

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE

Enhancing Research Culture through
Co-production and Public Participation

End of Project Report

August 2026

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Research Fellow

alongside **20 community co-researchers** and
with administrative support and project governance by
Dr Philip Constable.



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Lancashire

Institute of
Creativity,
Communities
& Culture

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Summary of the project

The *Heritage and History in Practice: Enhancing Research Culture Through Co-production and Public Participation* project was funded through the University of Lancashire's UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Enhancing Research Culture allocation during the 2025/26 academic year. Dr Brandon Taylorian envisioned the project as an avenue to developing a model of “participatory heritage” that brought members of the public into the research process as active co-researchers rather than positioning them simply as passive audiences. The project sought to strengthen research culture by fostering collaboration between the University and local communities through family history, heritage interpretation, archival research and public engagement activities.

The project consisted of a programme of six core participatory workshops, followed by an additional optional seventh workshop for final exhibition preparation. The programme was designed and delivered by Dr Taylorian on the Preston campus of the University of Lancashire between March and June 2026. The workshops focused on themes including dating antique photographs, interpreting family heritage materials, researching family histories, developing public-facing historical writing, exhibition interpretation, and heritage preservation.



Co-researchers supporting each other develop their outputs during the workshops at the University of Lancashire in Preston, 2026.



The 20 community co-researchers were encouraged to develop their own research projects using family photographs, newspapers, oral histories, archival records, and material culture. The project reached additional audiences through the co-produced exhibition, podcasts, social media engagement, and online dissemination activities through the project website www.antiquephotographs.co.uk. Co-researchers came from diverse backgrounds and included local residents, family historians, retired professionals, community heritage practitioners, academics, students and individuals with personal or family connections to Lancashire history, migration, education, religion, and public life.

Outputs

The project produced several major outputs. These included a public launch event on 24 June 2026 and subsequent exhibition hosted at the University of Lancashire Student Centre between June and July 2026; a series of co-produced interpretive boards and public history articles; a Participatory Heritage Toolkit; and podcast episodes documenting co-researcher experiences, reflections, and historical research journeys. The exhibition showcased a wide range of themes including Irish immigration, Caribbean and Windrush histories, Victorian education, military history, family businesses, religion, apprenticeship, crime history, and local community heritage.



An example of an interpretation board created during the project; the co-produced heritage exhibition in the University of Lancashire Student Centre, Preston.

Impacts

The project generated significant impacts on both the co-researchers and research culture more broadly. Co-researchers reported increased confidence in conducting historical research, interpreting archival materials, and presenting their findings publicly. Many described developing new skills during the programme in writing to an academic standard, conducting historical analysis, digitisation and exhibition design. The project also fostered new social connections and intergenerational dialogue around heritage and identity, not only between the co-researchers themselves but also the launch attendees.

Research culture

The project demonstrated how co-production and public participation can meaningfully enhance the relationship between universities and communities. It challenged traditional distinctions between academic researcher and public participant by positioning community members as active contributors to knowledge production. The project also created a model for participatory heritage research with the potential for replication and adaptation which can inform future public engagement, collaborative research, and external funding initiatives.

Project background

Dr Brandon Taylorian and Dr Philip Constable co-developed *Heritage and History in Practice: Enhancing Research Culture Through Co-production and Public Participation* in response to growing public interest in family history, local heritage and community storytelling. Since 2024, Dr Taylorian has hosted dating antique photographs and family history methods workshops for members of the public at the University of Lancashire, as well as in local libraries and museums. Yet workshop participants expressed interest in learning how to develop their family histories for public consumption, leading Dr Taylorian to theorise a model of “participatory heritage” that this project piloted.

Genealogy and heritage research have become increasingly popular forms of public engagement with the past. The expansion of online archives, digitised newspapers, genealogy databases, and social media heritage communities has enabled many people to explore family histories and local identities in new ways. At the same time, large quantities of historical material — including photographs, letters, certificates, scrapbooks, family memorabilia and other heirlooms — remain privately held within homes and communities, often without clear pathways for interpretation, preservation, or public engagement.



Dr Brandon Taylorian leading antique photographs and family history workshops in community spaces, museums and libraries in 2025.

The project emerged from the recognition that members of the public often possess knowledge and heritage materials that are valuable for historical research but are often disconnected from university research cultures. Existing public engagement models can sometimes position communities primarily as audiences or consultation groups rather than as active participants in knowledge production. This project sought to challenge that distinction by developing a participatory heritage approach in which community members became co-researchers engaged directly in historical interpretation, exhibition production and public dissemination.

The project was also shaped by the increasing importance of participatory and co-produced research methods within the humanities and social sciences. Participatory approaches recognise that research can be strengthened through collaboration with communities whose experiences, memories and collections form part of the historical record itself. Family history and heritage research are particularly well suited to participatory methods because they frequently rely upon personal archives, oral testimony, intergenerational memory, and local knowledge. The project therefore aimed to explore how participatory research methods could be applied within heritage and historical research in ways that were meaningful both academically and publicly.

Within the institutional context, the project was designed to contribute directly to the University of Lancashire's Enhancing Research Culture agenda by creating more inclusive, collaborative and publicly engaged forms of research activity. A central objective was to strengthen relationships between the University and local communities while also supporting a more open and accessible research environment. Rather than limiting research activity to traditional academic outputs, the project encouraged co-researchers to choose whether they preferred to produce articles, presentations or artworks to express their family story, and introduced them to the collaborative production of an exhibition. This created opportunities for the co-researchers to develop confidence, skills and ownership within the research process while also exposing future researchers and students to alternative forms of knowledge exchange and collaborative practice.

The project also addressed wider discussions within the higher education sector concerning civic engagement, impact and the role of universities within their local communities. Lancashire possesses rich and diverse historical traditions connected to migration, religion, education, industry, military history, and working-class life, yet many of these histories remain fragmented across family collections, local archives and personal memory. By bringing together co-researchers from different backgrounds and encouraging them to research and interpret their own histories collaboratively, the project showed how academic research and community heritage can mutually reinforce one another.

The project positioned heritage as an active social and cultural process through which communities interpret identity, belonging, memory and place. Through workshops, exhibition development and collaborative research activities, the project developed a model of participatory heritage capable of strengthening both research culture and community engagement simultaneously by promoting critical engagement with heritage materials.

Project aims and objectives

The project was developed to explore how participatory heritage methods could strengthen research culture within the University of Lancashire while also producing meaningful benefit to local communities. After co-writing the application, Dr Taylorian and Dr Constable submitted it through the Institute of Creativity, Communities and Culture, and framed it as part of an outreach initiative of the Centre for History and Public Engagement with the Past.

A central aim of the project was to develop a participatory heritage research model that repositioned members of the public as active co-researchers. Building upon the earlier Dating Antique Photographs and Family History Methods projects as a foundational case study, the project sought to demonstrate how community co-researchers could contribute directly to research design, historical interpretation, digitisation, exhibition production, and public dissemination. The project therefore aimed to create a more open and collaborative research environment that blurred traditional boundaries between academic and public knowledge.

A second major objective was to strengthen collaboration between researchers, students and members of the public through sustained participatory activity. The project aimed to bring together academics, students, family historians, local heritage enthusiasts, and members of communities previously under-represented in traditional heritage spaces through a structured programme of workshops focused on collaborative learning and co-production. This objective aligned closely with the wider Enhancing Research Culture agenda by promoting openness, inclusivity and public engagement within research practice.

The project also aimed to develop practical skills in heritage interpretation, public history, digitisation, and participatory research methods that would leave a lasting legacy beyond the end of the funding cycle. Workshops were designed not simply as public engagement events, but as collaborative research laboratories in which the co-researchers could develop transferable skills together. Activities focused on identifying and digitising heritage materials, interpreting archival sources, distinguishing between academic and public histories, and developing accessible exhibition narratives and public-facing historical writing. The project therefore supported both co-researcher development and public learning simultaneously.

Another key objective was to produce sustainable public outputs capable of extending the project's impact beyond the workshop programme itself. These outputs included a public exhibition launch event hosted at the University of Lancashire, a Participatory Heritage Toolkit, interpretive exhibit boards, co-produced historical articles and a series of podcast episodes documenting co-researcher experiences. The toolkit and podcasts were intended to provide reusable resources that could support future participatory heritage initiatives both within and beyond the University.

These objectives shaped the design of the project in several important ways. First, the project adopted a workshop-based structure spread across four months in order to create sustained relationships between Dr Taylorian, the co-researchers and university spaces. Rather than relying upon one-off engagement events, the project emphasised continuity, collaborative learning and reflective practice. Second, the project prioritised hands-on participation and co-curation. Co-researchers were encouraged to work directly with their own family archives, photographs, documents and heritage materials while simultaneously contributing to exhibition design and how they wanted their family stories to be presented for public audiences.

The objectives shaped the decision to situate the workshops and exhibition within University spaces. Hosting activities on campus reinforced the project's aim of positioning the University as an open and collaborative civic research environment while encouraging participants to view themselves as contributors to research culture rather than external visitors. The focus on sustainable outputs and transferable practice also influenced the inclusion of podcasts, exhibition materials and the digital toolkit as legacy resources designed to support future public engagement and participatory heritage research activity at the University of Lancashire and other higher education institutions.



The Project Introduction Sheet was shown to the co-researchers during their induction onto the programme to give them a clear sense of the project aims.

Project design and methodology

Participatory research approach

The project used a participatory heritage research model based on co-production and collaborative heritage research. Those who brought their family stories and materials to the project were designated “co-researchers” to reflect their contribution and their role as researchers supported by Dr Taylorian. The workshop programme was specifically designed to support the community co-researchers in researching, interpreting, preserving and presenting their heritage materials.

Specially designed worksheets provided step-by-step guidance to the co-researchers through each workshop. The project design encouraged co-researchers to contribute their own family archives, photographs, documents, memories and historical knowledge. Activities focused on shared learning, collaboration and public engagement rather than traditional top-down teaching. For example, the workshop programme included discussion-based tasks, a peer review process supported by public historian Stephen Poleon and interactive tasks involving the preservation of their heritage materials.

Workshop structure

The project was delivered through six on-campus workshops between March and June 2026, with an additional optional workshop for final exhibition preparations. The workshop series combined practical training, collaborative discussion and hands-on heritage research activities. The early workshops focused on identifying, digitising and interpreting relevant heritage materials while the later sessions focused on public history skills including article writing, developing interpretation boards and other visual displays.

Co-researcher onboarding

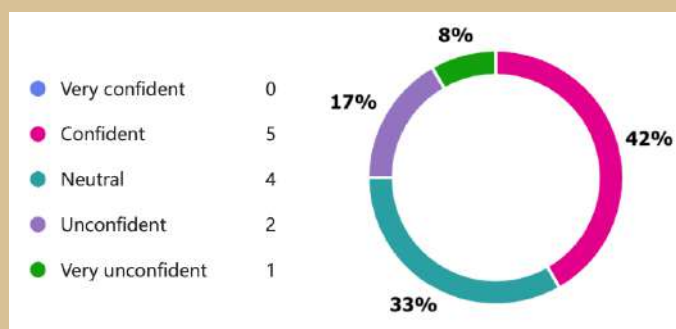
Having already conducted several family history workshops since 2024, Dr Taylorian prioritised previous workshop attendees who had consented to having their contact details retained as part of the Participatory Heritage Research Group. To fill the remaining spaces, the project was publicly advertised through local historical society mailing lists and popular social media groups like Preston History and Preserving Preston’s Heritage on Facebook.

