

Formby Civic News

Formby Civic Society

Formby Footpath News

The Society has for many years taken a strong interest in our network of old footpaths. Unfortunately some have been lost over the years but we greatly value those that remain. Some years ago we submitted an application to have a group of paths in Ravenmeols designated as Public Rights of Way. The status of these was finally made safe at a meeting of the Formby Area Committee on 28th September 2004.

These include Albert Road, (to the shore), Alexandra Road and St Lukes Church Road, (between Bushby's Lane and Range Lane, and Range Lane itself, (all to be bridleways). Cambridge Road path and St Lukes Church Road, (Range Lane to Altcar footpath No. 5 - Public) are to be a Footpaths. In addition a Track connecting Albert Road to Alexandra Road is to be a public footpath.

At the same meeting the more recent application regarding Wicks Lane, (between Larkhill Lane and Spruce Way), was also considered. Although the Society had only requested recognition as a footpath, (to which the developers of Larkhill Farm and the National Trust, - both owners of the land over



Above; St Luke's Church Rd

which the path is situated, were agreeable; the Public Rights of Way Officer

recommended the claim should be progressed for a Bridleway. It now remains to be seen whether the two landowners will object.

Brenda Lindsay.

One of the Founder members of the Society, Miss Brenda Lindsay, died after a short illness at the beginning of October. Brenda was a life-long Formby resident. Her father had been Chairman of the Formby Urban District Council. Brenda was the Society's first Secretary and held that position off and on for fifteen years. She helped to collect the exhibits for the Society's first exhibition and kept precise records which we still have today. She helped, enthusiastically, with a year long project to film asparagus cultivation but unfortunately the film was subsequently lost. Brenda then took on the post of Amenities Secretary for four years, until on becoming Deputy Head of Alder Hey School she relinquished her more active role. She always spoke fondly of the Society and was delighted when earlier this year she was made an Honorary Life Member at our Annual Dinner. We will miss her! B.Y.



October 2004

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A note for your Diary.....

Annual Dinner

Saturday 26th February 2005

at Formby Hall Golf Club.

Watch out for details in next issue!

Planning matters, by Ray Derricott.

Planning issues that are the concern of the Society involve telephone masts; advertising on roundabouts; foopaths; Formby Waste Water Treatment Works; and further proposed residential development.

Telephone Masts

Currently planning applications are being considered for masts at

Duke Street, opposite the Library, outside the shops at 82&84 Harington Road, in the carpark at the rear of the shops in Harington Road and a proposal to erect a mast on the west side of Liverpool Road.

Duke Street: a 17.5 metres mast is proposed on the verge of the Park opposite the Library. I assume that this is on Council land. I objected to this on behalf of the Society on aesthetic grounds, on its nearness to the children's play area, its unsuitability because it is close to a bus stop and on the approach to a busy roundabout. Maintenance and servicing may cause problems. This is (to date) still under consideration.

82&84 Harington Road: a mast disguised as street furniture is proposed in front of the shops. I objected to this on aesthetic grounds, its nearness to flats and other residences, its closeness to the inadequate parking in front of the shops where many accidents happen or nearly happen. The possibility of difficulties in this area will be caused by the need to have access for maintenance and servicing. The application has now been refused.

Carpark at the rear of the Harington Road shops. This is a re-proposal having been turned down earlier. This land belongs to the private landowner and presumably permission has been granted. I objected to this again on behalf of the Society for similar reasons for the one above. This has now been turned down.

The Liverpool Road proposal. The site on Silcock's Field is outside the built up area. It is at the bend on the road as traffic approaches Formby. This has been turned down as being "visually detrimental to the openness of the Green Belt."

There is a proposal to replace the mast on the site of Formby High School. Permission for this was given before a Council embargo. It is hoped that the Council will proceed in a cautionary manner on this proposal.

A general point about telephone masts. We need masts but if we do not oppose sites near or in the centre of residential clusters, we will eventually have them everywhere. The Council has a general embargo on sites on their property. Although we cannot object on health grounds this seems to be an attempt to protect schools and therefore avoid protests from parents. There is increasing evidence of the possible health risks associated with masts. This is not yet recognised by the planners. In parts of Europe and in the USA the allowable strength of radiographic output from masts is five times lower than it is in UK.

A high power conference being held this month at the Aintree Centre. It will be addressed by scientific experts, politicians from UK and from the European Parliament. The fee is over £200 for the day and well beyond the means of the Society. I have asked the Planning Director to produce a report on the conference and make it available to the public. I will follow this up and if necessary, write to the paper presenters and ask for copies of their papers. I have no further information about this.

