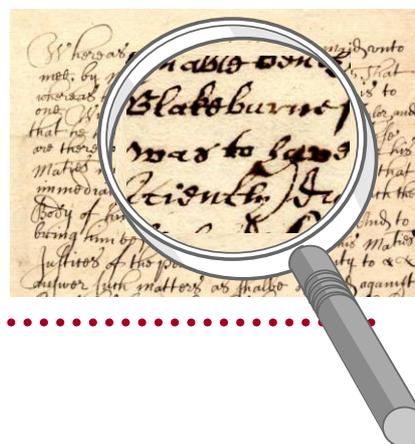




News from the Archives

Newsletter of Lancashire Archives



Archive Service

ACCREDITED
ARCHIVE SERVICE

update

At the end of June we held our first user consultation meeting online and I was pleased to meet with some of you and hear and read your comments and suggestions. There seemed to be agreement that the advance booking system was generally working well and that you like having a pile of archives ready awaiting your arrival. Saturday opening was also appreciated. You made kind comments about the staff helpfulness and response to enquiries, and one participant wrote, 'The Zoom meetings and the newsletters have been fantastic in keeping me informed; it has taken away the feeling of social isolation. I have missed being able to visit and meet up with like-minded people and actually see, feel and, yes, smell the old documents'.

You also miss the camaraderie of volunteering, although volunteering from home has been good for one of the participants. The tearoom, currently full of furniture, is very

much missed especially by people who travel here on public transport. The water dispenser in the searchroom is seen as a valuable addition whilst the tearoom remains closed, but we do need to address the lack of space and seating for visitors to consume refreshments – especially as we ask everyone to leave the building at lunchtime.

One user found the new version of LANCAT less user friendly. Ironically, it is intended to be easier to use, but unfortunately there were problems during the upgrade which has caused it to crash from time to time and not display properly. When we are sure it is working as it should, we will create a short video showing how to use it.

While the need for advance ordering is well understood it can cause problems with ongoing research – especially family history - where one document may open up new lines of enquiry. We need to respond more quickly to bookings and allow reservations without a list of documents at the time of booking, and also to allow document to be added to existing bookings. We hope that we will be able to ease up movement between the main seating and microfilm

areas soon, but we do have to ensure that we don't have 2 people trying to take microfilms out of the same drawer at the same time. On the other hand, is that so very different from getting tubs of ice cream out of a supermarket freezer cabinet?

When we can, we need to facilitate group visits and training sessions again, because some things just don't work online. In the meantime *News from the Archives* will keep you updated on our opening arrangements and include a link to our Zoom talk each month. And we hope to publish a list of online talks up to Christmas in the August issue.

Jacque Crosby

Archive Service Manager

Whittingham lives



The launch of Whittingham Lives new website: www.whittinghamlives.org.uk is the legacy of a two-year arts and heritage project that explored the 150-year history of Whittingham Asylum in Preston.

The project researched and critically reviewed the culture and legacy of Whittingham Asylum, reflecting on the past within the present with the aim of provoking critical thinking and public debate on mental health, to make a better future.

The website, designed and produced by [The PDF](#) digital co-operative, showcases the many events, exhibitions, performances, and conferences which made the project a huge success, bringing together local community groups, service users and members of the public who shared an interest in Whittingham Asylum.

Whittingham Asylum records held at Lancashire Archives were conserved and repackaged as part of the project, and the staff registers and death registers were indexed. The archive catalogue can be seen here [HRW](#)

