



Web site: www.liverpoolheritageforum.org.uk

Contact: email@liverpool-heritage.org.uk

A networking organisation of voluntary cultural societies in the Liverpool area. Please send information about your activities to the above email address. Do look at our website.

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A happy Liverpool European Year of Culture to all of you!

There is a mammoth programme of top class events for the first weeks of Capital of Culture Year and many more to follow. A selection of these events is reproduced at the back of this newsletter. Let's make the best of them. Despite all of the well-publicised difficulties, the major cultural organisations in the city have risen to the occasion and laid on an almost bewildering range of activities for us and for visitors. People are saying that this will be the best Capital of Culture ever.

There remain however a number of points still to be got right, mostly matters in the hands of the City Council, some in the hands of local businesses. The city has to be made to look clean and festive, to look welcoming to visitors including people from abroad and to show recognition that this is EUROPEAN Capital of Culture Year. We hope that the City Council will get its act together properly on these matters and that local businesses and the organisations which represent them will see that they not only owe it to the city to play their part but that it is in their own commercial interests to do so.

We are told that Jason Harborow is definitely on the way out. The original Board members and top executives deserve credit for putting in place the programme we now see coming to fruition but they did not have what it takes to inspire the people of Liverpool, to communicate and to give visible leadership. Let us hope that, under Phil Redmond, Kris Donaldson and perhaps others yet to be appointed, the city will have the Year of Culture that it is capable of creating and which it deserves.

Andrew Pearce

◇2008◇ English Heritage in association with The [Historic Environment of Liverpool Project](#) has a series of publications for sale at £7.99 plus £1.50 p&p from 01761 452966. Titles include "Storehouses of Empire", "Liverpool Parks and Open Spaces", "Liverpool Places of Worship", "Liverpool Charitable Institutions", "Liverpool Central Business District" and "Ordinary Landscapes, Special Places".

◇2008◇ A campaign is afoot to bring back an ornate set of gates celebrating Liverpool's maritime tradition. (Not quite the same as sending the Elgin marbles back but the same general idea!) They would become part of the Liverpool One development. Known as the Sailors Gates, the gates were originally installed in the city's old Sailors Home in Canning Place, having been cast at the Toxteth foundry of Henry Pooley & Sons. However, after the Sailors Home was badly damaged in World War II, they were given to the Avery Historical Museum, Birmingham, in 1951. (Avery and Pooley merged in 1931).

The Sailors Home, opened in 1850, looked a fine building from the outside but was viewed by the sailors as being rather like a prison on the inside - though no doubt better than the alternative of dirty and overpriced inns. One person staying there in its early days disliked it so much that he set fire to the building but it was put to rights.

Canning Place was severely damaged by bombing during World War II (in which Liverpool suffered more than any other British provincial city). Whereas the media at the time played up the damage to London in order to encourage patriotic sentiment, the damage to Liverpool was played down so as not to show the extent of damage to the port, the only one which remained fully operational throughout the war.

Another building damaged during the war was the Customs House, a fine colonnaded building with frontages facing both the Dock Road at Canning Place and up South Castle Street to the Town Hall. The building could have been saved after the war but municipal unwisdom caused it to be totally taken down. (A few stones from it are in a cemetery in Anfield). While we can criticise the Town Hall planners of the day for their "vandalism", we should recognise that not dissimilar threats to some of our buildings are present today - which is why Merseyside Civic Society is trying to set up a local listing scheme for buildings at present unprotected from the municipal planners.

◇2008◇ The frequently expressed view that there are too many new and refurbished buildings on the market in Liverpool is mistaken. One should not expect such new premises to be immediately occupied any more than one expects one's house to be sold the moment it is put on the market. It takes time.

One of Liverpool's failings over the years has been not having modern office properties readily available on the market. When a firm from elsewhere considers moving to Liverpool, it does not want to wait several years while a site is cleared, planning permission sought and construction put in hand. It wants something available at once, "on the shelf".

High quality new buildings can help Liverpool to look a vibrant place to be established in. This in turn will attract new tenants to the many refurbished heritage buildings which grace our city. If we keep our urban environment clean and attractive it will bring public and private sector organisations and jobs here. If this happens, there will be more money to conserve our heritage. The links between heritage, the local economy and the living standards of our people are clear.

◇2008◇ BBC Television broadcast a splendid "Liverpool Nativity" three times before Christmas. A temporary stage was erected outside World Museum Liverpool, dances were performed in St George's Hall and there were shots of the river and Seacombe ferry terminal. Dr Duncan's pub in St John's Lane featured as the inn in the Bible story. The

programme retold the Bible story of the birth of Jesus in a modern Liverpool context, with Liverpool actors. The city's fine buildings were shown to very good effect. Good work!

Not good work by the BBC were two post-Christmas pieces on Radio 4 current affairs programmes. In one, the BBC person asked someone why the new huge shopping centre was being built "in Liverpool of all places"! In another clip, the BBC person said that Vitamin D deficiency is more commonly found the further north you go - especially north of Birmingham where there is no sunshine". Why should a national media organisation insult our area like that?

