

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY

*The national society for
the study and
protection of Victorian
and Edwardian
architecture and allied
arts*

LIVERPOOL GROUP NEWSLETTER

December 2012/January 2013

LECTURES

SUNDAY 27 January 2013 – 2.15pm at Ullet Road Unitarian Church

The Annual Business Meeting will be followed by an illustrated talk from the Victorian Society's new Director, Chris Costelloe: "It's Grim Down South – the North-South Divide in Building Conservation".

Saturday 9 February 2013 – 2.15pm, Quaker Meeting House, School Lane

CLASSICAL LIVERPOOL: THE INSIDE STORY

Hugh Hollinghurst, who spoke to us memorably about the Fosters, will return with an illustrated talk arising from his latest publication, giving emphasis to the interiors of St George's Hall.

Saturday 23 February 2013 – 2.15pm, Quaker Meeting House, School Lane

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR ON THE STREETS OF LIVERPOOL

Committee member Mark Sargant will remind us – 150 years after Gettysburg – of the impact the American war had on the city, a story given added interest by the survival of some of the key sites involved. A relevant article by Mark follows in this Newsletter.

Saturday 9 March 2013 – 2.15pm, Quaker Meeting House, School Lane

NORMAN SHAW – Centenary Reflections

Andrew Saint, who recently revised his biography of Norman Shaw over thirty years after it was first published, will talk both about Shaw's work in the Liverpool area and about his current standing, and about changing fashions in the evaluation of late Victorian architecture. Andrew's *Richard Norman Shaw* is one of the great architectural biographies.

Wednesday 17 April 2013 – 7.30pm, Grosvenor Museum, Grosvenor Street, Chester

SHARPE, PALEY & AUSTIN

Geoff Brandwood's recent lecture for us will be repeated for Chester Civic Trust.

(All welcome - suggested donation £3 - no booking) (Linking trains from Lime Street depart 5.58 and 6.13, from Port Sunlight dep. 6.16 and 6.31, from Hooton dep. 6.26 and 6.41, arriving at Chester at 6.39 and 6.56. Opposite Chester Station, in City Road by the Town Crier, the No 1 Wrexham bus dep. 6.52 and 7.04, stopping in Grosvenor Street close to the Museum. Evening trains from Chester to Liverpool depart at -.00 and -.30 past the hour until the 11pm train.)

EXCURSIONS

Tuesday 7 May 2013 – WALLASEY WANDER

Terry Edgar will lead a tour of significant church and civic work in Wallasey. This will include the early C20th Town Hall (Briggs, Wolstenholme & Thornely) and Central Library, plus Scott's 1856 St James, Doyle's 1911 St Nicholas, Liscard's unique turn-of-the-century Memorial Unitarian Church (now with Historic Chapels Trust) and the nearby Rake Lane Cemetery & St Elisabeth the Martyr, where refreshments will be served. (The coach will leave New Brighton Station at 1pm [linking Merseyrail from Liverpool Central currently at 12.20 and 12.35, latter arrives New Brighton 12.58], returning by 5.15pm. Cost £12.50 to include coach, church donations and refreshments.) Bookings to be made by Tuesday 30 April.

Saturday 22 June 2013 – BARROW AND FURNESS

Tony Murphy writes: “We hope to enjoy a full day between the Lakes and the sea, taking in Paley & Austin at Barrow and at Holker Hall (out if not in, depending); Early Victorian fantasy at Conishead Priory; Lynn’s remarkable Town Hall at Barrow, and the townscape of perhaps the only great Victorian centre NOT to be redeveloped in the 20th century; and, if possible, a look at Lutyens at Furness Abbey. Unexplored territory, much of it, yet not so far away and well worth, we hope, the adventure of a day!”

(Depart Dale St/North John St corner at 9am. Return by 7.15pm. Cost £26 to include coach, admission charges, church donations.)

FEATURE

The American Civil War on the streets of Liverpool: A brief introduction

Liverpool’s links with America go back many centuries, but one of the most intriguing episodes in this story took place in the Victorian period, when the city played an important role in the American Civil War. In the 1860s a game of intrigue was played out on the streets of Liverpool by agents of both sides in the conflict as the city became the epicentre of the Confederacy’s struggle to obtain ships and armaments whilst the Union attempted to prevent this happening. It is a story given added interest by the survival of some of the key sites involved. Searching out the buildings and streets where these events played out provides a way of looking afresh at the mid-Victorian city.

