

LIVERPOOL HISTORY SOCIETY – 2016 MEETINGS PROGRAM

15 May	The History of Abercromby Square	Dr Chris Williams
19 June	Calderstones to Cunard: a History Walk Meet at Mansion House, Calderstones Park, 2pm	Richard MacDonald
July & August	Summer break, no meetings	
18 September	Tom Murphy Sculptures in Liverpool	Tom Murphy

All meetings will take place in the Grace Room, 1st Floor, Hope at Everton, Shaw Street, L3 8QB. This is the former St Francis Xavier College building. All talks start at 2pm (doors open at 1.30pm).
NOTE: The May meeting is preceded by the AGM at 1.30pm (doors open at 1pm).

Cotton, Reindeer and Old Hall Street

My father was a partner in the firm of Thos. W. Cooke & Co, a member of the Liverpool Cotton Exchange, which then occupied a magnificent building in Old Hall Street. Thos. Cooke's business, from the 1870s through to the 1950s, was buying cotton in the US and selling it in Finland and Sweden. The raw cotton which the firm bought in the United States was generally shipped directly from the US to Scandinavia, not physically via Liverpool. Samples of the raw cotton were, however, brought to Liverpool as the basis for sales and for the arbitration which played a central part of "futures" deals. In the late nineteenth century and leading up to the outbreak of WWII, most of the world's international trade in raw cotton was handled by the New York and Liverpool cotton exchanges, and some of the men involved made a great deal of money out of it.

During WWI, the Baltic Sea and the gulf of Finland were closed to British shipping, and the cotton mills in Tampere (then called Tammerfors and described as "Finland's Manchester") were deprived of supplies by this route. Thos. Cooke therefore arranged for cotton to be shipped to Kirkenes in Norway, a small town on the Arctic Sea where Norway and Russia meet (Finland, a little way to the south of Kirkenes, does not in fact touch the Arctic Sea). The cotton was then taken on sledges drawn by horses or reindeer to Rovaniemi for onward transmission to the mills in Tampere.

The civic authorities in Tampere are understood to be marking the centenary of the events of which Thos. Cooke & Co's improvised transport system was a part.

Andrew Pearce



Transportation with Reindeer © Andrew Pearce
The locations of Kirkenes, Rovaniemi and Tampere © Google Maps

Veronica Gibson



Veronica at an LHS visit to St Nicholas Church several years ago (supplied by John Tiernan)

Veronica Gibson (1928-2015), a member of the Society since 2003 and known personally to many, died just before Christmas. Married to John for almost 50 years, she was an evacuee, working mother, communist, peace activist and much more. She had a tremendous enthusiasm and interest in local history and built up a large and fascinating collection of around 1000 books devoted to Liverpool. In memory of Veronica we have been delighted to accept from her family the very generous offer of these books for the Society's library.

To see Veronica & John's art collection, visit the Corke Gallery's exhibition until 29 April: www.corkeartgallery.co.uk



HISTORY SOCIETY

SPRING 2016

On The Waterfront

A new exhibition at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, called 'On the Waterfront', opened on the ground floor towards the end of last year and will run until 19 June 2016.

Marking the 300th anniversary of the opening of the town's Old Dock – the world's first commercial wet dock and a game-changer so far as the town's fortunes are concerned – this exhibition covers the period from the 18th century up to the present day. Personal stories show how the waterfront has changed and the impact it has had on the city and the lives of local people.

In addition to stunning photographs of waterfront workers and buildings throughout Liverpool's history, visitors will be able to see the first-known painting of Liverpool, dating from c1680.

The Albert Dock features strongly in the exhibition. In fact this year the dock will be celebrating its 170th anniversary so, appropriately, there is a handwritten itinerary for Prince Albert's visit to the city to formally open the dock, a register of vessels showing the first ship using the new dock in 1846, as well as huge dock scales used to weigh cargo. The oldest photograph on display is a pieced-together panoramic image of Albert Dock and the Liverpool waterfront dating from c1860.



Dockside exhibit, image © Ron Jones



Albert Dock model, image © Ron Jones

Timeline



There are also architectural drawings of the warehouse blocks. A model shows the unique construction of one of the blocks and its foundations.

