

PETER ENTWISTLE, F.R.A.I.

by
Barbara Nightingale

Early in 1926, Peter Entwistle applied for the post of Curator of Museums in Liverpool. Here is a transcript of his letter of application (from a photocopy provided by Liverpool Museum):

The Chairman,
Library Museum & Arts Committee,

Sir,

Service. In offering myself as a candidate for the vacancy of Curator of Museums, Liverpool – may I be permitted to state that the whole of my life has been spent in your service, in the Art, Natural History and Archaeological and Ethnographical Depts., and that I have advanced stage by stage through the manifold ramifications of its several Sections until I attained my present position of Deputy Curator of both Museums. My experience has been very varied – first in Art under Mr. B. H. Grindley the then Editor of the “Liverpool Albion” and Secretary to the Autumn Exhibition when held in the Museum then with Mr. T. J. Moore, Curator of the Derby Museum, working particularly with his son – the eminent Osteologist – and Mr. C. T. Gatty Curator of the Mayer Museum whom I succeeded – and later with Dr. H. E. Forbes and Dr. Clubb, as his Deputy of both Museums.

So extensive a service under such able men could not have continued if I were not qualified for the work. During the period of Mr. Gatty’s Curatorship the Mayer Museum had a separate existence with its own finances, of which I had charge. In addition to the work of Deputy Curator under Dr. Forbes, I also carried on much of the administration.

Organisation & Exhibitions. In 1880 I helped in the organisation and arrangement of the “Loan exhibition of Prehistoric Antiquities and Ethnography” the outcome of which was the formation of the Museum collection of Ethnography, and for which the Committee built a room in the Walker Art Gallery, (the present black and white room “No. 10”). In a Catalogue of the Ethnography in the Museum, subsequently issued, Mr. Gatty in his Preface returns thanks for assistance rendered and closes with the following remarks:-

“ – Also to express his great obligations to his assistant, Mr. Peter Entwistle, whose intimate knowledge of the specimens has been of the greatest service in the compilation of this catalogue”.

In 1886 I arranged the West African Court in the “International Shippers Exhibition”, Liverpool, and in 1887 the “Exploration Courts” in the Jubilee Exhibition, Liverpool, also an exhibition of Welsh Antiquities in St. Georges Hall and organised and arranged the Ceramic Section of the Liverpool Sept., Century Exhibition, Liverpool 1907. Some years before I cleaned and arranged the collection of minerals, agates and precious stones for Prof., John Ruskin at Brantwood, with the object of forming a collection illustrating the evolution of Shipping (the Pioneer of the 1886 Exhibition). I assisted in collecting many rare instruments etc., as well as information.

Knowledge of Museums. The greater part of my vacation each year has been devoted to visiting Museums in various places with a view of acquiring an idea of their contents, and the arrangement of the same as well as to search out examples of Liverpool pottery:- in pursuit of this I have visited Museums in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Hamburg, Berlin, Dresden, Nuremberg, Mayence, Cologne, Brussels, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Teneriffe and Grand Canary, as well as very many private collections; such an extensive series of visits must naturally be of great use to anyone employed in Museum work, and I

have always been on the alert to note the methods of exhibitions adopted. In addition I paid particular attention to Cities with Aquaria in which I am interested – At Grand Canary I found the only rock where Anemones had been found previously by the late Isaac Thompson. From the Canary Museum I brought back Guanche remains, and from Teneriffe roofing tiles etc., from the dome of the Museum – an old Monastery – and also arranged an exchange.

As the direct result of my various visits and influence with collectors have procured many valuable additions for the Museum – notably the Ridyard Collection of Ethnography which was collected by him over a period of 25 years under my advice.

Museum Display and Cases. I have had considerable experience in designing exhibition cases for various classes of exhibits – notably the cases now used for displaying Ceramics in our Museum which have been much admired for their accessibility and ready means of observing the contents – also the sloping cases in the Main Hall containing the smaller Egyptian objects, which can be removed in a few minutes if required without interfering with the exhibits, and recently the specially devised method of exhibiting Tassie portraits in glass by electrical illumination whereby the exhibits are seen to perfection even on the darkest day or night.

Anthropography. The Anthropological collection was organised and the enlarged photographs of the Faces of Man mainly prepared by me – as also a duplicate series for the British and Fitzwilliam Museums.

