

Formby Civic News



The Formby Civic Society Newsletter

Registered charity No 516789



Coastal Storm Surges by Dr Phil Smith

May 2014



Formby Point after the storm surge

In a year of extreme weather events, December 2013 contributed a suitable climax - the biggest storm-surge since 1953. On December 5th, a 9.8m tide combined with a severe westerly gale and low atmospheric pressure produced a high-water surge 1.1m above its nominal height. Large waves attacked the dune frontage all along the coast, causing severe damage especially at Formby Point. Further surges occurred on 3rd January (10.1m) and 1st February (10.2m) 2014 but fortunately the wind had more of a southerly component and less erosion resulted. Sefton Council's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Team measured erosion losses at different places around Formby Point, Table 1 summarising the data they kindly

provided. Based on the average loss along the 5km Formby Point frontage, I estimate that about 5.3ha (12.7 acres) of duneland were washed away, not including the February event.

Formby Golf Course lost nearly 20m, while the National Trust frontage retreated by about 13m, leaving spectacular sand-cliffs and strange sculptured dune fragments. Equally spectacular were the great blocks of tobacco waste washed out of the dunes and scattered across the beach, while hundreds of tonnes of rubble from the former carpark collapsed onto the shore off Victoria Road. The disabled-access boardwalk near Lifeboat Road was damaged but not terminally,

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'Lighthouse'
Preview copy of our
new quarterly
Digital Newsletter
is on pages 14-15
On pages 14-15.

Coastal Storm Surges continued

according to Coast & Countryside staff.

Meanwhile, at Hightown, the Sailing Club premises were swamped and much of the sand deposited here in 2011 for a coast protection scheme was washed away, though it contributed to a useful rise in the beach level. The weathered brick-rubble “shingle” beach was driven landwards and it remains to be seen what has survived of its classic shingle flora. Further south, at Blundellsands, the rubble embankment tipped here after World War 2 to protect the coast was overtopped and eroded by at least a metre. Large slabs of stone and concrete as well as old house-bricks were thrown up onto the grassy area next to the cycleway. One of the most upsetting sights here and elsewhere was the enormous quantity of plastic refuse washed up from the Mersey and then blown inland. However,



volunteer groups organised by Sefton’s Coast & The frontal dune ridge on Crosby beach also lost an estimated 10m in the centre but, in absorbing wave energy, may have prevented the promenade being overtopped.

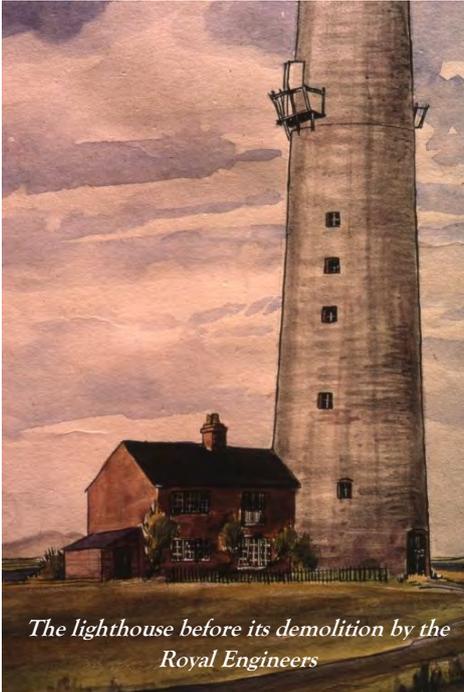
Between Ainsdale and Southport the foreshore is much wider, the dune frontage being protected by the Birkdale “Green Beach”. Nevertheless, the youngest dune ridge at Ainsdale, previously up to

2.5m high, was over-washed, losing much of its height, while a slightly older ridge further north was breached in several places, seawater deeply flooding the slack behind. Just south of Weld Road, the Birkdale Civic Society’s board walk across the Green Beach was washed up onto the strand-line. Otherwise, Birkdale and Southport were relatively little affected, a testament to the importance for coast protection of the Green Beach and salt-marshes at the mouth of the Ribble Estuary.

Although our coast suffered during this exceptional event, the storms did a great deal more damage in the east, south and southwest of the country with, for example, 48 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 22 National Nature Reserves being affected, according to Natural England. The repair bill for the RSPB’s Snettisham reserve on the Wash is estimated at £300,000

Location	Loss 5 th December (m)	Loss 3 rd January (m)	Total (m)
Alexandra Road	4.5	1.2	5.7
Lifeboat Road	4.0	6.1	10.1
Victoria Road	11.7	1.3	13.0
Formby Golf Course	12.0	7.7	19.7

Formby Lighthouse Demolition by Norman Bastiani



The lighthouse before its demolition by the Royal Engineers

In the early stages of WW2 my unit was 560th Field Company, 18th Divisional, Royal Engineers. My section, no. 2, was sent to Liverpool to assist the heroic fire fighters dealing with the many blazing buildings resulting from the German Air Force 'blitz' on the city. We were billeted at Croxteth Hall (If you click on to Croxteth Hall Flickr website http://www.flickr.com/photos/croxteth_hall there is a photo of the oak panelled room in which we were billeted).