The cohort of co-researchers came from a range of backgrounds in terms of age, ethnicity and religion, and represented diverse identities, including some who are disabled and others who are members of the LGBT community. The cohort included:

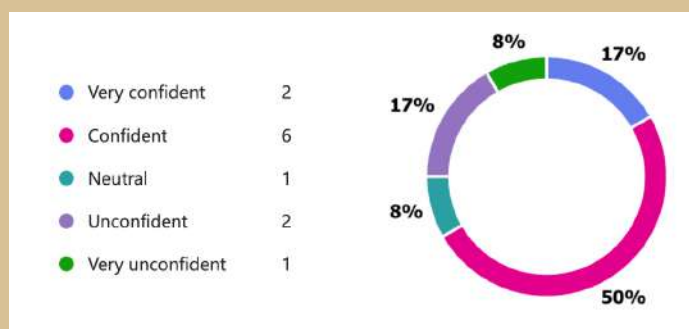
- 3 of the co-researchers were aged 18–25
- 1 with Jewish heritage
- 2 with Afro-Caribbean heritage
- 4 with Irish heritage
- 9 females and 11 males
- 2 from the LGBT community
- 5 people who self-identified as disabled

In turn, the co-researchers brought diverse historical interests, perspectives and personal experiences to the project that led to fruitful discussion-based tasks and a productive peer review process. An optional confidence survey was issued at the beginning of the workshop programme to understand the skills of the co-researchers at the outset and the extent to which they were confident or had previous experience in historical research. 12 of the co-researchers completed the survey, with the results displayed below:

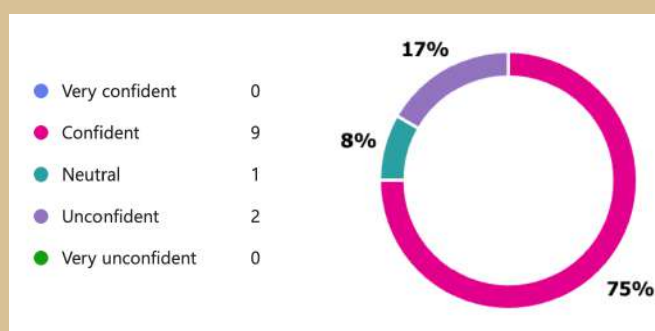
How confident are you in interpreting what a photograph, document, or object reveals about the past?



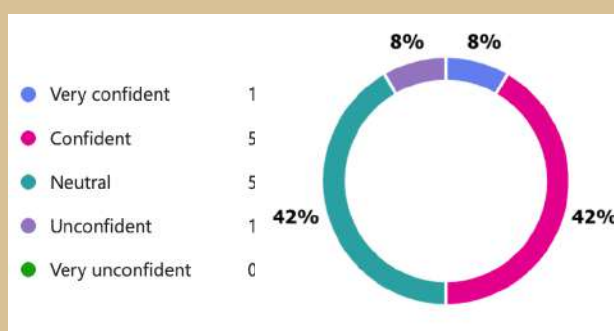
How confident are you in writing about history in a clear and accessible way?



How confident are you in linking personal or family history to wider historical themes?



How confident are you in contributing to a collaborative research project?



What would you most like to improve or learn during this project?

"Handling, organising and storage of historic documents and photographs. Interpretative writing and presentation of materials in an historic context."

"I would like to be able to consider myself more of a historian and less of a hobbyist with an untrained and possibly misguided enthusiasm."

"How to focus on an issue and really analyse what resources I have to bring the historical matter onto a format useful for the future (eg my children/ wider family/ whomever?) and find other corroborative material to consolidate/validate what I've discovered."

"To speak more confidently about my chosen subject and in general. That is something I have the least confidence in."

"Presentation of material in a manner that is easily accessible."

"What to do with objects if there are no descendants."

The confidence survey results showed that co-researchers entered the project with a generally positive but uneven confidence base. Most felt confident identifying and describing heritage materials and were generally confident in working with heritage materials and undertaking historical research. Confidence was strongest in linking personal or family history to wider historical themes, where 9 co-researchers felt confident.

However, the survey also identified clear development needs: several co-researchers felt neutral or unconfident about researching historical context, evaluating the reliability of sources, interpreting heritage objects, presenting historical material and handling heritage materials safely. The free text responses showed that co-researchers most wanted to improve their skills in individual and collaborative research, interpretation, presentation, and interpretative writing, confirming the anticipated value of the project's workshop-based approach.

Dr Taylorian used the results of the confidence survey to inform the structure and contents of the workshops as well as the tailored guidance the co-researchers were given. Another best practice involved asking the co-researchers at the end of each workshop what topics they would like time allocated to during the next workshop, showing that the coproduction method also informed the creation of the workshop series.

Types of data and materials gathered

The project generated a range of qualitative and creative outputs, including:

- workshop outputs such as historical articles, interpretation boards, exhibit captions, presentations, completed worksheets and research notes;
- digitised photographs, archival documents, newspaper articles, certificates, and family memorabilia;
- co-researcher confidence and feedback surveys, as well as reflective comments;
- surveys from members of the public on the exhibition;
- podcast interviews documenting co-researcher experiences and research journeys;
- observational notes and records of collaborative workshop discussions;
- photographs documenting workshop activities and exhibition development.

These materials contributed both to the final exhibition and to evaluation of the project's impact on the co-researchers, research culture and members of the public.

Headline figures from the project

20 co-researchers | 7 workshops | c.200 launch attendees | estimated 250–300 subsequent exhibition visitors | 67 exhibition feedback responses in total | 8 podcast episodes (9 co-researchers participated) | 23 co-produced exhibition boards | 15 historical articles | 8 presentations

Project activities

Participatory workshops

The core of the project consisted of six participatory heritage workshops, followed by an additional optional seventh workshop for final exhibition preparation, delivered on campus at the University of Lancashire from March to June 2026. The workshops created a supportive and collaborative environment in which the co-researchers shared skills, family stories, and historical knowledge while developing confidence in public engagement and research practice. They covered topics including ethical digitisation and the care of heritage materials, interpreting heritage materials for public history, engaging diverse audiences, and exhibition curation.



Covers of the presentation slides for each of the workshops in the series.



Photographs taken during the workshops, March to June 2026.

Launch event and co-produced exhibition

The project culminated in the *Heritage and History in Practice Exhibition* hosted at the University of Lancashire Student Centre from 25 June to 31 July 2026. The exhibition launch event on the evening of 24 June brought together co-researchers, University staff, students, community leaders, local history groups, invited guests and members of the public. The exhibition launch event attracted around 200 guests and the subsequent exhibition was placed in the Student Achievement Services Welcome Point which meant high visibility for the exhibition for a more general audience beyond those with a specialist interest, with an estimated additional audience of 250-300 people. The exhibition sent a clear message: community heritage materials could be transformed using university resources and spaces into accessible public history outputs through collaboration.



Photographs from the exhibition launch event in Social Learning East in the University of Lancashire Student Centre, 24 June 2026.



Photographs from the static exhibition in the Student Achievement Services Welcome Point in the University of Lancashire Student Centre, June to July 2026.

Digital toolkit

The project produced several digital and legacy resources designed to extend the impact of the project beyond the workshop programme itself. These included:

- a Participatory Heritage Toolkit containing guidance on collaborative heritage practice and public engagement;
- podcast episodes documenting participant experiences, research journeys, and reflections on family history and heritage;
- online project materials hosted through the Dating Antique Photographs website and associated digital resources;
- digitised heritage materials and exhibition content suitable for future dissemination and reuse.

The digital outputs were designed to support future participatory heritage activity both within the University and in community settings.



Glenda Andrew BEM (right) explains her father Oswald Andrew's story as an immigrant from Dominica who settled in Preston to an exhibition attendee.



Rachael Bryson shows visitors the items she inherited from relatives that she used to create her exhibit about the Preston Home Front.



Richard Ellis explains to a visitor how he used an 1849 indenture and collection of daguerreotypes passed down in his family to inform his exhibit.



Stewart Turner retells the story of his ancestor Richard Turner to exhibition visitors and the research journey he embarked on during the project.

Workshop model

Although the workshops were partially pre-structured for the purposes of the grant and ethics applications, they were also adapted during the course of the programme in response to requests from the co-researchers on the theoretical or practical topics they felt were most important that needed addressing. The model corresponds to a series of 7 worksheets produced by Dr Taylorian during the preparations for the workshops, including:

The *Output Production Sheet* was developed as a follow-on activity once co-researchers had identified the direction of their project. This worksheet provided a large open planning space where co-researchers could draft, organise, and visually map out the structure of their chosen output. The sheet allowed co-researchers to:

- organise exhibition text and images;
- plan interpretation board layouts;
- structure article content;
- identify key historical themes;
- reflect on how best to communicate their material.

The *Output Planning Sheet* was designed to help co-researchers clarify the focus, purpose, and interpretive direction of their chosen project. The worksheet guided co-researchers through several core areas including:

- identifying the type of output they wished to create (poster, article, presentation, or artwork);
- describing the heritage material being used;
- identifying the historical period or topic involved;
- developing a central interpretive idea through the prompt: "This heritage material helps us understand..."

The image shows two overlapping worksheets from a series titled "HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE".

The top worksheet is the "OUTPUT PRODUCTION SHEET". It features a header with the title and icons of a globe, books, and a magnifying glass. Below the title is a blue bar with the text "OUTPUT PRODUCTION SHEET". The main body of the sheet is a large white box with the instruction "In this box, write down the plan for your chosen output:". At the bottom left, there is a logo for "UK Research and Innovation".

The bottom worksheet is the "OUTPUT PLANNING SHEET". It also has the same header. Below the title is a blue bar with the text "OUTPUT PLANNING SHEET". The sheet contains several sections for planning:

- A "Participant name" field.
- A "Type of output" section with checkboxes for "Poster", "Short article", "Presentation", and "Artwork".
- A section titled "Describe the heritage material used (is it a physical object or story?)" with a large white box for writing.
- A section titled "Historical focus (what period or topic does your material relate to?)" with a large white box for writing.
- A section titled "Main interpretative idea. Complete the sentence: This heritage material helps us understand..." with a large white box for writing.

At the bottom of the "OUTPUT PLANNING SHEET", there are logos for "UK Research and Innovation", "University of Lancashire", and "Department of Education".

The *Title Production Sheet* was developed to help co-researchers think critically about how historical research is communicated to public audiences. The worksheet guided co-researchers through the process of developing clear, engaging and historically meaningful exhibit titles:

- Encouraged reflection on the wider historical themes connected to family heritage materials.
- Introduced co-researchers to different forms of public history interpretation.
- Supported co-researchers in identifying the key historical message of their exhibit.
- Encouraged creativity, audience awareness and accessible language.
- Helped co-researchers refine and strengthen their interpretive focus through revision.
- Supported collaborative discussion and peer feedback within workshop sessions.
- Strengthened co-researcher confidence in producing public-facing heritage outputs.

The *Caption Production Sheet* was developed to support co-researchers in transforming their research and heritage materials into concise, accessible, and publicly engaging text. The worksheet formed an important bridge between historical research and public interpretation by helping co-researchers structure their ideas into captions suitable for non-specialist audiences.



HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



TITLE PRODUCTION SHEET

Which type of title works best for your material? You can combine types.

☐ Descriptive (e.g. A Family Portrait in Preston, c.1920)

☐ Thematic (e.g. Exploring Working Lives in Industrial Lancashire)

☐ Question (e.g. What Was Life Like for Pupil Teachers in 1870s Chorley?)

☐ Narrative (Trade and Trust: Pawnbroking in 19th-Century Liverpool)

What wider topic does your material connect to?

What is the key message you want visitors to take away?

Draft Your Title. Write 2–3 possible titles:

Refine your title. Choose your strongest title and improve it: Is it clear? Is it engaging? Does it reflect your historical idea?







HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



CAPTION PRODUCTION SHEET

What are the main insights of your family story/material?

Historical context (what other relevant events occurred during the period?)

Now draft your caption (50–100 words):





The *Audience Engagement Sheet* was designed to help co-researchers think critically about public audiences and communicating historical research beyond academic or personal contexts. The worksheet encouraged co-researchers to consider what visitors might learn, question or find surprising about their heritage materials and exhibit:

- Encouraged co-researchers to identify and understand their intended audience.
- Helped co-researchers think about the educational value of their outputs.
- Supported reflection on how visitors might respond emotionally or intellectually to the exhibited materials.
- Encouraged co-researchers to anticipate questions and discussion points arising from their work.
- Developed public engagement and interpretive communication skills.
- Reinforced the importance of accessibility and visitor-centred exhibition design.

The *Exhibition Design Planning Sheet* supported co-researchers in organising the practical and visual aspects of their exhibits. The worksheet encouraged the co-researchers to think about how historical materials would be displayed, interpreted, and shared publicly. The sheet also helped connect heritage interpretation with practical exhibition planning and dissemination beyond the exhibition itself.



HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT SHEET

Who is your audience?

What do you want visitors to the exhibition to learn from your output?

What might surprise them about your output?

