



Report on Activities 2006-2007

Introduction

Liverpool Heritage Forum was set up as a means for voluntary cultural organisations to network with each other and to assist with their contacts with Liverpool Culture Company and the City Council. It acts through publications (an email newsletter and a website), thorough meetings and through direct contacts with individuals and societies. It has regular exchanges of view with Liverpool Culture Company and departments of the City Council relevant to the celebrations of 2007 and 2008. The Forum has no constitution or formal membership. Its affairs are run by a steering group. It has no funds and has not asked for any.

This report, the first the Forum has prepared, summarises what LHF has been doing since its creation. The opportunity is taken to comment on the “state of play” of the celebrations for the two years.

DISTRIBUTING INFORMATION

LHF website

The website is an extensive information base about the city of Liverpool and its history and the activities of voluntary cultural societies within it, including the Forum itself. Visits to the site in its first months of operation earlier in 2007 were running at about 15,000 a month. In recent months more than 60 additional articles have been added about Liverpool notables of yesteryear including:

Vestey, William (Sir)	Keay, Sir Lancelot
Epstein, Brian Samuel	Jones, Sir Alfred Lewis
Wood, John	Jones, Agnes
Askey, Arthur	John, Augustus
Audubon, John James	Hutchinson, William
Barclay Walker, Andrew	Horrox, Jeremiah
Barkla, Charles Glover	Hornby, Frank
Beecham, Sir Thomas	Holt, George
Bentley, Thomas	Henri, Adrian
Brown, Sir William	Hartley, Jesse
Bruch, Max Christian Friedrich	Harrison, Sir Reginald Carey (Rex)
Bryan, Blundell	Hardman, Edward Fitzmaurice Chambré
Butler, Josephine	Handley, Tommy
Canning, George	Fury, Billy
Chadwick, James Sir	Hall, Sir Bernard
Crosbie MBE, Jessie Reid	Gladstone, William Ewart
Dooley, Arthur	Foster, John
Lennon, MBE, John Winston Ono	Ross, Sir Ronald
Lester, Canon Thomas Major	Synge, Richard Laurence Millington
Lewis, David	Stubbs, George
Mayer, Joseph	Smith, Herbert Tyson
Moores, John	Sargent, Sir Malcolm
Nugent, James	Sargent, Malcolm
Paisley OBE, Robert 'Bob'	Saddler, John

Rathbone, Eleanor Florence	Rushton, Edward
Roberts, Isaac	Runcie, Robert Alexander Kennedy
Rowse, Herbert James	Tarleton, Banastre
Vaughan, Frankie	Walker, Andrew Barclay
Waterhouse, Sir Alfred	Whitty, Michael James
Wilkinson, Catherine "Kitty"	Williamson, Joseph
Chavasse. VC and Bar, MC, RAMC, Noel Godfrey	

Eighteen articles featuring aspects of Merseyside heritage have been added including:

The Dante Alighieri Society	Friends of Real Lancashire
John Newton, slave ship captain & writer of hymns	Galkoff's Kosher Butchers
John James Audubon, American Painter of birds	St George's Hall
The Beatles	The Athenaeum
R. S. Clare, Liverpool's longest established manufacturer	Scottie Press
Liverpool's Jewish heritage and urban regeneration	P.S.S.
Merseyside Heritage Investment Framework	THE BLUECOAT CENTRE
The Forgotten Gem: Windleshaw Abbey, St Helens	Liverpool Castle (Liverpool Daily Post Article)
Liverpool to Prescot Turnpike Road: 1726-1871	Liverpool's Theatres

The LHF Newsletter

The newsletter contains news and comment on heritage and cultural events in the area and provides extensive information about the activities of participating organisations.

The newsletter is circulated by email to over 650 subscribers including more than 40 local heritage and history organisations each month. All 98 members of Liverpool City Council, certain other local councillors, MPs, MEPs and officials receive copies. Other recipients are all directly involved in Liverpool's heritage, most of them having asked for copies. It is therefore a highly targeted document and is understood to reach over 2,000 readers who are or should be interested in our heritage.

The Forum gratefully acknowledges Rob Ainsworth's work on maintaining the website and operating the email distribution system.