Research Work. My research into the history of Liverpool and its Pottery and excavations on the sites, has been the means of establishing Liverpool in its true position in the History of Ceramic Art, and the results are now accepted by the Authorities at the B.M. & V. and A. Museums, who have not hesitated to remove specimens from their cases which had been classed as the work of other factories. For the past two years, during my vacation and whenever I had a day free, I have in conjunction with the Wedgwoods and Mr. Cook the Curator – excavated on the site of the famous potter, Thomas Wheildon at Fenton Low, Staffordshire with wonderful results – so much so, as to induce Mr. Hobson of the B. M. and Mr. Bernard Rackham of the Victoria and Albert Museum to visit the excavations. The result of this (when completed) will be to establish once for all the actual products of this famous man – and complete a chapter in the Ceramic Art of Great Britain.

For many years I regularly watched the forest bed at Leasowe – as well as the Neolithic floor at New Brighton. Many of the practical methods of work entailed in a Museum such as Photography, plastercasting, restorations etc., are all known and practiced by me.

From the forgoing brief notes it will be noted that I have had a much greater experience than most Curators in all phases of the work which so frequently comes under their notice.

I beg also to submit testimonials from Sir C. Hercules Read, Trustee and late Keeper of Mediaeval Antiquities and Ethnography in the British Museum, with whom I have been in close touch since boyhood, also from Mr. H. L. Hobson, Keeper of Ceramics and Ethnography in the British Museum and Mr. Bernard Rackham, Keeper of Ceramics in the Victoria and Albert Museum

Yours obediently,

Who was Peter Entwistle? He made his first appearance in the censuses in 1871 as the youngest son of Barnett and Eliza Entwistle, nee Knight, who had married at Prestwich St. Mary in 1846.

1871 CENSUS: 6 CLAYTON STREET, LIVERPOOL [RG10/3789, folio 86]

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|---|----|-----------------|-----------|
| Barnett Entwistle | Head | M | 48 | Porter | Lancaster |
| Eliza Entwistle | Wife | M | 52 | | York |
| John Entwistle | Son | U | 20 | Porter | Lancaster |
| Thomas Entwistle | Son | | 16 | Tobacco Spinner | Lancaster |
| Robert Entwistle | Son | | 10 | Scholar | Liverpool |
| Peter Entwistle | Son | | 7 | Scholar | Liverpool |

Barnett and Eliza made their home in Prestwich, where their first two sons were born:

1851 CENSUS: RINGLEY [HO107/2216, folio 487]

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|---|----|----------|----------------|
| Barnett Entwistle | Head | M | 28 | Labourer | Prestwich |
| Eliza Entwistle | Wife | M | 30 | | Snaith, Yorks. |
| John Entwistle | Son | | 3 | | Openshaw |
| Henry Entwistle | Son | | 1 | | Prestwich |

Some time between 1852 and 1855 they moved to Liverpool, where their family grew:

1861 CENSUS: 2 PORTLAND BUILDINGS, LIVERPOOL [RG9/2654, folio 262]

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|---|--------|-------------|-------------------|
| Barnett Entwistle | Head | M | 49 | Corn Porter | Outwood |
| Eliza Entwistle | Wife | M | 50 | | Snaith, Yorkshire |
| John Entwistle | Son | | 13 | Scholar | Openshaw |
| Thomas Entwistle | Son | | 3 | Scholar | Openshaw |
| Mary Entwistle | Daur | | 9 | Scholar | Outwood |
| Joseph Entwistle | Son | | 6 | | Liverpool |
| Robert Entwistle | Son | | 5 mos. | | Liverpool |

Sadly, Barnett Entwistle died not long after this census was taken.

By 1881, young Peter Entwistle was living in lodgings at 8 Exley Street, West Derby and working as an Assistant at Liverpool Museum.

On 4 December 1886 he married Lydia Cokersol at Christ Church, Kensington, West Derby. Peter was 22 years old, living in Tudor Street, and his occupation was given as 'Clerk'. Lydia was 21 years old, living in Moira Street. She was the daughter of William Cokersol (deceased), a painter. Witnesses to the marriage were William Henry Mellor and Hannah Jane Cokersol.

