

Paths Where There Were None?

How entirely new off-road routes might be established in Wirral

by Gareth Lovett Jones – writer, photographer, filmmaker

Episode 3 – use Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 226 and Wirral A to Z

Pensby/Landican Lane (Prenton Brook)



On the left, going north, where the A551 drops into Barnston Dale, there is a black-clad vertical of a modern finger post, matched by a nicely made old gap in the sandstone wall. This sign indicates a path leading upstream but, as things stand, this is simply not there to be followed.

photo above

Meanwhile, at the place where the same small stream-valley is crossed by Landican Lane, a well used de facto path turns south west along the brook all the way to a point where it meets the public path between Lower Thingwall Lane and Storeton Lane. In between this junction and the A551 is a long, narrow and rather beautiful meadow, where no man goes, nor woman neither.

It should be fairly unproblematic to give official recognition to the popular length of de facto path, given the option of 'permissive' designation. But there is something more important to be done here, namely to establish, if possible, a route along the whole length of the stream (and a little beyond it) from Pensby Road onwards. To do this over its upper length, i.e. to let it go where the signpost would be pointing, would be to allow the people of Pensby a much-needed new facility: a footpath leading directly into open countryside. This would clearly make full sense only when the meadow too has a path. The result would be well worth having: recognised access along a key length of one of Wirral's hidden dingles.

Feedback to Gareth's footpath proposals in the last newsletter from Paul Loughnane BEM, Keith Davidson Award 1997, Honorary Reserve Manager Thornton Wood

'I read with much interest Gareth Lovett Jones' speculative cross-peninsula traffic free walking route from Parkgate to Eastham. It is a great idea to have such a route. I have Gareth's book which he produced with Richard Mabey on wildwoods which is illustrated by Gareth's evocative photographs of a selection of these hallowed places. One part of the suggested cross Wirral route was following alongside the Clatter Brook through Thornton Wood from by Claire House, Clatterbridge down under the M53 motorway and on to Bromborough. I think where the Clatter Brook passes under the M53 would require extensive engineering works to make it readily passable at all times through out the year. See photograph below, by Paul Loughnane.

If Wirral Society members would like to join the Wirral Wildlife guided walk around Foxes and Thornton Woods to enjoy the woods the proposed route walk passes through. They are more than welcome to on Saturday 25th April 2pm. Places are limited but if over subscribed an early tour at 9.30am will be offered. These woods are ancient woodlands with associated spring flowers. There is rare chance to view an active hazel coppice system which has been benefiting the woodland flora and the restoration of Wirral's hedgerows. More than two kilometres of hedge laying has been completed using stakes from this coppice system. Attendees should be aware the woods have no formalised paths and can be steep in parts. The motorway underpass can be viewed too, if wished. For further details please contact Paul on jpl@liv.ac.uk or 645 8937.'

A postscript from Gareth on the same subject

'Those who have seen it report that the Clatter Brook motorway underpass SE of Clatterbridge Hospital is a non-starter for pedestrian traffic, so a compromise would be necessary here in the shape of a diversion southwards from the meeting point of brook and M53. This would carry the path some 200 metres, to link up with the county road and its over-bridge to the motorway. Walkers might then have to use the verge, very slightly adapted, to rejoin the brook bottom, and on as before.'



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Spring - 2015

www.wirralsociety.net

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

Some Current Issues we are actively involved with

Playing Fields, former Rock Ferry High School: The Society is in discussions with Wirral Council to establish how best these playing fields might best be retained as a public amenity, following the closure of this school.

NW Wirral – Proposed Fire Station: We continue to be concerned at the current proposals for the closure of Upton & W Kirby fire stations and the siting of a new station on Green Belt land at Saughall Massie. The Society is responding to the Consultation saying, given that once West Kirby is closed in April, those living in NW Wirral would be relying on the Upton station for the foreseeable future, so the case has not been made for a new fire station.

