

Formby Civic News

Formby Civic Society

Gladys Bevan — an appreciation; from Peter Lucas.

OCTOBER 2001

The enormous contribution Gladys Bevan, who died on August 4th, made to Formby life will be remembered by several generations. Her role within the Formby Civic Society since its foundation in 1953 may be less well known.

She was the secretary of the Natural History Group from the earliest days until declining health prevented her from leading it. One of the first tasks of the Group was the formation of a herbarium of local plants. Records were also kept of bird sightings over a number of years. A feature of the Group was the walks to the shore, which Gladys used to lead. She had this happy knack of bringing the whole landscape to life with details, which the less observant would have failed to notice. Her reports on the activities of the Group, delivered with charm and humour were a highlight of the Society's Annual General Meetings. Gladys was always a stalwart supporter of the conservation movement long before it became fashionable. She was involved in many causes but she brought common sense and a lack of sentimentality to the issues. Her knowledge was



Honorary Life Member; Gladys Bevan; sadly missed.

often key to the many campaigns waged by the Society. Gladys contributed the chapter on "Formby Fauna Past and Present" which appeared in the first edition of *Viking Village* published by the Society in 1973. Literature and writing were also among Gladys's interests, as many who have read her stories in various publications will know. She revived the Literature Group in 1979 and in 1990 a Writers Group became part of the

Society under her leadership. Some years ago in recognition of her contribution to the life of the Society, Gladys and her husband Harry were made honorary life members. Times change and other groups within Formby now cater for the interests, to which Gladys devoted so much of her time. For those of us who have benefited from her knowledge, advice and good company, Gladys will remain in our memory always.

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THE FORMBY CIVIC SOCIETY

was
founded in 1953 aiming
to
preserve the identity of
Formby as a
community,
safeguard its natural
amenities, and
encourage its cultural
activities

NEW MEMBERS ARE
ALWAYS WELCOME

Formby Hall Golf Club; proposed amateur Golf Academy

Sefton Planning Department is currently considering an application from Formby Hall Golf and Country Club, Southport Old Road, for a two storey Golf Academy, incorporating 60 bedrooms, as an extension to the existing Clubhouse and a six hole training Golf Course together with ancillary works and other upgrading measures. The Society has considered carefully this major application, and the salient features of our response have been discussed and agreed by the Society's Committee. We find it necessary to lodge an objection to the application. While there are parts of the proposals we are willing to accept such as the golf playing facilities, we cannot accept the extent of the buildings proposed situated as they are within the

Green Belt.

We have particular concerns over the 60 bedroom accommodation block and also the swimming pool; in neither case are we satisfied that they are essential to the scheme. We therefore consider that the very special circumstances required to site these within the Green Belt, have not been sufficiently demonstrated. We also find unsatisfactory the relationship of the PGA to the Scheme. After 5 years as we understand the PGA could withdraw its support and therefore the justification for the academy facilities, for which other uses would then need to be found. In the worst case scenario we would have a hotel/country club complex with no golfing connections other than a nearby golf course.

From the soundings which we have carried out, including among a number of local golfers, we have not detected any particular enthusiasm for the proposed scheme. The proposals seem more likely to be welcomed by those outside the area and do not offer very much for the town of Formby and its people. Specifically we would wish to see a fuller archaeological survey of the site proposed for the 6-hole training course before any development were permitted as we believe there may be medieval remains in this area. We also would want to see the maximum number of trees retained at the northern end of this site. [As we go to press we have now been told that the Planning Application has been withdrawn!] Mike Belshaw.

Town Council Submission.

Following a presentation to the Formby Area Committee on 27th September, it was suggested that Sefton Council undertake a Referendum to ascertain the views of the community, more positively than the rather 'minimalist' letter sent out with the electoral return form, recently. Unfortunately many residents did not understand that this was their one and only opportunity of expressing their point of view. It will

be interesting to see if Sefton agree to this. In the meantime some alarmist voices are being heard on the possible costs of a Parish/ Town Council. Ideas vary from estimates of £1 per

To see 2 full pages of 'questions and answers' on the proposed Parish Council please see Formby Times of 4th October.

household p.a. to one hundred times that. In fact the nine 'Sefton' Parish/ Town councils currently set a 'Precept' which is on average around £18. It is likely that a new Council would think of starting at between £10 - £20 p.a. per household. The expenditure of the Council would depend on what it decided to tackle. This would have to be planned and budgeted. Parish councils are the the cheapest kind of local authority in existence..

PowerHouse site

On the 11th September we received the surprise news from Mr. Mike McCombe, that he has secured a two year option to develop the Power House Site. Obviously, there is a question mark over access but the Society Committee has now given thought to what use could be made of this opportunity. These were our suggestions:-

1. A small, select, housing development, in an open pine woodland setting, within an area to be developed into a nature reserve
2. A Nature Reserve and coastal interpretation centre with quality shop and dining facilities e.g. as provided at Martin Mere. (Might possible tie in with Alt 2000 project).
- 3.. Squash club and/or keep fit com

plex.

4. An Adventure park. Bungy jumping, abseiling, rock climbing wall, obstacle course (commando style), parachute jumping, dry ski slope plus the usual facilities.
5. An Athletics Track and associated facilities.
6. A Skate-board Park.

We would be interested to have member's views.

JOHN HOUSTON; Coastal Strategy Officer to go to Brussels.

