

Formby Civic News



The Formby Civic Society Newsletter

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Altmouth Pumping Station Crisis

by Desmond Brennan

August 2010



Altmouth Pumping Station, 25th July; photo Jack Gore

Following sustained heavy rainfall throughout Tuesday, 20 July and continuing into the early hours of the following day, one of the two remaining diesel storm pumps at the Altmouth pumping station failed midmorning on the 21st.

Seven hours earlier, the embankment of the R. Alt at Lunt Meadows had been breached, causing flooding of farmland in the vicinity; fortunately, no residential premises were affected. Ironically, the breach helped to reduce the maximum flow rate at the pumping station and a further providential factor relieving the stress at the station was the high tide at 03.27 on the Wednesday was only 1.26 metre and there was no storm surge. (N.B. The highest astronomical spring tide is 6 metre and a storm surge could add a further 2 metre.).

From my many reports in the Society's *Newsletter*, regular readers will know that for the past two years we have been engaged with the Environment Agency (EA) over the very poor condition of the pumping station and the inadequacy of the specification for the refurbishment of the station. As matters stood prior to 21 July, there were just two of the four original diesel storm pumps remaining; no. 4 was thought to be the more reliable, but it was the one that failed; no. 1 continued operational throughout the storm, very probably because it was being run at reduced power on account of its known poor condition. The diesel storm pumps each had a rated capacity when new of 20 cu. metre/sec; a total flow rate through the station of 60 cu. metre/sec is required to provide the promised protection against a one in fifty year historical storm event. *Continued p. 2.....*

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Information is sought on the history of Formby Lawn Tennis Club. Their archivist, Peter Collinson, is keen to have information pre 1933 on 01704 - 830196 or by email pncollinson@btinternet.com

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The pump that failed -the drive to the impellor is in the foreground;

photo Jack Gore

It is only by good fortune that the pumping station was not without any serviceable storm pump during the storm. Had no. 1 storm pump been being driven harder, it too could well have failed. Also, had the timing of the installation in position no. 2 of the first of the new electric storm pumps been a little different, the intake to no. 1 storm pump might have been closed. This is because storm pumps no. 1 and no. 2 share a common intake, so work involving water flow in either one of them requires shutdown of the other, and similarly for pumps no. 3 and no. 4). Fortunately, the installation in position no. 2 of the new electric pump had just been completed, so that the original diesel pump in position no. 1 was back in service at the time of the storm, albeit at reduced power.

The EA's response to the crisis was to bring a hired mobile diesel electric generator on site to supply power directly to the newly installed electric pump and to reschedule the refurbishment programme. They intended to put on hold the installation in position no. 3 of the second electric storm pump and to bring forward the installation of the new switchgear so they would be able to commission the new on-site standby generator, already in position, as soon as possible. They also have on site the new transformer, so that, with the switchgear in place, they would be able to obtain power from the Scottish Power network just as soon as the high voltage power cable is connected.

This scheme would have minimized EA costs by minimizing the time

required for the hire of the mobile generator, but we believed it was unacceptable that this community's flood protection should be dependent for a considerable period on just one electric pump, of capacity 13.5 cu. metre/sec, and a diesel storm pump that was having to be operated at reduced power and was liable to break down at any time. For this reason, we wrote to Mr. Bill Esterson, our new member of parliament, urging him, as a matter of urgency, to press the EA to give priority to the installation of a second electric pump (at position no. 3) and for it, like the pump in position no. 2, to be powered directly by mobile generator. That way, we would have two reliable electric storm pumps operational while the remainder of the refurbishment work is carried out; this is still only a modest provision of protection, but it is the best that is practicable under the circumstances.

Mr. Esterson's response has been prompt and effective; a second new electric pump has now been installed in position no. 3 and is in service along with the pump in position no. 2; both are being powered by mobile generator. We are very grateful to Mr. Esterson for his intervention; we are also appreciative of the speed with which the EA managers rescheduled the programme of work at the pumping station at Mr. Esterson's instigation in what is a complex operation (there are currently five different contractors operating at the site). We must hope now that the work of refurbishment proceeds without any holdups so that the comple-

tion target date of March 2011 is met and, after being so long without it, we can again enjoy the promised standard of protection, which requires all four electric storm pumps and all four dry weather flow pumps to be operational.

Concerning the breach at Lunt Meadows, the EA have not restored the embankment to its former condition; instead, they have created what is in effect a weir at the site of the breach. They have done this by using rock infill capped by clay reinforced with matting and finished to a lower level than the rest of the embankment. At times of heavy rainfall, this arrangement will release water onto the surrounding land, thereby giving a measure of relief at the Altmouth pumping station at times of high stress.

