

The Victorian Society: Liverpool Group Newsletter

JANUARY 2017

The Society for the study and protection of Victorian and Edwardian architecture and allied arts. HQ 1 Priory Gardens, Bedford Park, London W4 1TT tel 0208 994 1019 website: www.victorian society.org.uk

Chairman's Review

The final talk of the autumn programme, 'The Victorian Way of Death', given by Dr Amanda Draper was very good: she had a light touch, some excellent ideas and images, and gave an engaging guide to what might have been a difficult subject. What nobody could have foreseen was its prophetic nature. Before she began, **BRENDA MURRAY** came up to me to say that no better subject could have been found: "this is just the one for me" were her words. Nevertheless, as it ended, she was there to ask the speaker about the chances of her 'Waterloo collection', or part of it at least, finding a home in the Atkinson in Southport, and a few days later was on the phone about her newly classified collection of Victorian Society literature and its future, looking ahead in practical terms to a constructive future.

So what a shock to us all to learn of her stroke at the Athenaeum and her death a few days later on 28th November. Brenda was such a presence in Waterloo, where Christ Church and its 'salvation' was driven by her and Seaforth, with the Gladstone memorial.

She was in so many associations and societies, especially her great love, the Liverpool History Society; at the Athenaeum, in some ways there as a pioneer; and, of course, in the Victorian Society, as a long-term member and a great source of enthusiasm, energy and ideas. 'Age shall not weary them', how true the words are of Brenda Murray, B.E.M. She was proud of her honour, her places, her family, and her work, and, though we are very sad to lose her, we are proud and glad to have known her, and all the 'Liverpool Victorians' are united in our sympathies to Nicholas, Julia and Philip on their, and our, great loss.



It was, therefore, very appropriate that the final summer walk was in Waterloo on 1st October, with Roger Hull leading and Brenda Murray directing events from her 'command position' in the Royal Hotel. This was a follow up to her excellent talk last year, as so often fluent and clear and without notes. The weather on that Saturday was not ideal and heavy rain threatened, yet in time the clouds cleared and the group enjoyed seeing the development of post-Regency housing in the 'new' suburb as well as a return to the 'old' Christ Church, the Paley and Austin masterpiece which Brenda did so much to save and to help give this outstanding building a new life. It is to be hoped that in due course there will be a permanent memorial of some kind to her in Waterloo's most distinguished building.

The weather was much kinder at the other end of the season. On the 20th July the sun shone on our visit to Gateacre, as did the gods (or chance). We enjoyed a memorable lunch at St Stephen's, an interesting view of the church and its history, a thorough exploration of Gateacre Village and its 19th century development and finally as a bonus, Annette Butler charmed one of the residents of Gateacre Grange into opening its gates for us, so we had a rare opportunity to see the hall proper and the grounds before finishing 'up the hill' at Bishop's Lodge, for tea and the splendid gardens. Many thanks to Margaret Read for a great deal of help in the organisation of the day, to the ladies of St Stephen's and to Beryl Plant, the historian of Gateacre, who gave us her enthusiasm, knowledge and time unstintingly, which made the day such a success.

Our September excursion, by coach to Hoar Cross and Burton-on-Trent, was also blessed with wonderful weather and we enjoyed both the Staffordshire countryside and two remarkable Bodley churches, his masterpiece at Holy Angels, Hoar Cross and the very late (completed after his death) 'modern' sparseness of St Chad's in Burton. One is hidden in the depths of the Needlewood Forest ("the most remote church we've ever visited", some one said) and which does take some finding; the other is in the heart of Burton's brewery suburbs and still stands, cathedral-like, high above the houses which surround it; not many churches of the time still have their original 'streetscape' and it was fascinating to compare the impact of them both in their setting. Many thanks to Derrick Cross and his team of ladies for their warm welcome at Hoar Cross, and to the Rev. George Robson for facilitating our visit to St Chad's and for all his help in organising it.

The Bass family paid for St Chad's. The rest of our day was spent in the National Brewery Centre, once the Bass Museum, and it made for a fascinating and comprehensive afternoon, enlivened by our guide, Steve, who had spent his boyhood in Speke and was keen to ensure that his fellow

Liverpudlians had a good time. Perhaps it is just as well that nobody seemed to succeed in using up all their tasting tokens, because there was a lot to see and a lot of ground to cover in a relatively short space of time. Everybody will have their own particular memories but for me the outstanding one is the superb model of Burton in its heyday at the beginning of the 20th century with brewery buildings everywhere, intersected by a maze of railway lines, almost, it seemed, along every street and carrying a tremendous sense of energy and industry. We really shall not look upon its like again. (This reminds me: let's hope we SHALL see the splendid model of Birkenhead Woodside, last observed in what was the Museum of Wirral in Birkenhead Town Hall. This is certainly a Victorian 'cause'.)

