

Formby Civic News

The Newsletter of the FORMBY CIVIC SOCIETY

The society gets out



A visit to the Dune Heath, just one of several interesting walks to look at wildlife organised by John Houston.



Heritage Open day at the Formby Hall Dovecote



Members enjoying their visit to Shibden Hall, Halifax.



November 2006

Inside this issue:

Squirrel Pox	2
Halifax Visit	2
Phone Masts	3
New P.A. System	4
Going Cycling?	5
Summer Walks	5
National Trust Plans	6
The Natural Environment	7
Brenda Lindsay Bequest	8
Des Wormald	8
Formby Power Station	9
Local tourism	10
Art Group	10
A Multi-agency Group	11

Squirrel Pox Virus in Formby and Ainsdale

Fiona Whitfield (Red Alert Project Officer) reports *eleven* recently confirmed cases of squirrel pox locally. A protocol has been drawn up of what trained volunteers and others should do if they find a sick or dead red squirrel. Please see protocol below.

A rota of volunteers to search the NNR woodlands has been pulled together, if you can help then please contact Fiona, She asks that members spread the word of the pox outbreak to friends, family, dog walkers etc.. As we need as many eyes and ears as possible. The Protocol for dealing with sick squirrels during Squirrel Pox outbreak 2006 is as follows:-

When out searching for sick squirrels or if you should respond to a call to pick up a sick squirrel then you need the following equipment: Gloves, Carry case, Towel or blanket to throw over squirrel

If you find a sick squirrel then every effort should be made to catch the squirrel without injury to yourself, if the squirrel is obviously sick but still lively then you may need to set a humane trap or get help with capturing it. Please ring Fiona on 07894

096046 or the NNR office on 01704 578774 for assistance

On capture of the squirrel it should be taken to: Mr Petchy, Veterinary Surgery, 113 Church Road, Formby, L37 3ND, (Tel 01704 877145) If it is evening or weekend and Mr Petchy is not contactable then please call Sue Farquarson on 01704 870050. If the squirrel is dead before you get to Mr Petchy then it needs to go for post mortem immediately.

If you are not trained then put the carcass in to two zip lock bags then into a box with your gloves, towel and everything you touched the squirrel with.

The squirrel should then be sent with details of where it was found, date and any information on the signs of death to:

Julian Chantrey, Veterinary Pathology Leahurst Veterinary School,

Chester High Road, Neston, CH64 7TE via:

Andrew Brockbank at the National Trust: 01704 878591, who can deliver directly. Or Fiona Whitfield at The Wildlife Trust on 0151 9203769 who can deliver via the internal post at Liverpool University on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday before 11am.

Put the squirrel directly in the post to the address above.

The squirrel should be packaged in two zip lock bags and then in a substantial jiffy bag. The bag should be labelled PATHOLOGICAL SPECIMEN and TO BE REFRIGERATED then sent guaranteed next day delivery. If you cannot do any of these straight away then the squirrel should be refrigerated, ideally in a nominated fridge not used for food, a nominated cool box or in a cool dark place. If you do take a squirrel to the vets or send for post mortem please let Fiona know on 0151 9203769 or 07894 096046.

If you should come in to contact with a dead squirrel then please disinfect yourself afterwards

"If you find a sick squirrel then every effort should be made to catch the squirrel without injury to yourself."

SOCIETY VISIT TO HALIFAX D. Willis

We had very nearly a full-coach for the Society's summer trip to the mill town of Halifax. Our first port of call, Shibden Hall, proved every bit as interesting to tour as the photographs of the building (about 1420) indicated. Extensive workshops at the back of the Hall (dairy, brewery, wheelwright...) proved fascinating for many. Then on to Halifax itself for lunch at a modern-style restaurant where everyone seemed to appreciate

the variety and quality of the menu. What should have been a short drive to the Town Hall proved to be rather longer than planned when your organiser managed to direct the coach driver on to a narrow country lane with no turnings for miles. We made it finally however and enjoyed both a (rather noisy) guided tour of the very ornate 1863 Town Hall and a welcome cuppa and biscuit. Finally a short walk (aided by a guide leaflet)

through the town brought us to the famous Piece Hall where we unfortunately managed to lose two of our company. With the party restored to full strength however we had an uneventful return journey, arriving only slightly later than planned. All-in-all the day was rather like a 'Reith' BBC broadcast: entertaining and educational.

Mobile Phone Masts - Planning Policy and Law

by Desmond Brennan.

