

Formby Civic News



The Formby Civic Society Newsletter

Registered Charity No 516789 www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk



Tree felling alarm in College Avenue.



On 15th September residents of College Avenue received notification that Network Rail “*needs to remove trees which pose a significant risk to railway operations near to your property*”. Night working was to be undertaken on Sunday 28th September, and 12th October, and day working from: Monday 29th September, to 3rd

“.....the work proposed may in fact lead to criminal offences being committed..”. Merseyside Police. Photo Tony Bonney.

October, Monday 6 October to Friday 10 October, Monday 13 October to Friday 17 October. The notice went on to state “*The trees situated along College Avenue (unadopted road) are in a very poor condition and pose a risk to the railway. They are sycamore trees which are also a risk to our operations during the leaf fall season. This site has been identified as a result of incidents on the line reported by drivers and also due to the condition of the trees following an inspection by our tree specialist. Lineside vegetation can obscure signals, get blown onto the tracks, including electrified track, or grow to an extent where our staff do not have a safe place to wait whilst trains pass. Vegetation management can also help prevent leaves falling on the line which hampers train acceleration and braking*”

We attended a meeting with representatives of Network Rail as this is an important issue. As College Avenue is unadopted freehold residents own the land in front of the houses right up to the railway fence including the trees. They question the statement made by network rail that “*the site has been identified as a result of incidents on the line reported by drivers, and the reports that line side vegetation can obscure signals and whether any actual problems have been caused by trees been blown onto the*

Formby during World War 1

The beginning of a special local history project is announced on page 5 of this issue - the rediscovery of how Formby responded to the outbreak of World War I; the many local

volunteers are now celebrated on the Formby Roll of Honour. What about the civilian response? We are now rediscovering exactly how Formby reacted

.....See page 5

October 2014

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‘Placecheck!’ -

.....see p11 and reply leaflet inside.

Tree felling alarm, *continued*

tracks". As there has been quite a bit of work done on the line in recent years including recent removal and refurbishment of 2 footbridges we are asking what problems were reported at that time, the trees have been there for 50 years, why is it now only a problem that has to be dealt with in this manner?

On taking it up, David Irving, now our Amenities Secretary, received an email from Network Rail stating that they will keep the society up-to-date with developments and they have assured him that in the meantime College Ave residents have received advice from the Wildlife Crime Investigation Officer for Merseyside Police who has written to Network Rail to seek clarification of the works that Network Rail intends to conduct. She is concerned "that the work proposed may in fact lead to criminal offences being committed. It transpires that the residents of College Avenue do in fact own the

land to the front of the respective properties right up to the border with the Network Rail fencing, therefore ownership of the tree's falls with the property owners

A number of tree's have been red tagged (i.e., marked for felling) along the route and that it is anticipated that two tree's on either side of the red tagged trees are also to be felled. This would mean that for every one tree that requires felling, network rail would in fact be taking down five. This would mean that in the region of 170 trees are to be subject of felling.

"no work will be taken to remove any trees in College Avenue until the residents have been fully consulted."

The Police advise that any Public Body wishing to carry out works would be bound by The Convention on the Conservation of European

Wildlife and Natural Habitats and offers NR "advice that would minimise the danger without felling the trees.

"We strongly recommend that you contact us if you are considering felling a tree or trees in these circumstances. You may be prosecuted for illegal felling if it is shown that the tree did not present a real or immediate danger and I would ask that due consideration be given to ensuring that the laws in relation to the protection of species and habitats be complied with and any mitigation measures required be put in place. It is important that if you require any guidance on any of the legislation that applies to Network Rail and the protection of species, that you seek expert advice from the relevant authorities"

College Avenue residents are also being supported by the Formby Woodland Monitoring Group.

Wildlife Notes *by Phil Smith*



With the exception of August, the period under review was much warmer than average. Spring was

unusual in having no prolonged droughts but September made up for it, being the driest since records began in 1910. These conditions had noticeable impacts on our wildlife, everything appearing much earlier than usual. It was the best summer for sand-dune orchids in living memory.