Their daughter, Florence, was born towards the end of 1887 in West Derby, to be followed two years later by a son, Charles.

1891 CENSUS: 53 DORSET ROAD, WALTON [RG12/2988, folio 43]

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---|----|-------------------|-------------------|
| Peter Entwistle | Head | M | 27 | Assistant Curator | Liverpool |
| Lydia Entwistle | Wife | M | 25 | | Liverpool |
| Florence Entwistle | Daur | | 3 | | Liverpool |
| Charles Entwistle | Son | | 1 | | Liverpool |
| Eliza Entwistle | Mother | W | 73 | | Snaith, Yorkshire |



A photograph of Peter Entwistle taken about 1890 at the Liverpool Free Public Museum.

[Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool, World Museum Liverpool]

By 1901, Peter and Lydia's family had grown, and Peter had become a Curator at the museum:

1901 CENSUS: 4 MARCH ROAD, FAIRFIELD [RG13/3499]

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|------|---|----|----------------|-----------|
| Peter Entwistle | Head | M | 38 | Curator museum | Liverpool |
| Lydia Entwistle | Wife | M | 35 | | Liverpool |
| Florence Entwistle | Daur | | 15 | | Liverpool |
| Charles Entwistle | Son | | 11 | | Liverpool |
| William Entwistle | Son | | 9 | | Liverpool |
| Mabel Entwistle | Daur | | 4 | | Liverpool |
| Henry Entwistle | Son | | 1 | | Liverpool |

In 1908, Peter Entwistle visited Tenerife with his wife and daughter. He took with him some Egyptian pots in exchange for some 17th century Spanish tiles. A book entitled "Coleccion devasos Egipcios del Museo Municipal de Bellas Artes de Santa Cruz de Tenerife", by Eduardo Almenara Rosales and Candelaria Martin del Rio Alvarez, is illustrated with objects from the Egyptian collection in Tenerife, and contains letters exchanged between Tenerife and Liverpool in 1908.

In June 1914, Peter Entwistle issued a prospectus of his "proposed book on the HISTORY OF THE LIVERPOOL POTTERIES, covering a period of two centuries of the Potters Art, fully illustrated, and with Six Coloured Plates". The price to subscribers would be £2 2s. [£2.10 in decimal currency.] Owing to the War and other unforeseen circumstances, the issue of the proposed work had to remain in abeyance.

Possibly the death of his wife, Lydia, earlier in 1914, led to some of the 'unforeseen circumstances'. However, Peter Entwistle continued to make "considerable and valuable discoveries on some of the sites, and unearthed much new documentary evidence, which reveals quite a new light on the products and activities of several of the works". It was suggested that his work should be published in two volumes, and in August 1922 he sent a letter to those who had become subscribers asking if they were willing to subscribe at the new price of £5 5s. [£5.25] for the two volumes.

So far (August 2007) I have been unable to ascertain whether publication did take place.

An entry in Kelly's Directory, 1926, lists Peter Entwistle, F.R.A.I. Deputy curator, Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool. Residence: 7 Ormonde Street, Liscard (a district of Wallasey).

This was the year in which he applied for the post of Curator, his application being backed up by the following testimonial letters (transcribed from photocopies provided by Liverpool Museum):

The Victoria Hotel,
Sidmouth.

Feb., 22nd. 26.

My dear Entwistle,

I am greatly interested to hear that you are applying for the Curatorship of the Liverpool Museums and I hope you may be successful.

I have known you and your work, I think almost from the beginning of your career, you have always struck me as possessing a useful and intimate knowledge of the contents of your Museum and you have had considerable advantage in maintaining close and practical relations with the officers of the British Museum and other similar institutions.

I know further that you have been of great use to your Museum in helping to secure for it many important benefactions.

This in itself would show the great advantage of your continued association with the Museum.

Finally, as a practical matter, it seems to be that at this moment when you are not very far distant from the end of your official life, it would be great utility that you should be at the head of the Institution while your successor could advantageously learn a great deal during your short term.

Believe me,
Yours truly

(signed C. Hercules Read)

I have known Mr. P. Entwistle for many years and have on several occasions visited and studied at the Liverpool Museum under his guidance. I have been extremely well impressed by the competent and orderly arrangement of the exhibits under his charge. In comparing notes with Mr. Entwistle with regard to the history of Liverpool pottery I have been enabled to appreciate the soundness of his methods in assembling evidence and his acumen and balanced judgment in deduction.

