



## “My Conservation Area Matters!”



Civic Voice has become the national voice of Heritage and Conservation in England. One of its aims is to raise the profile of Conservation Areas and to stress their importance for the general well-being of the country. Following Conservation

Areas Wirral's AGM in April, Ian Harvey, the one-man whirlwind and founder of Civic Voice, presented an inspiring talk with the theme 'My Conservation Area Matters'. The panel below highlights the key points from his address.

During 2017 the civic movement will be raising awareness of Conservation Areas and Ian stressed that our support is critical. In asking that we sign up to the Civic Voice newsletter Ian strongly suggested that communities should come together and say “My Conservation Area Matters”. Ian is urging Conservation Area Groups and Civic Societies to come together to celebrate their local Conservation Area.

Ian stressed the need for National Government to recognise the importance of Conservation Areas and to allow the resources that will enable Local Government to manage our Conservation areas effectively. But, he said, “Local Authorities also need to fully accept the Roles and Responsibilities they have in updating appraisals, managing Conservation Areas effectively and being much firmer on enforcement”. Civic Voice believes that a review of the Conservation Area legislation is needed and they will be publishing a strategy for Conservation Areas which will seek amendments to the current legislation.

*Photo  
Ian Harvey, chairman of Civic Voice, addressing  
CAW members at the AGM*

### The Questions

1. Are England's Conservation Areas being safeguarded and enhanced?
2. Are Conservation Areas afforded enough protection?
3. Are local authorities adequately resourced to enhance their local Conservation Areas?
4. What is the future for Conservation Areas?

### What is the Role of Civic Societies and Conservation Area Groups?

1. They are a source of local knowledge – history, contacts, etc.
2. They have continuity.
3. They can organise community-based events & consultations.
4. They are able to work with planners, conservation staff, developers and property owners as “honest brokers”.

5. They can help with Conservation Area appraisals.
6. They are the “eyes on the ground”.

### How can we help?

1. Set up a Conservation Area Forum or a Heritage Forum in partnership with the local authority.
2. Meet your MP.
3. Produce a series of Conservation Area leaflets to raise awareness of individual areas.
4. Seek funds for a number of Conservation Area Interpretation Panels.
5. Work with residents' groups to improve the appearance and tidiness of Conservation Areas.
6. Assist the local authority with Conservation Area appraisals and management plans.



## WELCOME!

The ranks of Wirral's Conservation Area Advisory Committees has been significantly increased with the addition of the Hamilton Square committee under the chairmanship of Philip Barton. As a Reporter for the Scottish Government and a former Planning Inspector in England, Philip is well known and well respected in the planning world. His committee's acceptance by the Council as the advisory committee couldn't have come at a more critical time for Hamilton Square. We look forward to working with Philip and his committee as they tackle the problems of this architectural gem.

This means that the only Conservation Area in Wirral now without an advisory committee is Bidston.



*Philip Barton (right), with Tamsin Cooke (left) (Historic England) and Eileen Willshaw (Wirral's Heritage Officer)*

## WIRRAL'S OLDEST TREE?

The last edition of CAW News requested information on significant or unusual trees in Wirral. Eastham Village Preservation Association responded with news of the 1700 year old yew tree that dominates the headstones in their ancient churchyard. It is sobering to think that this tree was planted when the Roman legions were considering leaving Chester.

Its almost hollow trunk concealed a sword, thought to have been a Civil War relic, that was discovered a few years ago and which is now on display in the church.

The tree was at one time a contender for the oldest tree in England and has been visited by botanist David Bellamy.

It is thought that the north wall of the original Eastham Church (1152) was built against it.



## CELEBRATING WIRRAL'S CONSERVATION AREAS

In order to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of Conservation Areas (see next page) Conservation Areas Wirral will be holding an event in Birkenhead Town Hall, Hamilton Square on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The venue has been

chosen specially to underline the national importance of Hamilton Square. Amongst the guests will be Frank Field MP for Birkenhead, the Mayor of Wirral and the leader of Wirral Council, Cllr Phil Davies. Civic Voice will be represented either by its Chair, Joan

Humble, or by Ian Harvey - its founder and executive director.