Our initial task was to lay iron pipes along the streets to get water to the fire tenders. These pipes were a few feet long with a flange at both ends for a clamp which enabled them to be quickly laid and moved as necessary. Water was obtained wherever possible, including ponds, swimming pools, and the river. Local people were

very helpful, coming out of their houses with cups of tea and sandwiches.

Following that, a small party of us, about six, were detailed to demolish what I now know was the Old Formby lighthouse which unfortunately was being used as a visual beacon by the German Air Force in its attacks on the city. There was a small four roomed cottage adjoining the lighthouse occupied by an elderly couple who tended their vegetable plot with great care. Of course we had to evict them and I have never got

over my feeling of guilt about that and have always hoped that they were looked after, having lost their home and garden.

We placed an eighty four ounce canister of 'Amatol' in each room and detonated it. The cottage disappeared in a cloud of dust!

The tower could then be demolished using Gun cotton. This came as a flaky solid block, about six by three by one and a

half inches, with a tapered hole in the middle to accept primer, which in turn had a small hole to accept the detonator. Each type of explosive needed a higher one to activate it. Guncotton was strapped directly on to the wall of the tower. Detonators were inserted into the primers and the fuse lead laid, a flexible cable with an explosive core laid in a circle and connected to an electrical detonator operated by a plunger.

The lighthouse wall at this point, about four feet from the ground, was three feet thick and of stone. Having won the right by coin spin, I pushed down the plunger and the tower came straight down in a neat heap. On our return next day to check the site we discovered that the lightning conductor, of solid three inch by one inch metal, along with all the lead from the roof, had disappeared. Local rogues have always been ready to capitalize on any situation, however sad!

After all these years I am delighted to have made contact and been able to describe the end of what was once described as the "Methuselah" of local nautical structures.



A Formby Civic Society visit to the exact site of the lighthouse.

History Group Report by Dr Reg Yorke



Unfortunately the first meeting of this year's History Group program, had to be abandoned because the speaker, travelling from the South of England, had to abandon his journey because of bad weather. Instead with those who turned out we participated in an interesting and rewarding discussion regarding the activities and programme planned for the rest of the year.

Our role in the community is appreciated by the Sefton Coast Partnership with whom we have a good working relationship particularly in relation to the ongoing Ravenmeols Heritage Trails project. Much thought is being given to our proposed Ravenmeols Heritage Trails website design and a guided walk, a 'Ravenmeols. I enjoyed a useful discussion with Daniel Byron, Principal Planner (Conservation), Sefton MBC Planning Services, to dispel any misapprehension that the society has become lukewarm to civic affairs, exacerbated by recent changes in the planning system and our failure to identify a new 'Amenities Secretary'. Our discussion confirmed that Sefton

would very much value our input into the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan, and a long overdue Conservation Area Appraisal. In both of these our knowledge and feeling for the Historic Environment is regarded as important

English Heritage's recently issued '*Good Practice Guide for Local Heritage Listing*' will enable us to raise our profile on 'local listing' to "playing an essential role in building and reinforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment, being used to identify significant local heritage assets to support the development of Local Plans, strengthen the role of local heritage assets as a material consideration in the planning process". A preliminary list of 'Structures of Historical Interest' within Formby is being compiled. This is a start of an interesting project.

Placing a Commemorative Plaque, - on Freshfield House, 95 Freshfield Road, Formby, the former home of Thomas Fresh, (Liverpool's first Inspector of Nuisances and close colleague of

Dr Duncan), after whom, Freshfield Station and then the surrounding area was named, needs also to be processed. Through Norman Parkinson, who has added to our research on Thomas Fresh, we have a promise of £200 from the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health. The Society and also the 'Chartered Institute of Environmental Health' would be named and in the centre, 'Thomas Fresh, 1803-1861, lived here'. We could add 'founder of Freshfield' and/or 'public health pioneer'

Proposed World War I 'Home Front' project. I was interested to read about this project in the current issue of Local History News and am suggesting a trawl through the Formby Times archives on microfilm at Crosby library to see what was happening here at that time. We do know that there were difficulties in launching the Formby Lifeboat then due to the fact that most suitable heavy horses had been sent to France! If anyone would be interested in participating in this project please let me know.

Work on local history archives. Now that (with the considerable help of Colin Cooke) we have finalised audit of the Sibley Collection and its catalogue, we propose a review of the rest of the local history archive, much of which goes back to the earliest days of the Society. This is likely to be very time-consuming, Having finalised audit of the Sibley Collection and its catalogue, we propose a review of the rest of the local history archive, much of which will be

Likely to be very time-consuming, particularly if we adhere to guidelines produced by The Community Archives and Heritage Group which supports and promotes community archives in the UK and Ireland and of which we have membership. If anyone would like to assist with this, please let us know. It will involve working a few hours on Friday afternoons. Work on this however depends on gaining working space following the proposed transfer of the Sibley collection to the Atkinson Gallery!



