



## NEWSLETTER

No 41 : 31 March 2008

### LOCAL ELECTIONS

Local elections are upon us. You may decide how to vote according to such policies as those on social services, education, housing or public transport. If you happen to meet one of the candidates, you could ask what his or her party's policy is on the "legacy" of 2008 will be - what support will be offered to maintaining our wonderful buildings and supporting the performing arts and whether the voluntary heritage and cultural sector will be properly recognized.

**Wirral History and Heritage Forum** held a successful fair on 8 March attracting 53 local societies. Visitors commented on the large measure of support from Councillors and Council officials.

### LIVERPOOL'S DOWNING STREET CONNECTIONS

Liverpool has a number of connections with previous occupants of 10, Downing Street over the years. The second Earl of Liverpool was Prime Minister from 1812 to 1827. His came from Oxfordshire. Available literature shows no connection between either him or his father with the city of Liverpool but his father is said to have taken the city's name for his title when he received his earldom in 1796 "in honour of the great trading port". The second Earl became Prime Minister after his predecessor was shot by John Bellingham, a Liverpool man, in the lobby of the House of Commons. Bellingham blamed the government for not having saved him from the consequences of a failed commercial venture, which had resulted in a period of imprisonment in Russia.

William Gladstone was Prime Minister from 1868 to 1874, from 1880 to 1885,, in 1886 and from 1892 to 1894. He was born in Rodney Street, Liverpool. A recent letter to The Times complained that any other city would have given more prominence to the birthplace of such a man than merely to affix a blue plaque outside the door. This is the kind of history that the tourists who come to see after 2008 is over will be interested in.

The fourteenth Earl of Derby was Prime Minister in 1852, from 1866 to 1868 and from 1858 to 1859. Harold Wilson was Prime Minister 1964 to 1970 and 1974 to 1976. He attended Wirral Grammar School for Boys and was MP for Ormskirk from 1950 and, following changes to the constituency boundaries, for Huyton, both including the then new housing development of Kirkby.

### THE COLOURS OF POLITICS

Do you support the Reds or the Blues - in politics? Be careful! The Conservatives used red rosettes for many years up until a few years after the Second World War, as did the party in a number of towns and cities. Liverpool was one of last major provincial cities to have a Conservative majority. One of the party's former bastions is now being converted into a luxury hotel after a period of serving as the Municipal Annex in Dale Street. This is right next to the Municipal Buildings. We suppose the old Tories could keep a close eye on the municipal pen pushers by being next door.

### FUTURE EVENTS

Liverpool Opera Circle (founded 1935 by Sir Thomas Beecham to provide audiences for opera) is mounting a GALA CELEBRITY CONCERT & DINNER at the ATHENAEUM (Church Alley off Church  
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Street) on Sunday April 27th @ 4pm. International Singers led by Paul Charles Clarke (Liverpool's only Tenor of International status at present) with pianist of equally international renown, Ingrid Surgenor. All profits to be donated to assisting the further training of an opera student at the RNCM. The event is in memory of the late Frank Lenhan, whose efforts launched many opera singers of today on the occasion of their professional debut. Tickets for the Concert £20: tickets for the Concert and Dinner £40. Booking: 0151 228 8874 or 0151 428 8923. email [ursula.hamilton@btinternet.com](mailto:ursula.hamilton@btinternet.com)

**Liverpool University and National Museums Liverpool** are organizing a major international conference on Public History that will examine areas such as how museums shape our sense of identity and our emotional responses to subjects such as the slave trade. It will examine the role of public history in art, archaeology, film and sport. Speakers will include former Minister for Welfare Reform, Frank Field MP, Sandy Nairne, Director of the National Portrait Gallery and Lonnie Bunch, Director of the National Museum of African American History in the US. The conference will be held at Merseyside Maritime Museum from Thursday, 10 April to Saturday, 12 April 2008. Entry costs £80 but tickets are half-price for those with a Liverpool postcode. (Not Wirral? – Ed.) Call 0207 862 8756 or email [samantha.jordan@sas.ac.uk](mailto:samantha.jordan@sas.ac.uk) to register. Bursaries offered to post graduate students. Info: [hhoock@liv.ac.uk](mailto:hhoock@liv.ac.uk) or [C.Paillard@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:C.Paillard@liverpool.ac.uk)

**St Helens Choral Society** presents music by Mozart and Britten at St Helens Parish Church at 7.30 on 19 April. (Tickets £7) Info: 01257 464475.

