

ODFHS SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT – 1 August 2025

RESULTS OF THE ODFHS 45th ANNIVERSARY COMPETITION

Hi all members

The aim of the competition was to choose one of “Who is your most interesting West Lancashire ancestor?” or “What is your most interesting family discovery related to West Lancashire?” and to tell us about it in 300 – 750 words plus photos and illustrations as appropriate.

We received eleven entries in total from members and non-members both in the UK and overseas. The overall standard of entries was excellent and the judges were impressed by the range of topics and eras (from 17th – 20th century subjects), the information presented and the story-telling in them.

All the authors can be proud of their entries, but the judges did manage to pick out a top three. The prize for winning is a year’s free membership of ODFHS. To everyone else – well done and a big thank you for competing and helping us to celebrate our 45th anniversary. We hope you enjoyed it, we certainly did.

1st The winner was written by one of our Australian members, Wesley Hedges, about his three times great aunt Mary Reynolds. Mary Reynolds was born in Ormskirk in 1786. She had a difficult early life leading, aged 34, to her being transported to Australia for the crime of theft. On the way, she met a sailor, they married on arrival in Sydney and stayed together for the rest of her life. Six years later, Mary, now a free woman, came back to England on her own to find her son and returned to Australia with him, where she enjoyed a happy family life. She died in Sydney in 1835 aged 49. You can read the rest of this touching story of scandal, exile, love, loss yet ultimate happiness when it’s published in the November edition of our Society Magazine “*The Ormskirk and District Family Historian*”. Wesley Hedges joined ODFHS earlier this year to find out more about his ancestors and the area they came from (his three times great grandfather was Mary’s brother). Some of you may remember Wesley from our June 2025 meeting when Wesley and his wife Rita were able to join us whilst on an extended tour of Europe. Keen lawn bowlers, they even managed to take in a game of bowls whilst they were here. They’ll be returning home via Japan where they’ll be representing Malta (Rita’s family home) in an international bowls tournament in September.



2nd In second place is the story of Eric Alfred Dean which was written by local member Michael Dawson. His story concerns a man who was a close boyhood friend of Michael’s father, William, in Lathom and who died on active service in 1943. But that man, Eric Alfred Dean, did not appear on

local war memorials until 2004 following the intervention of Michael's father, helped by Michael and another local historian. After that, they eventually found out what had happened to Eric and where he was buried. In 2012, Michael took his father to visit his pal's grave in Stafford cemetery for the first and last time. Soon after arriving home that day William Dawson suddenly became ill and passed away in the early hours of the following morning. You can read the rest of this moving account of Eric Alfred Dean's life and the efforts of Michael and William Dawson to have him properly remembered when it's published in the March 2026 edition of our Society Magazine "*The Ormskirk and District Family Historian*". Michael is well known to many of us as the main person behind "*Images of Burscough*" and a leading supporter of local heritage activities in West Lancashire.



3rd

In third place is a story about Robert Mawdsley, a 19th century entrepreneur who was born in Crosby and spent his life trying to bring Crosby into "the modern age". With perseverance and determination he introduced into Crosby a mains water system and a gas supply linked to a gas company in Liverpool. He was also a prominent local politician and administrator introducing, amongst other things, the granting of school fees to parents unable to provide the necessary funds. This story was written by Robert Mawdsley's great grandson, also called Robert Mawdsley, who lives in Aughton. He is not a member of ODFHS, but learnt of our competition through the U3A of which he is a member. You can read more of this story when it's published in the July 2026 edition of our Society Magazine "*The Ormskirk and District Family Historian*".

All good wishes

Kate Hurst

Chairman

Ormskirk and District Family History Society