

LOCAL STUDIES IN CHESHIRE

Mike Eddison

Cheshire has traditionally been thought of as a largely rural county, and indeed, even today the vast expanse of the Cheshire Plain, whether seen from the windows of a car or the train, would confirm that view. Administratively, the larger centres of population — for example, Chester, Crewe and Birkenhead — were outside the control of the County Council, as they were independent boroughs, providing their own library services to their residents. The services provided by the County Council were mainly to small towns and villages; it was accepted that many of its residents benefited from the services provided by the boroughs, and lending library provision was

accordingly largely of the recreational kind of literature. This meant also that the provision of a local studies services was on a very limited scale. There was a "Cheshire Collection" housed as part of the Students' Library at the County Library Headquarters at 91 Hoole Road, Chester; but it was left to the local librarians to acquire strictly local material, the "Cheshire Collection" being used to provide supporting material. Items from this collection, because of their general unavailability and rarity value, were not always available for home reading, and were often sent 'for use in library only'.

Following the appointment of Mr. S.G. Berriman as County Librarian in the

mid-1960s, the whole profile of the library service was raised, and a long-overdue comprehensive building programme of new, larger branch libraries was initiated. Wilmslow Library, opened in 1969, was the first of these, to be followed by similar buildings at Alsager, Marple, Nantwich and elsewhere. A feature of these new libraries was a large reference room which gave the County Library service the opportunity to vastly improve its provision of local studies material, by making available on microfilm local census returns, parish records and newspapers, in addition to copies of some of the standard county histories which were transferred from the "Cheshire Collection". There was, however, no post of Local Studies Librarian on the establishment, so that this improvement in provision could not be fully exploited.

In 1974, following local government reorganisation, a number of previously independent library authorities became part of the Cheshire Libraries and Museums Service — examples include Chester, Warrington, Widnes and Macclesfield — each having its own extensive and important Local Collection. Some degree of supervision and co-ordination of local studies material and services was undertaken by Geoff Pimlott and, later, David Rogers, respectively the District Librarians at Crewe and Warrington; libraries were visited, and improvements in stock were made, but this work was carried out in any time which could be made available from their principal duties as District Librarians, and local librarians still had a vital role to play.

Cheshire eventually recognised the increasing demands being made on its library services for local studies and genealogical material with the appointment in 1985 of a full-time Local Studies Advisor, whose role it was to build on the foundations laid by Geoff Pimlott and David Rogers, and to co-ordinate provision across the County, to publicise the service, and to give support to local librarians. This position was retained when the library service was re-organised in 1989, when the opportunity was taken to additionally provide a half-time post of Local Studies Librarian.

£1 REWARD.

THE ABOVE REWARD will be paid by the Superintendent of the Bradwall Training School, Sandbach, for the apprehension of

JOHN JAMES STANFIELD,

who absconded from the Reformatory on 8th instant, and is supposed to have enlisted, or to have gone to Belfast.

Particulars :

Age: 16 years 11 months.

Height: 5ft. 3in.

Weight: 105lbs.

Complexion: Fresh.

Eyes: Blue.

Hair: Light Brown.

Marks: Scar near right eye.

Dress :

Blue trousers, stitched crease.
Brown coat and vest (No. 1128 in sleeve).
Socks: Army grey (No. 28).
Boots: Blucher pattern, size 7 (No. 1128).
Shirt: Oxford, with collar (No. 1128).

Speaks with a slight Irish accent.

