

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019

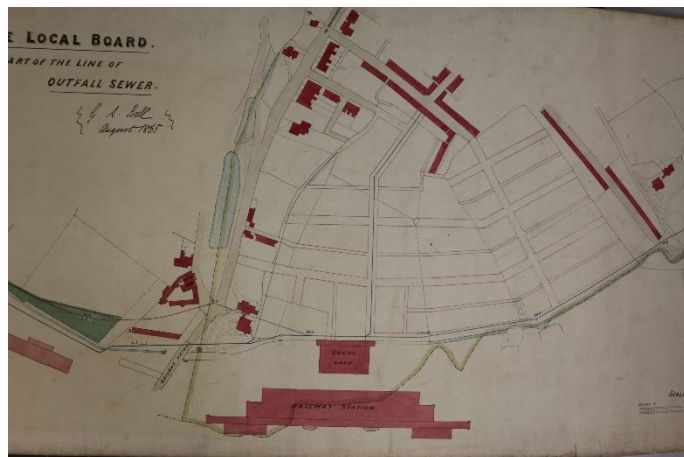
At our first meeting of the year **the history of Hoole Lane from the Railway Bridge to Boughton**



was described by your Chairman. The ownership of much of the land there by Macclesfield School was outlined, as were the coming of the canal and the railways, which resulted in the development of various enterprises, e.g. the leadworks, oil refinery and Chester Engineering Company. The large concentration of houses led to the building of shops, schools, a mission church and the Lock Vaults.

*Hoole Lane Mission Hall - with Lock Vaults
Brewery sign*

"A matter of convenience: the crisis in mid-19th Century sanitation and the coming of the sewers to Hoole" was the title of a presentation given in February by Monty Mercer. His "in depth" research illustrated both the scale of the problem as the rapidly growing population occupied more and more premises, and also how the terrain of the area and developing engineering knowledge were harnessed to provide solutions. Dealing with night-soil and epidemics, Flookers Brook as a conduit, negotiations with Chester Town Council and landowners, some of whom like Dickson's Nurseries were glad to take advantage of the situation, and litigation from the owner of Bache Hall were among the issues included in the talk about the essential infrastructure eventually built for the residents of Hoole and Newton, which lies unseen beneath our feet.



Original plan of outfall sewer from the Ermine Hotel to New Peploe Street

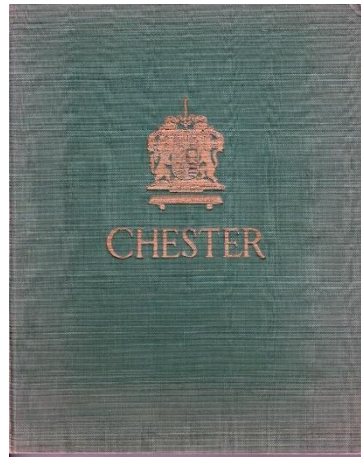
In March, Tom Welsh gave an illustrated talk on the **history of Chester's tanneries**. In the 16th and 17th Centuries Chester was renowned for its leather industry and Tom illustrated where tanyards were situated, many of them on what today would be called prime site development land. The tanning process used chemicals and compounds in quantities which resulted in land contamination, and also contributed to an early death rate among tanners and curers. The use of different animal skins was described as was the range of products made from leather: apparel, armour, costume, shoes; accessories, bags and belts; furniture; horse and farming tackle and even sporting goods.

The Society experienced a very different talk in April entitled **"Galtieri - my part in his downfall"**. Local resident, Chris Caroe gave an often moving but very factual and informative account of his experiences during the Falklands War in 1982. From "yomping" from their landing site through to action on Two Sisters Mountain, where fighting was intense and four comrades lost, through the emotions and feelings of being involved in battle, to the eventual arrival in Port Stanley, was a gripping and engaging account of recent history.

In May, Linda Webb explained the significance of "**The Greenwood Plans for Hoole between the Wars**". The Plans, including an appendix on the old buildings and houses of Chester are now fascinating and visionary documents parts of which have been realised and are a familiar part of present day local life. Linda pointed out ideas that may have been missed opportunities, and others which were probably fortuitously avoided. Contemporary photographs and documents were used to illustrate her presentation.



Chas. Greenwood, M.I.C.E.,
M.I.M. and C.E.
Lafayette



Charles Greenwood and his Plan

The story of **Browns of Chester**, the iconic and once fashionable department store was told by Sue Taylor in June. It started in 1782 when Miss Susan Towsey sent her buyer to London to choose some "pretty fancy ribbons". She later married John Brown and her dress shop moved along Eastgate Street, where succeeding generations developed its many departments into the building



we know today and became very influential in the affairs of the town. Charles Brown, Mayor of Chester six times, who lived a Folly House, played an important part in the community life of Hoole and Newton, and was largely responsible for today's layout of the area called Flookersbrook.

Browns of Chester

In July the summer weather broke when your Chairman led a group of members on a **walking tour** of Lightfoot, Walker, Faulkner and Charles Street. The significance of various buildings, past and present was explained, shops, houses, chapels and pubs, and it was possible to see details which illustrated changes in the development and uses of some of the premises in the area. The Bromfield provided welcome shelter in its extension which was built in 1900.

