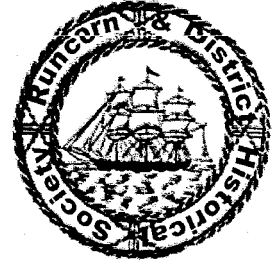


RUNCORN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NO. 2 SEPTEMBER 2006



Current Meetings Programme

Meetings are held at St John's Church Hall in Weston Village on the first Friday of every month at 7.30pm prompt.

6th October 2006

"The Life and Work of John Douglas"

Graham Fisher

This meeting will take place in the Church

3rd November 2006

"Cheshire's Early Christian Heritage"

Rev Gordon G Roxby

1st December 2006

Social Evening and talk "Cheshire Dialect and Sayings"

Mark Newbrook

5th January 2007

"Members Evening"

2nd February 2007

"Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition"

David Hill

2nd March 2007

Annual General Meeting

"The Irish Potato
Famine" *Dr Ian
McKeane*

13th April 2007

"Archaeology in
Cheshire" *Mike
Neville*

Please note that the meeting in **April 2007** will **NOT** be on the first **Friday** (that is Good Friday). It will take place on **SECOND Friday**-13th April 2007. Subsequent meetings will then revert back to normal—being the first Friday of each month.

Chairman's Update

Members of the Society will know of my interest in the Hazlehurst family and that five of the great-great-grandchildren of Thomas Hazlehurst attended my talk in October 2005. We have since discovered a direct descendant of Thomas' brother, Charles. Charles Patrick Hazlehurst is his great grandson and with his wife, Sally, he visited Runcorn on 26th June 2006. The main purpose of his trip was to visit Runcorn Town Hall. This was originally built as Halton Grange in about 1856 for Thomas Johnson who, with his older brother John, ran the soap and alkali business of Johnson Brothers. When the brothers were made bankrupt in 1871, the

house was bought by Charles Hazlehurst. Charles lived there until his death in 1878 and his wife, Julia, continued to live in the house until she died in 1903. Following a tour of the house, which was also attended by Alex Cowan and Ross Bullock, I took the couple to visit some other sites connected with Charles Hazlehurst, including his grave in the cemetery; Waterloo House, Charles' first house; the family gravestone in the parish churchyard; and Camden House where Charles was born and spent his childhood.

*Peter Vardy
Chairman*

TOWN HALL VISITS

Following the visit of Charles Patrick Hazlehurst, the Society has been invited by the Mayor of Halton to arrange visits to the Town Hall for its members. These will be organised and led by Alex Cowan and we expect they will arouse considerable interest. Accordingly we are arranging two visits (maximum number of 24) with one on a Friday evening and one on a Saturday. Forms will be available at a Society meeting for completion by those interested—on a first come, first served basis. In addition we are pleased to announce that the Mayor has accepted our invitation to be a guest of honour at the AGM in March 2007.

Society Annual Outing

Wroxeter and Shrewsbury Saturday 19th August 2006

After watching the weather forecast with trepidation (after the very wet day we had last year), our first stop was to visit the Roman ruins at Wroxeter. The rain thankfully held off for us, so everyone was able to explore the rather splendid and substantial building remains, with time to browse around the small museum

and visitor shop, before we continued our trip to Shrewsbury for lunch. In the afternoon, some chose to explore Shrewsbury under their own steam, but about half our contingent braved the worsening weather for a conducted walk of Shrewsbury town centre. Despite the increasingly heavy rain, everyone agreed it had been a most interesting and enjoyable experience. To

finish off the day, on our homeward journey, there was a free raffle draw, with the ladies scoring a hat-trick—better luck next year gents!

If you have any ideas about where we should go next year, please let Les Brown, or any other committee member have your suggestions.