What questions might visitors ask after seeing your output?

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HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE
EXHIBITION DESIGN PLANNING SHEET

Output title

Type (you can tick more than one) ☐ Physical object requiring encasement
☐ Artwork ☐ An item that the public can take away with them

Final version of caption text (50–100 words)

Supporting visuals you require (you can tick more than one) ☐ Postcard
☐ Photographs ☐ Printed article sheet ☐ Drawings

Once the exhibition is over on 31st July and your heritage materials are returned to you, where will you distribute any remaining outputs? (You can tick more than one)
☐ Just family and friends ☐ Lancashire Online Knowledge (speak to Brandon about the University depository)
☐ Local historical society. Specify which one:

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The *Heritage Material Analysis Sheet* was designed to help co-researchers analyse historical materials more critically and systematically. The worksheet encouraged co-researchers to move beyond simple description by considering dating, context, historical clues and wider historical significance. The sheet introduced the co-researchers to core historical research skills while remaining accessible to those without formal academic training:

- Helped co-researchers analyse photographs, documents, objects and stories critically.
- Supported co-researchers in establishing historical context.
- Introduced co-researchers to historical interpretation and source analysis.
- Helped co-researchers connect family materials to wider historical themes.
- Developed confidence in working with archival and heritage materials.
- Supported the transition from family memory to public historical interpretation.
- Reinforced the project's participatory and skills-based research approach.

The two handbooks Dr Taylorian had previously produced also proved useful to the co-researchers who required specialist guidance on skills such as dating and cataloguing their old photographs, locating records or linking their heritage materials to broader historical themes.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY
IN PRACTICE

HERITAGE MATERIAL ANALYSIS SHEET

Describe the material (what can you see?) or the story (what do you know?)

Establish a date or approximate date and possible location

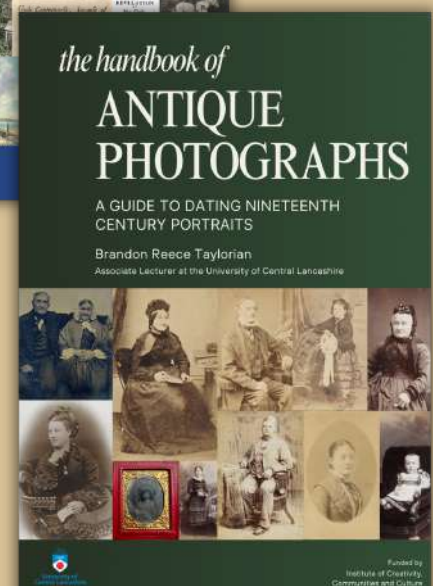
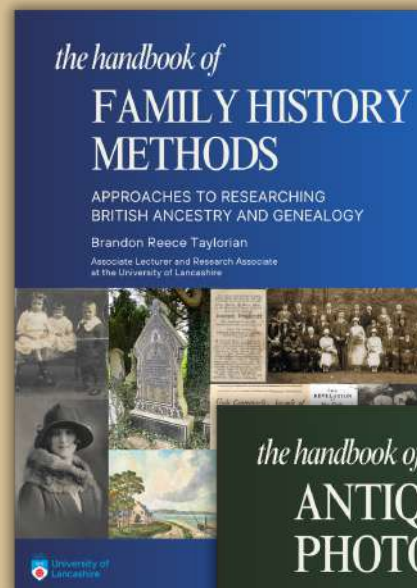
Historical clues and context (if a photograph, consider clothing and setting)

Historical significance (What does this reveal about the past?)

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Co-researcher outputs

Co-researchers produced a diverse range of outputs, including interpretive exhibition panels, short historical articles, presentations which they gave at the exhibition launch event, family history case studies, object captions and creative outputs such as zines. Many of these outputs combined archival research with personal archives, oral testimony and family memories, demonstrating how individual stories can illuminate wider historical themes.

The exhibition panels co-produced by the co-researchers and Dr Taylorian covered a wide range of subjects, including Caribbean migration and the Windrush generation, First World War nursing, local military history, industrial unrest, slavery and empire, migration from Ireland, Victorian apprenticeships, crime histories, and social change in Lancashire. Co-researchers moved beyond simply describing their family artefacts and instead situated them within broader historical contexts. For example, one co-researcher used newspaper reports and migration records to explore the experiences of Caribbean stowaways arriving at Preston Dock during the late 1950s and early 1960s, connecting an individual story to wider histories of migration, citizenship and post-war Britain.

Here is an example of Glenda Andrew BEM's exhibit interpretation board and her accompanying article handout:

WINDRUSH LEGACIES

Uncovering How Caribbean-Born British Citizens Shaped Community Life in Preston

The life of Oswald "Ossie" Andrew (1938–2014) is a case study to understand how members of the Windrush generation built new lives in Preston through work, faith, social connections and resilience.

CONTEXT: THE WINDRUSH COMMUNITY IN PRESTON

- Following the Second World War, Caribbean-born British citizens migrated to towns and cities across Britain, including Preston, helping to address labour shortages in industry, transport and public services during the post-war reconstruction period.
- Many members of the Windrush generation encountered discrimination in housing, employment and everyday life, leading churches, social clubs and community networks to become important sources of support, identity and belonging.

THE STORY OF OSWALD ANDREW

- Born in Dominica, Oswald Andrew migrated to Britain as a Commonwealth citizen, building a new life through work, friendship and faith.
- Family memories of Andrew's disappearance in 1960s London led to a newspaper report being discovered, explaining that he appeared before Ealing Area Sessions but was discharged after the prosecution offered no evidence.

INSIGHTS: THE POWER OF NEW RESEARCH

- Family photographs and memories reveal how members of the Windrush generation built new lives in Britain.
- Andrew's story demonstrates how combining oral history with archival research can uncover hidden aspects of the past and deepen our understanding of migrant experiences in post-war Britain.

MECHANIC CAREER

After working at Leyland Motors, Ossie established several garages in Preston, including on Horwath Parade, Walker Street, another before the bus station was built, and later in Ashton and Topley.

MENTORSHIP

Ossie was known for taking local lads under his wing, teaching them practical skills and encouraging them to learn a trade.

JOURNEYS OF COURAGE

The journey of Caribbean-born British citizens to Britain marked the beginning of a new chapter.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Community gatherings brought together people from Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica and other Caribbean islands. Through meals, celebration and friendship, Preston's Caribbean community created spaces of joy and belonging during the 1960s and 1970s.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE

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FROM TRUNKS TO STREETS: WINDRUSH AND BRITISH HERITAGE IN PRESTON: THE LIFE OF OSWALD ANDREW (1938–2014)

This article argues that personal heritage materials—such as family photographs, documents, and stories—reveal how members of the Windrush generation, Caribbean-born British citizens, built lives in Preston through work, social interaction, inclusion, and faith. It also considers how these experiences were passed down to their children and descendants, shaping identity, values, and a sense of belonging across generations. By bringing these stories into public view, this article demonstrates how Windrush history continues beyond the first generation and remains an important part of British heritage today.

Photographs of Oswald Andrew in the 1970s.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The arrival of the Windrush generation from the Caribbean in the late 1940s through to the 1960s marked a significant moment in British history. As Caribbean-born British citizens, many travelled to the United Kingdom to support post-war reconstruction, taking up roles in industries such as manufacturing, transport, and public services. In towns such as Preston, these individuals became part of the local workforce and wider community. Beyond employment, social interaction and inclusion were essential to everyday life.

HERITAGE MATERIAL AND LIVED EXPERIENCE

The materials used in this project include personal photographs of my father and his friend Mr Adams, a British passport issued in Dominica, and family stories passed down through generations.

Churches, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, played a vital role in supporting families, offering spiritual guidance, stability, and a sense of belonging. Community spaces such as pubs, social clubs, and youth environments also became important settings where individuals connected, shared culture, and built friendships. However, this period was also marked by discrimination and exclusion. Many individuals experienced unequal treatment in housing, employment, and policing. These challenges shaped how Caribbean-born British citizens navigated British society, strengthening community bonds and reinforcing the importance of shared spaces for resilience and inclusion.

Other co-researchers drew upon family archives to reconstruct overlooked personal histories. Co-researcher Roger Frankland used his aunt's autograph book, photographs, poems and diary entries to explore relationships between nurses and wounded servicemen during the First World War, highlighting the emotional dimensions of wartime care and recovery. Similarly, another co-researcher Rachael Bryson combined family heirlooms, military records and local history research to investigate the wartime experiences of Maggie Breakell, Charles Richmond and Henry Adams, demonstrating how military service, nursing and bereavement shaped family life on Preston's home front.

Several outputs connected family history to wider social and political developments. Co-researcher Stewart Turner used the life of cavalryman Richard Turner to reinterpret the Lancashire Riots of 1812, exploring industrialisation, economic hardship and social unrest through the experiences of an individual caught between working-class origins and military service. Another examined an 1802 Jamaican plantation will to investigate changing attitudes towards slavery, emancipation and property ownership in the British Empire.

The resulting outputs demonstrated clear progression in co-researchers' historical research and interpretation skills compared to the outset of the programme. Rather than producing private family histories alone, co-researchers had successfully transformed their personal heritage materials into public-facing resources capable of engaging wider audiences with local, national and international histories. The exhibition therefore showcased not only historical discoveries but also the development of the co-researchers as active researchers and public historians.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF RICHARD TURNER (1783–1860), A CAVALRY TROOPER FROM WESTHOUGHTON, LANCASHIRE

When Britain resumed hostilities with Napoleon Bonaparte's France in 1803 the inevitable economic downturn that followed was a disaster for the Lancashire cotton industry and its workers. One of those workers was my 4th great grandfather Richard Turner, but he had an escape plan. Some time during the summer of 1805 the 18 years old weaver travelled south to Windsor, and on the 8th of August¹ he enlisted as a trooper in the Royal Regiment of Horse one of the two crack regiments dedicated to the protection the monarch, George III. After his initial training to turn him into a horseman not only capable of controlling his horse in formation during the chaos of battle, but also during the pomp and glitter of a royal display, Richard settled down to the humdrum life of the barracks. In January 1808 Richard married local girl Ann Bench. Despite Britain being at war, the Household Cavalry was not deployed in fighting in the various theatres of war until 1812.

GOING HOME TO LANCASHIRE

On 28th July 1812, Richard and his troop are in Bolton¹, just five miles away from his family home. What were they doing there, flying the flag and recruiting? For an answer to this, we have to look at events in this area with respect to Luddite type activity. In April 1812 unemployment in the cotton industry, and taxes and food prices were at an all time high. This was caused partly by the effect of the war on trade but also by the increasing use of large factories containing the latest power looms and spinning mules. A mill was attacked in Middleton (near Oldham), Manchester saw food riots, and in Bolton a farmer selling potatoes at market was forced by a threatening mob to sell at a price they dictated.



The burnt out ruins of Rowe & Dunsough's Mill at Westhoughton in 1899, the year it was finally demolished.

In the very same week, Rowe and Dunsough's Mill in Richard's home town of Westhoughton, one of the very first mills to be powered by steam when it was opened in 1804, was set on fire and burnt to the ground. Eventually, 24 people were arrested and escorted to Bolton. In the ensuing trials, 12 were transported for seven years, and three (including a 16 year old boy) were sentenced to be hanged at Lancaster³.

Evaluation and impact

Co-researcher learning

An optional end-of-project survey was issued to co-researchers to complete. The end-of-project survey provides evidence of perceived improvements in co-researchers' confidence, skills and understanding of how heritage materials can be researched, interpreted and communicated. Because the baseline and end-of-project surveys had different response rates, the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than as a directly matched pre- and post-project comparison.

All seven co-researchers responding to the end-of-project survey agreed that they had learned new skills for identifying and interpreting antique photographs, while four agreed that they had developed practical skills for digitising or preserving heritage materials. Four also agreed that the workshops improved their understanding of how historians analyse historical sources, and all seven agreed that their confidence in discussing heritage materials with others had improved.

Before the workshops, co-researchers generally described themselves as “fairly confident”, although some expressed uncertainty about whether they were approaching historical research correctly. After the programme, co-researchers described themselves as “much more confident and positive about my researching”, “better equipped to interrogate an object”, and “much more confident on how to handle and store materials both physically and digitally”.

