**RECORD SOCIETY OF LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE**

# COUNCIL REPORT, 2021

The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire was founded in 1878. It aims to advance public education primarily by the transcription, editing and publication of original historical documents relating to the two palatine counties. It is a registered charity, no. 500434.

**VICE PRESIDENTS OF THE SOCIETY**

Mr G. Higgins

**COUNCIL AND OFFICERS, 2021**

President Dr M.R.V. Heale

Secretary Dr Dorothy J. Clayton

Treasurer Mr J.R.H. Pepler

General Editor Dr Fiona Pogson

Membership Secretary Mrs Diana E.S. Dunn

Publicity Officer Dr S. J. Roberts

Webmaster Dr P.Z. Cotgreave

Other Members of the Council Dr I.J. Atherton

 Dr Laura Balderstone

 Dr A.G. Crosby

 Dr Sam Edwards

 Mr J.C. Sutton (until 07/04/21)

 Professor D. Szechi

 Professor T.J. Thornton

## **Council**

During 2021 the Council met twice: on 7 April and 27 October. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both Council meetings were held online using the Zoom video conferencing platform.

The Society was not able to publish a *Newsletter* in hard-copy in 2021 owing to problems caused by COVID-19 restrictions. It has, however, been posted on the Society’s website at <http://rslc.org.uk/api/file/RSLCNewsletterNo.2.pdf>

In January 2021, the Society launched its Facebook page, which can be accessed by the following link, irrespective of whether or not you have a Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/Record-Society-of-Lancashire-and-Cheshire-103846055012201>

We publicise all our activities and publications here, and share interesting stories buried within our 150+ published volumes. Dr Heale posted a highly topical series of stories about historical pandemics across the region – from the Black Death to the Spanish Flu.

A popular recent post highlighted the Succession Act Roll of 1534 which required every adult male in the kingdom to acknowledge Henry VIII’s marriage with Anne Boleyn. The roll for West Derby Hundred is the only one to survive, and it is the subject of RSLC, vol. 158, the 2021 subscription volume.

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Dr Brian W. Quintrell in February 2021. Dr Quintrell, Vice-President of the Record Society since 2018, had been a member of the Society for 55 years, a Council member for 51 years, and the Society’s longest serving Treasurer (1966–2000). He was also a volume editor: *Lancashire JPs at the Sheriff’s Table, 1578–1694* (RSLC, vol. 121, 1981). A tribute to Dr Quintrell, written by Dr Fiona Pogson, General Editor and a former pupil of Dr Quintrell, together with Mr Geoff Higgins, Vice President, can be found on the Society’s website: <http://rslc.org.uk/blog/brian-qunitrell-a-tribute/>

Mr Jim Sutton, a longstanding member of the Record Society, stepped down from the Council at the 2021 AGM. Dr Heale thanked him for all the work which he has done for the Society, especially during his time as Membership Secretary (2009–19). Mr Sutton also edited a recent Society publication: *James Buckley’s Cash Book, 1729–1733* (RSLC vol. 154, 2017).

***2021 AGM***

Due to the very serious nature of the pandemic and the uncertainty surrounding it, we made the decision in October 2020 to hold the 2021 AGM (7 April) online via Zoom. However, we were better able to prepare for this AGM, and unlike in 2020, the 2021 AGM was open to all our members. The business meeting was followed by our customary free public lecture. This was a very special occasion with Dr Paul Booth delivering the Inaugural Colin Phillips Memorial Lecture. The lecture entitled, ‘The Oldest Lancashire Ghost Story’, was very well received by around 90 people, including Mrs Jan Phillips, the widow of Colin (President of the Society, 2013–18), in whose honour our annual public lecture has now been named. Many members who live outside the North-West clearly welcomed the opportunity to ‘attend’ the business meeting and lecture. This has led us to rethink arrangements for future AGMs.

 The 2022 AGM will take place in Lecture Theatre 1, Rendall Building, Bedford St South, Liverpool University, on Wednesday 13 April. starting at 1.45pm. It will be followed at 2.00pm by the Colin Phillips Memorial Lecture – ‘Lancashire’s Second Oldest Ghost Story’ – given by Dr Alan Crosby, a longstanding member of the Society’s Council. To make our AGM and public lecture as accessible as possible, we will livestream the event via Zoom for those who want to join us online.