The recent planning application by Orange PCS Ltd. for a mast in a busy part of Formby Village has once again focused attention on the contentious issues that characterize the development of the mobile telephone network. We love our mobiles, but we cannot have them without masts! This latest application (strictly a request for prior approval) would have put a mast and three large cabinets in the middle of the pavement adjacent to Barclays Bank fronting Halsall Lane. To everyone's relief, the community's vigorously expressed hostility to the proposal is shared by the Council's Planning Committee, which at its meeting on 18th October, 2006 voted unanimously to refuse the application on the grounds that it would be detrimental to visual amenity and pedestrian safety. However, there is a high probability that Orange will appeal the decision to the Secretary of State and it is a depressing fact that two-thirds of such appeals succeed. One object of this note is to explain why it is so difficult (but not impossible) to resist planning applications for telecommunications masts.

In a wild auction at the time of the dot com boom, the five mobile phone operators paid the government £22.5 bn for their 3G (third generation technology) licences and now is the time they are developing the infrastructure whereby they hope to earn a return on their investment - hence the spate of planning applications for masts. The government, for its part, is actively supporting the operators in their endeavours, because the vitality of the national economy depends on secure modern communications networks. Government policy is set out in Planning Policy Guidance No. 8 (PPG8): *Telecommunications* and, although in principle this document is only advisory, in practice case law has made it virtually obligatory for local planning authorities (LPAs) to conform to its policy statements. When people object to a mast, they usually have up-

permost in mind one or more of three factors, viz. health risk, devaluation of their property and loss of visual amenity. On all three considerations, government policy strongly favours the operators.

Concerning safety, PPG8 says, in one of its clauses, that health considerations can be material considerations for an LPA to take into account in determining planning permission or prior approval and it is for the courts to decide the soundness in law of the LPA's reasons for its decision, should it refuse an application. In the very next clause, PPG8 says that it is for the government, not LPAs, to set safety standards for masts. It lays down that self-certified conformity to standards set by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) by the operator is the sole safety requirement to be met and must be accepted by the LPA. This attempt to square the circle is typical of PPG8. In 2004, the Court of Appeal held that the ICNIRP

“why it is so difficult (but not impossible) to resist planning applications for telecommunications masts”.

standard was sufficient *unless there were special circumstances* why it should not be. In the case before the Court of Appeal, the beam of maximum intensity from the mast was directed at two schools, but this was not regarded as a special circumstance. As one legal commentator has remarked, it is difficult to foresee what might be a special circumstance, given that decision. Set against the Stewart Report on the safety of mobile phone technology and other subsequent reports, which recommend that the precautionary principle should apply, this is an extraordinary situation. The ICNIRP limits are concerned only with the heating effects

associated with the radiation, and in actuality radiation levels are much lower than these limits, so heating effects are not the issue. The uncertainty relates to possible harmful physiological effects caused, not by heating, but by long term exposure to low level electromagnetic fields. Science accepts that such effects are a possibility, but whether they are a significant reality or not must await the results of more research. In the meantime, the various specialist committees which have reported on the issues recommend that young people especially, but others also, should not be exposed to this kind of radiation for very long periods of time. However, given the Court of Appeal decision, that argument can no longer be presented in attempting to resist a planning or prior approval application for a mast.

Concerning the financial loss to an individual resulting from the depreciation in the value of their property caused by the proximity of a mast, the position is very clear; it is not a consideration in the planning context. The document *The Planning System: General Principles*, published by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) says in terms that the planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of one person against the activities of another; what matters is only the *public interest*. However, the public interest must be limited to material planning considerations. The relevance, or more often the irrelevance, of local opposition to a development, is made clear in the following extract from the same document

Mobile Phone Masts (continued)

The members of the local planning authority are elected to represent the interests of the whole community in planning matters. When determining planning applications they must take into account planning considerations only. This can include views expressed on relevant planning matters. However, local opposition or support for a proposal is not in itself a ground for refusing or granting planning permission, unless it is founded upon valid planning reasons.

This is yet another example of the Janus-faced nature of DCLG statements. Local representatives may well support their constituents in opposing a development on grounds of morality, or taste or that it is contrary to the community's aspirations for their area, but, unless it is based strictly on planning policy, their decision will be reversed on appeal to the Secretary of State. If a LPA loses too many planning appeals, the government grant is reduced accordingly; last year, Sefton MBC lost almost £60K for this reason. Bearing in mind that many developers are very well resourced and that LPAs can ill afford the expense of a thorough de-

fence of one of its decisions before The Planning Inspectorate, these considerations are very prejudicial to the making of planning decisions which are fair to the local community interest.