While we accept that this form of repair as a temporary measure is sensible under present circumstances, we fear it could become a semi-permanent arrangement. In August 2006, the EA received planning permission for a flood storage pool in the Lunt Meadows area; it was designed to have continuous flow throughout the washland area so as to avoid water stagnation and the concomitant possibility of disease carrying insect infestation. Unfortunately, even before it received planning permission, the scheme had failed to receive EA approval and, ever since, there has been serious doubt in our minds that such a scheme will ever come to fruition. NW EA managers are very strongly in favour of a flood storage scheme and they assured us that the scheme would be completed at the same time as the refurbished pumping station was commissioned. Indeed, their specification of the refurbished station was based on that assumption, despite their having no reliable understanding of how flows at the pumping station would be affected were such a washland in existence and despite the fact that the scheme was not being progressed through the EA bureaucracy at a meaningful rate.

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Planning Matters by Desmond Brennan

Yet again, it is all change in the world of planning. The coalition government has issued a succession of statements announcing its intentions to scrap key elements of the planning structure put in place by the previous administration, but it has not explained in any detail what the new structures will be. The result has been much confusion, conjecture and anxiety for both developers and planners alike. However, the refrain heard in all the announcements is the government's wish to empower local communities, so organizations like ours must be ready to engage constructively in any new opportunities to influence decision making.

The government will disband the Regional Authorities (4NW for our region), the Regional Development Agencies and the Regional Government Offices (the Government Office of the North West in our region); to do this will require legislation, so these bodies continue to exist for the time being, but now severely crippled. However, two changes have already been made, viz. the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) have been revoked and an amended Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) *Housing* has been issued.

In issuing the amended PPS3 in June, the government said its intention was

to block so-called garden grabbing, which it highlighted as a significant problem. The term "garden grabbing" is emotive and prejudicial in that it plays to most people's appreciation of very large back gardens as making a valued contribution to the amenity and environmental quality of an area. However, the problem is more complex than that. There is a pressing need for new housing; while just how much, of what type and where is a matter for debate (see *Planning Matters* in the Society's *Newsletter* for February 2010). What is certain is land for houses needs to be found and that cannot be done without some environmental damage and loss of amenity; the general consensus is that it is better that that land should be within existing urban boundaries rather than in the Green Belt.

Further, an earlier study, commissioned by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and published in January 2010, had shown that inappropriate building on garden backland is not a widespread or growing problem. A minority of

organizations like ours must be ready to engage constructively in any new opportunities to influence decision making.

Local Authorities considered it to be of importance, mainly in outer London and the South East, whereas the majority across the rest of the country, including Sefton, did not. The new PPS3 contains just two changes of policy, viz. the removal of garden land from the category *brownfield land* and the removal of an indicative value of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) as a minimum development density; all the many references to Regional Planning Bodies and RSSs remain unchanged, despite the government's declared intention to abolish both. Most people welcome the removal of gardens from the brownfield category because their inclusion there distorted the statistics on the extent to which land once occupied by abandoned or demolished premises, often contaminated, had been brought back into beneficial development. In a report to the Council's Planning Committee for its meeting on 21 July, Sefton's Planning Director concluded that decision making in Sefton according to policy would be not be significantly changed by the new PPS3.

The Director stated planning officers would continue to assess proposals for garden backland development according to the criteria set out in the Sefton's Unitary Development Plan,

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Altmouth Pumping Station Crisis *continued from p. 2*

Currently, computer modelling studies of the whole Alt-Crossens catchment are in progress, and they will include a properly designed flood storage area at Lunt Meadows; the modelling report is due towards the end of this year. So even on an optimistic view, if normal EA procedures are followed, it will be some years yet before a washland could be functional; if matters remain as they are and given the present financial difficulties, it has become even less likely that the scheme will be approved in

the foreseeable future. With the remedial work at Lunt Meadows, there is now a danger that the EA will further lower the priority assigned to the washland scheme. If that were to be the case, it would make Lunt Meadows an *ad hoc* flood storage area. The EA have given assurances that, because the area is already artificially drained, flooding from time to time would not be problem either for those who farm the land and those who live nearby; they claim there would not be a water stagnation problem. We re-

serve our view on that issue and intend to keep the matter under observation. Finally, the breach at Lunt Meadows has heightened our concern about the stability of the Downholmland embankment (please see *Planning Matters* in the last edition of *Society's Newsletter*). I have been informed by the EA that their consultants have now reported on the condition of the embankment, but their own staff will not be able to assess the report before September.

Planning Matters *continued from p.3*

viz. principally neighbourhood character, density, (developments below 30 dph. have never been excluded), street scene, access, distances to neighbouring properties, overlooking and respect for Tree Preservation Orders. The Director reported statistics showing that past decisions made according to these criteria had, in the main, withstood very well the scrutiny by inspectors when appealed to The Planning Inspectorate. However, on the agenda of the same meeting of Planning Committee was an application for a development in a back garden of premises in Ainsdale which was the subject of a large, but orderly, demonstration by residents opposed to the proposal who crowded into the committee room, several displaying posters. The application found no support among the Councillors who robustly rejected the Officer Report which recommended approval of the application. The predominant sentiment was that the wishes of neighbouring residents should prevail, in keeping with the government's intention of fostering grassroots decision making; the decision contrasts with the approval by Planning Committee last October of an application for a comparable development at 73 & 75 Kirklake Road, Formby.

