

Hale Village

Author, Peter Kehoe.

Local History Group

5 paid a visit to the historic village of Hale in August. Hale is on the banks of the River Mersey, close to Speke. It is now part of the area of Halton Council and has been in Cheshire since the 1972 local government reorganisation, having previously been in Lancashire since its inception.



Hale was inhabited even before the 1066 Norman Conquest and it was granted a charter by King John in 1203, 4 years before Liverpool had its charter (1207). The charter gives the right to elect Freemen, and they in turn elect a Lord Mayor, and we were privileged to have the current Lord Mayor Mal Sutton, accompanied by the very able Ronnie who is also a Freeman, as our knowledgeable and entertaining guides for the visit.

We were taken on a walking tour, starting in the village and then onto Within Way, an ancient roadway used by the Romans, Vikings and also by prince Rupert during the Civil War. Within Way leads down to the banks of the Mersey where in past times it was possible to ford the river at low tide and was a main route from Lancashire to Chester. On our return to the village we had extensive views across the river to

| <u>Contents</u> | <u>Page</u> | |
|--------------------|-------------|---|
| Birkenhead Priory | 6 | Cheshire and went past Hale Lighthouse, right on the river's edge, but not now operating because there are no longer any ships passing due to silting up of the river. |
| Group News | 11 | |
| Low Bentham | 3 | Hale's most famous resident is John Middleton (1578–1623). He is reported to have been 9ft 3ins tall and slept with his feet sticking out of the windows of his small cottage. He was taken to London by Sir Gilbert Ireland where he won a wrestling match against the champion of 1 King James 1, for which he was granted the sum of |
| Membership | 9 | |
| New Members | 11 | |
| Quiz Group | 2 | |
| Shakespeare North | 7 | |
| Southport Lifeboat | 4 | |
| U3A Committee | 11 | |
| Warm Places etc | 10 | |



£20, a huge amount at that time. On his return his sponsor took him to Brasenose College, Oxford, where one of the 2 life sized portraits of the Childe hangs, the other is in Speke Hall. The Childe was adopted as the mascot by the Brasenose First VIII rowing team.

We visited the Childe's grave in the churchyard of the 14th century St Mary's church. On the grave is the inscription

reading "Here lyeth the bodie of John Middleton the Childe of Hale. Nine feet three. Borne 1578 Dyede 1623." There is a modern statue of the Childe in the village that is 3 metres tall and looks across to his cottage.

Quiz Group

Author, Steve Whitefield.

Quizzes are always popular and they are a good way to keep the mind active. In the case of Formby U3A Quiz Group it is a very pleasant way to while away a couple of afternoons per month. During the lockdowns we held the sessions over Zoom but we have recently revived what the group used to do which is to take turns to host in our houses. We have quite a simple format which we follow and which happens to suit us. We each set 20 questions which we ask the rest of the group and then run through the answers before moving onto the next. The answers to the first 5 of each set of questions begin with same letter of the alphabet then we move through the alphabet for the following session.

It's an important tenet of the group that it's not competitive and we don't share our scores. We don't take it too seriously and find time to chat over a cup of tea. There is a knack to setting quizzes so that the questions are neither too easy nor too difficult, and the preparation of the quiz can be as interesting and enjoyable as the sessions themselves.

We generally cover a wide range of general knowledge: history, geography, science, the arts, entertainment, sport, some topical questions etc. etc. Because we meet at each others' houses there is a limit to the numbers we can manage and our group currently has no vacancies, but of course there is nothing to stop anyone starting another group – just contact the groups secretary (groups@formbyu3a.org.uk) if you are interested, or contact me (07760 380265; stevewhitefield@btinternet.com) if you'd like to talk to me about anything I've said here. The group is also going to contribute a quiz (20 questions but without the convention of single letter for first 5

answers) for each edition of this newsletter so give your brain a little exercise and enjoy!

