

THE HORNBY FAMILY - LIVERPOOL

About 1827 the most famous family ever to occupy Sandown Hall - and indeed any of the mansions around Wavertree Village - moved in. These were the Hornbys: Hugh Hornby, a merchant specialising in trade with Russia, and his wife Louise Cortazzi, daughter of a former British Consul in Smyrna. Hugh Hornby - whose roots were in Kirkham, near Blackpool - had travelled extensively before settling down in Everton in 1823. Everton was at that time a much sought-after place to live - "for the salubrity of its air, and its vicinity to the sea, it may not inaptly be called the Montpelier of the county", commented Baines's Lancashire Directory in 1824 - and Hugh and his brother Joseph Hornby were just two of the many wealthy men who had made it their home. (The family firm - H.& J. Hornby & Co. - had its offices in the Exchange Buildings, behind Liverpool Town Hall).

By 1826 Hugh had decided to leave Everton for the even more rural surroundings of Wavertree, where the Sandown estate on the slopes of Olive Mount offered similar benefits of an elevated situation, fresh breezes and views of the setting sun. In 1851 Hugh and Louise still had five children (aged 13-25) living at home, and the Census records them as employing ten resident servants at Sandown Hall: a governess, a butcher, a coachman, a groom, a cook, a lady's maid, a laundry maid, a house maid, an 'under house maid' and a dairy maid.

The Hornby family was well-known in Liverpool for a number of different reasons. Hugh Hornby was Mayor of the town in 1838, having been a member of the Council for many years. His nephew Thomas Dyson Hornby was a merchant, and Chairman of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Board: Hornby Dock having been named after him in 1884. Most celebrated of all, though, was to be Hugh's eldest son, Hugh Frederick Hornby ('Fred' to his friends) who took little interest in business affairs but spent a lifetime amassing a collection of rare books, prints and autographs in his house - Sandown Lodge - which was situated only a short distance away from the Hall. When H. F. Hornby died in 1899 he bequeathed this collection to the City, together with the sum of £10,000 to pay for a building to house it in. The result today is the Hornby Library, part of the Central Libraries complex in William Brown Street.

One Hornby not connected in any way with Sandown Hall was Frank Hornby, the inventor of Meccano and manufacturer of Hornby trains. Although these products were made within half a mile of here - in Binns Road, just within the old Wavertree Township boundary - there was no family connection whatsoever with the 'merchant' Hornbys.

[**Return to England**](#)