

Formby Civic News



The Formby Civic Society Newsletter

Registered charity No 516789



April 2019

THE POSITIVE AND THE NEGATIVES FOR CHAPEL LANE IN 2019

Plenty of people have been saying it for a long time now—life is increasingly difficult for the shop and business owners in Chapel Lane. A mixture of high rents and business rates make running a business in the Village a challenging proposition. The impact of online shopping is also having an impact and when we have so many closed or empty shop units in the retail heart of Formby, it is a cause of great concern for the local community.

However, it is always good to receive some good news—and this arrived recently on the back of the ongoing and unnecessary drama over the fate of our village trees, a precious element of our Chapel Lane heritage and endangered through neglect over many years. We now, though, have a positive addition to Formby in the shape of the Viking Boat, sculpted by Simon Archer onto the tree felled in March 2018. Well done to everyone concerned in this!

Formby Civic Society is involved with the work of the Formby Business Partnership and we can report to members that a group from the FBP will be working with key people and groups across the local community to help Chapel Lane thrive again. .



A Community in Wartime

It was lovely seeing so many FCS members as well as people from the general community at our Book Launch for

“A Community in Wartime” at the Riva Lounge last December.

We have a number of notes of gratitude for the help that the Civic Society received in publishing and marketing the book and that will be done inside on page 11. If you want to purchase a copy they are to be found at Derbyshire’s on Chapel Lane.

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VISITOR GUIDES TO CHAPEL LANE

A joint initiative with the Formby Business Partnership

How well do you know Chapel Lane as it was in the past?

Many visitors to Formby and Chapel Lane often ask questions about individual stores or about how this iconic shopping area might have changed and developed over time.

How many remember older stores such as Kershaw's, Dalley Brothers or Birtwistle's, McSymons, the Quality Shop, the Bon Bon Cafe and many others?

We still have Derbyshire's—a mainstay in Chapel Lane and even School Lane over so many years. But we see continual changes to these shops and quite a number of both stores and cottages have disappeared altogether over the years.

Of course, at this point in 2019, many of you will be asking what is the future for Chapel Lane when so many of the properties lie closed and empty.

The ***Formby Business Partnership*** aims to enhance footfall in Chapel Lane and has asked us to work in a joint initiative to produce a set of three short printed guides/walks from Formby Pool and along Chapel Lane for local residents and visitors alike.

Formby Pool will highlight these short guides and have them available free to anyone wishing to learn a little more about this area. Our aim is to have the sheets available soon after Easter.

Formby Civic Society will provide the historical background with associated old photographs and devise each walk. .

The three Guides will focus on:

- A century or so ago ...
- The Fifties and Sixties ...
- Millenium Formby

We will keep you in touch

with developments.



Chapel Lane
By
Muriel Sibley

CIVIC SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE NATIONAL TRUST PROJECT “FORMBY - A HAVEN IN THE BLITZ”

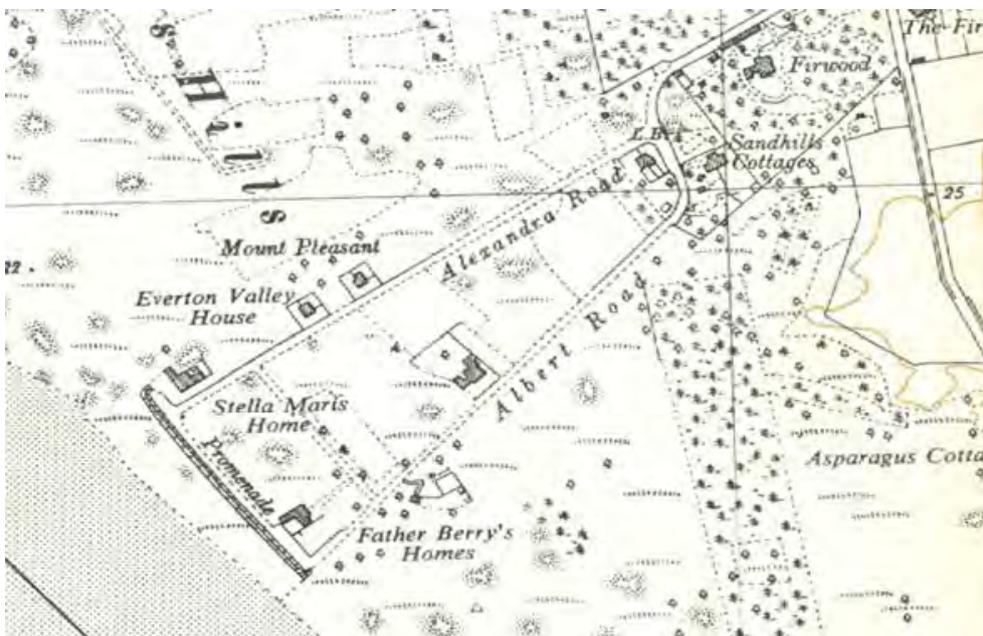
Last Autumn a number of FCS members helped the National Trust to find out more about what life had been like in the Ravenmeols area, when there were houses and a small community around Alexandra and Albert Roads. We were able to put their student researchers from Liverpool John Moores University in contact with Formby residents who had either lived in that area or who had a good memory of it.

