

Spring 2026

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The Mourholme Magazine of Local History



*Mourholme Local History Society (Charity Reg. No. 512765)
Covers the Old Parish of Warton containing the Townships of
Warton-with-Lindeth, Silverdale, Borwick, Priest Hutton,
Carnforth, Yealand Conyers and Yealand Redmayne*

www.mourholme.co.uk

CHAIR'S REPORT

April 2026

Nina Gaubert

New Year, New Website

The committee has agreed that the Mourholme Local History Society (MLHS) website needs a full revamp, with a planned launch in September. The current search function is no longer fit for purpose. We have been fortunate enough to secure the services of David Crowe who has offered to create a new site for us with minimal costs to MLHS. To support the redesign, I've been creating text files of all the research papers from our magazines. Reading extracts from *Rude Forefathers* (2000, no. 3) relating to a village in Nottinghamshire during 1600-1666, has highlighted some fascinating past occupations. The Churchwarden accounts include references to wages being paid to the molecatcher and the scourer of drains. The closest we have nowadays, is having our septic tanks cleaned by suction pumps. Another interesting occupation was a dog whipper who was employed at Upton to keep the dogs quiet during the service and to remove them if they became too noisy.

I also read with interest Jean Chatterley our former chair observing in the 10th anniversary magazine (1990 no 1) that Paul Booth who, by coming to Warton as part of Liverpool University's outreach programme, was instrumental in the establishment of MLHS. Between 80-100 attended the inaugural meeting, but Paul predicted that the attendance at subsequent meetings would drop to around 50. As Jean comments, this was not the case, as she was concerned about

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History Spring 226

fitting everyone into MLHS meetings. It's funny how I had the same dilemma as MLHS is still a strong society.

The Matchless Tragedy

Simon Williams and Peter Baker were invited to present their talk about the tragedy at Burnley Civic Hall this year. This was attended by several descendants of those involved in the 1894 Morecambe Bay disaster, which claimed 25 lives, 13 of which came from Burnley. MLHS continues to work with Silverdale Parish Council, Natural England, Morecambe Bay Partnership, and others to establish a permanent memorial to this disaster.

We Need Your Help

Our archives have recently grown considerably following bequests of the collections following the sad loss of several keen local historians among our members. We need volunteers to help file and index materials and to identify handwritten items that are now accessible digitally, s 1800s trade directories, for example. Could you spare half a day to create an Excel index of documents or photos, or to help with labelling items? This would also help Lancashire County Archives, as well as researchers, to know what is in our collection. It is not worth keeping archives, if no one knows they exist.

Events This Year

We have already enjoyed behind-the-scenes visits to Sizergh Castle, Lancashire County Archives, and to see the Silverdale Hoard at the Museum of Liverpool. Articles written by attendees may be read in this magazine. We always welcome new articles, they don't have to be long research papers.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

Forward Look

Following the success of the past two local history weekends, our next free event focuses on The Yealands. Leighton Hall is the centre and it will take place on 5–6 September, 10:30am–4:00pm,. Look out for booking details in August on the website. We would also appreciate any photos or stories you can share for our displays.

We are also preparing to publish a book which was first started in the 1970s, in which there are memories of people who lived in Warton at the time. It is a fascinating insight into some of the practices and personalities of the early part of the 20th century.

Please email us if you can help with any of the above.

A note from the editor

The magazine editor always welcomes new articles: while local historical research papers are always welcome, also very welcome are less formal contributions about the area including: anecdotes; of people you remember; changes you have noticed over time; reviews of local books; enquiries: anything in fact that interests you. Contributions do not necessarily need to be very long. Please submit everything in Word format (rather than PDFs, for example).

Awena Carter

Magazine editor

CUMBRIA'S ROLE IN A TENTH CENTURY GAME OF THRONES

Adrian Waddingham

he genealogy of the Wessex royal family, Figure 1, pp 6&7, is an endlessly useful resource in the reading of this article.

When Alfred the Great died in 899 it was not a given as to who would inherit the crown of Wessex. Alfred himself, as the fifth son of King Aethelwulf (839-858), could hardly have expected to reach the throne. Kings were elected by a council, the *witan*, which was made up of the leading ealdormen and other aristocrats, bishops and members of the royal family. Primogeniture, the right of the firstborn child of a monarch to inherit the throne, was way off in the future. One rule that did apply was that contenders for the throne had to be male. A monarch's brothers had good expectations of succeeding before the *witan* would dip into the generation below. Agnatic seniority (males related through a common male ancestor) proved pragmatic at a time when life expectancy was low and a king's children were likely to be young on his death; but it could cause its own problems. Would the sons of the last brother to be king have a stronger claim than the sons of an older brother?

Fortunately for Alfred his predecessor, his brother Aethelred (865-871), had died when his son, Aethelwold, was still too young to inherit and Alfred was elected instead. However, by the time Alfred died, his own eldest son, Edward, had a serious rival: his first cousin, Aethelwold the son of Aethelred, was now of age and so a viable candidate. Nonetheless for whatever reason the *witan* chose Edward, who ruled as Edard the Elder (899-924).

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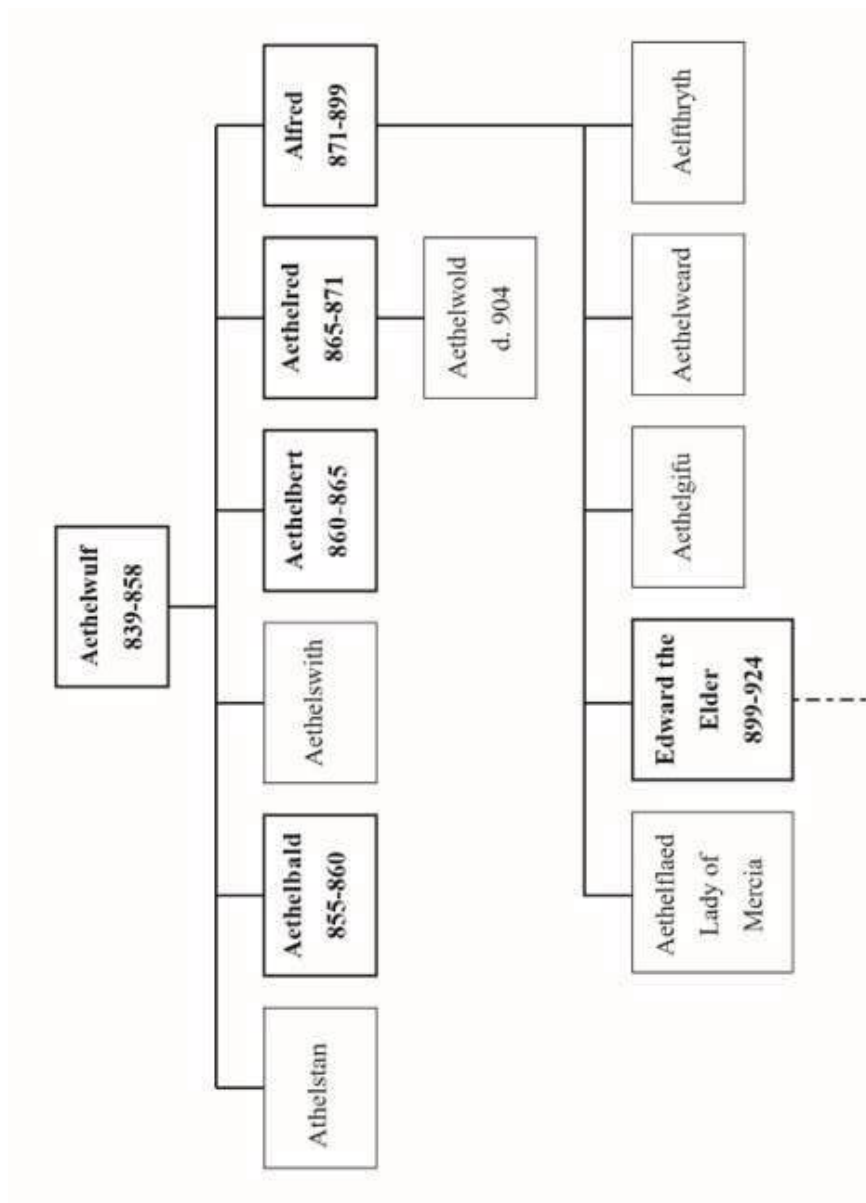
The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