- 1 What name is given to the stiff slender leaf of a conifer?
- 2 With which city is the Sally Lunn bun associated?
- 3 Who was the first woman to win a Nobel Prize?
- 4 Miso soup is made from the paste of which bean?
- 5 Which country is nicknamed the Land of a Thousand Lakes?
- 6 Who first discovered that the Earth revolved around the Sun?
- 7 Who wrote the poem Sea Fever?
- 8 What is the official name of Big Ben?
- 9 If you got off a train at Waverley Station which UK city would you be in?
- 10 Which is the smallest planet in our Solar System?
- 11 Who was appointed Labour Party leader in 2015?
- 12 In which city is the Crucible Theatre?
- 13 Who is the BBC's political editor?
- 14 What was the group comprising Roger McGough, John Gorman and Mike McGear?
- 15 What is the river that flows through Worcester?
- 16 "Definitely maybe" was the first album of which band?
- 17 In which county would you find Stonehenge?
- 18 What is the capital of Latvia?
- 19 Who designed Liverpool Anglican Cathedral?
- 20 What is the name of the short story by Daphne Du Maurier and the film starring Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie?

ANSWERS PAGE 8

Low Bentham & The Great Stone of Fourstones



Author, Peter Warren.

Walking Group 5's drive from Formby was without incident and 11 members arrived

in good order at the public car park in Low Bentham, the most westerly village in Yorkshire. Interestingly the car park was free for 23 hours which seemed a little quirky. No doubt there is a purpose behind it.

There had been a little rain on the way up and the weather was warm but still heavily overcast with low cloud obscuring views of the tops of the surrounding hills. Our route took us steadily upwards through green fields and over rough moor land to reach the isolated massive boulder, a glacial erratic, enjoying the title of The Great Stone of Fourstones. It was the highest point on the walk, interesting in its own right and there were plenty of good views all around. Unfortunately the anticipated sights of the summits of the Yorkshire hills including the 3 Peaks, Ingleborough, Whenside and Pen y ghent were denied to us as the low cloud, though beginning to lift as the sun came out, still persisted.

The walk continued downhill to ultimately reach the River Wenning along a nicely varied mix of terrain that also included a strenuous but happily short, steep descent to and climb back out of a beck. Further down the route there was a tantalizing upward glimpse of Ingleborough almost free of cloud, framed by an open farm gate in a substantial stone wall.



The final part of the walk continued alongside the river back to Low Bentham through woods and fields making good use of a variety of substantial stone stiles.

Our thanks to Joanne and George for devising and leading this most enjoyable walk.

Southport Lifeboat

Authors, Alan and Rosemary Thomas.

The brand-new lifeboat station was opened in Southport to the public on 15th April 2022 after three years of construction. The £1.4m building has been paid for entirely by public donations to the Southport Offshore Rescue Trust.

From the start of **Local History Group 9's** tour we knew we would not be disappointed due to the professionalism of two volunteers, Scott and Hayden delivering a very informative introduction starting with the question "Is the Southport Life Boat Station a member of the RLNI? The answer is "no". Indeed, was it ever a member? "Yes" it was one of the first in 1840 run as an independent lifeboat operation using the volunteers own boats. In 1860 the RNLi took over running the operation. In 1925 .it was closed following a review by RLNI, who stated due to lack of costal traffic and the channel silting up it was no longer considered a need for a Lifeboat station in Southport. The service was re-opened in 1989 following several incidents off the coast, which involved the loss of life.



Kath Wilson founded the Southport Offshore Rescue Trust in 1987 after her son, Geoff Clements, lost his life off the Southport coast while out fishing with friends. The people of Southport decided they needed a lifeboat service and within 14 months of the idea being floated, it became a reality due to the amazing fundraising efforts of Kath Wilson and her many friends.

Following an audio-visual screening delivered by Scott and Hayden they went on to show us the equipment currently being operated out of Southport including two lifeboats, three ATV quad bikes, drones, mud rescue equipment and one trailer designed and built by the crew. Also, a Tom Holland tractor plus a very impressive CAT for towing the lifeboats out to sea.

They filled in the lifeboat history when Southport was a member of the RLNI telling us about the Mexico and the night of 9 December 1886. The Southport and St Anne's lifeboats disaster, commonly known as the Mexico disaster, occurred on the evening of the 9th December 1886. In all, 27 lifeboat men lost their lives trying to save the crew of the German barque called the Mexico. Only two of the Southport crew survived one was the coxswain who sadly died 2 years later.