Proposed Wind turbine assembly shed at Cammell Laird premises, Alabama Way, Birkenhead: Whilst the Society is keen to support new industrial activity on Wirral wherever practical, it has written in support of the local residents, small businesses and those who use river access in the immediate vicinity of this proposal, who oppose the construction of this shed.

Major housing development at Ledsham Road, Great Sutton. We have been closely following the depressing actions that have been taking place in recent months, between Cheshire West Council and the developers over this site. Outline approval has now been given for some 2,000 houses on this prime farmland. The Society, together with local resident's groups, had objected last year to the 1st Phase of this major development and to subsequent Applications. We will be looking closely at the detail of the detailed plans, as they are submitted for approval.

Hydraulic Fracturing: As long as the Government continues to show its support for this method of extracting shale gas, the Society recognises it needs to try and understand the possible implications for the Wirral. We are concerned that as decisions on drilling currently rest with local councils, we have been asking whether they are properly briefed on the subject. This enquiry is continuing.

Chairman's Report

I'm sure many of you moving around the peninsula, whether by train, car or bicycle, will be depressed by the amount of litter in evidence. It has seemed to be especially prevalent this year. It's not clear whether it has been caused by any reduction in Councils' budgets for litter clearing, high winds we have had in recent months, or other factors. However, some comfort can be taken from recent press reports, which suggests this is a national problem.

It was therefore good to note a recently published report by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee has backed the Keep Britain Tidy Group's call for a national litter strategy. The Committee said the Coalition Government had 'displayed a lack of vigour, if not complacency' over the past decade in relation to litter and says a strategy should include 'a clear framework for action' to tackle the blight of litter in our communities.

The Report also backs the call for the introduction of fixed penalty notices for small-scale flytipping. Whilst the Society is not set up to be able to undertake litter clean ups, we are in discussions with one of our Councils, with a view to seeing whether the Society could again assist by purchasing some litter bins. In that earlier arrangement, the Council acquired the bins, determined their respective locations and subsequently serviced them. We hope by doing this, the Society might be able to make some small contribution towards keeping our Peninsula tidy.



The Tollbooth Cottage, Bidston



1909 stripes at New Ferry Tollbar

From Turnpikes to Motorways - October talk and article by Gavin Hunter

We still use the original Wirral turnpike roads everyday without thinking of their origins. It's easy to recognise them – they have the name of where they take you to – Liverpool Road, Chester Road, Parkgate Road, Hoylake Road. In the 18th Century Turnpike Trusts were set up to improve the Wirral roads. Funded by wealthy landowners and merchants, the costs were then recovered by charging tolls to the individual road users. 1787 saw the first turnpiked roads on Wirral; one from Chester Northgate to Neston, one from Chester to Woodside and a third via Clatterbridge joining the two together. Others followed over the next fifty years.

Tolls were collected at various gates operated by tollgate keepers who usually lived in a cottage adjoining the gates. There are very few turnpike cottages left on Wirral. The best example is in Bidston. Like most toll booths it stuck out into the road and had a gate across. One place-name in Wirral still retains the evidence of historic use – the Toll Bar at New Ferry.

There was an old turnpike cottage on the Chester side of the Yacht Inn on the Chester High Road.. Its painted toll board used to hang in Woodbank Hall. Tolls payable at Woodbank Gate ranged from 'For every horse, ass, beast or other cattle. Drawing any coach, carriage, chaise, gig or such like carriage, the sum of 6d' to 'For every Calf, Sheep, Pig or Lamb1/4d' 'Tickets issued at this gate entitled the user to free passage at the Shotwick and Badger's Rake side gates.

Victorian Villa Estates – Spring talk and article by Elizabeth Davey

The Wirral Society takes a particular interest in Wirral's Conservation Areas, two of which, Rock Park (1837) and Clifton Park (1840), began life as villa estates. The forerunner of the villa estate movement was Regent's Park, London, where Nash's plans included terraces and villas, the sale of which was intended to fund the laying out of the park. On Merseyside a similar scheme was followed for Prince's Park and Birkenhead Park.