That all proved to be successful and so the National Trust have planned a follow-up project for 2019. Their plan is to gather information at several sessions held in Formby Library in which volunteers from the community are

interviewed and their responses recorded, prior to being transcribed by volunteers. There is time to develop ideas and methods, and the final events may well involve some acting and dynamic third-party involvement.

For example, it could be that visitors who have signed up for this WWII experience will walk a route on the NT site with a guide—and ‘encounter evacuees’ in-situ and who may be able to tell the visitors a little of ‘their story’. It seems exciting already, but there is a long way to go before final decisions are made.

The result should be a set of valuable memories of how many people came to be evacuated to Formby during WWII and their experiences whilst here.



***Ravenmeols
in 1955***

FORMBY IN 1950

from the pages of the 'FORMBY TIMES'

On page 2 we mentioned the Walks we intend to develop on Chapel Lane, and the second of these will refer to Formby in the 50s and 60s.

That isn't really so long ago or is it?

If we want to bring back images and tales from 70 or so years ago, one of the best sources for information are the pages of the 'Formby Times' with the reports, editorials, letters, photographs and adverts. How many of you remember the shops, stores and businesses shown in the four adverts just opposite and the five on page 5?

Last spring FCS held a talk on the 'Old Cafes on the Shore', and a great deal of help and support was given to us by Peter Norris who was brought up in the old Lifeboat House. It is a pleasure to be able to include the two articles that refer to Joe and Cissie Norris and their involvements with the Lifeboat Cafe and the Camping and Caravan Parks. We certainly hope these articles and adverts will stimulate conversation amongst members and provide us with a little lovely nostalgia from a time so many of us remember with great affection.

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SAND BURIES OLD LIFEBOAT HOUSE

Camp Warden Had Many Troubles

CAMP site warden in Lifeboat Road, Mr. J. L. Norris, and Mrs. Norris will not easily forget the roaring gale over the Easter holidays. Apart from dealing with campers whose tents were blown down, Mr. Norris had his own troubles.

Practically the whole of the back of his home, Lifeboat House, was buried up to the roof in sand.

"The only way out was through the front door" Mr. Norris told a "Formby Times" reporter. "Luckily that side of the house was not affected."

"We have had it before like this but never so bad. I only cleared away a lot of sand from the back a week ago. Now I'll have to start digging again."

"This is the worst Easter I can remember for 30 years. Sunday and Monday were the worst days for wind and the campers have had a rough time on the site."

Badly hit were the week-end campers, whose tents were buffeted and in some cases blown down. The hardest stuck it out till Monday and left for home.

"The regular seasonal campers were all right" said Mr. Norris. "They pegged down well, had no troubles and stayed on."

But the wind kept away 30 people who were due in on 30th day and early Saturday.

BETTER GARDEN PRIZES OFFERED

MORE prize money is likely to be offered to this year's winners of the council house garden competition.

Tenants of the Broad Lane huts are to be brought into the contest with a separate section of their own.

Formby Council agreed on Wednesday night that the regular competition cash prizes should be £5, £3 and £1 10s.

The Broad Lane gardeners are to have prizes of £2 and £1.

This change in the scheme is not yet final. Ministry of Health approval has to be given before it can be put into operation.

TIDE TIMES

	ft.ins. a.m.	ft.ins. p.m.
Sat. ...	26 4 10-00	25 9 22-22
Sun. ...	26 9 10-33	26 3 22-52
Mon. ...	26 9 11-05	26 3 23-22
Tue. ...	26 6 11-36	26 0 23-51
Wed. ...		26 1 12-05

Campers Have Already Booked Pitches

BLEAK SITE WILL THEN BUSTLE

BLEAK, sand-blown and deserted, the summer camp site near the shore off Lifeboat Road will be changed into a bustle of activity in six weeks, when the first caravan and tent holiday-makers come in for Easter.