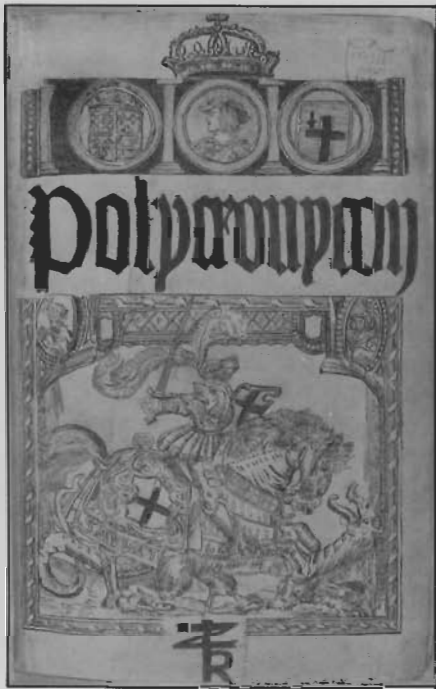


Any information to be sent to the School (Tel. 40 Sandbach), or to

SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE,
Police Station,

MIDDLEWICH.

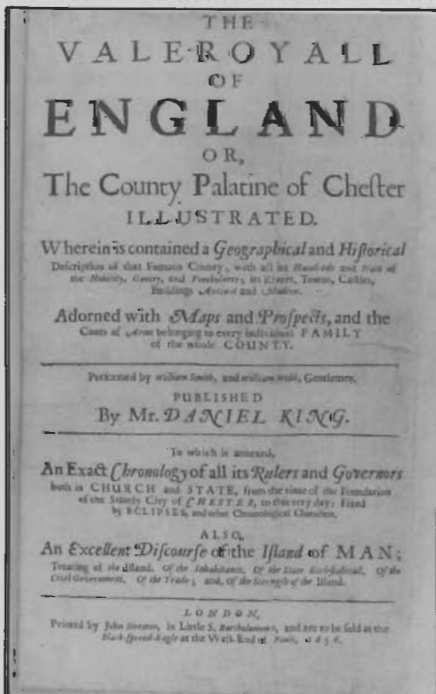
11th August, 1915.



Title-page. Polychronicon

Local Studies provision in Cheshire libraries came under the Archives and Local Studies Service in Autumn 1989, one of the groups of services established under the "Libraries, Arts and Archives" umbrella. This has resulted in the old County "Cheshire Collection" being rehoused at the Cheshire Record Office and merged with their existing bookstock, the aim being to provide a single location for all published sources concerned with the history of the county.

In addition to the management of this collection, an advisory and support service is provided for the local



Garlick is hote and drie in the fourth degree
 and it doth helpe bitinges. or stunges of wasps and
 of adders. inese garlick with honny. and it doth helpe
 founnes bitinge. if thou anointe therewith the bitten place.
 The sauour of stunges garlyk. doth a very noyous
 seruise. Gethe garlick in musk. and putte to it a litle
 vruete and drinke it. and this doth restore seruise
 in the stombe. and the trenches. with the same cure
 thou maist cure and hele the body that is beset with
 for colde. Gethe garlick piles in oyle. and that oyle
 doth helpe the bitinge of deadly and venemous bestes.
 if the bitten place be anoyous therewith. Anoynt
 the chere with garlyk sozen in musk. and vruete
 and this doth restore the smell and ache of the
 The same doth garlick piles so. if thou sette hem in
 water. and ley hem in the mane of a plaster to the
 chere. Gethe garlick in his piles. and the in sack.

Fifteenth-century herbal

1888), “stuffed frogs fighting a duel” (Nov 1888) and “a piece of Russian bread found in the trenches at Sebastopol in 1855” — not reaching the library until 1882.

With no union catalogue of local studies collections, we have traditionally, only had a sketchy overview of what is available throughout the County as a whole. Two recent developments should help clarify the position. First, a questionnaire covering all categories of local studies stock was sent out to all libraries. Preliminary analysis of the results is already providing a much improved picture of holdings and allowing moves to be made towards a more rational distribution of stock. Central to this approach is the concept of a uniform “core stock” of Cheshire material available in all our larger libraries, supplemented by purely local material as appropriate. This “core stock” would include, for example, the main histories of the County — the works of George Ormerod⁴, Sir Peter Leycester⁵, the Cheshire Community Council⁶, and the Victoria County History series⁷, J H Cooke’s *Bibliotheca Cestriensis*⁸, R Richards’ *Old Cheshire Churches*⁹, J M Dodgson’s *Place-Names of Cheshire*¹⁰, and, on a more popular level, Dorothy Sylvester’s *History of Cheshire*¹¹, and *Historical Atlas of Cheshire*¹².

