



**Welcome** to the Winter edition of the 'Halton's Heritage Newsletter' from Halton Heritage Partnership (HHP). This time of year seems a good time to look back at what we've achieved since the start of the project in September 2014 and also to tell you about our exciting plans for 2016.

We hope you have liked the events and newsletters that we've produced so far and that you'll find plenty more to enjoy as we continue to use our Heritage Lottery funding to raise the profile of Halton's heritage.

### In this issue:

- Mystery question
- Partnership update
- Norton Priory build
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- Blue plaques
- Youth Theatre production
- HHP profile

**Did you know?**

What is the significance of these unusual concrete shapes and what is their connection with some (very) famous faces?



More details on page 7

## Great progress for heritage venture

Prior to obtaining a £55,200 grant in May 2014 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the 'WORKING LIVES: WORKING TOGETHER' project, Halton Heritage Partnership had to produce an Action Plan of what it hoped to accomplish and give a detailed timeline of exactly how this would be realised by December 2015. We are delighted to be able to report that we've achieved far more to date than we anticipated at the outset!

To start with, the Action Plan was modestly ambitious, with the aim of encouraging the various heritage groups throughout the borough to work together on two fronts; improving access to Halton's heritage by upgrading the existing website, ([www.haltoncollections.org](http://www.haltoncollections.org)) and by collaborating on the specific theme of gathering information about the working lives of local people since 1800.

However, as Frank Lawless from Widnes Historical society explains: "As links have been strengthened between the partners, the original Plan has been updated to reflect our new aspirations including organising larger scale events, enhanced publicity and social media training for group members, all of which have now been realised."

Valuable new members have now come on board including Preston Brook History Group, Daresbury District Heritage Group & Sankey Canal Restoration Society. There seems to be a number of new heritage related initiatives around at the moment and those groups are very welcome to be part of HHP. The success of this 'WORKING TOGETHER' element has meant that the Partnership has been able to hold a number of well received public events, taking heritage out into the community. The last one was at Runcorn Town Hall's Open Day in December in the form of a film premiere, (complete with popcorn and a red carpet) where Halton Young People's Theatre debuted their 'WORKING LIVES' films. This is



HYPT welcome guests to film premiere

another successful element of the updated Action Plan, which aimed to engage with more young people (read more on the theatre group later on in the newsletter).

One of the original ideas was to develop an app which would allow users to follow various trails interweaved with stories from the oral histories collected for 'WORKING LIVES'; however, this proved problematic so that concept was replaced with developing a much more interactive website which will link visitors to the trails and a good mobile version of the site will also be available.

The 'WORKING LIVES' aspect has uncovered many fascinating stories and curious objects which will all be available to hear and view on the enhanced website which is currently under development. The initial collection of oral histories is now complete but further research and the cataloguing of objects will be on-going by the HHP members and will continue after the end of the project.

Due to the time lost in researching the app idea, HLF has agreed to an extended deadline. The culmination of the project will now tie in with Halton's Heritage Open Days in September 2016. Before then, there will be an end of project celebration, 'Canal-ival' in May or June, which will be led by Halton Young People's Theatre and involve both HHP members and non-members and will be a fabulous community occasion on the Bridgewater Canal, near to The Brindley.

The Partnership now has a mission statement: 'Working together to bring Halton's heritage to life'. We hope you agree that it sums up exactly what we hope to achieve and we look forward to sharing further progress with you in the coming months.

## Volunteers needed to restore Sankey Canal

If you are interested in waterways then Sankey Canal Restoration Society (SCARS) would love you to join as a volunteer. The group is working hard to bring the Sankey Canal and its immediate area back into everyone's lives. You don't even need to travel too far as Spike Island in Widnes offers plenty of opportunities to get involved.

Dave Smallshaw, Chair of SCARS, remarks: "Don't think it's all about digging! Although we are always looking for new volunteers to help in the practical conservation sessions, we are also keen to catalogue the history and heritage of the Canal and to engage people's interest at events and shows. If you have an interest in local history, that would be particularly useful, however, any help will be warmly welcomed."

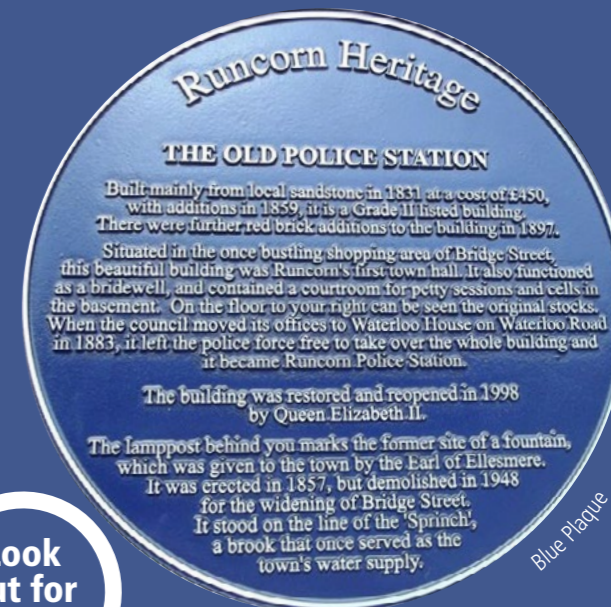


Volunteers at work at Spike Island

If your skills lie elsewhere, such as in marketing, media or computers, or perhaps you have other experience that would be a considerable asset to the organisation, you can contact SCARS via their [website](http://www.scars.org.uk) or e-mail [scarsnews@gmail.com](mailto:scarsnews@gmail.com)