Heritage Events Notices

LHF has published regular heritage events notices on its web site and within the regular newsletters. <http://www.liverpoolheritageforum.org.uk/>

Meetings

Public meetings at the Town Hall: LHF has arranged three free lectures in the council chamber of Liverpool Town Hall about local history with expert speakers from local societies. These are:

- Liverpool History Society: “The Streetes are Faire and Longe” John Tiernan, Chairman of LHS, (May 2007)
- The Victorian Society: a talk on Liverpool architecture by Graham Fisher of Liverpool Victorian Society. (June 2007)
- A speech by Professor John Belchem (18 October 2007)

Meetings for Forum members, mostly at the Athenaeum:

A series of meetings in the Library of the Athenaeum for all interested in heritage work have been held at approximately bimonthly intervals. These have included a series of three meetings about Liverpool’s diverse communities including:

- The Liverpool Irish: Dr Ian McKeane Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool.
- The Liverpool Welsh Community by Rev Dr D. Ben Rees.
- The Liverpool Afro-Caribbean Community by Mr Laurence Westgaph.
- A further meeting being planned for the autumn of 2007.
- A talk was given by Andrew Backhouse of Culture Northwest on the role of the organisation. The organisation’s **Merseyside Heritage Investment Framework** (a national first) was published on the LHF website.

LHF is grateful to the Athenaeum for the use of it newsroom for these meetings.

Heritage Groups website assistance

The Liverpool Heritage Forum through the assistance of steering group member Rob Ainsworth helped five Merseyside heritage and local history societies create their own web presences.

- Basic IT training was provided with the assistance of the Athenaeum in Liverpool to nominated society’s members in web site creation.
- The free web site servers was arranged and set up prior to the creation of the societies web sites.
- The LHF helped source and set up free web server space at no cost to the societies and groups.
- Their web sites were monitored for content and on going help and assistance was provided in overcoming coding and web page formatting problems.
- The LHF also provided on-going support.

The heritage groups and societies that benefited from the training were:

- ***Walton On The Hill History Group*** <http://waltononthehill.tripod.com/>
- ***Old Christ Church, Waterloo*** <http://oldchristchurch.tripod.com/index.html>
- ***Tranmere Tunnels*** <http://tranmeretunnels.tripod.com/>
- ***Dante Alighieri Society (Liverpool)*** <http://dantealighierisoc.tripod.com/>
- ***Friends of St George’s Hall*** <http://fstghall.tripod.com/>

Gardens of Stone Film

Rob Ainsworth, an LHF steering group member, assisted in promoting Gardens of Stone film and Ged’s Fagan’s model of Gerard Gardens. Ron Formby of Scottie Road

Press presented Rob with an award, for his assistance with promoting local heritage initiatives.

Contacts with regional press

LHF has been in contact with the Liverpool Echo and the Liverpool Daily Post on various issues and has been mentioned on several occasions in their columns.

CAMPAIGNING

Local building Listing Initiative

The Liverpool Heritage Forum Steering Group and the Merseyside Civic Society drafted a letter to Nigel Lee, Chief Planning Officer of Liverpool City Council, concerning “the desirability of setting up a local list of buildings whose merits, in the local context, are such that they deserve special consideration in the determination of any planning applications to alter or demolish them”. This relates to buildings, which do not qualify for official national “listed building” status. There is much more work to be done on this matter.

Liverpool Castle and the seven original streets

The Forum has campaigned, with some success, to raised awareness of Liverpool Castle and contributed towards David Charters’ Daily Post article on the castle’s history. It has joined others in pressing for better signposting and information panels about these (lobbying which will, it is understood, bear fruit but after a far longer period of gestation in official circles than was foreseen).

Hugh Stowell Brown

The Forum has campaigned for repair and reinstatement Hugh Stowell Brown’s statue in July 2007 and Rob Ainsworth researched and wrote a biography of the great man.

Links with Liverpool Culture Company

Members of the Forum’s steering group have had many contacts with officers of Liverpool Culture Company, which is the arm of Liverpool City Council responsible for the celebrations of the city’s 800th anniversary in 2007 and its year as European Capital of Culture in 2008. Notwithstanding what is said in the “Evaluation” (below), we are grateful to the officers with whom we have been in contact for their support.

