



# The Gazette

Issue 77 January 2020

[www.lfhhs-pendleandburnley.org.uk](http://www.lfhhs-pendleandburnley.org.uk)

## **BRANCH CLOSURE PROPOSAL**

2019 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pendle & Burnley Branch but, sadly, 2020 will probably be remembered as the year this Branch closes.

At the January Committee Meeting members decided by a near unanimous majority to propose that the branch should close at the end of 2020. Our dedicated and hardworking committee have served for many years, but due to personal commitments, health problems and advancing years it was felt that rather than limp along for the next few years the time is now right to make a clean break.

This decision was not taken lightly but falling membership numbers and a lack of newer, younger members to fill committee places – a problem many societies now face - has placed an increasing burden on the existing committee.

Therefore, as we can't see this situation altering in the near future, it is reluctantly proposed that the Branch closes in December 2020. Speakers have been booked to the end of the year and we will carry on with the normal programme until Christmas at which point the branch will be wound up.

## **AGM 18th MARCH 2020**

The nomination sheet will be available at the January and February meetings for you to nominate, propose and/or second nominees. It has been proposed that all positions will be for 1 year, this will have to be agreed at the AGM.

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## **2020 Subscriptions**

It would help the Society Membership Secretary if you could pay your subscriptions (which are the same as last year) as soon as possible.

A renewal form was in the November journal or you can renew online through the Society's online shop at:

[www.lfhhs.org.uk](http://www.lfhhs.org.uk)

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## **DROP-IN FAMILY HISTORY HELP SESSIONS**

will be held at Colne Library on the following dates:

January 22nd

February 26th

March 25th

April 22nd

10 am to 12 noon

Volunteers welcome

## 2020 Programme

- 15 January **William J P Hartley**  
Keith Richardson
- 19 February **DNA and Family History**  
Rodney Brackstone
- 18 March **AGM & talk**  
**Sidetracked By Sem**  
Denise North
- 15 April **Our Ancestors' Lancashire Schooldays**  
David Tilsley
- 20 May **Afternoon Outvisit to**  
**Woodend Mining Museum**
- 17 June **The Brontes of Haworth**  
Denise Adlard
- 15 July **TBA**
- 19 August **Betsy the Scullery Maid**  
Joanne Halliwell
- 16 September **Cromwell's Northern Journey**  
Nick Burton
- 21 October **From Port Sunlight to Rivington**  
Malcolm Tranter
- 18 November **The Woollen and Textile Industry**  
**in 19<sup>th</sup> Century England**  
**(part 2)**  
Edgar Holroyd-Doveton
- 2 December **Christmas Party & talk**  
**Childhood Memories**  
Diane Holding

## Christmas Party and Branch 40th Birthday December 4th 2019



(photo Alan Hardman)



### Cutting the cake

Jean Ingham (Chairman 2003 to 2013)  
Bob Abel (Chairman 1983 to 2003)  
Mike Smith current Chairman.

(photo Colin Spiller)

## **REFLECTIONS ON SOME HAPPY DAYS!**

Traditionally it is a time for making New Year resolutions, most of which have usually been long forgotten by February, but as we all pile on the years it is also a time for remembering the past, events, places, and, of course, as family historians, people.

Hopefully future generations will still be making use of their brains to remember and not rely totally on computers with their unimaginable 'memory storage' (all of which could be lost at the touch of a button!)

Many will remember our first coach trip in 2009 when we visited the Alfred Dock and what was then the "new Liverpool 1" shopping centre. In 2010 we ventured north to Lancaster, where we visited the Judge's Lodgings and spent a few (thankfully brief) moments in the dungeon beneath the Castle. The following year took us to York and, after a tortuous diversion when the driver got us lost, the Borthwick Institute.

In 2012 we were back over the border at the Bradford Media Museum and also visited the Industrial Museum, but the following year we turned south to Cheshire and had a day exploring Chester Cathedral and all the many other fascinating attractions of that historic city.

In 2014 we ventured to Manchester and the Media City Experience took us behind the scenes to see how our evening TV news is prepared.

However, we were back to Yorkshire in 2015 visiting Leeds Armouries and also Kirkstall Abbey and had another very enjoyable day at Ripon in 2016, which included a tour of the delightful Markenfield Hall.

Newby Hall proved to be an excellent choice for the 2017 outing, with just about something for everyone, especially teddy bear lovers!

We stayed in Lancashire in 2018, visiting Pilkington's World of Glass Museum where we had a glass blowing demonstration and enjoyed lunch in their modern cafe.

