

Formby Civic News

Formby Civic Society

Council Created!

February 2004

Despite the fact that unfortunately Sefton Council were not requested to send out polling cards, informing residents of Harington Ward of the holding of Parish Council Elections on December 22nd, (thus resulting in a low turn-out); this was in fact a historic occasion and eight Councillors were officially returned after the count at Victoria Hall, that evening. In

Ravenmeols the four Councillors nominated were returned unopposed. This means that there will be three seats to fill, possibly by 'co-option'. It says a lot about the degree of commitment of the local community, that twelve good candidates are willing to give their time and energies on our behalf in this way. We congratulate them on their initiative and wish them

every success in the years ahead. The successful twelve were Sean Brady, Roland Cawley, Charles Southern, Dru Haydon, Michael Coles, Clifford Scott, Edward Seddon and Stephen Leddy, for Harington Ward. Pat Aspden, Norma Griffiths, James Patterson, and David Walker, for Ravenmeols Ward. Of the successful candidates three are members of the Civic Society. Almost 100 years after Formby first gained Urban District Council Status, truly local government is now returning to Formby.

Report on first meeting of Shadow Committee.

Mr Graham Haywood, Chief Executive Officer Sefton MBC, welcomed the newly elected Committee and reminded them that the Parish Council comes into effect on 1st April. From this day, those elected could act as Parish Councillors but not before.. He wished the new Formby Parish Council well for the future. It was resolved: that Mr Ian Ralph Cowell be Appointed as Temporary Clerk and that Cliff Scott be appointed Chair of the Shadow Parish Council Committee with Sean Brady as Deputy Chair. Casual Vacancies: Mr Haywood advised that in order to keep the process of filling the three

vacancies on the Committee and the Parish Council proceedings open and transparent the Borough Council intended to advertise the vacancies on the Parish Council. The Committee did not have the power to co-opt, whereas the Parish Council would, after coming into being on 1st April 2004, if sufficient interest was received in calling an election. Standing Orders published in 2002 by the National Association of Local Councils were adopted by the Committee. And it was resolved: "That the non-interest bearing loan of £500 offered by Little Altcar Parish Council to

this Committee and Formby Parish Council be accepted with thanks until it is in fund".. A Finance Committee and Personnel Committee were Appointed. The Committee recommended to Sefton Council that it approve a Budget and Precept of £33,170 (Thirty-Three thousand one hundred and seventy pounds) based on a £3.50 Band D Equivalent for the next year. The Parish Council will be able to determine its own precept in future years, without reference to Sefton Council.

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Don't miss:-

GENERAL MEETING,

Friday, 27th February,

• Freshfield Dune Heath.

- An illustrated talk by Ted Jackson, (Lancs & Merseyside Wildlife Trust Chairman), Dr. Phil Smith and Fiona Robertson.

Farmers' Market –would it be good for Formby?

Since the opening of Britain's first modern day Farmers Market in Bath in September 1997, there are now around 200 such markets operating in Britain. Lively and successful markets, organised by Sefton Village Partnership, are now held monthly in King street in the centre of Southport on the last Thursday of each month, Central Square, Maghull on the 1st Sunday and now in 'Millennium Village', Bootle on the 3rd Thursday after a very successful 'pilot' last November.

Has the time come to think about the possibility of this in Formby? Farmers Markets are not a novel idea, but a modern revival of a traditional method of selling farm produce, that was normal practice until the early years of the Twentieth Century. Indeed Formby was one such place. Edith Kelly tells us *"at Cross Green, around the village cross, the markets and fairs were held. The market was an ancient institution, licensed from 1325 or possibly earlier. The rents of the stalls were worth 18 shillings to the lord of the manor and were claimed by the Blundells"*

At present day Farmers Markets producers themselves bring their produce for sale direct to the public. No bought in goods are allowed to be sold. There is an emphasis on adding value to produce and the public can expect to find quality produce that is fresh and wholesome and sold at a fair price. The producer has the opportunity for an informed face to face dialogue with the consumer. This benefits buyer and seller through increased consumer confidence in, and understanding of production. It also gives better market feedback from consumers to producers who can adapt their range or methods of production accordingly to target the market more successfully.

