

ALTRINCHAM HISTORY SOCIETY

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Hello everyone,

First, an error to correct - I got the date wrong for the January 2024 meeting; please note it is Tuesday 9th January, not the 8th, which is a Monday.

Altrincham Town Hall has had a reprieve, at least until the end of December 2023, so we will be remaining there for the September to December meetings. We still don't yet know what is happening there.

Here are some events and more interesting bits on YouTube and websites. Incidentally, for those of you without a computer or with only a laptop, you can watch YouTube items via your TV, as I do, as long as it's a 'Smart TV'.

Events

Short Notice - Chester Society for Landscape History

CSLH begin the autumn programme on the **Saturday 30th Sept** at St Columba's Church Hall, Upton nr Chester, at 2.00pm when the speaker will be Geoff Bailey & he will talk about **The Antonine Wall**.

Cheshire History Day - Saturday 7th October 2023, at The Grange School, Bradburns Lane, Hartford, near Northwich. Always a good day and good value at £15 including refreshments on arrival, bring your own lunch. The theme is Cheshire in the 1920s, with 3 main speakers and 4 short talks from local history society members. 15 display stalls from local societies, and two booksellers.

Contact Hazel for details and joining form: Tel 0161 980 5464.

Working Class Movement Library - This year's annual fundraising event, Radical Readings, will be held on **Sunday 22nd October from 2pm** at **Maxwell Hall, Salford Univ**. This year's event will feature readings by Maxine Peake, Carla Henry, Julie Hesmondhalgh, Mike Joyce and Oliver Lomax.

The readings, the earliest of which dates from 1381 with the Peasants' Revolt, cover historic events such as the Levellers, Peterloo, the Battle of Bexley Square and the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass!

Introduced by Library Trustee Royston Futter, and James Quinn will share the presenting duties. Original Poetry will be supplied and performed by Library Trustee Oliver Lomax. Tickets £15. Use this link to book:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/radical-readings-revolt-revolution-and-revenge-tickets-717736678727?aff=oddtcreator>

Learning Local History

I learnt how to study local history through evening classes firstly via the WEA (Workers Educational Association) held at St George's Primary School, Altrincham, and then from Univ. of Manchester Extra-mural Department. Also I learnt about sources when taking an option for my library qualification at Manchester Poly. Back in the 1970s, the Altrincham WEA had a three year evening class in Cheshire History taught by Mr Norman Dore, who wrote the book 'A history of Hale', but I never attended that class as it clashed with the 'Roman Britain' class. There used to be a WEA branch in Sale as well, but now the closest I can get is the courses from The Wilmslow Guild, now called The Guild for Lifelong Learning, and there's nothing much there really. <https://guildlifelonglearning.org/> And I can't find any evening classes listed by Manchester University or MMU. So how can people learn 'how to do' local history, apart from a

lot of reading? Well you can do a degree at Leicester Univ, and Oxford have an Undergrad Diploma in English Local History, and an online Advanced Diploma. Better still, Lancaster University has a Post-grad Certificate in Regional and Local History by online distance learning. <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/study-with-us/>

Lancaster Univ. has the Regional Heritage Centre, where I've attended study days held in February presented by Dr Alan Crosby [he's a really good speaker]. They have other events all related to the North West: such as an evening lecture on **Weds 18th October - Merriment of the Masses: Telling the Tale of Fairs, Seasides and Pleasure Palaces of the North West**, by Professor Vanessa Toulmin. This draws on many aspects of her work on the history of 19th and 20th century entertainment. As a fifth-generation showperson with close links to Morecambe and the North West, she is uniquely positioned to discuss popular entertainment in the North West. Bit of a long way to go for an evening, but looks interesting. <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/>

BBC History Website - for Local History

One of the speakers at Cheshire History Day will be Dr Alan Crosby. He has done a lot of work on Lancashire, and contributed the local history details for 'Who do you think you are', and to the BBC history website. I have never checked this website before, there is some useful information. Here's a link to his Top Tips on Landscape History.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/local_history/landscape/landscape_history_top_tips_01.shtml

He also has lots of useful guides and tips in the 'Local History' section. Quote "There are all sorts of motives and reasons for embarking upon the local history trail..." You can print off the article, only 5 pages.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/local_history/getting_started/first_steps_local_history_01.shtml

Items from YouTube

"The Bombed British City beneath New York" - on YouTube. The title intrigued me - interesting research by Mark Felton - 7 minutes long. I'll leave you to guess before watching.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRoHyzcSa3Y>

What Really Happened To The Crucial Roman Legion That Vanished From History? | The Ninth | Timeline 32 minute video on YouTube - this is only Part 1, you need to subscribe to 'History Hits' for part 2, but this is still very interesting. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MK45PRm4zTo> And if you haven't read Rosemary Sutcliffe's 'The Eagle of the Ninth', it's worth a read.

Uffington White Horse - the chalk figure - a video by Matthias Messer - 24 minutes. This video includes a bit about the Ridgeway and Wayland's Smithy burial chamber. He has also done a video on the Cerne Abbas Giant, and several others including Belas Knap long barrow, and Tintern Abbey. Matthias has a bit of accent but very understandable and well-researched.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIFZW1PnCcU>.

In contrast - something from WW2 for the engineers among you:

"The Plywood Derby: the birth of the PT Boat" - a 22 minute programme about the USA development of patrol boats / motor torpedo boats, used during WW2. A bit technical, but interesting to me having read a novel about the British MTBs operating in the North Sea. ['A prayer for the ship' by Douglas Reeman].