FCS Photographic Archive on Flickr by Tony Bonney

The Society has over 5,000 images in its archive and until June 2010 very few of these were available for either our members or the public to view. To make these more widely available a decision was made in 2010 to display these using a commercial organisation named Flickr.

The factors leading to this decision were:- It was an established organisation and had a very large user base so should be available for many years to come. It was cheap at £13 per year with no limit on the number or quality of images displayed. The images were not defaced by adverts or similar distractions. There was provision beneath each image to add a description so adding historical interest. Images can be organised into 'Sets' or folders to you and me. So each road has a

separate folder (Set).

A 'Comments box' was provided so individuals could add their own personal recollections and experiences. Viewing statistics were provided giving us a feedback on images viewed.

The decision proved well founded. Since June 2010 we have had over 750,000 individual views of our 5,178 images and it is rewarding to think that our archive has now been shared with so many.

We have also had hundreds of Comments made on Flickr ranging from... "thanks for bringing back my childhood memories" to a recent comment on Laxton Cottage, Elbow Lane from Elizabeth Rodway, who lived there

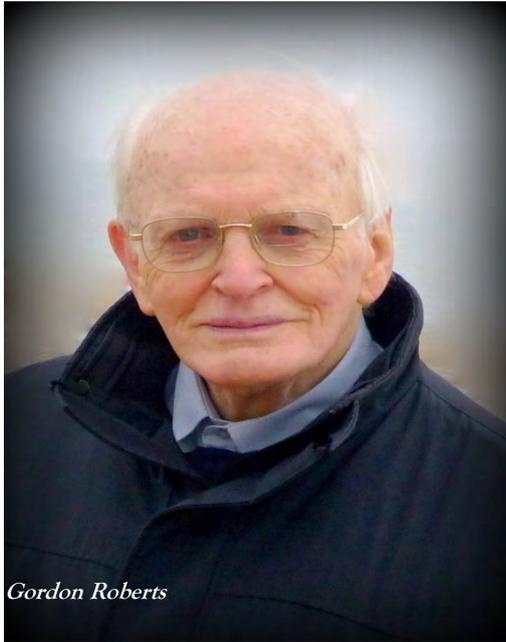
until 1957. Elizabeth sent us 2 photos from about 1955 as well as her recollections of life at the cottage as a young girl. You can read her fascinating story at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/formbycivicsociety/10174902846/in/set-72157624364295108/>

Could I once again appeal to you all not to let your pictures of our old Formby be lost forever? If you do have any, please contact me and I will copy them and return them the same day



The lost world of Formby point:

Footprints on the prehistoric landscape, 5000 BC to 100 BC



Gordon Roberts

Coastal erosion has revealed the sub-fossil footprints of humans (adult and child), animals (aurochs, cattle, red deer, roe deer, unshod horse, dog / wolf, wild boar, sheep / goat) and wading birds (crane, oystercatcher) preserved in late-Holocene, laminated silt exposures at Formby Point, Sefton Coast, Northwest England.

Most of the footprints are located in the intertidal zone. Stratigraphic evidence, supported by Carbon-14 and Optically-Stimulated Luminescence dating, indicates that they are late-Mesolithic to mid-Neolithic in origin. However, a higher, dune-edge peat stratum contains the imprints of Iron Age domestic oxen.

For many years their significance was not realised. Since 1989, a selective archive of over three thousand photographs and other data relating to the palæo-environment of Formby Point has been established. Gait analyses of more than 200 human footprint trails of varying lengths recorded to date indicate that most appear to be of young women and children, who may have been occupied in gathering food (e.g. shrimps, razor-shells and other seafood). Male footprints, on the other hand, are sometimes

directly associated with red and roe deer tracks. Evidence of an increased speed over the norm for the (then) soft, muddy environment would suggest hunting or animal management of some kind. Evidence of abnormalities / deformities of the foot are sometimes revealed, too.

exposures in an open, unprotected environment are rare. There are fewer than one hundred such sites in the entire world, twelve of which have been recorded to date in the British Isles. Of these, the intertidal Holocene sediments at Formby Point have revealed the largest number.

The purpose of this modest booklet is not only to draw attention to Formby's hitherto hidden prehistory, but to alert both lay people and archaeologists to the possibility that sea-level changes and coastal erosion may be uncovering elsewhere similar imprint-bearing intertidal sediment and peat outcrops along the foreshore which might otherwise pass unnoticed. Once exposed, such strata are immediately subjected to the destructive forces of the tides and longshore currents and any palæo-environmental and archaeological evidence they may contain could be lost for ever.

Sub-fossil Hominid footprint



Book-launch Ceremony at Ravenmeols Community Centre, Saturday 26th April

The footprints recorded!

Photographs taken of Gordon at work, recorded on film and tape by a film crew.



