LANCASTRIANS IN LONDON

Patron: His Majesty THE KING, Duke of Lancaster
President: Lady Arden of Heswall

NEWSLETTER - No. 178 AUTUMN 2026

Lancastriansinlondon.uk

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Events 2026 / 2027

Wednesday 28 October (3:00pm) Visit to St Magnus the Martyr
Friday 18 December Carol Service at Savoy Chapel followed by Christmas Dinner at Athenaeum Club.
Monday 8 March 2027 AGM at Union Jack Club.
Friday 21 May 2027 Annual Dinner at the Barber Surgeons Hall.





Lancastrians member Phillip Newfield is a past president of 'Old Merchant Taylors', and is pictured, left, with Alvan Seth-Smith, the current president of the alumni in his MT tie.

Alvan kindly let Philip take us on an unplanned tour of the magnificent cricket facilities at the school, more about that on the next page.



Traditionally, this fixture is hosted at Lords Cricket ground but the warm September showers in the open space took nothing away from our good Lancashire cheer. On the field we saw Sir James Anderson take the first two wickets and nearest to us in the outfield was a young Rocky Flintoff, son of Lancashire and England legend Andrew 'Freddy' Flintoff. The Association's long support of this fixture is evidenced in our archives, such as the extract, below, from the July 1995 newsletter.

THE ANNUAL CRICKET DINNER on 18th MAY was held in the newly refurbished Banqueting Suite at Lord's. It was a happy gathering of one hundred and forty three Members, friends and the Lancashire Team. A good dinner, short and witty speeches made a very enjoyable evening. An autographed bat was raffled and the proceeds of £530 donated to Neil Fairbrother's Benefit Fund. A further £300 was raised from the sale of ties and commemorative brochures.

THE ASSOCIATION OF LANCASTRIANS IN LONDON
Patron: Her Majesty The QUEEN (Duke of Lancaster)
Newsletter
No.83 July 1995

The Selectors were meeting at the same time as the Dinner (which meant that Michael Atherton could not be with us on this occasion). The next day he was announced as being in the twelve!

The London Merchant Taylors livery company founded the Merchant Taylors school in 1561. It has been in its present location, two miles from Watford town centre, since 1933.





Phillip Hammond was proud to show us the school's new cricket facilities which are enjoyed by Middlesex Cricket Club as well as the current pupils. A former pupil, Julian Hill, died in 2020 aged fifty-eight leaving a large legacy from his successful financial business to enable his old school to build the 'state of the art' cricket centre. Behind us in the picture, above left, are bowling machines that fire the ball at any angle or spin at professional speeds. Kevin Haigh, the lettings manager, (in the blue shirt) showed us around the centre and the picture, above right, illustrates the extent of the indoor nets.

We then moved on to the OMT Society War Memorial Club House with President Alvan Seth-Smith, also President of The Middlesex Seaxes (supporters' group) and who sat on the Middlesex CCC Committee for 30 years. Thanks are extended to Philip and his old school friends for making a rain-interrupted day of cricket so interesting. Lancastrians and guests are pictured below before returning to the first day's play in a match that Middlesex eventually won by 160 runs on the third day.



Church saved from closure by 'miracle' find of gold coins under the altar



Priya Bharadia

Unable to raise the £750,000 needed for urgent repairs, St Wilfrid's church looked likely to shut its doors after more than 700 years of service to Melling in Lancashire.

But the church has been saved from closure by the discovery – in a plastic bag hidden under the altar – of a box with nine gold coins worth nearly £30,000.

"We just burst into tears when we saw it," the Rev Jane Lee, 54, told the Times. She and a parishioner found the bag while preparing the church for morning prayer on Good Friday.

"We couldn't believe it," she said. "It was like a miracle because it's so desperately needed for the church."

Produced by the Royal Mint in 1999, the Britannia coins had a face value of £100 each, but together sold for almost £30,000. "We were both absolutely flabbergasted," said Lee.

The coins were accompanied by a note, written on Salvation Army paper and dated 16 July 2022, 11am: "Hi there, I'd like to donate these nine gold Britannias to Melling church."

The note was signed by "James, servant of the living God". The benefactor has yet to be identified, despite efforts by church officials.

Similar gifts were left to at least two other churches in Lancashire in 2022. Gold coins were found in the donation box of a church in Hornby and left behind the door of another in Quernmore. Lee believes that the coins at St Wilfrid's were left by the same anonymous donor.

St Wilfrid's was in the process of closing when the gold was found. It has a congregation of only five and needs £750,000 for urgent repairs to the roof, stained glass windows and other parts of the building.