Invitations will be sent later by letter to each Conservation Area so please note the date in your diary now. We very much hope that your Conservation Area will be well represented at this unique event.



## Blue Plaques Take Off

Thornton Common Road where she had lived with her husband Frank.

Ann Davison was one of the few certified lady pilots who flew before WW II. She had operated out of the old WWI airfield at Hooton, then owned by her husband and now covered by the Vauxhall car plant. Ann with two other pilots flew from Hooton to Blackpool daily where they gave joy rides taking off from the sands. She lost her husband when their unseaworthy ketch was wrecked off Portland Bill and she herself only just survived.

Determined not to be beaten she took up sailing and in 1952 crossed the Atlantic in her small boat 'Felicity Ann'. She was totally on her own and cut off from the world - no two-way radio and no back up crew in those days - a truly remarkable woman.

An added twist to her story is that 'Felicity Ann' survived and is being restored to sailing order in the USA. The restoration work is being carried out by a specialist organisation relying on female volunteer labour and will be used to introduce young ladies to the delights of sailing.

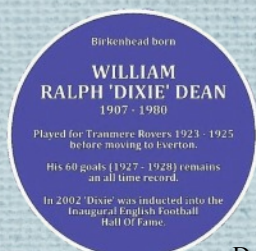
Last but not least for this year, will be a plaque in respect of John Gillespie Graham



*Ann Davison in her boat 'Felicity Ann'.*

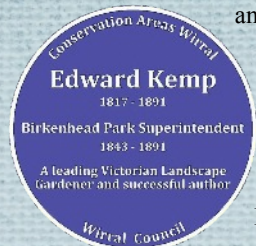
the architect responsible for the wonderful Hamilton Square with its 62 Grade I listed Buildings.

These Blue Plaques reflect on some of the extraordinary people who have lived in Wirral and whose lives have been an inspiration to us all.



**WILLIAM RALPH 'DIXIE' DEAN**  
1907 - 1980

Played for Tranmere Rovers 1923 - 1925 before moving to Everton.  
His 60 goals (1927 - 1928) remains an all time record.  
In 2002 'Dixie' was inducted into the Inaugural English Football Hall Of Fame.



**Edward Kemp**  
1817 - 1891

Birkenhead Park Superintendent  
1843 - 1891  
A leading Victorian Landscape Gardener and successful author



**Ann Davison**  
1911 - 1992

Lived in Mere Brook House  
The first woman to sail single handed across the Atlantic in her boat 'Felicity Ann' 1952  
Sailor, Aviator and all-round Adventurer

The Blue Plaques scheme certainly seems to have caught the imagination. We started with Dixie Dean a year or so ago and then in April it was the turn of Edward Kemp, the landscape designer who was also responsible for overseeing Paxton's designs for Birkenhead Park.

We have been indirectly involved in a Blue Plaque in honour of Charles Dawson Brown at the West Kirby Museum and also Philip Toosey of Bridge on the River Kwai fame in Oton.

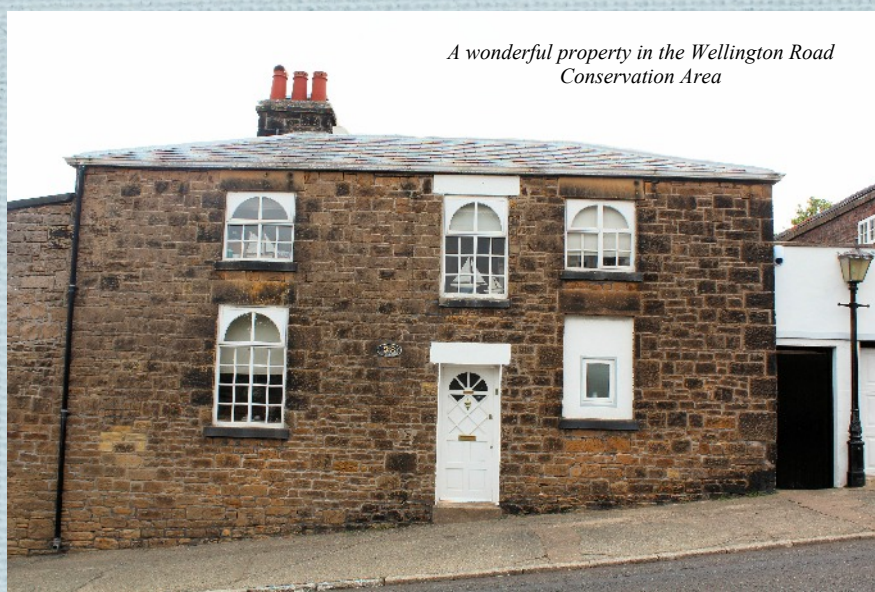
Next on the agenda is the remarkable Ann Davison the first women to sail single handed across the Atlantic. Her plaque will be erected at Mere Brook House on

