

THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY

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

LIVERPOOL GROUP NEWSLETTER

July 2013



St Francis (now 'The Monastery'), Gorton Lane, Manchester, by E. W. Pugin (1866-72) - "one of the two churches of national importance by A. W. N. Pugin's son" (Clare Hartwell, "Manchester"). Subject of a Group visit in 2008, to be placed in context by Dr Gerard Hyland in his 16 November lecture.

JOHN DEWSNAP (11.09.1942 - 02.02.2013)

John was such an inspirational figure, and his entertaining style belied his wide scholarship. He will be much missed, and the Victorian Liverpool Group will never be the same without him. ~ *Nick Roe*

We were at Alsop High School at the same time although in different streams, John always a "big lad" and popular. I think that, even then, he was developing his "lordly presence" which came in handy when he performed in the school plays. Falstaff-like characters suited him well while my star debut was as Old Gobbo in Merchant of Venice - even my parents didn't recognise me in make-up! I have a photo of the cast at dress rehearsal, John looming up on the right side. Although we both enjoyed Alsop, we were united in our hatred of sport and the autocratic sports master, Mr Atherton. Although I didn't really know him at school, we became good friends through the VicSoc which was more important. When he laughed he roared, wobbled and went red in the face, especially when I reminded him of a photography course that I attended during which we had to find and photograph interesting people. John loved hearing about the bikers' pub in Ashton-under-Lyne where I met a tattooed girl who happened to be a knicker-packer in the local clothing factory! ~ *Andrew Richardson*

John Dewsnap joined the Liverpool Group not long after its inception. He was Vice-Chairman from 1968-1981 and again from 1988 until his death this year. For a period from 1977 he was a valuable member of an activities sub-committee. John's enthusiasm for a wide range of C19th artists and architects was infectious: there cannot anywhere have been a better communicator on 'the stages of Morris glass', while his specific analysis of Burne-Jones on location in Allerton's All Hallows Church made a lasting impression on all who heard it.

Asked for his Victorian favourites, John would usually go for George Edmund Street and William Burges. He celebrated the latter in lectures on Worcester College, Oxford, and on Waltham Abbey (in 2005 and 2006 respectively), but sadly ill health prevented his participation in a jointly-planned excursion to Skelton and Studley Royal in May 2007. These last few years had not been easy for him: indeed, that we were not alone in missing his guiding skills was further illustrated by the strong complement at his funeral of former pupils from Blackmoor Park School where he had been Deputy Head. ~ *Graham Fisher*

Congratulations are in order for Brenda Murray who was deservedly awarded the British Empire Medal in the New Year Honours. This news was followed by the successful completion of her campaign for recognition of Gladstone's days in Seaforth from 1813 to 1830. A considerable crowd gathered on February 23rd at Our Lady Star of the Sea Church to witness the unveiling by Frank Field M.P. of sculptor Tom Murphy's bust of Gladstone.

Tony Murphy, Tom Murphy, Gladstone, Brenda, Frank Field M.P.



THE NOVEMBER LECTURES

These three lectures will take place at the Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool. The starting time is 2.15pm. (The admission charge is increased from £3 to £4: members will appreciate that subscriptions fund the Society nationally and that we need to aim to be self-supporting.)

Saturday 9 November 2013

VICTORIAN ORGAN CASES

John Norman is a Past Chairman of the British Institute of Organ Studies, Member of the London Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches and member of the Council of the Institute of Musical Instrument Technology. He is the author or joint-author of four books on organs. He explains his proposed talk:

"Because of the boom in church building in the Victorian era, there was a corresponding boom in the number of organs made. Nevertheless there was a considerable diversity in the styles of organ case design. The talk will begin with an introduction to the basic principles of case design, going on to the Victorians' stylistic inheritance from the 17th & 18th centuries.

Attempts at simplification, based on ancient models, had some unexpected results. A wholly different approach followed from Pugin's influence, leading to organ cases by Pearson, Hill, Bodley and others. The talk will conclude with a brief look at what followed, including our present design inheritance from the work of the Victorians."

