Lowlands Garden Project Launched

Work on the exciting Lowlands Garden Project has started at the West Derby Society’s (WDS) historic Grade II-listed HQ.

Both the stable yard (left) and the kitchen garden have been cleared of scrub and rubbish in preparation for planned raised flower beds and other features.

Regular monthly project meetings are being held at Lowlands to co-ordinate volunteers.

‘ello, ‘ello, ‘ello…

It is impossible to pinpoint accurately when the office of constable or parish constable started, writes Alastair Caird.

The word constable is of Norman origin, coming from the Latin stabuli meaning count of the stables or master of the horse.

Where the Anglo Saxons used the term tithingman or head borough, the Normans used the word constable and the names gradually became interchangeable.

In the end the tithingman, who kept the peace, was called a constable. He acted for his parish and a place was not regarded as a parish unless it had a constable.

The constables became the hands and eyes of the justices.
They supervised the watchmen, enquired into offences, served summonses, executed warrants, organised the Hue and Cry (left), took charge of prisoners and prosecuted them. In general, they obeyed the orders of the justices.

They were appointed to their office by the courts leet or manorial courts such as West Derby, but they were sworn in by the justices and acted under their direction.

Thus we find the tithing and its freemen, bound by oath to maintain order, gradually disappearing and being replaced by the system of justices and parish constables.

The Hue and Cry still existed as the method of pursuit of offenders and localities were still liable to be fined if they did not catch and prosecute their criminals.

The parish constable was appointed by the parish and the records of his office and duties would be kept in the parish chest.

Like special constable of today, the parish constable was unpaid, apart from small allowances, with his duties extraneous to his normal work. He was answerable to the chief constable of the Hundred.

Failure to carry out their duties effectively resulted in their appearance before the justices. Irregularities were widespread: as a result, regulations were drawn up by the justices in 1712 / 13 redressing and preventing the many civil practices and abuses committed by the chief constable, the petty constable and their agents.

Insight

An insight into the various situations the parish constable encountered can be found in transcribed Sessions records. They include reporting to the Sessional Court instances of refusing to keep watch, refusing to execute a warrant and taking seized cattle out of the common pound.

Others included convictions for swearing, arranging the horses and carriages for soldiers’ baggage belonging to a troop of dragoons, erecting a building without four acres of land, failure to repair the highway; the keeper of the county gaol allowing prisoners to escape along with using scurrilous language and calling someone of rogue.

End

Towards the end of the 17th century the above records reveal a large number of persons reported to the Sessional Court by the parish constable for failure to attend church. Here an absence of four weeks would result in a £20 fine and double pro-rata.

The next ranks, moving up the promotion ladder, were the head constable, or chief special constable or the senior constable.
Liverpool received its charter from King John in 1207. By 1257 a small stone chapel had been built overlooking a quay on the River Mersey. This chapel was used as the main centre of worship until 1355 when a new chapel was built on land granted to the burgesses by the Duke of Lancaster. In 1699 Liverpool was created an independent parish with two churches - the Old Church at the quayside and the later parish church of St Peter in the town centre.

St Peter’s was demolished in 1922 after serving as the pro-cathedral since 1885. St Nicholas’s, the quayside church, was gutted by fire following a wartime raid on 21 December 1940 - miraculously the tower survived.

Rebuilding began in 1949 and the church was re-consecrated on 18 October 1952.

“Hedges between keep friendships green” says an old French proverb, probably more commonly used in the days before fast-growing leylandii became such a source of neighbour complaints

However, it’s always nice to see, at the front of a property, a well-chosen, well managed hedge.

Hedge planting is an opportunity to create a rigorous investigation and research is recommended before choosing your plants. If it’s an old property, often a modern leylandii or cherry laurel may jar with the attractive frontage of the house or its historic or rural setting.

Traditional forms of hedge, beech, holly, hornbeam, privet and yew develop more slowly. They do not need so much cutting as leylandii, which is fast-growing into old age. Traditional forms of hedge can be restored even after many years of neglect, making them possibly a better long-term choice, especially in terms of maintenance.

