



CAW NEWS — JUNE 2024

Vineyard Barn Wirral's Heritage at risk ?

CAW has been very concerned about the steadily deteriorating condition of Vineyard Barn for some time. Although not in a Conservation Area, the barn is a very significant Heritage asset for Wirral and is near to 11th Century Poulton Lancelyn Hall.

Pictures taken this week (15 June)
which clearly show the appalling state of this
unique cruck framed building.



At our meeting with Council officials this week (see page 4) we were advised that **action was finally being taken**. However Jess Malpas (Wirral's Conservation Officer) has provided an update which seems less certain:

"Persimmon Homes were contacted last week to remind them to make the building weather tight and submit condition survey reports. They have been informed that if these elements of works are not implemented and information submitted by the 19th June, then the case will be passed to the enforcement team for more formal action to be considered."

CAW has written to Jess and Jason Bramwell, urging immediate enforcement given the state of the barn.

What's new in this issue?

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A “Good News” Story

Royal Mail rides to the rescue

Residents are probably aware by now that the missing letter box in the Gayton Conservation Area (CA) is now back in action (see photo below).

The Chairman of The Heswall Society went to the Heswall sorting office to try and find out what was happening to the box and explain that the Society wanted to retain the front plate at least as it was a very important part of the street scene in the CA. He was told that it had now been repaired and was back in action. The manager advised that the box had required repair as one of the hinges had broken and was being held in place only by the lock.

Rather than replace with a modern box, the person responsible realised the importance of the VR box and went to mid-Wales to find an equivalent replacement!

Royal Mail often get a very bad press but in this instance, they have gone above and beyond to help out. The Society now intend to contact the person responsible to thank him for going to all that trouble.

For once this is a “good news story” for Royal Mail and, hopefully there will be many more!



A Cautionary Tale

“Buddleia strikes again”

Whilst providing great food for butterflies and other pollinators, Buddleia is an absolute scourge for historic brickwork & buildings generally.



One of our keen-eyed CAW committee members took these pictures in Hamilton Square recently. This wonderful “Jewel in the Crown” of Wirral’s heritage assets is absolutely plagued with Buddleia which forces its roots into the smallest cracks in the mortar, gradually breaking the structure.

In certain cases (as has happened in Meols & Kings Gap CA) the plant fixes itself into the brickwork of a chimney, making it extremely difficult to remove but in other situations (like the ones in our pictures of Hamilton Square) early intervention with a trowel or secateurs could save a very expensive repair job down the line.

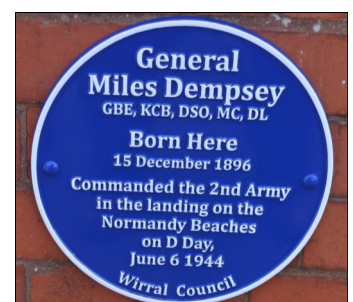


Blue Plaques update



Three new blue plaques have recently been installed, one each for Mallory & Irvine (See page 5) to commemorate 100 years since their attempt to reach the summit of Everest.

The third is a plaque sponsored by Cllr Jerry Williams, which has been installed in New Brighton on the house occupied by Sir Miles Dempsey, a “hero” of WW2 who was heavily involved in the Normandy landings as well as other key battles. The plaque was in place for the D-Day celebrations.



Eastham Conservation Area

Eastham Society rises to the Challenge

Eastham Village Preservation Association (EVPA) has extended its activities beyond its original remit of advising the Council on matters affecting the Conservation Area.

The world is changing and we have to change with it.

Sadly the Council is no longer able to afford the attention it once gave to maintaining Conservation Areas and that vacuum is being filled by volunteers who supplement the Council's responsibilities.

EVPA now has a Graveyard Team to maintain the churchyard and a Friends of Torr Park scheme to keep the village Park looking good; it funds and sustains the 29 hanging baskets that adorn the village in the summer - an appeal raised £800 in donations to fund the baskets. It organises a Speed Watch Team to remind drivers that the speed limit is 20 mph due to the lack of pavements.



The Society is responsible for the campaign to preserve the remains of the unique Victorian Pleasure Gardens in Eastham Woods, including the bear pit. It runs the campaign to reopen the public shoreline footpath between Bromborough Pool and Eastham Ferry and to extend it to the Boat Museum.