It all started with the usual display of over 20,000 **Green-winged Orchids** on Altcar Rifle Range, much enjoyed by visitors on guided walks. For the first time, this species was found away from Altcar, a single specimen being spotted at Cabin Hill. June was memorable for enormous numbers of **Pyramidal** and **Bee Orchids**, the

Ravenmeols/Cabin Hill population of the former being estimated at over 10,000, including several of the rare white form *albiflora*. **Marsh Helleborines** also flowered in spectacular abundance in the slacks. Again, the nationally rare **Dune Helleborine** was more numerous than usual, a strange yellowish colour-form appearing near Sands Lake at Ainsdale

A short distance inland at Haskayne Cutting Nature Reserve, I counted 350 marsh-orchids, the majority **Northern Marsh-orchids**, far more than the previous year. *Continued p8.....*

The Neighbourhood Plan *by Reg Yorke*

Formby Parish Council are working on the preparation of a draft Neighbourhood Plan and the Formby Civic Society have been invited to assist in relation to its built and natural heritage assets, particularly the former. Over and above the obvious value of our Green Lane Conservation Area and its listed buildings we will be looking particularly at the quality of the built environment and townscape more generally. As it is hoped to have the draft plan near completion by next August we will not have a lot of time to spare.

Our brief is:- ***'To ensure we can protect what we've got and outline what we expect of the future. To include consideration of the appearance of buildings and ensuring the character of the village'***.

This obviously includes not only the surviving listed houses, farm buildings and cottages, in Formby and Little Altcar, It also includes Cross Green, - formerly the heritage centre of Formby, the site of the original village green, the annual village fair, overlooked by an old thatched ale-house and the village cross, the stocks, and a small 'lock-up'.

Other buildings, (or groups of), of architectural or historical interest include (the unlisted), Freshfield House, the old Post Office, Victoria Hall, Gild Hall, the Churches, St Peters, St Lukes, Our Ladies, Holy Trinity, but also our other older Pubs, including the Grapes, and Freshfield, both once hotels.

The present-day village centre, Brows Lane, Chapel Lane and School Lane is obviously of special importance. Its development from the mid-19th century (as recorded on the

Tithe Map of 1845) to its present day hub of Formby life and business, represents all that has happened in Formby during the last century and a half. It's importance has been recognised by the Parish Council and its future development must be carefully managed. Whilst it's architecture is not exceptional it does tell an interesting tale of the transition from rural village to the heart of an important Merseyside community.

In its development from a purely rural community to modern suburb, the development of housing styles from traditional vernacular thatched cottages through Victorian/Edwardian style houses, together with many 'vernacular revival' examples, adds to the architectural interest of the township, needs to be respected and preserved as far as possible.

We not only have some interesting buildings but also many surviving 'structures of historical interest'; unlisted in the past, but now being recorded and we hope (unlike the old Lifeboat Station), preserved.

Interesting and health giving open spaces, Bills Lane, Dune Heath, Paradise Lane 'Conservation Corner', also need to be preserved, along with open-air recreational facilities such as the Cricket Club Ground, Formby Golf Club, the 'Tin-Tab' and of course the remains of the manorial demesne, Formby Hall and Formby House, now the 'Sparrow Hawk' Pub.

Finally we must not forget the surviving scattered farm-houses.

The older network of roads and lanes have historic as well as amenity value. Victoria Rd, not one of the older roads is a particular case; the only access to the National Trust

'honeypot' on the one hand and an important route to one of the major post-war development areas on the other.

In short our job is 'to ensure we can protect what we've got and outline what we expect of the future. To include consideration of the appearance of buildings and ensuring the character of the village'.

An RAF Woodvale Memorial?

With the approach of November 11th, it occurs to us that it would be appropriate for there to be some sort of simple memorial to the many RAF personnel, stationed at Woodvale, who lost their lives with the RAF during WW2. Few of the present-day Formby population, most of whom will have moved to live here since WW2, have much idea of the role Woodvale played. The now established Dune Heath would perhaps be one possible place (insofar as it is now open to the public), for a suitable simple Memorial. Another would be the (to be re-designed) main airfield entrance. Aldon Ferguson, the official historian of Woodvale, describes in his book how these airmen lost their lives one way or another. Only 2 or 3 graves are to be found in Formby itself. The similar Burscough wartime aerodrome, no longer used, does however have a similar Memorial at its former main gate. Before taking it any further we are seeking views of people like Aldon Ferguson and of course RAF Woodvale. If the idea has their support we would like to give it our further consideration. What do you think?

