

Cheshire West & Chester Council History and Heritage

Spring 2015

FREE Newsletter from Chester Community History & Heritage

Onward Christian Soldiers!

The Salvation Army sought to bring salvation to the poor, destitute and hungry by meeting both their "spiritual and physical needs". Founded in London in 1878 by William and Catherine Booth, they were vehemently opposed to alcohol, smoking and gambling – which often caused resentment and hostility within the very communities that they were trying to save.

The Army began in Chester in 1881 and after just a few months it gained the disapproval of Saughall inhabitants when it marched through the village singing loudly. A letter to the local paper complained that *"The Salvation Army are allowed nightly to parade streets shouting and singing...to the serious inconvenience of the public. Let them conduct their services in the places they have taken for that purpose. They may there shout their war whoops, do their marching, drill to their hearts content"*. Despite this, the Army's popularity grew and the congregation always filled the Pavilion Skating Rink, opposite the railway station, for each of the four Sunday services, even the early one at 7am!



The Pavilion Skating Rink

It was the habit of the Army to meet each Sunday at the drinking fountain in Boughton, before marching down to the Pavilion. At that time Boughton was one of the poorest areas of the city and notorious for criminal activity – an ideal place for the Army to preach and hopefully "save" the inhabitants from their sinful ways" - they referred to it as a Stronghold of Satan. On Sunday 26 March they gathered as usual at the fountain but instead of skirting the worst streets as they normally did, it was decided to parade right through the area, led by their Captain, Miss Miriam Falconbridge. Two policemen accompanied them.

When they reached the corner of Seaville Street they were faced with a threatening crowd of about 600 people, milling across the road and blocking their way.

The policemen ordered the mob to move aside but within minutes a volley of missiles, including stones, ashes and cinders together with rotten eggs and vegetables were hurled at the Army, who made no attempt to retaliate but kept walking down Steven Street. At the canal bridge however more thugs appeared and the danger escalated. Miss Falconbridge was struck on the head and knocked unconscious and both policemen were hit. At this stage the rioters attacked anyone who was around the area, even if they had nothing to do with the Army. Despite the terror surrounding them the bedraggled Army managed to reach the Pavilion but by mid afternoon the crowd – which by this time had grown considerably and included women and children – was on the march too, headed for City Road. They sang bawdy parodies of the Salvationist hymns and brandished their "flags" – brooms and umbrellas topped with filthy dishcloths and rags – according to the local paper it was a scene of *uncontrolled rowdyism*. Anyone who foolishly came near was attacked indiscriminately. Police reinforcements were hurriedly sent in and the crowd dispersed, although tensions remained high and by late evening even innocent passers-by were being beaten and assaulted – it was one of the worst days of violence that Chester had ever seen.

Preliminary proceedings against the alleged ringleaders took place on 30 March.



Boughton Drinking Fountain

The Chronicle reported: *"The majority were unmistakably roughs of decidedly criminal appearance; some of the women were sallow-faced and of a low type of physique, but most of the men were big, hulking, powerful fellows and included some of the most troublesome characters in the town"*. Naturally enough all those accused denied that they had been involved but it was a letter to the court from General Booth himself that swayed the magistrates. He begged that the miscreants be treated leniently to avoid further trouble and suggested that it was the decision to march through Boughton which had so inflamed the crowd and which would not be repeated. Thus, only 8 of the original accused were sent to the Quarter Sessions - 3 of these were discharged and the other 5 were each required to provide sureties to keep the peace. There was outrage at such lenient sentencing but the main aim was to calm down the situation and not to create martyrs and it was implied that the Salvation Army had been at fault for foolishly provoking the violence. It was also widely believed that local publicans – who hated the Army for their anti alcohol stance – had fuelled the riot by priming the crowd with beer beforehand and by using their premises to plan the revolt later named "Black Sunday".

William Booth's vision of his army fighting the enemies of drunkenness, sin and wickedness was tempered by the riots which had taken place in Chester and other cities and he determined to win converts by other methods such as social provision. Perhaps Black Sunday changed the course of history and helped the Army to evolve into the much respected community it is today.



William Booth today.



