



The Wavertree Society

Caring for Wavertree - Past, Present and Future

NEWSLETTER 244

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Our next meeting (on Zoom):

THE CANARY GIRLS

A talk by Sandra Gold-Wood
on Wednesday 8th February
at 7.30pm

It is estimated that about a million women were employed in munitions factories in Britain during the two World Wars. The work was hazardous, involving the mixing of dangerous chemicals and the packing of shells. Accidental explosions could maim or kill, and the long-term side effects included sickness and premature death.

The workers were nicknamed the Canary Girls because their skin and hair were often stained a yellow colour. They were in many ways heroines, but their contribution to the war effort has been largely overlooked. The factories

tended to be in isolated locations – our nearest one was at Kirkby during the Second World War – where the women lived in hostels and operated under conditions of secrecy. There is a museum – significantly called the "Devil's Porridge Museum" after the toxic mix involved – near Gretna in Scotland (the site of "the greatest munitions factory on earth" in WW1). However there is as yet no national memorial to the women who worked, and in many cases gave their lives, in such places.

Sandra Gold-Wood – who has set up a website at www.canary-girls.com – has started a campaign to have these munitions workers recognised within the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. She will talk about how women's role in society and the economy was transformed as a result of the two World Wars, and she will explain why she feels that a memorial to the Canary Girls is long overdue.

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).



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.

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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.

A REVAMP FOR THE HIGH STREET?

In November 2022, Wavertree was visited by the government's High Streets Task Force. This is "an alliance of place making experts" aiming to provide guidance, tools and skills to communities and local authorities, with the objective of helping local people and organisations "transform their high streets".

We understand that Liverpool City Council – supported by the Liverpool City Region combined authority – has identified Wavertree as



a priority area for such transformation. Along with 'Love Wavertree', the Wavertree Society was represented at a workshop session held at Wavertree Library on 10th November. The role of the HSTF was explained, and our High Street's strengths and weaknesses were discussed. We supplied the Task Force with copies of the 'Wavertree Way' report (produced by local residents Richard MacDonald and Craig Forward in 2021 – see the sample image above) and also the 'Wavertree Street Audit' (produced by Living Streets in 2005 but never acted upon by the City Council). Both of these documents put forward specific proposals for making the High Street more pedestrian-friendly and more business-friendly – with priority being given to people visiting and using the street rather than merely passing through.

The HSTF submitted its report to the City Council before Christmas, but its contents have not as yet been disclosed. They will be the subject of a further meeting – to which we have been invited – in February. Meanwhile it was announced, in mid-December, that the government has allocated £13.63 million to Liverpool for highways maintenance work on the Key Route Network. The City Council has decided to spend £4 million of this on improvements to Wavertree High Street and Picton Road (between the Clock Tower and Spofforth Road).

We have yet to discover the extent to which the HSTF recommendations have been influenced by the 'Wavertree Way' proposals – or the extent to which the government funding will be used to implement these recommendations rather than being spent on conventional 'highway improvement' measures. We are also waiting to find out what community consultation will be undertaken. The government funding is subject to various conditions, one of which is that the work must be completed by the end of March 2024, so there is no time to waste. All will be revealed, we hope, by the time our next Newsletter appears.

MANWEB PLAYING FIELDS: WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Various rumours have been circulating about the future of the ex-Manweb Sports Ground in Thingwall Road. The sad saga of this local greenspace – the freehold of which is owned by Liverpool City Council – has been told several times in our

Newsletters since 2011, when the lease (125 years from 1995) was sold by Scottish Power following the closure of the Manweb Sports & Social Club.

The new lessees in 2011 were two private individuals – Chris Chetwood and Paul Pearce – who paid Scottish

Power £40,000. This relatively low price was presumably due to the restrictive nature of the lease, which requires the land to be used only for "sports and allied non-residential Sports Club activities" and requires the grassed areas, the pavilion (which, in the event, was demolished following a fire in 2014) and the boundary fences to be kept in good condition.

Instead of complying with the terms of the lease, Chetwood & Pearce sold it, in February 2016, to an Isle of Man 'investment company' – C&PS Limited – for £1 million. The 'C' in C&PS was Charles 'Chucky' Smith, a former Liverpool scrap metal dealer who was, apparently, well known to the City Council. His purchase of the lease was, we believe, motivated by the prospect of a 'deal' (hinted at in our March 2016 Newsletter) brokered by the then Mayor of Liverpool. However, Mr Smith died in January 2017, and control of the company passed to his widow Pauline (the 'P' in C&PS).

In 2018 we described the Council's failure to enforce the terms of the lease – or to repossess the land – as "a major scandal". If planning permission for housing were to be granted, the land would be worth about £8 million. The 2016 'deal' would have brought the Council £2 million, and the Wavertree community a new public open space, and we cannot understand why it has not been pursued. We now hope that the Commissioners – who have been sent in by the government to oversee the City Council's property-related (and other) activities – will be prepared to investigate what has happened, and what can be done to bring the fields, whether in whole or part, back into recreational use.



DESMOND ROSS 2023 CALENDARS

We still have a few calendars left. If you want to buy (price £7.50 each if collected, or £10.50 by mail order) please email us – info@wavertreesociety.org – as soon as possible.

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