

Bolton's Genies

The Monthly Newsletter of the Bolton Family History Society

Edition 114 – November 2023



Photo by Adam Birkett on Unsplash

This month's photograph reminds us of the event over 400 years ago, on the night of the 5th of November 1605 which has become known as Gunpowder Plot, a failed attempt to assassinate King James I of England during the Opening of Parliament in November 1605. Thirty-six barrels of gunpowder were discovered hidden behind a pile of firewood in a storeroom beneath the Palace of Westminster in London. Guards also found a man who called himself John Johnson, who had fuses for lighting the gunpowder in his pockets. The plan was organised by Robert Catesby, a devout English Catholic who hoped to kill the Protestant King James and establish Catholic rule in England.

Editorial Musings

The “Convict” article reminded me of Ron’s research into Agnes Nuttall, my maternal grandma’s family. Grandma Nuttall is one of my favourite people of all time. She was short, like me. She had a twinkle in her eye and a store of one-line comments that Peter Kay would envy. Elderly lady characters in my novels capture something of her personality. Imagine my shock to discover she came from convict stock!

Three of our long-standing members are featured in this month’s *Bolton’s Genie*. Graham Holt is appealing for support in transcribing *The Mercury*. Rita Greenwood is advising us of her talk *The Road to the Aisle* and Jane Milne’s family is featured in the talk given by our November speaker – Dr Jim Beach. It is a pleasure to be part of an active and vibrant family history society.

Our chairman, David Baker, has asked for members help in compiling a more accurate list of Bolton members of the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society. Could members check if they have indicated “Bolton” on their application, particularly if they joined via the website. Also please check that emails are current. For members with a plus one please indicate if the second person uses a different email. The purpose of the above is that those who identify as “Bolton” can then receive Bolton focused updates and information.

Best wishes to all

Cath Cole

Information and Updates for Members

How to view Ancestry records for free

Follow the instructions on this website:

<https://www.whodoyouthinkyouaremagazine.com/tutorials/how-to-view-ancestry-records-for-free>

Source: WDYT YA

Discover this month's bumper Manchester addition

https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/new/manchester-electoral-registers-london-berkshire-parish?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_8114124

Source: Daisy Goddard

Do you have Irish roots?

Find your ancestors on this website:

https://www.findmy.past.ie/?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_8017650

Sourced by Jane Milne

A reminder from BFHS's Project Officer, Graham Holt

Tillotson's Newspapers, the founders and initial publishers of the Bolton Evening News, produced a company newsletter throughout the Second World War which kept all of its employees updated with what was happening to past and present employees. The newsletter was called "The Mercury" and was produced every month. Bolton FHS has acquired a bound copy of every issue from November 1939 to March 1946 from which we intend to transcribe appropriate details for inclusion on the MLFHS website. Scans of every page will be added to the MLFHS website. If you wish to consider being involved in the transcribing please email Graham at tillnewsletter@gmail.com and he will send you 3 pages of a newsletter and a completed spreadsheet to illustrate the work involved. Graham has calculated that an 8 page newsletter will take about 2½ hours to transcribe. If you then decide that you would be happy to do some work simply send an email saying so and Graham will send you a month to work on.

Do You have a Convict in the Family?

In the "Who Do You Think You Are" August magazine there is an article "Convicts Sent to Australia" which details various area websites:

State Library of Queensland: www.tinyurl.com/slq-convict-queenslander

Or search via:

https://onsearch.slq.qld.gov.au/discovery/search?vid=61SLQ_INST:SLQ

Libraries Tasmania: www.libraries.tas.gov.au/family-history/convict-records

The National Library of Australia has a guide to convict records at

www.nla.gov.au/research-guides//convicts

New South Wales State Archives - www.mhns.wa.gov.au/archivessubjects

There are other websites to follow in the search for convicts - too many to list here - but the article on pp. 37-39 of August's edition of WDYTYA is well worth a look.

