

NEWSLETTER

No 42 : 14 April 2008

EDITORIAL

Whatever the result of the local elections in Liverpool, attention must now be on the "legacy" of 2008. The city's year as European Capital of Culture was not meant to be a flash in the pan. It was meant to transform Liverpool long term into a city which would bring in tourists, give them plenty to spend their money on, create jobs and make the city better known and more attractive as a place for businesses to invest in. This means putting culture and heritage in a priority position in the City Council's economic policies alongside developing factory sites and transport links. 2008 was never meant to be mainly about street parties and paper hats, although there were times when this seemed to be the focus.

We understand that the City Council has a document proposing actions for the legacy period (prepared by consultants, of course!). We were not consulted and don't know what the document says. We think it should include,

- A. A unified way of administering the tourism, culture and heritage policies within the City Council.
- B. A determination not to let the city's heritage assets be torn down in the name of redevelopment or sod off.
- C. An effective way for voluntary societies and ordinary people to communicate with officials - and receive answers.
- D. Improving cleanliness of the streets, highly visible areas adjacent to them, pubs, restaurants and public toilets.

An example to show the importance of point A. Last year the Heritage Forum ran three public lectures in the Town Hall which over 300 people attended. We had negotiated the use of the Council Chamber free of charge. We want to do something similar this year to coincide with the arrivals of the cruise ships at the new terminal and to discourage cruise passengers from coach tips to Manchester (which has previously happened). But the Town Hall won't discuss this with us because they cannot agree with the Culture Company over which budget the money should come from. Yet the lectures cost the public purse nothing at all! We are left wondering whether the Town Hall actually supports 2008.

On point B, we are pleased that there seems to be progress on creating a new list of buildings which have an increased measure of protection from developers and we wish the City Council's conservation team success in progressing this. Yet Josephine Butler House opposite the Phil is being demolished as we write.

To see why point D is necessary, walk from Derby Square (at the top of Lord Street) down to the Dock Road (Wapping), either down the slope at the side of Graeme House or, for even more shocking proof, through the arch of Graeme House and down the steps at the back. It is unbelievable that a "Capital" city can tolerate such filth on a major pedestrian route. Or look at the frontage of the Picket pub as you approach the Philharmonic Hall. Yes, the litter has been picked up but the weeds are still there. Ten pounds' worth of pansies from B & Q would make the place look as though someone cared. Or look at the skeleton of a phone booth in Dawson Street which, according to local cabbies, has never been connected to the telephone system. Or look at the dirt on the litter of No 25 Rodney Street, also on view to anyone walking to the Phil? Do the Councillors and the Town Hall mandarins never walk about the city centre and see these things for themselves.

It's a pity to have to air these things in public but how else can we get the powers-that-be to listen? What, you may ask, has all this to do with culture and heritage? The answer is that the impression that our heritage and culture visitors will take home with them is as likely to include the litter they cannot help seeing as the glories of the Walker, St George's Hall and the Cathedrals.

SOCIETY FOCUS

- We are sad to learn that the Liverpool Scottish Museum is to close on 30 September. Dismantling of displays starts in June 2008 Info: www.liverpoolscottish.org.uk . A book entitled "Special Service of a Hazardous Nature: The Story of the Liverpool Scottish Involvement with Special Forces in WW22 by Dennis Reeves is available at £12.49. Mail to Major I.L. Riley at The Shambles, 51a Common Lane, Culcheth, Warrington WA3 4EY.
- St Helens Writers' Circle meets on Fridays at 1.30 at the town's Citadel Arts Centre Info: 01744 735436.
- The Dante Alighieri Society was formed in Italy in July 1889 with the intention of creating a society to promote Italian culture and language around the world, especially among expatriate Italians. The Liverpool society exists to meet these aims locally through a programme of social events and meetings (most of which are in English, but where Italian is used, help is given.) The society was named after Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), a pre-Renaissance poet from Florence and the author of The Divine Comedy, and of Dante's inferno fame, who is considered the father of the Italian language. Info: <http://dantealighierisoc.tripod.com/index.html>
- [Liverpool History Society](http://www.liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk/) has rewritten its web site (courtesy of Rob Ainsworth.)
<http://www.liverpoolhistorysociety.org.uk/>