A number of regulars each year have booked their pitches for the whole summer

Camp site supervisor Mr. James Norris has also had letters lately asking for space on certain dates, while some folk have made the trip down to his home at Lifeboat House to make inquiries.

Formby's bring-your-own-gear seasonal camp is becoming more widely known each year. Holidaymakers come from Leeds, Warrington and Manchester, apart from the Liverpool area.

Main job to be done now in preparation for the campers is clearing away the sand, which has been blown off the sandhills by the winter gales.

Don't Be Lonely Soldier Boys

AN open invitation to drop into The King's Own Gunners Sergeants' Mess and canteen in Coronation Road, Crosby, is made to all servicemen who are on leave in the Formby and Hightown areas.

This invitation comes from the Commanding Officer of the 390 L.A.A. Regiment, who adds that all are welcome, no matter to which branch of the service they belong.

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SATURDAY, 10 a.m. to 5-30 p.m.

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WILDLIFE NOTES

Dr. Phil Smith

JANUARY 2019

A gloomy month, January was dominated by thick cloud and poor visibility. Persistent high pressure meant hardly any rain in the first couple of weeks, continuing last year's dry theme. Overall, measurable rain fell on 11 days, though only 29th produced a reasonable soaking. The water-table rose by 12cm at my monitoring point at the Devil's Hole, but the dune-slacks here remained dry, the water level being 30cm (a foot) lower than at the same time last year. Although there was a cold snap latterly, the early part of January was relatively mild, the first **Snowdrops** appearing along Range Lane, Formby, on 15th, becoming abundant by the end of the month.



As usual, it was a relatively quiet period for wildlife sightings, not helped by the dark conditions that did not encourage me to venture outdoors much. At least I had my garden birds with a regular flock of about a dozen **House Sparrows**, several **Starlings** and daily visits from a splendid **Song Thrush** as well as the usual **Blackbirds**, **Robins**, **Blue Tits**, **Great Tits**, etc.

I don't expect to see insects at all in January but my routine trip to the Devil's Hole on 1st was enlivened by a swarm of **winter gnats**. Members of the family Trichoceridae, the males of these non-biting midges perform courtship dances in sheltered spots to impress their mates. Their larvae feed on decaying vegetation, thereby doing a useful job, as indeed do most of the 7000+ species of flies found in Britain.

Several visits to Marshside produced close encounters with various waders and ducks, the latter already in full breeding plumage. Up to 25 elegant **Pintails** were off the Hesketh Road viewing-platform, together with about 70 **Tufted Ducks** and a rather elusive young male **Scaup**. Further north, opposite Crossens Sewage-works, flocks of colourful **Wigeon** and **Teal** foraged near to the coast-road, having become accustomed to the traffic noise. Here,

Little Egret with fish at Lunt Meadows 28.1.19

an area of saltmarsh churned up by cattle attracts wagtails and pipits, though they are not always present. Happily, my visit on 20th coincided with 23 **Pied Wagtails**, nine **Meadow Pipits** and a superb **Water Pipit**. This scarce winter-visitor from the mountains of central and southern Europe is more reliably seen at this spot in March. Although too distant for a decent photograph, it gave good views through my telescope.



Song Thrush at Hayward Court 2.1.19

Long cold watches across the endless Crossens saltmarshes were rewarded by occasional views of three magnificent **Hen Harriers**, a “ring-tail” female and two males in their ghostly grey plumage. A **Merlin** zipped past while a **Short-eared Owl** flapped slowly along the marsh edge. A **Stonechat** added to the interest and a **Peregrine** sat on a post in front of the nearby RSPB Marshside hide.

Another good birding spot is the 77 ha Lunt Meadows Nature Reserve, recently developed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust, whose staff are currently working on a Management Plan. Acting as flood storage for the adjacent R. Alt, this superb wetland has several large water-bodies, fringed by rushes and reed-beds, the latter mostly derived from plantings. It already has a reputation for wintering birds, including **Bitterns** and **Short-eared Owls**. A visit on one of the rare calm sunny days late in the month reminded me that I should go more often. As I arrived, the piping calls of **Teal** filled the air. A tour of several newly constructed hides provided excellent views of water-birds, including a **Little Egret** which caught a fish. A **Buzzard** perched on a fence post and, although no owls turned up, it was an enjoyable trip to an inspirational place. I even recruited a new volunteer for the “Buckthorn Bashers”!