A section dedicated to the Three Graces includes reproductions of two newly donated Stewart Bale images of the Cunard building under construction during World War One, neither of which have ever been displayed before. One of the photographs, dated 1913, is now the oldest image held by the Museum within its prized Stewart Bale collection.

Ian Murphy, Deputy Director, Merseyside Maritime Museum, said: "The landscape of Liverpool's maritime heritage is now a defining symbol of the city and forms part of its World Heritage Site. 'On the Waterfront' is a record of the changing fortunes of the port, the city, and its people. It's an important story and we are delighted to be able to tell it on the historic 300th anniversary year of the opening of Liverpool's Old Dock, the world's first commercial wet dock. Merseyside Maritime Museum itself was once a warehouse for high value goods like tea, silk, sugar and spirits in the Port of Liverpool's Albert Dock - a powerhouse of industry. When Liverpool's docks relocated downriver towards Seaforth, the building fell into disrepair as part of the wider decline and fall of the city's traditional docks. But in 1986 the building reopened as the Merseyside Maritime Museum – the first public building to open at the dock – starting the renaissance of the waterfront, and becoming the venue we know today; one of the most visited museums in the region. This building is a perfect encapsulation of the story we are showing in the wider exhibition – the changing fortunes of the docks – and we are proud to be opening it here".

Ron Jones



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PUGIN HERITAGE IN MERSEYSIDE

Meeting report:
Mary Harrison

John's beautifully illustrated account of the life and achievements of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) told us that he was the son of Auguste and Catherine Pugin who had been married in the French Catholic Chapel, King Street, London in 1802, although their children were not raised as Catholics. Auguste trained in London and became an architect and a prolific artist.

As a boy, Augustus accompanied his father on field trips, drawing buildings and importing antiquities from churches vandalised during the Napoleonic period. After some "raffish experiences" as a sailor and a scene painter, he became an architect and designer. His early observations had convinced him that the fashion for classical architecture was pagan, including St Paul's Cathedral, and he wished for a return to Christian Gothic design. In 1835 he became a Roman Catholic, and then spent the rest of his short life designing churches and convents for his new found faith.

He also designed everything needed to furnish and decorate his buildings, most notably the designs for the interiors of the 1846/7 rebuilt Palace of Westminster, including the House of Lords throne. The 16th Earl of Shrewsbury, a staunch Catholic, became Pugin's patron. To attain the perfection he sought, Pugin needed the skills of expert craftsmen: George Myers from Hull, who built many of Pugin's designs, and John Hardman Junior, who made much of the stained glass and furniture which enriched Pugin's churches and houses.

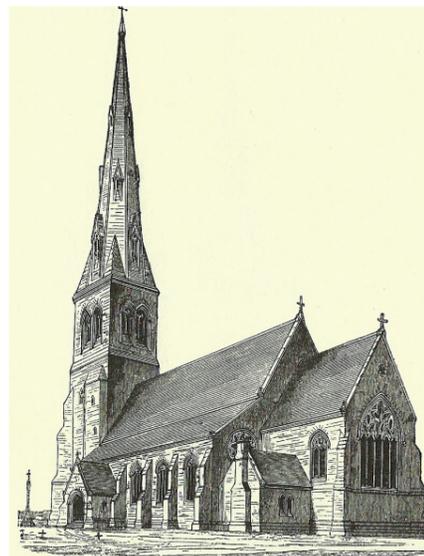
As the leading architect in the Catholic Church, Pugin received commissions from 1839 onwards. Unfortunately most of his Merseyside buildings have either been demolished or are changed beyond recognition. John showed some of Pugin's notable successes: St. Oswald, Old Swan, 1839/42, complete with forbidden steeple and bells, demolished in the 1950s; the Convent of St. Ethelberga, Mount Vernon, 1840/47, for the Sisters of Mercy, demolished in 1969; the first Chapel of St Mary, in the area of Exchange station, replaced by Pugin's Gothic design in 1845, destroyed by German bombs in 1941; the Bishop's Chapel of Eton House, Woolton, now known as 'Bishop Eton'; and the church of St. Marie-le-Sands, Southport, 1829. One house that does still exist is Oswaldcroft, 1845/7, which illustrates his pioneering domestic architecture and attention to detail, now split into apartments.