Recent Events

November Meeting

Jim Beach Senior Lecturer in Twentieth Century History of the University of Northampton gave a talk on Researching World War I Soldiers. He used the example of his research project on Percy Wyndham Lewis and the Diaries of William Douglas Harcourt, our own Jane Milne's great uncle. His talk had the dual aims of telling the story of these two people and also providing some insight on useful research techniques for WWI.

Jim described his academic research in intelligence systems in WWI and how these systems impacted on military decision-making. His frequent collaborator, James Bruce, has carried out significant research in local and family history. One of Bruce's areas of research in the past ten years has been focused on the stories behind the people in the war. It is difficult to learn who exactly worked in intelligence as there is no list of secret agents!

Wyndham Lewis was an influential person in the arts world in the early 20th century. He was a well-known and innovative painter and writer who had connections across the art world. He was an iconoclast who saw himself as an outsider. During WWI Wyndham Lewis developed as an artist. In the 1920s he flirted with fascism. He got into many artistic arguments and feuds with others. His political views and later career as an outsider influenced the later reception of his art, whose significance is only recently being re-evaluated.

Jim described a chance meeting at an event marking the 1460 Battle of Northampton, where a colleague gave him a copy of Wyndham Lewis's war memoir, *Blasting and Bombardiering*, which Jim is now involved in republishing. The memoir sparked his interest and he read the available sources. As well as the soon to be republished memoir, there are two biographies (1980 and 2000) which recycled information from the memoir. Jim also learned about Wyndham Lewis's wartime art and showed examples of these works which portray everyday activities of soldiers, such as moving artillery and lining up for a rum ration.

From *Blasting and Bombardiering*, he learned the basic outline of Wyndham Lewis's wartime experience. Wyndham Lewis enlisted in 1916 and was commissioned in December after attending cadet training. In 1917, he joined 330 Siege Battery with whom he left for France in May. Wyndham Lewis suffered from trench fever in July

but re-joined the SB in August in Flanders and was at the Third battle of Ypres in September. In October he left for the UK and in December was seconded as a Canadian War Artist.

There are four standard sources for Wyndham Lewis:

- His service file which contains substantial detail,
- The 330 Siege Battery war diary which records where they were and what engagements
- Personal records such as his memoir published in 1937, and
- Wyndham Lewis's letters to Ezra Pound, his friend and poet. These letters are detailed and informative.

To look learn more about Wyndham Lewis, Jim wanted to find new sources. He recommends three that he discovered that contain useful information: [The Long, Long Trail](#), Chris Baker's website and forum; [The Great War Forum](#); and the recently digitized [Ogilby Muster](#), the holdings of regimental museums from across the UK.

The final part of Jim's talk outlined how he went "down the rabbit hole" by digging into Wyndham Lewis's wartime life. He shared four principles to discover new information and perspective:

1. put aside what is known and start afresh, without pre-conceived notions;
2. follow multiple lines of enquiry based on the unit and its locations over time;
3. assume nothing, check everything and follow every lead to its end; and
4. everything is a potential data point, and combined with others can lead to better understanding.

Jim followed two lines of enquiry on Wyndham Lewis, one on the home front in Britain and one on active service, in France. Military records are more detailed when a unit is on active service. An individual's service record provides location and Jim was able to use the record of another person who was in the same location at the same time to fill in some gaps. The use of service numbers for soldiers was only standardized after WWI; before that, each transfer resulted in a new service number. Since numbers were assigned in chronological sequence it is possible to find those who had similar experiences by researching those whose numbers were close in sequence. For instance, on enlistment, there were 27 others assigned numbers on the same day. Of those many were destroyed in a fire in 1940 but seven survived. From the occupations listed, it was clear that the well-educated Wyndham Lewis was surrounded by people from different social classes: farm labourer, grocers assistant, etc.

