

On the A540 these Police signs give a 'warm welcome' to visitors as they enter Wirral from the South.

Photo by Rod Tann



Solar Panels - and why should I fit them to my roof?

The first and foremost factor about solar, or photovoltaic, (pv), panels is that the energy they generate is "clean". The Government has been requested by Europe to greatly reduce its carbon footprint by 2020 and so in an effort to achieve this target it has presented an incentive to the public to encourage them to install pv panels on their roofs.

Basically one will need to invest, on average, £6,000 on the installation. The argument to do this is very positive for many reasons which are all win-win situations.

- i) Interest on this investment is about 1% net at present, if you are lucky. It will bring you a return of £60 per annum.
- ii) The Feed in Tariff (FIT) paid to you by your electricity company at present is 13.39p per kilowatthour (kwh) generated. A modest total kwh generated in a year by your panels is 2500kwh and this will bring you £334.75
- iii) Any appliances you have switched on during the hours of generation will use any electricity you generate instead of drawing it off the National Grid and your electricity bill is likely to go down by £176 in a year.
- iv) Whether you use the electricity or not the electricity company will pay you for what you generate. They will assume that half of what you generate will go into the Grid and so they will pay you an extra 1.5p per kwh at the end of the year.
- v) This income is all free of UK tax.
- vi) You will add value to your property should you wish to sell your house.
- vii) You will earn about £550 per year and it would take you about 11 years to recoup the outlay but the point is that you will be getting a return on your original capital of 9%. Where else would you be assured of this return to-day.

Since the outset of this scheme the costs of installation and feed-in-tariff have dropped but the pay-back time has remained the same.

Why don't you get a quote from an installer to-day? You don't have to go ahead with it if you are still unsure.

NB. Panels do not have to be facing directly to the South but that is the best aspect.

Photo right faces East and Photo left (zigzag) panels face South.



Article and photos by David Casement



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



Guided ancient woodland walk

How privileged we were to roam the ancient woodland valleys of Raby, in Foxes and Thornton Woods – with two specialists who are former winners of The Wirral Society's environmental (Keith Davidson) award - Honorary Woods' Warden Paul Loughnane, botanist Hilary Ash along with mycologist John Ratcliffe who is an amateur enthusiast of fungi and all aspects of Natural History.

You can contact John on rattyco@yahoo.co.uk .

Flowers grow here that indicate the ancient woodland past - moschatel, dog's mercury, golden saxifrage, wood anemone, wood sorrel. The banks are covered with wild bluebells. Wren, robin and hedgehog find their homes in rough piles of cut and broken wood. Trees, long fallen, are colonized by mosses, slime moulds and fungi. Names to conjure with - haresfoot inkcap, tar spot, hairy curtain crust.

One slope has coppiced hazel, some over 100 years old. The straight sticks are harvested for hedge laying (eg. Station Road, Barnston) and woodland use.

The Clatterbrook has a boggy floodplain in the wider Thornton Woods Valley, allowing golden marsh marigolds (kingcups) to thrive. **(photo above)**

Management of the woods includes keeping soil poor in one meadow to allow wildflowers to thrive, by cutting and removing cuttings. Garden escapes such as yellow archangel and Himalayan balsam are pulled up, as they soon form a vigorous cover that stifles and stamp out the ancient plants.

The woods are nature reserves managed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Guided walks take place each spring - see www.wirralwildlife.org.uk or www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

Green Flag Awards

The Wirral Society has a long history of supporting local parks and open spaces and the work of their various volunteer Friends groups. It is therefore very pleasing to see that Wirral now boasts 22 Green Flag parks, more than any other local authority in the North West.

The most recent awards have been made to Queens Park in Hoylake, Mayer Park, Bebington and Rake Lane Cemetery in Wallasey, in all of which Friends groups have been very active. In addition Tam O' Shanter Urban Farm and New Ferry Butterfly Park have achieved Green Flag Community Awards.

One park, Birkenhead Park has again been recognised By Historic England and retained its Green Heritage Site accreditation, awarded for a high standards of work in the management and interpretation of a site of local or national historic importance.

At a time when bees are under threat, the work of New Ferry Butterfly Park has been recognised and it now holds a 'Bees Needs' Special Award for Innovation in recognition of its commitment to encouraging and increasing pollinator-friendly habitats and food sources for bees throughout the year.

Article and bee photo by Elizabeth Davey



Birkenhead Rock Follies by JR



2015 Summer Guided tour – Hooton Hangars

This fascinating Museum of airfield history adjoins the Ellesmere Port Vauxhall Factory and is run by volunteer enthusiasts. There are planes, artefacts and historic photos along with huge World War 1 Hangars in varying states of repair. The Griffin Trust. www.hootonparktrust.co.uk oversees and manages the restoration of the hangars on this former airfield at Hooton Park.



The Hooton Hangars need restoration help



Pages from a "A Thousand years of Hooton Park" booklet

Paths Where There Were None?

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

by Gareth Lovett Jones – writer, photographer, filmmaker

Episode 4 – use Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 226 and Wirral A to Z

Barnston/Brimstage

Please remember we are discussing what might be done in Wirral to create structurally useful permissive routes, as and when individual farmers or landowners begin to engage with the High Level of Stewardship Project.

The stretch of country described here is, currently, efficiently farmed and shows no outward signs of needing to change. It remains the case, though, that southwards from Storeton Lane/Station Road to the A5137 there is not a single public path, and that any route across it could be immensely useful.

The link I have in mind could leave Storeton Lane at the point where the Thingwall Lane path across Barnston Dale emerges on to it. Here in any case a short length of green way leads onto field gates, but without any attendant bridleway beyond. Could some lost right of way be indicated? The bisecting rail line has a single farm-bridge crossing, to the south, and beyond this a 'way out' might run to and along the farm track that joins the A5137 just west of Brimstage. It may be worth noting that this track is hedged on both sides at its southern end, as might be a bridleway or public road. Along any such route, Barnston, and by way of the preceding suggestions, Pensby and, along the path to Barnston from Whitfield Common, Heswall would all be linked with Brimstage and thus with the existing paths southwards from there.

Green Belt Issues by Neil Parry, our Green Belt coordinator

Following the general election there does not yet appear to be any "bright ideas" to change local planning and the Green Belt. Once again a focus on brown field land development.

The issue of "Housing Land Supply" is still apparently rumbling on with a need for more houses. If so, at least Wirral has acres of cleared brown field land to use. Although this does seem to be forgotten when there are developments on green fields to consider.

The big issue we are currently facing is the "independence" of local Councils to decide appropriately on applications to develop Green Belt land that they also own.

The latest twist in the threat to Green Belt is with applicants claiming "Enabling Development". I.e. if allowed to build houses or some other money making scheme which is inappropriate for the Green Belt then the money (if it ever appears) can be used to build something "of value", that may possibly on its own just be permissible in the Green Belt.

It would appear that this may be the logic being used by Wirral Council with its (still running after 10 years) Golf Resort Scheme.

We hear that the application to expand oil storage at Eastham has been approved. One can only hope that the Council has placed restrictions so that the tankers will not go through Eastham Village to the site.

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

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