NEWS

- "2008" is bringing the tourists in. The number of hotels in Liverpool has risen from 24 with 2127 beds in 1998 to 55 with 5155 beds. They are doing very well. One hotel company shortly to open new premises is already wishing it had planned for something 50% bigger.
- We wrote last time about the paucity of opera in the city and the rather disappointing numbers of people attending the last Welsh National Opera visit. We hope to say more about this in a future edition. It can be argued that more people would pay the inevitably high ticket price for top quality live opera if they have been able to experience opera in some other way, from listening to CDs upwards. One way is to go to amateur performances, such as the recent very creditable performance of Mozart's Don Giovanni by the Una Voce group at Southport Arts Centre. Look out for future performances by them. Another way is see opera on film such as the performance of La Traviata at the Vue cinema in Southport (also at Birkenhead). Opera on film may not be to everyone's taste but the superlative performance of the La Scala company in this film, makes up for it. Films of more operas are coming. (www.artsallainacemedia.com/opera).

FLAGS

- David Brazendale has republished and added some new material to "The Liverpool Guide", first printed in 1797. It is dedicated to the Earl of Liverpool "whose abilities and exertions have so eminently contributed to the commercial interests of the nation and of which Liverpool has so amply participated; this sketch of the growing prosperity of a town so appropriately distinguished by his adoption is, with the highest respect, inscribed by the author". One item in this fascinating book is about the signal flagpoles on Bidston Hill, the holes for some of which can still be seen. Flags were put up on these poles by spotters to show which ships were approaching the Mersey along the Wirral coast. These flags could be observed at the Tower at the bottom of Water Street (and in later years from the office building which replaced it) and the owners alerted.
- What about flags celebrating Capital Of Culture Year in the city centre? We walked round to see for ourselves. There was a union flag on the Town Hall the other day (at half mast, a former mayor having died), a dirty and torn Year of Heritage (2007) flag on the old Bank of England building in Castle street, a flag at the Athenaeum, a St George's flag on the Municipal Building and a clean union flag at the Police HQ. The RC Cathedral has some good banners outside it. A Market stall in Whitechapel has a banner for each of the football clubs. (The Liverpool one was upside down). The only European flag the editor could find (this is EUROPEAN Capital of Culture year) was on the Holiday Inn Express at the airport (Good for them! Continental tourists will be pleased).
- The current Journal of the RSA (the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts Manufactures & Commerce), a body sometimes criticized by some of its own members for being too London-centered, has interesting references to the BBC's persistent London focus ("cocooned in central London" as it puts it) which has led it to portray the northern working class in a false way. Referring to media people cocooned in central London, It tells the tale of playwright Alun Owen - author of the 1969 play No Trams to Lime Street - who recalled challenging a BBC wardrobe mistress who

simply lined up a play's cast to be dressed in mufflers and caps. "My life!", said the playwright. "Haven't you heard about Burton's? We dress differently nowadays."

ROSCOE

A remarkable feature of Liverpool's cultural scene is the Roscoe Lecture series. Generally held in St George's Hall, these attract as many as 1,000 people to hear lectures by eminent speakers, such as the Dalai Lama, the Presidents of Ireland and Ghana and various Cabinet Ministers. Ian Tracey recently gave a fascinating lecture about music in Liverpool over the years. It was poignant to hear such a lecture in St George's Hall in which so much great music has been performed over the years, not least by Ian himself as City Organist.

In a lecture on 29 March last year, Lord Alton outlined Roscoe's life. 200 years earlier, an Act of Parliament which abolished the slave trade throughout the British Empire was passed. Roscoe, one of Liverpool's MPs, played a major part in this. Although it would not be until 1833 that slavery itself was made unlawful, the vote in March 1807 represented the culmination of a historic campaign to challenge a deep-seated evil. Sir James Picton, Liverpool's greatest historian, (after whom the Picton Library and Picton Road in Wavertree are named) said of William Roscoe: "No native resident of Liverpool has done more to elevate the character of the community, by uniting the successful pursuit of literature and art with the ordinary duties of the citizen and man of business."

