**RECORD SOCIETY OF LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE**

# COUNCIL REPORT, 2022

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 It aims to advance public education primarily by the transcription, editing and publication of original historical documents relating to the two palatine counties.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, 2022**

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

Professor Emeritus D. Szechi

Professor T.J. Thornton

## **Council**

During 2022 the Council met twice: on 13 April and 26 October. The April meeting was held in person in the Rendell Building, Bedford St South, Liverpool University; and the October meeting was held online using the Zoom video conferencing platform.

At the April Council meeting our President, Dr Martin Heale, proposed that we have a Five-Year Plan for the Record Society. He suggested some key areas of activity which we might focus on during the next 5 years in order to build upon our successes and to develop new ideas to make the Society more relevant and attractive to a wider range of people. The areas highlighted are Legacies; Digital Volumes; Developing and Formalising Partnerships with University History Departments; Further Digitisation of Backstock; Marketing Strategy; Website; and Council Membership. Several areas have been discussed during 2022 and we will revisit these areas in subsequent Council meetings.

The Society has continued to keep in touch with members and friends via its annual *Newsletter* edited by Dr Heale. To view the latest issue, published in January 2023, see [http://rslc.org.uk/api/file/Newsletterno\_4.pdf](about:blank) Our website includes details of our activities and publications, as well as a news blog. The majority of our past editions up to and including vol. 146 (2012) have been digitised, and are available to download free of charge. The website also provides links to other historical societies in the region, and to local and regional archive repositories. During 2023 Dr Peter Cotgreave, the Society’s Webmaster, plans to review the website and look at other ways to make it a useful research tool for those interested in the history of Lancashire and Cheshire. The Council will invite members to contribute to this review.

During 2022, members of the Council have considered how best to deal with our backstock with a view to reducing the cost of storing volumes in Deepstore. A small working party, chaired by Dr Heale, was set up to discuss the practicalities of disposing ethically of some of the Deepstore backstock, and to consider opportunities for marketing all our stock, including recent items. Mr Pepler, the Society’s Treasurer, has done an audit of our volumes in Deepstore. We have agreed that we will keep a maximum of 10–15 copies of each title; this exercise has enabled us to cut the number of boxes in Deepstore from 80 to 60. Our print run is being reduced to 250 for most future volumes; and this change will reduce future levels of backstock.

In relation to marketing our volumes, the Society’s Facebook page continues to be used to publicise our publications activities to existing members and others who are interested in local history. We had approximately 160 followers at the end of 2022.

***2022 AGM***

The 2022 AGM was held at Liverpool University on 13 April. It was followed by the Colin Phillips Memorial Lecture, delivered by Dr Alan Crosby, a longstanding member of the Society’s Council. He introduced us to ‘Lancashire’s Second Oldest Ghost Story’, a tale which dates back to the early sixteenth century. To make our AGM and public lecture as accessible as possible, we livestreamed the event via Zoom for those who wanted to join us online.

The 2023 AGM will take place in Liverpool Central Library on 5 April. It will be followed by the Colin Phillips Memorial Lecture – ‘Welfare, Riot and Bereavement: The Great War through the Eyes of the McGuire Family of Wallasey, 1914–1919’ – given by Dr Stephen Roberts, a member of the Society’s Council. Again, the AGM and public lecture will be livestreamed. Only members may vote at the AGM, but the Colin Phillips Memorial Lecture is free and open to all.

***Membership***

There has been little change to the numbers of individual members in the past year, 78 paid up members compared with 80 in 2021. There has been one resignation, two deaths and one new member. The annual accounts, showing only a minor change in income from individual members compared with 2021, reflect overdue payments, now paid, from a couple of members. Similarly, our institutional membership has remained relatively stable in 2022, compared with 2021. We have lost three members in the past two years: Chester University (unpaid in 2021 and 2022), Inner Temple (resigned from January 2021 but paid for 2022 membership) and Lancashire Heraldry and Family History Society (resigned from January 2022). The reason for the resignation given by one of the institutions was lack of space to store volumes which is a worrying trend, also mentioned by some individual members as a potential problem.

The apparent dramatic fall in institutional subscriptions (see Financial Statement) is accounted for by the timing of payment of ‘bulk’ subscriptions by agents: 7 were paid twice in 2021, at the beginning and end of the year, not at all in 2022, but again in January 2023.

Since the easing of restrictions on face-to-face meetings due to Covid, we decided to return to a ‘normal’ AGM in April 2022 followed by a lecture given by one of our Council members, Dr Alan Crosby, held at the University of Liverpool. We were pleased to welcome a small number of members to the AGM in person and a few ‘attending’ via Zoom but were disappointed that more members missed the opportunity to hear such an excellent speaker. We continue to keep in touch with our members through our website, Facebook, and annual *Newsletter*. We currently hold email addresses for *c*.65% of our members and we would very much like to increase this percentage if possible. Providing an email address enables us to keep in touch with our members more easily and saves us high postage costs.

***Publicity***

## Following a difficult period during the various Covid 19-related lockdowns, Dr Roberts, our Publicity Officer, has recommenced the promoting of the Society, particularly with local libraries and historical and archaeological societies. He has offered books for sale at meetings of Wirral Archaeology CIC and spoken about the Record Society. He has also sold volumes of the Society’s publications at the Wirral Heritage 2020 Open Day in West Kirby and distributed Record Society ‘Information Leaflets’ at the same event.

## **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, was published in the summer. It is a substantial and innovative volume: there are, for example, interesting insights into how Henry VIII’s marriage to Katherine of Aragon and the rise of Anne Boleyn were regarded by ordinary people in Lancashire.

Dr Pogson has been dealing with two other volumes during 2022, both of which she expects to be published in 2023. First, *Prisoners of the Fifteen*, ed. Jonathan Oates, is an edition of the lists of Jacobite prisoners taken at the battle of Preston in 1715, and then held, tried and disposed on from various gaols in Lancashire and Cheshire. The finding of some additional material by Dr Oates means that the volume will now be published in the early summer of 2023. The 2023 *Newsletter* includes an interview with Dr Oates in which he describes the research behind the edition (see [http://rslc.org.uk/api/file/Newsletterno\_4.pdf](about:blank) ). Secondly, *Cheshire Motor Vehicle Registration Records, 1908–11*, ed. Craig Horner, should be published as RSLC vol. 160 for the subscription year 2023.

***Website***

The Society’s website, now in its ninth year of operation, continues to attract new users. Between 1 January and 31 December 2022, there were 3,422 unique users. This compares with 4,058 during the same period last year, a decrease of 16%; the high number during 2021 may reflect lockdown habits and mirrors trends for the websites of other organisations. During 2022, 48% of views were made from UK computers, 16% from the US, 3% each from China and Canada, 2% each from France, Australia, Japan and South Korea, and the remaining 22% from various other countries. The following towns and cities account for most of the UK users, in descending order: London, Liverpool, Manchester, Macclesfield, Birkenhead, Stoke on Trent and Birmingham.

***Financial Statement***

The total net assets of the Society on 31st December 2022 were £57,812.98. The comparable figure for 2021 was £60,426.78. Our receipts in 2022 were lower than our expenditure, but only by a small margin (£58.28), Receipts for personal subscriptions in 2022 were a mere 6p down on 2021, but institutional subscriptions were down by £780.66. Mr Pepler has noted that in January 2023 we received £370 from EBSCO (a periodical subscription agent); this addresses some of the fall in institutional subscriptions. The value of our M&G Charifund investment fell in 2022 to £35,458.40 as against £37,549.92 in 2022, but the income from Charifund in 2022 was £2,002.73 as against £2,501.07 in 2021. Dr Pepler has reduced the value of our book stock from £3,000 to £2,500 in the 2022 accounts.

Dorothy J. Clayton

Secretary

February 2023