Cheshire West
and Chester

Editorial

Well what a year 2014 proved to be! Our commemoration of the Great War, together with the associated projects from our partners, was celebrated at a final event in Chester Cathedral in November, which proved to be a resounding success. We are all working on ways to capture the legacy of the past year – watch this space!

We hope you enjoy the events and exhibitions that we have planned for the next few months – if you have any photographs which you would like to see included we would love to have them – we scan them and return to you, using the copies in our displays.

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Bowling Green Inn, Brook Street

Many thanks to Mr Kenyon who brought in an album of wonderful photographs which had been collected by George Taylor, landlord of the Bowling Green Inn in the early 20thC. This rare photograph shows the original Inn before it was rebuilt in 1911. More images from this collection can be seen at cheshireimagebank.org.uk

Don't Miss...

To accompany our exhibitions we have arranged the following events:

From Barn Lane to Boatyard

18 March 1.30 – meet outside Chester Town Hall £5

A guided walk with Gerry Tighe, looking at King Street, a look inside the medieval Bonewaldesthorpe's Tower and down to the canal basin.



Babycham and Bitter Beers

17 April and 20 June 1.30pm £3

Our much-loved local historian Len Morgan is back with a slideshow looking at the old pubs of Chester – with not a fruit machine in sight!

From Workhouse to City Centre

23 April 6.30pm meet at Hoole Community Centre £3

Led by guide John Whittingham, this walk from Boughton starts at the paupers grave in the grounds of the old workhouse then along the canal to the city.



Chester Life in the Months Leading to August 1914

6 May 1.30pm – meet at Chester History & Heritage £5

This guided walk led by Gerry Tighe looks at Chester before war changed everything – where people shopped and worked, where they went to school and how they entertained themselves

Til Death Do Us Part

15 May – meet at Overleigh Rd Cemetery gates 1.30pm. £3.

This time Len Morgan takes us on a stroll through Overleigh Cemetery, looking at the variety of Victorian monuments there, including the grave of the sad little Chewing Gum Girl and the renowned Chester architect John Douglas.



As always, places on our events are limited so booking is essential – call in or ring us to book 01244 972210

Past exhibitions



From July – December 2014 we displayed our wartime exhibitions – Dulce Et Decorum Est, The Nurses Story, HMS Chester and From Bombs to Bandages – which used images and stories from our own collections and also the wonderful photographs and family memories which were brought in at our Roadshow - many thanks to everyone who contributed. Throughout the summer we also offered help with tracing WW1 ancestors and Gerry Tighe engaged audiences with his reading of WW1 poetry, together with tales of Chester life during 1914-1918. Donations to these events totalled £107 and this has been sent to The Royal British Legion – The Poppy Appeal. Again thanks go to Gerry as well as Di, Betty and Audrey from the Cheshire Family History group.

In August we held our event Oh What a Lovely War which was a recreation of wartime life in Chester 1916, together with a wartime wedding, sing-along's, re-enactment and even a taste of trench tea! We had well over 500 visitors who all enjoyed themselves – despite the threat of having to take the King's Shilling! Many thanks to the Cheshire Pals (we could not have done it without you!), Louise and Jackie, and Mike and Christina Mercer from the Albion Inn. We can't forget Natalie and Ross for "getting married" in front of an audience and to Paul Crofts for saving the day with his musical skills. Well done to everyone!



Photographs courtesy of Bob Hadfield.

Present exhibitions

Oh You Pretty Things until 27 March



This exhibition looks at a decade that seemed to be a mix of glitz and glam and trouble and strife, depending on your age and point of view! As part of this exhibition, Film Chester (formerly the Chester Film Co-op) will be premiering a new short film: "Changing Times". Transporting viewers back in time to 1970's Chester, the film highlights some of the many changes to the city during the decade of flared trousers, the three day week and disco!

Band of Gold until 27 March



A look at Chester weddings – from Lady Margaret Grosvenor marrying the Prince of Teck in 1894 to a 1970s registry office do.

Voluntary Action on the Home Front until 27 March



Set up days after the outbreak of the Great War, the Council of Social Welfare (later to become Chester Voluntary Action) co-ordinated the provision of assistance on the Home Front, providing relief to those in need due to the war.

