



**FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT
HISTORY SOCIETY**

JOURNAL



**Issue No.49
December 2019**

Compiled by: Kath Gee, Sue Lorimer and Heather Powling

Journal of
FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY
Issue No. 49 November 2019

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Front cover picture:

The coloured print is one of several similar images based on the eyewitness account of publisher and activist Richard Carlile. He was to speak at the meeting that took place on 16th August 1819, at St Peter's Fields, Manchester. The cavalry charged into the crowd of 60,000–80,000 people gathered to demand the reform of parliamentary representation. 18 people were killed and 400–700 were injured. The massacre was given the name Peterloo in ironic comparison to the Battle of Waterloo which had taken place 4 years before. The image is attributed to the Rochdale News.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Officers:

Mr Frank Whitfield, Chairman; Dr Kath Gee, Hon.Secretary; Mr David Fletcher, Hon.Treasurer.

Committee:

Mrs Margaret Dodd, Membership Secretary; Mr Brian Dykes; Mr Andrew Faraday; Mr Brian Keeble; Mrs Pam Keeble; Mrs Heather Powling; Mrs Betty Wakefield; Mr Tony Wakefield; Mrs Gill Baxter, Archivist.

Welcome to our History Society Journal 2019 – you'll find it full of varied and interesting articles researched by our members, plus topical events, news of our activities during the year and our 2020 Programme of Meetings on page 32. Membership of the society grows steadily – we have recruited new members and a varying number of visitors at each meeting so far this year. At the end of September 2019 membership stood at 97 – a record!

At different times in the past, eight of those 97 members have been awarded lifetime honorary membership for their services to the society. The most recent award was to Beryl Wainwright – we celebrated her 25 years of service at the AGM in March 2019. You can read about Beryl's contributions to the society on page 28.

We elected Gill Baxter, our new Archivist, to the committee at the last AGM. You can read Gill's first news report on page 4.

The June coach trip this year was a guided tour of St George's Hall, Liverpool. It was much enjoyed by all who attended. You can see two photographs taken on the visit below and read the accompanying personal record of the visit on page 17.



Ceiling of the Concert Room.....Floor tiles in the Great Hall

My sincere thanks go to all the dedicated committee members especially those with named roles – Kath Gee, David Fletcher and Margaret Dodd – they ensure the society & its meetings run smoothly and efficiently throughout the year. We are extremely grateful to Andrew Faraday for his expertise in helping speakers to set up their presentations; to Heather Powling for organising the refreshment rota and all our members who have willingly helped serve them **and** left the kitchen tidy! We appreciate Betty and Tony Wakefield's generosity in hosting our committee meetings.

We encourage you as members to contribute to future issues of the journal and would especially welcome help from those of you with expertise in managing a website or dealing with archives.

Frank Whitfield, Chairman



Rants, Whispers & Cries

- 1 The city seems so quiet
In early morning sun.
Towers sprout on the skyline
Like a fist in the air
Unfolding its fingers
One by one.
*Beware those who believe
they own the earth –
theirs is not the kingdom*
- 2 Next to the helter-skelter,
Outside Manchester Central:
Boarding, planks, cement
And a Mather and Ellis
Stonemason's van
Constructing a monument.
*Beware those who live like kings
but refuse
the responsibility of kings*
- 3 We watch from our moral vantage
Across two hundred years.
From Oldham, Middleton, Stockport
Marchers converge for hours
Until the square's a multitude
Like ripened corn or flowers.
*Beware those who assume
they are on the side of righteousness –
but forget those who hunger and thirst*
- 4 'Ye are many, they are few'
The Cap of Liberty rising.
You couldn't move for people –
So close their hats were touching.
Horses, muskets, sabres,
Ready, waiting, watching.
*Beware those
who live in fear
when they are the cause of fear*
- 5 If it's power versus people
The chance of peace looks thin.
Fife bands, banners, soldiers –
So many caught between.
If it's nail versus hammer,
Who do you think's going to win?
*Beware those who build walls
in the name of God – they will find
themselves walled out of life*
- 6 And have those cries been silenced
In a world that's split by hate?
They whisper through the library,
They echo in the street.
A passing siren, blue lights,
An ambulance heads for Deansgate.
*Forgive us who make monuments
of regret, about acts
we are still committing*

Thinking of Peterloo

This poem has been written by Andrew Rudd, Poet-in-Residence at Manchester Cathedral. It is part of the city-wide commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre. On the 16th August 1819, a peaceful crowd of workers from around the townships of Greater Manchester met to hear speakers calling for political reform. They were brutally dispersed by the mounted Yeomanry and Hussars. Eighteen were killed, and many hundreds injured. The title lettering by Stephen Raw is in the style of the hand-made clandestine banner made after the massacre, that read: Truth and Justice pouring balm into the wounds of the Manchester sufferers. This broadsheet has been printed from metal type by Graham Moss and Kathy Whalen at their Incline Press in Oldham, 2019. The edition is of two hundred copies and this is

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVIST

Gill Baxter

Well, it has been just over eighteen months since I took over the role of Archivist for the Society. First of all I must say "Thank You" to Kath Hewitt for all her help in introducing me to the Archive collection and database, keeping in touch via email and for several cups of coffee, always with a biscuit! Thanks to Steve McEntee for help with using the database and also to members of the Society who have been generous with their knowledge of local history when I have emailed or asked at meetings for help with enquiries.

I've had a variety of enquiries including two "where was Street/Lane" The first of these was from a member of the 'Frodsham family'. The family lived in Holmes Lane in 1939. A quick search on the internet, and I found an image on Cheshire Image Bank of a pair of cottages labelled "Cottages on Bridge Lane / Holmes Lane" and the information "Now the Chinese Delight Restaurant". I asked if anyone in the History Society knew of Holmes Lane and was put in touch with one of this family who is a member of the Society. We spent a couple of hours chatting about the family and the location of Holmes Lane which turned out to be the part of Ship Street between Plumpstone Lane and St Luke's Way (where the Sorting Office is now) so I suspect the Image Bank photograph is mislabelled.

The second was a family tree based query about the location of Booth Street where a member of this family was born in 1881. Looking at the Census records it was located between the Cheshire Cheese and Marsh Lane and in a chance conversation with the late John Nield, he remembered that it was situated roughly where Brookside Close is now.

I received an enquiry about the Trinity Methodist Church Spire and Sue Lorimer came to the rescue with an almost full set of "Interact" pamphlets containing the story of the campaign "Save Our Spire" which took place between 1976 and July 1979. On March 21st 1977 a meeting was held and events were organised including an epic motorcycle ride, hotpot suppers etc to raise funds to prevent the demolition of the Spire and create a garden named "The Garth". A total of £7,800 was raised.

In an update to the Flower Cottage story, a ring found in the garden has been identified as silver and thought to be of Viking origin. Other items discovered are a knife handle, small pieces of drainage or water pipes, a stone with incised marks, a pointed piece of grooved slate, a keyhole protector and some other metal items.



HENRY MORTON STANLEY 1841-1904 – AN HISTORICAL ENIGMA

Arthur R Smith

H M Stanley became famous in 1872 when he led an expedition into Central Africa and “found” Dr Livingstone. After Livingstone's death, Stanley was inspired to take up the great man's work and try to discover the course of the principal rivers of that part of Africa. In the next twenty years he led a number of successful missions and later worked for King Leopold of Belgium to develop parts of the Congo region. When I first read Stanley's autobiography about thirty years ago, I thought that here was one of history's great heroes. It was a story not of rags to riches but of rags to great eminence. Not only had Stanley led an amazingly adventurous life but he had achieved all these things from such harsh beginnings.



This photograph of Stanley shows him dressed in the sort of uniform he wore during his expeditions in Central Africa

Stanley was born in Denbigh, North Wales on 21st January 1841. His mother, Elizabeth, had returned from London to give birth to her baby at her father's cottage in the precincts of Denbigh Castle. He was the illegitimate son of John Rowlands of Y Lllys, Llanrheadr. On 19th of February the baptism took place at St Hilary's Church in the town. The boy was christened John Rowlands after his father. Shortly afterwards Elizabeth Parry left the baby with her father, Moses, who looked after him for a few years. When the grandfather died, his cousins arranged for the young boy to be cared for by Richard and Jenny Price, an elderly couple who lived in Castle Row, Denbigh. They looked after him for a few years until they decided that the burden was too great for them. On Saturday 27th February 1847 Dick Price, their son, took the young boy to the St Asaph Union Workhouse on the pretext that they were going to visit Aunt Mary at Tremeirchion.