When the Confederacy, with little manufacturing of its own and few ships, appointed James Dunwoody Bulloch as its chief procurement agent in Europe, Liverpool was the obvious base for him. The city was the world centre of the cotton trade, the port through which raw cotton from the American South was imported to feed the Lancashire cotton mills and it was home to many merchants with close commercial links to the southern states, as well as a sizeable American expatriate community. Captain James Dunwoody Bulloch, formerly of the U.S. navy, was from an old Georgia family and an established authority on maritime affairs. His sister had married into the Roosevelt family and the future U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt was his nephew. Landing in Liverpool on 4th June 1861, Bulloch was arriving in a city where there was already significant sympathy for the Confederacy. There were, of course, also strong supporters of the Union to be found in the city’s merchant class. Influential merchants, often from non-conformist families, such as the Unitarian Rathbones, were strong abolitionists and opponents of the slave system prevalent in the southern states. Nevertheless, sympathy for the South was believed to be stronger in Liverpool than anywhere else in the country; in May 1862 one American commentator observed that, *“This great city has gone for the South from the first day and the feeling is at.....pretty high pressure”*. Because of Britain’s officially neutral position, Bulloch was unable to openly act for the Confederacy and instead operated, ostensibly as a private merchant, in the ‘American trade’. Making contact with fellow southerners, he was given an office in the firm of Fraser, Trenholm & Co., a firm with offices on both sides of the Atlantic. The head of the Liverpool branch was Charles Prioleau of South Carolina, a leader of Confederate society in the city. It was through this firm that the Confederacy channelled most of its money and the Liverpool offices, in Rumford Place, operated as a *de facto* Confederate ‘embassy’ during the Civil War, handling vast sums of money for the southern Treasury and directing clandestine operations. The firm bought, financed and commissioned the building of warships and paid operating expenses for the ships while at sea, as well as selling southern cotton and using the proceeds on behalf of the Confederate Government. The official American Consulate (representing the Union) was located nearby in Water Street, from where the Consul, Thomas Dudley, ran a network of informers and agents to keep southern sympathisers and operatives under surveillance.

Bulloch settled in Waterloo, six miles up the coast but conveniently linked by train to Exchange Station, just around the corner from the Fraser, Trenholm & Co. offices. By March 1862 he had been joined by his wife and children and the family was living in the first of several homes they

occupied in Waterloo. During the next three years an extraordinary game of espionage and intrigue was played out on the streets of Liverpool and Birkenhead, as Bulloch successfully commissioned almost a hundred and fifty ships throughout Europe and purchased arms and munitions, to the fury of Consul Thomas Dudley. The ships were acquired ostensibly as merchant vessels and then converted to warships to enter service as blockade runners and maritime raiders under Confederate colours. The blockade of the southern ports by the U.S. navy stopped vital supplies reaching the Confederacy but also prevented export of the cotton crop, of which some sixty per cent had been destined for Liverpool pre-war. The result was the 'Cotton Famine', which damaged the interests of Liverpool merchants but also resulted in destitution for the tens of thousands of Lancashire mill workers who lost their livelihoods as a result of the blockade. Whilst the Confederate blockade runners had limited success against the U.S. navy, the activities of the Confederate raiders on the high seas had a considerable effect on northern shipping; insurance rates for U.S. ships increased by 900% and as a result over seven hundred were transferred to British registration. By far the most feared Confederate raider was the CSS *Alabama*. This ship had been built in Laird's Birkenhead shipyard and the story of its dramatic escape from the Mersey in August 1862, precipitated by the threat of immediate impoundment by the British Government, acting under pressure from Washington, and with a U.S. navy warship in pursuit, reads like the script of a Hollywood blockbuster. After the war, the U.S. Government sued the British Government for compensation for damages in the 'Alabama Claims' case; Britain eventually paid £150 million, at today's value, in settlement. Despite the efforts of Bulloch and his associates, in the longer term the Confederacy could not hope to succeed against the North's superior forces or to win the propaganda war on the issue of slavery. The southern army surrendered in April 1865, bringing the existence of the Confederate States of America to an end. It was not the last act of the war, though, which took place six months later in Liverpool, when, in November 1865, the still un-captured CSS *Shenandoah* steamed into the Mersey. Reluctant to return to the defeated South, she surrendered to the Royal Navy, handing over a formal letter of surrender addressed to the Prime Minister, Lord John Russell.

