



NEWSLETTER

No 40 : 4 March 2008

Jason Harborow, hitherto the boss of Liverpool Culture Company (answerable to a Board of little known and seemingly ineffective "worthies") has gone. Phil Redmond, now in charge of the events being planned, has been, thankfully, a more visible and more effective driving force. Yet the old problem of getting an answer to a letter to Millennium House, the Culture Company's HQ, persists, as a number of societies have found. The City Council, of which the Culture Company is an appendage, will be unwise to ignore the voluntary cultural sector if it wishes to maximise the city's cultural and heritage assets in the "legacy" period with its objective of continuing to bring revenues and investments into the city.

One would expect by now to see the city looking festive. But a walk along Whitechapel, Church Street, Dale Street and some of the smaller streets nearby shows that almost nothing has been achieved in this regard. Sayers bakery shop has an "08" poster in its window. Some Arriva buses have them. An LJMU building in Hatton Garden has a large banner on it. A 08 flag flies on the Town Hall. But, in the city's centre, that's about it!! You would hardly know this was Liverpool's special year and nothing to show the European nature of the Capital of Culture project. Our enquiries of several businesses suggest that they have never even been made aware that it would be a good thing, in their own interests as well as more broadly, to put something in their windows to welcome "08" visitors and to proclaim the city's cultural merits. Yet in some shop windows, posters acclaim World Book Day, the International Real Ale Festival and Fair Trade Week. Even Millennium House itself (the Culture Company's HQ), the Conservation Centre, the Municipal Buildings and the Observatory (where Liverpool Vision is based) have no external sign of Capital of Culture Year, no welcome to visitors. What have a hundred staff in the Culture Company been doing with heaven knows how many million pounds being spent for so little visual impact on people walking in the city? A lot of people have put much effort into the making of an excellent programme of events for 2008. A good deal has been done to improve the streets. Why not let this be recognised by making the city centre look as though a festival is taking place?

Liverpool Culture Company Deputy Chairman Creative Director Phil Redmond (the creator of "Grange Hill" and "Brookside") says that the city must break its reliance on public aid and remodel itself as a business city. He says it is time for Liverpool to start emphasising its assets rather than chasing public subsidies. Liverpool Heritage Forum has regularly praised the city's wonderful heritage and its current artistic climate. It has not called for large new public expenditure but it does demand that where public money is expended, the job should be done properly - like keeping the streets and land adjacent to them clean, something which the city is now doing better but still not in a fully satisfactory way.

The Sir Thomas Hotel in Victoria Street bears a stone inscription "Bank of Liverpool". The bank was founded in 1831 and bought Martins Bank in 1919, after which it was known as "Bank of Liverpool and Martins Ltd". The name was shortened to "Martins Bank" in 1928. It was bought by Barclays in 1969 and lost its separate identity. The Boardroom in its splendid former

headquarters in Water Street (built in 1927 but now deserted by the bank) was truly magnificent - in a day when banks thought that showing off their wealth was good for business. The bank incorporated Heywoods Bank, which had been set up by two wealthy slave trader brothers and which had its office, later a branch of Barclays, off Castle Street until recent times.

The Sir Thomas Hotel says it "offers guests a delicate blend of Liverpool's history and modern culture". When I asked who was the "Sir Thomas" after whom the hotel (and the adjacent street) were named, the staff did not know. It was in fact named after Sir Thomas Johnson, who was MP for Liverpool for 21 years and Lord Mayor in 1715. He was among the pioneers who built the world's first enclosed dock (the "Old Dock") and who made money as a slave trader. He died, penniless, in London in 1728.

It would be nice for visitors to the city to have snippets of information like this made available to them. Many cities which try to attract cultural tourists have long done this. This is the sort of thing the Culture Company should be concerned with to protect the "legacy" of 2008 - the ability to go on attracting tourists to visit the city to enjoy its heritage and culture.

