



The Heswall Society

Established for the public benefit to conserve the heritage of Heswall

www.theheswallsociety.org.uk

NEWS LETTER



SPRING 2022



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Spring is in the air at last and how uplifting it is to see the spring bulbs peeping through the ground. Throughout the village we will soon be reaping the benefit of all the year-round hard work of the Heswall in Bloom and our Castle Buildings teams on behalf of our local businesses, residents and visitors as the various beds and planters around the village burst into life.



As we enter the third year of Covid, it's encouraging that, although more contagious, Omicron does seem to be much less severe than its previous variant



which, it is reported, seems to have all but disappeared. Hopefully, as the year progresses and with continuing uptake of the vaccine, we and the virus might finally manage to find a mutually acceptable steady state! Meanwhile, it's good that we seem to be returning to some degree of normality.

With the easing of restrictions, your Committee was able to resume face-to-face meetings towards the end of last year, and decided to go ahead with our January Open Meeting in Heswall Hall where we can ensure good ventilation and social distancing. Whilst there is still an element of uncertainty, I am hopeful that we can do the same for our future meetings, but we will continue to monitor on a day-to-day basis.

The work of the Society continues unabated, despite the pandemic and I am extremely grateful for all the effort and support that your Committee members continue to provide. They are the engine room of the Society.

Which brings me on to a familiar topic. I am very conscious that some of our Committee have served for many years for which I am very grateful, but clearly we cannot keep relying on them indefinitely – we need other younger members to come forward to ideally shadow their work and then ultimately take over. This is vital if the Society is to continue.

The period, once again, has kept the Committee very busy as you will discover as you read through this newsletter. Your subscriptions are being used to support the current work, and help us build up our reserves for the increasing challenges facing the Society. The most immediate is contributing to the Wirral Green Space Alliance legal fighting fund that will be used to support the fight to protect our Green Belt at the inspection stage of the Local Plan (see later).



Finally, I would like to thank our three local councillors for their continued support of the work of the Society, and the Heswall in Bloom team. Their advice and support is greatly appreciated.

Steve Anderson

OUR COMMITTEE

The Society is pleased to report that another person has joined our Committee. Richard Brocklebank was co-opted onto the Committee in October and will be up for election onto the Committee at the March AGM.

MEMBERSHIP



It remains very encouraging that the Society continues to attract new members. In the last quarter of 2021, the Committee was pleased to welcome five new members into the Society. However, the potential membership base remains large, and I would again encourage you all to become membership champions whenever the opportunity arises.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Even if you cannot attend meetings, whether virtual or face-to-face, your membership fees are vital for the Society to be able to continue its varied work conducted on your behalf and outlined in this newsletter.

As usual at the beginning of a new year some membership subscriptions remain outstanding. For those paying by Standing Order, I would ask you all to please have a look at your bank statements for last December to check that your payment has been forwarded. Sad to say, banks have not always been enacting these Standing Orders correctly.

For the small number of you paying by cash/cheque, please remember that annual subscriptions for this year were due on 1 December last year. If you have any queries, please contact the Membership Secretary or Treasurer.



COMMUNICATIONS



Those of you who can use e-mail but have not yet opted to receive the Society's communications by e-mail, are encouraged to do so. Just e-mail the chairman at chairman@heswallsociety.org.uk saying that you wish to switch to e-mail communication. This allows the Committee to keep you more easily updated with developments while also saving us both time and money. Equally, it is important to inform the chairman if you move house or change your e-mail address.

MEETINGS

For our November meeting, it was such a pleasure for members to meet once again face-to-face. This took place in a refurbished Heswall Hall, and we were once again entertained by the Illusionist, Peter Turner. Peter entertained us with the third in his series, called 'Heads I Win



Tails You Lose! This was our third attempt to invite Peter to give this talk, Covid having caused us to cancel the first two dates – third time lucky! Whether we can run future open meetings face-to-face remains to be seen.



The Society was once again able to have its annual Carols Around the Tree held in conjunction with St Peters church. Unfortunately, the event had to be moved indoors at the last minute due to the very inclement weather, but it was well attended. The warmth and atmosphere within the church was appreciated, as was the large number from the Port Sunlight Lyceum brass players who led the music so well. Being able to adjourn after the singing into the St Peter's Centre for mince pies and mulled wine further added to the occasion.

The Society donated £100 to 'Light Up Heswall' as a contribution towards last year's Christmas Lights.