Some American Civil War sites Recalling these momentous events in the Liverpool of the 1860s can give a whole new perspective to looking at the buildings and locations associated with them. A very large number of American Civil War related sites have been identified in and around Liverpool and today these attract many visiting Americans. In fact, the cluster of sites around Laird's shipyard in **BIRKENHEAD**, where the CSS *Alabama* and other Confederate ships were built, have been officially designated a 'Civil War Heritage Site' by the United States' 'Civil War Preservation Trust', being the only such site outside America. There are far too many individual sites to cover here, but some of the main sites associated with Captain Bulloch provide a useful starting point. **WATERLOO** has a rich concentration of these. From beginnings as a Regency bathing resort it had, by the 1860s, become a favoured place of abode for members of Liverpool's merchant and professional classes, well supplied with a range of aspirational residences far removed from the grime of the city but an easy commute by train. James Bulloch and his family lived in the area throughout the Civil War and beyond. Their first house was no.2 **Marine Terrace**, a modest 'seaside stucco' residence of the 1840s, but they soon moved upmarket, firstly to **Wellington Street** and then to **Cambridge Road**. No.12 Wellington Street is part of a larger terrace of the 1850s, vaguely late Georgian in proportion but with a large, shallow, two-storey bow occupying two bays of the three bay brick façade. By 1871 the family was living in a much grander, double-fronted detached, sandstone villa, 'Clifton' in Cambridge Road. As he could not return to America, where he would have been arrested, Bulloch remained in Liverpool, becoming a naturalised British citizen. There are several other surviving local buildings with American links. '**Claremont House**' in Crosby, now part of St. Mary's College, features gateposts displaying the American Eagle, and was the home of John de Costa, a somewhat shady double-agent. The first baptisms at the new **St. John's Church** Waterloo, 1864-65 by *William Culshaw*, were of Bulloch's children. The modest, early 19th century, '**Liver Hotel**', on the corner of South Road, is reputed to have been a meeting place of Confederate agents. Although enlarged, its external appearance is substantially as it was in the 1860s and certainly would still be recognisable to Bulloch. In the decades after the War, Bulloch, still occupying offices in Rumford Place, set up his own firm in the American trade, although initially he was kept afloat financially by his Roosevelt relatives. Two of his sons attended a small private school, one of many such operating at this period, located in a three-storey terrace house at no.9 **Waterloo Road**. They were joined here briefly, in 1868-69, by the son of Jefferson Davis, the former President of the Confederate States who was in Liverpool at

the time. The Roosevelts were also frequent visitors to Liverpool and Bulloch became something of a mentor to the future president, who formed a special attachment to his 'Uncle Jimmy'.

CENTRAL LIVERPOOL In the city itself, the most evocative surviving building is undoubtedly Bulloch's business base in the former offices of Fraser, Trenholm & Co. in **Rumford Place**, distinguished by a series of commemorative plaques and habitually flying the stars and stripes from its flagpole. Richard Pollard, in the 2006 *Pevsner B of E*, calls Rumford Court "a unique survival of mid-C19 offices in Late Georgian domestic style". The main court is earlier, perhaps 1830s, but the rest is by *Henry Sumners*, 1869, when Rumford Place was then a cul-de-sac, not linked to Fazakerley Street until around 1900. In the 1860s the United States Consulate was nearby in Water Street, the site now covered by the 1906 'Tower Buildings' by *Walter Aubrey Thomas*. The consul himself, Thomas Dudley, lived near Princes Park where the two very grand houses he occupied in turn, nos. 3 and 6 **Belvidere Road**, do survive. However, the most ostentatious home of any American resident of this period was that of Charles Prioleau, the head of the Fraser, Trenholm & Co. Liverpool office. He lived in some splendour at no.19 **Abercromby Square** in the house he had built by *William Culshaw* 1862-63. Joseph Sharples (*Pevsner Architectural Guide*, 2004) calls it "perhaps the grandest surviving C19 house in the city centre". Later used as the Bishop's palace before passing to the University (and long occupied by the School of Education), this building incorporates many surviving decorative features alluding to Prioleau's home state of North Carolina. By the mid-1870s the Bulloch family had moved from Waterloo into the city. Their house, no.63 **Upper Parliament Street**, was characteristic of the impressive late Georgian architecture of the area, but sadly does not survive. When his wife died in 1897, Bulloch moved in with a married daughter who lived in a similar house, still surviving, at no.76 **Canning Street**. Bulloch died here in 1901 and was buried in Toxteth Park Cemetery, where his memorial stone is inscribed "American by birth, Englishman by choice".

