



HISTORY SOCIETY

WINTER 2011/12

**Museum of Liverpool – New Galleries Now Open**



Those members (and there were quite a few) who were perhaps less than overwhelmed by the museum's first phase offering will no doubt be delighted with the opening of the Museum's remaining galleries on 2nd December, following the visit of the Queen and Prince Philip the previous day.

Although there are four new 'galleries' – *Liverpool Overhead Railway*, *The Great Port*, *History Detectives* and *City Soldiers* – they appear to flow seamlessly into one large two-storey gallery, such is the physical layout of the building.

Who could not be impressed by the jaw-dropping vista of that rare survivor from the dawn of the railway era, the 1838 locomotive *Lion* with the last surviving Liverpool Overhead Railway carriage of its type, perched above? National Museums Liverpool set itself the target of showcasing 6,000 objects from its secret treasurehouses; no matter, these two objects alone make a visit to the Museum of Liverpool worthwhile.

In the *Liverpool Overhead Railway* gallery, visitors can walk on board the coach and experience something of what it was like to be a passenger on the *Dockers' Umbrella* more than 55 years ago. Alongside, is a fascinating model of the railway's route from Seaforth to Dingle with accompanying audio-visual displays, including the famous 1896 film footage shot by Alexandre Promio (Lumiere Brothers) from a LOR coach.

Follow the gallery round and you come to *City Soldiers* whose main focus is the King's Regiment, formed in 1685 and which became Liverpool's regiment in 1881.

*City Soldiers* leads into *History Detectives* which features an impressive 124 foot long 'time line' starting in the Ice Age and continuing through the millennia to the present day with the emphasis, understandably, on 19th and 20th century Liverpool. This is the most 'object-rich' section of the entire museum and you will need to set aside at least an hour to do it full justice.

Finally, follow the staircase down to the ground floor to the *Great Port* gallery. This charts the history of Liverpool's relationship with the River Mersey and the people who dedicated their lives to it. *Lion* forms the stunning centrepiece. Also hauled out of the museum's Large Object Collection is a 1927 Sentinel steam tractor (see also below) and the only known surviving Liver Phaeton automobile, manufactured locally in 1900 by the William Lea Motor Co Ltd.



Report and ©photographs: the Editor, Ron Jones.

18 September 2011 – Graeme Milne

## LIVERPOOL SAILORS ON THE WATERFRONT IN THE 19th CENTURY

Meeting report:  
Mary Harrison

Dr. Graeme Milne, Lecturer in Modern History, Urban, Maritime and Business History at Liverpool University, is currently completing a project on the Liverpool waterfront in the second half of the 20th century but today he was talking about the waterfront in the 19th century, specifically Liverpool's 'Sailortown' and its effect on society and culture.

During the 18th century Liverpool had become an international seaport, incorporating the new Atlantic trade and the Slave Trade. However, its heyday as a maritime city was in the 19th century when hundreds of thousands of seafarers landing in, and sailing from, the city made it cosmopolitan and vibrant. It became the dominant seaport of the spreading British Empire and a key player in global development. And to service the industry Liverpool had an army of support workers, especially between the 1840's and 1880's, when deep sea sailing ships travelled the world.



The crews of these ships became a huge transient population and the question arises; were they welcome in the cities they visited? Some of them experienced discrimination and prejudice, especially black sailors. Local inhabitants often regarded waterfront areas as places of lawlessness. Graeme's studies reveal the ambiguity between waterfront and town and we see that these problems also existed in other seaports. Seamen were 'paid off' at the end of every voyage, and would come ashore with lump sums of between £4 and £50, a substantial amount in those days. In 1877 alone 100,000 seamen were paid off in Liverpool and boarding house keepers, bar owners and brothel keepers were all keen for them to spend money in their establishments, of which there were hundreds in the dock area. It has been estimated that 50-75% of seamen's wages were spent in the bars and brothels of Sailortown.

Victorian society was scandalised by newspaper articles describing the drunkenness, violence and depravity of waterfront life, blaming the behaviour on the seamen themselves, who spent their wages in ways that "ensured criminal activity and female immorality". Religious and social reformers recognised that sailors were easily seduced by the bright lights of Sailortown and were almost childlike, even allowing themselves to be exploited; they needed to be protected from their child-like selves. These reformers aimed to provide sailors with 'a home away from home' with Sailors' Homes and safer boarding houses. Seafarers did not always appreciate these, which they regarded as controlling, but they also were aware of the dangers they faced, such as the scandalous custom of 'crimping', practiced by some unscrupulous boarding house keepers and which could result in heavy debts.

