

West Derby Society

NEWSLETTER

www.angelfire.com/al4/westderbysoc/

Summer 2012

Footpath Consultation

Following objections by the West Derby Society (WDS) and others including many residents, Liverpool City Council has acknowledged that the ancient footpath between the golf course and rugby club is used and should remain a public right of way. However, the serious concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime affecting new houses on the barracks site must be addressed.

The council is now proposing to gate the footpath which will restrict access to the byway. A public consultation exercise is planned for August.



The council, in considering a gating order, says: "This order, if made, will enable the council to physically close the path (by gate or other structure at either end) to prevent general public access to the path, although the path's legal status shall remain a public right of way. This is a temporary measure and the order is made to address the path facilitating crime/ anti-social behaviour."

Your Society awaits the publication of the proposed order with interest and will respond once details are published. WDS needs assurances that this public amenity will remain accessible to the many people who use it at various times. Presumably an access plan will be drawn up.

Tesco's Village Plans

Developers have confirmed that Tesco want to open a convenience store in the West Derby Village conservation area.

This is on the vacant site in Mill Lane (Tippier's) near the Conservative Club. A Victorian block was pulled down

some years ago for another planned development that never materialised. Since then it has become an eyesore.

Rumours that Tesco – a notoriously aggressive organisation – wanted to trade in the Village had been circulating for months.

However, the application was made by a company called West Derby Asset Ltd.

Objection

WDS has objected to the proposed development on the grounds that there is no demand for such a store in the Village plus traffic problems, noise, pollution and anti-social behaviour.

As a result, the Manchester-based company behind West Derby Asset Ltd contacted WDS. They had never heard of the West Derby Society and wanted to meet up to talk about the development. They only revealed that Tesco would be a tenant of the planned development when asked directly. WDS has declined this offer to meet the developers.

The proposal now goes to the planning committee.

The site does need to be developed but WDS believes a locally-owned company without a policy of undercutting and unfairly stealing business from others would be more appropriate and enhance the current mix of traders in this historic area.

Black Ivory and Fall Well

Most people, while perhaps not being obsessed by history, have a wholesome respect for what has happened before, *writes Alastair Caird*.

Tradition and precedent are often preferred to expediency and many folk love the past just for its own sake. Even the most ardent materialist is ready to concede that the course of events today may be irrevocably linked to what our forebears did.

Historically, Liverpool may not be often associated with pomp and pageantry and colourful tradition. Its past is tied more to social and commercial development and enterprise, human and humane problems and people. Nevertheless in matters of general interest the study of the city's background will pay the student tenfold.

Goree

Nothing now remains of Goree Piazzas built in 1793 in part commemoration of the African trade, taking its name from Goree Island off Senegal, West Africa - a coast once prolific in supplying slaves.

The original building was short-lived, being destroyed by fire in 1802 and rebuilt.