As Stanley wrote many years later:

“At last Dick set me down from his shoulders before an immense stone building and, passing through tall iron gates, he pulled at a bell which I could hear clanging noisily in the distant interior. A sombre-faced stranger appeared at the door, who despite my remonstrances, seized me by the hand and drew me within, while Dick tried to sooth my fears with glib promises that he was only going to bring Aunt Mary to me. The door closed on him and, with the echoing sound, I experienced for the first time the awful feeling of utter desolateness.” (*Autobiography of Sir Henry Morton Stanley* page 10).

Stanley describes the workhouse as an institution to which the aged poor and superfluous children are taken to relieve respectable people of the obnoxious sight of extreme poverty. “To the aged it is a house of slow death, to the young it is a house of torture.” (*Autobiography...* page 10) According to Stanley, conditions in the workhouse at St Asaph were grim and, worst of all, John Rowlands had to contend with a brutal schoolmaster, one named James Francis. After suffering many beatings over the years, Rowlands decided one day to hit back and knocked Francis over and he and a friend ran away. After a short stay in Denbigh, he lived for a few years with his Aunt Mary in Tremeirchion and then travelled over to Liverpool. Eventually, one day at Liverpool docks he was offered a job as a cabin boy on the “Windermere”, only to find, once on board, that he had to work as a common sailor. Scrubbing the decks and climbing the rigging on a sailing ship in those days was a fearful task, especially for the inexperienced. After a lot of rough treatment and hardship he finally reached New Orleans – penniless, homeless and friendless. After a few days of wandering about the quayside he had a stroke of good fortune. He was taken on by a local cotton merchant – Mr Stanley – a Mr Henry Hope Stanley. During the ensuing weeks and months, Rowlands worked on the docks and on the steamboats, impressing Mr Stanley with his diligent attitude and his intelligence. Not only did Mr Stanley employ him but he welcomed young Rowlands into his home. John Rowlands was so grateful to his adopted father that he eventually took on his name – Henry Stanley.

In 1861 when the American Civil War broke out, Stanley, knowing little or nothing about the dispute, was reluctant to volunteer. One day a parcel arrived on his doorstep. It contained a blouse and a petticoat. As a result he was shamed into enlisting and joined the Dixie Greys. After fighting in the battle of Shiloh he was taken prisoner. Conditions in the Federal prisoner of war camp were so dreadful that, when given the opportunity, he agreed to enlist in the Union Army.

Whilst serving with the Union forces he wrote reports of some of the engagements. From this experience he developed the idea of becoming a journalist. At the end of the Civil War he reported on various expeditions against the Indians and built up his reputation as an adventurous reporter who knew how to compose a lively dispatch. In 1870 he was asked by the proprietor of New York Herald Tribune to go out to East

Africa and “find” Livingstone. It's a well known story how he assembled a large party of men in Zanzibar and then led this force almost like a military expedition and found Livingstone in Ujiji. After spending two or three months there in the company of the famous missionary, he returned to England as something of a hero.

Such is the outline of the story of Stanley's life as he portrayed it. Since it was published in 1909, many readers of Stanley's autobiography have probably taken his word as gospel but when you start to look into the detail of the circumstances and events which Stanley describes, you find some amazing discrepancies between his version and the real situation.



John Rowlands at the age of 15 years

When I read some of the more recent research on Stanley's life I was surprised at the extent to which he had embroidered the truth, or in some cases, totally fabricated parts of the story. E W Jones in his book *Sir Henry M Stanley – The Enigma* (1989) states that nearly all Stanley's biographers have accepted his condemnation of the family for neglecting him and callously sending him to the workhouse. But E W Jones maintains that the boy was probably better off in the workhouse than many of the children of poor families who lived in squalid cottages outside. The author states: “St Asaph, notwithstanding the demeaning connotation of the name ‘Workhouse’, offered John Rowlands protection, sustenance, clothing, religious and secular education and the companionship of other boys until the age of 15”. (Jones page 40)

Stanley in his autobiography describes James Francis, the workhouse schoolmaster, as a brutal man who almost every day inflicted pain on his charges.

He states: "Francis, soured by misfortune, was brutal of temper and callous of heart.....No Greek helot or dark slave ever underwent such discipline as the boys of St Asaph.....our poor heads were cuffed, and slapped and pounded until we lay speechless and streaming with blood.....Every hour of our lives we lived and breathed in mortal fear of the cruel hand.....George (aged about ten) received double punishment, and his back, breast and legs were covered with wounds.....in these, and scores of other ways, our treatment was ferocious and stupid."

Finally to complete the picture of Francis as a savage ruffian, Stanley tells how one day he saw the body of Willie Roberts lying in the workhouse mortuary. The body was covered in livid patches where he had been beaten to death and James Francis was the murderer. E W Jones examines this claim in great detail. He states that the St Asaph Union Workhouse was a well-run institution. The master, John Williams, and the Chairman of the Board of Guardians, Captain Leigh Thomas, were highly respected citizens and the workhouse records were fully and accurately kept. E W Jones states: "I have examined the contemporary records covering the year 1852, and a few years on each side of this. The first impression.....is of the excellent way in which the records were maintained, neat and well ordered, easily legible and sections regularly counter-signed by Captain Leigh Thomas in his capacity as chairman. There is no record of an eleven year old boy named Willie Roberts dying during the period under review." (Jones page 64)

Dr Vowler Short, the Bishop of St Asaph, took a great interest in the welfare of the inmates and visited the workhouse regularly. A crime, like the death of this boy from a severe beating, could not have happened without it becoming known and causing a scandal. So why then did Stanley fabricate this story? It was almost certainly to blacken the name of James Francis and thereby to finally persuade the reader of his brutal ways. In this way Stanley's suffering in the workhouse was intensified but, in the end, it is implied these hardships only served to strengthen Stanley's character. Furthermore there is evidence that James Francis was gaining recognition as a competent schoolmaster as these two quotations show from E W Jones's book:

"9.11.1854 – That the clerk [should] write to the Poor Law Board to obtain their sanction to the appointment of Robert Williams aged 13 as a pupil teacher to Mr James Francis, School Master of the Workhouse School. Also, in favour of Mr Francis being paid the sum of £8.10.0 two quarters allowance by the Committee of the Council for Education as per certificates.

24.11.1862 – Also, a Certificate from the Committee of the Council on Education which was awarded to James Francis the School Master, viz: A Certificate of Competency First Division, and that the sum to be allowed from the Parliamentary Grant on his behalf for the ending Lady Day 1863 will be at the rate of £37.5.0 per annum". (Jones page 67)

What was the truth about James Francis? One must remember that punishment and caning were a regular feature of school life in the 1840s and 1850s. The cane and the dunce's cap could be found in every schoolroom. St Asaph was probably no worse and no better than the average institution of its kind. What is one to make of Stanley's assessment of James Francis? It is extremely difficult to believe that his description is justified. How could Francis have been awarded a Certificate of Competency First Division without a recommendation from the Board?

What other evidence is there about the character of James Francis?

One very positive piece of evidence is to be found in the book *Henry M Stanley – the Story of his Life* by Cadwalader Rowlands. Rowlands describes the Workhouse School in these terms:

“The School would appear to be well managed, so we may believe that during the ten years he spent in it, his friendless condition would be made as little apparent as possible. Mr John Williams, whose death occurred a few weeks ago (summer 1872), was Master (not Schoolmaster) at this period. He was a good and upright man, in the best sense of the word, and made it his especial care to see that the children under his care were kindly and properly treated. That the education of the children was well attended to by Mr Francis is evidenced by the good use the fatherless boy has been enabled to make of it since. Mr Francis took a real interest in the progress of the children under his charge and when they left school he inevitably presented them with some book, toy or piece of money according to his discretion.”

In time, by virtue of his ability, John Rowlands took a leading position amongst his classmates and eventually, because of his progress, he was employed to assist in keeping the accounts. He was said to be an avid pupil and a great favourite with his teacher. As mentioned before, the Bishop and clergy took a great interest in the children and frequently visited them. In 1855 the Bishop presented young Rowlands with a Bible bearing the inscription:

“Presented to John Rowlands by the Right Rev'd Thomas Vowler Short, D.D., Lord Bishop of St Asaph, for diligent application to his studies and good conduct.”

From all this evidence it would seem that Henry Morton Stanley wanted to present himself as the victim of severe maltreatment during his nine years at the St Asaph Workhouse. No doubt his reason for this was to convey the impression in his Autobiography of a man who had done well in life despite the many hardships of his upbringing.

References

E W Jones 1989 *Sir Henry M Stanley – the enigma*

1909 *The Autobiography of Henry Morton Stanley*

Cadwalader Rowlands 1872 *Henry M Stanley – the story of his life*

JOHN TOMKINSON, MASTER MASON AND STONE MERCHANT

Sue Lorimer

Land on Beacon Hill, including a stone quarry, was put up for auction in October 1830 as the owner, William Darlington of Comberbach, had been declared bankrupt the previous year. The quarry was bought by John Tomkinson of Liverpool, who was already leasing the site. At this time John Tomkinson, a builder of repute, already worked a number of quarries in the Runcorn area. In October 1817 John had married Elizabeth Grindrod, a widow with small children. Her late husband, Timothy Grindrod (1781- 1817), was a stone mason in Liverpool, linked with the Grindrod 'dynasty' of stone masons in Liverpool and Rochdale. Elizabeth nee Grindrod had married Timothy Grindrod, her first cousin.