Despite an often brutal life on board, there was always a pool of strong young men willing to go to sea. Working life ashore was often equally brutal and exploitive. By going to sea, men could avoid military service or perhaps prosecution and they gained skills that could be transferred to employment in the New World. Used to heights on the tall ships, they could work as lumber jacks or construction workers on tall buildings. Many 'jumped ship' to seek work in America knowing that if they did not find jobs they could always find another ship. This suited ship owners too, as they had little difficulty in finding crews.

By the 1890s steamships were transforming the industry. Voyages became shorter and predictable – months at sea became weeks at sea. Mariners were no longer transients but part time residents of a port and set up homes and families. Laws and regulations improved conditions although the stereotype image of drinking and 'red-light' districts lingered.

Now that the Sailortown phenomenon has become a memory, Graeme thinks we need to examine its history carefully. The 'Heritage Industry' is sometimes tempted to recreate a sanitised, nostalgic view of our historic docklands, but this would be a mistake.

16 October 2011 – Gerry Scott

## MY YEAR AS LORD MAYOR OF LIVERPOOL

Meeting report:  
Netta Dixon

Mr. Gerry Scott, accompanied by his wife Anne, gave a talk on his experiences as Lord Mayor of Liverpool from 2001/2002. He said that a lot happens in twelve months as Lord Mayor. To be Lord Mayor you also have to be a Councillor, but each party has different rules; his party has length of service and he had been a Councillor for 22 years.

Gerry spoke of the history of Mayors in Liverpool since 1207 when Liverpool received its Charter from King John and Adam of Liverpool was Mayor. In the Town Hall there is a plaque listing every Mayor and Lord Mayor since 1207. Liverpool has had Lord Mayors since it became a City in 1880. In times past Mayors had real power and made their own laws e.g. in 1574 John Mainwaring decreed that beggars should be shipped to Barbados and in 1617 Edmund Rose passed a law stating that apprentices should not go out in the town after 9pm. In 1649 Thomas Hodgson passed a law, which apparently is still on the statute book, stating that you will lose your freedom if you speak ill of the Mayor.

Gerry gave an example of an interesting anomaly. William Rutherford was appointed Lord Mayor in November 1902 but he also wanted to become a Member of Parliament for Liverpool. As Lord Mayor he was barred from standing as an MP so he resigned in January 1903 and 'gave' his Lord Mayorship to Thomas Bower Forwood. When he was elected as an MP, Forwood moved aside and Rutherford once again became Lord Mayor. The rules of the game decreed that an MP could also be a Lord Mayor but that a Lord Mayor could not stand as a candidate in a Parliamentary election. A good example of "Where there's a will there's a way."

Gerry then gave a brief history of Liverpool's Town Halls: in 1505 a Town Hall ('like a barn on stilts') was presented to the town by John Crosse; the second Town Hall in 1673 had a ground floor which was open to traders; the present Town Hall, built by John Wood of Bath, opened in 1754. In 1775 the Town Hall was attacked and damaged with cannon by unpaid seamen from 50 ships in the



Gerry and Anne Scott. Photo: Liverpool City Council.

Mersey. Following a disastrous fire in 1795 much of the building was reconstructed by James Wyatt and John Foster Jnr. The staircase on *Titanic* was modelled on the staircase in the Town Hall. There is also a plaque to commemorate Liverpool's VCs including John Kirk who received his award in 1857 when he heroically rescued his captain during the Indian Mutiny. The day before he received his V.C. that same captain sentenced him to twelve lashes for being drunk on parade; he wasn't, Kirk apparently suffered from sleeping sickness. Immediately after he received his V.C. Kirk was kicked out of the army and he returned to the Brownlow Hill workhouse, on whose steps he had been born 38 years earlier, and where he spent the last three years of his life.

Gerry then spoke of the role and functions of the Lord Mayor: he represents the City at Civic functions and promotes the City nationally and internationally; Gerry went on a good will visit to South Africa and saw Mandela's cell; he presented the freedom of the City to Simon Weston; he conferred awards to honorary Freemen and

Associations and gave degrees to University students. He had the honour of greeting VIPs and Royalty, including Prince Andrew who playfully accused him of overtaking his official car; on a later visit Prince Charles pulled Gerry's leg – "Have you overtaken any cars lately?" Gerry attended religious events of all denominations except the Salvation Army much to his regret; a Catholic, he even attended an Orange Lodge event where the warm welcome he received was "attitude-changing". He attended many events and visited other cities including Belfast; he visited HMS *Eaglet* to present medals to Royal Marines. He mentioned that Liverpool has a Lord Mayor's coach but no horses; it is now used about six times a year with horses hired in. Gerry spoke of the Chinese New Year when he was invited to six banquets. When he declined to drink the traditional brandy his hosts offered him, rather than cause offence, his officials explained that he was "a reformed alcoholic"!