Roscoe was born on March 8th, 1753, in Liverpool's Mount Pleasant. He attended a day school in Paradise Street. He ended his formal education at the age of twelve, and worked in his father's market garden growing potatoes and later worked in a book store. He taught himself a reading knowledge of Latin, French, and Italian, learned to etch and acquired a love of the fine arts. He was a Unitarian. (They believe that Jesus was a great man and a prophet of God but not God himself).

Roscoe was articled in 1769 to Mr. John Eyes, a Church Street solicitor, became an attorney in 1774 and was called to the bar at Gray's Inn in 1797. He married and lived in the then countryside of the Dingle. In 1773 he founded "A Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Painting and Design" and in 1775 organised the first exhibition of paintings ever held in Liverpool, or indeed any provincial city or town. The exhibition mainly featured the paintings of local artists.

In 1783 he and some friends inaugurated another society - one which organised a series of public lectures with the objective of educating public taste. This Liverpool Academy was later taken under the wing of the Liverpool Royal Institution which Roscoe helped pioneer in 1817. The Academy was to be a place of learning imbued with the explicit objective and ideal of contradicting the lust for money which had become the hallmark of Liverpool's commercial life. Lord Alton wondered what Roscoe would have made of the current Roscoe Lecture series of over 65 lectures over ten years, now under the management the Foundation for Citizenship at Liverpool John Moores University.

In 1777 and 1787 Roscoe published pamphlets against the slave trade - a brave thing to do in Liverpool as it could have jeopardized his own professional interests.

He wrote a widely acclaimed biography of Lorenzo de' Medici leading Horace Walpole to describe him as "the best historian and poet of this age" and it gave Roscoe the idea of trying to turn Liverpool into another Florence.

In 1799, Roscoe purchased Allerton Hall - where the natural beauty of his surroundings would later provide the inspiration for "The Butterfly Ball". In the same year he and a group of friends created a scholars' library, the Liverpool Athenaeum. The club still houses a collection of Roscoe's books. He helped to establish the city's Botanic Gardens, initially in Mount Pleasant, later moved to Botanic Road. Roscoe invited the celebrated botanist, Sir James Edward Smith to open the Gardens and it was from specimens held in the Gardens that sketches and coloured plates - many in Roscoe's own hand - were made and exhibited widely. Roscoe was a very early "Green" and his fame as a naturalist led to the plans for the Liverpool botanic Gardens being copied in places as far away as Calcutta and Philadelphia.

Against the odds Roscoe was elected to the House of Commons for the Liverpool constituency. A colleague said: "Roscoe spoke yesterday for his maiden speech. Windham says his manner is dull, coarse and provincial. I do not think that his talents are such as will enable him to add to his reputation by his public speaking."

February 23rd would be the day of the speech for which he would be remembered; and for which he would suffer at the hands of his constituents. William Wilberforce and his supporters told him that his speech and

his vote were worth twenty of anyone else's because Roscoe would have to pay a price. This was the first time that a Liverpool member had spoken out against the slave trade. In the House of Commons he spoke up clearly and demanding outright abolition.

The price which Roscoe paid for lifting his voice was considerable. He returned to Liverpool on May 2nd 1807, the day after the abolition of the trade became law. A combination of enraged slave traders and religious zealots - who reviled Roscoe because he had championed Catholic relief - assailed Roscoe as he stepped from his coach and horses in the city's Castle Street.

His refusal to be crushed was expressed later in that same year when he wrote and published his wonderful poem "The Butterfly Ball and The Grasshoppers' Feast", which set a trend in children's picture books and sold more than 40,000 copies. Originally written to appease his young son, Robert, who was cross at being excluded from a dinner which his father had to attend, Sir George Smart set it to music, at the bidding of George III, for the young princesses Elizabeth, Augusta and Mary.

In 1831 Roscoe caught flu and died on June 30th, aged 78. He was interred in the burial ground abutting Renshaw Street Chapel. A small monument and garden remain as Roscoe's memorial and are accessed from Mount Pleasant.