EVALUATION

Voluntary organisations’ activities

The Forum set out to be a focal point for improving networking between the 60-odd voluntary cultural organisations in the Liverpool area and between them and the public authorities, no more or less than that. To attempt to do more would be to trample on the work of the many excellent societies, which already exist and are doing excellent work in their chosen spheres of operation.

2007 and 2008 present a challenge to these societies, which they can take up or not as they wish, to share their work, with a wider audience, people who are not and will never be among their membership. A number of societies have welcomed the fact that the Forum’s newsletter spreads news of their activities much more widely than they can do otherwise. The Forum believes that it is useful to demonstrate the breadth of cultural activities in and around the city even to people who we know will never participate in such activities because it helps to prove the quality of the city’s past and present.

The present catastrophe

This report is being written while the City authorities consider how to deal with the catastrophe of the cancellation of major parts of the Matthew Street festival. While this pop music carnival is outside the Forum's area of interest (even though pop music is indeed a branch of culture), it is organised by the same organ of the City Council, which is responsible for the celebration of the City's heritage and for its year as European Capital of Culture. The Forum cannot therefore prepare this report without offering some comment on the situation.

The two celebratory years are not just about partying. They are about celebrating the City's past and present and about enhancing its future appeal to tourists and investors, thus bringing in revenues and jobs. (If it isn't these things, what are the celebrations for? Just for the locals to have a good time?)

Purpose

What are we celebrating? We are celebrating remarkable achievements in the world of commerce, which paid for the glorious buildings and art treasures, which are a main focal point of the City's appeal. We are celebrating the pioneering work of reformers and social activists who strove to mitigate the horrors which ruined the lives of so many people at the time, whether through the slave trade, appalling housing, poverty and disease. We should never forget the suffering of so many people but the word "celebrate" has to refer to something good, not to something negative. Liverpool has plenty of good – indeed wonderful – things to celebrate, not least in the leading role it played on the world stage in ending or at least reducing many of these evils. People all over Liverpool and its hinterland, not just the rich in the "leafy lanes" have an interest in knowing our heritage, good and bad, in celebrating the achievements of our history and in showing off the superb artefacts and architecture left to us by earlier generations and the top quality traditions in the performing arts and sport which continue to this day.

People in the Forum and elsewhere sometimes feel that Liverpool Culture Company has not had these central themes as the driving force of the celebrations. Partying for its own sake is empty. We need to know and to tell others what we are celebrating. Discontent with the Culture Company's focus on these central objectives is a backdrop to the disaster about the Matthew Street Festival, a situation where the Culture Company has little goodwill to call upon.

Effectiveness

Much is also said about the Culture Company's efficiency (and its co-ordination with the rest of the City Council). Tales abound of unanswered letters to it. The scheduling of the installation of commemorative marking on the street paving of the site of Liverpool Castle in 2009, after both of the celebratory years are gone (!), illustrates the point. The refusal of the Forum's suggestion that the Town Hall should be open to the public for far longer periods next year, despite some of the staff that would be involved having raised no general objection to the idea, shows the low priority which some staff give to the celebrations. The interminable time to put up some small plaques illustrating the history of the City's original seven stets, the problems put in the way the Forum's request to put up notices about societies' activities in 08 Place (the tourist office) and the refusal to let the Forum use the unsightly empty space in the Queen Square bus station for display purposes illustrate the malaise. Given the scale of spending on other projects, lack of money cannot be pleaded as excuses for these projects, which are minor but with strong impact. The impact on visitors to the City of what the Echo calls "grot-spots" -

untended municipal (and private) flower beds and litter in prominent City locations, dirty and primitive toilets and pedestrian tunnel at Lime Street Station and a complete absence, so far, of “Welcome” signs, flowers, bunting, foreign languages etc in the streets (perfectly possible to some extent despite the Big Dig) shows how far the Culture Company and the City are from realising the potential that 2007 and 2008 offer. The Culture Company has some seventy staff, a Chief Executive on well over £100,000 a year and a budget of £100,000. Its time we saw much better results.

Get it right now!

There is still time to get 2008 right. Many organisations of their own volition have attractive programs. National Museums have two excellent exhibitions at the Maritime Museum and much to see elsewhere. The Philharmonic Hall has a superb program. Bar and Club owners, the maritime community, the churches and many others are making strong contributions. No doubt there will be a glittering program of highly successful events organised by the Culture Company. The Culture Company and the City Council has got to get the rest of it right - involvement of local people, communication, a welcome to visitors throughout the city centre, proper recognition of heritage and culture in all its forms and better standards in the amenities used by everyone.