Another debatable issue is the Council's general embargo on masts on their property. What qualifies as Council land? This seems to be interpreted inconsistently. Are verges and roadside sites part of Council land or not? The situation is unclear. I have asked the Planning Directorate and some local Councillors to provide

more transparency about this embargo and make it easier to implement. Council land at the side of the by-pass still seems to offer an acceptable siting of masts.

Advertising on roundabouts.

At the Society's Norton Priory visit a straw poll amongst the members present showed a unanimous opposition to this proposal. This view was substantiated at Committee Meetings. Subsequently applications to erect small commercial adverts on all of Formby's main roundabouts were submitted and apparently rejected. The proposals re-appeared on the agenda of the September meeting of the Area Committee. The Committee was asked to make a recommendation for Formby. Discussion on this was deferred until the October meeting. I believe that the committee was not quorate on that day and the issue was not considered. The background papers for the item revealed, to my knowledge for the first time to the general public, some interesting information. As far as back as October 1996 the Council agreed a contract with a company from St. Annes to have roundabouts sponsored. The limited income, it is claimed, was used to provide a number of floral roundabout displays. (Which roundabouts and where?). When approached by another sponsorship organisation in 2001 this was referred to the Cabinet. All Councillors were given reports on the progress of a new sponsorship deal. Eventually on 26 May 2004 the Council entered into a contract for sponsorship with Immediate Solutions. Submissions, objecting to the proposals, from the Crosby Area Committee and Formby Parish Council were taken into consideration in signing this contract. Before this came to the September Area Committee the contract had been in existence for four months. Income from sponsorship will probably generate about £12000 across the Borough. This

Civic Trust, Northwest Association—Autumn Gathering, Kendal. 10th October 2004

We began the day by recovering the Blackpool delegation from being stuck in the lift at Kendal town hall shortly before the fire engine arrived to assist. Following this excitement around twenty five people from around the North West area met under Stephen Langtree of Chester Civic Trust who is the Regional Chairman. Stephen sent his regards to the Formby Civic Society and was delighted to hear that the Formby Parish Council was now in being as it was under discussion at the time of his visit to us last year.

We had a fascinating walk around part of the town guided by the Kendal Civic Society. This covered old passages off the main street, the river, the northern terminus of the Lancaster canal which it is hoped to reopen into the town centre basin and finally the castle which overlooks the town on the summit of its rather steep hill. The Society is very keen to show their town and offer seven different tours which might be suitable for one of our

future excursions?

Discussion sessions covered the following :- *The Planning and Compensation Act* is now law. It requires “Local Development Frameworks” which must contain a statement of local community involvement.

John Miller director of Heritage Trust NW spoke about the *Restoration and Care of Buildings* with examples such as, old barns, Heysham village,

Lytham Hall which we visited, Bank Hall Bretherton and the Midland Hotel Morecambe. As lottery money is for structures only, the necessity of having an economic use for the buildings was stressed with examples such as a museum of local history, study centre, holiday let and tea room. Barrowford tea room has a turnover of £250,000 per annum.

Conservation Areas. The NW association is working with English Heritage to define and publicise them. £2500 funding due November from

English Heritage to assist this work. The need to conserve but not freeze things so preventing year round economic development was emphasised. Council conservation officers have a duty to do official appraisals but civic societies can assist by collecting and supplying information to councils so that it is on file when building applications are submitted.

Education. Civic studies are now part of the National Curriculum and it was suggested that societies could cooperate with schools to help them and encourage new young members. Possible activities were, talks to schools, town walks, environmental projects and inviting children to meetings of interest.

Altogether an interesting and challenging day which taught us how other NW societies were engaging with their communities to assist with issues which are often common to us all.

Andrea and Alan Burton.

Planning matters, (continued from previous page).

This means about £1000 per round-about. The background papers contain a statement that if Formby object we might lose money. I am keeping in close discussion on this matter with a Parish Councillor. It is hoped that consultation is organised about the use and siting of Advertising Pill Boxes

Footpaths: Barbara Yorke reported on the general position about footpaths and access on the coastline.

The Council has accepted the proposals for the development of Larkhill Farm. I take it that this means that the proposal to erect Kissing Gates at both ends of the small stretch of pathway alongside the development has been agreed. However Barbara indicated that the proposal to make the path a

Bridle Path is on stream.

Formby Waste Water Treatment Works off Hoggs Lane. O2 UK Ltd. has a proposal for this. Plans are now available for consultation.

Further residential development. The last significant area for residential development in Formby is sited on the old mushroom farm. No details are yet available but we must monitor this carefully.

