

St. Hildeburgh's *Dispatch*



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The Final Issue.

A fortnightly on-line paper to entertain all during the coronavirus pandemic

Battle of Rowton Heath ~ 1645 *The Siege of Chester during the English Civil War*



Chester, and the struggle to hold the last port under Royalist control, was of major strategic importance to Charles I, so much so that the King abandoned his march north to join up with Montrose in Scotland (who was enjoying a series of victories on behalf of the Crown) and turned his army instead towards Chester in order to reinforce his troops who had been under siege by the Parliamentarians since December 1644. The news that had caused this change of plan arrived with a messenger carrying the intelligence that “part of the outworks of Chester were betrayed to the enemy”. The King’s main army had been defeated in June 1645 at Naseby, and although around 4,000 cavalry had survived and escaped from that battlefield – and Charles still maintained a significant force in the West of England – he was in desperate need of recruits coming from North Wales and Ireland, and for this purpose he needed to keep the River Dee open. Bristol had fallen to the Parliamentarians on the 11th September 1645, so it was vital to retain access to the ancient west-coast port of Chester.

On the 20th September 1645 a force of 500 cavalry, around 700-foot soldiers, and a couple of hundred dragoons, attacked the outer barricaded earthwork defences of Chester and took the Royalists by surprise, forcing them to fall back behind the Roman walls of the city. Having refused to surrender, Cromwell's men began a heavy bombardment and although the wall was breached in a couple of places, the Royalists managed to repulse their attackers and hold the line. Suffering from fatigue, the King's men looked on anxiously as Parliamentary reinforcements arrived to swell their numbers. Their relief can be imagined when news of Charles's appearance at Chirk on the 22nd September reached the besieged defenders, and the next day, as Parliament's forces were concentrated on the eastern side of Chester, the King and his force of some 500 or 600 men entered the city through the western gate. The Parliamentarians were under the command of Colonel Michael Jones, a soldier who had gained considerable military experience in Ireland. He anticipated Charles's move to detach the main body of his relieving force under the command of Marmaduke Langdale with orders to attack from the east while the King entered Chester from the west, and sent out messengers to the Parliamentary force under the command of Sydnam Poyntz to come quickly to his aid. Langdale crossed the Rive Dee at Holt and set up camp at Hatton Heath, some five miles south of Chester. Most of the forces on both sides consisted of horse – although Parliament's army had some 1500-foot soldiers under arms – deployed besieging the city.



Grosvenor Museum

Langdale was confident of success. However, the Royalists were ignorant of Poyntz and his 3,000-strong force of cavalry that had already arrived in Whitchurch, only 20 miles away, and they would make a formidable force when added to Jones's 500 horse awaiting the arrival of these reinforcements. Eventually, news of Poyntz's advance towards Chester reached the ears of the King. He immediately deployed the 500 or 600 Lifeguards who had entered the city with him, along with an additional 500 of foot stationed in Chester, to join Langdale and prevent the two Parliamentary armies joining up. Charles retired to the Phoenix Tower on the city walls (illustrated left, now known as King Charles' Tower) in order to watch events from the most advantageous viewing point in Chester. The stage was now set for what would come to be known as the Battle of Rowton Heath.

The Battle of Rowton Heath, sometimes referred to as the Battle of Rowton Moor, took place upon the uncultivated heathland, traversed by narrow lanes with hedges either side, in an area around Rowton, Waverton and Saughton ; roughly two miles south-east of Chester, off what is now the A41 Chester to Whitchurch road. (See map on page 4).

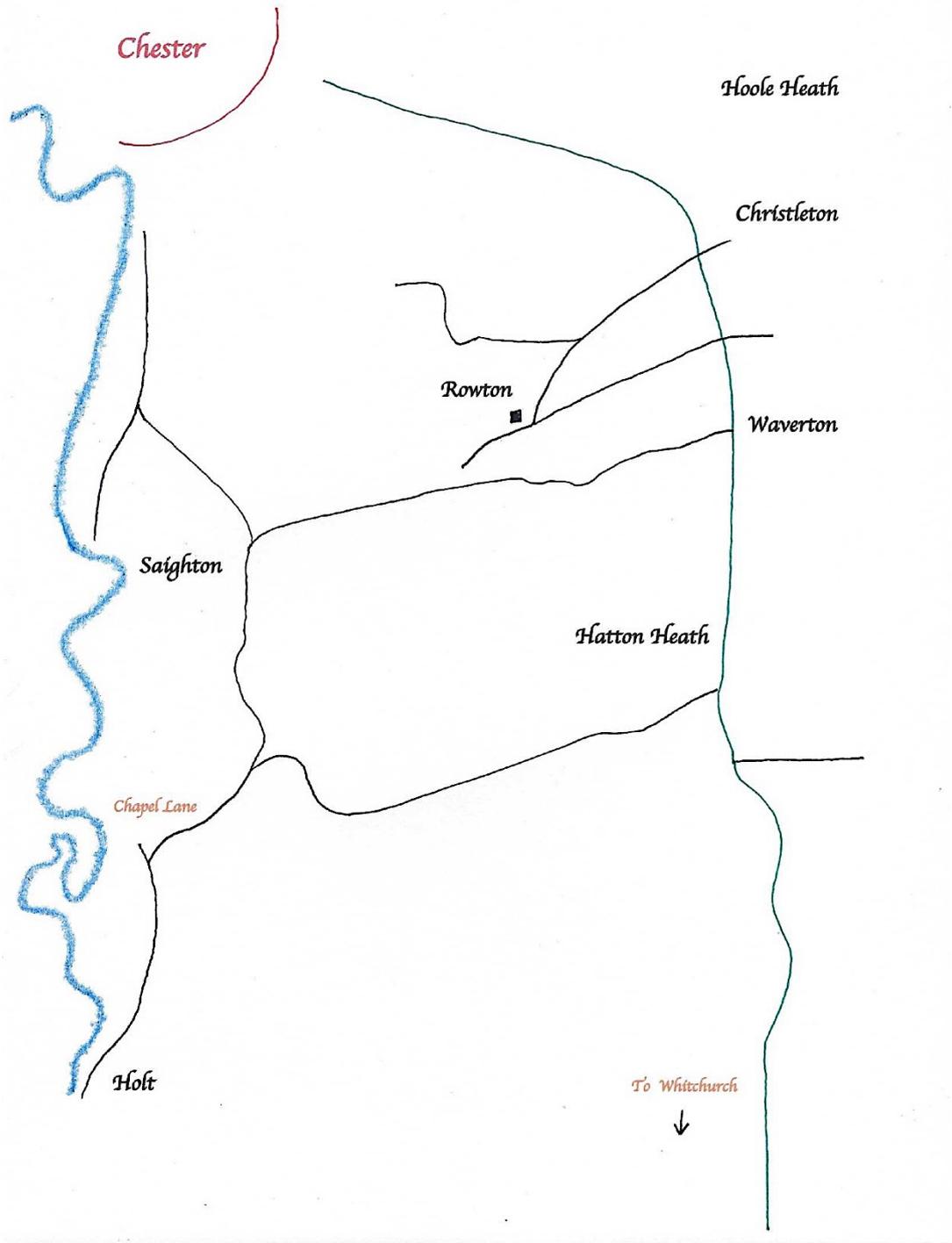
The encounter was fought on the 24th September 1645. Langdale's force of around 3,000 cavalry advanced along what is today Chapel Lane, heading towards Saughton, with the aim of attacking Jones before his army could be reinforced. During the night his men had captured a messenger and had learnt that Poyntz was already moving north from Whitchurch under the cover of darkness, and he too had 3,000 horse under his command. Poyntz arrived in the area around 0700 unaware of how close his opponents were. Langdale had moved on to Miller's Heath, along what is now the A41, located between Waverton and Rowton. Here he had his men dismount and line the hedgerows with their carbines at the ready, and as Poyntz's force came into view, his dragoons opened fire on

their vanguard. The fields off the A41 today have been drained and cultivated by local farmers, but in the 17th century it was boggy heath land and the Parliamentarians were in some disarray on account of it, and they had difficulty dismounting. Occupying the high ground, Langdale's strategy was to lure the Parliamentarians into a trap. A sharp and confused action took place, with initially the Royalists looking as if they would retain the upper hand, but after about thirty minutes of close-quarter fighting (now taking place approximately around the start of the Chester-Whitchurch road), Poyntz's men routed Langdale's forces and pursued them over open heath towards Chester. However, the Royalists deployed fresh soldiers into the conflict, and after further heavy fighting, Poyntz was forced to retreat. Langdale knew that to take full advantage of the situation, and to follow up and defeat his enemy, he needed further reinforcements from within the city walls. A messenger was sent and within a quarter-of-an-hour was pressing his case before the King, but for a reason or reasons still a matter of speculation, no orders were issued for a further six hours, and by that time the advantage was lost as it was Poyntz, not Langdale, who received additional support, with the arrival of 350 cavalymen and around 400 musketeers.