Being true to Lancashire, our final day out in 2019 took us to Lytham Hall, one of the treasures not previously fully appreciated by many of us – unfortunately the Antiques Road Show had been and gone by the time of our visit. After an excellent buffet lunch, on what was one of the hottest days we had experienced over all the years of our trips, the gardens and grounds were a welcome retreat.

WELCOME TO 2020 – A NEW DECADE!

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## **THE STORY OF SARAH**

Sarah Wilkinson was born in Colne on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1797 the third daughter and youngest child of Thomas and Elizabeth Wilkinson who kept a grocery and draper's shop in the centre of the busy little town near the Lancashire, Yorkshire border. She was baptised in the Parish Church of St Bartholomew on 23 July 1797 by her uncle, William Wilkinson, Thomas's half-brother who was an occasional minister of the church for forty years, seventeen as curate. Unmarried, he lived with his sister Isabel and they are buried together in St Bartholomew's churchyard. However Thomas and his family were fervent Wesleyan Methodists and both the parents achieved an obituary in the *Methodist Magazine* <sup>1</sup>

Sarah was the last of the seven surviving children, four years younger than William, the nearest in age and nearly six years younger than Margaret, the sister nearest to her in age. She may have been petted as a small child but increasingly ignored as her siblings matured. The obituary tells us that Thomas (b. 1759) 'trained up his children in the fear of the Lord' obliging the whole family to attend church from the commencement of service and spending much time in secret prayer, on his knees for an hour together pleading with the Lord

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<sup>1</sup> *Methodist Magazine* 1831 p286 (Mrs Wilkinson): 1833 p. 822 (Mr Wilkinson)

for himself and his family. Unfortunately he became increasingly depressed and by 1818 his friends and family felt that there was no alternative but to commit him to the asylum, Spring Vale, near Stone where Thomas Bakewell ran a humane establishment. An inducement was also that it was situated about halfway between Manchester and Wolverhampton and there was a regular coach service going past the asylum. Mr Wilkinson had his own room, there were few restrictions; Mr Bakewell played chess with him, took him to church and discussed the sermons. The only complaint was that Thomas rose early and roamed the corridors crying that he was a sinner, disturbing the other inmates. Unhappily, Thomas only became upset when visited by his family.

The sons of the Wilkinsons do seem to have shared in much of their father's nature. Depression was a default condition and, although it is not mentioned in the letters, I believe he must have had a considerable temper to impose his will on a large and lively family. The boys certainly spent much time falling out – sometimes violently. The two elder girls were peaceable souls but Sarah had enough stropiness for three. Her mother lives in fear of her outbursts and uncontrollability. Mrs Wilkinson frequently writes of appeasing her rages with 'treats', of writing her letters by candle or firelight in the kitchen so that Sarah won't know that she is writing to Elizabeth (who is now married and living in Wolverhampton) and hides letters she has received because Sarah might tear them up.

Sarah's own comeuppance came when her mother discovered a letter directed to her daughter which she opened to find that Sarah was being courted by a man proposing marriage. This was John Parkinson, owner of a Colne liquor store. Mrs Wilkinson went to see him (accompanied by two of her sons and Uncle William to represent the Church). The date was fixed, Mr Parkinson agreed to get a Special Licence and all that remained was not to tell anybody. So brother John went down to the pub and told some of his drinking companions, under strict pledge of secrecy and next day all Colne knew. Preparations went ahead; food was ordered and invitations were sent out to far-flung relatives. Sarah's brothers kept an eye on John Parkinson who was showing signs of backing out. Sarah selected a suitable dress for the wedding and asked brother Tom to bring her a pink silk scarf the next time he went to Liverpool. John Parkinson reported that he couldn't get a Licence because the correct official wasn't in. Sarah's brothers took him to Burnley to get it. John Parkinson needed to change the date from August 30 1823 because his relatives couldn't

come. Uncle William agreed to change the date to September 4 which would remain secret. The day dawned; Mrs Wilkinson and Sarah set out for the short journey to the church. The way was lined with onlookers and the entrance to the church was packed; Uncle William was waiting at the altar and so, after two hours were Sarah and her mother. John Parkinson did not turn up. Everyone dispersed and three of Sarah's brothers and an exasperated Uncle William went to see Mr Parkinson. Sarah and her mother returned home and drew the curtains.