Wyndham Lewis was initially assigned to the 183 Siege Battery (SB) as an enlisted man but reapplied for a commission and on acceptance was temporarily assigned to the 196 until he went to Cadet School at Trowbridge in October 1916. There were 33 others commissioned on the same day and their letters and diaries provide significant information on life at cadet school. One cadet, writing to a relative, included a detailed day-to-day account of life there, even providing exam questions!

Records on officers are detailed and better maintained so from here on the record is a little clearer. Jim was able to check files of the other 33 cadets and see how they went through the training process. On graduation in December 1916, Lewis was assigned to the 330 Siege Battery and left for France in 1917. The 330 SB war-diary lists five officers. Jim researched each one and came across a photo of the diaries of one of them, William Douglas Harcourt, on the Lest We Forget website. He emailed the project, trying to find out the location of the diaries and was eventually put in touch with Jane Milne. William Harcourt was a surveyor and a very different type of person from Lewis. His diary is a detailed day by day chronicle of the 330 SB and provides an invaluable picture of life in the trenches in France. It also made possible a juxtaposition of what was happening in the Battery during the writing of Wyndham Lewis's five letters to Ezra Pound. In addition, the 330 SB was reported to the Australian command, so we have the officer view of day-to-day actions and information on decisions being made at a higher level. Through these means much has been learned about Wyndham Lewis's experience. From this rich trove of material, Jim and his colleague have written two papers that have been accepted for publication in the Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, one article focuses on the home front and the other on battle life in 1917. There were several questions:

Will there be a comprehensive source that consolidates all aspects of Wyndham Lewis's Life?

We don't know, but the Paul Edwards biography Wyndham Lewis, Painter and Writer (2000) is recommended.

How did Jane Milne come to be in possession of the diaries?

Jane explained that William Douglas Harcourt was her great uncle. Her brother was visiting South Africa when William's granddaughter was clearing out the house after her mother's death and agreed to take the diaries. There is another set of diaries by William Harcourt's father, based on his experience in the South African Frontier Police Force in the early 1870s [Welcome\(eggss.org\)](http://Welcome(eggss.org)) See entry 22nd May 2021, so perhaps that inspired his son to keep a diary also. Both sets of diaries are now in the National Army Museum at Chelsea in London [Collections | National Army Museum \(nam.ac.uk\)](http://Collections|NationalArmyMuseum(nam.ac.uk)) and will soon be available for research purposes.

Why did Lewis become a Canadian War Artist?

In 1915/16 the British government hadn't thought through the role artists could play in the war, but Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook (a Canadian-British newspaper publisher), arranged for the secondment of many artist/soldiers as war artists to the Canadian War Records Office, including Wyndham Lewis.

What was the position of the military leadership on individuals keeping person diaries which could fall into enemy hands? In WWI soldiers could keep diaries, although they were not allowed to send them home or to take them to the front.

Cath Cole, our host, thanked Jim for his very interesting talk.

Upcoming Events

6 Dec - Quiz, Raffle & Supper (No Zoom) - To be held at our usual place, Bolton Golf Club. The cost will be £5 to members and £10 to non-members.

Talk by Rita Greenwood at MLFHS

Bolton FHS's Rita Greenwood will give a talk in the Performance Space of the Manchester Central Library - the talk will be part of the "Explorers" programme and will be aimed at beginner genealogists. Rita will address sources for finding further details of weddings including banns, licences, bonds and allegations. Rita will aim to show examples from each source.

The talk, entitled "The Road to the Aisle" will take place on Saturday 25 November 2023 at 11 am

Advance Notice of Manchester Family Fair

Following on the success of the Society's Fair in past years, MLFHS have decided to hold another Family History Fair in 2024 at Manchester Central Library. The date will be **Saturday 13 April 2024**.

It is early days and details of a theme and a format are still to be decided. When further information is available, we will publish here in the Bolton's Genies.