The revoking of RSSs will have a major impact on the formulation of planning policy and planning decisions. Our Local Planning Authority, like many others, is currently formulating its Core Strategy and the other documents which comprise the Local Development Framework (LDF). All these documents were required to conform to the policies set out in the RSS for the NW Region, but, now the RSS is no more, there is a policy vacuum. Indeed, some Councils (but not Sefton) declared they had stopped work on their emerging LDFs, but Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for the DCLG, has told them they must continue. However, the government has also said it intends to replace LDFs by simpler local plans; it also intends to replace national Planning

Policy Guidance and Statements by less detailed guidance in the form of a National Planning Framework. So the way forward is still very unclear, but it is to be hoped that, to be judged sound, an LDF or whatever replaces it will have to conform to a strong database of evidence and that there is sufficient detail in government planning policy for conflicts of interest to be resolved within the framework of policy rather than in the Courts. Because of the disruption resulting from the revoking of the RSSs, a large housing developer is seeking judicial review of the government's decision and the House of Commons Select Committee for the DCLG is conducting an investigation into it.

Even more dramatic than the revoking of the RSSs are the government's decisions to dispense with the Regional Authorities, the Regional Development Agencies and the Regional Government Offices. They are to be replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), which it is anticipated will become functional in 2012. An LEP will be an association of Councils

there will be much turmoil before the new structure for making and executing policy at regional and sub-regional level is in place

and business leaders, and be chaired by a prominent business leader; their purpose is to rebalance the economy towards the private sector and at the same time to give greater opportunities for local decision making. Within the remit of LEPs will be planning and housing, local transport and infrastructure priorities, employment and enterprise and the transition to the low carbon economy; they will be expected to encourage small business start-ups and to work closely with universities and further education colleges and, where appropriate, to foster tourism. However, there is a concern that local autonomy will be seriously impaired by the return to

Whitehall of responsibility for inward investment, sector leadership, responsibility for business support, innovation, and access to finance, such as venture capital funds, and there is a fear that distribution of the European Regional Development Fund could also go to the centre. Local leaders have until 6 September to tell the government how they will come together in an LEP. Their task is made all the harder by the absence of information on the powers LEPs will have or how LEPs will be financed; Grant Shapps, minister for Housing and Local Government, has indicated that Councils can expect to get only a fraction of the funds currently allocated for administration of the Regional Planning Bodies and they should expect to have to bear some of the administrative costs themselves. Clearly, there will be much turmoil before the new structure for making and executing policy at regional and sub-regional level is in place. To conclude, I will describe briefly two novel planning policies whose impact would be specifically local.

The *Community Right to Build* policy will allow a community group, which has come together as a corporate entity, to proceed with a development proposal provided it can achieve 80-90% approval in a local referendum; the Council would be responsible for the referendum, but the local group would pay for it. Who would be allowed to vote and how they would be informed about the proposal has yet to be worked out. The group would be permitted to use a property developer if it wished, but it is to be hoped that the legislation will be tightly enough drawn to prevent a property developer using a local group! A formal planning application would not be necessary, but the scheme would have to be vetted by the Local Authority; how this is to be done also has yet to be worked out, but presumably a minimum requirement would be that the proposal would have to be consistent with the local plan. Grant Shapps has said he envisages the measure would be used

Centenary fly-past at Freshfield - by Reg Yorke



Compton Paterson in his 'Curtiss biplane'



Melly's Bleriot monoplane

On Friday 14th May, a milestone in Merseyside's aviation history was marked by a celebratory fly-past over Formby Point by a group of vintage planes as part of a special ceremony held at RAF Woodvale. The centenary event was organised by Formby Civic Society, National Trust, Southport Air Show, Sefton Council, Manchester Science and Industry Museum, RAF Woodvale and Southport Shore Interest Group to celebrate the 100th anniversary of pioneer pilot C. Compton Paterson's first flight from Freshfield shore in his Curtiss biplane - making him the first man to take to the skies on Merseyside.

Seven vintage planes left

RAF Woodvale and flew along the coastline to mark the occasion. They included a 1943 Harvard Mark III, a 1948 Piper Vagabond and a 1946 Piper J3 Cub.

The fly-past was witnessed by children from primary schools in Formby and Freshfield who took part in a kite-making competition organised by the National Trust.

Tony Corfield, head of tourism at Sefton Council, said: "We are very proud of our aviation links in Sefton and the organised fly-over marked the occasion in style. Early flights like the ones made by Compton Paterson in Freshfield helped set the tone for future developments in the aviation industry".

Howard Carby, station commander at RAF Woodvale, added: "We enjoy our close links with the community and we were both proud and privileged to be a part of this celebration."

The Centenary will again be celebrated at this year's Southport Airshow in September.



1948 Piper 'Vagabond', photo Jack Gore

Planning Matters *continued from p .4*

mainly to provide homes shops, businesses or facilities in the countryside. To prevent overdevelopment, expand the size of the community by more than 10% over any 10 year period.