The most promising grounds for opposing an application for a mast is to prove an unacceptable loss of visual amenity. However, PPG8 makes it clear that if the technological requirements are such that there is no other site available that would meet the requirements of the operator's network, then the LPA must permit the development notwithstanding

“The most promising grounds for opposing an application for a mast is to prove an unacceptable loss of visual amenity.”

serious loss of visual amenity. In the DCLG's document *Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development*, the operators and each LPA are urged to meet together to discuss the operators' rollout plans for the year ahead, so as to optimize the choice of sites and maximize mast or site sharing. The Code also recommends that each LPA surveys its area

for suitable sites for masts and has in place a traffic-light system for signalling the need for community involvement prior to the placing of an application by an operator. Regrettably, Sefton MBC has not been implementing the Code, but unfortunately the Code does not have statutory force. Also, the fact that the Council has resolved to prohibit masts on its property restricts the availability of suitable sites, contrary to PPG8.

Clearly, there is much scope for reform both at government and Council levels.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Mike Belshaw (Treasurer and Membership Secretary), requests to be informed as soon as possible of any changes to members' addresses, names, etc, so that he can keep the membership list updated. He reminds us that for new members recruited from December onwards, their membership is valid for the year commencing April 2007. (ie, they get 16 months for a 12 month subscription!)

New PA System at the Ravenmeols Community Centre

We have often experienced difficulties in the 'Classrooms' at the Ravenmeols Community Centre, when our speaker at a History Group meeting addresses a large audience. When both sections are full, people at the back have had difficulty hearing clearly. This has now been overcome. Our representative on the Management Committee has been pressing for the introduction of a modern 'public address' system and the Trustees were persuaded by the arguments. A new system, with hearing 'loop' for the hard-of-hearing, has been installed and is now working. A hand-held radio-microphone is used by the speaker and the signal can be transmitted to new loudspeakers in one or both classrooms. This is simple and works well. There is also the facility to feed signals from other audio sources (cassette or CD players) into the system. All the equipment is housed in a secure steel box in the far classroom, which can be opened with the key in the Key Cupboard. Simple instructions are given below the unit and all we need to remember is to switch off the microphone (battery-powered) after use and before locking away. A demonstration to the Centre's Management Committee was almost a failure when the batteries were found to be 'dead' but your Representative has spares in his car and managed to save the day. We are grateful to the Trustees for their action on this issue. John Turner

Going Cycling? By David Willis

There's a decent cycle track coming somewhere near you, soon! Sefton MBC is supporting plans for a regional cycle route from Liverpool via the Mersey coast through Crosby and Formby to Ainsdale. A short section of the route should be installed in the Liverpool City Centre in 2006/07. A grant of £80000 has been set aside in 2006/07 for schools links in Sefton Borough, in Southport and in Hightown/Crosby as part of the Department for Transport 'Links to Schools' Programme. Plans are being formed for resolving the more difficult sections between Crosby and Hightown, Hightown and Formby, and Formby and Ainsdale.

A bit further afield, an historic Sefton footpath was re-opened in May following a £16,000 makeover. 'Maghull footpath number 21' is one of the main access routes for walkers joining the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) from the north east of Merseyside. The public right of way, off Ormonde Drive, Maghull, leads to Jubilee Woods, the largest new community woodland on Merseyside, with footpaths, bridle paths, woodlands and wildflowers, and a section of the TPT. In recent years, parts of the path had worn away due to the erosion of the banks of Whinney Brook, which runs alongside. The embankment of the brook was repaired through a joint project involving

"Sustrans is seeking proposals that would make a real difference to the local community"

Sefton Council and the Environment Agency. Special materials were used to encourage native water voles that were known to be living in the area.

These are but 2 examples of much work (albeit slowly) going on in the back-

ground to encourage more people to walk and cycle. Interestingly, the national cycling campaigning group, Sustrans, has been selected as a short-listed candidate for a single grant of between £25 million and £50 million. Sustrans' *Connect2* community project was short listed to go through to the second stage of the Big Lottery Fund's groundbreaking "Living Landmarks: The People's Millions" competition. *Connect2* aims to transform, revitalise and regenerate communities, and will compete with others on the shortlist for the grant, where the winning project will be decided by a public vote on ITV.

The relevance of this to Formby is that Sustrans is seeking proposals that would make a real difference to the local community and utterly transform the possibility for walking and cycling more. So may be there could be more cash for Formby? Suggestions please to Sustrans at www.sustrans.org.uk

Summer Walks Programme by John Houston



Hebridean Sheep, an unusual sight now to be found grazing the Dune Heath

Our summer nature walks programme was highly enjoyable. Our plan was to visit the more unusual parts of the coast, with local guides, to learn more about the wealth of wildlife on our doorstep. The turnout was not as high as we would have hoped but, nevertheless, we feel that we should arrange another programme for 2007.