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZ_xOY1cPTo

Parks & Gardens UK website - interesting website on the history of landscaped gardens. You can search for places and names. A quick look for anything local brings up Dunham Massey of course, and also Walkden Gardens in Sale and Brooklands Cemetery. Look under 'Resources' for additional information and even audio files. <https://www.parksandgardens.org/>

Bits from Bowdon Churchyard -

Charles H. Syers, F.C.A. - in 1942 Kelly's Directory he was at 19/21 Kingsway, Altrincham. His business was *Syers & Nephew accountants*, and he was also agent for the Burnley Building Society; and secretary for the Altrincham & District C.O.P.E.C. Housing Society Ltd. [What did C.O.P.E.C. mean?]



This plaque is on a bench by the churchyard wall.

Charles Harold Syers was born 20th January 1888 in the Altrincham area and his death registered in the March quarter of 1973.

In Slater's Directory of 1898 *Syers & Nephew, accountants* were listed at 11, Stamford Street, (NB that's the same as 21 Kingsway). The business was already in existence when Charles was only ten years old, so who was the original Syers and who was the nephew? In 1898 *Harold G. Syers, accountant (Syers & Nephew)* lived at Rose Hill Cottage, East Downs Road, Bowdon. Harold was also there in the 1905 and 1910 directories, with the address changing to 21 Kingsway by 1910.

Harold Gaskell Syers was born in 1852, registered in Great Boughton district (near Chester), and married in 1885. Harold's death was registered in September quarter of 1922, aged 70. Perhaps Harold was the 'nephew' to another earlier Syers, perhaps in the Chester area? The business carried on as *Syers & Nephew*, variously 'accountants, estate agents and valuers' until at least 1942, and Charles died in 1973.



The Armitage family stone at Bowdon, against the west side boundary.

William and Margaret Petrie Armitage lived at Beech Hurst, Altrincham (on Townfield Rd, near to St George's Churchyard in Altrincham.)

There is detailed information about John Basil and Noel, the two men killed in WW1 on the Trafford War Dead website. They were nephews of George Faulkner Armitage.

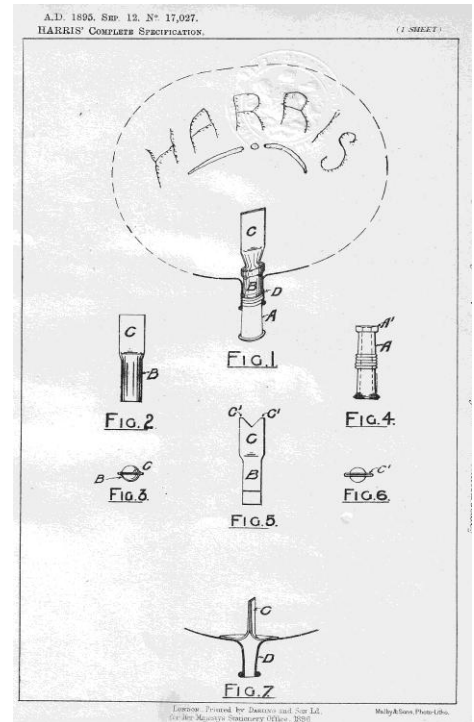
There's a William Armitage death registered in the March quarter of 1941 aged 92.

Aerial Photos from the 1940s - taken by the USAAF

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/> - explore this site -interesting content.

'The United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) reconnaissance aircraft flew hundreds of sorties over England during the Second World War. The Historic England Archive holds a USAAF collection of over 20,000 photographs that records airfields, military bases, towns, and countryside in England between 1943 and 1944.' Lots from south of England. Not many from our area, but there is this one from May 1944; follow the link. Then try and work out where it is - North is not at the top! https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/record/US_7GR_LOC354_VM_8027 There's also another one of Trafford Park.

Rubber Balloons - Back in 2021 I mentioned in Newsletter no.10 the Rubber Works of Joseph Harris in Broadheath. Soon after, an item came up for sale on Ebay - a Patent Application No.17,027 from 1895 by Joseph Harris for "Improvements in or relating to Toy Balloons and similar Inflatable Objects". For toy balloons and specifically those used for advertising purposes. This is basically an additional tube of thin india-rubber that is inserted into the opening, so that when the air is blown into the balloon a valve prevents it coming out again. The inner end is flattened out and 'vulcanised'. It may be fitted with a wooden or similar mouthpiece. Also the tube "on blowing through it, produces a musical note, and thus renders the balloon a musical toy. This invention is applicable to air cushions, football bladders and other similar inflatable objects."



Lost and Gone

Across the canal from where the Rubber Works was, we've lost a building from the ?18th century. This is the sort of building you may pass by, as just an old industrial building, in the space between the Old Packet House pub and Broadheath bridge.



But it was an old warehouse, and had an arched opening onto the Bridgewater Canal to allow boats to enter and unload. You could see this from the opposite towpath, and from the car park at Halford's and Dunelm. Sadly it is now gone - unexpectedly - so I didn't get a chance to photograph it thoroughly, just a couple of older photos. I didn't see any planning application for it. It wasn't a Listed Building, had been too much altered, and all at once it was gone. So what will come there next? I wonder. It just teaches us - take photos while you can, it may be gone next time you pass.

So, keep taking the photos (and label them), keep talking to locals, and *write things down*.

See you around, Hazel