

Summer Outing

This summer the Society's outing was to West Kirby, where members were given a tour of St. Bridget's Church and the recently refurbished West Kirby Museum, formerly known as the Charles Dawson Brown Museum.

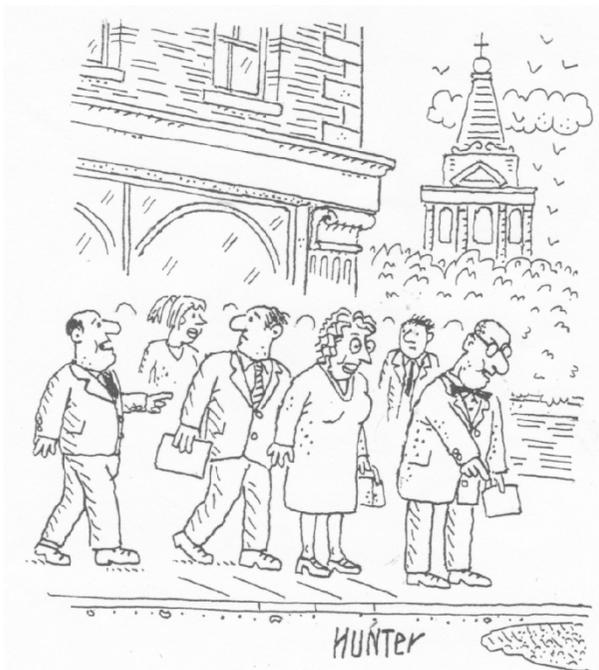
In the church we were able to see the 10th century Hogback and to admire the work of Charles Kempe (1837-1907) the Victorian designer who was responsible for most of St. Bridget's stained glass windows as well as for the elaborately carved and painted chancel arch.

In the church centre, members were plied with refreshments and able to see how recent work has completely transformed what was once a tiny, dusty, late Victorian Museum. The collection, which includes some pre-Norman sculpted stones, is now displayed in attractive well-lit, fully accessible surroundings and is supported by a range of informative interpretation panels which tell the story of the locality.

For those who missed the trip, the Museum can be visited on any Saturday, when it is open, free of charge from 10am to 1 pm.

Details of other events can be found on the Museum website www.westkirbymuseum.co.uk

by **Elizabeth Davey**



'Excuse me, is this the Civic Society's Historic Potholes guided walk?'

The Friends of Burton Manor Gardens work hard to maintain the gardens there. The Lottery funded



restoration of the Edwardian walled gardens and glasshouse now has an Auricula Theatre and visitors are always welcome. The café is open each day except Mondays 10 -4. Details of events www.burtonmanor.co.uk

Wirral Conservation Areas Forum

The Wirral Society sponsored the first Conference of this Forum which represents the 26 Conservation Areas of Wirral. A newsletter 'Conserve Wirral' will communicate the nitty gritty of the Forum's work.

Hot pot Supper

note change of venue this year to **Hollins Hey Hotel, Victoria Road, New Brighton, Tuesday 7th October 6.30 for 7**

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Cartoon - HUNTER

HELP SUPPORT OUR WORK

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

Copies are placed in all libraries and sent to councillors and MPs in the Wirral peninsula

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Summer 2014

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



10th. May - New Ferry trees – cause for concern?

www.wirralsociety.net

The recent Green Streets programme instigated by Peel Holdings and carried out by The Mersey Forest Partnership, to plant trees on the main transport routes around the Wirral Water's site has been the single largest tree-planting programme on the Wirral peninsula for many years. The Society applauds the fact that 600 new street trees have been planted in the Birkenhead area over the last 2 years, with a target of a further 400 trees in this final year. The Wirral Society are now looking to identify possible locations where trees, either singly or in groups, might be planted during the coming season to make at least some of the more urban parts of our Peninsula more attractive places. Send your ideas to our Secretary.



22nd. July – hope springs from every willow branch

Some Recent Casework

Marsh Lane, Bebington. The Society attended and made representations at an Appeal heard by the Planning Inspectorate against a decision made by Wirral Council to refuse an Application for housing on land within the Merseyside Green Belt. The applicant appealed, first for written, then represented, Inquiry.

This was a critical case, involving an important part of the Wirral countryside and the potential for setting a undesirable precedent.

It was good that the 3 local councillors were present, in addition to representatives from local organisations and individuals, to support Council planning staff in making the case for stopping this unnecessary development.

Good Result:- The Inspector upheld the Council's decision and the Appeal was refused.

Chairman's Comment

The Wirral Society's committee has recently been considering the importance that trees make to our daily lives. Not only do they visually soften our landscapes, especially our townscapes, but they also make an important contribution to our environment by absorbing carbon dioxide and giving out oxygen. In Italy, the amount of CO2 absorbed by forests is now equivalent to half the emissions from its entire transport sector. Many of us may consider Britain to be a well tree'd country, but in fact we compare badly against many European countries, with just 12% afforested, against the best ones, such as Sweden with 75% and Finland with 69%. Whilst it is perhaps unrealistic to achieve those high levels we are keen to see if there are ways in which we can increase tree numbers, at least on our peninsula.

Water feature at the former Burton's factory, Moreton: now that proposals for redeveloping the factory as housing have been rejected, the Society has restarted its efforts to see how this valuable 20th century landscape feature designed by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe can be rescued from continuing decay.

M53 Moreton Spur: We have drawn the attention of the Highways Agency to the poor condition of this section of road. Whilst the carriageway itself has recently been repaired, the rundown, weed infested and littered state of areas of the crash barriers and of the hard shoulders have been reported. There has been positive response, so the committee is hopeful of some action in the foreseeable future.