Saturday 16 November 2013

E. W. PUGIN IN THE NORTH WEST

It is 35 years since the late Clive Wainwright (joint-organiser of the V & A's pioneering A.W.N. Pugin exhibition) commented that, while E.W. Pugin's buildings rarely attained the quality of those of his father, when properly studied and analysed they are likely to establish him as a major High Victorian architect. We are privileged to welcome Dr Gerard Hyland, who is currently engaged in such an essential study. From his Liverpool office, E. W. Pugin (1834-75) designed St Vincent de Paul in St James Street and Our Lady of Reconciliation in Eldon Street, while Joseph Sharples has reminded us of a rare commercial work, Seel's Building on the Church Street/Paradise Street corner. Further afield, Group excursions have taken us to two Catholic churches "of national importance" (Pevsner): Manchester's St Francis (now 'The Monastery') "because of its showy façade", and All Saints, Barton-upon-Irwell, "which is the masterpiece of his life without any doubt", as well as to Shrewsbury Cathedral. Dr Hyland will be emphasising E. W. Pugin's many 'industrial' churches built to house the large town congregations of the north of England.

Saturday 30 November 2013

SAINTS AND SINNERS

Florence Gersten will tell six stories of C19th women who differed very widely in the circumstances of their births, subsequent lives and ultimate fates. The reasons that they are remembered are equally polarised: either for very positive virtues, or for very much the reverse. Apart from the overlap in period, these women are linked by the fact that some crucial part of their lives was spent in Liverpool.

PERAMBULATIONS

Saturday 13 July 2013 - ROPEWALKS

Joyce Hughes will be our guide for a tour of this fascinating area and she writes: "After the completion of the dock in 1715, this area was rapidly developed, with merchants houses, offices, warehouses and a variety of light industries serving the maritime trade - not forgetting of course the eponymous "ropewalks". The area is of outstanding architectural merit with over 90 listed buildings. It includes the finest collection of warehouses in the country with many rare examples of Georgian and Victorian warehouses, which enables us to see how they developed through this

period, from the smaller purely functional to the imposing finely detailed structures of the later C19th. There are a number of key buildings, but the main value is in the ensemble which help tell the story of this phase of Liverpool's development as the second port of empire. The last time we visited this area was in June 1977, I think we can expect a few changes!"

There is no charge for this event but as numbers are strictly limited, it is **essential** that a booking is made. The walk will last from 11am until 1pm, starting from outside the Merseytravel office at the LIVERPOOL ONE BUS STATION (behind John Lewis).

(Please note: The Liverpool Loop is out of action on 13 July - Wirral trains are terminating at Birkenhead North or Birkenhead Central.)

Thursday 17 October 2013 - ROCK PARK, BROMBOROUGH POOL VILLAGE, EASTHAM FERRY

Graham Fisher's **3 mile walk (with bus interludes** - bring a bus pass if you have one and a snack if you need one) is in part a trailer for forthcoming attractions - an E.W. Pugin church (16 November lecture) and villa estates (15 February 2014 lecture by Elizabeth Davey). We will start from Rock Ferry Station, visiting E. W. Pugin's St. Anne's (illustrated), then passing Ruskin, Wordsworth, Kipling, Tennyson and Browning, we will observe churches by David Walker and by Hurst & Moffatt, before considering 'Commuter Country: 1837' - that is to say the tragically bisected Rock Park (once very close to the heart of our co-founder Ted Hubbard who led Group walks to the then unspoilt estate in both 1966 and 1970). A short bus link will take us on to Bromborough Pool Village (illustrated), Price's pioneering settlement which preceded Port Sunlight by some 35 years. Here we will meet representatives from Ainsley Gommon Architects who are involved with new work in the Village. Given reasonable weather, we will continue to 'the Richmond of the Mersey', perhaps sampling refreshments and the bear pit before rounding off the afternoon.

(Gather outside Rock Ferry Station at 12.30pm - never more than a 15 minute interval between Merseyrail trains from Liverpool Loop to destinations Chester or Ellesmere Port. NOTE: the walking is over some rough surfaces. Group strictly limited - advance reservation **essential**. Bus routes 145/146 involved, last from Eastham Ferry (for Eastham Rake or Rock Ferry stations) at 5.35pm on current timetable. Cost £3 to cover church donations, etc.)