A key characteristic of Farmers Markets is their sense of community own-

ership and their emphasis on sustainable local production and limited environmental impact. In addition, the idea is to provide local small-scale producers and processors a forum in which to sell direct to the con-

sumers and thus contribute to the economy of the community in which they live.

The local Sefton experience is that where the markets are held they draw people in and are good for local busi-

Benefits of Farmers Market

The benefits offered by Farmers Markets can be split as follows

Consumer Benefits

- High quality and freshness of produce
- First hand instruction on product use/presentation
- Reduced processing of food
- Local flavour/characteristic and reduced standardisation of products
- Access to traditional specialist retailers
- Opportunity to establish how and where goods are produced –traceability
- Opportunity to discuss wants and needs with producers
- Easy access for non-drivers

Producer Benefits

- Direct customers feedback to guide produce development
- Accessible outlet for small-scale producers
- Improved public relations for home-producers and the opportunity to benefit from local brands
- Savings on packaging and transport
- Social contact and job satisfaction from interaction with customers and other producers

Wider Social Benefits

- Revitalisation of town/city centres
- Promotion of good will and understanding between urban and rural communities
- Promotion of sustainable production
- Publicity for rural development issues
- Social interaction and entertainment value

Wider Economic Benefits

- Increased purchasing of local produce and support for local rural businesses, leading to:
 - Increased customer trade for nearby retailers, including existing charter markets
 - Improved local economy
 - Increased employment opportunities
 - Agricultural diversification and greater economic stability
 - Increased consumption of home-produced goods and consequent benefits to the national trade balance

Environmental Benefits

- Reduced transport "food miles" through local marketing and consequent environmental benefits

HERITAGE COAST.

About one third of the national coastline has been designated as a Heritage Coast but on the coast of NW England from the Dee to Solway Firth, only a short section of the Cumbrian coast is designated as such This may change .

Here in Sefton we have a magnificent coast with many associations and features of significant historical, cultural, maritime and other interest. At present it could be said that we have a 'quasi-heritage' coast, which unfortunately still lacks the insurance against inappropriate development, that Heritage Coast designation would provide. Having it so desig-

nated would increase local pride and underline the cultural value of our coastline, both to local people and the large number of those who visit our coast, at least in respect of the undeveloped section of coast between Birkdale and Hall Road,.

It is intended to explore the story of man's cultural impact on the coast at a special day conference to be held at Formby Hall Golf Club on Wednesday 15th September 2004, under the title of "Sefton's Coastal Heritage'. It is hoped that this will be an occasion for local people to hear more about some of the things which make

our coastline a notable one in view of its history, archaeology and traditions This will be of interest to all, not only the 'experts'. If you would be interested in having more information please return the Reply Slip enclosed

For more information about the Sefton Heritage Coast proposal, see the current issue of COASTLINES, the Sefton Coast Newsletter, Winter 2003/2004 or our own website.

CIVIC SOCIETY DINNER.

Once again we are looking forward to holding our Annual Dinner on **Saturday 27th March at Formby Hall Golf Club** and we would like to extend a very warm invitation to all members, family and friends to this event to round off our Golden Jubilee Year in suitable style. We have much to celebrate and now look for

ward to our next half century.

**Annual Dinner,
7.30 for 8pm,
Formby Hall Golf Club,
Saturday 27th March
2004.**

**Please see Menu and
Reply slip enclosed.**

On this occasion our Guest of Honour will be Mr. Ted Jackson, Chairman of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and the Sefton Coast Partnership. Ted and Cynthia have been Formby residents for many years. Tickets £17.50 including glass of wine. Join us for a special evening!

ASPARAGUS PROJECT

There is much local interest in preserving local knowledge of this interesting tradition and it is hoped that the Formby Civic Society, working with the National Trust and the Sefton Coastal Partnership, (History and Archaeology Task Group), will be able to find out more about its history, record the surviving cultivation ridges and landscape of the area concerned. produce a booklet on the tradition and create an interpretive

trail round an important part of the area. An application is being made to obtain a Heritage Lottery grant to finance this project. All being well the project could start in June 2004, launched with an 'Asparagus Feast' and display of photographs, etc. This would be followed by the preparation of a book, detailing present knowledge of the Asparagus tradition. Phase 2. (To start in May 2005) would include:- 1. Further research.