Other activities include repairing the traditional red phone box that has adorned the village centre for over 100 years, keeping the Village's history archive which goes back to the 10th century and also planning a litter picking team.

These initiatives, driven by our community, not only enhance the village but also foster a sense of pride in the area in which we are privileged to live

Conservation Areas are playing an increasingly prominent role in Wirral's visitor attraction offer, but to maintain them properly, there must be an active two-way partnership between the Council and those who love Wirral and its historic areas. Making this work is a challenge for all parties but with good will on both sides, we can all play our part.



Friends of Torr Park celebrating another day beating the bindweed and other Park invaders.



The Speed Watch team !

More “Good News” Council Conservation Staff more than doubled !

Wirral Council have received funding for a Conservation Officer to be appointed on a one year contract which is great news. However — there is more good news as Mandy Lewis, Assistant Director (Planning) told CAW (at a recent meeting) that they had advertised for a permanent Principal Heritage Officer.

Several applications had already been received and they will be interviewing shortly with a view to the applicant joining them as soon as possible. Chris Han has been promoted to Head of Place, Culture & Visitor Economy and will move over to the Regeneration Department. Given that Conservation Areas are seen as a key part of Wirral’s Tourism offer, we will still be liaising with Chris on a regular basis but CAW congratulates him on his well deserved promotion.

We were pleased to hear that Kath Lawless is still heading up the team working on getting Wirral’s Local Plan through its lengthy journey. Progress is slow but continuing.

Meanwhile, Rebecca Lowry is now Assistant Director for Regeneration. Previously Rebecca was working with the Wrexham Authority and has great experience in dealing with heritage issues within a difficult, economically deprived area.

Even more Good News:

* Chris Han told us that **updated Appraisals and Management Plans** were going to be done for Birkenhead Park, Hamilton Square and hopefully Clifton Park as well. These would be the new style, shorter format documents. This has been a long time coming so CAW will be delighted to see these documents as they emerge.

* During the meeting, discussions centred around the **Memorandum of Understanding** that has been signed, ensuring that Conservation Areas with little or no representation will be represented by CAW on any planning issues. CAW will also be copied in to all planning applications in Conservation Areas for reference purposes.

* CAW had also submitted thoughts about a pilot scheme to trial **Article 4 directions**, given the pressure on CA’s by people who buy houses within the Area but then wish to significantly change the appearance of a building, which could lead to a real erosion of the “character” of the area. Mandy Lewis did not have any objections to a pilot scheme but felt it was too soon with so much of the team’s time being devoted to Local Plan preparations and other structural changes that she is gradually bringing into play.

* Enforcement was also discussed with Steve Lacey assuring CAW members that the team were at full strength and working to ensure Planning permissions were adhered to and unauthorised works halted as soon as the team were aware. A big concern has been Vineyard Barn in Poulton which is Grade II listed but deteriorating rapidly. We were assured that actions were being taken to secure the Barn (however see earlier article).

* In answer to a question, Steve Lacey assured us that there was no particular priority given to tree species. The crucial question was how the removal or pruning of a tree would affect the “character” or “view” of the Conservation Area.

“ENABLING DEVELOPMENT” Can it work in Conservation Areas?



A Blue Plaque has recently been installed in Birkenhead Park to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of Mallory & Irvine’s attempt on Everest. It just so happens that Irvine’s house is part of an Enabling Development!

The former residence of Sandy Irvine had been used as a Social Club for many years but ceased operation. As a result the building became pretty well derelict. With large grounds to the rear, a developer saw an opportunity and submitted plans for an “enabling development” of houses on the land with the proviso that the profits would fund the renovation of the house which could be converted into apartments.



In the picture below left the left hand half of the house was the former Irvine home and the properties in the picture on the right are the ‘enabling development’,

Opposition had focused on the impact the “new buildings” would have on the character of Birkenhead Park surrounds. It demonstrates the delicate balance of competing priorities. On the Chair’s casting vote, the committee balanced the retention of an unlisted building with a significant historical association against the effect on the Park of the



enabling development. This was before seeking the inclusion of the Park on the list of World Heritage Sites. The development needs to be completed by taking down the temporary “Heras” fencing and erecting the fence approved under the planning permission. The new flats have more of a visual impact on the Park in the winter when the trees are bare.

