

The Thinkers

Somewhere not very far away, in the headquarters of a very distinguished company, there is a comfortable conference room with heavy doors, thick carpeting, luxurious furniture, a drinking water fountain and a small but selectively stocked bar. It is known as The Future Strategy and Mode d'emploi Facilities Suite or, as the lower orders of staff have it - 'the Think Tank.' The doors into this holy of holies bear the warning sign 'QUIET' and all who have the Company Chairman's written permission to enter must first remove their shoes before they do so.

It was this inner sanctum team which came up with the mind-blowing scheme called Wirral Waters and the companion Liverpool Waters. Both envisage changing the sky-line in both places with cloud-bursting towers in the style of Shanghai, Dubai and Baibi on one side of the Mersey and in the style of New York, Sydney and Hong Kong on the other.

Not content with that they then produced super-ultra-grandiose plans for Britain's first International Trade Centre to be built on the site of the erstwhile Birkenhead/Wallasey docks, all at a cost of billions of millions - or was it millions of billions? I forget which.

And even that is not all. Now they have drawn up a Mersey Ports Master Plan to create a new port - Port Wirral, no less - and, seemingly, several little ports as well. It will be strange to talk of Port Bridgewater, Port Ince, Port Warrington and Port Salford. It calls for the widening or straightening or strengthening in parts of the Ship Canal to be done all over the course of several decades. That infers that not all the members of this ultra-expert team will see their plans brought to fruition. The cost has not yet been mentioned but that doesn't seem to matter much. The fun is in the planning.

It must be an exciting place to work. Imagine the weekly meeting of these brains of brains.

'Who's going to start us off today?' asks the Chairman. A hand shoots up. 'Yes, Humphrey? Got an idea?'

'Yes, chief, I have. I think you'll like it. Over the weekend I was wondering how the hundreds of Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian and other Far Eastern tycoons who'll be coming to the Trade Centre will travel. They'll all arrive via Heathrow, of course, but from there on the journey to Birkenhead is - I'm sure you'll agree - a bit of a bore.'

'Good point. I think that calls for a real think.' The Chairman presses a button on his table and the company butler comes in bearing a tray of headgear which he distributes to the team.

'Right, colleagues,' says the Chairman, 'Thinking Caps on and a five-minute recess to consider. Humph's got a good point.'

Silence descends. Brows become furrowed. Heads are scratched. Lips are pursed. Faces are pulled . . . 'Right! Time's up. Now, what have we got?'

A hand shot up. 'Ah, Cornelia - had a brainwave or two?'

'Yes, chief - I suggest that we start our own private airline! We could then fly the tycoons straight into Speke and cut out the drag of arriving in Manchester. I realise this would mean enlarging Speke Airport but we own a good part of it and I'm sure we could buy the rest. Speke Hall might be a problem but I'm quite sure we could do a deal with the National Trust and have it demolished and rebuilt on a more suitable site - say, in Garston or even in Calderstones Park.'

'But how will we bring them in comfort from Speke to Birkenhead?' queried the Chief.

'I know! I think I've got it!' Sebastian's face was all aglow. 'by Cable car!!' Build a Cable Car track along the banks of the Mersey. 'Or two tracks. One inwards on the left-hand side, the other outwards on the right!'

'Well worth thinking about, said the Chairman. What shall we say it will cost? Shall we say four and a half mill? Jobs? Say two to three thousand construction jobs?' And we'll have it all ready in time for Prince Williams' coronation! Are we all agreed?'

Heads nodded vigorously. 'Jolly good. I'll get Lavinia to put out a press release.'

The Wirral Society will aim to influence the proposed Wirral Waters developments by positive collaboration.

Some Current Society Casework -

We are asking -

Liverpool City Council what arrangements it has in place, to ensure Burton Manor is properly maintained during the period the building is up for sale.

