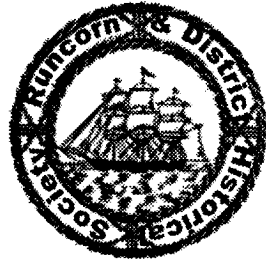


RUNCORN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER No. 5 – SEPTEMBER 2007



Chairman's Update

You may have read in Roy Miller's article in the *Runcorn Weekly News* that the Egerton Street Library has been accepted by the Secretary of State as a Grade II listed building following a recommendation from English Heritage. As you know, the archives of the Society, over 1,000 items, are held in the library and are available to any member of the public by application to the librarian on duty. A catalogue of the contents of the archives is also available on our website. In their report English Heritage commented that the library is of a design which was unusual for a library at the time it

was built and that it now "possesses special architectural and historic interest within a national context". Although an application for listing of the adjacent Waterloo House was not successful, the listing of the library provides an opportunity for the Society, and the general public, to increase their use of the library and maybe, in time, to develop within it a Heritage Centre, or something of that nature.

Peter Vardy
Chairman

Conwy & Betws-y-Coed - 11th August 2007

Well, we finally had a dry day and warm weather for our Summer Trip!

This year, after a good run with only a little holiday traffic to contend with, we started our day in the rainforest atmosphere of the Butterfly Jungle in Conwy. It was an absolutely fascinating experience to have an assortment of beautiful exotic butterflies flying around us, and a real treat for the photographers amongst us. Afterwards,

some of us spent time exploring the ancient town of Conwy, whilst others chose to relax by the waterfront until after lunch. In the afternoon, we made our way to Betws-y-Coed, with its array of shops to browse, and of course the magnificent scenery of Swallow Falls to take in, before indulging in a wonderful cream tea. Three lucky people also managed to win prizes in the free raffle that took place on the coach on the

way home.

All agreed it had been a most enjoyable day out as we followed the scenic route home, passing through Llangollen on our homeward journey back to sunny Runcorn.

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

Web Site Report

In the last three months the number of visitors has increased once again, from 3,200 in May to 3,950 in July.

The addition of web pages showing the Runcorn / Halton / Weston listed and unlisted buildings was completed in May. We also added Moore, Daresbury and Preston Brook buildings in June.

More recently Bert Starkey's talk on the history of the Roman Catholic church in Runcorn, and St Edward's Church in particular, has been added, together with a fully updated list of our archives.

Ross Bullock
Secretary and Web Master

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.

5th October 2007

"Widnes Past and Present"
Bob Martindale

2nd November 2007

Details to be announced

7th December 2007

"Christmas Party"
Including a short talk from Roy Hayes, on "The History of Pantomime", followed by a buffet supper. (Members only).

4th January 2008

"Members Evening"
Details to be announced

1st February 2008

"Savage Fortune"
The story of our local aristocrats in the early 17th century

Lyn Boothman

7th March 2008

Annual General Meeting
Election of committee followed by a talk about his year in office, by Mike Hodgkinson, Mayor of Halton.

CHESHIRE ANNUAL HISTORY DAY - Saturday 25th October 2007

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

Society Walks - June and July 2007

The Irish Connection

Following on from his recent lecture to the Society, about 20 members joined Dr Ian McKeane for a Saturday morning walk around Liverpool.

Everyone met at the Metropolitan Cathedral and began the walk by looking at a site that was once a workhouse set outside the city limits. We also saw the site of the pauper burial ground, now student accommodation.

The walk focused on the Irish connections, but also incorporated lots of other interesting snippets of information, such as learning that houses in Rodney Street were not identical, but had been built in small sections. We saw how many of the old familiar landmarks, such as hospitals, were now all converted or demolished, to make room for student accommodation, or university buildings.

The walk continued down Duke Street, to look at the remains of the back-to-

back houses, then on to the grounds of the bombed-out church of St. Nicholas, where there is a granite monument brought by ship from Ireland. There were also plaques telling the story of the migration and hardships borne by the immigrants.

The walk lasted longer than expected due to the Big Dig blocking the route to the docks where the coach was parked, and also due to the Lord Mayor's parade. We were all glad to arrive at the coach and put our feet up as it was one of the hottest days of the year, but as Dr McKeane said, "It was great fun!"

Chester Canal Walk

Twelve members of the Society joined Geoff Taylor on a walk to learn about Chester's canal.

The walk began by heading west, from Frodsham Street, down the steps onto the towpath, only to learn that we were walking in an old

quarry, the stone having been used to construct walls and buildings in the city. Geoff showed us the surviving Roman remains and many other features relating to the history of the city. We were all surprised to learn that the sluices are still opened and closed manually to control the flow of water. The contrast between the old commercial use of the canal, and the use of the canal today, was shown every step of the way.

We completed our walk at Taylor's boatyard, looking at the buildings we had been shown in Geoff's talk.

The walk was enjoyed by everyone and was very interesting, showing the familiar city of Chester from a new perspective. It was a lovely evening, and we all thanked Geoff for helping us to appreciate the importance of canals, both in the past, and in the present.

Jackie Cowte
Membership Secretary



USEFUL LINKS

Runcorn and District Historical Society
website :
www.runcornhistsoc.org.uk

Runcorn Locks Restoration Society
website :
www.runcornlocks.org.uk

Norton Priory Museum and Gardens website :
www.nortonpriory.org.uk

Halton Castle website :
www.haltoncastle.org

Ross Bullock website :
www.rossbullock.co.uk

Cheshire Records Office
website :
www.cheshire.gov.uk/recoff

Family History Society of Cheshire website :
www.fhsc.org.uk

New acquisitions have been two 18th century mortgage documents relating to the Brooke family, a Centenary booklet for Camden Methodist Church, an ICI magazine Vol.1 January-June 1928, a Ragged School Centenary booklet (photocopy) and 13 photographs relating to Heath House and its staff.

Advice and assistance has been given to Halton Lea Library on their new walk leaflet, "Round Mersey Road and High Street". I have also been doing some research on historical dates for the Society Calendar 2008 and have been in discussions for holding a seminar in January 2008 on "How to Research Your Local History" with sections on local history, family history, history of buildings and architecture, etc.

Alex Cowan
Hon. Archivist

Archive Report

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 Cowte :
Meetings Secretary

Dianne Jackson :
Membership

Les Brown

Ray Miller

Clr Sue Blackmore