Learning extended beyond technical skills to historical interpretation and public communication. Co-researchers reported learning how to place family histories within their wider historical context, organise and preserve materials, develop stronger research techniques, and produce outputs that were “relevant, engaging and interesting” to family members and wider public audiences.

Importantly, co-researchers also developed a stronger understanding of the historical significance of seemingly ordinary family materials. Co-researchers reported recognising the value of exercise books, receipts, certificates and other original sources alongside photographs and conventional genealogical records, as well as the importance of recording “hidden” family histories before they disappear.

Evaluation and impact

Research culture impact

The project also provides evidence of a positive impact on research culture by creating a collaborative space in which members of the public could participate in research alongside the University rather than simply receive academic knowledge.

All seven co-researchers agreed that their knowledge and experience were valued during the workshops and that the programme encouraged open discussion and shared learning. Six of seven agreed that the project felt collaborative rather than researcher-led, while all seven agreed that co-researchers were encouraged to contribute their own ideas and interpretations. Six also agreed that the project increased their understanding of how universities conduct research.

Qualitative responses reinforce the value of this participatory research culture. Co-researchers particularly valued “the input from fellow researchers”, the sharing of stories and the opportunity to consider their own research through advice from both the project lead and the wider group. One co-researcher specifically highlighted enjoying “the participatory nature of co-researching”, while another valued being among people interested in family history not simply as names and dates but as a means of understanding “people and lives and the wider history.”

The project therefore helped to bring academic and community research practices together, while making the University itself a more accessible research environment. Co-researchers described working within the University as a “welcoming, pleasant experience”, “enjoyable and valuable”, with one commenting that it “felt like I was a student again”. This compared to one verbal comment made at the beginning of the programme by the same co-researcher to Dr Taylorian in which they said they were unsure they belonged in the University setting because they did not have a degree-level qualification.

There is also strong evidence of potential longer-term research-culture impact: all seven respondents reported that they were very likely to continue researching their family history, share heritage materials with others, visit museums, archives or heritage exhibitions, and participate in similar projects in the future.

Evaluation and impact

Nine of the co-researchers recorded 30 to 40-minute podcast episodes in the University of Lancashire's Podcast Studio at the conclusion of *Heritage and History in Practice*. This acted as an important final stage in the project's contribution to research culture. Rather than treating the exhibition as the endpoint, the podcasts created space for the co-researchers to reflect in their own voices on the complete research journey: why they joined the programme, discoveries that changed their understanding of family or local history, how participation affected their understanding of historical research, and their experience of transforming personal photographs, documents and artefacts into a public exhibition.

This reflective element was particularly valuable because it positioned the co-researchers not simply as contributors to a University-led project, but as researchers able to articulate what they had learned, how their historical practice had developed, and what their research meant to them. The podcasts also provided a tangible example of how research culture can extend beyond conventional academic outputs and involve members of the public throughout the research lifecycle.

The conversations documented the transition from initial curiosity and family history research to investigation, interpretation, co-curation, public exhibition and reflection, while asking co-researchers to consider how they might continue their research and encourage others to transform their family stories into public history.

As recorded outputs, the podcasts preserve co-researcher perspectives alongside the historical research itself, providing evidence of the processes and experiences behind co-production that an exhibition alone cannot always capture.

They therefore demonstrate the value of participatory research as part of the University's research culture: opening research to local communities, recognising public expertise, giving co-researchers a public voice, and creating pathways through which engagement with the University can stimulate continued independent research beyond a funded project.



Co-researcher Eve Peel with Dr Brandon Taylorian recording her podcast episode.



Co-researcher Stephen Poleon recording his podcast episode.

Evaluation and impact

Exhibition launch impact

The exhibition generated strong evidence of public engagement and learning. Of the 43 respondents to the survey at the exhibition launch, which around 200 people attended in total, 30 said that they had learned “a lot” about heritage or history and a further 11 said they had learned “somewhat”, meaning 41 of 43 respondents reported some degree of new learning. Visitors highlighted learning about previously unfamiliar local histories, historical research methods, dating antique photographs, and the ways in which family histories can illuminate wider historical contexts. Public responses also demonstrate the effectiveness of presenting research through personal and family stories. At the launch, family stories were the most frequently selected element of interest (35 responses), followed by old documents and letters (25), antique photographs and exhibition design (19 each), artwork/posters (18), and historical interpretation (16).

The exhibition launch also stimulated further public interest in heritage research. 35 respondents said that they were more interested in exploring their own family or local history after seeing the exhibition, with another five answering “maybe”. Thirty-seven of the 43 respondents were visiting a history exhibition at the University of Lancashire for the first time, providing particularly useful evidence that the project reached audiences beyond those already accustomed to engaging with University history exhibitions. Visitors described wanting to research their own families more deeply, preserve family stories, and consider their own material worthy of historical investigation; one particularly revealing response stated, “I didn’t think my family had a story but now I think we could.”

Taken together, the survey evidence from the exhibition launch suggests that the event translated the co-researchers’ work into accessible public history, encouraged visitors to recognise the historical significance of their own family and community experiences, and created new connections between University research and wider public audiences. The overwhelmingly positive comments—including descriptions such as “beautifully conceived”, “amazing” and “well worth the journey from Leicestershire”—also demonstrate a high level of public appreciation, while constructive feedback concerning acoustics, signage and the launch event location provides useful learning for future public-facing projects at the University of Lancashire.

Evaluation and impact

Main exhibition impact

The feedback from the exhibition launch event and the subsequent static, unmanned exhibition has been separated in this report because they represent two distinct forms of public engagement: the launch involved presentations and direct interaction with co-researchers, whereas the static exhibition allows us to assess how effectively the displays communicated the project's research independently to visitors encountering them without facilitation.

Feedback collected from the static Heritage and History in Practice exhibition in the University of Lancashire Student Centre, separately from the launch event, provides strong evidence that the exhibition succeeded in engaging visitors with local, family and community history. A total of 24 exhibition feedback responses were received.

The responses indicate particularly strong learning outcomes: 16 respondents reported learning “a lot” and eight “somewhat”, meaning that all respondents answering positively reported some degree of new learning. Visitors identified learning across a strikingly broad range of subjects, including Victorian photograph dating, research methods, Windrush migration, the First World War hospital at Moor Park, religious history and criminal justice. One visitor commented that they had learned about the “multiple strands of local history in such close proximity to Preston, Lancashire and the North West”, while another highlighted learning “more about the Windrush generation, some of the notorious murders, [and] the impact of wars on the local populace”.

The feedback therefore suggests that the exhibition was successful in demonstrating how individual research projects and personal heritage materials could illuminate much broader histories. Visitors were not simply attracted to photographs as visual objects: the most frequently selected elements were old documents and letters (16 responses), family stories (15), and historical interpretation (15), followed by antique photographs (12). This is significant for the project's participatory methodology because it indicates that audiences valued the process through which personal sources had been researched, contextualised and transformed into publicly accessible historical narratives. One visitor summarised their response as: “Excellent presentations. Inspiring stories.”

There is stronger evidence still that the exhibition stimulated future engagement with heritage. 14 respondents said that they were now more interested in exploring their own family or local history and a further 8 answered “maybe”; only 2 selected “no”, with comments indicating that some visitors were already actively researching their histories. The exhibition was also judged highly accessible: 21 respondents rated the information “very clear” and 2 “mostly clear”, with only 1 selecting “somewhat clear” and none selecting “not clear”.

Particularly important for assessing the exhibition’s role as public engagement by the University of Lancashire is how visitors encountered it. 12 respondents reported discovering the exhibition simply by walking past it, compared with 6 through the University website, 5 through social media, 3 through newspapers or press, and 2 through friends or family. Moreover, 14 respondents reported that this was their first visit to a history exhibition at the University. These findings suggest that maintaining the exhibition as a static public display after the formal launch enabled the project to reach audiences beyond those who had deliberately attended the launch. It allowed research to occupy an everyday University space where it could be encountered incidentally by students, staff and members of the public.

The qualitative feedback was predominantly positive while also providing useful lessons for future exhibitions. One visitor described it as “very well presented”, while suggestions included providing transcripts alongside handwritten letters, ensuring information sheets remained available throughout the exhibition, having an attendant periodically available to answer questions, and considering a different location within the University. Visitors also proposed subjects that could be incorporated into future displays, including labour and trade-union history, Chartism and women’s suffrage. One visitor’s response to the Moor Park First World War hospital research went beyond the exhibition itself, suggesting that “there should be a plaque on the park on where the hospital was located.” This is a particularly useful example of participatory heritage generating interest in how research might influence the interpretation of heritage within the wider city.

Overall, the 24 responses to the static exhibition provide evidence that *Heritage and History in Practice* achieved more than simply displaying the outputs of the co-researchers. The exhibition communicated previously unfamiliar histories, encouraged some visitors to reconsider the significance of their own family heritage, stimulated intentions to undertake further research, and brought University-based historical research into contact with people who had not necessarily intended to engage with it.

Reflections on participatory heritage

The project demonstrated the significant value of participatory heritage approaches within both public engagement and research culture development. By positioning participants as co-researchers rather than audiences or consultation groups, the project created a more collaborative and inclusive research environment in which personal archives, family histories, lived experiences and community knowledge were interpreted and curated by the people and communities from whom they originated.

One of the clearest outcomes was the way co-researchers developed confidence in interpreting and presenting their own heritage materials publicly. Many co-researchers initially viewed their photographs, documents, and family stories as personal or private items rather than historically significant sources. Through collaborative workshops and co-produced activities, the co-researchers increasingly recognised the wider historical value of their materials and their ability to contribute meaningfully to public history.

The project also demonstrated that participatory heritage methods can strengthen relationships between universities and local communities. Co-researchers engaged directly with research processes including source analysis, interpretation, exhibition production, and public communication. This helped break down traditional distinctions between academic expertise and public knowledge while fostering a stronger sense of shared ownership over research and heritage outputs. For example, at the exhibition, many co-researchers accepted the offer to take their exhibit boards home to put on display and use as part of future events in their local historical societies.

Importantly, the project showed that participatory heritage can support both skills development and community connection simultaneously. Workshops encouraged collaborative learning, peer support, intergenerational discussion, and reflective engagement with themes such as migration, identity, religion, education, work and local memory. Overall, the project highlighted the potential of participatory heritage as a sustainable model for enhancing research culture through co-production, accessibility, public engagement, and collaborative historical practice. It also demonstrated how empowering community co-researchers with transferable research and interpretation skills can build lasting local capacity for heritage activity beyond the lifespan of an individual funded project.

Challenges and lessons learned

As with many participatory heritage projects, several challenges emerged during delivery that required flexibility, reflection and adaptation. These challenges ultimately provided valuable lessons about inclusive public engagement, heritage interpretation and project planning.

One challenge involved co-researcher confidence levels. While many co-researchers were enthusiastic about attending the workshops, some initially lacked confidence in their ability to contribute meaningfully to discussions about history, heritage and archival interpretation. A small number of co-researchers initially viewed themselves as having “nothing important to share” or felt uncertain about handling historical materials and discussing their family histories in a group setting. This was particularly noticeable among co-researchers who had not previously engaged with heritage activities or academic environments.

To address this, the workshops were designed to be informal, supportive and highly interactive. Activities were structured progressively so that the co-researchers could build confidence over time through discussion, collaborative tasks and hands-on engagement with photographs and archival materials. Emphasis was placed on valuing lived experience and personal knowledge rather than specialist expertise. Encouraging the co-researchers to share stories connected to their own photographs helped create a welcoming environment where individuals increasingly recognised the historical significance of their experiences and family histories.

Another challenge involved balancing historical rigour with accessibility. A central aim of the project was to ensure that the workshops and outputs remained historically informed while also being accessible to co-researchers with varying levels of historical knowledge. There was a risk that discussions around photographic dating techniques, historical terminology or archival interpretation could become overly technical and reduce engagement. This challenge was anticipated by carefully adapting the presentation of information and using clear, non-specialist language throughout the workshops and supporting materials. Rather than overwhelming the co-researchers with technical detail, historical methods were broken into manageable and practical steps supported by visual examples and group discussion.

A further lesson concerned evaluation and participant retention. Although 20 community co-researchers participated in the project, response rates differed between the baseline and end-of-project surveys. Future iterations would benefit from building evaluation more systematically into workshop delivery, including matched pre- and post-project measures where appropriate. This would enable changes in confidence and skills to be assessed more robustly while reducing reliance on retrospective self-reporting.

