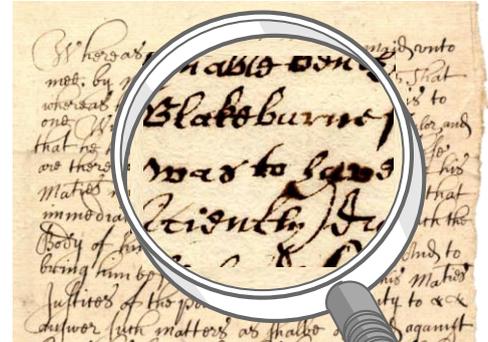


# News from the Archives

Newsletter of Lancashire Archives



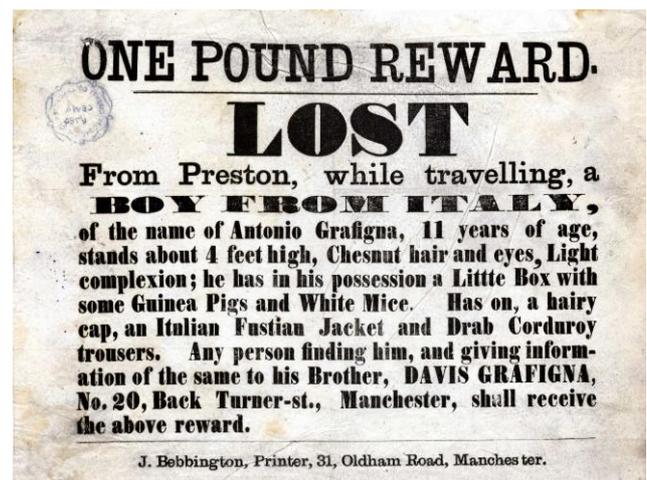
## *The Extraordinary Tale of the 'Lost Boy from Italy'*

When we give talks we often wax lyrical about the incredible documents and the stories they hold that have at times captured our imaginations and inspired us. Truth be told, we all have a favourite or two, some of which you can see in our '75 Years, 74 Treasures' exhibition', currently at the Museum of Lancashire until 27 September.

A particular favourite of mine is a poster from the Warrington County Borough collection (CBWA). The poster, one of many in the collection describing anything from theft to runaway apprentices and husbands, details the loss of a boy from Italy, at Preston, while travelling (CBWA 1/784). It is undated, but we believe is from about 1860/61. It gives the boy's name as Antonio Grafigna, aged 11 years and describes him in detail as having chesnut eyes and hair, wearing a hairy cap, Italian fustian jacket and drab corduroy trousers.

One of the most intriguing aspects of his description is that he has in his

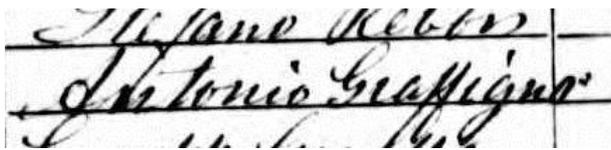
possession guinea pigs and white mice, which suggests that Antonio was an Italian street entertainer.



I have often wondered what happened to Antonio and whether he was found – his brother, named as 'Davis' had offered a £1 reward for information.

Back in 1831 a fourteen year old Italian boy called Carlo Ferrari from Piedmont had been murdered by the 'London Burkers', named because they were believed to have copied Burke and Hare by murdering people and selling their bodies for anatomical research. Carlo had been a street entertainer with white mice. Knowing this I have always feared the worst for Antonio.

However, I recently revisited this document as part of the Preston Arts Association creative writing project looking at Victorian Lancashire. Quite by chance I felt the urge to put Antonio's name into Ancestry and was amazed to discover that he appears on the 1861 census, aged 11, in a house on Lumb Square in Leeds along with 20 or so other Italians including his brother Davide Graffigna aged 14 – his name has been mis-transcribed as Davilbe. Their occupations are given as 'musician', which has been described as a common euphemism for organ grinder. Without a date on the poster, it is impossible to ascertain whether this was before or after Antonio went missing in Preston. It was at this point that things took a very unexpected turn.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Antonio Graffigna". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

I decided to clarify whether Antonio's brother was called Davilbe or Davide and made a search on the Internet.

Astonishingly the search resulted in a link to an article written for the *Carousel Organ*, issue 40 – July 2009 with the title 'Luigi Bacigalupo to Louis Bacigalupi: Inventor of the Paper Roll Organ to Hand Organ Revivalist. Part I: The Paris, London and Berlin Saga' by Dr Fred Dahlinger.

In his article Dr Dahlinger talks about the Graffigna brothers and their appearance on the 1861 census. He then goes on to tell us that they eventually opened an organ rental shop and bar in Berlin. Antonio's story goes further however as he eventually established a company making barrel organs called 'Cocchi, Bacigalupo and



Graffigna'. This company was very successful and operated until 1904 when Antonio died. His share of the money from the business went to his son, who is sadly not named, but at least we know he had a family.

The final amazing discovery however, was this photograph of Antonio.

Sadly our document, which captures a moment in Antonio's life, is also evidence of a history that is often dark and involved what was essentially child trafficking.



Italian children were purchased from their parents, sometimes kidnapped, often by a 'band of villains associated with modern slave traders', otherwise known as *Padroni*. They would teach these children to sing or play and while some managed to save money and eventually prosper, as in Antonio and Davide Graffigna's case, while under the control of the *Padroni* they were often abused, beaten and otherwise cruelly treated, being packed into rooms in unhealthy and insanitary conditions.