Your views are welcome! Editor.

The Sibley Collection



As previously discussed the collection has now been transferred to the renovated Atkinson Gallery where it will be stored in appropriate environmental conditions and displayed with appropriate levels of security

The archive will be 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.

Dune Heath history guided visit

At the invitation of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust on Sunday, September 9th, its 10th anniversary under the care of the Trust, we assisted with an Open Day by leading a guided walk discussing the history of the Dune Heath area. Although the turnout was fairly small this was an enjoyable occasion particularly as the gorse and scrub -cleared area of the Heath now has an extensive area of Heather

currently in flower. Lowland heathland is now of course a rare natural landscape but has now naturally returned to Woodvale simply due to the fact that this area

an extensive golf links, requisitioned in wartime for the defence of north-west England,

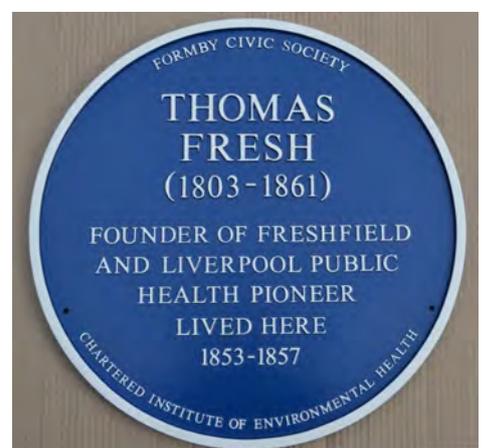
once an extensive golf links, has been completely sheltered from public intrusion since it was taken over by the RAF early in WW2. We were able to talk about its previous uses, first as rather poor farmland, subsequently an extensive golf links, requisitioned in wartime for the defence of north-west England, and now reverting to its natural state.

Reg Yorke

Freshfield House; blue plaque.



Formby's first Blue Plaque is to be affixed to Freshfield House, 95 Freshfield Road on Friday 31st October. This is to commemorate his former residence here.



World WW 1 project

On Monday, August 4th, exactly 100 years after the start of World War I, a meeting of interested members was held to consider a proposed study of the First World War 'Home Front' in Formby using microfilm copies of the Formby Times of that period in Crosby Library. To remind ourselves of the background we watched a recently produced DVD including contemporary news films put together by the North West film archive. 'The First World War - life on the Home Front in North-West England'. Interestingly this includes our original film of a practice launch of the Formby Lifeboat in 1916 assisted by a Royal Artillery battalion then based at Altcar.

We now have seven volunteers to participate in the project which started with a preliminary meeting at Briardale on the evening of 4th August. Similar historical investigations are currently ongoing across the country with apparently very interesting results and it will be interesting to rediscover happenings here in Formby.

Since 4th of August work has begun in earnest. We already have a great deal of information scanned from the microfilm records in the form of computer files which we can work on at home. An early result has been the rediscovery of the source of the information recorded on the Roll of Honour now placed in the grounds of

Formby Pool!

There are many references to local events during this period in the contemporary Formby Times, both civilian and military. We already know that military training took place here under canvas and this involved the 'Liverpool Scottish', who in their kilts made a great hit with local girls! The names and addresses of all volunteers were published week by week and I have already noticed two (later), founder members, of the Formby Society, Fred Beardwood and William Marshallsay.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone else interested in joining in this project. Reg Yorke

The First Days of WW1 *(from The Formby Times, transcribed at Crosby Library).*

On Monday 11th August, 1914,

“£46 was the sum asked for at a meeting held in the Victoria Hall, Formby, to make arrangements for work parties in connection with the base hospital at Liverpool. Over £70 has come in the ladies who are working so hard at organising the movement will find good use for the money. The large sum contributed but make it possible to buy the best material, and our Tommies who are so nobly doing their duty deserve the best. The response to the appeal for workers is also been excellent. The same party will be held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday as Victoria Hall so long as the ambulance lectures are being given at the Holy Trinity Parish Hall.

