

# West Derby Society

# NEWSLETTER

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## Sefton Rugby Club

Talks have been held about the future of Sefton Rugby Club's ground off Leyfield Road. City Council officials have had discussions with the organisation about the possibility of the club relocating to Croxteth Park once its ground has been sold to developers.



Nothing has been confirmed but there is much speculation. The West Derby Society (WDS) is concerned about the impact of any housing development on the community, the environment and amenities. This land plays a key part in draining the surrounding area.

Builders may want to have the entrance to the new estate at Thornhead Lane.

This could mean demolishing part of Leyfield Close. Leyfield Road, already suffering traffic problems at peak times, would face additional congestion. An alternative could be to build an access road from Princess Drive.

Sefton Rugby Club has contributed to health and wellbeing over many decades. The ground was used for anti-aircraft guns in the war.

The two embankments are made up of rubbish and waste. One is currently being removed at a cost of £50,000, ostensibly to allow more car parking. See *next column*.

### **Thornhead Lane Footpath**

**W**ork will begin soon fencing off the ditch running alongside ancient Thornhead Lane, recently designated a public right-of-way.

The new barrier at the Leyfield Road end has helped deter fly-tipping in the brook.

The new fencing should end this nuisance once and for all.

Presumably there will be room for the water course to be periodically cleaned and the vegetation managed.

This brook suddenly surges up after heavy rain, sending a bore or steep-fronted wave racing along its course.

Meanwhile, the rest of the footpath remains open to Aspes Road.

### **Day Trippers**

**T**he WDS day trip to Buxton on 7 July was well-supported – there was just one spare seat on the coach.

There were many spectacular views as we climbed up from Macclesfield into the Cheshire Highlands and the Peak District National Park (the boundary marked by a stone mill wheel).

We drove past the Cat and Fiddle, once a drover's inn and now popular with cyclists and other tourists – it stands at 1,690 ft. Other landmarks included the Goyt Valley and signposts to the quaintly-named Wildboarclough.

The coach stopped at Buxton's Pavilion Gardens and we walked into the town centre where there was a lot to see and plenty of small shops.

Some spent time at the Pavilion's excellent book fair, a regular attraction in the spa town.

### **Remembering Jack Cooper**

**T**he funeral of our much-respected former chairman, Jack Cooper, was held in St Paul's Church on Thursday 26 July 2012, *writes Alastair Caird*.

Jack had suffered ill-health for some years and was moved from Liverpool to Derbyshire to be nearer his children, one of whom is a doctor who arranged and supervised his care for the last few years.

Members will remember Jack as an avuncular chap, a former headmaster who had a vast knowledge and love of Liverpool and all things past. He could, and often did, talk knowledgeably on any subject. We were very lucky to have had him as our chairman for so many years.

Our society was well represented with many members, past and present attending. Among these were the present chairman Stephen Guy, treasurer Stephanie Grogan and me. A sad goodbye was said to Jack and there was a chance to meet his family after the funeral at St Paul's Social Club in Spring Grove.

*Happy memories of and goodbye, Jack.*

### **BBC**

I hear that the former Margaret Bevan school has been commandeered by Children's BBC (CBBC) who have moved most of its production of *Young Dracula* to this West Derby venue where filming has been going on for some time.



I think most members have heard of our famous ferry boats *Royal Iris* and *Royal Daffodil*. You will almost certainly have sailed on them but how many have heard of *Lily*, a Wallasey ferry boat of the 1930s? Our picture shows *Lily* making her way to New Brighton, Egremont and Seacombe. Many Wallasey ferry boats were named after flowers.

The lily (flower), besides giving its name to the former Mersey Ferry boat, is a

symbol associated with the patron saint of St Mary's Church, West Derby - lilies are frequently used to adorn the flower stands around the high altar.



Southport, being officially in Merseyside is close enough to West Derby to be of interest - hence the picture of a 1926 Vulcan two ton, four cylinder 3,400 flatbed lorry which was made at the Vulcan works (founded in 1904) at Southport.

In 2003 the lorry was saved from the scrapyard and fully restored. It was used to deliver coal by Brothers of

Blackrod, near Bolton.

### **Canal**

The Manchester Ship Canal was opened in January 1894 and was at the time the largest river navigation canal in the world.

More than 54 million cubic yards of material was excavated and about 12,000 workers employed during its construction.

In 1955 18,563,376 tons of cargo passed through the canal but by 2005 this had fallen to 7,261,919 tons.

The maximum boat length the canal can accommodate is 182.9 meters which is the equivalent of 4.4 Mersey ferries.

We crossed the canal at Warrington on our way to Buxton.

