

# NEWSLETTER

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New Year 2009

50p to non-members

## Exciting Year Ahead

We look forward to returning to *Lowlands* in 2009 following the extensive £1.2 million restoration and renovation of the Grade II-listed West Derby Community Centre. The building has been subtly transformed with a new roof, lift, improved heating, new kitchens, drains, disabled facilities and a new large room on the first floor (below).



The Society is grateful to St James's for letting us use the church for our meetings since September 2007.

There have been a number of unavoidable delays at *Lowlands* but now the specialist contractor, Brereton's of Liverpool, is starting the final leg of the site works – painting the interior and exterior of this beautiful Italianate building dating from 1846.

The main cause of the delay has been extensive dry and wet rot. This has been tackled in an efficient and expert manner in consultation with the architects, the Griffiths Thompson Partnership of Liverpool.

The Heritage Lottery Fund, the main funder of the *Lowlands* Renewal Project, has been very supportive of the additional work required to make sure the building continues to serve the community for many years to come.

## What's in a name?

Some people may have difficulty with the pronunciation of two prominent names in our history - Derby and Molyneux, **writes Alastair Caird.**

Society members may know that in 1985 the Stanley family celebrated the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the granting of the Earldom of Derby following the Battle of Bosworth which saw the defeat of Richard III and the end of the Wars of the Roses.

People continue to ask whether the name should be pronounced Darby and Derby. Most people favour Darby and this seems to be supported by old maps and prints where the name is also spelt Darby. However, in earlier times people had a much more flexible approach to spelling.

### Hoult

Some people pronounce it Derby. Local author J Hoult claimed 100 years ago that most people articulated it in this way. Picton, the renowned 19<sup>th</sup> century Liverpool historian, wrote that someone from West Derby was a West Derbyite but didn't indicate how it was enunciated.

The name Molyneux can also be pronounced in two ways. The vast majority of people drop the x. The late Earl of Sefton, head of the Molyneux family, was once asked how to pronounce his family name. He replied that it should be said in the same way as it was spelt, sounding the x.

One of the last parish constables, before Robert Peel's police reforms, was stationed at Old Swan with responsibility for West Derby within the parish of Walton. **Cont ...**

The parish constable was an important official within the community. In those days the main qualification for the job would be sheer physical size and strength rather than knowledge of the law. This particular individual could not read or write and only had a very elementary idea of his duties. He knew that thieves had to be caught, peace needed to be maintained on the streets and drunks should be put in the Old Swan lock-up.

There were strange stories about the constable, whose name has been lost in the mists of time. On one occasion several frightened women asked him to stop a fight on a field off Black Horse Lane.

### **Sportsman**

The constable hurried to the field and, being a sportsman, decided it was a pity to stop a good fight. Instead of intervening in the cause of peace, he said they must fight it out and he would lock up the defeated man!

Times were changing and the constable learnt that his methods were not to be tolerated. Eventually he came under the authority of magistrates who tried to make him follow more conventional practices. In the end, the manner of his dismissal was perhaps typical of the man and his times.

### **Neighbours**

He was very fond of beer and some of his neighbours, taking advantage of this weakness, played a practical joke on him. One night they got him drunk and persuaded the local barber to shave only one side of his face. They then placed him on the Knotty Ash omnibus but unfortunately another of the passengers was one of the constable's superiors.

The drunken constable noticed him and addressed the startled official as "old cock" which led to the unfortunate policeman's dismissal. Later he took to drink and spent many a night in the lock-up which he once supervised ...

In the midst of West Derby Village is seen an old-time instrument of punishment.

The stocks – which have recently been refurbished – show how our forefathers showed a sense of thrift in the punishment of offenders. These were much cheaper compared to prisons and were, in many respects, an efficient punishment.

They may certainly have cured drunkenness as the shame and ridicule of exposure brought many an offender to their senses. An Act of Parliament in 1605 ruled that being drunk would result in a fine of five shillings (25p) or six hours in the stocks.

The original West Derby stocks were made of wood and can be seen against the north wall of the Courthouse in an 1853 painting by William Gawin Herdman (below).



The present iron stocks were installed some time after this date. We do not know when the Village stocks were last used but it was probably about 1860 when the use of stocks in most places fell into disuse – they lingered on in remote areas until the 1890s.

The small garden where the stocks stand today is the last remaining part of the Village pound, also known as the pinfold. It once extended some distance behind the Yeoman's House.