**The Last World of Formby Point:
Footprints on the prehistoric Landscape,
5000 BC to 100 BC**



Gordon Roberts



FCS Local History Archive by Dr. Reg Yorke



Housing the archive has always been problematic. For a period the book collection was housed in the Formby library, but removed when it was discovered that books were being stolen.

A collection of other miscellaneous archives, assembled or donated gradually over the last 60 years, was passed from the previous History Group Secretary, Jennifer Lewis, to Barbara when she took over as History Group Secretary in 1981. From time to time since then additions have come from various sources. The archive was increased during Muriel Sibley's final illness when her personal collection of about 700 pen-and-ink and watercolour sketches was donated by Deed of Gift to the Society in 1993 when she moved into a Nursing Home.

It was at first housed in Jim Hersey's garage. After his resignation, arrangements were then made to use a room over a charity shop in the village. This was fairly satisfactory until the charity needed the space for their own purposes and we were ejected at very short notice. We then gained permission to use

Swift's butcher's shop on the corner of Formby Street, first putting up some shelves. Unfortunately Mr Swift had left all his stuff including two large deep freezers, a large meat cleaving block and other items, including an old motorcycle! This left comparatively little room for storage and none at all as (a badly needed) working space. We were finally asked to remove the archive material, including the Sibley collection, at very short notice after his son returned to live in the property about two years ago.

On evacuating Mr Swift's shop, and not being able to find alternative accommodation despite pleas to all members via the Newsletter, Barbara and I had to provide room ourselves - slightly problematic in a domestic environment and this arrangements is not ideal as far as storage conditions are concerned.

In consequence we have recently successfully negotiated with the Atkinson Gallery for the Sibley collection to be passed to them. We would now like to

expedite this transfer as soon as possible. The Atkinson is willing to accept the gift of the Muriel Sibley archive of paintings as part of their permanent collection. It will not be disposed of - the Atkinson Museum & Gallery Service has a long-term purpose and follows the ethical policies Code of Practice established by the Museums Association.

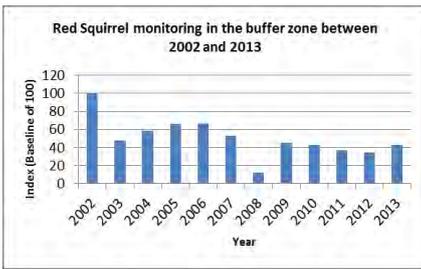
It will be stored in appropriate environmental conditions and will be stored and displayed with appropriate levels of security and used in a range of future exhibitions and museum displays. Access to the stored collection will be available on request to researchers or interested visitors by appointment with the museum staff.

Appropriate documentation of the collection, including location records, will be maintained. If the museum service closes or the museum collections are dispersed, title of the Muriel Sibley collection would revert to Formby Civic Society. Copyright remains with the Society but the Atkinson has the right to reproduce images from the archive for non-commercial purposes (e.g. web site, marketing etc.).



Red Squirrel Monitoring Report, Autumn 2013 by Rachel Miller

Red Squirrel Field Officer; The Wildlife Trust, Lancashire & North Merseyside



The Autumn squirrel monitoring was carried out by staff and volunteers at Lancashire Wildlife Trust in October. All 16 transects covering the reserve area of Formby, Ainsdale and Altcar were completed and 10 sites within the buffer zone were surveyed, covering Little Crosby, Ince Blundell and Southport.

The results were very positive in both the reserve and the buffer zone with 12 red squirrels being seen on one morning on one of

the Formby National Trust transects. In the reserve area, we recorded the highest red squirrel numbers since the 2008 pox outbreak, with numbers reaching 80.95% of the 2002 population.

The picture is looking very promising for red squirrels in the buffer zone too with red squirrels now being present at an additional 3 sites they were not present in last year. Red squirrels were seen on 6 of the 10 transects walked. One of these sites, The Jospice, has not had red squirrels since 2002 and the other, Moss Wood in Little Crosby, since 2011. We also know through trapping and public sightings that red squirrels are present at Ince Blundell Hall and Flea Moss Wood in little Crosby,

The positive story continues outside of the stronghold area as we continue to receive sightings further into West Lancashire, around Rufford, Ormskirk and Rainford and also around Kirkby and Fazakerley again.

No grey squirrels were detected at all in the reserve area and numbers remain low in the buffer zone. This combined with the increase in red squirrel distribution is fantastic news for the North Merseyside and West Lancashire red squirrel population.



Digital Problems?

Tony Bonney & Noel Blundell are offering free help to our members on most matters digital.

So, if you:-

- ***are having trouble with your computer***
- ***want advice on emails***
- ***or on surfing the net***
- ***have a digital camera and just wondered how to get the pictures on to your computer and mail them to your family or friends***
- ***or how to move pictures from your emails to your computer***
- ***have landed up with the Welsh version of the BBC***
- ***are having trouble retuning your digital TV***
- ***are wondering if the time has arrived to move to a laptop, an iPad or another tablet and you think they can help, then just give them a ring to talk through your problems and if necessary to arrange a home visit. They can't guarantee a fix but will do their very best.!***

Phone:- Tony 872862 or Noel 876891.