The Timothy Grindrod (1779-1823) who owned Mill Brow Quarry and Weston Quarry in the early 19th century, was Elizabeth's brother. He was listed in Pigot's Directory for Runcorn in 1828/29 as (H) Etherington, Grindrod and Co, stone masons. This company executed masonry for Liverpool Docks, erected churches in Liverpool and Birkenhead and built the once famous Birkenhead Hotel. Elizabeth's brothers John and Jonathan, builders of Liverpool, owned houses in Buttermilk Lane, Runcorn in the 1830/40s, presumably ones they had built themselves.

Whether John Tomkinson was included in the Grindrod's 'and Co' is not known but he worked with his stepson Edmund Grindrod until 1838 when the partnership was dissolved. Edmund retired to the Isle of Man, where he died in 1842 aged only 35. Over his lifetime, Tomkinson owned or leased quarries in Rathbone Street Liverpool, at Weston, Runcorn Hill, Mill Brow, Stenhills, Stourton on Wirral, Daresbury, Penmaenmawr (with Thomas Brassey, the famous railway contractor) and not forgetting Frodsham.

In the early 19th century, Liverpool was growing at a great rate, using wealth from its expanding shipping trade to build prestigious civic buildings and infrastructure. Runcorn stone (mainly Helsby Sandstone) was in great demand due to its strength and durability. John Tomkinson, stone mason, who specialised in river and dock masonry, was in the right place at the right time. In 1827 Tomkinson and Co was the main contractor for masonry for the Perch Rock Lighthouse, New Brighton, but that was constructed of Anglesey granite. The Lancaster Gazette described it as a *splendid specimen of mechanical art* due to both the skill of the architect and the skill with which the masonry was constructed. This lighthouse is now a privately owned Grade II* listed building. It is possible that he was also involved in the construction of the Grade II* Fort Perch Rock as it was constructed from red sandstone from Runcorn.

John Tomkinson became involved in the development of the former Herculaneum Potteries site on the banks of the Mersey near Toxteth, which had been producing earthenware and china since 1793. The original Herculaneum Company was

dissolved in 1833 and the pottery, dock and workers' houses were sold to Mr Ambrose Lace who leased out the pottery until it finally closed in 1841. In 1835 the partnership Lace, Tomkinson and Samuel Holme, brick maker, master builder and local politician, erected a 'commodious pier' for the passenger steam boats to and from Rock Ferry. In 1839 they built a dock for Lord Egerton and sold off other areas of the site, netting huge profits. Liverpool Docks were expanding rapidly and by 1843 ambitious plans were afoot to create a dock containing two large graving docks and warehouses on the site at a cost of £268,000. This project was finally completed in 1864, with a further graving dock added ten years later. I am unable to establish to what extent John Tomkinson was involved in that later build, if at all. The Herculaneum Dock complex that was built on the pottery site, finally closed in 1972 and I understand is now a car park.

More is known about John Tomkinson's role in the construction of Birkenhead Docks. The newspapers of 1844 announced that he had won the contract for building the whole of the sea wall using some locally quarried stone and some from his own quarries. By September 1844 he was in the process of erecting a limekiln, mortar mill and an elevated railway for the movement of heavy stones. A large number of his men were working night and day, tides permitting, to construct the foundations. Sir Philip De Malpas Grey Egerton, MP, laid the foundation stone of Birkenhead Docks on 23rd October 1844, listing the Docks Commissioners as John Laird chairman, Mr Rendell engineer and John Tomkinson contractor. The occasion warranted a great deal of pomp and ceremony, with a huge procession headed by the High-Constable with four mounted officers and included at least seven bands and 1,000 workmen as well as professional trades, dignitaries and 'Mr Reed in a magnificent suit of armour'. John Tomkinson and his men teamed up with the shipwrights and marched from his yard in Kent Street, Liverpool, to the Pier Head and on to Birkenhead to join the festivities. Later in the day he hosted a party for nearly 400 workmen and dignitaries, including the architect of St George's Hall, Harvey Lonsdale Elmes.



During the late 1820s to the early 1840s, building contracts were coming thick and fast and Tomkinson became the most eminent contractor in Liverpool, specialising in contracts for the council. He was the contractor for the masonry of the Grade I listed Oratory for St James' Cemetery, completed in 1829. It now houses statues and monuments for the Walker Art Gallery.



The porticoed Customs House

In 1831 Tomkinson and Holme worked together on the 'stupendous edifice' of the Customs House, some of the stone coming from Helsby Quarry. Tragically that building was hit by a bomb in the Liverpool Blitz and was demolished in 1948. The duo worked on another civic building, the Fish Market in Great Charlotte Street. It opened in 1837 and contained 19 shops with vaults underneath. This building was superseded by a larger fish market in 1889 with 40 stands, with cellars and offices above. This too was demolished to make way for the redevelopment of the city centre.

Tomkinson also undertook smaller contracts: the Church of England School, Cornwallis Street, Liverpool in 1837 and an industrial bakery for a ship bread maker, opposite Canning Dock in 1845.

John Tomkinson was the builder of the observatory near to the Waterloo Dock. It opened in 1843 and was invaluable for astronomical and meteorological observations and was used to provide accurate time for ships' chronometers. The observatory was relocated to Bidston Hill when the docks were redeveloped in 1866.



Tomkinson and Holme were the contractors for the Stockport Viaduct, one of the largest brick structures in Britain and an outstanding feat of Victorian engineering. Completed in December 1840, it is said to contain 11 million bricks, 11,300 cubic meters of stone and to have cost £72,000. It allowed the Manchester and Birmingham Railway to cross the Mersey and is still in use today, albeit widened and

strengthened. The viaduct underwent a £3m restoration in 1989 and is now floodlit. It has a Grade II* listing.



The foundation stone for the Liverpool Collegiate Institution was laid on 22nd October 1840 by Lord Stanley and was opened on 6th January 1843 by William Gladstone. This Tudor Gothic style building was designed by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes and the building contract given to John Tomkinson, who had tendered to put up the school for £21,379. The Grade II* listing states that the building is of red sandstone, which seem plausible, although Wikipedia says it is faced with pink Woolton Sandstone, which is the stone used for building most of the Anglican Cathedral. Samuel Holme was one of the Liverpool worthies instrumental in the formation of the Collegiate Institution.

Elmes was also the architect for St George's Hall and Assizes, so it was no surprise that Tomkinson was awarded the contract to build the carcass for that magnificent building. The Chester Chronicle on 5th May 1843 reported: *It is a gratifying reflexion that we have a townsman with sufficient capital and enterprise to undertake the erection of such a splendid building.* The majority of the stone for St George's Hall was from Darley Dale Quarries in Derbyshire. Tomkinson insisted that Samuel Holme undertook the brickwork, but as the main contractor, it was John Tomkinson who was introduced to Sir Robert Peel when he visited the site in October 1847.

I am unable to discover the builder of Liverpool Sailors' Home, but as Samuel Holme's brother Arthur Hill Holme was in partnership with the architect John Cunningham, I suspect that it was kept in the family. However in August 1846, a few days after Prince Albert had laid the foundation stone for the Sailors' Home, John Tomkinson held a party at Weston for 300 of his workmen who could not attend the celebrations at Liverpool, suggesting, at the very least, that he had supplied some of the stone. The Sailors' Home closed in 1969 and was demolished in 1974. Its famous restored gates now stand in Paradise Street in Liverpool One, close to the site of the original building.

All this success gives the impression that John Tomkinson was just an astute, ambitious and perhaps even a ruthless businessman, undercutting his competitors to gain contracts. His obituary paints a different story. The Northwich Guardian dated 21st January 1865 reported: *He was a warm and sincere friend, a kind and indulgent master, and to the poor, a benevolent benefactor, doing good by stealth, relieving stress without ostentation...* John Tomkinson was a devout Christian and H. F. Starkey in his book "Old Runcorn" states that he was at first a patron of St Luke's Chapel, but in 1835 provided the land and means to build the Bethesda Chapel and school in the High Street, Runcorn. Much was made of the fact that Tomkinson, 'a

dissenter', had given the stone for Christ Church, the Anglican Watermen's Church at Weston Point, constructed by the River Weaver Trustees in 1841. The church now sits on an island between the Weaver Navigation and the Manchester Ship Canal, built 1894. It is Grade II listed and was declared redundant in 1995. Tomkinson also gave the stone for St Peter's School, Higher Bebington, in 1845. In his later years he not only gave a donation to the new Church of England School in Weston, but provided practical services and advice.