In 1845 there occurred what John called "a great Liverpool what if" when Pugin was asked to design a large Cathedral for the town, with "two lofty towers and a steeple of great height". Alas this was not to be realised.

There are still two buildings where Pugin's work can be seen and appreciated: St. Oswald's Anglican medieval church near Warrington, the chancel of which was rebuilt by Pugin at the request of the High Anglican Rector, Rev. John Hornby; and Scarisbrick Hall, near Ormskirk, the ancient home of the Scarisbrick family. Pugin was employed to remodel the Hall and his designs show his deep knowledge of late medieval architecture.

Pugin was married three times: to Anne Garnet, who died a year after their marriage, to Louisa Burton, who died after nine years, and to Jane Knill. Tragically, after four years of this marriage, stress and overwork caused Augustus to suffer a breakdown. He was temporarily confined in Bedlam before dying at his home in 1852 at the age of 40.

His work and religious ideals were continued by his sons, Edward and Peter Paul, and his nephew Sebastian Pugin Powell, and John promised to describe their work in a future talk.



St Oswald's, Old Swan, plate VI in Pugin's 1843 'The present state of ecclesiastical architecture in England'

BOOTLE THROUGH TIME

Meeting report:
Veronica Maguire

A well attended meeting was given a whistle stop tour of Bootle's past, its areas and characters. Noted in the Domesday book as Boltelai, and by the 18th century as Bootle-cum-Linacre, Bootle's oldest house is 1 Merton Road, the kitchen wing of the then Hunting Lodge of the Earl of Derby, dating from 1773. The oldest pub is the 1802 Jawbone Tavern.

In 1868 a Charter Party travelled to London to secure borough status, and the charter was celebrated by its residents on 5 January 1869. The Coat of Arms displays the motto 'Respice, Aspice, Prospice' (look to the past, look to the present, look to the future).

In 1824 William Miller, a wealthy solicitor, built himself a stone castellated mansion known locally as 'Miller's Castle'. This residence is long gone but in 1885 sections of Balliol Road were renamed 'Miller's Bridge' in his memory. On the abutment of the canal bridge a plaque displays 'Adeiladu' (Welsh translation of 'build') and refers to the large number of Welsh builders in Bootle. St Mary's church was built in 1827 with the help of Miller. Its twin towers acted as a navigational aid to ships sailing up the Mersey. Destroyed in the 2nd world war, today its grounds are a memorial park displaying some of the original burial stones, one of which belongs to Jesse Hartley.

The most prominent Welsh builder was William 'Klondyke' Jones. He bought land in Bootle and Orrell, built houses using bricks and tiles manufactured in his own works on Anglesey, and became Mayor in 1886. Street names paid homage to Jones' Welsh heritage and family. In 1969 the council began replacing the houses with high rise flats (recently refurbished), and at present more of the 'Klondyke' estate houses are being demolished. Jones' last residence was 9 Merton Road and is now a nursing home.

Bootle Town Hall was built in 1882, and today flags of Capt. Johnny Walker's ships hang from the Council Chamber. In 1887 a library and museum opened in Balliol Road, with a technical college added in the basement of the library in 1892 (later replaced, and now Hugh Baird College). Secondary schools for girls and boys followed, becoming Grammar schools in 1946. The original doorway of the girls' school has been integrated in the Hugh Baird Pembroke Centre.

Salt water swimming baths arrived in 1888 with slipper baths for those with no baths at home. They sustained war damage in 1941 and were finally closed in 1998, with only the façade remaining. Bootle Hospital arrived on Derby Road in 1872, with an adjoining nurses' home and a new wing in 1887, and remained active until 1976. Today, Mast Laboratories use the old hospital, keeping a medical connection.

Bootle gained importance through the development of docks and canal and rail links. Industry grew and some of the local employers were the Litherland Gas Works, Bootle Tannery, Johnson's Dye Works, Robinson's Engineers, Williams Toffee Works and, latterly, Government and Council agencies.

Recreational areas were provided in South Park and Stanley Gardens (now Kings Gardens), with carnivals in Barn Hey Park (now North Park), and model yacht racing and a band stand (still there today) in Derby Park. There were 3 theatres and 5 cinemas; today there are none.