Similar work is being engaged in connection with our Lady's Church. This is in no way in opposition to the other effort, but it was felt that the circumstances were rather different,

and to meet them separate organisation was necessary. A meeting was held on Monday evening, when the Reverend Father Gardner and Father Hothersall spoke on the subjects in view. Committees were formed for collecting funds, and supervise work parties and the latter have assembled in good numbers at our Lady School, with the hum of sewing machines each evening has testified that busy hands were at work to give practical help to the base hospital. Some of the workers found it convenient to take their work home and altogether the response to the appeal made on Monday evening has been most praiseworthy.

The general officer commanding the West Lancashire division wishes to know as soon as possible the names of householders resident in Formby district. Paul Willey in an emergency to take in the wounded soldiers and the number they can accommodate.

This is merely a precautionary measure and for War Office information. Those willing are asked to communicate with Dashper E Glynn, Jr, Trap Hill, Formby, the organiser of the local voluntary aid detachment.

“Formby is doing in its share”. This expresses the sentiment on everyone's lips, and we are proud of the way the little township has risen to the great national emergency through which the country is passing. Recruiting for the Territorials is excellent during the week, and the 'Terriers' who came down to look after it were most pleased with the results of their efforts. It is stated that there have been recruits to the “Regulars” also. A number of the Formby Territorials have volunteered service at the front. Another report states that the whole of the Formby detachment volunteered for the front

The First Days of WW1.

and one or two were rejected on physical grounds.

The National Reserve mustered in good numbers at the Jubilee Hall Formby on Tuesday evening, and signed cards in respect of the different classes. There are 3 classes - those belonging to the 'Volunteer for service' if called upon anywhere: the 2nd and 3rd classes for 'home defence', the third class consisting of members over 50, who would be given lighter duties than the others. Drill and exercises were gone through, and it is expected that there will be drilling for the reserves at the Jubilee Hall 2 or 3 nights a week. It is hoped that all men who are qualified by having served 3 years in some branch of the service will join.

The, Commandeering of horses has been going on for several days. The animals were brought to convenient places for inspection, and on Thursday morning environs of the Blundell Hotel presented quite a "horse fair" appearance.

At a meeting of the principal master bakers of Formby, held on Monday, it was decided owing to the increased cost of flour, to raise the price of bread 1/2d per loaf for all bread delivered but as an inducement to purchasers paying cash and taking delivery at the counter, they will be able to obtain bread at the old price of 3d and 3 1/2d per loaf. The master bakers hope that Formbyites will support local bakers, who have to help them to pay the rates and taxes of the district. The above prices will be strictly adhered to during the war crisis.

By Friday morning the prices of bread and flour were back to normal and this will be maintained if buying on the part of the public is also normal. Prices of other commodities tending in the same direction.

Owing to the employment of Boy Scouts under the recognition of the government, a number of the troop are now busy in the district, but there are still a number who are available. Any public service such as the St. John ambulance for other newly formed corps or society.....,

The 1st Western military general hospital has been organised at Liverpool, and a large number of

"It was decided owing to the increased cost of flour, to raise the price of bread 1/2d per loaf for all bread delivered"

local ladies are engaged in working parties in connection with the scheme. At Formby the working party has been organised by Mrs Edgar Storey; at Great Crosby by Ms Fraser; Crosby by Mrs Weld-Blundell of Ince Blundell and Miss Agnes Blundell, Crosby Hall. At Blundellsands by Mrs Harpin and Mrs Coward, Ms Lumley St Michael's Church workers and Ms Cooper.

Mr Weld Blundell of Ince Blundell and the Lord of the Manor of Birkdale has placed his Lancashire and Dorset seats, Ince Blundell Hall and Lulworth Castle at the disposal of the government for hospital or convalescent purposes. Sir Talbot Scarisbrick, Bt has offered Greaves Hall, Banks near Southport to the

Government for the use of war convalescence. Lord Derby has also offered use of Knowsley Hall for similar purposes.

Hospital Work.

Help from Formby.