## Blue is still the colour

Stuart Allen from Runcorn Historical Society has been continuing in his mission to highlight significant people and places from Runcorn's past by arranging for 20 blue plaques to be positioned on relevant buildings around the town.



Look out for more!

So far he has installed 17 and the latest ones to look out for are at:

- **The Quayside, Canal Street** – location of Runcorn Football Club's original ground
- **Co-op store, Granville Street** – in recognition of Sir William Dudley O.B.E. (1868 – 1938), born in Loch Street and became President of the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1933
- **Tricorn Pub, Palacefields** – site of Hallwood Manor, birthplace of Sir John Chesshyre (1662 – 1738), a prominent lawyer who was responsible for one of the first free libraries in England, in Halton Village
- **Old 'Boathouse' Inn, Mersey Road** - dedicated to the old ferry service which ran from what was then called Mersey Street
- **Old Police Station, High Street** - built in 1831 as Runcorn's first Town Hall & Bridewell (jail)

There are just three more to go and they will appear on [Runcorn Historical Society's Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/runcornhistoricalsociety) as each one is put in place.

## Norton Priory's makeover is well underway

The new museum at Norton Priory is taking shape, thanks to its £3.7m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the impressive 'Monastery to Museum 900' project.

It is still on course to be open in August this year, despite the odd unexpected occurrence such as having to relocate bats. Building contractor, HH Smith has

now taken down the majority of the old museum building and the tiled floor in the medieval undercroft has been carefully removed by archaeologists but will be re-instated once conservation works are completed\*.

Staff and volunteers recently donned their hard hats and hi-vis vests for the opportunity to explore the museum site to see the progress being made. It is hoped that members of the public will also get a chance for a behind the scenes tour in the spring, so keep a look out for

those details in the press and on Norton Priory's social media sites.

Susan Brownrigg, Learning & Community Officer, said: "Brilliant to see how fast the build is coming along, the metal structure is up, and the walls are down! Those who were brave enough went up onto the top of the undercroft to look at the new first floor gallery, with great views over the ruins. It really helped staff and volunteers get a feel for the new layout and just what a transformation the Heritage Lottery grant is bringing about."



Framework for new museum at Norton Priory - Jan 2016

Staff & volunteers enjoy a tour of the construction site



This new building will give a wonderful opportunity to exhibit many new objects and as conditions within the galleries will be greatly superior to before, sensitive artefacts will be able to be displayed for the first time. Staff and volunteers have been working hard at selecting all the items to go on show and writing the text to accompany them, working alongside exhibition designers Mather & Co.



You can follow Norton Priory's progress at [nortonpriory.org](http://nortonpriory.org)

\* If you are looking for a novel present or just would like to be part of the Priory's restoration project, you can 'Buy a tile' for £10 to save an original tile to be conserved and replaced or for a replica tile to be made if it is beyond repair. Donor's names will be included in a permanent dedications panel to be displayed within the undercroft.



Tile showing Sir Richard Brook's monogram

## Get your dream ticket for bus tour

Halton's Young People's Theatre (HYPT) aims to help young people between 12-18 learn theatre skills and be inspired by the community of Halton and its surrounding area to produce original creative pieces.

Led by theatre-making collective, The Suitcase Ensemble, HYPT has been actively involved with the 'WORKING LIVES: WORKING TOGETHER' project since its early days and has devised and performed imaginative responses for events such as Heritage Open Days and Runcorn Town Hall Open Day.

Their next venture is a unique theatrical experience, taking place on an actual bus tour of Halton and will involve HYPT collaborating with local professional actors. 'Between Dreams' sees ex bus-conductor George revisiting places and characters from his past.

The tour will take place on 9th April but actual times and departure points haven't as yet been confirmed. Details will be in the press and on HHP's social media sites.

You can find out lots more background to [The Suitcase Ensemble](#) on their website.



### PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES SPRING 2016

Are you aged 12-18 and interested in theatre and performance?

Come along to Halton Young People's Theatre and get involved with these two unusual and exciting public performances in 2016.

#### CHARLIE'S USHERS

Who'd be an usher? These guys would... meet the unusually helpful characters for whom theatre and customer services are both vocation and obsession...