The other local policy is the *New Homes Bonus* scheme whereby the government is seeking to encourage new house building by paying a Council a substantial benefit for every new home it allows to be built in its area. When the policy was first announced on 9 August, Grant Shapps

said the government would match for six years the council tax revenues on every new home built (with up to 125% for affordable homes); in a recent letter to Councils, however, the minister is no longer specific about the size of benefit. The benefit would be available to be spent as the Council sees fit, but there would be no new government money for grants to local Councils. It is unclear at the moment how this policy would sit with a Council's responsibility to ensure that development is consistent with its

local plan, nor how a local community might assert its opposition to new housing in its area against a Council incentivized in this way.

As usual, please note that information about the Society's submissions to the Council's Planning Department concerning planning applications is available on the Society's website.

Wildlife Notes by Dr Phil Smith

May



White-tailed Plover

No significant rainfall between 2nd April and 28th May meant the Sefton Coast experienced the longest spring drought in living memory, with considerable effects on gardens, the countryside and wildlife. Last year was bad enough for Natterjack Toads, but it looks as though there will be a complete breeding failure in 2010, with every dune-slack bone dry by the third week of May. Other creatures benefited, however, with sun-loving **Northern Dune Tiger Beetles** appearing in unprecedented numbers. By the end of the month, I had recorded 190 individuals of this nationally rare species during my walks in the dunes. Some butterflies also did well with a big hatch of **Common Blues** and more **Walls** and **Small Heaths** than I have seen for some years. Cold nights slowed the appearance of dragonflies; however, a warm spell between 21st and 24th, followed by much-needed rain on 29th, led to a big emergence of **Broad-bodied Chasers**. On 30th, 18 of these beautiful insects were sheltering from a cool breeze in the lee of Alder bushes on Birkdale Green Beach. A few years ago, such a sighting would have been unheard of, but this is one of several dragonflies that have invaded our region from the south in recent times.

May is usually an excellent month for wild flowers. The drought had an impact but, fortunately, our duneland flora is resilient. Thus, the well-attended annual guided walk to Altcar Rifle Range on 14th to see the **Green-winged Orchids** was rewarded with a record number of

about 22,400 of these nationally “Near Threatened” plants. The meadow grasses had hardly grown at all so the orchids, although much shorter than normal, stood proudly above the sward, showing off their spectacular colour-forms, from white to deepest-purple. Several other interesting flowers included the best ever show of Cowslips on the ranges and we also spotted a **Short-eared Owl**.

Early in the month, I came across two large colonies of one of our less common plants, the Slender Spike-rush (*Eleocharis uniglumis*) at Crosby Marine Park, a new locality for it. I therefore decided to look for this species elsewhere on the coast and, by the end of May, had found and documented 21 patches of it, many of them on Birkdale Green Beach. Because of its similarity to the **Common Spike-rush** (*E. palustris*), this plant has been much overlooked in the past, these new records representing a considerable increase in the known distribution of a “Species of Conservation Importance in North West England.”

May 2010 will also live long in the memory of local bird-watchers. It started well, when my visit to Marshside on 1st was rewarded with great views of a **Long-billed Dowitcher**, an American wader which had been around on the Ribble for a while but which had just moulted into its glorious russet breeding plumage. However, even better was to follow on 23rd, when Seaforth Nature Reserve hosted a colourful **Wilson’s Phalarope**, also from North America. Finally, on 27th, a **White-tailed Plover** appeared at Seaforth, only the sixth British record of this almost mythical bird which breeds in Central Asia. I hardly ever take bird photographs but this was so close to the hide that even my rather limited equipment was adequate to the task.

June

Flaming June lived up to its reputation this year with rain falling on only five days and in small quantity. The

Environment Agency finally got round to issuing a statement, admitting what wildlife watchers, farmers and gardeners already knew – that the spring drought was the longest in living memory (actually since 1929!). Certainly, I have never seen the dunes so dry and we are lucky there haven’t been more large fires. Nevertheless, most of our local wildlife seems to have coped well with the extreme conditions.

A highlight of the month was a guided visit to Birkdale Green Beach on 21st with the Frodsham Naturalists. In view of the drought, we were lucky to find two adult **Natterjack Toads** living up to their old vernacular name “the running toad”. However, even flat-out, they wouldn’t have caught the speedy **Northern Dune Tiger Beetles** which were a “first” for most of the group. In damper areas, sheets of colourful marsh-orchids were a joy to behold; we identified four species: **Early, Southern** and **Northern Marsh-orchids** and the closely related **Common Spotted-orchid**. I was also able to point out some of the less spectacular, but rarer, members of the flora, such as the **Baltic Rush** and another “northern” plant, **Saltmarsh Flat-sedge**. One of the members drew my attention to a pink flower-spike which from a distance looked like an orchid but which, on closer examination, proved to be a new plant for the Sefton Coast: **Common Bistort** (*Persicaria bistorta*). This species is more normally seen in the hilly eastern parts of our region.