As Lord Mayor, Gerry raised £98,000 for the Samaritans, Changing Faces, The King's Regiment and DEBRA (children with skin diseases). His wife even did a parachute jump in aid of his charities. When he met Yoko Ono at the airport he asked her to donate something for his raffle and was delighted when she later rang him from America to say she had decided to send him £12,000!

Finally, Gerry explained that it is only possible to be Lord Mayor once but he was made an honorary Alderman. There were official ceremonies at the beginning and end of his time of office.

## 19 November 2011 – Brenda Murray

### JOSEPHINE BUTLER

Meeting report:  
Mary Harrison

Mrs Josephine Butler was a real life heroine, as LHS member Brenda Murray proved in her eloquent and moving talk. Born in 1828, Josephine Grey was seventh of ten children of a happy family in Northumberland. Her uncle was Earl Grey who gave his name to Earl Grey tea. She was well educated, mainly at home, and had just two years of formal schooling.

In 1852 she married Oxford lecturer, George Butler; it was to be a happy marriage. They had four children but in 1864 their only daughter, Evangeline, aged seven, tragically died after a fall in their own home, in front of her parents. Two years later they moved to Liverpool where George was appointed Principal of Liverpool College, successfully introducing modern languages and geography into the curriculum.

Still deeply grieving, Josephine decided that she must try to help those more unfortunate than herself. She was recommended to Brownlow Hill Workhouse which then housed about 5,000 paupers. There she persuaded the doubtful Matron to allow her to meet the convicted prostitutes. She found them incarcerated in the workhouse cellars, seated on the bare floor, condemned to pick oakum, i.e. scrape with their bare hands the tar from ships' ropes, to make them reusable. To win their confidence Josephine sat on the floor and worked with them. Thereafter they welcomed her daily visits when she talked to them of God and hope.



Josephine had found her vocation. In loving equal partnership the Butlers set up a refuge for released prisoners. Thirteen women at a time were able to live there, learning skills which enabled them to find employment. For the rest of her life she worked on behalf of underprivileged and troubled women, writing letters and books and speaking at meetings. Through Liverpool College she met and worked with Anne Jemima Clough to improve education for women and became Chairwoman of the North of England Council for Promoting the Higher Education of Women.

Appalled by the double standards applied in judging men and women, particularly prostitutes and procurers, Josephine campaigned successfully for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act and worked for the Act which raised the minimum age of consent for girls from 12 to 16. She worked tirelessly on behalf of suffragettes, ill-paid governesses and many other causes and had some notable successes. She also spoke to working men who listened to her advice on protecting their wives and daughters. On top of all this she continued to visit the workhouse three times each week.

George's wholehearted support of his "awful wife", as many Establishment figures termed her, lost him his deserved advancement, but he never faltered. When he retired in 1882 his friend W.E. Gladstone, assisted him in gaining the post of Canon of Winchester Cathedral. Sadly this meant that the Butlers had to leave Liverpool and their beloved House of Refuge. George took ill in 1888 and Josephine stopped working to nurse him until he died in 1890. Afterwards, in spite of increasing ill health and declining income, she continued writing, speaking and travelling, including a trip to Rome where her work was commended by the Pope. At last in 1903, she retired to live near her son in Northumberland and three years later died there in obscurity.

## LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2012 MEETINGS PROGRAMME

19 February	Edward Kemp, Parks and Patrons	Elizabeth Davey
18 March	Liverpool Workhouse Project	Kay Parrott
15 April	The Liverpool Olympics	Rob Baynes
20 May	Annual General Meeting followed by talk about the <i>Titanic</i>	Gervais Stringer
17 June	Visit to the Grade 1 listed Ullet Road Unitarian Church	

July and August...Summer recess – no meetings

16 September	Della Robbia Pottery	Colin Simpson
21 October	Liverpool and the American Civil War	Lee Ruddin
18 November	The Unique Overhead Railway	Michael Murphy
16 December	Chinese People in the Blitz	Francesca Aiken

*With the exception of June, all meetings will take place in the Grace Room, 1st Floor, Hope at Everton, Shaw Street. This is the former St Francis Xavier College building. All meetings start at 2pm (doors open 1.30pm).*

### Bookshelf *book reviews in brief*

**How to Survive the Titanic, or the Sinking of J. Bruce Ismay** Frances Wilson, 2011. Bloomsbury Publishing, London. 328pp + 32 pages of b + w pictures. ISBN 978 1 4088 0922 8 (hardback) £18.99.