On Monday afternoon a meeting was held at the Victoria Hall Formby, to obtain local support for the base hospital in Liverpool. The hall was filled with ladies and there was a large and influential platform, which included Revs J. Brooks-Richardson, J Llewelyn, R. Minnitt, E.J.Gawne and W. H. Wicks. The Rev Thomas Bishop arrived later.

.....a small number of ladies met together the idea of starting in Formby in the various districts working parties under one chief head to work for the wounded and the sick at the base hospital at Liverpool.

Mrs Ainsworth said many things would be required for the base hospital..... They felt no time should be lost in securing that. When the soldiers might require them there would there would be ready a good stock of comforts and necessaries. Mrs Story very kindly invited a large committee to act and she made it as far as possible a representative one.

They had bought some materials and wanted to arrange for cutting out and sewing parties. They had already cut out about 120 articles so ladies who wish to do so might take work that day. They proposed having that Hall open from 10.30 to 6 PM in order to give all the opportunity of attending.

There would always be present some members of the committee to give out or receive work finished,.

A century ago; - *Reminiscences of a Formby childhood,*

Recorded by Mrs Watts of Watts Cottage, Brewery Lane, 60 years ago



Watts Cottage., Brewery Lane, Freshfield.

Freshfield was called after a Mr Fresh. There were no shops at Freshfield station. Just a shed where Rimmer's cabmen waited for the trains. There were no streetlights - oil lamps, and candles to get to bed. Water from wells. No bathrooms, lav next to pigstye. No cars. Only horses and traps, cabs at the station. No locking doors at night. When the gas was put down the road, a man used to come round and light the lamps at night; he carried a ladder to the street lamps.

Brewery - beer was named "Jackie Water" by the locals because the water came from the pumphole at the side of Brewery Lane.

Gypsies camped sometimes at the end of Brewery Lane. No houses in West Lane, only the convent, now St

Georges School, and the old Tithe Barn. Old cottage at corner of West Lane and Massam's, Lane, also at Wrigley's Lane with fields where a gentleman turned out his racehorses. He lived in the house now called Bishops Court. A cottage at corner of Wrigley's Lane and Paradise Lane. No school in my mother's time like St Peters. In her day the children used to go to the house next to the school, and take one penny each Monday. As their names were called the children would say "present, Miss, paid a penny."

No banks for money. The cottagers used to take their savings to the Parson in their long white aprons, and he used to save it for them. Church House was in those times a pub or inn called the "Formby Arms". People used to come to church on Sundays and stable their horses there. After church service, It was the custom to have some refreshment drink before returning home. Some people came up from Ainsdale. There used to be a public footpath from corner of

Massam's Lane through the fields and past the end of our cottage and Brewery, on again over the B and I Golf Course, past farms called the Brank, and under the Cheshire Lines Railway into Ainsdale. This path was closed when the aerodrome took over and the golf closed down during the war.

I remember as a child Church Road was just a cart track. Farms - "Rimmers", "Butter basins" and a few houses.

The people of Formby did a lot of fishing by setting nets and lines on the shore. Many took fish to Liverpool to sell, starting early mornings by pony cart. Formby consisted of people by names of Aindow, Rimmer, Norris, Brooks. They had to sort them out by nicknames. The real Formby folk were called sandgrounders.

At the end of Watchard Lane, I remember a 'Pinfold' ; it was round made of stone. If any cattle strayed, they were driven into it, and the owners had to pay to get them back. In Green Lane there were two cottages "Rimmers". One was a small farm. Many a jug of buttermilk I have had from the old lady. Milk then a halfpenny a pint all froth as you could watch the cows being milked. On the corner, at Cricket Path, there was a house with shop attached "Miss Birtles". She sold everything from oil for lamps to sweets, a big bag for a halfpenny.

Of Ormskirk market day, a horse-drawn wagonette took people to the market, but when they came to the Hill everyone had to get out and walk, as the driver would not have his horses work too hard.

Wildlife Notes, *continued from p2.*



White form of Pyramidal Orchid

Continued from p2.....

Orchids also appeared in unexpected places, such as the playing field of the former Hope School, Ainsdale, where a survey found **Bee Orchids**, **Pyramidals** and **Dune Helleborines**, as well as a colony of **Maiden Pink** thought to be the largest native population of this Red Data Book plant in “Lancashire”.