Only one problem with the day: our numbers were not great, so that the excursion was not cost effective. Perhaps timing was a problem? Perhaps the idea of Burton-on-Trent was not a strong enough image. This does raise again the question of how best to organise a visit beyond the effective limits of train or public transport, for instance, a look at Butterfield in Rugby, and his 'rivals' in last year's Northampton visit seemed to go well, but it was very specific. Perhaps people will exchange ideas on this, or does anyone know somebody who has an economical coach firm?! It is the best way to reach awkward places, but costs have become very high in recent years.

No travel difficulties in November when we made our way to Tuebrook and Newsham Park to see Bodley's important church of St John, Tuebrook, and to look at Lister Drive Library and the Liverpool Seaman's Orphanage building. Once again we had lovely weather (for the season) and fine light for the church and for the remarkable 'parksapes', especially of the Waterhouse building. The really intrepid could even stand in the middle of Green Lane and look down the road towards Old Swan, thus seeing both Bodley's tower at St John's and Pugin's at St Oswald's, that rare survivor in the same view. Sadly, nobody managed to take the photograph, but it may be one for James Hughes next visit to Liverpool.



The welcome from Fr. Simon Fisher at St John's was as warm as those in Staffordshire. He even made the tea and coffee himself! But more than that, opened up everything for us to see, including rare vestments in the vestry and was on hand for any enquiries. St John's is a 'transformational' church in Bodley's career, marking his change of style towards English exemplars and the contrast with the other two was illuminating.

Like St Chad's it is fortunate in being surrounded by a low-level streetscape, so that the church retains its significance as a 'marker' for the area; furthermore, the restoration directed by Stephen Dykes Bower in the early 1970's returned the original perfection of Bodley's and Kempe's painted decoration and furniture. The Civic Trust gave St John's an Award of Exceptional Merit in the Architectural Heritage Year of 1975. That standard has been maintained and it is easy to understand why Eastlake wrote in 1868 of Kempe's mural of the Tree of Life above the chancel arch, that the 'true grace of medieval art has at last been reached.'

Another hidden gem is in a little visited part of Liverpool. That may change in the next few years as the Lister Steps Charity, which has been awarded £3.96 million by the Heritage Lottery fund (and half a million by Liverpool City Council) is to redevelop the former Lister Drive Carnegie Library, an outstanding Edwardian building (Shelmerdine 1903-05) and the first to be directly funded by Andrew Carnegie himself. It has been closed since 2006 but nevertheless, the exterior is intact (although a recent road incident has damaged the gates) and much of the fine interior remains, so that the building can certainly be regarded as of historic and stylistic significance, as well as having an important place in the significant streetscape and a crucial one in the regeneration of an area. From the Victorian Society's viewpoint, this represents a real triumph, especially in view of the loss of the Futurist Cinema in Lime Street and Salter's Building in Pembroke Place and the threats to the visual integrity of Liverpool's historic streetscape. Gaynor McKnight and her team at Lister Steps deserve all the support we can offer, and they certainly deserve our thanks for another warm welcome, refreshments and an excellent and enlightening presentation of both the history and he hopes for Lister Drive.





Just a few steps away there is a different and successful regeneration: the Lister Drive Baths of 1901-04 (W.R. Court, the Corporation's Bath Engineer, with assistance from Shelmerdine). This is in an English Renaissance style and makes an attractive foil to the library and is very successful as a pet and fish emporium, with 'fish and leaf' tiles by C F A Voysey and much colourful glazed brick and tile work and a most unusual home for thousands of fish and birds, and customers. One again, an Edwardian building proves remarkably adaptable and maintains the battered grandeur of Lister Drive's grand sweep up to Newsham Park, laid out by Edward Kemp in 1864, but much in need of the kind of attention given in the recent past to Stanley Park and the Sefton Park Palm House.

