



Bootle Town Hall

Author, Val Hignett; photographs by Chris Vere.



When **Local History Group 8** visited Bootle Town Hall we were ushered into the Council Chamber where we had time to look around this splendid room. Our guide, Sean, informed us about the flags on display which were connected to the ships which have arrived in Bootle docks in years past. One flag belonged to The Starling, Captain Johnnie Walker's ship. There was a painting of the captain, the most successful anti-submarine commander of the Second World War and opposite, mounted on the wall, a replica of the gates to his house which stood just a few streets away. On the back wall of the chamber were plaques presented by captains of ships who made a visit to the town hall.

Magnificent stained glass windows showed the coats of arms of many Lancashire towns. The seating in the chamber was labelled with councillors' names and Sean explained how the seating separated the different parties (possibly to avoid trouble). Currently Labour has a large majority. Various rooms in the building displayed paintings of past dignitaries and the maces of Southport, Waterloo and Bootle, now jointly represented as Sefton. Each mace is topped by a crown to represent service to the monarch. This symbolism dates back hundreds of years, the mace being carried into the chamber at each sitting. There were numerous artefacts on display including an intricately decorated music box which Sean set going for us. Two robes as worn by past mayors and deputy mayors were on show - these being particularly popular with visiting school children, as they were allowed to put them on. Interestingly, male mayors wear a "Nelson" hat, whereas a lady mayor wears a tricorne hat.

A magnificent solid silver model of the town hall clock tower, standing about three feet high, was most impressive, but unfortunately no longer houses a clock as repairs are too expensive. The corridor displayed photographs of past mayors dating back to the early 19th century. Here also were the chains of office for Southport, Waterloo and Bootle

mayors. The current chain of office for Sefton is passed between mayors when they have a council meeting.

Upstairs is the ballroom with seating around the sides. A beautiful stained glass window looks down from the gallery. Unfortunately this room is no longer used for its original purpose. The Council Chamber is licensed to hold marriages and the ballroom has, in the past, been used for wedding receptions.



Sean was an enthusiastic and friendly guide who kept us all interested in the history of the Town Hall. We all had a most enjoyable visit.

National Waterways Museum



Author, Peter Kehoe.

Local History Group 5 paid a visit to the National Waterways Museum at Ellesmere Port. We travelled to the museum by Merseyrail, and then it was a pleasant 15 minute walk along a quiet road and canal towpath from the station to the entrance.

The museum is now part of the Canal and Rivers Trust. Our guide for the day, long-time volunteer Mike Turpin, gave us a presentation on the history of the canal and museum after which we had free time to explore the museum in more detail. The museum is located at the northern end of the Shropshire Union Canal that originally went only as far as Chester when opened in 1795. There was a direct connection from the canal to the River Mersey via a series of locks but when the Manchester Ship canal opened in 1891, this direct connection was lost. Access to the Mersey was still possible through the locks and along the Ship Canal. Canal traffic actually thrived because larger ships could now

enter the port from the Ship Canal and many more buildings were constructed to cope with the increased traffic. Canal traffic declined during the 1930s and 1940s due to competition from roads and railways, and ceased commercial operations in the 1950s. The site became derelict until the 1970s when volunteers started clearing the docks and repairing the historic buildings, with the museum opening in 1976. The site covers 7.5 acres of indoor and outdoor exhibitions, with many listed buildings and boats, and renovation work continues when finance is available.

There is a large fascinating collection of narrowboats and canal artefacts. It is possible to take a short canal cruise on one of the restored narrowboats. The site has a good café and it was an enjoyable day out with warm sunny weather.

Banks Hall



Author, Peter Musker.