The weather conditions were similarly beneficial for insects, exceptional numbers of **Northern Dune Tiger Beetles** being recorded in May, while the usual explosion of **White Satin moths** at Ainsdale Sandhills was more spectacular than ever. Dragonflies also responded to the warmth, **Banded Demoiselles** being abundant on Downholland Brook in late May. My annual dragonfly walk at Mere Sands Wood



Black-tailed Skimmer

Nature Reserve in July produced eight species, including several **Black-tailed Skimmers**, a species now rarely seen on the coast. A September visit to Highfield Moss Nature Reserve near Warrington was rewarded with typical peatland dragonflies, such as **Black Darter** and **Common Hawker**, but also abundant **Meadow Grasshoppers**, the

latter seemingly confined to bogs in the Northwest, though ubiquitous further south. Striking black-and-yellow **digger wasps** (*Mellinus arvensis*) were seen stocking their nest-burrows with small flies.

In July, the **White-letter Hairstreak** was re-discovered on Ainsdale National Nature Reserve, two years to the day since the last one was seen. Large numbers of **Dark Green Fritillaries** were nectaring on **Creeping Thistles** near the shore at Ravenmeols, while a big hatch of



Bishop's Mitre Shieldbug.,

Peacocks took place, together with a few **Painted Ladies**, the latter hanging on until well into the autumn. I also found the photogenic **Bronze** and **Bishop's Mitre Shieldbugs** which are new records for the coast.

Natterjack Toads did less well in some parts of the dunes, as their breeding sites dried up prematurely. However, new scrapes dug at Ainsdale Sandhills and Hightown were successful, the latter producing thousands of toadlets derived from tadpoles rescued from Devil's Hole.

Ornithological highlights included a **Spotted Flycatcher** at Range Lane in September; formerly common, like so many of our song-birds, this is now almost a rarity. A high-tide roost on Ainsdale beach on 13th August contained at least 8000 **Sanderling**, the second highest count of this species for “Lancashire”. These Arctic-breeding waders were probably fresh in from Greenland and northern Canada, having flown the north Atlantic.

A challenging survey concerned **Japanese Rose**, a non-native invasive plant attractive in appearance but potentially damaging to duneland habitats. As many as 45 volunteers were recruited to cover the coastal zone from Seaforth to Marshside; they recorded over 500 bushes covering about 6 ha, the equivalent of 12 football pitches. A separate study showed it was increasing at a remarkable 20% per annum.

Finally, Freshfield Dune Heath celebrated its 10th anniversary in September, attracting large numbers of visitors to various events, including a “Bioblitz” which recorded nearly 300 species, about 60 being new to the reserve.

Summer Programme 2014 report *by Reg Yorke, photos Tony Bonney.*

Our Civic Day event on 21st June was a presentation of 'A Sense of Place' arranged at the invitation of Formby Parish Council as a contribution to our joint working on the proposed Neighbourhood Plan at Formby 'Gild Hall'. It was transferred to the Formby Library as a 'stand-alone' presentation and remained on view for several weeks. The display was based on our archives collected over 60 years and attracted much interest.

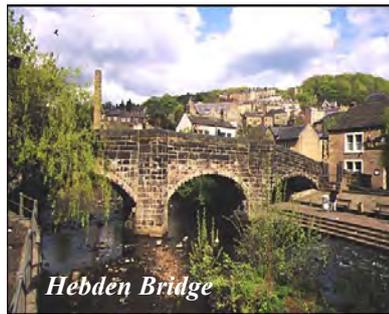


'Grace by the Sea', Atkinson Theatre, Southport, Saturday 19th July;

Our summer season proper started with a visit to the premier of a new play by writer and producer, Rob Brannen at the Atkinson theatre on Saturday 19th July. It included a lot of material about our coast, Formby lifeboat history, and prehistoric footprints, and featured (an actor playing) Gordon Roberts! This was a very pleasant evening and I gather the play subsequently went well in Edinburgh. It sold out at Unity and for a performance in Halewood, so Rob Brannen its author thinks it's been seen by approx 750 people – not bad for a community production.

Day visit by coach to Hebden Bridge.