Meanwhile, Langdale was doing his best, although frustrated with no word from Chester, and he re-grouped his forces on Rowton Heath. From their vantage point in Chester, they could see the Parliamentary reinforcements approaching Poyntz's position, and sent word to warn Langdale of the danger. Around 500 horse and 500-foot soldiers were sent out from Chester under the command of Charles Gerard, hoping to attack Jones's men from the rear, but Gerard was intercepted on Hoole Heath by an inferior force of some 200 cavalry and 200 infantry, but sufficient numbers to prevent Gerard coming to Langdale's assistance. Around 1600 hours, with Poyntz having received his reinforcements, the Parliamentarians advanced on the weary Royalists, their cavalry charging the King's line, covered in their advance by a full volley of fire from the muskets of Roundhead infantry. Langdale put up a brave resistance and even tried to counter-charge, but his forces were soon outflanked with Parliamentary musketeers now firing into the rear of Langdale's force, and soon his men were in full retreat and complete disarray, some running for the defences of Chester, others escaping over the Dee at Holt Bridge. On Hoole Heath, some retreating men joined up with what remained of Gerard's force, and they, courageously, made a successful counter-attack before being overwhelmed and pushed back to the sandstone walls of Chester. In the panic to reach safety behind the walls, the narrow streets became terribly congested with men and horses, and the Roundheads fired into the choked-up streets and caused heavy casualties. Those outside still trying to get in, were picked-off by infantry. King Charles, looking on with dismay from Phoenix Tower, knew that for him the day was lost.

The Royalists suffered somewhere in the region of 600 men killed, and a further 800 or 900 wounded. Parliamentary losses were also heavy, but their number is unknown. Naseby had wiped out most of the King's infantry, and now his cavalry had all but been decimated. At Sherburn-in-Elmet, on the 15th October 1645, his cavalry would be completely annihilated when they ran into an ambush set up by Poyntz. Rowton Heath had bought a little time for Chester itself, and the respite lasted until the 3rd February 1646 when the remaining Royalist forces finally surrendered, realizing that the promised reinforcements from Ireland would never arrive. The day after the battle on Rowton Heath, King Charles, fearful of being trapped in the city, left Chester with what remained of his army, about 2,400 horse – destined to be destroyed at Sherburn-in-Elmet – and headed for Denbigh Castle. From there, Charles moved on to the castle at Newark-on-

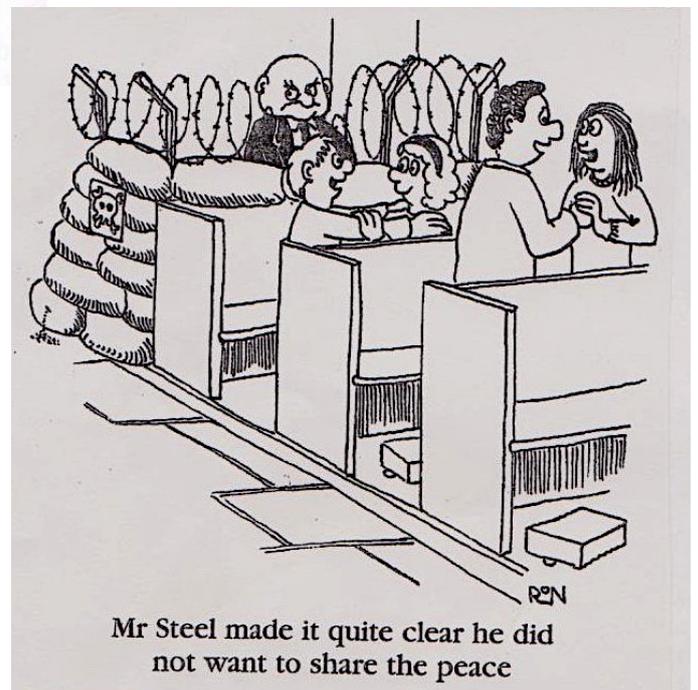
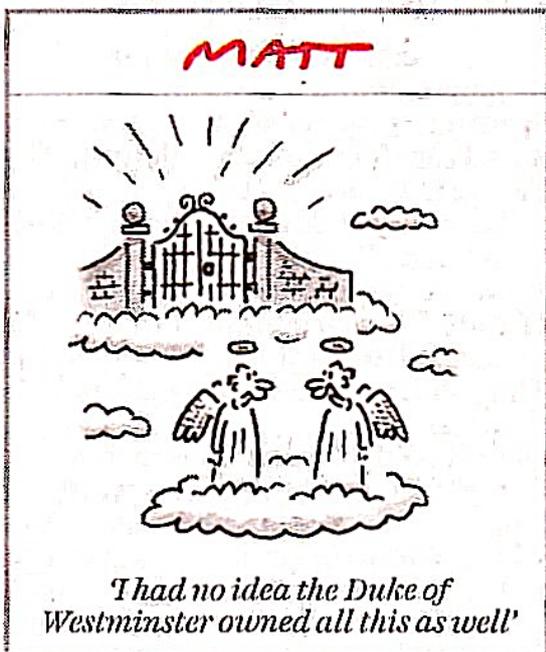
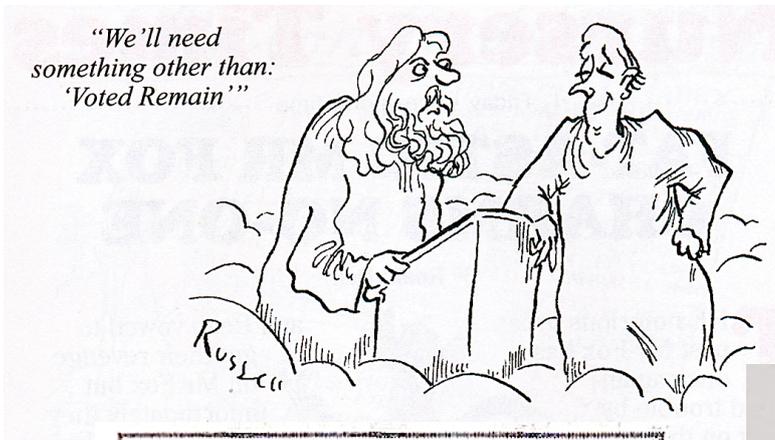
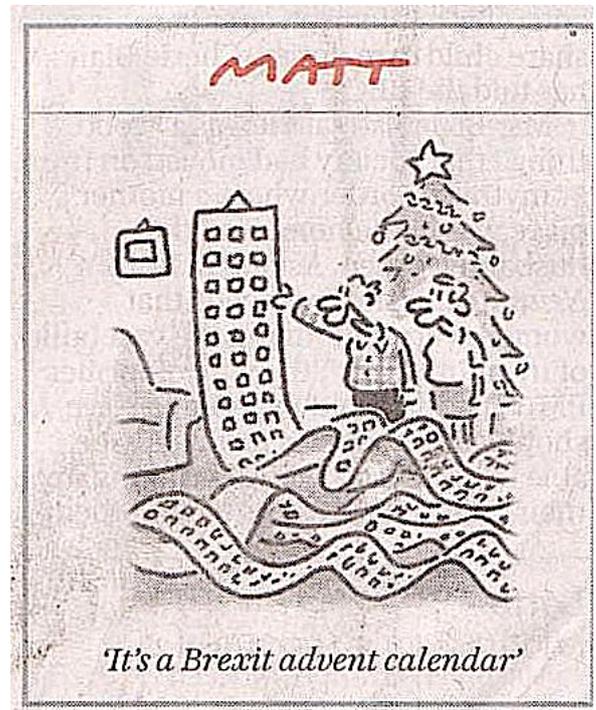
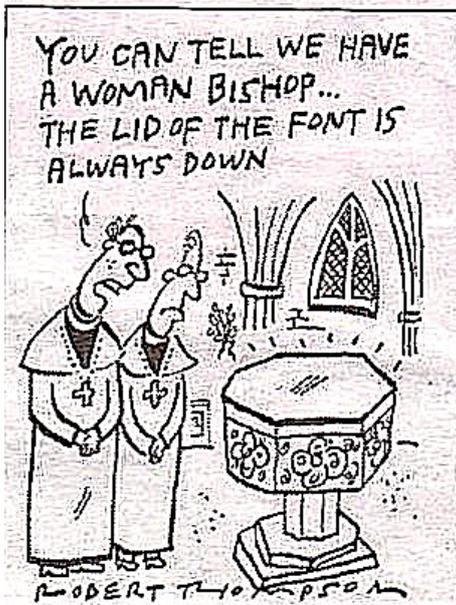
Trent. It would be early 1649 before he lost his head, but the defeat at Rowton Heath was a significant nail driven into his coffin.



Sketch Map of the battle area of Rowton Heath (Not to scale)

M.N.

Laughter ~ the best medicine



Wirral Quiz

*How well do you know our Peninsula ?
Test your knowledge with these ten questions.
(Answers will be found on pages 26 & 27).*



- {1} The world's first commercial hovercraft service began operating from the Wirral Peninsula in 1962. Where did they operate from and what was their destination ?
- {2} The first shot fired during the First World War was fired from Wirral. Where was the gun located and what was the target ?
- {3} Two Wallasey ferry boats took part in the raid on Zeebrugge in 1917. What were their names ?
- {4} Who wrote the poetic lines of *The Sands of Dee* ?
- {5} Where in Wirral would you find the Swiss Bridge ?
- {6} What is the name of the house that was moved across Wirral from Bidston Hill in 1891 ?
- {7} What was the name of the celebrated war poet educated at Birkenhead ?
- {8} One of the greatest Science Fiction writers of the last century hailed from Wirral. Can you name him ?
- {9} The Hoylake & West Kirby War Memorial on Grange Hill is internationally recognized as a fine example of British sculpture. Can you name the sculptor responsible ?
- {10} Where would you go to find Puddydale ?

