

West Derby Society

NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2011

Alder Hey Update

More detailed plans for the exciting redevelopment of Alder Hey Hospital have been unveiled.

A CD of updated plans shows the new buildings and replacement green spaces created as Springfield Park is shifted 90 degrees.

The West Derby Society (WDS) supports the modernisation and enhancement of Europe's biggest children's hospital which is also a world-standard centre of excellence in the heart of our community.

However, we have now sought clarification and assurances about the Grade II-listed Nelson's Column which has stood in Springfield Park since the latter was a private house and estate.



WDS has written to Liverpool City Council planning committee as follows:

We are concerned about the apparent vagueness concerning the monument – known locally as the Half Nelson – which has stood on the site for 200 years.

Parameter Plan 2 says: “The Nelson Monument will be relocated to an appropriate position within the new Springfield Park.” Parameter Plan 8 says: “Relocation of the Nelson Monument can take place during Phase I.”

The Society hopes and trusts that a management plan is being drawn up with the City Council's conservation officers and English Heritage covering the safe dismantling and re-erection of the Nelson Monument and appropriate costs included in the budget.

Prominent

The Society also hopes that the monument – set up by Mr Downward who lived at Springfield - will be placed in a prominent place similar to its present position.

The Society suggests that moving the monument about 200 meters to the west would be most in keeping with the original setting. It hopes that the current landscaping and flower-bed arrangement plus gate on to East Prescott Road could be replicated. An alternative could be to place the monument on the proposed Park Avenue landscaped walkway.

Amusing

The Nelson Monument, with its amusing history and visual impact, adds colour and interest to the site and links the new developments to the heritage of the area.

The Society hopes that detailed plans for the future site of the monument are made known as soon as possible.

WDS urges that its suggestions are incorporated into the plans and that the column is restored to its original appearance.

1086 and All That

The *Lowlands* History Room and West Derby Museum is playing an increasingly important part in the life of the community, **writes Alastair Caird**.

It is situated on the first floor directly opposite WDS's monthly meeting room. The History Room, opened by the Lord Mayor last year, was partly-furnished with a grant from Liverpool City Council while the Big Lottery paid for the two computers.

It was a condition of the £1.1 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant to restore and refurbish *Lowlands* that its history be interpreted – the room is therefore an important part of the project.

WDS archivist James Ashton has provided printed files of articles from the *West Derby Reporter* 1959 – 65 – an exciting period for the area.

He has located relevant items of interest such as news reports about *Lowlands* and local events including the demolition of historic buildings. They are contained in seven loose-leave albums and include a wealth of photographs.

Deeds

James has spent a huge amount of time researching historic West Derby documents housed in the Liverpool Records Office. He has painstakingly transcribed the fascinating legal manuscripts written by Victorian clerks recording sales and leasing of land in those far-off times.

The records also include hand-drawn coloured plans of long-vanished houses and plots of land. These can be studied on the History Room computers.

Historic

Books from the estate of Frankla Corris MBE, former WDS archivist and manor court specialist, are available for reference. Frankla and her husband John once ran a bookshop in the Isle of Man and there are a number of volumes on Manx history. Other gems include military details and biographies of all those listed on the West Derby Village war memorial.

This was poignant as the donor's father Major Frank Watson was killed in the First World War shortly before Frankla was born – she was named after him.

Frankla willed these items to our chairman who, in turn, donated them to the West Derby Museum.

Other *Lowlands* supporters have also donated books including some from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Bound copies of the *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* came from the library of the late David Power, a leading WDS member for many years.

Images

The computers also hold the Society's collection of late Victorian and Edwardian images taken by Marion Fergie who was the acting Village postmistress. The atmospheric photographs – digitalised from the original glass plates – give a remarkable insight into West Derby people such as this family group taken at The Barracks.



There are some featuring the Cartmel area where Miss Fergie spent her holidays. Other images from various sources include vanished houses in West Derby and elsewhere in Liverpool.

Visitors can also follow the restoration and refurbishment of *Lowlands* in 2008 – 9 by reading the original illustrated project newsletters.

A set of display boards carry newspaper reports of the *Lowlands* Renewal Project which is still ongoing.

There are also photo albums relating to *Lowlands* events.

Several pictures have been donated for display in the room. Further donations of historic material are welcome if they fit gaps in our collections.

The History Room and West Derby Museum is open at selected *Lowlands* events (including WDS meetings) and by appointment.

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The Domesday Book offers a glimpse into the country's past. Have you wondered what life was like in this area more than 900 years ago?

