

# St. Hildeburgh's *Dispatch*

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A fortnightly on-line paper to entertain all in lockdown during the Coronavirus pandemic

## The Great Hurricane of 1839



Scenes like this shipwreck of 1837 by the Dutch painter Wijnand Nuijen (1813-1839) would have been played out all around the British coast in 1839

**On the nights of 6 - 7<sup>th</sup> January 1839, a ferocious hurricane swept over the British Isles leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake. We have a reminder of its passing in our midst in the**

form of the 60-foot Doric column on Grange Hill. Constructed of local red sandstone and erected in 1841 by the Liverpool Dock Trustees – the forebears of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board established in 1858 – the column replaced Grange Mill which had stood as a navigational landmark since medieval times, guiding mariners bound for Chester or Liverpool into Hoylake. It is clearly evident on Captain Greenville Collin's chart of 1689, the first survey to be carried out in Liverpool Bay. The windmill was blown down and completely wrecked in what the Irish called *Oíche na Gaoithe Móire* – Night of the Big Wind.



Grange Column, an 1841 navigational aid for sailors.

So terrible was the storm that the older residents of West Kirby and Hoylake still spoke of it in whispers some sixty years later. They had witnessed a number of horrific storms in their time, but none could hold a candle to the windstorm that visited the peninsula in early January 1839. The winter had already produced unusual weather, but nothing prepared the nation for the storm that was about to visit them. First reports came from County Mayo around noon on the 6<sup>th</sup> January as the weather came in off the Atlantic. In the afternoon the storm moved slowly across Ireland, gathering strength as it did so. That night, in Ireland alone, it is estimated that between 250 and 300 people lost their lives ; about a quarter of all houses in Dublin were damaged and flooding inland was widespread ; and 42 vessels on the Irish coast were wrecked. Soon the storm-surge was spreading out over the Irish Sea heading straight for North Wales and England.

By the time the tempest arrived over Liverpool Bay, winds were reaching well in excess of 115 miles per hour – a category 3 hurricane. It pushed relentlessly on over England, hitting Yorkshire and Cumberland hard and reaching up into Scotland and down to London and beyond, but the Liverpool Bay area suffered the most owing to its shipping. This part of the kingdom had witnessed many storms in living memory – even the ‘Great Storm’ of 1703 had passed into folklore – but that of 1839 in terms of property damaged, ships sunk, and lives lost, exceeded all that had gone before it. The storm raged from Sunday night, 6<sup>th</sup> January, and continued with hardly an intermission till the afternoon of Monday 7<sup>th</sup>. With little warning of its approach, many experienced captains had put to sea on the Sunday tide, and shortly after midnight the storm had developed into a perfect hurricane. Houses were not as well maintained as they are today ; the pointing of brickwork for example was often neglected. There were many reports of flying slates, chimney stacks crashing through roofs, and solid walls shaking and vibrating with the violence of the wind. Liverpool and Wirral were devastated with reports of deaths and damage. At Knowsley, it was estimated that well over 3,000 trees were uprooted.

Countless reports of destruction and fatalities came in from all quarters. Almost every house in Birkenhead was damaged, eyewitnesses telling of slates hurtling a distance of 100 yards like wartime shrapnel. A house in Portland Place was reduced to its outer walls only. In Chester, the Rev. Charles Taylor, rector of St. Peter’s, had the presence of mind to check on his six-year-old child, sleeping oblivious of the havoc all about him. Hearing an ominous noise, Rev. Taylor snatched his child from its bed, only seconds before the chimney came crashing through the roof and landed where the child had lain. The clergyman was left bruised from fallen masonry, but his child was safe, thanks to his quick-thinking. Around Rock Ferry hardly a property escaped damage. Roofs were torn off and lead gutters rolled up like paper. Across the Hundred of Wirral the devastation was without parallel. There were those who remembered the severe storm of 1802, and more recently that of 1833, but nobody had witnessed the mischief that this storm brought down on their heads. Property along the Dee coast of Wirral, and more especially along the top of the peninsula between New Brighton and Hoylake, suffered the most. Every Wirral village reported desolation that defied description.

As usual, it was those at sea who were in the greatest peril. Even shipping in Liverpool Docks did not escape. In Queen’s Dock, a large fishing vessel sank, and many ships lost spars. In King’s, four flats and an anchor-boat were sunk. In George’s Basin, three fine brigs came adrift and smashed into the S.E. corner of the basin but not before sinking a schooner. In Bootle Bay a great number of vessels were driven ashore. The *Oxford* from New York lay on the sands with nothing left standing except her bowsprit

and mizzen-mast. All communication with shipping in the Approaches was lost as the telegraph on Bidston Hill had been blown away. The N.W. Lightship drifted from her moorings but had fortunately reached the Mersey safely, managing to drop anchor off Seacombe, not far from where the *Admiral*, the Seacombe ferry, had sunk with the loss of two seamen. Out in Liverpool Bay the situation was far worse. Almost sixty vessels had sailed from the Mersey that Sunday afternoon, the tide at its height about three o'clock, all hoping to clear the sandbanks on their passage out into the Irish Sea. Many joined a terrible catalogue of disasters during the night that followed ; some would never return.

Of the numerous casualties more or less in sight of Hoylake that night, three in particular are remembered : *Pennsylvania*, *St. Andrews*, and *Lockwoods*.

The *Pennsylvania*, an American packet-ship, was outward bound from the Mersey for New York and was off Point Lynas when the storm struck about 11 pm. It carried away her sails and many of her spars and after drifting all night at the mercy of the waves – the spray so thick that visibility was seriously impaired – she greeted the dawn in a perilous situation. No man could stand on her decks and therefore no sails could be set. She continued wallowing on the sea all Monday, everyone on board expecting the vessel to go to pieces before the next day. However, when Tuesday did dawn, they found themselves off the Ormeshead and the ship continued to drift back towards the Mersey. Off the West Hoyle Bank, she was finally knocked to pieces and her timbers gave way. The captain got as many passengers as possible into the boats slung over the stern, he and most of the crew remaining on-board. One boat made for the shore, about three miles distant, but within a mile of land the boat was swamped. Some of the passengers reached land safely, others were not so fortunate, their bodies being taken to Leasowe Castle. Fourteen of the passengers and crew were drowned, including the captain and the first and second mates, some perished clinging to the rigging. Twenty-six souls were saved, a number by the Magazine lifeboat.