An interesting find was made in Tomkinson's Stourton Quarry in 1838, the fossilised hand-like footprints of the prehistoric 'Chirotherium' or 'Hand beast'. Similar footprints were first found in Germany in 1834 so it was fortunate that these were noticed in Stourton at the time. Newspapers reported that John Tomkinson donated two examples to the Museum of Literary Institution, St Anne Street, Liverpool and a further two specimens were given to King William's College, Isle of Man, through his son Edmund Grindrod in 1842. Opinions differ as to whether 5, 6 or 8 examples were discovered, but originals are now on display in the World Museum, Liverpool and the Natural History Museum, London, plus other museums around the country.

It was a great shock to all who knew him that in May 1848 this well respected businessman was declared bankrupt. Newspapers reported: *an unfortunate railway contract in Yorkshire, heavy sacrifices arising out of a contract with the Birkenhead Dock Company, considerable loss with the Assize Courts, together with a large outlay upon his Runcorn quarries and the great difficulty of obtaining money to meet such large engagements are the causes which have led to the embarrassment of one of our leading tradesmen, whose industry and benevolence have been for so many years the subject of admiration, and whose misfortunes everyone deploras.*

His problems started with the Birkenhead Docks contract early in 1846. Tomkinson had underestimated the cost of the undertaking and had difficulty securing funding. The Dock Commissioners, realising that the whole enterprise was too large for one contractor, allowed him to 'relinquish' his contract, which was then split between various sub-contractors. Tomkinson must have left on good terms with his reputation intact, as he continued to supply stone for the docks.

It is estimated that 3,000 men were employed building the Birkenhead Docks early in 1846, This must have been before the 1846 strike by building workers, led by the stone masons, who were fighting for more pay and shorter hours. The strike was centred round the Birkenhead area and was supported by trade unions based in Liverpool who were striving for a 'closed shop'. The Operative Society of Masons, Quarrymen and Allied trades was founded in 1833 and was the most powerful union of the day. The masons' strike spread to Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. In March 1846 Tomkinson chaired a meeting of Master Builders who passed the resolution that "each master would require every workman in his employment to sign a declaration that he does not, and will not belong to, nor subscribe to the funds of any Trades Union, and will discountenance any appropriation of the funds of any

Sick or Benefit Society to the support of a turn-out of their own or other trades". Twenty nine masons employed at Tomkinson's quarry at Weston Point refused to sign on the basis that they were unconnected to Birkenhead, and were dismissed. Tomkinson's actions alienated the unions, but he said that he would rather incur penalties on his contacts than give in to their demands. However by the middle of June the local strikers had reduced their demands and the strike was settled by the end of the month. The Birkenhead masons agreed to a 2s increase in their wages with a longer breakfast break and Tomkinson gave his workers on the St George's Hall contract a wage increase to 27s and a half hour afternoon refreshment break.

The strike caused long delays and increased costs for both the Birkenhead Docks and the St George's Hall projects which contributed to Tomkinson's rising financial problems. Tomkinson's original tender for the build of the carcass of St George's Hall and Assise Court was £78,000 and Holme's original tender for the brickwork was £90,000. By March 1847 the estimates for the cost and length of the build had doubled. The final cost was over £300,000 and it had taken 10 years to complete. Following Tomkinson's bankruptcy, Holme took over as the main contractor.

Stone from Runcorn quarries was widely used to build local railways and Tomkinson himself held shares in the Birkenhead and Holyhead Railway Company. In the 1840s the country was gripped by 'Railway Mania'. Companies were springing up with ambitious plans for new routes and the affluent middle classes were speculating on their success. In 1845 the Bank of England raised its interest rate, resulting in a loss of investment in the railways and many of the schemes were unrealistic. The 'bubble' burst and many of the new railway companies failed. It is thought that one third of the railways authorised by Parliament were never built. Tomkinson could have either invested in, or had a contract with a Yorkshire railway that failed, adding to his financial difficulties.

Closer to home, there were problems in Runcorn. In March 1846 a fire at Tomkinson's lime works in Runcorn claimed the lives of two of his workers. More industrial accidents followed and in 1847 Tomkinson had had to install expensive machinery at Mill Brow Quarry as the stone getters had refused to work in such difficult conditions. In August 1847 he had to lay off 70 men as work on the bridge at Bangor and the river wall at Fleetwood had stalled.

All these difficulties added up, but the main problem was his inability to obtain sufficient finance to see him through. As a consequence of his bankruptcy Tomkinson lost the St George's Hall / Assizes contract, which was transferred to Samuel Holme, who was already a sub-contractor for the brickwork on the build. Beacon Quarry in Frodsham was sold to Joseph Stubs of Park Place, Frodsham as late as 1856, but what happened to his other assets is uncertain. It is known that his relatives and friends, including fellow quarry owner Philip Whiteway, gave him loans, as £5,000 was mentioned as still outstanding, but reducing, in his will dated 1862. Perhaps only the building side of his business failed as he was able to keep his

quarry at Weston. On 18th March 1848 the Liverpool Mail reported on the almost total suspension of work at Weston Quarry which supported nearly 400 families, adding to the already depressed state of the town. However by 1850 Bagshaw's Directory stated that 150 men were working in Tomkinson's Weston Quarry and at times as many as 700 men were employed: the resulting profits would have enabled him to reduce his debts.

John Tomkinson moved from Liverpool to Church Place, Runcorn where he died on 15th January 1865. He was buried in the graveyard of the Bethesda Chapel. The funeral was a grand affair, reflecting the esteem in which he was held. It was attended by the worthies of the area, including the Vicar of Runcorn, five JPs, representatives of the Bridgewater Trustees, Weston Point Docks, Brassey & Co and 250 members of his workforce. The Northwich Guardian said of John Tomkinson: *He was a kind and affectionate friend, few better men ever lived.*

Sources:

British Newspaper Archives, as cited.

Find My Past

H. F. Starkey 1990 *Old Runcorn*

Jean M. Morris 2016 *Across the gap*

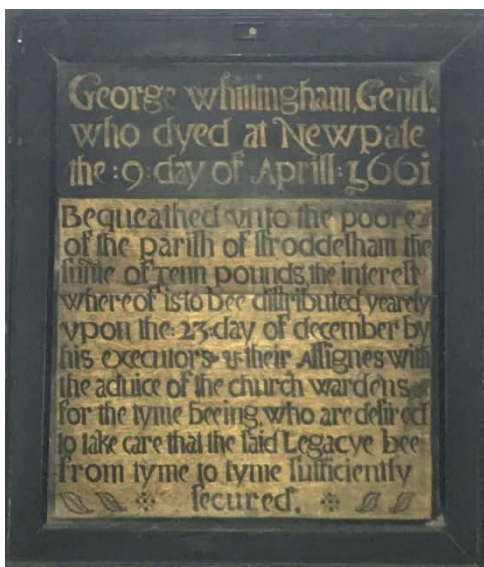
Peter Seddon pers. comm. 2019 St George's Hall.

Barry Humphreys 2017 *New Brighton Lighthouse*

Wikipedia also consulted

LOOKING AHEAD

The importance of these two images in the tower at St Laurence Church was brought to our attention during recent guided tours. We plan to tell their stories in the Frodsham & District History Society Journal Issue 50 in 2020.



VISIT TO ST GEORGE'S HALL, LIVERPOOL, 3 JUNE 2019

Fiona Barry

As a new member, I was delighted to be able to get an opportunity to visit a building that I had often passed on my way to Liverpool Library and the Walker Art gallery, but had never been inside. Our guide Peter Seddon spoke for our entire visit and answered all our questions, and I think was the most knowledgeable guide I have ever come across.

The hall was intended to be a venue for music, and was built on the site of the first Liverpool Infirmary which closed in 1824. The foundation stone was laid in 1838, to commemorate the accession of the young Queen Victoria. In 1839 a competition to design the Hall was won by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, a young London architect aged 25 years, who also won the competition to design Assize Courts in the city. In 1840 he resubmitted his designs for a combined building, the first of its kind, and one of the largest public buildings of the time. Sadly, Elmes would not see his creation to the finish as he died of consumption aged only 33, and Charles Cockerell completed the project. The building opened finally in 1854.

We started our tour in the basement where we learned that this was the first building to have air circulation as designed by Boswell Reid. We went up a floor to view the cells; outside of each was information providing the details of the crime for which the offender was being tried, also a photograph, details of their physical characteristics and of course their address and any aliases they were using – a gift for family historians. The Crown Court room was very impressive, and must have been completely overwhelming to the young offenders as they emerged blinking into the grandeur and the formality of the court. We saw an amusing poster that detailed some of the crimes offenders were tried for, including stealing various goods including herrings, hens, calico and drawing slates, as well as murder, poisoning, loitering, possessing explosives and bigamy.