Now people can see how our ancestors lived in the 11th century by looking at pages from the Book put on the Internet by the National Archives.

The great survey of England was commissioned by William the Conqueror and completed in 1086. Pages include local places and landowners.

Old

Whilst the original was written in Old English, a modern translation is given on the website.

For example, the pages show how unemployed people in this area were fined two shillings (10p) and ordered to cut the king's crops.

It reveals that if any free man in the Sefton area committed theft, highway robbery, housebreaking or otherwise broke the king's peace he was fined a massive 40 shillings (£2).

If any man committed bloodshed, rape or remained away from the shire moot (area) without reasonable cause he was fined 10 shillings (50p).

If he remained away from the hundred court or did not go to plea when the reeve ordered, the fine was five shillings (25p).

If any wished to withdraw from the king's land, he paid 40 shillings and went "where he would".

If anyone wished to have the land of his deceased father he paid a relief of 40 shillings.

These sums of money now seem trifling but were substantial amounts in early Norman times. When the West Derby Courthouse was rebuilt exactly 500 years after the Domesday Book in 1586 it cost a total of £40!

Details are given on property, farms, woodland and vineyards in the newly-conquered land as well as the names of the local landowners and their followers.

William I effectively carved up the country and handed out vast tracts to his cronies.

The defeated English were left with the crumbs.

Referring to the West Derby Hundred and its original English landowners, the Book states: "Stenulf held Upholland. There are two carucates of land worth 64 (old) pence. Uhtraed held Dalton - there is a carucate of land. It was worth 32 pence. The same Uhtraed held Skelmersdale - there is a carucate of land, it was worth 32 pence."

Measurement

A hide was a measurement of land for tax assessment of about 120 acres. A carucate was a unit of land that could be ploughed by one plough team.

The Book adds: "Uhtraed held six manors - Roby, Knowsley, Kirkby, Little Crosby, Maghull and Aughton. There are two hides."

To find out more go to www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/labs, search by postcode and then click through to find your place of interest, 11th century name and download a copy of the relevant page.

BECOME A FRIEND OF LOWLANDS

Why not become a Friend of Lowlands? This Grade II-listed former merchant's mansion has served as the West Derby Community Centre since 1957. WDS has met there for many years. It is owned by the West Derby Community Association Ltd, which is a registered charity.

You can help Lowlands by joining the Friends. This can mean helping as much or as little as you like or by simply joining and lending moral support. Membership is just £6 a year including four free quarterly newsletters.

Send a cheque / postal order made out to WDCA Ltd (Friends) plus your name and address to the Membership Secretary, Friends of Lowlands, 13 Haymans Green, West Derby, Liverpool L12 7JG.

The lowlands website is www.lowlands.org.uk

Mystery

As always the third Wednesday of June was reserved for our annual mystery trip.

Our chairman naturally kept the location a closely-guarded secret.

We left West Derby Village in our comfortable luxury coach and with Stephen at the front directing the driver we had a mystery journey over many types of unusual roads, winding and twisting all the more to confuse members as to our final destination.

En route, several voices announced with confidence where we would end up and all were wrong. After much travel along roads with great views of the Dee Estuary we found ourselves in Wales, and the final destination was soon reached - the delightful village of Hawarden. Stephen took those interested on a brief orientation tour of the village, which he must have carefully researched prior to our arrival.

Many of us went to a lovely friendly village pub, The Fox and Grapes, for an hour or so before the journey home over a completely new set of roads, more direct this time but just as interesting and enjoyable. With all our thanks to Stephen who had thought of the destination, researched it and driven a dry run over the route for our eventual communal enjoyment.

A lovely evening out, and those who missed it let slip an enjoyable treat - I would say to these members to make a note of 3rd Wed in June next year to ensure your place on the coach.

Conwy

The day trip to Conwy on Saturday 2 July went very smoothly with no delays in either direction - gone are the days when this beautiful ancient town was a bottleneck.

Parrs' coach driver Barry skilfully drove smoothly through a medieval doorway to the coach park.

There was a festival underway complete with clog dancers and continental stalls.

Some went to the castle or along the town walls. Others enjoyed the sunshine and wandered through the picturesque streets with many hotels, pubs, cafes and restaurants.

NOTE FOR 2012 DIARIES: The evening trip will be on Wednesday 20 June 2012 and the day trip on Saturday 7 July 2012.

Finally, this 1924 garden fete (see advert below) must have been good to charge up to 2s 6d (12.5p) for entry. It raised funds to build St Andrew's Church in Clubmoor. The event appears to have been held in the grounds of Croxteth Hall.



