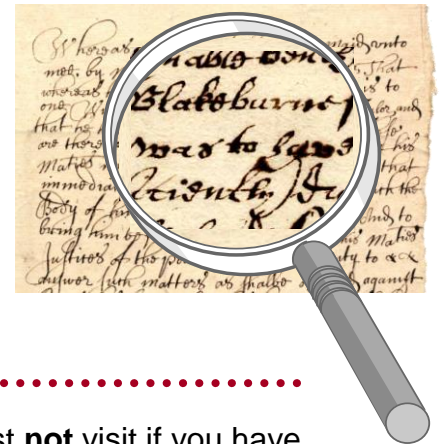


News from the Archives

Newsletter of Lancashire Archives



Archive Service
update

covering and must **not** visit if you have COVID symptoms.

Hope to see you soon

We're Open again !

I am looking forward to Tuesday 6 October when Lancashire Archives will once more be able to welcome people to research in person. Hoorah!

If you are planning to visit soon please do ensure that you read **all** the information on the website and **all** the guidance you are sent in advance.

Important things to note:

- **you will need to book a session**
- **you will need to order documents in advance**
- **you will need an Archives Card** – please apply online before your visit <https://archivescard.com/>
- **how to get in** – via the door at the bottom of the staircase. Use the intercom to talk to the searchroom; the person on reception will unlock the door

And of course in line with government instructions you will need to wear a face-



Lancashire Archives – or at least the record office building - has achieved international fame with a posting on the Brutalism Appreciation Society Facebook page.

Yes, it was completed between the 1950s and 1980. It is an angular geometric shape. As the stalactites indicate, a lot of concrete was involved in its construction. Until they were painted in the 1980s all the internal walls were untreated concrete render. It has indeed now weathered to a harsh grey.

But a lot of the materials used in the construction were expensive. The large

external panels are not concrete; they are Conistone limestone and, if cleaned in the same way as the building across the road, they could look splendid again. The huge internal, solid Ash doors, improve year on year as the wood gradually darkens and there is still a remnant of the striped wool carpet which formerly covered the whole building (in the entrance to the Ladies' toilet).

Maybe one day it will be listed, just like Preston bus station.

Jacquie Crosby
Archive Service Manager

Electoral registers now online



Last month images of over 300 Lancashire electoral registers were added to Ancestry. The registers cover the whole of the historic county of Lancashire, including parts of Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. They start in 1832 and end in 1935, although the vast majority date from before 1918 when the franchise was extended to some women and all men over the age of 21.



*From the Selina Cooper Collection
(DDX 1137 ACC5437/2)*

If your ancestors do appear the registers can be a brilliant way to pinpoint where they were living between census years. The registers can however be notoriously difficult to search manually as they are arranged by ward and polling district, so that you need to have a good idea of where your ancestors might have been living. However this new collection on Ancestry makes it much easier find people. You can search by name across the whole collection, or use the keyword field to search for a street address - ideal for anyone doing house history. Ancestry can be accessed free of charge in Lancashire Archives as well as in libraries throughout the county.

In fact, all of the resources in the Digital Library can be accessed not only on a public computer at Lancashire Archives or in Lancashire libraries, but also by using your own laptop, tablet or phone, when you connect to the internet using the free onsite Wi-Fi in our Lancashire buildings.

Keri Nicholson
Archivist

The Witch of Woodplumpton

As the nights draw in and Halloween approaches, let us look a bit more closely at one of Lancashire's abundant legends of nefarious women and dark doings. Tracking down archive sources for legends or folklore can be a risky business as there will always come a point when fact spills into fantasy. But in this case there might be something to it...

First the legend. Mag Shelton was a fearsome hag who lived in a wretched hovel called Cuckoo Hall in a solitary part of Wesham at the end of the 17th century. She

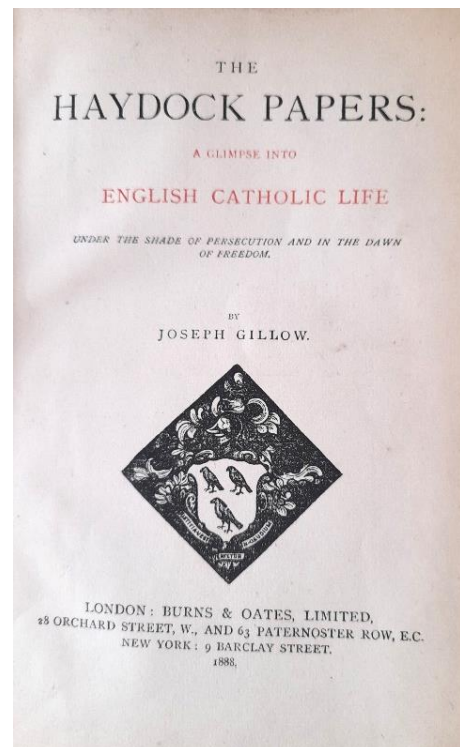
subsisted on a porridge of boiled grains and foraged herbs (sounds rather like a high class vegan dining choice these days), and plagued her neighbours with sour milk, lame cattle and stolen goods. After incidents involving a goose, a fire and an enchanted cow, she left Wesham looking for another abode.

