

*Like all little boys I played cowboys and I also read cowboy novels. One day I picked up a book called "Death on the Prairie" by Paul I. Wellman which was, in fact, a history book about the cattle drives, so I started to read cowboy history. I discovered without the American Civil War the twenty year cowboy era from 1865 to 1885 would never have happened. So, I started to read Civil War history. My interest after fifty years reading American Civil War history remains as strong as ever.*

In reply to the article The Alabama Story in the spring edition of Wirral Matters I feel there are some points that need to be clarified. First and foremost, the American Civil War was not fought over the issue of slavery. Lincoln was, as were many in America at that time, opposed to slavery but in fact the war was fought over State Rights. ie: The right of a state to secede from the Union. The issue of slavery only came to the fore on 1st January 1863 when Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation. So, the war was fought, as Lincoln put it "to preserve the Union" not to free the slaves.

Mr Brack stated that the war started on the 12th April 1851. However the date and month are correct but it was 1861 and not 1851. He also states that the attack was against the northern states harbour of Charleston, South Carolina when it was in fact the attack was against Fort Sumter which was held by the Federals in Charleston harbour. South Carolina was not a northern state but was part of the Southern Confederacy and was in fact the first state to secede from the union.

The Alabama was built in 1862 in Birkenhead at the Laird's shipyard and was only known as "Hull Number 290". She was renamed the CSS Alabama after fitting out in the Azores. Mr Brack states "over two years the Alabama destroyed over 60 ships but as none of them were armed this was hardly a glorious naval feat". It was not intended to bring off a "glorious naval feat" it was intended to do a job, which it did very effectively. In its two year life it boarded 450 ships, burnt 65 of them and took just over 2,000 prisoners without a single loss of life for either prisoners or crew. From the Confederate States point of view it was a good investment.

Mr Brack also states "The Alabama's career, however, was brought to an inglorious end in June 1864 when it was sunk off Cherbourg in a fierce battle with the USS Kearsage". The Alabama was forced to strike her colours and was sunk on the 19th of June 1864. However, the Kearsage was a fighting ship and not a commerce raider. It carried more and bigger guns than the Alabama and it also was armoured. The action lasted about one hour but in that time the Kearsage was hit many times and if it had not been for the deteriorated state of the powder on the Alabama the outcome might have been very different. In fact if the shot from the Alabama delivered from its 7 inch Blakely Pivot Rifle which hit the steering post had exploded the Kearsage would have undoubtedly been disabled and the engagement would probably have ended in a victory for the Alabama. So this was hardly being brought to an inglorious end but rather more like going down with all guns firing! I hardly think that most people would think that building such a seaworthy ship is regarded as an "irremovable stain on the good name Birkenhead" It has always been the position of the English Government to make arms sale around the world as we are a nation that survive by export, including weapons of war.

One last point. Mr Brack asked "I wonder how a replica of a ship that was built to ensure the continuance of slave labour might be regarded today". I think most people would think of it as a fitting tribute to the shipwrights, joiners, riggers and engineers of the old Lairds shipyard for building such a wonderful vessel especially if the true background to The Alabama and the Civil War is understood more fully.

**EMAIL ADDRESSES WANTED**

*Send a message, including your name, to Wirral Society .and we can send you information on forthcoming events as quickly as possible - as well as reducing postage, printing costs etc. and saving the rain forests! [wrlsoc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:wrlsoc@yahoo.co.uk)  
We assure Members that personal information will not be passed to anyone else .If you can't use the internet all information will continue to be sent by post.*

**Editor and production:** Judith Railton,  
22 Bracken Lane, Bebington, CH63 2LZ . 0151-608-4498  
**Hon. Secretary:** David Casement,  
5 Cornwall Drive, Prenton, CH43 0RW TEL/FAX 0151-608-3039  
**Membership:** Avril Wilmshurst,  
6 Robins Croft, Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port CH66 2LQ 0151-200-3920

**HELP SUPPORT OUR WORK**

*send your name and address and tel.number to Avril with a cheque for £7 (£10 for a society) for one year's membership (Jan to Dec)*