Topography of Wirral

An extract from

*Speculations on the former Topography of Liverpool
and the Neighbourhood*

By Joseph Boulton

Joseph Boulton F.R.I.B.A., was a member of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire ; Liverpool Polytechnic Society ; and the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society. It was for the latter two, between 1866 and 1873, that he read a paper, in four parts, entitled *Speculations on the former Topography of Liverpool and the Neighbourhood*, published during those years for private distribution only. In Part III of these papers Joseph Boulton addresses the topography of the Wirral and the relevant extract is reprinted here.

Considering how very thinly Wirral is likely to have been inhabited before the Anglo-Saxon period, it contains several Celtic names, some of which are very suggestive as to its early topography and history. The name of Wirral, coupled with our information as to its early condition, appears to be from *C. uir*, a district, *ral* an oak tree, signifying therefore the oak-tree district. To derive it from *W. wyre*, a spreading, an expanse, and *halen*, water, involves a transposition from water to land such as I have not met with elsewhere. The name of Wyrewater, at Fleetwood, is no doubt derived from these words. An early name of the hundred of Wirral, was Wivalleston, which survives in that of the village and township of Willaston. Possibly from the *C. uim*, a country, with a final aspirate, and *fal*, untilled, *es*, an ox, and *tun*, a place, denoting that the village was then in an untilled, or uncultivated country, possibly pastoral, and therefore very suitable for grazing. In *fal* appears the root of the English word fallow. Parts of Wirral are still noted for numerous oak trees, some of which attain magnificent growth.

The distich,

From Blacon-point to Hilbree
A squirrel might leap from tree to tree ;

or

From Birkenhead to Hilbree
A squirrel might leap from tree to tree ;

is quite too modern in dress, as well as date, to be accepted as a correct indicator of the state of the district.

Liscard is apparently the same word as Liskeard, in Cornwall, which represents with great fidelity *C. lios* an enclosure, *ce* earth, and *ard* high ; and therefore means the high, enclosed, or cultivated land. The name Noctorum, which looks so like a piece of barbarous Latinity, should, no doubt, be cnoctorham, that is, the A. -S. *ham*, village or

homestead, appended to the *C. cnoc* nape, and *tor* hill, or *cnoc* hill and *tor* fort. In Doomsday Book the same place appears under an earlier Celtic form of the same topographical feature, namely Chenotrie, *i.e.*, *ceann* head, and *otir* ridge jutting into or towards the sea ; thus the top of the seaward ridge.

Tranmere, sometimes written Tranmol and Tranmul, looks like another pseudo Latin word ; the first form probably being *C. trian*, *W. tran*, a district, and *C. mir*, a summit ; in the second form, the final syllable being *C. mul*, *W. moel*, an eminence ; these names would be appropriate to Higher Tranmere, and it is not unlikely that the uplands were first settled, and named, and that Lower Tranmere, and also Lower Bebington, derived their names as adjuncts.

The name of Wallasey, – the foreigners' isle – is Saxon testimony to the Celtic origin of its inhabitants ; for they, like the Celts, and like uneducated people a few years since, called all alien to themselves foreigners, whether natives or not.

It is true that, on the authority of a village school-master named Robinson, ¹ the origin of the names of Liscard and Wallasey have been attributed to two persons called Lee and Walley. Of this Mr. Robinson nothing more is known, whilst of Lee and Walley nothing whatever is known, beyond Robinson's statement that there were in the parish two churches, called respectively Walley's Kirk and Lee's Kirk, and he conjectures that these names are derived from the two men, a supposition which was excusable in one so ill-informed, and in his day, when difficult problems were solved by imaginative legends.

Dr. Ormerod does not attach any value to Robinson's statement, but says "Lee's Kirk must have been the chapel belonging to the Priory of Birkenhead ; Walley's Kirk is obviously a corruption of the name of the parish church, uniformly called *medietas rectoriæ de Kirkbye in Walleia* in the early Lichfield Registers," II. P. 262. Further, Sir Peter Leycester quotes a grant from Robert of Rhuddlan, to the Abbey of Utica, in Normandy, *inter alia*, of all the town, tithe, and Church of Kirkby, in Wirral, within the county of Chester, and of the Church of the Island ; and from a Charter of Confirmation, made 1081, by William the Conqueror, *dedit sancto Ebrulfo Cherchebiam cum duebus ecclesiis ; unam scilicet quæ in ipsâ Villâ et Aliam propé illum Manerium in insula maris ;* and remarks, "So that Kirkby with the two Churches, I conceive, is Kirkby in Wirral, within Cheshire, one church then standing within the said Town, and the other near thereunto in the Island of the Sea, which I conceive is meant of the Island now called Ilbree."

As there is not any evidence of a church on Hilbre island, the remains there indicating a cell only, it may be allowable to suggest that the two churches were West Kirkby and Kirkby in Walley, or Wallasey ; a suggestion which is confirmed by the insular position of Wallasey at high water of spring tides, before those tides were excluded from the Leasowes by sand hills and embankments. Both livings are in the gift of the Dean and Chapter of Chester, that of West Kirkby from a very early period ; and the two may have been originally medieties of one living. It is clear, at any rate, that Robinson's romance is entirely unsupported by any evidence, and is about as baseless a fabric as that other romance of a submarine graveyard, it has been revived to support.

The insular character of Wallasey suggests a Celtic root for the name of Birkenhead, which possibly was *burr ceann*, the sea-head. The dates when the coast of

Wirral received the general features of its present conformation, and when Wirral was settled by the Celts are, and probably will remain, unassignable ; but it appears probable that the settlement was after the physical change had attained the state which is partially recorded in history. Hilbre or Ilbre is almost identical with *C. ile-de-bre*, the island of the headland, or *oil-de-bre*, the rock of the headland, either of which describes the topographical feature with the customary pertinence and force to be observed in Celtic names.

It is true some monkish and other writers derive the name of the island from St. Hildeburgh, but I fear she, like many other personages, sacred and profane, including the before-mentioned Lee and Walley, is entirely mythical, and owes her existence, at any rate in this locality, to one of those frequent attempts to explain abstruse facts by an easy effort of the imagination, instead of by patient inquiries. A similar instance is to be found in Cornwall, at Perranzabulo, where the church dedicated to St. Perran has been lost in the sands. Instead of owing its name to the saint, he owes existence as well as name to the place. Perranzabulo is so called from the position of the town in the days of the early Celtic settlers, which I believe is not much changed. It is probable the name originally was *pur-rann-sa-bul-lo*, that is the short, or abrupt, promontory in sandy water. ²

These eponymous legends are less illustrative of the scientific use of the imagination, than of imaginary Science.

In this little island, says Tanner (*i.e.*, Ilbre, Hilbury, or Holburgh), is said to have been a cell of Benedictine monks to Chester, which was dedicated to our Lady. He refers to King's *Vale Royal*, p. 1, p. 28, p. 11, and Willis, *Hist. of Abbeys*, vol. i, app. p. 66 ; vol. ii., app. p. 5 ; but makes a "Quære whether this might not be the hermitage mentioned in the Record Fin. 2 Edw. III. m. 2. thus, Cest Hildburghey heremitagium percipit xs. per ann. de castro regis Cestriæ de antiqua eleemosyna." Leland in his *Itinerary*, in vol. v. p. 55, says, "there was a celle of monks of Chestre, and a pilgrimage of our Lady of Hilbyri." Dugdale, *Mon.* vol. vi. p. 1615. There is here no record of a *church*.

The names of Hoyle-bank and Burbo-bank, assuming them to be Celtic, confirm the supposition that the existing conformation of the coast had taken place when that people dwelt here. Hoyle appears to be from the headland *oile-de-bre*, or from the island *ile-de-bre* ; and Burbo to be *burr-bo*, *i.e.*, sea-cow ; the latter not more far-fetched than those of the Calf, off the Isle of Man, and the Rat and Sheep, off the coast of Pembroke.

In Bowdon, Bowland Forest, and the Bowstones on the hills which border Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire, it is likely are other references to the cattle of the Celts ; just as the Bowman of Scotch villages collected the cows of his neighbours, took them out to graze in the morning, and brought them home at night.

The Point of Ayr appears another indicator of the conformation of the coast when its name was conferred. According to Jameson, in Orkney and Shetland, *air* signifies sand. He does not assign it to any language, it may be related to *C. uir*, earth, clay, dust.

Judging from record, and fair inferences from the record, Hoyle Bank has passed through much alteration. The Dee, like most other streams, has had two channels to the sea ; one along the Welsh coast, now, and for some centuries past, bearing the name of Chester water ; the other to the east-ward ; between the two lay a delta of sand. This delta

increased yearly, the principal causes of which appear to have been the large amount of silt brought down by the upland waters, the strength and earlier establishment of the tide through Chester water, and the prevailing winds. From the tidal establishment being earlier in Chester water, the flood would first make there, and would acquire strength before appearing in the eastern channel, which I will call Hoyle-lake, though probably it did not acquire that name until a comparatively recent period. This difference in the age of the flood would be accompanied by a phenomenon similar to that which I believe is still noticeable at New Brighton, near the Lighthouse, feel themselves carried seawards in the direction of Crosby channel.