The *St. Andrews* was also an American packet bound for New York, having sailed from Liverpool at 2 pm that fateful Sunday. She too was taken by surprise at the ferocity of the storm which, by 2 am, was a complete hurricane. Her almost brand-new sails were torn to ribbons. One hand was dashed from the yardarm onto the deck and was severely injured yet alive. The captain ordered his men aloft but staring at almost certain death, they refused. The ship was now unmanageable and when Monday came, she was in a sorry state. However, the seamen managed to cut away her upper masts and rig jury sail, in this crippled condition she attempted to steer a course back to the Mersey. About 10.30 in the forenoon, she struck the Burbo Bank. *St. Andrews* was more fortunate than *Pennsylvania* as help was close at hand. The steam tug *Victoria* rescued the packet's passengers, and the Magazine lifeboat and the steamship *Mountaineer* saved her crew. All 23 on-board survived.

The *Lockwoods* sailed from Liverpool around 1 pm on the Sunday and she too was outward bound for New York, with 86 emigrants and 25 officers and crew. On encountering the full violence of the storm out in Liverpool Bay their sails were in tatters, the second mate was badly injured, and they did not know exactly where they were. During Monday they managed to set some sails and on discovering that they were off Blackcombe, on the Cumberland coast, they bore up for Liverpool on the Tuesday morning. At that point all passengers and crew were alive. They reached the Spencer Cut buoy, and had the N.W. Lightship been at her moorings, all would have been well. Men

peered out looking for the lightship which had broken her cables and was now lying off Wallasey. They let go the anchors, but these were soon lost and shortly afterwards they struck a bank. With heavy seas washing over the ship she soon filled up. Pilot No. 5 came to her assistance, followed by the steam tug *Victoria*. Three or four hawsers were made fast to the *Lockwoods* but all parted. The *Victoria* had taken 30 or 35 passengers and crew on board, and being unable to render further assistance, she made for Liverpool.



Wreck of the *Lockwoods* by J. Buttersworth. The tug *Victoria* is seen coming to her assistance.

The Hoylake lifeboat came out to give assistance on the Wednesday morning, although the crew were criticized for only putting to sea after a long delay. On boarding the vessel, they found 21 bodies on the poop – men, women and children – and two further bodies on the main deck. They carried the 23 bodies into Liverpool where they were taken up to the workhouse. There were two or three further bodies that they were forced to leave behind as they were jammed in the rigging and could not be removed. They also took off the remaining survivors, but one passenger refused to leave as his wife lay dying. The mate of the *Lockwoods*, Thomas Fleck, claimed that he asked the boatmen to take the woman off together with her husband, but that they refused to have any half-dead people on board and threatened to leave him too if he did not quit the ship immediately. The lifeboat crew were eventually persuaded to take the husband and wife off. Fifty-two passengers and one seaman lost their lives in the *Lockwoods*.



Contemporary engraving by Thomas Fairland showing the loss of the *Pennsylvania*, *Lockwoods* and *St. Andrews* off the Wirral coast in 1839

Disgraceful behaviour is attached to some individuals along both the Cheshire and Lancashire shores. Wreckers were reported to be at large, plundering what the elements washed ashore rather than giving aid to those in need. It was reported in Liverpool that around a hundred wreckers were about their shameful business, and Liverpool dispatched a score of policemen to disperse them and to protect lives and property. Twenty-six wreckers were taken into custody, but they were not lodged securely and twenty of their number escaped. Other locals behaved with great courage and sacrifice.



# *As We Were : Hoylake in days gone by.*

*No. 4 : 1892*

In the fourth and final account of Hoylake in yesteryear, we take a description from *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire* for the year 1892 and view our town as the Victorians knew it.

**“HOYLAKE is a watering place on the shore of the Irish Sea and near the estuary of the Dee, with a station on the Wirral railway, 8 miles north-west from Birkenhead, in the parish of West Kirby, and comprises within its area the townships of LITTLE MEOLS, and HOOSE, in the Wirral division of the county, Lower division of the hundred and in the union of Wirral, petty sessional division and county court district of Wirral and in the rural deanery of Wirral, archdeaconry and diocese of Chester : the town is under the control of the Hoylake and West Kirby local board, established Feb. 14, 1891, and has been for some years a place of resort for bathing ; it is lighted with gas and is supplied with water by the Hoylake and West Kirby Gas and Water Co., Limited : there are three excellent hotels and some good lodging houses and the game of golf is much played on the extensive links.**

The ecclesiastical parish of Holy Trinity, formed in 1860, comprises the townships of Hoose and Great and Little Meols ; the church, built in 1834 at a cost of £2,000, is an edifice of red sandstone in the Norman style, consisting of chancel, nave, south porch and a western turret containing one bell : there are 560 sittings. The register dates from the year 1834. The living is a vicarage, gross yearly value £300, net £220, with residence, in the gift of the Bishop of Chester, and held since 1891 by the Rev. Francis Sanders M.A. of New College, Oxford. The church of St. Andrew, locally in Little Meols, erected in 1891 from the designs of Messrs. Douglas and Fordham, architects, at a cost of £4,000, is a building of stone in the Gothic style, consisting at present of clerestoried nave of five bays, aisles and north and south porches, and affords 350 sittings. There is a Congregational chapel, built in 1884, with 320 sittings ; a Presbyterian chapel, built in 1874 and seating 300 ; and a Presbyterian Church of England, erected in 1890 and seating 690.

The Masonic Hall in Market street is a spacious building, used for meetings, concerts, dramatic entertainments, &c. ; it will hold 600 persons. The Children's Convalescent Home, erected in 1889, and supported by voluntary contributions, is a spacious edifice of red brick and is available for 40 children. The Upper Hoylake lighthouse, built in 1865 by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board at a cost of £3,500, is now disused ; there is a lifeboat station here belonging to the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board. The population of the local board district in 1891 was 6,545. Parish Clerk, Thomas Thexton.

HOOSE is a township on the Irish Sea, 8 miles north-west from Birkenhead, between Great Meols and Little Meols. There is a Wesleyan chapel here, built in 1886, with 100 sittings. Lord Stanley of Alderley is the principal landowner. The soil is sandy ; subsoil, rocky. The area is 108 acres of land and 1,608 foreshore ; rateable value, £4,042 ; population in 1891 was 1,657.