On Thursday 24th July following Lunch At Stubbings Wharf Pub. Where we were joined by our 'heritage guide' for the day we walked along the Calderdale Canal to



the town centre, looking at its many interesting old buildings and hearing about how the town has developed and changed without losing its Pennine character.

We then re-boarded our coach to take us up to Heptonstall a well preserved but much older hilltop settlement overlooking Hebden bridge. Here we talked about its development over the centuries and looked at its two old churches, one now in ruins. After afternoon tea in a pleasant old tearoom we re-boarded the bus to return to Formby.



Visit to Liverpool waterfront 'World Heritage Site.'

On the evening of Wednesday 6th August, we greatly enjoyed a visit to Liverpool waterfront 'World Heritage Site', with Elizabeth Newell, Blue Badge Guide and member of the society. Our enjoyment was helped by the fact that it was a beautiful evening and it was an excellent opportunity to rediscover our nearest city and see how it's waterfront has now

become a top tourist destination, as well as remaining one of the world's greatest ports. We thank Elizabeth for a most interesting evening.

Visit to Altcar Rifle Range,

We enjoyed another pleasant evening on Wednesday 20th August when we visited to Altcar Rifle Range, with member John Houston to look at its



historical aspects. John who is chairman of the Altcar Conservation Advisory Group reminded us of the Range's 150 years history during the course of an interesting walk when we talked about its history and looked at recently rediscovered wartime anti-aircraft bunkers and on the dunes on the coastal side, the still surviving mountings of a battery of naval guns probably dating from World War I

World War One.

Our remaining event was a discussion meeting, followed by a series of visits by interested members to research the Formby Home Front during WW1. (see p 5)



An RAF Woodvale memorial needed? by Reg Yorke



The crew of the crashed B 24 Liberator

It was just after 12 noon on Saturday 25th of October that Tony Bonney and I arrived at Segar's farm just off the coast road at Ainsdale to meet Mrs Joan Braid, now in her 80s, brought up on the farm and still living there, the only surviving witness to the disastrous B 24 Liberator crash which occurred on a misty day as she came home from school for lunch exactly 70 years ago.

Before going out onto the now uncultivated fields on the periphery of the old farmstead we looked at her scrapbook of newspaper cuttings and communications from American relatives of the seven American airmen who lost their lives that day returning for a period of rest and recuperation. They were all on their way home after flying together a total of more than 370 missions,

After a chat we made our way to the fence now separating the farm from the airfield, now grown wild and rough, though the farmland, though rather poor and sandy, had once been productive until taken over by the RAF for the creation of the airfield at the beginning of World War II. With previous permission from the RAF we negotiated the barbed wire and made our way through hummocky overgrown grassland to the exact site

of the crash. Mrs Braid was able to describe as a ten year old on this day at 12.50 pm exactly seventy years ago, seeing an American B24 Liberator approaching at a low level from the north-west in the direction of the control tower, but not landing immediately; circling round out to sea and then making a 2nd approach. Unfortunately still on a slightly incorrect course, making a rapid correction the plane banked, when its starboard wing hit a field boundary (cop), causing the plane to cartwheel, crash and catch fire. Twenty veterans of the 446 Bomber group were immediately killed or badly wounded.

The incident seems to have been covered up by the US military for a long time and it was only 17 years ago that the relevant documents were declassified. It is now considered that this was arguably the most tragic non-combat related accident of the 8th Air Force during the war. Our informal visit today when we left a few flowers and a small wooden cross, appears to have been the first 'memorial' visit ever to take place at the original crash site, despite the clear description given by Aldon Ferguson in his excellent book on 'Royal Air Force, Woodvale the First Fifty Years' published by Airfield

Publications, 1991.

With the approach of November 11th, it occurs to us that it would be appropriate for there to be some sort of simple memorial erected to the many RAF personnel, stationed at Woodvale, who lost their lives with the RAF during WW2. Few of the present-day Formby population, most of whom will have moved to live here since WW2, have much idea of the role Woodvale played. The now established Dune Heath, formerly part of the airfield, would perhaps be one possible place (insofar as it is now open to the public), for a suitable simple Memorial. Another would be the (to be re-designed?) main airfield entrance. Aldon Ferguson, describes how over 24 airmen lost their lives one way or another. Only 2 or 3 graves are to be found in Formby itself. The similar Burscough wartime aerodrome, no longer used, does however have a Memorial at its former main gate. Before taking it any further we are seeking views of people like Aldon and of course RAF Woodvale. If the idea has their support we would like to give it our further consideration. What do you think?

