



The Wavertree Society

Caring for Wavertree - Past, Present and Future

NEWSLETTER 239

Founded 1977
Registered
Charity
No.1004259

January
2022

Our next meeting (on Zoom):

PAGAN BENEATH THE SURFACE – WELSH SACRED WELLS

An illustrated talk by Mike Farnworth
on Wednesday 26th January at 7.30pm

This talk traces the tradition of sacred wells from Roman and pre-Roman times to the present day, showing how Celtic pagan sites were taken over by the church and dedicated to saints, but how at the same time the folk traditions at these wells continued largely unchanged.

Most people will be familiar with the idea of "taking the waters" to seek a cure for various ailments, but they might not be aware of some of the superstitious rituals surrounding this practice, such as drinking out of a skull or carrying a rooster. As recently as Victorian times, some sacred wells were also used for the ritual cursing of enemies.

Mike Farnworth is Liverpool born and bred, but describes his ancestry as "approximately half English and half Welsh". He learned Welsh as a retirement project a few years ago, which led to an interest in Welsh culture. This talk on the pagan origins of sacred wells, inspired by the story of Ffynnon Elian, the notorious cursing well, was originally prepared (in Welsh) for the 2020 National Eisteddfod, but that version has been postponed twice due to the pandemic.

This is a 'members only' meeting. If you attended any of our previous Zoom events, you'll automatically be sent a link for this one a couple of days beforehand. Otherwise, if you're a Wavertree Society member with internet access and you wish to attend the talk, please send an email to membership@wavertreesociety.org and we'll add you to the list (and send you guidance notes, in case you're new to Zoom).



MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Society's new membership year began on 1st October. The date on your address label indicates when your next subscription payment is due. The annual subscription rate remains at £5 for a Household and £10 for 'Company' membership (including schools, etc.). Personalised renewal forms will be sent out – to those members whose subscriptions expired on 30/09/21 – with the next Newsletter, but if you wish to renew now then your cheque (payable to The Wavertree Society) will be gratefully accepted. The address to send it to is 338 Wavertree Nook Road, Liverpool L15 7LJ. As previously, you are invited to pay for up to 3 years at a time – and to make an additional (purely voluntary) donation towards our expenses. You may also pay online; see our website for details, or go direct to bit.ly/payWavSoc

THE WAVERTREE SOCIETY aims to IMPROVE local amenities and to PROTECT the local environment and architectural heritage, especially within the Wavertree Village and Wavertree Garden Suburb Conservation Areas.

Chair: Robert Zatz 65 Sandown Rd, Liverpool L15 4JA (0151 733 5878 or 07973 951408)

Vice Chair & Planning Sec: John Wood 3 Soarer Cottages, Grange Lane, L25 5LF (07703 531991)

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Hon. Treasurer: Colin Pyle 1 Monkswell Dr, L15 8JN (0151 722 1565)

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Local History Sec & Newsletter Ed: Mike Chitty 16 Chartmount Way, L25 5LB (0151 428 7801)

VISIT OUR WEBSITE at

www.wavertreesociety.org for more pictures, information and web links relating to the topics featured in this and previous Newsletters.

You'll find instructions on how to join the Society - or renew your membership - online using a credit or debit card.

You'll also discover how you can help us by registering with Easyfundraising.org.uk and generating donations from retailers (at no cost to yourself) when you shop online.

DESMOND ROSS (1931-2021) WAVERTREE ARTIST *by Mike Chitty*



We were very sorry to hear of the death of Desmond Ross, who passed away on Christmas Eve at the age of 90. For over twenty years he had been painting scenes of Wavertree in a very distinctive and colourful style of his own.

I first met Desmond Ross in 2005. He had bought a copy of 'Discovering Historic Wavertree', and invited me to his home to see some of the paintings which he said the book had inspired him to produce. I could hardly believe what I saw. There were paintings everywhere, and it was quite clear that his inspiration was what he saw around him in Wavertree, and a deep affection for the area and its people, rather than just reading about its history in a book. Painting was, he said, "a hobby which has now developed into a passion". He saw Wavertree in, literally, a new light – a colourful place full of colourful characters.