A nearby dune-slack added more orchids to our list, including **Bee, Pyramidal** and **Marsh Helleborine**, while other choice plants here were the uncommon **Variiegated Horsetail** and **Greater Tussock-sedge**. A small pond, still holding water, attracted several dragonflies, including a stunning male **Emperor** which, unusually for this hyperactive species, posed for photographs.

In my May notes, I mentioned a survey of one of our least known plants, the **Slender Spike-rush**.

Completing the study during the month, I found 45 patches of this m



ainly coastal species; not bad when you consider that the *New Atlas of the British & Irish Flora*, published in 2002, has only one (pre-1970) record for Sefton. This apparent recent increase is probably due to the development of new habitat near the sea, especially on Birkdale Green Beach where 34 patches were recorded. Almost all the places that the plant has colonised are of relatively recent origin, providing the open conditions that it likes. I also revisited the only “old” slack where Slender Spike-rush is known in the Birkdale Sandhills, cutting my way in through dense **Sea-buckthorn** scrub with scateurs. However, the effort was worth it because the plant was still there and, nearby, acquaintance was renewed with the only clump of **Black Bog-rush** in South Lancashire, discovered by the late Neil Robinson and me in 1977. Back then, it was only a foot across; now the clump is about eight times bigger but still on its own.

Finally, Patricia Lockwood and I counted the three Sefton Coast colonies of one of our most important plants, the **Isle of Man Cabbage**. Confined to sand-dunes in southwest Scotland, northwest England and south Wales, it occurs nowhere else in the world. Numbers are holding up well at Crosby Marine Park and Hall Road, Blundellsands, but the Southport Marine Lake population has crashed from several hundred individuals to only nine. This plant is known to prefer open, sandy conditions but its habitat west of the lake has become more heavily vegetated

in recent years, perhaps partly due to lower public pressure, these dunes having been fenced off by their private owner in 2007

July.

United Utilities’ introduction of a hose-pipe ban on 9th July led inevitably to the “Great Drought” ending in the middle of the month; it soon became a distant memory as frequent spells of rain came in from the Atlantic. Parts of Birkdale Green Beach reflooded, with Natterjacks Toads calling on the unusually late date of 23rd July. As in July 2007, they must have spawned because I found lots of baby tadpoles on the 31st in shallow water at the Ainsdale end of the Green Beach.

Following an early emergence in late June, our most important duneland butterfly, the **Dark Green Fritillary**, reached unprecedented numbers, appearing in areas where they have rarely been seen before. Rachael Parks contacted me to report four sightings in her Formby garden where, in past years, she has recorded only one. My visit to Ainsdale dunes on 11th was rewarded by the sight of dozens of these spectacular orange-and-black butterflies zooming around at high speed, posing for photographs on thistles, brambles and knapweed, together with **Commas**, **Gatekeepers**, **Meadow Browns** and **Small Skippers** and the first **Graylings** of the summer. A nearby pond produced seven species of dragonflies, including an early **Ruddy Darter**.

During June and July, Liverpool Hope University hosted a visit by the coastal ecologist Dr Maike Isermann from Bremen, studying the effects of scrub removal on the sand-dunes. I had the pleasure of showing Maike some of our best dune areas, including many plants and animals that were new to her. It was especially valuable to get her opinion on the potential problem of **Japanese Rose** (*Rosa rugosa*), a garden-escape which has become seriously invasive on sand-dunes in Germany and Denmark and seems about to become a

major problem here. We have organised a student project which will collect information on its distribution and rate of spread, with the aim of guiding future management.

Maike was particularly interested to see the famous shingle beach at Hightown. Here, erosion of a tipped rubble embankment has produced a unique habitat of water-worn bricks, colonised by such typical shingle plants as **Yellow-horned Poppy**, **Sea-kale** and **Rock Samphire**. We also found an abundance of another regionally rare plant – **Ray’s Knot-grass**. Vegetated shingle is a rare habitat in Northwest England, meriting conservation throughout Europe.

One of our most beautiful duneland flowers, the **Sea Bindweed** (*Calystegia soldanella*) has been highlighted for special study by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust’s Endangered Plants Group. Pat Lockwood and I therefore monitored six colonies on the Sefton Coast during July. We already knew the whereabouts of five of them but not one on Ainsdale Local Nature Reserve which was originally found in 1949. By coincidence, Maike Isermann came across it during her researches and provided us with a grid reference. First recorded on the dunes here in 1801, **Sea Bindweed** was familiar to several 19th century writers but, by the 1960s, had become “very rare”. Fortunately, it has survived and may even be increasing, several new Sefton Coast colonies having been discovered in recent years.

July is often a quiet period for bird-watchers but seabirds were already on the move before the month’s end, with a sizeable shore roost of about 180 **Sandwich Terns** and 550 **Common Terns** at Ravenmeols on 28th and at least 185 of the former species at Ainsdale three days later. It was good to see so many juvenile Sandwich Terns with the flocks, indicating a good breeding season

A visit to the site of the old Formby Lighthouse.



