



HAMILTON SQUARE - AT RISK



HAMILTON SQUARE – formerly the centre of the town’s business district was designed by the Edinburgh architect, James Gillespie Graham (1776–1855) as the focus of his plan for the new town of Birkenhead. Echoing Georgian Edinburgh, its architectural significance was recognised by English Heritage when it was designated the largest Grade I listed square outside London, containing 62 Grade I listed buildings as well as the Grade II* listed Birkenhead Town Hall.

The Square’s Gardens provide a welcome area of public green space in an otherwise built up part of the town. Within them stand some important links with Wirral’s past: the statue of John Laird, the monument to Queen Victoria, the Cenotaph and the numerous memorials commemorating branches of the armed services. There is much here that has the potential to be celebrated.

“The talking has to stop and action taken”

We are calling for a meeting of all interested parties

Sadly, however, the imposing terraces, guarded by the impressive Town Hall, stand in mute defiance of a host of indignities. This once magnificent Square is today sinking under the weight of numerous conflicting interests and opinions. Its buildings are disfigured by satellite dishes, their frontages marred by a proliferation of wheelie bins of various hues, randomly cluttering the pavements and their basement areas are too often left to accumulate litter. The Square is now so neglected that it has been placed on Historic England’s

‘Heritage at Risk’ list. The talking has to stop and action has to be taken.

So what’s to be done? How can the Square play its part in the affairs of the Borough? Tourism might be one answer, linking it to the tourist target of Woodside and its famous ferries. However to discuss these and other solutions CAW would like to see a meeting called of the representatives of all the interested parties, its aim - to map out the options for the role of this incredibly significant asset to the future prospects of Wirral.



Satellite dishes disfigure the grade I listed buildings

Our First Blue Plaque



accomplishments of some of Wirral's best known former residents".

It is the aim of the Group to erect four Blue Plaques a year for the next three years and we need your input. It would be very helpful if we could have your ideas for future Blue Plaque recipients.- these could then be published in future editions of the Newsletter. Could you please let Peter Bolt know of any nominations that you would like to make.

Peter Bolt – Tel : 0151 678 9300 // email : petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com



One of the aims of CAW is to push Conservation higher up the public agenda - to make people more aware of how important it is to conserve our past - for the benefit of the future. It is therefore important to extract the maximum publicity from our projects so that all of Wirral's twenty six Conservation Areas can feel some benefit from keeping Conservation in the public eye. It was with this in mind that we deliberately chose the high profile figure of legendary footballer Dixie Dean to be the recipient of our first commemorative Blue Plaque. We are pleased to say that the Liverpool Echo picked up the story and gave us good coverage both on its website and in the paper itself.

Born in Laird Street, Birkenhead Dixie played for Pensby Institution FC before moving to Tranmere Rovers at the age of 15. He progressed to Everton in 1926 where he scored the never-equalled sixty goals in a season (1927-28). The Mayor of Wirral unveiled the plaque before the Tranmere game with Chester on the 12th November in front of a good crowd of supporters.

Conservation Areas Wirral chairman, Alan Chape said, "Wirral is a remarkable place. Not only is it the birthplace of many talented people like Dixie Dean but it also seems to attract people from all walks of life who fall under its spell. Wirral's combination of industrial innovation, leafy lanes and historic villages surrounded on three sides by water makes it utterly unique. Conservation Areas Wirral is delighted to be in the forefront of this new Blue Plaque scheme that celebrates the

Rock Park Beach Clean-up

Alan Thompson lives in Rock Park Conservation Area, on the banks of the Mersey, and it is a lovely place.

However there is a problem with the refuse washed down by the river that accumulates on the beach. Alan says, "We are now dealing with this by running 'Beach Clean' events every four weeks: up to twenty volunteers from the local area meet on a Saturday morning to collect and bag the rubbish washed down on the tides."

It's not only the Rock Park beach that benefits from their efforts. The team also collects some litter from the local areas too, but as Alan says, "the vast majority of our work is waste removal from the beach. Usually we collect between 40 and 50 full bags. It takes us a bit more than one hour for this work".