Our excursions took us to the Altcar

Rifle Range estate on 24 May to see the fabulous displays of Green-winged Orchids on the grassland of the main ranges. Many other meadow plants and orchids were also to be seen. Thanks to Major Doug Farrington, chair of the Altcar Rifle Range Conservation Advisory Group for hosting the visit.

On 12 July we visited the Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve in the company of Mike Downey and Nick Haigh of English Nature (now Natural England). Probably the highlight of the evening was seeing one of this year's natterjack toadlets –by all accounts it has been an excellent year for our rarest amphibian. Remember all that rain in May –it helped!

The third visit took us to the new Freshfield Dune Heath nature reserve on 25 August (just after it was officially opened on 22 August). The

site is managed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust and we were given a guided tour by Phil Smith and Fiona Whitfield to explain how the Trust will maintain the heath by grazing with Hebridean sheep. Now that we can access the site there may be some good opportunities for the Society to help with some historical research.

We would like to repeat the programme next year to visit three other sites in the local area. But we would like to see more members. Two of our meetings were held in the summer evenings and one on a weekday afternoon. Perhaps different timings might be more suitable –please let us know. Ideas for next year could include the Hightown Dunes, Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve and the history of the Ravenmeols Local Nature Reserve.

If you have any suggestions please contact John Houston on 01704 870455

National Trust Plans by Andrew Brockbank



The National Trust and Sefton Council are currently working with landscape consultants Gillespies to develop proposals for the sustainable development of three coastal gateway sites, notably the Ainsdale Lido complex, Lifeboat Road and the National Trust's Victoria Road site. The Sefton Coast Visitor Gateways Study will be completed this autumn and it will provide the basis for consultation and engagement with the local community and other stakeholders about the future of these valued coastal facilities.

The National Trust's Countryside Property Manager, Andrew Brockbank, outlines some of the key issues affecting the Victoria Road site where the fragile frontal dune landscape is under pressure because of the position of the dune car park within the mobile dune belt.

Victoria Road has been a popular point of access to the coast for decades. Prior to the 1960's only road side parking of cars was possible at Victoria Road. The dune car park developed from the early 1960's and the layout was rationalised and substantially improved by 1980, as part of a programme to promote dune restoration and repair directed by Merseyside County Council and carried out by Manpower Services Commission funded training schemes. Boardwalks were laid out and traditional dune stabilisation techniques were employed to restore the balance between vegetated dune and bare sand.

In recent years, the dune belt in front of the main car park has become so narrow and mobile, that boardwalks and dune fences are overblown by sand in a matter of weeks or even days. Visitor pressure on the fragile frontal dunes has increased, not least due to high numbers of visitors enjoying the hot summer weather in recent seasons. But

the issue of greatest concern is that the car park is interfering with the natural roll back of the dunes and the dune belt will continue to deteriorate until the car park can be moved back from the frontal dunes, possibly by as much as 500 metres.

In planning to relocate the car park, a number of factors must be considered. Predictions of the future position of the coast are a primary consideration. Sefton's Coast Protection Unit has offered advice about the possible position of the coastline in 2050 in relation to predictions of sea

"To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here."

level rise in low, medium and extreme high greenhouse gas emission scenarios.

When considering climate change scenarios it is necessary to understand that this involves the incorporation of both risk and uncertainty into the decision making process. Certain areas are eroding and predictions can be made based on existing rates of change. A risk level can then be assigned to these predictions occurring; for example we can be 95% certain that the coast will have eroded to this point by 2050. Uncertainty is associated with the climate change scenarios as we are uncertain how society will respond to the situation and potentially change the pat-

tern of emissions. It is not possible to assign a probability of occurrence to these scenarios, only to accept that they may occur under a certain set of circumstances and factor this into our decision making process, often through the adoption of adaptive solutions.

A preferred location for a new car park is included in the Gillespies report along with information about other options which were considered but discounted on technical grounds.

The report will recommend removal of the entire existing dune car park rather than partial relocation so that the frontal dune landscape can be restored to a more natural condition. New, well defined, access routes would be provided to the north and south of the existing dune car park area to provide alternative pedestrian access to and from the beach and it would be necessary to exclude visitors from the restoration area for a period of time (years rather than months) to allow natural recovery. There would also be opportunities for habitat creation as part of the remediation works, such as the creation of dune slacks.

