



CONSERVATION AREAS WIRRAL

Promoting & Protecting in Partnership

W: www.cawirral.org.uk | E: enquiries@cawirral.org.uk

ANNUAL REPORT



2019/2020





CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Section 1 | Introduction Local Plan issues Green belt appeals |
| Section 2 | Heritage Strategy |
| Section 3 | Conservation Area updates |
| Section 4 | Communications |
| Section 5 | Planning applications/ Heritage Statements |
| Section 6 | Major Initiatives Conclusion Financial Statement |

SECTION 1

Introduction

Local Plan issues

Greenbelt appeals



Bebington

ANNUAL REPORT

2019/2020



CONSERVATION
AREAS WIRRAL

Promoting & Protecting in Partnership

W: www.cawirral.org.uk | E: enquiries@cawirral.org.uk

Introduction

This is a progress report on the achievements of Conservation Areas Wirral (CAW) in 2019/20. The progress has been in relation to the agreed aims of CAW as set out below:

****To work in partnership with Wirral Council to improve the quality and coherence of all our designated conservation areas.***

****To encourage local societies, community groups and other stakeholders to play a more proactive role in caring for Wirral's conservation areas and to strengthen their ability to influence and to support policy recommendations.***

****To foster the pooling of skills, knowledge, experience and good practice between conservation societies and other voluntary groups throughout Wirral.***

****To encourage effective networking through the production and distribution of a regular newsletter, social media, and occasional workshops and conferences.***

The year until March 2020 was proceeding on its usual path. CAW was heavily involved with responding to Wirral's Draft Local Plan and dealing with a wide range of issues associated with the area's 26 Conservation Areas. Of particular concern was the slow progress made in updating the Council's Heritage Strategy and the loss of the Heritage Officer in 2020.

Then in the last week of the 2019/20 year the advent of Covid 19 resulted in a lockdown of the Council and much of CAW's normal activity. The inability to maintain face to face contact has meant, amongst many other problems, the cancellation of our Annual Meeting /AGM and the proceedings of the committee have been heavily curtailed until very recently when we piloted a virtual officers meeting using the Zoom facility. In addition, we have managed to maintain some contact with senior Council officers on the Local Plan and a range of conservation/heritage issues and initiatives.

CAW will now try to schedule its Annual Meeting/AGM early next year subject to whatever restrictions might still be in place re Covid 19. In the meantime, this report will be circulated to all the local conservation societies and contacts. We will be happy to receive comments and suggestions for discussion at the eventual 2019/20 Spring Forum which will include our Annual Meeting/AGM next year.

Section 1: Local plan submissions

AS noted, CAW has been heavily involved in responding to the ongoing Local Plan reports issued by the Council. We have responded on two aspects of the Local Plan:

Conservation Areas & Green Belt

We expressed the view that the Local Plan should contain policy statements on each of the 26 Conservation Areas in the Wirral. The Council had prepared a policy statement including all the areas alongside overarching policies covering design, trees and landscaping, ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, archaeological remains and transport.

Our conclusion on the policy statements relating to Conservation Areas was that the Council needed:

A. to initiate a review of the whole canvas of Conservation Areas taking advantage of an external commissioning process with a consultancy well versed in the history and character of the area's conservation challenge;



B. to take full account of the 19-character appraisals and 15 management plans produced by the Insall's consultancy and the 7 appraisals done in house or by other accredited bodies;

C. to make significant progress in commissioning and approving management plans for the 7 Conservation Areas which had no such coverage, especially Hamilton Square. The other 6 areas are Clifton Park, Lower Bebington, The Magazines, Kings Gap, Meols Drive and Mountwood.

We also expressed our concern at the large number of properties in Conservation Areas assessed as making a "positive contribution to the character of the area" which had very little protection under the current planning legislation. These properties with their original windows, doors, roofs and other features were potentially at risk from inappropriate changes which were classified as "permitted development". We asked the Council to consider measures to prevent this, including making Article 4 directions in the areas with large numbers of these properties.

On the Green Belt emerging proposals CAW was particularly concerned about the possible impact on two of the area's Conservation Areas – Saughall Massie and Eastham.

Saughall Massie

The draft Local Plan invited consultation on various plots of land which were potentially designated for release from the Green Belt. If they were to be released three of these were adjacent to the Saughall Massie Village Conservation Area and would directly impact upon some of the key characteristics identified in the village's Appraisal document – namely an ancient village surrounded by farmland, with open views of agricultural land and narrow lanes leading into the village.

The local CA Society has appealed strongly against any such green belt release, additionally drawing upon a recent planning appeal for the Nurseries which was turned down by the Inspectorate on just those points. One of the fields is also designated as a serious flood risk zone by the Environment Agency which is another factor plus the continuing use of the land and buildings by the local farming family for livestock grazing and arable as well as agricultural plant hire.



Eastham



The 'emerging Local Plan' has been so buffeted by changes in Government policy and the difficulties experienced by the Council in finding sufficient brown field sites to accommodate the perceived number of new houses required that the plight of the most vulnerable area, like Eastham, has been overlooked.

We remain very conscious that Eastham is an oasis of Green Belt surrounded by land-hungry industry, when even the so-called protection offered by the green belt and its Conservation Area status failed to protect it from the erection of 21 new houses and a grotesque new sports pavilion to protect the financial failings of the local rugby club.

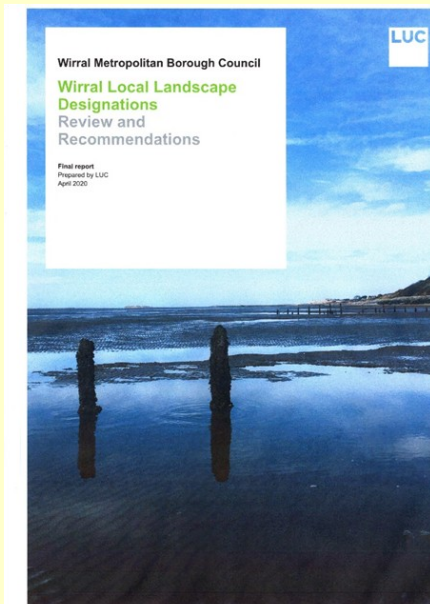
Caldy's Green Belt objections

The Caldy Society urged their Members to contact the WBC about the proposal to include Green Belt land in the Local Plan for house building. They were particularly concerned about Green Belt Land, in the Conservation Area, which appeared to be included in the plans for development. The land was so important, on many fronts, to the preservation of the Conservation Area that the Caldy Society raised sufficient money from their Members and through crowdfunding, to employ a team of professional planners to write a detailed and comprehensive report opposing this development, which they duly submitted to the WBC.