Wirral Council to take action against flyposters using the hoardings around the former Pool Inn in Pool Lane, Wallasey

Graham Handley - who led the successful campaign to re-instate the 12 Quays footpath - for the latest information on its re-opening, which is understood to be imminent. (We learn as we go to press, the good news that the Agreements have all now been signed, so we await details of the official opening ceremony)

New Ferry Butterfly Park organisers if the Society can assist with help towards the costs of the legal action, which was necessary to help secure the continued use of the land for the Park

Wirral Council to require the owners of the retail units at the former Champion factory at Arrowebrook, as a condition of continuing to use the premises, to erect proper agreed signage and plant appropriate screening trees to replace those recently felled.



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

SUMMER TRIP



Interior of The Gladstone Library, St Deiniol's, Hawarden
Photo credit - David Casement

No British Prime Minister read so many books, nor owned the many thousands that Gladstone did. In his lifetime he set up a library resource that was eventually rehoused in 1894 in the impressive building we see today. Designed by John Douglas, it is light and spacious with useful three sided bookcases and study areas. Residential accommodation has always been a strong part of the ethos and various courses are run here during the year.

Thanks to the volunteers who gave us vivid tours of the library and the adjacent church, the people and policies of the hundreds of years on this site came alive. Gladstone used the best artists and craftsmen. So Burne-Jones, a friend of Gladstone's daughter Mary, designed 7 of the church's windows. Gilbert Scott designed the reredos (a decorative screen behind the altar). Gladstone spoke up for the oppressed of the world - we saw a window donated by grateful Armenians.

The church was always an important source of income for lords of the manor - with the tithe system of taxation. Their family members were rectors there, consolidating wealth and influence. Names to conjure with:

1180 - William de Montalt (a Norman knight)

1423 - Marmaduke Lumley

1685 - Beaumont Percival

Further back we see the importance of Hawarden as a hill promontory once surrounded by a curve of the Dee.

There is evidence of bronze Age burials, an Iron Age fort and a colourful legend.



The Butterfly Park, New Ferry - has won an important battle recently in their fight to keep this wildlife haven from being destroyed by developers. The war continues.

FEEDBACK

- some recent Society issues -
Wirral Society has highlighted the state of the mediaeval Cruck Barn at Vineyard farm, Bebington. The tenant farmer Mr. Willis is interested in the history and will allow visitors to take a look inside. With the help of Matthew Crook, Wirral's Conservation Officer, a grant may be available to restore the barn. Persimmon Homes, the owners can be pressured to repair this important building.



Wirral Society has supported the website 'Great Trees of Wirral'

One featured tree - the mimosa at the Mimosa Café, Eastham Ferry, sadly died this year after the hard winter. The owners have taken a cutting and hope one day it may flourish again. Meanwhile - why not try and grow your own Mimosa tree with its fragile fernlike leaves and bright yellow flowers in February.



Eastham Mimosa - Photo credit - Marianthi Lainas

Meanwhile, another tree celebrated on the website, the yew tree in Eastham churchyard is still going strong - age approximately 1600 years

A Comment from the Chairman

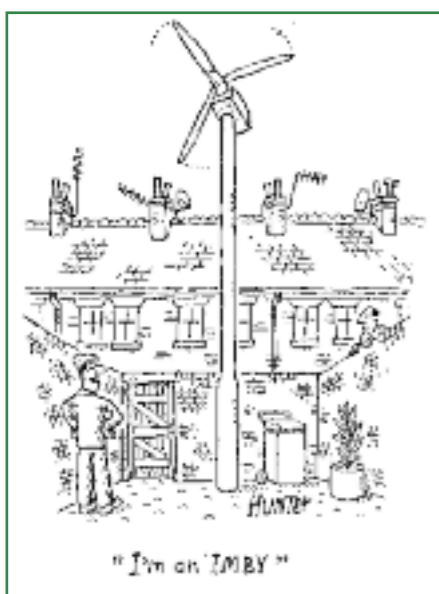
The Government has published a highly sensitive draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for public consultation. As its agenda unfolds, it is clear the planning system is under attack. At this stage, I can do no better than reproduce part of CPRE National Office's statement when it says that.. 'it represents the biggest shake-up of planning for over 50 years and CPRE believes it will place the countryside under increasing threat as the economy recovers'.