The Irish Guards, 40% whom are Merseysiders, held a special service in the Anglican Cathedral last month and then paraded down to Lime Street and St John's Gardens to lay a wreath at one of the memorials there. This was a splendid sight, with some soldiers in desert clothing, others in scarlet tunics and with the band playing. The event did not draw particularly large crowds, mainly because it was not much advertised in the press until the day it took place (except by the Forum, which did so one day earlier). We were told that this was for security reasons but this takes a bit of believing when the whole world knows that the Guards parade every day of the week outside Buckingham Palace. Why the secrecy here? For some former soldiers, this was a very emotional occasion.

The Liverpool Carters Working Horse Monument Fund Project needs £120,000 to erect a full-size bronze statue of a Liverpool Working Horse to commemorate the amazing work done by horses and Carters for over 250 years in Liverpool. The ex-carters, who run the project have so far raised £77,000, which has allowed the full-size clay model to be finished by equine sculptor Judy Boyt. When another £43,000 is raised the statue will be cast in bronze and installed in the city, possible at Albert Dock. A successful fundraising Luncheon was recently held at The Athenaeum. Contact: Liverpool Carters Working Horse Monument Fund, P O Box 136, Liverpool L14 5WZ or phone Sharon Brown 0151 259 0327

Liverpool Irish Festival (Director Anna Gilbert, phone 07903 142 133) is organising a project around James Larkin for the 2008 Festival. Larkin, the son of Irish parents, was born in Liverpool on 21 January 1876. When he was five years old he was sent to live with his grandparents in Newry in Ireland. He returned to England in 1885 and became a dock labourer. Converted to socialism, he joined the Independent Labour Party in 1893 and spent his spare time selling The Clarion. In 1893 he became a foreman dock-porter for T. & J. Harrison Ltd. The following year he was sacked when he went on strike with his men but remained active in the union and in 1906 he was elected General Organiser of the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL).

In 1910 Larkin was found guilty of misappropriating money while working for the NUDL and was sentenced to a year's hard labour. Many members of the union believed that Larkin had been convicted on false evidence and following a petition from the Dublin Trades Council he was released. In 1912 he joined with James Connolly in forming the Irish Labour Party and later that

year won a seat on the Dublin Corporation. On the outbreak of the First World War, he called on Irishmen not to become involved in the conflict.

As well as organizing strikes he also became involved in the temperance movement.

An historic synagogue in Greenbank Drive, Sefton Park, built in 1936 to a design by architect Alfred Ernest Shennan and consecrated on August 15 1937 but closed on January 8 this year, has been upgraded to Grade II*, putting it on a par with Croxteth Hall and the Cunard and Port of Liverpool buildings and in the top 5% of all listed buildings in the country.

English Heritage, which operates the Grading system, described the synagogue as “one of the finest art deco synagogues in the country”, saying that it has an important socio-historic significance as an inter-war synagogue of 1936-7 that represents one of the last free cultural expressions of European Jewry before the Holocaust.” It became a refuge for homeless families in the Blitz. All listed buildings have a level of protection, but anyone wanting to redevelop the synagogue will now have to satisfy even tougher tests, showing how they plan to maintain its historic nature.

Nicholas Murray has published "So spirited a town" (Liverpool University Press £12.95). He refers to Warren Bradley having said that Liverpool is having "one of the biggest urban transformations ever seen in this country" and contends that this must refer to building shopping facilities. He speaks of the outflow of people from the city in the post-war years, saying that such people are the "most ardent patriots". Some people, he says, call such people Liverpolitans but to most we are scousers. (Some use the term Wackers but you editor thinks this applies to Birkenhead men, who wacked rivets into ships' hulls at Cammell Lairds).

A set of historic gates to a “little gem” of a Liverpool park are to be restored after campaigners led by Gabriel Muies raised health and safety concerns. Work has started on the entrance to Princes Park, Toxteth of a £70,000 scheme to bring the gates and their pillars back to their former glory.