The Society's railway expert, Phil Cook, gave a presentation in September **on the role of the railways in the First World War**. His knowledge and research illustrated the essential part railways played in transporting men, armaments and equipment to vital destinations quickly. Raw materials, fuel and finished products needed for the war effort were moved in bulk to and from the factories which were working at full capacity. Ambulance trains had to be introduced to move the returning casualties to the auxiliary hospitals set up in many communities across the Country.

Peter Elliot explained in October **how geology had affected the River Dee and thus the location and history of Chester and its surrounding area**. A simplified view on how the continents we know today were formed, led on through the various geological periods to the pressures and processes from which the local landscape emerged. The presence and the use of the resultant minerals gave rise to conflict, industries and employment and consequently, areas of habitation. An analysis of local building materials enabled the construction of a house to be examined in a new way.

At our November meeting, Linda Webb talked about **World War 1, the Peace Settlement and the end of the War years**. Life after the end of the War was to change rapidly, not just because of the large number of casualties but also because of the development of public amenities and services e.g. electricity, telephones, motorised buses and transport, and the implementation of legislation to combat disease and epidemics, to enable local authority planning and to provide better education. Locally, the Urban District Council had to balance its relationship with the County Council and implement new responsibilities e.g. licences for buses, school signs, improvement of streets, provision for leisure; it purchased The Elms as its Council Offices and started to build council houses. Society was changing as witnessed by moves towards Sunday trading and the British Ladies Football Team playing at the Tomkinson Street ground.

Hoole and Newton School opened two years before the start of World War 1



After last year's large scale 100th anniversary Commemoration Service on **Armistice Day** which involved many members of the community, the Society resumed its commitment to ensure that the fallen of Hoole and Newton will not be forgotten by organising a lower key service at the War Memorial. Some 60 people attended the service which was conducted by Rev. David Goodwin, Minister at Hamilton Street, Methodist Church. Information on War Memorials in the Society's area were sent to the Imperial War Museum for the updating of the Register there.

This year, for the first time, the Society took part in **Open Heritage Days** and in September two groups, each of some 15 people, were taken on a walking tour of Hoole and Newton. These guided tours were well received and resulted in some participants joining the Society.

During 2019, the following **talks** were given to outside bodies:

- 18th March - Warrington History Society: Newton Hollows and the route from Deva to Veratinum by Monty Mercer
- 14th August - Hoole Community Centre Over 55's Group: The Greenwood Plan for Chester after the Second World War and Hoole Urban District Council in 1947 by Linda Webb
- 20th Sept - Cheshire Local History Research Discussion Group: Researching James Hampson Spencer, Chester Druggist and Stereoscopic Photographer 1852–1901 by Linda Webb

A substantial amount of material has been added to **the Society's website** including some derived from past power-point presentations e.g. religion, sewers, the Westminster Schools and the development of Hoole Urban District Council. Information on more signatories to the Memorial of 1889 seeking an entrance to the Railway Station from Hoole continues to be found, among these Edward Richards, Edward Noel Humphreys, S.J.R. Dickson and Mrs. Dinwoodie. The considerable expansion appears to have led to an increasing number of enquiries, several of which have been for illustrations e.g. James Mowle; Miss Eliza Atkin, Headmistress of Westminster Schools; wards in the Royal Infirmary; and Hoole Lane Mission Hall.



Miss Eliza Atkins retirement

Other information sought included Lt. Col. Sir W. Prout at Chester War Hospital; James Bevan at Mayfield House School; former Chester F.C. footballer Thomas Carline and the Hoole Veterans Hut. Contacts were made by relatives of well-known shop keepers in Hoole, Baldwin's Greengrocers and Dinwoodie's Butchers. The Borthwick Institute in York informed us that they have 18 letters belonging to Emma Hesketh who was the force behind the formation of the local Female Friendly Society in 1816.

We are very grateful to Peter Addison for the time and expertise he puts into the development and maintenance of the website, and for fielding the enquiries which are made. Also, for his liaison work with Hoole Roundabout where monthly articles continue to appear.

Thanks also to all members of the **Committee** for their contributions. Seven years after the Society's formation it has seemed timely to revise its constitution which members will be asked to approve at the Annual General Meeting. Many thanks to our Secretary, Ruth Ludgate for organising the proposed alterations and for all of her work throughout the year.

Membership of the Society at the end of November was 86. Thanks once again to Monty in his role as Membership Secretary, for being our power point expert and also for going down the sewers.

A knowledge of sources and the ability to search them has enabled members of the Society to provide factual information about sites where possible **controversial development** could take place - the Co-op building in Walker Street, the Ermine/Flookersbrook pub and the adjoining furniture store, (which was originally Bent's Brewery's warehouse), Hoole Alexandra Park and Hoole Coronation Playing Field.

Serendipity sometimes comes into play and although little information has emerged on the Hoole Angling Club Trophy featured 2 years ago, a photograph of George Boddy's fireplace shop in Westminster Road from which he eventually sold fishing tackle and a 1970's advertisement for it has been found. No doubt other discoveries are still to be made.



George Boddy's shop and advertisement