Landscape survey, recording and archaeological assessment. 2. Layout of interpretive trail, with suitable way-markers etc. 3..Writing guide, leaflet and design of interpretive panels. And finally 4. Publicity and opening to visitors, local schools, groups, etc. Phase 3. would follow in May 2006. With Guided Walks, Open 'Extended Trail'. Develop Communication Links with Merseyrail, etc. It is hoped that other community groups will be involved in all stages of this project. Watch out for further details.

The Sibley Collection

October of this year saw the tenth anniversary of the death of one of Formby's best known residents who was also one of the original founders of the Formby Civic Society and a leading member of its Art and History Groups. Mrs Muriel E. Sibley, originally from Essex, came to live in Formby in 1949. She was soon captivated by the then more extensive reminders of Formby's rural history and going everywhere by cycle, soon set to work to record by pen, brush and camera the many old cottages, farms, lanes and landscapes, representative of Formby's past. Over four decades she produced a huge volume of accurate records of the many 'vernacular' buildings, which had then stood for hundreds of years but soon alas to vanish. Her records of the typical 'Cruck' built, thatched cottages, were not only preserved as line drawings or water-colours. For each of her subjects she also took a number of high quality transparencies. These total about 2000. In some of these her faithful bike is sometimes to be discerned!

Thus as a community we are fortunate to have a pictorial record of Formby spanning four decades whilst its population increased from 8,000 to nearly 30,000. Many of the buildings recorded in her drawings have long since been demolished and their sites re-developed.

Anxious that her works should be preserved as a Historical record, prior to her death in 1993, Muriel Sibley, presented, her entire collection, to

The Formby Society, along with, her personal notes and her journals of press cuttings. Muriel died on 26th October of that year. The task of cataloguing her works and making reproductions available continues and to aid this a computerised database has now been completed. For this the Society is grateful for several years work by Committee Member Alan Burton and his wife, helped in the

in 13 volumes of A3 plastic sleeves and each volume contains 50 drawings. Index pages have 12 columns with 20 drawings per page and gives the following information:-

.Vol; (the volume containing the drawing).**Page no;** **Acquisition no;** (the original number which is shown on each drawing). **Road;** **Title;** (the title on the drawing or if untitled the

name of the subject where known). **Sub-**

ject; (often duplicates the title but is intended to help those seeking a particular type of building eg. Farms). **Date built;** (the date built or in some cases *demolished* (Dem) where known.)

Date drawn; (This can get confusing because sometimes Mrs Sibley drew from earlier drawings or photographs but generally from her own contemporary colour

slides. Where possible Alan has tried to clarify the dates. eg. Drawn 1970 as 1950). **B/W** indicates drawings in black and white. **Colour** indicates coloured or colour wash. **Sibley note** is the reference number of the background notes made by Muriel Sibley at the time the drawing was done. In many cases these can provide valuable historical data about the buildings and people of Formby. The notes are held in the Society Archives. Finally **Map Ref** gives the position of the subject on a map at the end of the index.



Muriel Sibley at work

setting up stage by Jan Stirling.

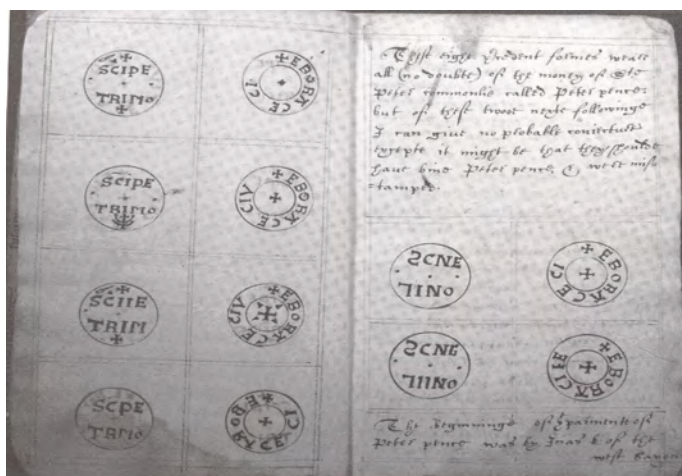
Thanks to all this work Formby residents now have an unparalleled visual record of their community as it was during the last half century.

The Society is now able to provide high quality laser print copies of her work at a moderate charge.