**LITTLE MEOLS** is a township, 9 miles north-west from Birkenhead, adjoining Hoose. Little Meols lighthouse, which stands on the shore, was built in 1865 by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board ; it is 40 feet in height and shows a white fixed light visible for 11 miles at sea. Lord Stanley of Alderley is lord of the manor and sole landowner. Soil sandy ; subsoil, rock. Chief crops, potatoes, wheat and turnips. The area is 708 acres of land and 3,048 foreshore ; rateable value, £10,321 ; the population in 1891 was 1,964.

**GREAT MEOLS** is a township on the Irish Sea, 7 miles north-west from Birkenhead. Mrs. Keightley, of London, is the principal landowner. Soil sandy ; subsoil, rocky. Chief crops are grass, wheat and potatoes ; rateable value, £1,775 ; the population in 1891 was 457.

National School (mixed), built in 1880, for 100 children ; average attendance, 80 ; Mrs. Annie Sault, mistress. Railway station, John Dawson, station master.



Post, M. O. & O. S. B. & Annuity & Insurance Office, Market street (Sub-Office. Letters should have S. O. Cheshire added). – Miss Charlotte Murray, postmistress. Letters delivered at 7 a.m. 3 & 5.30 p.m. ; Sundays, 7 a.m. ; dispatched 9.15 a.m. 1.15, 4.20 & 7.30 pm. ; Sundays 5.30 p.m. [Those were the days ! *Ed.*]

**Hoylake & West Kirby Local Board.**  
Meets at Board Room on 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in month at 7.15 p.m.

Clerk & Collector, Thomas Pemberton Morrison, 10 Marine Parade.  
Treasurer, A. G. Jones, North & South Wales Bank.  
Medical Officer of Health, George Arthur Kenyon, M.B., Flookersgate, Chester.  
Surveyor & Inspector of Nuisances, William Walton.

Newspaper, ‘The Herald & Visitor,’ for Hoylake & West Kirby, Masonic Hall, Market street ; Silas William Gill, printer & publisher ; published weekly.

National School, built in 1891, for 470 children ; average attendance, 418 ; Ernest Farnall, master ; Miss Bertha Burnet, girls’ mistress ; Miss Alice Napper, infants’ mistress.

### Carriers :

Jesse Bird to Birkenhead daily, Sundays excepted.  
John Jones to Birkenhead daily, Sundays excepted.  
Samuel Parr to Birkenhead daily, Sundays excepted.  
Liverpool Parcels Delivery Co., to Liverpool daily, Sundays excepted.  
Globe Parcel Delivery Co., to Liverpool daily, Sundays excepted.

Railway Station, Hoylake, George Frederick Cherry, station master & goods agent.”



# Liverpool Quiz

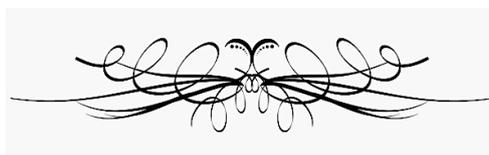
*How well do you know the city over the water ?*

*Test your knowledge with these ten questions.*

*(Answers will be found on pages 19 & 20).*



- {1} The first passenger railway in the world ran from Liverpool to Manchester. What year did the line open ?**
- {2} Allerton Hall stands in the south of Liverpool. Who was its most famous resident ?**
- {3} Jeremiah Horrocks, the celebrated Astronomer, made an important observation in 1639. What was it ?**
- {4} The Vauxhall chimney (Vauxhall Road) was built in 1828 for Muspratts Chemical Works, and it was taken down in 1922. What did mariners use this 231-foot chimney for ?**
- {5} Where would you find Carnatic Hall ?**
- {6} Who was the architect of the Anglican Cathedral ? And who was the *first* architect of the Roman Catholic Cathedral ?**
- {7} Where did the Goree warehouses once stand ?**
- {8} Where was William Ewart Gladstone born ?**
- {9} Name the Liverpool poet who wrote '*Casabianca*'.**
- {10} Name Liverpool's most celebrated animal painter. He specialized in paintings of horses.**



# *Knuckles and Police Chases :* *Prize Fights on Victorian Hilbre Island*

By  
*Dr. Nigel Hall*



Hilbre is a tranquil island of just over eleven acres in size and when the tide is out, it is possible to walk across the sands from the Wirral coast and set foot on the island. On a fine day it is a pleasant walk – rewarded when one reaches the highest points of the island with wonderful views in one direction of the Welsh mountains, and in the other direction, by a pleasant view of the Wirral coast and the peninsula's hills. The only full-time human resident of Hilbre today is the island's warden. The rest of the island's regular population is its stunning birdlife and, on a nearby sand bank, a colony of seals. How different it was 150 years ago, when there were illegal prize fights, gambling and police chases on the island. These fights were important enough to attract well-known Victorian fighters and promoters.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Hilbre was owned by Liverpool's Mersey Docks and Harbour Board. The island was used as a navigation marker and signalling point associated with the maritime trade of Liverpool. Until the 1930s there was even a lifeboat stationed on the island in case of maritime emergency in the nearby and busy shipping routes. A small handful of people lived semi-permanently on Hilbre in the nineteenth century, either working for the Dock Board or involved in livelihoods such as fishing.

According to local legend, Hilbre Island was at one time the haunt of smugglers and ship wreckers. The location of the island would certainly have made it a convenient place to engage in this sort of criminal activity, with it being not far from Liverpool and its prosperous trade, but at the same time cut off by the tide for much of the time from the prying eyes of officials. In the nineteenth century it was these two factors that led some enterprising individuals to realise that Hilbre would be an ideal place to stage illegal prize fights. Prize fights or "bare knuckle fighting" had been illegal in England since at least the middle of the eighteenth century but it was in the Victorian age (before the modern and regulated sport of boxing emerged), that the forces of law and order tried hardest to suppress it.

Prize fights taking place on Hilbre Island would be close enough to Liverpool to attract many spectators and gamblers, and yet cut off from any interference by the authorities when the tide was fully in around the island. On the far side of Hilbre (opposite the Welsh coast), there was a channel which would allow boats of even quite considerable size to approach the island and land the fighters and their supporters.

The first record we can find of a prize fight arranged on Hilbre dates from November 1853. On Thursday 10 November 1853, a hired steamer approached Hilbre Island from Liverpool.