It is manifest that such a meeting of portions of the same tide would prolong in Hoyle-lake the interval of slack water at each turn of the tide ; and that thus, in combination with the prevailing winds, the accretion of sand on the south-east side of the bank would be promoted ; consequently Hoyle bank would gradually increase in breadth south-eastwardly, and so deflect the course of Hoyle lake. A spit or projection would thus be formed on the bank, and this spit would not only increase the deflection of the ebb but would deflect the flood in the direction of the Rock point.

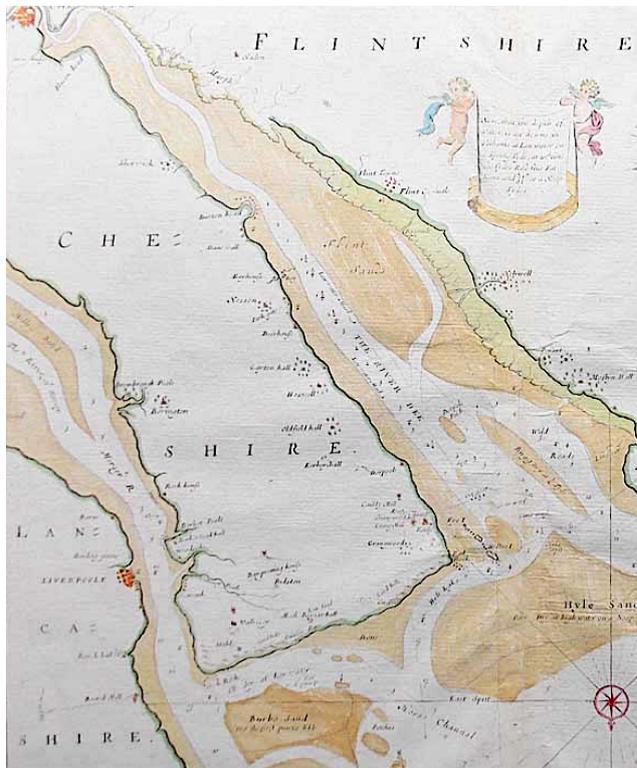
On the other hand, there can be little doubt that at some time undeterminable the water of Wallasey marsh, or leasowe, instead of passing into the Mersey, flowed direct into the sea between Wallasey and West Kirby, over the lowland containing at this day upwards of three thousand acres, below the level of high water. When the tide advanced into what is now called the Mersey, so far as the Birken or seahead, it would gradually eat into Wallasey pool also, and, by forming an outfall at a lower level, as at low water, cause the stream through the pool to reverse its direction, and thus the lowlands before referred to, forming Bidston March and the Leasowes, would be flooded at spring tides only. In the interval the sand hills would accumulate, and gradually advancing from Kirkby towards Wallasey, in the direction of the prevailing winds, would enable the little township of Hoose to be formed of land reclaimed from the oozy bottom of the former mouth of the pool. Perhaps the connection between the pool and the sea, at spring tides, remained until a comparatively recent period, that is, until within the last two hundred and fifty years, as it is indicated on a map dated 1644.³

The township of Hoose is extra-parochial. Usually this indicates that the place was formerly the property of the Sovereign, or of a Religious House. As Hoose does not appear to have occupied either position, it may have been reclaimed since the formation of parishes in Wirral, and considered of too little value to be claimed by either Kirkby or Wallasey, not having been included in the original parish, out of which those two are supposed to have been formed. The name of Hoose is from W. *wsg*, what separates, and this more modern Celtic name implies a more recent settlement.

The name of Gill-brook, formerly a branch of Wallasey pool on the Birkenhead side, is also Celtic, *gil* signifying water, and *gilaid* a little creek, which indicates what Gill-brook was, after the tide had deepened and enlarged Wallasey pool.

Whilst Wallasey pool discharged its waters into the sea, there would be a spit, or pseudo delta, between its mouth and the eastern channel of the Dee, and, judging from its name, Dove point, or spit, is its representative ; Dove being derivable from C. *dubh*, signifying black. If the diversion of Wallasey pool coincided with the deflection of Hoyle lake, as is highly probable, the bias of the flood stream to trend from the Dee towards the

Rock Point would be increased, and thus the deflection of Hoyle lake would be rendered more rapid, until it attained the position assigned to it on Collins' chart ; [See extract from that chart below] ⁴ since that date its history has been one of simple shoaling and contracting, to its final extinction. Collins represents Hoyle sand as a very large and continuous bank ; Fearon and Eyes, ⁵ on their charts some seventy or eighty years later, show that a part of the Waters of the Dee, unable to pass through Chester water, were cutting a more direct channel, called Hilbree swash, in preference to the tortuous course through Hoyle lake ; subsequently this new channel appears as the Half-tide Swatchway, and then, as now, the Zebra Channel, from its parti-coloured buoys.



So long as the stream through Hoyle lake retained any strength, it counteracted the flow through the Horse or Hoose channel, and prevented it from wasting the coast ; consequently it is not until within the last seventy or eighty years that there is the faintest record of any such waste. Thus it is physically impossible that the point of Wirral, that is ancient Meols, could ever have been subjected to any inroads from the sea of the slightest importance, except sand ; a conclusion which to my mind receives abundant confirmation from the existing phenomena in that locality, including the so-called submarine forest.

In the Act of Parliament, obtained in 1829, for the erection of the Wallasey Embankment, it is stated that it was required to prevent further

encroachment of the sea, and the injury to arise therefrom to the lowlands contiguous, and to the port of Liverpool ; and the preamble recites, "Whereas for some time past the sea has made great encroachments upon the Leasowes in the townships of Wallasey and Great Meols in the county of Chester, and such encroachments have within a late period very rapidly increased." This is scarcely appropriate language, if the waste has been going on for centuries ; the promoters of a Bill for protecting the coast of Yorkshire or of Norfolk would scarcely have used such moderate expressions as "sometime past" and "within a late period."

There is a singular resemblance between the trees of this submarine forest and that Saint who, after martyrdom, walked about with his head under his arm ; the stems of trees are found beneath upright butts, so that the latter must have raised themselves and placed their amputated limbs underneath. ⁶

I have not found any traces of that marvellous commerce which has been attributed to Meols and Formby ; on the contrary, I infer that in the time of the Roman occupation the seaboard from the Dee to the Ribble was in the sole occupation of the Celtic inhabitants ; that it was, in fact, like the mountains of Wales and Cumberland, a camp of refuge from the invaders. There seems little doubt now that the Seteia

Æstuarium and the *Belisama Æstuarium* of Ptolemy represent the mouths of the Dee and the Ribble ; on each of the rivers which fall into these estuaries was a position of great importance, in which were maritime transactions ; but on the Mersey there is no trace of anything of the kind ; it does not appear there was any commerce or navy at Wilderspool, therefore the course of the Mersey was not of any importance to the Romans, even if that river had any independent navigable connexion with the sea ; but a knowledge of the courses of the Dee and Ribble was important. It is to be observed that the designation of the two estuaries as given by Ptolemy is adjectival ; the form is not the genitive but the nominative. In English these estuaries are styled of the Dee and of the Ribble ; but it is not so with Ptolemy ; therefore I apprehend that the names of *Seteia* and *Belisama* belong to the estuaries alone, and do not extend to the rivers. The name *Belisama* appears to be derived from *C. beal-is-am*, literally the sands under water, or, the sandbanks on the coast under water ; ⁷ a description which probably would apply to the site of the present estuary of the Mersey, as well as to that of the Ribble. It is not unlikely that this estuary was intersected by numerous streams of which the Ribble, the Douglas, the Alt, and the Mersey are the principal representatives ; but these included the waters of other streams, which have been intercepted by natural or artificial operations. In the Mersey, for example, on the eastern bank there were *Otirpul*, *Stirpul*, *Liferpul*, *Beacon's Gutter*, *Landpol*, *Rimrose Brook*, besides some others, whose names are unknown or lost. Some of these, no doubt, united their streams before they reached the estuary or bay, but still it is highly probable that the streams were numerous, and formed many islets ; besides which the tide would be forming continually new inlets, to be abandoned in favour of others. The coast would therefore present the appearance of many mouths, some of them *cul-de-sacs*, some shallow, with here and there one that was navigable ; among the latter, the Ribble would appear to be the chief, both from its name, and from the town and port of Ribchester, *i.e.* Ribbleceaster. The name of the Ribble appears to be *C. Righ-bel*, the chief mouth or entrance, and the earlier name of Ribchester, *i.e.*, *Rigodunum*, to be *C. righ-go-dun*, literally, the chief-water town, ⁸ that is, the town on the principal river or stream.