LOCAL PLAN

There have been no further developments regarding the Local Plan since the Autumn newsletter. The latest information on timings is summarised below:

- Engagement with Councillors through December/January on the draft plan
- Extraordinary Council meeting in March 2022
- Six-week public consultation
- Submission to Secretary of State thereafter



Apparently, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is content with this timing. Thus, we will not see the final draft of the Local Plan until March at the earliest when it goes out for public consultation. This will be the last opportunity to comment.

The Wirral Green Space Alliance (WGSA) Steering Group (of which the Society is an integral member) continues to try and get the Council to stop sticking to the use of the Standard Method and Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2014 household projections to calculate housing need

(i.e. 12,000 houses over the 15-year plan period), despite the method and data used to produce this figure now having been thoroughly discredited technically by the Office for Statistics Regulation, and in the House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee review of the Future Planning System. Local authorities are now able to present their own housing estimates at inspection. Alternative analysis based on using the most recent data for Wirral, and the low migration variants of the most recent 2018 ONS household projections, suggests a housing need of around 4,000 houses over the 15 years.

At the time of writing, and worryingly, Leverhulme Estates have just submitted seven Screening Opinion and Scoping Requests (SCR) to the Council, with another site expected. These are not formal applications for permission to develop on these sites, but rather preparatory studies for their stated intention of submitting planning applications early in 2022. These sites are on Green Belt hence the reason for our concern. Sites of particular concern to the Society involve Gills Lane and the land adjacent to Milner Road and Barnston Road, all of which are adjacent to the Heswall township and provide an important green separation from neighbouring townships and villages.

These requests are for the Council to form an opinion as to whether all the environmental issues potentially affected by the proposed developments have been fully and properly addressed in the proposed methodology.

The Heswall Society along with the WGSA, other Societies and residents, have commented to the Council on these proposals. Leverhulme Estates are assuming that the Inspector of the Local Plan will force the Council to release some Green Belt for development because a housing need of 12,000 cannot be satisfied through use of brownfield only sites. The primary reason we are all fighting to get a much more realistic and lower housing need figure adopted in the Local Plan is to minimise this risk.

The Society's response was copied to members, our councillors, and our Member of Parliament.

Finally, the WGSA is well aware that any final decision to release Green Belt land will not be the Council's. It will be in the hands of the Government Local Plan Inspector. To represent us at the inspection stage, the WGSA will be briefing legal Counsel. You will appreciate that this will be a costly process, and to add to the contributions from member groups, a WGSA Legal Fighting Fund has been set up on Just Giving. Should you wish to donate you can do so at:

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/savewirralsgreenbelt>

HESWALL IN BLOOM

The Heswall in Bloom (HiB) team has once again remained active over the winter period, and hopefully the seasonal planting will develop and flourish over the winter and into the spring. As our contribution to HiB, the Heswall Society group, led by Angela Mounsey, specifically looks after the planting in Castle Buildings. Their efforts are helping to ensure Heswall remains colourful and attractive over this period.



HiB has a WhatsApp Page (Heswall in Bloom) and an Instagram page (@Heswallinbloom).

The Society's Castle Buildings group has recently set up a WhatsApp page (Castle Buildings waterers) to help coordinate the ongoing watering and maintenance.

Additional donations and help are always welcome. We are also pleased to report that our Councillors have supported our efforts.

A separate Lower Village team, although not officially part of HiB, are doing an excellent job in providing additional colour in the Lower Village. A representative is now also attending HiB meetings so we can share experiences and inform each other of future plans.

CHERRY COTTAGE

Continuing the saga with Cherry Cottage on Wall Rake, as mentioned in the Autumn newsletter, the Society was appalled that the Council approved facing the boundary wall with concrete tiles rather than the previously agreed sandstone. The Society sent a formal letter of complaint to the Council in October.



Unsatisfied with the official response eventually received, the Society initiated the second stage of formal complaint with the Council in anticipation of contacting the ombudsman about such a blatant disregard of conservation area values.

We are escalating this complaint as we believe there is an important principle at stake relating to protection of our Conservation Areas.

LOWER VILLAGE TELEPHONE KIOSK

The telephone kiosk in the Lower Village has now been converted into a small book exchange thanks to Merilyn Phillips. It seems to be working well.



QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY PROJECT



The Society intends to support the Queen's Green Canopy Project (QGC). Its aim is to thank Her Majesty The Queen for her exceptional service, to celebrate her Platinum Jubilee in 2022 and to promote the importance of trees to the environment through the encouragement of tree planting and tree preservation across the nation.

The QGC is designed to run from May 2021 through the planting season between October 2021 and March 2022 up to the formal Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022, and beyond to the end of 2022. The Society has contacted Nicola Wallbank, the new Council Landscape Officer, with the idea of planting some standard trees in the triangle of land between Thurstaston Road and Telegraph Road, an area recognised to need a management plan. We are pleased to say that Nicola is very receptive to this idea, although it's also recognised that a maintenance plan would be needed.

VILLAGE ROAD

The Society has been approached by residents concerned at the speed of traffic through the Lower Village, between the two existing 20mph sections fronting Gayton Primary School and St Peter's School respectively. The Society fully recognises the problem and would be supportive of any resident initiative to extend this limit throughout the Lower Village.



CLIMATE AWARENESS



The Society has agreed to support the Climate Awareness Day planned for Saturday 14 May 2022. The day will be based in Hillhouse Gardens, the Library forecourt, and Fire Station forecourt.

The Society will have a presence to advertise our work and that of the Heswall in Bloom team.

FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

A further reminder to members that, in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Government has set a cut-off date of 1 January 2026 for identifying unrecorded footpaths and bridleways.

The Society is keen to make sure that any public rights of way in Heswall that were on the 1929 definitive maps before the Councils merged are still on the current Council definitive map, and are not lost forever.



Members are asked, therefore, to examine the Council's definitive map by visiting the Council's website or by following a link on the home page of the Society's website www.theheswallsociety.org.uk, and email Richard Brocklebank at richardheswall@gmail.com to alert us to any that may be missing in Heswall. The Society will collate responses and forward to the Council and copy to Wirral Footpaths and Open Spaces.

PLANNING MATTERS

The high number of planning applications continues unabated. Our small but enthusiastic Planning Group has reviewed every planning application submitted in Heswall Ward, and made recommendations to the Committee on any action to be taken.



The trend seen since COVID began of less retail and business applications and more home extensions is still very much in evidence. Since the

Autumn Newsletter was prepared, your Committee has considered 133 planning applications, of which we objected to 14, and made comments on eight.

We would encourage any member who would like to learn more about planning, and might be interested to join the group to help champion good development in Heswall, to contact us on planning@heswallsoc.org.uk.

We would like to provide an update on several developments highlighted in the Autumn Newsletter, and to inform you about some new applications:-

1. The Society and local neighbours objected strongly to the revised application APP/21/01428 at 22 Farr Hall Drive for a block of six apartments.

The applicant sought to address the Appeal Inspector's refusal of a previous application by changing the arrangements of the windows at the rear of the building.

We felt that this change introduced unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring properties. In addition, a local expert calculated that the root protection areas of two veteran protected oaks on the boundary of the site had been determined incorrectly and the development posed a threat to these trees.

Unfortunately, despite the refusal of the earlier design, the case officer recommended approval when this application was tabled on the December Planning Committee agenda. We disagree with the logic he used to justify approval and believe he misinterpreted the Inspector's comments.

The application was withdrawn from the agenda for technical reasons and a new public consultation period started. The Society will submit an updated objection and the ward councillor has offered to speak at the planning committee meeting when this application comes back on the agenda.

2. The new application APP/21/01113 for a large extension to a pair of old sandstone cottages at 28 Boundary Lane, submitted after the refusal of an earlier application was upheld on appeal, is still undecided at the time of going to press. We feel that this new application does not address the concerns of the Inspector and has a high probability of being refused.

More recently, a new application has been made to demolish these cottages.

We believe that there is no statutory protection on these non-designated heritage assets to prevent their demolition.

The ward councillor has contacted the case officer to see if there is any possibility of finding a way forward which saves the original cottages but also allows development of the site.

3. We notice that work has started by J D Wetherspoon to convert the old Exchange premises on the Mount to the 'Prese Well' public house.

This must be to the original approved plans, as a later application to amend these (to which the Society objected) were withdrawn.

Despite reports in the local media, repeated requests to increase the licensing hours have been refused, and the permitted hours are 09.30 to 23.30 every day of the week.

4. The application to replace 15 Delavor Road with a much larger property with three storeys APP/21/00629, was approved after a few design amendments were made by the applicant. This has a very contemporary design with a flat roof.