The hall itself was on a scale that even the exterior of the building did not indicate, and was truly magnificent. The elaborately decorated ceiling has carefully concealed grilles for stale air to escape, and both ends of the hall had impressive stained glass windows, one with St George slaying a green dragon. The floor was covered with wood, to protect the stunning Minton tiles beneath. We compared an old rotunda of tiles with one that had been restored to its former brightness. Many marble statues of men lined the walls, including Joseph Mayer who donated 20,000 books to establish the first Bebbington Library in 1866. There was just one statue of a woman, unveiled in 2012, Kitty Wilkinson, an Irish immigrant and washerwoman, who offered her hot water boiler to her neighbours to help them ward off cholera. Her efforts led to the City council opening a public washhouse and baths, the first in the country, which she was appointed Superintendent of.

We passed through the impressive entrance area, with its neo classical decoration and beautiful marble goddess statues, to the stunning (Golden) concert room, restored in 2007. This beautiful room had a fabulous ceiling with gold leaf decoration, richly decorated stalls all supported by individual classical statues, and a dazzling glass chandelier with 2,824 crystal pieces. In the corridors, we passed beautiful crafted banners created for the City of Culture, depicting the many important buildings of Liverpool, before emerging into glorious sunshine with a chance to enjoy St John's ornamental gardens, previously the city's cemetery, a sanctuary in the busy city centre.

It is hard to believe that this magnificent building, described as *'the best example of Neo-Classical architecture in Europe'*, was under threat after the Court moved out in the 1980s. Thankfully, local people campaigned to preserve and retain the hall, which was slowly renovated at the end of the twentieth century, and which is now once again a major music venue, and now wedding venue, enjoyed by the whole of the north west.

EDWARD WHITLEY MP AND HIS LEGACY

Sue Lorimer



The statue of Edward Whitley M.P. that stands in St. George's Hall, Liverpool was paid for by public subscription. There is also a street and a public park, Whitley Gardens in Everton, named in his honour. Edward was a well-respected lawyer and president of Liverpool Law Society. He served as a Conservative member on Liverpool Town Council from 1866, mayor in 1867-68 and MP for Liverpool from 1880 until his sudden death in 1892. However it was his benevolence and generosity that endeared him to the people. In his obituary the press described him as *the most popular man in Liverpool*.

Edward was independently wealthy, being the eldest son of Liverpool lawyer, Jonathan Whitley and his wife Isabella, nee Greenall. The Greenalls were a family of landowners and brewers. Isabella was the sister of twins, Sir Gilbert Greenall (1806-1894) and Rev Richard Greenall (1806-1867). Rev Richard was the Archdeacon of Chester, who was responsible for the construction of Foxhill House, Woodhouses, currently used as a Diocesan Retreat and Conference Centre. Edward's brothers ran the brewing empire which became Greenall Whitley whilst Edward concentrated on politics.



Edward might have been born in Liverpool but he chose to be buried in the family plot in Alvanley where his family can be traced back to the 16th century. A special train was laid on for all the mourners and a memorial service held in Liverpool for those unable to make the journey to Cheshire. Edward's parents are also buried in St. John's Churchyard, Alvanley, with five of his siblings. The Whitley family of Alvanley was also well connected. Edward's grandfather, John Whitley, was the gentleman gamekeeper to the Arderne Estate and it is thought that the family farm was Church House Farm, Alvanley, opposite the church. John's brother was George Whitley, who had inherited Norley Hall and Manor in 1795. Edward's aunt Ann Whitley married Thomas Urmson, grandson and joint heir of John Urmson, co-founder of the Salt Works, Frodsham Bridge.

Edward Snr and his wife Elizabeth had five children who continued their father's ideals of benevolence and generosity. Their eldest son, Edward Jnr, studied medicine at Oxford and became a biochemist, endowing a Chair of Biochemistry there in 1921. He followed his father into politics in Liverpool, albeit on the other side, the Independent Labour Party, and became a director of The New Statesman. Edward Jnr was a great supporter of the University of Liverpool and was a life member, named in its Charter of 1903. He gave the University many gifts including £1,000 towards the establishment of a Student's Union. Three of Edward Jnr's children, who died young, are buried in Alvanley and he lost a son fighting in WW2.

The three younger sons of Edward Snr. William, Herbert and Charles were educated at Bromsgrove School. Following Edward's sudden death, the family moved to Primley House, Paignton Devon, where William and Herbert started to breed various animals on the estate. William bought a 2,000 acre estate in Buckland in the Moor and specialised in pedigree cattle and sheep. William lost two sons in WW2.

Herbert's taste was more exotic and his collection of rare plants and animals became Primley Zoological Gardens and eventually opened to the public as Paignton Zoo. Herbert was also interested in conservation. He bought and saved Slapton Sands which is now a National Nature Reserve owned by The Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust, set up in his memory. Paignton Zoo, New Quay Zoo and Living Coasts, Britain's only coastal zoo, are now operated by the Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust.

Charles stayed in the Cheshire area and with his school friend, Edmund Page, bred pedigree pigs and cattle. At the outbreak of WWI the friends joined up together. Charles was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry but was killed in 1917 at Wancourt. He is remembered on his parent's grave in Alvanley. Charles left property and shares to his old school, Bromsgrove, and a legacy to his friend Edmund Page. Out of his legacy Edmund donated funds to Bromsgrove School for the Charles Whitley Laboratories which were opened on 14th June 1921.

Edward Whitley Jnr had a son Edward, born 1906. He was a great supporter of the RSPCA and founded the Whitley Animal Protection Trust in 1961, which is still in operation today. His grandson, Edward, born 1961, a T V presenter and author, is a present day philanthropist. He set up the Whitley Awards for Conservation in 1993 which provide funding for nature conservation around the world. One of the trustees is David Attenborough and the Princess Royal is its patron. The awards are known as the "Green Oscars" and Chester Zoo has twice been a recipient.

Sources:

Bromsgrove School Archives,
Chimps, Champs and Elephants by Jack Baker 1988
Find My Past
British Newspapers online

ASHLEY HOUSE AND THE ESTATE OF ISABELLA FRANCES ASHLEY 1845 – 1924

Various Contributors

Isn't the internet wonderful? You can now sit in front of a computer in relative comfort and delve into history. With the help of census returns, birth, marriage and death records and newspapers online, the mysteries that have been elusive for generations can be unraveled. For example 'Ashley House' was thought to have been built by the attorney, Robert Wainwright Ashley, son of Daniel of Park Place. Records now show that this Robert Wainwright was an attorney, but he died in 1786, before Ashley House was built. He inherited Park Place from his father and continued to live there. Park Place passed to Robert's son Daniel, 1769-1841, and as he had no issue, to Daniel's brother, Rev Thomas Ashley 1771-1851, Rector of West Shefford, Berkshire. So why was Ashley house so named?

Thanks to information available online and from local sources, we have been able to piece together something of the real story of Ashley House and its inhabitants.

The 'Ashley' of Ashley House comes, albeit by a complicated route, from another branch of the family, from Robert's brother, Francis 1752-1819, also a solicitor, with a practice in Frodsham. Francis and his wife Margaret had 10 children. Their unmarried daughters, Mary b.1786, Margaret b.1789 and Elizabeth b.1795, appear in the 1841 census for West Derby, Liverpool and Mary and Margaret died in the Liverpool area in 1847 and 1852 respectively. Another single daughter, Frances b.1791, died in Wavertree in 1845. Elizabeth died in Frodsham in 1871. Sons Francis b.1793, Thomas b.1797, Robert Wainwright b.1800 and William b.1805 also lived in Liverpool, where they were merchants and shipbrokers. Only their eldest son, Daniel b.1788, remained in Frodsham and continued the family firm of solicitors. In 1841 Ellen, the youngest daughter b.1803, married one of the wealthiest men in Frodsham, John Rigby Pickering, corn merchant of Frodsham Bridge (see last year's journal). It is thought that in 1845-46 they built a grand new house in Main Street (Ashley House) and moved there from the Mill House at Frodsham Bridge.

The new Cheshire Tithe Maps online website enables the user to see who owned an individual plot of land circa 1846 at the click of a mouse. However it is not totally accurate and the original Tithe Maps always need to be consulted. Ashley House stands on what was Tithe plot 200, owned and occupied by John Rigby Pickering. The 1841 census shows that Daniel Ashley, solicitor, was living in the same part of Main Street. The Land Tax Assessments for 1823 and 1825 show that Daniel Ashley Junior did own a house and land but do not specify where. At that time he was married to his first wife, Mary, nee Urmson. Mary died in 1827. Their children both died aged 18: Sarah in Everton in 1839 and George in Torquay in 1842.