Members of the **History Trips Group** assembled on a breezy day at Banks Hall, Bretherton. Our two guides, Judy and Janet met us at the gate and began our visit with a description of the hall in 1995 and of the formation of a preservation group. The history of the Hall could be traced back to the 17th century and it was known there had been a building on the site since the 14th century, sadly by the 1990's it was completely derelict and vandalised. The roof and a number of walls had collapsed after years of neglect. Fortunately, having a 'prospect tower', had given the Hall 'Listed Status' which enabled the volunteers to obtain grants, including from the National Lottery for renovation. The History group adjourned indoors for a welcome tea, coffee and cake before mounting the 73 steps to the top of the tower to enjoy the views over the countryside and a further talk on the history and former occupiers of the Hall. After retracing our steps, the Hall was viewed from the outside with an explanation of the various architectural features to be seen. Once again inside for a short film on the development of the hall from ruins to its present-day condition concluding with a visit to a room containing various artefacts that had been recovered during the rebuilding. The outside has been carefully rebuilt to resemble the Hall in its splendour but mainly using modern materials due to the shortage

of funds. The interior had been completely destroyed and no longer resembles its former glory, having been redesigned and rebuilt with modern materials with one wing converted into apartments for sale and rent to help provide funds for the future upkeep

Trips



Author, Helen Lewandowska.

Members on two coaches set out for Conwy and Bodnant Gardens. Sadly, the weather wasn't very kind to us and our morning in Conwy was a wet one. Luckily the afternoon brightened up and rain held off for most of the time which allowed us to walk round and explore the beautiful grounds. People reported having enjoyed the trip despite the weather which obviously is outside of our control. The Laburnum Arch pictured here impressed us all!



We had a very wet trip to the Lake District so we all put on a few pounds having to shelter in doors for most of the day. We even had a quiz in the Old England Hotel so might set up the u3a pub quiz team! As one member put it there so much rain it was funny in the end and I think we all made the best of the terrible conditions. Good weather must be due for next year trips as we have not been very lucky this year. The day is described very aptly by Ann Musker:



A very wet day saw us depart for a trip to the Lake District. Disappointingly, after a glorious spell of tropical weather, rain of monsoon proportions was to greet us on our arrival at Waterhead. Groups of us scrambled for the nearest shelter, mostly the local hotels and public houses! Fortunately it was time for coffee which was a good excuse.

A boat trip was booked for 12 noon and after reassembling at the jetty we boarded the vessel 'Tern' for the half hour trip to Bowness. Sadly, the rain was coming down in bucket fulls so we all retreated to the lower, fully covered deck and sadly were unable to get good views of the surrounding countryside as we made our way down Lake Windermere.

The rain had not relented as we retreated into Bowness to find shelter and lunch. Some of us made for the nearby McDonald Hotel and other members of the group braved the elements to find alternative shelter. After lunch as there was no improvement in the weather some decided to avail themselves of one of the hotel games in the hotel lounge.

When the rain did ease off, sometime was still available to set off and explore some of the shops in Bowness before making our way back to the coach and our return to Formby.

Retired Gardeners do AI!



Author, Christine Howorth (Chair Southport U3A)

Chelsea Flower Show launched their first Artificial Intelligence Garden this year, so Southport u3a thought they'd have a go too. Inspired by a fascinating RHS article on how Artificial Intelligence will transform gardening the team put their heads together.

Enthusiastic gardening members discussed how Artificial Intelligence was being used for commercial horticulture, research and AI gardening in the future. Seemingly unrealistic

for the residential gardens we knew where they were already using plant identification



apps, they thought what next? They brainstormed some rather splendid creative ideas. Luckily, Phil Allison, a member of both Formby and Southport u3a made the dream a reality with his clever garden design.



Southport u3a created a technology garden, harnessing newly available and futuristic techniques with a bit of 'tongue in cheek' to create another show garden at the Southport Flower Show in August. The design was submitted, accepted by the Show and a 9m square garden space was reserved in the main show garden area. The garden included innovative and futuristic garden concepts including hydroponics, sequestration carbon capture, renewable energy and automated plant hydration. There was a raised flower pond, a seemingly floating pergola with a water curtain, drone and actual robot management. A very beautiful garden using reclaimed landscape materials softened some interesting plants, talking trees and a lot of technical wizardry.

Hotter Shoes



Author, Peter Musker.

The Hotter Shoes shop on Lord Street was the meeting point for the **History Trips group**. There we were met by the manager, Hayley who introduced three of her assistants and it was interesting to note the company loyalty that all had been with the business for some considerable time. Light refreshments were available together with a goody bag for all containing mementoes of our visit. Hayley then gave a short talk on the history of the business and how it started in Skelmersdale in 1959 where they still had their factory. The business started by making slippers but soon diversified into shoes. Southport was their first shop and now one of 30.