They also particularly supported the hard work and dedication of Wirral Green Space Alliance (WGSA), CAW and other groups on the Wirral in opposing proposals to build on Green Belt Land.

ITPAS and Green Space Alliance

Members of CAW attended the Wirral Green Space Alliance meetings prior to Covid restrictions and would like to put on record how much we value the incredible amount of work put in by the Alliance members and particularly, John Heath. They have been tireless in their efforts to challenge the Council's Local Plan housing predictions in their endeavours to hold them to account as the housing numbers quoted are way above what is needed for Wirral's demographic. Under the Government's new Planning rules, the new housing numbers are, sadly, likely to stay high and the team have now submitted further detailed responses to the Government's White Paper on revising the national Planning System.



Green and blue infrastructure study*

The Council have commissioned a Green and Blue Infrastructure Study which aims to map, protect and enhance Green and Blue infrastructure in the borough. This will be completed in time to inform the draft Final Local Plan.

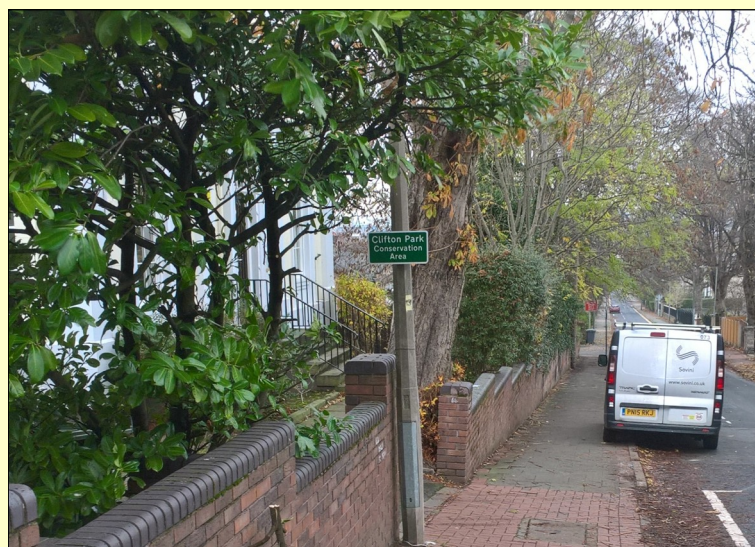
In the context of an urbanised environment like the Wirral this is to be understood to cover all natural and semi-natural landscape elements that (could) form a green-blue network. It refers to landscape elements on various spatial scale levels: from individual rows of trees to complete valley systems.

Examples of green landscape elements are hedgerows, copses, bushes, orchards, woodlands, natural grasslands and ecological parks. Blue landscape elements are linked to water. They can be pools, ponds and pond systems, wadis, artificial buffer basins or water courses. Together they form the green-blue infrastructure.

We submitted comments on this study. Our view was that the study needed to take greater account of the conservation and heritage aspects of this infrastructure. This reflected our concern that Conservation Areas and heritage assets were not being highlighted as crucial elements of the study.

*(*Blue infrastructure refers to water elements, like rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, floodplains, water treatment facilities, etc. Green infrastructure refers to trees, lawns, hedgerows, parks, fields, forests, etc. These terms come from urban planning and land-use planning.)*

Conservation Area Signage



**CLIFTON PARK
CONSERVATION AREA**

CAW has been lobbying hard for specific Conservation Area signage to be installed at the access points to all our Conservation Areas so that developers, tree surgeons et al cannot claim to be unaware of the protected status of the area and the various restrictions that carries with regards to works on the green infrastructure.

We were delighted to get our first signs up in Clifton Park, a real 'At Risk' CA, at the end of 2018 and since then more signage has gone up in other Conservation Areas including Saughall Massie, Heswall and Caldy.

We hope that, once all the Covid restrictions have been lifted, other CA's will feel able to apply to the Council for signage too. The signs are very good value, utilising the local lamp standards as a support thus avoiding the cost of having to install additional frameworks for them.

SECTIONS 2 & 3

Heritage Strategy

Conservation Area updates



Our view is that Wirral has a particularly significant weakness in its ability to access external funding from sources such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and other grant awarding bodies. This has come particularly to the fore by the inability to develop an HLF bid for the Conservation Area and Heritage Trail (see below).

Section 3: Conservation Areas

Birkenhead Park

The Friends of Birkenhead Park (FOBP) have worked with the Council WHS/HLF Project Manager and Project Officer in preparing the draft of a submission to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport for inclusion in the British tentative list of World Heritage Sites. Owing to the coronavirus pandemic the expected request for applications by DCMS in the summer of 2020 has been significantly delayed and is hoped for in 2021. A grant application for a further phase of Heritage Lottery Funding has been declined to be assessed owing to the pandemic. Funds have been diverted to the Heritage Emergency Fund which is not open to Local Authorities.



A draft of a revised management plan for the Conservation Area in accordance with the latest Historic England guidance has been prepared. This is to be submitted to the Council in due course for consideration, amendment and adoption.

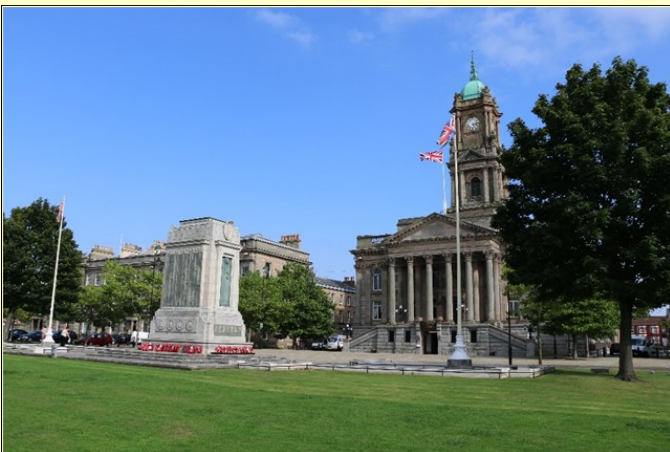
A Planning Application for the conversion of the British Legion headquarters in Park Road East to flats has been commented on and a substantial part has been taken on board by the Council in its approval.

