

Liverpool Cultural Heritage Forum

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NEWSLETTER NO 13

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EDITORIAL

The Prime Minister has said that tourism is the third largest export earning sector of the UK economy. The English Tourist Board says that heritage is the UK's principal attraction for tourists. Why then are funds to improve the country's tourism offer at risk? There is a threat of closure or of shorter opening hours for museums and other heritage attractions and of the cancellation of new heritage projects. The government's wish to maintain spending on publicity for tourism in England is welcome but there has to be something for the tourists to see and enjoy when they get here (and to persuade them to come back again). Much public investment in tourism is made by the Regional Development Agencies but they are to be swept away. (It seems that the government thinks that because the South East Region runs, crazily, from Oxford to Southampton to Kent, the others, like our own, which has a fairly logical grouping of Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria should be swept away too.) Such a change could only result in more control from Whitehall. We know full well what that means: more money spent in the South East of England (such as on the Olympics) and decisions being taken by Whitehall officials whose grasp of circumstances beyond the M25 has quite often been shown to be hazy.

Nick Hurd, Minister for the Civil Society writes a regular column for *Directory of Social Change*. The Minister wants "to share his thinking and engage with you on key issues." An email address for him will be published at the end of each edition. The August column can be found at: <http://www.dsc.org.uk/NewsandInformation/News/WordfromHurdColumnAugust2010>. We should be telling him what we think about the place of heritage in our society.

NEWS

Liverpool has retained the Green Glag award for all of the submitted sites with the addition now of Stanley Park, a total of seventeen.

The Times had a feature on Ken Dodd on 9 August. If ever there was an outstanding example of Liverpool's heritage of theatrical comedians, it is surely Ken. Now 82, he is still touring the country and was recently in New Brighton. Liverpool produced an amazing succession of comedians but it seems to be an art form that is dying out. As Ken says: "I'm the one who's been left to switch the lights off". The Ken Dodd of television shows years ago may not have been everybody's cup of tea but I have yet to meet anyone who survived Ken's four-hour blasts of hysterical humour on the stage who does not look forward to the next opportunity. He has now produced a "pictorial journey" through his life. He will be at the Floral Pavilion in New Brighton on 23 October. Tel: 0151 666 000. There is a campaign afoot for Ken to be knighted - it is amazing that he has not been knighted already. Perhaps Revenue & Customs has blocked it!

Wirral Borough Council has granted outline planning permission for developer Peel Holdings' £4.5bn Wirral Waters scheme. Planners voted unanimously in favour of the scheme to redevelop 50 hectares of dockland between Birkenhead and Wallasey, which has also received the backing of all four of the borough's MPs. If and when the project goes ahead, the view from Liverpool will indeed be different and, perhaps for the first time, attractive.

The oldest church building in Merseyside forms part of the present modest skyline of Birkenhead when viewed from Liverpool. This is Birkenhead Priory, founded by Hamon de Masci about 1150. (His was the family which gave its name to Dunham Massey, near Altrincham, and is Grade I listed. He came from Massie Grand Camp on the coast of Normandy). The priory was visited twice by Edward I due to its strategic importance, being close to the borders of Wales, and also the Irish Sea. In 1318 the monks from Birkenhead Priory were granted ferry rights by Edward II. This allowed them to build a house in what is now Water Street to store their corn. The house was also used by travellers for shelter if the weather was too bad for the ferry to cross the River Mersey. The priory's chapter house is still used for services. There is a chapel dedicated to the training ship HMS *Conway*, which was in the Mersey for many years. There is also a museum detailing the history of the site. St Mary's Tower was originally part of Birkenhead's first parish church, opened in 1821 in the grounds of the priory. It is a Grade II listed building. Redevelopment of the area from 1925 resulted in a large amount of residential housing within the parish being cleared to make way for the construction of the first Mersey Tunnel. An expansion of the Number 5 dry dock at the adjacent Cammell Laird shipyard in the 1960s resulted in the church losing a significant portion of its graveyard. Subsequent redevelopment of the approach roads to the Mersey Tunnel effectively cut off the church from most of what remained of its parish, causing the congregation to dwindle further. St. Mary's Church closed in 1974 and was partly demolished a year later, for reasons of safety. Only the former church tower and parts of the outer walls were retained in site. The churchyard contains the burial vault of the Laird family, which includes John Laird (1805–74), Birkenhead's first Member of Parliament and co-founder of the ship yard which, after several troubled years, now seems to be embarked on a new phase of success and expansion.