The factory in Skelmersdale still makes the majority of their merchandise augmented with some shoes and materials imported from India, China and the Far East. Craftspeople work both by hand and with some machine help ensure consistent quality. The business went into receivership in 2023 but was saved by Woolovers and is now a significant manufacturer in the UK.

Hailey's assistants then modelled various styles of shoes from the companies varied ranges. Following this, we were invited to look around at the products on display and a generous discount was offered should anyone wish to make a purchase, an offer which was taken up by some of the party. Before concluding from our interesting visit Hailey had given everyone a raffle ticket and a lucky member of the party found themselves leaving with a voucher to spend in the shop.

To round off the afternoon, eleven of us enjoyed a meal together at the nearby Auberge Brasserie on nearby Seabank Road.

Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts



Author, Paula Parker.

Local History Group 16 travelled to visit LIPA, a Higher Education Institute in Mount Street, Liverpool.

LIPA is a world leading provider of university level performing and creative arts training. Their Lead Patron is Sir Paul McCartney who describes it as one of the best Performing Arts Schools in the World. LIPA is based on the site of the Liverpool Institute for Boys and opened its doors to the first intake of students in 1996 although looking very different now with additional buildings and transformation.

The day nearly started with disaster as our planned train was cancelled at short notice. Luckily we were able to contact our guide and push back our allocated viewing time. We met our organiser, Joe, who had kindly agreed to show us around. We started in the main hallway looking at photographs and memorable artefacts. We played spot the famous faces in the school photographs and definitely recognised Sir Paul McCartney.



We were able to look around all of the studios both performing and costume. We learnt we could sign up and be notified of future student productions that are available to all.

We were happy to donate to Institute funds at the end of the tour before going our separate ways in Liverpool to frequent our favourite cafes, restaurants, pubs etc. Definitely worth a visit especially if you have no working knowledge of LIPA.

Mary's Meals

Author, Andy Dickinson.

Our speakers at the July meeting were Pam Stephenson and Patsy Beaumont from the charity Mary's meals. The charity started life in 1992 as the 'Scottish International Relief' and was founded by Magnus McFarlane Barrow and his brother Fergus. Amazingly their work, which was largely based in Romania, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina at the time, had its HQ in a shed in a remote part of Scotland.

In 2002 Magnus travelled to Malawi. On his visit he met a 14-year-old boy called Edward. Edward was the eldest of six children, all sitting with their mother who was dying of AIDS. Magnus asked him what he hoped for in life and Edward replied: "I would like to have enough food to eat and to be able to go to school one day." That encounter led to the formation of Mary's Meals in 2002.

The charity which started in the UK, now works in 16 countries and has branches raising money in 20 different countries. The vision for Mary's Meals is that in every country where they work every child receives one meal a day in their school before lessons commence. The children often walk miles to school and receive their breakfast meal. The images we saw of happy smiling faces on the children were quite moving.

The work by the international branches of Mary's Meals ensures that over 2.25 million children receive a meal every school day. It costs only £19.15 to feed a child for a whole school year. In some cases, an Industry will sponsor an individual school but the charity relies as much from smaller donations from individuals and events run by schools, churches etc. One member of the audience asked if any governments of the countries

where they work ever got involved. The response from the Mary's Meals Liverpool Coordinator was "The simple answer is that we are there because the local governments/councils/tribe leaders - whoever it is that is in charge - are unable to provide these schools meals due to the levels of poverty. However, some governments have eventually been able to replicate the way we feed and so we have been able to withdraw from those areas with the promise that we can be contacted at any point if they need our advice or further help. This then means the money that was providing the programme there can be taken to either expand other programmes or start new ones."

The talk was very interesting, and for those who missed it, a visit to the Mary's Meals website provides more about the charity and stories about how small changes can transform lives.

