

# Formby Civic News

*The Formby Civic Society Newsletter*



**February 2006**

## Opposition to Brows Lane Pub

The Society strongly objects to this application from Barracuda and feels that situated as it is proposed on the very edge of the Village Retail area it would not only be detrimental to amenity and out of keeping with the character of the area but inappropriate in scale in relation to local facilities and service arrangements. There would be an adverse impact on the adjacent residential area and also the 'Urban Green Space', now to be the site for the long-awaited Formby Pool. In respect to the latter we are aware of the concern, previously expressed, regarding traffic flow and parking. The effect of a pub here would be worse!

There has been a feeling that this application was being 'pushed through' with indecent haste and it was good that the Planning Committee wisely decided to defer a decision until after a site visit and further consultation with the community including the Parish Council. Unfortunately the Applicants are now complaining that the decision has been unduly delayed and on these grounds are lodging an appeal.

This will apparently mean that the final decision will be taken by the Planning Inspectorate. It is not clear at this stage whether the Inspector will hold a public meeting. Formby Parish Council, in association with this Society held a well attended Public Meeting at Formby High School Sixth Form College on Friday February 3rd chaired by the Parish Council, Chairman Sean Brady. In the absence of representatives of the applicants Councillor Brady gave a full, impartial and accurate summary of the proposals. (Continued next page)

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*'The Priory' formerly known as 'The Elms', stood on the site of the row of shops which includes Byrnes. These were built following its demolition in 1961. It was thought to be one of Formby's oldest houses. A Roman coin dating from 109—108 BC was found in its garden in 1866.*

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

**ARE NOW DUE !**

**PLEASE SEE RENEWAL**

**REMINDER**

## Society Opposes Brows Lane Pub

*(Continued from previous page)....*

This was followed by a very full and convincing criticism of the proposals by Brows Lane resident, Desmond Brennan. The views of the Society were then expressed by Ray Derricott, (Amenities Secretary) and also on behalf of the Formby Pool Trustees, by Alan Roberts, Chairman. The meeting was then opened to discussion from the floor when a large number of local residents voiced their objections. Finally the Resolution (right) was agreed and passed unanimously

***Resolution passed unanimously at end of Public Meeting held on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February.....***

***“This meeting resolves that is totally opposed to the Barra-cuda planning application for a public house at 44/46 Brows Lane, on the grounds of:-***

***Gross incompatibility with swimming pool,***

***On edge of high quality residential area,***

***Excess and unsafe traffic congestion,***

***Pedestrian congestion,***

***Blight to neighbouring businesses.”***

## The countryside is at risk - Louis Proctor



The recent sale of 500 acres of prime farm land on the outskirts of Formby is very disquieting and led to a recent talk from a speaker from the Council for the Protection of Rural England. The CPRE believes that recent demands for the review of Green Belt boundaries' and pressure to 'modernise' Green Belt policy' or make it more 'flexible' have helped spawn a sudden growth of companies offering Green Belt land for sale at vastly inflated prices. These companies thrive on ill-informed calls for massive growth of market housing (when the real need is for affordable housing") and on other threats to the countryside. Trading on the hope that Green Belt will be released for development in the foreseeable future, these companies buy farmland at agricultural prices (about £2,500 an

acre), sub divide it into small plots and market it as an investment, reselling it for as much as £60,000 an acre.

This activity is causing serious and increasing damage to the character of the countryside. Plots for re-sale are often marked out on site by fences, wire or unlinked posts, scarring hitherto open landscapes. Under current planning law, such activity does not require an application for planning permission. The new owners of the land often live outside the affected area; indeed, local knowledge would normally be enough to deter buyers at these inflated prices. Plots are marketed on the internet, sometimes attracting overseas buyers. Consequently, many new owners have neither easy access to the sites nor any interest in future maintenance. So in addition to being lost to agricultural use and scarred by subdivision, this land is highly vulnerable to neglect.