Hooton Hangars: we are finding it difficult to know how best to give meaningful support to the Trust which manages these valuable hangars. There are 3 such buildings which date from 1st World War; one appears to be beyond economic repair and another is deteriorating badly. Despite their being Listed Grade 2, there does not seem an economic use for the buildings and thus funds to pay for their upkeep are not forthcoming.

Park and Ride Facility, Bidston: We have written to Mersey Travel commending this new facility, but asking whether light sensors might be fitted to cut down on energy use and light pollution. We have also asked why more trees have not been planted around the site and whether we can work with the Company to improve landscaping.

* * * * *

IN WIRRAL

- Paths Where There Were None -

by author and photographer,
Gareth Lovett Jones – who was brought up on Wirral and has spent much of his adult life visiting and exploring the peninsula
Episode 1

This is a discussion piece addressed to all and any of those who hope to see the best possible use made of the **seventeen-miles-by-eight** for self-powered recreational travel. The ideas have come very gradually into focus during a year-long project to identify and photograph those elements of the Wirral landscape which make it

most 'itself'. Travelling was done using a flexible combination of bicycle and strong soled boots, plus a car thrown in occasionally for southern regions. As part of the project I made it my business to go along as many of the peninsula's public paths as I could, especially where they were not yet known to me. I have given location details using road or village names, on the assumption that most readers would recognise them, and I hope that they may be able to cross-check details where needed using the Ordnance Survey Explorer map number 266 and, here and there, the A to Z.

Anyone with a serious interest in the future of countryside access in Wirral could do well to visit and reflect on two areas of permissive path creation already in existence here. In them we may find models for a newly pragmatic approach to route creation in all those surviving green spaces between Wirral's built up areas, especially in the northern half of the peninsula. To say this, is not to imply that routing innovations for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders haven't already been improved here by leaps and bounds: there has been inventive work going on for at least the last three decades, making use of former railways (the Wirral Way was one of the first such routes in the country), marine embankments, formerly car-dominated promenades, bridleways such as Landican Lane, and even the occasional transformation of a field path into a useful link for horse-riders. And where else has a former borough dump been regenerated into a whole new hill, complete with cycle circuits? But successes in one place do have the effect of highlighting ongoing needs in another.

The two areas of path creation on farmland are to be found, firstly, in the country between Arroe Park and Thurstaston Common, and secondly, to the west and south of Thornton Hough. A third lies in the vicinity of Shotwick Castle, north-west of Great Saughall. The Arroe Park to Limbo Lane network is now well established and much in use by locals. In its modest way, it can be quite beautiful, allowing the adventurous to leave the wide and made-up ways of the Park in June on paths across popped cornfields that might have given Monet himself a moment's pause. It is, I think, as priceless now as the farmland it criss-crosses – farmland which stops Greater Irby from bulging further eastwards, and Greater Pensby from bulging further north.

The second paths network has been laid out amongst the fields of White House Farm, Raby, and has generously enlarged the possibilities for walking and riding in that area, revealing new beauties in the landscape as it does so. In particular it has opened up two good routes between Thornton Hough and Raby where previously there was no choice but the road, while to the east it allows a safe off-road link between Raby and Rocklands Lane, and so onwards to Brimstage and elsewhere. This characteristic of new paths, to forge links with outlying networks, is one of their most important benefits. The project has been made possible under English Nature's High Level Stewardship Scheme, which includes an element of farming for wildlife – management of field-edge strips, planting of seed-crops for birds, and so on.

Go and see the White House Farm paths, if you don't already know them. Variations on what has been done there might be made in every remaining patch of Wirral's 'green lung' regions and many existing routing problems solved in the process – at least as long as English Nature can continue to pay the grants, As EU subsidies for food production alter, farmers will inevitably look to other ways of paying the bills, so that path creation may at last become a genuinely attractive option for them.

Gareth's proposals for new off-road routes in Wirral will be serialized in future Wirral Matters



The permissive path from the bottom of Station Road, Burton, across the marshes to Connah's Quay has opened up a great off-road route into Wales. Following the old coastline to start with, past sheep-farming and the Iron Age hill fort, the

views and terrain are ever changing. In the storm surge of December 2013 the old coast line was reclaimed for a while as the sea found its old home.



Green Belt News

Once again the 'interest' in Green Belt planning has been provided by Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) Council area with applications in back gardens. This raises the fundamental issue of what development should occur within a Green Belt village 'inset' and whether that 'inset' area should be extended and under what conditions.

Perhaps the answer is that land easily capable of food production should be retained, its loss being unsustainable, as per the government's own National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) planning rules. (Also referencing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC).

CW&C Council are still developing their Local Plan, and CPRE Cheshire, the umbrella organisation for the Wirral Society and the other affiliates, has been providing comment as best possible, given the huge 5 year housing need that CW&C feel they must meet. Hopefully the recent statements by Messrs. Osborne and Pickles re-stating the requirement to develop brown field land first will reduce the planned loss of Green Belt around Chester.

Wirral Council is also developing its Local Plan, to which the Wirral Society has commented and suggested improvements at every draft stage. We understand that the next draft for consultation will be at the end of 2014. so it appears most likely that the 'old' Urban District Plan, UDP, will be in force for another year or two...or all thrown in the air again by a new government in spring 2015.

**Any comments on The Green Belt in Wirral please email :-
neil101parry@gmail.com**