

West Derby Society

NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2010

Bellefield Alert

Everton FC and Bellway Homes are expected to put in a new planning bid to build houses on the club's former Bellefield training ground.

This time they want to put even *more* homes on the site – despite a planning inspector throwing out the previous plans last year.

The City Council's planning committee had earlier rejected the plans following protests from your Society and many local residents.

It seems Everton and Bellway are pinning their hopes on the new government, Labour council and changes in planning laws.

However, the ruling Tory / Lib-Dem coalition has promised a greater say by local people in the planning process.

Visit

Your chairman was one of those who visited what was termed a public consultation in an empty house in Sandforth Rd – one of several properties bought to make way for the proposed development. The only plans on display were the housing development covering the former training ground.

Your chairman repeated the Society's call for Everton to give something back to the community by building a commercially-run sport and leisure centre on the footprint of the changing rooms. The field would be retained for sporting activity with perhaps land set aside for much-needed allotments.

It was clear from the way the proposals were presented that Everton wish to capitalise on their asset by reheating a stale and unappetising concoction. We urge them to think again – and await any application with interest.

Summer Outings

We had beautiful warm sunny weather for both our outings which were almost fully-booked.

The destination of the mystery tour on Wednesday 16 June was Churchtown, Southport's equivalent of West Derby.

The coach was again driven by Selina, one of the excellent Parr's team. We meandered through Hale and Widnes before heading north to the East Lancs, Ormskirk and Burscough.

We spotted a wonderful old windmill near the Martin Mere nature reserve before encountering the bungaloid growths of Crossens and the splendid mausoleum of the Scarisbrick family.

Churchtown, a pretty village with thatched cottages and ancient church, was here long before Southport started to grow in the sandhills – it got its name from being the south port of the Ribble.

Cartmel

Alex was our driver for the day trip to Cartmel and Grange-over-Sands on 3 July.

Most of us visited the splendid Cartmel Priory seen in a picture taken by Marion Fergie a century ago.



The Society has a collection of 156 glass plates taken by West Derby postmistress Miss Fergie. A number feature Cartmel, where she spent her holidays.

The Priory is a stunning medieval masterpiece which survived Henry VIII's destroyers by becoming the parish church.

Among its joys are beautiful choir stalls with amazing carvings.

There are many tombs including that of local squire Lord Frederick Cavendish who was a victim of Dublin's Phoenix Park political murders in the 1880s.

Grange

After two hours exploring Cartmel we carried on 10 minutes down the road to Grange-over-Sands. Everyone was reminded of Parkgate because much of the shoreline beyond the promenade has silted up.

Most of us had lunch here and moseyed around the shops – there were some excellent traditional independent outlets. The bookshop at the station drew several from our group.

A coach-board raffle raised £56 for Society funds.

West Derby Wanderings

Below are two pictures of Meadow Lane, one of West Derby's old thoroughfares, which show the difference half a century can make, *writes Alastair Caird*.



Before ...



... and after.

It is a good idea to check the kerb edge stones to locate where the old police station stood.

The West Derby village policeman was a handy person to have around to keep an eye on things, knowing who was where and what they were up to. He often dealt with problems on the spot and applied common sense in dealing with offenders.

The late Canon Crewdson, St James's vicar for many years, told of the village policeman of old in his fascinating book *Stories and Customs of Old West Derby* originally priced at 2/6 (12.5p).

The village bobby lived in a house off Eaton Rd. When he arrested a drunk, rather than struggle with him all the way to the lock-up, he would take him to his home and lock him in the outside lavatory.

Wash

The next morning he would offer the miscreant a wash and breakfast, followed by a smoke and gossip before marching him off to the bridewell in Old Swan, via footpaths and fields, to be suitably dealt with.

The following are historical and topographical notes regarding the township and manor of West Derby. The Domesday Book noted that it contained a forest two leagues long by one league broad – one league equals about three miles. There was a breeding place or aery (eyrie) for hawks used in hunting. At the time of the Norman Conquest, the manor was held by King Edward the Confessor. There is no mention of Liverpool in the Domesday Book. The name Derby (*Deor-by*) means *the place of the deer* indicating the remoteness of the area.

The West Derby Hundred's Wapentake Court existed in Saxon times.

It is believed each hundred was responsible for the provision and maintenance of 100 armed fighting men on the call of the King.

King John ordered that West Derby's Wapentake Court be removed to Liverpool in 1208, the year after he granted the new borough its first charter.

William the Conqueror gave West Derby to one of his followers, Count Roger of Poitou, who built a castle in what is now Meadow Lane.

The castle was removed centuries ago and the mound on which it stood levelled about 1800. The stream that fed the castle moat still flows in a concealed culvert.

Banished

Roger was later banished and his land forfeited – the next owner was Stephen of Blois.

Hundreds of years passed until Henry IV annexed West Derby, becoming Crown lands around 1400.