BROMBOROUGH POOL UPDATE

For over 10 years, Autism Together has operated a range of support services from a number of rented buildings within Bromborough Pool Village, namely the former school, church and hall. The three buildings are listed and situated in a Conservation Area. Over the years these buildings have seen a great deal of wear and tear, which has left them requiring restoration.

In 2023, these buildings were gifted to Autism Together. As a result, they want to undertake some much-needed repairs to the buildings as well as providing greater community access to the Enterprise Centre (the former school building) and Giles Shirley Hall (the former village hall).

They are extremely keen to engage with the community and key stakeholders to hear their wishes for the village, and how the community spaces within these buildings could best be used by people living nearby. They completed a public consultation in January, which asked people how they would like to see the village developed and reported on the outcome of this on their website <https://www.autismtogether.co.uk/bromborough-pool-village-project/>

They have this week (June 2024) received the architect’s master plan for the village, and they are in the process of gaining board approval to take this forward. They hope to share this with the Bromborough Pool Conservation Committee and the public around September time. There will be another consultation around then for the public to have their say.

CLIFTON PARK



Since the loss of Maureen More, Chair of the Clifton Park Conservation Area Society, the Park has been missing an active group to look after this unique piece of Birkenhead's heritage.

CAW are now working with local residents to try and rectify this situation. Hopefully a public meeting will be held in the near future to encourage the formation of a new group who can work to mitigate some of the problems that the Park is experiencing.

CA'S & TRAFFIC PROBLEMS



Is your conservation area having problems with parked cars?

Pavement parking and parking on yellow lines is becoming more common.

Cars seem to be getting larger and arriving in greater numbers so The Oxton Society recently met with senior managers from the Wirral Council to highlight the issue.

The situation has been exacerbated by the changing nature of the village centre towards a cafe/ restaurant function with less traditional shopping outlets so the Parking restrictions are sadly being ignored to a greater degree. This then leads to pavement parking and double sided parking to access a space.

It also increases the danger of accidents to other cars and pedestrians. Through their discussions with Council officers The Oxton Society hopes to arrive at potential solutions to some of these problems. This would obviously require more frequent and effective enforcement as well as the possible use of CCTV. We will keep you updated on progress.

If your conservation area is experiencing similar problems please let CAW know by email (see contact details below).

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Friday 6th — Sunday 15th September

Many of Wirral's wonderful heritage assets will be open to view from Friday 6th September to Sunday, 15th September.

The programme is part of the National Heritage Open Days initiative and enables the public to look inside buildings that may generally not be open to view as well as perhaps taking part in a guided walk around one of Wirral's key heritage areas.

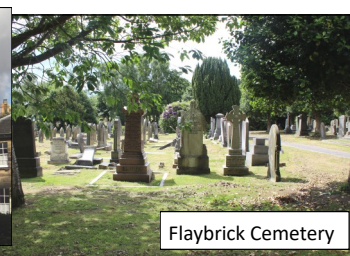
A number of Wirral's Conservation Areas will feature in the programme including Birkenhead Park, Flaybrick Cemetery, Bromborough Pool Village, Oxton, Port Sunlight and Rock Park.

For information on Heritage Open Days regionally and nationally see www.heritageopendays.org.uk

For more information nearer the time visit the Wirral History & Heritage Association website: <http://www.wirralhistoryandheritage.org.uk>



Rock Park



Flaybrick Cemetery

Robert Lee

1946 - 2024

We are sad to report the death of William Robert Lee. Robert (formerly Emeritus Professor of History at Liverpool University) had been ill for some years. Despite this, he had worked tirelessly to promote the cause of Birkenhead Park becoming a Unesco World Heritage Site and the Friends received the welcome news earlier this year that the Park has been placed on the Tentative List.

Robert was also a well regarded author with his latest book, "Birkenhead Park", published earlier this year. He gave a huge amount of his time to Wirral's parks generally and was also involved with the Nordic community through family connections. He will be sadly missed by his many colleagues, friends and family.

For more information about Conservation Areas Wirral, please see our website: www.caw.org or contact the Secretary: Gillian Bolt on petergillianbolt1@btinternet.com