In 1843, Daniel married Isabella Caddy, daughter of Henry Caddy of Egremont, Cumbria and granddaughter of Captain Joseph Borrowdale who lived at what is now 77 Main Street. They moved next door to Joseph Borrowdale, to what we now know as The Old Hall. It is doubtful that Daniel left the grandeur of Ashley House to buy a smaller, older house so it is thought that John Rigby Pickering bought Daniel's old house, demolished it and erected his new home on the plot.

The 1851 census shows John Rigby Pickering on Main Street and he remains there until his death in 1880. At the time of the 1861 census Ellen's siblings, Elizabeth and Robert, were living with them, but Robert was only visiting as he had returned to Liverpool by the 1871 census. He died in Liverpool in 1878 but was buried in Frodsham. John and Ellen did not have children so in his will of 1873 John left his estate to his wife for her lifetime and following her death to her nieces Mary Ellen Ashley b.1844 and Isabella Frances b.1845, the daughters of Daniel, with his second wife Isabella. Ellen Pickering died in 1885 and the estate then passed to the Misses Ashley, hence the name 'Ashley House'.



FDN0245 Ashley House (left) c.1850

Mary Ellen Ashley died in 1899. In her will, made in 1879 when she was living at Five Crosses, she left her estate to her sister Isabella. On the 1881 census, Mary Ellen lived with her mother Isabella (Caddy) Ashley at Oaken Dale, Overton. This was also known as 'Oak in the Dale' and was where Oakdale Avenue is now. Isabella continued to live at Ashley House until her death in September 1924.

Now that banks and building societies are returning house deeds, other valuable resources have become available. The deeds of one of the Brookstone Cottages on Main Street have recently come to light. The documents contained a copy of the sales brochure of 1925, for Isabella's Estate and details of John Rigby Pickering's will.

At the time of her death Isabella's property had changed little from that inherited from John Rigby Pickering. Her executors put the estate up for sale in 1925. One of the executors was Frances Cotton Perryn, wife of Richard George Henry Perryn of Trafford Hall. Frances was the daughter of Isabella's brother Henry, listed as a 14 year-old student at Chester College in 1861, but, who with another brother, Francis, had emigrated to America in 1868. Frances was therefore born at Yates Centre (Kansas), but came back to England to marry into the Perryn family, wealthy landowners with much property in Frodsham. Henry Ashley remained in Kansas until he died in 1913.

The 1925 sales brochure advertised 'Ashley House' with stabling for three horses, coach house, shippon for six cows, pig sty, workshop, greenhouse and gardens. This was bought by Edward Greenway, a veterinary surgeon with a practice at his home Prospect House, Church Street. Edward was the son of Arthur Greenway of Bowling Alley Farm, Alvanley, and had originally joined the practice of Alexander Bate of West Bank, Main Street in 1909. The 1939 register shows Edward Greenway and his wife Violet living at Ashley House with their daughter, son and Edward's sister, Eveline.

Thomas Thomson became Edward's assistant in the 1950s and in the early 1960's Edward's son, Edward Douglas (Ted), a well-known amateur rider, joined as partner. Edward Greenway died in 1962, and in 1969 Thomas Thomson bought the house and practice with his business partner Peter Vaudrey Coveney. Over the years the main house was used to accommodate on-call vets and had been split into a number of flatlets. Ashcofts bought the



veterinary business in 1985. The house became Grade II listed in December 1985. In 1999 Ashley House was put up for auction. Professor Tim Wheeler and his wife Marilyn fell in love with it and have been restoring it to its original splendour ever since, including replacing part of the banister rail lost during previous renovations'.

FDN1946 *Ashley House c.1995*

In addition to Ashley House, the will of John Rigby Pickering included '4 houses' adjacent to his house, shown on the 1846 Tithe Map as belonging to Rev Thomas Ashley. John Rigby Pickering probably bought these houses when Rev Ashley's estate was sold following his death in 1851. Sometime between 1873 and the sale in 1925 these 4 cottages were extended as the sale brochure refers to 'Three attractive pebble-dashed cottages' and 'Three old-fashioned Cottages'. These cottages are now known as 'Brookstone Cottages'. It is thought that the right hand cottage, number 57 Main Street, was formerly a barn. The beams in the cottages show scorch marks and holes in strange places, suggesting that they could have been taken from an earlier property, giving rise to the story that the cottages were constructed from material from the ruined Frodsham Castle!



FDN2678 & FD00005 *Brookstone Cottages c. early 20th century*

At the auction in 1925, Lot 2, the three pebble-dashed cottages 53, 55, 57 Main Street (FD00005), were bought by Miss Ellen Pollard of Holly Bank, daughter of John Pollard the school master. In 1930 she sold them to her sister Annie Elizabeth, who on her death in 1945 left them in trust to her remaining siblings and their families. The properties remained in the Pollard family until they were sold in 1964. John Ellams, son of Thomas Newport Ellams 1874-1901, of the Horse and Jockey, Helsby, and later the Whalebone Inn, Frodsham, bought No 57. Members of the Ellams family have occupied each of the three cottages at one time or another, over the years.

Lot 4 in the brochure was a house and shop and Lot 5 two brick houses. These houses, thought to date back to the 18th century, are shown on the Tithe map as plot 171, owned by Edward Moss, miller, Lower Bridge Street, Chester. His son, another Edward, inherited the mill, but both he and his wife died in 1852, leaving two young daughters. The will of John Rigby Pickering listed a house and cottage, occupied at that time by John Rimmer. (This is now 50 Main Street, 'Presentations' and the house next door, recently converted into one

dwelling). John Rimmer, a grocer and flour dealer, had traded from there since c.1850 and his wife Ann carried on the business following his death in 1885, specialising in confectionery. On the 1861 census, they are shown living at the premises, with John's mother, Rebecca, described as a housekeeper, living next door.

By 1901 John Rimmer's wife Ann, nee Stead, had moved to Crosbie House, Main Street. Ann's sister, Mary, had been a servant for William Church at his school at Crosbie House in 1851, and Ann herself was listed as a servant on the 1841 census ten years earlier. In 1871 Mary lived as housekeeper for William Church junior, in Chorley, Macclesfield but the link to Crosbie House continued. John and Ann Rimmer's son, John Stead Rimmer, became a corn merchant and in 1888 owned Crosbie House, or at least part of it, where he lived with his Aunt Mary Stead. His success was short lived, however, as he died in 1892 aged only 35. The 1901 census shows that his mother, brothers and sisters lived at Crosbie House, although it appears that they continued to run the bakery business at the other end of Main Street until Ann's death in 1910.

From about 1911 Walter Stanley Lazenby, whose brother Arthur had another baker's shop on High Street, ran a bakery and confectioners shop at 50 Main Street. Messrs Lazenby catered for many of the large weddings and events in Frodsham. A newspaper article of 1914 says that an event at the Drill Hall was catered for by Arthur Lazenby and the brothers were still advertising in the 1923 trade directory. Born in Warrington, Walter had been a journeyman baker at Colne, Lancashire, before moving to Frodsham. Both Lazenby brothers emigrated to Canada - Arthur in 1923 and Walter followed in 1925, showing on the ship's passenger list that he was joining his brother.



The 1925 sale catalogue lists the house and shop with an outside bakehouse and oven. The tenant at that time was Mr R Summergill, grocer and general dealer. In the 1930s the shop was listed as a sweet shop run by Miss Lilian Riley (1936-39 trade directories). Later it was known as 'The Candy Box' and for a short period 'The Phone Box'. 'Presentations' moved there from No 44 about five years ago. The premises have been owned by Qy Yau (Tony of Yuet Ben) since 1989.

FDN1251 Shop at 50 Main St + adjacent cottages in the 1970s

One area not included in the sales brochure is the plot where Main Street Community Church now stands. The Tithe Map shows the land next to John Rigby Pickering's as Plot 201, owned by the Marquis of Cholmondeley, leased by Rev Thomas Ashley and occupied by Joseph Gorst, farmer. The church, originally St Dunstan's, was built in 1872 as a Chapel of Ease for the Parish Church of St. Laurence. It is thought that the land was gifted by the Marquis of Cholmondeley, but that John Rigby Pickering had bought the outstanding lease from the estate of Rev Ashley. The Church paid what appears to be a peppercorn rent to him for the land. The agreement continued under the Misses Ashley and it was stipulated in Isabella Ashley's will that it would continue at a rent of 5s a year. If the rent was not paid for 2 years then the trustees of her will had the power to repossess the land. The Church,

perhaps deliberately, defaulted, allowing them to purchase the land in 1976 from the then Trustee/owner, Frances Gavine Perryn, daughter of Frances Cotton Perryn.