The removal of the existing car park also needs to be considered in the context of coast protection. The main principal will be that the works should not contribute to an increase in the rate of erosion over and above that which would otherwise be expected. Work would be needed to remove the car park base which is formed of concrete and rubble over 3 metres deep in places. Some of this material could be crushed to use as base for a new car park, whilst the remainder would have to be transported for recycling. After removing the rubble, the area would be re-graded and re-profiled and a ridge would be stabilised behind the frontal dune line to enable the frontal dunes to 'capture' sand from natural movements over the summer period.

The report will consider a range of other possible improvements to visitor facilities although at this stage the

National Trust Plans (continued)

key questions to be considered at the Victoria Road site concern the relocation of the car park as follows:

a) Natural coastline change will result in the existing dune car park being overblown by sand - do we accept the need to move it? Do local people understand that the rubble base must be totally removed in the interests of safety?

b) How should we restore this area once the car park is removed? Creating new habitats is possible and we

will need to enhance conservation if we are to secure the necessary consents for the project to proceed.

c) Where should the new car park go? What are the issues which we need to consider? Changing coastline/ erosion and a possible increase in rate of sea level rise and erosion in the next few decades due to climate change effects; Landscape issues on the open asparagus fields (visually intrusive and harmful to historic landscape); or within woodland (loss of woodland habitat but car park is visually con-

tained and within natural contours); traffic management and promotion of alternatives.

Once the Gateway Study report is published, it will be available in local libraries, on the seftoncoast.org.uk website and we will be pleased to offer presentations and workshops so that local people can be involved in shaping future access to the Formby

The Formby Civic Society and the Natural Environment

The Formby Civic Society has a good record of engagement with land managers as a 'critical friend' –supportive but not afraid to raise concerns or disagree with decisions. We hope that this role is welcomed and respected.

There will always a need to keep up to date with environmental issues. What issues should we be involved in? For example;

Maintaining our current links with the National Trust at Freshfield –on going and in response to their proposed major works to relocate the car-park.

Improving our liaison with Sefton Council at Lifeboat Road and Ravenmeols Local Nature Reserve—we would like to support the establishment of a 'Friends of..' group

Continued liaison with Natural England at Cabin Hill and Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserves—we have taken an active part in consultations over the past ten years

Support for the Lancashire Wildlife Trust in establishing the Freshfield Dune Heath nature reserve

Regular contact with Sefton Technical Services Department on issues concerning coastal erosion and accretion and predictions for climate

change etc

Responses to the Sefton Coast Partnership strategies –on tourism , access, nature etc

Liaison with the Environment Agency and others

Liaison with Formby Parish Council, especially through our mutual interest in the environment.

The Formby Civic Society should be represented on any groups associated with the management of the local environment to provide a sound foundation of knowledge in support of decision making. This is a strength which should be nurtured. What makes us different from other groups is our knowledge base, understanding of cultural heritage and apolitical stance.

We believe that over the next five years opportunity the role of the Civic Societies along the coast will be strengthened –by working together, as key stakeholders in initiatives and strategies, by championing cultural history and acting a first point of contact for heritage matters. Above all we would like to be considered pragmatic and able to respond to the challenges of change.

Having thought about it the committee is to consider the setting up of an informal 'Natural Environmental discussion group'. If you would be interested in participating or would otherwise support the establishment of an informal group of this sort or have any views on the subject please let the Chairman, Dr Yorke know on 01704 872187.



The Green winged Orchid an unusual species but to be found on the Sefton Coast. Photo John Houston.

Brenda Lindsay - a bequest

Brenda Lindsey who lived in Kings Rd Formby all her life, died in October 2004. (See previous obituary notice in Formby Civic News Oct 2004). She has now left a very significant and very welcome bequest to the Society. Her long time friend Pat McGregor remembers that Brenda attended Trinity Hall School in Southport and then to a Teacher Training College. She spent most of her working life teaching at the Alder Hey Children's Hospital school where she rose to be Deputy Head.

She was a Founder member of the Society, then called just The Formby Society. Brenda was then in her

twenty's and Pat remembers was considerably younger than the other Founder members. She was a very active Secretary until she had a Sabbatical year visiting Hospital schools in France. Brenda was a keen gardener, presenting friends and neighbours with bags of home grown vegetables. She was always interested in children and Pat's son recalls being generously paid for washing plant pots in Scout Job Week.

Though in latter years Brenda did not attend meetings she retained her interest in the Society and was thrilled to have been made a Life Member in 2004 at the Dinner that year when

she spoke warmly about the Society's early days & the filming of asparagus growing.

The use of her £1500 bequest to the Society is to be discussed by the Committee at its next meeting on 15th November but it is very likely that it will be used to provide the Society with its own Digital Projector and accompanying Laptop computer.

This is a very useful piece of equipment which is increasingly used by speakers. It is interesting to note that our original slide projector was also acquired as the result of a previous legacy many years ago.

