

**Update on specialist restoration of
Vineyard Farm, Bebington**



We highlighted the plight of this rare Tudor farmhouse building in the Summer 2012 issue. Its historic importance was realized thanks to Wirral's Conservation Officer, Matthew Crook, the Wirral Society, and English Heritage which gave it a Grade II listing. The specialist restoration complete, Tudor is once again part of a 21st century home.

W. Victor Smith lectures

War memorials of Wirral

Edward Morris, retired curator at the Walker Art Gallery introduced us to the world of war memorials; an art world that is accessible to everyone, unlike an art gallery. For the most part war memorials were erected by local people who wanted to pay respect to those they had known and were a substitute for real graves for those who had died in wars abroad. Committees were formed, money collected and stone carvers or fine art sculptors commissioned.

If you want to see some fine memorials you don't need to climb Grange Hill in West Kirby to peruse Charles Sargeant Jagger's, to Macclesfield to see the realism of John Millard's 'Soldier who had been gassed'. You can amble along the prom near Vale Park, New Brighton and see the sculpture to the Wallasey fallen, to Hamilton Square, Birkenhead for H. Tyson Smith's work, (pictured right →) to Port Sunlight for Sir William Goscombe John's dramatic scenario of local people defending the village against imminent attack.



Keith Davidson Award - named after a former Chairman of the Wirral Society.
Do you know someone, or a group, who has made an outstanding contribution to the preservation or improvement of the Wirral?
Contact Doreen Grey for an application form on 0151-792-0118



**Summer meeting -15th June, 2.15pm
Meet at St. Bridget's church,
Church Road, CH48 7HL,
for a tour of the West Kirby Museum
Info: Diana Lane 0151-342-6749**

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

Winners of the Wirral Society Civic Design Award – Ainsley Gommon, architects and their team of skilled stonemasons, Stone Central for their restoration of Birkenhead Priory and St. Mary's church.

Alf Plant and Peter Gommon met while they were students at Liverpool School of Architecture. They gave an overview of the history of the Priory site – including the visit by Edward I in 1277, through the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540, the mid Victorian period when there was a large vicarage and a congregation of 15,000. Relatively unscathed during the Second World War, the 1960s and 70s found conservation low on the agenda and a modern relevance had to be found for this historic site.

There is now a handy car-park and disabled lift at the back of the site in Church Road, CH41 5JH. Check opening times before you visit. It's closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

During restoration, complex scaffolding surrounded St. Mary's church tower for almost a year, with each new stone and sculptural element being worked with traditional tools. As the original stonework is difficult to clean a decision was made to leave the marks of a grimy industrial past. So, the visitor can see clearly now where the restoration has taken place.

The cast iron decorative windows were blasted to remove rust and repainted.

Still Going Strong



Signs of spring are on roadside verges and in parks everywhere on Wirral. In the 1980s the council made a big drive to brighten up the scene in this low cost and effective way and, along with rangers organized 'plant ins' with local people.

These daffodils are blooming in Birkenhead Park this spring



To climb the 101 steps to the top of the tower gives unparalleled views along the Mersey and over Wirral. At the moment you can also get a great view down to

the pirate-catcher ship, RFA Fort Victoria which is in for repairs in the shipyards below.



The original inside wall of St. Mary's church has now been rendered

Green Belt News

Did everyone manage to watch the Planning programs on BBC2 (Permission Impossible)? It showcased the Planning Committee of Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C), leading with the near repeat application for a huge new estate off Ledsham Rd, Little Sutton, for the builders, Redrow. The land was in the Green Belt until taken out by Cheshire a few years ago to meet a (then) housing forecast "need". As it is prime agricultural land, it deserves comment as if Green Belt land.

The original application was only refused in July 2013, being too large for the area to absorb. Had the BBC focussed on the management of the original Planning meeting in July and how a "repeat" application was brought so quickly it would have been a very "enlightening" program. How much more farm land has to be lost before it fails the Government's own Planning Test of Sustainability? Will Planners be saying "let them eat bricks" next?

In Neston, CW&C have managed to unite dog walkers, cyclists and horse riders with the unannounced re-surfacing (destruction) of **Cuckoo Lane** with what appears to be scrap road surfacing. The huge local protests have prevented any more of the Lane being destroyed. One can only hope that CW&C will clear up their mess and dispose of the surfacing correctly, allowing the Lane to recover. We are still waiting for a decision on the repeat application for two wind turbines at the nearby University site in Neston. Again arousing much local protest.