In 1639 Charles I, always desperate for money, sold it to some London speculators who promptly resold it to the Earl of Derby.

The Stanleys kept it until 1718 when the manor was bought by Isaac Greene, a Prescott lawyer, from whom it eventually descended to the Marquess of Salisbury through marriage. Lord Salisbury is still West Derby's Lord of the Manor.

The manor and township contained four ancient corn mills – two in the castle (one driven by a horse, the other by water), Ackers Mill in Finch Lane and another on Mill Bank which survived until 1805.

Between Mill Bank and the Village stretched Earl's Meadow with what is now Mill Lane running through it.

The people of West Derby had to pay the Lord of the Manor a shilling a year for the privilege of using Mill Lane.

In other very old settlements such as West Derby the main street was also known as Town Row and the parallel thoroughfare Back Lane. In the 16th century our Town Row went as far north as Clubmoor on the boundary with Walton.

Part of Town Row remains but in fairly recent times the stretch beyond Deysbrook Lane was gentrified into Leyfield Rd. Likewise, Back Lane became the more elegant Eaton Rd. West Derby Courthouse, built in 1586 to replace an earlier building, was last used in 1910. It is open between 2 pm and 4 pm every Sunday April to October (not Easter Sunday), admission free.

Stocks

The stocks originally stood on the north wall of the Courthouse where the Flower Pot now stands. *(An 1853 painting by W G Herdman shows wooden stocks in situ. The present iron stocks were probably never used for punishment and appear to have been made in a factory. An almost identical set can be seen at Thornton, Crosby. The Victorians loved to recreate their idea of what Olde England may have looked like. West Derby Village today is largely a Victorian creation. They probably felt iron stocks were more appropriate to reflect the prosperity of their neighbourhood. The old wooden stocks may have been discarded when the tram ticket office was built on the site of the Flower Pot about 1880.*

An old photograph shows the stocks in a garden before they were moved to their present position in 1904. They may have not have come originally from West Derby.

The last references I can find for stocks being used locally is 1858 for Walton and 1863 for Thornton, so West Derby's probably fell into disuse about the same time. Unlike the pillory, stocks have never been made illegal – the Victorians, proud of their prisons, merely stopped using them. West Derby stocks were last employed to hold an offender as late as 1962 – when the Village policeman handcuffed a drunk to them to await the Black Maria or Hurry Up Wagon – Editor.)

Opposite *Lowlands*, on Haymans Green, there is a high sandstone wall turning round into Haymans Close. Now a small housing estate, this was once the site of a very large house called The Lodge, pictured below.



One of its occupants was William Imrie, business partner of Thomas Ismay. Their White Star Line later built *Titanic* and other great ships. White Star was founded over a game of billiards at Broughton Hall when it was the home of a German financier.

In the 1950s The Lodge became Marlborough College, a private boys' school. When this closed, the building was demolished about 1970 to make way for the current housing.

Frankla Corris MBE

Mrs Frankla Corris MBE, who died on 17 April aged 92, was a leading member and archivist of the West Derby Society for many years.

She had a formidable knowledge of the history of the area as well as Croxteth Hall and the Molyneux family built up over many years of study.

Frankla served tirelessly as a volunteer at the hall, acting as a guide in the role of a Victorian costumed housekeeper. She was the leader of the volunteers for many years and led with determination and skill.

Frankla Watson was born 1 May 1917 in Walton, Liverpool, just one month after her father Frank – an army officer – was killed on the Western Front. Educated at Holly Lodge Girls' School, Frankla went on to become a primary school teacher. She taught at schools in the West Derby and Norris Green areas, including St Mary's and Broad Square.

She married John Corris in 1946 and settled in Ennis Road. John was Manx and the couple made frequent visits to the island where they owned two bookshops.

Both were talented artists – Frankla painted traditional still-lives while John did landscapes using a bold *impasto* style.

She was also passionate about the West Derby Courthouse. She studied Latin to enable her to decipher documents relating to the Manor Court.



Frankla located the original document relating to the building of the Courthouse. Originally thought to be from the Restoration period, Frankla discovered it dated from 1586 and was built on the personal authorisation of Elizabeth I.

Frankla was among Society members who successfully campaigned for the Courthouse to be restored in 2005. She often appeared there in costume at Sunday afternoon openings until 2008. But perhaps we will remember her most for her feisty contributions to our monthly meetings. Woe betide anyone who thought they could challenge Frankla about facts and dates!

The Queen installed Frankla as a Member of the British Empire, for her services to the heritage and history of West Derby, at Buckingham Palace in 2004.

Society members and costumed Croxteth Hall volunteers were among the many who attended the funeral at St Mary's on 30 April. Frankla's passing has deprived West Derby of one of its leading personalities.

Planning News

The Planning Inspectorate threw out plans to redevelop **43 Almonds Green** as sheltered housing following a campaign by your Society and local residents.