Committee Vacancies

Author, Helen Lewandowska

We still need a **Speakers secretary** and as from next March u3a will need a new **Chair** as my 3-year term comes to an end. The Speaker's secretary is an easy role which just involves booking Speakers and turning up once a month on the Wednesday to set chairs out and greet members. I'm sure we have lots of members who could easily fulfil the role so please give it your consideration. Similarly, I know we have many professional members so if one of you could step forward to take the Chairs role that would be great.

New Members

Formby U3A is pleased to welcome the following new members.

Clive Bailey	John McNally
Lynn Bailey	Brian Moore
Lucia Coggins	Peter Moore
Ian Douglas	Tessa Parker
Alice Edwards	Judith Payet
Lesley Fleming	Ian Pickford
Bob Jackson	Jacki Pickford
Karen Jones	Paula Shanahan
Ann Kilner	Joan White
	Sue Wilson

Newsletter Potential Closure & Contributions

The current Newsletter Editor is stepping down from the role after editing almost 100 editions. It is a role that any member with word processing skills, an ability to receive and answer e-mails and edit text could undertake. Without a new editor Formby U3A Newsletter will publish its final copy with the December 2025 edition. If anyone feels able to step into the role, or would like more information, please contact the Chair (*see inside the back page*) or the newsletter editor (*below*).

Articles informing members of your group and its activities are always welcome. Please send contributions to the Editor: 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.

When submitting Newsletter reports could authors please ensure all article have:

- A title (not the group name/number) to reflect the activity (please feel free to be creative/attention grabbing).
- The author's name.
- The group name/number is included somewhere within the report.
- Photographs (no more than 3, please) relevant to the report, showing some or all members on the activity. Please ensure that all people shown in photographs are aware that photographs are being taken for inclusion in the Newsletter and may be shown on the Formby U3A website.
- Photos sent as one of the common picture format attachments (jpeg, png, tiff etc) to the report and not embedded in the text for the report. Please do not send photographs as a separate message as there is a risk they will not be identified as part of the group's report, nor embed them within the writing but send as an attachment to the submission.
- Photos submitted must be members' own photos as copyright of third parties' photos remains with the owner and the Newsletter cannot publish such photos.
- Please send submission to the newsletter editor asap after the event occurred and, where possible, are not sent within the final few days before a deadline.

Please remember, it is contributor's responsibility to check articles for grammar, spelling, punctuation etc, not the Newsletter Editor's.

Previous Newsletters: are available at: https://formbyu3a.org.uk/?page_id=331

Next (December '25) Newsletter

The deadline for the next Newsletter is midday 20th November at the latest. This will be the final Formby U3A Newsletter, unless a new Editor is found.

The next Newsletter can be viewed found at: https://formbyu3a.org.uk/?page_id=331 from 1st of December. Paper copies can be collected at the monthly meeting & coffee morning.

Formby U3A Committee 2025-26

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Monthly Meetings

Meetings are at 2.00 pm in Holy Trinity Parish Hall. **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.

Future speakers: If you have any suggestions of Speakers/talks that you think may be of interest to members, please email us at speakers@formbyU3a.org.uk or use the suggestion box at monthly meetings.

10th Sept It'll All Come Out In The Wash, David Kinson. The Hidden World Of Commercial Laundry. Commercial laundry is a hidden sector but with a real impact it has on everything we do.

8th Oct The Day the Music Died, John Coventry. Myths and legends galore have grown up around the 1959 crash that took the lives of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the Big Bopper. This presentation examines the crash, what led up to it, its aftermath, and tries to answer the questions that still hang in the air. Even though the subject is sad (we all know the ending), the music is still great!

12th Nov Formby Lifeboat, Nic Dickson. Formby had the first Lifeboat in the world in 1776, 250 years ago next year. This informative and entertaining presentation, with pictures, history, song and humour will cover the story of our Lifeboat from the early 18th Century to the present day.

10th Dec Christmas Show.

Please remember that you need to show your **2025 Membership Card** at all events, including group activities.

Coffee Morning will be from **10:30 to 12:00** on the 2nd Thursday of the month. These will be held in the Workshop, Holy Trinity Church, with free coffee and the chance to pick up information about other groups and meet some of your committee.

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