After 22 years of service to Sefton, Society Member, John Houston has accepted a new challenge in the field of nature conservation. Although John will remain in Formby, his new job with the European Life Project will take him all over the United Kingdom and Ireland, where he will work on conservation projects. He will also have an office in Brussels.

During his 22 years with Sefton Council, John has witnessed and played a part in significant changes to our coast.

John came to Formby in 1979 as the Project Officer for the then newly established Sefton Coast Management Scheme. For the first six months John worked for Merseyside County Council and then for the past 21 years he has worked for Sefton Council.

In the early years of the Coast Management Scheme much of the work was focused on landscape restoration at Formby Point. At Lifeboat Road, years without any real management had left a lot of damage and there were concerns about coast erosion, woodland management, the loss of rare species and vandalism.

John said: "I was thrown in at the

deep end with a second-hand Land Rover, a trailer, tools and a small budget. My job was to help set up the long tenn co-ordinated management of the coast on behalf of the scheme." Some of the early work included the establishment of local nature reserves at Ainsdale and Birkdale sandhills and at Ravenmeols.

John continued: "I had tremendous support from local people through voluntary ranger schemes, and most of the practical management was carried out by conservation volunteers. This led to the formation of the Sefton Conservation Volunteers, local people putting a lot of effort into helping the Sefton Coast."

For several years both Sefton Council and the National Trust ran Manpower Services Commission schemes to carry out the necessary work of erosion control, tree-planting, construction of car parks and footpaths and habitat management. These schemes helped set up the basic framework for the Council's ranger service, which came into full operation in 1987. John said: "I was most fortunate to have the opportunity, through the Winston Churchill Memorial

Trust, to travel to Holland and Denmark in 1983 to study dune management and I was able to bring back many good ideas.

"The experience opened my eyes to the National importance of the Sefton Coast and I am pleased to see that the UK government has included the Sefton Coast in its list of premier sites. It would probably have not done so in the 1970s and the Formby Point and Sefton Coast that we now enjoy is thanks to the work of thousands of local people, volunteers, trainees and staff."

As Coastal Strategy Officer, John has helped to prepare plans and strategies for the coast. He lists some of the many highlights as the establishment of the Sefton Coast Footpath, the dune restoration at Lifeboat Road, the creation of Wick's Lane Lake, the land purchased at Ravenmeols, the Queens Jubilee Nature Trail and the coast education project. Friends and colleagues from the Sefton Coast Partnership joined him for a farewell party last weekend.

From article by Maria O'Neill, Formby Times



The 'Man-made Lake'. This was one of John's ideas and cleverly restored the last area of 'sand-winning' in Formby. We have been very fortunate to have had a person of John's calibre in charge of the Coast during the last two decades. We would like to take this opportunity to wish him well in his important new position.

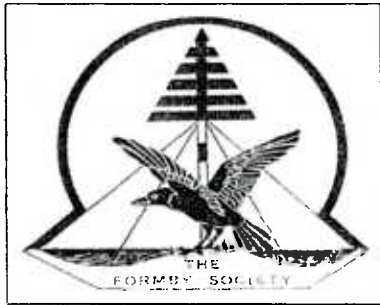
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SUBSCRIPTIONS

As reported in the July Newsletter Membership subscriptions for the year 2002-03 will be increased on 1 April 2002.

The new annual rates will be:

Individual £7

Family £10*

Under 18 £1

*(not £9 as reported in the last Newsletter)

This represents an increase of £2 for individual members and £3 for Family members.

No action is required at present by members who pay by cheque and a reminder will be contained in a later Newsletter when the new rates are due. The Treasurer will shortly send Direct Debit forms to members who currently pay by Standing Order. When these are received members should complete them, return them to the Treasurer and at the same time advise their bank to cancel their existing Standing Order. The use of Direct Debits instead of Standing orders will reduce the administrative work in future

Winter Programme; October 2001 - January 2002.

General Meetings:

Friday 26th October. "Government for the North West"; Leonard Collinson;
Deputy Chair of The Northwest Regional Assembly.

Friday 23rd November. "Holiday Memories" – A tutored tasting of European Wines from holiday regions.
(Tickets; £3, from Hon Secretary or Oddbins.)

Friday 7th December. "The Boundary Walk Revisited"; Jan Stirling, PLUS a
"Formby Swimming Pool Presentation.;The Freshfield Foundation.

Friday 25th January, "George Romney, Painter"; Speaker from Walker Art Gallery.

History Group Meetings

Thursday 4th October "The Hamilton Map"; David Brazendale,
Associate Tutor in the History School of Liverpool University.

Thursday 1st November "A Crosby Diary"; Roger Hull, Research Officer, Liverpool Record Office.

Thursday 3rd January "Formby, 1950 - 1980" - As photographed by Muriel Sibley.

Art Group Programme.

Saturday, 27th October Life Drawing at Liver Sketching Club, 36 Seel Street, Liverpool,
10 am to 1 pm. cost £4. Phone Art Secretary if attending.

In November; (Dates not yet to hand), Visits to Brooke Gallery, Goosenargh and Geoff Rollinson's Wildlife Exhibition, Ribchester. Also Visit to Blackwell House, Windermere. Leaving Formby at 9.30 a.m. (Private cars). Phone Art Secretary for further details. (873920) at beginning of November.

Saturday 8th December. CHET Exhibition, Little Crosby, Meet at CHET, 11 am.

Saturday 5th January. New Year 'Get-together'. Please advise Art Secretary if attending, by 1st January