***Volume Launch, Athenaeum Library, Liverpool, 23 September 2021***

We were able to hold our first in-person event for 18 months in the autumn of 2021. This was a belated celebration of the publication of *The First Minute Book of the Liverpool Athenaeum, 1797–1809*, edited by David Brazendale and Mark Towsey (RSLC, vol. 157, 2020). Both editors intended to give short papers: unfortunately, Mr Brazendale was ill on the day of the launch and his paper was delivered by the Vice-President of the Athenaeum. The transcription and editing of the volume, together with the illuminating introduction, were clearly a mammoth task, and we are grateful to the editors and to the Society’s General Editor, Dr Fiona Pogson, for producing this important volume. The Athenaeum from its foundation was as much a library and newsroom as a gentlemen’s club. The significance of the Minute Book lies in what it reveals about the mindset, interests, and cultural aspirations of the Georgian elite of a very prosperous provincial town. We want to record our thanks to the Liverpool Athenaeum for hosting this event which was enjoyed by members of both the Athenaeum and the Record Society. Six copies of the volume were sold to people who attended the launch. It is appreciated that many members of the Record Society were unable to be present due to the ongoing pandemic. David Brazendale has contributed an interesting article on the research behind the volume in the Society’s 2021 *Newsletter* (pp. 3–5). See <http://rslc.org.uk/api/file/RSLCNewsletterNo.2.pdf>

***Membership***

There has been little change to the overall membership figures during 2021. Individual membership stands at 80, very slightly down on last year (82). There have been 3 new members, but we have lost more than that number through cancelled and lapsed subscriptions. The slight decline in income from individual members’ subscriptions over the past year shown in the annual accounts (just under £60) can be explained by lapsed subscriptions in 2021. This has been a recurring issue since at least 2018 despite considerable efforts being made each year to contact non-payers. On a more encouraging note, we are pleased to report that outstanding subscriptions from institutional members which were a real concern in 2020, have mostly been paid, resulting in a significant increase in income from this source in 2021. Overdue subscriptions are still being actively pursued alongside the routine reminder to pay the current year’s subscription.

 Despite the difficulties of the past two years, we are determined to seek out more ways to build up our membership, both individual and institutional. There is already some evidence that new initiatives – such as our Facebook account, annual Newsletter, email/letter updates, and a stronger online presence – are contributing to the Record Society reaching a larger and more diverse audience. We intend to build on this following the easing of Covid restrictions. We continue to encourage individual members to provide their email addresses. This makes communication faster and more efficient, as well as reducing costs. We now hold email addresses for *c*.65% of individual members.

***Publicity***

Dr Stephen Roberts, alongside Dr Heale, has been actively involved in promoting the Society’s Facebook page. He has also authored two interesting pieces on the environment based on documents included in our publications. In the Society’s very first volume, published in 1879, there is evidence that the people of Eastham Parish in the Wirral, Cheshire, could teach us a thing or two about renewable resources and locally sourced foodstuffs. In another piece, Dr Roberts challenges us to think about ‘re-wilding’ – the reintroduction of animals into the British Isles which became extinct because of man’s actions. In the Cheshire Chamberlains Accounts of 1302–03 (vol. 59, 1910), payment was made to officials in the Forest of Macclesfield who had set traps to get rid of the wolves which inhabited the area. The Earl of Chester owned the deer in the Forest, and it seems that wolves were more successful at capturing and destroying the deer than were the Earl and his fellow hunters. (<https://www.facebook.com/Record-Society-of-Lancashire-and-Cheshire-103846055012201>)

## **Publications**

Dr Fiona Pogson, our General Editor, has had another busy year. *Loyalty and Levy: West Derby Hundred in Lancashire seen in the Succession Act Oath Roll of 1534 and the Lay Subsidy Returns of 1545*, ed. Thomas Steel, should be ready for dispatch shortly. The 2022 *Newsletter* includes an interview with the volume’s editor in which he describes some of the most unexpected material that he uncovered when transcribing the records: ‘I had no idea how much the common people resented the rise of Anne Boleyn and simply believed Henry’s marriage to Katherine of Aragon to have been valid’ (see<http://rslc.org.uk/api/file/Newsletter_no_3.pdf>**).** The 2022 subscription volume will be *The Jacobite Prisoners of the Fifteen*, ed. Jonathan Oates.

***Website***

The Society’s website, now in its eighth year of operation, continues to attract new users. Between 1 January and 31 December 2021, there were 4,038 unique users. This compares with 2,544 during the same period last year, an increase of 58%. During 2021 50% of views were made from UK computers, 13% from the US, 4% each from China and Australia, 2% from Canada, and the remaining 27% from various other countries. The following cities account for most of the UK users, in descending order: London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birkenhead, Birmingham and Bolton.

 At the October 2021 Council meeting, we agreed that during 2022 we would review our providers of web services to ensure the site continues to offer the best service to members.

***Financial Statement***

The total net assets of the Society on 31st December 2021 were £60,426.78. The comparable figure for 2020 was £55,863.02. Our receipts in 2021 exceeded our payments, albeit by a small margin (£168.91). This was a lower margin than in 2020 (£5,499.20) because the invoices for the printing and despatch of vol. 157, the 2020 subscription volume, were not submitted until 2021. Receipts for personal subscriptions in 2021 were slightly down on 2020, but there was a significant recovery of institutional subscriptions. The value of our M&G Charifund investment continued to recover in 2021 (£37,549.92, as against £33,119.07 in 2020). Unfortunately, this recovery will probably be lost in the coming weeks with economic uncertainty at home post pandemic and post Brexit, and an increasingly unstable situation in Eastern Europe.

Dorothy J. Clayton

 Secretary

February 2022