It has been reported that, in the words of a local civic dignitary, people 'don't come to Liverpool to look at old buildings.' That's an arguable proposition. They certainly come to Newsham Park to experience one: the Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution (Alfred Waterhouse, 1871-1875). It has lost its chapel and has been officially empty since 2005 but it has had a great success as a venue for ghost nights, 'shiver experiences' and even pop concerts: the weekend before our visit to the area, a couple of thousand young people had been here for a 'rave' in the courtyard. Large and handsome in 'Waterhouse's economical Gothic' (Pollard, 2006), much survives, and as we would hope to see the interiors on some future visit, and rave in a different sense or two!





There is a very good accessible account of its history in John Hussey's 'Liverpool: Forgotten Landscapes, Forgotten Lives' (Creative Dreams Publishing UK, 2016 isbn 97809935524 0 3),, in particular the chapter 'The Orphan's Tale', based on a memoir written by Frank Watmough, born 1895, writing in 1995, with, in Hussey's words, "very little of Dotheboy's Hall or Salem House here." Recommended, for that and much more.

Our final event of 2016 was an afternoon visit to the Elizabeth Hoare gallery at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral on Thursday 8th December. The collection of 19th and 20th century ecclesiastical embroidery is unique in Britain and needs to be better known and supported; we were fortunate in having Vicky Williams, the volunteer curator and herself a skilful gold-leaf embroiderer, both to guide us and reveal hidden treasures of alter frontals and original Bodley watercolours: a privilege indeed and amplified by the contribution of Beryl Patten of the Manchester Victorian Society, an expert on the subject and who had met Elizabeth Hoare, the niece of Giles Gilbert Scott, and so could transmit something of her ideas and objectives. The visit was revelatory and made all the more pleasant by the seasonal music rising from the choir as the Belvedere Academy's vocalists and instrumentalists prepared for the evening concert, while the Victorians 'coped' with tea and cake.

It was an appropriate end to our Bodley season, which had begun with an outstanding talk by his biographer, Michael Hall, focussed primarily on the buildings we were visiting and touching on Bodley's role at Liverpool Cathedral. Michael's insights and help added a great deal to our knowledge and appreciation of the man and his legacy, and we are most grateful. Our other autumn speaker, Malcolm Shifrin, was also excellent and brought some copies of his definitive book on Victorian and Edwardian Turkish Baths, a bit easier to handle than Michael's monumental tome about Bodley! He gave us a fascinating review of a phenomenon most knew little about, including the surprisingly large number of establishments in Liverpool and Merseyside, of which almost none survive. Thanks to Malcolm, and also to Mark Watson who came over from Manchester to provide technical support... and meet the gremlins of the small meeting room.

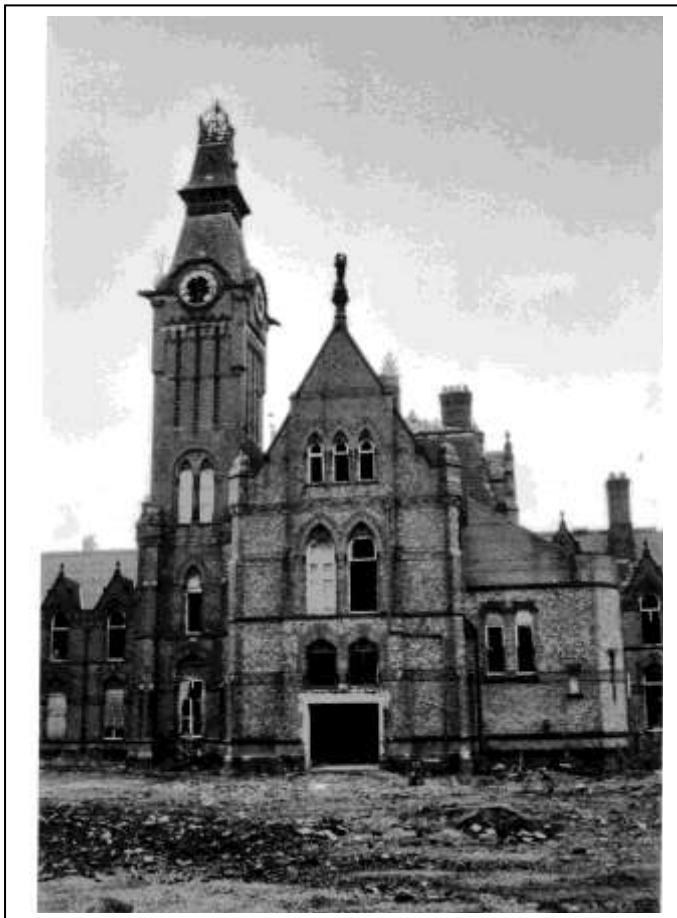
Maybe they'll disappear in 2017? Our winter-spring programme includes talks from Joseph Sharples on writing a Pevsner guide; Hilary Grainger on Victorian Crematoria, with special reference to our region and Dr Gareth Carr of Glyndwr University, Wrexham on Richard Owens, the architect of 'Welsh Liverpool.' We hope to support them with visits to Huddersfield by train, led by Joseph, who has prepared the account of the new West Riding II Pevsner, and a walk in Toxteth and Princes Park with Dr Carr, to look at the Welsh streets and the park, ending with tea in Sunnyside. There will be another 'Annette Butler Special Excursion' by coach, this time to 'the Surprises of Stockport', and Dr John Driscoll will lead an Ellesmere Port walk extending both our boundaries and our perspectives. Full details of all these and also of a prospective visit to the Synagogue and its neighbours on Princes Avenue are on the activities sheet and at the AGM, our next event, which will be in Chester at 2.00 pm on Saturday 21st January, at the usual venue, by invitation of the Chester Civic Trust, the Bishop Lloyd's Palace, where Peter Boughton (of the Grosvenor Museum) will be our speaker. Those coming from Liverpool will need to make an early start as the renewal work on the Liverpool Loop Line means that there will be no trains from Liverpool. There are replacement buses to Birkenhead Central but it will be a longer journey as will be the case if you use the direct service, the fast X8 from Sir Thomas Street.