Liverpool City Council is in discussions with Sandwell Council about the return of the Sailor's Gates originally installed in the city's old Sailors' Home in 1850. after the Sailors' Home was badly damaged in World War II, gates so they can form part of a memorial garden on the site where the home used to stand in what is now the new Liverpool One development. They were given to the Avery Historical Museum, Birmingham, in 1951.

In this edition of the Newsletter, we are happy to expand our coverage of the progress of events to include recent sports results. In recent games in the top divisions, Everton lost to Deportes La Semana 1 – 0 on 24 February but Liverpool beat Central Español 3 -1 on the same day. These were of course in the Chile and Uruguay leagues respectfully, Everton being based in the city of Viña del Mar on the Pacific coast and Liverpool in the capital city of Montevideo. Football spread from Britain around the world in the late 1800s and early 1900s, particularly through the activities of British expatriates in those countries. The Everton Viña del Mar club was founded in 1909, Liverpool Montevideo in 1915.

The history of the two Liverpool clubs has been intertwined almost from the start. Everton was founded in 1878 and Liverpool was founded as a split-off from it in 1892. At the present time, as Liverpool plan a new stadium in Stanley Park and Everton plan to move to Kirkby, it is interesting to note that Everton's very first game was played in the south east corner of Stanley

Park. The two teams currently jostle for fourth place in the Premiership, which would guarantee them a place in the European Champions League next year - meaning a lot more revenue from television rights and receipts at the turnstiles. Meanwhile, Everton women's team have just beaten Arsenal in the women's premier League Cup. Well done to them!

Ben Johnson puts the final touches to his panorama of Liverpool at the Walker on 6 March. Many people have been to watch the artists at work in the Gallery, a stimulating experience quite apart from the considerable interest which the work itself generates.

At the Walker there will be an exhibition entitled " Art in the Age of Steam" from 18 April to - 10 August 2008, featuring artists such as Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro and Edward Hopper. It captures the fear and excitement of early train travel as it explores artists' responses to the advent of steam locomotion.

Cains Brewery run tours round their brewery. (0151 709 8734). Other businesses might find it useful to let customers go behind the scenes sometimes. We congratulate Cains on their special 2008 beers.

The Friends of Liverpool Monuments have recently published an excellent pamphlet on sculptures in Liverpool. The city truly has a remarkable number of sculptures which are mostly *objets d'art* in their own right and also tell part of the story of the city. St John's Gardens, St George's Plateau and St James Garden (behind the Anglican Cathedral) are good places to start looking at these but they are to be seen in many streets. See their website.

The world premiere of One Step Forward, One Step Back takes place at the city's Anglican Cathedral 7 April – 10 May 2008 and uses Liverpool's vibrant cityscape as its backdrop. Visitors will encounter weird and wonderful characters as the drama unfolds – they will be led through the awe-inspiring building into areas never seen before by the public – including the rarely visited cathedral rooftop.

Previous performances by internationally acclaimed theatre company *dreamthinkspeak* have taken place in an art deco cinema, backstage at a theatre, in an old abattoir, at the former Majestic hotel in Kuala Lumpur and a vast disused paper factory in Moscow. Famous landmark public buildings include Somerset House in London, New Registry House, Edinburgh and the Old Treasury in Perth and the Torrens Building, in Adelaide, Australia.

The overall effect is like being part of a journey with new and unexpected experiences – audiences can look forward to a very memorable and personal encounter through this production which utilises models, film, music and live action. The production will draw together a company of 60 professional performers, local students, designers and technicians.

Tickets £12 (Concessions £8). Age 12+ only. Tickets: 0844 8000 400 or from '08 Place in Whitechapel.

"City Magazine" is delivered free to 200,000 homes and businesses in the city This gives much information about events for Capital of Culture Year. In other parts of Merseyside (Wirral, at least) there is not much information about what is going on. Which is a pity, considering that many people in Wirral, Sefton and Knowsley would be very interested to have such information.

Andrew Pearce, Editor