On board there were two fighters, named James "Rory" Gill and Frank "Ned" Donnelly, with their "seconds" and a group of fight followers. Gill and Donnelly were to fight for a prize of twenty pounds – a considerable sum of money in 1853. The fighters were not "heavyweight" boxers at all : Donnelly weighed ten and half stone or 147 pounds, and Gill just ten stone or 140 pounds. The two had fought before, in September 1852, when Gill had beaten Donnelly. It seems that the police discovered the plans for the Hilbre fight in 1853. The fighters and their followers therefore made away from the island and headed for the sands around Formby where the fight actually took place.

The account above suggests that although the 1853 fight did not in the end take place on Hilbre Island, it was clearly thought of as a suitable location for such "sport", and other fights, that we have no record of, may have taken place. The first surviving account of a prize fight on Hilbre that actually did take place dates from the year 1864.

One cold and windy morning in January 1864, a boat with the two would-be fighters and a group of fight followers left Liverpool and sailed to Hilbre Island. Those on board struggled to get on the island due to a strong wind, but eventually this was accomplished. The prize for the winner of the fight was the large sum of fifty pounds. The combatants were "Fox of Birmingham" and "Finighty of Liverpool". A referee was agreed upon once on the island, and after nine rounds, the two fighters had fought each other to a standstill. More time was given for the fight to continue, but the fighters were no longer capable of battling further. As a result, the fight was given as a draw. The "Finighty of Liverpool" mentioned may be the famous "bantam" weight fighter, Simon Finighty, who some years earlier had fought the American fighter, Charlie Lynch, in two famous fights in 1856 and 1861 - their fight of 1856 lasted a staggering ninety-five rounds (which Finighty won). If the fight on Hilbre did indeed involve the famous Simon Finighty, this could explain the large prize of fifty pounds. In today's money, this would equate to about six thousand pounds.

The prize fights on Hilbre Island about which we have most information took place in the year 1867 – it involved well-known characters from the world of prize fights, and even involved a police chase. The key organiser appears to have been one Joe Goss. Goss, born in Northampton in 1837 or 1838, was a noted fighter in his own right, who eventually emigrated to the United States where he continued his successful career, eventually becoming heavyweight champion in America in the years 1876 to 1880.

The day was Tuesday, 29 September 1867. Between eight and nine in the morning, about 200 Liverpool and Birkenhead fight enthusiasts boarded the steamer "*Wasp*" at Liverpool, heading to Hilbre Island, with the aim of seeing two prize fights there. The fighters were to be Patrick Barnacle of Birkenhead and John McKay of Liverpool – who would fight for ten pounds ; and a Peter Sheridan of Birkenhead and a "Smith" of Liverpool (real name Edward Starkey or Starkie) who would fight for five pounds.

Perhaps because it would have been difficult to keep the plans for the fights entirely secret on the morning of the planned contest, information about them reached Divisional Superintendent Ryde of the Liverpool police. However, the "tip off" Ryde received was not accurate – he was led to believe the fighters and fight followers were heading towards Eastham Ferry on board the "*Wasp*". One wonders if Ryde had been *deliberately* misinformed

in order to divert the police away from the real intended location of the fights : Hilbre Island. Superintendent Ryde, as soon as he received the information about the planned fight, communicated this to Superintendent Hammond of the Wirral police. As a result, Hammond set off for Eastham, only to discover upon arrival that he had been misinformed that Eastham was where the fights were going to proceed, and he returned to the town of Birkenhead from where he had come.

Meanwhile, the steamer "*Wasp*" with the would-be fighters and fight followers arrived off Hilbre Island towards one o'clock and landed the men. The few inhabitants of the island were greatly alarmed by the rough crowds streaming onto their island. However, the police were still on their trail. A police constable named Shore, stationed in the village of Frankby, seems to have independently learned about the planned fights on the morning of the day set. He therefore set off for Hoylake, accompanied by another police constable, named Garside. Upon arrival at Hoylake, the police constables witnessed the arrival of the "*Wasp*" off Hilbre. Thereupon, the two constables hired a boat and, with others on board, headed for the island, with the intention of halting the fights.

The two officers were not well received at the island ! Rather than meekly abide by the law and halt the intended fights, the large crowd of fight-followers opted to pelt the officers in their boat with stones to prevent them landing (although this was later denied). The officers were clearly in a very difficult position, being completely outnumbered ; nonetheless, they persevered – and eventually managed to make landfall on Hilbre on a different part of the island. The brave officers approached the crowd and courageously told the men that the fights must not take place, but both the fighters and their backers would not give way and the ring for the fights was set up. The fighters Barnacle and McKay were soon in the ring and ready to fight, and the policemen were forced merely to be onlookers. Barnacle and McKay fought no fewer than twenty-three rounds over a period of an hour and twenty minutes, but even after this length of time, there was disagreement as to who had the victory. Large amounts of money had been bet, and the roars of the crowd could be heard across the sea in Hoylake.

Next into the ring were Sheridan and Starkey. Constable Shore was still determined to do his lawful duty and called out to the men that they must face the consequences if they fought – someone in the ring called back to PC Shore that they were indeed prepared to take the consequences – and the fight began. This proved to be a shorter affair than between Barnacle and McKay, lasting only between twenty minutes and half an hour. Sheridan was declared the winner. After the fight Police Constable Garside, assisted by some witnesses, succeeded in seizing the ropes and poles that had formed the ring, despite threats – including from a certain Patrick McHale, who threatened the constable with a large stick. The promoter, Joe Goss, saw sense and persuaded McHale and others to let the police keep the remains of the ring. The officers tried to obtain the names and addresses of those involved, but all appear (not surprisingly) to have given false information.

The surviving newspaper accounts of the time do not tell us much about what happened after the fights were over and the ring seized. Presumably, most of the fight-followers re-boarded the "*Wasp*" and sailed back to Liverpool. However, in the intervening time, the tide may well have receded – allowing some to walk across the sands to the mainland around Hoylake or

West Kirby. This is suggested by the fact that two of the fight promoters, Simon Finitny and William Mills, were arrested that evening at Meols railway station. Within a few days, several of the other promoters and fighters had been arrested and appeared before the Birkenhead magistrates in court. They were committed to trial at the forthcoming Quarter Sessions. It is rather startling to read in the newspaper accounts of the time that although all the men were found guilty in court, their punishment was a fine of just five shillings each – and being bound over to keep the peace for twelve months !