Our objection was to the mass of the building, which would result in it being out of harmony with the overall street scene in the area and potential overlooking of neighbours. In contrast, a similar transformation of an existing property in Oldfield Way APP/21/00106 was refused for design reasons, and the refusal upheld on appeal.

Turning now to new applications:

5. The Society was consulted by the developer prior to his submission of an application to demolish Nos 4 and 6 in Rocky Lane (the location of the old Citizens' Advice Bureau and Orchard Chambers) and build a block containing nine apartments.



We indicated that we thought that this was an excellent location for apartments, but the proposed plans represented an overdevelopment of the site, producing a structure of excessive

mass which would dominate neighbouring properties and be detrimental to the local street scene. In addition, there were issues of overlooking and lack of amenity space for the future occupants. The developer paid no heed to our comments, and we objected to the subsequent formal application APP 21/01566 on these grounds.

6. APP/21/01780. We objected strongly to an application to build an access road from Banks Road to the disused Deeside caravan site, currently accessed from Broad Lane.

We felt that this was a severely misjudged application, as identical applications have been refused at least twice before and upheld on appeal, due to the adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

The Council was uncharacteristically fast in refusing this application and, in addition, supported the Society's view that the application was further invalidated due to the absence of an ecological survey necessitated by the rewilding of the abandoned site.

7. Application APP/21/02147 has been submitted to build four houses on the site currently occupied by Allandale on the corner of Farr Hall Drive and Farr Hall Road. Allandale is an early work by the architect Herbert Rowse who went on to design many important buildings in Liverpool, including the Philharmonic Hall and the Queensway Tunnel entrances.

Unfortunately, the LPA has apparently already agreed in principle to its demolition in pre-application advice. We have submitted an objection on the basis of overdevelopment of the site, and unwarranted felling of protected oak trees to clear enough site to achieve the excessive development density.

We commented that poor design was clearly demonstrated as four three-storey identical houses were proposed in serried rank with hardly any space between them, giving the appearance of a monolithic terrace. This is, of course, in an area characterized by individual dwellings of very varied design standing well in their plots. The balconies proposed at the rear of the houses will overlook each other's and neighbour's gardens.

We further strengthened our argument for refusal by drawing attention to the design principles established on the site of Inchbroom opposite, where two applications have been refused, upheld on appeal, based on poor design and overdevelopment of the site.

8. Readers may be aware of the plot of land off the Wirral Way next to Pipers End, which had been cleared of trees. We objected to an application to build two houses on this site APP 21/01924 on the grounds of overdevelopment and overlooking, also commenting that the application did not address the reasons for the refusal of an almost identical earlier application.
9. We note that The Cave and a separate attached plot of land have been sold. We will monitor carefully to establish whether there is any threat to this historic property, and will endeavour to achieve local listing, if the LPA finally decides to implement this procedure.

Roger Lane

TREES



Over the past year, we have been consulted on 14 applications for work on trees either subject to TPOs or growing within the Gayton or Heswall Lower Village Conservation Areas. We have commented on three of these applications and have objected to three, of which two have been upheld by the subsequent Council decisions.

We are also pleased to report that, after several emails and Zoom meetings, two of the eleven felled trees along Village Road have now been replaced. A limited success, and we hope that more will be replaced over time.

OPEN SPACES

We are pleased to report that the Dales' volunteers have been told that The Dales, being an SSSI site, will be protected from any upcoming (and very likely) budget cuts, whether financial or personnel related. We are also pleased to report that, after several emails and 'Zoom' meetings, two of the eleven felled trees along Village Road have now been replaced. A limited success, and we hope that more will be replaced over time.

CONSERVATION AREAS

We await the publication of the draft Local Plan, and the status of Conservation Areas within it.



We understand that nominations for Local Listing will soon open, but believe that, initially, nominations will only be open for structures outside Conservation Areas. We would add that it is questionable whether local Listing is worth the effort unless greater protection is given to such structures, whether within or outside Conservation Areas.

DAWSTONE PARK

The Committee of Dawstone Park hopes that things will be returning to normal. Dates for Working Parties will be circulated to members and a notice put up on the Notice Board. It is hoped that regular meetings of the Committee will be able to take place face-to-face. They have been missed! Do get in touch if anyone would like to join us.