The land on the Alt Road site of 2 Church Road is signed for development. There are no plans yet for this but the site is on a dangerous junction. This development will be monitored with safety in mind and also in relation to the character of any new Buildings.

Our Archives—help needed!

The History Group has existed since the Society's foundation and is one of its key strengths . Founder members included Professor and Edith Kelly the author of Viking Village, published by the Society in 1973. and still a definitive reference. Many members share our interest in local history and contribute much knowledge, take photographs, collect information and have in turn presented the Society with its archives and Library. This is now used regularly by local students of all ages, for help with Dissertations, Projects and Course-work. Copies of these, when completed are often presented and added. Attempts have been made to record and index our archives from time to time and this is an on-going need. Following the successful completion of a computerised data-base of the Sibley Collection, (now on our website); we now need to undertake a similar exercise for our archives. Is there anyone out there interested in helping? Barbara Yorke.

Sefton's Coastal Heritage Conference.

Our long awaited conference was held at Formby Hall Golf Club on Wednesday 15th September 2004. with over 180 participants and organised by the Sefton Coast Partnership's History and Archaeology Task Group, with the assistance of this Society.

After Ceri Jones of Sefton Council, welcomed participants, Dr Jen Lewis of The University of Liverpool took the chair for the morning session. To provide a context for subsequent presentations, she described how archaeological and historical evidence help us understand how our forebears lived and worked.

The next three presentations looked at research into prehistoric activity on the coast. Ron Cowell of National Museums Liverpool described the coastal environment and suggested how it might have been exploited on a seasonal basis as hunter-gatherers moved across the landscape with no settled abode. The discovery of large quantities of flint objects in Little Crosby and Ince Blundell has thrown light on hitherto unknown prehistoric communities in the area from the end of the last Ice Age, about 10,000 years ago through to the Bronze Age, about 1,500 BC.

Using examples of evidence for human and animal footprints in the inter-tidal silts, Gordon Roberts, showed that the coast had been used not only by prehistoric people but by mammals and birds as they exploited the coastland resource.

Changing sea levels resulting in the sands and silts in which the footprints are preserved, presented Dr Annie Worsley of Edge Hill College, Ormskirk with a challenge to see whether pollen captured within such deposits could tell us about changing environments. She found that the evidence showed changes from marsh and mossland vegetations to woodland over the millennia. She suggested that charcoal fragments trapped in silts deposited long before the introduction of metalworking showed evidence for the use of fire at temperatures higher than expected from accidental burning. Microscopes set up in one of the Conference side rooms allowed delegates to examine the exciting remains captured within the silts.

Moving forward in time Dr Rob Philpott of National Museums Liverpool drew on current research into the archaeological and documentary evidence for lost settlement at Meols off the north Wirral coast and suggested that Sefton dune sands may conceal similar evidence. Whilst the occasional discovery of Roman material on our coast gives credence to the possibility of Roman exploitation before the 5th century, Norse Viking place names indicate the presence of coastal communities here before the 11th century.

After lunch, John Houston, former Sefton Coastal Management Officer and currently Consultant to the EU Life Fund took the chair. Barbara Yorke, Formby Civic Society, considered how problems of navigating a changing coastline were faced as the port at Liverpool developed and shipping in the Mersey estuary increased. She identified the location and structure of navigation beacons and lighthouses and described the establishment of the country's first lifeboat

station at Formby in 1776. Her presentation ended with a remarkable archive film of the last launch of the lifeboat when the Formby Station closed in 1916.

Sylvia Harrop of The University of Liverpool and Chairman of The Birkdale and Ainsdale Historical Research Society described the role of the shore in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a means of communication in a landscape backed by treacherous and almost impassable mosslands. She described a formalised arrangement of 'fishing stalls' on the beach together with details of the structure and placement of nets. All along the coast, the shore provided opportunities for running in boats laden with smuggled goods from the Isle of Man to be unloaded and hidden in local houses — an activity in which many, if not all members of the community were involved.

Dr Reg Yorke, member of Sefton Coast Partnership and Chair of the organising Task Group, considered the creation by local landowners of extensive conifer plantations both as a cash crop and as a means of stabilising the dunes from wind-blow. Dry areas within the dunes attracted new fields for the cultivation of asparagus in the mid Nineteenth century. Development of the new railway line from Liverpool to Southport provided transportation of night soil from the city to Freshfield for use as a fertiliser as the fields were brought into cultivation.