Des Wormald



Des and his daughter Carolyn after receiving the Maundy Money from the Quenn.

FCS Member Des Wormald, who recently died aged 84 will be greatly missed. He was a regular attender at Society meetings, particularly the History Group. Born in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, in 1922. His family moved to Liverpool in 1932 and he was educated at Christ Church Waterloo and Waterloo Grammar, After serving in the RAF VR in WW2, he joined Liverpool Maritime Terminals retiring in 1986.

Margaret (Peggy) and he had two daughters, Carolyn and Christine His wife died in 1992 and for the remaining years of his life, his elder daughter Carolyn and her husband, Rob, shared his home and helped look after him.

For over 50 years Des was Sidesman

at St Luke's and for many years on its Parochial Church Council and its Communications Committee. It was for his services in this area and to the local community that he was selected to receive Maundy Money from the Queen at Liverpool Cathedral in 2004. Apart from the Formby Civic Society, Des was also active in 'Churches Together', the Formby Luncheon Club, and Waterloo Grammar School Old Boys Association and was Master of his Masonic Lodge.

Alan Waplinton, Deputy Church Warden at St Luke's, says

"Des was a man for all seasons. whatever the church activity, Des would be involved in it. I remember once working with him, helping Allan Worthington take down the grills protecting the Rose window and the East window so that we could re-paint them. We used a rickety domestic scaffold. Looking back it was distinctively dangerous. Des was then of advanced years, but he climbed the scaffold and held the grill while we unscrewed it. When Alan accidentally bashed his nose with his hardhat, Des made no fuss. He just loved St Luke's and would do anything for it; danger meant nothing for him. God would keep him safe!

Des would have regarded his work over 50 years as a sidesman at St Lukes as his most important service. He was a long-serving member of the P.C.C. and a dedicated member of the St Lukes Woodland Workshop Team.

He also worked hard for the Communications Committee and was a keen supporter of 'Churches Together in Formby. He enjoyed social events and was a stalwart of the St Luke's Tuesday Fellowship and 'Open Church', and heavily involved in the Formby Luncheon Club.

Formby Power Station

The Liverpool to Southport Railway line was opened in 1848, using of course, steam locomotives. In 1902 a decision was taken by the Directors for the line to be electrified at 600 volts DC, using a third live rail, one of the first such projects in the country. Because the supply of domestic electric power was at a very early stage of development, this meant that the Company would have to supply its own power.

This electrification contract was given to Dick Kerr and Co of Preston and the choice of location for the site of the necessary power-station was to be near Formby, the most westerly point of the whole Lancs and Yorks Railway. This site was on the banks of the River Alt, which was to provide the cooling water for the turbines, midway along the line and also some distance from any housing, thus avoiding any risks of nuisance. Four sub-stations were placed along the line, one at the Power Station itself. The others at Seaforth, Sandhills and Birkdale.

The building was erected by Thomas Croft and Sons of Preston. It was 280 ft long. And divided into two bays, the boiler section 65ft wide and the machinery section also 65ft, traversed by overhead electric cranes.

Coal was brought from Wigan and delivered by gravity hopper wagons.

Current at 7,500 volts AC left the power station and was stepped down and converted to 620 volts DC at the sub-stations. As no approach road to the power-station existed, access was

“What a marvellous centre for an industrial museum it would have made!”

provided from the railway in the form of a small platform ‘halt’ for passengers, (workers) and sidings for rail wagons.

It ceased producing electricity in 1946, after which time power was obtained from Clarence Dock Power Station. It remained empty until 1955 when it was taken over by Ross Insulation Products who remained until

1978. In the 1980s it converted to making a variety of moulded plastic products, etc. At this period it was described as an “active Formby Factory surrounded by fields a mile from the dunes and shore, standing solid and foursquare against the winds of the Irish Sea”. No claim to glamour but certainly a building of character, achievement and a little bit of history. What a marvellous centre for an industrial museum it would have made!

Barbara Yorke.

Reference ‘Seaport to Seaside’ by John W. Gahan 1985 (A copy of this book is in the FCS History Library).

Below; This photograph, (courtesy of the Formby Photographic Group) shows the Power Station building, no longer generating electricity. The former large chimneys have been demolished. Instead it took on a new life manufacturing plastics. It produced insulating panels, containers, trays and boxes for all kinds of marketed goods.



A Personal View of Local Tourism by David Davies

In the Summer edition of this newsletter Alan Burton raised some interesting issues on coastal tourism.