CPRE say that it 'originally understood from the Government that its Localism Bill would rebalance the planning system in favour of local communities and Ministers seemed genuinely committed to the role of planning in protecting the environment. Now the mood has changed'.

'Many elements of the new draft are deeply worrying. In particular, Ministers have failed to commit to the principle that the countryside should be protected for its own intrinsic character, beauty and heritage.'

'If these proposals are carried through, local communities and planning authorities would be largely powerless in the face of development pressure. This could put huge swathes of our countryside up for grabs. When we emerge from the recession there will be uproar across the country as local communities discover that the planning system and its ability to shape development, protect the countryside and promote urban regeneration has been undermined by the reforms currently being pushed through.'

It is in these times, that we especially value the work that CPRE, as a National campaigning organisation, does on our behalf. May I then ask that if you are not already a full member of CPRE, that you take this opportunity to join? A copy of the Application form is included in this edition of Wirral Matters.



Our resident cartoonist - HUNTER - comments on the recent proliferation of small scale windmills

Wirral Green Belt News from Neil Parry

The main item this time has been commenting on the proposals re guidelines for "Travellers". We have worked with "Willaston Residents" who have the "traveller camp" on Green Belt land next to Brook Meadow Hotel, Heath Lane.

The main issue is the value of any new guidelines since the authorities seem "unwilling" to support the rights of the residents now, e.g. in Essex!

However, improvements can be made to the guidelines that may help the authorities to act more readily in support of the Green Belt and the local residents.

Additionally, the enacting of David Cameron's comment re illegal "retrospective" applications in the Green Belt is needed asap.

Any comments on the Green Belt in the Wirral please email:- neil.parry@lineone.net



A lovely bit of Green Belt near Storeton

'A Thank You' to P H Holt Charitable Trust in the last issue was written by Lilian Potter

Bidston Lighthouse has been sold to the occupant who was acting as its guardian. We ask – will the light still be lit?

Tree lovers! Are you willing to measure exceptional trees on Wirral after half an hours training? Contact John Moffat at flaybrick.m.garden@ntlworld.com

Neighbourhood Plans – Wirral Borough Council want to know what you think your neighbourhood should be like. Pick up a questionnaire from libraries, council offices or www.wirral.gov.uk/neighbourhood

Dates for your diary – W. Victor Smith lectures – Jan.24th and March 6th at Wallasey Golf Club

The former Mostyn House School in Parkgate has been added to the English Heritage list of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest
See their website for details
www.english.heritage.org.uk

** UNEXPECTED SIGHTS OF WIRRAL



Bill Hatton gives rides during a Library event in Neston on his hand built scale model of a Foster traction engine. Appropriately, the first steam engine in Wirral and West Cheshire operated in Neston during the Industrial Revolution



Barry Lello (standing right) receives the annual **Wirral Society environmental Keith Davidson Award** from President, **John Tarn** at a special dinner. Also pictured – **Margaret Lello** (left) and **Chairman, Rod Tann** (seated).
Photo by David Casement

RUBBISH!

Celebrating Civic Day – members were encouraged to collect litter from a beauty spot of their choice



Five minutes per collector, several plastic bags, equals a tremendous difference to the look of Storeton Woods, Caldley Hill and St.Bridgets, West Kirby (after the Fair)
A long standing Society campaign to get extensive litter and old furniture removed from the railway embankments, especially near Birkenhead North station appears to be near resolution. Promises to clear the banks and deal with the problem of rubbish dumping in that area have been made.



Wirral Society committee meet every month

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