Keep West Derby GREEN.

---

**WDS Annual General Meeting (AGM) Minutes**

The AGM was held at *Lowlands* on Wednesday 19 January 2022. It was chaired by WDS chairman Stephen Guy who opened the meeting at 7.40 pm after agendas were handed out.

**Apologies for absence:** Beryl Jones, Judith Golby, Stan Guy, Brian and Barbara Walker.

**Minutes of last AGM:** (Circulated 2020).

**Matters Arising:** There were no Matters Arising.
Chairman’s Report: Stephen read out the following report:

This is the WDS’s first AGM for two years due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Our last AGM was in January 2020. I remember at the Lowlands Burns Night that month there was talk about the spread of Covid but little did we know of its effect.

We carried on as usual. The meeting dates were set and speakers booked. You may remember that our speaker in February 2020 was none other than Mr Charles Dickens portrayed so well by Frank Kennedy.

In March I went on the annual recce for our planned July 2020 day trip to Ulverston in Cumbria, taking in historic Swarthmoor Hall (below).

By this time, it looked as if stringent government measures would be introduced and so it was.

From March 2020 most meetings or gatherings - including the Society’s - were banned. WDS did not meet again until September 2021 - a gap of 18 months, certainly the longest since the Society was formed in 1977 and unprecedented.

The Society was not inactive during this period, being involved in major controversial planning issues such as Alder Hey, Springfield Park and Melwood.

Positive moves during the lockdown included the unveiling of plans to refurbish Sandheys, once part of Holly Lodge College, the former Margaret Bevan School and the successful refurbishment of the former St James’s Church on Mill Lane by the St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church.

The Society was consulted in all of these plus the recent uncovering of the front of the former West Derby Picture House (Kids in Bloom) for the first time in 60 years.

The Newsletter continued to be printed as usual and did not miss an issue. The West Derby Society committee agreed that membership for all existing members should be free in 2021 because of our lack of meetings and therefore reduced expenses.

The return of meetings was welcomed by most members, including myself. It was satisfying to be able to meet up again within the guidelines.

We hope we are now on a clear course to returning to normal as soon as possible.

Lowlands continued to operate at a reduced level during lockdown and is now almost operating normally.
West Derby Courthouse reopened to the public on Sunday 1 August with our regular volunteers and continued most Sundays until the end of October. The Society took up issues with the city council involving the courthouse yard.

A new restaurant extractor fan was installed (left), reducing grease and gunge entering the little fern garden. Hopefully a rodent infestation is under control. A fence and gate were constructed between the chip shop and the courthouse, improving security.

Several West Derby Society members have joined the Lowlands garden committee focusing on areas behind our historic HQ - the stable yard and kitchen garden.

Both have just been cleared of vegetation and debris so we have a clear canvas to work on, hopefully creating raised flower beds, a vegetable patch and other amenities not available for many years.

Flower beds elsewhere in our rare woodland city garden will also be improved.

I hope I am not tempting fate but let's hope things will now run smoothly in 2022 - and we finally make it to Ulverston and Swarthmoor Hall on Saturday 2 July. We also look forward to the traditional mystery tour to who-knows-where on the evening of Wednesday 15 June.

May I take this opportunity to thank our committee, volunteers and members for their support in the past two years.

Thank you.

Treasurer’s Report:

WEST DERBY SOCIETY FINANCES 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCOMING</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscriptions</td>
<td>60.00 (six new members, existing members free).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donation</td>
<td>190.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc</td>
<td>92.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>342.30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTGOING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hire of hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print / Post / Stationery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WDS was once again following on in the footsteps of the previous year. We had to remain closed, which was very disappointing. WDS decided to give our existing members a year’s free membership. I would like to thank those of you who very kindly donated their membership money to WDS. We were also not allowed to have our much-missed evening and day trips. Hopefully this year we can resume them. In September we were allowed to re-open and what a wonderful opening it was. It felt like we had never been away, seeing and meeting everyone again was lovely. To make it even better, we welcomed some more new members.