## Fifty Years of Conservation Areas

The concept of conservation areas was introduced in England, Wales and Scotland by the Civic Amenities Act 1967 through a private members bill led by Lord Duncan Sandys. Civic Voice now holds the annual Sandys Lecture in his name.

When conservation areas legislation was introduced there was widespread public concern over the pace of redevelopment in our historic towns and cities. Today there are over 10,000 conservation areas in the UK (approximately 9,300 in England, 500 in Wales, 650 in Scotland and 60 in Northern Ireland) reflecting the popularity of this legislative tool in identifying and protecting our most valued historic places.

Conservation area designation essentially controls the demolition of unlisted buildings over a certain size and works to protect trees, restricts permitted development rights on dwelling houses and



*A wonderful property in the Wellington Road Conservation Area*

tightens regulations on advertising. It also places a statutory duty on local planning authorities to pay special attention to preserving or enhancing the

character or appearance of conservation areas while undertaking their planning duties.



# Clifton Park - A Conserv



in one large house, not all of whom may be conservation minded.

Some two dozen properties survive from the 1840s and 50s these are mainly in Clifton Road and consist of large detached houses or pairs of semis. One of the earliest is Fearnley Hall, dated 1843 and standing on the corner of The Woodlands and Fearnley Road. It was designed by Walter Scott and has an unusual octagonal lantern turret over its side gable.

## CONSERVATION AREA ADVISORY GROUP

Although there has been a Residents Association for some time there has never been an established Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC).

CAW undertook a leaflet drop to all the residents asking for interested persons to get in touch. A number of people came forward and we met up with Maureen More, the Chair of the Residents Association, who explained that most of their work was dealing with anti-social behaviour problems, fly tipping and unauthorised tree felling.

## CAW INVOLVEMENT

CAW have worked with the Residents Association on establishing a name

**T**he Clifton Park Conservation Area occupies a triangle of land running from south of Borough Road, uphill to Tranmere; it was designated as a Conservation Area in July 2004.

When first laid out the Park was one of a number of high quality villa estates which had sprung up on both sides of the Mersey, catering for the merchants of Liverpool who, with improved transport services, were able to leave the noise, dirt and smoke of the town centre behind.

The land on which the Park was laid out was acquired by a Liverpool ship owner, Captain William Sharp. It was devel-

oped to a plan designed by the Birkenhead architect, Walter Scott, who also designed some of the houses, many of which are Grade II listed. It is this leafy, designed landscape, with its surviving early Victorian properties, that the Conservation Area was primarily designated to protect.

Clifton Park has had its fair share of prominent personalities amongst its residents. One of these was F.E. Smith - Lord Birkenhead - who, as Lord Chancellor served in David Lloyd George's government from 1919 to 1923. He was a close political friend and confidant of Winston Churchill.

## CURRENT PRESSURES

Clifton Park suffers from similar pressures to some of Wirral's other Conservation Areas. It is located in one of the most disadvantaged parts of Wirral. Many of the Grade II listed buildings are in multi-occupation bringing with it the usual problems associated with several families living







change incorporating the word ‘Conservation’ and also assisted them with drafting out a Constitution incorporating both the Residents’ and Conservation interests. The committee has gained the approval of the Council for looking after the area’s conservation interests.

