

Formby Civic News



The Formby Civic Society Newsletter

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October 2015

Summer Blooms In Formby Village



*A fine display in
Chapel Lane.*

*The flowers at-
tracted much praise
from local people
and visitors alike.*

Formby residents enjoyed a colour spectacular this summer with the fine array of plants and flowers around the village and especially Chapel Lane.

The blooms were provided by the Parish Council and particularly the capable hands of Parish Councillor Pat Gwyther.



The Parish Council has previously provided floral displays for the village but clearly for 2015 they have spent a good deal more money on the project.

Further good news is that by the time this newsletter reaches the doorsteps of FCS members, an autumn display will have been produced to help warm our spirits for the winter.



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We welcome any comments you wish to make regarding the content of 'Formby Civic News' as well as any suggestions you make for what may be included in future editions

Summer Programme 2015

Members of FCS were able to enjoy an interesting range of activities for this year's Summer programme with different events appealing to different people.

Asparagus Trail

The first of these was a guided visit to the National Trust's newly established Asparagus Trail with Andrew Brockbank on 11 June, which was just in time to catch some freshly cut asparagus. Reg Yorke has played a significant role in helping to get this new attraction for both Formby residents and visitors and there is a detailed historical background with original photographs of the people who grew and sold asparagus.

Waterloo Walk

The Waterloo walk on 23rd July was led by James Gentles and was very well received. It was a fine evening and we were led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide. Although Waterloo is so near, our members found it very interesting to hear something about the various well-known people who have lived there and how Waterloo developed. A more detailed description of this particular walk can be found on the page opposite.

Freshfield Dune Heath

Our visit during a fine evening on Thursday 27th of August to the Freshfield Dune Heath was led by Fiona Whitfield of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and was interesting and relaxing. Standing in the middle of flowering heather we could have been 100 miles from Merseyside in this now nationally rare habitat.



Calderstones

We had a good turnout to visit the Calderstones with archaeologist Ron Cowell on the evening of Thursday 3rd September. Ron gave us two hours expert explanation and put the Calderstones into context, explaining their archaeological significance and also relating them to similar sites in this country, Wales and Ireland. Reg Yorke, leading the group, said that this was the first time he had looked closely at the stones since his school days, and was shocked by how 'grimy' they had become since then. It is now difficult to see the numerous prehistoric incised markings but fortunately Ron was able to show diagrams of what is now concealed by grime from traffic exhausts. It seems that the stones will soon be removed again and their cleaning arranged.



Photo courtesy of Don Levin

Social Evening at the Cross House

The final event of the summer programme was held at the Cross House on Thursday 3rd September. A party of just under 30 members enjoyed a light meal in a side room and were then given an opportunity to look at both summer photos, a selection from our archives showing how the Formby Civic Society has enjoyed itself in the past and remembering many people who have given their time and energy to our Society over 50 years. Reg Yorke made a very humorous presentation on what has been achieved, despite a late microphone clash with the pub quiz night! It was so successful and the cost so reasonable that a number of people have suggested setting up another evening in the near future.

A Walk in Waterloo

1815 - 2015

A group of FCS members enjoyed a walk around Waterloo in August as part of our annual summer programme. The idea of the 'Waterloo Walk' was prompted by the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo in which the Duke of Wellington overcame the might of Napoleon's French Army. Our group met at the Royal Hotel and walked along to Beach Lawn, admiring the houses that had been built since the early 19th century and then the series of Gardens that had been created for the public and which lie between the various Terraces and the shore. Our guide for the evening was James Gentles who is closely involved with the work of the Friends of Waterloo Seafront Gardens.



We began at the hotel as it was the first building to be built in this area that was originally known as Crosby Seabank and was very sparsely populated. Sea bathing was becoming increasingly popular in the early years of the 18th century and John Kilshaw decided to build an hotel there to attract visitors on horseback or by horse-drawn bus. The hotel soon took the name of the 'Royal Waterloo Hotel' (only changing to the 'Royal Hotel' in the late 19th century). The area gradually attracted more and more wealthy visitors and the area became 'Waterloo'.

We were shown the group of six houses to the north of the hotel and which had been constructed at the same time, still in excellent condition. We then moved along Marine Terrace until the junction with South Road.

As we walked, the names of some of the streets acted as reminders of some of the stories of the Battle of Waterloo and the narrow victory of the Duke of Wellington over Napoleon Bonaparte's army.

Brunswick Parade was named after the Duke of Brunswick who was killed at Quatre Bras a few days before Waterloo. *Wellington Street* and *Duke Street* refer to the Iron Duke, as

does *Wesley Street* which is a reminder that his family name had been changed to 'Wellesley' from 'Wesley'. *Murat Street* is named after the famous French 'King of Naples' who had offered to join Napoleon but had been refused. *Blucher Street* reminds us that the battle was a 'close run thing' and the outcome had been turned by the intervention of the Prussian Field Marshall Blucher in its latter stages.



There are over one hundred houses in the various terraces between the hotel and the end of Beach Lawn, but no shops. We continued along Marine Crescent (built 1823 with an extra block added in late Victorian times), Adelaide Terrace (built 1830) and Beach Lawn (built in the late 1850s). We took in the two houses in which John Smith, Captain of the 'Titanic' on its fateful voyage, had lived whilst working for the White Star Line in Liverpool; also, the home of J. Bruce Ismay of the White Star Line and who had survived the tragedy.

Lying between the rows of houses and the river are the four Waterloo Seafront Gardens: Beach Lawn, Adelaide Garden, Crescent Garden and Marine Garden. As we returned to the hotel via these lovely gardens, James Gentles used a series of old photographs



to help explain what the area looked like before they were built, what they looked like in their heyday and what has been achieved by the Friends group.

Some Opportunities For Members

Volunteer Feeders for Red Squirrels in Formby

Rachel Miller, the Red Squirrel Field Officer at the National Trust, has been in contact to make Society members aware of some new volunteer posts at the National Trust, Formby.

They are looking to build a team of squirrel feeders to take over the supplementary feeding at the reserve. Ideally, those in the team would be able to commit to 1 day per week and feed the squirrels at about 10am.

They are looking for people who will also be willing to talk to visitors about red squirrels and update them on what's happening with red squirrel conservation. This could be an excellent opportunity to talk to people about red squirrels throughout the stronghold and in the wider landscape and promote the work that we all do.

If you are interested you do need to apply online.

Enter the link below and search 'Formby'

<https://myvolunteering.nationaltrust.org.uk/opportunity-search>

You can also phone for further information from Justin Matthews, who is co-ordinating the team, on **01704 874949**.