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Edward, with significant support from his sister, Aethelflaed, the Lady of the Mercians, extended the boundaries of Alfred's realm; by the time of his death in 924 Edward was the ruler of the whole of Wessex and Mercia, including Manchester, as well as all of what we now call England south of the River Humber.



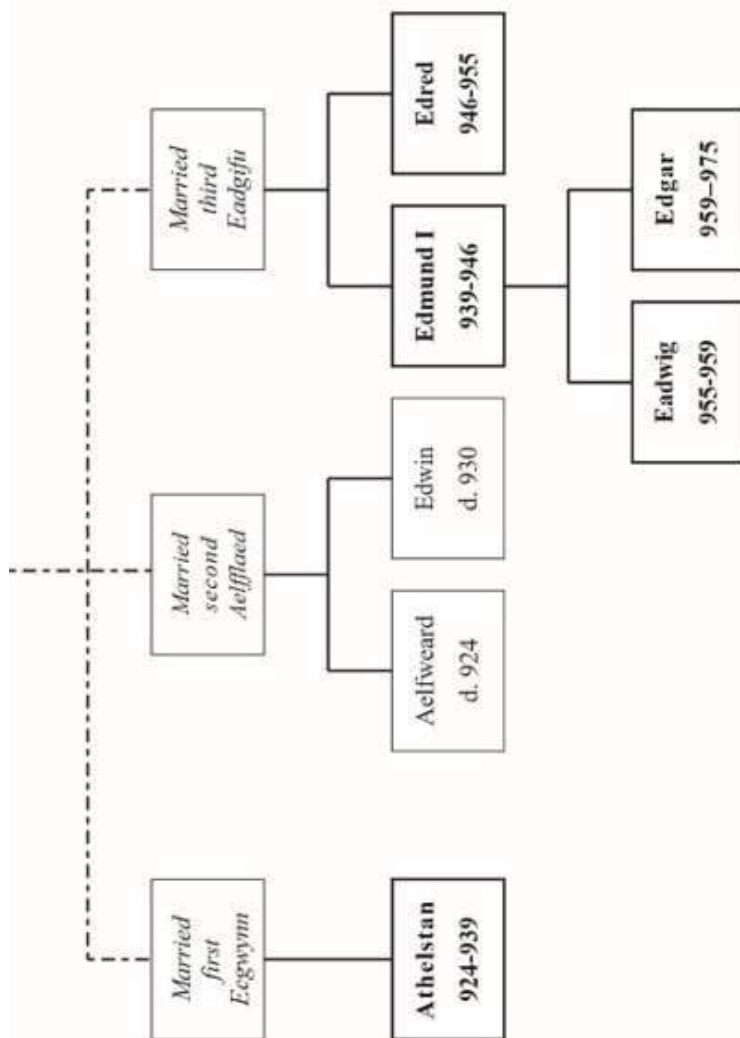


Figure 1: Wessex Royal Family (Kings in boldface type)

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

.Edward's eldest son Athelstan was born to a concubine who might never have been married to Edward and so Athelstan was vulnerable to a challenge from Edward's next two sons whose mother was higher-born than Athelstan's mother. Rather conveniently the first of those brothers died a month or so after Edward. Athelstan had to wait a year for his crown until 925 when he gained the begrudging acceptance of the ealdormen of Wessex.

Athelstan was equal to his kingly task, determined to continue the northern push against the Vikings in York, and the rulers of Strathclyde and Scotland, who were both growing wary of the increasing power of the Anglo-Saxon king. Athelstan had presence and would prove a natural leader of men. He moved quickly. Just as his father and grandfather before him, Athelstan extended his influence by arranging a political marriage for his sister Edith to Sihtric, the Viking king in York. Within a year Sihtric died in mysterious circumstances. Whether or not Athelstan was somehow behind this, and there is no evidence of that, he did seize the moment. Sihtric had intended that his son Olaf would succeed him as King in York but Athelstan was not about to let this happen. Either after a battle, or perhaps simply by a menacing armed presence, Athelstan had young Olaf fleeing back to Dublin leaving York wide open to the Anglo-Saxon king. No previous southern king had ruled in York. Athelstan was not the first to proclaim himself as King of the English but there can be no doubt that he was the first to justify the title.

King of the English – almost. The area we now know as Cumbria, and As North and West Lancashire, was effectively controlled by Vikings and the King of Strathclyde; and the northern border with Scotland was anything but secure.



Figure 2: Athelstan
Oil painting on oak c 1515
Society of Antiquaries, London

Evidence of the Viking presence in the North West abounds . At St Peter's church in Old Heysham there is a fine 'hogback stone' with Sigurd the Dragon Slayer etched on one side and Christian carvings on the other; not to mention the amazing Viking treasure of the Silverdale Hoard unearthed in 2011 (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The Silverdale Hoard
(Flickr/Ian Richardson, CC BY-SA 2.0)

Athelstan called a summit of northern rulers on 12 July 927. This meeting was held at Eamont Bridge, the confluence of the Lowther and Eamont rivers two miles south-east of Penrith, probably in the nearby Dacre monastery. This monastery is first mentioned by Bede in 731 but no trace remains and, on the site, there is now a fine Norman church dedicated to St Andrew. Present at Dacre were Constantine of Scotland, Ealdred of Bamburgh, Owain of Strathclyde and possibly King Hywel Dda of Southern Wales.

Such was Athelstan's authority, backed by his ability to draw a large army from all parts of England, that all present at Dacre accepted Athelstan's overlordship and, at his demand, agreed not to have any truck with the pagan Vikings. Athelstan had no need to fight: 'thus did King Alfred's grandson, the valiant Athelstan, become one of the first sovereigns of Western Europe'. This clear result, coming within three years of his coronation at Kingston, led to seven years of relative peace in the north. We may be granted a special bank holiday on 12th July 2027 to celebrate England's 1,100th anniversary.