William Haydock, lord of Cottam, was a great lover of the hunt, and in return for the promise by Mag of a hare to course, he offered her a cottage at Woodplumpton. Her proviso was that a certain black hound not be allowed to join the chase. As is usually the way, promises were forgotten, and in the heat of the chase the black hound was unleashed. It hunted the hare closely, right through the window of the witch's cottage, snapping at its tufty toes. And yes, you guess correctly, thereafter Mag always walked with a limp.

Nevertheless, she continued to live at Woodplumpton, until neighbours realised they hadn't seen her for a while. The door to her cottage was forced open and Mag was found crushed to death between the wall and a large barrel. Legend has not noted the contents of the barrel. She was buried at St Anne's and that was that. Or not. Her corpse was found above ground on several occasions until her spirit was quieted by the priest of Cottam Hall and a large boulder deployed over her grave, just in case. A perfect Lancashire Legend with the appropriate comeuppance for the witch.



But what else is there?

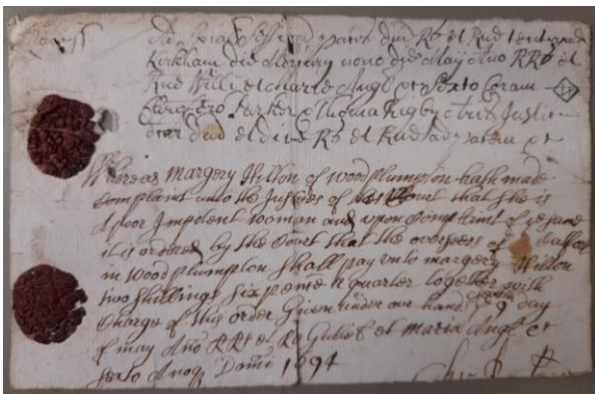


The earliest detailed account of Mag appears in 1888 in a memoir of the Haydock family written by William Gillow (although she does appear as a character in a strange story in the Preston Chronicle of 1884). Gillow's text (searchroom library G3/HAY/GIL), although peppered with anecdotes and local colour, is primarily a description of the world and work of Catholic priest George Leo Haydock and his recusant family. It is a very partisan volume, calling William III the Dutch intruder and praising William Haydock as the supplier of the horse which threw the king, causing his death in 1702.

So in this context the heroic squire William and his Catholic priest at Cottam Hall, who supposedly relieved the village of Mag's troublesome spirit, are set against rural and Anglican superstition. William was a Jacobite. Following the 1715 rebellion his

estates were forfeited and he died in 1717 (his will is here, referenced WCW/C312b/13).

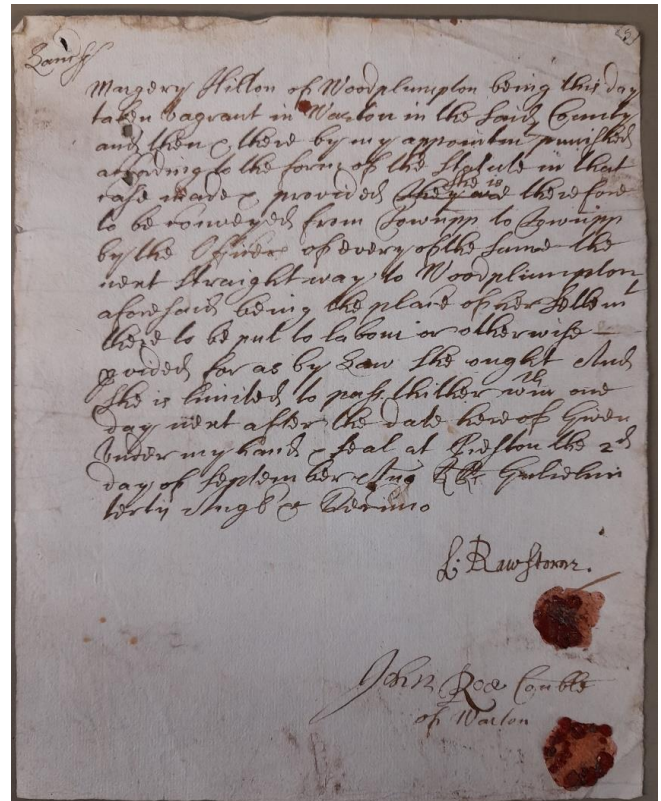
Gillow's account has some unusually specific details such as the names of properties and the name of Mag herself. Gillow confidently describes her as "a famous witch, commonly called Mag Shelton, though her real name was Margery Hilton." Which is a bit odd. But it gives us alternatives, and this is where archives show their wonderful worth. There is no Mag/ Meg/ Margaret Shelton in our collections. In fact Shelton appears only 63 times in our catalogue, against 3337 appearances by Hilton. But we do have a Margery Hilton and she could be our witch.



