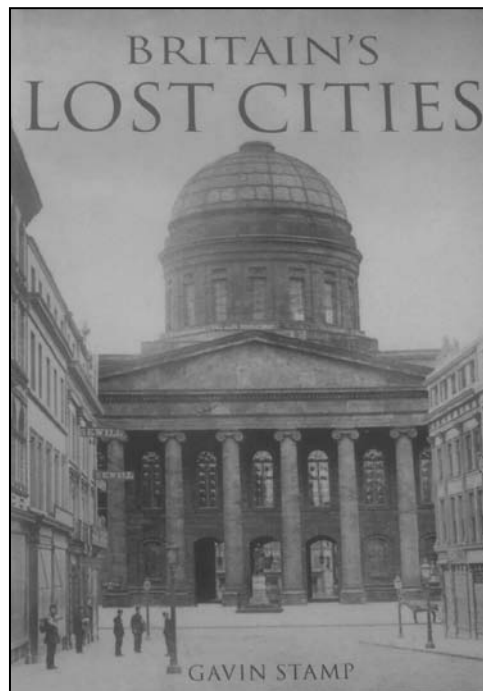


# THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY

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

## LIVERPOOL GROUP NEWSLETTER June 2010

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***Tribute to the FOSTERS ... see page 2***

# PROGRAMME

THURSDAY 15 JULY

**To central MANCHESTER celebrating ELIZABETH GASKELL'S bi-centenary and the PANKHURST CENTRE/ Museum to the Suffragette Movement & former Pankhurst home.**

(Depart Dale St/North John St corner at 10.15. Cost to cover coach and Gaskell Home visit incl. tea & cake [bring packed lunch]: £15. Return to Liverpool around 4.30pm.)

Leader Annette Butler comments: "We will first visit the Gaskell family home in Plymouth Grove (they expect us at noon) where refreshment will be provided, together with a brief history of the charitable trust which has been engaged in renovating and making the building open to the public on a limited basis, before we tour the home, still undergoing restoration. Afterwards we will make an approx. 10 minute walk to the Pankhurst Centre at 60/62 Nelson Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester 13 (only open Thursdays 10-4, which is why this is not a customary Saturday outing). Both places are near Oxford Road/Wilmslow Road, in the vicinity of the University Medical School, with very limited parking. The Pankhurst Centre has free admission. We will make our own way round the museum, from 2.30 for about 45 minutes. 'Elizabeth Gaskell/Bi-centenary' etc. is an excellent website, linking Plymouth Grove and the separate Gaskell Society, showing a wide variety of Gaskell events – talks, library displays, theatre, Unitarian activities – until end of year.

SATURDAY 4 SEPTEMBER

**ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE and the TAME VALLEY**

(Depart Dale St/North John St corner at 9.30. Cost [bring packed lunch]: £20 (includes church donations). Return to Liverpool via Oldham for 7pm)

Tony Murphy's latest excursion will look at a group of distinguished churches (and an amazing public baths) in Ashton, an area rich in mills and canals. We follow the Tame Valley, taking in Dukinfield (the Unitarian Church its best building), Stalybridge and Pennine-set Uppermill.

## NOVEMBER LECTURES

The following 3 lectures will take place at 2 for 2.15pm at the QUAKER MEETING HOUSE, 22 School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT. (Open to all: £3 admission)

Saturday 6 November

**THE SEVEN ORIGINAL STREETS OF LIVERPOOL**

Christina Clarke (along with our illustrious members Florence Gersten and Brenda Murray) did much to promote our medieval streets for the city's celebratory years of 2007 and 2008.

These ancient streets were Mill Street (Old Hall Street), Juggler Street (High Street/Exchange Flags), Castle Street, Chapel Street, Bank Street (Water Street), Moor Street (Tithebarn Street), Dale Street. Christina will explain the significance of the early pattern and its importance for C19th developments.