If there is anything in Formby Civic News to which you wish to reply or comment, please do so at:

chairman@formbycivicsociety.org.uk

Archaeology Course in Southport

Dr Robert Philpott of Liverpool University has contacted the Society to ask for members to be informed about a new course starting in October in the **Atkinson** Gallery in Southport. It is entitled, 'An Introduction to the Archaeology of Merseyside and Beyond Parts 1 and 2' and comprises:

5 meetings from Wednesday 14 October 2 - 4pm
5 meetings from Wednesday 17 February 2 - 4pm

The North West of England has a rich and fascinating history. Archaeological discoveries over the past three decades have changed our understanding of the past, casting new light on the people of the region, their lives and occupations, and the material possessions they used in everyday life and to display their status and identity. The course will take an overview through time from the Iron Age to the 18th century of the archaeology of the North West region of England. Based on Merseyside and its neighbouring counties, we will look at case studies of excavations and other research to gain new insights into life in the past. Some familiar modern themes - trade, industry, identity, the north-south divide and immigration - may turn out to have surprisingly ancient roots.

The course is run by Continuing Education at University of Liverpool .

If you wish to join the course or want to know more, either contact the university on **0151 794 6900** or online at

<http://payments.liv.ac.uk/browse/product.asp?compid=1&modid=2&catid=87>

The course number is CRN 19736/Algy9118

The course fees payable to the university are:

Full Fee: £59 | Reduced: £46 | Concession: £30

Pedestrian rail crossing improvements at Fisherman's Path in Formby - David Skelton

In the May 2015 edition of the Newsletter, in the article about Railway Crossings in Formby, I described how there had been conversations with Network Rail over the possible closure of Fisherman's Path to the residents of Golf Cottage, cyclists and less-fit rambles. Network Rail had sought planning permission for a 'stepped bridge' to replace the crossing gates; however, when it became clear that this idea would be rejected, the application was withdrawn.

Network Rail did have a real issue here following a number of terribly sad incidents over the past few years. Yet, as was discussed in the spring edition, the solution would have to meet the needs of a wide community as well as provide safety for people crossing the railway line at that point. Eventually, Network Rail has found a solution to improve safety at Fisherman's Path. Along the rail track fencing, between Freshfield station and the crossing gates, posters now warn people that they are approaching a rail crossing and should keep dogs on a lead. It is such a shame that these notices were not in place before.



Also, at the crossing, the gates have been improved. The originals were metal seven-bar, wide single span, farm-type gates, one on either side of the crossing. The gaps between the bars of those gates presented no barrier to small or medium sized dogs.

They are now safer and easier for walkers and cyclists to use. Now there are shorter span vehicle gates and pedestrian gates, side by side, guarding the crossing.



Both sets of gates have wire mesh fitted to prevent small animals getting through the bars of the gates. Also the pedestrian gates are hung in such a way that they are self closing and self latching, so users cannot leave them open. They are also much lighter to operate. However, the gate latch on the pedestrian gate is difficult for a wheelchair user as from one direction as he/she has to reach through the top bars of the gate. To operate the tumbler latch. (see close up). This gate could be improved with an easy open mechanism, (see illustrations in next column).



Here the latching mechanism is in two parts.

The vehicle gates, now also lighter, will only be opened infrequently and with a shorter span will not sag like the old ones. This crossing is now the safest it has ever been. However, the crossing could be made safer still by installing warning lights, and a siren to increase the period of warning that a train is approaching.

Hoggs Hill Lane Crossing

Unfortunately, despite Network Rail's protestations that their primary concern is for the safety of people crossing the railway, the gates at Hoggs Hill Lane remain unfit for purpose. Now that the Orchard Meadow estate is being built on the old power-station site, and the Park Road estate has been connected to Hoggs Hill Lane via Wheatstone Road, many more people have access to, and reason to, use this railway crossing. There are no notices on Hoggs Hill lane to warn that you are approaching a railway crossing,

The gates themselves have spring loaded draw-bolt fastenings, which are difficult to draw to latch or unlatch the gate. The gates were spring loaded to close automatically but on one gate the spring has broken off, and on the other it is very weak, so the gates are not properly secured by most users. Gaps under the gates provide unimpeded passage for small dogs.

Installing gates at Hoggs Hill lane of at least similar quality to the pedestrian gates installed at Fisherman's Path should be an urgent priority for Network Rail.



The Home Front in Formby

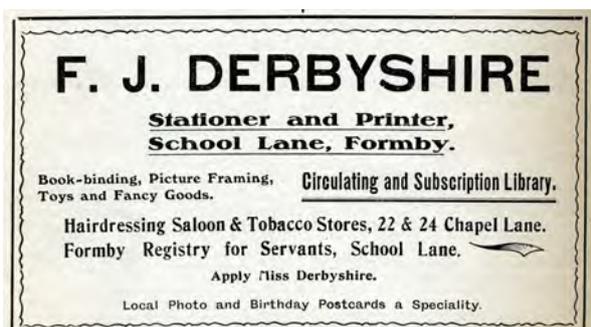
1914 - 918

A report on Formby Civic Society Project

John Phillips and Tony Pawson

One of the unexpected outcomes of searching through old copies of the 'Formby Times' to build up a picture of the Formby Home Front is that we come across a number of advertisements from over a century ago. This helps to give us some idea of daily life at the time. Although it was so long ago, it is a style of village shopping that many of us can remember from the mid-20th century. However, it is easy to spot aspects of shopping that appear to be from a different age to even the mid-20th century.

When we scan over these old adverts from shops that would have been well-known to locals in the war years, we can see names that remained well-known throughout much of the century and the descendants of whom may well still live in the village. A good example can be seen in the column opposite. 'Derbyshires' is a name that has been in Formby for a long time. Robert Derbyshire and his wife Zoea moved their family from Liverpool to Formby some time before 1891, working first as a bookkeeper in Rosemary Lane and later moving to Elbow Lane (probably to Elm Lodge, next door to Marion Christophers and the school at Whoof House). There he opened a tobacconist shop. Following his death in 1905, his family moved to a house on School Lane where his son Frederick James opened a stationery shop and his younger sister Elsie ran a 'Registry Office for Servants'. By 1914 they had moved into a second shop, this time in 22/24 Chapel Lane.



These adverts illustrate that for many people in 1915 the reading of books derived from a local 'Circulating and Subscription Library' and a 'Magazine Library'. It also shows how local shops were ready to diversify their products to meet a wide range of local needs: picture-framing, toys, hairdressing, postcards, hairnets and bookbinding as well as the general stationery supplies.

F. J. DERBYSHIRE,
STATIONER & PRINTER,
SCHOOL LANE, FORMBY.

LOCAL PHOTO & BIRTHDAY POST-CARDS A SPECIALITY.
HAIR NETS, FRAMES, PADS, COMBS, SLIDES, &c.
BOOKBINDING & PICTURE FRAMING.
CIRCULATING AND SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARY.