Fascinating, well-researched and covering much more than the fateful night in April 1912, this book traces the history of the Ismay family and their shipping interests from their Cumbrian roots to Bruce's death in the late 1930s. There is also much of local interest about the Ismays' time living at Waterloo, Mossley Hill and Thurstaston (although the still existing house at Waterloo is always referred to as "Beech (rather than Beach) Lawn"! Much is written about Bruce's psychological make-up before, during and after the sinking, comparison being made with fictional, seagoing characters created before and after 1912 by Joseph Conrad. An intriguing comparison is also made between the American public enquiry and the British one, the former being held with seemingly indecent haste immediately after the survivors landed in New York. This book is available at all Liverpool public libraries. (Fred Forrest)

**And the Band Played on...** Christopher Ward, 2011. Hodder + Stoughton, London. 274pp + 16 pages of b + w pictures. ISBN 978 1 4447 0794 6 (hardback) £20. Also available as paperback and e-book.

Another "Titanic" book but a very different one. The main characters in it are Jock Hume, a member of the band who played on while the ship sank, and his family, both before and after the incident, the villain of the piece being Jock's father, also a professional

musician. Part of the book deals in detail with the inevitably gory operation mounted from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to retrieve the floating corpses from the Atlantic. There is also a fascinating insight into the compensation paid by White Star, which suggests that surviving first class passengers were dealt with much more generously and sympathetically in respect of lost possessions than the relatives of lost crew members, whose wages were stopped as the ship slipped below the water! Not a lot of Merseyside content in the book but it is a fascinating read and should be available in all Liverpool public libraries. (Fred Forrest)

**Wirral Then and Now in Colour.** Daniel K. Longman, 2011. The History Press, Stroud. ISBN 978 0 7524 6079 6. 95 pages, c.100 photos; Hardback £12.99.

A well-produced and attractive volume, this is one of a number of recent books on more or less the same subject. As with many books of this ilk, most of the "now" photographs are remarkably similar to "then" ones in respect of the buildings involved. It is often what is going on in the streets and their comparative peace a century ago, before the age of the car, where the differences lie. This book will undoubtedly be of interest to Wirralians and others with an interest in the area. As with all books of this type, it is not cheap. (Fred Forrest)

**The Hurricane Port. A Social History of Liverpool.** Andrew Lees, 2011. Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh & London. ISBN 978 1 8459 6726 0. 295 pages, 28 b & w photos on 8 pages. Hardback £18.99.

A highly individual, idiosyncratic, indeed zany, warts and all book written by a St

Helens-born Professor of Neurology who was exiled to Leeds at an early age but who seems to possess an almost unnatural and obsessive passion for Liverpool and yet manages in this book to remain surprisingly academic and objective. The book covers mainly the last 300 years of Liverpool's turbulent past (thus the title) and includes much on relatively recent "crises" such as Toxteth 1981, Heysel, Hillsborough, Militant, Jamie Bulger and the dockers, as well as more positive episodes. My only criticism of this thought-provoking book is that it seemed to dwell overlong on "drug baron" Curtis Warren. (Fred Forrest)

**The Little Book of Liverpool** Alex Tulloch, 2011. ISBN: 9780752460062 Hardback £9.99.

*The Little Book of Liverpool* is an enjoyable and easy read covering an interesting view of the many aspects of the city's history. This is a small compact reference book and guide, that can be dipped in to. A remarkably engaging book, this is essential reading for visitors and locals alike. It is full of odd, unusual and little known facts and snippets of information I personally was unaware about. This is an ideal book to have by your bedside or to while away the hours on a long train journey I particularly enjoyed the chapters relating to the unusual crimes and punishments, eccentric inhabitants, famous inhabitants of Liverpool. Alex Tulloch's new book gathers together a myriad of data on this historic city. There are lots of factual chapters but also plenty of frivolous details which will amuse and surprise. Something I learned was that the clock on the Liver Building was started at the precise moment that King George V was crowned on 22 June 1911. (Rob Ainsworth)



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