This comedic 'curtain raiser' for Lip Service's *The Hysterical Historical Show* takes place at **The Brindley, Runcorn** on **Friday 12 February** at 7.15pm.



#### BETWEEN DREAMS

Meet ex bus conductor George, your host on this theatrical guided bus tour. Driving through the streets of Halton, lost memories, characters from his past and local stories of unrealised opportunities begin to emerge. Where will George find his dreams?

This is a unique theatrical experience, taking place on an actual bus tour of Halton and performed by a collaboration between Halton Young People's Theatre and local professional actors.

**Friday 8 and Saturday 9 April (times and departure point tbc)**

#### How can I get involved?

Halton Young People's Theatre runs during term time on **Tuesdays** at **The Studio, Lacey Street, Widnes** from 5.30-7.30pm and costs £4 per session. To join up or for further details: email [andy@suitcase-ensemble.com](mailto:andy@suitcase-ensemble.com) or call 07916 920415



What is the significance of these unusual concrete shapes and what is their connection with some (very) famous faces?

Did you know?



A. These pyramids are at the end of **Dungeon Lane, at Oglet, close to both Hale Village & Liverpool John Lennon Airport. They were laid as tank traps during WW1.**

Paul McCartney and his brother Mike often cycled to Oglet when they lived in Speke and George Harrison played in the nearby fields as a boy.

Another interesting feature close by is the buried access to a salt chamber. This harks back to the 17th century when salt was discovered in Cheshire and played a significant part in the development of the Port of Liverpool. The pretty fishing village of Dungeon even had its own salt refinery.

Halton Council is using a £50,000 WREN grant to regenerate the area with repairs to pathways and resurfacing, vegetation clearance and installation of interpretation boards.

## Who's who in HHP

Hello, I'm Jean Bradburn & I'm the Oral Historian for the **WORKING LIVES: WORKING TOGETHER** project.

I've long had a fascination with history and as a librarian, managed the local history collection in Widnes library for many years. Whilst there, I created an image website for Halton -



[www.picturehalton.org.uk](http://www.picturehalton.org.uk) by digitising the various libraries' photographic collections to make it easier for the public to find historical images of the Borough and also to ensure that we had a record of these photos, before the originals 'disappeared', as so many items unfortunately tend to do over the years.

Now that I've retired, like so many people say, I've been busier than ever! I am an adult tutor and run courses in family history and together with my husband John, a photographer, I've published four local history books, including 'Widnes through time' and 'Runcorn through the ages' and the most recent is 'Central Manchester through time'. Each book compares an old picture with a view of the present day along with fascinating facts I'd discovered about the local legends, buildings and people. We will soon be starting one about the Bridgewater Canal & I am really looking forward to exploring it in more detail, preferably when the weather gets a bit better!

The 'WORKING LIVES' aspect of this project has been a wonderful insight into Halton's past and I have met some remarkable people who kindly gave up their time so I could record their entertaining stories. I hope you will enjoy hearing about them all on the revamped [www.haltoncollections.org.uk](http://www.haltoncollections.org.uk) website when it is launched later this year.

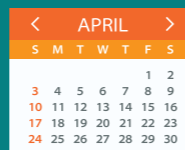
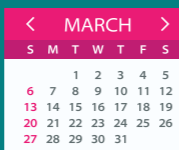
## Dairy Dates

### March

4th	Runcorn Historical Society AGM, followed by 'A potted history - a trip through time'
5th & 6th	Hedge laying course, Norton Priory
10th	'Life & works of Thomas Brassey', Preston Brook & District History Group
11th	'Story of The Dream', Widnes Historical Society
28th	Easter Bunny hunt, Norton Priory
31st	SCARS AGM, followed by talk on Mersey Gateway (at Select Security Stadium)

### April

1st	Talk about William Gordon Brough, Runcorn Historical Society
9th	'Between Dreams', Suitcase Ensemble HHP production
21st	'The history of the long bow', Preston Brook & District History Group
24th	Plant Hunters' fair, Norton Priory



## Be a heritage detective

We have lots of helpful historical societies that you may be interested in joining or just asking for their advice. Whether you are tracing your family history or have come across a weird and wonderful but totally unrecognisable ancient object in granny's attic, you can be sure that there will be someone in one of the groups who will be able to help.



The 'Exploring Halton's Heritage Local History Contacts' leaflet can be found in the 'Links' section of:  
[www.haltoncollections.org.uk](http://www.haltoncollections.org.uk)



If you have any ideas to contribute for future issues, we would love to hear them.



[www.facebook.com/HaltonHeritagePartnership](http://www.facebook.com/HaltonHeritagePartnership)

See more about Halton's collections at:

[www.haltoncollections.org.uk](http://www.haltoncollections.org.uk)

and you can contact Halton Heritage Partnership on [haltonheritage@gmail.com](mailto:haltonheritage@gmail.com)



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