This short tour around a few of the many American Civil War sites in Liverpool, as well as throwing light on a fascinating chapter in its history, allows us to see the teeming mid-Victorian city in a different perspective. An exciting human narrative links these commercial and domestic buildings scattered through the city and its suburbs, in a way that interweaves architectural appreciation with events from a period of momentous world history.

Mark Sargant – note lecture on 23 February

RETROSPECT

BIRMINGHAM Saturday 8 September 2012

The 'Age of the Train' for (some) Liverpool Victorians was, most agreed, a successful day and an experiment worth repeating. Lime Street and South Parkway saw the full complement of travellers board the right train; the journey, both ways, was comfortable and uneventful; our time in the Second City was busy and energetic, but all survived the city centre walking, with some help from our friends at St Chad's, and the consensus was that Birmingham has much, and much more, to commend it to the discerning visitor.

It was useful to begin at St Martin's in the Bullring and so to contrast old and new, as well as enjoy J. A. Chatwin's skilful Victorian reconstruction of the church, Burne-Jones's splendid window in the transept and the clever and attractive re-modelling of the Hardman windows destroyed in World War II. Many enjoyed the view from the tower, others had a private tour of the church, all appreciated the very warm welcome we received.

Next stop was St Philip's Cathedral, one of England's most under-rated eighteenth century masterpieces, which again was quite brilliantly and seamlessly extended by Chatwin, one of the leading figures amongst the distinguished Birmingham group of later Victorian architects. We saw some of his secular work nearby, and enjoyed a first look at the 'terra cotta Empire' of the Colmore Estate, but the inevitable highlight for everybody was the Burne-Jones glass, in Chatwin's 'Borromini comes to Birmingham' apse and at Archer's West End: if you haven't seen it, Go!, for the Bennett's Hill boy become master artist saved the best of his work for his local church. The windows are quite remarkable.

After lunch we walked through part of the Colmore Estate and enjoyed more terra cotta; saw 'the last of old Snow Hill station'; braved the inner ring road and arrived safely at St Chad's, Pugin's 'German Church' and a focal point for the bi-centenary celebrations. Our welcome here was fulsome indeed – even the Dean turned out to greet us, on a Saturday afternoon – and we were privileged to have not only an excellent guided tour of crypt and church and environs, but 'handling' access to the treasures on display, which included sacred vessels, vestments, plans, pattern books. It would hardly be possible to get closer to the spirit of Pugin and his key collaborators the Hardmans and Myers, and our group were and are very grateful to all those at St Chad's who made this wonderful experience possible.

At the end of this extravaganza there was mixed exhilaration and exhaustion in our group, but most managed to make it to our last couple of buildings, J. A. Chamberlain's remarkable School of Art, which in some ways pre-figures Art Nouveau and is, to some eyes, as distinguished in its way as the Glasgow School of Art; and, perhaps even more striking, W. R. Lethaby's 'Eagle Star' Insurance building at the end of Colmore Row, his only work in an urban context, one of the city's few Grade 1 listings, and, modestly though it sits, a place to which people come from all over the world. At the moment it stands empty.

Then all went their separate ways, some to see inside the Council House, others to look at the Town Hall, or the libraries old and new; many preferred to take tea, cake and fine arts and crafts in Birmingham's excellent Museum and Art Gallery, secure in the knowledge that New Street station was a mere five minutes away and the train every half-hour. There are other cities almost equally accessible; perhaps next year might see an excursion to one of them or, should people prefer, a return to Birmingham to catch some of the places there wasn't time to consider: the Jewellery Quarter and its Museum, St Paul's, Handsworth and Pugin's convent, Soho House, Chatwin's church at Aston, one or two of Lister and Lea's splendid public houses... "Second City First" isn't such a bad slogan and it certainly gave us an excellent day.