Figure 4: Athelstan silver penny: REX TO BR
(Courtesy of the Athelstan Museum, Malmesbury)

For now, rival rulers had conceded to Athelstan but discontent festered in the north. In 937 an alliance of the Scots, Strathclyde Welsh, and Irish Vikings challenged Athelstan at a pitched battle at Brunanburh. Athelstan won an impressive victory at what may have been the bloodiest battle on English soil. Exactly where it was fought is not known. The leading candidates are south Yorkshire or the Wirral, although it is quite possible that the battle was fought near the Fylde coast in Lancashire. If so the soft, damp terrain has left us no clues.

Some years earlier Athelstan had fostered at his court, Hakon, the youngest son of Norway's first king, Harald Fairhair. When King Harald died in 933 he was succeeded by his favoured son, Eric. On his way to his throne Eric had ruthlessly killed several of his brothers, and in so doing earned the soubriquet Eric Bloodaxe. But Eric had overlooked one brother. Hakon, safe in King Athelstan's court, was out of his reach.

The prospect of a King of Norway forged in England was alluring to Athelstan and one year after Harald's death and still in his late teens, Hakon was just old enough to mount a challenge. Athelstan gave his

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

blessing, provided ships to carry Hakõn to Norway and presented his ward with a 'sword with a golden hilt and haft, but the blade was even better. With it Hakõn split a millstone to the eye'. It was thereafter called *kvernbit*, meaning stonecutter. Hakõn had the sword until the day he died. Once back in Norway Hakõn quickly gathered support from the many jarls who loathed Eric. Sensing defeat, without waiting to do battle Eric fled takin refuge in Viking Orkney.

Athelstan had died in 939 and was succeeded by two half-brothers in turn, first Edmund I (939-946) then Edred (946-955). Since Athelstan's death Vikings had seized control of York but Edmund recovered the city. In a strange turn of fate in about 946 Edred offered a sub-kingship in York to the exiled Eric Bloodaxe, setting a Viking to guard against further Viking infiltration from Cumbria and elsewhere. His task was to help guard Edred's northern border. After a quarrel with Edred, Eric was ousted by the leaders of York in 949 but then invited back in 952.

Eric's second term in York did not last long. Stainmore, straddling the border between Cumbria and County Durham, is a lonely, bleak, high place, with the Lake District hills visible to the west on rare, good-weather days. Today's busy A66 trunk road from Brough to Bowes follows the line of the old Roman Road over the Pennines and passes through Stainmore, but few travellers pause there. This was the route of choice for Irish Vikings landing in Cumbria and heading towards York.

In 954 Eric was riding westward along this route, not alone but probably with less than a full army. He was heading towards an Irish Viking camp somewhere around the Solway Firth. A local leader, Maccus, probably of Irish-Viking descent sprang an ambush on the wild road near Stainmore and jumped on Eric and his men. Even though caught by surprise Eric might have been able to deal with Maccus to his front, but Oswulf, the High Reeve of semi-independent Bamburgh had been tailing Eric with another force and attacked his

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History Spring 226

rear. With armed warriors in front of him and more behind, Eric stood no chance. He was slaughtered. A colourful life had reached its dark end. There would be no more kings in York.

There is at Stainmore a monument, the Rey Cross or Rere Cross), protected as a scheduled monument. (Figure 4) Legend, has it placed there to mark Eric's grave, but the reality may be more prosaic. King Edmund may have placed it halfway between Penrith and Barnard Castle at least ten years before Eric's death to mark the boundary between England and Scotland.



Figure 5 :
All that remains of the Rey Cross at Stainmoor

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

It is now badly weathered but we have records from the seventeenth century which tell us that it had been richly carved and topped by an English-style wheel-cross. It has been moved a couple of times over the centuries, most recently for road widening in the 1980s, but no bones or other indications of a grave were ever found.

The fuller story can be found in R A J Waddingham's new book: 'First Kings: Forged by Vikings in England and Norway' published by The History Press ISBN 978

**CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF CARNFORTH LIBRARY,
1936-2026**

Alison Lloyd Williams

A community project exploring the history and heritage of Carnforth Library has uncovered a wealth of fascinating stories. Led by Global Link, an educational charity based in Lancaster, and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project has brought together local volunteers to investigate many aspects of the library's past. This research has ranged from Carnforth's reading culture before the library was built, to the circumstances surrounding its creation and its place within the wider development of the Lancashire County Library Service. It has examined the people who have worked in, supported and used the library over the years, as well as how the service has responded to change, including major challenges such as the Second World War and the Covid-19 pandemic. The project team has drawn on the wealth of County Library material held at Lancashire Archives, as well as national and international library and archive collections, and online sources such as family history and digitised newspaper databases.

When Carnforth Library opened as a Lancashire County branch library on 17 September 1936, it was part of a relatively new and rapidly expanding system. The Lancashire County Library Service had only been established in 1924, following the Public Libraries Act of 1919, which allowed county councils to become library authorities. Supported by the Carnegie UK Trust, the service grew quickly during what became a golden age for public libraries in interwar Britain.

Our research has discovered that Carnforth had already been served by the County Library Service (Figure 1, page 18) for a decade before the purpose-built library was constructed. In March 1926, a small library 'centre' was established at North Road Council School (now

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History Spring 226

Carnforth Community Primary School). Open on Friday evenings and staffed by two volunteer librarians from Carnforth Urban District Council, one of whom was the school's headmaster, Mr R. T. Barnard, the centre proved immediately popular.

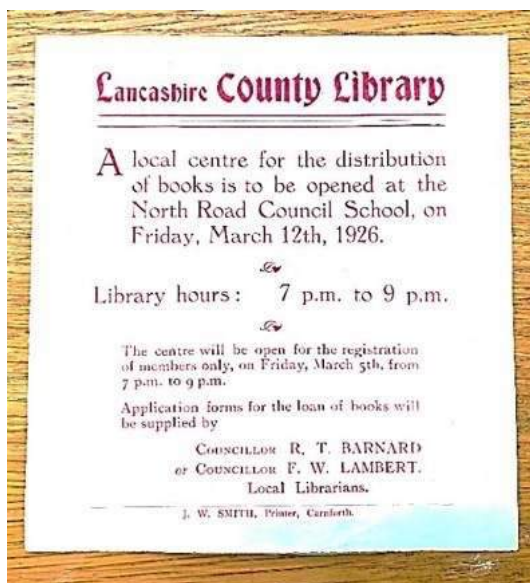


Figure 1
Handbill advertising the opening of Carnforth Library Centre, 1926.
Lancashire Archives and Local History

This early success led to calls for a dedicated library building. Funding presented a challenge but Carnforth benefited from some unspent grant money from the Carnegie UK Trust, which was put towards the cost of constructing and equipping the new branch.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

The timing was ideal: demand for public libraries in the 1920s, 30s and 40s was exceptionally high, and Carnforth Library quickly became a valued community resource. Within just six weeks of opening, 1,018 people (about a third of Carnforth's population) had registered as borrowers, and 5,076 books had been issued: clear evidence of its immediate impact. Heysham and several rural library centres, marking the early formation of what would become Lancashire County Library's Morecambe District.