The (invisible) Board of the Culture Company and the highly paid top officers in Millennium House owe it to the people of Liverpool now get their house in order. Or leave and get someone else to run the show.

Andrew Pearce, Chairman
28 August 2007

0151 327 2990

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Contact for Rob Ainsworth: robotic2000@btinternet.com

Notes

Members of the Liverpool Heritage Forum Steering Group

Mr Andrew Pearce (Chair)	Mr. Kevin Bargaen
Mr. Michael Brian	Dr Peter Brown
Mr Mike Chitty	Mr Joe Crossley
Ms. Florence Gersten	Mr. Graham Boxer
Mrs. Jo McCann	Mr. Ian Harvey
Mr. James Mansell	Mrs. Brenda Murray
Mr. Michael Corfe	Ms Eileen Wilshaw
Mrs Susan Spibey	Mr Robert Ainsworth
Mr. Patrick Neil	

Organisations and Societies involved

52 Roscoe Street	Friends of Welsh National Opera
All Arts Forum	Friends of Williamson Tunnels
All Saints Childwall	Galkoff's Kosher Butchers Shop
Ancient Chapel of Maghull	Friends of Real Lancashire
Arena Gallery	Gateacre Society
Art in Liverpool	Halewood Arts College
Bebington Dramatic Society	Heswall Society
Biennial	History Society of Lancs and Cheshire
Black Box Merseyside	Hope Street Association, The
Blackburne House	Hotel 62 Castle Street
Bluecoat Arts Centre	Hoylelake Choral Society
Catholic Family History Society	Hibernia - Researching Irish Family History
Citadel Arts Centre	In a Living City
Civic Trust	LIPA
Danish Consul	Liverpool - Now and Then
English-Speaking Union	Liverpool University - Irish Studies
Everton Red Triangle Amateur Boxing	Liverpool & South West Lancs Family History Soc
F.A.C.T.	Liverpool & SW Lancs. Family History Society
Florence Institute Trust Limited	Liverpool Academy of Arts, The
Friends of Ancient Chapel of Maghull	Liverpool Arts Centre Brown Hill
Friends of Arrowe Country Park	Liverpool Astronomical Society
Friends of Anfield Cemetery	Liverpool Athenaeum
Friends of Birkenhead Park	Liverpool Biennial
Friends of Flaybrick Cemetery	Liverpool Botanical Society
Friends of Hoylelake and Meols Gardens	Liverpool Cathedral
Friends of Liverpool Cathedral	Liverpool Culture Company
Friends of Liverpool Monuments	Liverpool Decorative & Fine Arts Society
Friends of National Museums Liverpool	Liverpool Genealogy Society
Friends of St James Church	Liverpool Geological Society
Friends of St James Garden	Liverpool History Society
Friends of St. George's Hall	Liverpool Italian Opera Company

Liverpool Metropolitan Opera	Scottie Press
Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral Orchestra	Sefton Park Palm House Trust
Liverpool Nautical History Society	South Liverpool Photographic Society
Liverpool Network Theatre Group	St Bride's church
Liverpool Opera Circle	St Cyprians
Liverpool Scottish Museum Trust	St Francis Xavier's Church
Liverpool Welsh Choral	St Nicholas Church
Liverpool's Original Seven Streets	Tate Liverpool
Local Dante Alighieri Society	The Beatles Story
Merseyside Archaeological Society	The Save the Manxman campaign
Merseyside Civic Society	Toxteth Park St Agnes
Museums Libraries and Archives Council	Toxteth Town Hall
National Museums Liverpool	University of Liverpool (Liverpool 800)
National Trust	Urban Picnic
National Wildflower Centre	Urban Strawberry Lunch
NW Association of Civic Trusts	Victorian Society
Old Christ Church Waterloo	Walton on the Hill History Group
Open Eye Gallery	Wavertree society
Operation Eden	Whiston History Society
Pool Project	Wirralh Skip Felag (The Wirral Vikings)
Port Sunlight Village Trust	Wigan Borough Heritage Network
Princes Road Synagogue	Wirral Society
Researching Irish Family History Liverpool	World Ship Society
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic	Youth Communications Network