Worse still, some aggrieved purchasers - finding that there is no immediate prospect of developing their land - have formed pressure groups to push for the relaxation of Green Belt protection. Others may start to put sheds or caravans on the sites, safe in the

knowledge that the planning system is painfully slow to remove even flagrant breaches of planning controls. This undermines public confidence in the effectiveness of Green Belt policy and can, in turn, encourage further planning abuses.

The Government needs consistently to stress its positive support for the permanence of Green Belt. Firm public statements by Ministers on the subject could drastically reduce if not halt the damaging growth in speculative sales of Green Belt land.

Public affection for the local countryside can be harnessed to nurture the wildlife and natural potential of neglected land around our towns and cities, increasing the biodiversity and environmental value of these sites. This should be achieved without caving in to demand for damaging built development which would undermine encourage further planning abuses. Green Belts can support health and well-being; Green Belts can support wildlife!

***The Society has recently renewed its affiliation with CPRE. These points are taken from official CPRE policy statements.***



### Shaftesbury House

*Shaftesbury House on the south side of Ravenmeols Lane, was the home of Dr. Stanley Gill who also ran it as a private Mental Hospital. It was described as having "well wooded grounds, nearly 10 acres in extent, affording ample privacy for exercise and recreation". It had an attractive hall used for concerts at which Percy French entertained. This later became an approved school (St Vincents). It is now the site of Harebell Close*

## ***Do not miss these important Events!***

**Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, Annual Dinner, at Formby Hall Golf Club, 6.30 for 7pm.**

Our Guest of Honour this year is to be The Reverend Canon Alison Woodhouse, Vicar of St Luke's Church, Formby, which this summer has celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Revd Woodhouse was honoured recently by her appointment as Chaplain to H.M. The Queen and we are delighted that she is able to join us on this special occasion. Tickets; £16 per person, to include a complimentary glass of wine on arrival. Dress informal; Guests of members are very welcome.

***Please reply immediately if you have not already done so and wish to join us on this special occasion***

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> March 8 pm**  
**National Science Week Meeting at** Formby High School, Sixth Form Centre.

**“The dawn of nature conservation on the Sefton Coast”** An illustrated talk by Dr Phil Smith.

*The story of the conservation of flora and fauna in the rare sand dunes, pinewoods and rare dune heath habitats bordering the Sefton coast. From the early establishment of the Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve to the present day and looking towards the future. Join the question and answer session afterwards!*

Visitors welcome.

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006**  
**The Society's Annual General Meeting is to be held at 8pm on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006**

at Ravenmeols Community Centre, Park Road, Formby. There are vacancies on the Committee and nominations are invited, (also for all official positions).

Following the AGM Councillor Sean Brady, Chair of Formby Parish Council will speak on **“Formby Parish Council – The Story So Far”**.

Please note that the AGM itself is a ‘members only’ occasion but guests and members of the public are welcome to the talk.

## Society Activities; Reviewed by Reg Yorke



*The informative Society stand on Dickensian Day.*

A small subgroup of the Committee consisting of Alan Burton (Chair), R. Yorke, John Houston and Dru Haydon recently met to consider in broad terms the Society's activities, progress and priorities. The sub-group were reminded of the principal objectives of the Society as set out in the Constitution. This is a legal document and our activities must relate to our objectives. The objectives can be amended by resolution at an AGM if necessary but any changes must be acceptable to the Charity Commission. The following matters were discussed:-

**1. Publicity and Membership.** It is desirable to increase membership, particularly the younger ages group but not essential as our views and activities do not relate to numerical strength. Income however may do! The production of saleable products such as Notelets and Sibley prints is useful and income generating. Fundraising is an important, but not our main activity. Publicity at the present time largely arises in relation to our meetings but also in connection with Planning and 'Civic' Matters, when we have expressed a view or concern; for example, in relation to Holy Trinity School. Is this enough?