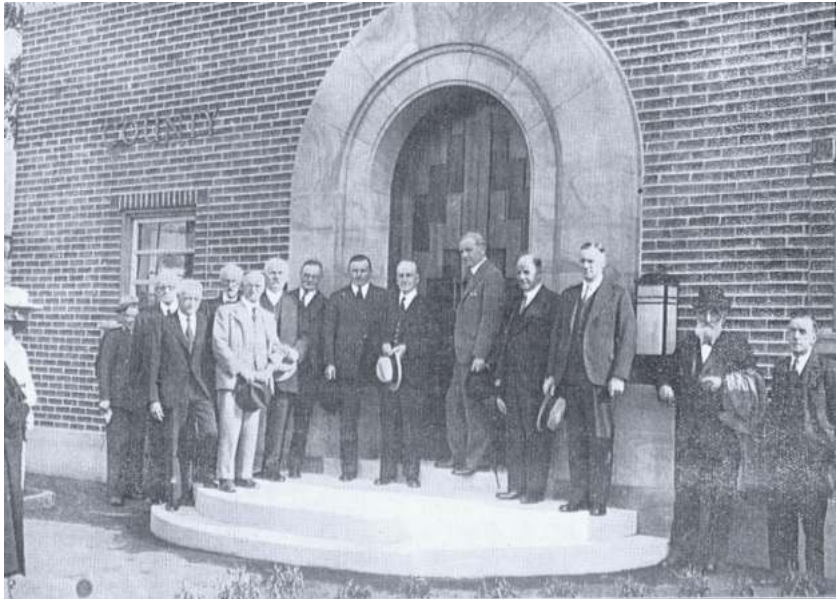


Figure 2
The opening of Carnforth Library 1936
Lancashire Archives and Local History

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

When the branch library opened (Figure 2), it came under the supervision of the Morecambe librarian, who was also responsible for for those working in libraries at the time, this was an exciting and pioneering period. The early librarians at Carnforth were not only custodians of books but innovators, helping to shape what a modern public library could be. For example, Carnforth became home to the second mobile library in the county in 1939 and the second Children's Book Week in 1944. Carnforth Library also hosted several meetings of the Lancashire Library Staff Guild during the War, which often included local walks and guest speakers.

The project has produced a range of outputs, including a booklet on the history of Carnforth Library. This will be launched at a special open day celebrating the library's 90th anniversary on Saturday 18 July, from 10:00 to 12:00. The event will feature an exhibition of artwork by local young people, as well as a library 'memory box' designed for use with older people and those living with dementia. Visitors will also be able to see items on loan from Lancashire Archives, including a wartime library logbook, alongside a variety of family-friendly activity.

Another upcoming event is a study day in collaboration with the Regional Heritage Centre at Lancaster University, taking place on Saturday 16 May. 'Libraries and Learning in the North West' will highlight insights from this project into the evolution of public libraries in Lancashire over the past century, placing them within the broader history of reading and learning since the modern period: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/regional-heritage-centre/events/libraries-and-learning-in-the-north-west/>

he project team is grateful to the Mourholme Local History Society for its support for this project and was delighted to share some of the early findings at the Warton History Weekend last October.

WILLIE RILEY

From the Little Book Club

Tony Dunlop



**Figure 1:
Willie Riley**

Willie Riley was born in Bradford in 1866. For the first fifty-three years of his life he lived in West Yorkshire, where he became a successful businessman and a prominent member of the local Methodist community. He also established himself as a novelist, writing many stories centred on the villages and towns of West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales.

In 1919 he moved to Silverdale, on Morecambe Bay, seeking fresher air for the benefit of his wife's health. Even after settling there, he maintained strong connections with the Leeds and Batley area. I have therefore written two *Little Books* about these links. They are not biographies, but introductions to the local connections he had with Yorkshire and Silverdale.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

While continuing to write novels set in Yorkshire, Willie quickly became an active member of village life in Silverdale. Initially through his strong ties to the Methodist movement, he soon found further opportunities to use his business experience to support local organisations. The Silverdale based Holiday Camp for the Leeds Poor Children's Charity welcomed him as Honorary Secretary, a role he held for more than thirty years.

Clara died on July 27th 1929, and is buried in Silverdale Churchyard. There is a Memorial window in Silverdale Methodist's Church. (Figure 2, page **)

When the need for a community centre or village hall arose, Willie was asked to lead the committee exploring options. Not only did he drive the proposal forward, but he also used his network of friends to launch the fundraising effort.

Through his books and public talks, he developed a close friendship with the Batley-born philanthropist Sir Norman Rae. During one of Sir Norman's frequent visits to Willie's home, he agreed to contribute funds to establish a building project. The result was the Gaskell Memorial Hall, which remains a vital part of the community to this day.

Sadly, Sir Norman passed away before the hall opened, but his friend Gertrude Elsie Taylor, the first female Mayor of Batley, continued to support the cause and attended fundraising events.

Willie Riley died on June 4th 1961 in St Annes and is buried with Clara in Silverdale churchyard.



Figure 2:
The memorial window to Clara Riley,
Trinity Methodised Church, Silverdale

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

NOTES:

BOOKS BY W. RILEY.

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>Published</u>	<u>Photos*</u>	<u>Remarks.</u>
1. Windyridge.	1912	8	Hawksworth, near Guiseley.
2. Netherleigh	1915	8	Otley.
3. Way of the Winepress	1916	8	Harden, near Bingley.
4. Number Seven Brick Row	1918	4 Plates	Bradford
5. Olive of Sylcote	1918	8	Nidderdale.
6. Through a Yorkshire Window	1919	16/8	Upper Wharfedale.
7. Jerry and Ben	1919	6	Holebottom, near Grassington.
8. A Yorkshire Suburb	1920	8/4 Plates	Bradford.
9. The Lady of the Lawn	1920	8	Silverdale.
10. Men of Mawm	1921	8	Malham.
11. Rachael Bland's Inheritance	1922	8	Rylstone, near Skipton.
12. The Garden of Delight	1923	8	Burnsall, Wharfedale.
13. Laycock of Lonedale	1924		Lothersdale, near Skipton.
14. Peter Pettinger	1925		Bradford.
15. A Village in Craven	1925	12 Plates	Stainforth.
16. Children of the Outcast	1926		Morecambe.
17. A Late Harvest/The Lord's Poor Brother	1927		Two one-act plays
18. Windyridge Revisited	1928		See No.1.
19. Witch Hazel	1928		Castle Bolton, Wensleydale.
20. Doctor Dick	1929		Hebden Bridge.
21. Squire Goodall	1930		Fictional N. Riding setting
22. Kit of Kit's Folly	1931		Keld, Swaledale.
23. The Silver Dale	1932	16	Factual book about Silverdale.
24. Old Obbutt	1933		Baildon.
25. Yorkshire Pennines of the North West	1934	23	Factual book about the Dales.
26. Jack and John	1935		Bentham area.
27. The Man of Anathoth	1936		'Factional' book about Jeremiah.
28. Old Asa and other Stories	1936		Collection of moral short stories.
29. The Sixpenny Man	1937		Bradford.
30. Gold Chains	1938		Langcliffe, Settle.
31. The Valley of Baca	1939		Airedale.
32. The Voice in the Garden	1940		Upper Wharfedale.
33. Common Clay	1941		Bradford.
34. Grapes from Thorns	1943		Bingley area.
35. A Stick for God	1946		Silverdale.
36. Services of Song	1954		Church Service book
37. Sunset Reflections	1957		Autobiography.
38. In the Silver Dale	1958		Abridged version of No.23.
			Dalesman paperback.
39. The Man and the Mountain	1961		Yorkshire generally.