QSP/822/4

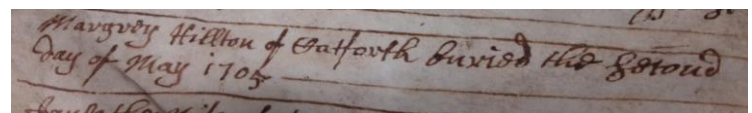
Two documents in the Quarter Session Petition collection relate to Margery Hilton of Woodplumpton. The first, dated May 1694 describes her as a "poor impotent woman" and she is awarded 2 shillings and sixpence every quarter to be paid by the overseers of Catforth.

The second suggests that this wasn't enough to keep her out of trouble, because in September 1698 she is taken as a vagrant in Warton. The court orders her to be returned to Woodplumpton, her place of settlement, "there to be put to labour or otherwise provided for as by Lawe she ought."



QSP/822/5

So these pieces of evidence speak to the notion of low income and indigent women, with no support network, being prime candidates for identification as witches. This is something which is often drawn upon in discussions of witchcraft and women's history, but it is splendid to see it in concrete form (allowing for all the various caveats that this may not be the "right" Margery etc.).



PR2930/1/5

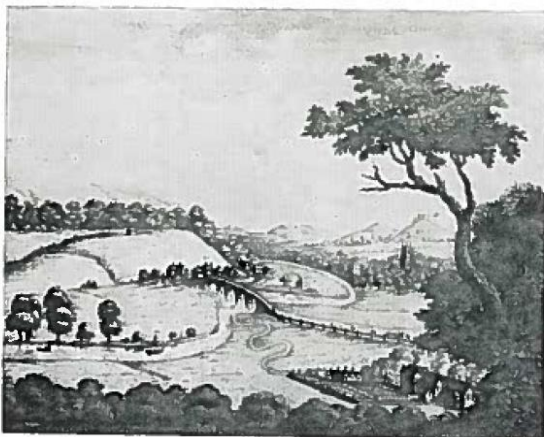
Finally, the parish registers of St Anne's show us that Margery Hillton (sic) of Catforth was buried 2 May 1705. We don't have a graveyard plan so she may or may not be planted under the boulder. (Do not try to find out).

There are no baptism or marriage records for a Margery Hilton at St Annes, or at St Michaels on Wyre. If she came from Wesham as the legend says, is she in the records of Kirkham St Michael? One day I'll get around to having a look. But for now, as the witching season is upon us, and fancy dress witches prowl for treats, remember Margery. Whether a witch or not, she was a poor impotent vagrant woman and deserves to step forward from the various sources, both factual and fictional.

Kathryn Newman

Archivist

Ribble Bridge



RIBBLE BRIDGE 1728 (BUCK)

Until the middle of the 18th century there was only one bridge over the Ribble below Clitheroe, that linking Preston and Walton-le-Dale, which was known until modern times as Ribble Bridge.

When a bridge was first built here is not known, but one may suppose that it was in the 12th century, though it is not impossible that there was one there in Roman times. In 1400, because of the abnormal flow of water and floating masses of ice, the bridge had become so badly damaged as to be unsafe for people to use it; and it was decided that a new stone bridge should be built. In order

to finance this project the king, Henry IV, was persuaded to grant pontage for three years.