It may only be February, but there are signs of plant/bulb growth and the birds are beginning to sing. Do visit the Park. It may be small, but it is beautiful! It is always a joy to sit on one of the many seats and take the time to listen!

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

We have published further articles in the Heswall and District Magazine.

In the Autumn 2021 edition we wrote about James Francis Doyle, the architect of several important buildings on Wirral and in Liverpool, including St Peter's Church, The Cave, The Roscote, Dawpool and the Royal Insurance building in Liverpool. We considered research on the architect of The Cave was important whilst its future ownership remains unknown.



In the December article we told the story of Johnny Pye who pioneered bus services which helped make Heswall an important commuter town, and whose name lives on in the names of a pub and a road in Heswall.



We have been loaned a 142-year-old document which outlines the land holdings of Rev. Mark Coxon, who was an important figure in Heswall, rebuilding St Peter's Church after it was destroyed by lightning and building the school on School Hill. The document mentions many old family and field names and will form the basis of our February article.

We continue to receive many queries being sent through the Society's enquiry page as people try to trace ancestors or to find out about the history of their houses.

If you have any interesting family history or an old house in Heswall and would like to see if we could help you explore the stories behind them, please contact Roger Lane (roger.m.lane@btinternet.com, 0151-342 9269).

Roger Lane

EVENTS

The following dates have been provisionally scheduled for 2022:-

Wednesday 23 February 2022. Speaker Stephen Ross. Title '34 years of Working for the Probation Service - The Highs, The Lows, Humour and the Occasional Terror'.

Wednesday 23 March 2022 - AGM followed by Speaker Gavin Hunter. Title 'Crossing the Mersey'. Looking back at the problems faced by people getting from Wirral to Liverpool over the centuries.

Wednesday 21 September 2022 - Speaker Paul Dufton. Title 'Cleanliness is Next to Godliness - Pears' Soap in the 19th Century'.

Wednesday 16 November 2022 - Speaker Anthony Annakin-Smith. Title 'Seven Reasons Why the Early Neston Collieries were Remarkable'.

NOTE: Meetings will start at 8:00pm, except the AGM which starts at 7:30pm, all in Heswall Hall. Regrettably, at the moment, we are not able to provide tea and coffee beforehand.

Please also note that Heswall Hall has been provisionally booked for Open Meetings on the following dates next year:-

Wednesday 18 January 2023
Wednesday 22 February 2023
Wednesday 22 March 2023
Wednesday 20 September 2023
Wednesday 15 November 2023

TREASURE HUNT



It has been a great pleasure seeing children out and about in Heswall following the Society's Treasure Hunt!

Introduced last year, the Society's Treasure Hunt/Quiz is principally aimed at primary school children and their parents/carers and grandparents. The trail is approximately 50 minutes in length, depending on how many stops are made. It takes you through the main Heswall Village, pointing out refreshment stops and play areas along the way.

For further details, please visit the Society's website.

PUBLICITY.

Full details of the Society's activities can be found on our website at www.theheswallsociety.org.uk.

MEMBERSHIP

If you are not already a member of Heswall Society and/or can think of anyone who might be interested in becoming a member, please complete and/or pass on the **Membership Application Form overleaf**. Further copies can be downloaded from our website www.theheswallsociety.org.uk.



THE HESWALL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP AND GIFT AID FORM

Your membership will include all the members of your family living at the same address.

I (details below) wish to become a member of THE HESWALL SOCIETY:

Reference (HS use only)

Title Surname Forename(s)

Address

..... Post Code

e-mail address.....

Please write YES in this box if you are happy to receive all further communication electronically. Otherwise information will be sent by post.

GIFT AID

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made today and in the future. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify the Heswall Society if you:

- * want to cancel this declaration
- * change your name or home address
- * no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains

Signed Date

STANDING ORDER FORM

Reference (HS use only)

To the Manager Bank Sort Code

Address

..... Post Code

I hereby authorise and request you to debit my/our account No: the sum of £..... (Minimum Ten Pounds) and credit Barclays Bank plc, Sort Code 20-29-50 for The Heswall Society Account No: 63505251 **on RECEIPT of this order AND ON DECEMBER 1 ANNUALLY** until cancellation; and to cancel any previous standing order payable to The Society.

Name(s)

Signed Date

Please return this form to: Membership Secretary, The Heswall Society, c/o Heswall Hall, 111 Telegraph Road, Wirral CH60 0AF