Colin Walsh, organist at Lincoln Cathedral, will give a concert at 7.30 pm on Saturday 3 May at Christ Church, Port Sunlight. The organ here, built in 1904, is the largest surviving Willis organ and the oldest in its original condition in the world. Tickets £5 at the door. The organ in the Anglican Cathedral is by Willis.

The Peter Davies lecture takes place at the Maritime Museum at 7 pm on 24 April. Professor Wray will speak about the major shipping companies involved in the arrival of Japanese competitors into traded between Europe and East Asia in the 1890s, finishing in 1950 when they were welcomed back into the shipping conference system following the Second World War.

**Birkenhead History Society** has a trip to Llandudno and Penrhyn on 3 May. Info: 0151 652 1983.

**St Helens Sinfonietta** plays at St Helens Town Hall on 4 April (Info: 01744 455305)

**The Friends of Liverpool Monuments** are organising a series of heritage walks. On Sunday 6 April 2008 a walk will be led by Robin Riley from the bottom of William Brown Street at 10 am, to tour the Cultural Quarter. Buy refreshments at The Walker afterwards. Charge: £5 (but £1 for students, retired and unwaged and free for members of the Friends of Liverpool Monuments). Info: <http://liverpoolwalks.co.uk/whs/map01.htm> . Other proposed Sunday events this year will be:

- 4 May – Anfield Cemetery – Liverpool history in headstones, led by Bob Haliday.
- 1 June – Ropewalks – Sculptures and buildings in the Bold Street area, led by Alan Maycock.
- 6 July– Prescott – Heritage, architecture, clock and watch making, led by Robin Riley.
- 3 August– Southport – Lord Street sculptures and curiosities
- 7 September – Flaybrick Cemetery – nonconformists section and arboreal tour and Birkenhead Park, led by Simon Petris and a Park Ranger.

**The Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire** will hear Dr Peter Rooney speak on "Modernising Liverpool 1818-1839" on 14 May at 12.30 in the Hornby Room at Liverpool Central Library.

**St George's Hall Heritage Centre** has a series of meetings including Steve Binns on the Civil War (2 pm 10 April), Frank Carlyle on the Irish Famine (2 pm 24 April) and Steve Binns on the city's two Cathedrals at 2 pm on 8 May and 13 May at 2.30. Info: 233 3007.

## RECENT HAPPENINGS

The Grade I listed **Bluecoat Centre** for contemporary art has reopened after a £12.5m refurbishment. A wing not used since damage in World War II has reopened and a 200-seat theatre and various studios, shops and refreshment facilities have been installed.

**The Friends of Birkenhead Park** have a project for children to learn about the links with New York's Central Park, which was laid out by F.L.Olstead, and incorporates ideas he picked up in Birkenhead.

**The Board of the Swedish Church Abroad** has decided to transfer the Liverpool vicar's post to London, which already has a staffing complement of 11. He would be a travelling Minister for Britain and Ireland. The Liverpool congregation would be evicted from the Church on Park Road in December 2008 and the building put up for sale. The building is Sweden's (and Scandinavia's) oldest overseas mission church in continuous operation. It was built on land provided by the Corporation of Liverpool and it has been funded by the local community. It is Grade II listed, was viewed by contemporaries as 'the largest and most beautiful seamen's church in the world' and remains a unique feature of Liverpool's changing skyline. It is part of the mixed texture of Liverpool's heritage. The Church seeks support to oppose this move. Info: [roger.metcalfe@pilkington.com](mailto:roger.metcalfe@pilkington.com), 01695 625 998 or Stan Royden: [nortork@hotmail.com](mailto:nortork@hotmail.com), 0151 632 2718. We wish them luck.

"**Wirral Champion**" had an interesting article about the comedian Tommy Handley. The city's great earlier comedians are sometimes overlooked, no doubt because recordings of their broadcasts are not generally available. The whole nation listened to Tommy in the darkest days of World War II. He came up through Aigburth Amateur Society and the Dingle's Wellesley Society. His ITMA (It's That Man Again) show was launched in 1939. Characters included the inebriated Colonel Chinstrap "I don 't mind if I do"), Mrs Tickle, Vodkin the Russian inventor and Funf, the German agent. Sam Costa, Maurice Denham, Deryck Guyler and Hattie Jacques also played in the show.

The new owners of a famous Liverpool building have unveiled plans to transform the former department store, while keeping its historic features. Developers want to transform the Grade II listed **Lewis's building** into a £105m city centre "leisure destination". The exterior of the building - and Epstein's famous Liverpool Resurgent statue, locally nicknamed 'Dickie Lewis' - would be cleaned and preserved.