**2. Historical resources and activities.** An understanding of the history and 'culture' of the area is an important strength. Our historical records are also an important and unique re-

source which is available to the wider community as well as fulfilling one of the main objectives of the society.

### 3. 'Amenity' and Civic matters.

Promoting 'higher standards of architecture' seems to be a lost cause and this objective should perhaps be re-considered and re-addressed. Our interests might be

better expressed as 'Civic Design', which would include 'Town Planning'. Much of the work of the Society relates to Planning; (commenting on Planning Applications) and 'civic' issues. This again is a most important role and well understood by the Community. It helps to publicise the Society and is central to our work. Stimulation of debate about local issues is also an important activity and perhaps one we should do more often. It was suggested that this could be an element of our regular general meetings, particularly if and when it relates to the subject of the meeting and we have an 'expert' speaker, as at the recent CPRE meeting. (Some of our best attended meetings are on topical and controversial issues). Occasional 'Open Forum' sessions might also be organised; for instance, on the development of the Village. On a slightly different level, we include - working for a *better Community/Civic Centre*, as a base for our activities and a much needed civic amenity. We will continue our current negotiations with the Church of England, CVS, Sefton MBC and the Parish Councils. We hope to participate in the Formby Parish Council's proposed 'Village Plan'.

**4. 'Consultation' meetings** are particularly important as our views are respected but we are not able to speak directly for the entire community, as does the Parish Council. It is healthy

for us to be regarded as a 'friendly critic' when necessary. With regard to participation it is noted that there are no formal links between Committee and the Membership. Should we have more advisory groups?

**5. Groups.** The large number of different interest groups which formerly existed have gradually been reduced to the History Group and the 'semi-detached' art Group. With regard to the FCS History Group, this has much to offer in the form of access to historical material and perhaps this access might be of interest to the U3A History Groups? The use of our archives and library by members and others would perhaps be encouraged by the proposed re-organisation and indexing. We also need to improve our storage and archive-care. Appreciable outside interest comes from students and people doing individual research projects. Regrettably teachers seldom make as much contact now as they have in the past despite official encouragement of Local Studies.

**6. Wild life and conservation.** The Society has built up a good working relationship with Sefton Coast Partnership, and the several organisations concerned with the management of the coast but John Houston points out that there is a relative lack of regular organised wild-life observation and recording. This was an activity of the former Wild-life Group under the leadership of Gladys Bevan. It would be helpful in the monitoring of biodiversity if this could be again encouraged. The work of Ken Parks and friends with Red Squirrel monitoring on defined woodland transects at set intervals is a good example.

**7. Art group.** With regard to the Art Group it was noted that this group originally drew great inspiration from the built and natural environment in the immediate vicinity. Indeed founder artistic members such as Muriel Sibley and Lilian Rushton provided a unique and valuable record of Formby during a period of great change.

## Society Activities Reviewed; Contd.

**8. Heritage, (Cultural and Environmental).** The question was raised as to as to whether we should not use these “buzz-words” more. They have an important ‘pull’ at the present time and ‘Heritage’ is really close to the core of our activities.

**9. Fund-raising.** Is important to support our activities but also provides a way of publicising our activities. The availability and marketing of Notelets and Sibley Prints is an excellent development. Perhaps there are other ways we can develop this in relation to our historic records. The ti

. **Communications.** *The Society*

*Newsletter* could do with more active support and perhaps limited colour printing. The *Web-site* has during the last month been upgraded in order to accept images and captions. Adding these is now an exciting possibility and technically straight forward thanks to our ‘webmaster’ Sam Gerard but will obviously take time. Relations with the local press are good. In the last month we have held the first ever meeting with representatives of our local neighbouring Societies. This was very promising and will be continued. Finally we would like more contributions from members to our Newsletter and more “feed-back” generally. Constructive

comments are always welcome. Let us know what you think and what concerns you!