The previous production of accessible resources such as *The Handbook of Antique Photographs* and *The Handbook of Family History Methods* also helped ensure that the co-researchers could revisit concepts independently after the sessions. This experience reinforced the importance of translating academic and archival knowledge into formats that are engaging and approachable for public audiences. Time constraints within the workshop format also presented practical difficulties.

The co-researchers were often highly engaged and eager to share stories, ask questions and discuss photographs in detail, which occasionally made it difficult to cover all planned material within the allocated session time. In some cases, discussions naturally evolved into broader conversations about migration, memory, identity and local history that exceeded the original workshop structure. To manage this, greater flexibility was introduced into later sessions. Workshop activities were prioritised more carefully, additional opportunities for informal discussion were incorporated, and the co-researchers were signposted towards follow-up resources and future activities where appropriate. This highlighted the importance of building adaptability into participatory projects and recognising that meaningful engagement sometimes develops in unexpected but valuable ways.

Practical challenges also emerged during exhibition preparation. Coordinating materials from different co-researchers, preparing captions, ensuring image quality and presenting personal histories respectfully required significant time and organisation. There were also challenges in balancing visual presentation with historical context and ensuring that the co-researchers felt their family stories were accurately represented in the final outputs. These issues were addressed through careful planning, ongoing communication with contributors and a collaborative approach to exhibition development.

The co-researchers shaped how their stories and materials would be presented, helping to ensure that the exhibition remained both respectful and representative. The process reinforced the importance of allowing sufficient preparation time for heritage displays and ensuring that public contributors remain involved throughout the development of exhibition content.

These challenges strengthened the project by encouraging a more reflective, flexible and participant-centred approach to heritage engagement. The experience demonstrated that successful participatory heritage projects depend not only on strong organisation and historical knowledge, but also on empathy, adaptability and the ability to create environments where co-researchers feel confident, valued and meaningfully involved.

Future development: towards a participatory heritage model

The project demonstrated strong potential for the development of a wider participatory heritage model centred on co-production, accessibility and community ownership of historical research. One important area for future development would be the repetition and expansion of the workshop model across additional communities and settings. The success of the sessions highlighted public interest in engaging with family history, photographs and local heritage through collaborative and supportive learning environments.

The model could also be adapted to explore a broader range of heritage themes beyond antique photographs, including oral histories, migration histories, working-class heritage, religious history and community memory projects. Expanding the thematic focus would create opportunities to engage even more diverse groups of co-researchers and strengthen local connections to heritage and identity.

Future collaborations with archives, museums and libraries would further enhance the sustainability and reach of the project. Partnerships with organisations such as Lancashire Archives and regional museums could support travelling exhibitions, shared public programming and the development of community-led archival collections. Such collaborations would also help embed participatory methods more firmly within local heritage practice.

There is also significant potential to integrate this participatory approach into university teaching and research culture, including continuing professional development courses. The workshop model could inform community-engaged teaching methods, placement opportunities and co-produced research projects involving students and public participants working collaboratively. The project offers a framework for bridging academic research with public heritage practice.

The project has potential for continued academic and professional dissemination. Future outputs will include journal articles reflecting on participatory heritage methodologies, public engagement and co-production, alongside the wider dissemination of the project toolkit through university and heritage sector networks. Together, these developments would help establish the project as a scalable and transferable model for community-centred heritage engagement.

A key next stage will therefore be to test the transferability of the model beyond the University campus. Delivering adapted versions of the programme with libraries, archives, museums and community organisations would allow the participatory heritage model to be evaluated across different institutional and community settings. This would provide a stronger evidence base for identifying which elements of the model are transferable, which require local adaptation, and how participatory heritage practice might be scaled sustainably.

Conclusion

Heritage and History in Practice demonstrated how personal heritage materials can be transformed into meaningful public history when community participants are given the skills, confidence and opportunity to become co-researchers. Rather than beginning with established institutional collections, the project began with materials held by individuals and families—photographs, letters, documents, medals, exercise books and other inherited objects—and supported participants to investigate what these sources could reveal about wider histories of Lancashire and beyond.

The resulting research showed the historical potential of seemingly ordinary family collections by connecting individual lives and inherited materials to much wider historical developments. Ellie Wroe's research into Jamaica's Bamboo Estate, for example, used John Carr's 1802 will and the history of formerly enslaved people connected to the plantation to examine slavery, emancipation, landownership and the unequal legacies of Britain's Caribbean plantation economy.

Stewart Turner's investigation of his fourth great-grandfather, Richard Turner, traced how a Westhoughton handloom weaver became a Royal Horse Guards cavalryman and returned to Lancashire during the unrest of 1812, illuminating the tensions created by industrialisation, unemployment, poverty and the difficult loyalties of working-class soldiers ordered to police the very communities from which they originated.

Eve Peel's study of her transient military family followed four generations whose movements to and from Preston between 1878 and 1987 connected family experience with poverty, domestic service, military life, wartime mobility and the opportunities offered by a changing town, demonstrating that migration and transience are themselves important parts of local heritage.

Peter Wilkinson's poignant Tale of Two Sisters demonstrated how a seemingly modest family keepsake—a 1927 Sunday School prize book and the memorial bookmark preserved inside it—could unlock the forgotten story of two teenage sisters, Amy and Ivy Roskell, who died from tuberculosis in Preston in 1926, connecting intimate family memory with the wider social history of interwar Preston.

Katharine Partridge reconstructed more than four centuries of the Portico Estate at Eccleston Park, using a remarkable 1799 indenture alongside family papers, maps and photographs to connect the history of three fields with Catholicism, landownership, inheritance and interwar suburban development.

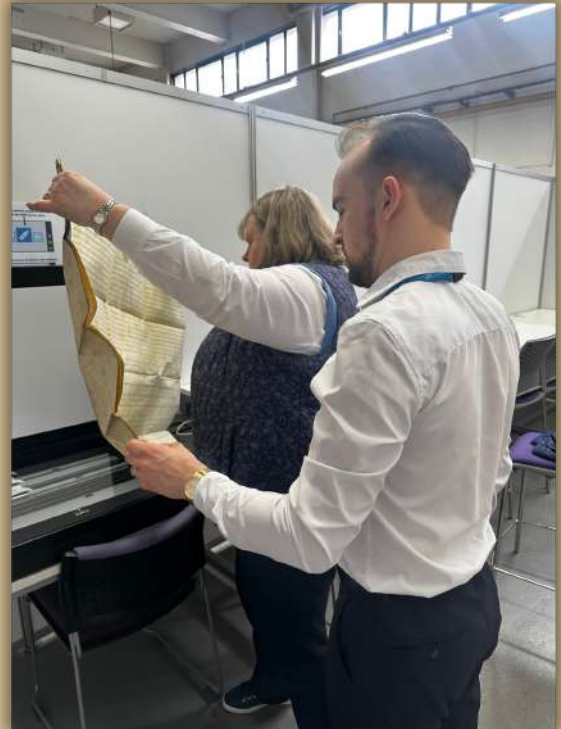
Finally, Joan Clayton's research used a family story passed down across generations to reconstruct the remarkable experiences of her ancestor, Sarah Apperley, who was living and working at Fulwood Barracks aged just ten when she witnessed Private Patrick McCaffery shoot two officers in 1861. By combining family memory with census records, maps, newspapers and other historical sources, Joan transformed an inherited story into a wider exploration of childhood, military families, violence and everyday life in Victorian Preston, culminating in an exhibition panel that brought Sarah's experience to a wider public audience.

Together, these projects demonstrate how family documents and personal research can provide distinctive routes into much larger histories of slavery and empire, industrial conflict, migration and military life, religion, landownership and social change.

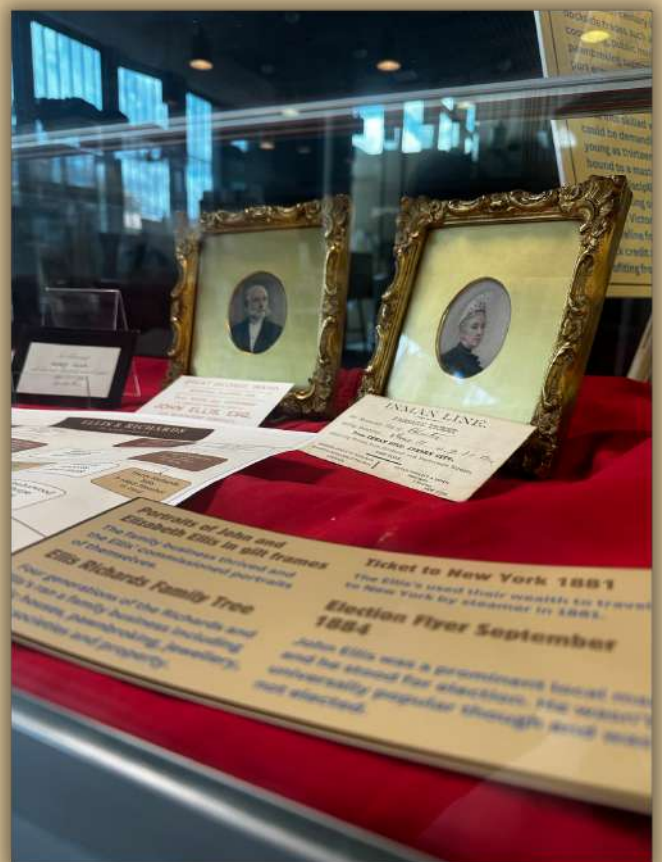
Crucially, these histories did not remain private research projects. The co-researchers learned to analyse sources, contextualise their discoveries and communicate their findings before transforming them into exhibition displays and presentations for public audiences. The exhibition launch attracted around 200 people, with survey responses and verbal feedback indicating that visitors valued not only the diversity of the exhibits—thematically, geographically and chronologically—but also the opportunity to interact with and pose questions to living descendants of the people whose histories they encountered.

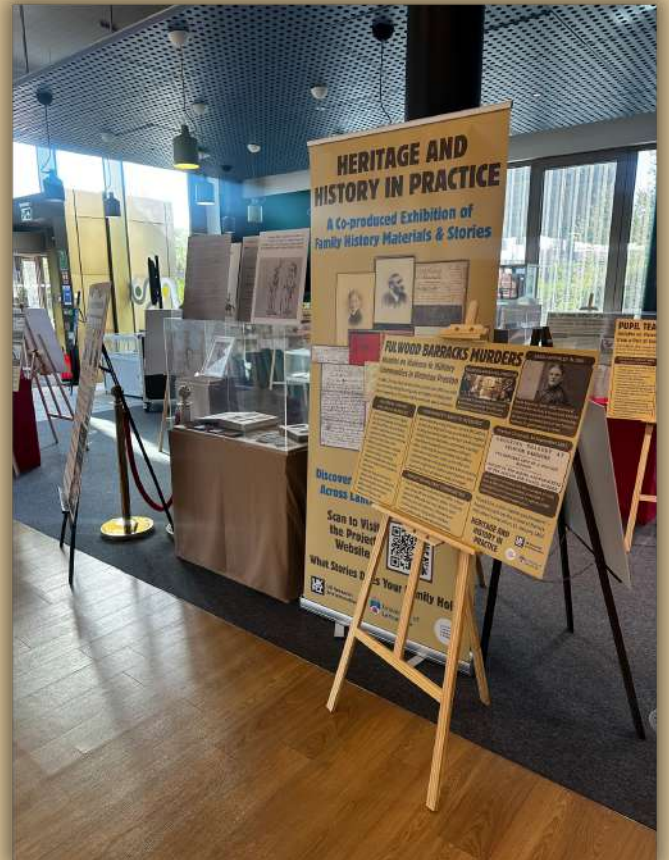
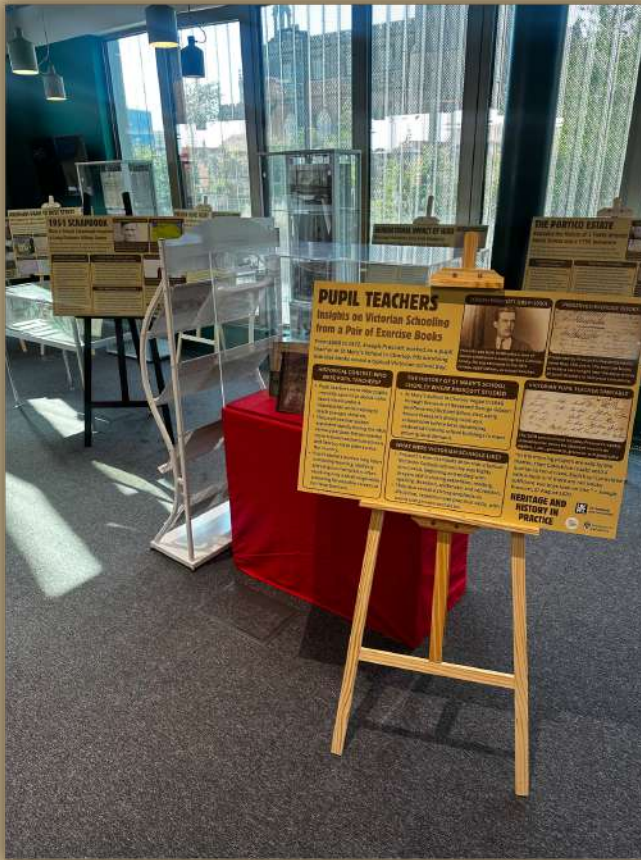
The project therefore demonstrated that participatory heritage is not simply a means of engaging the public with research that has already been produced. It can enable communities to participate in the production of historical knowledge itself. By bringing personal archives into dialogue with historical research methods, academic expertise and public storytelling, *Heritage and History in Practice* transformed privately held materials into shared histories and showed that family collections can illuminate much larger histories of migration, work, war, religion, education, identity and social change. The project demonstrated a simple but important principle: personal heritage becomes public history when people are empowered to research, interpret and share their histories.