*Diane Stanley
Treasurer*

CHESHIRE ANNUAL HISTORY DAY - Saturday 21st October 2006

This year's theme will be "Getting *About in Cheshire*". For full information and an application form please contact Cheshire Local History Association on 01244 602559, or e-mail to recordoffice@cheshire.gov.uk, or visit www.cheshirehistory.org.uk

Website Report (www.runcornhistsoc.org.uk)

WHAT IS A "HIGGLER" ?

A Higglar was an itinerant dealer or peddler. The word has survived in the West Indies, especially in Jamaica, in the sense of a market trader, but has disappeared everywhere else.

Just a century ago most English market towns had higgler—middlemen who went round the farms buying up produce such as poultry, rabbits, eggs and cheese to sell in the market. In return they supplied goods the household needed.

In some places, higgler has a bad reputation, because they were thought to manipulate prices to their own benefit. The Times dated 10th June 1800, reported a small-scale consumer revolt against them.

Some of the trade was done by barter rather than by money changing hands, but all of it involved haggling, which is where the name came from. Higglar is just a variant spelling of Haggler.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The Christmas Social this year will be held as usual in St John's Weston Church Hall. Apart from having a speaker to entertain us, there will be a buffet supper with wine and soft drinks provided.

This promises to be a very enjoyable evening and gives everyone a chance to chat and mix with members they normally don't get time to do at our regular monthly meetings.

An announcement at a forthcoming meeting will be made to give an idea of numbers for the Social.

During the period May to August 2006 we have had some 6,400 "visitors" to our web-site, with over 40% of these from the USA.

The main additions to the site over the period have been :

- The superimposing of modern views of Runcorn on all the old postcard views, which we put on the website in the early part of the year. This process is still continuing.
- The first Society newsletter has been on to the "www" for all to see, as has Bert's talk on the Parish Church of Runcorn.
- A copy of the most recent archive list, in "Adobe Acrobat" format. This lists all of the archive material now in the Egerton Street Library.

We have had some quite interesting requests for information during the period, subjects included :

- Thomas Moffatt (of Rourke's Drift fame)
- The schooner "Snowflake", built at Runcorn in 1880
- What churches were there in Runcorn in 1848?
- How did the new bridge impact on Runcorn?
- Information about the death of J T Brydon (Runcorn station master) in 1915
- Yet more information about the Hazelhurst family.

Ross Bullock Secretary and Webmaster

The Society Archive

As I said in the last newsletter the Archive is now installed in the Meeting Room at Egerton Street Library and has been used by a number of people. Ask the counter staff for access. The appeal for more items brought some nearly 60 items relating to the leather industry—tools, books, samples, etc. These are also at Egerton Street (in the big box on top of the cupboard, so take care when getting it down).

Discussions are taking place

with the Library Service to put on a joint display at Halton Lea Library later this year on the leather and tanning industry in Runcorn. The Website archive list was changed to a subject based one and will be updated at the end of September. Through the Website there have been a number of queries, some of which we have been able to provide answers through our archives. Discussions are taking place with the National Archive with a view to our archives

being linked through their A2A site, which will greatly enhance our Society's reputation in the national field as well as in Cheshire (all this in just over five years!).

There are manuscript items in our collection which it would be useful to transcribe onto computer and if any member (or friend / relative of a member) would be willing to help with this I would greatly appreciate it. Please contact me (01928 572504) if you can help.

Alex Cowan

Archivist

Society Committee

Anyone wishing to join the Society can do so either by following the instructions found on the Society Website, or by writing to Dianne Jackson, 22 Balfour Street, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4PH, or by attending one of the monthly meetings and join on the night. Subscriptions are £6.00 per person for per year (usually renewed at the Annual General Meeting in March). Visitors are welcome to join us at any of the meetings for just a £1.00 per visit.

Dr Peter Vardy :
Chairman

Peter Johnson :
Vice Chairman

Ross Bullock :
Secretary & Web Master

Diane Stanley :
Treasurer

Alex Cowan :
Archivist

Jackie Cawte :
Meetings Secretary

Dianne Jackson :
Membership

Les Brown

Ray Miller

Cllr Sue Blackmore