Also a number of short stories and articles in newspapers and early issues of "The Dalesman".

* There were illustrated editions of the early novels, with photographs or pictures (plates).

In addition a number of unpublished Lectures, Addresses, and Sermons.

Yellow: small book of plays. Green: topographical books. Blue: religious books. Purple: autobiography.

+++++

Willie Riley: born Bradford 23rd April 1866; died St. Annes 4th June 1961.

Businessman, Methodist local preacher, and Novelist.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History Spring 226

The Little Book Club was founded by Tony Dunlop in 2019, and has raised thousands of pounds for local charities. He has produced around 400 “little books” about local history and other topics. The books are written by more than 60 contributors, and are in a small, A6 format, designed to be cheap, portable and easy to read on the bus or on the way to work.

From a n article by Lauren Ballinger the Dewsbury Reporter,.

The next book in this series will be about the philanthropist, Sir Norman Rae.

The books are available for just £2.00 each from the Mourholme Local History Society (mourholme@hotmail.com).

THREE SMOURHOLME VISITS
Visit I
BEHIND THE SCENES AT SIZERGH CASTLE

Pam Davies, Jill Mason and Chris Jenkins



Sizergh Castle

What visitors don't see

During the season, Sizergh Castle is set out for visitors to be able to walk freely around the rooms, as about 900 visitors a day do at busy times. The wear and tear on a carpet made by one summer season's footsteps is the equivalent of 25 years of domestic use. Sizergh is normally closed to the public over the winter, except for the Christmas event, when in the region of 1,000 visitors walk through the castle.

These visitors do not see what goes on to maintain the paintings, furniture and other items in the collection that make a visit to Sizergh so interesting. But, on 17th February 2026 two groups

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

of Mourholme members were privileged to see behind the scenes at Sizergh Castle. This tour had never been undertaken before, so they were unsure what we would be interested in or how much we would want to look at. But as you will see below it was a great success.

We were shown around by members of the conservation team, whose job it is to conserve the items in the house's collection and protect them from ten causes of damage, including light, humidity, pests, dust... They do not do major restoration work, of the sort seen on The Repair Shop, because this is done by specialists off-site; but they do the day-to-day preventative care, such as taking 20 minutes carefully to remove dust from a large picture frame. Every item has a condition report, checked annually: 'is that small crack in the frame the same size as it was last year?'

Paintings, in or out of their frames, are stored upright, and chairs or other objects are never turned upside down to be stored or examined, because changing their orientation would set up new stresses in the structure. We were also shown the specialised brushes and vacuum cleaners used to remove dust which, if left undisturbed, can combine with water from the air to form a fixed layer dulling the appearance of objects or decorations.

In December 2022 the castle suffered from a catastrophic flood when, over a weekend, a water pipe joint leaked, allowing water to pour down through three floors. While the damage was covered by their insurance, the remedial work is still ongoing. Material had to be dried thoroughly but gradually. A large carpet had to be rolled up and removed, taking 16 people to handle it – estate staff and rangers were called in to provide muscle power. A group of paintings had just been returned after restoration following an earlier flood, and were positioned carefully well

away from the candelabra where the previous water had entered. But they were now in just the wrong place for the later flood and were damaged again.

In restoring paintings and other items after the damage, the aim was to restore them to their pre-flood state, not to their original state. But this flood actually helped tell another story: when one of the paintings, which is a copy of an original in the British Museum, was being cleaned, an area that had been restored previously was identified. This time it was decided to remove the old work, which then revealed that the painting's subject was sitting with his architectural plans, just as in the original painting. Even after a devastating flood the house is still revealing secrets.

Fragile treasures

In an upstairs room, smelling of fresh paint having been restored after water damage, we saw some items too fragile to be on display at present. Figure 1 shows an example



**Figure 1: Embroidery too fragile to be on display, except under glass
Photo, Jane Lyde**

Another was the royal purse containing the Privy Seal of Charles I, which was held by one of the Strickland's when he was Lord Chancellor. It's a wonderful piece of embroidery with metallic threads and a three-dimensional lion and unicorn. Yet another fragile item is part of an altar frontal, found recently in a cupboard (and owned by the family, not the National Trust, as it was not part of the transfer to the Trust in 1950).

In the Banqueting Room (as the main floor of the old tower, was named by Victorian Stricklands), we saw a couple of reminders that Sizergh has been occupied for many more years than the present building. Various archaeological digs on the estate have found a variety of objects: we saw a Langdale stone axe which appeared to have been ritually broken; and an ancient polishing stone whose smooth surface we were allowed to touch.

And yes, Sizergh does have a ghost, the staff talk about spooky footsteps heard along the Banqueting Room, when no one was upstairs.

Future plans and hopes

From this main floor of the old tower, we could go up the narrow spiral staircase to the upper floor, used by past Stricklands as a sitting room and currently used for storage. There are hopes to turn it into a museum room, with walls to be covered in the fabric which was used to decorate the Inlaid Room during the time when its panelling had been sold to the V&A and not yet returned.

Another desirable project is the restoration of the Minstrel's Gallery (Figure 2), which was a Victorian addition to the house.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

It is not accessible at present but the National Trust would like to develop it as an exhibition area



Figure 2, The Minstrel's Gallery
Phot, Jame Lyde

One of the Stricklands would happily drive his motor car into the house and out the other side This is definitely not a stunt planned to be recreated by National Trust. It is hoped, however, to develop a roof tour to let visitors see the roof as well as the views from there of the estate.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

There was a small voluntary contribution from the members who attended. This money goes directly to the house, not to the National Trust, so it can be used for small restoration projects. They have within the house some Gillow furniture, and they would like to understand what was the original upholstery design, so it can ultimately be restored to the state seen by the original purchasers. These, together with the plans to expand the collection, and to develop the view from the roof tours, will need to be funded through grants and contributions.

The tour was a fascinating insight into the work which goes on, unseen by the public, to conserve and to protect the collection. Our guides were knowledgeable and happy to share their knowledge and their enthusiasm for their work: an excellent tour.

THREE MOURHOLME VISITS
VISIT II
THE LANCASHIRE ARCHIVE, PRESTON
Jane Lyde, Sue Brown and Nina Gaubert

On our recent trip to the Lancashire Record Office, we were shown several interesting and precious items in the Lancashire Archive. The staff are very friendly, as we found out during our visit. When first arrived, we asked if they could bring out their copy of John Lucas' *History of Warton Parish* (Compiled 1710-1740). While this was being collected for us, we listened to the fascinating history of the archives

The Gunpowder Plot: how the news was shared

One item I found particularly interesting was a communication from John Summer¹ to William Farrington of Worden, Chorley (Figure 2p 33). The letter is dated the 6th November 1605, the day after the discovery of the plot. In the left margin of the letter (Figure 1) is a drawing of a finger pointing directly at the most important aspects of the letter.