Wildlife Notes by Dr Phil Smith



The 'Devil's Hole'

The late summer began with a relatively warm and dry August, a bonus for our hard-pressed butterflies, **Small Coppers**, **Wall Browns** and **Small Heaths** being the beneficiaries, as well as the usual **Graylings**. Dragonflies also did well, a peak of 109 **Emerald Damselflies** being counted at the group of restored ponds I have been monitoring in the Birckdale frontal dunes.

With the help of Merseyside BioBank, over 40 volunteers were recruited to take part in a coastwide survey of one of our most iconic plants, the **Grass-of-Parnassus**, celebrated locally in prose since the pre-Victorian period. I also conducted my own survey of the much less charismatic but regionally rare **Blunt-flowered Rush**, a species most often associated with East Anglian fens and confined to only six sites on the Sefton Coast.

There was little time for bird-watching during August but I was delighted to bump into an immature male **Redstart** at Hightown dunes on 16th. Late in the month, record numbers of nearly 500 noisy **Sandwich Terns** roosted at high-tide on Ainsdale beach before setting off on their epic migration to West Africa.

Unfortunately, these important flocks were frequently and deliberately harassed by unthinking individuals.

September also contributed more settled weather, enabling a successful conclusion to the

Grass-of-Parnassus survey, with over 45,000 plants counted despite it being considered a poor year for this beautiful wildflower. It must be one of the largest populations in the country of what is a nationally declining species. Other important duneland flowers at this time of year are **Field** and **Autumn Gentians**. However, the

“A successful conclusion to the Grass-of-Parnassus survey, with over 45,000 plants counted”

colonies I check regularly at Ainsdale and Birckdale sandhills had lower numbers than usual, perhaps because of local declines in **Rabbits** which maintain the short turf favoured by the gentians.

Returning bird migrants included, as usual, **Pink-footed Geese** from Iceland, an impressive roost of 2500 gathering on the sand-banks off Hightown. However, my mid-September highlight was an immature **Lapland Bunting** making all the right noises on the shore at Ainsdale. This is a rare bird in our area and then usually

seen much later in the year. Another good find was a male **Black Darter**, a peatland dragonfly that occasionally appears on the coast in late



Black Darter

summer, though this was the first since 2010. Nearby, the Green Beach had lots of bright-green **Short-winged Coneheads**, a southern bush-cricket that arrived here in 2002 and has now spread all the way up the coast to Cumbria.

Rain returned in October but it continued quite mild, so that plenty of attractive insects remained active in the dunes. Butterflies like the **Comma** and **Red Admiral** could be seen on flowering **Ivy**, while hairy caterpillars of the **Oak Eggar** moth were unusually numerous on **Creeping** and **Grey Willows**.

A moss and liverwort expert, Des Callaghan, visited the dunes in October to investigate some of our nationally rare species. He showed a group of us several, including the almost mythical **Petalwort** in the Birckdale frontals and then **Sea Bryum** on the southern part of Birckdale Green Beach, which is the British headquarters for this moss. Des also found **Sea Bryum** at the Devil's Hole, highlighting further the importance for rare plants of this gigantic dune blow-out at Ravenmeols.

Garden-escapes are a feature of our dune flora, a spectacular new arrival being **Common Morning-glory** flowering at Falklands Way in mid-October close to a variegated **Mugwort** which has still not been named, even by experts, three years after its discovery.

Although **Rabbits** were in short supply in many places, they remain abundant on parts of Ainsdale National Nature Reserve. As a result, I was able to find enormous numbers of Field Gentians during a visit to record the extremely rare willow hybrid **Salix × doniana**. Two new bushes of the willow were found, making a total of 32 for the Sefton dunes, there being only about four more individuals known in the whole country.

In late October and early November, I joined other volunteers in essential work to clear invasive **Sea Buckthorn** from slacks and dunes near Ainsdale's Sands Lake. This area supports one of our largest concentrations of **Grass-of-Parnassus**, as well as many other rare plants. These would not survive long if the buckthorn remained unchecked. It was noticeable that the bushes cut last year were much smaller, our experience being that repeated cutting over three or four years can get rid of this major pest. My latest ever **Common Darter** at Birkdale sandhills on 12th November reflected the continuing mild weather.

Interesting birds at Marshside at the end of November and into the following month included a juvenile **Ross's Goose**, a startlingly white bird with black wing-tips which breeds

in the Canadian Arctic. However, this was almost certainly an escape from captivity. Also possibly suspect was an attractive male **Baikal Teal** which attracted "twitchers" from far and wide. This eastern Siberian species should have been wintering in China or Japan; but was it a genuine wild bird?