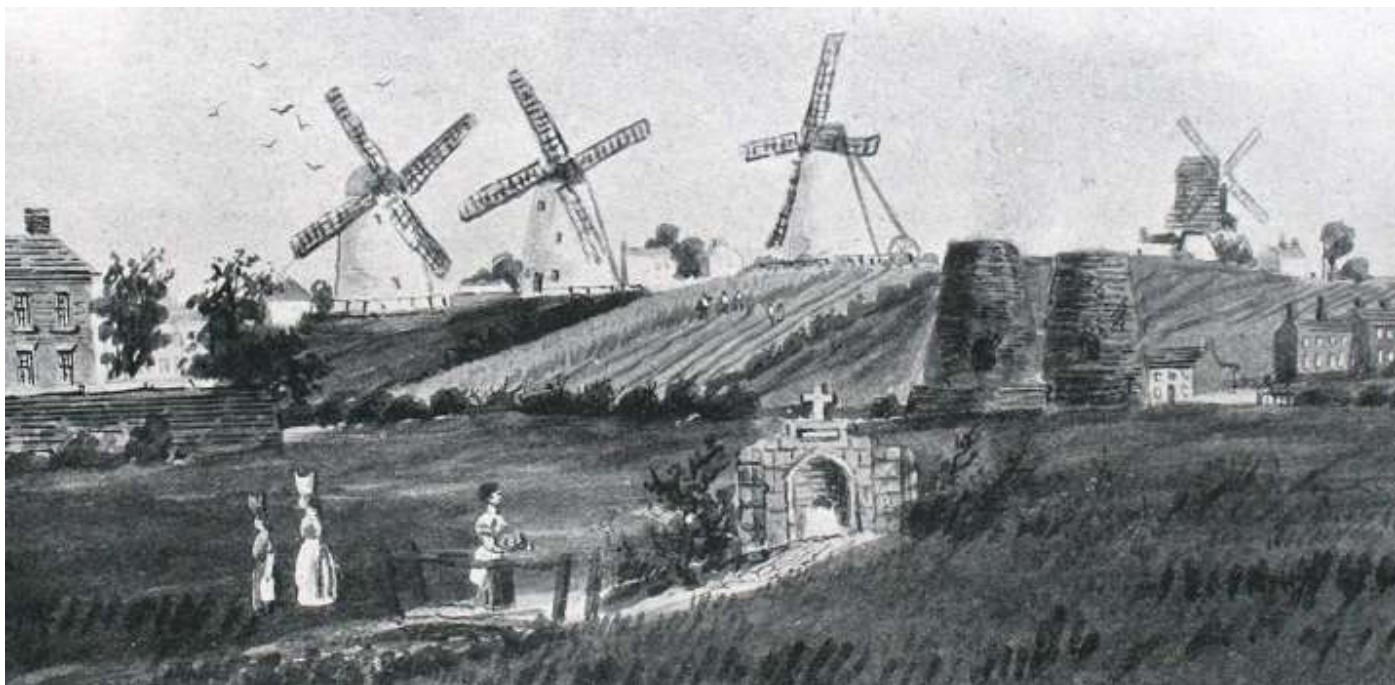
Piazza is an Italian word describing a square or market place and is generally applied when surrounded by buildings or a colonnade.

We have long faced the distasteful realisation that many Liverpool fortunes were founded on the odious trade in Black Ivory, as slaves were sometimes euphemistically described. At the beginning of the 18th century, Bristol was a firmly-established and prosperous seaport, her merchants and ships were very active in the transport of Africans to the plantations on the New World. Liverpool was scarcely in the race.

The port hung precariously on the fringe of the commercial world.

Her population of some 5,000 people had little conception of how she was to develop during the following century.

Even the most cursory glance backwards is enough to show that the town was struggling out of its cocoon.



In 1694, for example, Liverpool relied largely for its water supply upon Fall Well (above), on the Common at a point roughly corresponding to the top of St John's Lane.

Servants washed in it; other polluted water flowed into it. A year later three enterprising men petitioned the council for the right to supply the town with fresh water. The council agreed to let them construct and repair an aqueduct and construct a cistern. The entrepreneurs were to pay £10 per annum for 99 years. (The town records say that they were not to "pinch" the water from Fall Well.)

Bore

The Common was frequently in the news - in 1698 the ever-enterprising council bored there for coal and voted no less a sum of £10 to the project. Apparently the outcome was compatible with the outlay, for we hear little more of coals under the Common until 1717. At that time Alderman Gildart (of Gildart Street) obtained liberty to bore for coals, widening the scope of the search by including lead and other ores. Touzeau, in his *Rise and Progress of Liverpool*, suggests that the presence of valuable minerals would not have been suspected without reasonable cause. Who knows, had the project been more successful, we may have had mine shafts now where Lime Street Station and the Adelphi stand. By 1699 shipbuilding had become sufficiently important to be recognised as an industry. Liverpool Corporation, rarely missing a trick, was not slow to exploit the situation. Carpenters building ships on council land were in future to pay 6d a ton for the privilege. As a port the town was struggling. The first dock had yet to be constructed and early shipping had more than its share of problems. Continuous damage to vessels moored off the town, caused by ships constantly fouling one another, led to the appointment of a water bailiff who enforced such curious regulations as: All ships lying within the band and below the Water St end should be moored with three cables and three anchors; one to the NW another to the SE and another to westward etc - penalty for default, five shillings.