PLAZA MEMORIES

by David Webster

I was very interested to read Arthur Moore's memories of the West Derby Plaza in the WDS Spring Newsletter. Rhoda, the wife of the cinema's manager Percy Tonge, was a cousin of my paternal grandfather.

My father was killed in a tragic accident in January 1951, leaving mother a widow at 39 with three young children.

Aunt Rhoda, as she was known, was very good to us at this time. My eldest sister and I were invited to the Plaza from time-to-time when there was a suitable film showing.

It was always a back row seat complete with a nice ice cream in the interval.



The former Plaza in 2008 when it was Somerfield's

Rhoda took us to the pantomime that Christmas at the Pavilion Theatre in Lodge Lane. We had a grand tea at her Rose Lane home beforehand. The house was demolished years later to make way for Tesco's superstore.

Rhoda, whom also managed the cinema at various times, was once a cinema pianist in the pre-talkie days.

At the time the Ritz Cinema in Utting Ave closed in June 1957, Percy Tonge was acting chairman of the Ritz Picture House Co.

The Plaza closed on 9 January 1960. Percy Tonge had been the manager for 27 years. The Tonges were always moving house and lived in at least five houses in Liverpool, Bromborough and Bebington where Rhoda died about 1976. Through my interest in trams I got to know Harry Haddrill about 1959 - we were both members of the same tramway society.

It wasn't until about 14 years later that I found out he was a nephew of Rhoda Tonge - they always say it's a small world. The lady who worked in the Plaza's box office, Joyce Caple, passed away earlier this year.

Seek and ye shall find

For the first time since opening as West Derby Community Centre in 1957, *Lowlands* is signposted.



The brown tourist signs are positioned at two ends of Haymans Green at the junctions with Eaton Rd North and Mill Lane.

These signs are proving very helpful to people visiting *Lowlands* for the first time. Contributions to the Period Room continue with *Lowlands* supporters coming forward with items ranging from a suitcase and clock to a cheese dish and clothes.



A table has been laid for afternoon tea as might have been enjoyed in a bedsitting room by a senior member of the domestic staff in the period between 1890 and 1930.

Chairman's Comments

The new Museum of Liverpool opened on 19 July 2011. I was there when the building was started and have followed progress with great interest.



This has prompted me to think about change and the impact on our environment. Frankla bequeathed a remarkable collection of images to WDS – a treasure trove of fascinating views featuring long-gone buildings and open spaces. William Gawin Herdman, the Liverpool artist, left a remarkable legacy of paintings and drawings recording areas that would soon disappear. He did a number of studies in West Derby and this particular image from Frankla's collection recently caught my eye.



It is an unusual view of the Village seen from the site of the present Sefton Arms looking north.

Apart from those on the extreme left, all the buildings in the picture have disappeared.

The old chapel seems larger than in other representations – it could accommodate 800 people and I have always thought this must have been rather a squeeze. I suspect there was a gallery inside which boosted capacity.

The other buildings, including a shop, were also swept away in the 1850s when the Earl of Sefton redesigned the Village as a suitable entrance to his country estate. Let's imagine this happening today. Change would thankfully be more difficult – especially the demolition of the chapel. In those days there was no such thing as listed buildings.

Money talked and if property owners wanted change they pretty well did as they pleased.

Right up to the death in 1972 of Hugh Molyneux, the last Earl, the presence of his ancient family was felt deeply in West Derby.

This was not just the physical presence of the Earl (he was a commanding 6ft 5inch tall) but what he represented.

Lord Sefton was not an aloof aristocrat, as some would have us believe, but someone with a strong sense of his Liverpool roots.

Unlike his predecessors, he had served as Lord Mayor. The year before the Earl died, I received a telephone call from his estate manager asking about a photograph of Knotty Ash signpost I had put in the *Daily Post*. He was curious that it carried a Molyneux cross and wanted to know where it was.

Heritage

However, his ancestors I suspect were not so interested in heritage issues.

Hugh's Victorian ancestor swept away the ancient Village while keeping just a handful of the original buildings.

To most Victorians change was essential and they were not generally very sentimental about the removal of old buildings.

We lost many architectural treasures in this period. It was the huge number of architectural casualties that prompted the founding of the National Trust.

We should be grateful that today there are much greater protections for our environment, both built and natural.

WDS has stood for protecting these two elements and must continue to have a say in planning issues. We should welcome any moves that give communities a greater involvement. ***Stephen Guy***