Figure 1: Detail of the Farrington letter with schematic finger indicating the details of the Gunpowder Plot ²

¹ Lancaster Archives reference DDF2438-92

² This early 17th Century manuscript being very difficult to read, an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) version can be found in Note 1, page **

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

This part of the letter goes into some detail: there were 36 barrels, 2 Firkins (small barrels holding approximately 9 gallons) and 2 hogsheads (large casks usual capacity 63 gallons) all full of gun powder found in “a vaulte or cellarr directlye under the Parliament howse” and he gives the names of the Catholic plotters who were, intent to kill the protestant King James I, his heirs and Members of Parliament. It goes on to say “Greates Bonfyres wears maide thorowe out all the streettes and ringinge of bells thorowe out all London for upon Tuesdays the 5th of November att night for joye the same divelische practize was revealed,...



Figure 2: Sir William Farington

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History Spring 226

The plotters were thwarted by an anonymous letter (now in National Archives) sent to William Parker 4th Baron Monteagle, on 25 October 1605, suggesting. ‘I have a care of youre preservacious, therefore I would aduysse you ...tender your life to devise some excuse to shift your attendance at this parliament.’

Monteagle’s family seat was Hornby Castle in Lancashire. We were shown an interesting research paper on the Lords of Monteagle, especially William Stanley 3rd Baron Monteagle and his will which is spread over four volumes of the Mourholme Magazine. (see Mourholme Local History Magazines 33 to 37).

The Townships of the ancient Parish of Warton

The archive team also brought out documents relating to the seven townships including a significant number of postcards, which a lot of us had not seen before, as well as the sales catalogue for Leighton Hall.

The Lancashire Archives have recently updated their online catalogue which makes it easier to find what they hold in their store rooms (see References, page **). Some are important documents such as the births and records register of St John’s Yealand; while some are interesting but quirky items, such as the “recipes from the Yealand Catholic Mission” which included a recipe for English Madeira Wine.

Lancashire Archives’ copy of John Lucas’ book

We were interested to see Lancashire Archives’ two-volume copy of *History of Warton Parish* by John Lucas. There is, however, some doubt about the provenance of this copy.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History Spring 226

In 1931 J. Rawlinson Ford and J. A Fuller-Maitland, published their edited copy of Lucas' book. In this edition Rawlinson Ford and Fuller-Maitland say that two copies of extracts from Lucas' History are known to exist: a copy in the Bodleian library, which was apparently made by the Rev J. Watson; and a copy that was given to the then vicar of Warton by William Beckett MP, it is suggested that this copy was made by Thomas Wilson, a friend of Lucas. However, Rawlinson Ford and Fuller-Maitland also suggest that Lucas himself made at least one draft and perhaps two, including the Bodleian manuscript.

Historian Rev William Hutton, used the Warton Vicarage manuscript when writing this Beetham Repository (1770), This Warton copy then disappeared for approximately 100 years. A copy of Lucas's work was subsequently discovered in the library of Darcy Bruce Wilson of Seacroft Hall near Leeds. It was this that Rawlinson Ford and Fuller Maitland used by in 1931. Although they state it was lent to them, they subsequently donated this copy to the Lancashire archives it is not clear, however, whether this is the Seacroft Hall or the Warton Vicarage copy. The Warton vicarage copy is thought to have been written earlier than the one discovered at Seacroft Hall.

The unclear history of the copies, or perhaps drafts, of Lucas' History of Warton Parish, make authentication difficult, although it seems probable that the manuscript in the Lancashire Archives is likely to be one of the copies.

An enjoyable day

Our visit was a very enjoyable experience for everyone who attended and it was enhanced by the enthusiasm and friendliness of the archive team.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

References:

Photos courtesy of Lancashire Archives

For catalogue access: <https://archivecat.lancashire.gov.uk/>

For different versions of the Monteagle Letter

<https://famous-trials.com/gunpowder/2767-anonymous-letter-to-lord-monteagle>

Note

OCR version of the William Farrington letter (CoLancashire County Archive))

:

To the Worshippfull my ever approved good Master William Farrington, esquire, att his howse Worden in Lancashire, give these....

Nowe for other matters, the occurrents of this tyme are soe dangerous that I thinke silence better blamed, then babblinge, for there bee soe manye whoe listen to learne the inwarde affections of men, by their outwarde speeches, and such interceptinge of letters that I hadd rather praye silence then prayte out of season, yett for that I wolde not bee thought over fearfull I will acquaints you with some smile parte of that current newes, which I resolve my selfe will grows graye headed with you, before the receipts hereof.

True it is that upon Monday late in the night being the 4th of November or rather upon Tuesday earlye in the morninge there was found in a vaulte or cellarr directlye under the Parliament howse a greate quantitie of gunpowder barrelled uppe, [beare barrens full 36,

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

firkins², and hogshedes 2], all filled with gunpowder, besydes the traynes to sett them on Pyre, laide theare by one Mr. Thomas Pearcye, one of the Kinges Pencioners, and one Johnston³ his servante or confederatte, which. cellar or vaulte the said Johnston hadd taken with some other howsing adioyninge thereunto of purpose as it is thought the better to woorke. this exploite, with a full determination and purposse that when the Kinge, queens and yonge prince, together with all the Nobilitie. and Peares of the Realme hadd beene theare assembled, to have sett fyre upon the powder, and soe with barres of iron and fagottes and such lyke stuffe that weare laid upon the barrells to have blown uppe the howse, which wicked practize was revealed by my Lord Mounteagle, whoe havinge received this letter hereinlosed, presentlye acquainted the Kinge and Counsell therewith.

Johnston is in the Tower and haithe this daye as it is saide beene upon the racke and examyned by dyvers (many) of the privie Councell, but as yett I doe not heare that hee bewrayeth any more. Pearcye is fled, for the apprehencion of whom there is a proclamacion come forth in printe, which proclamacion is sent unto yow by William Somner.⁴

The said Johnston was brought privatlye upon his apprehencion before the Kinge whoe asked him whether hee was not sorrowfull for that his wicked practize, whoe ainswered that indeede hee was sorrowfull because his purposse did not take full effecte.

Greats Bonfyes wears maide thorowe out all the streettes and ringinge of bells thorowe out all London for upon Tuesdays the 5th

³ Guy Fawks

⁴ The proclamation in print searching for Thomas Pearcye is not with the document

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

of November att night for joye the same divelische practize was revealed, all the streattes being sett. with watchmen the same daye.

As matter or occacion shall fall out yow shall heare frome mee, god willinge. And soe in hoppe of your healthe I comitt yow to the almightie.

London this sixte of November 1605.

Your worshippes humble servante

JOHN SUMNER

The section in square brackets relates to the number and sizes of barrels containing the gunpowder.

THREE MOURHOLME VISITS
VISIT III
THE MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL

Nina Gaubert



Figure 1
The Bronze Age I gold Cape
Photo Nina Gaubert

A number of us went to the Museum of Liverpool to see their exhibition, *Treasure: History Earthed* with a private tour by Vanessa Oakden, National Museums Liverpool Curator of Regional and Community Archaeology. Vanessa, was extremely enthusiastic and not only explained each of the items and the history behind how and where they were found, but also how the team decided on the best way

to display each item in order it to maximise the view. She also told us how and how some of the artefacts loaned by the British Museum were handled when they came to the museum. She sounded relieved that the gold cape (Figure 1, previous page) was only handled British museum staff, and not by her own team. This magnificent Bronze Age ceremonial gold cape is also known as the Mold gold cape because of its discovery in a burial mound near Mold, Flintshire. There is no understanding of who or when it might have been worn, but its size suggested that it was worn by a woman or young teenager.



