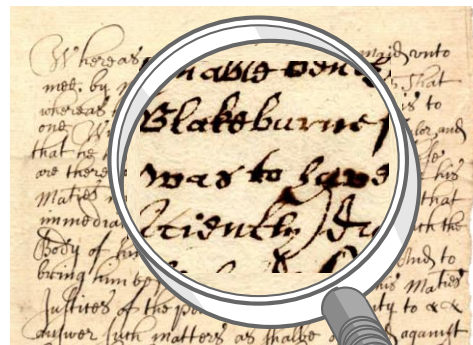


News from the Archives

Newsletter of Lancashire Archives



Archive Service update

This May will be a busy month as I have to submit an application for reviewing our status as an Accredited Archive Service. This should be quite straightforward but we have experienced so many changes, especially over the last 18 months, that there is a lot to report. Staff losses, increased fees and charges and reduced opening hours are in many ways negative, but they have made us work more effectively and there are lots of good things happening too.

Alison Ferguson is not only running the Crew List volunteer project but has now re-joined our searchroom team. Alex, our archive conservator, has a new baby, Max, and we're pleased that we will be getting someone to fill her place for the next few months.

The first talk in our *Beyond Parish Registers* programme was well attended and the next family history talk will be on Wednesday 17 May at 12.30 when Keri Nicholson will talk about using family and estate records for family history research.

Jacque Crosby, Archives Manager

The Fulfilment and the tragic tale of Edith Allonby

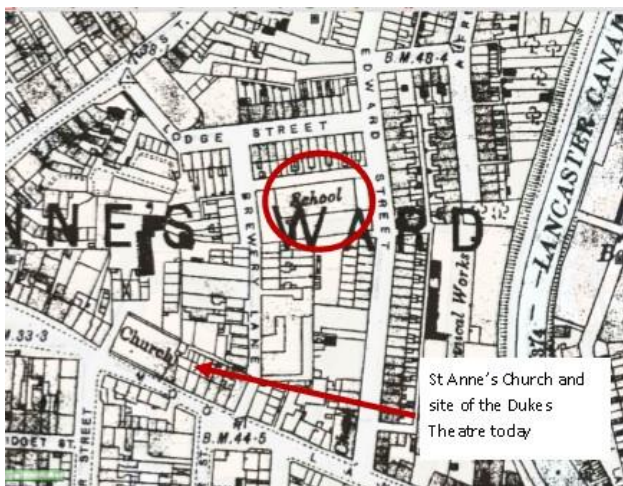
As progress is being made on cleaning the Lancaster and Morecambe coroner's inquests from 1896 to the 1930s (DDHD/CR), attentive volunteers, will often spot interesting or unusual details about particular cases. One such interesting inquest was spotted by Zylpha Thompson and concerns the death of Edith Allonby, head teacher of the girls' school at St Anne's National School, Lancaster (near the site of the Dukes Theatre) from 1901 until 1905 (DDHD/CR/10/35). Zylpha spotted a telegram in the inquest file from the *Daily Mirror* requesting that the manuscript of 'Fulfilment' be found and published and from this intriguing item a fascinating and tragic story unfolded.

Edith was born in 1875 in Cark in Cartmell in Furness. The daughter of Joshua Allonby and Jane Orr, she had two brothers and four sisters. The family lived at Bank Farm on the Holker estate until 1891 when Edith, now fifteen years of age, was living in Liverpool with her brother and two sisters.

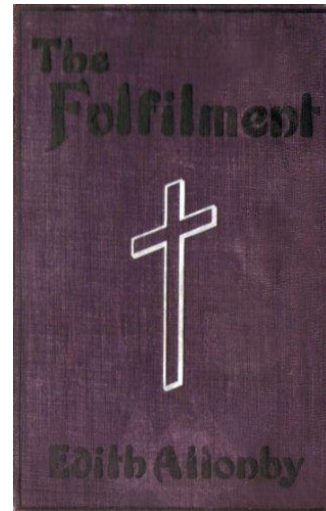
By this time both parents were deceased. While in Liverpool, Edith trained as a teacher, eventually going on to Cheltenham College to complete her training. She secured a job at St Anne's in Lancaster in 1901 and writes in the surviving girls' school log book on 18 March, that '*I Edith Allonby, appointed head mistress of the Girl's Department take charge of this school today*' (SMQ 1/3).



As well as a dedicated teacher, Edith was also a writer, but unlike women authors of romantic fiction of the time, Edith wrote science fiction/fantasy novels. Her first books *Jewel Sowers* (1903) and *Marigold*



(1905) have been described as 'mildly satirical fantasy novels' set on the fictional planet of *Lucifram*. Yet it is her final novel *The Fulfilment* (1905) that plays a central role in this tragic story.



In September 1905, Edith Allonby took her own life by ingesting a quantity of Carbolic Acid. She had taken time to write to her sisters and her publisher to explain her motives. Edith explained that she was not insane, just that she believed her book was too important and she had put too much of herself into it for it not to be published. She was moving out of the way to make way for her work in essence, as she explained herself in one of the letters, '*there is only one way of showing it, and that by dying simply. When I am once out of the way the big stumbling-block has been removed. People can no longer think I have written with a fanciful irreverence.*' The book was eventually published after careful consideration by her family and publishers, Greening & Co, and is even available as a Kindle edition today.