LIVERPOOL BIENNIAL

Liverpool Biennial 2010 shapes up to be the biggest yet as 45 new commissions are presented. It is the UK's largest as well as one of its most exciting contemporary visual arts events. It attracts some 960,000 visitors and is one of the best attended in the world. There will be major displays and activities at the Bluecoat, FACT (Foundation for Art & Creative Technology) and at A Foundation in Greenland Street. Many exhibits will be in various public places and in otherwise empty properties. The John Moores painting Prize will be presented on 16th September and can be seen on the John Moores 2010 website.

<p>LIVERPOOL'S HERITAGE OPEN DAYS ARE 9 – 19 SEPTEMBER. INFORMATION AND BOOKLETS FROM 08 PLACE IN WHITECHAPEL. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT HERITAGE BUILDINGS MANY OF WHICH ARE NOT NORMALLY OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. OTHER PARTS OF MERSEYSIDE ALSO HAVE HERITAGE OPEN DAYS ON SIMILAR BUT NOT IDENTICAL DATES. INFORMATION FROM LOCAL TOWN HALLS AND LIBRARIES.</p>

OTHER EVENTS

Ian Tracey, the City Organist, gives lectures in the Concert Room of St George's Hall at 12-45 on 30 September and 21 October on the life and work of W.T. Best, the city's first organist. After a refreshment break, Prof. Tracey will play some of Best's organ transcriptions on the Cathedral's organ. £5 entry. See: www.stgeorgesliverpool.co.uk.

John Tiernan addresses the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire at 2 pm on 22 September on "The makings of The Athenaeum". Bookings (£5) by 10 September to Dr Fiona Pogson, Dept of Politics and History, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool L16 9JD

The Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire is selling copies of the Churchwarden's accounts of Walton-on-the-Hill for 1827-1667. £20 plus £2 p&p from Dr Pogson (see above).

Heswall Operatic Society presents *Argyle Remembered* at the Gladstone Theatre Port Sunlight 22 – 25 September, commemorating the 70th anniversary of the closure of the famous Birkenhead theatre, Tickets: 0151 643 8757. West Kirby Light Opera presents *A Funny Thing Happened To Me On The Way to the Forum* on 19 – 23 October. Members of *Age Concern* tread the boards with *Glityz Glam Bam* on 29 October.

Community Historian Steve Binns talks on *The Life of Kitty Wilkinson*, Victorian pioneer of sanitation improvements in Liverpool on 23 September at 12.30 in St George's Hall. Free.

The Walker has a tour of its paintings by Liverpool-born George Stubbs on 14 September. Info: 0151 478 4199.

Eastham Village in the Wirral has a Scarecrow Festival on 10, 11 and 12 September 10 am to 4 pm in association with the medieval church's Heritage Open Days. St Mary's church is just off the A41 before the M53.

The Bluecoat has a *Poetry Café* session on 23 September 8 pm to 10 pm. Info: 0151 702 5324.

The North West Industrial Archaeology & History Conference on 25 September includes talks on Excavations at Liverpool Museum, and Lee's Tapestry Works in Birkenhead. (£25 incl lunch). Info: 01928 724 804.

A replacement plaque is to be unveiled in Rumford Place on 6 October at 11 a.30 am by a direct descendant of Commander James Dunwoody Bulloch, from Australia. This is being made possible by the firm of Keppie Massie who own the building. The plaque went missing and is now being replaced.

The Friends of Liverpool Monuments has a "walk and talk" in St Helens on 19 September (revised date) starting at 11 am at the parish church. Confirm via Patricia.Nalder@tiscali.co.uk or see <http://www.sthelensparishchurch.org/how-to-get-here.html>

The Rock Ferry Local History & Research Group have published *The changing face of Tranmere*. £ 3.75 plus p&p. Contact 01829733266 or maryward13@btopenworld.com Their sales leaflet bears a copy of William Collingwood's 1863 painting of Liverpool from Holt Hill, Tranmere.

There is to be a *Birkenhead Park Festival of Transport* on 18/19 September. *Lions Clubs* from Liverpool, Wallasey and elsewhere are helping with fund-raising. There will be a service of heritage buses from Liverpool Centre. (info from Merseyside's Tramway Preservation Society, whose AGM is on 15 November at the Ship and Mitre in Dale street, Liverpool. Contact: 103 Grove Road, Wallasey.)