If local people have not been involved in the debate about planning green tourism I wonder why the matter has not been taken up by our elected representatives both on the Parish Council and Area Committee? In fact, these plans have been debated at the annual Coastal Forums held for the past few years (most recently at the Guild Hall), at which representatives of interested local groups (and our Councillors) are invited to attend. Whether tourism should be encouraged along our coast splits opinion ideologically between those who wish our beaches and pinewoods to be left alone, to be enjoyed mainly by local people, without any development such as heritage and activity centres (proper toilets even): and, those who (like myself) believe our wonderful natural coastal resource is there to benefit the whole community, both near and far, and that proper facilities and green tourist features should be incorporated to meet a growing demand.

It is true that the car-parks both at Victoria Road and Lifeboat Road need expanding and improving significantly. This matter was fully discussed at the Coastal Forum and plans are afoot for these improve-

ments to be made. As to the raising of revenues: car-parking fees, visitor and activity centre charges, income from cafeterias and arts and culture related ventures, for example, a permanent Vikings exhibition and centre, a proper memorial to Britain's first Lifeboat Station; exciting woodland sculptures and a permanent outdoor performance area, would assist in offsetting publicity and other expenditure. While many day visits would continue, such features, together with wider Formby attractions such as the new swimming-pool and the growing numbers of golf courses, would attract longer stays and more money spent in the town.

As to the Gormley Iron-Men, there is no doubt they have been very successful in attracting huge numbers of visitors to Crosby's promenade. Sadly, the lack of services to provide for those visitors such as cafeterias, hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation, has resulted in their swift departure. But, I suspect, many of those visitors, as part of their trip, may have previously visited the many sights Liverpool has to offer and may even have journeyed up to Formby to visit our pinewoods and see the red squirrels. Again, we suffer from the same lack of back-up facilities. Sefton seems to be addressing the broader problem of its

coastal tourism responsibilities: I suggest we in Formby need to concentrate on our specific contribution in helping to make the whole north Merseyside coast an attractive area to visitors. In that way, visitor spending in the area will increase which can only benefit the local economy.

Dickensian Day

Saturday 2nd December 2006

As last year we will be running a Civic Society stall in the village between 9.30am and 4 pm to publicise our activities, encourage new members and sell Sibley drawings or notelets.

Our stall will be near to Derbyshires and the barbers shop in the same place as last year.

If you are in the village please drop by for a chat and any one who could help for an hour or so to man the stall and explain to people what we do would be doubly welcome. Dickensian costume is not essential but something warm and cosy probably will be.

If you can help or would like more information please ring Alan Burton on 876454.

Art Group Report by Barbara Mossop

Whilst summer seems to have gone on and on this year, we chose an inclement day for our visit to the Boatyard at Tarleton and were not able to do any painting. The yard was very busy and we did get ideas for future pictures and finished the day at the Mill Gallery, Parbold, where we saw new paintings of Venice.

Recently we visited an exhibition

of paintings at Alston Hall, by Jim Gray. Who has spent some time recently in Egypt which was reflected in his work. We then went to the Old Corn Will at Bretherton for lunch. They also had plenty of pictures on their walls for us to view. November seems to be the month for exhibitions.

I give details of these in the Diary and hope to meet some of you at

the CHET Art Exhibition and also the exhibition in the Atkinson Gallery, Southport.

Please let me know if you intend joining us in advance if you intend joining us at the get-together and outing to the Liver Sketching Club.

GETTING READY FOR THE NEW LIVERPOOL David Willis

As we all now know, Liverpool is pulling out all the stops for its turn, in 2008, to play at being 'European City of Culture'. At our first meeting of the new season, Cindy Downing, an Information Centre manager at the Duke of Westminster's development company told us all about the "Grosvenors' Paradise Project" now underway around the old bus station. During it she offered to host any FCS visitors to a tour around the site periphery and a birds-eye view of the overall development from the roof of the HQ building. A number of mem-

bers after the meeting expressed interest in taking up the offer so we've arranged a choice of dates for some small groups (limited to 10 or 12 people) to 'see a bit more'.

Each visit is scheduled to start at 11.00; just present yourself at reception at the Paradise Project Information Centre (76-78 Lord St, Liverpool). The visit is likely to last only an hour or so; you'll be able to tie it in with lunch in Lewis', shopping in Marks.....If you'd like to take part indicate on the return slip enclosed

your preferred dates in 1, 2 ... 5 order and we'll let you know the group you can join.

Because it's quite short notice, you will need to send notification by 29th November if using snail-mail and provide a phone number (or if e-mail). For mail/hand delivery, a booking slip is enclosed to be returned to David Willis, 5 Phillips Close, Formby, L37 4BD. You may leave an answer-phone message on 01704-878994 or e-mail to secretary@formbycivicsociety.org.uk.