The original building at the front of the of 54/56 Park Road South site has been repaired and converted to flats. The controversial part to the rear comprising 21 apartments for which approval was given in 2017 is subject to a new application to extend ground floor apartments under oversailing gables, provide second floor terraces and to increase parking from 32 to 39 places. The FOBP are opposed to these amendments considering that it is a further erosion to the character and appearance of the Park and Conservation Area; these proposed 3 storey apartments are extremely close to the Park Drive boundary.



A meeting of the Council's Birkenhead Park Management Advisory Committee on the 9th September discussed the way forward in safely opening up the Visitor Centre and in responding to a petition to keep the Park car free for the future. These are difficult issues requiring balanced judgement and further exploration, including assessment of the needs of access for the disabled and the provision of temporary external toilets to meet coronavirus safety concerns.

Hamilton Square Conservation Area



CAW has been concerned for some time about the future of the Hamilton Square Conservation Area. We were reassured when the Council announced its intention in 2019 to deal with various breaches of planning guidelines, including the proliferation of TV satellite dishes on the front facade of Grade 1 listed buildings. However, the initiative appears to have run out of steam and been overtaken by the Covid 19 lockdown.

In many ways Hamilton Square is emblematic of the Council's intent to protect and enhance the character of Wirral's conservation areas. What has become evident over the last five years is the startling contrast in the way the area has been neglected compared with the substantial progress achieved in respect of Birkenhead Park and Port Sunlight. This 'jewel in the crown' is looking decidedly unloved.

CAW has been informed that the area will be an integral part of the Birkenhead Regeneration Strategy which will be a central part of the Local Plan. Our concern is that the area needs some immediate action to prevent further breaches of planning control.

Port Sunlight Conservation Area

Conservation Management Plan (CMP)

In 2018/19 Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT)'s new 10 year CMP was adopted by Wirral Council. The CMP provides structure and a timeframe to deliver work that ensures the long-term sustainability and enhancement of heritage in the village.

In 2019/20, year 2 of the CMP, work focused on the commissioning of design guidelines for new works and the completion of condition assessments for Sea Piece and the Leverhulme Memorial, which are both Grade II listed. In both cases, the conclusion of the commissions was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Environmental sustainability strategy

In 2019/20 PSVT was awarded grants to commission an [environmental sustainability strategy](#) for the organisation, and an asset & property income generation strategy (APIGS) for the village. Creative Heritage Consultants were commissioned to deliver the APIGS and good progress was made in terms of stakeholder consultation, asset mapping and benchmarking. The project has been subject to some delays but will conclude in 2020/21.

Tree Strategy



As part of the development of a [Tree Strategy](#), a comprehensive arboricultural survey was commissioned and completed in January 2020. This assessed the condition of all trees owned and managed by PSVT, mapping them using GPS software for the first time and producing a prioritised plan of works which is now underway.

Phase 1 of a regenerate planting plan was completed, significantly improving the landscaped areas around the Duke of York cottages. A plan for how similar works will be applied to all other areas of Port Sunlight over a period of 10 years is now in progress.

Members of the PSVT staff team attended RHS Tatton in July 2019, where PSVT exhibited a back-to-back garden entitled 'The Art and Nature of a Port Sunlight Garden', designed by Landscape Supervisor Liam English and constructed by the Landscape Team. The garden was awarded a Silver - Gilt medal and the "Best in Show" accolade.

NLHF Resilient Heritage grant

As part of a National Lottery Heritage Fund Resilient Heritage grant-funded project, PSVT appointed its first dedicated fundraising officer to implement a new fundraising strategy. The aim is to make the organisation more fundraising fit, by adopting a new ethical fundraising policy, putting basic procedures in place in terms of donor management and communication, enabling on-line donations through PSVT's corporate website, and introducing new fundraising campaigns.

A dedicated Volunteer Manager also joined the PSVT workforce in 2019/20, funded by a National Lottery Heritage Fund Resilient Heritage Grant. Based at the community hub, the volunteer manager has been appointed to implement PSVT's new volunteer strategy, as part of a drive to increase the capacity of the organisation and strengthen PSVT's relationship with the local community.



AIM Biffa funding

PSVT was awarded a History Makers grant from the Association of Independent Museums and Biffa Award to develop a brand new visitor offer in Port Sunlight for a project called Soap & Water.

Mountwood

CAW was particularly pleased to hear that Kay Crook and the team from Mountwood, who had carried out a hard fought and vigorous campaign to prevent development on the adjacent Prenton Golf Course, have been successful. The proposal violated the adjacent Green Belt and would have led to the construction of a large and imposing driving range facility on the boundary of the Conservation Area.

The proposal was rejected by the Council who said:-

“The proposal would constitute inappropriate development by virtue of failure to preserve the openness of the Green Belt, which is not outweighed by a robust case for very special circumstances”.



In addition, the Mountwood Society have been in discussion with United Utilities spanning a two-year period over their proposal to remove a sizeable part of the area's ancient woodland. This related to a small area of land within the Water Tower site (which is a candidate for statutory listing). The tree surgeons commissioned by United Utilities worked way beyond their remit and/or were incorrectly instructed and major destruction ensued. After two years of debate the Society finally received an apology and an offer of compensation.

The Society is also negotiating for a planting scheme on the “War Memorials” garden in Prenton lane. The “Memorials” are now Grade II listed. The project is supported by United Utilities and once complete will be the subject of a celebration for the local community and re-dedication of the site by the Vicar of St Stephen's church.

Caldy



Planning Issues

The Caldypark Society has not had as much involvement as usual in scrutinising Planning Applications, partly because of the Covid pandemic, which has delayed so much. However, Planning-Sub have made written several objections/comments within the last 12 months about 3 schemes within the CA ...Sadly there is a continuing trend towards high fences, massive gates, (e.g. 'Sawrey Knotts'), replacement large garages with rooms above, etc. Replacement fencing around the village is getting higher and higher. Older properties are under threat by developers, and the Society is keeping an eye on several houses considered vulnerable. The trend is to maximise house size regardless of plot size.