Although this tragic tale is interesting because of the unusual circumstances surrounding Edith's death, it is also interesting because of the particular genre of Edith's writing. By the 1940s the science fiction/fantasy genre had reached its peak yet only 10 to 15 per cent of authors were women. For a woman to be writing this type of literature in the early Edwardian period is therefore seemingly unusual, certainly interesting. Bengali science fiction authors Begum Roquia Sakhawat Hussain, who wrote *Sultana's Dream*, and Sukumar Ray were both celebrated women science fiction

authors in this period internationally, but were considered early feminists in their writing. Another early feminist science fiction work at the time was Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*. Edith however was deeply religious and wrote her novels from that viewpoint, her fictional planet *Lucifram* for example being an allusion to Lucifer. *The Fulfilment* contains chapters on 'Heaven' and 'Hell' and by her own admission, elements could be perceived as blasphemous.

Sadly, questions over her mental health – which she was so keen to avoid – stand in the way of a clear critique of her work. A letter from the family doctor to the coroner suggested that there was a history of insanity in the family. In the letter he states that Edith's father and his brother had both committed suicide and that her sister had also tried to take her own life. However, in her final letter to her publisher she writes, *'if they say I'm mad, tell them from me it's a madness that will spread – not the suicide but the belief. But indeed it is no madness.'*

Vicci McCann, Archivist

Manorial Records for Family Historians

We came across some strange-sounding people at the first in our *Beyond Parish Registers* series of talks. *Manorial Documents for Family Historians* aimed to give an insight into the usefulness to genealogists of the huge amount of records left to us by the manorial system and, in doing so, we encountered hedgelookers, burley men and pinders, as well the more familiar constable and potentially tipsy aletaster! These were just some of the officials appointed by manorial courts, who in some way were the forerunners of our neighbourhood watch, trading standards officers and special constables. Manorial records can contain a wealth of information

about our ancestors and the rest of the series hopes to help unlock similarly underused types of archives. Book your place now for:

- May 17** **Using family and estate records for family history research**
- May 31** **Asylum records for family historians**
- Jun 14** **Coroners' records for family historians**
- Jun 28** **Probate records for family historians**

All you need to do is email us at record.office@lancashire.gov.uk or call on 01772 533034



In preparing for this talk I came across this quill, still helping hold a court roll together after 300 or so years.

David Tilsley, Senior Archivist

Memories of Burnley

MONDAY 15 MAY

2.00 - 4.00 pm

Burnley Library

Did you use to work in Burnley in the days of warm school milk, baths once a week, and Pot Fair?

Lancashire Not Forgotten is recording memories from people with dementia and their families and carers. Come along to our drop-in afternoon and share your memories of working in Burnley – we'd love to hear them!

We've got plenty of old photos and objects from the past to look at whilst chatting, plus free refreshments and an optional craft activity. All the memories will help create two pieces of textile art for exhibition, and some will feature on our Lancashire Not Forgotten website.

Please note: the afternoon will be filmed, photographed and recorded, for sharing online.

Lancashire Not Forgotten is a heritage and arts project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is a collaboration between Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council, and Blackburn with Darwen Council.

To find out more about Lancashire Not Forgotten, please contact the Project Officer: glynischarlton@gmail.com

World War 1 - Sowing the Seeds of Global Citizenship:

Volunteers needed for new local heritage project

Global Link in Lancaster is looking for volunteers to get involved in its new Heritage Lottery Fund project to research the impact of World War 1 in creating a new movement of internationalism, peace activism and education for world citizenship.

The research will be added to Global Link's digital community history platform, *Documenting Dissent* (www.documentingdissent.org.uk).

The project will involve talks and workshops by expert historians and visits to local archives to gather material for a digital map documenting internationalist activity in the North West in the years following the First World War.

In many ways, the First 'World' War led to a greater global consciousness. Many people experienced international travel for the first time, as medics and soldiers, including colonial troops from around the world, served on a range of fronts in Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia. From 1919, there was a widespread call for greater international cooperation and peace education as a means to avert another global conflict. The League of Nations, founded in January 1920 as part of the Paris Peace Conference, was the first international organisation whose principal mission was to maintain world peace and it included an Educational Committee, which promoted teaching about the League and international relations. Local League of Nations Union groups were set up around the UK, including the North West.

If you are interested in getting involved in the project or have further questions, please get in touch with the project coordinator, Alison Lloyd Williams, on 01524 36201 or a.lloydwilliams@globalink.org.uk.

Our next Tuesday late opening is 9 May 2017 until 7pm

Our next Saturday opening is 13 May 2017 from 10am to 4pm

**ANY
COMMENTS?**

Write to: The Editor, News from the Archives, Lancashire Archives, Bow Lane, Preston, PR1 2RE. Telephone: 01772 533039. Email: record.office@lancashire.gov.uk