The last month of the year was dominated by wild weather and high-tides, culminating in the biggest storm-surge since 1953 on 5th. This caused serious damage all along our coast and is the subject of a separate article. Great quantities of tidal drift along the beaches included vast numbers of **Razor-shells** and, at Ravenmeols, my first ever specimen of **Dead Men's Fingers** attached to a **Scallop** shell. Although fairly common and widespread, this relative of corals is mainly associated with rocky shores and was probably washed over from North Wales.

The storms also brought in large flocks of gulls, at least 15,000 being on the Ainsdale-Birkdale shore, while a magnificent **Great Northern Diver** on Southport Marine Lake was a suitable climax to an exciting year.



Baikal Teal

Chairman 's

Notes by Reg Yorke

I am giving myself this column to summarise where I think we are up to now as a society. In the run-up to the last AGM, despite the quiet celebration of our 60th anniversary there was a lot of 'negativity' floating around regarding the future of the society.

Since then, things have begun to change. This is very much due to the welcome input of four active new members on the committee., listed at the bottom of page.16.

Already we have taken what I think may be a very useful initiative. This is the introduction of a new quarterly digital newsletter, under the drive of Andrew Pearce, who before coming to live in Formby, was for nine years MEP for the Wirral

*This will assist us to keep in contact, share ideas and information more efficiently and regularly, by email. Unfortunately we have at present only about 40 members email addresses. We would be very grateful if all members could confirm their email addresses, by email itself if possible. If you have any problems with this Tony Bonney or Noel Blundell will help. (see note on page 9). To whet your appetite a printed copy of the first quarterly newsletter appears on pages 14-15. please let us know your views, **but most importantly of all your email address! To join contact membership@formbycivicsociety.org.uk***

Annual General Meeting held 10th April 2014

Giving his last report as Chairman, Ray Derricott expressed his concern that although women have played a considerable role in the development of the Society, regretfully, Barbara Yorke and Dru Haydon were no longer able to play an active role. We now have only one woman on the committee.

He believes the Society needs to maintain and develop its records and artifacts as these are the best source of Formby's heritage and history, being accessed and used through our website in many parts of the world. The Society should continue its good work; continue to be involved in the Neighbourhood Plan and to publicise its activities, (for which we need to appoint a Publicity Officer).

Mr. J. Gore (Hon Treasurer), (in presenting his report said the General Fund had a balance at the year-end of £7,631.69 and the Millennium Fund a balance of £4,052.33; Income for the year was £3,796.44 and expenditure £3,709.64, a surplus of £86.90 which would be transferred to the General Fund.

The summer outing which last year had made a loss had this year made a profit. Expenses, particularly stationery, printing and postage, were continuously rising whilst our subscription income was falling. However, in view of our substantial reserves he did not think it appropriate to increase the subscription. He concluded by thanking Tony Bonney for providing membership database information and Honorary Auditor, John Kershaw, for auditing our annual

accounts.

Ways of reducing costs were discussed. Mr. Lucas suggested that the newsletter could be issued by e-mail. Mr. T. Bonney, (Membership and Newsletter Distribution Secretary) said he had requested members' e-mail addresses but had received a poor response. Dr. P. Smith suggested each member be asked to try to introduce one new member to the Society.

Dr. Yorke presenting his History Report said as our contribution to the Festival of British Archaeology, the History Group programme had included a visit to the Ravenmeols Subterranean Cold-War Nuclear Monitoring Post on the Ravenmeols Dunes, created in the early 1960s and dismantled in 1991. A second very successful '*Formby Asparagus Feast*' was held on 31st May at the RAFA Club in cooperation with the National Trust. During the year we had a succession of interesting speakers but unfortunately a talk on The Arts and Craft movement had had to be cancelled due to bad weather preventing the speaker from travelling but this had been replaced by a fruitful discussion on the future of the society.

He complemented Colin Cooke for his diligent re-indexing of the Sibley 'originals'. We now propose a review of the rest of our local history archive. This will take some time and we would welcome help from any member interested. Other projects include the creation of a number of Heritage Trails in Ravenmeols', the creation of an associated website; a commemorative plaque to be placed on Freshfield House,

former home of Thomas Fresh; and also a proposed World War One 'Home Front' project searching contemporary issues of the Formby Times on microfilm at Crosby library.

Probably the most important event undertaken by the society for some time is the publication of the booklet '*The Lost World of Formby Point*' by Gordon Roberts who identified and recorded over a quarter century, the famous prehistoric footprints on Formby Shore. (See article page 6).

Election of Officers; The following were elected; Chair and Acting Secretary ; Dr. R. Yorke ; Treasurer , Mr. D. Skelton; Committee: Mrs. J. Beer (Minutes Secretary), Mr. C. Cooke and John Phillips.

Committee members: Mrs. A. Blackman, Mr. H. Curtis, Mr. A. Pearce, (former MEP for Wirral and a member of Council of Merseyside Civic Society). Mr. C. Cooke.