Antisocial Behaviour

This summer saw a huge increase in antisocial behaviour (ASB) across Wirral, as a result of the lockdown and the closing of school and places of entertainment. West Kirby Beach, Cubbins Green, Caldypark Beach, Caldypark Hill and the Common were all badly affected by ASB over several weeks. Following significant numbers of complaints from residents and members of the public the Society submitted evidence to WBC who have applied for a Public Spaces Protection Order for several key areas. Caldypark Hill and the Common were not included in this and I wrote to WBC asking about this. In addition, several events on the Common over the summer resulted in fires, drug dealing and general ASB, which were dealt with by the Merseyside police, with whom I have also been in contact. All this seems to have calmed down in recent weeks.

Caldypark Society Tree & Planting Group

A pool of approximately 15 Caldypark residents help improve the green areas around Caldypark that do not belong to homeowners.

Within the last year, the group has: -

- Considered every application for tree works within the Caldby Conservation Area sent to us by WBC, and provided feedback where appropriate
- Planted and deadheaded daffodils, bulbs funded from donations, around the village
- Pruned & maintained a number of mixed hedges comprising saplings donated by the Woodland Trust
- Weeded & maintained a few tiny, unadopted strips of land in the village
- Started working in partnership with Dave Weaver, Local Team Leader, WBC Parks & Countryside Services, to improve the appearance of Caldby roundabout
- Organised an open evening in Caldby church hall comprising an illustrated talk given by Carol Seery, RHS Master of Horticulture, followed by our own Gardeners' Question Time

The Society also supported a new designation to be known as " Central Wirral Sandstone Hills ". which included Caldby Hill and Stapledon Wood in this designation, and suggested an extension to the East to include the bird sanctuary fields, to link Caldby Wood to Thurstaston Common.

Clifton Park

Following our very successful Open Day at the Masonic Hall in 2018 and the project with the Woodlands School, CAW was delighted to see the two lovely interpretation panels installed once the Council's contractors were allowed to start work again and thanks to Shaun Brady (*Wirral's Senior Highway Development Manager*) for organising this.



The panel showing the work done by the children has been installed next to the children's play area in Clifton Park, along The Woodlands and the other, illustrating the history of the Park, was placed at the top of Clifton Road. Both panels have received very positive comments and generated a great deal of interest from residents and visitors walking by.



We were also pleased to see that No 42 Clifton Road has been purchased – by another resident in the park. The house has been in multi occupancy for many years and the two latest tenants were asked to leave and the building put up for auction.

Given the historic nature of the house (Lord Birkenhead lived there for some years when his father bought it) and the gothic design – it is Grade II listed – it has been in very poor condition for some time which was very disappointing. The new owner hopes to restore it to its former glory and we wish them every success with the project. As one of the original houses built in 1840, allegedly for the developer, Captain Sharp himself,

the house has many unique features including stained glass windows and a very unusual twisted chimney.

Meols Drive

A controversial proposal to demolish the substantial single dwelling at Wirral Point at the far end of Stanley Road overlooking the popular view-point of Red Rocks and replace it with an ultra-modern building of 9 luxury apartments was turned down by the Council's planners. However, the developers have appealed, and the result is expected in November. Meanwhile the same developers have submitted a new application for nine flats on the same site which is currently being processed.



The 'Refusal' letter said :-

“The demolition of this dwelling, categorised as a Category B building within the Meols Drive Conservation Area Appraisal, would have a detrimental and irreversible impact upon the character, integrity and setting of the conservation area.”

Oxton Village

The cause celebre of 2019-20 in Oxton Village was the appearance of the Tranmere mural. This appeared unannounced on the wall of a local coffee shop in January 2020 and as the attached photo shows is large, colourful, and

obtrusive. As a result, a very unfortunate row ensued between the opponents and supporters of the mural. Judging by the extensive feedback the Oxton Society received, a lot of village residents were firmly against it and there was a sense of disappointment that it was done without any consultation.

Initially the Council were satisfied that the mural fell within the definition of an advertisement as set out in section 336 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). Letters were sent to the owner of the land and to the Tranmere Rovers Trust (who commissioned the mural) advising that the unauthorised display of an advertisement constitutes an offence (for which they are liable to prosecution in the Magistrates Court) and that they should either permanently remove the unauthorised advertisement or apply for retrospective advertisement consent. Failure to take one of those steps and the Council would consider the instigation of a prosecution.



Following receipt of the Council's letter the owner of the property agreed to alter the image so that it was a replica of the Birkenhead Coat of Arms (rather than a TRFC emblem). As a result the Council came to the view that the Birkenhead Coat of Arms could not reasonably be described as an advertisement and the painting of the building was therefore permitted development under Part 2, Class C of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Therefore, the Council would not be able to require the image to be removed.

The Oxton Society are unhappy that no further action can be taken. They have written to Civic Voice (national society for conservation areas) asking for their support in seeking an amendment to the General Permitted Development Order 2015 to bring such murals within the planning control system thereby requiring planning permission.

Bromborough Pool



Following a leaflet drop to every house in the Bromborough Pool Conservation Area in November 2019 there was an expression of interest for forming an Advisory Committee. A General Meeting was held on the 9th March 2020 which included representatives from Autism Together, who have a big presence in the area, as well as local residents and representatives from Conservation Areas Wirral. Ambitious plans were discussed including a Village Fair to be held hopefully on the cricket club outfield. We were very heartened by the enthusiasm shown by everyone including Autism Together.

Then Covid intervened and no further progress has been made.

The Magazines

An important and attractive feature of the Magazines C.A. is Vale Park, created from two 19th century private estates by the former Wallasey Urban District Council in 1898 and opened as a park in 1899.

Central to the park is the historic Vale House, which until 2011 was run by Wirral as a Community Centre, when its lease was transferred to Community Management. Currently, while the park itself has remained open (though not the public toilets), the Community Centre has been affected. Part of the building was run



as a Café, which until Covid 19 restrictions were applied, was fully open to the public. With the precautions necessary to limit the spread of the virus, the Café has had to alter how it operates with an inevitable loss of trade. The resulting loss of income to the Café and the Centre will impact on the upkeep of the fabric of Vale House with consequences for the conservation area.