LATEST BOOKS:

"The Wedding Day," C. N. and A. M. Williamson.
"A Knight on Wheels," Ian Hay.
"The House Round the Corner," Louis Tracy.
"The White Vampire," A. M. Judd.
"Jetsam," Victor Bridges.
"Monsieur De Rochefort," H. De Vere Stacpoole.
"Old Andy," Dorothea Conyers.
"Patience Tabernacle," Sophie Cole.
"The Cap of Youth," Madame Albanesi.
"A Wife Out of Egypt," Norma Lorimer.
"Curing Christopher," Mrs. Horace Tremlett.
"Bat Wing Bowles," Dane Coolidge.
"B," Julian Hickley.
"The Price of Love," Arnold Bennett.
"What Will People Say," Robert Hughes.
"World's End," Amelie Rives.
"The Light of Western Stars," Zene Grey.
"The Swindler," E. M. Dell.
"John Barleycorn," Jack London.
"Weeds," Olave M. Potter and Douglas Sladen.
"Captivating Mary Carstairs," H. S. Harrison.
"Freedom," Alice and Claude Askew.
"The Residency," Henry Bruce.
"Fallen Among Thieves," Arthur Applin.
"The New Road," Neil Munro.
"Vandover and the Brute," Frank Norris.
"The House of Mammon," Fred M. White.
"Grizel Married," Mrs. George De Horne Vaizey.
"The Greater Law," Victoria Cross.
"Beasts and Super Beasts," H. H. Munro.
"Simon Heriot," Patricia Wentworth.
And Many Others.

Subscription:

	12 Mths	6 Mths	3 Mths	1 Mth.
1 Vol.	12/6	8/-	6/-	2/6
2 Vol.	21/-	12/-	8/-	4/-

MAGAZINE LIBRARY.
Subscription: 5/- per Annum.
Receiving Office for Royal Dye Works,
Litherland.
REGISTRY OFFICE FOR SERVANTS.
Apply MISS E. DERBYSHIRE.

Indeed, 1915 was a special year for Frederick Derbyshire as he married a dressmaker from Liverpool, Sarah Brownrigg, in April of that year.

The cuttings shown on pages 6 and 7 are taken from editions of the 'Formby Times' in 1915.

There are many more examples of contemporary advertisements to be found and it is noticeable that they change and develop over time. The quality of the newspaper adverts improved gradually throughout the war.

THOMAS REYNOLDS,
STATIONER, BOOKSELLER, PRINTER, AND NEWSAGENT.
20, CHAPEL-LANE, FORMBY.
 A Large Variety of NOTE-PAPER and ENVELOPES,
 ACCOUNT BOOKS, PRAYER BOOKS AND HYMN BOOKS,
 EXERCISE BOOKS, BOOKS FOR OLD AND YOUNG.
PURSES, POCKET BOOKS, TOYS, FANCY GOODS, &c. &c.
CIRCULATING LIBRARY.
 A CHANGE OF BOOKS EACH MONTH. ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW.
 LIVERPOOL DAILY PAPERS DELIVERED on the ARRIVAL of the FIRST TRAIN

There was another newsagent/stationer/bookseller in 20 Chapel Lane, Thomas Reynolds. He also ran a 'circulating library'.

Below is an advertisement for 'Birtwistle's Stores, a famous old grocery store that was on the site of a modern-day charity shop next door to Boots.



Thomas Birtwistle was the son of a Blackburn grocer and he had run his business on Chapel Lane since at least 1901. He was 52 in 1915, by which year he had opened a second store in Church Road.

TO SECURE BEST VALUE
 -- IN --
GROCERIES, PROVISIONS & BREAD
 EVERY BIRTWISTLE'S STORES,
 CHAPEL LANE - - - PHONE 24
 CHURCH ROAD - - - " 7"
 QUALITY: FRESHNESS: SATISFACTION:
 District Agents: L.A.E.G.O., the Great EGG PRODUCER.
 - - - BIRTWISTLE'S special POULTRY FOODS

One advert that appeared every week and was changed every week was that for the Picturedrome Cinema in Three Tuns Lane. There were nightly performances with a matinee on Saturday. It supported the war effort whenever it could and must have welcomed many of the troops billeted in Formby or coming over from Altcar Camp.

FORMBY
PICTUREDROME.
 Nightly at 8. Saturday Matinee, 3 p.m.
 Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday:--
SILVER BLAZE
 (No. 2 of the Sherlock Holmes Series).
 Thursday, Friday, and Saturday:--
BARNABY RUDGE
 (The Greatest Dickens Film). *
THE WELLS-BLAKE PRIZE FIGHT.
 Saturday, Continuous Performance, 7 to 11.
 Admission: 3d., 6d., 1/-.

The extract below from Seeds 1914 Directory identifies where it was situated.

THREE TUNS LANE.
 [DUKE STREET]
 3 O'Keil Ed. Jas. baker and confr.
 5 Mercer Mrs. Eliz. Ann, stationer
 6 Mercer Mrs. Eliz. A., statnr & tobacco
 7 Alderson James, butcher
 9 Sheldrake George
 [CROFTON ROAD]
 11 Clements Walter J.
 13 Tickle Mrs. A.
 13a Formby Catholic Club; Edward Massam
 steward; tel. 173
FORMBY PICTUREDROME; John Carr,
 lessee and proprietor; tel. 173
 15 Coultate Frederick, master mariner
 17 Beahan J. & Sons, decorators; tel. 23y
 Ackers W., boot and shoe maker
 [CHAPEL LANE]

There will be a talk by John Phillips on 'The Home Front in Formby in the first year of WWI' at the Ravenmeols Community Centre on Thursday 12th November 2015

The talk will be based on the research carried out with Tony Pawson and will make use of a range of cuttings from the Formby Times.

John will look at how the war affected Formby with stories such as:

Eight members of the Freshfield Band are away on war duty, including the solo cornet, solo trombone, and solo euphonium. Thus do the drums of war abroad spoil the "harmony" at home. But, needless to say, the band are proud of their "military" record.

Reminiscences of Formby

The Civic Society receives letters and emails from people in many different parts of the world requesting information about the Formby they knew or people they remember from the past. They also contact Tony Bonney to purchase photos from the FCS archive or, in some cases, to provide the Archive with new material. In this article we can share some of the more recent involvements and ask members generally if they have any knowledge or recollection they can share with us.

Ron Iphophen, now retired and living in France, sent in this letter:

"In my retirement in France I have been indulging myself in writing a memoir of my experiences of being in a group in Liverpool in the 1960s. Not a particularly famous group - we were called The Collectors. But we did play at Formby AFC Social Club a couple of times. (The last time was Friday 19th April 1968.) I remember it was a very lively and friendly venue.

I read that, sadly, the football club has had to disband after a long history. Now I'm not expecting anyone to have remembered our performances - but I would be interested if anyone had any recollections of the Social Club or any archive material that could enliven my personal memoir. I'd be pleased to hear from anyone who can fill in some memories."

If you have any memories of the Formby AFC Social Club, please get in touch and they will be passed on to Ron.

Dr. Tony Fort, who lives in Burnley, was looking through our Flickr archive recently when he came across some old photographs of Bishop Court Prep. School in Wrigleys Lane, Formby. He had attended that school as a boy between 1973 - 1977 and was able to provide us with interesting information about it. Also within the FCS archive we have a scrap-book compiled by a Miss B. Doherty on the Bishops Court Scout Group 1917-1955, containing its history and some old photographs.

We have suggested to Tony Fort that he might write something for our spring edition about not only life at that school but also the impressions of the pupils - many of whom were boarders whose parents worked abroad—about Formby at that time.