The Wirral MBC area has thankfully been, in comparison, much quieter.

We submitted comments on the latest draft of the Local Plan last year and are awaiting the next stage in re-defining the Local Plan this summer. We have been consulted on the Wirral's Landscape by Natural England as part of their National (Landscape) Character assessment and have made suggestions re industrial heritage and golf courses!

Since Wirral MBC revoked the moratorium on building outside of the "New Heartlands" area we have seen a rise in applications for residences especially for "unused" farm buildings in the Green Belt.

Any comments on the Green Belt in the Wirral please email:-

neil101parry@gmail.com

Notes from Doreen Grey

Who keeps an eye open for issues in the Neston area

Set up as a support mechanism during the Napoleonic Wars, the Neston Female Friendly Society is celebrating its 200th anniversary with its annual Lady's Day Walk in Neston Town Centre on 5th. June

More details:

www.aboutmyarea.co.uk/cheshire/neston/ch64

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Friends of Storeton Woods are celebrating their silver anniversary this year - see their website for events and information -

www.friendsofstoretonwoods.org.uk

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Wirral Society Treasurer, Peter Bowler is opening his garden, along with two of his neighbours on 21 and 22nd June under the National Gardens Scheme

'The Meadows', Townfield Lane, Mollington CH1 6NJ

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Hot pot Supper

note change of venue to

Hollins Hey Hotel,

**Victoria Road, New Brighton,
Tuesday 7th October 6.30 for 7**

Members of The Wirral Society are represented on many local groups.

A few of the valiant volunteers:

Alec Potter - Bidston Conservation Area Committee
Yvonne Sanné - Cheshire CPRE Branch Executive
David Casement - Wirral Tree Wardens
Graham Gladden - Sustainability Appraisal Panel
Neil Parry - CPRE Cheshire Branch Planning Forum & Wirral Coastal Partnership
Diana Lane Heswall Society WCP, (Dee Estuary Conservation Group - Wirral Coast Committee)

Chairman's Comment

In recent months, the Society's Committee has been in discussions with the project director of Peel Holdings Ltd, over the Wirral Waters' Project at Birkenhead -Wallasey docks.

This Society has always maintained that this important area of our peninsula should be re-developed in an appropriate and environmentally-sensitive way. However, it may be recalled that we had objected in principle to Peel's proposals, particularly in view of the overpoweringly high buildings proposed for the 'Sky City' phases of the development.

Our recent discussions arose from our interest in seeing what progress the Company had made on the project, since Outline Planning Permission had been given.

It was good to record that Peel's first priority was to deliver good quality projects. We learned that a number of such projects, which were relatively small-scale low-rise initiatives, were already 'in the pipeline'. Of these, site remediation and preparation for their International Trade Centre, involving the demolition of the dangerous buildings on the Mobil site and the major tree-planting schemes, were already under way.

Others, including development of a Film Studio Hub at West Float, and a 'Supplier Park' to support the regional automotive and energy industries, the conversion of the Listed 'Hydraulic Tower' and a new building for Wirral Met College, were also being brought forward. At the moment, Peel say they're concentrating on site preparation, much of which is contaminated, and also putting investment into infrastructure; specifically in aspects such as energy, transport, skills and 'green infrastructure'. The Society were encouraged with what was being undertaken so far, and will be continuing its dialogue with the Company, as these and other schemes are progressed.

Some recent casework

Former Burton's Biscuit factory site – Moreton: The Committee has been consulted by the Agents for developers, who are seeking approval for the partial demolition of the factory and its replacement with housing. We are generally supportive of the change, providing the Jellicoe water feature is retained.

Bidston Observatory & cottages: The Society has been anxious to learn of the progress of the sale of these important Wirral buildings. To date no information has been forthcoming. It had been suggested the sale could be delayed by up to six months, using the 'Community Right to Buy' legislation.

Burton Manor: The future of this building still remains unclear. Whilst there has been substantial Lottery Funding awarded, it's still uncertain how this might affect future re-use of the building.



Our resident cartoonist, HUNTER, comments on a recent case in Mollington, where developers deliberately poisoned mature trees to facilitate their building plans

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Cartoon - HUNTER

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