Teal

At Crossens

28.3.18

Ainsdale. Other works on the coast by this group are in the pipeline. These activities were part of 2018's *Year of the Volunteer*, involving

The "Bashers" met twice during the month; first, 12 of us cleared **Sea Buckthorn** re-growth from slack no. 44 in the frontal dunes north of Sands Lake, Ainsdale. This site is a long walk from the car park, so *Green Sefton* kindly provided transport along the beach and back again. Because a high spring tide prevented beach access, our second event was a "Buckthorn Burn" to get rid of material cut in October near Sands Lake. This time we had 14 participants, supervised by Andrew Hampson of *Gems in the Dunes*. As well as a lot of buckthorn, we burnt a big pile of willow cuttings produced by the Wood Allotments Association. This is a new project developed by *The Mersey Forest*, enabling woodland owners to engage with local communities and manage their woods to produce logs for wood-burning stoves. In this case, it was an opportunity to cut back dense **Grey Willow** bushes that have invaded flower-rich dune-slacks at

about 2300 participants, who contributed over 5200 hours of their time. The Liverpool City Region is promoting 2019 as the *Year of the Environment*, lots of related events being planned.

FEBRUARY 2019

These notes have highlighted many examples of crazy weather over the last decade but February 2019 really took the biscuit. Only eight days had measurable rainfall but all-time record temperatures in the last week were unprecedented. An extraordinary 21°C was recorded in southern England on 26th when the thermometer soared to about 18° here. Such extremes are consistent with recent research into long-term global warming trends.

One result of this winter heat-wave was the appearance of insects usually not seen until late March or April. Natalie Hunt reported

Holly Blue and **Birch Shieldbug** in her Southport garden, while Pete Kinsella saw a dazzling range of species at Blundellsands, Crosby and Hightown, including **Brimstone**, **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Red Admiral**, **Peacock**, **Hairy Sand Wasp** and **Gorse** and **Green Shieldbugs**, as well as at least five species of **hoverflies**. His best find, however, was **Hairy-footed Flower Bee** at Alexandra Park, Crosby.

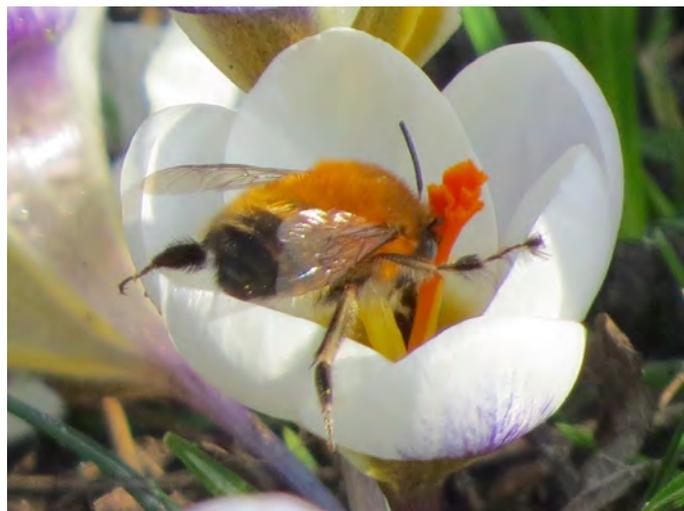
Being unfamiliar with this solitary bee, I visited the park on 26th. Sure enough two or three of the ginger males were zooming around a large bed of crocuses. When a black female turned up, mating took place, though too brief for me to get decent photos. Also there were a **Brimstone**, 3 **Commas**, **Tree** and **Buff-tailed Bumblebees**, **dung-flies** and several kinds of **hoverfly**. A **Chiffchaff** calling, though not singing, was perhaps a wintering bird rather than a migrant. Also unseasonal was **Common Frog** spawn in Rachael Parks' garden pond on 25th, the earliest she has ever recorded.

The previous day, Freshfield Dune Heath Nature Reserve, produced four **Gorse Shieldbugs** sunning themselves. These were the green spring form which I had not seen before.



Gorse Shieldbug.
FDH
25 2 19[4]

Hairy Footed Flower Bee
Peter Kinsella



There were also several hoverflies and a solitary bee, which expert Ben Hargreaves thought was probably **Gwynne's Mining Bee** *Andrena bicolor*. Although the heathland ponds were very low, due to the drought, one had 40-50 **Common Toads**, some already paired up. Recent management by the Wildlife Trust included mowing an area of heathland to reduce **Gorse** invasion and encourage young **Heather**, while four attractive **Golden Guernsey goats** were tackling the coarse grassland and **Dwarf**



Cherry scrub in the "Hay Meadow".
Golden Guernseys.