The visiting group on site at Altcar, photo Jack Gore

Being within the perimeter of the Altcar Rifle Range, the site of this old lighthouse on the bank of the Alt is normally “out of bounds” to the public and now almost completely forgotten. With the kind permission of Major WJ Hunter MBE, BM, TD, the Camp Commandant, the Society was able to arrange for 35 interested visitors to visit the site on Sunday 25th July as part of the Council of British Archaeology’s ‘Festival of British

of local nautical structures”

The Lighthouse was erected in 1719 and demolished in 1941; for most of the 220 years that it stood overlooking the Mersey approaches, it was simply a 120 ft tall unlit brick landmark but for two relatively short periods was converted to a lighthouse. It was demolished in 1940 because it was too useful a landmark for German bombers heading for Liverpool so there is nothing to be seen

Archaeology’. Together with maritime historian Mike Stammers and archaeologist, Mark Adams, we were then able to discuss the history of this structure, once described as the “Methuselah

now, but it once had great significance for the tricky navigation of the Mersey, being constructed in conjunction with Liverpool’s first enclosed Dock to improve safety of navigation of the ever-changing Mersey channels and having close links with nearby Formby Lifeboat Station, (Britain’s First).

Altcar Rifle Range have now erected a wooden site marker and assembled a collection of photos. All visitors enjoyed hearing a little about the significance of the site, and no less the hospitality extended.

It is likely that the remains of the building’s foundations, which lie buried may be excavated at some future date, possible under the aegis of the Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Reg Yorke

PPS5; Planning for the Historic Environment by Desmond Brennan

A Planning Policy Statement (PPS) is a statement of government policy and, while it does not have the force of statute, it is an important material consideration in any process relating to a planning decision and it may not be disregarded except under explicitly justified exceptional circumstances; it is also a very significant document in influencing the development of planning policy by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs). The PPS has superseded the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG), which is a less authoritative document, although, in practice, case law has conferred on the PPG a significance much greater than the term *guidance* would seem to imply. In 2008, there was the prospect of a *Heritage Protection Bill*, but the draft Bill was dropped despite strong all-party backing and a weaker document, in the form of PPS5, has taken its place.

PPS5: *Planning for the Historic Environment* sets out national planning policies for the conservation of the

historic environment; it was published in March 2010 by the *Department for Communities and Local Government* (DCLG) after a consultative process. It seeks to achieve an integrated approach to the preservation of historically significant assets and, to that end, it replaces PPG15: *Planning and the Historic Environment* (published by the DCLG in 1994) and PPG16: *Archaeology and Planning* (published by the DCLG in 1990). In addition, PPS5 is supported by a *Practice Guide* published jointly by the DCLG, the *Department for Culture, Media and Sport* and *English Heritage*.

The fundamental premise of PPS5 is a presumption in favour of the conservation of a heritage asset and that every possible means of preserving the asset must be purposively explored; wherever possible, heritage assets are to be put to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation and only in very

exceptional circumstances may harm to or loss of a heritage asset be contemplated. Further, PPS5 protects against deliberate neglect of or damage to a heritage asset with the intention of furthering the possibility of redevelopment of the site; it states specifically that deterioration brought about in this way is to be disregarded when the decision is made whether or not to permit redevelopment.

PPG5 has been warmly welcomed for its holistic view of what constitutes a heritage asset, which now includes landscapes, and even parks and gardens, in addition to buildings, monuments and specific sites. It is also no longer necessary for there to be a formal designation (listing or scheduling as a monument); it now suffices for there to be expert assessment to establish the significance of an asset in epitomizing local character and sense of place. Particularly to be welcomed is the requirement that LPAs

Continued on opposite page.....

FCS Images go on line! by Reg Yorke

On behalf of the Society, Tony Bonney has arranged for 2165 images from our main archive to be uploaded to the digital image website Flickr at

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/formbycivicsociety/sets/>

These are contained in folders (Flickr call them Sets) for each location to allow for ease of searching. Flickr also has an excellent search engine not only within our own area but throughout the site. For example entering 'cockle cottage Formby' will bring up our 3 images.

Each image has an (at present) an empty 'comments box' but we are slowly adding short 'captions'. A user, (if registered with Flickr), may add further comments.

We still have well over 1,000 additional images, including the Sibley sketches/watercolours, to add but feel that the 700 Sibley sketches should be in a separate folder (Set) rather than included in the present folders.

Statistics from Flickr record 802 viewers since the 25th June when we registered. Not a bad start.

Google has indexed some of the first images uploaded and we hope more will be included in time.

In addition, we hope to participate in computerised **Mapping Interactive** organised by National Museums, Liverpool. This will explore how

places change, revealing the key events that shaped Merseyside's history. Visitors will be able (digitally) peel back layers of historic maps, discover archaeological finds or important buildings and even explore our natural history - searching by place, time or theme. Some of the themes include archaeological and geological sites of regional importance, historic buildings and structures, natural history, parks and open spaces, people, street-names, music and sporting venues.