No nominations had been received for Amenities Secretary and in this absence the committee has agreed that a small group will monitor planning applications and make comments where developments are not in keeping with Formby's character. A retired planner would be ideal as an adviser on this. Dr. Brennan stressed that it is very necessary to know how the planning system works!

Publicity; The new committee will consider the appointment of a Publicity Officer. Finally Mr. A. Pearce suggested the possibility of e-mailing a digital news-letter about the Society and offered his assistance with its production.

The 'Lost Settlements' Project by David Poole

In early 2012 Dr. Mark Adams, senior archaeologist at Liverpool Museums, came to speak to Formby Civic Society about a project he had been doing at Newton-le-Willows. He also told us about a new project that he had just received Heritage Lottery funding for, which was to investigate the so-called 'lost' settlement at Ravenmeols at the southern end of Formby. There was evidence to suggest that there used to be a fishing and farming community on the coast at Ravenmeols and that this had been overwhelmed by the sand in the eighteenth century. Mark asked for volunteers to help him with his research to establish the whereabouts of this settlement. Hence a small group of enthusiastic people was set up. The group has met regularly since then and, under Mark's guidance, has been looking at and analysing original sources of information.

Our starting points were a report by Kim Moreton, the Formby Tithe Map and various other written commentaries. Taking clues from these, we then went to look at original land lease documents, mainly in the Lancashire Records Office at Preston. Some of us spent many hours there, requesting documents from storage and then photographing them. It would have taken too long to study them while we were there. Instead, several of our volunteers were sent digital copies of the photographs and they, in turn, spent many hours transcribing them into digital format. Many of the original documents dated back to the 17th and 18th centuries and were extremely difficult to read. Some were in Latin. Mark then tried to match the information obtained to the tithe map. This was all interesting but didn't give many extra clues about any lost settlement.

At this point Mark thought we might obtain more relevant information by looking at wills. Lancashire Record Office keeps most of the original wills for the Formby area in the period we were looking at. Therefore, using an index of wills, we tried to identify people such as landowners, yeomen and those with common Formby surnames. We then requested original copies of many of these wills, photographed them and then set about transcribing them. Again, the wills provided a lot of interesting information about the way of life in the Formby area, but unfortunately they gave us no new leads about Ravenmeols.

In the next few months the project will be drawn to a conclusion. Mark will produce a full report and it is hoped that this, together with all the transcriptions that have been done by the volunteers, will be put on the Formby Civic Society website.

New Faces on the Committee



Clockwise from above: John Phillips, Andrew Pearce, Howard Curtis, Ann Blackman, and (Treasurer), David Skelton.





Lighthouse

The Formby Civic Society
Environment, Cultural and Heritage Updates



May 2014

Editorial

Why do people tip their rubbish on vacant sites in Formby? We are in touch with Sefton Borough Council and Formby Parish Council about rubbish recently seen on sites in Victoria Road. We urge anyone who sees locations where tipping or depositing of household or garden waste has occurred to report it to Sefton Council <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/bins-recycling/fly-tipping.aspx>. Better still to report who is doing it. This applies to privately owned sites and public land. We do not want this kind of behaviour in Formby.



A Japanese invasion

First it was Japanese knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. **Now it is Japanese Rose!** Such plants are invading our dunes and threatening existing plants. Anyone interested in helping with a survey is invited to contact Dr Phil Smith 01704 872596 or email him at philsmith1941@tiscali.co.uk



Conservatives out, Wetherspoons in

A new Wetherspoon's pub will shortly open in the village (despite mixed views expressed about the proposal). It will occupy the site/building of the Formby Conservative Club. The Club was built in the late 1800's.



Snapshots of Formby's history

Why "Freshfield"?

A newcomer to Formby is perhaps more likely to have heard of Creamfields in north Cheshire (which describes itself as the UK's best dance event) than Freshfield. So what is the origin of the name of this part of Formby ?

The name goes back to a certain Thomas Fresh (born in 1803 in the Lake District) who was appointed Liverpool's 'Inspector of Nuisances' in September 1844. This was two years before the appointment of Dr Duncan, as Britain's first Medical Officer of Health. Inspector Fresh was responsible for the Borough's Police Department and was also at various times Superintendent of Alms Houses, and Superintendent of Scavengers (i.e. manager of refuse collection and public cleansing). He worked closely with Dr Duncan.

Part of the appalling sanitary conditions in Liverpool of the 1840's (at the height of Irish immigration following the potato famine) resulted from human waste piling up in the courts around which large numbers of poor people lived in overcrowded buildings – buildings without mains drainage. The waste had to be shovelled up and, as railways developed, was carried by train to places outside Liverpool for spreading on the land. One such destination was Formby, where local farmers welcomed this supply of fertiliser, not least for the asparagus crop. Waste was therefore brought to a point north of Formby station and taken away on carts. A name had to be found for the place where this operation was carried out. Freshton was one idea, giving credit to Thomas Fresh, who was in charge of it, but eventually the name

Freshfield was adopted. In due course, a passenger station was built there and luxury houses for some of Liverpool's businessmen were built nearby, creating the pleasant locale we now know.