Often featured in these notes, the superb dunes at Crosby Coastal Park are threatened by scrub invasion. A joint project between Sefton Council and the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, funded by Veolia and supervised by Ben Hargreaves, tackled the large scrub patches of **Sea Buckthorn** and **Japanese Rose** in the southern section of the Park. On 5th, I went to see this mechanized work, which will provide more habitat for the endemic **Isle of Man Cabbage** and many invertebrates.

A **Skylark** was in full song while a **Starling** on a nearby rooftop was doing a convincing imitation of piping **Oystercatchers**.

My own "Buckthorn Bashers" met twice during the month, first to burn piles of cut material and then to cut more buckthorn regrowth on dune ridges north of Sands Lake. Andrew Hampson of *Gems in the Dunes* kindly supervised the "burn", while *Green Sefton* transported us up the beach and back for the second event, both being well supported by 11 and 10 volunteers, respectively.

Passing a spectacular display of **Snowdrops** on Range Lane, I went down to Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve on 13th for my regular "snipe count". Although, the extent of flooding in the big slack is much less than the winter norm, I recorded 21 **Common Snipe** and five **Jack Snipe**, while a **Short-eared Owl** flapped past. It was also good to bump into Natural England staff and volunteers burning **Grey Willow** cut from one of the slacks. Nearby, I was delighted to find some beautiful **Scarlet Elf Cup** fungi in Cabin Hill Wood.



Sanderling on Hightown shore 23.2.19

Some big tides early and late in the month justified trips to the Alt Estuary at Hightown where a large wader-roost often gathers on the protected Altcar Rifle Range shore. Counts of 750 **Curlew**, 1000 **Oystercatcher** and 250 **Redshank** were encouraging, while a **Sanderling** with a wonky leg was foraging along the strandline.

Several visits to Marshside were rewarded by sightings of male and female **Hen Harriers**, it being unclear whether these were survivors from the carnage on north England and Scottish grouse-moors or migrants from the continent. **Wigeon** and **Teal** gave close views from the Coast Road and I spotted an adult **Mediterranean Gull** from the Hesketh Road viewing platform. Nine **Avocets** appeared on 22nd, increasing to 11 by 27th. Up to 3000 **Pink-footed Geese** on Crossens Marsh were accompanied by a rare **Todd's Canada Goose**, which breeds near Hudson Bay and normally winters in the south-east United States. The first **Colt's-foot** flower appeared at Crossens on 15th, while masses of **Common Whitlow-grass** and a specimen of **Alexanders** were in bloom near the Sandgrounders' hide.

MESSAGE TO MEMBERS

As the writing of this latest Newsletter has developed over the past month we have experienced some wild mood swings in our weather – from unexpected early joy through wind and rain and on to the end of March and a very pleasant arrival of spring (don't speak too soon, editor!). I wonder what Phil Smith makes of all this – please remember you can find his Wildlife Notes posted monthly on our website.

Phil gave a fascinating talk on dragonflies at our March talk, following the well-received input from Tim Quinn in February. Indeed, Tim has agreed to return for a rather shorter input to follow the main proceedings at the Annual General Meeting in May. As you will see from the back page, we have talks planned between October and December, and our traditional December meeting with a talk and mince pies plus other refreshments on a Friday afternoon will focus on life in Formby in the 50s and 60s. This may provide an opportunity for some of you to share stories and even photographs as we conjure up a picture of what is not really too distant a past. Please contact either me or Tony Bonney if there is anything you may wish to offer for the seasonal meeting.

Tony Pawson and I, having survived the activities surrounding the launch of the Society's book, "A Community in Wartime", were invited to a talk on World War I at Woodlands Care Home and were pleased to see Barbara Yorke in the small audience. We also received a message from one of Dru Hayden's daughters. Dru moved into a Care Home nearer to them before Christmas but we sent her a copy of the book with all the best wishes of her FCS friends here in Formby and it was good to hear how she had appreciated our keeping in touch and sent her best wishes to all her friends here.

With regard to the book itself, we have many people to thank for all the support we have been given in publishing and selling copies. The aim was always to provide a permanent

written record of various aspects of life in Formby during the 'Great War' and mark our Society involvement with the local commemorations generally. We were supported in this by both Formby Parish Council and Little Altcar Parish Council, whose financial support removed any financial concerns from us, I am pleased to say that the amount needed to be paid for from our own reserves is now about done. We sold the book at what we knew was a bargain price of £5, and this was a Committee decision made with the aim of selling as many books as possible in the local community and not to make money. A second vote of thanks must go to Derbyshire's in Chapel Lane who have continued to stock the book for us – a shop known by everyone in the community and at a time when we no longer have a bookshop in the Village.