Future exhibitions

Cheers! The Pubs, Inns and Taverns of Chester 30 March – 26 June

At one time there were said to be 365 hostleries in Chester – a different one for every day! Over the past years this number has certainly decreased but it doesn't seem so long ago that there was a pub on almost every street corner and this photographic exhibition takes a look at many of those well remembered locals, where friends and families met up after a hard day, including The Swan in Foregate Street, the Market Tavern in George Street and the Mariners Arms in New Crane Street. So raise a glass to the old pubs of Chester and reminisce with us!



Spotlight on Blacon 30 March – 26 June

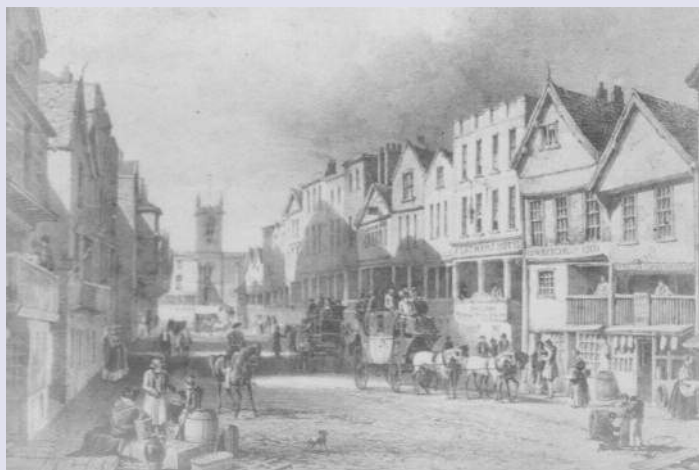
Described in the Domesday Book as having four ploughs and a fishery, Blacon now is a large scale township with a renowned community spirit. With ancient pathways and evidence of the Siege of Chester nearby, Blacon was long established as an agricultural area where "the atmosphere is the most bracing in the District". Throughout WWII a large army camp was built there and the post war period saw the rise in local authority and private housing that we know today. This foyer display looks at images from our collections and will show how much Blacon has changed over the years.

Working in partnership with Chester History and Heritage, Film Chester (formerly the Chester Film Co-op) is inviting schools and youth groups to take part in its first film-making competition. As part of the "Spotlight on Blacon" exhibition, Film Chester is looking for short films featuring stories, history and memories of Blacon. Please contact filmchester@gmail.com for further details.



An Elegant Entertainment

For over 300 years the Feathers Inn in Bridge Street was one of the foremost hostelries in Chester and it was one of the largest houses in the city with large gardens, an orchard and courtyard. It stood immediately opposite Pierpoint Lane and a few yards north of the still existing Feathers Lane – so named because it gave access to the back premises and large stables.



Feather's Early 1800's.

Described in 1863 as “a comfortable, old-fashioned, rather tumble- down looking hotel”, The Feathers in its heyday had been of prime importance in the city with its open galleries, oak staircases, bar parlours and smoke rooms. Indeed, in 1682 the Duke of Monmouth attended a public supper there and the local gentry were frequent visitors. A number of the city companies held their meetings at the Feathers and in 1717 the Smiths Company celebrated the anniversary of George I accession with festivities that cost them almost 18s. In 1768 Thomas Grosvenor and Richard Wilbraham Bootle were elected MPs for the city. They were carried in triumph through the streets to the inn for dinner where “a sumptuous and elegant entertainment was provided at which a numerous company of gentlemen attended”. Indeed, so much election strategy was plotted at the Inn that the parlour was dubbed the “Little Assembly Room”.

From the beginning of the 19thC the inn grew in importance as a coaching house, under the supervision of the licensee, the redoubtable Mrs Mercy Tomlinson, who had moved there from the White Lion. In 1812 an advert from the inn informed the public that the following coaches now left daily from The Feathers: The *Highflyer* to Shrewsbury, The Commercial and the Morning Star to Liverpool, The Prince Regent to mid-Wales, the *Trafalgar* to Manchester and all of the Mail coaches to London. The advert promised that “the public may rely on every attention being paid to their comfort and accommodation and as the establishment of the various coaches is little inferior to the Mail they have the best founded hope of being rewarded in a manner commensurable to their