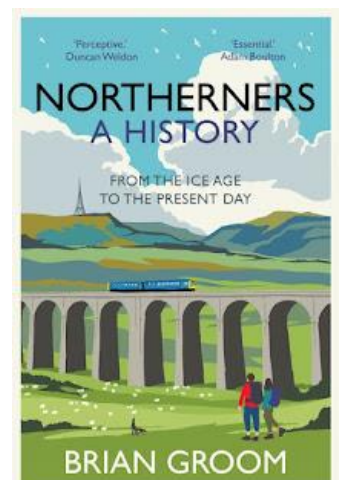
Advance Notice of 2024 BFHS Speakers

- **Wednesday January 10th Wayne Ashton "Tom and Fanny have gone to Russia they liked it so much they stayed"**.

The story of how Wayne's uncle and aunt, two 19th century Bolton mill workers were recruited to work in Russia in 1861 and stayed for forty years. Wayne became interested in the subject only to find that there were thousands of Brits in Russia up until 1917 and some never came back, they made quite a community for themselves.

- **Wednesday Feb 7th Brian Groom Northerners Based on Brian's book 'Northerners: A History, from the Ice Age to the Present Day',**

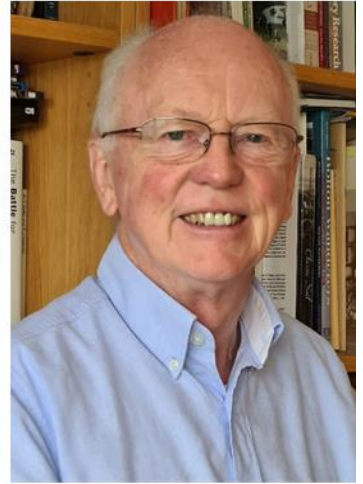
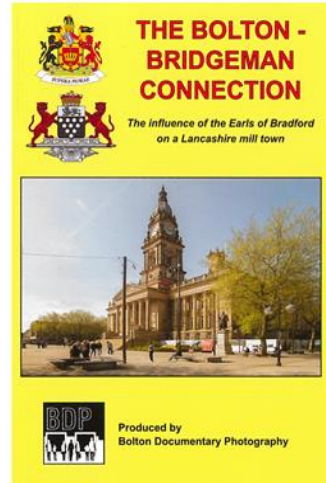
Brian's book was published in paperback on 25 May 2023 by Harper North. It is the first general history of northern England to



be published for more than 30 years. We are promised an entertaining event with wide appeal and plenty of local interest, a 45-minute romp through 180 million years of northern history!

- **Wednesday 6th March Ray Jefferson from his new book 'The Bolton - Bridgeman Connection'.**

Ray, a local author and lifelong photographer, believes photography should be valued according to the contribution it makes to society. He is the chairman and a photographer for the voluntary community and arts organisation Bolton Documentary Photography, meet the team (boltondocumentary.co.uk).



The story tells how the Bridgeman family (later elevated to the Earls of Bradford) were involved in the story of Bolton over 350 years and it is a development of the exhibition which was mounted in the parish church in 2017.

- **Wed April 3rd Maggy Simm "Henry Dawsons presentation album and T Taylor Ltd of Bolton".**

<https://tinyurl.com/fkz7udv3>

<https://tinyurl.com/4vvaz24z>

Thanks to Jane Milne

Bolton History Centre and Bolton Records

Due to the Library renovation work the History Centre has moved temporarily to Crompton Place Shopping Centre, in the former C&A building opposite the rear entrance to the former M&S.

The telephone number for any local history and archive queries and requests for material is 01204 332185 or send an email request to archives@bolton.gov.uk. Requests take seven days to turn around and will either be looked at in the lab at or the museum at Crompton Place. References to some of the websites:

<https://boltonremembers.org/> has some of the WW1 & WW2 records we have found for Bolton military personnel either born, resided, or enlisted in Bolton.

<https://bolton.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/WPAC/HOME> Spydus catalogue for local studies search.

<https://www.boltonlams.co.uk/history-centre-1> This is the History Centre page for the services we offer to researchers. Gives some information about archives and the records we hold.