Another vote of thanks must go to Luciano of the Riva Lounge on Chapel Lane who gave us free access at short notice for our Book Launch and provided a very pleasant evening out. I should also mention the encouragement and support given to us by the Formby Business partnership and Formby Pool. Thanks again to everyone! Finally, I want to give a particular vote of thanks on behalf of all FCS members to Tony Pawson who became involved with this project in its earliest days and at a time when it was becoming clear that illness would prevent Reg Yorke from playing the active role he would have liked so much. Tony became an historical researcher using microfiche at Crosby Library for many weeks and helping to build up a core amount of data for preparing the written accounts. He then turned author and through regular coffee-filled meetings in the Village worked to agree titles and themes and illustrations. Just when he thought the end was in sight, Tony became a speaker and joint-speaker at a number of events and brought his own brand of insight and humour to a serious and difficult topic. Well done, Tony, for all your work and involvement over roughly four years!

FORMBY AWARD FOR CIVIC SOCIETY MEMBER JOAN RIMMER



At the *Pride of Formby Awards 2019* held at the Gild Hall, Civic Society member Joan Rimmer was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award in respect of her work within her own community over many years and her outstanding contributions to recording and preserving the heritage of our Village.



Her award was sponsored by DefSec Global Ltd. And was presented to her by Alex Krol. Alex had been injured in 2005 in a road traffic accident whilst on duty with the Royal Marines and is now a full-time wheelchair user. He took part in the 2016 and 2017 Invictus Games.

Joan is always involved in community affairs and is currently working in two Civic Society projects: the National Trust 'Formby - a Haven in the Blitz' that is described earlier, and a joint venture with the Sefton Local Business Partnership in which together we write, design and produce a series of three short walks through Chapel Lane. With the number of shops currently closed in the Village, it will be fascinating to see just how busy and active Chapel Lane has been over the past hundred years or so.

DICK AND BOB LEA

SOME PERSONAL FAMILY HISTORY FROM WWI

Old family photographs, letters and memorabilia can lay undisturbed in old family boxes or hidden away in attics for many years, and stay there until something happens that disturbs the dust. I suggest this may have happened a good deal more than usual since the centenary of the start of World War One was marked in 2014. My mother's family has many photos but few written records from those war years, but what we do have has taken on an extra meaning and I hope you don't mind me sharing them with you. Photographs are not simply artefacts –they become a record of people as they lived their lives with family, friends and loved ones, their hopes, dreams and worries; letters offer a different type of glimpse into the lives of people from another time. This short account relates to some of my own family in the war and complements our wider understanding of how people at that time faced adversity and occasional tragedy.

The Lea family lived in Lathom and Burscough Bridge in the latter half of the 19th century. The head of the family was Thomas Lea, who had moved there from Ormskirk about 1850 and ran the 'New Inn', at a point where the canal met New Lane; he sold beer and food with a piano on site as well as making and mending boots and shoes. His second son, Dick Lea (1835-1909) was my great-grandfather and brought up a family of nine with his wife Alice (Ormandy). This particular story relates mainly to the family of my grandfather Jack's younger brother, Bill: he and his wife Mary lived in Warper's Moss, Lathom, and raised four children: Dick Lloyd Lea was baptised at



Dick Lea

St. John the Baptist Church, Burscough Bridge, in April 1891 and Bob Lea followed with a New Year's Eve baptism in December 1893.