The name of the other estuary, *Seteia*, I take to be derived from *C. sa-dae*, the stream rampart, as marking the mutual protection it afforded to the inhabitants of Wirral and to those of the black coast, the *Ordevices* of Roman history (*C. or*, coast ; *dubh*, black ; Latin *vices*, neighbours) ; or, the name may be from *C. sa-ta*, that is border stream ; or *sa-da*, two stream ; the river itself being called by the Welsh *dyfrdwy*, or *dyfrdwy*, which also signifies two streams. Requiring to keep open their communication from Chester to the sea, it soon became a strategic necessity to the Romans to guard the black coast of North Wales, on which no doubt they incurred many disastrous losses from wrecks, like those which have befallen so many subsequently ; but those wrecks would still be more disastrous to the Romans, so long as the coast was in the hands of a hostile people, and so they took possession of Anglesea or Mona, – the island of the holy relic, – and formed a road guarded by a chain of forts from Anglesea to Chester. Thus naturally they would prefer to use the channel, since called Chester water ; to that of Hoyle Lake, as they would desire to give the hostile people of Wirral a wide berth ; an inference which is confirmed by the absence of all those remains which, it is well known, the Romans constructed usually, if not always, wherever they settled for any lengthened period. It is true that coins, and fibulæ, and other trinkets, and articles of minor utility have been found at Great Meols, but these are not relics a people like the Romans would leave as the only memorials of an abiding residence. ...

It is well sometimes to look at subjects of local interest from the stand-point of a distant observer ... the discovery of coins and rings at ancient Meols ... is likely to be ... [this] : William III sailed from Hoylake with his army for Ireland ; on the staff of the army and in the sovereign's train were various people, who, whilst they awaited the gathering of the army and the sailing of the fleet, amused themselves with inspecting the various antiquities and other curiosities of Chester, which then, as now, were of interest to men of education. They of course purchased largely of the light portable articles presented to them, which represented pretty nearly all ages of English history. These purchases they took with them to the place of embarkation, at ancient Meols, but in the hurry of embarkation, from want of room on board, or some other accident, several packages, in which these antiquities were conveyed, were left behind. After the departure of the fleet, and when the locality had resumed its ordinary quietude, the inhabitants, who had enjoyed considerable experience as wreckers, broke open the boxes, and helped themselves to the clothes and other articles, with the value of which they were acquainted ; but being unable to detect the metal of which all this antiquarian rubbish was composed of, it was allowed to fall amongst the sand, where it was forgotten. By degrees the coins and other antique articles sank into the sand, and were covered by additional sand which drifted over them ; there they remained until the early part of the present century, when the weakening of the current through Hoylake allowed the flood-tide through Hoose channel to return towards its former position ; in doing this "the surface sand was washed from the beach, and for upwards of a mile along the shore layers of peat were exposed. Some men observing the curious appearance of the peat turned it over, and found several coins embedded in it." These and other articles excited and perplexed those lovers of the marvellous who are ever ready to accept any story which avoids probability, even though it be as extravagant as the tale of the Three Black Crows ! ... ⁹

It will be remembered that Cæsar describes some of the ancient Britons as having infinite store of cattle ; and the inland people as seldom troubling themselves with agriculture, living on milk and flesh meat, and clothing themselves in skins. This description appears to apply generally to the Celts of these islands, for Mr. Joyce gives several illustrations, in his interesting book on the *Origin and history of Irish names of places*. There appear to be various illustrations in this neighbourhood : Oxton, C. *oc-dhun* ; Bevington, now part of Liverpool, and Bebington in Wirral, which appears to be C. *babhun-dhun*, in which *babhun* represents a corrupted form of *badhun*, a cattle enclosure. *Lios*, from which the first syllable of Liscard has been derived, is supposed originally to have represented a cattle enclosure ; that at one time it represented simply an enclosure is rendered very probable from its appearance in *eug-lios*, a churchyard, literally a death-enclosure. The cattle enclosure would naturally be in the stronghold of the tribe ; here their women and children would be placed, and subsequently their chief ; and thus the gradual extension of its signification to house, habitation, palace, court, and fortified place. Dungeon, near Speke, perhaps illustrates a similar change, for it is probably a corruption of *daingean*, which signifies a stronghold, fortification, or enclosure. Joyce says that in Ireland it is applied to a stronghold of any kind, whether an ancient circular fort, or a more modern fortress or castle, and gives name to a considerable number of places ; Dangan being the correct English form. ...

In Landican, which appears in Doomsday Book as Landechene, is possibly a record of one of the earliest churches in Wirral, unless it be assumed that on the introduction of Christianity the existing temples were converted to the purposes of the

new religion. Dr. Ormerod has conjectured that a church in Landican preceded that in Woodchurch, which now gives name to the parish. The name may be interpreted as the church of the upper part, or of the hill ; but I feel very doubtful that Lann in this case has any reference to religion, and think it was more probably used in its earlier signification of enclosure or settlement. The name may have been *lann-de-ceann*, the enclosure of the chief ; or *lann-du-ceann*, the enclosure or field of two heads, an example of a place of execution similar to those noticed by Mr. Joyce as being found in Ireland.

Poulton, near Bromborough, is distinguished from other places of the name by the addition of Lancelyn ; that is, *lann-ce-linn*, or pool church land ; more correctly perhaps the pool settlement, a ruder and therefore earlier synonym of Poulton, with which it is now conjoined.

The word Thingwall is well known as of Danish origin, and indicating the place on which the people assembled, and laws were framed and promulgated. In Domesday Book Thingwall in Wirrall appears as Tuigvelle, *i.e.* I suppose, *Tuighe-del*, literally the thatching covering or roof of debate ; or, if the final *le* of the name in Domesday Book represents *C. li*, the thatch roof of law debate. From this it would appear as if the assemblies referred to were not held in the open air ; possibly the top of a hill, in this case perhaps where the mill now stands, was selected that it might be conspicuous, and to prevent any surprise from parties who, worsted in the discussion, might wish to appeal to the *ultima ratio* of kings. This explanation of the name also indicates the distinction conferred by a thatched roof. From the Coucher Book of Whalley,¹⁰ it appears that, so late as the end of the thirteenth century, roofs were covered with turf in the Meols of Lancashire. But it must not be hastily assumed that the thatch was of straw, as reeds or rushes may have been used instead. The contiguity of the townships of Thingwall and Landican is suggestive, as the land in each may have been originally assigned for the Chief of the House of Legislature respectively.

The Meols are remarkable features on both sides of the Mersey ; they probably derive their name also from the Celts. *Magh-ol*, or *Magh-ull*, the great plain, describes the large extent of level country of which they consist, and which, from Holt's *Agricultural Survey*, appear in Lancashire to extend under the sand hills. In the name of Maghull the orthography is identical with modern Irish, though the pronunciation is better preserved in Meols, the Lancashire sound. The village of Maghull is on a great plain. The plural form of the Meols seems analogous to that of the Leasowes, perhaps consequents of partition among different owners. Great and Little Meols, in Cheshire, were no doubt so distinguished from the comparative extent of the respective townships, which possibly were settled contemporaneously with those in the Lancashire Meols, that is, by the Saxons. If the names Meols and Leasowes are respectively Celtic, and Teutonic, the latter is of more recent date, and like the name of Hoose lends confirmation to the supposition that the tracts bearing the names were not settled, nor ready for settlement, until after the course of the Birket through Wallasey Pool had been reversed, in consequence of the inroad of the sea into the Mersey.



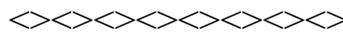
NOTES

- ¹ See *An Account of Wallasey, based on that of Mr. Robinson, Schoolmaster there, 1720 ; with Notes on the Parish, and extracts from the Registers*. A paper read by W. C. Ashby Pritt, to the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, 14th January 1892.
- ² Readers who are familiar with our church guide will already be aware that nothing is known of St. Hildeburgh and that her very existence has been brought into question. It has been said that her connection to Hilbre Island originated in Victorian times, but the tradition is far earlier than the 19th century, probably as early as the 7th century. Ormerod states that in early Norman times (1081) the island, together with the church at West Kirby, was given by William the Conqueror to the abbey of St. Ebrulf of Unica, and that in turn they released it to the abbey of St. Werburgh under the name of “Capella de Hildburgheye”. (See the leading article in *Dispatch* No. 7). The shrine on the island, so often referred to, was dedicated to “our lady of Hillbyri”, in other words, to the Virgin Mary.
- ³ Map in the collection of Thomas Dawson, M.R.C.S., a Liverpool surgeon then living in Rodney Street, and a collector of local books, engravings, charts and manuscripts.
- ⁴ Captain Greenville Collins, R.N., surveyed the waters around Wirral in 1689, first published in *Great Britain’s Coasting Pilot* in 1693.
- ⁵ Samuel Fearon & John Eyes carried out a series of surveys around the waters of the North-West from the 1730s to the 1760s, as well as producing numerous plans of Liverpool and surrounding districts, canals, etc.
- ⁶ *Observations on the Geology of the Cheshire Coast, and the so-called Submarine Forest beds* ; by Charles Potter, *Transactions of the Liverpool Geographical Society*, 1868-9. The Act of 1829 : Geo. IV., c. xvi.
- ⁷ Boult’s footnote : *beal* = sandbanks on the coast. *is* = under. *am* = ocean, or water. *Feoirin* = A sandy place on the sea-shore. May not this be the origin of Formby, the suffix being added by the Danes ? The name was formerly sometimes spelled Ferneby, the diphthong *eo* taking the sound of *eo* in yeoman ; and *n* before *b* has a tendency to become *m*. Thus the compound Celtic and Danish name would be pronounced Fōêrimby, which would naturally be contracted into Formby. Another form of the same room is *forna*.
- ⁸ Boult’s footnote : G, aspirated by a subjoined *h* in the middle or end of a word, is rendered quite quiescent, or suppressed in pronunciation. *O’Reilly*. In Welsh, *righ* becomes *rhi*. *C. Go* means literally the sea, but probably was also used generically for any important piece of water or stream.
- ⁹ Joseph Boult’s theory as to the myriad of finds along the shore of Meols being attributable to the carelessness of embarking troops ; and the leaving behind of a significant amount of personal effects owing to lack of space aboard the large fleet of men-o’-war and storeships assembled in the Lake, is implausible in the extreme. Supposing the average soldier of the day would have been interested in buying antiques in the first place – his mind was usually on more earthly pleasures – especially as they are about to go to war ; after making