The day concluded with a presentation from Sarah-Jane Farr, Merseyside Archaeological Officer. She showed examples of different approaches to archaeological fieldwork and described the role of the Sites and Monuments Record as an archive to hold information about the past and how this can be used to advise Local Authorities in the processes of Planning and Development Control. She noted the national and regional importance of the Sefton Coast and emphasised that management of the archaeological and historical heritage requires understanding of what it represents.

The Formby Hall Golf Club proved an excellent venue and there were some interesting displays by the Society, (Muriel Sibley's Coastal Drawings), Liverpool Hope University College, Sefton Library Services, Liverpool Sailing Club Merseyside Maritime Museum, Crosby Museum and RSPB Southport Group.

Feedback following the Conference has been extremely positive with over 91% indicating that they felt better informed about the Coast and 85% positively stating that they would be interested in attending future events of this kind. The Conference proceedings will be published by Sefton Library Services towards the end of next year.

The organisers are grateful to Sefton Council for their generous financial backing of this event and the sterling administrative assistance provided particularly by Lorna Lander and Sue Rudkin of Sefton Planning Department.

We are also very grateful for a number of complimentary letters of appreciation from participants who enjoyed the event.

Report by Jen Lewis and Reg Yorke.

‘Formby-by-the Sea’.



This was one of the few houses constructed at the sea-ward end of Alexandra Road, in the late 19th Century attempt to create an ambitious building development called ‘Formby-by-the-Sea’. Alexandra and Albert Roads, then constructed, were joined by a split-level Promenade, the (still surviving under the sand).

Curb-stones for these roads were laid and may still be seen. The 1930 “Future Development Plan” for Southwest Lancashire showed a proposed new coastal road sweeping along the coast immediately behind the Promenade and closely following the line of a previously proposed single track railway line which actually gained Parliamentary approval. The Company however “ran out of steam” and beyond a few houses development never took off.

One of the best known of these houses was Stella Maris, which was a home for Liverpool children before WW2. During war-time it was requisitioned for use as a Radar Station, to aid the defence of the vital sea approaches to the Mersey. It is now left as one of the best locations for autumnal dew-berry picking and its access roads and tracks are now finally officially designated as public rights of way

R. A. Y.

Art Group Notes by Barbara Mossop

Many thanks to those members who have said they would like to be involved in running next year’s Exhibition. We will discuss this further when we hold our annual get-together in January. The Society now has its own stands, purchased recently from the Association of Formby Artists.

I have managed to arrange a visit to the Herdman Photographic Exhibition and home in Rodney Street. This is now owned by the National Trust and at present is only open for short periods each week on a pre-booked basis. They take parties of 6 on each tour at 15 minute intervals throughout the day. Each tour takes 1 hour 15 minutes. The Exhibition is free to National Trust members and non-members pay £3.50 each. Please let me know if you would like to join us, so that if necessary I can book more slots in their time-table. The Exhibition will be closed from December to March. We intend going to the Philharmonic Pub for lunch following the visit – to study architecture, (of course!).

November seems to be the month for exhibitions and I have listed some of these in our Diary Dates. I hope to see some of you at these. We usually go to Ribchester in November to see Geoff ? Exhibition but this year he is not holding one as he has too many commissions to finish

Formby Civic Society

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History Group; Barbara Yorke
Art Group; Barbara Mossop
Amenity Secretary; Ray Derricott.

www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk



Society Notelets.

The possible production of a series of attractive notelets is actively being considered. These would be based on a selection of Muriel Sibley's drawings and would come in packs of eight with four different designs. Please let us know what you think!

Future Programme 2004—2005

GENERAL MEETINGS.

Friday 26th November; '*Formby Footpaths*', Val Hough, Sefton MBC, Technical Services

Friday 28th January, '*Alien Plants in the Sand Dunes*', Dr Philip H. Smith.

Friday, 25th February, '*The Leverhulme Story*', Mr Gavin Hunter.

HISTORY GROUP MEETINGS.

Thursday, 2nd December, '*Films on Martin Mere and Southport's Lord Street*', Jim Morris.

Thursday, 5th January, '*Punchinello in England: The History of Punch and Judy*', Judge Martin Grundy.

Thursday, 3rd February, '*A look at the FCS Newspaper Cutting Archive*', Barbara Yorke.

ART GROUP EVENTS.

20th November. *Association of Formby Artists*, Holy Trinity Church Hall.

25th—28th November. *CHET Art Fair*, Little Crosby.

27th November. *Visit to Hardman Photographic Exhibition and House*; meet 10 am Formby Station. (Please contact me as soon as possible if interested. Limited places).

15th January 2005. *Annual Get-together*. The Pinewoods, Formby 12 noon. We will then discuss 2005 Exhibition. Please contact Barbara Mossop by 7th January, if attending. .