West Kirby

A key element of the West Kirby Conservation Area is a pocket of open fields lying to one side of Rectory Road. The land belongs not to the parish but to the Diocese of Chester and has recently been earmarked by a developer as the site on which to build a Care Home.

Not only are the fields of considerable value to the local community as green space but have particular local historical significance lying, as they do, adjacent to St Bridget's church and having acted as the parish glebe since records began.

Local opposition to the scheme has been vocal but to date no planning Application has been lodged and it would seem as if the developer, Liberty, may have put their plans on hold as they have removed Rectory Road from their website where it used to be shown along with other projects to build care homes.



Lower Heswall



There is much concern about a new unapproved development in Wall Rake which is damaging the historical character of this ancient highway in the Heswall Lower Village Conservation Area.

This road is characterized by long red sandstone walls and a cluster of very attractive buildings comprising of a lodge, stable with clock tower and a cottage, remnants of the long lost mansion 'The Roscote'. Adjacent to these was the old single storey Roscote laundry building, used as a dwelling known as Cherry

Cottage, but in a very poor state of repair and mainly hidden behind a sandstone wall.

Planning approval was granted in 2018 to redevelop this building as a two-storey house, having access from a side road. Temporary removal of the frontage wall was approved to aid construction, this wall to be fully restored after completion of the dwelling. The developer blocked up the approved entrance, replaced it by one directly from Wall Rake exploiting the gap where the wall had been demolished and made an unapproved extension to the design after construction started.

A retrospective planning application for these changes was refused in 2018, and the unapproved extension was demolished. However the entrance from Wall Rake has been made permanent with a large loss of frontage wall and the road-side verge has been appropriated to form a parking area.

The developer has tried from April to December 2019 to validate the new entrance via two applications for discharge of conditions and a further planning application. These remain undecided.

The Heswall Society wrote to the CEO of WMBC in mid-August to protest at the lack of action on these applications and the loss of the verge. No reply has been received at the time of writing.

Thornton Hough: refusal of planning permission for retirement home complex



In November 2019 Thornton Hough Community Trust were very pleased with the news Wirral Council had refused planning permission for the English Country Village project at Hilltop Farm!! This was essentially a retirement village project.

After a number of years of campaigning against the applications, this was a huge success for the local community. The reasons given by the Council were as follows:

1 The site lies within the Green Belt, where the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies GB2 and URN1 in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan make it clear that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development and substantial weight must be given to the harm arising from inappropriate development. It is not considered that very special circumstances have been demonstrated that would outweigh such harm.

2 It is considered that the proposal conflicts with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies LAN1 and LA1 in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan because it's fixed and indicative siting, design and layout would fail to protect the character and quality of the area and would be detrimental to the openness and visual amenities of this area of Special Landscape Value.

3 It is considered that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the setting of Thornton Hough Conservation Area and adjacent Listed building by reason of its size, location and scale, which will have a disproportionate increase on the size of the village thereby having a significant and negative impact upon its special character. This is contrary to Policies CH1, CH2 and CH15 of the UDP and the National Planning Policy Framework and having regards to the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

4 The proposed development would cause a permanent loss of some of Wirral's best and most versatile agricultural land Grade 3a contrary to UDP Policy AGR1, Policy AG2 and National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 170).

Barnston

Barnston CA Society report that the farm buildings in the centre of the village CA area have now been sold but no further information is currently available.

There are also concerns about the state of the village where building works have been started but not completed as yet and the possible blocking off of a right of way by the church.



Saughall Massie

The CA Society has been keen to have a village notice board for some time but prices seemed exorbitant. However, our diligent Treasurer spotted one on Ebay, our Chairman drove to Stoke on Trent to collect it and hearing that we were a voluntary group, the seller reduced the price. Our Heritage Officer refurbished it and our local farmer welded a frame with extended legs onto it so truly a community effort. Installation was carried out by the contractors working on the Fire Station who were just finishing off their groundworks around the new building. This was brokered by Councillor Chris Blakeley who has since sadly died after a long illness. The Society would, however, wish to record our thanks to Chris for his tireless efforts on behalf of his community and his unflinching support for Wirral's Green Belt land.



Rock Park



18 Rock Park is a listed building which was damaged by fire during a proposed renovation. The building has remained in this state for some time but an application has now gone in to repair and refurbish it, creating 6 apartments in the process. Whilst this was welcomed by the CA, another application to build a further block containing 5 more apartments has caused concern and merited close scrutiny before possible objections.

Under the watchful eye of the CA Society the project should return this gem of a building to its former glory so it can again add to the lovely landscape in the park.

Rock Park residents have, like all of us, been hugely impacted by the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and the measures taken to mitigate its Health implications. However several of us have learnt to use technology like 'Zoom' to hold conference-type social discussions and the practice continues to spread: we still need to keep in touch with our friends and neighbours.

More specific to Rock Park: our periodic 'Beach Clean' events (supported by Wirral and the Refreshment Rooms) had to be discontinued in March. We continue to make our best efforts to keep the beach (relatively) clear but this is nothing like as effective without the enthusiastic support from concerned individuals across Wirral (we have a mailing list of 120 individuals who have helped in the past and have asked to be kept informed.

Wellington Road

Pilots Way and the Pilots Way Green Dip

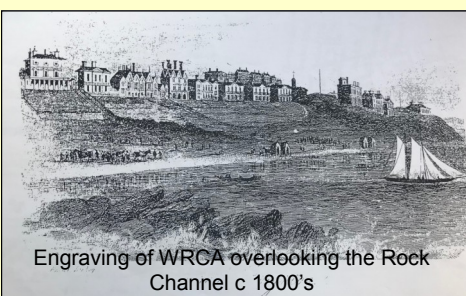
Contained within the seaward boundary of the Wellington Road Conservation Area, lies the first of four green leisure dips. These dips were landscaped out of the reclaimed foreshore on which stands the Kings Parade Promenade. This first dip, together with an unnamed service road, replaced the beach which, until then, had formed the north facing setting of the villas in Wellington Road.

For 90 years, the dip provided a green open space for visitors and residents to promenade, exercise, and generally enjoy the open air, and take in the view of the (now listed) buildings. That said, the service road remained unnamed and to a degree, unrecognised by planners and developers alike. In turn, the service road became an unsightly parking area for "Heavy Goods" and "Passenger Service" vehicles, and, more recently, a convenient place for motor caravan owners to park up their vehicles.