Again, if anyone reading this has knowledge about either the school or the scout troop, please contact us.



BISHOP'S COURT
FRESHFIELD, LANCs. Telephone: FORMBY 4537
PREPARATORY SCHOOL FOR BOYS
Founded in 1892
Under the Patronage of His Grace The Archbishop of Liverpool
Boarders and Day Boys Ages 7 to 14
The School is recognised as affiliated by the Ministry of Education and is a member of the Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools.

The School stands in beautiful grounds and is most healthily situated. Boys are admitted from the age of 7 and prepared for the Catholic Public Schools. The school has an excellent record of academic success. Incentives aimed for Riding and Carpentry and Music. Extensive playing fields. Cricket, Rugby Football, Tennis and Swimming are conducted in season to boys of all ages. Private Chapel in the School. Chaplains: The Right Revd. Monsignor J. Canon Bennett. The health and general welfare of the boys receive special care and attention. There is a resident nurse (R.N.S.) and a trained housekeeper who are under the supervision of the Headmaster's wife.

Fairmore Scholarship Succession to Public Schools every year since 1925.
For particulars, apply to the Headmaster: H. G. Burrows, M.A. (Oxon.)

If you have any knowledge or recollections you wish to share, please contact us at:

chairman@formbycivicsociety.org.uk

Do you remember Needhams ?

In the previous newsletter there was an article on Laxton Cottage in Elbow Lane. It had recently been demolished to enable three new houses to be built.

Our archives contained a memoir by Elizabeth Rodway who had grown up living there. She described how there was no electricity in the house and the batteries for the wireless had to be taken to 'Needhams' in the School Lane for re-charging. She said, "They were so large that I can remember pushing them along in my sister's pushchair".

A few members have told us they certainly did remember Needhams and the shop is described in Joan Rimmer's book, 'My Formby'. We wondered if we could find a current Formby resident who might have a good memory of the business, and we found that person in Terry Prescott of Elbow Lane. Terry was an electrician and actually worked for the Needham brothers in the 1960s. He described Ron Needham as being 6 foot tall and fairly thin: he later moved to New Zealand. Alan Needham lived in Rosemary Lane and was very keen on model railways, often holding exhibitions. The business had been started by their father and was more than just an electrical store. The Needhams provided electrical services for houses new and old and most of Terry's work was in houses undertaking installations, repairs and ensuring everything was ship-shape electrically. They also trained up apprentices.

The battery that Elizabeth described was in fact an 'accumulator' and they were charged just as she describes.

The Needhams' store may have been the first electrical shop in Formby, but there was another electrical and television shop called Talbots in Chapel Lane.

History Group Report

Autumn 2015 Reg Yorke

Accessions

Our Ceramic Cottages collection has been cared for by Peter Lucas for some time now, and we are very grateful for all that he has done to support us with this. However, changing commitments mean that it now needs to be housed elsewhere. The committee discussed this matter in September and agreed to allow the collection to be transferred to the care of the Atkinson Gallery in Southport. No final decision can be taken, however, without member approval at the next AGM. Therefore, we will follow the same procedure as for the Sibley collection, for which we had no appropriate storage nor any means of protecting or means of renovating her wonderful set of sketches. The decision, then, will have to be ratified by members in May.



*Dean's Cottage,
Gore's Lane*

Now that the last glass case used to display our local history collection has sadly been removed from Formby Public Library, I suggest that we should review the future storage of the rest of the 'accessions' currently in the care of the society. These have been carefully catalogued by Peter Lucas and include all sorts of objects of historical or antiquarian interest, including for instance a Victorian Magic Lantern.

Ravenmeols' Heritage Trails

The two main Heritage Trails were opened to the public on Heritage Open Day, Sunday 13th September when we had about 35 visitors. A leaflet was prepared and the text for this is now to be used for a professionally designed two sided triple-folded illustrated leaflet currently being prepared. This is still in design stage as there are a few more additions / changes to be made.



I was grateful for the assistance of members particularly Phil Smith and Margaret Cooke.

Interpretation boards are just starting to be designed and 'way-marker' posts and other requirements for the trail are being fabricated in the Sefton Coast and Countryside Workshop in Ainsdale and will be installed when the interpretation boards arrive.



We are looking at completing by mid-December at the latest so perhaps we can plan to officially open the trails sometime in the New Year. As we have some money left in the budget, a more substantial publication is also being considered.

A third possible future trail is being considered, proceeding further south onto the Cabin Hill National Nature Reserve but the development of this will be left for the time being.

Ravenmeols research

The one-time existence of a historical watermill at the mouth of the Alt on the Ravenmeols bank and connected with Stanlaw Abbey, Wirral, has been recognised for some time but little has been known about it and it does not appear in national lists. There are, however, details contained in historical archives, which with the transcription help of Dylis Firm I am looking into with great interest. There was obviously a connection with the former Grange situated on what is now Altcar Rifle Range. The existence of this watermill (possibly a tide mill), would help to explain the existence of the sandstone revetment recently exposed on the bank of the Alt near to the Grange. I hope to be able to give a short report on this in my talk to the society on Thursday 10th December at Ravenmeols Community Centre in Park Road.

Wildlife Notes

Dr. Phil Smith

April - September

April

From April to the end of June, our region was blighted by drought conditions and cold winds, following a pattern that seems well-established at this time of year. Indeed, an analysis of spring rainfall data from the Ainsdale National Nature Reserve weather station shows a statistically significant decline in precipitation since 2000. While most people may not notice, these dry springs are having a serious impact on our wildlife, most notably the iconic **Natterjack Toad** which always spawns in shallow water and is particularly susceptible to drought. Thus, by mid-June it was clear that the toad had experienced an almost complete breeding failure. I found toadlets in one excavated scrape at Ainsdale but that seems to have been the only successful site this year. This scrape attracted lots of calling males in April, enabling me to photograph them at night with flash. I found that getting close to the noisiest amphibians in Europe going full blast is painful to the ears!



Natterjack Male calling

May / June

May and early June visits to the Lancashire Wildlife Trust's Haskayne Cutting Nature Reserve, a few miles inland, were rewarded with a male **Brimstone**, a butterfly that seems to be increasing locally, as well as the more usual **Orange Tips**. Also doing well here are marsh-orchids. Patricia Lockwood and I counted nearly 900 deep-purple flower-spikes of mostly **Northern Marsh-orchids**, where annual late-summer mowing maintains suitable habitat. **Southern** and **Early Marsh-orchids** were also there, together with a few **Bee Orchids**. Indeed, it seems to have been an outstanding year for the latter, my friends and I finding an astonishing total of 1390 **Bee Orchid** spikes in a dune area measuring about 200 x

30m north of Shore Road, Ainsdale.

An early summer survey counted one of our most important wildflowers, the **Isle of Man Cabbage**, at all of its localities between Crosby and Southport. Patricia Lockwood and I found 2317 plants, an encouraging 21% increase on numbers recorded in 2012 and 2013. With its striking yellow flowers, this plant is endemic to Britain, being restricted to a few places on sandy western coasts from south-west Scotland to South Wales.