CAW has recently lobbied on their behalf regarding inappropriate developments. At a recent planning meeting the committee discussed yet another application for the conversion of a property into four flats. In spite of the planning officer recommending approval the committee rejected the application. This decision was supported by the three local Councillors as well as Frank Field MP.

It is heartening to see local democracy at work and maybe, just maybe, it is a sign of better things to come for the Clifton Park Conservation Area.



**Page 4** - Top - A wonderful listed building.  
Lower left - An example of the problems.  
Lower right - Peter Bolt (CAW Forum Friend) & Maureen More (chair of the Resident's Association).  
**Page 5** - Top - Another fantastic listed building.  
Centre - One house - now two contrasting semis.  
Bottom left - Cllr Phil Davies inspects more rubbish dumping.  
Bottom right - A further superb example of what Clifton Park has to offer.





# Mountwood Conservation Area



are large and provide the opportunity for extensive planting to surround and engulf the houses. Although properties are large, they do not dominate their surroundings."

The Appraisal goes on to identify the important features. It highlights the importance of boundaries which it says "because the buildings within the area are mostly set back from the road and shielded by mature planting, the boundaries between properties and streets assume a greater significance".

The houses which form the core of the

**M**ountwood is unique! Its conservation area status defined as much by its superb individual, architect-designed houses as by its wonderful canopy of trees. Its Conservation Area Appraisal reflects these factors.

Mountwood was designated a Conservation Area in 2005. It has an

active and informed Advisory Committee whose members not only have the interests of Mountwood at heart but are professionals in their own fields.

Garden designers, trying to get a feel for their brief, often refer to the 'genius of the place'. It is the same with Conservation Areas and in Mountwood's case it can be summarised as "A unique early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing development in the 'Arts and Craft' style with a fine collection of fascinating houses in a stunning woodland setting". It is this 'genius', this 'spirit', that the Mountwood Conservation Area seeks to capture and preserve. The Conservation Area Appraisal neatly sums it up.

"Greenery predominates throughout the area and plays an extremely important part in defining its character. Grass verges line three of the streets and mostly contain mature trees. Mature trees and planting within front gardens also contribute substantially to the quality of the environment. Plot sizes

Mountwood area are individually designed and date primarily from the early 1900's. Many display common features, such as steeply pitched roofs with low eaves; small, horizontally grouped windows; tall decorative

chimneys; and decorative timberwork. Each house is distinctive.

The properties are noted for being some of the best

*"A unique early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing development in the 'Arts and Craft' style with a fine collection of fascinating houses in a stunning woodland setting".*

examples on Merseyside of domestic architecture from this period.

Whilst the development may be characterised as 'unplanned', which is no bad thing, it nevertheless follows its early origins of woods, farms and a quarry. Burrell Road curves round the former quarry, whilst Pine Walks follows the line of the original woodland tracks and Acrefield and Prospect Roads are located on former field boundaries. The woodland setting has been maintained by large plots which have allowed planting and trees to mature and greenery therefore now dominates the street scene.







The glory of Mountwood is surely its trees - the development pressures that seek to cut them down or indeed to replace hedges with bricks or railings, to reduce plot size or alter the appearance of houses must be resisted.

Mountwood, in its sylvan setting and cocooned in ancient woodland, makes a distinctive contribution to Wirral. Its Conservation Area priorities must therefore be to maintain those unique characteristics which so embody the 'genius' of Mountwood.