Builders want to pull down a perfectly-good 1920s detached house with adjoining stables and replace them with an anonymous-looking block of flats and related buildings.

Liverpool City Council's planning committee rejected the plans, prompting the appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

In his decision announced on 19 May, the inspector said that the planned development was out of keeping with nearby residential properties and would invade the privacy of neighbours.

We await the next moves in relation to this site, most likely another application on similar lines in the hope the new council and Government will take different views.

The Society had lodged objections to open yet another pizza parlour – this time opposite the gates of Broughton Hall and Cardinal Heenan Schools.

As Britain tries to combat a rising tide of obesity particularly among the young, fast food outlets are expanding and targeting areas where young people gather.

This latest plan relates to **4 – 5 Honeys Green Precinct**.

The West Derby Society (WDS) says there is currently no demand for pizzas in this area. The proposed takeaway is restricting its opening hours – 8 am to 6 pm – which by a strange coincidence coincide with when the schools are open.

WDS also says that the planned parlour will generate traffic as well as noise and nuisance such as litter, boisterous groups of customers and offensive smells.

Down Among the Dead Men

by Colin Langeveld

The last days of my boyhood were spent in Knotty Ash. The local church still holds a fascination for me. Consecrated in 1836, not old compared to some of our more ancient pantheons, but nevertheless *very old* to a boy just in from the colonies.

I was contacted by my brother who attended the infants' school (built in 1838) that lies opposite St John's. He informed me of an open day on 8 May to be held at the school and church – including the crypt.

As a keen enthusiast of the dark and mysterious, I leapt at the opportunity.

On first appearance, it was a disappointment: a tunnel with two rows of opposing, empty brick caverns, some with soil strewn on the floor. (One heap was topped by an old cross. The parson was unaware of what lay beneath and admitted, he did not particularly want to know). Then, as we reached the end of the tunnel I noticed that three of the caverns were fronted by four huge, rusted, iron doors.

According to the parson, the last time they had been opened was between 1850 and 1860. By shining a torch through the four small holes at the top of each door, one could see well-preserved coffins, some with brass fittings still dully gleaming thanks to the dry atmosphere of these tombs. Unfortunately only one of the crypts had sufficient room for me to insert my small camera lens.

We were then directed to a blank wall with a half-brick removed.

Apparently, a boy had recently removed it when he found it to be loose. I was now able to insert the whole of my camera (was my wrist to be gripped by a dry, skeletal hand?) into the dark recess. The results were truly remarkable: enclosed was a huge coffin amazingly still topped by time - blackened wreaths.

I left with the memory of how the crypt smelt, not musty or of mould, but strangely of faded flowers.

Chairman's Comments

I was passing Thornhead Lane when I noticed an official notice about public rights of way. Calling in at the Municipal Buildings, I learnt that the local authority was updating the Definitive Rights of Way Map under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. I paid the fee of £2.50 for a copy of the map and what a fascinating document it proved to be. It lists a number of rights of way which will now be officially recognised. **Thornhead Lane** links **Leyfield Rd** with the footpath running down to **Princess Drive** – an ancient route pre-dating many of the later thoroughfares (below).



Other paths include one linking **Townsend Lane** and **Cherry Lane** over the recreation ground – this area has been public open space for at least a century, according to old maps. There's another from Townsend Lane to **Breckside Park**, again over public open space. A path from **Gillmoss Close** to **Altcross Rd** runs parallel with the River Alt. I have known the one from **New Rd** to **Orphan Drive** for many years. It snakes under the railway line next to the former Newsham Hospital, giving access to Newsham Park from **Green Lane**. I sometimes walk to work and this is an important link on the journey. Passing through Sandfield Park and Newsham Park it is possible to do about half the journey through parkland. I did this several times last winter when it was impossible to take the car or use the bus in the snow. I lost a big toe nail as a result!

Cinders

When I was young the path from **Honeys Green Lane** to **East Prescot Rd** was known as The Cinder Path. There were prefabs where the bingo hall and supermarket are now. In those days it was common to see cinders used on paths and car parks. If I remember rightly the coal yard at the side of Ken Dodd's house was surfaced with cinders. Hidden away behind Oak Vale Park a path goes over a railway footbridge, linking **Waldgrave Rd** and **Warnerville Rd**.

On 8 July about 80 pupils from my old school Blackmoor Park spent the day exploring West Derby on foot.

I thought this was an excellent idea. In this age of the school run it is important to encourage people of all ages to walk.

I met the pupils and their teachers in West Derby Village and gave them a talk about its history. We then walked to *Lowlands* to see the grounds and parts of the building. Footpaths in urban areas fill an important need to access areas for whatever reasons.

They serve a vital role in people's health and sense of place This is even more important today as our roads fill up with traffic.

The West Derby Society's terms of reference support the maintenance and management of footpaths as means of seeing and preserving our areas of open space. We must encourage the use these paths. ***Stephen Guy***