### **Plantastic**

What's in a name? The popular or common names of trees and shrubs vary from country to country. Some names describe the uses or characteristics of plants such as mountain ash, which can grow on high and rough terrain, or crack willow named after the brittleness of its branches. Some names can be confusing - the UK native mountain ash is also called a sorbus or a rowan.

To help eliminate this confusion, scientists applied a principal proposed by the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) giving every tree and shrub scientific names.

The first part is the generic name common to all trees belonging to the same genus or a closely-related group. The second part is the specific name referring to one particular species. For example the Scots pine is called *Pinussylvestris* – meaning a pine of the woods – whatever popular name it may also have.

### **Minor**

Within a species there are sometimes minor variations of leaf or flower colour, for instance. If these variations have occurred in the wild, the trees are called varieties and a third scientific name is added. Therefore *Pinussylvestris* var. *scotia* is the Highland variety of Scots pine with short blue-green needles.

If the variation has happened under cultivation, whether accidentally in a botanic garden or as a result of intentional breeding, the tree is called a cultivar. The cultivar's name is written after the scientific one and placed in single quotation marks – *Pinussylvestris* "Aurea" is a golden-leaved form of Scots pine originally from a nursery.

Several species of trees cross-fertilise with other species and the resulting hybrid usually shows the characteristics of both.

More rarely, a hybrid occurs between species of a different genera. *Leylans* cypress, for example, is a hybrid between two American species of Monterey cypress.

Despite its common name, Nootka cypress (*Chamaecyparisnootkatensis*) is not a true cypress at all. An x is placed before the scientific name of such hybrids so the well-known Leyland cypress is called *Cupressocyparis x laylandii*.

## Hold

A Wallasey friend is a collector on a vast scale - this drives his wife to distraction!

He mentioned recently that he had something which would be of great interest to me which resided for more than 100 years in West Derby Police Station, Meadow Lane.

Its hold on the occupants of this long- demolished building was total.

From the superintendent down to the humblest constable, all would dance to its tune.

It commanded when they ate, slept, left and came back - all had to take instruction from it and were severely punished if they did not abide by its precise readings.

Indeed they would fail to uphold justice by just misreading its explicit orders which, according to the law, must be strictly adhered to.

The first custodians of the item were Lancashire Constabulary, followed by Liverpool City Police. *The item is, of course, the old station clock.*

This Victorian wall clock is nothing fancy, merely a run-of-the-mill local government building-type utility unit. It is the sort one would look longingly at whilst sat at a desk in a dull and dismal classroom of an equally dull and dismal Victorian-built Liverpool school or waiting in the smoky atmosphere of a Victorian station waiting room.

The makers name emblazoned on the clock face is J. Bryant of Prescott Rd, Liverpool. My friend opened the side hatch of the clock and glued inside was a maker's label dated 1893 and the location of the clock as The Police Station West Derby Village.

If only that clock could speak – what stories and incidents it could relate – of old West Derby, its inhabitants and the occupants of the police station. However, it is in safe hands in Wallasey rather than West Derby where it I think it would look rather good in *Lowlands*.

Members will no doubt remember the Stop Press articles which were printed in red on the front page. I have one for the present *Newsletter* – it's just come to light and will complement my report above about *Young Dracula*.

West Derby progresses into a Hollywood of the North as film-makers move in yet again, this time it is into Alcester Rd and Blackmoor Drive. Mathew Kelly has been spotted filming *Moving On* by Jimmy McGovern being made by Liverpool-based Lime Pictures. A house up for sale has been commandeered to act as a film crew HQ while occupants of two other houses have been paid for the inconvenience of having lighting towers put in their front gardens. There was traffic congestion at times.



Liverpool City Council's planning committee approved the proposed Tesco store in West Derby Village despite protests from WDS, councillors and others.

Opponents who addressed the committee at Liverpool Town Hall on 24 July were WDS chairman Stephen Guy, West Derby Councillor Pam Thomas, Rector of West Derby Rev Mark Coleman and one of the shopkeepers who is likely to be put out of business by the new store.

Stephen told the committee that Tesco was a company with a history spanning more than 50 years of ruthlessly crushing business competition.

He told committee members before they approved the plans: "Remember that the decision you make today will affect West Derby Village for generations."

Work has yet to start on the Mill Lane site (formerly Tippiers). It has been reported nationally that Tesco is scaling down on walk-in stores. It is not known how this will affect existing plans.

### **Topsy-Turvy**

I always like a surprise and this one really tickled my fancy, writes *Stephen Guy*.

*Norman Conqueror*, my piece in the August *West Derby Link*, was about the ancient Molyneux family.