Saturday 20 November

**JOHN FOSTER, FATHER AND SON**

Local historian Hugh Hollinghurst has broken new ground with his recent publication "John Foster and Sons, Kings of Georgian Liverpool" (Liverpool History Society) since, astonishingly, this is the first time a book devoted solely to the family has been published. John Foster Senior and (his second son) John Foster Junior held the office of Surveyor for the Corporation of Liverpool continuously from 1789 to 1836. They and the rest of the talented family distinguished themselves in engineering, public administration, manufacturing and the law, but above all for their classical architecture which laid the foundations for the city's Victorian magnificence. Hugh also reminds us that between them the Fosters were responsible for much of the modern street layout, thus taking the story forward from Christina's opening lecture.

Saturday 27 November

## IN PEVSNER'S FOOTSTEPS

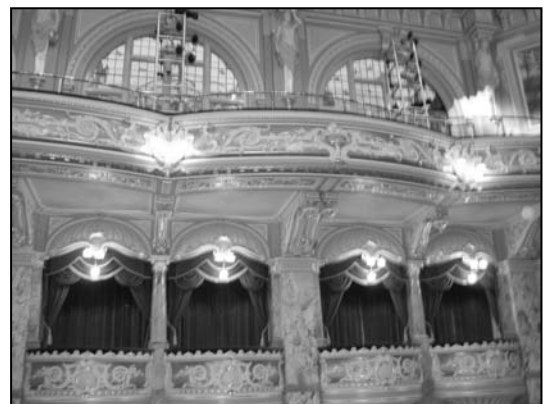
As author of the September-published "Cumbria" and joint-author of the forthcoming "Cheshire", Macclesfield-based architectural historian Matthew Hyde is in a good position to reflect on changes in styles as well as in judgments since these counties were first analysed by Nikolaus Pevsner in his groundbreaking 'Buildings of England' series.

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## RETROSPECTIVE

Tony Murphy provided us with comprehensive notes for his sunny March day in Harrogate (LibDem swing to Con). But some reflections from Peter Burton in his 2006 "North Yorkshire" may be of interest. This finely produced work (Michael Russell, £14.95 - if still in print) is a 'Shell Guide' in all but name. In fact, former schoolmaster Peter Burton had been invited by John Piper to do a Shell Guide to the North Riding before the series sadly came to an end. He explains: "I have tried to model all my North Yorkshire entries on Henry Thorold's Shell Guides. He wrote five of the best of them. He became a close friend, and I took photographs for nine of his ten books... In many ways the Shell Guides were seen by their instigators, Piper and Betjeman, as an antidote to Pevsner's Buildings of England series, personal and partial as opposed to dry and academic. But Pevsner had his enthusiasms and prejudices, even his own dry humour, and nobody who loves architecture or England could contemplate life without him. Certainly my own debt to him is huge."

Over to Peter Burton's Harrogate entry... "Trees, grass and gardens rather than distinguished architecture make Harrogate the delightful spa town it is. The varied grey, millstone grit Victorian terraces and villas play their part. The common sweeps into the town's heart. Changes of level help; Montpelier Parade drops down from Betty's Corner with its pretty outdoor canopy, towards Paradise Row and Promenade Square which saw some of Harrogate's earliest growth... In the valley are the 1930s classical Municipal Buildings, and the more ebullient Royal Baths with towers and a cupola. Across the Ripon road more towers and cupolas, this time Frank Matcham's festive Royal Hall. Standing beside it now the first jarring shock, the International Centre, like a child's Greek temple accidentally dropped here. Another modern failure lies beyond, the assertive Conference Centre with glass-faced Moat House at its back, at home perhaps in some city, but out of keeping in Harrogate...



"A feature of Harrogate is the way the church towers and spires, poking up above tree-lined thoroughfares, seem to be focusing different areas of the town. Many are more important as elements of townscape than as individual buildings. But St Wilfred's, Duchy Road, is in a class by itself, one of the great twentieth-century churches of England, the masterpiece of Temple Moore, completed by his son-in-law, Leslie Moore (1935). Its honey-coloured stone



contrasts with the millstone grit of neighbouring villas. The view from the south is equally impressive with cloister-like arcade and eastern towers. Within all is light and space. Leslie Moore's Lady Chapel is a beautiful room at the east end."