The site of the crash.....



A 'Placecheck' for Formby !



Chapel Lane, looking West.

Placecheck

We have informally agreed with the Formby and Little Altcar Neighbourhood Plan working party to assist in the carrying out of one or more 'Placechecks' in key local areas. Placecheck is a method of assessing the qualities of a place, showing what improvements are needed, and focusing people on working together to achieve them.

A Placecheck can start with just half a dozen people round a kitchen table, or a small group meeting on a street corner, or it may be a larger affair involving a programme of walkabouts and workshops.

A Placecheck can cover a street (or part of one), a neighbourhood, a town centre, or a whole district. A variety of types of appraisal of places can be carried out. Some define the character of a valued place. Others assess how sustainable a development is, or describe the visual qualities of a place.

This can provide a focus for bringing people together to identify what needs to be done to improve the place. Developed by Urban Initiatives in the 1990s, Placecheck is now in

widespread use in communities throughout the UK.

How to Placecheck

Options for a Placecheck event include:

- a walkabout of the area
- a meeting or workshop event
- an exhibition
- a questionnaire
- an event at a community festival
- a combination of more than one of these.

At the core of the Placecheck is a checklist of questions intended to prompt participants to think about what might be relevant to their area.

The Placecheck list is in three parts:

A: Three basic questions aimed at getting people thinking:

- What do you like about this place?
- What do you dislike about this place?
- What needs to be improved?

B: Fifteen more specific questions:

The first six ask who needs to be involved in changing the place for the

better, and how they can be involved in achieving that. The other nine questions focus on how people use the place and experience it. These questions may be enough to draw out the information that is required. If not, the next part provides more prompts.

As a society we carried out a somewhat similar paper exercise in January 2007, and the results then obtained may still be valid. We are however proposing to go ahead with a fresh look at our area and we are looking for volunteers prepared to help us decide what is good or not so good about Formby and Little Altcar, not sitting at home ticking boxes, but actually walking around in small groups looking afresh at the place we live in with the hope that we can help our local council make it even better.

If you are interested and would like to participate in an introductory meeting please fill in the reply slip enclosed. We will then make a start to make Formby and Altcar even better than they are already!

What might the Placecheck lead to?

The review of the local authority's development plan, setting out the council's overall planning and design policies.

An urban design framework, master plan or design code, setting out and illustrating planning and design principles to apply to an area, an urban quarter, or a whole village or town.

A development brief, setting out and illustrating planning and design principles to apply to a specific site.

A design guide, setting out and illustrating planning and design principles that relate to a specific topic for an area.

Formby Civic Society Meetings Programme

Please note, all meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Ravenmeols Community Centre at 8pm

13th November	<i>“The Shrimp Line”</i> ; John Quirk.
11th December	<i>‘Frank Hornby and his products’</i> ; Les French,
12 th February	<i>‘Sefton’s vanished Coast Guard Service’</i> ; Mike Roberts,
12 th March	<i>‘The importance of the River Alt in prehistory’</i> ; Ron Cowell,
9 th April	<i>‘The National Trust Asparagus Trail’</i> ; Andrew Brockbank,
14 th May	<i>Annual General Meeting.</i>
June – August	<i>Summer programme - details to be arranged.</i>
10 th September	<i>‘The Bee problem and how we can help’</i> ; Ben Hargreaves,
8 th October	<i>‘Lord Leverhulme’</i> , Julie Kershaw,
12 th November	<i>World War 1 - the Formby Home Front</i> , John Phillips
10 th December	<i>‘Old Formby’</i> ; Reg Yorke.

Additional Meetings may be held from time to time to discuss subject of current interest.

Officers of the Society

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

Committee Members; Mrs Jean Beer, Mr Colin Cooke, Mr H Curtis, Dr. R. Derricott, Mr Andrew Pearce, Mr John Phillips, Anne Blackman, David Irving, Yvonne Irving.

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