The Rock Park beach team are very grateful to Wirral Council, who provide the refuse sacks and the 'litter pickers' to help us with the work. They also arrange for the bags of waste to be collected by Biffa on Monday morning.

In addition the team is supported by the Royal Mersey Yacht Club which is based next to the Conservation Area. As well as getting help from club members their tractor moves all the sacks up to the agreed collection point. At the end of the session everyone retires to the well known 'Refreshment Room' (formerly The Admiral pub) who provide the team with coffee and light refreshments.



How successful are we?

- The area looks much better.
- Families are starting to visit the beach in the summer months
- We are changing an eyesore into a leisure resource for the community
- Working together helps to engender a 'community' spirit.

New Hope for Future



the cemetery. The group is also actively involved in the current project which is intended to stabilize the chapel walls to prevent further collapse.

Stone masons, specialised in the conservation of historic buildings, are carefully repairing stonework and carvings which have been hidden for over 30 years. Fallen masonry has been removed from the interior and will be preserved in the hope that the stones may eventually be reused.

CAW IS DELIGHTED to report that a partnership between Wirral Council and Historic England is bringing new hope for the future of Flaybrick Memorial Gardens which is one of England's most important Victorian garden cemeteries.

Urgent repairs to the derelict chapels have now started as part of a longer term plan to preserve and protect the whole cemetery.

Designed by Edward Kemp (the then Superintendent of Birkenhead Park) and opened in 1864 Flaybrick is the final resting place of over 100,000 people from the Wirral area, including Kemp himself. The cemetery is listed Grade II* on the Register of Historic Parks & Gardens and is of European as well as national significance. The centrepiece of the cemetery is a pair of unusual linked Anglican and Non-conformist Chapels, built on a grand scale by Liverpool based architects, Lucy & Littler.

Burials stopped in 1975 and the disused chapels fell into disrepair. By the 1980's their roofs and central spire had been removed for safety – sadly the chapels also became a target for vandalism and the cemetery was added to the national Heritage at Risk Register in 2011. Over the years there have been several attempts to resolve these problems and the Friends of Flaybrick Memorials Gardens was set up in 1993 to support



of Flaybrick Cemetery



The work, costing £325,000, is being jointly funded by Wirral Council and Historic England and managed by leading conservation architects Purcell. Once completed in 2017, the chapels will be safe and secure until a future use is decided.

The next step will be the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan, also funded in partnership which will involve the wider community looking at the needs of the entire cemetery and its gardens. Work has begun on the Plan and it is hoped that a first draft will be available in the Spring. Cllr Jerry Williams, Wirral's Heritage Champion said:

“We believe that Flaybrick is one of the finest locations of funerary architecture in Britain. We are working with Historic England to make the chapels safe once again, which we feel will go a long way to improving public perception and appreciation of this important location. We are now going to be working with the community, the Friends of Flaybrick Memorial Gardens and Historic England on a Conservation Management Plan that will help to preserve Flaybrick for the future.”

CAW's representative, Peter Bolt, is attending the Flaybrick Steering Group meetings so further updates will be reported in this newsletter. However, we are delighted that so much positive work is going on at this important site after years of neglect.



*Opposite page
Top - On top of the world - a splendid view from the top of the tower
Bottom - Lovely tiled floor.
Right - Scaffolding tower
This page
Top - Tiled walls
Lower - Bird's eye view of progress*

Photos by John Moffatt

Conservation Award for Port Sunlight

In November 2015 Port Sunlight became only the second area in the country to introduce a Local Listed Building Consent Order (LLBCO), which gives residents 'blanket' consent to make certain alterations to the rear of their properties in the Port Sunlight Conservation Area. The work carried out to achieve this order resulted in Port Sunlight Village Trust and Wirral Council being nominated for a Historic England Heritage Angels award. On Monday 31st October (2016) at a ceremony at London's Palace Theatre they won Best Research Project and were presented with their prize by Andrew Lloyd Webber and art dealer and historian Philip Mould.