The 2nd world war, and particularly the *May Blitz*, brought devastation to Bootle. Out of 17,000 houses over 2000 were completely destroyed with just 40 houses sustaining no damage at all. Of a population of 76,000, only 30,000 were able to remain living and working there.

Today Bootle's residency is above pre-war levels. The docks are expanding, including the reintroduction of railways, whilst work proceeds on the canal to bring tourism to a now picturesque area.



The 1868 Charter Party

LIVERPOOL BOTANIC GARDENS

Meeting report:
Helen Penny

The creation of Liverpool's Botanic Garden was undertaken by eminent Liverpool gentlemen, led by Drs. Bostock & Rutter, Rev. W Shepherd and William Roscoe. They met with others in November 1800 to agree the Rules and Regulations of a subscription-only private institution, with shares of 12 guineas and annual subscriptions of two guineas. Their original purpose was to study nature using living specimens in a Liverpool location.

The Corporation leased them land in Mount Pleasant, at that time in the country, and a walled garden was created during the following year. William Roscoe, the new President, gave the inaugural address, and the gardens were opened in May 1802.

Economic products were the focus of attention and very quickly Liverpool joined Dublin, Calcutta and Kew as the major botanic gardens in the world. Plants came from all over the globe through Liverpool's extensive trading connections. A 240ft long glasshouse was built and 4823 different species and cultivars were in their 1808 plant catalogue.

John Shepherd was the first Curator and to him is due a lot of the credit for the gardens. By the late 1820s the expanding city had surrounded the garden and pollution threatened the health of both plants and visitors. In 1831 they started the move to a new site, outside the city limits in Wavertree, completed in 1836. Shepherd died soon after and was succeeded by his nephew Henry, previously his assistant and the first person in the UK to grow ferns from spores.

In the early 1840s the LBG got into financial difficulty and the Corporation took it over. The 1850s was another golden period, where Liverpool was the orchid species capital of the UK and famous for its extensive fern collection and tropical plants.

By the early 1900's, however, the sorry state of the Herbarium and Library convinced the Corporation to form a Botany department in the City Museum, and in 1909 40,000 herbarium specimens were transferred, of which only a quarter were regarded as worthy of retention!

Between the wars it was difficult, because of the sulphurous smoke. However, the gardens continued to be of scientific value for the local University, Colleges and Schools.

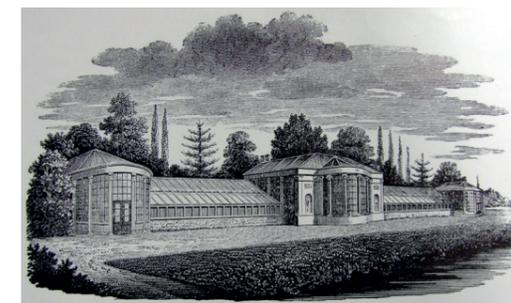
In November 1940 a parachute bomb shattered the glasshouses, the plants were moved to private glasshouses and the orchids went to Sudley House. That would have been the end of the LBG if Percy Conn had not become Superintendent of Liverpool Parks. In 1951 he began rebuilding on the Harthill estate in Calderstones Park with only enough money to build one glasshouse a year.

By 1964 a complex of 16 glasshouses had been completed and filled with plants from Kew, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow and private individuals, and Liverpool subsequently represented Britain at International shows all over Europe, with many skilled horticulturists being trained up on the various collections.

However by 1979 the City's economy was in dire straits with unemployment over 25%. The Merseyside Task Force launched a series of initiatives, and the heritage of the LBG led to the 1984 International Garden Festival.

Although the Council also agreed in February 1983 to rebuild the LBG at an estimated cost of £200,000, these dreams were dashed in May of that year when Militant Tendency came to power and decided that the glasshouses were not safe. They were closed for good, the plants were moved to Greenhills Nursery, and for the next 23 years five botanic horticulturists tended the 10,000 plants - invisible to the world!

As part of the preparation for Liverpool's commemorations in 2008, the artist Jyll Bradley produced the book 'Mr Roscoe's Garden'. There was a stand for the 2008 Chelsea Show and, during 2007/8, a third of the plants were found room in four glasshouses by Croxteth Hall's walled gardens where they can still be seen by the public.



The 1802 glasshouse