Following the fights of 1867, it is difficult to find evidence of any further prize fights successfully taking place on Hilbre at a later date. In July of 1869 there was an attempt to stage a fight on the island. However, the police were far better prepared this time. Superintendent Hammond (who had been thwarted in his attempts to stop the fights of 1867), hearing of the plan, dispatched a dozen of his officers to Hilbre, and the would-be fighters and followers were not able to land – and headed instead for the coast of North Wales. With this failed attempt to organise a fight on the island in 1869, it seems that this unpleasant chapter of Hilbre's history had drawn to a close. Hilbre's lawless days were behind it.



**Sources :** Contemporary editions of the following newspapers : *The Liverpool Daily Post*, *The Cheshire Observer*, *The Liverpool Mail* and the *Liverpool Mercury*.

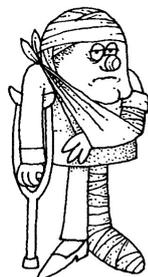
*Laughter ~ the best medicine ....*



**In 1967, the Institute of Legal Executives printed in their journal, *The Legal Executive*, amusing, sometimes incredulous, but genuine excuses and statements made out in accident and damage reports. This final selection, continued from *Dispatch* No. 4, are from the books of just one firm :-**

- **I blew my horn, but it would not work as it was stolen.**
- **I unfortunately ran over a pedestrian and the old gentleman was taken to hospital much regretting the circumstances.**
- **I thought the side window was down but it was up as I found when I put my head through it.**
- **A cow wandered into my car. I was afterwards informed that the cow was half-witted.**

- A bull was standing near and a fly must have tickled him as he gored my car.
- If the other driver had stopped a few yards behind himself the accident would not have happened.
- She suddenly saw me, lost her head and we met.
- A lorry backed through my windscreen into my wife's face.
- I bumped a lamp-post which was obstructed by pedestrians.
- I ran into a shop window and sustained injuries to my wife.
- I misjudged a lady crossing the street.
- I heard a horn blown and was struck in the back – a lady was evidently trying to pass me.
- Coming home I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I haven't got.
- Three women were talking to each other and when two stepped back and one stepped forward, I had to have an accident.
- A lamp-post bumped my car damaging it in two places.
- The car in front stopped suddenly and I crashed gently into his luggage grid.
- The other car collided with mine without giving any warning of its intention.
- I left my car unattended for a minute and whether by accident or design it ran away.



# *The Early History of the Bible in England from Tyndale to the Authorised Version*



## **I : William Tyndale**

**William Tyndale (c.1494-1536) is the man to whom we are indebted for the first printed English Bible, although a number of partial English translations had been made from the seventh century onwards. John Wycliffe's manuscript Bible in the fourteenth century was in great demand despite the death penalty under the 1408 Convocation of Oxford for anyone found in unlicensed possession of Scripture in the English language. Even William Caxton who had set up the first printing press about 1476 made no attempt to print it. Tyndale, however, had a burning conviction that the Scriptures should be known and read by all men. His was the first to take advantage of the printing press and he produced the first English Bible to draw directly from Hebrew and Greek texts.**

**William Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire about the year 1494 and was educated at Magdalen Hall (later Hertford College), Oxford, receiving his B.A. in 1512 and M.A. in 1515. He began studying theology and went on to Cambridge and became fluent in French, Greek, Hebrew, German, Italian, Spanish, and Latin. In 1523 he left for London to seek permission to translate the Bible into English, but his request was refused, and he sailed from England for Germany in 1524. He had been working on his translation for some time and by 1525 the work was finished. All that he needed now was someone willing to undertake its printing, but Germany was also in religious turmoil and divided by the Reformation ; Lutheranism had many enemies. Tyndale found a printer, Peter Quentel, who agreed to print the translation, but Cologne, where he had his press, was a town with a strong anti-Lutheran faction and when the intelligence came to the ears of the authorities, Quentel was warned not to proceed. Tyndale, together with Friar William Roye who had been assisting him, took possession of the sheets that had been printed, and sailed further up the Rhine to a place called Worms, a free imperial town in the process of adopting Lutheranism. Here he found Peter Schöffer, a printer willing to complete the task. In 1526 the Worms edition of the New Testament was completed and within months smuggled copies began circulating in England and Scotland, selling at half-a-crown a copy. Bishop Tunstall, the Bishop of London who had refused Tyndale permission to print his work in England, was furious and immediately condemned the translation, warning booksellers of the consequences of selling the book. He had copies of the translation burned in public at St. Paul's Cross, although this act provoked a great deal of controversy, even among the faithful. Tunstall had the full backing of Cardinal Wolsey who, in January 1529, condemned Tyndale as a heretic. Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall further claimed that he had found more than 3,000 errors in the translation – Tyndale never claimed it was perfect, but it was a start and he was working to improve it. Sir Thomas More went further and claimed that the errors were deliberate and with heretical intent.**

Meanwhile, William Tyndale remained in Worms for about a year. He was amused when he heard accounts of his book being burned, for not only could the clergy be accused of setting a torch to the ‘Word of God’, but, by trawling the land for copies to buy up, they were providing funds for further copies to be printed. Meanwhile, Tyndale continued to work on the Old Testament.

The first terminated attempt at Cologne had been printed on quarto-size sheets. These were thought to be lost until in 1834 sixty-four pages were discovered and bequeathed to the British Museum (now the British Library) by Thomas Grenville. The Worms edition, by comparison, was printed in octavo, and the success of Bishop Tunstall’s efforts in rounding-up the Bible, can be judged by the fact that only two copies of the Worms edition now survive. One is to be found in the library of St. Paul’s Cathedral which has imperfections at the beginning and end, and the other is in the library of the Baptist Theological College in Bristol – their copy lacks the title-page but is otherwise complete.

Tyndale, meanwhile, still living on the Continent, was hard at work translating the Old Testament. The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, were eventually printed in 1530, followed in 1531 by the Book of Jonah. Only one copy of each now survive and they are in the British Library.

In time, Tyndale moved to Antwerp, a free city where his enemies found it difficult to take action against him. However, in 1535 he was betrayed by Henry Phillips, a member of a respected English family but an untrustworthy character who had squandered and gambled away his father’s money. In desperate financial circumstances, Phillips was an easy recruit for the role of Judas. After gaining Tyndale’s trust, Phillips made it possible for Tyndale to be kidnapped in May 1535, and he was taken from Antwerp to Vilvorde, near Brussels, where he was thrown into prison. There were those in England who tried to secure his release – even Henry VIII was moved to intervene and Thomas Cromwell made intercessions on the King’s behalf – but all to no avail and Tyndale suffered a long and hard imprisonment until, in 1536, he was found guilty of heresy and handed over to be executed. On or around the 6<sup>th</sup> October 1536, (there is some dispute regarding the actual date), William Tyndale, who had lit a torch that would never be extinguished, was tied to a stake, strangled by the hangman and his body burned. Tyndale’s last prayer was “*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes*”. Singularly enough, the very year of his death, Thomas Bertelet, the King’s printer, issued the first New Testament to be printed in England – with Tyndale’s name attached to it. It was printed in folio and followed Tyndale’s text of 1534. Within four years of Tyndale’s martyrdom, four English translations of the Bible were printed and published in England at the King’s behest, including Henry’s official ‘Great Bible’ – all based on Tyndale’s work.