Southport Lifeboat operation is run by the Southport Offshore Rescue Trust. They are independent of the RNLI and receive no government or regular external funding. Being independent means that the Trust is responsible for all of its own financing and fundraising by their charity shop and fund-raising events. The crew commit their time and effort freely, they receive no



payment at all. It costs £70,000 to support itself and provides a first-class lifesaving service in an area of coastal water between the River Mersey to the River Ribble, and up to 25 miles (40 km) offshore, including Southport Marine Lake.

This is one to put on your list of tours.

Birkenhead Priory



Author: Andy Dickinson.

Members of **Local History Group 16** visited the hidden gem of Merseyside that is Birkenhead Priory. After a short walk from Hamilton Square Station the weather allowed us to start our visit with a picnic before our guided tour started. Many thanks must go to our wonderful guide, Sam, who took us through the history of the Priory from 1150AD to the present day with her expert knowledge and tales from the past. She made the visit so interesting. The original Chapter House built in the 1150's, the oldest standing building on Merseyside, is a stunning building and is still used as a chapel. It has the most beautiful stain glass windows. The Priory monks operated the first River Mersey ferry and looked after visitors including two visits from Edward 1st before being closed in in 1536 after Henry VIII's Dissolution of the monasteries. In the late 1890's Birkenhead Corporation acquired the site and restoration of the site began. Also on the site are the tower and west walls, with its cast iron windows, of St Mary's Church opened in 1821 and demolished in 1975. Those members of the group who climbed the 101 steps to the top of the tower were treated to fantastic views of both sides of the Mersey and the neighbouring Cammel Laird shipyards.

Above the ancient Chapter House is the Scriptorium which now houses the home of the Friends of training ship HMS Conway with its museum of fascinating artefacts. The visit concluded with the opportunity to dress the part of characters from the past. Most said no but as you can see the trip organiser was coerced into donning the Monks costume to much amusement! Some will of course recognise the said monk as your Membership Secretary!

If you've never been to the Priory it is well worth a visit. As its says on their leaflet it's a 'small place with a big history'. Members made their way home, some taking the current ferry across the Mersey, but not before a stop for refreshment at Gallagher's traditional pub en-route!



Shakespeare North



Author, Dave Goodwill.

Did Shakespeare live, or work in Prescot? Members of **Local History Group 6** hoped to find answers when they visited the new Shakespeare North Playhouse in Prescot for a Heritage Tour.

Prescot was a major town in Elizabethan England, being far more important and larger than Liverpool. Eccleston Street still possess a Jacobean half-timbered frontage, the Lord Strange Pub and Stone Street, which at 71cm wide claims to be Britain's second narrowest street. The town was the first place outside London to have a theatre, "The Playhouse," which existed between the mid-1590s and 1609.

This was the inspiration behind the modern building. The original Playhouse owed its origins to the Earl of Derby, who prior to the opening of the theatre had a private theatre built at Knowsley Hall. His son, Ferdinando Stanley, the fifth Earl and known for unidentified reasons as Lord Strange, was the patron of an important company of players, "Strange's Men," which "almost certainly" included Shakespeare. The men went on to form the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's company at the Globe.

The new Playhouse, opened in summer July 2022, was intended to create a lasting legacy in what is now Britain's second-most deprived local authority area. The building includes a 420-seat main auditorium, outdoor Sir Ken Dodd Performance Garden, a modern studio space, exhibition and visitor centre. The venue is a local asset and was not opened by any dignitary, but following a collection of local events led by Prescot residents. A National Lottery bid to fund the complex was unsuccessful, which instead came from Knowsley Council, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and a small 2016 Budget governmental contribution. Ken Dodd's widow provided £700,000 in funding to the theatre to create an outdoor performance garden. No architectural plans, or archaeological remains of the original theatre survive, although documentary evidence shows its existence. The new playhouse's wooden auditorium recaptures the look and atmosphere of an Inigo Jones theatre

which existed near the site of what is today Downing Street, London. It rivals London's Globe Theatre, with the added benefit of a roof, heating, padded seats, plus suspended and real candles to recreate the starry night plays would have originally been performed beneath! The guided tour, was so inspirational that several members stayed for the afternoon performance of "A Midsummer Night Dream." It was a brilliant production with a modern twist which included mock pre-show announcements highlighting the



incompetence and panic of management, along with the absence of half the cast who had gone awol so that the "head of security" had to be drafted in to play Bottom!