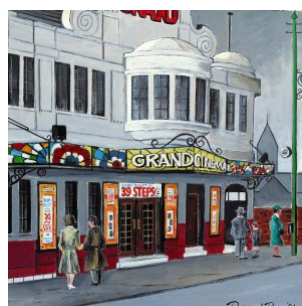
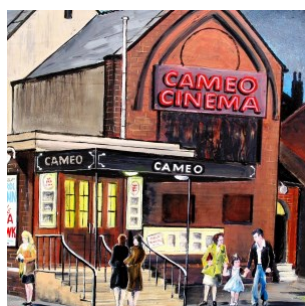
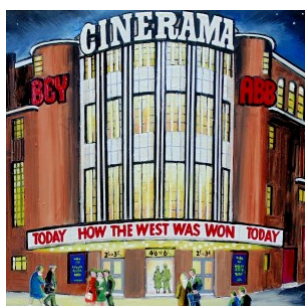
Desmond Ross had been born in Garston, Liverpool, in 1931. He left school at the age of 14, and served an apprenticeship as a poster artist and sign-writer. He later set up his own business in this field. He told me that some of the placards and posters featured in his paintings were ones that he himself remembered creating many years previously. Sometimes he painted from observation, sometimes from memory, or by reference to old photographs and postcards – but on occasions he strayed into pure fantasy. His graffiti-enriched version of the Penny Lane street nameplate, featured in the Wavertree Society's 2022 calendar, showed not only his artistic talent but also a great sense of humour.

After marrying and moving to Wavertree in 1956, Des became a supporter of his local church, St Bridget's. He later allowed them to sell prints of some of his paintings as a fundraising venture, and in 2018 an exhibition of his works was held in the church hall. It was thanks to Wavertree Society member John Beese, who had helped to organise the exhibition, that I was put back in touch with Des. I re-visited him, and was pleased to discover that he was still painting every day, and producing new works on a regular basis. He had diversified his subject matter, alternating between scenes of Wavertree, Edge Hill and more general (and often very topical) Liverpool themes.

Des was enthusiastic about the idea of a partnership with the Wavertree Society, whereby we would promote and feature his work on our website and on our merchandise. He allowed the Society to produce an A4 version of his 2020 calendar – which he had already designed and commissioned for circulation to friends and via St Bridget's Church – as a Society publication. He also allowed us to use four of his colourful paintings of Wavertree cinemas as inlays within a set of coasters.

Des's work was celebrated in the Autumn 2019 issue of the L15 Wavertree Times magazine. Meanwhile his grandson Kevin Maddock had set up a 'Des Ross Paintings' Facebook page, to display a selection of his pictures and make them available as high-quality prints. The advent of Covid, however, in 2020 was a setback for all concerned. Our plans for a local exhibition of Des's work, and a new calendar, had to be put on hold. Later in the year, Des's increasing age and respiratory problems led to a move 'down south' to his daughter's home in Suffolk. Nevertheless he continued to paint – adding scenes of Bury St Edmunds to his repertoire.

The year 2021 saw the publication of not one but two separate 'Desmond Ross 2022' calendars. One (postponed from the previous year) was produced by the Wavertree Society, and the other (covering a wider range of subjects) by his family. Sadly, Des passed away in December 2021, after a short illness. His last hours were spent in hospital, surrounded by family members. He will be much missed, and – thanks to his prodigious output of wonderful paintings – long remembered.



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Do you want JOIN the Society?

Our annual subscription is **£5 (household)** or **£10 (company, etc.)**. Please pay online (see website) or send a cheque, payable to 'The Wavertree Society', to the Membership Sec: 338 Wavertree Nook Road, Liverpool L15 7LJ.

Are you a PAID-UP Member?

Your address label indicates the date (e.g. 30/09/22) on which your current subscription expires. You can renew, if you wish, for up to 3 years at a time.