In 1560, the celebrated Geneva Bible, again based on Tyndale’s translation, appeared. It was, for some sixty years, the most popular Bible in England ; the first to be printed in Roman letters and the first to adopt a division into verses. This was the Bible of William Shakespeare, Oliver Cromwell, John Knox, John Donne, and John Bunyan. Preceding the King James Bible by 51 years, this was the main Bible the pilgrims aboard the *Mayflower* took with them to America. The Genevan Bible relied heavily upon Tyndale and would never have been printed without his vision and sacrifice.

In the next issue we will trace the story of the Coverdale Bible.

# The Church Mouse



## Diary of a Church Mouse

by Sir John Betjeman

Poet Laureate from 1972 until his death in 1984, Sir John Betjeman's wryly comic verse achieved a level of popularity unusual for contemporary poetry. He was recorded reading the *Church Mouse* (which he claims never to have liked) during a 1975 Poetry Prom, but it was written earlier, in 1954, and originally broadcast on the wireless.

Here among long-discarded cassocks,  
Damp stools, and half-split open hassocks,  
Here where the vicar never looks  
I nibble through old service books.  
Lean and alone I spend my days  
Behind this Church of England baize.  
I share my dark forgotten room  
With two oil-lamps and half a broom.  
The cleaner never bothers me,  
So here I eat my frugal tea.  
My bread is sawdust mixed with straw ;  
My jam is polish for the floor.

Christmas and Easter may be feasts  
For congregations and for priests,  
And so may Whitsun. All the same,  
They do not fill my meagre frame.  
For me the only feast at all  
Is Autumn's Harvest Festival,

When I can satisfy my want  
With ears of corn around the font.  
I climb the eagle's brazen head  
To burrow through a loaf of bread.  
I scramble up the pulpit stair  
And gnaw the marrows hanging there.

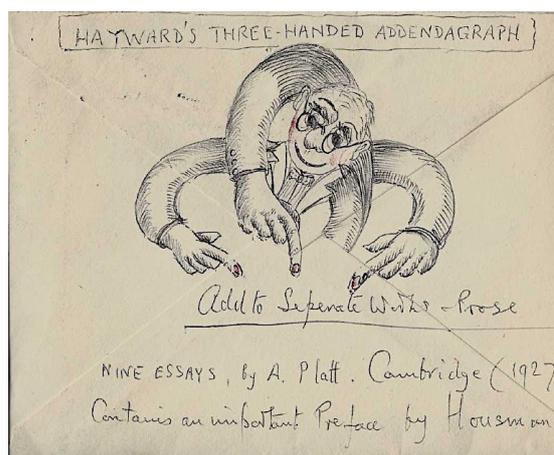
It is enjoyable to taste  
These items ere they go to waste,  
But how annoying when one finds  
That other mice with pagan minds  
Come into church my food to share  
Who have no proper business there.  
Two field mice who have no desire  
To be baptized, invade the choir.  
A large and most unfriendly rat  
Comes in to see what we are at.  
He says he thinks there is no God  
And yet he comes ... it's rather odd.  
This year he stole a sheaf of wheat  
(It screened our special preacher's seat),  
And prosperous mice from fields away  
Come in to hear our organ play,  
And under cover of its notes  
Ate through the altar's sheaf of oats.  
A Low Church mouse, who thinks that I  
Am too papistical, and High,  
Yet somehow doesn't think it wrong  
To munch through Harvest Evensong,  
While I, who starve the whole year through,  
Must share my food with rodents who  
Except at this time of the year  
Not once inside the church appear.

Within the human world I know  
Such goings-on could not be so,  
For human beings only do  
What their religion tells them to.  
They read the Bible every day  
And always, night and morning, pray,  
And just like me, the good church mouse,  
Worship each week in God's own house,

But all the same it's strange to me  
How very full the church can be  
With people I don't see at all  
Except at Harvest Festival.



# John Hayward's Doodled Envelopes



John Davy Hayward, C.B.E. (1905-1965) was a distinguished literary scholar, anthologist and bibliophile, who's flat in Chelsea overlooking the Thames was an essential destination to connoisseurs from both sides of the Atlantic who admired his writings, his judgement, and his scholarship. This reputation was built up in the face of a crippling physical handicap which he never allowed to daunt him. His father, John Arthur Hayward, was a physician and surgeon, and his mother was the daughter of Professor George Rolleston (1829-1881), a renowned physician. John Hayward's middle name reflected descent from Sir Humphry Davy (1778-