THE SIBLEY DRAWING INDEX

The basic collection of all the 622 drawings and paintings is contained

‘The Vikings in Lancashire’. A Talk given by Professor Stephen Harding. 23rd January. Report by Louis Procter.



comes from

Drawings of some of the 10th Cent Viking coins discovered at Little Crosby, in the 17th Cent.

In this fascinating Talk, given to a well attended meeting of the Society on 23rd January Professor Harding illustrated how the evidence of our ancestors is hidden in our genetic code and reveals how developments in the cutting-edge-science of population genetics have made it possible not just to discover where our ancestors lived (and who they may have fought, loved, learned from and influenced) but to create a family tree for the whole of humanity.

In 2001 the BBC launched the series “Blood of Vikings,” by taking oral swabs with the intention of investigating the evidence for Viking influence in the British Isles. As part of that series 2000 men were tested to see if they had genetic material in their Y-chromosomes comparable to men in the Viking homelands of Norway and Denmark. In the final programme of the series the BBC presented Bill Housley from the Wirral as one of the best examples of a match with men surveyed in Norway.

Was this a sheer coincidence, or is there something about the history of Merseyside, Chester, West Lancashire and indeed the North-West of England as a whole, that makes the finding about Bill’s Y-chromosome, perhaps not so surprising?

The first clue

Bill’s home village - Meols, near Hoylake. Meols is an old Viking name or, to be more precise an “Old Norse” name, meaning “sandbank”. “Norse” is used as a term to describe Vikings originating from Norway, distinguishing them from Danes. In fact, Old Norse (abbreviated as “ON”) is very similar to Old Danish (ODan). Although there are subtle differences they are not too dissimilar to Old English (OE), the language of the early Anglo-Saxon invaders from Northern Germany. The place-name element *Meols* also appears in West Lancashire as North Meols and Meols Hall, all near Southport. And it is no coincidence, it also appears in Iceland several times, as *Melar*. So, Vikings in Merseyside and Lancashire? Most definitely yes!

The place-name element most people are aware of as typically Viking is the ending ‘by’ which means “settlement” and the second clue here, comes from a consideration of the distribution of place-names in Britain with this element. Experts now regard the place-name *-by* as more typical of Danish as opposed to Norwegian Vikings. If we look at the distribution of all place-names of village and towns which can be traced to Danish, Norse or Norse-Irish roots, the evidence for significant Viking influence in Merseyside

and West Lancashire is beyond dispute. In addition the influence extends to some surprising quarters. The connoisseur of Association Football may be surprised to learn that at least three of its teams in the area carry the flag of Viking names: the most senior of these is Tranmere, a village in the north of Wirral, which surprised many in 2000 by reaching the final of the English Football League Cup at Wembley Stadium. Across the Mersey into West Lancashire, another Viking village, Skelmersdale reached the final, also at Wembley, of the FA Amateur Cup in 1967, and reached the final again in 1971 to win the

trophy. Nearby Burscough FC, which also sports a Viking name, are one of the top sides in the North-west of England outside the Football League.

Now whether we in Formby admire or love the Vikings, we have been left a heritage of their culture all around us in the names of our villages and towns: Our Sefton Metropolitan Borough; “Seftun” “Sedge Farmstead,” or Farmstead where rushes grow. Ainsdale; “Einulfsdalr,” “Einulf’s Valley.” In the Domesday Book, it is described as located between sandhills and mossland. Birkdale; “Birkidalr,” Birch-tree valley. Little Altcar; the can or marshland, beside the River Alt. Formby, Fomisby, “Forni’s village,” from a Norse personal name “Forth.” and the Norse “byr”, or Danish “by.” An alternative is Fornaby “the old village” from old Norse “forn”. An early form includes Fornebei (Domesday Book). Ekwall points out that Fornaby is a very common Swedish name, and Fornebu was until recently the site of the main Oslo Airport. Finally Great and Little Crosby Krossabyr, “The cross village.” Early forms include Crosebi (Domesday) and Crosseby.(1212).