We also revisited the **Baltic Rush** in its only English locality at Birkdale, repeating a study last done in 2003/04. Although two large populations were damaged by off-road vehicles in the winter of 2013/14, the total area of rush patches has increased nearly three-fold since the previous survey.



Northern Marsh-orchid

One of many guided walks organised during the summer, it was a particular pleasure to welcome 18 members of the Nantes Botanical Society from France. Being well aware of the international reputation of the Sefton Coast, they were delighted to see such northern and western specialities as **Vari-gated Horsetail**, **Slender Spike-rush** and **Baltic Rush** amongst an Ainsdale dunescape dominated by spectacular drifts of golden **Kidney Vetch**.

July

July was mainly notable for unprecedented insect records, perhaps linked to a brief heat-wave early on. On 3rd, Peter Kinsella photographed a male **Keeled Skimmer** at a scrape in the Birkdale dunes. This was only the second sighting in Lancashire & North Merseyside of this mainly peatland dragonfly. A week later, an even more extraordinary find was of a female **Southern Migrant Hawker**, a dragonfly that has only recent colonised south-east England.



Southern Hawker

On the same day, John Dempsey reported a **Banded Demoiselle** in his greenhouse at Ainsdale. There were several extralimital records of this spectacular insect this summer, including one at Mere Sands Wood on my annual dragonfly walk. Then, in mid-July, I spotted a small green creature on Patricia Lockwood's car in Freshfield. Somewhat incredulous, I identified it as an immature male **Oak Bush-cricket**, only the second record for Merseyside. Surely this trend could not continue; but it did! On 23rd, Trevor Davenport brought me a bush-cricket from his Freshfield garden; I expected another **Oak Bush-cricket** but it turned out to be a female **Speckled Bush-cricket**, a mainly southern species not previously recorded in our region. As it is wingless, the question arises how did it get here? Amazingly, a few days later Trevor found six more on his Dahlias!



Speckled Bush-cricket, Freshfield

Although the relatively cool late summer period was not kind to insects generally, **Gatekeeper** and **Small Skipper** butterflies appeared in good numbers, while a group of scrapes in the Birkdale frontal dunes supported an unprecedented 16 species of dragonflies and damselflies, a tribute to work carried out by the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) to restore this site in 2011. Apart from the **Keeled Skimmer** already mentioned, a particular highlight was a magnificent male **Common Hawker** that spent over a week in August patrolling one of the ponds, frequently clashing with the resident **Emperor**. The latter, usually the dominant species, became somewhat worse for wear with large chunks missing from his wings. Breeding on more acidic waters well inland, **Common Hawk**ers are rare on the coast; I have seen no more than a handful in over 40 years. This one was the star performer for a well-attended dragonfly guided walk or-

ganised by LPS. We also found a newly emerged **Migrant Hawker**, while I was able to net both **Common** and **Ruddy Darter** to compare identification features in the hand.



Common Hawker

August

Blessed with sunny weather, the 50th anniversary bash for Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve on 8th August attracted large numbers of enthusiastic local people to a range of events from Landrover safaris to sheep herding. It was good to see plenty of children there, a **Sand Lizard** and **Natterjack Toad** being especially popular exhibits. My wildflower walk, via Pinfold Pond, enabled me to show the group a new plant for the reserve discovered a few days before. This is the rather distinctive, if esoteric, hybrid between the **Creeping** and **Marsh Thistle** which rejoices in the name *Cirsium × celakovskianum*. We were also distracted by three large and brightly coloured dragonflies - **Emperor**, **Brown Hawker** and **Southern Hawker** - cruising around the pond.

Late summer attractions in the dunes included an unusually large number of **Field Gentians** in the big slack south of the Ainsdale Discovery Centre. The Sefton Coast is one of the British hot-spots for this increasingly rare plant. The same can be said for **Grass-of-Parnassus**, a mainly northern species described as "Vulnerable" in the Red List for England but still doing well on the Sefton Coast. In August, particularly large colonies could be seen at the Devil's Hole blow-out, Ravenmeols, and on the southern section of Birkdale Green Beach. Flowering well into the autumn, this spectacular plant, much loved by the Victorians, is still a great favourite today.



Grass-of-Parnassus

September

Although measurable rain fell on ten days during the month, quantities were very small and temperatures above average. September therefore ended up as another desperately dry month, the duneland ground water-table being the



Spiked Shieldbug

lowest recorded since the drought of the mid-1990s. However, the often sunny weather brought out lots of late-summer insects, including one of my favourite groups, the **Shieldbugs**. Sometimes called “stinkbugs” because of their smelly defensive secretions, these often brightly coloured and distinctively shaped true-bugs are mostly seen in the autumn. Without trying too hard, I managed to find eight of the ten species I have so far recorded on the Sefton Coast. Freshfield Dune Heath Nature Reserve proved a particularly good hunting ground with six different species, **Birch, Bronze, Gorse, Hairy, Parent** and **Spiked**, the first being perhaps the most attractive. I was particularly pleased to find two specimens of the **Spiked Shieldbug**, an active predatory bug that feeds on caterpillars. I had only seen this once before over thirty years ago. The heath also produced 11 kinds of butterfly, including a fresh **Painted Lady**, and three dragonflies, one being a stunning **Southern Hawker**. Another perched for photos at Birkdale on 28th, a relatively late date for this dragonfly. **Northern Dune Tiger Beetles** were also prevalent in suitably open sandy habitat for most of the month, with record numbers of 55 at Devil’s Hole, Ravenmeols, on 5th and 30 at the Newest Green Beach, Ainsdale, on 16th.

Although many dune wildflowers are past their best in September, there were still plenty to see. Patricia Lockwood joined me on 21st for a visit to Crosby Marine Park, where **Isle of Man Cabbage** was still flowering and the very rare **Dune Wormwood**, first discovered here in 2004, was looking in great shape. The original plant is now 5m in diameter and has three off-

spring nearby. The park always produces garden escapes and we recorded a great number, including several new to the inventory of Vascular Plants for the Sefton Coast. On the way back, Patricia spotted a spectacular 2m-high **Mullein** in a field near Hightown. Its identity puzzled us and also two keen botanist friends from Bradford who came over a few days later. They were also intrigued by the Crosby exotics and showed me the rare **Taschereau’s Orache** on the strand-line at Marshside, there being only one previous South Lancashire record.

Most of our summer surveys were winding down but Patricia and I continued to monitor the wonderful flora of the Devil’s Hole. We have identified 147 flowering plants here since detailed recording began in 2004. Of particular interest to me is the abundance of **willows** colonising the slacks in the floor of the blow-out. So far, no less than ten different ones have been recognised, including the nationally rare hybrid **Salix x friesi-ana**. We labelled 116 young bushes so that we can follow their progress and growth rate. A guided Ravenmeols Trails walk on 13th organised by Formby Civic Society and Sefton Coast & Countryside enabled us to show about 30 local people this spectacular blow-out, perhaps the largest of its kind in Britain. It originated in the early 1940s, possibly from a wartime bomb explosion and has grown to cover over 3.5ha. We were also able to demonstrate how the duneland in this area has been modified by other human activities, especially sand-extraction, asparagus growing and conifer planting. The attempt to develop “Formby-on-Sea” in the late 19th century, followed by golf course proposals in the 1970s might have resulted in a very different landscape but, fortuitously, both schemes failed and the Ravenmeols duneland was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1985, further land being added in 1994.