Appendix 1: More Workshop and Exhibition Photographs









Appendix 2: More Co-researcher Outputs

WARTIME NURSING

Retracing Romantic Connections in a Cumbrian Nurse's 1914 Autograph Book

The First World War opened young women's eyes to romance but also tragedy and the harsh realities of modern warfare. One autograph book preserves Ella Metcalfe-Gibson's experiences working as a nurse through photographs, poems and drawings by her soldier patients.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The First World War transformed nursing, as thousands of women volunteered in military hospitals across Britain and overseas to care for wounded servicemen.
- Military hospitals naturally became social spaces where nurses and soldiers formed friendships, exchanged letters, and shared experiences of war, recovery and separation.
- Wartime nursing offered many women new opportunities for independence, while also exposing them to the emotional realities of injury, trauma and loss on an unprecedented scale.

ELLA METCALFE-GIBSON (1886-1964)

- Ella was born in Ravenstonedale, Cumbria, into a wealthy mining family. When Ella suggested that she might contribute to the war effort, her mother was so cross with her that she refused to say goodbye. Ella began recording in a diary her feelings about the 87 soldiers she cared for.
- In a diary entry dated 13 January 1916, Ella wrote that a soldier named Butterworth "has gone tonight. I am awfully sorry & I think he felt it very much. He came to say goodbye to me in the sitting room and held my hand for a long time. I asked him to remember to write to me. There is a very sad side to this game."
- Ella's story shows that the social constraints of the period meant that nurses were prevented from pursuing their romantic inclinations, poignantly illustrated by her dying as a spinster.

c.1914 PORTRAIT



Ella Metcalfe-Gibson (left) with Sister Nora and dog Michael at Stramondgate Hospital, Kendal.

SOLDIER'S DRAWING



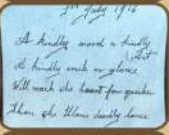
This drawing by drummer W. Hoffin is one of many in Ella's autograph book.

DRIVER EGGLESTON



Known as "Curly", this soldier features heavily in Ella's diary, indicating her fondness for him.

SOLDIER'S POEM



This poem in Ella's book by Private George Ferguson highlights his affection for her.

"A nurse most delightfully slim, used to tackle a patient with vim, so often she said do get out of bed, his face bears a sardonic grin." – a poem written to Ella by O. Dennis, Gloucester Regiment, 12 January 1917.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE

UK Research and Innovation

University of Lancaster

GENERATIONAL IMPACT OF WAR

What Hugh McFadden's Story From Donegal to Preston Reveals About The Lasting Impact of War

Old photographs, letters and memories show how war, migration and loss shaped Irish identity and family life, demonstrating how the emotional impact of conflict extended beyond the battlefield to influence memory and belonging within migrant families.

HUGH MCFADDEN IN SINGAPORE



McFadden enlisted in the British Army as a private but later rose up through the ranks to become a Company Sergeant Major responsible for 100-150 soldiers.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: IMPACT OF WAR ON DESCENDANTS

- The Second World War caused long-term emotional and social disruption for many families, particularly children who lost parents through military service, illness and wartime separation.
- Irish migrants serving in the British armed forces often maintained strong family and cultural ties to Ireland.
- Wartime loss continued to shape descendants long after 1945, influencing family memory, traditions, identity and the absence of relationships with parents and grandparents never fully known.

IRELAND TO LANCASHIRE DURING WW2

- Born in Donegal, Hugh McFadden enlisted in the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and later settled in Preston at Fulwood Barracks, where he met his second wife (also Irish), reflecting the close connections between Irish migration and military life in Britain during the period.
- Hugh's death following the fall of Singapore in 1942 left his young daughters without parents, illustrating how wartime loss could shape family lives and identities across generations.

ABSENCES CAUSED BY WARTIME CONFLICT

- McFadden's story shows how military service and wartime bereavement could leave lasting absences within families, influencing cultural belonging, childhood experiences and intergenerational relationships long after the conflict had ended.

HUGH MCFADDEN'S GRANDCHILDREN, 1965



War reshaped childhood, leaving many children to experience bereavement, separation, long-term emotional loss and displacement at a young age.

"My dear I feel very lonely at times without you, I keep praying night and day that something may happen soon to bring us together again, as I am just dying to be with my own family again." – An extract from McFadden's letter to his wife written in Singapore in 1941.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE

UK Research and Innovation

University of Lancaster

PRESTON HOME FRONT

How Nursing and Military Service Shaped One Family During the First World War

The artefacts and life stories of Maggie Breakell, Henry "Harry" Adams and Charles Richmond reveal the lasting impact of the First World War on families, relationships and memory in Preston.

MAGGIE BREAKELL



Maggie joined the home front by working as a nurse.

CHARLES RICHMOND



Charles joined the 17th Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers.

HARRY ADAMS



Born in Derbyshire, Harry joined the Sherwood Foresters.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: PRESTON'S HOME FRONT

- During the First World War, local hospitals, volunteers and nurses caring for thousands of wounded servicemen returning from the French and Belgian battlefields.
- The war affected most families in Preston, as men enlisted for military service while women took on new responsibilities in hospitals, charities and essential wartime work.
- Military hospitals brought together civilians and servicemen from across Britain, creating relationships that sometimes continued long after the war had ended.

MAGGIE, CHARLES AND HARRY'S STORIES

- Family tradition suggests that Maggie met a soldier at Moor Park Hospital named Harry suffering from a shrapnel wound, beginning a relationship that led to marriage after the war.
- Maggie's cousin Charles was killed during the Battle of the Somme in 1916, illustrating the contrasting wartime experiences of survival, loss and remembrance within a single family.

MAIN HISTORICAL INSIGHTS

- The war reshaped lives beyond the battlefield, as experiences of nursing, military service, bereavement and recovery created lasting connections and influenced later generations.
- Heirlooms like postcards and a wallet with a mirror that saved Harry's life by deflecting a bullet preserve memories of conflict, allowing historians to explore untold impacts of war.

MOOR PARK HOSPITAL, PRESTON, 1918



Established in January 1915, the nurses, doctors and volunteers treated thousands of wounded servicemen returning from the Western Front.

"I have landed at home again just for the week end I wish you could be here with me. Keep smiling. With best love." – Harry Adams' wartime postcard message to his "dear girl" Maggie.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



THE PORTICO ESTATE

Retracing the History of 3 Fields through Family Stories and a 1799 Indenture

The Portico Estate's history is reconstructed from 1593 to the present day, particularly focusing on a milliner and builder in the interwar period who saw promise in the land to fulfil their dreams.

1799 INDENTURE FOR THE PORTICO ESTATE



This legal document records the history and transfer of Three Nooked Croft near Portico Chapel, offering insight into the land's ownership and development over three centuries.

UNDERSTANDING THE PORTICO ESTATE

- The Portico Estate reflects the process of the same plot of land being passed through generations of the Eccleston family from at least the 16th century before being sold in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
- Religious change shaped the landscape. As restrictions on Roman Catholic worship eased in the late eighteenth century, the Portico Chapel became an important centre of worship, and local Jesuit priests acquired the estate to provide an income for their mission.

FROM FIELDS TO HOMES

- William Lyon rose from a late-Victorian working-class background to become a successful builder, transforming three fields into 93 homes through skill and enterprise.
- Lizzie Scowcroft's inheritance and experiences during the First World War provided the financial support that helped turn Lyon's vision for the Portico Estate into reality.

HISTORICAL INSIGHTS OF THE INDENTURE

- Legal documents such as the 1799 indenture can reveal centuries of local history, enabling historians to trace patterns of landownership, inheritance and community development.
- The Portico Estate history demonstrates how religious institutions, including Catholic missions, played an important role in shaping the ownership and use of land in Lancashire.

WILLIAM LYON



Born in St Helens in 1884, Lyon emigrated in 1912 to Canada to fulfil his dreams before returning to England the year after.

LIZZIE SCOWCROFT



Born in Colne in 1895, Scowcroft trained as a milliner in Paris after the First World War and later received inheritance.

"That Close Closure or parcel of land situate lying and being at the Maids Lane ends near Portico Chapel within Eccleston aforesaid." – Thomas Eccleston and others convey Three Nooked Croft to Nicholas Sewall, Robert Johnson and Marmaduke Stone, 2 Nov 1799.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



LIVES ON THE MOVE: FROM 1878 TO 1987, PRESTON PROVIDED A HOME AND OPPORTUNITY TO FOUR RELATIVES

Life on the move conveys a sense of adventure, perhaps also desperation or maybe intrigue and secrecy? Is one moving towards something or escaping from something else? Perhaps a mix of both. My first family link to Preston comes from a brief line in my Great Grandfather Walter Chester's enlistment papers from when he joined the Marines in 1889. He gives as his next of kin: "s (meaning sister) 182 Lancaster Road, Preston." This was the then location of the Golden Cross Hotel and Public House where his older sister Fanny had gone to be a domestic servant. Just a few years earlier, Fanny had been required to leave the workhouse in Bishop's Castle, Shropshire, to find work and free up a place for another desperate soul.



Staff and locals outside the Golden Cross Hotel, Preston. Rights Reserved Linda Barton.

FROM RURAL TO URBAN LIFE

Fanny and Walter Chester were both illegitimate children of Mary Chester who had died in childbirth not long after she had been admitted to the workhouse with her children in 1881. Initial impressions of Preston must have been bewildering for Fanny even whilst this new job liberated her from workhouse captivity and gave her sanctuary. Life here would have been a strong contrast to the disciplined, narrow existence in Bishop's Castle. It was likely even more of a contrast to her earlier life in the rural village of nearby Clun where she and Walter were born into a family of farm labourers.



Walter Chester with his sons Walter (left) and Frederick (right) in the First World War.

At Clun, the siblings lived largely in the care of grandparents whilst their mother worked as a domestic servant. As E. V. Rieu describes in *The Shropshire*, "The land that the Shropshire description is still in the 1880s activity, all things it) and significant the town centre, loss of the Shropshire Golden Cross Hotel."