Lee said the gold coins were "the answer to their prayers" and would be used as a "seed" to apply for future grants and fundraising campaigns to complete the necessary repairs.

The building dates to the 14th century, though a church has probably been on the site since before 1066.

Annual Quiz 21 September



A fun afternoon with a 1pm start for a fish & chips lunch.
In the Lancashire round we were asked by David Roberts; what were the Wigan Alps? and which Lancashire holiday resort was known as Bradford on Sea?



The winning team on the roof terrace by Blackfriars Bridge

A great location for our quiz this year and we mustn't forget to order the weather again if we can get it for next year as well. Thanks to Andy Lees for organising again and to question contributions from Timothy St Ather and David Roberts. There was also a Newsletter round - so keep reading and come along next year. And in case you were wondering, slag heaps were the Wigan Alps and Morecambe was the favoured coastal destination for many Bradford folk of the past.



Lancashire v Yorkshire. Black Pudding v Yorkshire Pudding. Lancashire win again!

Last September's newsletter included a picture from The Times that Adrian Waddingham had spotted and he sent me this years coverage from the same newspaper. A further search produced a wide coverage of this event, held on Sunday September 13th.

Lancashire Post

"Just leave people be" Attempts to turn Lancashire v. Yorkshire black pudding contest vegan are snubbed

Once a year, people from across the region and the world flock to Ramsbottom for the World Black Pudding Throwing Championships which sees competitors throw black puddings at stacks of Yorkshire puddings on a plinth 20 feet in the air. The winner is the person who knocks the most off.

Local legend claims the tradition dates back to the War of the Roses when the warring factions of the House of Lancaster and the House of York at a battle in Stubbins, Lancashire, are said to have run out of ammunition and resorted to throwing food at each other. But a new squabble has arisen this year after Peta issued an open letter to the organisers calling for the event to use vegan black pudding only. (PETA - People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)

Ramsbottom residents are unimpressed with the charity interfering with their championship, however. Retiree John Lingard echoed this sentiment, with the 68-year-old saying: "It doesn't bother me [that it's meat]. Just leave people be."

Others spoke of the championship as part of their local heritage. Another retiree, Alan Gray, 68, said: "It's tradition, isn't it? It should stay as it is as far as I'm concerned.

"We're losing a lot of tradition [...] We should take modern values into account, but at the same time modern values should take tradition into account."

THE TIMES

First blood to June

June Weir, 73, has become the oldest competitor and the first woman to win the World Black Pudding Throwing Championships. She shared the top spot with three others who knocked six Yorkshire puddings off a perch at Ramsbottom, Greater Manchester. Archy Hepworth, a local ten-year-old, took the junior prize.



Bury Times



BBC NEWS



Monday 28 September - Walk from Blackfriars to Westminster

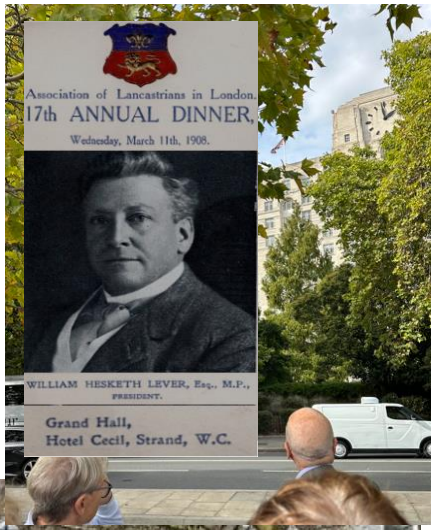


Many thanks, yet again, to Angela Waddingham for another fact-filled walk, this time along the north bank of the River Thames starting at Blackfriars Bridge and heading upstream towards Parliament.
Every building along the Thames is well know for something, Unilever House, London School for Boys and Somerset House were at the river's edge when they were built but now are up to forty-five yards away from the water.



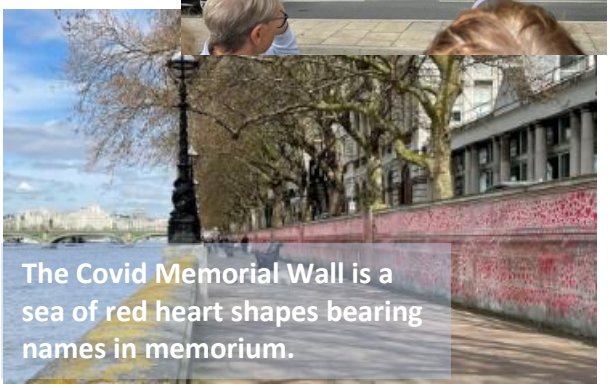
This is thanks to the engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette (1819-1891) who completed Victoria Embankment in 1868, providing a boulevard covering the 'main drainage system' that reduced the disease (and the stink) of four-million Victorians. This year the adjacent new 'super sewer', serving nine million Londoners has been completed and has created a landscaped public space next to Blackfriars Bridge named Bazalgette Embankment. This was our starting point and pictured above left. The tall black structure is one of many pieces of artwork that disguise the ventilation towers.