We hope to provide very specific information relating to our local area including : historic (listed) **buildings** or other structures, interesting **street-names**, including the origin of the name and period, **memorials** (including heritage plaques; well-known local **people**, either historic or contemporary, who have an interesting story related to them, **sporting** and **music** venues, **parks** and **open spaces** including squares and cemeteries

Special Place is a community project already set up on National Museums

We hope to provide the Museum with information about places in our locality

Liverpool website under 'Our City' http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/galleries/our_city.aspx

This is where people can geo-tag a place on Flickr which has special relevance to them writing a short description on why it is special and adding a drawing and/or images of that place. <http://www.flickr.com/groups/ourcityliverpool/pool/map?mode=group>

We hope to provide the Museum with information about places in our locality – linked to the list of themes listed above.

Each site or point of interest will need to be geo-referenced to 12 figures, using the numeric National Grid references (e.g. easting's 331390; northing's 389123).

Obviously detailed National Grid references can be found from large-scale maps, but it can also be done using a Global Positioning System device, or web software (such as Pro-Map).

Mapping Interactive will enable access to a wide range of data, on a variety of topics through one easy means, be image rich and easy to navigate. It is designed especially for local people and those with a local connection to investigate "their place".

Planning for the Historic Environment *continued from p.8.*

must take reasonable steps to seek the views of the local community when a heritage asset may have a special significance for that community.

PPS5 requires the LPA to create and maintain a public database of evidence about the historic environment and heritage assets in their area of sufficient detail to inform adequately the formulation of the Core Strategy, which is the key document upon

which future planning decisions will be based, and there is an expectation that LPAs will take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the character and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. Many civic societies are notable repositories of historical data (ours certainly is!) and will be able to contribute significantly to this process.

Although PPS5 provides recognition of the economic and cultural value of heritage assets, there is evidence that conservation units in LPAs are already under resourced and, in the present economic climate, it is to be feared that the extra staff needed to deal with the additional burdens placed on LPAs by PPS5 will not be immediately affordable.

Art Group Report by Barbara Mossop



photo Jack Gore

Our Open Air Exhibition was held on Saturday 26 June, the hottest and sunniest day so far this year. There were about 100 paintings on show and the many people who were in the village on that day all appeared to

enjoy looking at them and talking with members of the Group. It was also lovely to see so many members of the Society taking an interest in our work and, whilst we did not sell many paintings, as an Exhibition it was a great success. Thanks to everyone who took part and a special thank you to Reg for the liquid refreshments, which were much appreciated (we could almost have been in France !)

Several members of the Art Group are going on this year's coach outing to Pendle. It sounds an interesting trip and we should have time to paint in the afternoon; anyone wishing to 'have ago', bring a sketch pad and pencils/paints and join us.

We hope to have a sketching day on Sunday 26th September at Ladygreen and Ince Blundell Hall - Meet at Ladygreen, 9.30 am.

October - Sunday 17th. Proposed sketching in Formby Pinewoods. Meet 11 am at Larkhill Lane, near Blundell Road. If wet, meet at Pinewoods Pub to discuss November programme.

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Dr. MARGARET MERRICK, botanist and artist by Barbara Mossop



Photo: Formby Times

Dr. Margaret Merrick (centre) at a Society Open air Art Exhibition, July 1988.

A previous chairman of the Society, Dr Margaret Merrick died on 26th July. She was brought up in Crosby and attended Merchant Taylor's School, which, being academic, she enjoyed. She kept up her interest in the school and only a few years ago, attended one of their Old Girls Reunions. She left in 1939, to go to University in Liverpool her main love being botany. In fact, when war broke out, she was in France on an exchange trip, and was hastily returned to England. I know that some of the people she met at University became her friends for life.

During the war, in which, to her

great sadness, her brother in the RAF, was killed, she worked for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in the North East and when the war was over she went to live and work in Berkhamstead. She was at one time sent by her employers to Johannesburg for a few months to work and she enjoyed this, though apparently because of the situation there at that time,

she had to be escorted everywhere.

Eventually she came to live in Formby and at this time took her Doctorate and took up a teaching position at Belvedere School in Liverpool. At this time she joined the Formby Society, her main interests being art and botany. In the 1980s, she became Art Secretary and eventually, for three years was Chairman of the Society too. Members who knew her will remember the trips she arranged, sometimes with Gladys Bevan, to study the local flora and fauna. She enjoyed painting and enjoyed exhibitions and was very knowledgeable where artists were concerned. She thoroughly enjoyed

the painting weekends we spent in the Lake District.

In 1996, when Conquest (an Art Group for the disabled) was started in Formby by Phil Clulee, a member of the Society, she, with other members of the Society volunteered, to help teach, which she did until, because of deafness, she found this impossible

One of my own personal memories of Margaret was a coach trip to paint in Monet's garden. There were about a dozen of us plus a professional Artist. It was Spring and all the Spring flowers were out. The garden and house were closed to the public, so there was just us and half a dozen professional artists and photographers. The gardeners were pricking out seedlings in a garage and also scooping leaves off the water by the bridge. A cuckoo sang and it was magic. I know Margaret thought so too. Margaret belonged to the Unitarian Church in Southport, where she was a much valued parishioner, helping in various ways, including giving interesting talks which sometimes involved scientific experiments. Members of the Society attended her funeral there.

