



## ALTRINCHAM HISTORY SOCIETY

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Hello everyone,

I hope you had a peaceful Christmas, and have avoided the worst of the 'flu, Covid, or 'the 100 day Cough' that keeps coming back. [Mine started after exploring the submerged forest on the beach at Borth, Cardigan Bay at the end of November - A bit of ancient history.]

We still do not know what is happening about Altrincham Town Hall. We have our meetings booked there through to March 2024, and have an alternative venue for April and May, **if** we need to move from the Town Hall.



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Here are some interesting bits on YouTube and websites to keep you busy.

**The National Archives** has some really interesting topics coming up in 2024 – worth checking here:  
<https://news.eneews.nationalarchives.gov.uk/NLI/ViewHtmlEmail.aspx?a=9497F8C0EF22B53C524109EB37EAF1&b=9158F81B5F7FB174AC4F0D114B0EA470>

And here is a 15<sup>th</sup> Century cure for headaches and congestion – found bound in with records of Chancery:  
<https://news.eneews.nationalarchives.gov.uk/NLI/ViewHtmlEmail.aspx?a=1BF45832931EF6DE4142B7B1A2837BF&b=9158F81B5F7FB174AC4F0D114B0EA470>

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**'In the Face of Dwelling' Exhibition 26<sup>th</sup> January to 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024**  
at the Working Class Movement Library, Salford.

Following on from the well-received *Capturing The Modern Backdrop: Shirley Baker Photographing Salford* exhibition last year, we are again welcoming the University of Salford to bring *In the Face of Dwelling*, an exhibition that combines portraits with photographs and architectural drawings of Salford dwellings between c1900 and the 1970s. Some are haunting, showing poor living conditions, others are sweet and amusing, giving glimpses into daily lives. The library is open from Wednesday-Friday, 1pm-4:30pm for visitors. <https://www.wcml.org.uk/whats-on/events/in-the-face-of-dwelling-exhibition/>

### Enquiries

We've had a couple of enquiries and I wonder if any members can help;

First – about premises in Back Grafton Street, Altrincham that used to be a car service garage, previously Leathers workshop and now apartments called The Tannery. The enquirer thinks it was called Rothwell's, but is not sure and is looking for the name of the garage. Probably running during the 1970s and early 1980s?

It was next to the old offices of the local Guardian newspaper at no 22.



Second – Wadham House School – the private school on Arthog Road, Hale which closed in about 1960/61. The school and its 8 acres of playing fields were sold in 1962 to a builder, and the site is now houses on Wadhma Way, Fernlea and Birchfields. This query is from a lady in Canada whose brother (now age 86) went to the school and remembered they had various items on display, including what he referred to as Caribou antlers (maybe could have been fallow deer?). Anyway he is asking if anyone would know what happened to these items when the school was closed. Does anyone have any ideas.? He has asked Trafford Local Studies without result.

Incidentally, the Wadham House WW1 memorial board is at the top of the stairs in Altrincham Town Hall.

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“Exploring London’s 13 historic Taxi Shelters” – this is a 30 minute video by RobsLondon. ( I wish I had seen this when I did the article about Altrincham’s cabmen’s shelters.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nsoxj9U71rQ>

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Tony Robinson at Quarry Bank Mill - Private Life Of the Industrial Revolution: Social Change

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6As8AibKK5Q>

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Cheshire county Directories – a Fascinating reference source. (11 directories spanning 1789-1910)

<http://cheshiredirectories.manuscripteye.com/index.htm>

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### **The Pendle Witches**

<https://bitaboutbritain.com/the-witches-of-pendle/> an article with pictures (and falling snow effect).