In the 1870s a speedy build was required and it was decided that a prefabricated building would be the best option. These ecclesiastical buildings, known as 'Tin Tabernacles', were very popular at the time and many were exported abroad. St Dunstan's became fully licensed during the period that St Lawrence Church was closed for restoration 1880-82. In 1995 the church was 'rolled' closer to Ashley House to create Chapelfields.



The 'Iron Church' being moved 3 metres sideways in 1995

In July 2007 the church was renamed 'Main Street Community Church', but it is still affectionately known as the 'Iron' or 'Tin' Church. For further information visit their website mscc.org/history/

The sale of Isabella Ashley's estate came at a time of great change. The Great War had swept away much of the old order. Landed estates could no longer be run as they had been before the war and many were sold or divided. It is perhaps no coincidence that the last of the lands originally owned by the Ashley family in Main Street were dispersed. Richard George Henry Perryn also died in 1927 and his estate at Trafford Hall was sold to an industrialist. The last surviving daughter of Edward Abbott Wright of Castle Park died in 1931 and Castle Park, originally named Park Place, once owned and lived in by the Ashley family, was gifted to the Rural District Council of the day.

To return to our starting point: so much local and social history is now available to all through online websites. The authors have spent many happy hours researching local families and properties through Ancestry and Find My Past, though some of the inside stories have also come from local residents.

Acknowledgements:

Grateful thanks to all the contributors: Janine Ellams, Andrew Faraday, Heather Powling, Sue Lorimer, Marilyn Wheeler.

Sources:

Ancestry.co.uk & Find My Past
 Newspapers Online
 Cheshire Image Bank
 Tithe Maps Online
 Wikipedia
 Deeds of Ashley House and 57 Main Street

JOHN JESSE JP

Sue Lorimer & Kath Gee

“The residences of John Rigby Pickering, Esq. and John Jesse, Esq, J P. are beautiful modern mansions, situated in Frodsham. The latter contains some fine paintings, the productions of the old masters”. Bagshaw’s Trade Directory 1850.

The electoral Registers for 1846-1852 state that John Jesse did own a house and land in Main Street although for the last two years his main residence was in Llanidloes, Montgomeryshire. He was born in December 1801 in Manchester where his father was partner in the thread-making business, Ablett and Jesse. The family had a distinguished past. It is said that a forefather, Rev Henry Jesse was chaplain to Oliver Cromwell (unconfirmed).

John Jesse was a qualified doctor, but he had retired from that profession by the time he moved to Frodsham. His first wife Sarah died shortly after giving birth to their son, Francis Ablett Jesse, in 1845, perhaps the reason for his change of career. He became a Magistrate for the County of Chester in 1847 and later Justice of the Peace for Denbighshire. He married Eliza Milne at Manchester Cathedral in 1848 and their daughter Sarah Margaret was born in Frodsham in 1849.

John Jesse was very active for the community of Frodsham. In October 1848 he was one of five magistrates who petitioned for a lock-up in the town. By the end of the month the County Court had granted £650 to build the facility, which was erected in Church Street the following year.

The booklet *Discovering Old Frodsham* compiled by members of our society, then called Frodsham and District Local History Group, and edited by Arthur Smith in 1985 states:

The house on the left at the foot of [Church Walk, in Church Street] used to be the Frodsham Police Station in the 19th century. Erected in 1849, it contained 3 cells and was for many years the residence of the superintendent, Mr William Hilton. The building was converted for residential purposes in 1880 ... [when] the new police headquarters were built on the corner of [High Street] and Ship Street.

As a magistrate he also supported the construction of a new bridge across the River Weaver rather than repairing the old one. He was so instrumental in promoting the work that he was invited to lay the foundation stone for the new bridge. The ceremony took place on 15th June 1850 and he was presented with a silver trowel to commemorate the event. A celebration followed where workmen and dignitaries feasted on roast beef and plum pudding washed down with plenty of ale.

The new bridge was to consist of 3 arches of 70 feet span with a rise of 18 feet 9 inches; the piers were to be 12 feet thick and 50 feet long.

The facings of the bridge and the parapet walls were to be faced with Welsh limestone. Messrs. Worth and Sons of Siddington were the contractors and a grant of £12,294 was given out of County funds with a further £900 in 1852 for the dismantling of the old bridge and building a wall to the mill.



Joseph Ablett, philanthropist and High Sheriff of Denbighshire was a relative of John Jesse. Ablett purchased Llanbedr Hall, Ruthin in 1804 and in the 1830s added the Bathafarn Hall and Plas Coch Estates. Ablett donated 20 acres of land for the Denbigh Lunatic Asylum, later the North Wales Hospital, and built the almshouses in Llanrhydd Street, Ruthin. Joseph Ablett died in 1848 and his wife Ann in 1854. As they were childless the estate passed to his relative John Jesse.

John Jesse became High Sheriff of Denbighshire in 1856. As well as writing papers on various medical matters including one on "Haemorrhage and Necrosis after Amputation" he had great knowledge of the Arts, Science and History. He also supported the local churches, giving a magnificent stained glass window to Ruthin Church and £500 to the Free Church of Ruthin. In 1863 he had a new church built in his own parish of Llanbedr. The whole area mourned his death in September 1863.

The Llanbedr Hall Estate was inherited by his eldest son Francis who was studying at Magdalen Hall (College), Oxford, in 1863. Francis sadly died in 1865 following a long illness, aged only 20. The estate then passed to his 14 year old brother, John Fairfax Jesse. Following his death in 1911 the estate was broken up and sold off.

The question remains, where did John Jesse live in Frodsham? We know it was a modern mansion in Main Street, but, in the 1850s Main Street continued up the hill to Bridge Lane. Do you have any suggestions as to where this was?

Sources: Wikipedia, British Newspapers Online, Census Returns, Bagshaw's Directory 1850

OUT AND ABOUT IN THE COMMUNITY 2019

Kath Gee, Sue Lorimer & Heather Powling

Beryl Wainwright's retirement from the Committee at the AGM, 4th March 2019

Beryl is fondly remembered by many residents of the Frodsham area for she taught at primary schools in Kingsley, Overton and Orchard House, Frodsham, for more than 25 years. Beryl has been a member of Frodsham & District History Society since 1992. She was elected to the committee in 1994 and was an active member of the Photographic Group under Bill Hawkin & latterly Pam Hall. She was vice-chairman to Jim Harvey (2000-03), Chairman (2003-06) & then Membership Secretary, which continued until our move to the Main Street Community Church in 2011. In 2013 Beryl & Margaret Dodd sorted c.150 new historic images & cross-checked them with images already on the website. Beryl also helped to mount several exhibitions locally and assisted Dennis Simmons with the History Society's fund-raising plant stall at several Festivals in the Park. We are very grateful for her diverse contributions to the society during her 25 years as a member of the committee.

Visit of King Dr Dandeson Douglas Jaja to Prince Waribo's grave 6th July 2019

St Laurence Church received a private visit from the present King of Opobo, King Dr Dandeson Douglas Jaja on Saturday 6th July. We had only last minute notice of his intended visit, so the occasion involved only Heather Powling and Father Michael. Heather met the King and his companions and gave them a very brief 'tour' of the inside of the church. The party said that they would like to conduct a short ceremony at the graveside, so were shown the grave and then left to place a piece of traditional fabric on top of the grave in private, as is their tradition. Although this was the briefest of meetings, it was good to know that the contacts with Prince Waribo's family are on-going. The young prince made a great impression on Frodsham in the short time he was at Manor House School, and his death in April 1882 clearly moved the community as a whole. His story has been part of Frodsham's heritage ever since. We hope to hear more from Opobo in the future.

St Laurence Church & Graveyard tours for Frodsham U3A members 7th May & 23rd July 2019

Heather Powling, Church archivist and History Society member, has been delighted to conduct tours of St Laurence Church for Frodsham U3A during the summer. Members joined a tour of the inside of the church on 7th May. For several, it was the first time they had been inside the Grade I listed building. The church has, remarkably, retained much of its medieval structure whilst the restoration of 1880-82 ensured that the walls were cleaned of 18th century whitewash to reveal the original sandstone. The building is open on a daily basis and visitors are always welcome - guided tours by arrangement!

Members who had enjoyed the inside tour requested a visit to the graveyard, so returned on a very hot afternoon on 23rd July. Heather and Kath conducted a tour of some of the most interesting features of the graveyard, including a Grade II listed grave near the gate to the car park – an obelisk in memory of John Wright of Kingsley and his family. We visited the graves of Prince Waribo, the Mariner's Grave, in memory of sailor and blockade runner Andrew Wilson, the memorial to the Wright family of Castle Park and the World War I graves and memorials in the section behind the east window of the church. Again, visitors are always welcome and if you come for a guided tour, there will usually be a cup of tea as well!