With the assistance of some very determined council officers, and the cooperation and support from local councillors, the Wellington Road Conservation Area has employed a strategy to drastically reduce the abuses to which the dip was subject.

The service road having languished unnamed since the 1930s, the Wellington Road Conservation Committee decided that the time had come to name it; the question was "what shall we call the service road?" Over time, it had been suggested that reference should be made to Wallasey's and the district of New Brighton's maritime heritage. For a millennium, the "Rock Channel" off the north Wirral coastline was the only navigable route by which merchants, traders and travellers accessed the open sea to and from Wallasey and Liverpool. Recreational sailors and fishermen use it to this day.



Engraving of WRCA overlooking the Rock Channel c 1800's

The original property boundaries to the "villas" extended to the highwater mark, which ran parallel with the "Rock Channel". Following the 1930's land reclamation, those property boundaries now finish at the service road. Because of the connection with the "Rock Channel", the consensus was that the name should, in some way, reflect it and those who plied their livelihoods upon it. Since 1766, the Liverpool Pilots' Service has provided the personnel who safely navigate shipping in and around the river Mersey and its estuary into the Irish Sea. Suggestions were made to the Council who officially named the road "Pilots Way". A further advantage is that the adjacent green dip can now be identified as the "Pilots Way Green Dip".

This raises the question, "what's in a name?"

The name is important because it provided the mechanism to identify the area in respect of traffic restrictions for which the local authority is responsible. It meant that weight and parking restrictions could be implemented to negate some of the problems which detracted from the setting of the listed buildings. In addition, the Pilots Way Dip became a safer, more pleasant, and appealing place for people to exercise and take their leisure.

Work has still to be done; parking issues remain. At peak times, people seeking outdoor and indoor leisure pursuits, and shopping facilities in New Brighton, must compete for car parking spaces. This leads to inconsiderate, unsafe, and illegal parking on the green verges which border the boundary walls along Pilots Way. With this in mind, and with its support for a greener environment, our committee is working with the local authority to plant trees along the length of Pilots way.

Further initiatives to calm traffic within the conservation area, will render it a safer place for walkers and cyclists to enjoy the architectural and environmental benefits it has to offer.

Eastham Village Conservation Area

Eastham Village Preservation Association is responsible for conservation matters within the village. Successes this year include the takeover of a redundant red phone box in the centre of the village. It is planned to turn it into a focal point to promote the Conservation area and other aspects of Eastham.

The promised and long awaited 20 mph for the village is scheduled to start in mid October. It has been over 20 years in gestation.

A team of volunteers has diligently watered the twenty hanging baskets that have brightened the heart of the village this summer. This involved the purchase of a second water bowser as well as the planted baskets by the Association. Disappointingly, many residents thought the Council was responsible!



An application has been made to Historic England to get the 17th century Eastham House listed.

Built by the Stanleys of Hooton Hall It has been a care home since 1967 but has now been put up for sale by Riverside Housing Association - we fear for its future.

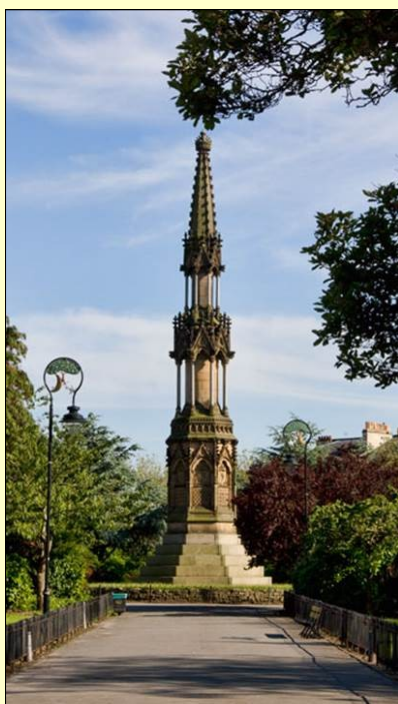
Eastham Village Preservation Association holds its AGM in the magnificent ballroom of Eastham House

ITPAS (The Irby, Thurstaston and Pensby Amenity Society)

As mentioned earlier in the report, members from ITPAS have been heavily involved with organising and underwriting the funding of the Wirral Green Space Alliance Group — their committee members spending many hundreds of hours producing analysis and documents relating to Wirral's proposed Local Plan as well as the Government's new consultation on its amendments to the Planning Laws.

However, they have just also launched an attractive new website itpas.org.uk which is well worth a visit.

(Please note: Not all Conservation areas had matters to report due to the current restrictions)



The Victoria Monument in Hamilton Square 2020 is the centenary of the death of Edmund Kirby, one of Wirral's local heroes, who was the designer of the monument.

SECTIONS 4 & 5

Communications

Planning Applications/ Heritage Statements



Section 4: Communications



1 Newsletter

The CAW newsletter continues to be produced, albeit on an occasional basis. This will continue but plans are in hand to make more use of email to keep supporters of Wirral's history and environment more informed about activities.

2 E-News



To complement the printed newsletter and our on-line presence we are trialling a regular Email that updates supporters with news and items of conservation interest. It covers such diverse topics as Conservation Areas of the Month, Blue Plaques, Wirral's Historic Buildings, the Listed Building Process as well as general items of News affecting Conservation Areas. The articles are brief to the point and include photographs where appropriate.

If you would like to receive this regular email please send your email address to david.allan132@ntlworld.com and your name will be added to our e-mailing list. The email contains the usual opt out feature should you wish to "unsubscribe".

3 Website

Our website continues to get a steady stream of visitors with certain CA's attracting more interest than others which is to be expected. A small number of visits come in from Europe and other far destinations which may be individuals doing family history searches. We recently had an inquiry from a relative of Captain Sharp who instigated the building of Clifton Park CA and its wonderful houses.

We are conscious that the site is not necessarily "phone friendly" and hope to address this in the near future.

4 Facebook

There are 416 people who have indicated they "like" the site. CAW will be exploring how we can keep in touch with these supporters.