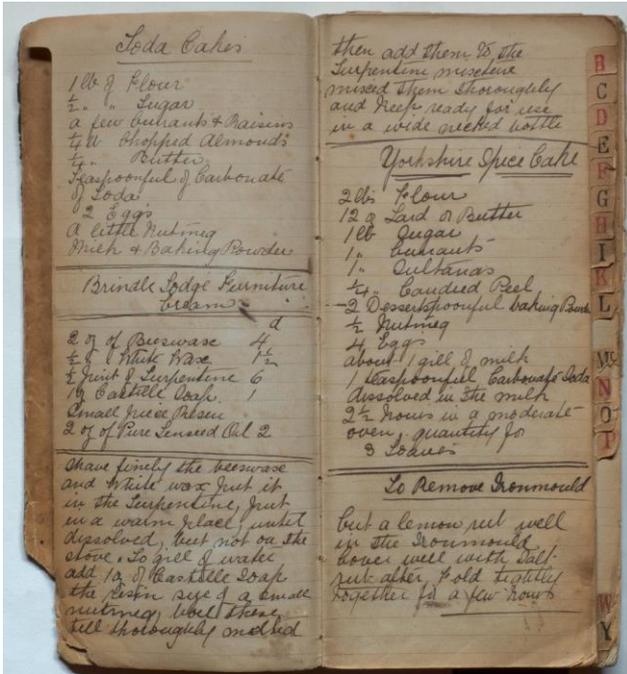
'I've enjoyed the journey in seeing them again from all those years ago'

In July 1978, two Preston schoolgirls were [mis]spending their summer holidays exploring derelict houses down Fishergate Hill, when they came across some old books in a pile of rubble. The Record Office in Bow Lane hadn't been open many years, but the local community was aware of it and that the people who worked there knew about history; so the girls were told to take the books there. They hoped they would be worth something, and that there might be a reward.

Sadly, they have no real financial value and sat in a box in one of our strongrooms until earlier this year, when one of the schoolgirls, now a Lancashire County Council employee, was recalling her discovery of more than 40 years ago. She vividly remembered recipes and knitting patterns in one of the books and wondered what had happened to them. Were they still in the record office? Would anyone be able

to find them? Would she be able to see them again?

Of course! Our electronic archive management system located the girls as depositors, the accession number, and even a short catalogue.



I am sure that the 4 items are connected in some way – relating to the Grundy family of Penwortham and Preston and to rented properties in Bow Lane, Christchurch Street, Pedder Street and Barlow Street. Some of the recipes are from Brindle Lodge and there are also useful recipes for hair tonic and furniture cream, and a remedy for flatulence.

The exciting thing would be to find out more about the family they originally belonged to as well as trying out the recipes and knitting the patterns – only 23 stitches, so not a large item or garment.

Barbara was delighted to see the books again and to know that they are being kept safely for the future. She said: 'It's great that the books were well preserved and had not just gone to landfill; it makes me feel happy.'

If you'd like to explore them for yourself - to try out the 1930s' knitting patterns or recipes, or to try to discover why they were found together on the corner of South Meadow Lane, the reference is **DDX 1206**.

Jacque Crosby

Archive Service Manager

Making a difference

Everyone here answers enquiries, in person, by phone, email or letter. It is a core part of what we do, helping people solve mysteries from the distant past or within living memory. It is also one of the ways in which we are able to truly connect with our customers, although we don't always find out how the information we provide makes an impact on someone's work, their research, or even their lives.

Which is why it is so rewarding to be able to follow up and feel as if we have been able to make a difference.

In early June we received a telephone call from Canada. A very nice lady on a slightly crackly line wanted to find a copy of a newspaper article from 1944, could we help? Why certainly, we now hold the microfilm copies of the Lancashire Evening Post and as she had the exact date, we could take a look and provide a copy. As the story unfolded a little, I became more intrigued.

Ruth Fawcett had recently lost her beloved husband Jim. She knew that Jim had been in the newspaper in April 1944 and wanted to get a copy of the article.

I found the article but felt it might be a little disappointing in its brevity.

Southport D.F.M.

Sergeant James Henry Fawcett, R.A.F.V.R. of Tulketh - street, Southport, has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. A former bricklayer, aged 20, he is now a rear gunner in a Halifax and has completed 30 raids over enemy territory, in which the official citation says he "displayed high skill, fortitude, and devotion to duty."