One early curiosity that would be included is *The Vale Royall of England* published by Daniel King, the son of a Chester baker, in 1656. This colourful compilation — really four separate works bound together — has received its fair share of criticism:

This Daniel King, who was a

pitiful pretender to antiquities, was a most ignorant, silly fellow... not able to write one word of true English.

Antony à Wood

and

...the lists of gentry etc. in this work are very unreliable and of little practical value, and it is probable enough that the Itinerary itself was for the most part compiled “at home” with the aid of maps, and other sources of information. George Ormerod



George Ormerod

Not the least strange thing about this book is the way that the author of the third part, George Lee, attacks the authors of the two preceding sections, William Smith and William Webb.

two painful Authors... former Plagiaries; who usurping the vast pains of the most industrious Leland to themselves, have injuriously abused his Memory.

Non-book sources would include local newspapers, pamphlets, census returns, specific County maps — such as Saxton (1577), Speed (1610), Bowen (1751) and Burdett (1777) — and local history journals.

In addition to the questionnaire, access to local history material is being made a lot easier by the use of a database — or rather two databases, one for local history and one for audio-visual material — via a mainframe computer at County Hall. This CHIPS (or Cheshire Information Providers) network¹³ has “on-line” terminals at our ten largest libraries, with Nantwich Library due to join the system in the near future. Entries are ‘free text’ which means that anything that is typed in as part of the entry — word, number, or whatever — can be used as a ‘handle’ by which that entry can be pulled out.

As we gradually target more local studies stock for input — these could be the complete run of a particular journal, or all library holdings of parish registers, or one particular library’s illustrations collection, for example — access to local studies material generally should be greatly improved. Input is carefully controlled, via an editorial team, and a thesaurus has been compiled to help with the universally difficult problem of choosing subject terms or ‘keywords’. We are also looking at ways to improve things at the “output” stage - aiming at a more “customised” production onto hard copy - and, perhaps further away, the ability to ‘download’ selected entries directly onto discs compatible with the average PC in the High Street.



Local studies room, Macclesfield Library

Library staff have little time to handle detailed local or family history enquiries at branch level. A number of training courses have been arranged to give librarians a better understanding of sources on Cheshire generally, and further courses are planned to deal with specific subjects such as census returns and maps. Further help is now available in the presence of a 'researcher', Diane Backhouse, recently appointed at the County

Record Office, to whom any local or family history enquiries can be directed.

With over ten thousand entries now on the CHIPS database, a more established central "Cheshire Collection" and a move towards a more even distribution of local studies material across the County — together with a number of other initiatives in the pipeline — we hope that it is going to get a little easier for both local and

family historians to find the sources that they need.

The Cheshire Record Office is situated in Duke Street, Chester, CH1 1RL (0244 602559) (Information Officer and Archivist, Ian Dunn), or Fax 0244 603812. The hours of opening, Monday to Friday inclusive, are 9.15 am - 4.45 pm, and enquiries should be addressed to Mike Eddison.

