bowdon Church – look out for the names on gateposts, often all that is left of the original big houses. Go along to Denzell and explore the gardens there. Perhaps come back via The Devisdale and The Firs. Watch out for a commemorative plaque on The Firs. Take the children and see what they can spot.

We received a recent enquiry about Bickham House on Green Walk. This is now a residential/nursing home, with a noted collection of Snowdrops (should be out now); Alice Gertrude Bickham was a ‘galanthophile’. I have some information about the Bickham family, but I referred the enquirer to a history of the house written by Elizabeth Haddock and David Miller, much better than my scrappy bits and pieces. Spencer Henry Bickham was a silk merchant and the house was called ‘Gorsefield’ when the Bickhams lived there, one of the Bowdon ‘mansions’.



Finally -

“Saving Swandro” a video by Time Team and the Orkney Coastal Archaeology Trust. A 23 minute video with John Gater from Time Team. This Iron Age site on the island of Rousay is gradually being lost to the sea. [I visited Orkney nearly 40 years ago, and saw some of the tombs on Rousay, and Midhowe. Orkney is well worth a visit, if you get the chance.]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84klyJGHKi4>

We sent out the Xmas Photo Quiz last time for those who couldn’t make it to the Christmas do. If you were puzzled by any of the photos, here are the answers.

1. Stamford New Road, west side near the old Post Office
 2. Corner of The Downs and Ashley Road.
 3. Wythenshawe Hall
 4. Bowdon RUFC, ground and pavilion are on Clay Lane, Timperley.
 5. Bonson’s Heated Store Rooms, Moss Lane, Altrincham., from Moss Lane bridge.
 6. St George’s Church and Ashton Brookes funeral directors, Church Street, Altrincham.
 7. Lloyds Bank on Stamford New Road west side, ram’s head detail.
 8. Station Buildings, Moss Lane side, 1905.
 9. The Pelican, Manchester Rd, Timperley - motor lodge was the first in the area
 10. Market Street, west side, next to Stamford Estate office.
 11. Greenwood Street, now Kennedy’s bar, at cut-through to the lower market and George Street.
 12. The old Timperley Library, Park Rd, Timperley. Lost and gone.
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Keep warm, soon time to start exploring.

See you around, Hazel