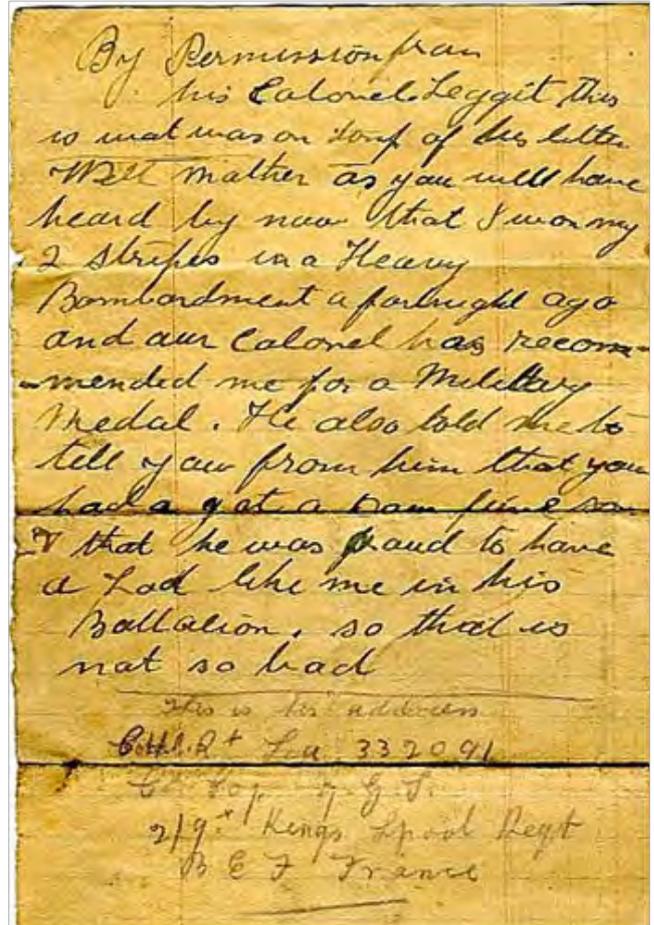
Dick attested to join up at Southport on 23rd of November, 1915, and was posted to attend the barracks at Seaforth, Liverpool, in order to join the 17th Reserve Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment. There are no records remaining for when Bob joined up, but it would have been at roughly the same time as his brother that he joined the 2/9th Liverpool (King's) Regiment whose main depot was indeed Seaforth Barracks. At some time around then it is more than likely that both of them would have visited Boswell Street in Bootle, a few minutes' walk from the barracks, to see my grandparents - their Uncle Jack and Aunt Polly. Jack Lea had maintained their relationships through mutual visits and occasional letters.

Dick was based at Prees Heath, near Whitchurch. In February 1917 he wrote to the family in Bootle describing life with the Training Reserve. He wrote, "I am A1 myself but have had a very bad cold. They are rushing us through our drills. I don't think we shall be in England long now. .. I am sending you this photo. It was taken in a hurry and I was very poorly. It is a rotten one."



Bob Lea

Only a fortnight later, Bob wrote to his relations from his camp in Blackburn, shortly prior to embarkation to France. "We leave here either Thursday or Friday for France ... All the lads in our hut are busy playing cards or a game we call House ... we are allowed only 2 letters and 2 field cards a week ... We went on a little Route march this morning – 15 miles – but that's nothing, we think nothing of 20 miles ... I have had all my teeth out, you will see on the photo ..."



We also have a letter written in May 1917 which a proud Bob would have sent to his family in Lathom. It is written on the reverse of a letter to him from his commanding officer, Captain Roy van Gruizen, which announced that he had been 'given his stripes': "I have the greatest possible pleasure in enclosing herewith your stripes, which you so well deserve. I believe you are the first in the Battalion to be promoted for gallantry in the field ... I am exceedingly proud of you." At the bottom of this sheet of paper, written in pencil, was the following note: "This is what they sent me from home so I thought I should send it to you. I suppose you will know the handwriting." The most likely explanation is that this letter had eventually been forwarded to his Uncle Jack in Bootle by brother Dick from his camp at Prees.

On the reverse side of the letter, Bob had written, "Well. Mother, as you will have heard by now I won my 2 stripes in a Heavy Bombardment a fortnight ago and our Colonel has recommended me for a Military Medal. He also told me to tell you from him that you have a damn fine son and that he was proud to have a lad like me in his Battalion, so that is not so bad."