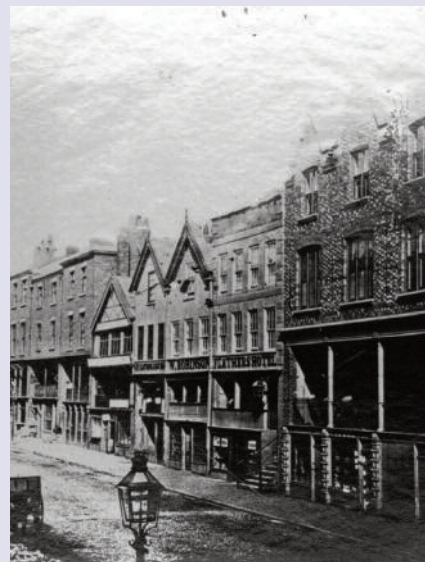
increasing exertions” A public dinner was given to honour Mrs Tomlinson in 1823, after her London Mail service vastly exceeded the time taken by rival coaches and the early editions of the London news papers were delivered to the diners, including the mayor and leading tradesmen. Mercy was a colourful and controversial character who was up before the magistrates on several occasions for overcharging – an opportunist, she came out into the crowd gathered on Bridge Street to celebrate the birth of a son to Earl Grosvenor and distributed bottles of sherry to toast the new heir.

The abdication of Napoleon in 1814 was celebrated with great rejoicing and in Chester the streets were brilliantly decorated and illuminated – the Feathers displayed eight transparencies – and in 1816 the Chester Freemasons organised their procession from the Inn. Other local or national celebrations were always marked by decorations and special dinners. The coronation of William IV in 1831 involved a lavish procession where a trumpeter, robed in scarlet, was mounted on a beautiful piebald mare from The Feathers stables. At this time between 30 and 40 coaches left the inn each day.



Feather's Lane

Over the next years the importance of the hostelry together with the general coaching industry passed away with the coming of the railways. The Feathers Inn was pulled down in 1863 and the site later remodelled for St Michael's Arcade – now an entrance to the shopping mall. All that is left of this 18thC grand hostelry is the dark and narrow lane which once echoed with the ring of horses' hooves, shouting ostlers running out with lamps aloft and, the rattle of coaches carrying weary travellers from far and wide to the Feathers Inn.



The Feathers before Closure & Demolition in 1863.

When The Lights Go On Again

In 2015 we celebrate 70 years since the end of WWII. These extracts from the Chester Chronicle on 12 May 1945 capture the spirit of a city ready to party after 6 years of worry, hardship and despair.



VE Day Party in Pitt Street.

On Monday afternoon there was a news flash that the German Foreign Minister had announced Germany's total surrender. Immediately spirits rose and people began to decorate their homes and business premises. Streets were gaily decorated and flags were flown from top windows. Shops were hung in red, white, & blue streamers and most had the "V" signs prominently displayed.

It was about 7.30pm on Monday evening that the BBC announcement came that the war in Europe was over, Tuesday would be VE Day, and Churchill would broadcast at 3pm. In the Gaumont, the manager Mr. Ronnie Padgett announced it to loud cheers & the audience rose to sing the National Anthem. People made their way towards town and licensed houses were full. Soon after 9.30pm crowds of young people, including service personnel, linked arms & began to march round the streets singing popular songs. Buses were crowded and people, all very good humoured, sang at the tops of their voices - "Roll out the Barrel" and "There'll always be an England" were popular. The crowds were good humoured on both evenings and not a single arrest was made. Outside the Town Hall were hanging baskets of flowers - the fallen of the last war had not been forgotten & bunches of red tulips had been placed on the Cathedral Cenotaph.

We had waited so long for the War in Europe to end that when it came, it was almost an anti climax. The principal emotion appeared to be that of relief for horrors outlived and of thanksgiving for hard-won victory. The crowded Thanksgiving Service in the Cathedral on Tuesday was attended by at least 3,000 people, with the Dean leading the service which commenced with the National Anthem. Silent prayers were offered in remembrance of the Fallen and the offering was taken for churches in enemy occupied countries to help in their reconstruction.

Thanksgiving services were also held in the parish churches at Christleton, Hoole, Upton and other denominational churches.