Tony Murphy

TWELVE QUAYS WALKWAY Friday 21 September 2012

This year saw the re-opening of the historic walkway. The Mayor of Wirral, Councillor Gerry Ellis, after a few words to the large number of invited guests who were members of organisations which have campaigned to have this footpath re-opened, cut the ribbon and declared the footpath open to the public.

The walkway is the section of Wirral's Mersey waterfront which faces the Pier Head in Liverpool with its 'Three Graces'. It is the venue from where many of the well known images of the Liverpool waterfront have been taken. The entire walkway was closed to the public in the late 1990s when work began on the construction of the roll-on-roll-off freight terminal at Birkenhead. This action caused much distress to the crowds who had hoped to see the QE2 visiting Liverpool in 2000 from this vantage point only to find their way blocked. One member of the public, Rachel, a young girl aged 6 years, was so disappointed that her uncle, Graham Handley, who had taken her to see the liner, decided to take some action. Thus the twelve year campaign to reinstate this public footpath began.

The public footpath had been created by Acts of Parliament that had enabled the construction of the Wallasey and Birkenhead docks in the mid-1800s. The public had always, since then, enjoyed this amenity. The campaign attracted the attention of over forty local and national organisations, representing over 100,000 people.

After the quayside ceremony was over, the guests were invited to enjoy a presentation in the auditorium at Birkenhead Town Hall. The speakers, who were drawn from the Ramblers Association locally, were joined by Graham Handley, who said, "It just shows what can be achieved when people and organisations come together as a community". The afternoon's activities closed with a toast being given to the Twelve Quays Campaign – and a super buffet which included a slice of the celebration cake for everyone who was present.

John Hankey

PROSPECTS

THREE OF THE BEST

There's been much change in the opportunities to enjoy Victorian London, and about, in the last year, and it's well worth making a special trip to enjoy the outstanding 'new' museums on the fringes of the capital. Furthest away is the re-furbished Watts Gallery at Compton, a short bus or taxi ride from Guildford, itself forty minutes or so from Waterloo three or four times an hour. A few years ago it was a sad sight: dusty, decrepit, a place with no future... now, completely re-developed and bursting with enthusiasm and energy, it's the base for an outstanding day, taking in the Watts Memorial Chapel, ten minutes or so walk away, and, at the moment, hosting a very good exhibition of the work of William and Evelyn de Morgan.

If you're keen on them, there's no need to go out to Guildford. A much shorter journey to West Hill, Putney, will bring you to the new de Morgan Centre in the former library. Once more there's an enthusiastic staff and an excellent new gallery, very clearly laid out, spacious and well-lit and full of an amazing array of painting, glass work and, of course, tiles, as well as an interesting historical and local background to their work. Access by train and bus is convenient and easy and it makes for a most enjoyable excursion from central London.

Going diagonally the other way, but equally easily by tube and bus, is Walthamstow and the re-opened William Morris Gallery in his childhood home at Water House, a splendid bay-windowed Georgian villa set in its own, also re-furbished, park on the main road, yet a more than convincing way into his enthusiasms and inspirations. The twelve small(-ish) rooms, which include recreations of his weaving and textile workshops on the R. Wardle and an evocative taste of the Morris & Co. shop in Oxford Street (1878), with its wood panelling and rush flooring in mediaeval style, are deeply evocative and succeed in showing that a small collection of well-chosen objects can bring out a life just as successfully as a gallery crammed with stuff.

All three do that, and very well. Now really is the time to enjoy and learn from these splendid developments in the continuing story of Victorian London and the wider Victorian world.

Tony Murphy

Rosemary Hill writes in the 'London Review of Books' (13.09.12):

"Early in 2007 the council's then leader (defending plans to close the gallery) described Morris as 'a white imperialist' of no relevance to Walthamstow. The spectacular row which ensued generated on-line petitions, national press coverage and representations from the William Morris Society in the United States. Morris's birthday, 24 March, saw demonstrations at the gallery and the Victorian Society, dressed in forensic suits, taped off Walthamstow Town Hall and declared it a Heritage Crime Scene... Expressions of concern from sitting Labour MPs were lukewarm, while the list of Labour opponents to the plans was a roll-call of the old guard, headed by Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone.