**10. Social activities.** These seem to be enjoyed but are limited at present to the Annual Dinner and several outings during the Summer months. The Annual Garden Party should be resumed. The re-appointment of a Summer Programme Secretary could be considered in order to provide more options during the Summer months.

**Please let us know what you think about our activities.**

## Secretary's Notes — by David Willis

### Are you mobile?

Your FCS Newsletter gets delivered to your door by a volunteer member of the Society, to keep down costs. However, we're always in need of new volunteers to fill in for holidays or illness and to replace those who 'retire'. Please let us know if you would be willing to distribute a few Newsletters in your immediate neighbourhood.

### Promoting the Society

You may have noticed in the Library some new leaflets about the Society. We have recently revised and updated a 2-fold leaflet that gives some basic information about the Society, its origins and programmes. It is aimed at 'spreading our name' and gaining new members. We'd be grateful for any help in getting the leaflets displayed more widely; for example, could you persuade a local shopkeeper to have a small leaflet holder on a shelf? We'll provide the holder and a 'top up' service. The copy leaflet enclosed for your information will need to be updated soon for next year's programme. If you

have any suggestions for improvements we'd like to hear from you.

### What other help do we need?

Well, there's something as simple as the tea rota for monthly meetings. Not very exciting, for sure, nor very demanding but it all helps to keep the 'tea ceremony' alive. We'll provide full 'instructions' and all the equipment and supplies

### FCS on the World Wide Web

Many members now have access to a computer and the Internet but perhaps not all will be aware that we have a Society website: [www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk). It's worth a look if you want to keep in touch with Society activities or recall some of our history and the culture of the area. Most recently we have added a summary list of the collection of local drawings and prints done by local artist and member, the late Muriel Sibley. We can provide both colour and B/W copies of any of the

sketches – perhaps of your own house or a nearby scene. Contact Alan Burton for details or follow the procedure on the web site. Anyone with an interest in computers and able to help keep the website up to date would be warmly welcomed.

### Opportunities to help?

As an example of the help that's always gratefully received, we were recently approached by a local 6<sup>th</sup> form student for access to the 19th Century Formby Tithe map information for a school project. It proved to be of two-way benefit as the student offered to start transferring the information from old-style index cards to a computer database. This has now been finished and we anticipate this information will eventually be freely accessible on our website. We are always exploring the possibility of other voluntary help on this and similar projects, and would be pleased to hear from any member with an interest in the area and a bit of spare time.

**Help is given by the Society to the Community in Formby and beyond.**

# MERSEYSIDE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM by Ray Derricott

**The intention of this short piece is to inform and up-date members of the Society about the Merseyside Local Access Forum. The MLAF is beginning its fourth year of existence. I have been a member of the LAF since its establishment in November 2002. I was invited to be a member of the group because of my interest in walking and cycling and because I was keen to see footpaths legally established and maintained. I am also keen to see attempts to make it easier for all groups, whatever their particular interests and needs, to enjoy easy access to the countryside. I do not represent the Civic Society on the Forum but I do monitor that the interests of Society members and those of the wider Formby community are properly served**

The role of the Forum is laid down in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act of 2000. This Act, known as CROW 2000, (sorry about that) made significant changes in legislation regarding public rights of way. These rights of way include footpaths, bridleways, roads used as public paths and byways open to all traffic. The legal changes required all highway authorities to produce Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs). This is the first time that legislation has been enacted that focuses on the overall management and provision of rights of way by highway authorities. The CROW Act came into action in November 2002. The Act requires authorities to produce their first Rights of Way Improvement Plans ((ROWIPs) within five years. These plans are expected by November 2007. DEFRA has issued guidelines on how these plans should be prepared. The plans are also expected to relate to Local Transport Plans. The Transport Plans for Merseyside refer to the progress being made on the ROWIPs.