‘Conquest Art’ by Barbara Mossop

Members of the Society including those in the Art Group support and help to run Conquest Art Group Formby. In fact the Formby Group was started by one of our members and his wife, Phil and Muriel Clulee, who were friends of the founder of the original Group which was set up in Surrey by Ursula Hulme MBE, assisted by Rotary.

Conquest has grown and there are now some 14 Classes like the one in Formby throughout the country, plus several more in Hospitals and Nursing Homes.

Formby Conquest meets at The Luncheon Club on alternate Wednesday afternoons, from 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm. Members of this class have the opportunity to draw, paint or do craft work and in these tasks they are assisted by volunteers like ourselves. Some of the group painted before

they became ill, but most have never painted in their lives, so for them it is a new experience. Members who are not mobile are transported to the hall by a team from Rotary, and other volunteers make sure that tea and biscuits are available during the afternoon.

Apart from the art work that is achieved, members enjoy the company and the chance to have a chat with friends. Each Summer they have an outing - this year they are going to Pendle, the same venue as the Formby Civic Society outing and we hope they enjoy it. At Christmas, funds permitting, they either go out for Christmas lunch, or have a party and entertainment at the Luncheon Club.

When the Class in Formby was set up in 1996, Mr Norman Gibbon, the well-known local Surgeon became President. The Senior Tutor was Mr

Phil Jackman, another well-known local man, who eventually moved to Wales. This role was then ably taken on by Mrs Joan Mills, another Formby resident.

Some of the members of the Class have attended for many years and it is gratifying to see the progress that they have made and the pleasure that painting brings into their lives.

The Group were recently able to hold a collection at Morrisons, Southport. Their Annual Exhibition is on Saturday 26 July. I feel it will be over before you get your Newsletter - however, if you saw the details at the Formby Civic Society Exhibition recently, you may have decided to visit us, for which I thank you. If you know anyone who would benefit from joining the Group, please let us know. They would be made most welcome

Formby's first librarian.



Mrs. Sarah Elizabeth Derbyshire, was Formby's first branch librarian in the days when we were still Lancastrians and our library was in this former shop at 2 School Lane. This sketch by Muriel Sibley, was in fact based on an old photograph of what was for-

merly known as 'Slater's corner'. Many older Formby residents will have no difficulty in recalling the old library and Mrs Derbyshire its resident librarian, (she actually lived over the library!).

Mrs Sibley recalled that Sarah Derby-

shire not only scolded you for late return of books but advised you on what to read, kept unsuitable books away from children and chose books for housebound ladies, whose neighbours would take them. In addition, she was a mine of information about what was going on in the village! Muriel commented "the lady upstairs is cleaning the window in a manner rarely seen nowadays when windows are being replaced by modern ones." The gas-lamp across the road stood by the War Memorial, its foot buried in the blue, fawn and reddish tiles of the pavement at that time. The roundabout had not yet been constructed at this road junction.

June Milligan, a young relative of Mrs. Derbyshire is researching her family history and would be very grateful for any information or memories anyone might have relating to Sarah.

E-mail; barry.milligan@hotmail.com

The Formby Civic Society Newsletter

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PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL TRUST

Civic Voice has formed a strong partnership with the National Trust with which, like ourselves, shares a passion for conserving and improving places for people.

Free day access pass

The individual members of all civic societies who join Civic Voice can receive the offer of a free day access pass. This will provide free access to any National Trust property during normal opening hours subject to a small number of restrictions.

The free pass is available to download by our members by using the following link www.civicvoice.org.uk/nationaltrustcivicvoiceoffer. The pass is transferable and can be given to friends or family if a member is already a member of the National Trust.

Where members do not have internet access a free day pass will also be available by sending a stamped addressed envelope to Civic Voice, Unit 101, 82 Wood Street, The Tea Factory, Liverpool L1 4DQ requesting one and providing contact details and the name of the group which is a member of Civic Voice.

This offer is available in the first year that a civic society joins Civic Voice.

Future Meetings Programme

General Meetings.

Friday, 24th September; Ms. Mary Harrington, *Being the 'Bernard'*.

Friday, 29th October; Mr. John Taylor, Head of Art and Culture, Sefton MBC, *Art and Culture in Sefton; What has it done for us?*

Friday, 26th November; Mrs. Chester, *Hearing dogs for deaf people - how it changes lives.*

History Group Programme

Thursday, 14th October; Mark Sargant & Mathew Tinker, Sefton Libraries Local History Service, *History on your doorstep*

Thursday, 11th November; Dr. Ben Rees, *Father James Nugent and child emigration from 19th Century Liverpool.*

Thursday, 9th December; Dr. Alan Sykes, *Josephine Butler and the 'outcast'.*

For more information see our website www.formbycivicsociety.org.uk