A recently-refurbished stone in front of the stocks says:

*To commemorate the long and happy reign of Queen Victoria and the Coronation of Edward VII: this site of the ancient pound*      **Cont ...**

*of the Dukes of Lancaster and other Lords of the Manor of West Derby was enclosed and planted and the village stocks set herein, Easter 1904.*

The village pound was looked upon as a valuable piece of property. In 1321 it generated the vast sum of £9 13s 4d (£9.67). Turning now to West Derby in the early 1930s, the following published ramble paints a fascinating picture :

*Take the electric car [tram] from Liverpool to West Derby for which you will be charged 2d [less than 1 p]. From here you can take an excellent ramble from West Derby to Knowsley, Croxteth Park and back to the Village. The walk, though only a few miles beyond the city boundary, leads through some pretty country and along field paths which may not be well-known.*

*From the car terminus proceed along Town Row and the road beyond. When in Leyfield Rd look out for the footpath on the left where a direction post says "To Knowsley".*

*You now enter a byway which soon brings you to West Derby Golf Course. Just beyond the golf course at the point where the path runs at right angles across yours, turn to the right and you will soon reach Yew Tree Lane. . [This path – ancient Thornhead Lane - is still there but overgrown in places. The signpost is long gone.]*

### **Cemetery**

*Here the direction is straight along Finch Lane. After passing the Roman Catholic Cemetery, take the footpath just beyond the farm buildings on the left hand side of the road. Across the field you will see a wood, the path cuts through a hedge and then goes straight ahead to the stream – the River Alt. [This area was built over by Liverpool Corporation after the Second World War as part of a major rehousing project.]*

The ramble goes on to Knowsley and Croxteth, passing Croxteth Hall and back across the estate to the Village for the tram back to Liverpool.

Yew Tree Lane was the site of a long-demolished residence called Yew Tree House which featured an ancient yew tree in the grounds. According to legend, many yew trees are between 1,000 and 2,000 years old and local lore put the West Derby yew into this age group. An old photograph shows it was of great size. A tree house in its massive boughs was built by Lawrence Heyworth JP and was used by residents of Yew Tree House as a summer house for afternoon tea.

### **Builders**

Scarratt Brothers were builders in West Derby between 1922 and 1953 during an era of huge housing development.

Scarratts built houses for Liverpool Corporation in Norris Green and private houses in Town Row between Melwood Drive and the Village Hall.

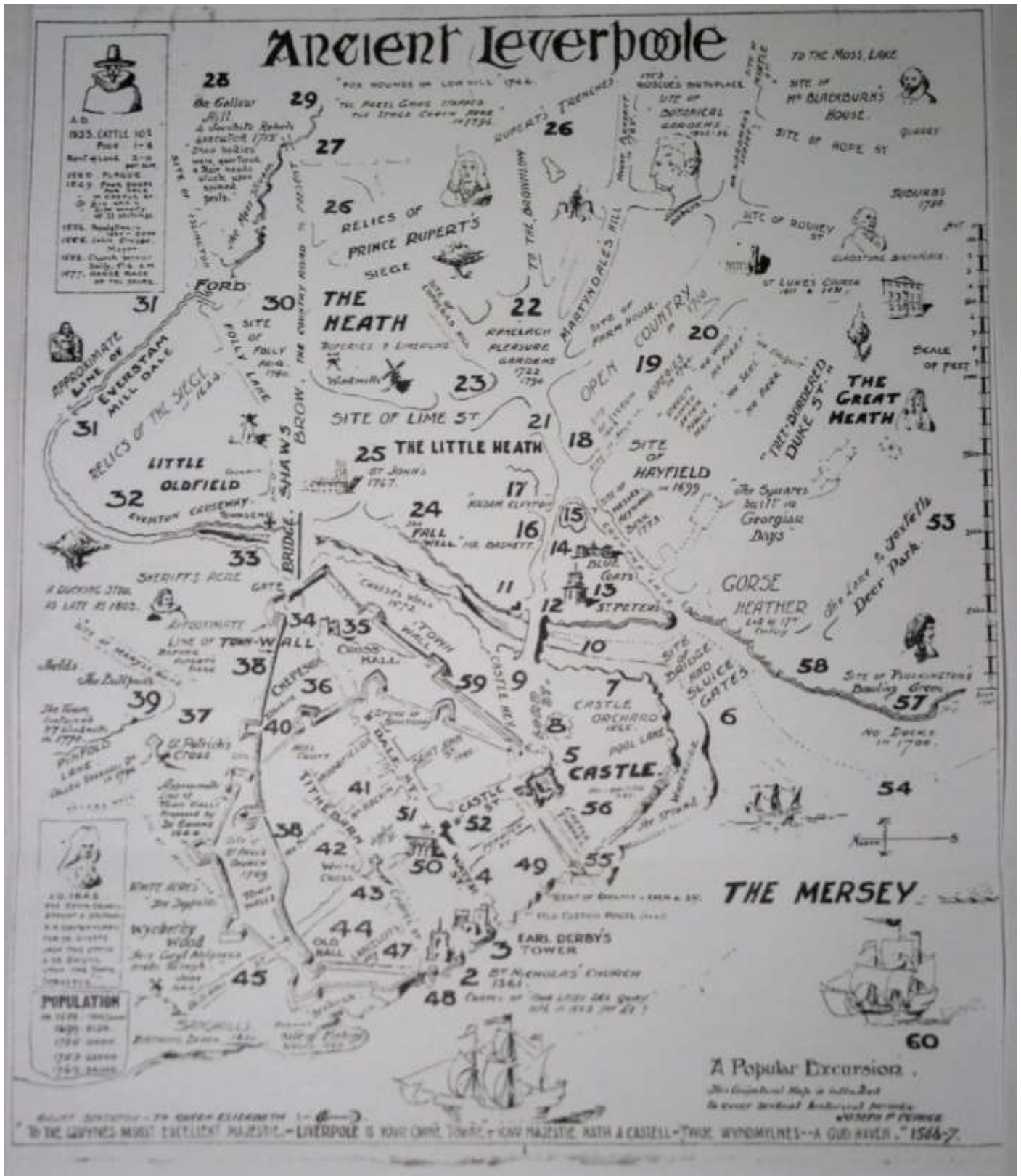
They also developed the Warnerville Rd area off Queens Drive, demolished Staplands – a big house in Broadgreen – and built Lingfield Rd.