The Merseyside Local Access Forum was one of the first to be set up as part of a pilot study to test the feasibility of the terms of the CROW Act. Under the Act LAFs are statutory bodies that have to be consulted about local plans but have only an advisory role. The Merseyside LAF is made of representatives from five Merseyside authorities and Halton/Runcorn. Each local authority attaches a footpath officer or an officer from technical services to the Forum. The appointed lay members of the Forum represent a range of stakeholders. Walking, riding, cycling are all represented so are people with access and mobility problems. Landowners and land managers are also represented on the Forum, as is Merseytravel.

Being part of a pilot study the Forum

take a wider and co-operative position. There was a great deal of learning to be done by Forum members and the best quality to possess was patience. After nearly two years of very little progress the membership was augmented with a few new faces and new interests. It also became clear that the Forum needed a dedicated secretary who could organise and co-ordinate its activities. Eventually a secretary has been appointed. This has given the Forum more energy and has positively activated the tasks that have to be undertaken.

The first task undertaken by the Forum was the identifying all common land in the area. Maps showing common land to which the public has rights of access had not been revised since the mid-sixties. While undertaking this task areas of dune heathland were also identified. Most of this heathland was within the Sefton borders.

The Government has asked local transport authorities to provide plans to encourage access to the countryside and to encourage walking, to provide safer routes and improve air quality. The presence on the Forum of a senior officer from Merseytravel has encouraged the group to take a wide and integrated view of their work on rights of way. Sefton's approach to the task shows a full appreciation of the health and welfare benefits that can be achieved by providing the people with clear guidance to the established rights of way in the area. The biggest task facing the Forum is to monitor progress and provide advice on providing a definitive map of rights of way for the Merseyside area and Runcorn/Halton. The Forum is concentrating on three main areas of concern.

## **Physical improvements of rights of Way**

These include improvements of.....



*Freshfield Dune Heath— soon to be open to the public.*

was breaking new ground. Early progress was full of enthusiasm but progress was slow and at times frustrating. There were several reasons for this. The local authorities were not used to working together on detailed access issues. Early guidance from DEFRA was vague and not always helpful. It was obvious that the amount of human resources and time provided by the local authorities differed greatly. So did the levels and status of the officers allocated to work in the access area. Individual lay members of the Forum tended to argue solely from their vested interested position and found it difficult to

## MERSEYSIDE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM (Continued)

of surfaces, lighting and the removal of, or adjustment of, barriers. This includes the removal of stiles where possible. Halton claims that there are no stiles in their area. Work is undertaken to improve accessibility for those whose mobility is restricted. Attempts are being made to encourage a wider use of rights of way by all age groups from all backgrounds.

### Network improvements.

These include the creation of new rights of way or the change in status of existing rights of way. For example, a footpath may be changed to a shared-use track for walkers and cy-

clists or to a bridleway to facilitate horse-riding. Routes that have been used traditionally by the public, but which are not public rights of way, will be formally created as public rights of way in order to guarantee their continued availability.

### Information

The provision of a network of local rights of way has to be accompanied by an improvement of information for the public. This information should be from published brochures, from a website or from audiotapes for those with impaired sight. Brochures should be available in languages

other than English.

A draft statement of the Merseyside Rights of Way Improvement Plan should be ready by the end of 2006. The beginning of 2007 will provide the statutory consultation period. Local authority officers and the LAF will consider comments on the draft plan during summer 2007. By October 2007 each of the Merseyside authorities and Halton/Runcorn will be asked to approve of the final version of the plan. The Final Plan will be published by November 2007.

## History Group Report by Barbara Yorke

The first meeting in the new year of the Society History Group held on 5<sup>th</sup> January, provided a glimpse into the Society's records of the last half-century, through the medium of press cutting 'Scrap-books', kept by previous members, notable Mrs Muriel Sibley and Miss Lilian Rushton.