such a purchase from their meagre pay, it is doubtful whether, *en masse* (as would be necessary given the number of items found on the beach) they would have been so inattentive to their treasures while boarding ship as to mislay them in vast quantities. As for goods being left behind, if, as the author states, the antiques purchased in Chester were “light portable articles”, they would have easily been housed and secured about their person. The definitive work on the subject is undoubtedly *Ancient Meols : or, some account of the Antiquities found near Dove Point, on the Sea-Coast of Cheshire ...* by the Rev. A. Hume, published in 1863. Even a perfunctory study of the book would impress the reader that the sheer number and variety of finds would call Mr. Boulton’s concept into question. Thousands of artefacts have been picked up near the water’s edge. Each and every single one of King William’s soldiers would have needed to have had all his pockets bulging – and then some. Hume’s amateur but learned study has been more than endorsed and augmented in more recent times by 20th century finds, and by the comprehensive monograph written by archaeologists and published in : *Meols. The Archaeology of the North Wirral Coast ...* Oxford, 2007. [Editor.]

Tale of the *Three Black Crows*, a poem by John Byrom (1692-1763), born near Manchester, educated at Chester, later going to Merchant Taylors’ School and on to Trinity College, Cambridge. Chiefly remembered for his ‘Hymn for Christmas Day’ which begins : *Christians awake, salute the happy morn / Whereon the saviour of the world was born.* Byrom also invented a system of shorthand but this was not used until four years after his death.

¹⁰ *The Coucher Book or Chartulary of Whalley Abbey*, edited by W. A. Hulston, Chetham Society, Manchester, 4 volumes, 1847-1849.



Stephen Hough ~ Heswall’s Classical Pianist

Stephen Hough won first prize at the Naumburg International Piano Competition in New York in 1983 ; became the first classical music performer to be awarded a ‘MacArthur Fellowship’ in 2001 ; and was named ‘Instrumentalist of the Year’ at the prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society Music Awards in 2010. He was appointed a CBE for services to music in 2014



Born in Heswall on the 22nd November 1961, Stephen Hough’s family moved to Thelwall, near Warrington, where he spent most of his developing years. He took piano lessons at Thelwall at the age of five and pleaded with his parents to buy an old piano for £5 in an antique shop. At the age of 12 he suffered a nervous breakdown after a mugging incident and was off school for a year. Nevertheless, he went on to study at Chetham’s School of Music, and the Royal Northern College of Music. In 1978 he was a finalist in the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition and attained the piano section.

In 1982, Stephen Hough won the ‘Terence Judd Award’. He has written over 30 pieces, and his Masses have been performed in Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral. An Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music, he was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Liverpool in 2011 ; just one of many honours and awards bestowed on him since his

musical career began. During an appearance on Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs*, the book he chose to be with him when shipwrecked was Tyndale's Bible.

Stephen Hough has recorded more than 60 CDs, perhaps his most memorable being Rachmaninoff's piano concertos and *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, recorded live with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. These recordings won him his seventh Gramophone Award as well as the Classical BRIT Critics Award. He is a visiting professor of piano at the Royal Academy of Music in London, the International Chair of Piano Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, and he is on the faculty of the Juilliard School in New York. Stephen Hough became a Roman Catholic at the age of 19, and seriously considered becoming a priest. In 2005 he took up dual nationality and became an Australian citizen in honour of his father who was born there. Last year he had published : *Rough Ideas : reflections on music and more* being a collection of essays and short musings. (Faber & Faber, 2019).

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Delightful Oddities

Wording on a form sent out by a Government department in 1962 : *“Separate departments on the same premises are treated as separate premises for this purpose where separate branches of work which are commonly carried on as separate businesses in separate premises are carried on in separate departments of the same premises.”*

Lady Granville to her sister in 1810 : *“Men so little understand the comfort of talking a great deal about nothing at all.”*

Alice Roosevelt Longworth : *“If you have nothing good to say about anyone, come and sit by me.”*

Alec Douglas Home on growing old : *“To my deafness I'm accustomed. To my dentures I'm resigned. I can manage my bifocals. But Oh, how I miss my mind.”*

Sir Thomas Beecham : *“I prefer Offenbach to Bach often.”*

Letter from Jeffrey Bernard in the *New Statesman*, 18 July 1975 : *“Sir, I have been commissioned by Michael Joseph to write an autobiography and I would be grateful to any of your readers who could tell me what I was doing between 1960 and 1974.”*

From the *Isis* magazine of Oxford University : *“Worcester, like most colleges, does not admit dogs. The Dean's dog Flint has thus been officially declared a cat by the Governing Body.”*

A remark made to Capability Brown : *“I hope I may die before you, so that I may see Heaven before you improve it.”*

Agatha Christie : *“The advantage of being married to an archaeologist is that the older you get, the more interested he becomes in you.”*

Anonymous : *“Good news seldom arrives in a brown envelope.”*

Anonymous : *“The future isn't what it used to be !”*

The Wirrall Hundred

1795

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Arrow | Backford |
| Barnston | Bebbington Superior |
| Bebbington Inferior | Bidston cum Liscard |
| Blacon cum Crabhall | Brimstage |
| Bromborow | Burton |
| Caldey Magna, or Grange | Caldry Parva |
| Capenhurst | Childer Thornton |
| Chorlton | Claughton cum Grange |
| Croughton | Eastham cum Plimyard |
| Frankby | Gayton |
| Greasby | Heswall cum Oldfield |
| Hooton cum Ranacre | Irby |
| Kirby cum Wallasey | Knoctorum |
| Landican | Lea |
| Ledsham | Leighton |
| Liscard | Meols Magna |
| Meols Parva | Mollington Banister |
| Mollington Torrett | Moreton |
| Nesse | Neston Magna |
| Neston Parva cum Hargreave | Newton cum Larton |
| Oxton | Pennesby |
| Poole Superior | Poole Inferior |
| Poulton cum Seacombe | Poulton cum Spittle |
| Prenton | Puddington |
| Raby | Rough Shotwick |
| Saughall Magna cum Woodbank | Saughall Parva |
| Saughall Massie | Shotwick |
| Stanney Magna | Stanney Parva |
| Stoake | Storeton |
| Sutton Magna | Sutton Parva |
| Thingwall | Thornton Mayes |
| Thurstaston | Tranmore |
| Upton | Westkirby |
| Whitby | Willaston |
| Woodchurch | |





An American Poet's visit to Liverpool & Chester in 1840

Lydia Howard Sigourney (1791-1865) was a minor American poet with a passion for English literature and had formed a correspondence with many distinguished writers and poets before she realized her ambition and visited England.

In 1840, she set sail from New York, bound for Liverpool, on what was to become an extensive tour of England, Scotland and France. Upon her arrival in Liverpool, she visited Chester before travelling north to the Lake District in the hope of meeting Robert Southey who, unfortunately, was too ill to see her ; on up through Carlisle to Abbotsford, the home of Sir Walter Scott, and on to Glasgow, Loch Lomond and Edinburgh ; before returning to England and visiting York, Sheffield, Matlock, Chatsworth House, Lichfield, Birmingham, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick, Oxford, London, and on to tour France via Dover and Calais. She returned to England in order to sail home from Bristol aboard Brunel's *Great Western* in 1842. She wrote of her travels in a book published in Boston and London in 1844 entitled *Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands ...* which included a number of Mrs. Sigourney's poems, a little too 'flowery' for modern taste, perhaps, and her historical accuracy was sometimes wanting, but nevertheless the glimpse of England through her eyes is not without interest. Virginia Blain, in a book on women writers published in 1998, described, rather unkindly, Lydia Sigourney's journey as "literary lion-hunting." In which case, the poet carried off some notable trophies as she visited every possible literary home in England, Scotland and France.