John Moores University has done much to make Roscoe better known but he is still not celebrated as a hero in Liverpool as much as William Wilberforce is in his native city of Hull, where his house is a museum and his work in leading the anti-slavery campaign widely celebrated. Do the authorities in Liverpool concentrate too much on the evils of the slave trade and not enough on the role that some of the city's citizens, Roscoe in particular, took to stamp it out?

Forthcoming Roscoe lecturers include Crosby-born George Davies, fashion designer of Next, Asda and Per Una at Marks & Spencer fame, the Archbishop of York, the Rt Revd Dr John Sentamu, Peter Sissons, who went to school in Liverpool with John Lennon and Jimmy Tarbuck, food-guru Loyd Grossman and local poet Roger McGough. Contact : 0151 231 3852.

Andrew Pearce, Editor

Editor's personal footnote: Readers of this newsletter will be familiar with my attempts to spread knowledge that King John built a castle in Liverpool (where modern Derby Square is located at the top of Lord Street), similar in size to Harlech Castle. So it will not surprise them to learn that when I saw there was a horse called King John's Castle in the Grand National, I put a small sum on it at the bookies - and duly won £15! Clearly, readers who did not win £15 on the National should pay more attention to these columns!

EVENTS

16 April: Knowsley Historical Society's Sir Alan Waterworth - Latham House and the Civil War in Liverpool.

18 April: International World Heritage Day. Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site – is running two events:

§ Free tours of the World Heritage Site on an open top bus. Explanations of Liverpool's inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage list.

§ At 11 am, an inter-active DVD Uncover Albert Dock and the Pier Head, a UNESCO World Heritage Site will be launched at a short event in the first floor Parish Room at the Church of Our Lady and St Nicholas on Chapel Street and I invite you to attend to collect a complementary copy. Contact: 0151 233 5367

20th April 2008. 7 pm. Passport to Liverpool premiere will be held at the Liverpool Philharmonic hall and the After- show party in Fly in the Loaf - Hardman St (£30 - includes free DVD, entrance to premiere and after-show party with free drink and buffet). Special offer, two tickets for £50. Info: www.brightmoonfilms.co.uk <<http://www.brightmoonfilms.co.uk/>. This documentary film explains why Liverpool is different to other English Cities – how its character has been shaped by seafarers, dockers, independent women, migrants, movement and of course the Irish connection.

20 April: Liverpool History Society has a talk by Robin Riley on "Monuments lost and found". 2pm at Hope at Everton, Shaw Street.

26 and 27 April: the Liverpool Sonnet Walks will celebrate Shakespeare's birthday. Lodestar Theatre Company, promoters of The Liverpool Shakespeare Festival, have picked a route taking in major Liverpool landmarks during which there will be encounters with various actors, disguised as members of the public, who will enact short scenes culminating with one of Shakespeare's sonnets. Tickets limited. Info: 0151 727 1703 or from News from Nowhere in Bold Street. See www.LodestarTheatreCompany.co.uk.

27 April: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909.

1 May: Liverpooljazz at the Bluecoat at 8 pm. (£3/£6). Tickets 0151 702 5324.

1 May: Friend sof St George's Hall have a talk by Anne Walton on the Trial of Mrs Maybrick .Tickets from 0151 255 6909.

5 May: Ian Tracey plays the organ in St George's Hall. Tel: 0151 225 6909.

4 May: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909.

8 May, 15 May and 29 June. Lunchtime talks about Liverpool's buildings at St George's Hall. Tel: 0151 233 3007.

9 May; Northern School of Contemporary Dance perform specially commissioned work at the Bluecoat at 8 pm. (£9/£7). Tickets 0151 702 5324.

11 May: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909.

15 May: Creative Communities conference (Dept. for Culture, Media and Support)/Heritage Lottery Fund. Andy Burnham, Culture Minister will speak. BT Convention Centre. Book: www.neilstewartassociates.com.se216 or phone 020 7324 4330.

14 June: Festival of Hope involving both Cathedrals. Large free Gospel Arts celebration. See:www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk or phone 0151 709 3789.