CLHA QM Overton 24th July 2019

Our History Society hosted the CLHA Quarterly Meeting in St Laurence Parish Church on 24th July. After the meeting there was a guided tour of the church led by Heather Powling and followed by a short circular walk around the centre of Overton, taking in Bellemonte Road, Hillside Road, School Lane & Church Road – with reference to historic images & 5 extant buildings, showing how Overton had changed over time. The walk was led by Kath Gee & Sue Lorimer who also provided guide notes.

Heritage Open Days 13th to 22nd September 2019

2019 is the 25th anniversary of Heritage Open Days – the national annual event that celebrates architecture and culture by allowing free access to interesting properties, many of which are not normally open to the public. There were also free guided tours and other activities and some of them were linked to this year's theme 'People Power'. Events in west Cheshire were organised by a partnership of Chester Civic Trust and Cheshire West and Chester in association with local societies including F&DHS. Booklets detailing events and booking procedures became available from participating properties and public places such as libraries and community centres in mid-August. The local participating properties were St Laurence Church, Ring O'Bells, Bear's Paw, Queen's Head, Castle Park Arts Centre and Helsby Railway Station.

Sandstone Ridge Walk & Ride Festival 5th to 13th October 2019

As supporters of the Sandstone Ridge Trust, Kath and Sue had previously shown SRT members the location of a sand cave and other features in the woodlands at Foxhill. We were subsequently invited to offer and lead a walk in the Trust's October Walk & Ride Festival. A walk titled 'Landscapes, features & viewpoints at Foxhill' was scheduled for Saturday 5th October.



Whilst looking into the history of Foxhill House & Woodlands we discovered that the initial owner, Archdeacon Greenall of Chester, died suddenly in 1867 and James Reynolds, a tanner from Warrington, bought the property and was responsible for completing the house and laying out the hillside paths and pleasure grounds probably including the grade II listed Folly Tower viewpoint. Sue has been looking into the background of James Reynolds and the following story came to light.

James was one of the grandsons of Thomas Reynolds whose family leased Raddon Court Barton (farm), Thorverton, Devon, for many years. For nearly 40 years James' grandfather, Thomas, had bred prizewinning sheep and cattle and was highly respected in his home area. In his eighties, all but one of his sons having either emigrated or moved to Warrington, he was struggling to keep the farm going. The landlords would not compensate him for the improvements made to the property and times were getting hard. At 9 am, one frosty morning in March 1845, 107 ploughs, sent by friends of old Tom Reynolds, set to work. The men ploughed 84 acres as a tribute to their friend, allowing him to plant a final crop of wheat. They also clubbed together for a dinner at Raddon Court, to celebrate their friendship. Thomas died in August the following year.

This was such a special occurrence that it was still being referred to in the newspapers of 1886!

HISTORICAL SNIPPETS – various contributors & sources

The placename 'Irodish'

The area on of the A56 near the junction of Godscot Lane is known by the name "Iron Dish". The derivation of this name has been a matter of speculation for years. This is a gem from Monty Mercer, Hoole History and Heritage Society. Monty, who has researched Roman Roads in North Cheshire, explained that 'Irodish' was a corruption of the Anglo-Saxon "iernan" a variant of "rinnen" meaning "to run or flow as in running water" and "edisc" meaning "meadow" so, roughly translated, means "water meadow". That makes complete sense as we know there is a stream there, forming the boundary between Frodsham and Helsby and a dipping well.

Savage and Cholmondeley

This article was included in a package of documents given to F&DHS Archives by distant member, Judith Shore.

The Savage family of Clifton, near present-day Runcorn, were landlords of Barrow from 1409. The family title became Earl Rivers but this title was extinguished in 1714 when the last surviving male elected to remain in holy orders. A daughter, Lady Elizabeth Savage, Countess of Barrymore, was granted the estates. Her only child, Lady Penelope Barry, married the Honourable James Cholmondeley, in 1730. Lady Penelope died childless and the estate formally passed to the Cholmondeley family in 1784. The Cholmondeley seat is Cholmondeley Castle, near Whitchurch in Cheshire. They remained landlords in Barrow until 1919, when the property was progressively sold off, although the Church of England primary school is built on land donated by the family.

In 1568 the Savage family built a huge family seat near Clifton known as Rock Savage. The Cholmondeley family allowed this to fall into ruin but the name Rocksavage lives on in the chemical complex and power station at Runcorn, as well as in a courtesy title for the heir to the Cholmondeley titles.

It is probable that the Barrowmore Estate derives its name from Barrow, but the coincidence of a possible association with the Earl and Countess of Barrymore is intriguing.

Source: Frodsham Memories 19/08/17

Bridge Frodsham

This name crops up when you search the Internet for "Frodsham Bridge". Bridge Frodsham, 1734-1768, was a famous actor based mainly in York. He became known as the "York Garrick". He died in Hull on 21st October 1768 only a few days after a stage performance. It is said that his death was hastened by drink. Sources say that he was a native of Frodsham, but his name does not appear on the baptismal records of St Laurence Church. However a baptism for Bridger Frodsham (*sic*) on 28th July, 1733, appears in the records of the Parish Church of Rostherne, where his father, Rev Robert Frodsham was the incumbent. He might belong to the "Frodsham" family but there is no indication that he ever lived here

Bicentenaries in 2019

As well as being the bicentenary of the Peterloo Massacre on 16th August 2019, this year is the bicentenary of birth of **Queen Victoria** born 24th May 1819 at Kensington Palace, London and **Albert, Prince Consort**, born 26th August 1819 at Schloss Rosenau, Coburg, Rödental, Germany.

This year is also the bicentenary of the birth of **John Ruskin**, the leading English art critic of the Victorian era. John Ruskin was born on 8th February, at 54, Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, London. He was a prominent social thinker and philanthropist who wrote on a wide variety of subjects and died at his home, Brantwood, which overlooks Coniston Water in the Lake District.

Joseph Stubs – owner of Park Place (now Castle Park House) 1851-1861

In September 1860, Captain Hitchen of the Frodsham Volunteer Rifle Corps made a speech to welcome home the recently married Mr and Mrs Joseph Stubs of Park Place, from their “hymeanal” (honeymoon) tour of the continent. Both were reported to be in excellent health and spirits.

Later the Chester Chronicle lamented the decision of the newlyweds to move to Cheltenham on a permanent basis. Frodsham was to lose a dedicated magistrate and the recently formed Rifle Corps, its patron. Perhaps the couple should have stayed in Cheltenham, but they were back in Frodsham for the 1861 census and Joseph returned to the bench. He suffered a stroke whilst serving at the Petty Sessions in Sandbach and died at home in Frodsham on 15th April 1861.

Joseph, partner in the tool manufacturing firm of Messrs Stubs and Co, and former Mayor of Warrington, had married the “handsome and accomplished” Miss Elizabeth Claudia Harding on 17th July 1860. He was a widower aged 63 and Elizabeth, just 25 years old!!

Joseph was buried in the family vault in Warrington Parish Church and his widow moved to Lower Norwood, where in 1863 she married Reginald T Pearse, a doctor from her native Glamorgan. She died in Glamorgan in 1867 aged only 32.

Information gleaned from newspapers of the day.

£3,000 Damage at Frodsham



“On Sunday, at Frodsham, near Runcorn, a boot shop and a cloggers shop belonging to Mr Hindley, and a tinsmith’s shop belonging to Mr Rothwell, were completely destroyed by fire. The occupants of the shops were away from home, and how the fire originated is a mystery. When the fire was at its height an explosion occurred in Mr Rothwell’s shop, blowing off the roof and throwing down the walls. The Golden Lion Hotel was considerably injured. The damage is estimated at £3,000”.

Source: Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 5th April 1902

FRODSHAM & DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY

Programme of Meetings 2020

**All indoor meetings are held on Monday evenings at Main Street Community Church, Frodsham, and start at 7.45pm
Membership £5.00 p.a. + £2.00 per meeting. Visitors £3.00**

6 th January	Mike Blackburn Development of Liverpool as a world port linked to North Wales
3 rd February	Prof Tim Wheeler History of Chester University from 1839
2 nd March	AGM Sheila Walsh Costumed guide at Speke Hall 'The life of a Tudor Lady'
6 th April	Sheila Leonard pp volunteer speaker History of the 1903 steamship 'Daniel Adamson'
4 th May	Gillian Williams 5000 years of a Cheshire Village
8 th June	Guided tour of Elizabeth Gaskell's House, 84 Plymouth Grove, Manchester M13 9LW
7 th September	Bernard Dennis Life and times of Sir Thomas Egerton
5 th October	Claire Moores Fantastic Mr Foxes v Tipping and Faulkoner
2 nd November	Allen Wales 1st/5th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment during WW1
7 th /14 th December	Dr Rachel Swallow The Legend, Lady and Landscape of Caernarfon Castle

Frank Whitfield, Programme Secretary & Chairman, has arranged the meetings for
2020