FROM GLOBAL RAF WARTIME SERVICE TO SETTLING IN LANCASHIRE AT THE DAWN OF THE NEW ELIZABETHAN AGE

It is 1944, probably late summer or autumn. Preston. A dance hall, or more likely a hall of some sort hosting a dance. The packed room is full of couples dancing in pairs to tunes performed by a small musical ensemble. Many of the people are in military uniform. Women adopt the look of the American film stars who they idolised. Some American service persons are present. A small group of airmen, stationed at Warton, arrive at the hall disappointed to find that the event is sold out and they cannot gain admission. Disgruntled, they light hard-won cigarettes and pace around the exterior of the hall. Opportunity beckons as they note that a window large enough for a person to climb through is open. They climb in. People look up noticing them and chuckle: after all, they are risking their lives in the defence of the country in their military service. Irene looks up as she dances and smiles, making comment to those close to her. She particularly notices the thin young airman with slightly receding dark hair and alluring eyes. Years later, writing memoirs for some unknown purpose, possibly notes for the celebration of her and his wife's Golden Wedding Anniversary, Jim recalled that once he was in that dance hall, his eyes fell upon the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Jim and Irene would be married in Preston within two years.

SOUTHAMPTON ORIGINS

Jim was born in Southampton. His parents worked the commercial shipping lines to America as service staff. Aged 16, he obtained an apprenticeship as a baker in central London, on Ramillies Street, off Oxford Street. When of age for military service, he volunteered for Air Force, as he was interested in planes. Recollecting his experiences in casual conversation, over many years, he recalled that he had trained on Spitfire fighter planes, but that he was not engaged as a fighter pilot because they discovered he had something defective in his vision. [I suspect it might actually have been a class issue].



Jim and Irene at their wedding in Preston, 1945.

Jim was subsequently trained as an RAF navigator and crewed Halifax supply planes / bombers. He would travel to India, America, Canada and Ceylon in that role, as his flight logbook from 1944-45 shows.

Let's be

*Let me religious pleasure join
 I leave the world to you
 Let me die the death of the
 Righteous and let my last
 end be like him — J.T.
 Oh that we were all Harmonious*

CIVIL

*We certify that this is one of
 the Registers or Records —
 deposited in the General Register
 Office, pursuant to the Act of
 the 4th Victoria, Cap 92.*

*Sam Dale
 John Bowdler
 Rob. Wenden*

AVENHAM PARK TO ROSE STREET



First Opened in 1976, Jalgos Sports and Social Club in Rose Street in Preston is Lancashire's Last Remaining Caribbean Social Club

Created by students at St Stephen's Primary School, these images illustrate Jalgos West Indian Cricket Club's journey from its foundation in 1962 to the opening of its forever home in 1976, a home away from home where everyone is welcome.

BLUES PARTY RECORDS



OUT OF A HAT



GREAT BALLS OF FIRE



THE MAYOR'S VISIT



JALGOS BLAZER



PICNIC ON THE PARK



NO HOME FOR JALGOS



LEND US £1000?



HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



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JAMAICAN SUGAR PLANTATIONS

Insights on Changing Attitudes to Slavery in John Carr's 1802 Will

Exploring slavery, freedom and land ownership through the story of Bamboo Estate in Jamaica and the lives shaped by a plantation owner's will in the age of empire.

BAMBOO ESTATE, HANOVER



Bamboo Estate was a 700-acre sugar plantation in Hanover that William Carr Walker owned after John Carr.

COMPENSATION FOR SLAVES

Under the terms of the Act of 1833, the sum of £5000 has been paid by the Government in compensation to the owner of the Bamboo Estate, the late John Carr, for the loss of the property of the late John Carr, and that this sum shall be paid to the hands of J. S. Black, as Mortgagee, if a case of Bankruptcy be brought against the said John Carr, or his estate.

In an 1847 court hearing, the government paid £5000 in compensation to the slaves on the land but this was passed to James Graham Clark as mortgage.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SLAVERY AND JAMAICAN PLANTATIONS

- During the 18th and early 19th centuries, Jamaica was one of Britain's wealthiest colonies, with vast sugar plantations generating enormous profits through the labour of enslaved Africans.
- Enslaved people endured brutal conditions, beginning with the dangerous Middle Passage across the Atlantic and continuing with harsh labour, family separation, and legal and social restrictions.
- However, slave rebellions, changing public attitudes, and debates about emancipation began to challenge the plantation system across the Caribbean.

POWER, PROPERTY & PLANTATION SOCIETY

- John Carr owned Bamboo Estate at Hanover, a large Jamaican sugar plantation worked by enslaved labourers during the height of Britain's colonial slave economy.
- In his will, written around 1800 and proved in 1802, Carr unusually named several formerly enslaved people, granting some land, freedoms and protections, raising important questions about slavery, power and the realities of emancipation within plantation society.

INSIGHTS ON CHANGING ATTITUDES

- Carr's will suggests that some plantation owners may have been beginning to question aspects of slavery and enslavement even before abolition, although their actions still remained shaped by unequal systems of power and control.

THE FATE OF CARR'S FORMER SLAVES

Under the terms of the Act of 1833, the sum of £5000 has been paid by the Government in compensation to the owner of the Bamboo Estate, the late John Carr, for the loss of the property of the late John Carr, and that this sum shall be paid to the hands of J. S. Black, as Mortgagee, if a case of Bankruptcy be brought against the said John Carr, or his estate.

"I will order and direct that 20 acres of land at the South West corner of my property...be set apart as a provision ground for the use of a Mullato woman named Betsy Brown and her children (formerly my slaves) but since emancipated." – an extract from Carr's will, 1800.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



FULWOOD BARRACKS MURDERS

Insights on Violence in Military Communities in Victorian Preston

In 1861, Private Patrick McCaffery shot two officers with his rifle after being found guilty of neglect of duty but Sarah Apperley, a 10-year-old nursemaid, was a witness.

FULWOOD BARRACKS, PRESTON



From 1848, Fulwood Barracks housed British Army regiments for 170 years, shaping the social history of Preston.

SARAH APPERLEY IN 1916



Sarah Apperley (1851–1921) worked at Fulwood Barracks as a nursemaid and the trauma she experienced from witnessing the murder remained part of her family's memory for generations to come.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: VIOLENCE IN BARRACKS

- Victorian barracks were highly disciplined spaces, but tensions between officers and ordinary soldiers could become intense, especially when punishment was severe or felt to be unfair.
- Military communities included soldiers, wives, children and civilian workers, meaning violence inside barracks could affect far more people than the army alone.
- Cases like Fulwood Barracks reveal wider Victorian concerns about discipline, mental strain, public safety and the harsh realities of military life.

CONFINEMENT LEADS TO OUTBURST

- Before the shooting, Private Patrick McCaffery of the 32nd Regiment was punished for neglect of duty and sentenced to 14 days' confinement within Fulwood Barracks, reportedly causing resentment towards his superior officers.
- After receiving his punishment, McCaffery returned to his room, took up his rifle and entered the barracks quadrangle where he shot Colonel Hugh Denis Crofton and Captain John Hanham in front of soldiers and witnesses.

INSIGHT ON MILITARY COMMUNITIES

- The Fulwood Barracks murders offer a rare case study of how violence within Victorian barracks affected not only soldiers and officers, but also women, children and civilian workers living within military communities who experienced trauma.

Preston Chronicle, 18 September 1861

SHOCKING TRAGEDY AT FULWOOD BARRACKS.

TWO OFFICERS SHOT BY A PRIVATE SOLDIER.

INQUEST ON THE BODIES, AND COMMITTAL OF THE ACCUSED FOR WILFUL MURDER.

Following his conviction for the murders, Private Patrick McCaffery was publicly executed at Kirkdale Prison in Liverpool on 11 January 1862 before a large crowd of spectators.

"Good God, is this capital punishment!" – Reported cry from the crowd at Patrick McCaffery's execution, 11 January 1862

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



REBEL CATHOLICS

The Opening of the Leyland Latin Mass Centre, 1974–1977

During the 1970s, an isolated Leyland house became a hub for the movement to restore the Latin Mass after the Catholic Church abandoned it following Vatican II.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE PAPAL BAN ON LATIN MASSES

- The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) decided that the Mass would be celebrated using vernacular languages to make the Mass more accessible and promote active participation.
- In 1969, Pope Paul VI restricted the Latin Mass; the 1971 Heenan Indult required bishopric approval to celebrate the Latin Mass in England and Wales.
- The Saint Pius V Association led by Father Peter Morgan began organising unapproved Masses.
- By 1975, 3,000 English Catholics united in their refusal to accept restrictions on the Latin Mass.

THE OPENING OF THE FIRST LATIN MASS CENTRE IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND

- With their parish priest at Leyland refusing to celebrate the Latin Mass, Derrick and Irene Taylor travelled far and wide to attend Saint Pius V Association Masses until they decided to open their own house chapel in April 1974.
- For taking this action, the couple were labelled “rebels” and “cranks.”

TRADITIONALIST CATHOLICS IN LANCASHIRE: A MOVEMENT EMERGES

- Local newspapers describe how Catholics from Preston and the Fylde travelled to the Leyland Mass Centre to hear the Latin Mass.
- Mr and Mrs Taylor believed in the version of the Mass their parents had taught them and they aimed to preserve this tradition by bringing their children into the movement.

MAKESHIFT MASSES



The Taylor family hosted unapproved Latin Masses in their living room and garden using a makeshift altar. The Masses were celebrated by a band of rebel clergy.

NEWS OF REBELLION SPREADS



The Taylors' house chapel was featured on the *Lancashire Evening Post* front page. Father Morgan's rebel clergy traversed England, serving about 30 Mass centres.

A FRENCH REBEL IN ENGLAND



The Latin movement's figurehead was a French Archbishop named Marcel Lefebvre who regularly visited England in defiance of the bishops.

“My heart bleeds for the Catholics of today. There is a treasure and they are just throwing it away.” – Derrick Taylor, October 1975.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



BANANA BOATS

The Journey of Caribbean Stowaways to Britain, 1959–60

A lesser-known chapter in the history of British immigration involves men who risked their lives to travel as stowaways on cargo ships from the Caribbean.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE BANANA BOAT STOWAWAYS

- In the late 1950s and early 1960s, some Caribbean men travelled secretly to Britain on banana boats, risking dangerous Atlantic crossings in the hope of finding work and a better life.
- Preston Dock became one of several British ports linked to Caribbean migration, as ships carrying bananas from the Windward Islands such as Dominica also brought migrants.
- These journeys reveal how post-war migration was shaped by personal ambition and economic hardship during the final years of empire.

PROBLEMATIC AND “PENNILESS”

- Newspaper reports show that Caribbean stowaways arriving at Preston Dock were often described as “penniless.”
- While shipping companies viewed the stowaways as a logistical “problem”, the men were legally British subjects and could not easily be prosecuted for entering the country.

RETRACING THE LIVES OF STOWAWAYS

- Later records about the eight men who arrived at Preston aboard the Norwegian banana boat *Bjorgstein* in 1960 show that some travelled on to London and Cardiff.
- Later oral history shows that these journeys were shaped by hopes for work, ideas of Britain as the “Motherland”, and the painful experience of arriving as a British citizen but later being made to feel “not British.”

8 STOWAWAYS AT PRESTON, 1960



This photograph of 8 stowaways from Dominica who arrived in Preston in February 1960 was featured in an article in the *Lancashire Evening Post*.

3 STOWAWAYS ARRIVE IN 1959



This photograph from another *Lancashire Evening Post* article in September 1959 shows three stowaways from the Caribbean coming ashore at Preston.

H.M.T. EMPIRE WINDRUSH



From 1948, thousands of people travelled from across the Caribbean to help rebuild Britain after the Second World War and fill labour shortages in transport, healthcare and industrial sectors.

“You couldn’t tell what kind of work you could hope for...in the 60s there was plenty of work...the money was small but it grew with the economy.” – Hesketh James Boston, oral history extract, 2019.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



PUPIL TEACHERS

Insights on Victorian Schooling from a Pair of Exercise Books

From 1868 to 1872, Joseph Prescott worked as a pupil teacher at St Mary's School in Chorley. His surviving exercise books reveal a typical Victorian school day.

JOSEPH PRESCOTT (1854–1930)



Prescott was born in Wheelton, one of eleven children in a working class Catholic family. He was recorded in the 1871 census, aged sixteen, as a pupil teacher.

PRESERVED EXERCISE BOOKS



Preserved by Prescott's descendants for more than 150 years, the exercise books provide a rare insight into the experiences of pupil teachers in Victorian Lancashire.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: WHO WERE PUPIL TEACHERS?

- Pupil teachers were older pupils—usually aged 13 or above—who apprenticed under a headteacher while helping to teach younger children.
- The pupil-teacher system expanded rapidly during the 19th century because Britain needed more trained teachers as schools and literacy rates grew across the country.
- Pupil teachers worked long hours combining teaching, studying and religious instruction, often receiving only a small wage while preparing for possible careers as full-time teachers.