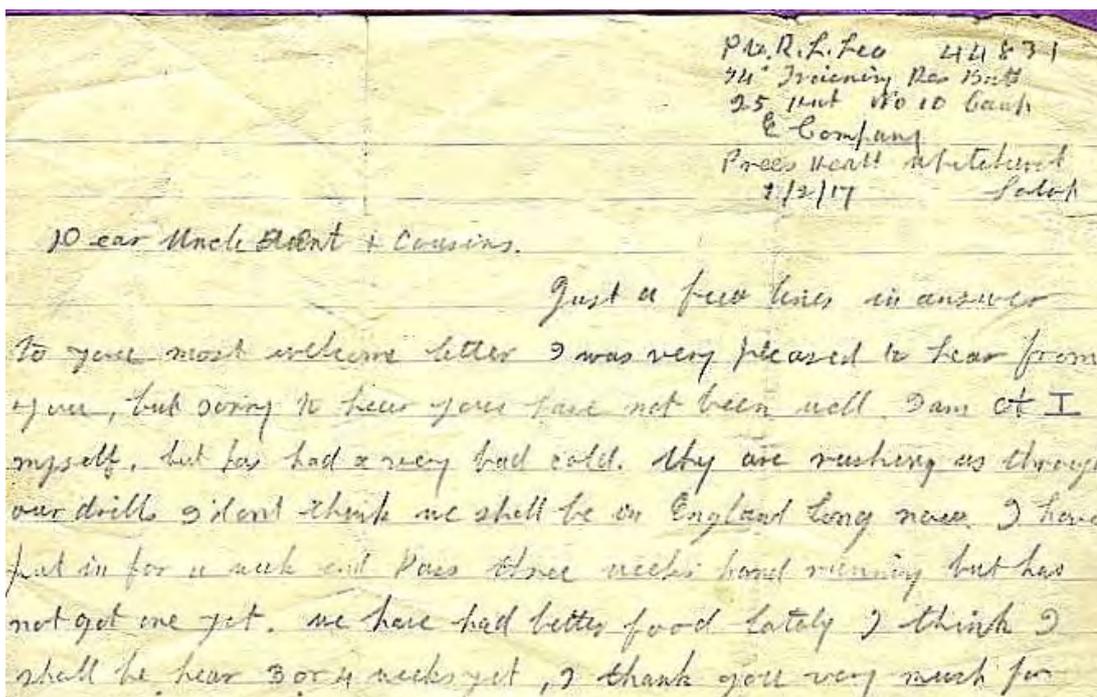
Dick – Richard Lloyd Lea - eventually saw action in France and was wounded at least twice, spending time in hospital in Rouen. He was able to return home and resume work as a railway porter initially. Within a few years he married and eventually moved to York and died in 1952 at Huby where he ran a pub.

Bob – Corporal Robert Lea – was not so fortunate as to survive the war. Just a couple of months after winning his stripes, he died. His battalion, having arrived in France in February, were deployed in the front line in the Bois Grenier sector, near Armentieres. This was one of the quietest sectors on the British front until they were utilised to distract attention from the preparatory operations for the attack on the Messines Ridge at the start of the Third Battle of Ypres.

The bombardment began on the 21st of May but, as is well-known in this area of the campaign and was to be throughout Passchendaele, the ground conditions were appalling and many men commented that they were more likely to die from drowning than from hostile fire. Bob's name can be found on the local war memorial and inside the Church of St. John.

Two other cousins were also involved: another Richard Lea, son of Uncle Richard and Aunt Sarah, and Edwin Southworth, son of Aunt Margaret. Richard Lea had been born in the same church as the others in his family, in August 1893, some eight months after his cousin, Bob. The family later moved to Ormskirk for work and he became a railway clerk. He enlisted at Seaforth as a Rifleman in the King's (Liverpool) Regiment but was eventually killed in action near Lens as late as mid-September 1918.

Edwin Southworth had moved from Hoscar Moss Lane to become a railway porter in Formby when he signed up in July 1915 for the Royal Field Artillery. Happily, he survived the war and lived on in Formby until passing away in 1959. He lived in Formby Street, very near to the lovingly remembered Gladys Bevan who gave so much to her community through the Formby Society.



Section of a letter written home by Dick Lloyd Lea.

FCS Programme: 2019

Meetings are held at **Ravenmeols Community Centre** in Park Road.

They mainly begin at 7.30 pm and usually last between an hour and ninety minutes, However, please check times for each event as we do like to put on an occasional talk in an afternoon. You are more than welcome to bring family and friends along to any meeting with you—we would be very grateful if visitors were to pay an optional £2 towards charitable purposes

TALKS AND MEETINGS

Thursday 11 April	Reg Yorke Memorial Talk <i>Lunt Meadows</i> <i>Where we are today</i>	Ron Cowell
Thursday 9 May	A.G.M. followed by a talk <i>Hollywood Greats & Not So Greats</i> <i>- My life Making Documentaries</i>	Tim Quinn
Thursday 12 September 6pm	<i>Annual Get-Together</i>	At the Cross House Inn
Thursday 10 October	TBA	
Thursday 14 November	<i>The true story behind Viking Voices</i> <i>The Cuerdale Hoard</i>	Paul Atherton
Friday 6 December at 2 p.m	Formby in the 50s and 60s' With mince pies!	

GET IN TOUCH

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