Flight Sergt. J. H. Pilling who has been awarded the D.F.M. He is the son of Mrs. Highton, 66 Tulketh Street, Southport, and grandson of Mrs. Pilling, of West Street, and the late Mr. Halliwell Pilling.

Surely Jim's achievement, a Distinguished Flying Medal at such a young age would be worth a few more column inches. As he was a Southport lad, I got in touch with The Atkinson, Southport's central library. Once I had explained the quest, helpful staff in the library directed me to the Library Information Service based at Crosby Library. As Southport is now part of Sefton local authority, resources such as microfilms of newspapers are held at Crosby, and the Information Service Librarian, Gillian Morgan, very kindly agreed to look at the microfilms of the two Southport newspapers, The Gazette and the Visitor.

Local services working together can often be hidden among bad news stories and tales of political infighting. In reality, all kinds of professionals are quietly working away behind the scenes, crossing local borders for the good of our customers. In very quick time Gillian found some hopeful looking reports, but although there were lots of similarities; they grew up on the same street and were both rear gunners in Halifax bombers, it was the wrong surname, Pilling not Fawcett.

D.F.M. FOR AIR-GUNNER

Flight-Sergeant James H. Pilling, R.A.F., of 66b, Tulketh-street, Southport, who has completed in various capacities, many successful operations against the enemy, in which he has displayed high skill, fortitude and devotion to duty, has been awarded the D.F.M.

A rear-gunner in a Halifax, he has completed over thirty operations over enemy territory.

He volunteered for the R.A.F. two years ago, and previous to that was employed at a North-West factory, and later went to work in the South with his step-father. He was also a member of the Southport Home Guard. He attended Norwood-road Schools, and was a keen swimmer.



Fl.-Sgt. J. H. Pilling

Odd coincidence, we thought. Or a 77 year-old case of mistaken identity? We forwarded the articles to Mrs Fawcett in Canada with the caveat that although it was an

interesting coincidence, this was not her Jim but we'd keep looking,

Within hours we received the answer:

"Kathryn and Gillian you are both angels on earth and miracle workers. Your email brought tears to my eyes.

This IS my Jimmy.....no mistake or coincidence. Jim's birth name was Pilling. His dad died when Jim was about 5 years old. Jim's mother later married Robert Fawcett. Jim loved his stepfather and legally changed his name to Fawcett. Sadly Robert Fawcett was killed in a workplace accident when Jim was 12 and never knew of his son's accomplishments."

Ruth also included some fantastic photographs, one of Jimmy and his crew in 1943,



And a lovely image of Jimmy and Ruth at the Dedication of the Bomber Command Memorial in London 2012.



She also told us that Jim had completed 2 tours for a total of 62 operations as a tail

gunner first tour with 76 Sqd and his second tour with 148 Sqd. He was presented his Distinguished Flying Medal by King George VI at Buckingham Palace on November 20th, 1945 at the age of 21. His achievements at such a young age put a lot of things into perspective, along with the sacrifice of so many other young people in all kinds of conflict. I think Ruth put it best, with dignity and simplicity when she said, "He was my hero and my miracle."

Now, perhaps I should have thought about a different surname, in hindsight this was much more logical than a coincidence or skulduggery. I blame it on reading too many Agatha Christies in my formative years, but this is the kind of scrap of lost information that can easily de-rail research. Happily, not in this case, and another great outcome is the new link between Lancashire Archives and colleagues in Sefton (an exchange visit is happening later in the year).

So why share this story? There are several things I wanted to highlight, morals of this tale, if you like.

We all work together to make excellent customer service happen

We all get invested in finding answers for our service users, we do care.

We also care when those customers let us know what our efforts mean for them.

Please let us know. At the moment we are part of a national survey asking for customer feedback. If you do receive a request for feedback, or even if you just want to tell us what you think, please do. And the ability of a small piece of paper to make a difference to someone thousands of miles away should never be underestimated.

Kathryn Newman

Archivist

**ANY
COMMENTS?**

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