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1500 copies go to members, libraries, community centres and all Wirral Peninsula councillors and MPs  
All images by Judith Railton except if otherwise named.  
Additional material from Diane Lane and Lilian Potter*

**World Environment Day at Ness Gardens**

'I really enjoyed the event. The speeches were good, especially that of Prof. John Guillebaud who told us the 5 'R's and a B in relation to the environment. These were in order of importance:- Refuse, Reduce, Re-use, Repair, Recycle and Bicycle. He made the point that recycling was better than nothing but it used a lot of power to do it.' WS delegate – Joanna McIlhatton



Several Wirral Society committee members attended

**WIRRAL MATTERS**

NEWS and VIEWS from THE WIRRAL SOCIETY - FOUNDED 1928  
THE WIRRAL COMMITTEE OF THE CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT RURAL ENGLAND (CPRE)

President: Professor John Tarn OBE DL FRIBA FRSA FRHistS FSA

**VINEYARD FARM SUCCESS STORY**

**Further to the campaign to preserve the recently uncovered mediaeval farm building at Vineyard Farm, Bebington**

**A letter from Matthew Crook - Wirral's Conservation Officer**

"I am pleased to say that the recent onset of repair works to Vineyard Farmhouse has prompted English Heritage to expedite a listing decision on the property, and its is now listed at grade II. The listing went live this morning (27th June) on the government's heritage gateway website. I would like to extend my thanks to all those in Wirral community groups, in particular the Wirral Society, who have made the case for its better preservation as an important example of an evolved vernacular, timber-framed farmhouse.

The letter to Persimmon Homes (from Wirral Society President, John Tarn) was important, I think, in defraying destructive works to the farmhouse. I am also grateful for the additional archival and historical information that you (WS) were able to supply in support of the listing application – important in setting the building into its local context, and information that is not freely available. I attach the listing below,

[http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results\\_Single.aspx?uid=1408451&resourceID=5](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=1408451&resourceID=5)

I have been in touch with Persimmon Homes (the owners of Vineyard Farm) to inform them of this decision, and to request a meeting with them in order to work through the issues that arise from the listing. I am sure that your organisations will take an interest in the ongoing preservation of the building, and the adjacent cruck-framed barn, and I would appreciate your ongoing input into these projects.

Significant repairs to the timber-frame have already been undertaken to the timber-framed by Trace Basement, a contractor experienced in repairing timber frames through the steel and epoxy resin reinforcement method. It may make sense to continue with this method of repair (which is not without its merits) in the interests of getting the building back into a stable condition. New oak timbers have been added back into the building where the originals have been found to be beyond repair.

This building is very similar in its joinery details to the recently listed farmhouse at the Crow's Foot Inn in Raby, the adjacent listed barn, and several others. In consideration of the fact that we have almost no timber-framed residences before 1600 in the Borough, these and other similar structures likely reflect the "Great Rebuilding" of residences in the early C17th. The buried remains of earlier, more basic structures may lie in and around these plots. There is obviously a long way still to go before the listed buildings at Vineyard can be considered to be in a stable condition."

**UNEXPECTED WIRRAL SIGHTS**

**The Hangars, Hooton Park Airfield**  
[www.hootonparktrust.co.uk](http://www.hootonparktrust.co.uk)



**New Signing at Viking Parliament site**

**Ladies Day in Neston →**



## Green Belt Matters -

### The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is starting to be used and quoted to support planning applications and decisions.

This will be a complex time as the reality of the NPPF evolves. On one hand we are told the Green Belt is still sacrosanct, but on the other the pressure to allow "sustainable" development (definition to be defined!) may override this.

Lately there have been several applications for residences built from "unused" buildings in the Green Belt. This gives rise to the question of whether it is better that these buildings are used, even for residence, or should they be left? There is the argument that if the building exists, it is already interrupting the openness of the Green Belt. The counter argument is that an unused building can be pulled down and the land re-used. But if converted to a residence the land suddenly becomes valuable and the residence most likely permanent, meaning the land can never have any other usage.

Another concern is the increased number of "retrospective" applications to "legalise" "inappropriate development" that has already taken place in the Green Belt. Most controversial, and where should the balance be? If caught speeding you will get fined even if you have not caused any damage, so should people be allowed to get away with actual damage to the Green Belt?