Neighbourhood Multi Agency Group by Ray Derricott

I attended the October meeting of this group and indeed this is the title under which the group operates. It is certainly multi agency. The group consists of the police, the railway police, the fire services, Mersey Transport, Sefton Technical Services, Leisure Services, Traffic Services, the Sefton Coastal Partnership, the National Trust, Councillors and I am sure many others. Once more I was the only member who had no official role and was there as a Formby resident. I have been given the job of obtaining feedback on the group's recommendations from other residents.

The group operates through a series of subgroups. There groups for Transport, Disorder and the Coast.

The Disorder Group is recommending a Section 12 Order that sets up a clearly designated area in which alcohol drinking in public is prohibited. The Police have the right to stop and question any person or group that appears to have alcohol and is likely to misuse it. Alcohol can be taken from such groups or individuals.

The group recommends setting up a Section 12 area from Fisherman's Path in the North down Montague Road and Freshfield Road along Lifeboat Road and to the beach. This huge area will be difficult to police and we shall have to wait to see what happens. Feedback from residents that I have spoken to seems to agree with the need for action but many feel that it will be difficult to imple-

"It is very easy for all these officers to sit around tables and make judgements that they themselves do not have to live with"

ment.

The Coastal Group has not produced a report.

The Transport Group makes many sensible and much needed suggestions about the need to improve signage to and from the beach. Attempts are to be made to improve parking facilities at Lifeboat Road and in the National Trust. The South side of Victoria from the railway crossing to the entrance to the Trust is to have parking and loading restrictions. It is also suggested that the east side of Harington Road from Victoria Road to the shops is to have the same restrictions. I have yet to speak to a

resident in the Harington Road area who is in favour of this. They say that why should they and their visitors be restricted from parking in the front of their houses. With more restrictions visitors will be forced to park in Squirrel Green, Birch Green, Dunes Drive and other nearby roads. Any attempt to implement this recommendation will be met by considerable opposition.

This brings me to question the composition and operation of the multi agency group. It is very easy for all these officers to sit around tables and make judgements that they themselves do not have to live with. Official parking in the National Trust costs £3.30. Drivers who cannot get into the NT are redirected to Lifeboat Road where the cost is even higher. Their solution is to standardise the cost and make it £3.50 in each carpark. The cost of parking is already the biggest deterrent to visitors. It is also difficult to define the moment when either of these carparks is full. There are no parking bays, the parking is untidy, individualistic and sometimes anarchic. It is time that some of the people who make these recommendations let themselves to be touched by a little reality.

If anyone reading this has views they would like to express please contact me.

The Newsletter of the FORMBY CIVIC SOCIETY

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Art Group Rep; Barbara Mossop

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For more news see the Society Web-
site www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk

ART GROUP PROGRAMME

Saturday November 11; *Association of Formby Artists Exhibition at Holy Trinity Church Hall.*

11th/12th November; *Fine Art Fair, NLVH Art Gallery, New Longton.*

24th November Southport Atkinson Gallery. Meet 12.30 pm at Gallery. *Talk by Curator. Picture of the month –The Castle, Dieppe by Sylvia Gosse, followed by tour of the exhibition of works by Formby High School pupils.*

November 30th CHET, Little Crosby. Meet at gallery 2.150pm

January 3rd 2007; *Get-together/ forward programme, 12pm Lydiate Hall Farm. (Please advise if attending).*

January 27th *Life Drawing; Liver Sketching Club, Liverpool. 10am.*

General and History Group Meetings.

Meetings, events and visits are open to all Members; (and usually guests for a small charge). Special interest groups cater for Local History and Art, Meetings are held monthly between September – April General meetings on the 4th Friday of each month, the HistoryGroup on the 2nd Thursday of each month, Meetings are held in Ravenmeols Community Centre, Park Road, Formby and usually start at 8pm and finish at approx. 10pm

9/11/2006 - HISTORY GROUP

"Lancashire Halls" David Brazendale,

24/11/2006 - General Meeting

"The Liverpool Merchant Identity" Dr Adrian Jarvis

14/12/2006 - HISTORY GROUP

"The Rathbone Family, from Welfare to Politics". Brenda Murray,

11/01/2007 - HISTORY GROUP

Formby Cottages – a look at some of our ceramic models.

26/01/2007 - General Meeting

River Alt Flood Defence Environment Agency speaker

8/02/2007 - HISTORY GROUP

"Formby – Portrait of a Community" Alex Watson, (Talk and DVD).

23/02/2007 - General Meeting

"Liverpool's 800th Anniversary Celebrations" Adrian Pearce