Talisman

The water bailiffs' talisman was a silver oar. Historians mention that the mere showing of the oar was sufficient to authorise the arrest of those who disobeyed, without recourse to warrant or process. The silver oar, incidentally, is now part of the civic regalia. This was the state of the new menace to powerful Bristol. By 1764, Liverpool boasted 766 ships against Bristol's 332. Liverpool was handy for the expanding industries of the north but also her merchants and shipowners operated more frugally and economically.

Consider insurance. Writing to the Earl of Cork in 1780 Samuel Derrick, Master of the Ceremonies, during a visit to Liverpool had this to say: "Though few of the merchants have more education than befits a counting house, they are genteel in their address. They are hospitable, very friendly to strangers, even those of whom they have the least knowledge. Their tables are plenteously furnished, their viands well served up, their rum is excellent, of which they consume large quantities in punch, made when the West Indies fleets come in, mostly with limes, which are very cooling, and afford a delicious flavour. I need not inform your Lordship that the principal exports of Liverpool are all kinds of woollen and worsted goods, with other manufactures of Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham wares. These they barter on the coast of Guinea for slaves, gold dust and elephants' teeth [ivory]. The slaves they dispose of at Jamaica, Barbados and other West Indian islands for rum and sugar, for which they are sure of a quick sale at home. "This port is admirably situated for trade, being almost central in the channel, so that in war time, by coming north-about, their ships have a good chance of escaping the many privateers belonging to the enemy which cruise to the southward. Thus their insurance being less, they are able to undersell their neighbours and since I have been here, I have seen enter the port, in one morning, seven West Indian ships, whereof five were not insured". The close of the Seven Years War (1763) threw open the seas as never before and by 1765 Liverpool had 83 ships totalling 9,382 tons, engaged in the slave trade, carrying 24,200 slaves.



A slave ship, courtesy of National Museums Liverpool

There is ample and incontestable evidence of the magnitude of Liverpool's Africa Trade as slaving was then described. During the 11 years from 1783 to 1793, 878 Liverpool slave ships landed 303,737 slaves in the New World at a sterling value of £15,186,850. It should be remembered that the frequently terrible conditions of the Middle Passage killed large numbers of Africans. Instances were commonplace of losses in human cargoes amounting to 20% and as much as 50% was not unknown.

The Middle Passage formed one third of the lucrative triangle of journeys. Slavers left Liverpool laden with cheap Manchester goods, liquor, arms and trinkets to exchange with African traders for as many enslaved Africans as could be crammed into the holds of the ships. There followed the awful crossing to the Americas, then the disposal of the slaves in various ways on arrival. Finally there was the loading of the vessel with sugar, tobacco, rum and cotton which were then sold in Liverpool for big profits.

Thus we have the phenomenon of a wealthy and established Bristol being cut out of the African trade by enterprising Liverpool which, according to Williams in his *History of the Liverpool Privateers* was without sufficient capital to support a vessel of 30 tons in 1700 and did not have a dock at that time.

Mention of such numbers of slaves carried in Liverpool ships must not encourage the belief that slave auctions were part of the daily scene in Goree Piazzas. On the contrary, it is clear that slaves were almost invariably carried direct from Africa to the Americas and there is little to support the suggestion that their auction in Liverpool was a regular practice.

Numbers

At the same time, the handling of such large numbers of slaves inevitably ended in some coming to Liverpool. As Muir, in his *History of Liverpool* puts it: "The legend which pictures rows of negroes chained to staples in Goree Piazzas, exposed for sale, is a curious instance of popular superstition.

"After 1772, indeed (and the slave trade was at its height after that date) no slaves can be brought to Liverpool, for in the Somerset case, tried in that year, it was laid down by the judges that under the common law slavery did not exist in England and that every slave became free as soon as his foot touched English soil.