An interesting website sourced by Bolton News – “Unclaimed estates in Bolton revealed by Treasury for June”

<https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/23622610.unclaimed-estates-bolton-revealed-treasury-june/>

Lancashire Records

News from The Archives

UK BMD Summary <http://goo.gl/I29JpL>



Lancs OPC <http://goo.gl/AN699Z> and left click on the “What's New” tab on the left



Lancashire Archives News and Events <https://goo.gl/H8UexE> for their latest newsletter and more.

Lancashire Archives Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/lancsarchives>

Activities and Events from MLFHS Branches



Please note these events are all free to subscribed MLFHS members, £3 to guests.



Manchester branch – Next meeting - 25 November 2023
 Manchester Central Library - 11.00 am
 “The Road to the Aisle” - Rita Greenwood

Rita's talk on The Road to the Aisle will take us through marriage settlements, bonds and allegations.

Booking: [Eventbrite](#)

Cost: members - free of charge

Cost: non-members - £3



Oldham and District Branch

Note: There will be no meeting of the Oldham Branch in December

Next meeting: Saturday, 13th January 2024 at 2pm

Life and Work in Cotton Lancashire, c1830-1914 - Details in next month's edition.



Anglo Scottish Branch

Next meeting: Saturday 2 December 2023 at 2.00 to 3.30 pm

Christmas Get Together” at Manchester Central Library

Members only

Other Local History Societies' Meetings

WE ADVISE CHECKING THEIR RESPECTIVE WEBSITES PERIODICALLY FOR UPDATES
 AND DATES OF MEETINGS.



Halliwell Local History Society <http://goo.gl8erYyr>

Email: enquiries@halliwell-lhs.co.uk

Next meeting – 28 November 2023 - Ray Jefferson - “The Bridgeman and Bradford Estates in Bolton”

Dec meeting - 19 December 2023 - Sid Calderbank - “Entertainment and Songs”

Meetings are held St Luke's Church, Chorley Old Road, Bolton BL1 3BE at 7.30 pm



Turton Local History Society <https://goo.gl/adx4GM>

Next meeting - 23 November 2023 at 7.30 pm - AGM + “The Roman Fort at Wayoh Bridge” by David Ratledge)

Meetings will be held at Harwood Methodist Church

£2 entry fee for non-members.

Email: mlandypublishing@yahoo.co.uk

Westhoughton Local History Group – <http://goo.gl/XNugl5>

Meetings take place on the 3rd Thursday of the month in Westhoughton Library, Market St, Westhoughton, BL5 3AU.

Next meetings - at 10.00 am



Horwich Heritage Centre - <http://goo.gl/fSPsij>

Next event – 12 December 2023 at 7.30 pm - “Christmas Special” with the Happy Voices Choir

This event will be held at Horwich Community Centre, Beaumont Road, Horwich BL6 7BG. There will be a charge of £5.00 inc refreshments - tickets available from the Heritage Centre.

Open Days, Admission Free, are held most months on Saturdays between 10.00 am - 1.00 pm

New Exhibition: “40 years since the Closure of Horwich Loco Works” On now till 31 January 2024 at Horwich Heritage Centre with free admission.

Key Information about Bolton Family History Society

<https://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton>

•Speaker Bookings: Boltonprog@mlfhs.org.uk

•Bolton helpdesk: boltonfhishelp@gmail.com

•Newsletter Archives since July 2014:

<https://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton/newsletter/archives>

•General Society enquiries to the BFHS Secretary, Christine M Ellis

bolton@mlfhs.org.uk

•Manchester Research email a brief enquiry to, <https://www.mlfhs.uk/virtual-help-desk>

or visit us at

•Bolton Facebook page <https://goo.gl/n99qtW> 976 Likes and 1K people following on Facebook

•Bolton Research Collection on the MLFHS website: (For members only)

<https://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton/research>

•Join the MLFHS/BFHS at: <https://www.mlfhs.uk/join>