THE GREAT FORMBY COCKLE CASE*

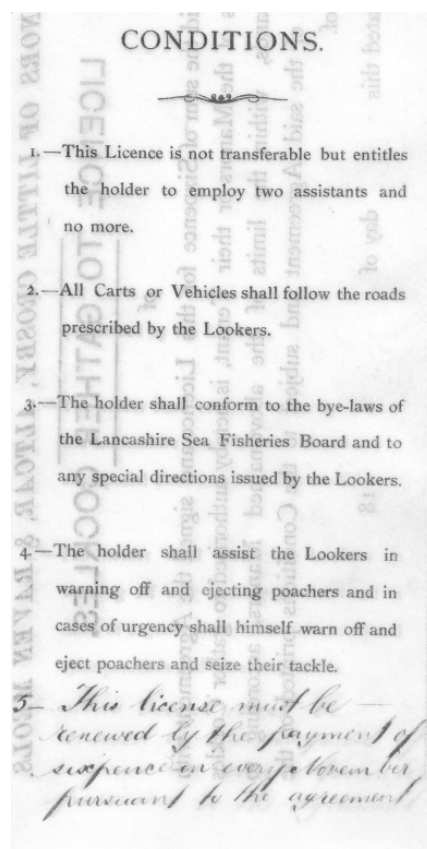
In the nineteenth century Formby cockles were greatly prized, and many fishermen made their living from cockle gathering, but it was an occupation fraught with a certain amount of danger, and also of fraud, as is shown by the appointment by the Court Leet of "Lookers after the Cockle Beds for the Manor of Raven Meols". For one season Thomas Rimmer was appointed to this office, and the lords of the manor agreed to pay him one pound a year "for the trouble he would have".

His duties were to "make general regulations for the preservation of the cockle beds and in particular to stake out the roads by which all persons going to and returning from the beds either on foot or with Horses, Carts or other vehicles, shall enter thereon or return therefrom and to revoke the licences of all fishermen who are guilty of a breach of any such regulations." Also he was to grant licences to gather cockles upon the said sands, reserving an annual rental of sixpence.

The trouble expected from the

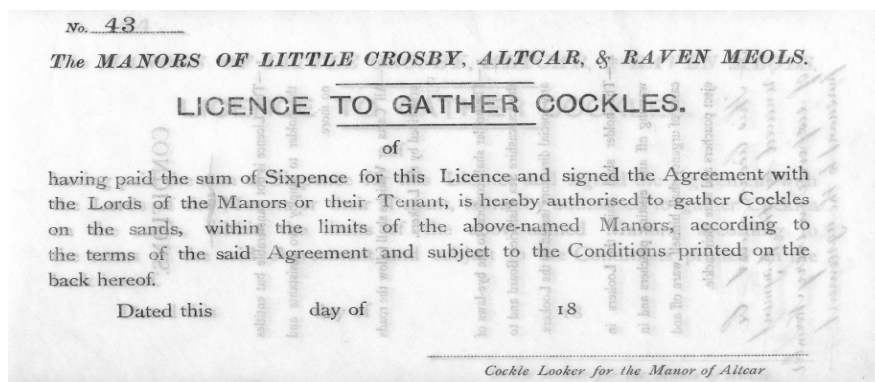
cockle beds happened and was reported by the *Liverpool Daily Post* of August 19th, 1867.

"Four men and two women parishioners of Formby were summoned for wilfully damaging certain bags containing cockles . . . and with assaulting Mary Hogan. A number of Irish people residing in Liverpool had gone down to the shore opposite Altcar with boats and carts and dug up the cockle beds. The Formby people considering this an invasion of their rights, which they enjoyed under the Lords of the Manor of Formby, to gather fish on the foreshore, rose in a body, came down upon the intruders vowing that not a sanguinary cockle should leave the shore that day, cut open the bags in which they were stored and strewed them on the beach. In the squabble one of the Irish women got pushed down, hence the charge of wilful damage and assault."



Left; a 'License to gather cockles' as issued for Altcar, Ravenmeols and Little Crosby at the beginning of the last century, by Ralph Brooks, Cockle Looker.

Above; Conditions stipulate that the Licensee could employ two assistants, all carts or vehicles should follow the roads prescribed by the Looker and should obey the Bye-laws. The holder should assist in warning off and ejecting poachers and in so doing may "seize their tackle". The License cost 6d payable every November.



*This interesting account is taken from 'Viking Village' by Edith Kelly, 1973. The License Book is in our Archives

In Memorium—JENNY CURPHY.

Jenny Curphey who died at the end of last year had been a member of the Civic Society for many years and had contributed to Member's Evenings of the History Group.