Mullein

There wasn’t much time for bird-watching during the month but I was entertained by a flock of 22 **House Sparrows** in my garden. Autumn passage was reflected in 250 **Sandwich Terns** on Ainsdale Beach on 5th, soon to leave for Africa, while the familiar calls of **Pink-footed Geese** heralded their arrival, as usual, from Iceland and Greenland. About 100 roosted on the sea off the Alt Estuary on 19th, while at least 1000 were feeding on the saltmarsh at Marshside on 27th.

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Dr Phil Smith is a retired university lecturer in Biology who has lived most of his life in this area. He has wide natural history interests and is particularly involved with the flora and fauna of sand-dunes and salt-marshes. In 2002, he was awarded an MBE for services to nature conservation.

Phil is a keen photographer and has provided all the images used in this feature. He is a very valued and supportive member of FCS.

Village Formby

One of the treasures of living in Formby is that we can say with justification is that we still have a 'village atmosphere'. Visitors to Formby remark upon it and regret that such a thing has been lost from the area in which they live. Local people in Formby recognise this and, for example, there is a special pleasure in walking down Chapel Lane on a sunny Saturday morning and a cold but busy Christmas Eve.

There are various stalls and fetes and markets open at different times of the week and year which help to strengthen that feeling of 'Village Formby'. In this issue of 'Formby Civic News' we can visit the Formby Vintage and Craft Fair held on the first Saturday of each month at Holy Trinity Church Hall. It aims to bring an extra and different experience to Formby each month, offering products that may not be available locally. There may be surprise awaiting you.



The Village Fair comprises stalls run by craftsmen and women who are the best at what they do, from the Harris Tweed stall to hand-turned pens made from 5000 year-old bog woods. Also, there are professional artists, designers and tailors producing lovely handmade clothes. There are food-related products on sale: jams and preserves, cakes and pastries. High quality local photographs and artwork of different types and forms provide options for home decoration, presents as well as cards and calendars; there are cushions and fabrics, bags and carriers of different



and often colourful designs, paintings, drawings and prints and photographs. If you like jewellery there is a wide selection of hand-made designs available.



Walking through the Hall you can find a wide range of items, new and old, that may just take your eye. One of the values of local markets is the impetus it gives for local people to gain ideas for developing their own skills in traditional crafts and using the own artistic or practical talents into the creation of products.

The market was originally begun in the industrial estate, but now in the Holy Trinity Parish Hall it has found a site that makes it a part of 'Village Formby'. It is run currently by Julie-Ann Burt who says she wanted to provide a service to Formby people that displayed locally-produced goods and produce as well as vintage items. For her the key is that what can be found in the Hall should be a good range and crafts and of a high quality; she wants to bring together each month a group



of people who are very talented, imaginative and serious about what they do and what they can offer Formby people. She said, "Over the last three and a half years, I have worked hard to source the various stalls and ensure that each month we offer not only excellent quality but a diverse range of stalls and a friendly, welcoming atmosphere."

Do you have any suggestions about examples of local markets, stalls or other facilities that help retain and enhance our village atmosphere in Formby? Why not get in touch and share your ideas for the spring edition of the newsletter?

A Letter from The Chairman

After a lovely September, October has brought with it some of the cold and wet weather we had almost forgotten. The wonderful display of flowers in the village in the summer remains vivid in the memory as we move into our autumn and winter programme of events and a time when we will be asking how Formby Civic Society should move forward in the future.

The first priority is to meet the needs and interests of all our current members, many of whom have been stalwart supporters of the Society for many years. We have our existing programmes of talks, newsletters and summer activities. They, of course, will continue. What would be valuable, however, is to know what you think about them. Do you have any suggestions over the timing of events? Are there any visits that you think would be enjoyable or educational for us? Would you welcome any extra talks, held in the afternoon? We had a really enjoyable and well-attended social evening in the Cross House in early September and there have been suggestions that there might be another informal social event in the coming months. Please feel free to get in touch with me or any other committee member to share your ideas.

Our second priority is to extend our membership. We do take in new members each year – welcome if you are a 2015 newcomer! However, if we are to continue to serve the needs of our community here in Formby we should widen our member base and attract more people of different ages and interests. Lifestyles change so rapidly in the 21st century that we cannot afford to ignore change. Wherever these new members come from, it is the work of everyone to encourage more people to join and for some of those new members to take on active and organisational roles in the future. At the September social evening, Reg Yorke took us on a light-hearted stroll through the Society's history and reminded us of what had been achieved before now. Continuing to build is always a challenge but that is what we face in order to support the developing needs of the community.

Only eighteen months ago I was a member of FCS who attended the odd meeting and read the newsletters with great pleasure and interest. I never thought once about getting in touch with the committee to express my thoughts, yet now I find myself in a position where I can listen to your thoughts and have the opportunity to do

something about them. Most of you have been members much longer than I have. I accepted this responsibility because I believe that FCS serves a valuable purpose in Formby and that we can take this further by working together. What we really need at the moment and the coming year are more members who would be happy to help out in the running of the Society. By that, I do not mean taking on big jobs – though there are some big jobs that we do need help in filling – but by getting in touch and saying you would be prepared to help out even in small ways. I include some of the 'bigger' jobs we wish to encourage someone to take on, but I make a commitment to you that I will never 'twist your arm' or try to talk anyone into joining in. I believe that these jobs would be a really interesting challenge if you have a little spare time, and there is a good team of people in the current committee who are always ready to help out. I can vouch for that from personal experience. Do think about it. I know it would not suit many members, but it just might suit a few. Also, you could look at it as a one-year 'taster' at most and then walk away if it was not to your taste.

Secretary

Dr. Yorke informed us a number of months ago that he was unable to continue in this role in the New Year. We are looking for someone who will field emails to the appropriate person in the Society and liaise with other Civic Societies and community groups. It is a role that would need regular checking of email and communicating with other FCS members on upcoming issues. It would not involve any postal responsibilities to membership and attendance at the monthly committee meetings would be welcome but optional. Essentially, though, it would be an opportunity for someone to get involved in the life of the Society and through that the life of our Formby community. I believe it would be both interesting and rewarding and I would be happy to discuss this with you personally if you would like to know more.

Meetings Secretary

Again, this has been a responsibility taken on by Reg Yorke in previous years. It is a role that could be split into the work of three people!

We have:

- winter and summer programmes of talks held in the evening on a monthly basis
- a summer programme of about six events for our members
- a possible set of winter and spring afternoon open talks (i.e. for members and non-members) that would provide an additional activity for current members as well as an opportunity to invite non-members to see the work that we do and consider joining FCS themselves.