Just a few of the interesting items concerned things as diverse as the restoration of the Victoria Hall in 1979, the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Byrnes

the Tailors in 1985, the end of boat Shrimping in 1970, the building of Stella Maris on the Promenade and its use as a temperance hotel in 1905, a US army base at Hill House during WW2 and Freshfield Golf Club (now the Dune Heath). It was interesting also to note recurrent themes of interest; the need for a new Civic Centre was one, Conservation issues were another. The Society also possesses a great deal of other material of interest to historians and researchers. A

small working group of 4 – 5 interested members are from next month to start work to improve the access, storage and cataloguing of the collection. This will be an interesting long term project and one which will be of benefit to future historians. A necessary pre-requisite of this is the availability of suitable storage boxes and acid-free materials and the Society has applied to the Parish Council for a grant of £300 to help with the costs.

## Art Group Report by Barbara Mossop

Last November a group of our members went to the Art and Craft exhibition in Birmingham. A long day, but we were able to watch demonstrations and purchase materials and books. On the 4<sup>th</sup> January we held our annual 'Get Together' at Lydiat Hall Farm. We had hoped to discuss our future programme but unfortunately for various reasons some of our regular members were unable to attend, so this was not possible. As everyone present enjoyed themselves we de-

ecided we would repeat it in early Spring! We will discuss the programme at that time. At the lunch I invited members to paint a picture suitable to be placed in the Society's stand in Formby Station, on any aspect of Formby life. This is not a competition, as the paintings can be rotated, as and when required, when the space is not needed by the Society to advertise forthcoming events. I hope all members who usually participate in our Art Exhibition, will

take part. Just let me know when you have something to exhibit and don't forget to sign it. Pictures are behind Perspex. **Anytime before the end of March;** Members are asked to produce a picture, (any medium), suitable for the stand in Formby Station max size 24" square. Reminder – The Group still needs an Art Secretary! The AGM is drawing near – Volunteers please!

Chair; Dr Reg Yorke, 3 Wicks Lane,  
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Hon Secretary; David Willis,  
5 Phillips Close, Formby. 878994

Treasurer; Mike Belshaw,  
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History Group; Barbara Yorke  
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[www.formbycivic  
society.org.uk](http://www.formbycivic<br/>society.org.uk)

## FORMBY NOTELETS

Formby Notelets produced by the Society are selling well. They are printed on quality card with drawings of Formby subjects by founder member Muriel Sibley who subsequently bequeathed her collection to us.

They are plain on the inside making them suitable for a wide variety of uses, such as thank you notes, invitations, brief messages, and so on.

The packs of eight cards contain two each of four designs plus envelopes.

We have had enthusiastic advice and support from local retailers who forecast a good demand for them and they are already on sale at the following places.

Derbyshires, Pritchards Book Shop, Select Office Supplies, Send A Card and Southport Tourist Information Office .

The retail price is around £4-00 but members can purchase packs from the Society at the reduced rate of £3-50 at our meetings or collect them from Alan Burton, Tel 01704 876454

## Meetings Programme

### 24/02/2006 - GENERAL MEETING

*Challenges for Nature Conservation on the Sefton Coast*; A discussion led by John Houston.

### 03/03/2006 - HISTORY GROUP MEETING

*"The Botanic Gardens Museum"* Miss Jones, (Curator).

### 10/3/2006 SCIENCE WEEK MEETING

*"The dawn of nature conservation on the Sefton Coast"* Dr Phil Smith. ( Formby HS).

### 24/03/2006 - GENERAL MEETING

*"Burbo Bank – Future Prospects"* Adrian Maddocks

### 06/04/2006 - HISTORY GROUP Meeting

*"Members Evening"*

### 28/04/2006 - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*AGM followed by "Formby Parish Council – The Story So Far"* Cllr Sean Brady

## Art Group Programme.

March 31<sup>st</sup> at 10.15 am **Spring 'Get-Together'**, Lydiate Hall Farm, to discuss future programme and if fine, to paint.