Lydia Sigourney's voyage from New York to Liverpool via Newfoundland was uneventful enough. She described her feelings of life onboard in two poems, *A Sabbath at Sea*, and *Approach to England*. Her "approach" however, was anything but uneventful, and vividly portrays the perils of the sea in the nineteenth century. An account of this voyage appeared in the *Church of England Magazine* (Vol. XVI, January-June 1844). Sailing from New York on the 1st August 1840 aboard a 'Liverpool Packet', the *Europe*, after seventeen days at sea they came within sight of the Irish coast. We will allow the author to tell her story in her own words as she describes the terror of being at sea under sail in low visibility near a dangerous coast without the modern benefits of radar and satellite navigation :

"...that terror of mariners awaited us in St. George's Channel – a dense fog upon an iron-bound coast. We had joyfully seen the light in the head of old Kinsale ; afterwards, the harbour of Cork, and the mountains of Dungannon, revealed themselves, and were lost. Then wrapped in a thick curtain, we went on fearfully with continual soundings. A chill rain occasionally fell ; and the winds moaned and cried among the shrouds, like living creatures. The faithful and attentive Captain, [Captain Edward G.

Marshall] oppressed with a sense of his responsibility, scarcely took refreshment or repose. At midnight, on the 19th, we heard his voice cheerfully announcing, that a bright light from Tuscar Rock [Tuskar Rock, off the coast of County Wexford, one of the most dangerous spots in the Irish Sea and the scene of countless shipwrecks.] was visible, that our course was right, and that all might retire to rest, free from anxiety.

As morning dawned, I lay waking, and listening to sounds, that seemed near my ear, and even upon my pillow. They were like water forcing its way among obstructions, or sometimes as if it were poured hissing upon heated stones. At length, I spoke to the friend who shared my state-room, of a suppressed voice of eddies and whirlpools, like what is often heard in passing Hurl-Gate, [a narrow channel in the East River between Manhattan and Long Island] when the tide is low. She thought me imaginative ; but on hearing that I had long been reasoning with myself, and yet the sounds remained, she threw on her dressing-gown and ascended to the deck. The fog was still heavy, and all things appeared as usual. Soon the carpenter, being sent aloft to make some repairs, shouted in a terrible voice, ‘Breakers ! Breakers !’ The mist lifted its curtain a little, and there was a rock sixty feet in height, against which the sea was breaking with tremendous violence, and towards which we were propelled by wind and tide. At the first appalling glance, it would seem that we were scarcely a ship’s length from it. In the agony of the moment, the Captain, clasping his hands, exclaimed that all was lost. Still, under this weight of anguish, more for others than himself, he was enabled to give the most minute orders with entire presence of mind. They were promptly obeyed ; the ship, as if instinct with intelligence, obeyed her helm, and sweeping rapidly around, escaped the jaws of destruction. Still we were long in troubled waters, and it was not for many hours, and until we had entirely passed Holyhead, that the Captain took his eye from the glass, or quitted his post of observation. It would seem that, after he had retired to rest the previous night, the ship must have been imperfectly steered, and aided by the strong drifting of the tides in that region, was led out of her course towards Cardigan bay ; thus encountering the reef which is laid down on the charts, as Bardsey’s Isle. [Off the Llŷn Peninsula].

The passengers, during this period of peril, were generally quiet, and offered no obstruction, through their own alarms, to the necessary evolutions on deck. One from the steerage, an Irishman, who had been thought, but a few days before, in the last stages of pulmonary disease, was seen, in the excitement of the moment, labouring among the ropes and blocks, as if in full health and vigour. It was fearful to see him, with a face of such mortal paleness, springing away from death in one form, to meet and resist him in another.

Every circumstance and personage, connected with that scene of danger, seem to adhere indelibly to recollection. A young girl, came and sat down on the cabin floor, and said in a low, tremulous tone ‘I have loved my Saviour, but have not been faithful to Him as I ought ;’ and in that posture of humility awaited His will.

A mother, who since coming on board had taken entire charge of an infant not a year old, retired with it in her arms to a sofa, when the expectation of death was the strongest upon us all. Masses of rich, black hair fell over her brow and shoulders as her eyes rivetted upon the nurseling, with whom she might so soon go down beneath the deep waters. He returned that gaze with an almost equal intensity, and there they sat, uttering no sound, scarcely breathing, and pale as a group of sculptured marble. ...”

Lydia Sigourney and her fellow-passengers eventually crossed Liverpool Bay where the boarding of a Liverpool pilot brought reassurance, and a steam tug waited to tow the square-rigger up the Mersey to the safety of Liverpool Docks. The following day, Sunday 23rd August, Mrs. Sigourney attended Divine Service in Liverpool's Blind School, doubtless returning thanks for her safe arrival in England and her deliverance from a watery grave :

“It is impossible to listen without emotion to the sacred music of the blind, in their church at Liverpool. They chant as in the cathedral service, accompanied by the organ ; and sing anthems, and other compositions, with a soul-thrilling sweetness. Of course, all these performances are acts of memory, which is doubtless rendered more retentive by the concentrativeness of thought, which blindness promotes. The noble asylum for these sightless worshippers is well patronized. Their church is adorned with two large paintings, and a transparency ; and was filled by a respectable audience. The seats for the objects of the Institution are in the gallery. Sweet and heaven-born is that charity, which, if she may not, like her Master, open the blind eye to the works of nature, pours upon the afflicted mind the light of knowledge, and lifts up the soul to the ‘clear shining of the sun of righteousness’.

We were taken, by the kindness of a friend, to the afternoon worship in the chapel of the Blue Coat Hospital. Two hundred and fifty boys, and one hundred girls, were assembled there, in the neat uniforms of the Institution. To our surprise the whole service was performed by them. A boy of very grave deportment read the Liturgy with a solemn intonation, and the others distinctly responded. Another officiated as organist ; and all joined zealously in the singing. Catechisms and portions of Scripture were recited by a selection of scholars, and the exercises conducted and closed decorously.

The building appropriated to the Institution is spacious, and perfectly neat. In one apartment are portraits of its benefactors, among whom are some who were once pensioners of its bounty. The advantages for an extended education are not so great here, as in the establishment for the Blue Coat Boys in London, which has produced some literary men of note. The Liverpool beneficiaries are prepared for the practical walks of life, and become apprentices to artisans, or tradesmen. Before leaving, we were invited to see the children taking their Sunday supper. Each had, on a wooden plate, a huge mass of bread, with a modicum of cheese, and by its side a small cup of ale ; all of which elements they were discussing with a visible relish. Their appearance was healthful, and their deportment quiet and in perfect subordination. How true is that benevolence which rescues the young from ignorance and poverty, and inspires them with motives to become useful here, and happy hereafter. It is peculiarly honourable in a commercial city, to devote time and attention to these departments of philanthropy.

Liverpool possesses objects of interest of a different nature. The magnitude of its Docks astonishes every stranger. Its New Cemetery [St. James Cemetery, behind the cathedral, opened in 1829] is beautiful. We visited also its Bazaar, Custom-House, and Town Hall. The latter has a noble staircase, and good prospect from the dome ; and in some of its apartments are portraits, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, of various members of the royal family. Opposite the Exchange is a bronze statue of Nelson. He is depicted in the death-struggle. Fame and Victory holding over his head several crowns. The pedestal is surrounded by nine colossal figures in chains, [*sic*. There are four manacled figures around the base] representing the various nations, which he had either subjugated, or compelled to acknowledge the supremacy of Great Britain.

We were gratified by seeing some of the descendants of Roscoe, who ennobled the mercantile profession by elegant literature, and his native city by his fame. On the fifth day after our arrival, we left Liverpool ... well pleased with the kindness and polite attentions which had met us at the threshold of the Mother-land.”

On Tuesday 25th August 1840 Lydia Sigourney was in Chester and she gives her impression of the ancient city which she found strange and unfamiliar :

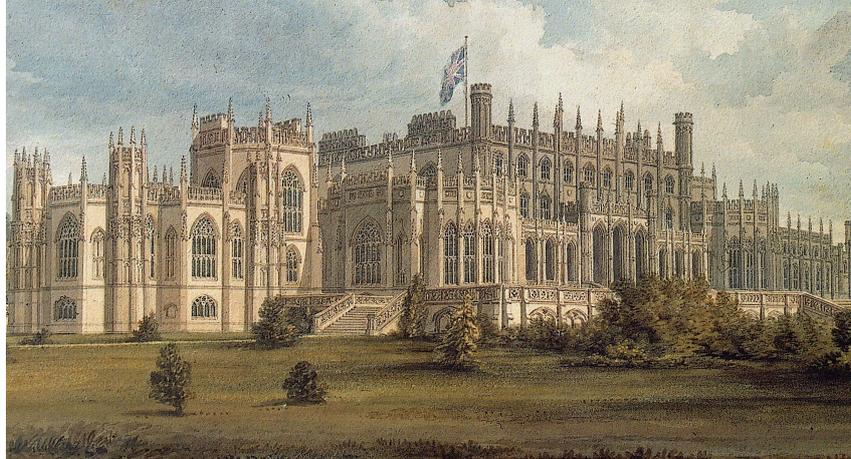
“The features of Chester are peculiar, at least to an American eye. Its dwellings are so constructed, with a story projecting over the side-walks, that the passengers move along through covered vestibules ; and at first view, they who are in the streets seem to be in the houses, and they who are in the houses, in the streets. It exhibits the only specimen of ancient fortification in England, with the exception of Carlisle. Its walls are nearly two miles in circumference and afford an agreeable promenade. The towers, by which they were defended, were anciently placed at bow-shot distance, that they might afford aid to each other, as well as annoy by their arrows a besieging enemy.