The awards celebrate and reward the efforts of local people in saving their heritage and are co-funded by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation. There were five categories of award - best community action project, best contribution to a heritage project by young people, best research project, best rescue of a heritage site and outstanding contribution to heritage.

The alterations included in the LLBCO would normally require full Listed Building Consent from Wirral Council and

permission from the Trust. Applying for full Listed Building Consent can be a fairly long and uncertain process but under the LLBCO, permitted works are fully described; taking uncertainty out of the process, and the local planning authority only has 28 days to make a decision on a LLBCO application.

The Port Sunlight LLBCO includes installation or relocation of satellite dishes in appropriate locations and replacement of severely deteriorated or inappropriate rear doors, rear windows and yard gates. The LLBCO specifies the rear window, rear door and yard gates approved under the LLBCO. If residents prefer to install something other than what is specified in the LLBCO, then they would have to apply for full Listed Building Consent. For more information on the LLBCO process please contact Lizzie Heywood, Conservation Adviser for Port Sunlight Trust, at e.heywood@portsunlightvillage.com.



Annual General Meeting - 26th April - 6.30pm for 7.00

The Annual General Meeting of Conservation Areas Wirral will take place on Wednesday 26th April at the Lyceum Building in Port Sunlight

Please make a note of this in your diaries now!

If there are any topics that you would like discussed please advise CAW Chairman, Alan Chape, as soon as possible

Email : alantchape@hotmail.co.uk // or Tel : 0151 653 0274

Tree Preservation Orders



Trees soften the centre of Eastham Village Conservation Area

Trees are a critical feature of many of Wirral's Conservation Areas. They add to the scene with their age, their shape and their canopy. They soften the outline of buildings and contribute to the overall impression that a visitor may get. Without trees many Conservation Areas would lose their impact and so it is essential that they are protected.

Conservation Area status confers some protection on all trees within the Area. There is a six week time limit for a response to applications for any work to a tree in a Conservation Area. Once this six week time limit has expired work can start even if no permission has been received. Tree Preservation Orders can be made on individual trees, groups of trees or whole woodlands. But they apply only to trees that are deemed to possess amenity value; there is no time limit on applications to work on a tree protected by a TPO

The role of trees in a Conservation Area is often misunderstood and so the owner of a tree who may wish to prune or fell it for what he feels is a perfectly rational reason becomes resentful when told by 'authority' that he needs permission - which may or may not be granted.

It would be advantageous if residents living in a Conservation Area could be made aware of the requirements and to have some knowledge of those trees that are already protected by a TPO. This would surely help to prevent future misunderstandings. For this to happen a survey or an inventory is needed that maps the trees within each Conservation Area. This could then be made available to the residents of that area. Is this not something with which Conservation Area Advisory Committees could help?

TPO's are currently applied as an emergency protection measure that relies on someone reporting tree surgeons starting

unauthorised work. There is then an urgent response – if staff are available - which may result in aggression and which takes up valuable staff time. That could all have been avoided if the rules and regulations were more widely known and understood. Of course some will deliberately flout the rules and it is surely these people to whom staff resources should be applied. There must also be an effective means not only of enforcement but also to ensure that there is determined prosecution of those who deliberately destroy protected trees with damages being sought in reparation for Council expenditure in the prosecution of such cases.

The reactive nature of the current system creates additional work load and prevents the proactive, systematic, planned protection of existing tree cover, let alone the planning of replacement and enhanced tree cover. There is also a backlog of work in updating existing area protections that further adds to workload pressure.

Roger Merry, who advises us on trees, said, "A TPO is recognition of the importance of trees to the community, history and ecology of Wirral. It is a plaudit and not some sort of vindictive act that threatens the "Englishman's castle". We will continue to report progress on this important aspect of our Conservation Areas.

Is there a significant tree in your area or indeed anywhere in Wirral that is your particular favourite? Then please send us a photo with a few words that describe it and we will publish it in CAW NEWS.

Email it to david.allan132@ntlworld.com

CAW NEWS