EXCURSIONS

Saturday 28 September 2013 - BIRMINGHAM AND 'BEYOND'

As a follow-up to last year's successful train day to the centre of the 'Second City', Tony Murphy is happy to lead a similar adventure (9.34am Lime Street, return 'at choice' after 5pm, to enable advance booking of tickets for the cheapest rate, currently £11-90 return with a railcard), this time to include, as far as possible, Pugin's Convent of Our Lady and the Hardman House, Victorian Handsworth, the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, St Paul's Church and possibly Soho House, Matthew Boulton's grand residence and the starting-point for Birmingham's Industrial Revolution. We will conclude the day at the Museum and Art Gallery, to allow time for tea in its true Victorian splendour. There will be a short 'bus journey or two on this excursion; however, no great distances are involved and it should be a very manageable and interesting opportunity to explore beyond the familiar façades of St Chad's and the Bull Ring to the reality of the 'workshop of the world'. There will be an event charge of £5.00 and a possible charge for the tour of the Jewellery Quarter Museum.

Tony will round up the group on the train.

(STOP PRESS: There are still coach seats remaining for Tony's BARROW excursion on Saturday 22 June [£26] – contact Diana Goodier)

ROUNDAABOUT

An exhibition of drawings by Edward Burne-Jones is currently at the Lady Lever Art Gallery (until 12 January 2014). Featuring around thirty pieces of work, material is drawn entirely from National Museums Liverpool's own collection. A number of designs for stained glass windows is included.

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Bargain of the month is surely Geoff Brandwood's "Britain's Best Real Heritage Pubs". This CAMRA-backed survey of pub interiors of outstanding historic interest comes with a foreword by English Heritage's Chief Executive, Simon Thurley. The Merseyside entries are ten in number: Birkenhead's Stork Hotel (Price Street), Liverpool's Crown Hotel, Lion Tavern, Peter Kavanagh's, Philharmonic Dining Rooms, The Vines, Prince Arthur (Walton), Lydiat's Scotch Piper, Sutton Leach's Wheatsheaf and Waterloo's Volunteer Canteen.

If you would like a copy of the book, please send a cheque for £9.99 to Geoff Brandwood at 2 Rothesay Avenue, Richmond-on-Thames TW10 5EA (unless otherwise requested he would sign it: 'To [first name], with best wishes, [signature]'). If you would prefer to pay by internet banking, drop Geoff an email (g.brandwood@virgin.net) and he will let you have his account details.

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With the 1914 centenary looming ever closer, it is perhaps natural to contemplate what sensitivities may architecturally have been lost from the first years of the C20th. We should be careful about too stringent art-historical divisions, but it seems clear that the domestic revival ushered in by Street and Butterfield, Webb and Shaw (and so celebrated by Hermann Muthesius) had petered out. The turn-of-the-century reverberations of Art Nouveau were certainly stilled, with the Morris-influenced Arts & Crafts generally in something of a magnificent cul-de-sac.

Our recent excursions have calculatedly highlighted some local late Victorian and Edwardian treasures. In October we experienced a couple of contrasting works by John Douglas, at Caldby (with a later window by the Bromsgrove Guild) and West Kirby. In May, Terry Edgar's Wallasey cross-section included Liscard's Memorial Unitarian Church, with Bromsgrove Guild and Della Robbia ware, as well as buildings commenced in 1910 (the Central Library) and 1914 (the "strikingly monumental building for so unmonumental a town", that is the Town Hall). Doyle's St Nicholas was likewise from 1910, with some Arts and Crafts furnishing. On our visit, Ann Jones reminded me that Hazel Turnbull's funeral had been held in that fine building. And it is thanks to Hazel's generous legacy that Edward Hubbard's "Work of John Douglas" is currently being reprinted by the Victorian Society. That superlative book's imminent reappearance explains some of the Arts & Crafts reflections which follow...

Edwardian Sunset: John Douglas and the Arts & Crafts

As the centenary of the Great War draws near, it is tempting to over-romanticise the early years of the C20th. Nonetheless, so far as the built environment was concerned, they were years of considerable richness and diversity. Art-historical terminology can be misleading but it is reasonable to assert that this period saw the culmination of the Arts and Crafts movement: its most sensitive (and prolific) practitioner in our region, the indefatigable John Douglas, had in fact died in May 1911, in his eighty-first year.