Have you ever read any of Robert Neill’s historical novels? Neill was born in Lancashire, and his novels are mostly set around the northwest. The first I read, and the earliest setting, was ‘Mist over Pendle’ (published in 1951, later reprinted), relating to the Pendle witches of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Later novels are set during and around the Civil War featuring a family from Cheshire, and the Jacobite wars, including ‘The Devil’s Weather’ set in the Lake District. The ‘blurb’ in this one states: “When working on the background of his books he reads widely all the contemporary documents of the period, visits the places about which he is writing and prefers to go to original sources, regarding textbooks merely as a way to trace these sources.” [Admirable advice for anyone researching history.]

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Mid-Wales explorer walks – very useful website with downloadable maps for local walks -

**Llanidloes** has a timber-framed market hall, built in early 1600s. Now bypassed by the A470, it also has a good book shop, with a barn full of second-hand books. [On my regular route to Mid-Wales, and the old Liverpool to Cardiff Express bus route, before I started driving.]

<https://www.llanidloes.com/walk-llanidloes/>

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The Cerne Abbas Giant – has the mystery of the chalk hill figure been solved? A short article, with links to more details. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-67717015>

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‘Great Mistakes: Coventry’s lost Medieval Cathedral’ a video by ‘Stained Glass Attitudes’ about 21 minutes. It has some ‘jerky camerawork’ but keep going. The presentation is a bit ‘whacky’ at times, and very fast moving – you may need to pause it to read the information about photos, and the sources of information. I had no idea about Coventry’s remaining medieval buildings.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVa73IOs2w0>

At a much slower pace – “**Exploring the 17<sup>th</sup> century Roads of England**”. **Jack Hargreaves** takes us on a ride along a Turnpike road, and then onto the old high road from Salisbury to London, in a horse-drawn tilt cart. 25 minutes video on YouTube. Originally broadcast on Channel 4 in 1984. Forty years ago, I wonder what the main road is like, and if you can still walk this route now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmOhltFV5pc>

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Another at a slower pace - “**Pilgrim’s Way (1956)**”, a documentary film of about 35 minutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nLFi8QDE0U>

Starts in Winchester with information about the city. [Mentions the old watermill as a Youth Hostel - I stayed there before it closed.] The film progresses along the route including Guildford, where the new cathedral was under construction, and shows footage of the 1955 pilgrimage there when 20,000 people attended. Finishes with a view of Canterbury Cathedral.

[This reminds me of a similar view in the 1944 film ‘A Canterbury Tale’- you can find it on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMJ8IVXXNP8>

I also found this about the locations used in that film, not watched it yet.

<https://www.bfi.org.uk/features/powell-pressburger-kent-locations-canterbury-tale> ]

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### Unusual Industry – is it still going?

I’ve been reading an old book called ‘The Countryside Companion’ dating from about 1938. In the section on seashore life there’s a piece about sand-hoppers – those tiny flea-like things that burst out as you walk along the high tide line. Consuming decomposing weed among the shingle, 20,000 have been found working on a single dead sea-urchin. So many of them, but the idea of collecting them for sale? Well there was some demand – for scientific research, for bird food and for feeding fish in public aquaria. Quoting from the book:

“One old-established firm in Sussex has the monopoly of this queer trade. The hopper hunter, operating up and down the coast between Newhaven and Southampton, goes forth armed with scores of nets – like huge jelly bags – and a load of rough timber. The wood he uses to sink shafts, like miniature mine shafts, in the rolling stones, and in each shaft he puts a net, crammed to the mouth with fresh seaweed. Twelve hours later the weed is shaken into bins, and later the hoppers are ladled into a tin basin, mounted on a yard-high pole set upright in the middle of an old rain-water tank. Within the tin basin, the hoppers dance a feverish dance, until eventually they hop themselves over the side and down into the tank, by which time they have shaken their many legs clean of sand and weed. Then off they go – in quart drums – by fast car to their various destinations. Time is precious, for the hopper, though unable to live long in salt water, cannot exist for more than six hours or so in a non-briny atmosphere.”

I didn’t find any mention of this trade in an online search, so it seems that it has finished.