Stephen Guy had used copies of Jack Cooper and David Power’s West Derby books. Written in the 1980s, the books had been donated to the Society by various people. Stephen decided to sell them at £10 each to members – they made a total of £70, the money raised going to WDS.

Our magazines were back on sale and made a total of £18.30 for WDS. I would also like to once again thank our volunteer distributors for the good work you do delivering our Newsletters by hand.

Balance to our Community Account ending 2021 is: £959.48
Balance for our Santander Account year ending 2021 is: £4,669.53
Giving WDS a grand total of £5,629.01
Thank you.
Stephanie Grogan, Hon Treasurer

Any Other Business: There was no Other Business.

Election of Officers: All officers stood down and offered themselves for re-election. The meeting re-elected them unanimously.

Date of next AGM: 18 January 2023.

Stephen thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 7.55 pm.

There followed the excellent chairman’s illustrated talk William Gawin Herdman: Modern Liverpool 1864 which was well received by all present.

More Spring Grove Memories
The family of Eileen Ryde, a long-standing WDS member who died in 2020, has kindly donated more of her local history photos and ephemera to the WDS archive. They include the following notes penned by Eileen, recalling her childhood at Spring Grove, the family home which gave its name to the cul-de-sac off Town Row. Over the road was St Paul’s Church.

When my parents moved into the house called Spring Grove about 1917, there were springs in the garden and a well in the kitchen’s flagged floor.
Father Van was an aristocratic Dutchman – hence the Van something but he was referred to only as Father Van.
I used to see him driving down Spring Grove with his black dog sitting in the front seat with him. His gate to the garage etc was right opposite our front gate. He never acknowledged anyone.
He would cane the children who missed Sunday mass, at the little school in Bonsall Road.
The priest house had two servants (one the housekeeper).
I remember lying in my cot on Sunday morning hearing the bells tolling from an early hour.
Before I was born, two young priests used to come over to use our tennis court but eventually they were stopped mixing (we were Plymouth Brethren).
At the top of Spring Grove, on Town Row, lived Best the boxing promotor at Liverpool Stadium.
Opposite Norris Green Road on Town Row was the driveway and lodge to Dr Arkle’s house. They had the most land, always with full-time gardeners.
At the bottom of Spring Grove was Johnson’s, a newer house than any of the others. There was a large pond with a little boat to an island.
Tradesmen etc would go up their drive and open the gate into Craven Road.
We left Spring Grove in autumn 1938, moving to a five-bedroom house which was then 12 Aysgarth Avenue.
We rented extra land where originally the road was intended to extend from Blackmoor Drive, across the top of Spring Grove to Melwood Drive and behind the Village Hall. Two houses were removed between Darley Drive and Aysgarth Ave but the planned road was cancelled, perhaps because of the war?
Spring Grove was sold to St Paul’s as a club for the church. Spring Grove was later demolished for the new school.

**Chairman’s Comments**

I have always been intrigued by this image of West Derby Burial Stone, an 1878 engraving by prolific Liverpool artist William Gawin Herdman (1805 – 82).
Where was it? What happened to it?
Most of these popular engravings come from books which were split up so the prints could be sold for framing.
I have now seen the original book and Herdman gives an account of seeing the stone and sketching it, some period of time before it was destroyed.
Around 1838 the stone was on a rocky stretch of Back Lane, later Eaton Road. In those days the lane ran across open country from Honeys Green Lane to Townsend Lane.
One day, Herdman was walking along the lane when an old man showed him the stone. It had been moved and set in the rock when the road was widened.
The historic relic was called the Burial Stone because mourners carrying a coffin to the nearest burial ground – Walton churchyard – rested there.
Herdman adds: *Some years afterwards, on account of increased traffic, the parish officers determined to widen the road still further.*

*Having less respect than their predecessors for ancient relics, the stone was destroyed, and no memento of it exists save the present plate.*

He describes the Burial Stone as being about three foot high and one and a half wide, with a roughly engraved cross.  

*Stephen Guy*