And here was Ian Nairn in 'The Observer', 17.03.68: "After the war Harrogate Council realised that the old days of wealthy spa-goers had gone forever... It has become a regional shopping centre of the enviable kind where people come from many miles away and pay a little more for the sake of the atmosphere and extra gloss of sophistication. Pre-war wealth has been transmuted smoothly into post-war affluence: by comparison with Buxton, which doesn't know what to do next, or the shabby Regency terraces of Leamington, Harrogate is a very lucky place... The charm of Harrogate is the way in which open spaces wind right through the town, surrounded by winding roads which are lined with quiet Victorian stone buildings. It is a splendidly flexible framework; but what it cannot take is the standardised modern box. And that is what it has got: one crude slab set above the station, another facing the biggest open space, the Stray. Its problem is to stop the anti-spa pendulum swinging too far the other way; for it could so easily become a kind of Croydon with a nattier line in open spaces..."

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## ROUNDAABOUT

Dr Peter Brown, Chair of Merseyside Civic Society, made a forceful point early this year in a letter to the 'Liverpool Daily Post': "The abandonment of [1960s 'inner urban' motorway] plans, which would have blighted a significant part of the Georgian quarter and the setting of the Anglican cathedral, can be attributed to an outbreak of common sense, based on a greater appreciation of the value of the area's built environment. Today we are clearly grateful to those who fought against, and averted, the consequent fragmentation of that area.

"It is deeply unfortunate that, in the case of Edge Lane, today's decision-makers have been unable to show the same enlightened leadership as their forebears in demonstrating an ability to listen to reason by halting the wanton destruction of a heritage Victorian townscape to make way for a misguided and expensive scheme, the prospect of which has blighted the eastern approach to the city centre for far too long."

SAVE Britain's Heritage has likewise continued to express concern, latterly focusing on the Welsh Streets in the misguided hope that a Sustainability Report would do other than assemble evidence in favour of demolition. In 'The Guardian' (22.04.10), reviewing the

Labour years, Jonathan Glancey - while acknowledging the highlights of Eden Project, Tyneside redevelopment, Scottish Parliament, Birmingham Selfridges, St Pancras revamp, Kielder Observatory - lamented the overall picture: "None of the major political parties has a handle on architecture or planning. Quite simply, there are too many interest groups involved. On the one hand, there are private developers and party-funding big business; on the other, a tangled web of quangos, rival government departments, snake-oil design consultants and local councils. If I were to cast my vote solely on the basis of architectural and planning manifestos, no party would win it. The shocking state of our woeful and cynical new housing would alone stay my hand, while the wilful privatisation of our public realm would keep both hands firmly in my pockets.

"New Labour bounded into office in 1997, committed to doing something about architecture and cities. Many a bold word was written in favour of 'urban regeneration', notably Towards an Urban Renaissance, an optimistic government report championed by the architect Richard Rogers. I watched, however, in bemusement, then incredulity, as New Labour's Cool Britannia vision transformed too many historic city centres into gormless 'regen' retail theme parks, as ill-suited to Birmingham or Liverpool as to Beijing and Mumbai."

Glancey is no fan of 'Liverpool One' ("a shopping mall that could be anywhere") but a more balanced view comes from Quentin Hughes's pupil Stephen Bayley. He writes in the recently published "Liverpool: Shaping the City" (RIBA Publishing, £19.95): "Liverpool One has a reasonable claim to be the most successful UK development of its size and type and in 2009 it became the first masterplan to be nominated for the Stirling Prize. One important contribution was a variegated squad of architects working to complement rather than obliterate the historic grain and culture. Contributing architects include Dixon Jones, Page and Park, Glenn Howells, CZWG, John McAslan, Wilkinson Eyre, Cesar Pelli, Michael Squire and Allies & Morrison.