Travelling to London



Most of us are familiar with one or other of the ways to get to London by train – into Liverpool Central and then walking up to Lime Street, going through to Liverpool South Parkway, changing there and again at Crewe or travelling to Southport and then crossing the road from Wigan Wallgate to Wigan North Western. But forty or fifty years ago, a train (which started at Southport) left Formby at 9.09 and arrived at Euston at 2.05 pm. Some of the carriages of this train were attached at Edge Hill to a train from Lime Street so there was no need for passengers from Formby to leave their seats. The Station Master at Formby used to make sure that London-bound passengers got in the right carriages. There was a similar return train from Euston at 5.45 pm, arriving at Formby at 10.16 pm.

Walking on the beach

Have you strolled or paddled on Formby beach recently? You may have left footprints in the sand. If so, you were not the first to do so! Footprints of people who walked there 5,000 years ago can still be seen from time to time in the clay which is normally covered with sand but is sometimes exposed. Formby Civic society has just published 'The Lost World of Formby Point', an interesting and important addition to our knowledge of the village. It is an account of the researches of former local resident and teacher Gordon Roberts and throws new light on the life of Formby's earliest inhabitants (in the Stone Age). The book is the culmination of work over a quarter of a century. It is a useful pocket-size, illustrated guide to finding and understanding the relevance of prehistoric footprints on the Formby shore. Copies may be obtained at local bookshops in Formby Village for the very reasonable cost of £3



The Society runs a number of events for members which this year include -Saturday 19th July; Theatre visit, 'Grace by the Sea', Atkinson Theatre, Southport and **September 14th; Heritage Open Day, Ravenmeols**, (11-14 September are the National Heritage Open Days). Additional events are :- **Saturday 21st June; Civic Day, FCS display Chapel Lane, Sunday 22nd June Wildlife Walk**, led by Phil Smith, **late July; day visit by Coach to Hebden Bridge, early August; Visit to Altcar Rifle Range**, with John Houston to look at historical aspects of the Range. **Late August; Visit to Liverpool's World Heritage Site**, with Elizabeth Newell, Liverpool Blue Badge guide.

Sign up

Formby Civic Society is concerned with historical, contemporary and future issues affecting our area. It carries out research into local history and seeks to increase the interest and knowledge of residents in the history of our area. Members can attend talks on heritage and topical subjects several times a year and receive copies of the Society's Newsletter. To join, please email



membership@formbycivicsociety.org.uk

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“Lighthouse” is sent free of charge by email as a pdf to anyone who requests it. You may unsubscribe at any time. If you would like to receive future copies please email news@formbycivicsociety.org.uk

FCS Programme; June - December 2014

Meetings and Events

Wednesday 11st June	Wildlife Walk, led by Phil Smith, a joint event with Sefton Coast Partnership. <i>To book phone 0151 934 2967</i>
Saturday 21st June	Civic Day, FCS display Chapel Lane, 10am –4pm.
Saturday 19th July	Theatre visit, ‘ <i>Grace by the Sea</i> ’, Atkinson Theatre, Southport, <i>for booking details, see enclosed.</i>
Late July	Day visit by Coach to Calderdale ; (Hebden Bridge). <i>For details , cost and booking form, see enclosed.</i>
Wednesday 6th August at 7pm	Visit to Liverpool World Heritage Site, with Elizabeth Newell, Blue Badge Guide. <i>To book please use form enclosed</i>
Wednesday 20th August at 6.30 pm	Visit to Altcar Rifle Range, with John Houston to look at historical aspects <i>to book contact Reg Yorke .</i>
Sunday 14th September	Heritage Open Day, Ravenmeols Heritage Trails Event, <i>(look out for details nearer the date).</i>

Winter Programme

September 11th	Diane Cox, “ <i>In the footsteps of Charles Dickens</i> ”.
October 9th	Graham Fisher, “ <i>John Douglas and the ‘Arts & Crafts’ Movement</i> ”
November 13th	John Quirk, “ <i>The Shrimp Line</i> ”.
December 11th	Les French, ‘ <i>Frank Hornby and his products</i> ’

Officers of the Society

<i>Chairman;</i> Dr Reginald Yorke, 3 Wicks Lane L37 3JE; Tel 872187	<i>(Acting) Hon Secretary;</i> Dr Reginald Yorke, 3 Wicks Lane L37 3JE; Tel 872187	<i>Hon Treasurer;</i> Mr David Skelton, 2 Shaw Crescent, L37 8DA Tel 01704 875033
<i>History Group Secretary;</i> Dr Reginald Yorke,	<i>Minutes Secretary;</i> Mrs Jean Beer	<i>Distribution Secretary;</i> Mr Tony Bonney, membership@formbycivicsociety.org.uk

Committee Members

Mrs Jean Beer, Mr Colin Cooke, Mr H Curtis, Dr. R. Derricott, Mr Andrew Pearce, Mr John Phillips,

www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk