

# News from the Archives

Newsletter of Lancashire Archives

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## **Archive Service** **update**

As we approach the end of the county council's year, I will be looking carefully at the budget and starting to gather statistics and information on our achievements over the last 12 months. My feeling is that we have done well, but I'll report on that in May!

Three small increases to our fees and charges have been agreed by the County Council Cabinet and will be implemented from 1 April. The cost of a printing from the PNet computers will increase from 10p to 15p per sheet; reader printer tokens will cost 80p instead of 75p; and the administrative charge for the list of record agents will increase from £50 to £55. The cost of copy Anglican baptism, marriage and burial certificates as well as civil registration certificates - all set by external organisations - have also increased this year. Other charges will remain the same as now, although LCC will be introducing charges later this year for visitors (not volunteers) who use the car park. I will provide more details next month.

I am pleased that we are still able to provide free access to the archive collections and hope that this will always continue. It may however be timely to remind users who are grateful for our service that there is a donation chest in the searchroom. Money donated goes directly to the Friends of Lancashire Archives who are then able to fund occasional projects and purchases to support our service.

### **Art inspired by Archives**

Helen Draper's workshops last month were hugely enjoyed. Participants said they learned a lot and particularly loved working with the ordnance survey maps. We are opening to arrange another workshop with Helen later this year

Here are some of their creative ideas (photos by Helen Draper):





Jacque Crosby

Archive Service Manager

## Cataloguing the Dalton of Thurnham Collection



The chapter house, Cockersand Abbey

According to Professor George W. Bernard, 'The dissolution of the monasteries in the late 1530s was one of the most revolutionary events in English history. There were nearly 900 religious houses in England, around 260 for monks, 300 for regular canons, 142 nunneries and 183 friaries. They housed some 12,000 people

in total: 4,000 monks, 3,000 canons, 3,000 friars and 2,000 nuns. If the adult male population was 500,000, that meant that one adult man in fifty was in religious orders.' (The Dissolution of the Monasteries, *History* 2011).

Cockersand Abbey 'standing very bleakly and object to all winds' in the parish of Thurnham was one such religious house as is evidenced by the few architectural remains and the surviving chapter house - I am sure many of the local buildings are partly built with stone from the Abbey too. Cockersand is interesting however because it managed to survive the first Act of Suppression (1536) and there is a document in the Dalton of Thurnham collection to prove this.

The document in question is a grant from Henry VIII to the Abbot of Cockersand that the Abbey would not be suppressed under the Suppression of Religious Houses Act and is dated 19 December 1536. On the reverse is written that it was 'because it was of the Premonstratensian Order'. However, under the provisions of the Act of Suppression of 1536, any house with an income below £200 per year was to be closed and despite owning considerable land, it seemed that Cockersand, 'with a net income of one hundred and fifty seven pounds fourteen shillings and half a penny' fell under that requirement. Nevertheless, the Abbey managed to argue for a reprieve, 'the canons contended successfully that their income exceeded £200 and that consequently their house could not legally be dissolved as a lesser monastery.' ('The Abbey of St. Mary of the Marsh at Cockersand', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Historical Society*, 1923).

It was only a temporary reprieve however and the Suppression of Religious Houses Act 1539, sometimes referred to as the Second Act of Dissolution or as the Act for

the Dissolution of the Greater Monasteries, provided for the dissolution of a further 552 monasteries and houses that had remained after the Act of 1536. Consequently, on 29 January 1539, Abbot Robert Poulton along with twenty two canons, finally signed the official document of surrender of Cockersand Abbey. Then in 1543 the site was granted by the Crown to John Kitchen of Hatfield in Hertfordshire and Pilling in Lancashire. Subsequently, through the marriage of his daughter Ann, it passed to Robert Dalton of Bispham, who as we know, was also soon to acquire the Manor of Thurnham.

The remaining chapter house was used as a mausoleum by the Dalton family and is usually open to the public on Heritage Open Days, please see the web site for more information: [www.heritageopendays.org.uk/](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/). There is also a good circular walk which passes the ruins of the Abbey if you don't mind being subjected to 'all winds'.

**Victoria McCann**

**Archivist**

## 'Get yourself a chop Mother'

Many of our collections come to us after domestic changes, tidying up sessions, or 'downsizing', and we know that often we are fortunate that people make the effort to bring records to us rather than just discarding them. A small collection (now catalogued under reference DDX 3252) recently arrived, sent by the widow of the former coroner for Sefton, Knowsley and St Helens. The gentleman had carefully put aside some documents inherited as part of his office, and had marked them to eventually come to the archives. The records give a snapshot of the role of a

coroner in former years and include the sad tale of Mrs Emma Louisa Holme.

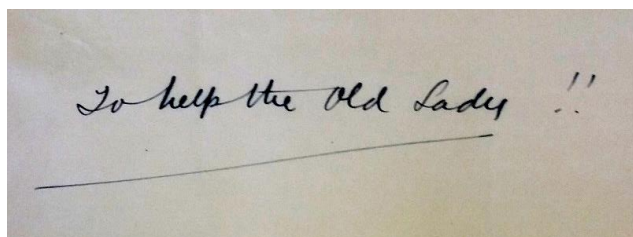


**Mrs Holmes**

In January 1939 Mr R W Brighthouse opened a coroner's inquest into the case of Arthur Holme aged 29, an unemployed bricklayer of Seaforth, found drowned in the Leeds Liverpool Canal. He heard from Arthur's widowed mother that his last words to her were 'Get yourself a chop Mother, I'll see you right.' and he gave her his last pennies. Mrs Holme went on to describe her circumstances, saying that since her son's unemployment the two of them had only had 1s 6d a week for food. They had only one bit of coal left which she was saving for when her son came home. After returning a verdict of death by drowning, Mr Brighthouse awarded Mrs Holme £5 from the poor box fund and made an appeal on her behalf. The case was reported in the press and immediately donations began to arrive. About 80 of these letters are in the collection and show an amazing cross section of donors and amounts.

About half the donors remained anonymous signing themselves, 'an old pensioner', 'a man of no account', 'another Arthur who once had a good mother', 'a few hard ups', for example. Some just enclosed a donation, whilst others felt the need to

comment, including the 'Blackshirt widow' whose card begins 'Hail Mosley' and the donor who commented 'I think this is a heart rending case. It does seem to me that the economic system is such that the wealth of the nation goes into the pockets of a select few and human life and suffering is of little or no account.'



Donations eventually ran to over £90 and Mr Brighthouse set up an account for Mrs Holme which provided her with a weekly allowance until her death in 1943.

**Kathryn Newman**

Archivist

## Focus on family history this month with 6 events on offer



Thu 7 March 2-4pm: **Tithe documents – what they are and what to use them for**, with Alan Crosby. A workshop on how to use tithe maps and schedules for local and family history. Cost: £10. Places limited – booking essential.

Fri 8 March 9.30-12noon: **Family History Surgery. FREE** help from members of the Preston Branch of the Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society. No need to book. Just drop in with your relevant paperwork.

Fri 8 March 2-3.30pm: **Getting to Know Lancashire Archives.** An active session describing relevant sources and explaining how to get the best from the archive service. **FREE.** Places limited – booking essential

Sat 9 March 10am-4pm: **Beginning your family history.** A full day workshop for beginners, introducing a range of sources, available in libraries and archives and online, which can help you get started. **FREE.** Places limited – booking essential.

Thu 28 March 2pm: **Tracing your ancestors using DNA**, with Graham S Holton. An afternoon talk providing an introduction to the use of DNA testing for family history, looking at the types of questions which it can help to answer, the various types of tests available, the science behind the tests and some guidance on how to interpret test results. Cost £7. Places limited – booking essential.

To book for any of these events please email [record.office@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:record.office@lancashire.gov.uk) or phone 01772 533039 (Tues-Fri)

Where there is a fee for events payment **MUST** be made in advance. Please make cheques payable to Friends of Lancashire Archives. To pay by BACS please see the Friends' website: [www.flarchives.co.uk](http://www.flarchives.co.uk)

**Our next Saturday opening is 9 Mar and our next Tuesday evening opening is 12 Mar until 7pm.**

**ANY  
COMMENTS?**

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