Chester has a castle, where a garrison is stationed ; and a cathedral, erected in the fifteenth century, [Parts of the cathedral in fact date back to the 13th century – 1283] which is 350 feet in length, by 75 in breadth, and the altitude of the tower 127. Its most ancient portion, which was originally an abbey, was founded 1160 years since, by Wulpherius, king of Mercia. [Wulfhere (c.640-675), reigned 658-675 AD. St. Werburgh, or Werburga, Patron Saint of Chester, was Wulfhere’s daughter]. The Danes destroyed it, when they took possession of Chester in 895 ; [Sic. In 893 the Vikings marched on Chester from Wirral] but it was afterwards restored, and placed under the government of Ethelfleda, [Aethelflaed] daughter of Alfred the Great. Beneath its low-browed arches we were shown the tomb of Henry IV of Germany, [? Sic. Henry IV died in 1106 and is buried in Speyer Cathedral, Germany] and some Roman relics. Among the latter was a stone, with an obscure Latin inscription, purporting that one thousand paces of the wall were built by the cohort, under Ocratius Maziminius. [?]. It is well known that the head-quarters of the twentieth Roman legion were at Chester, and that it is supposed to derive its name from *Castrum*, a camp or military station. [Towards the end of the 400-year Roman occupation, the ‘Legio vigesima Valeria Victrix’, – the 20th Legion – was known in the Imperial Roman Army as *Castra Deva*, which means ‘the military camp on the River Dee’] Many circumstances led me to explore, with peculiar interest, this antique and fortified town.

A ride of four miles beyond it brings you to Eaton-Hall, the seat of the Marquis of Westminster. Its principal gate of entrance is said to have been erected at the expense of £10,000 ; and the grounds, which are seven miles in extent, are laid out in parks, interspersed with shrubbery, beautiful flowers, and tasteful porter’s lodges. The mansion, a specimen of the modern Gothic, is seven hundred feet in length, and exhibits an imposing range of towers, pinnacles, and turrets. The interior has a costly display of paintings, statuary, sculpture, and gilding. The dining-room, state bed-room, and superb library, one hundred and thirty feet in length, and divided into three compartments, with other richly-furnished apartments, were shown to us. As it was the first baronial establishment our republican eyes had ever beheld, we regarded it with attention. There was much to admire, especially in the high state of cultivation that marked its environs ; yet the mind reverted with a deeper sympathy to the time-worn structures we had just quitted, and preferred to linger among the shadows of mouldering antiquity.

During our ride of ten miles from Chester to Eastham, where we took passage in a steamer for Liverpool, we had delightful views of the blossomed hedges and cottages of England.”

And there we must leave Mrs. Sigourney as she sails down the Mersey and across river to Liverpool and allow her to continue (uninterrupted) on the next stage of her journey towards Kendal and the beauty of the English Lakes.



**William Porden’s Eaton Hall as seen by Lydia Sigourney
The Hall was begun in 1803 and completed in 1813
Eaton Hall was rebuilt by Alfred Waterhouse between 1870 and 1882**

A Close Call ~ Winston Churchill: “I went for a row on the lake of Lausanne with another boy a little younger than myself. When we were more than a mile from the shore, we decided to have a swim, pulled off our clothes, jumped into the water and swam about in great delight. When we had had enough the boat was perhaps one hundred yards away. A breeze had begun to stir the waters. The boat had a small red awning over its stern seats. This awning acted as a sail by catching the breeze. As we swam towards the boat, it drifted farther off. After this happened several times, we had perhaps halved the distance. But meanwhile the breeze was freshening and we both, especially my companion, began to be tired. Up to this point no idea of danger had crossed my mind. The sun played upon the sparkling blue waters ; the wonderful panorama of mountains and valleys, the gay hotels and villas still smiled. But now I saw Death as near I believe as I have ever seen him. He was swimming in the water at our side, whispering from time to time in the rising wind which continued to carry the boat away from us at about the same speed we could swim. No help was near. Unaided we could never reach the shore. I was not only an easy, but a fast swimmer, having represented our House at Harrow, when our team defeated all comers. I now swam for life. Twice I reached within a yard of the boat and each time a gust carried it just beyond my reach ; but by a supreme effort I caught hold of its side in the nick of time before a still stronger gust bulged the red awning again. I scrambled in, and rowed back for my companion who, though tired, had not apparently realized the dull yellow glare of mortal peril that had so suddenly played around us.”

My Early Life

The Puzzle Stones of Bebington

Puzzle Stones, more than two hundred years old, survive in Bebington Library. They were originally in the wall of a house (now demolished) at the bottom of Heath Road and were cut by its owner, a village eccentric named Thomas Francis, who died in 1850 and is buried in Bebington Churchyard. See if you can solve his riddles. The first refers to the Two Crowns Inn by the old Chester Road in Lower Bebington, and its landlord at the time, Mark Noble :

[1]

**My name and sign is thirty shillings just
And he that will tell my name shall
have a quart on trust
For why is not five the fourth
Part of twenty the same in all cases ?**

[2]

**Subtract 45 from 45
That 45 may remain.**

[3]

A stone used by and designed for loafers :

**AR
UBB

I
NGS
TONEF
ORAS
SE
S**

[4]

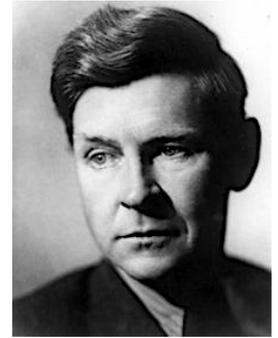
**From six take nine,
From nine take ten,
From forty take fifty,
Then six will remain.**

Answers below :

Answers to the quiz questions on page 6

- {1} British United Airways operated a Vickers VA-3 hovercraft between Moreton and Rhyl from July 1962. With a cruising speed of 60 mph, and a journey time of 35 minutes, it was hoped that the service would open up the Welsh coast to thousands of additional visitors. However, the hovercraft was damaged at her moorings in a storm and the service ended after only a few weeks.
- {2} The shot was fired from Fort Perch Rock only 30 minutes after war was declared in 1914. The shell was fired across the bows of an inward-bound Norwegian ship that had failed to respond to a signal.
- {3} Zeebrugge was attacked in 1917 in an attempt to deny the port to German destroyers and U-boats. The Wallasey ferries *Iris* and *Daffodil* played an important role. King George V afterwards bestowed the *Royal* prefix on the two vessels and their successors.
- {4} Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) wrote *The Sands of Dee* with the well-known opening line *O Mary, go and call the cattle home*. The poem concerns the marshes around Burton and Shotwick and were written by Kingsley when he was a canon of Chester Cathedral (1870-73). Kingsley played a significant role in the establishment of the Grosvenor Museum.
- {5} The Swiss Bridge is in Birkenhead Park and was built between 1843 and 1847 when the park was laid out to a design by Joseph Paxton. It has been re-built several times over the years.
- {6} The beautiful half-timbered house moved from Bidston to Royden Park near Frankby is called Hill Bark. Built by Sir Ernest Royden, the Liverpool shipowner, he had it taken down in 1929 and moved to its present position as he preferred the view.
- {7} Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), born in Oswestry, moved to Birkenhead in 1897 where he attended Birkenhead Institute on Whetstone Lane. Owen enlisted in the 2nd Manchester Regiment in 1916. Suffering from shell shock he was sent to an Edinburgh hospital to recover and there met Siegfried Sassoon and began to write poetry. He returned to France and was killed just before the end of the war.

{8} Dr. William Olaf Stapledon (1886-1950), author and philosopher, was described as perhaps the best writer of Science Fiction between the age of Verne and Wells. Born in Seacombe, he lived from 1920 to 1940 in Grosvenor Avenue, West Kirby, behind Ashton Park ; and for the last 10 years of his life in Simon's Field, Caldy. Stapledon Wood on Caldy Hill is named after him.



{9} Charles Sargeant Jagger (1885-1934) was the Yorkshire-born artist who sculptured the Hoylake & West Kirby War Memorial. He is best remembered for his inspiring Royal Artillery Memorial on Hyde Park Corner, and for his splendid Great Western Railway War Memorial in Paddington Station. The granite obelisk on Grange Hill is 11.5 m high.

{10} The charming name of Puddydale is given to a small grassy park on Telegraph Road, Heswall. Puddydale was originally a pond, drained in 1922. The land was given to the parish in 1859 by the Enclosure Commissioners.



Whither the World?

“The leadership of the privileged has passed away ; but it has not been succeeded by that of the eminent. We have entered the region of mass effects. The pedestals which had for some years been vacant have now been demolished. Nevertheless, the world is moving on ; and moving so fast that few have time to ask – whither. And to these few only a babel responds.”



Winston Churchill
Great Contemporaries



Editor's Endnote :

We finish the *Dispatches* with yet another bumper issue and hope that there has been something for everyone over the course of the ten issues put forth since March and the early stages of Lockdown. My thanks to Nigel Hall for uploading the *Dispatch* so diligently each fortnight.

Continue to keep safe.

Michael Nash.

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