## **Extract from Mountwood Societies 'Aims & Objectives'**

**The Character Appraisal makes it clear that trees and greenery make a major contribution to the character and charm of Mountwood.**

**We are determined that this character and this charm as defined in the Character Appraisal and as set out in the Council's policy for Mountwood will be both sustained and enhanced.**

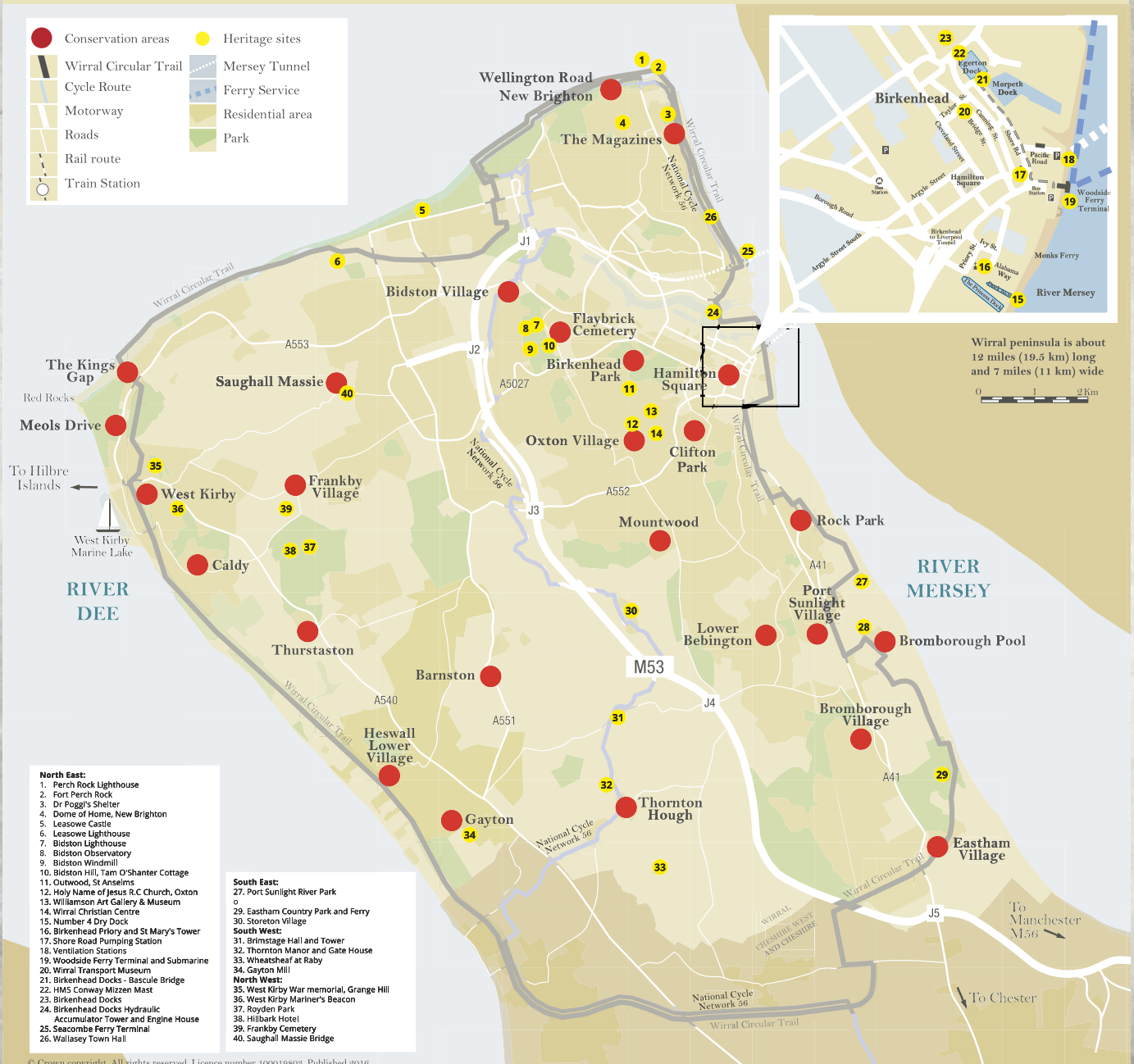
**We understand that trees need to be managed and that expeditious tree work is necessary for the health and safety both of trees and residents.**

**However any work on trees within the Conservation Area needs approval by the Council through its Tree Officer who consults with the Mountwood Committee before reaching any decision.**

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## Discover Wirral's Conservation Areas & Heritage Sites



[www.wirral.gov.uk/heritage](http://www.wirral.gov.uk/heritage)