This was a worthwhile visit on so many levels and is highly recommended for all.

Answers to quiz

- 1) Needle
- 2) Bath
- 3) Marie Curie
- 4) Soy (Or Soya) Bean
- 5) Finland
- 6) Nicolas Copernicus
- 7) John Masefield

- 8) Elizabeth Tower
- 9) Edinburgh
- 10) Mercury
- 11) Jeremy Corbyn
- 12) Sheffield
- 13) Chris Mason
- 14) Scaffold
- 15) Severn
- 16) Oasis
- 17) Wiltshire
- 18) Riga
- 19) Sir Giles Gilbert Scott
- 20) Don't Look Now

It's Nearly Time to Renew Your U3A Membership

(£9 per member)

Annual subscriptions are due on 2nd January. In order to ensure that the insurance cover provided by our affiliation to the Third Age Trust is not compromised, ***all membership subscriptions should be paid by 31st March 2023 at the latest.***

Formby U3A now has to pay bank charges of 40p on each cheque we receive. If you do pay your membership fees by cheque we would be grateful if you could arrange to pay your 2023 fees by Standing Order or by Online Bank Transfer.

How to renew your membership

a) **Standing Orders:** Thank you to those members who have already set up a Standing Order for their membership fees. If you wish to set up a new Standing Order, please request details from the Membership Secretary by e-mailing membership@formbyu3a.org.uk or phoning 643971. Forms can be collected at the Speaker's Meetings in November or December.

b) **Online Bank Transfer:** The reference or description field of the payment MUST contain your membership number followed by your surname and initial. If you do not know your membership number you should contact the Membership Secretary (as above). Payment should be made to the following Formby U3A bank account: - Account name: Formby U3A Sort code: 40 21 20 Account number: 41365878.

Membership Cards will be posted to those paying by Standing Order or Online Bank Transfer once your subscription has been received from your bank.

c) **Cheque Payment:** We ask that all other renewals should be by cheque. We prefer not to handle cash as there is too much potential for error. **If paying by cheque please make your cheque payable to Formby U3A and write your membership number on the back. (If you do not know your membership number, please write your name and address instead).**

Payments can be made in person at the at the Wednesday afternoon meetings in Holy Trinity Parish Hall (11th January, 8th February or at the AGM on 8th March). If you pay

in person at these meeting you can collect your card at the same time.

Payment can be made By Post: Cheques should be posted to: Membership Secretary, Formby U3A, PO Box 216, Liverpool L37 1XQ. **Please remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope to receive your Membership Card.**

If you do not intend to renew your membership for 2023 please inform the membership Secretary.

Warm Places

Sefton are in the process of developing a “Warm Places” network of community venues where people concerned about their energy costs can go to keep warm. Details are still to be published, so check the Sefton Website.

Third Age Matters Magazine

The Third Age Trust publishes their magazine each quarter. Formby U3A receives a single copy. Members can browse through the magazine which will be placed in Formby Library when we receive each new magazine. The autumn edition is out now. Please do not take the magazine away from the library. Many thanks to Formby Library.

Newsletter Contributions

Reports informing members of your group and its activities are always welcomed.

Please send contributions to the Editor, e-mail: newseditor@formbyu3a.org.uk If, 7 days after submitting an article you have not received an acknowledgement one of the e-mail systems failed, so please try again.

Formby U3A Committee would like to remind contributors that it is their responsibility and not the Editor's to check their submitted articles for the grammar, spelling, punctuation etc. Contributors' names should be given.