THE EDITOR ROUND AND ABOUT

There was a splendid performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury* in the Concert Room at St George's Hall. At least one member of the audience who had been on jury service there years ago found it a poignant moment. More poignant still was the fact that W.S.Gilbert (1836-1911), who wrote the words, had been the prosecuting counsel at the first trial held there – and apparently did not do a very good job! At the time (1865), it was the custom for London actors to spend the summer months in Liverpool (the climate here being thought less unpleasant than that of London!) He lodged in Marine Parade in Waterloo, where he met Arthur Sullivan. Sullivan agreed to write music to go with Gilbert's words of *Trial by Jury* and the first "G & S" light opera was born, in 1875. Another first for Liverpool! At the time there were some 30 theatres in Liverpool and a slightly larger number of music halls. Liverpool then was second to the capital in music and theatre. It could be argued that it still is.

The Gladstone Pavilion in Stanley has just celebrated its first year since it was renovated and brought back into use as a venue for cultural and entertainment events. It's worth a visit – but it means either attending a function or dining there. The adjoining and refurbished Stanley Park is a joy to see – thanks in part to money from Liverpool Football Club. The bringing back into civilised condition of several of our parks, including Sefton and Birkenhead Parks, is heart-warming.

SCAPEGOATS IN LIVERPOOL AND MANCHESTER

Visiting Manchester City Art Gallery recently, I came across the painting by William Holman Hunt of *The Scapegoat*. (A scapegoat is a person or, in this case, an animal, made responsible for the wrongdoings of others). Funny, I thought, I'm sure I've seen this in the Lady Lever. Could some Manchester persons have stooped so low as to come and pinch our picture? No, indeed, I discovered they are fine people in Manchester and entirely innocent of such a deed. There are in fact TWO pictures of the scrawny, pathetic beast, the smaller one in Manchester, the larger, about three times the size, in Port Sunlight. With the kind help of staff at both galleries, I have unravelled the story as follows.

Holman Hunt was born in London in 1827 and studied at the Royal Academy. Reading John Ruskin's literary works, he became influenced by the idea of art having a moral purpose. He went to the Middle East to expand his religious experiences. *The Scapegoat* was Hunt's first major picture while in the Holy Land (where he was also stimulated, by the Jewish *Talmud*, for his painting *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (which is now in Sudley House, Liverpool). The Jews believed that two goats should be periodically sacrificed to atone for the sins of their people, one being killed outright and the other driven out into the desert. The *Day of Atonement* ("Yom Kippur", 18 September this year) commemorates this. If the red cloth tied around the beast's neck turned white, the sins of the Jews were forgiven. The frame of the larger painting, which Hunt himself designed, carries words from the book of Leviticus in the Bible which refers to these beliefs. Hunt thought that this belief was a foretelling of the crucifixion of Jesus with a crown of thorns on his head (a red cloth round the goat's horns in the picture), to cancel out the sins of humanity and included this in the larger work. .

Hunt carried out much of the work on this pictures beside the Dead Sea at Osdoom which he believed was the site of the ancient city of Sodom, notorious for the sexual behaviour prevalent there and therefore an apposite place to deal with the question of the forgiveness of sin. Hunt paid two visits to this location, being unable to complete the work in one visit. Prior to his first trip, he bought a rare white goat in Jerusalem to include in the painting. At Osdoom, he was impressed by the glowing colours of sunset and these appear on the smaller version of the work.

He returned to the location a month later, taking the goat with him. This time he painted from a slightly different position, leaving a space where the goat itself would be painted in later. He was unable to finish the work *on location* and on the way back to Jerusalem the white goat died. Hunt was unable to find a replacement. He therefore painted a new, brown, goat standing in a tray of salt and mud brought back from Osdoom, in his studio in Jerusalem. He placed a red cloth on the goat's head, symbolising the crown of thorns which was placed on Jesus' head at his crucifixion. In the first painting, Hunt had painted a rainbow but this was omitted on the smaller version.

The larger version, portraying the white goat, was exhibited in London in 1856 and in Liverpool later the same year. It was sold in 1856 to a dealer, D.T.White for about £470. It was later acquired by B.G.Windus of Tottenham, who also bought the smaller version. After being bought sold several times it bought by 1923 for about £5,000 by Lord Leverhulme, exhibited at the Walker and later transferred to the Lady Lever.

Andrew Pearce, Editor