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### Neglected - Grade II Listed Building in Trafford

This is Watling Gate, at the end of Leys Road, off Park Rd. in Timperley. Now surrounded by trees and undergrowth so that you can’t see clearly, but there is lots of damage to the building. Scaffolding is still in place for a temporary roof covering, but that has gone and sections of the roof have fallen in.

It was bequeathed to Altrincham Borough Council in the 1930s, by Col. Newton along with the surrounding Newton Park.

It’s a shame that this Listed Building has been let get into this state.

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A few more items on YouTube :

“Ten places that made England” – Portchester Castle. An English Heritage video by Dan Snow, 8 minutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11YIHA4Wo3Y>

A couple of items by Chris Green – ‘The History Chap’, who has a number of videos:  
“Who was Woodbine Willie?” A ten minute presentation about the WW1 Chaplain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLmC70j-B5Q>

“Yangtze Incident: the real story of HMS Amethyst, 1949” another presentation, about 11 minutes.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urWa8bp\\_Yt4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urWa8bp_Yt4)

There are of course other items on the internet about the Yangtze Incident, I just came across this one.

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“The Secret Cave City revealed by an Earthquake: 5 Most Mysterious Ancient Underground Cities”. Video about 14 minutes long, it gives a very brief introduction to 5 cities in Georgia, Turkey, China, Malta and France. It’s produced by ‘Dark5 Ancient Mysteries’, but don’t be pit off at the start, just keep watching.

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

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**Letters Live** – I’ve just discovered this series of readings of actual letters, read by well-known actors; ranging from current day silly insurance claims, via one from the Queen Mother describing a bomb at Buckingham Palace, back to this one: “Olivia Colman reads a hilarious seventeenth century letter from a wife to her husband.”

Here’s the background to the letter: ‘On March 3rd, 1610, the one-time Lord Mayor of London Sir John Spencer died, leaving behind a vast fortune to be inherited not by his daughter, Elizabeth, whom he had often treated terribly, but by her husband, Lord William Compton - an amount so large, in fact, that Compton was said to have “lost his way” for some time. It was in 1618, when Compton’s health was restored, that Elizabeth wrote him the following letter and listed the many ways in which he was to spend some of her late father’s money.’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pIrkEsh7Vo> 6 minutes long. And very good.

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Somewhere to Visit - Fire Service Museum

One of our members has found this website for the Fireground museum, in Rochdale, open Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Covering the fire services of Greater Manchester. <https://www.fireground.org.uk/>  
Looks good. Reviews say enjoyed by youngsters. Unfortunately their photo collection is not yet online.

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“A village that was once capital of an ancient kingdom”

- a YouTube video by LeiceExplore, about 28 minutes.

Here’s something different that I really appreciated – four **young blokes** exploring the history of Repton: the School, church, remains of water mill, and discovering ruined buildings. A good video. Don’t be put off by the ‘bloke-y’ introduction, once they get going it’s a really good presentation using maps, and with decent camera work and no intrusive music. Many history-related items on YouTube are by older people or experts, so it’s good to see these lads so enthusiastic and posting videos that hopefully will get other young folk interested. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hu15gcOBUE>

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**The end of an era** - As I’m a member of the Co-op and use my local shop regularly, I received a letter recently with some changes: “From 24 January 2024, you’ll no longer earn 2p for every £1 spent on Co-op products and services.” Instead there will be Member Price reductions across Food, and also Insurance etc. So I can save a few pence on Member price items; but what if I don’t want that particular item and instead some other Co-op product that doesn’t have the member price? I’m going to miss the **Co-op Divi**.

<https://www.co-operativeheritage.coop/blog/the-co-op-dividend-what-is-it>

Roll on spring – I’ve got crocus in flower, and dandelions and a couple of daisies nearly out in the lawn. Looking forward to longer days, and better weather for exploring, and the end of this darned cough!

*See you around, Hazel*