Born in Sandiway in 1830, Douglas received his training with the Paley and Austin firm in Lancaster, these being the years in which the ideological impact of the meteoric Augustus Welby Pugin was being felt. Pugin had forcefully argued for the superiority of medieval Gothic architecture to anything subsequently produced. In her outstanding biography, Rosemary Hill has wisely remarked: "Pugin's work contains, like a densely packed capsule, almost everything that followed with the High Victorians, the Arts and Crafts movement and in the works of Ruskin and Morris. Working in every medium, in glass and metal and stone and as a pattern designer of Mozartian facility, it would take three generations to develop all that was implicit in Pugin's short career."

At the Catholic church of St Giles at Cheadle in Staffordshire, completed in 1846, Pugin's patron the 16th Earl of Shrewsbury enabled him to put his ideas sumptuously into practice. The Earl witnessed its effect on George Gilbert Scott: ravished by the interior, "the stencilling made the water run down both sides of his mouth". Alongside other Gothic Revivalist architects like William Butterfield and William Burges (at Cardiff Castle), Scott acknowledged a tremendous debt to Pugin. He drew attention to the functional adaptability of Gothic, the notion that each part of a building should "express as distinctly as possible its use and destination". And this evidently influenced the young John Douglas when he designed in 1867 Oakmere Hall, near Sandiway, for Liverpool merchant John Higson. This is an ambitious High Victorian mansion, with indications of the Germanic detailing which so appealed to Douglas. It is in startling contrast to his slightly earlier former Congregational Chapel at Over, by Winsford, which Nikolaus Pevsner dismissed as "very ugly and not, it seems, in a deliberately challenging way" but which – in its polychromatic styling – is surely a nod to Butterfield's "orgasmic" ("Nairn's London") All Saints, Margaret Street, the church that was a model for the Ecclesiologists.

From the 1870s a greater sensitivity – to materials, to location – is to be found in Douglas's work and this is in accord with developments on the national scene, not least in the influence of William Morris. George Edmund Street had worked in Gilbert Scott's office: now it is in his own office that the Arts and Crafts movement truly germinates for he is briefly assisted by Morris and Philip Webb. Although there are earlier 'vernacular' buildings from Street and Butterfield, it is the Red House in Kent that Webb designed for Morris in 1859 that has become the symbol of a move from formalised Gothic to an architecture free of imposed style, growing unselfconsciously from its surroundings and the needs of ordinary people. A year or two later Morris set up his company to undertake all manner of decoration, involving Edward Burne-Jones whose stunning stained-glass dominates Douglas's parish church of St Paul's at Chester.

It is in Chester and the surrounding Westminster estate villages (especially Eccleston and Aldford) that the Arts and Crafts inspiration of Douglas becomes most apparent. The terrace of Grosvenor Park Road (1879) is a symphony of red brick, leading perfectly to the park which Kemp designed some twenty years after his work with Paxton in Birkenhead. In the park itself, Billy Hobby's well and the lodge are Douglas's first contributions to Chester. The nearby swimming baths are of 1900, while the adjacent Bath Street with its quirky turrets is into the Edwardian period. Similar features can be seen in Douglas's only contribution to Birkenhead: this is the asymmetrical range at Charing Cross, partly curved on plan, consisting of the former Martins Bank with shops either side. It presents a most engaging riot of turrets and diminutive dormers.



Nationally the richness of the Arts and Crafts period can be seen in the work of a whole range of designers, almost all of whom expressed indebtedness to Ruskin and Morris. Respective Masters of the Art Workers' Guild were W.R. Lethaby (Brockhampton Church, 1901), Liverpool's Henry Wilson (Brithdir Church with its exquisite beaten copper altar, 1897), and Charles Voysey (his sweeping slate roofs an evident influence on Herbert North's Close in Llanfairfechan). Lethaby and Wilson submitted a 'free form' entry for Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral, the competition winner being Gilbert Scott's very young grandson. C. R. Ashbee, very much a Morris social idealist, led his East End Guild of Handicraft to an astonished Chipping Campden in 1902; later, he was employed by the Wolverhampton Corrugated Iron Company for an estate of cottages around Beechfield Road in Ellesmere Port. Also from the local scene, Birkenhead's Charles Harrison Townsend, a 'Gothic' pupil of Clifton Park's Walter Scott, arrived in London as arguably England's only art nouveau architect, producing the Whitechapel Gallery, the Bishopsgate Institute, and – supremely – the Forest Hill Horniman Museum (1901). Meanwhile, Edgar Wood – invariably attired in cloak and knickerbockers – had established the Northern Art Workers' Guild and made a strong impression on the Manchester area.

