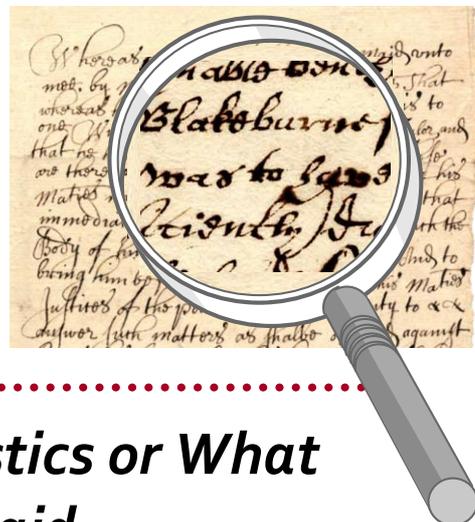


News from the Archives

Newsletter of Lancashire Archives



Archive Service update

Spring is on the way and our new staff are settling in and coping well with an increased number of visitors, enquiries and requests for copies. The Family History Surgery last month was a success and we'll be seeking to develop the idea further. We have an exciting programme of events lined up from this month onwards.

The Archives User Group raised some helpful points about parking, lockers, the electronic display board, WiFi and LANCAT. If you experience any difficulties using our online catalogue from home please would you let us know. We're monitoring reported problems so if you send a brief email to record.office@lancashire.gov.uk with details of the problem, and the date and time we'll ensure that it is logged.

Jacquie Crosby, Archive Manager

Statistics or What You Said

We've just received our results from last autumn's national Survey of Visitors to British Archives. The number of returns was small – about a third of previous surveys – so we can't place great significance on the results but there are some interesting trends. I was delighted to see that our users gave Lancashire Archives a rating of 9.5 out of 10 overall (9.4 out of 10 at the last survey) and that satisfaction with our document production delivery system was 100% (up from 96%). Not surprisingly, satisfaction with opening hours had dropped from 95% to 90% with only 40% (compared with 75% previously) stating they were 'very satisfied'. 6% were not satisfied.

What was particularly interesting was the greatly increased usage of the website before a visit – 61% compared with 54% – and use of the online catalogue, up from 39% to 53%. So more than half our users do look at LANCAT before they visit – which is wonderful! The other interesting statistic was the average length of a visit. 18 months ago this was 3.3 hours. By last autumn it had increased to 4.5 hours (mean average) with

the mode being a huge 7 hours. So our visitor numbers may have reduced but the people who do come to do research are staying a lot longer.

All at Sea

135 years ago, on 22 April 1882, John Boyle, mate on the *Brilliant Star*, was frozen to death when the ship was lost off Iceland. He was born in Dublin in 1859 and had joined the ship at Runcorn on 18 March 1882. This is just one of dozens of stories uncovered by the volunteers indexing the Lancashire crew lists.

While many of the crews, especially on the coasters, came from Lancashire or the coastal areas of Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man, there are hundreds of names from all over the world – from France, Holland, Germany, Scandinavia, Malta, Canada and America. Crew members often left the ship in a foreign port and were replaced by local seamen. It is obvious that this is going to be a very rich source of information for family historians.

The volunteers are very much enjoying the project and I'm pleased to say that we have been able to recruit Alison Ferguson (our former volunteer support officer) to support them each Tuesday. Some of the volunteers have researched the ships they've indexed, and discovered fascinating, and often tragic tales, of what happened to the vessels after the last entry in the records held in Lancashire Archives.

While the *Brilliant Star* was lost during a voyage, the *Ryelands*, a coaster, was sold and went on to star in the 1950 film, *Treasure Island* and, six years later, as the *Pequod* in *Moby Dick*. She spent some of her retirement at Scarborough and then at Morecambe, where she was destroyed by fire in 1970. The *Greyhound* and the paddle steamer, *Queen of the North*, both run by the Blackpool Passenger Steamboat

Company were, in 1916, requisitioned by the Admiralty for war service. The *Queen of the North* was used as a mine sweeper but unfortunately hit a mine laid by a German U-boat and sank in the North Sea on 20 July 1917. The *Prestonian*, later renamed the *Gower Coast* also fell victim to a German mine on 4 April 1917 – the ship, her cargo of coal and all the crew were lost including the 14-year old steward.

We'll update you on the progress of the project in June when we celebrate Volunteer Week.

The Lancashire Crew list project is being funded by the Federation of Family History Societies.

Jacquie Crosby, Archive Manager

Name	No. of Certificate	Address	First Port of Departure	Date of Discharge	Date and Place of joining present ship	In what Capacity Engaged, and, if Mate or Engineer	Date, Place, and Cause of Death, or Leaving this Ship
Thomas Rhodes	20209	Victoria Terrace Carnel-fogues	Runcorn	20	18/3/82 Runcorn	Mate 20209	22. 4. 82 Iceland Frozen to death Cause of death RHS
					19: Runcorn	AB Cook	do
					20: Runcorn	AB	do
					20: Runcorn	AB	do
					20: Runcorn	OS	do
					20: Runcorn	AB	do