Again, the existing committee members will be very happy to offer help and advice. A Meetings Secretary would play a leading role in deciding the content of each session, contacting visiting speakers and helping to set up the venue prior to the event. Again, please talk to me if you want to know more. No arms will be twisted but your interest will be very welcome.

Publicity Secretary

Currently I keep an eye on this area, but it would be good to have some fresh ideas about how to 'publicise' the work of the Society within the community.

Committee member

If you really do not want to take on any specific role but would be interested in learning more about the work of FCS and would welcome the chance to give your opinions on a monthly basis, you could consider suggesting your involvement on the committee.

Best wishes to all members and any prospective members who may be reading this 'online'.



John

Storage Problems for Society

Stock and Artefacts

Over the years in which FCS has been in existence we have gradually acquired a valuable range of items that are a treasure to us and a valuable record of much of the history of our community. Previously we have been able to store these items in a number of places that rendered them safe. However, with the passing of time and the increasing need for space in Formby, our options for storage space are decreasing.

This has been exacerbated in the past 12 months with three issues.

1. The wonderful collection left to the Society by Muriel Sibley needed a much improved storage facility as well as the professional care in terms of maintenance and renovation that we were unable to provide. There is no public gallery in Formby for that purpose and we could no longer run the risk of allowing her exceptional record of Formby to be allowed to run the risk of damage or deterioration. In the spring the AGM agreed to asking the Atkinson Gallery in Southport to take on storage and upkeep responsibility for the collection together with the opportunity to put it on display.
2. A similar issue has occurred with the ceramic Formby cottages we possess. They have for a long time been looked after by a member who is no longer able to do so. We have to find a home for them that is safe and secure and this may well turn out to be the Atkinson Gallery again.
3. FCS had two display cases in Formby Library but with the recent refurbishment they have now also been lost to us.

The reason for making you aware of this situation is so that you understand the decisions that have been made about Society assets such as these and that any future decisions will be based on need and the best interests of the Society and the community.

Again, the committee would welcome your input on this issue and we will look into any suggestions you can make for future storage.

Formby Civic Society serves the local community but its members are its life blood. Throughout this edition of 'Formby Civic News' you will have seen requests for you as members to play as full a part as you wish in giving the committee feedback, opinions and information.

Your input would not only be welcome. It would help enormously in looking at the future development of our Society.

Ainsdale National Nature Reserve's 50th Anniversary

Report by Reg Yorke

It is curious that whilst the main entrance gate to the Ainsdale National Nature Reserve is in Ainsdale most of its terrain is within the Formby boundary! We can be pleased that the reserve has succeeded so well in guarding our coastal wildlife and habitats over a fifty year period.

Historically, both Ainsdale and Freshfield dunes were included in the first ever National Reserves List, much earlier than that; the 1915 'survey of areas worthy of protection', carried out by the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves. Ainsdale in particular appeared in a number of national surveys from that time on. It was one of the top 22 sites listed by the Nature Reserves Investigation Committee in 1944. Locally its importance was declared in the post-war 'Merseyside Plan', of 1944,(HMSO).



This was largely on account of its importance as a wet dune habitat providing one of the few remaining stronghold of the sand lizard whilst the marshy slacks behind the dunes are the spawning places of the uncommon Natterjack Toad. Since then an extensive literature has been written on the value and uniqueness of our dune system, including, Greswell 1953, Gordon and Savidge 1962 and most recently Atkinson, Houston and colleagues 1991. In these accounts the pre-eminent importance of the Ainsdale site has always been seen to be the wet slack flora and fauna and the physical and ecological dynamics of the dune system.

Nevertheless a former land-owner planted thousands of Corsican Pines from about 1906. According to Ashton this was for mixed motives, but partly for the future financial return. Greswell records that a considerable amount of felling occurred in 1938-1944, (see map). Other portions of woodland were destroyed by fire about 1937. Unfortunately, during the last 30 years the introduced pines have been found to be damaging to the original natural habitat including the indigenous species which are now found naturally in very few other situations. For a very full discussion of the consequences of afforestation on the dune-system and the benefits of felling, see *Sand-dunes of the Sefton Coast*.

Ownership of the site

Originally owned by the Blundell family from medieval times, some or all of the site was sold following the death of Charles Weld-Blundell in the late 1950's and for a time was apparently in the ownership of the Pilkington family. It was then put up for sale and the two options were:

- Disposal to the Forestry Commission or
- Disposal to the Nature Conservation Council.

The second was of course the preferred alternative. It was acquired by the Conservation Council (today Natural England) and has been managed for its scientific value as a wet-dune habitat since 1965. It was thus the first official Nature Reserve established on the Sefton Coast, The National Trust following a year or so afterwards funded by Enterprise Neptune.

Ainsdale Sand Dunes (and Cabin Hill) remains an integral part of the internationally important Sefton Coast with natural processes enabling the ecosystems to function. The dune system is resilient and adapts to the twin issues of coastal change and climate change and the diverse owners on the coast work together to identify successful management approaches and welcome people, enabling them to enjoy this special place.

The public use the site for a range of activities which are in harmony with nature. A strong volunteer team help with the management of the site and act as advocates for the conservation of the dunes to the local community. The mosaic of habitats maintains rich and diverse populations of species for which the coast is protected. The Reserve management has the support of the local community and the community have an understanding of the processes and issues impacting on management decisions. Local universities take the opportunity to use the site for research which extends our knowledge and understanding of the coast. Schools and other groups use the reserve with the support of the staff to learn more about the site and wildlife and leave enthused and wanting to support environmental issues. Children too play and feel safe in the wild outdoors offered by the reserve and learn to love the environment.

In summary the reserve is recognised both nationally and internationally, demonstrating best practice in management of the habitats, processes and people.



Community News

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Local people were given what should be a greater say about what happens in their community. There are many issues that are of concern to Formby people, though there are also different views and opinions about what should happen.

In the current climate of the pressure for new homes to be built, even on Green Belt land, and the severe cuts to local council budgets, if we are to make the best of what opportunities we have for expressing our local opinions then we need to be aware and to act accordingly.

Formby is in the process of creating its own Neighbourhood Plan and it is now in the public sphere for ideas, suggestions and comment. This Plan, when completed according to what Formby people have said, it will be put to all of us in a local referendum. You will be able to vote for or against it. It will then help shape how our town will grow and develop over the next fifteen years.

Many FCS members will have seen the survey already and have returned their completed copy. If you have not yet done so, you can choose to do so via a paper copy or on the internet.

Paper copies can be obtained from:

The Parish Clerk, Formby Library, Duke Street, Formby L37 4AN - or - phone 01704 395955

The Residents' Questionnaire can be accessed online at:

<http://www.tinyurl.com/formbyresidents>

If you would like any further information on the Neighbourhood Plan, then contact the Parish Council on: 01704 395955

FORMBY'S WAR MEMORIAL

Dr. Reg Yorke has been supporting the work of the Parish Council in researching the background to the planning and creation of our War Memorial. This will help in applying for funding from central Government in carrying out any restoration that may be needed before the date of the 100th anniversary of end of WWI and any possible memorial services.