Villa estates, on a smaller scale, featured on both sides of the Mersey. Some like Fullwood (1840), Grassendale (1848) and Cressington (1851), ably documented in Susan George's 'Liverpool Park Estates.' remain almost unchanged. Others, like Parkfield (1836) laid out on a wedge of land between Exmouth Street and Conway Street and once home to historian Hilda Gamlin, have left no trace.

Perhaps the most famous, Rock Park, once boasted a ferry and the Royal Rock Hotel. Children from the Bluecoat Hospital went there on outings and it was home to the American Consul, Nathaniel Hawthorne and the astronomer, Isaac Roberts. Today their house has gone and the New Ferry by-pass rips through the park. Yet the riverside esplanade remains, albeit in grave need of repair, and from it the modern visitor can still enjoy views across the Mersey.

The Keith Davidson Award is made annually in recognition of outstanding contributions towards the preservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the environment of the Wirral peninsula. This year to George and Garnette Bowler who, for many years, have been Green – both politically and environmentally. They were instrumental in saving Storeton Woods for public enjoyment and setting up The World Environment Days at Ness Gardens. Dorothy and Gordon Plumb accepted the award on their behalf from our President – John Tarn

photo of George and Garnette by David Casement



At the recent Society AGM the recipient of the 2014 Civic Design Award was Hardman Double Glazing of Wallasey Village. The award was presented to Mark Hardman, a director of the company by our president, Professor John Tarn. One may query why a commercial firm should be the winners, but their extension above their Wallasey village premises fulfilled all the assessor's criteria. Apart from providing much needed accommodation in the form of two self contained apartments on a brownfield site it matched the adjoining building, circa 1900, in almost every detail, this fitting into the street scene extremely well.

by Terry Edgar photo – David Casement



Summer Guided tour – June 21st Hooton Hangars 2.30

Airfield Way, S Road, Ellesmere Port CH65 1BQ 01510-327-3565. sat nav not always reliable. Leave M53 at Junction 6; follow 'Vauxhall cars only' sign. Road crosses motorway. Turn right at next roundabout. Hooton Hangars is a short distance along on the left. Car parking available on site, past the collapsed hangar. www.hootonparktrust.co.uk

Chairman, Rod Tann honoured with a Wirral Award

Rod was nominated by Cllr. Geoffrey Watt, for his long involvement in The Wirral Society and his close involvement with the formation and running of the Wirral Symphony Orchestra. He joined nine others at a recent ceremony in Wallasey Town Hall, with awards presented by the mayor, Cllr Steve Foulkes

Green Belt Matters by Neil Parry, our Green Belt coordinator

Both our Councils, Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C) are still working on their Local Plans that will be the basis for future developments, always assuming no new 'bright ideas' following the May elections.

CW&C's seem to be the more developed, although would apparently be reliant on the loss of quality agricultural land off Ledsham Road, by Capenhurst, to meet the 'need' for new housing.

The current planning laws, the NPPF, support only 'sustainable development'. Sustainable is not defined but it does seem strange that losing quality agricultural land can be considered sustainable. How much farm land can we afford to lose?

CW&C planners are noticeable at present - they are still considering applications to develop gardens in Willaston and the application for Wind Turbines by Leahurst/Cuckoo Lane is still pending. Surely time for a decision.

Once again the peace in Eastham Village is threatened by the proposals to expand oil refinery works by the Docks. The potential to generate yet more traffic through the village is most concerning.

Whilst no formal application has yet been made, we believe the threat of a new, questionably essential, Fire Station in Greasby has now moved to Green Belt land by Saughall Massie. One has to wonder how we are to be protected since we think the West Kirby station is to close this April. So, for months, if not years, pending the new station, we will be reliant on Upton to protect the north west of the Wirral.

Any issues on the Green Belt in Wirral please email planning@wirralsociety.net