It featured this picture of the carved stone Molyneux Cross on the corner of the red-brick houses in the Village.

However, an eagle-eyed reader pointed out to me that – when inverted – the picture looks like a grotesque face grimacing at passers-by.

Perhaps this was a stone-mason's joke – there are similar examples at our cathedrals and elsewhere.

I think the face is hilarious – like something out of *Noggin the Nog*.



Here is the full article for those who missed it:

*The Norman knights battled with the Saxons in a fight to the death with England as the prize. William of Normandy's invasion culminated in the Battle of Hastings, one of the most decisive events in British history. The 1066 victory saw the native English defeated and deprived of their power and wealth.*

*King Harold, England's ruler, died in the battle and the Normans took control – French became the language of the court for hundreds of years.*

*William the Conqueror carried out a massive audit of his newly-acquired country. The Domesday Book recorded all the communities including West Derby. There was no Liverpool – just*

*a farm on the banks of the Mersey.*

*Among William's knights in that key battle was William de Molines. We do not know much about him except that he was number 18 on the Battle Abbey Roll.*

*William hailed from a province in Normandy called Moulineaux (mills). Battle Abbey, built by William I, stands where King Harold died. The Roll is said to have listed more than 600 of William's companions who helped him seize England.*



*It disappeared long ago and we know it mainly from alleged 16<sup>th</sup> century copies published by chroniclers. The contents and nature of the Roll remain controversial but many agree that it probably compiled in the 1300s, long after the battle.*

*Once William had compiled the Domesday Book he proceeded to carve up England among his cohorts, pushing out the defeated Saxons.*

*The chief Norman in north west England was Roger de Poitou, Earl of Lancaster. His trusted friend was Vivian, son and heir of William de Molines.*

*Roger granted the manor of Sefton to the de Molineses and Vivian became governor of West Derby Castle, a small but important fortress protecting the route between the Mersey and the Ribble.*

*They became the Molyneux family and remained in West Derby until the last Earl of Sefton died in 1972 without any close relatives.*

*Their coat of arms was the Molyneux Cross which is still proudly displayed where they once held sway. The stone wall-mounted cross (pictured) can be seen in the Village.*

*Perhaps William de Molines had this distinctive cross on his shield at Hastings – it was certainly used in later conflicts.*

### **Conservation Area**

The implementation of the expanded West Derby Village Conservation Area was postponed at a city council meeting in the summer.

There was public consultation last year.

The plan was remitted to the council's select committee for discussion on 13 September, when there were no objections.

Official ratification of the new measure, which will give further protection to the historic Village and environs, is expected soon.

The conservation area is being extended to include additional parts of Mill Lane, Haymans Green, the castle site and rectory.

Both *Lowlands* and the former Margaret Bevan School are included, along with Field House.

Properties in the conservation area may be eligible for English Heritage grants.

### **Heywood's Cottages**

**WDS** alerted the city council's conservation officers after new windows were installed in Grade II-listed Heywood's Cottages in Almonds Green.

The owner was later invited to make a retrospective planning application and the outcome is awaited.

Listed properties are covered by strict guidelines and any alterations must be inspected and approved by planning authorities. Sandstone-built Heywood's Cottages once served Norris Green House.

### **Chairman's Comments**

It was with great sadness that I heard of the passing of the Society's founding chairman, Jack Cooper.

My mind went back to a memorable day at the Liver Building in 1998. I had recently started my job as National Museums Liverpool press officer and was invited to give a talk to a group of Blue Badge Guides.

During my talk I mentioned that I was from West Derby. When I had finished, a cheerful man introduced himself and, hardly pausing for breath, asked me: "How would you like to be chairman of the West Derby Society?"

I had heard of Jack, of course, from his books (written with David Power) called *A History of West Derby* and *The People of West Derby* which had been big hits in the 1980s.

I knew of the West Derby Society but had never joined because my life as a news reporter precluded participation and, anyway, I lived in Rainhill.

I was very flattered and discussed Jack's idea with my father, who I was looking after (he died shortly afterwards). Dad said I should take up the offer.

I was duly elected at the 1999 AGM and widowed Jack emigrated to Canada with his new wife. His happiness was short-lived, however, as she died and he returned to West Derby, taking a flat in Kiln Hey.

He suffered bad health and increasing memory loss meant he could not look after himself. When he moved to Chesterfield in 2007, his children generously donated his history archive.

I stored it away as I could not bring myself to examine it in detail while he was alive. It felt too personal.

The archive consists of many books, documents and videos. It is now a long-term project to catalogue the contents. Some items will go in the *Lowlands* History Room and less important things can be offered to WDS members to raise society funds.

**Stephen Guy**