Figure 2:¹ The Silverdale Hoard

Source: www.dailymail.co.uk

There were three silver hoards on display together, including the Silverdale Hoard² All three hoards had been found in lead bags.

¹ Figure 2 first appeared in a Mourholme magazine article by Jenny Ager (2012, No.1, issue 62).

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History

Spring 226

Scientific analysis, it has found that lead prevents silver from tarnishing. How did the Vikings know this? In most finds the lead stopper has been lost, or the significance of the lead container has not been realised as it is often not intact.

One of the unique items of the Silverdale Hoard is the finding of a coin that showed that there was a previously unknown King of Northumbria, called Airdeconut, who ruled in the 10th Century. An analysis of the silver has revealed that it originated in Afghanistan. How it got to England is not known, one theory is that it was traded along the Silk Route, another is that it was looted or plundered.

There were also gold coins from Elizabeth I's reign on display, but the Mold cape on loan from the British Museum was by far the most dazzling gold item,

This trip by coach would not have been possible if National Landscape had not offered to subsidise the travel costs. Therefore, a big thank you is due to them for providing funding to allow twenty of us to go and see such a wonderful display of finds of Bronze Age and Viking treasure. from North West England and North Wales.

LANCASTER CITY MUSEUM 's REDEVELOPMENT

Carolyn Dalton

Lancaster City Museums comprise the City Museum (which also contains the King's Own Royal Regiment Museum), the Maritime Museum and the Cottage Museum. Some of you will be aware that back in 2023 the budget for the City Museums was reduced by 40% as the Council struggled with its finances. This led to the overall halving of opening hours across the three sites.

In 2024 we secured £68,000 from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for a full Service Review. At the conclusion of this the Council decided to support the redevelopment of the museums, particularly the City Museum, which has the greatest potential in terms of footfall, community impact, impact on the High Street and income generation to support the museums. It also has quite a bit of staff space that can be better used as public space.

Following a successful Expression of Interest to NLHF we obtained permission to make a Round One application for an estimated £6m project, for which we will be asking NLHF for £5m (a very big ask). This Round One application will be submitted in early August and will give us two years to develop up the project before we submit a Round Two application actually to deliver it. We are aiming to have the project delivered by 2033 – which is the 250th anniversary of the old Town Hall building.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

One of our aims is to tell the story of the whole district better than we have been doing, and so we have been actively collecting from the district, particularly metal detected finds. We want therefore to ask people what they think their important local stories are? Warton, Silverdale, Carnforth, Yealand, Borwick and Priest Hutton have so much history to tell that we would love to hear what you think is important and why? It has been justly said that ‘people love people’ and it would be great to hear some of your stories of ordinary people, those who did extraordinary things, those who were characters or leaders within their local community or further afield and those who took the concept of British eccentricity and really ran with it.

So please do get in touch with me on cdalton@lancaster.gov.uk or show your support by filling out the survey at <https://arcg.is/1GfrLq1> or via



And if any of you would like to see some material from your area there is the Viking Age Warton Hoard as well as coin hoards from Silverdale (Roman, Medieval and Tudor) and from Yealand (Medieval) on display at the Maritime Museum in the ‘Hoard of Hoards’ exhibition. And at the City Museum there is the Mourholme ring on display in the main local history gallery as well as a c.1700 poesy ring from Yealand on display in the ‘Hidden Treasures’ exhibition.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

The City Museum is open 10.30-16.00 Friday – Tuesday

The Maritime Museum is open 12.00-16.00 Friday – Monday

Locals from LA1-6 have free access, just be prepared to tell us
your postcode, no ID required

REPORTS OF EVENING MEETINGS

Gill Ribbons

26th November 2025: Dungeons, Debtors and Death – A Dark History of Lancaster Castle - Gregory Wright

The talk was well attended in spite of the weather. Gregory began by telling us the history of Lancaster Castle and why it was built where it was. The site was on the main route north to Scotland and there was a convenient crossing place on the river Lune before it widened and ran into Morecambe Bay.

There were more prisoners sentenced to death at Lancaster castle than anywhere else in the country outside London. It was the only court and prison in Lancashire up until 1835. Famously the Pendle witches were imprisoned here in 1612 and this gave rise to the naming of the Witches' Tower. The prison at Lancaster castle was also used for debtors until the Bankruptcy Act in the 1860s; the Well tower was run as a pub by the governor for this type of prisoner and they were generally allowed better facilities. It was used to detain prisoners in WW1 and the Royal Observation Corps took over the Keep in WWII to be able to warn of attacks on Barrow. Lancaster Castle was also used as the County Asylum until Lancaster Moor Hospital was built.

In 2011 the prison was closed as there weren't many prisoners housed there and the upkeep of the building made it untenable. The prison area has been used as a film set most notably in the 2014 film 'Get Santa', and briefly, as a nightclub. The Victorian prison visitor building was demolished and that area now houses

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

Atkinson's café and various small businesses including artists and a chocolatier. Currently work is ongoing to restore the Keep to its former glory, it will be open to the public once works are completed.

This was a very enjoyable talk with plenty of humour as well as gruesome facts and figures, it was accompanied by many photos and illustrations. There were some questions and answers at the end; one member asked if Gregory had ever seen any ghosts – he had seen three!

17th December 2025: Cumbrian Ice Houses and the International Trade in Ice – Dr Rob David

Another evening of foul weather but there was an audience of at least fifty people to listen to this talk. Dr David began by explaining his background in Arctic research and, from 1975, working as a teacher. He then covered what Ice Houses were for and how they were built mainly underground with a sequence of doors to help preserve the low temperatures required. The audience were shown slides and diagrams to help explain the process.

King Charles II brought the idea back from France and the first Ice houses were in London; it took ten years before there were any in Cumbria. It was an expensive undertaking so generally they were owned by big estates, who also had the required water/ice supply. There were Ice Houses at: Levens Hall, Holker Hall, Patterdale Hall and the Brantwood Estate, among others. This was before the international trade in ice took off. Ice was initially shipped from New England to Britain and distributed by

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History Spring 226

train to Liverpool, Bristol and London; then around 1860 Norway joined the market and shipped ice to the East coast, they took over from the Americans as it was much cheaper. The trade in ice was a hugely profitable business, however as we moved into the twentieth century ice making machines could artificially produce ice, and WW1 meant the ships could no longer transport it here.

In the second part of the talk, Dr David described how he and some fellow teachers carried out a project with a group of students to clear out, repair and use an old Ice House near the A6. He described the trials and tribulations of the experiment, which was ultimately successful; the Ice House was filled in January 1980 and the ice lasted until February 1981!

The audience were very interested in this experiment and an entertaining and informative evening was enjoyed by all.

28th January 2026: Crime, Policing and Punishment in 19th Century Westmorland – Dr Michael Winstanley

Dr Winstanley presented an interesting and informative talk covering: the nature of police forces in this period; the types of crimes and how much crime was committed, and people who were charged and/or convicted and their punishments.