◇2008◇ Steps are in hand to create a museum called the Abdullah Quilliam Heritage Centre to commemorate the fact that the first British Mosque was in Liverpool. £2.5 m are sought to turn the Georgian building in West Derby Road into a thriving Mosque with a library, an Islamic garden and a café. Quilliam was born in Liverpool in 1856 and became a solicitor. He converted to Islam and set up the Mosque and Institute in 8 -12 Brougham Terrace in 1889. The building was subsequently used for other purposes and has been empty since 2001.

The Editor's amblings at Christmas and New Year - tasting the culture of this very special place.

++ Church Street looked very attractive for Christmas carols opposite Marks & Spencers with live deer and sheep in a pen in the street and artificial snow blowing down off the store's roof.

++ There were carols and sheep (but no deer) in Formby's main street on the Saturday. Formby had its own version of Biblical story of three wise men. They had five wisepersons - including two police officers (one female) dressed in desert clothing and on horseback.

++ The usual Maritime Carol Service took place at St Nick's - a reference not only to the Christian festival but also to city's maritime origins.

++ Thousands attended the Anglican cathedral's New Year's Eve celebration with gospel songs and fireworks afterwards. The Bishop referred to an example of Liverpool spirit. An old lady ran for a bus but missed it. The driver saw her in his mirror and reversed the bus so that she could catch it. This couldn't happen anywhere but Liverpool. Another expansion of traditional Biblical truth recounts how God created day and night, the land and the sea, plants, fishes, birds and animals and then man. And then he created Liverpool!

++ A visit to Oxford Cathedral had a Liverpool touch. An alternative version by John Julius Norwich of the "Twelve Days of Christmas" was read. The original version proceeds from "my true love" being delighted with a partridge in a pear tree through to ten pipers piping, eleven ladies dancing and twelve lords a-leaping. The John Julius Norwich version has "my true love" getting increasingly irritated by ever more creatures arriving and finally breaks off the engagement on the arrival of the entire percussion section of the Liverpool Philharmonic. Any ideas why he picked on our Phil for this honour?

A selection of early Capital of Culture Listings

see "08 Liverpool Events Guide" available from bookshops and 08 Place in Whitechapel and listings of the venues concerned

- 1 Jan: New Year's Day Prom at the Phil.
- 2 – 5 Jan: Donizetti's "Emilia di Liverpool" in St George's Hall.
- 3 Jan: Classic FM Radio broadcasts all day from Liverpool.
- 3 – 5 Jan: Cutting edge jazz at the Phil and other venues.
- 5 Jan: Wayne Shorter with the RLPO at the Phil.
- 4 Jan: Opening performance at the new Echo Arena.
- 6 Jan: CBeebies Live at the Echo Arena.
- 6 Jan: Handel's Messiah at the Phil.
- 7 Jan – 8 Feb: Ann Frank exhibition at the Anglican Cathedral.
- 9 Jan: The biggest school choir ever assembled performs at the Roman Catholic Cathedral.
- 10 Jan: Winner of Radio City "Song for Liverpool" contest.
- 10 Jan and 31 Jan: Lunchtime concerts at the Phil.
- 11 and 12 Jan: Official beginning of Liverpool's reign as European Capital of Culture - an extravaganza on St George's Plateau on the 11th and "Liverpool the Musical" at the Echo Arena on the 12th.
- 13 Jan: Favourite Liverpool songs performed by Belvedere School and Liverpool College. At the Sefton Park Palm House.
- 16 Jan: Music from Liverpool and New York artists commissioned for 2008.
- 19 Jan: Choral works by Kenneth Hesketh, Liverpool Phil's composer, at Cornerstone, Hope Street.
- 24 Jan: "Enigma" at the Phil including Elgar's Variations.
- 24 Jan: Lunchtime Phil concert at Bootle Town Hall.
- 26 Jan: 26 Jan, 23 Feb 8 Mar and 26 Mar: St Helens Sinfonietta, at Ormskirk Street, St Helens.
- 26 Jan: Archbishop of Canterbury lectures at the Anglican Cathedral.
- 1 – 3 Feb: Jazz Festival at the Arts Centre in Southport.
- 2 Feb: Light music concert at Knowsley Village.
- 2 Feb: Gershwin music at the Phil.
- 3 Feb: Soweto Gospel Choir at the Phil.
- 4 Feb: Barbara Dixon at the Phil.
- 4 Feb: NCO chamber music concert at St Hildeburgh's in Hoylake.
- 9 Feb: Dione Warwick at the Phil.
- 9 Feb: Southport Arts Centre's Day of Folk.
- 11 Feb: Kodo Drummers from Japan at the Phil.
- 20 and 21 Feb: Holst's "Planets Suite" at the Phil.
- 22 Feb: Ukelele Orchestra of Great Britain at the Phil.
- 27 Feb: Opera project for Sefton schools at the Anglican Cathedral.

Don't forget the excellent exhibition of paintings by Wright of Derby at The Walker and the two first class exhibitions at the Maritime Museum, the Magical History Tour and the International Slavery Gallery. An exhibition about the Beatles is on in the Picton Library from 17 Jan to 15 Feb. Also..... Pauline Daniels in "Blood Brothers" at the Empire until 26 Jan and "The 3 Sisters on Hope Street", a Chekhov play re-situated in Liverpool - at the Everyman from 25 Jan. Not to mention..... all the amateur events which are listed on our website.