The folk of Colne were remarkably understanding although Parkinson let it be known that he had been told that Sarah was damaged goods. The only ill-treatment of Sarah came from the two daughters of her eldest brother who had gone to London to find his fortune but not prospered and died leaving his wife and daughters to sort out his debts and obligations and pawn most of their clothes and possessions to pay the coach fare to Colne, where they were taken in by Mrs Wilkinson, educated, fed and clothed but could only despise the provincial town and their unfortunate cousin – now showing her pregnancy, ashamed to go out and hardly leaving her room. Mrs Wilkinson was afraid that she would commit suicide after the baby was born so decided that a family trip to Harrogate would do them all good. This precipitated a huge family row that led to brother William and his wife (the daughter of a local mill-owner and thought to give herself unjustified airs – he was a failed mill-owner after all) leaving for the Isle of Man.

Sarah's baby boy was born the next year and called Thomas. On 11 June 1824 John Parkinson was buried in the Inghamite Chapel Cemetery, Wheatley Lane where a number of his family lay. A note in the Register says 'Unfortunately lost his life when bathing in the canal'.

Two years later on 19 December 1826 Sarah married Robert John Kay, printer & stationer of Bury at St Bartholomew's. On 15 September the following year she gave birth to twins who both died on 4 October and were buried in the Union Street Chapel. Kay does not appear to have been a good husband. According to a letter from Elizabeth Shaw to her father on 23 Feb 1832 after Sarah's death 'I don't think Robert Kaye is worth our anxieties – except to take care that he does not spend the property that little Thos. should have – I always understood he was an idle selfish fellow but he might have waited a decent time. However he has entirely cut the family connection in acting so absurdly.'

The end of Sarah's story is told in this letter from William Wilkinson in Colne to his sister Elizabeth Shaw in Wolverhampton on June 29 1831:

Dear Sister, My dear Sister Sarah came to Colne on the 17<sup>th</sup> inst. In a very poor state of health with the small sum of 1d in her pocket after she had defrauded the expenses of her journey. .... She continued until this morning when her happy spirit winged its flight into those regions of everlasting bliss. .... Her patience in her illness had been very great as a murmur has not fallen from her lips since she came here. We as a family are falling on every side which are loud calls for us who are left. I sent a special message off to Robert Kay as he had information Sarah was better on Monday morning – it will be a great shock to him. I also wished brother Thomas to come to Colne soon as possible that he might arrange the Funeral .....

One thing I have been unable to find is where Sarah is buried. Thomas Wilkinson snr. had been a patron of the new building of St James' Wesleyan Church on Albert Road in Colne and had a family vault there. When the church was demolished all the bodies both inside and in the graveyard were reinterred in Colne Cemetery. There is no Burial Register, just a record of fees received for burials which does not apply to interments in family vaults. Her children and her aunt who lived in Bury are in the Union Street Chapel graveyard. Thomas jnr. might possibly have arranged burial at St Chad's although there is no record. So what became of poor Sarah?

There are two things to note which come from the letters. Sarah was sent to Wolverhampton when her sister Elizabeth was ill following a bad miscarriage and a new pregnancy and she managed the household so well that Elizabeth wished to keep her so perhaps she simply needed to feel wanted and valued as she was when a small child. The second is that there are no letters to or from Sarah in the entire collection of over 200 letters. Were they all destroyed? Did she have difficulty in writing? All the children were sent away to school in Yorkshire where the girls received a good education – one of her brothers reports that a friend commented that a good-looking, well-educated girl like Elizabeth was wasted in a small town shop. When Sarah is at school with her sister Margaret she sends good wishes to the family but writes no messages. Had she some defect to which no one ever referred?

The material for this article is drawn from a large collection of letters spread over the University of Birmingham's Special Collections

in the Cadbury Research Library, The Shaw Archive in Wolverhampton's Archives and a small private collection in Colne. A transcription of most of the letters in Wolverhampton is available at Touchstones Local Collection in Rochdale together with three letters transcribed by George Mainwaring, a local journalist and historian. The originals of these have disappeared and the dating of them is not reliable as indeed are the dates on many of the other letters available in transcription. There is an index and summary of the letters in Birmingham, online, University of Birmingham, Cadbury Research Library Special Collections, which gives a flavour of life of 'the middling sort' in Colne and Wolverhampton in the early, pre-Victorian, years.

Pat Dyson.

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GAZETTE – Editor – Arnold Slater

Articles for the April 2020 Gazette  
by the end of March please.

Please send articles to Editor at [lfhhs-pendleandburnley.org.uk](mailto:lfhhs-pendleandburnley.org.uk)  
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