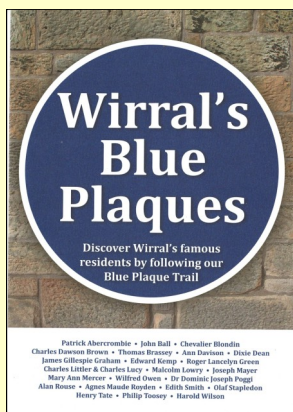
5 Heritage Fair

CAW was again represented at the annual Heritage Fair in Birkenhead Town Hall.

This is an opportunity to speak to attendees about our activities and enlist more supporters to the campaign to protect and enhance Wirral's 26 Conservation Areas and the related heritage of the area.



6 Blue Plaque Trail leaflet



During this last year we have been fortunate enough to receive support from Wirral Council on the production of a Blue Plaque Trail leaflet which was produced and distributed to local libraries and visitor centres.

Listing the locations and details of the various plaques on map of the Wirral, it is hoped that these flyers will encourage visitors to the Wirral and indeed local residents to find out more about Wirral's prominent past citizens and their achievements.

If you would like any copies please get in touch with our Secretary.

Section 5: Planning Applications and heritage statements

CAW continues to be concerned about the quality, and in some cases absence, of Heritage Statements accompanying applications in Conservation Areas. Wirral Council's own guidance notes on Heritage Statements states that there are a number of basics that must be included in any heritage statement. It lists the three main ones as:

1. Assessment of Heritage Significance
2. Assessment of Impact
3. Mitigation

In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states at paragraph 128 that:

'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'.

To meet this requirement, local authorities normally now require a Heritage Statement to be prepared to inform and accompany proposals affecting heritage assets. The Council have got to meet their own policy obligations, and those of the Government. Heritage Statements are not optional, nor is the content.

Our concerns were highlighted when the Eastham Society queried the quality of a Heritage Statement accompanying a planning application in the Eastham Conservation Area. The officer concerned was most helpful, and stated that:-

"I can confirm that we would not hold an application invalid on the basis that insufficient information has been provided as part of a Heritage Statement (within reason), but we would certainly not approve an application until sufficient information has been provided where it is necessary."

This we understand, but two further points arise:

- 1) the application can't go ahead until the information required has been provided?
- 2) consultees need to see the amended Heritage Statement before a decision is made?

The Conservation Area Advisory Committee's comments and indeed anybody else's, may be pertinent and could be based on the submitted and amended Heritage Statement.

The Council's definition of "Heritage Assets" includes Conservation Areas. In this context the requirement of the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) is quite clear, it says:-

"a Heritage Statement should set out details of the history and development of the asset", (i.e. The Conservation Area).

A developer will often seek to minimise the importance of a heritage asset and play down the effect any proposal will have on that asset. CAW is then asked to react to the proposal which is almost always defensive and therefore seen as negative.

CAW is considering whether we might prepare for each Conservation Area **"details of the history and development of the asset"**.

Where areas have character appraisals and management plans this should not always be necessary but even where they exist there is a tendency to opt for a "cut and paste" from these documents. This inevitably often means that the detail of how the heritage asset's treatment impacts on the area and how this has been mitigated.

Also, in a number of the conservation areas either one, or both, of these documents is not available and CAW is campaigning for these appraisals and management plans to be completed.

In the meantime, CAW will consider how we can fill this gap in terms of statements for any of the major heritage assets in these areas.

SECTION 6

Major Initiatives

Conclusion

Financial Statement



Bidston

Section 6: Major initiatives

Blue plaques

This has not been a good year for Blue Plaques on the Wirral. The rolling programme of four plaques each year has come to a standstill with the departure of Wirral's Heritage Officer and above all the Covid 19 situation which has a severe impact on all of us.

CAW has been told that the Heritage aspect of Wirral Council has moved from the Planning Department and been absorbed into the Culture Team.

In January this year, however, we were able to install the plaque for Helen Forrester at Warren Drive, Hoylake with welcome help from Elizabeth Davey.



We have also managed to move two plaques forward which we are hoping will be installed this year:

- 1) The Old House in Wallasey – a stone-built house in Limekiln Lane (also known as The Bird House).
- 2) Lottie Dod – five times Wimbledon ladies singles champion from Bebington.

We were able to hold a virtual meeting with members of the Wirral Council Culture team recently which does give us some hope for the Blue Plaque scheme going into next year.

Conservation Area and Heritage trail

For the last few years Conservation Areas Wirral has been working with Wirral Council's Rights of Way Officer, Robin Tutchings, and with its Heritage and Conservation Officers, to devise a Heritage Trail.

The aim of the trail is to encourage people to visit each of the Borough's 26 Conservation Areas, to learn more about the areas themselves and to discover (or rediscover) some 40 historic assets encountered on the way.

The Trail can be followed by walkers, cyclists or car drivers, with information being provided at every stage. For ease of use the Borough has been divided into four quadrants, each of which can be traversed independently, or for the ambitious the whole route can be attempted in its entirety.

Currently the Trail is only available on the Council website, but information can be downloaded onto a smartphone or printed out to provide a paper version.

Had work not been halted by Covid 19, it had been the ambition of CAW to have the Trail produced in booklet form and possible sources of external funding were being explored.

For a handy map and details of each of the four elements of the Trail go to:

[Wirral Conservation Areas and Heritage Trail www.wirral.gov.uk](http://www.wirral.gov.uk).



Tree strategy and implications for conservation areas

"Trees, hedgerows and woodlands are vital elements in Wirral's landscape, but it's so easy to take them for granted, ignoring the threats, challenges, gaps and opportunities. Tree Wardens want more people to enjoy, know and care about trees, to find an active way to be stewards of trees for the future and contribute to the protection of environment, wildlife and well-being. We thank our partners in Wirral Initiative for Trees for helping this to happen, the Borough of Wirral for putting ideas into action and friends at the Tree Council, Forest Research & DEFRA for advising, identifying and sharing good practice in Wirral's Strategy to National policies."

Conservation Areas Wirral welcome the Wirral Tree Strategy and support its aims and objectives. We expect that it will lead to better management and retention of our existing trees and guide sensible future tree planting and natural regeneration. We are particularly happy to see its recognition of the crucial role tree preservation orders play in Wirral's 26 conservation areas.



We also support the development of a Wirral wide tree strategy as a major contributor to protecting and enhancing the concept of a greener Wirral. We will continue to work with Wirral Borough Council and our colleagues in local organisations to help implement this strategy.