Exactly why things changed is unclear. The strength of local opposition, 'the sound and rumour', as Morris described it in his *Chants for Socialists*, of 'the people marching on', must have unnerved the council as blogs and protest meetings moved beyond the issue of the gallery to exchange views about other council services... The gallery's running costs are now guaranteed by the council indefinitely and new staff, with the right expertise in art history and curatorship, have been taken on. There has been no attempt to simplify the complex life and mind of Morris, whose titanic idealism reflected an age of great certainty and equally harrowing doubt."

NEWSREEL

The recently unveiled Liverpool Vision blueprint for the next fifteen years speaks of the city's potential to have three truly "great streets" – The Strand, Hope Street, and the corridor from Lime Street to Water Street along Dale Street. The plan for Dale Street and Water Street focuses on repopulating vacant buildings with residents, bars and boutique hotels... Meanwhile there are less than cheerful reports in respect of two key buildings of the area, both masterworks from Professor Reilly's star pupil, Herbert Rowse, sustaining Liverpool's Classical tradition into the 1920s.

Rowse's former Martins Bank building, adjacent to the Town Hall, still awaits potential hotel conversion. But on the other side of Water Street, to quote Peter Elson in the 'Liverpool Post' (22.11.12), "the future of one of Liverpool's most famous buildings appears in crisis, with tenants fearing eviction and its owners cautioned by the council for removing its eight bronze entrance plaques". With India Buildings and its Holt's Arcade hailed as one of Liverpool's crown jewels, we can only echo the sentiments of Civic Society spokesman Jonathan Brown: "It is devastating to hear of the illegal changes being made to the building and the planned closure of Holt's Arcade. It is the equivalent, or better than anything in New York on Wall Street, or Chicago. This is an international class of building and to deny the public access to it is an appalling blow. Herbert Rowse's concept was a US-style scheme to bring the public through this incredible office block. The bronze shop fronts are public show pieces, not to be hidden away as staff offices." Understandably, Wayne Colquhoun, whose Circa 1900 shop is in the arcade, is leading an SOS fight-back, while Gavin Stamp has expressed astonishment that India Buildings has only a Grade II listing, commenting that the commercial blocks designed in the 1920s by Rowse, "one of Liverpool's great architects", are the finest of their sort in Britain. English Heritage do report that a private application has been made to upgrade the listing.

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SAVE Britain's Heritage reported in its July Newsletter:

"Saving homes on the frontline of post-Pathfinder Britain continues to absorb a great deal of time and resources in SAVE. Following Housing Minister Grant Shapps' condemnation of the Pathfinder policy in Parliament last November, the mass clearance of neighbourhoods of Victorian terraces was supposed to be over. Quoting from SAVE's 'Housing Scandal: Pathfinder, a Post Mortem' (2011), Shapps promised an end to John Prescott's legacy of large-scale demolition. But the return of the bulldozer to streets in Blackburn, Liverpool and Bootle in recent months shows that Pathfinder's land grab continues, fuelled by a new 'Transitional Fund', that is supposed to be an exit strategy for those trapped in Pathfinder's ghost streets, matching £35m in money from Eric Pickles' Department with a further £35m from other public funds. The money is not ring-fenced, meaning that the government cannot control what local authorities spend it on. Freedom of Information (FOI) requests by Liverpool campaigner Jonathan Brown, and David Ireland from the Empty Homes charity, revealed that the £70m has in fact gone towards the demolition of 5,125 homes across 13 local authorities. Almost half of the demolitions (2,350) are underway on Merseyside. They include much of Anfield, and Toxteth's famous Welsh Streets, where SAVE has a house at 21 Madryn Street, purchased in 2011 in order to stop the street being demolished...

In one of the most inflexible authorities, Sefton, our splendid legal team, Richard Harwood and Susan Ring of Richard Buxton Environmental and Public Law, have helped local campaigners halt demolition, pending a Judicial Review of Eric Pickles' refusal to demand an Environmental Impact Assessment. In the same area there has been a series of arson attacks on empty properties, and the local authority seems unwilling to protect either the empty houses, or the few remaining vulnerable households, in Bootle's Klondyke Area, from the most appalling intimidation."