Until then, best wishes and compliments of the season to all. To end with an image: much of Lime Street may have gone but 'Son of Concourse House' may be back. There is still much for the Victorian Society to do in and round Liverpool, so keep up the good work and let's see how many NEW members we can find in 2017!

Tony Murphy, December 2016.



A piece from Andrew Richardson on Barnes Hospital, Cheadle



Once a month I drive to Stockport to enjoy lunchtime concerts on the huge Wurlitzer organ in The Edwardian Town Hall (I took our group there some years ago).

On my regular journeys home I began to notice a gothic tower, surrounded by trees, looming down eerily from a higher level above the angle of motorways which I was carefully negotiating.

With extreme difficulty, on another trip, I managed to find this place, a former convalescent hospital, by then abandoned and semi-ruinous. As with the urban explorers, I took a load of photos, expecting the place to be burnt out in the near future.

Imagine my joy, about nine years later, to see the clock tower now clad in scaffolding but I was, by then, dedicated to my homeward lane on the motorway and couldn't divert from my route to investigate.

Subsequently, using the new all-colour A-Z, I prepared a map which would take me, after the next organ concert, past the Stockport pyramid via Cheadle and eventually onto the ferociously busy Kingsway from which led off the narrow entrance to the hospital site which was now marketed as Barnes Village.

The Albanian gentleman let me in but I could only view the complex from the Sales Suite area (Health and safety rules). Nevertheless it was thrilling to see the old hospital, designed in 1871-5 by Blackwell and Lawrence and Booth, with its new slate rooves gleaming in the sunlight – even the clock in the tower now running again!

Although Pevsner considered the place “large, gothic and grim”, it's now looking fine surrounded by blocks of high-quality modern apartments, a sight that was a joy to behold as so many old buildings have been thoughtlessly swept away over the years.

c. Andrew F Richardson 2016.

Annette Butler writes as Secretary of the Liverpool Group:

New ideas, developments and a 'Wall of Names' all in Liverpool 8

In late November I was emailed by two organisations based in Liverpool 8 (Toxteth – Princes Park) about two separate novel ideas: one relatively easy to achieve and the other more complicated and immensely expensive if realised.

The 'Wall of Names' has received official blessing, funding and volunteers are in place: students of brick-laying from Hugh Baird College, Bootle, will get practical experience in constructing the wall – with the hope that it will be completed around April 2017. It is to occupy a space in Cairns Street (between Granby Street and Kingsley Road, L8). There is space for up to 600 names of remarkable people associated with Liverpool from 19th century to the present day. It will highlight women (historically often marginalised). Names already agreed include Eleanor Rathbone, M.P., councillor for Granby Ward (L8) who entering national politics as an MP, notably secured Family Allowances paid direct to women. She inspired Margaret Simey whose name also will appear. Less widely known persons such as living/ recently deceased community workers will be honoured too. Men who have made a difference in their community/ Liverpool city will, of course, also be rightly celebrated.