From CA perspective it is great that the document states that the council will vigorously enforce all infringements of TPO's and Conservation Area protections.

The strategy also will support a comprehensive review of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and conservation areas and potentially implement new orders to protect Wirral's trees. It is encouraging to see how many people/organisations have been able to contribute to this project.

Finance

John Pyke, CAW's Treasurer reports: the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2019 are attached to this report and are, I hope, self-explanatory. However if anyone has a query, please contact me by email: jandfpyke1@sky.com; or by telephone : 0151 342 3245.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Peter Bolt for his enormous contribution to our credit balance. He has not charged CAW for his travel expenses, nor for his time and expertise in fixing the Blue Plaques in position and, where necessary, obtaining listed building consent. Without his generosity, our credit balance would only be in the low hundreds.

As our activities in the current year have been severely affected by Covid 19, we have consequently had less to report back to you. This, together with a reasonably healthy balance sheet, has led us to take the decision not to ask for donations in 2020. However should any Society wish to do so, we would certainly not refuse it!

Conclusion

This year has been the most challenging since CAW was established in 2014. The combination of dealing with the final stages of Wirral's new Local Plan and the onset of the Covid 19 virus has been difficult and protracted. The Council has also been challenged and has had to create a completely new set of working arrangements and staff changes to cope. In terms of CAW that has included new arrangements for officers including the loss of David Ball, our main Council contact point. David has been moved to a special projects role and we are still awaiting information on who will replace him as our principal contact. In addition the Heritage Officer has left the Council. We have expressed our concern that her post should be filled. Assurances have been given that this will happen.

In addition the Government have issued a White Paper which proposes to radically change the current planning system. It will involve a move to defining a system of planning zones (development, renewal and protected). Wirral's next Local plan would have to subdivide the area into these parcels. It would have to be prepared immediately the current plan process is finished in 2022 and be completed in 30 months!!! Any major developments would be subject to adhering to a design code prescribed by the Government and modified as necessary by the local planning authority.

It is not clear how this will apply to Wirral's 26 Conservation Areas which would be part of the protected zone. We await further information and in the meantime we have submitted comments through Civic Voice (national body for civic societies). At this stage we have concerns about how much proper community involvement there will be in this new system and the efficacy of the proposed design codes. The ability of the Council to develop and administer this process is also a cause for concern given its limited staff resource and lack of capacity and expertise in the area of design and architecture.

However, despite disappointments we have also had our significant successes in the last year with:

- * **Heritage interpretation panels being installed in Clifton Park CA**
- * **The installation of Green Conservation Area signage in some Conservation Areas, high lighting their CA status and this affordable signage is available to all CA's should they wish to apply for it.**
- * **More blue plaques installed**
- * **The production of a Blue Plaque leaflet, listing all those installed on the Wirral with their locations on a map. This leaflet has been made available in all the libraries and visitor centres.**
- * **A new e-bulletin is now being produced and circulated**
- * **We have done major submissions on the Wirral Local Plan**
- * **We have also done a major submission to the Council for their consultation on the Wirral Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy. (*Blue infrastructure refers to water elements, like rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, floodplains, water treatment facilities, etc. Green infrastructure refers to trees, lawns, hedgerows, parks, fields, forests, etc. These terms come from urban planning and land-use planning*)**

CAW will, of course, soldier on developing our contacts and supporting the local conservation and heritage community. We will continue to be a critical friend of the Council and strive to continue our non adversarial relationship, working to establish positive relationships with the new contacts when practicable.

These are truly challenging times and we wish all our supporters well and a safe passage through it all.

With best wishes
Alan Chape
Chairman: Conservation Areas Wirral



CONSERVATION AREAS WIRRAL

Income & Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 December 2019

| | £ | 2019 £ | 2018 £ |
|------------------------------------------|----------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Income | | | |
| Supply of Blue Plaques | | 3,566.00 | 3,409 |
| Donations (note 1) | | 795.00 | 770 |
| | | 4,361.00 | 4,179 |
| Expenditure | | | |
| Blue Plaques & fixing materials | 2,600.27 | | 2,389 |
| Printing Newsletters, Leaflets & Cards | 214.05 | | 285 |
| Postage & stationery | 14.03 | | 78 |
| Membership fees | 10.00 | | 50 |
| Miscellaneous Expenses | 130.00 | | 79 |
| 6 Panel Display Board | 297.54 | | - |
| Web Hosting | - | | 122 |
| Table at Heritage Fair | 10.00 | | 5 |
| | | 3,275.89 | 3,008 |
| Excess of Income over Expenditure | | <u>1,085.11</u> | <u>1,171</u> |

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2019

| | | 2019 £ | 2018 £ |
|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Lloyds Bank – current account | | 4,000.10 | 3,054 |
| Add Blue Plaque work in progress | 372.00 | | - |
| Plaques – sums receivable | 427.00 | | - |
| Less Deposits Received in advance | (660.00) | 139.00 | - |
| | | <u>4,139.10</u> | <u>3,054</u> |
| Represented by | | | |
| Funds brought forward | | 3,053.99 | 1,883 |
| Surplus for the year | | 1,085.11 | 1,171 |
| | | <u>4,139.10</u> | <u>3,054</u> |

The notes on page 2 form part of these accounts.

Approved by the Treasurer – John Pyke

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have examined the records maintained by the Treasurer, without audit, and can confirm that the above accounts are in accordance therewith.

Sonia Oldershaw, FCA
6th March 2020

CONSERVATION AREAS WIRRAL

Note to the Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019

| Donations | £ |
|------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Barnston Conservation Society | 75.00 |
| Birkenhead Park Conservation Area | 20.00 |
| Eastham Village | 30.00 |
| Friends of Flaybrick | 50.00 |
| Frankby Conservation Area | 40.00 |
| Heswall Society | 100.00 |
| Hoylake Conservation Area | 120.00 |
| Mountwood Society | 50.00 |
| Magazines Conservation Group | 20.00 |
| Oxton Society | 100.00 |
| Saughall Massie VCAS | 50.00 |
| Wirral Society | 50.00 |
| Mrs Gillian Bolt—talk to Neston Probus | 40.00 |
| Alan Chape | 50.00 |
| | <hr/> |
| As Income & Expenditure Account (page 1) | 795.00 |
| | <hr/> <hr/> |