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Tristram Hunt MP, lamenting declining resources for local government ('Guardian', 26.10.12), recalled the "historic, civilising function" of much C19th municipal enterprise. "At the height of the industrial revolution, life expectancy in Liverpool was 26 years – the lowest since the Black Death. Across Britain, the free enterprise and tax planning of the 1800s was yielding both incredible riches and desperate poverty. These were the two nations of rich and poor, 'between which there

is no intercourse and no sympathy’, which horrified Benjamin Disraeli. Beginning with the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, local government was able to start reforming sewerage and cesspits, housing conditions and pollutants. But in the latter half of the C19th, horizons expanded. Inspired by the memory of Florence and Siena, Bruges and Ghent, Birmingham councillors started to talk of the importance of beauty and dignity to their communities. ‘During a little over half a century the town has been transformed and ennobled’ reflected the mayor, Joseph Chamberlain, in 1892. Victorian Birmingham was the model of municipal socialism: an active local government using public funds to elevate the life of its citizenry... The noble and transformative forces that Joseph Chamberlain regarded as civilising urban life – the *raison d’être* of local government since the 1830s – are being lost.” Birmingham is very much the focus of our excursions – Tony Murphy reports above, with a further trip in prospect.

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The fifteenth volume of the remarkable *Public Sculpture of Britain* series, published by Liverpool University Press in association with the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, was launched at Chester’s Grosvenor Museum in November. This volume is of great local interest as *Public Sculpture of Cheshire and Merseyside (excluding Liverpool, already published)*. Edward Morris, for many years Curator of Fine Art at the Walker and Lady Lever Galleries, is now the Chairman of the Editorial Board for this series. He is co-author of the new volume with Emma Roberts, a Principal Lecturer and Course Leader in History of Art at John Moores University. There are contributions from Timothy Stevens, Director of the Walker between 1971 and 1987.

It is stimulating to see analysis that ranges from Richard Harding Watt’s Elizabeth Gaskell Memorial Tower in Knutsford to Antony Gormley’s Another Place on Crosby beach, from Goscombe John’s War Memorial at Port Sunlight to Herbert Tyson Smith’s at Southport. There are invaluable pocket biographies and a comprehensive bibliography, which lists two works from our co-founder Edward Hubbard and three from committee member Andrew Richardson.

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And the perfect stocking-filler is surely Gavin Stamp’s *Edwin Lutyens Country Houses* (Aurum Press), now available as a £20 paperback (less from Amazon!). The illustrations are from the archives of ‘Country Life’, with Gavin’s introductory essay being described as “masterly” by Gillian Darley and “brilliant” by John Martin Robinson...

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An 1879 Bootle pumphouse figures in the latest Victorian Society list of top ten endangered buildings. The description in ‘The Victorian’ is worth repeating: A red-brick sentinel stands slowly crumbling at the edge of a container park. Its ornate appearance belies a practical role: it originally contained the steam engine to operate the locks at Langton Dock. Later on, as shipping declined, the dock was left to languish; time, neglect, and Atlantic rain have left the pumphouse looking cragged and derelict. Thanks to its remote location, however, the usual stalkers of abandoned buildings, crime and vandalism, have bypassed it. The pumphouse is certainly savable and should be regarded – like many buildings on the docks – as a valuable example of Britain’s seafaring history as well as a dramatic piece of architecture. The port owners should repair this impressive building and the council should pressure them to ensure that the work is carried out. It could, perhaps, find a new role as a unique and striking dock office. (No access without permission of Dock Police.)

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In November Gladstone’s early years and family involvement in the Seaforth area were celebrated in a talk by Brenda Murray, along with a play especially written by Tony Murphy and performed by local children. This event was successfully held in Linacre Road Methodist Mission’s spacious hall, in aid of the Memorial bust of Gladstone to be unveiled in January. Please contact Brenda (tel: 0151-924 2541) for the precise details of the unveiling by Frank Field MP.

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A long-standing member of the Liverpool Group, Dr Ian James, died in August after long illness. Many will recall Ian’s guided tour of Bidston Observatory ahead of that historic institution’s move to Liverpool. Our belated condolences to his wife Jenny.

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY

**The national society for the study and protection of Victorian and Edwardian
architecture and other arts**

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