She was brought up in Formby but trained to be a teacher and spent most of her teaching career in London. When she retired, she came to live in Formby and became active in Village life and local organisations, becoming Chairman of the Council for Voluntary Service. It was Jenny who gave the Society Muriel Sibley's watercolour painting of local wild flowers used last year to stimulate interest in the nomination of a wild flower to represent Formby. B. Y.

WICKS LANE PATH



Wicks Lane, looking towards the shore, 1962. Drawn by Muriel Sibley.

In the last issue of this Newsletter we asked for help from people who have used this footpath for 20 years or more to provide evidence of their use in order to keep it open as a designated Public Right of Way. We are very grateful to the large number of people who immediately came forward. This seems to be sufficient to ensure the safety of this important access to the shore. What we hadn't envisaged was a large number of horse riders, also claiming to have used it as a route to the shore. The Victoria Road-Lifeboat Road Bridle Path crosses the Footpath and indeed shares it for about 50 metres. It may be that it will go to a Public Enquiry!

Art Group Programme

At this time it is not possible to finalise dates for some proposed events. In these cases therefore, members are requested to contact the Art Group Secretary nearer the time.

Jin Gray who runs an Art Class in Southport, sometimes invites us to join their coach outings. Recently five of us enjoyed a day at Manchester City Gallery and the Whitworth Gallery with his members. Often these trips come up between Newsletters but if you would like me to let you know of future visits, please phone.

Having been Art Group Secretary for about 12 years now I would like to find someone to take over the Group, particularly the annual Open Air Art Exhibition. I could of course assist anyone taking on the job, to undertake this. Don't let this, (after many years), be the last exhibition we hold – Saturday 26th June 2004.

Future programme;

Saturday 21st February 10.30am; meet Formby Station; Visit to the **Palette Club Exhibition**, *Southport Gallery*.

Friday 12th March; Visit to **Craft (and Art) Exhibition**; *Birmingham Exhibition Centre*. Phone Secretary by 25th February, if interested.

March, (No date yet); **National Wildlife Exhibition**; *Burton, Wirral*. Contact Art Secretary by 25th February for details.

April 17th West Lancs. **Craft Guild Exhibition**, *New Longton Village Hall*

Tuesday 20th April. **Proposed visit to the Unitarian Church**, *Liscard*. Arts and Crafts recently restored by the Historic Chapels Trust., - Burn Jones Windows, Della Robbia pottery, painted furniture. Contact Art Secretary by end February. NB All Society members are welcome to this event.

Barbara Mossop.

Formby Civic Society

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Hon Sec . Dr. Reg Yorke

Phone: 01704 872187

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See our website;
www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

Due 1st April 2004

Subscriptions for 2003 remain unchanged:
£10 -Family.Husband, Wife and children under 18
£7- Individual Member
£1 Individual Member under 18.

A renewal form is enclosed for use by those members who pay by cheque or cash. The use of a Bank Standing Order is very helpful and forms for this purpose are available from the Treasurer, Mike Belshaw, Tel 874940.

The Society has benefited by reclaiming tax paid by members who are taxpayers under the Gift Aid) Scheme. At the present level of 28p in the £ this means a benefit to the Society of £2.80 for a family subscription and £1.96 for a single. Members to whom this is applicable. ie Taxpayers, who have not previously completed a Gift Aid Declaration are urged to use this facility to enable the Society to recover this money which will help us maintain subscriptions at the current level. If you are unsure whether you have completed a Gift Aid Declaration and wish to do so please telephone the Treasurer,

(Tel 874940), who will check our records and supply the necessary form

FUTURE PROGRAMME.

GENERAL MEETINGS.

Friday, 27th February, *“The Freshfield Dune Heath”*; Ted Jackson, Phil Smith and F. Robertson .
Friday, 26th March *“The River Alt and its Flood-plain”* **Phil Hunter**; Environment Agency
Friday, 23rd April AGM followed by *“Liverpool and Horticulture”* Leander Wolstenholme; Liverpool Museums.

HISTORY GROUP.

Thursday, 4th March *“Formby Asparagus”* Andrew Brockbank
Thursday, 1st April *Members’ Evening* To be announced



Topics for discussion;
Left; *Freshfield Dune Heathland*;
27/2/04

Right; *The Alt Flood-plain*.
26/3/04.