Photographs that show members involved in group activities are always appreciated. Photographs submitted must be members' own photos. Please ensure that all people shown in photographs are aware that photographs are being taken for inclusion in the Newsletter. *Please do not send more than 4 photographs.*

Previous Newsletters: can be found by following the link on the Formby U3A website, formbyu3a.org.uk Newsletter tab, or by typing www.formbyu3a.org.uk/?page_id=331 into you web browser.

Owing to the intermittent reporting from groups, please check the website for the date of the next Newsletter.

The deadline for articles for the next Newsletter is midday of the penultimate Thursday in the month.

Group News

Coffee Mornings: Planning will be starting shortly to re-instate the coffee mornings once a month on the second Thursday.

Sunday Lunch: A new leader is needed for the Sunday Lunch group. Thanks to Margaret who no longer feels able to continue.

Theatre: A new leader also required to re-start theatre group which stopped some time ago.

New Members

Formby U3A is pleased to welcome the following new members.

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Jan Assheton | Joan Birtwistle | Mary Bishop |
| Stuart Coldwell | Philip Collins | John Conroy |
| Brian Crolley | Pauline Dawson | Liz Dixon |
| Noreen Evans | Andy Flood | Christine Gerrard |
| Andrew Greenyer | Sonia Greenyer | Wendy Hall |
| Edith Haslam | Catherine Jackson | Helen Lewandowska |
| Michael Lewandowski | Brenda Lunt | Michael Lyonette |
| William Lyons | Ann McCabe | Peter Murray |
| Linda Murray | Paul Otterson | Angela Parry |
| Vivien Powell | Steve Powell | John Searson |
| Anthony Spofforth | Ginny Willis | |

Formby U3A Committee 2022-23

| | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Chairman | Helen Lewandowska (2022 Co-opted) | 07548 213496 | chair@formbyu3a.org.uk |
| Secretary | Evan Bale (2020) | | secretary@formbyu3a.org.uk |
| Treasurer | Anne Rodmell (2019) | 621835 | treasurer@formbyu3a.org.uk |
| Membership Sec. | Andy Dickinson (2022) | 643971 | membership@formbyu3a.org.uk |
| Group Secretary | Gill Brady (2022) | 643745 | groups@formbyu3a.org.uk |
| Officers | Helen Beaver (2022) | 07771 717387 | 1stofficer@formbyu3a.org.uk |
| | Nikki Harrison (2021) | 871308 | 2ndofficer@formbyu3a.org.uk |
| | Martyn Rodmell (2021) | 621835 | 4thofficer@formbyu3a.org.uk |

Speaker Meetings

Martin Rodmell, Speaker Organiser.

Speaker meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month in **The Holy Trinity Parish Hall, Formby**. The meetings start at 2.00pm and last about an hour.

Access: There is ramp access to the hall.

Parking: Please remember to enter your vehicle registration number on the electronic pad in the hall foyer each time you park. There is no charge for parking but failure to enter your number will almost certainly result in a heavy fine. If you are unsure what to do please ask for help.

9th November, David Hearn, “Sir William Brown – The man who made Liverpool”

14th December, the return of the ever popular, Sing Me Mersey

11th January, Bernard Smith, “Touching the World” – Bernard and his blind partner’s motorcycle trip around the world

8th February, Fran Sandham – “DR LIVINGSTONE, I PRESUME?” The story behind the legendary meeting in Africa in 1871 between the missing explorer Dr David Livingstone and the fame-hungry journalist Henry Morton Stanley. How their meeting proved to be the newspaper scoop of the century, bringing Stanley world fame and notoriety; the widespread controversy, hostility and personal ridicule Stanley faced on his return to Europe and America after finding Livingstone; why their meeting was such a sensational news story and why Stanley’s four words became the most famous greeting in history.

Remember to bring your current membership card to all u3a activities. The 2022 card is BLUE.

Coffee Mornings

Unfortunately, as we do not have a full committee despite extensive appeals, we are under resourced and combined with the lack of attendance on Thursdays, the Thursday Coffee Mornings are regrettably currently suspended until further notice. Committee members will be available on the Wednesday talk if you have any queries.