From early Tuesday morning the Rows were crowded and tradesmen garlanded their vans as for old May Day festivities. Children hung out of bus windows waving Union Jacks at the passers by, although it was pouring with rain! In Newtown flags and bunting were hung in such numbers that the houses were practically hidden and lamp posts were painted with red, white & blue stripes. At night bonfires were lit in Trafford Street and in Talbot Street a gigantic children's party was held - points had been pooled & rations offered and each child received a bag of sweets & ice cream.

Boughton's streets were crowded on VE Day. Fosbrook, Victor & Steven Streets were the most gaily decorated. In Fosbrook street children danced on the top of an air - raid shelter and Victor Street, Sandy Lane & Filkins Lane all had bonfires.

A large bonfire was lit at 11pm on Hoole playing fields and the large crowd did not disperse until well after midnight. Groups of happy young people danced in Faulkner Street until a late hour on both nights.

Victory tea parties were held in Prescott Street & Phillip Street.

In Christleton flags and bunting were displayed from the residences in the district. Peals were rung on the church bells and a huge bonfire arranged by the children was lighted on a site near Littleheath Pond. There were also fireworks. In Upton flags & bunting were flying on the Parish Church, and at the Golf club in the evening a bonfire was lit and fireworks were let off. A Victory Carnival Dance was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday. There was a large tea party followed by races, donkey rides & dances in Sydney Street off Saughall Road on Wednesday.



Victory Celebrations.

Chester Royal Infirmary was decorated. All adult patients who were well enough listened to BBC broadcasts through headphones and a special high tea was greatly enjoyed.

The Women's War Services Club canteen at the Stanley Palace was open with a full complement of helpers on VE Day & Wednesday from 10am - 10pm. On Tuesday free food & beer were supplied all day to members of the forces.

The first baby born in Chester on VE Day was a son for Mrs. Hodgson, Holly Cottage, Christleton, who arrived at 2.15am in the Chester Nursing home, Stanley Place.

Chester in this historic week rather "missed the bus". The streets on Monday burst into a blaze of coloured flags & streamers and the city wore the trappings of festivity... but the great day itself having come there was apart from the Cathedral and other church services little in the way of organized celebrations. On Wednesday however the city went into action as the Mayor gave orders for loudspeakers to be fixed outside the Town Hall and for dance tunes to be broadcast in the evening. The news quickly spread that there would be dancing in the square so just after 10pm it was estimated 5000 were present. All the upper windows of the Town Hall were lit and The Mayor and Mayoress (Alderman & Mrs. W. Matthews Jones) received a great ovation when they appeared on the balcony, with the crowd dancing and singing until midnight.



A VE Day Party in Trafford Street.

Events diary - SPRING 2015

Lache & Westminster Park Local History Group hold various events and activities – please contact Linda Shuttleworth, shuttleworths@talktalk.net for further details.

FEBRUARY

- 2 Frodsham & District History Society, Main Street Community Church, Frodsham 7.45pm. Ken Bishop, **"The History of Mather and Platt"**
- 4 Backford, Mollington & District Local History Society, Backford & Mollington Village Hall 7.30pm. Ian Boumphry, **"Yesterday's Wirral"**
- 4 Chester Canal Heritage Trust, Chester Boughton Hall Cricket Club, Boughton Hall Avenue Chester 8pm. Colin Edmondson, **"A Look at the River Weaver Through the Ages"**
- 10 Saltney & Saltney Ferry History Group, Drama Studio, St David's High School, Saltney Ferry 7pm. Anthony Anakin Smith, **"Slave Ships Parkgate"**
- 10 Weaverham History Society, University Primary Academy 7.30pm. Mr Michael Crumplin, **"The Bloody Fields of Waterloo-medical support for Wellington's greatest battle"**
- 11 Malpas Field Club, Malpas High St Church 7.45pm. Euan Bryson, **"The Great Cattle Plague in Cheshire"**
- 18 Pulford & Poulton Local History Group, Pulford Village Hall 7.30pm. Mr Tom Jones, **"The Miller's Tale"**
- 18 Chester Civic Trust, Grosvenor Museum 7.30pm. Adrian Sumner, **"Art Nouveau in Europe"**
- 23 Chester Society for Landscape History, Grosvenor Museum 7.30pm. Mark Rogers, **"The Hedgerow Trees of Cheshire"**
- 29 Chester Family History Group, Cheshire County Sports Club, Plas Newton Lane 7.30pm. Colin Herbert, **"The Adventures of Great Uncle Ernest during the Great War"**

MARCH

- 2 Frodsham & District History Society, Main Street Community Church, Frodsham 7.45pm. Tony Bostock, **"The Holcrofts of Vale Royal"**. AGM.
- 4 Backford, Mollington & District Local History Society, Backford & Mollington Village Hall 7.30pm Mark Bevan, **"White Mischief and the Vale Royal Legacy"**.