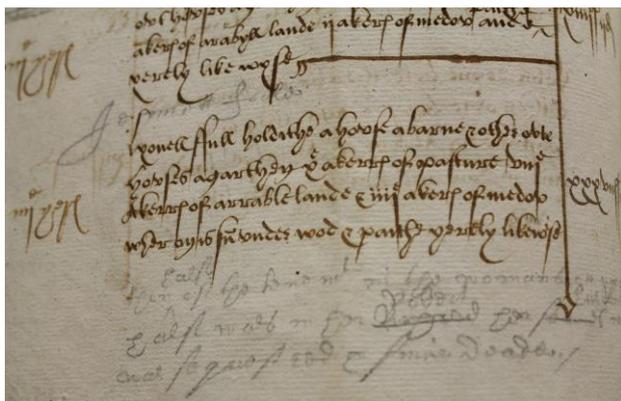
Early Use of Pencil

On being consulted about the fragility of a document recently – a manorial court record from the 1550s in the Petre of Dunkenhalgh collection (DDPT/22) – it was noticed that the document in question had a lot of pencil annotations. On closer inspection it was discovered that the pencil annotations were in a similar, if not the same hand as the main body of text. This led to much questioning and speculation about the early use of pencil, for example when did people start using them?

It is generally accepted that graphite was first found and mined in the Lake District in

the early 16th century, although early pencils consisted of a piece of graphite attached to a shaft of wood as a handle, a bit like a knife, and it wasn't until the 18th century that the standard form of pencil was invented.

However, even if the pencil annotations were added later, it would seem that our example is a particularly early one.



Books of Ours



We had a really successful visit from a school group this month, which saw not only the children having a varied and enjoyable learning experience, but also gave the staff involved a chance to find out things too. The year 6 pupils - from St James CE Primary School – wanted to know more about the

history of books. When their teacher first contacted us, our first thought was that a library might be a better place for them to visit, but, we thought a bit more and soon saw the potential in the huge number of archives in our collections that are in book form: accounts, minutes, diaries, photograph albums and registers of all sorts... We also, of course, have thousands of printed books in our searchroom library and, less well known, quite a few tatty paperbacks slowly yellowing in the staffroom.

The children had a specific, thought-provoking, question in mind, namely were books more valuable in the past? A number of questions struck us: What was involved in making a book in the past? How much did they cost to make and how has this changed? What kinds of 'value' are there? Is the information in unique archives always more important than that in a printed book?

The children arrived, excited to be out of school and, without exception, curious and eager to engage. The star of our show was a medieval book of hours (RCFo/11) beautifully illuminated and no doubt the most visually stunning item in our collections. Conscious that we needed to know our stuff, we had asked Professor Sarah Peverley, a medievalist at the University of Liverpool with an interest in book history, what she could tell us about it. She was kind enough to provide us with a wealth of information (too much, sadly, to repeat here), but one thing in particular fascinated us: that the kneeling figure shown in the initial illuminated capital was the person who commissioned the book.

We discussed the 'value' of this wonderful mid-fifteenth century volume with the children, extremely costly to make back then and irreplaceable now, and weighed its value against archive volumes made in the centuries since, printed history books, and the dog-eared tomes from the staffroom.



On a strongroom tour, they saw the sheer volume of volumes and how much time and effort we spend on keeping them safe. We asked them, who knows what the word 'unique' means? Why is all this stuff important? Reassuringly, the answers 'one of a kind' and 'so we can understand history' came back; clearly archive advocates of the future?

Alex Calvert, one of our conservators, showed the children how books were made in the medieval period and explained how bookbinding – both in terms of methods and materials – has changed over the centuries.



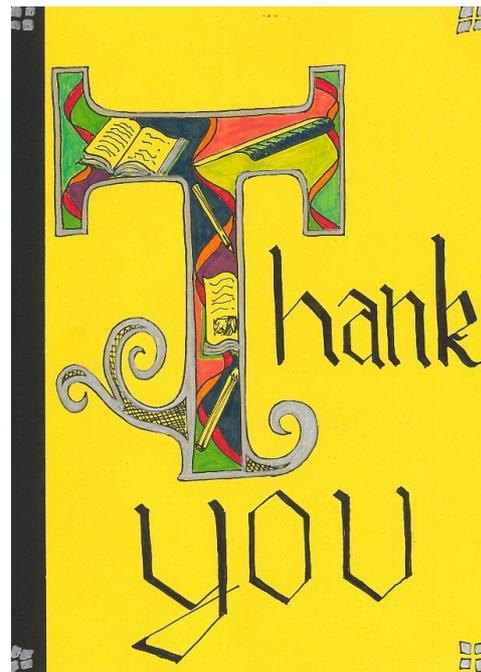
The children also had a chance to have a go at some illumination, which seems to have inspired the subsequent 'Thank You' card which was also covered with comments from the children, including:

'Thank you for the wonderful trip, you were all ever so nice'

'I really enjoyed all the activities and learning about old books and looking at them'

That Alex was nearing her maternity leave didn't escape the children!

'Thank you so much for our trip to the Preston archives. The trip was good and I would like to go again. Good luck to Alex with her baby'



David Tilsley, Senior Archivist

Our next Tuesday late opening is 11 Apr 2017 until 7pm

Our next Saturday opening is 8 Apr 2017 from 10am to 4pm

**ANY
COMMENTS?**

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