Additionally, there are those giant talents who gave great character to the period under review but who transcend the art-historical definitions: Charles Rennie Mackintosh (who, with Ashbee, was much celebrated in Europe) and Edwin Lutyens (who turned from Arts and Crafts to the classical profundities of his Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral and his Thiepval Memorial for the Missing of the Somme). Certainly, there is a sense in which the Arts and Crafts were in a blind alley given that the guiding spirit was anti-industrial, anti-urban. The Morris rejection of the conveyor belt was both a strength and a weakness: craft skills were prized but the products were priced out of the reach of the working people. In Liverpool, Charles Reilly, the newly appointed Roscoe Professor of Architecture at the University, firmly rejected Arts and Crafts notions in favour of American-style classicism. Ironically, he contributed the shallow crescent of Lower Road ("classical and a little stagy with its skeletal colonnade" – Matthew Hyde in the revised Pevsner/Hubbard "Buildings of Cheshire") to an enlightened development which initially owed a great deal to the Arts and Crafts...

Port Sunlight was initiated a decade or so after London's Bedford Park. That was very much a planned suburb for the middle classes, with fine houses by the far-famed Richard Norman Shaw (who had succeeded Webb in Street's office and whose great pupil was Lethaby, the undoubted influence on St Agnes's vicarage). It is probable that the 1st Duke of Westminster recommended John Douglas to Lever as a key player for his venture. The best of Douglas's work is in the vicinity of The Dell, the early romantic stage of the village. Appropriately, Bridge Cottage, No. 23 Park Road, was Lever's own house in 1896-7 while Thornton Manor underwent alteration. Opposite Bridge Cottage is the Lyceum, by Douglas & Fordham, serving as school and church until these were subsequently built. It faces the architects' sandstone Dell Bridge, the whole composition having something of a pre-Raphaelite air. (It is splendid that the Burne-Jones classic 'The Beguiling of Merlin' is housed in the Lady Lever Gallery!) Lever employed some London architects (Lutyens for instance) but it is the strictly local men who dominate, Douglas's timber-framing exercising a particular appeal. (Although there's nothing here to compare with Chester's masterly St Werburgh Street, his own development leading from Eastgate to the Scottified Cathedral.) Later work at Port Sunlight was very much in the hands of the under-celebrated James Lomax-Simpson. Both he and Douglas also worked extensively at Thornton Hough.



John Douglas's 'Edwardian' days showed little diminution of his Arts and Crafts talents. In his birth village of Sandiway his 1903 St John is delightfully small scale, comparable in quality to some of his strongly personal churches of the 1870s like Whitegate and Altcar. The following year he completed work on St Deiniol's Library at Hawarden, his most important secular building, founded by Gladstone as a place for study. In Wirral at Caldby village Douglas & Minshull converted the school of 1868 by the great George Edmund Street into a most attractive Arts and Crafts church, complete with saddleback tower. Nearby, at West Kirby, he added an east end to St Andrew's. As Edward Hubbard remarked (in his masterly "The Work of John Douglas", 1991): "This second stage of work at St Andrew's is typical of Douglas at his best in combining historical knowledge with unmistakable individuality and an awareness of contemporary thought and development." Not far away at Frankby is the black and white masterpiece of 1891 that was moved piece by piece from Bidston in 1929: Hillbark is by Douglas's star pupil, Edward Ould, who was also responsible for Wightwick Manor (near Wolverhampton), a National Trust property where can be seen a marvellous Morris interior – a true 'Earthly Paradise'.

And a C20th footnote: astonishingly the Bromsgrove Guild survived until 1966. In Liverpool we have the delights of the Liver Birds and the bronze lamps of India Buildings. The latter is a reminder that whatever hostility Reilly may have felt for the Arts and Crafts (turning his back on the School of Architecture's 1900 Philharmonic Hotel) his star pupil Herbert Rowse was regularly working with a couple of brilliant craftsmen in Edmund Thomson and Herbert Tyson Smith. Perhaps the powerful reliefs of Tyson Smith's sculpture (1930) on the Lime Street Cenotaph - in Joseph Sharples's words, "one of the most arresting memorials anywhere to the dead of the First World War" - should be the appropriate last word on a remarkable period.

Graham Fisher

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