He used many sources for the information some of which included: newspaper archives: Police archives and photos, censuses; online archive of the Old Bailey; and a biography of Cumberland and Westmorland's first Chief Constable Sir John

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

Dunne (1825-1906), who organised the first effective County Police Force.

We learnt how policing has changed from there being only a Nightwatchman and perhaps a volunteer Parish constable; and Voluntary associations (which were a precursor to Neighbourhood Watch); on private land there would have been Gamekeepers to an organised countywide police force made up of full-time paid officers. By the end of the century this force was well established and the crime rates went down.

He gave many examples of crimes and their punishments for example a forger could be sentenced to death (this was basically treason) and someone who was found guilty of manslaughter may have been imprisoned for 6 months with a shilling fine.

An eye-opening presentation and plenty to think about!

25th February 2026: Carnforth Haematite Ironworks – Phil Baggley

There was a full house to listen to Phil's talk, he began by explaining how his interest in the works began. His Grandfather was a cupola keeper and his Father was a Bessemer Shop shift manager and he himself worked in the Workington Iron and Steel industry from the age of sixteen.

He talked about what evidence is left and what structures still remain, which isn't much. The Carnforth Haematite Iron Company was formed in 1864 with £100,000 capital, Herbert John Walduck, a Manchester iron and copper merchant with a home in Silverdale was the main promoter. Three blast furnaces

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

were erected in 1865 and about a hundred homes for workers were built in Millhead (then known as ‘Dudley’), by 1873 six furnaces had been built at Carnforth. Steelmaking began on site in 1874 after several years of construction and delays, only to close fifteen years later. Local ore deposits were exhausted by 1890.

Phil showed e excellent images/photos of the Ironworks and explained in detail what each building was for, the different components inside and how it all worked together. He also explained why buildings and equipment were designed in that way and how they were modernised and improved. The final major investment in the works at Carnforth, around 1920, was to upgrade furnace 1a (renumbered 1b after improvements) to increase capacity. The Ironworks ran with just the one furnace in blast until closure on 3rd December 1930 due to the prevailing economic climate.

He talked about the Ironworks at Barrow in comparison, which were established in 1859 and by 1873 there were 10 furnaces. In 1876 it was the largest ironworks in the world employing over 5000 people.

This concluded the first part of his talk which took the whole evening and due to high interest Phil has been invited back in May this year to deliver Part 2!

There were plenty of questions and interested individuals who queued at the end to speak to Phil personally.

25th March 2026: Silverdale – Moments in History or 3,500 years in one hour – Simon Williams

Luckily for us, our President, Simon was able to stand in for Nick Burton who was unable to make it to the Gaskell Hall, but Nick's talk about Ghandi's Northern Holiday will be rescheduled.

Simon had many interesting facts about Silverdale which build a picture of its history, some of which are noted below.

Silverdale's population remained sparse, around 1-200 people mainly living and working on farms, until two major events boosted the population. In 1857 the Ulverston – Lancaster railway line was opened, with a station in Silverdale which allowed for wealthy incomers who were attracted to the beauty to live and build houses in Silverdale and also allowed exports from our area e.g. product from quarries and from fishing bringing additional wealth. In 1938, following protracted arguments, Silverdale was at last provided with a mains water supply. (Arnside 1907, Carnforth 1879).

Some artefacts have been found in Silverdale which provide evidence of the people who lived here: a Bronze Age Sword dug up on Know Hill, found by metal detectorist in 1974, and the Slackwood Farm Blade found in 2013 during Adrian and Angela's extensive refurbishment of Slackwood. The blade was buried behind the plaster in a wall under the stairs.

Silverdale's name is nothing to do with our silver-coloured limestone, or profusion of birch and hazel trees. Names recorded are Selredal (1199) and Celverdale (1292) - possibly derived from the surname of a Norseman, Soelvers – i.e.

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History
Spring 226

Soelvers' Dale. There are other Viking words here in Silverdale – “Slack” is a Norse word e.g. Dogslack, Waterslack, Slackhead, Slackwood.

A little-known fact is that Silverdale was once in Yorkshire, Lancashire was not established until 1182.

With the arrival of the Normans in England came a new type of building – the castle; Silverdale had a local castle, to house our overlords - Mourholme Castle. It was owned by the barons of Kendal, along with Kendal castle, but we don't know when it was built, or what it looks like. First mentioned in a document from 1216, but probably built by the Normans post 1066. But thanks to some archaeologists who got to work in 1975, just before the gravel pits were flooded to form Pine Lake, we know where it was. They found the foundations, and quantities of mediaeval pottery and also the Mourholme Ring - it's probably the earliest diamond ring yet found in this country, probably 14th Century. In that era diamonds were little known, and all came from India; this one is roughly octagonal, and is uncut. It would be hard to guess the ring's original owner, or the circumstances of its loss. But today, as we have long lost every trace of Mourholme castle, it's wonderful to know that Mourholme's diamond ring is still sparkling in the Lancaster City Museum.

Many thanks to Simon for his entertaining and informative presentation which was enjoyed by all present.

NOTES AND QUERIES

KYRIL BONFIGLIOLI

29 MAY 1928 – 3 MARCH 1985

Ricrd and Awena Carter

Born Cyril Emmanuel George Bonfiglioli in Eastbourne, to an Italo-Slovene father, and English mother, this colourful character was an art dealer, magazine editor and comic novelist. His eccentric and witty Mortdecai novels have gained a following since his death. From the mid 1960's until about 1971 Bonfiglioli, lived in Yew Barrow, Wailings Lane, Silverdale. Memories of him were very much alive when we first moved to the village in 1972, and there were many anecdotes.

Chief among these, were reports of rehearsals for an outdoor performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in the grounds of Woodwell House. The project collapsed, causing Bonfiglioli to shaved his head in response.

Some information about him is available on the internet but little is said about his life here. Does anyone have memories about him?

[Kyril Bonfiglioli - Wikipedia](#)

[Making of Mortdecai - The Curious Life of Kyril Bonfiglioli - HubPages](#)

(Both internet sources were consulted on Shakespeare's birthday, April 23 2026)

THE MOURHOLME MAGAZINE OF LOCAL HISTORY Spring 2026

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Contents	Page
CHAIR'S REPORT April 2026	1
Nina Gaubert	
A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR	5
Awena Carter	
CUMBRIA'S ROLE IN A TENTH CENTURY GAME OF THRONES	6
Adrian Waddingham	
CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF CARNFORTH IBRARY, 1936-2026	17
Alison Lloyd Williams	
WILLIE RILEY , from the Little book Club	21
Tony Dunlop	
THREE SMOURHOLME VISITS :	26
Visit I	
BEHIND THE SCENES AT SIZERGH CASTLE	
Pam Davies, Jill Mason and Chris Jenkins	
VISIT II	32
THE LANCASHIRE ARCHIVE, PRESTON	
Jane Lyde, Sue Brown and Nina Gaubert	
VISIT III	39
THE MUSEUM OF LIVERPOOL	
Nina Gaubert	
LANCASTER CITY MUSEUM 'S REDEVELOPMENT	42
Carolyn Dalton	
RPORTS OF EVENING MEETINGS	45
Gill Ribbons	
NOTES AND QUERIES	52
Richard and Awena Carter	