- 10 Weaverham History Society, University Primary Academy, 7.30pm. Hugh Beggs **"Hedges Round Edges"**. AGM.
- 10 Saltney & Saltney Ferry History Group, Drama Studio, St David's High School, Saltney Ferry 7pm. Geoff Pickard, **"The History of Chester Leadworks"**
- 11 Malpas Field Club, Malpas High Street Church 7.45pm. Jonathan Pepler, **"Cheshire Maps and Mapmakers"**
- 18 Pulford & Poulton Local History Group, Pulford Village Hall 7.30pm. Mr Alister Williams, **"Photos of Wrexham Part II"**
- 18 Chester Civic Trust, Grosvenor Museum 7.30pm. Angela Harrington, **"New Developments in Manchester"**.
- 18 Guided Walk, **"From Barn Lane to Boatyard"** with Gerry Tighe. £5, meet outside Chester Town Hall 1.30pm. Booking essential at Chester History & Heritage 01244 972210.
- 23 Chester Society for Landscape History, Grosvenor Museum 7.30pm. David Hopewell, **"The Roman Roads of North West Wales"**
- 27 Chester Society for Landscape History, Grosvenor Museum 7.30pm. Stephen Dean, **"Great War Camps on Cannock Chase"**

APRIL

- 1 Backford, Mollington & District Local History Society, Backford & Mollington Village Hall 7.30pm Gavin Hunter, **"The Lost Halls of Wirral"**
- 8 Malpas Field Club, Malpas High Street Church 7.45pm. Johnny Gillett (The Journeyman), **"Tales from the Sandstone Trail"**.
- 13 Frodsham & District History Society, Main Street Community Church, Frodsham 7.45pm Dr George Eccleston, **"The Tragedy of Kirk O'Field: The Murder of Darnley"**

- 14 Weaverham History Group, University Primary Academy 7.30pm. H Warrender, **"Manchester Oddities"**
- 14 Saltney & Saltney Ferry History Group, Drama Studio, St David's High School, Saltney Ferry 7pm. Jill Burton, **"The Servants of Erdigg"**
- 17 Chester History & Heritage, St Michael's Church Bridge St 1.30pm. Len Morgan, **"Babycham and Bitter Beers"** £3, booking essential 01244 972210
- 23 Guided Walk **"From Workhouse to City Centre"** 6.30pm Hoole Community Centre. £3, booking essential at Chester History & Heritage, St Michael's Church Bridge St 01244 972210.
- 27 Chester Society for Landscape History, Grosvenor Museum 7.30pm. Stephen Dean, **"Great War Camps on Cannock Chase"**

MAY

- 6 Backford, Mollington & District Local History Society, Backford & Mollington Village Hall 7.30pm AGM and Members Meeting.
- 6 Guided walk **"Chester in the Months Leading up to August 1914"** with Gerry Tighe. £5, meet at Chester History & Heritage 1.30pm. Booking essential 01244 972210.
- 11 Frodsham & District History Society, Main Street Community Church, Frodsham 7.45pm. David Hearn, **"The Battle of Waterloo – a Near Run Thing"**
- 12 Weaverham History Society, University Primary Academy 7.30pm. Gavin Hunter, **"Lord of the Isles"**
- 12 Saltney & Saltney Ferry History Group, Drama Studio, St David's High School, Saltney Ferry 7pm. AGM.
- 15 Tour of Overleigh Cemetery with Len Morgan, **"Til Death Do Us Part"**, meet at Overleigh Road entrance 1.30pm. Booking essential at Chester History & Heritage, St Michael's Church Bridge St 01244 972210.