Our walk was littered with the history of the Association of Lancastrians in London, passing places of recent events at The National Liberal Club and the King's Chapel of the Savoy and places of past events such as the Savoy, Middle Temple and HQS Wellington. Angela also revealed that the Shell Mex building, the one with the large clock, had a link with our history. Salisbury House stood on this land and was built by Robert Cecil (first Earl of Salisbury and chief minister to Elizabeth I) It was replaced by the largest hotel in Europe in 1896 and named Hotel Cecil. Our oldest remaining artefact (right) is the 1908 dinner programme, hosted by Lord Lever and held at Hotel Cecil. The clock tower we see through the trees was part of the rebuild in 1930 but much of the original Strand facade remains.





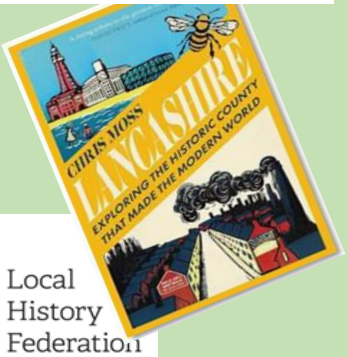
We crossed Westminster Bridge and along the Covid Memorial Wall finishing at the Garden Museum next door to Lambeth Palace which has an excellent cafe and shop. All food is made in the premises often with a strong fruit and veg theme.


The Covid Memorial Wall is a sea of red heart shapes bearing names in memorium.



Member Sheila Darzi wants you to know about the Local History Federation Lancashire. Sheila pointed me to the link below that led to 20 packed pages of Lancashire history events, stories from the archives, news from other societies and recent publications. The next newsletter is due out on 23 October and if you like your Lancashire history you might want to subscribe.
Included in the newsletter is advice of a new publication exploring our historic county that made the modern world.

ISBN 9781913083199. Old Street Publishing, 2026.
360pp, Endnotes, Select bibliography. B&w ill. £25.



Local History Federation ancashire

website www.lancashirehistory.org

2,300 Sqft Apartment hits market on the site of movie star Gracie Fields 1920's estate on Billionaires Row

April 30, 2026 hamhigh.co.uk



A rare opportunity has arisen to acquire a piece of North London's most intriguing cinematic history. An impressive 2,300 sq. ft. lateral apartment has officially hit the market at Ebony Court, 49 The Bishops Avenue for £2,995,000.

Located on the world-renowned "Billionaires' Row," this residence sits on the historic grounds of 'Tower', the legendary 1920s estate built by Britain's highest-paid movie star of the era, Dame Gracie Fields. While local legend often incorrectly cites the original house as a former maternity home, the true history of No. 49 is far more layered.

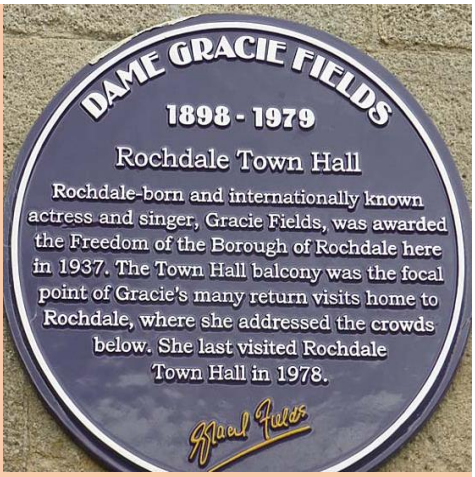
In 1929, at the peak of her fame, Gracie Fields and husband Archie Pitt commissioned 'Tower'—a 28-room mansion named after her breakout show, Mr. Tower of London.

The estate's evolution is a mirror of the Avenue's own transformation: By 1936, the vast grounds were divided. A separate building at the far end of the garden later became the 'Tower Maternity Annex' for North Middlesex Hospital, while the main house took a different path.

By 1960, the original mansion had been renamed and served for decades as the Heinrich Stahl House (a Jewish Care Home), extended to accommodate its residents while preserving the surrounding "wild woodland" that defined the site.