We were delighted when we heard that, after repeated urgings by ourselves and many others, progress is being made to salvage something from the former **Warships museum** in Birkenhead docks. The Merseytravel project to display the World War II German submarine has received a half million pound boost from the European Union. The new display at Seacombe is expected to be open in the summer.

Liverpool's **FACT** arts centre in Wood Street will be one of six organisations to act as a "hub" for creative businesses across the region, as part of Gordon Brown's plans to revive the "Cool Britannia" spirit of the 1990s.

As part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the Intercultural Cities Conference (1 – 3 May in Liverpool) will look at migration, diversity and urban life in a fresh way.

**The Arts Council** last month announced a new investment of £1m from its strategic development funds to support Manchester International Festival's programme of work to 2011. The announcement, which will see £0.5m awarded in 2008-09 and a further £0.5m in 2009-10, is part of a national drive to support artistic excellence and innovation. We hope Liverpool is on to this.

Tristram Hunt, author of "Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City" has been writing about the sad state of Liverpool's legacy of heritage buildings. He quotes the devastation of World War II. Between August 9, 1940, and May 9, 1941, Merseyside endured 68 air raids gutting much of the historic neighbourhood surrounding the docks. The worst architectural victim was John Foster's Greek revival Custom House, a testament to Liverpool's 19th-century ambition to play the Athens of the North: a city of Commerce and Culture. Rather than rebuilding this shattered civic icon, the postwar planners opted for Liverpool Heritage Forum April 2008 Newsletter

demolition. It was a decision that set the tone for the ensuing decades of planning terror as dock warehouses, stuccoed Regency houses and elegant piazzas fell victim to the ring-roads and clearances. He anticipated that during Capital of Culture year, the demolitions would ease up. But as Liverpool's prosperity accelerates, he argues, the Council is still prone to dismiss its marvelous historic fabric as an impediment to growth. During the past ten years some 36 listed buildings have been lost to the bulldozers. Whereas Merseyside once enjoyed a Georgian building stock comparable to Bath, what little remains is now under threat. In addition to the terraces of Seel Street, there are numerous properties in Duke Street, Dale Street and Great George Square - as well as such listed landmark churches as St Luke's, Berry Street and St Andrew's. Add to that the Toxteth terraces and Welsh Street houses that remain under planning blight. When Councillors talk about the "legacy" of 2008, these heritage buildings are a large part of that legacy. Once knocked down they cannot be recreated.

Liverpool University Press (4 Cambridge Street, Liverpool L69 7ZU; tel: 0151 794 2233) has a range of books for anyone studying Liverpool's history. Liverpool aspects of The Middle Ages, transatlantic slavery, public sculpture, privateers, pottery, birds and design culture are among topics covered.

In the last edition we spoke of football teams in South America bearing the name Liverpool. Other evidence of the travelling habits of some of our ancestors are the three Liverpools in the USA (in Texas, Pennsylvania and New York state) and an East Liverpool in Ohio, Liverpool in Nova Scotia, Canada, Liverpool in New South Wales in Australia and Liverpool Land in Greenland. The inhabitants of one of them are called "Liverpoolites".

Congratulations to Mick Elliott on his appointment as Director of Culture at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, from 9 June. Mick's time as Chief Executive of the Phil has seen a tremendous flowering of the music played and the number of people attending. He deserves our warm thanks and best wishes. Members of the Phil have a Conference on 14 April. (Did you know that the Phil is the fifth oldest institution giving public concerts in Europe?)

The "Big Issue", the magazine which supports homeless people, is among the many publications which have featured Liverpool this year. The article quotes Clive Grey, a lecturer at Edge Hill College on what he calls "scouse imperialism" with the dialect spreading to adjacent parts of Lancashire and Cheshire.

**Andrew Pearce, Editor.**

P.S. We await action by the authorities for: support for a plan to repeat the successful public meetings held last year in the Town Hall, especially to coincide with the arrival of cruise liners; an additional information panel at the site of Liverpool Castle; the presentation of something about Liverpool's heritage in the empty space in the Queen Square Merseytravel Office and, in the context of giving tourists a favourable impression of the city, European flags in the street, festive "welcome" signs in shops and the clearing up of a number of Grot Spots, such as outside the former Picket pub by the Phil and finally a request that Phil Redmond should come to meet the city's voluntary cultural and heritage societies.