Also, because they were foreign and classed as travelling musicians they were not covered by developing legislation controlling the employment of children in Britain. With this in mind it makes you wonder if Antonio went missing, or if he was actually running away in 1861.

There will be an afternoon of readings from the Preston Arts project as part of the Preston Arts Festival on Friday 16 October from 2pm to 4pm at Lancashire Archives.

**Victoria McCann, Senior Archivist**

## ***New beginnings – back to the archives***

September is back to school month. The start of the Autumn term provides an opportunity to take another look at family history, to continue a research project or to learn a new skill. What will you do?

At Lancashire Archives we have millions of documents covering 9 centuries of Lancashire's history and telling stories of the people who have lived and worked here in time gone by. We have unique and wonderful original resources for anyone with Lancashire ancestors as well as an increasing number of archives online through Ancestry and Find My Past. We're open 5 days each week, with a late-night opening every Tuesday until 8.30pm and a weekend opening on the second Saturday of each month. One recent visitor wrote to say thank you and added: 'I cannot believe I've been missing so much for so long'.

This month, in addition to our usual free searchroom facility, we are offering:

- Latin classes run by Lancashire Adult Learning, starting here again on 14 September \*
- Our Talks programme, now on Wednesday afternoon, beginning on 9 September
- Special archive-related exhibitions in the Museum of Lancashire and Morecambe Library
- Special events for Heritage Open Day on Saturday 12 September
- Our regular monthly Getting to Know Lancashire Archives session on Friday 11 September from 2.30pm for people who want to discover how to find the records which will help their research \*
- A free day school for local historians on digital content and social media

Advance booking is required for the events marked \* and there is a fee for the Latin class

We were hoping to have a stand at the Family History Fair in Blackburn on 19 September but this has been cancelled. Why not call in to see us in Bow Lane instead, and look again at your family history? We offer free internet access, either on the Public Network computers or through wi-fi on your own laptop or tablet. New sources are appearing online all the time and can often provide a way through that brick wall.

Watch out for a palaeography taster session next month to help you work your way through that indecipherable old handwriting!

**Jacquie Crosby, Archives Manager**

## ***Heritage Open Day 2015***

Once again Lancashire Archives will be taking part in Heritage Open Days, when some of Preston's most intriguing buildings open their doors. This year we will be open on Saturday 12 September and there will be two exhibitions to enjoy as well a chance to look behind the scenes and to explore one of our eight strongrooms.

In our 75th Anniversary year find out about the history of the service and of our iconic building as well as seeing some rare documents relating to another important anniversary, that of the Jacobite Battle of Preston in 1715.

Tours will take place at 11am, 12pm, 1.30pm and 2.30pm. No need to book but please assemble in the lecture room.

**Kathryn Newman, Archivist**



**heritage open days**

## Collections

### Papers relating to the censorship of the film 'Five Nights' (CBP acc11945)

In 1915 Preston Borough Council found itself in court being sued for libel, after the Chief Constable viewed the film Five Nights and decided that it was not suitable to be shown in the town. The subsequent case caused a great deal of controversy, and the court papers contain summaries of the film outlining exactly which scenes were problematic, as well as testimony from members of the public. The case eventually led to a landmark ruling which allowed local authorities to effectively ban a film which had previously been passed by the BBFC. The film was subsequently lost, but these papers contain two frames from the film itself, thought to be the only surviving remnants.



### Kirkdale Gaol (QG)

A recent deposit included two fascinating volumes relating to Kirkdale Gaol. A chaplain's character book for the years 1856-1859 records children held at the prison, with reports on the cause of their imprisonment and their home circumstances. The second volume included applications for the post of hangman at the prison, with notes from their interviews. Interestingly one of the initial applicants was Samuel Dougal of Ware, who eventually gained notoriety and was himself executed after committing the "Moat Farm Murder".

**Our next Saturday opening is 12 September**

## 74 treasures for 75 years

Archives as diverse as letters and diaries written by local folk over hundreds of years, and a lost property register of items left on Blackpool trams in the 1930s, are all now on show in a superb exhibition.

'75 years, 74 Treasures' features a wide range of stunning archives, brought together to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Lancashire County Council's archive service. The exhibition will be on display as follows:

Museum of Lancashire, Stanley Street, Preston from Saturday 15 August to Saturday 27 September.

Lancaster Maritime Museum, Custom House, St. George's Quay, Lancaster from Saturday 3 October to Sunday 10 January 2016.

The exhibition is supported by a talk on Monday 9 November at 1pm at the Lancaster Maritime Museum.

Entry to the talk is free, but booking is required as places are limited.

For more information, or to book a place on the talk, visit [www.lancashire.gov.uk/archives](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/archives), telephone 01772 533039 or email [record.office@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:record.office@lancashire.gov.uk)

Our first Wednesday afternoon talk is on the 9 September:

### **The Blackpool Trenches and the battle of Loos, Nigel Neil**

All talks take place on a Wednesday lunchtime from 12.30pm to 1.30pm

**ANY  
COMMENTS?**

*If you have any comments on, or suggestions for this newsletter please send them to: The Editor, News from the Archives, Lancashire Archives, Bow Lane, Preston, PR1 2RE. Telephone: 01772 533039. Email: [record.office@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:record.office@lancashire.gov.uk)*