"Many different architectural languages - or, at least, quotations - have been built into it. John McAslan's store for John Lewis, for example, very clearly reflects the landmark Peter Jones building in Chelsea, whose original design (to which Charles Reilly contributed) McAslan had meticulously restored. Seen at night, South John Street is not a bleak Alphaville of Starbucks and Gap, but an animated street enlivened by good lighting, canopies, walkways and passarelles. If not yet quite so romantic as Atkinson Grimshaw's moody 1887 painting 'Liverpool Quay by Moonlight', as modern cityscape South John Street achieves a level of visual variety and human scale unusual in comparable developments."

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A good review from M.R.D. Foot in 'The Spectator' (30.01.10) for William Gladstone's "Gladstone: A Bicentenary Portrait" (Michael Russell, £18.50): "This delightful book is by the statesman's great-grandson, who now holds the family baronetcy and is a Knight of the Garter. He is steeped in the family's history and its voluminous records, and like his ancestor can even make budget speeches interesting, bringing back to a forgetful public what fun it used to be to be in the same room as Mr Gladstone, to hear him talk about almost any subject on earth that happened to interest him.

"Sir William's comments on his ancestor's role in creating the world free trade system remain highly relevant to today's economic troubles. Gladstone presided also over the transition from an aristocratic to a democratic society in this island, no mean feat: he was never a mean man. Many illustrations help to illuminate an admirable opening handbook to British 19th-century history."

This confirms our expectations in the light of our recent visit to Hawarden Castle. And from 10 May to 4 June the Victorian Society returned to the village in the shape of the Gavin Stamp-curated 'Saving a Century' exhibition, which was located in the Flintshire Record Office, Rectory Lane, close to the church and St Deiniol's residential library. Meanwhile Brenda Murray has been campaigning with some success for a Gladstone Memorial sculpture in

Seaforth, whose name derives from the house (demolished c.1880) built for John Gladstone, the great man's father.

Many members will recall Mary Bennett who was Keeper of British Art at the Walker. In the 1960s she originated three fine exhibitions on Ford Madox Brown, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt. Now she is earning advance praise for a fully illustrated catalogue which provides the first complete coverage of all Madox Brown's work. The first of two volumes, "a tour de force of scholarship", is published in June (at £85).

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"A masterful piece of scholarship" is Charles Jencks's verdict on Stephen Games's "Pevsner - The Early Life: Germany and Art" (Continuum, £20). This is the first stage of Games's proposed biography and undoubtedly the most revelatory. As the author himself remarks, "what concerns me is that while everyone has been concentrating on the extent of Pevsner's Englishness, no one has ever given serious attention to the reality of his Germanness". Games is well versed in the (inflated) controversies around the great Sir Nikolaus whether from the Betjemanites (he himself has 'collected' Betjeman in "Trains and Buttered Toast", "Tennis Whites and Teacakes", etc.) or the David "Architecture and Morality" Watkin followers. And Games was thrown into the bear pit several years ago when, announcing his initial 'German' discoveries, he was the victim of sensational sub-editing, having given the out-of-context impression that he thought Pevsner was "a Nazi in England". The introduction and appendix to the new book deal entertainingly with these ideological arguments and misunderstandings, but the meat of the work are the seventeen short chapters on Pevsner's Leipzig birth and upbringing, leading to his curating and lecturing in Dresden and Göttingen. It is a compelling read partly on account of some disturbing quotes (a long distance from the social democrat known to us in England), but judgment is inappropriate given the pressures and obscenities of 30s Germany. Certainly, Pevsner's arrival here aged 31 in 1933 was our great gain. In 1940 he was interned nearby in the Huyton internment camp. Two years later his mother committed suicide in Leipzig to avoid being sent to a concentration camp.

Newsletter edited by Graham Fisher

### **THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY**

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