The tolls to be paid included: for a horse, an ox or a cow, ¼d.; hides, ¼d. each; ten sheep or pigs, ½d.; a horse-load of cloth, ½d.; a hogshead of wine, 1d.; 1,000 herrings, ½d.; a horse-load of sea-fish, ½d.; 100 planks, ½d.; a millstone, ½d.; 1,000 faggots, ½d.; a quarter of salt, ¼d.; a quarter of butter or cheese, ½d.; iron, pewter, copper, lead and wool paid similar amounts. Seven years later the stone bridge was still unbuilt and the dangers greater than ever, so an appeal went to the king for a further grant of three years' pontage. Among the articles on which toll had to be paid this time were Galway cloth, worsted, honey, pairs of wheels, tree-trunks, coal, boat-loads of mussels, etc. As no further reference appears in the records, we may suppose that the bridge was built – a bridge which lasted until 1781 and was described by Leland in the mid-sixteenth century as “the great stone bridge of Ribyll” and by Kuerden in the late seventeenth century as “one of the stateliest stone bridges in the north of England.”

There had stood at the Walton end of the old bridge a chapel, for in 1383 the abbot of Whalley leased it for 30 years to Ralph of Langton, lord of Walton, and the chaplain Thomas of Clayton. One of the conditions was that the chaplain had to spend the oblates and alms which remained beyond his reasonable salary on the repair of the bridge. There is, unfortunately, nothing further known of this bridge-chapel. By the 17th century, at least, the bridge was suffering from the ravages of time, for there are continual references in the archives of Quarter Sessions to the need for repair, few years going by without calls upon the county for money for that purpose.

Outstanding among the events in which Ribble Bridge was involved were the battles

of Preston in 1648 and 1715, when in the former year Cromwell inflicted a resounding defeat on the Royalists and in the latter, the hopes of the Jacobites were crushed at the last battle on English soil. Thirty years later Bonnie Prince Charlie marched southward over the bridge in high hopes, but retraced his steps a short time later headed for Culloden.

By 1778, complaints about the unremitting expenditure on repairing the bridge had reached such a pitch that the magistrates decided to rebuild it and, on 30 June 1779, entered into a contract with John and Samuel Law of Heywood (the latter, in 1783, became Bridgemaster of Salford Hundred), Robert Law of Dyke Green in Todmorden and Robert Crabtree of Burnley, stonemasons, to build a new bridge about ninety yards east of the old one at a cost of £4200.

Richard Threlfall of Garstang Churchtown, Bridgemaster of Amounderness Hundred, was appointed supervisor, and the work was to be completed by 11 November 1780. As soon as the new bridge had advanced far enough to be used safely, the contractors were to demolish the old bridge except for the northern wing-walls, against which they were to erect an adequate buttress on the site of the northern land-pier. The new bridge was to be 30 feet wide between the battlements, with three elliptical arches, the old bridge having had five pointed ones. Full details are given in the contract as to various measurements, including the depths to which the foundations of the piers were to be sunk, the sizes of the stones, etc. The battlements of the old bridge were to be used at the south end of the bridge to the second pilaster and at the north end to the first pilaster. As for the roadway, a footpath consisting of Haslingden flags four feet six inches wide was to be laid on each side, while the carriageway was to be "well Gravelled."

By the best of good fortune, the 432 page account book of the rebuilding has been preserved in private hands, together with the counterpart of the contract. Both of these are now in Lancashire Archives (reference DDX/51). In a short article such as this it is quite impossible even to summarise the expenditure, which, remarkably enough, came to £50 less than the contract price, despite the fact that the work took over twelve months longer than was agreed upon. The principals took a wage of 2s. a day – included in the £4150 cost – and shared out the surplus £50 on 28 September 1782.

Most of the stone came from the quarries of Whittle-le-Woods and Hoghton Tower and, when worked, archstones cost 1s. 3d. to 1s. 6½d. each, battlement stones and ashlar being 2½d. and 3d. per cubic foot respectively. In the northernmost arch, with its piers, were 13,792 cubic feet of stone, costing £215 10s. 1¾d. For the timber work, the contractors bought 624 feet of English fir at 1s. a foot and 2253 feet of Memel balking at 1s. 3d. a foot.

On the site was a thatched cabin containing three beds. It would appear that ale for the workmen was brewed on the spot, for there were regular payments for grinding malt and for hops at 10d. a pound. In more recent years, the official name of the bridge was changed, for ease of identification, to Walton Bridge. Now well over 200 years old, it still stands, though since 1941 it has carried only southbound traffic, the west side having been widened to provide a dual carriageway. The widening, which in effect was the building of a similar bridge, cost £32,000.

Adapted by David Blake, Archive Assistant, from an article which first appeared in the Lancashire Record Office Annual Report, 1959

ANY COMMENTS?

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