14 May: Peter Rooney speaks to the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire on "Modernisin Liverpool 1818-1839: Urban Planning and Technological Innovation in the Work of John Foster Jnr". 12.30 in the Gornby Room of the Central Library.

14 May: Knowsley Historical Society's Knowsley Historical Society's Tony Parkinson - D Day Landings

17 May: Three of the best musical societies in St Helens perform songs from musical theatre, past and present at the Town Hall. Contact: 01744 455305.

18 May: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909.

18 May: Liverpool History Society has a talk by Ken Pye on "Liverpool – a true capital of

19 May: Friends of St George's Hall AGM. 1.30 pm.29 May – 1 June: Southport International Jazz Festival. Info: 01704 500036.

26 May: Ian Tracey plays the organ at St George's Hall 12.45 to 1.30 pm. Free.

1 June: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909

5 June: Ian Tracey performs on the organ at St George's Hall at 7.30 pm. £5.

8 June: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909.

10 June: Ian Tracey plays the organ at St George's Hall 12.45 to 1.30 pm. Free

14 June: Festival of Hope involving both Cathedrals. Large free Gospel Arts celebration. See:www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk or phone 0151 709 3789.

14th June: Exhibition of Photographs of Old Knowsley and its People in Knowsley Village Hall. A new book of reminiscences from residents old and new, will be launched at the event. Info: 0151 546 967 or 1knowsley.sandra@blueyonder.co.uk.

14 June: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire has day conference at LACE "Liverpool's Catholics 1750-1930". Contact: Denise Jones on 05009062@hope.ac.uk

14 June: Festival of Hope involving both Cathedrals, following the International Youth Congress. (Info 0151 709 6271.

15 June: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909.

18 June: Knowsley Historical Society's Knowsley Historical Society's June Corner- Curiosity Corner

20 June: Ken Pye will speak to the English Speaking Union on his book "Discover Liverpool – the complete history" at the Athenaeum at 12.30. Book on 0151 636 5512.

21 June: Southport Bach Choir perform "A German Requiem by Brahms. At 7.45 pm. Tickets from 99 Cambridge Road, Southport PR9 9SB. People interested in joining the choir should call 01704 229 416.

22 June: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909.

28th June to 5th July: Wirral-based No Nonsense Theatre, in collaboration with Dutch artist Boukje Landsman, are offering Mask Making and Puppetry workshops at Chez Le Pre in France - a beautifully renovated farmhouse near the village of Trezelles, 350 km South East of Paris. Info: <http://www.artsjobs.org.uk/index>

29 June: Guided walk through St George's Hall at 11am. £3.50. Info: 0151 225 6909.

20-29 June: Prescott Arts Festival. St Helens Sinfonietta, Birkenhead Operatic, Fairey Band, music drama and dance. See: www.prescofestival or phone 0151 430 7787.

17 July 2008: A day conference entitled "Roscoe and Italy", sponsored by the Society for Renaissance Studies, at The Athenaeum, Church Alley, Liverpool L1 3DD. Fees: £20 (£15 concessions. Bookings and info : Dr Stella Fletcher, School of History, University of Liverpool, 9 Abercromby Square, Liverpool L69 7WZ, stella@ravenna123.freereserve.co.uk.

20 August: Knowsley Historical Society Annual Outing

16 July: Knowsley Historical Society's Mrs Gidman - Effigies of Ormskirk Church

1 -13 September: South Liverpool Arts Group exhibit in the Anglican Cathedral.

1 – 30 September: Tracey Emin brings an especially commissioned neon work to the Anglican Cathedral.

17 September: Knowsley Historical Society's Ann Holt - Family History

29 September: Merseyside Industrial heritage Society have a Social at the Garston Brick Museum. Info: 01928 724 804.

15 October: Knowsley Historical Society's AGM

19 November: Knowsley Historical Society's Shirley Addy - History of Dry Stone Walling.

Cains Brewery tours (Stanhope Street L8 5XJ) start at 6.30 Mondays to Fridays and 1 pm on Saturdays. Prebooking required. 0151 708 8395.