From my personal observation of museums and their control in England and abroad, I feel myself to be in a position to express the conviction that Mr. Entwistle is in every way fitted to direct the administration of such a museum as that of Liverpool.

(signed. Bernard Rackham)

February 23, 1926.

DEPARTMENT OF CERAMICS & ETHNOGRAPHY,
BRITISH MUSEUM.

20th February, 1926.

I have much pleasure in testifying to the high qualifications of Mr. P. Entwistle who is applying for the Directorship of the Liverpool Museum.

Mr. Entwistle has been trained in all the relevant subjects, - Natural History, Art, Archaeology and Ethnography, - and he has had long practical experience in handling collections of all kinds, and in organising and arranging exhibitions.

He is an enthusiastic and untiring worker and most of his spare time has been devoted to excavation and archaeological research, with the result that he is now the recognised authority on the antiquities of the Liverpool and particularly on its pottery.

In addition to these qualifications which would make him a sympathetic and far seeing director, I understand that he has had the necessary experience in the administrative branches of the work.

(signed. R. L. Hobson
Keeper)

Unfortunately, his application was not successful.

On 19 March 1931, at Liverpool Register Office, Peter Entwistle, a widower aged 67, of 7 Ormonde Street, Liscard, married Kate Taylor, a 42-year-old spinster, living at 71 Botanic Road, Liverpool. Her father was John James Taylor (deceased) a House Decorator Journeyman. Witnesses were Charles Hemmitt and Annie Coupe.

Peter and Kate had only a short marriage, as Peter died on 6 November 1939, as announced in the Liverpool Post and Liverpool Echo [transcribed from photocopies provided by Liverpool Record Office]:

LIVERPOOL POST NOVEMBER 8 1939

ENTWISTLE – November 6 suddenly, at 2 Rosemead Avenue, Pensby, PETER (late deputy-curator, Liverpool Museum), dearly-beloved husband of Kate Entwistle. (Lodge of Prudence No. 2114, Old Vics Society.) Service and interment at Rake Lane Cemetery, tomorrow (Thursday), at 2 p.m. (Friends please accept this – the only – intimation.)

LIVERPOOL POST NOVEMBER 8 1939

Mr. Peter Entwistle, an old servant of the Liverpool Corporation, and one who was known to hundreds of regular visitors to the Liverpool Museums, has died at his home at Rosemead Avenue, Pensby. He was for fifty-three years on the staff of the museums, and before his retirement in 1929 was deputy curator.

ENTWISTLE (Old Vic.) – “Our PETER” after a life’s leisure given to social service as gymnastics leader and instructor, scoutmaster, lecturer, and writer, has passed. The Old Vics.’ records in public library remain a monument to his indefatigable efforts. Interment at Rake Lane Cemetery, to-day (Thursday) at 2 p.m.

ENTWISTLE (Lodge of Prudence No. 2114) – The Worshipful Master desires as many Brethren as possible to meet him at Rake Lane Cemetery to-day (Thursday), at 2 p.m., to pay a last tribute of respect to their departed Brother. P. ENTWISTLE, P.M.

LIVERPOOL ECHO NOVEMBER 8 1939 FIFTY YEARS WITH THE MUSEUM

DEATH OF MR. PETER ENTWISTLE IN RETIREMENT

The death has occurred at Pensby, Wirral, of Mr. Peter Entwistle, who served the Liverpool Corporation Museums for over 50 years and who was deputy curator when he retired in 1935. He was 73 years of age.

Mr. Entwistle was widely known as an authority and lecturer on archaeological matters, and especially on old pottery. His work brought him into touch with antiquaries and writers all over the Empire.

In his early days he was a gymnast and devoted a good deal of time to boys' club and Boy Scout work in Liverpool.

An entry in the National Calendar of Wills and Grants of Probate reads:
ENTWISTLE, PETER, late of 2 Rosemead Avenue, Pensby, Wirral, died 6 November 1939.
Admon. Liverpool 25 January 1940 to Kate Entwistle, widow, and Henry Entwistle,
commercial clerk. Effects £1,633.11s.6d.