"Before 1772 a few slaves were brought to Liverpool but they were exceptions. There was never any systematic importation. The largest number of slaves known to have been offered for sale at one time in Liverpool was 11 but though the newspapers contain adverts of slaves for sale, 'warranted sound', and though auctions of negroes occasionally took place in the shops or coffee houses, or on the steps of the old Custom House, these cases were exceptional, and do not deserve the prominence they have obtained in most histories of Liverpool".

The immeasurable misery created by this traffic stank to high heaven. It is difficult for us at such a distance of time, to appreciate what went on in the minds of otherwise so-called respectable business people.

Interest

It should not be thought that Liverpool's interest in the slave trade began and ended with that of the 100 or so of its principal merchants. Directly or indirectly a great part of the population was eager to take part. To quote Muir: "It is well-known that many of the small vessels that imported about 100 slaves were fitted out by attorneys, drapers, ropers, grocers, tallow chandlers, barbers, tailors etc of whom some had one eighth, some a fifteenth, some a 32nd share.

"An army of sailors who got better pay on these ships than on any others, a host of shipwrights, ships' chandlers, manufacturers of chains and implements, whose livelihood depended upon the trade, all equally resented attacks upon it.

"It had flooded Liverpool with wealth, which invigorated every industry, provided capital for docks, enriched and employed the mills of Lancashire and afforded the means for opening out new lines of trade. Beyond a doubt it was the slave trade which raised Liverpool from a struggling port to one of the richest and most prosperous trading centres in the world".

Liverpool watched the gathering strength of the abolitionists with mounting apprehension and forecast "grass growing in Castle St" should the slave trade ever be abolished. The council fought hard for its retention and when Rev Raymond Harris, a Spanish Jesuit, wrote in 1788 that slavery "conforms with the principles of natural and revealed religion" they voted him £100 in approval.

They petitioned both Houses of Parliament and readily bestowed the freedom of the borough on those influential people who were vigorous in their support of the trade.

If all good things must come to an end, humanity may find comfort in applying the same rule to evil and on May Day 1807 the British slave trade ended.

- **Find out more about the slave trade at the International Slavery Museum (in the Merseyside Maritime Museum building), Albert Dock, open 10 am to 5 pm every day, admission free.**

Village Association

WDS does sterling work with regards to preservation and historical accuracy about all aspects of West Derby.

Our sister organisation, the West Derby Village Residents, Tenants & Business Association (WDVRTBA), formed in 2001, helps protect West Derby from exploitation.

The Association has the good of West Derby at heart, working with police and youth services, installing CCTV in the Village and maintaining the Village website www.westderbyvillage.com It has installed and maintains flower planters in the Village, provides a Christmas Tree every year, campaigned for Town Row to be resurfaced, helped refurbish the historic stocks and chapel monument, restored the lamp on the water fountain and maintains the bollards and chain fencing at the Country Park entrance.

It does good work (as we do) and must be recognised as such. We have great respect for the work done by each other. I would urge our members to check out the WDVRTBA website (above) to see if there is any area in which you feel you may be able to assist in the good work, along with WDS of course.

Two Fountains *by Andrew Richardson*

During our recent holiday in Scotland we had a day in the seaside town of Girvan, a small ship-repairing port.

Exploring the back streets I came across a large red granite drinking fountain very similar in style to the one opposite the Jolly Miller. Upon investigation, imagine my surprise to find a West Derby connection so far from home.

Frederic Bowden was born in 1825 in Tremington, North Devon, and came to Liverpool in 1843 to join Boutcher, Bowden, Limington & Co., hide and leather merchants, staying with them until 1884. He was very interested in the work of the Liverpool Dispensaries, joining their committee in 1871, serving in various roles until he became president and treasurer in 1900. He stayed in this post until his death, having attended over 2,000 meetings.

RSPCA

Frederic was also on the committee of the RSPCA from 1878 to 1894 and its chairman from 1894 to 1903. His church was St James's, West Derby, which he attended for 40 years. His wife, Eliza, bore him two children, Thomas and Eliza and, in 1909, Frederic and Eliza celebrated their Diamond Wedding. But happiness was to be short-lived as son Thomas died later that year followed by Eliza, the mother, the following year (1910).