THE HISTORY OF ST MARY'S SCHOOL CHORLEY WHERE PRESCOTT STUDIED

- St Mary's School in Chorley began in 1846 through the work of Reverend George Gibson and Reverend Richard Gillow, first using Mount Pleasant's dining room as a schoolroom before later developing dedicated Catholic school buildings to meet growing local demand.

WHAT WERE VICTORIAN SCHOOLS LIKE?

- Prescott's exercise books show that a typical Victorian Catholic school day was highly structured, beginning and ending with prayers and including catechism, reading, spelling, dictation, arithmetic and recreation.
- They also reveal a strong emphasis on discipline, repetition and practical skills, with pupils using books and slates.

VICTORIAN PUPIL TEACHER TIMETABLE



The 1870 exercise book includes Prescott's weekly timetable that shows he attended lessons on algebra, Latin, geometry, grammar and geography.

"In the morning prayers are said by the master, then Catechism is said until a quarter to ten o'clock. Each boy is provided with a book or if there are not books sufficient two boys look on one." – Joseph Prescott, 17 August 1870.

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FRANCIS McMELLON

The Artistic Legacy of a Bamber Bridge Schoolmaster

Discover how one schoolmaster used education, art and faith to shape generations of local lives in twentieth-century Bamber Bridge.

FRANCIS McMELLON (1892–1976)



McMellon was born in Bamber Bridge into a Catholic family. His father William was also a headmaster, helping shape Francis' lifelong passion for teaching and learning.

McMELLON DEFENDS EDUCATION

OUR MODERN EDUCATION.

To the Editor of The Lancashire Daily Post.
SIR.—Mr. Parkinson is, to a certain extent, right in his assertion that the cotton industry in Lancashire is due to the efforts of uneducated men. Many of the great cotton firms of to-day owe their origin to men who were sharp enough to seize the opportunity of using (or appropriating) the invention of power though better men than themselves. But is the industry of the present day governed by men of poor education? This by the way.

In a 1921 letter, McMellon argued that children needed more advanced learning to succeed in the modern world instead of relying on memorisation and basic skills.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

- McMellon grew up during a time when many working-class children left school young to work in mills and factories.
- New laws raised the school leaving age and expanded opportunities for poorer children to continue learning.
- McMellon spent almost fifty years at Brownedge Boys' School in Bamber Bridge, beginning as a student teacher before becoming assistant headmaster in 1912 and later headmaster in 1938, remaining there until his retirement in 1955.

McMELLON'S ART CAPTURED THE BEAUTY OF THE LANCASHIRE COUNTRYSIDE

- Never including people and only sometimes an odd bird or cattle in his paintings, McMellon's works instead focused on the Lancashire countryside at a time when traditional rural landscapes and canals were beginning to disappear because of modern development and industrial change.

INSIGHTS FROM McMELLON'S CAREER

- Through his work as a teacher, headmaster and founder of local night schools, McMellon believed education should continue beyond childhood and be available to ordinary working people, including adults who had missed out on schooling when young.
- Mellon's career reflects the importance of Catholic education in 20th century Lancashire.

FARMHOUSE BY THE SEA, 1961



McMellon captured quiet rural landscapes with soft colours and careful detail. This work features his hallmark: a sail boat leaning to one side.

"True education is not an ability to write in copperplate work lengthy and useless problems in arithmetic or memorise long strings of capes and bays" – Francis McMellon, 11 March 1921.

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1951 SCRAPBOOK

How a School Scrapbook Inspired a Long-Distance Hiking Career

William Warbrick created a scrapbook during a school trip to a summer camp in Suffolk led to a lifetime of scrapbooking and his love for the great outdoors.

WILLIAM WARBRICK (1936–2025)



Warbrick attended St Bede's School in Clayton Green. His father was the school caretaker and the parish church's sexton and the family lived in School House.

A TALENTED CARTOGRAPHER



Several pages in Warbrick's scrapbook show his talent for map drawing as his school trip took him and his classmates across Norfolk and Suffolk in July 1951.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE PRACTICE OF SCRAPBOOKING

- In post-war Britain, school scrapbooks were often used to encourage learning by doing, asking pupils to create their own records through maps, diaries, lists, drawings and collected materials.
- Scrapbooking helped children organise and reflect on their experiences, turning outdoor education into structured learning through observation, writing and visual presentation.
- Scrapbooks developed attention to detail, creativity and ownership over knowledge beyond the classroom.

THE ST BEDE'S SCHOOL TRIP TO KESSINGLAND CAMP, SUMMER 1951

- In July 1951, 14 year old Warbrick travelled from Lancashire to Kessingland Camp on the Suffolk coast as part of a school trip.
- The trip combined education with outdoor experience, encouraging pupils to explore new landscapes, keep diaries and draw maps through the creation of scrapbooks.

POST-WAR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

- The scrapbook reveals how post-war British Catholic schools encouraged pupils to combine discipline, creativity and reflection.
- The Kessingland trip shows that Catholic education extended beyond the classroom, using school camps to promote cooperation, moral development, engagement with nature and personal growth.

A PASSION FOR LONG-DISTANCE HIKING



Later in life, Warbrick joined the Long Distance Walkers Association, completing 23 100-mile events across Britain between 1988 and 2015.

"Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results." – John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916.

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IRISH IMMIGRANTS

What Life Was Like in Victorian Preston for Irish Families

The McKerney family arrived in Preston in 1855 after fleeing the potato famine, but their experience was marred by murder, alcoholism and domestic violence.

UXORICIDE ON GRADWELL STREET

THE WIFE MURDER IN PRESTON.

On Monday afternoon an inquiry was held at the Police Station, on the body of Margaret McKerney, who was killed by her husband, Andrew McKerney, on Saturday. The evidence showed that on Friday the prisoner, who is a brutal fellow, well known to the police, threatened his wife, and when she left home for her work on Saturday morning he expressed a wish that she would not return alive. He was very violent towards her, and frequently abused her without provocation. The body was found with a knife wound.

On 15 July 1876, Andrew McKerney kicked his wife to death after years of domestic abuse. McKerney tried and sentenced to 18 months hard labour for his crime.

VIOLENCE AGAINST IRISHWOMAN

MYSTERIOUS DEATH IN PRESTON.

ALLEGED VIOLENCE TO A MARRIED WOMAN.

This afternoon, the district coroner, Dr. Gilbertson, held an inquest at the Preston Police Station, on the body of Ann Dolan, a married woman, of 21, Walker-street, who died on Thursday, under very extraordinary circumstances.

On Christmas Eve 1887, Ann Dolan (née McKerney) died following an outburst of drunken violence on Edward Street, Preston, with her killer never identified.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: IRISH IMMIGRATION TO ENGLAND

- The Great Irish Famine of 1845–1852 accelerated large-scale Irish migration to England, with many families travelling through Liverpool before settling in industrial towns such as Preston in search of work, safety and improved living conditions.
- By the mid-nineteenth century, Preston had one of the largest Irish-born populations in England, with many migrants living in overcrowded housing around Marsh Lane and the town's "Irish quarter."

THE RISE IN HIBERNOPHOBIA: DISCRIMINATION AND IRISH STEREOTYPES

- Irish migrants often faced prejudice and "othering" in Victorian England, with stereotypes linking the Irish to poverty, crime, disease and disorder spread through newspapers, political commentary and satirical cartoons. It was a widely held belief that the Irish were a burden on the poor rate.

McKERNAY FAMILY IN PRESTON

- The McKerney family migrated from Dublin and settled in Preston's overcrowded Irish quarter around Lower Pitt Street.
- Like many Irish migrant families in Victorian England, the McKernays experienced poverty, discrimination, and difficult living conditions, while also becoming part of Preston's growing Irish Catholic community.

THE IRISH FRANKENSTEIN, 1882



Satirical cartoons depicting the Irish as dangerous, animalistic or subhuman were a fairly common sight in Punch Magazine during the 19th century.

"All who are familiar with the record of the police court will know that the brutality and violence of men of this class towards their wives is unceasing." – Preston Chronicle reporter, 22 July 1876.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE

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THE LANCASHIRE RIOTS OF 1812

Industrial Unrest Retold Through The Life and Times of Cavalryman Richard Turner (1783–1860)

In 1812, cavalry trooper Richard Turner returned to his native Lancashire to police the very communities he had once belonged to as unrest erupted over industrialisation, unemployment and the growing use of steam-powered mills and spinning machinery.

ROYAL HORSE GUARDS, c.1813



Drawing of a Blues trooper, the nearest we will get to a picture of Richard Turner.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: UNREST IN NAPOLEONIC LANCASHIRE

- The 1812 Lancashire Riots were caused by rising unemployment, high food prices and economic hardship during the Napoleonic Wars, which badly affected textile and weaving communities.
- Many workers feared the growing use of steam-powered mills, power looms and spinning machinery, which threatened traditional jobs.
- The unrest became so serious that thousands of troops were deployed across northern England to control riots, food protests and Luddite-style attacks on industrial sites.

FROM WEAVER TO CAVALRY TROOPER

- Richard Turner was born into a Westhoughton weaving community affected by economic hardship during the Napoleonic Wars, but in 1805 he left the cotton industry to enlist in the Royal Horse Guards as a cavalry trooper.
- In 1812, Turner returned to Bolton with the army during the riots, placing him in the difficult position of helping control unrest among working-class communities similar to the one he had grown up in as a young weaver.

INSIGHT FROM A SOLDIER'S DILEMMA

- Richard Turner's story reveals how the Lancashire Riots blurred the boundaries between working-class communities and the state, as former textile workers could find themselves returning as soldiers to suppress unrest within their own home communities.

Ruins of Rowe & Dunsough's Mill, 1899.



This Westhoughton mill was one of the main flashpoints of the 1812 unrest in Lancashire.

"Having stolen a large quantity of potatoes" – The charge against more than 100 people in Manchester, 29 April 1812.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



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THE MILL MURDER

A Petition to Reprieve Arthur Birkett in Blackburn, 1912

After killing his former sweetheart, Alice Beetham, in a Blackburn mill in May 1912, a public campaign to reprieve Birkett from his death sentence emerged.

ARTHUR BIRKETT (1889–1912)



After Birkett's conviction, a public mercy campaign began, with supporters arguing that Birkett acted in emotional despair instead of cold-blooded cruelty.

ALICE BEETHAM (1893–1912)



Beetham's funeral drew thousands of mourners onto the streets of Blackburn, reflecting the emotional impact the murder had on the local community.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE DEATH PENALTY IN ENGLAND

- In Edwardian England, murder usually carried a death sentence. After conviction, the main hope was a reprieve, meaning the sentence could be reduced to life imprisonment.
- Reprieve requests were sent to the Home Office, which looked for recognised reasons such as insanity, serious doubt about the evidence, youth, or a jury recommendation for mercy.
- Public petitions could gather thousands of signatures, but emotion alone was rarely enough to satisfy the strictly narrow criteria of the Home Office.

A ROMANCE FIZZLES OUT BETWEEN TWO WORKERS AT JUBILEE MILL, BLACKBURN

- Birkett and Beetham had been courting, but Alice decided to end the relationship. Beetham's father ordered his daughter not to engage in "street-corner courting."
- In the days leading up to the murder, witnesses recalled Birkett becoming increasingly distressed and jealous.

A TRAGEDY, A FUNERAL AND A TRIAL

- On 20 May, Birkett attacked Beetham with a razor in front of hundreds of millworkers.
- After fatally wounding her, Birkett attempted to take his own life by cutting his throat, but he survived and was later arrested and charged with wilful murder.
- Birkett's case went to trial as thousands attended Beetham's funeral in Blackburn.

A FAILED CAMPAIGN FOR MERCY

ARTHUR BIRKETT TO DIE.

Despite amassing 70,000 signatures, the Home Office refused to grant Birkett a reprieve and he was hanged on 23 July 1912 at Strangeways Gaol.

"It is awfully hard to think how I shall have to finish up on this earth if I don't get a reprieve, but the Lord says our bodies are nothing; it is our souls we must pray for." – Arthur Birkett, 17 July 1912.

HERITAGE AND HISTORY IN PRACTICE



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