In 2004, the original structures were finally cleared to make way for the boutique collection of luxury buildings—Hazel, Ebony, and Maple Court—that occupy the site today, finally returning the land to its primary purpose: high-luxury residential living.





Thank you to Mave Turner who spotted this article about Rochdale's Gracie Fields in the HamHigh newspaper, local news for Hampstead and Highgate, north London.
If Gracie was before your time, the plaque on Rochdale's town hall tells you much of what you need to know and another impressive statue to this newsletter's collection is located nearby. Sadly, Gracie doesn't have a statue in London - that's not Big Ben, it's Rochdale Town Hall.



Spotted by Erica Stary in the online Telegraph are responses to an article dealing with county boundary change

CR **Craig Rome** · 2 DAYS AGO
Re-unify Lancashire please

JS **J S K** · 2 DAYS AGO
Reply to Craig Rome - view message
And get rid of barlick & earby!

'New' Lancashire

LANCASTER CITY MUSEUM NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Lancaster City Museum is seeking to redevelop its building to revitalise and modernise its presentation and exhibits.

The team at Lancaster are hoping to be awarded £5,000,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, but would greatly appreciate your support. By filling out their short online survey and sharing your words and thoughts on the museum you can help to make the case for a grant. Click on the following link to fill out the form - https://arcg.is/1GfrLq1.



The UK Government announced a decision in July 2026 to replace Lancashire's fifteen current local councils with four new unitary authorities (illustrated right). Implementation was paused in September for a 'rapid government review' and news is likely to break before our next newsletter at the end of the year. It is 52 years since the government created Greater Manchester and Merseyside, half of what was just *Lancashire.* However, these Mayoral Cities are not affected by the latest reorganisation.

The Four Proposed Unitary Areas

If the reorganisation moves forward following the review and parliamentary approval, the 15 existing councils will be replaced by four distinct unitary authorities:

- **North Lancashire:** Lancaster, Preston, and Ribble Valley.
- **West Lancashire (Coastal/Fylde):** Blackpool, Fylde, and Wyre.
- **East Lancashire:** Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, and Rossendale.
- **South Lancashire:** Chorley, South Ribble, and West Lancashire. Lancashire County Council



Benevolent Fund

The last newsletter identified three Lancashire Schools that used a £1000 gift from The Association of Lancastrians in London investment fund to benefit pupils. Since then we have made some more children happy .....



Janet Hails, Lancastrians committee member, nominated Flookburgh Primary School (Grange-over-Sands) as a beneficiary of our investment fund. Phil Wright, Headteacher, sent the following note of thanks:

Hi Janet, here is the picture of the gardening club outside the poly-tunnel you have kindly sponsored for us. It is going to be brilliant as we introduce gardening into the Early Years and Infant curriculum, as well as a weekly club. We are really grateful and in the new academic year. We have mentioned the sponsorship of Lancastrians in London in our newsletters (which you can find on our website) and in Grange NOW (a local newspaper). The grounds team from the Haven Holiday Park helped to install it. It was great that they volunteered their time. Thank you for all of your support - as we start to get some produce we will send photos.

The Lancastrians Benevolent fund produced £6000 in the last financial year and this was shared between six nominated beneficiaries providing educational support to children in Lancashire.

The trustees of the benevolent fund have re-invested funds for a better return in the new financial year, which has just started, and your suggestions of worthy causes can be advised to the newsletter editor, (email below) or to any trustee.

A date for your diary; Annual Dinner Friday 21 May 2027



To be held at Barber-Surgeons' Hall, Wood St. Barbican, on Friday, May 21, 2027. Our speaker will be Cathy Ashton (The Rt Hon The Lady Ashton of Upholland, formerly the EU Representative for Foreign Affairs 2009 - 2014). Mary Arden will again preside.

New Members

Gregory Hunt, Mediator, Born in Liverpool raised in Skelmersdale.

Derek Cohen, born and schooled in Manchester

Deaths

Peter Hughes. We learned in August from Peter's wife, Susan, that Peter died last November after an illness of one month. The Lancastrians' committee offer sincere condolences.



Kenneth Edward Thomas FCA
5 April 1931 – 8 July 2026
Former Lancastrians Treasurer

Ken passed peacefully at the age of 95. He was born in Fazakerley, Liverpool and qualified as a Chartered Accountant. We are grateful for his service to the Association, being an active member for many years and a committee member as Treasurer.

He leaves a son, six grand children and eight great grand children along with many happy memories and is sadly missed.

We thank his son, Paul, for letting us know this sad news and extend our condolences to the whole family.

Newsletter editor Jim Collier, email: collierjames439@gmail.com