The bad luck continued as, in February 1910 at a meeting of the Liverpool Dispensaries, Frederic caught a chill, dying from the effects on 1 May 1911, aged 86, and still of sound mind until the end. His funeral was at St James's with burial at Anfield Cemetery. He'd lived a full life, leaving £28,537 in his will, a fortune in those days.

So pity the poor daughter, Eliza, who'd seen her brother, father and mother die within two years. It was she who donated the Frederic Bowden drinking fountain in 1913 near Brougham Terrace and the Thomas Bowden fountain near the Jolly Miller in 1911. Sadly the latter one, originally standing in open countryside, is now wrecked. The ironwork for the fountains was made by W C McFarlane of Glasgow although I don't know who carved the stone.

Eliza junior married Hugh McCubbin in whose memory the Village Hall was donated in 1912 so I presume that he died at the same time. Eliza lived at 9 Millbank, the house was pulled down some years ago but the family home survives at *Fernside*, 4 Haymans Green which is where Frederic lived.

The fountain in Girvan was presented by Hugh McCubbin "of West Derby, Liverpool, to his native town of Girvan" in 1911. Unlike our two fountains, this one still sports two bronze animal-head water taps, bronze dedication plaque and a bronze bas-relief of the man himself.

Mystery Magic

This was the 13th WDS mystery tour but there was nothing unlucky about it.

Every June since 2000 Society members have enjoyed an evening's confusion engineered by the chairman.

There was an excellent turn-out for the

20 June event – just one seat on the coach was unsold.

We were also blessed with perfect midsummer weather.

We left the Village at 6.30 pm and headed for **Prescot** with the chairman giving a sporadic commentary throughout. Next it was over the **Runcorn Bridge** and down to **Frodsham** to take the scenic route to **Delamere Forest** and **Hatchmere**. The views towards the Pennines were spectacular.



We were soon at our destination – **Tarporley**. Some of us took a walk with the chairman around the village, looking at a house dating from 1586 – built the same year as the West Derby Courthouse – and the parish church reached up a back crack off the high street. The visit ended with a visit to local pubs including the Rising Sun.

Here locals were surprised by a sudden influx of visitors although we had given notice we'd be coming. A pint or two of Ward's bitter went down well with some of us before returning home via **Helsby**.

Chairman's Comments

I remember them well – they were known as Irwin's the cash grocers.

They were everywhere, small general stores with great personal service given by helpful staff.

They were a family business of the type once so familiar in our high streets.

I used to see the stores as I rode around on the bus or walking around the town. We would occasionally shop in one although we bought most of our groceries at Kewley's in Deysbrook Lane.

It was 1960 and suddenly Irwin's was in the news for all the wrong reasons.

The 212 stores were taken over by Tesco's and the name disappeared.

Family

Perhaps it was inevitable that family businesses should vanish as the age of the big combines emerged after the Second World War.

Premier Foods and Associated Biscuits gobbled up companies as a dog-eat-dog atmosphere developed.

Tesco also acquired Williamson's stores (1957), Harrow Stores (1959), Charles Phillips (1964) and the Victor Value chain (1968). Traditional stores with personal service gave way to self-service supermarkets, large and small.

Tesco's continued to grow. After small local stores were taken over, the rapacious company started buying whole supermarket chains such as Hillards and William Low.

To be fair, other supermarkets did the same with varying degrees of success.

Their policies of ruthlessly undercutting small competitors and putting them out of business have resulted in many high streets becoming littered with empty shuttered shops.

Tesco have been lampooned in the media and by comedians – one TV spoof showed the latest store hanging off the White Cliffs of Dover.

Now Tesco plan to open a shop in West Derby Village where the company will doubtless try to take business from other shops in the Village.

WDS opposes the store and feels it will blight the conservation area and close down competitors, adversely affecting the Village .

Stephen Guy