**Any further information on the Green Belt in the Wirral please email:- [neil.parry@lineone.net](mailto:neil.parry@lineone.net)**



"I see this one is protected by a stump preservation order"

### THE NEED TO KEEP ALERT

#### Memorial trees at Ingleborough Road fields.

A new planning application has been submitted for building houses by Tranmere Rovers Football Club. 80 trees were planted here to commemorate ex Birkenhead Institute boys killed in World War 1

## Wanton Vandalism

Residents were devastated when contractors destroyed most of the trees in woodland in Noctorum Dell and with them the habitat of bats, woodpeckers and foxes. Although the trees were under preservation orders, aggressive contractors claimed that the TP Officer 'knew' of the situation and continued wholesale destruction. By the time the council officials were on the scene a wildlife haven was reduced to a muddy wasteland. As suspected, planning permission had not been applied for and tree preservation and planning enforcement officers have now interviewed the contractors under caution. The police wildlife officer is also investigating destruction of wildlife habitats. So far the owner/developer of the site is proving difficult to locate but it is hoped that a prosecution will follow the investigations particularly as one of the residents took photo and video evidence of the devastation although she was verbally abused and a mechanical digger was driven at her. Notwithstanding investigations and prosecutions the trees have gone and with them the bats and woodpeckers. You can view the site on youtube using the link. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c5fkjppt\\_E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1c5fkjppt_E) The residents are hoping to put up bat boxes and Wirral Wildlife have suggested artificial nesting tree to encourage the woodpeckers. Watch for an update in the next Wirral Matters.

Lilian Potter

The Wirral Society 75th Anniversary tree flourishes in Flaybrick Cemetery



Photo by Doreen Grey

## Some Current Wirral Society Casework

- **Ledsham Road, Little Sutton:** We have made an objection to the proposal to build 2000 houses on good agricultural land in this area
- **'Red Routes' Accident Signage:** We have been concerned at this signage on main routes up the peninsula and have now established from Cheshire West Council, that it will shortly be removing this signage.
- **Burbo Bank Windfarm:** We have asked Wirral Council to consider in more detail, the likely impact of the proposed extension of this windfarm.
- **Unauthorised Roadside Advertising:** We have encouraged Cheshire West Council to seek to implement a tougher policy on this issue and have reported examples of such signage.
- **Local Nature Partnerships:** We have enquired how the Society can participate in these newly-formed Partnerships.

### Chairman's Comment

The recent news of the apparently wanton destruction of a woodland, comprising many mature trees, on the edge of the Noctorum Ridge, came as a shock to members of the Society's Committee.

Whilst the woodland was covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), Wirral Council was unable to stop the destruction of these trees, along with its wildlife habitat. This has raised many questions; not just about the particular circumstances surrounding this incident, but more generally about the effectiveness of TPO's as a means of protecting our most valued trees and whether the new guidance contained in the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), provides Councils with any more effective means to prevent losses of this kind in the future.

Of course, we must accept that if a developer is set on getting rid of trees that stand in the way of their plans, they are always likely to be able to succeed in doing so, whether or not those trees have legal protection i.e. either in the form of a TPO or being located within a Conservation Area. At present, it would appear that even if a prosecution is brought, the penalty for contravening this legislation is so trifling, that it serves as no disincentive.

In the next Wirral Matters, we will look at these issues in more detail.

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**Yvonne Sanne has been re-elected as a Trustee of the Cheshire County Executive of CPRE**  
**Yvonne has been the Wirral Society's voice on this committee for several years – discussing and feeding back important local and national countryside measures.**  
**Many members of the Wirral Society Committee tirelessly perform such roles in other organisations - including heritage, environmental and coastal interests**

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**The carillon of 37 bells which pealed out over Parkgate for nigh on 90 years from Mostyn House School (now closed) are going to Charterhouse School, Surrey. Listed building consent has been given**

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### RAVENSWOOD REPRIEVE

Although Rock Ferry High School has closed and its grounds sold for housing – this important school building – a Victorian era villa - has just received Grade II listing