NOTES

- 1 Charles Tunnicliffe, R.A (1901-1979), born at Langley near Macclesfield; wildlife artist and book illustrator.
- 2 The Whitfield Collection of books on the life and work of Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) presented in 1960 to the Unitarian Chapel, Knutsford, by Professor A. Stanton Whitfield, and transferred to Knutsford Library in 1986.
- 3 James Hall (1846-1914), *A History of the Town and Parish of Nantwich* (Author, Nantwich, 1883, repr. Morten, 1972)
- 4 George Ormerod, *The History of the County Palatine and City of Chester*, Second edition revised and enlarged by Thomas Helsby. 3 vols. Routledge, 1882.
- 5 Sir Peter Leycester (1614-1678), lawyer and antiquarian, of Nether Tabley. Author of *Historical Antiquities* (1673) in 2 vols., the second concerned with Cheshire, and in particular with the Bucklow Hundred.
- 6 Cheshire Community Council. *A History of Cheshire*, edited by J.J. Bagley 1. *Cheshire before the Romans*, by W.J. Varley (1964); 2. *Roman Cheshire*, by F.H. Thompson (1965); 3. *Pre-Conquest Cheshire, 383-1066*, by J.D. Bu'Lock (1972); 4. *Cheshire under the Norman Earls*, by B.M.C. Hussain (1973); 5. *Cheshire under the three Edwards*, by H.J. Hewitt (1967); 6. *Cheshire in the later Middle Ages*, by J.T. Driver (1971); 7. *Tudor Cheshire*, by Joan Beck (1969); 8. *The Civil Wars in Cheshire*, by R.N. Dore (1966); 9. *Cheshire 1660-1780: Restoration to Industrial Revolution*, by J.H. Hodson (1978); 10. *Squire and Tenant: Rural Life in Cheshire 1760-1900*, by Geoffrey Scard (1981); 11. Not yet published; 12. *Cheshire in the Twentieth Century*, by Rosalind E. Tigwell (1985).
- 7 *Victoria County History of Cheshire* (1979-); vols. 1-3, edited by Brian E. Harris, published to date.
- 8 John H. Cooke, solicitor and Town Clerk of Winsford; author of *Bibliotheca Cestriensis* (1904), a biographical account of "books, maps, plates and other printed matter" on the County of Chester; he also wrote *The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in Cheshire* (1899) and *5000 miles with the Cheshire Yeomanry* (1913).
- 9 Raymond Richards, *Old Cheshire Churches* (Batsford, 1947.)
- 10 J. McN. Dodgson, *Place Names of Cheshire*, in 5 vols. (Camb. U.P., 1970-1981) (English Place Names Society, vols. XLIV-XLVIII)
- 11 Dorothy Sylvester, *History of Cheshire*. (Phillimore, 2nd. ed. 1980)
- 12 Dorothy Sylvester and Geoffrey Nulty, *Historical Atlas of Cheshire* (Cheshire Community Council, 1958; rev. ed. 1966)
- 13 Raymond Benton and Alan Peacock, "Chips with everything: automated information in Cheshire". *Library Association Record*, 90 (11), November 1988, pp.665-6

Master's Degree/Postgraduate Diploma in the History of the Manchester Region

The Course

This is a part-time, evening postgraduate course. It is a linked Master's (three-year) and Postgraduate Diploma (two-years) programme. The content and assessment requirements of the first two years of the Master's course and of the Diploma course are identical. Successful completion will lead to the award of the appropriate CNA qualification.

The course should appeal to those with a solid background in historical studies, and who wish to develop their historical skills and expertise to a postgraduate level of attainment. This is achieved through an in-depth but selective examination of the development of the Manchester region from the late eighteenth to the twentieth century.

The programme of study is carefully structured to develop the research and study skills needed by the researcher in the field of local studies and will be of particular benefit to teachers and others concerned with the regional economy. Teaching in Years I and II is a combination of lectures, seminars and individual tutorials.

Course Structure

Master's/Diploma Course

Year I: The History of the Manchester Region: An Introduction
Year II: Two options selected from a range of up to six.

Master's Course

Year III: Supervised research leading to the submission of a dissertation.

Second Year Options

Students select two options. Up to four or five options may be available from the following:
The Cotton Industry and the Industrial Revolution
Urban Growth and Problems in Victorian Manchester

Working-Class Movements in the Manchester Region
Contemporary Manchester
Culture and Society in Nineteenth Century Manchester
Architecture and Art Institutions and Patronage in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Manchester

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