The firm also demolished Eaton House in 1933 to make way for new houses. This house, pictured below, was built in 1820 and gave its name to Eaton Rd, originally called Back Lane. When this picture was taken in 1906 it was used as a children's convalescent home. The original sandstone walls of the side entrance to Eaton House can still be seen at the end of Agincourt Rd.





This map of Liverpool is based on how the town could have looked in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Civil War town walls can be seen and the Pool fed by the Moss Stream. Liverpool Castle is seen near the waterfront. For hundreds of years it was the largest building in the town before being demolished about 1720 – the Victoria Monument was later built on the site. The Tower – on the site of Tower Buildings – was the Liverpool stronghold of the Earls of Derby. No docks are visible – ships were loaded and unloaded on the beach.



## West Derby Courthouse

The West Derby Courthouse – probably Liverpool's oldest public building - was open to visitors every Sunday between April and October in 2008.

More than 940 people of all ages visited over this period, most of them first-timers to this remarkable Tudor building dating from 1586. The busiest month was June, with around 230 visitors while a total of 120 came through the door over the two Heritage Weekends in September.

Once again your Society organised a rota of volunteers to supervise the building during the opening hours between 2 pm and 4 pm. Admission is free.

Visitors are fascinated by this Grade II\*-listed building which was restored and conserved in 2005 at a cost of £110,000. Costs were shared by the owners, Liverpool City Council, and English Heritage.

Administered by Croxteth Hall, the Courthouse is the only free-standing post-Medieval courthouse in Britain. It features original Tudor benches and 17<sup>th</sup> century muniment cupboards (for documents) which are believed to be unique.

This year display boards were generously donated to the Courthouse, creating a small exhibition of historic maps, images and documents. The adjacent stocks were also skilfully restored by Liverpool City Council, helping to bring more visitors to West Derby Village. Comments from the 2008 visitors' book included "Pleased to see open. Keep up the good work" and "Really lovely to see this open!"

***West Derby Courthouse will again be open 2 pm – 4 pm every Sunday between April and October in 2009 (not Easter).***

Thanks to all volunteers in 2008 including:

Pat Allen, James Ashton, Jim Bannon, Peter Cain, Allan & Lucy Cartwright, Frankla Corris MBE, Moira Curran, Bill Davies, Stephanie Grogan, Tony Goff, Stan & Rita Guy, Stephen Guy, Jim & Mary Harkins, Dave Joyce, Ken Lightfoot, Jan Monaghan, Eric Preston, Bill & Pam Rayner, Andy Richardson, Margaret Shapton,

## Mary Greenwood

Society committee member Mary Greenwood has passed away after battling against illness for many years.