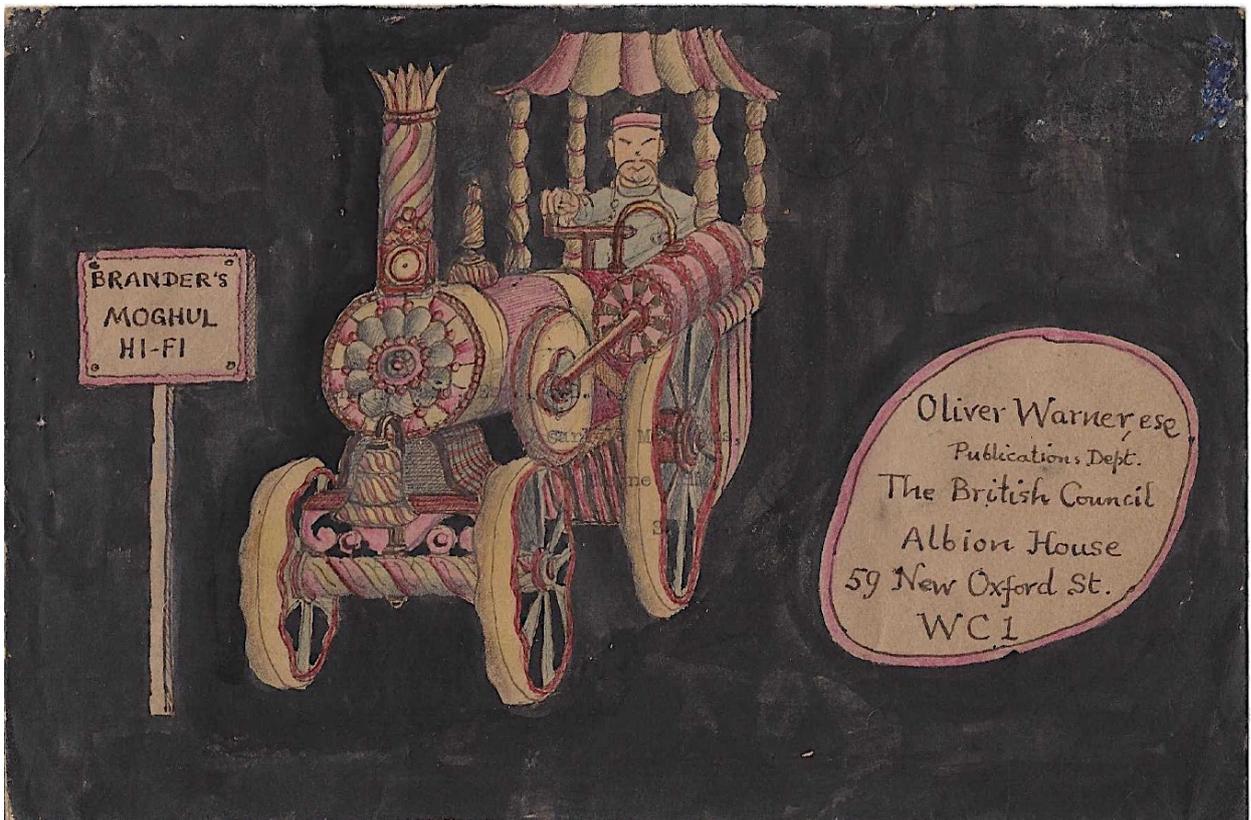
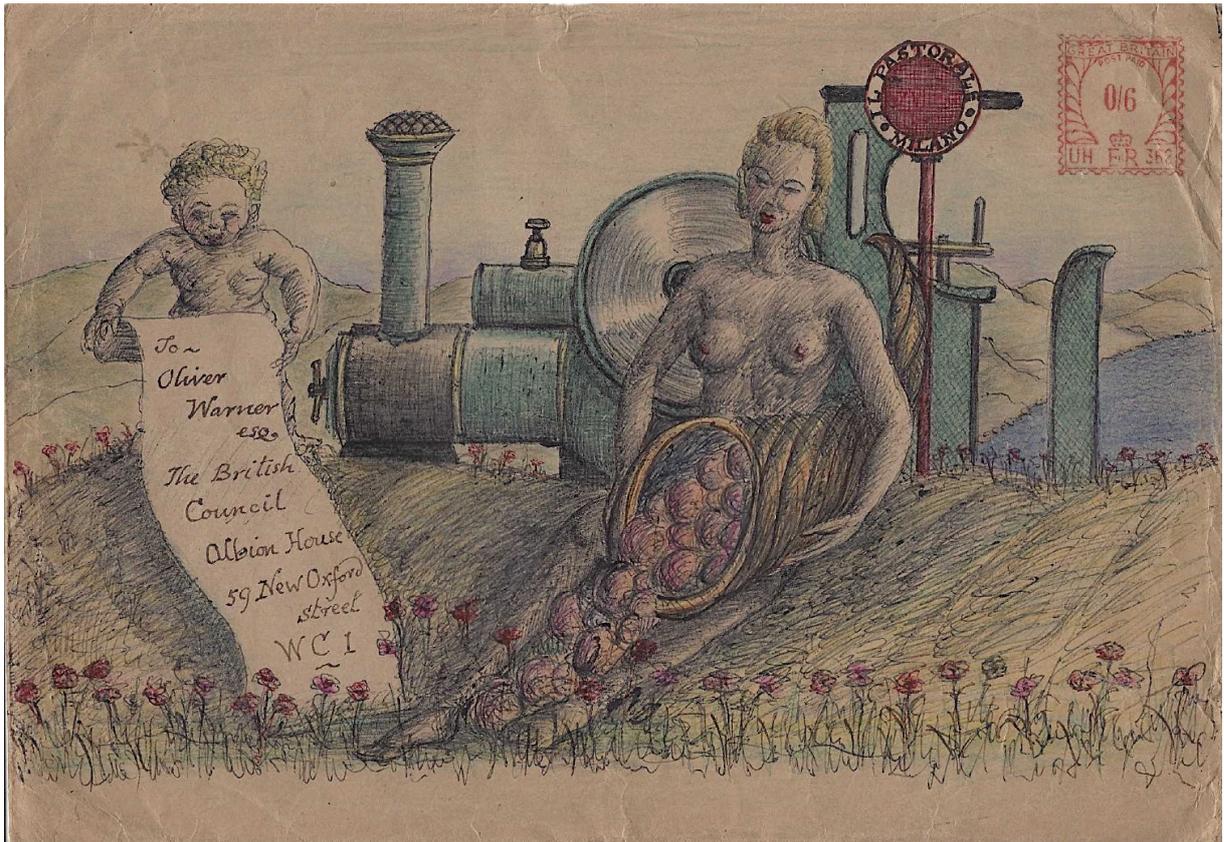
1829), and Hayward was educated at Gresham's School, Holt, Norfolk ; and King's College, Cambridge where, with wit and courage, he defied the muscular dystrophy already beginning to afflict him.

After Cambridge, Hayward established himself in London and, his wheelchair notwithstanding, pursued a successful career as an author, editor and critic, producing a number of outstanding anthologies along the way. By the post-war era he had acquired an impressive reputation as a bibliophile and was responsible for the Catalogue for the 1947 exhibition of the National Book League. Among those with whom he worked was Ian Fleming (of James Bond fame), and T. S. Eliot whom he had known since 1925. Hayward's dandyism was affectionately mocked in Eliot's dedication to him as 'the Man in White Spats' in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939). For ten years, Eliot shared Hayward's flat in Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. To this residence flocked the world's literary elite of the day. However, Hayward's friendship with Eliot was overshadowed by a cloud when, in 1957, Eliot secretly married his secretary and, with minimal explanation, moved out of the flat two days before the wedding. Hayward was deeply hurt and felt that his long friendship had been betrayed, and he made no bones in letting Eliot know his feelings. After Eliot's death, which occurred only nine months before his own, Hayward confided to a mutual friend that he felt Eliot had, in the end, acknowledged his terrible misjudgement.