Indeed, Dr. Yorke will describe in detail the background to its design and construction in the spring newsletter.

It is worth remembering today that our community almost lost the present site for the memorial but for determined work by the FCS of the time.

It was threatened with removal in July 1975 when serious consideration was being given to developing the field behind it in the then Formby Development Plan. This would have had a serious impact on the Memorial site.



Formby Civic Society's Community Action Plan

Changing central Government regulations on house building and development as well as the growing interest by property developers in acquiring sites to create housing, bars and restaurants are now well-known. Recently we have also learned of central Government's plan to build more houses, wherever space may exist. A green field site is no longer a bar to development and at a time of great financial pressure for local Councils, it is for the local community to work together to protect their heritage and environment.

The Civic Society works closely with Formby Parish Council and we have read recently in the local newspaper of their concerns about the possibility of losing local amenities, with Duke Street Park mentioned.



Duke Street park

We need to be working proactively to find opportunities for local communities to protect their buildings and open spaces.

On the previous page we mentioned the time in 1975 when Sefton District Council together with two partners intended to move our Formby War Memorial and garden away as part of a redevelopment scheme. Chapel Lane was to be made a pedestrian area with a realignment of Halsall Lane and Three Tuns Lane. This caused the members of Formby Civic Society at the time to fight the suggestion, after opposition to it was first voiced by then councillor Eric Storey. Dr. Reg Yorke remembers this well and writes, "Formby Civic Society founder member and talented local artist Lillian Rushton, then took up the battle with the proposed developers and Planning Committee and organised a 5000 signature petition calling for the site, originally given by Mr Weld Blundell in 1922 specifically for the war memorial and garden, to be saved. The Council then complied with an order made by the Charity Commissioners preserving the status of the site so that it can never be used for another purpose without consent of the commission. After a two-year battle the site was recognised as a charitable trust. And thus the memorial and its garden were saved for posterity on its present

prominent and suitable site. Formby is appropriately proud of its distinctive war memorial situated within its own carefully tended garden."

Formby's honouring of its community from a century age has again been demonstrated by the recent raising of a monument to the men named in the 'Formby Roll of Honour' in WWI, erected in the grounds of Formby Pool. Indeed, the Pool itself stands as testament to what can be achieved by local people in the face of challenges from other interests.

Our Civic Society has produced a 'Community Action Plan' that has considered how we can take greater control over the local area and maximise the potential to secure resources and assets to deliver community priorities and involve more people in taking part in shaping the future of their community.

Our Action Plan has identified 4 key programmes:

1. **Raise awareness of what are called 'Assets of Community Value'.** To this end we have identified a long list of twenty potential assets on community value that include among them the Pool, Formby Luncheon Club, Victoria Hall community centre and Formby Library. Should there ever be talk of these 'assets' being sold off, Formby would have already laid down a marker with Sefton Council that this would not be appropriate and would be strongly opposed. This does not mean they would be secure from sale or redevelopment, but a clear statement by the community would have been made from the outset.
2. **Build community ownership of assets**
3. **Encourage the protection of parks, green space and sporting facilities**
4. **Encourage the protection of the historic environment and local distinctiveness.**



Formby Luncheon Club

Formby Conservative Club closes its doors



The 'Con Club' on Three Tuns Lane shut its doors for the last time in September and we now await a renovation programme and the opening of a new pub, with space being created inside for a new 'Formby Club'.



The Formby Conservative Club, latterly the 'Formby Club', became the home of the 'Formby and Altcar Working Men's Conservative Club' in 1926 although the club itself remained independent of the Conservative Association. Before moving to the site in Three Tuns Lane, local Conservatives had held their meetings at a grocery in Chapel Lane now the site what became the original Tesco store in the Village and is now the Chapel Lane Surgery. In the early 1920s, the current building was owned and rented out by Mellor's Wine merchants to a social club associated with Our Lady's Roman Catholic Church. When the social club moved to the Gild Hall, the new Conservative Club eventually moved in. There was a formal opening by Lord Derby IN 1926 but initially the number of members was less than one hundred. The Club had a snooker area and a number of small rooms in what became the main lounge, an upstairs area known as the 'Assembly Rooms' (later the 'Churchill Lounge') and a bowling green. The premises were used also for whist drives, performances by a local choir and even some boxing promotions. At the outbreak of WWII life in Formby changed and, prior to the construction of Harington

Barracks, the Club premises were requisitioned by the King's regiment. The Assembly Rooms provided sleeping accommodation for 100 army personnel.



Following the end of the war, the club developed gradually and the membership increased whilst changes were made to the structure of the building. Jack Wright, steward from 1948 to 1973 was a strong and popular influence on the club's development. In 1967-68 the building was enlarged with the bar area enlarged and the small rooms opened up and a new patio area was laid. In 1979 there was a further development of the ground floor to enlarge the main bar area and provide a separate room for the two snooker tables. Former Prime Minister Edward Heath visited the club shortly afterwards.

The Club remained popular for many years. It held functions and entertainments; the summer barbecue was always eagerly awaited; and the Christmas Raffle and snooker/darts/dominos competitions were a highlight of the year. Unfortunately, it didn't attract enough younger members and with the recession and falling bar income, the Club found it difficult to continue. It was renamed the 'Formby Club'. However, closure seemed to be inevitable until the pub and restaurant chain Wetherspoons made a proposal that they buy the property and create a new Formby Club on the second floor with lift access from outside. As the construction work was to be undertaken mainly from the area of the bowling green, that little oasis of quiet was going to be significantly affected and was later sold off to Wetherspoons also. This understandably attracted much criticism and opposition.

There have been many differing opinions, not only in the community but also amongst club members. Let us hope they will enjoy their new premises when the doors finally re-open and that Wetherspoons do the best job they possibly can in preserving as much as possible about a Formby landmark of much of the past century.

FCS Programme: November 2015 - June 2016

GENERAL MEETINGS

Meetings are held at Ravenmeols Community Centre in Park Road on the 2nd Thursday of each month and are open to guests on payment of the small admission charge of £2.

12th November 2015	'WWI: the Home Front in Formby - the first year'	John Phillips
10th December 2015	'The Sefton Coast in WWII'	Dr. Reg Yorke
11th February 2016	'Liverpool Cowkeepers'	David Joy
10th March 2016	'Sand-racing on Birkdale Beach in the 1920s and 1930s'	Barry Griffiths
14th April 2016	'Ainsdale National Nature Reserve: the first 50 years'	Dave Mercer
12th May 2016	Annual General Meeting	

Details of the Summer Programme for June - August 2016 will be published in the spring newsletter. Additional meetings may be arranged occasionally as afternoon sessions.

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Treasurer

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Amenities Secretary

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Hon. Secretary

Reg Yorke (post vacant from January 2016) secretary@formbycivicsociety.org.uk

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Mrs. Jean Beer (minutes secretary), Colin Cooke, Ray Derricott, Andrew Pearce

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