Despite her infirmities, she bravely attended most of our Society meetings and contributed much to our knowledge of West Derby.

Mary had many clear memories of the area dating back to childhood.

She contributed several fascinating articles to the *NewsLetter*. Several recalled the vanished countryside of her youth when Queens Drive ran through open fields.

## Planning Issues

We await the result of two Planning

Inspectorate appeals relating to the former Everton FC training ground at **Bellefield** and the old St James's Vicarage at **111 Mill Lane**. Deputy chairman Andrew Richardson spoke at the three-day Bellefield inquiry at a Liverpool city centre hotel.

The Society has written to the Bristol-based Inspectorate urging it to reject the elderly persons' apartments proposed for the former vicarage.

Your chairman spoke at the Liverpool City Council planning committee in support of the conversion plans for Grade II-listed **Alder Grange** (formerly Kiln Hey house), which were approved. However, proposals for a new building next to the historic mansion were rejected. Meanwhile, plans by a developer to pull down the former stables house at **43 Almonds Green** were withdrawn following objections by your Society and many local residents.

We still await a decision on our application to English Heritage to list the **Carmelite Monastery** to protect it from unsuitable development. The Council have issued tree protection orders covering more than 20 trees which should help protect the site.

Work around tower house **Gwalia** on Queens Drive is being monitored by your Society.

### Word from the Web

The following is of particular interest following the account of a ramble in the 1930s on page 3.

**Allan Jones** e-mailed the Society:

*I was born in Max Rd, off Finch Lane, in 1949.*

*Nearby in Finch Lane was what we used to call Close's Farm but I think the correct name was Lower Finch Farm, which was demolished in the 1980s.*

*It was a working farm when I was a child, with a sizeable dairy herd. The problem for the farmer was that the Corporation built a housing estate on part of his land, cutting off the farm buildings from the grazing land.*

*Princess Drive was also built, further isolating the farm buildings. I believe that Princess Drive was built as part of an outer ring road which was to be extended along Croxteth Hall Lane but never built.*

*In order to get the cattle to their grazing, the farmer had to drive the herd across Princess Drive, stopping the traffic in order to do so. They were driven to fields between Mab Lane and the River Alt which were later built on. This had to be done every day to bring the cattle in for milking and Princess Drive used to be covered in cow pats which made driving very hazardous!*

### Chairman's Comments

Another year is upon us so this is a suitable time to reflect on 2008.

It has been hard to ignore Liverpool enjoying being European Capital of Culture. The city has had an astonishing 15 million visitors drawn to the attractions over the past 12 months.

The other day I organised a small ceremony to greet the one millionth visitor to Merseyside Maritime Museum in 2008 – the first time any National Museums Liverpool venue has had this many.

Liverpool has outstanding cultural assets – from the stunning architecture and museums

to the outstanding and varied talents of its people.

However, 2008 is gone and we must continue to plan and move forward. There is mention of *Lowlands* on the front page. The City Council is also putting a lot of time and effort into West Derby Village with its many historic attractions.

One area of concern is inappropriate planning applications and your Society will continue to be vigilant. We very much appreciate input from our members and others alerting us to proposals and moves by developers, often heard on the grapevine.

We have an exciting agenda for our Society meetings in 2009:

**21 January:** Annual General Meeting and chairman's talk. Please bring annual subscriptions.

**18 February:** Broadcaster and writer Laurence Westgath on Liverpool's heritage.

**18 March:** Lesley Black on the League of Welldoers.

**15 April:** Curator Moira Lindsey on the new Victoria Museum, Liverpool University.

**20 May:** Curator Paul Gallagher on The Beatles and *The Beat Goes On*.

**17 June:** Evening Outing.

**4 July:** Day Trip.

**August:** No meetings.

**16 September:** Shaun Rothwell on the history of Merseyside Police.

**21 October:** Dr Ashley Cooke on mummies and Ancient Egypt.

**18 November:** Pamela Brown on Liverpool's maritime world.

**16 December:** Traditional Christmas cheer. Please make a note of these dates in your diaries and calendars – they will also be on your 2009 membership cards which will be issued when annual subscriptions are paid. The first two or three monthly meetings are expected to be held in St James's Church, Mill Lane, before we move back into *Lowlands* after Easter but this depends on the completion of the site works.

**Stephen Guy**