Another friend and correspondent of Hayward's – with whom he shared a love of steam traction engines – was the author and naval historian, Oliver Warner (1903-1976). Warner, a prolific writer, had joined the Admiralty secretariat during the Second World War, initially serving in the Commission and Warrant branch before assisting on the War Artists Advisory Committee. He concluded his time at the Admiralty serving as secretary to the Naval Honours and Awards Committee. After the war, Warner became deputy director of publications of the British Council, where he remained until his retirement in 1963, thereafter concentrating on writing, chiefly naval history.

It was to the British Council that John Hayward frequently wrote to Oliver Warner, always re-using old envelopes, upon which he would often doodle. Some were simple designs with little artistic effort or merit, others were executed with imaginative skill which must have taken longer than it took to write the letter the envelope was

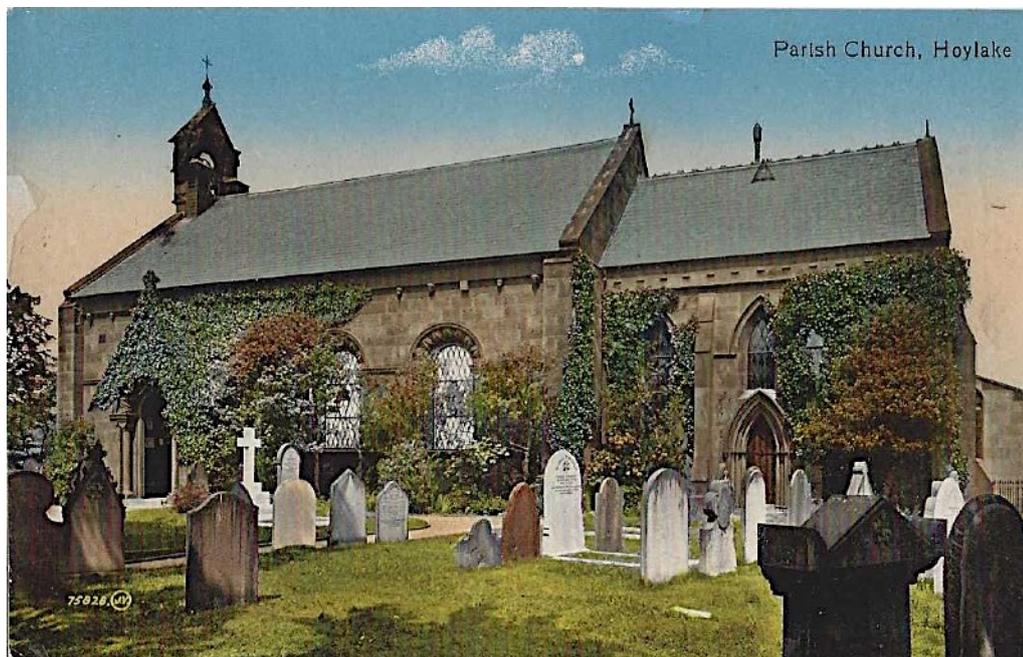
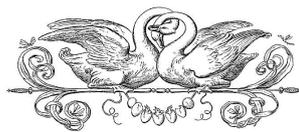
transporting. These designs included their mutual liking for steam traction engines, nautical themes, and even one displaying a sputnik. Illustrated here are three examples of Haywards' artistry.



*Answers to the quiz questions on page 7.*

- {1} The Liverpool & Manchester Railway opened in 1830 (15<sup>th</sup> September 1830 to be precise). It was the first railway to connect two major industrial towns, and the first to provide a scheduled passenger service.**
- {2} William Roscoe lived at Allerton Hall from 1799 to 1816 when bankruptcy forced him to sell it.**
- {3} Jeremiah Horrocks (1618-1641) observed the transit of Venus in 1639. His remains lie in the Unitarian Ancient Chapel of Toxteth.**
- {4} The Vauxhall chimney was a notable landmark for sailors navigating their approach to the Mersey. More importantly, it was used by captains to check their compasses before sailing on long voyages.**
- {5} Carnatic Hall is to be found in Mossley Hill. It was bought from the Ogden family by Peter Baker, shipbuilder. Baker's son-in-law, Captain John Dawson of the privateer *Mentor*, captured the Frenchman *Carnatic* in 1778 with a cargo worth £400,000. Mossley Hall became Carnatic Hall. The site until recently was used as student accommodation for Liverpool University.**
- {6} Sir Giles Scott was the architect for the Anglican Cathedral, and Sir Edwin Lutyens was the first architect for the Roman Catholic Cathedral. Lutyens's brickwork in the crypt is breath-taking.**
- {7} Goree Warehouses stood at the foot of Brunswick Street, opposite to Cunard Buildings. Erected in 1793, they burnt down in 1802 but were rebuilt. They suffered bomb damage during the Second World War and were demolished in 1958. 'Goree' was a French possession in West Africa, taken by the British in 1758 and returned to the French in 1763 at the end of the Seven Years' War. The British took it again in 1779, and again in 1800. We gave it back to France in 1817.**
- {8} Gladstone was born at 62, Rodney Street in 1809 and was Prime Minister four times. Gladstone Dock, opened in 1927, was not, as many believe, named after him. It was in fact named after Robert Gladstone (1805-1875), Liverpool merchant and mayor, brother of William.**

- {9} Felicia Hemans (1793-1835) wrote *Casabianca* published in 1826, better known as “The boy stood on the burning deck”. It refers to Captain Casabianca and his 12-year-old son who both perished when the French *L’Orient* blew up during Nelson’s victory at the Nile in 1798. Felicia Hemans produced another opening line that acquired classic status : “The stately homes of England.”
- {10} George Stubbs (1724-1806), a self-taught, Liverpool-born artist, celebrated for his skill in painting horses acquired from his love of anatomy. Many of his beautiful paintings can be seen in the Walker Art Gallery.



### *Editor's Endnote :*

The Editor hopes the *Dispatch* is proving to be an enjoyable distraction during the pandemic and wishes to thank all who have taken the trouble to get in touch. A special thanks to Nigel Hall for his contribution to this issue. *Michael Nash.*

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