Durning Road Air Raid Shelter

In the early hours of 29 November 1940, during the heaviest air raid to date, a parachute mine hit the Junior Instruction Centre in Durning Road, collapsing into the shelter below and crushing many of its 300 occupants. Boiling water from the central heating system and gas from fractured mains poured in. Raging fires overhead also made rescue work extremely dangerous. In all, 166 men, women and children were killed. Many more were badly injured. On the November 28th more than 150 people attended a memorial service to remember 160 victims of the Blitz bombing of the Durning Road air raid shelter in Edge Hill in the early hours of November 29, 1940. Killing more than half of those seeking refuge from the Luftwaffe bombardment. People who lost loved ones including mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers attended the ceremony at Kensington Primary School, singing hymns, saying prayers and listening to memories of what Winston Churchill described as “the single worst civilian incident of the war”. The memorial service was the first time many in attendance saw the plaque inscribed with the names of the dead which has been kept at the Anglican Cathedral for many years. The plaque will now be permanently displayed at the school.

Wearing my other hat answering Liverpool history questions for the Liverpool History Society via their Questions Blog, I recall an event relating to the Liverpool May 1940 blitz when a bomb landed in the coal store of Lister Drive Power Station. The subsequent explosion showered coal across the area around Green Lane. It was reported by the time the fire brigade arrived to quench the fire that had broken out in the power station, the majority of the coal littering the area had mysteriously disappeared. It is good to hear that the residents of Green Lane did their bit to keep the city tidy.

Liverpool Monuments is requesting details of drinking fountains in the Liverpool area (like the one to the right), but not the one in Old Hall Street. If you know of any please contact Pat Neill at liverpoolmonuments@gmail.com

Streets of Liverpool - An online photographic archive about Liverpool. If you have not yet visited the excellent Streets of Liverpool web site then give yourself a Christmas treat. It is a web site dedicated to old photographs of Liverpool containing some of the best quality photographs available on the internet.

Founding Beatles member Pete Best could soon have a street in Liverpool named in his honour. The fab-four's first drummer, has been included in a list of names that Liverpool City Council want recognise when naming new roads. Best has been included for what a council spokesman said is his 'special contribution' to the city's musical heritage.

Liverpool's got talent
WHAT do Keith Chegwin, Sir Simon Rattle, Janice Long, Claire Sweeney and Ray Quinn all have in common? They've all won awards at Liverpool's longest-running talent competition - the Liverpool Performing Arts Festival. The competition takes place in February and March 2011 at St. George's Hall and is the perfect platform for budding performers to show off their skills. Entrants are welcome from across the country - they don't have to live in Liverpool.
The Liverpool City Council has a list of people it would like to honour with street names and one of them was a Beatle. It’s not John, George, Paul or Ringo, but none other than Pete Best. They want to honour him for his "special contribution" to the city.

Lucky thirteen for Pier Head
The Pier Head Liverpool Canal Link has scooped another prestigious accolade - bringing its total number of awards to 13. The scheme, delivered by Liverpool City Council in partnership with British Waterways, has just been named a winner in the National Natural Stone Federation Awards and last week received a prestigious national design award from the Landscape Institute. Previous national accolades have included a RIBA, (Royal Institute of British Architects) prize, a national RIBA Cabe Space award, as well as Project of the Year in the North West Construction Awards and a British Construction Industry gong. The Pier Head Public Realm works was a £9m scheme which complemented the £18.5m Canal Link extension, delivered by British Waterways and the contractor was Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering Ltd. The project was completed in Summer 2009.

Localism Bill
Under the forthcoming Localism Bill, neighbourhoods will be given the power to takeover planning responsibilities held by local councils, allowing households to redevelop their properties with significantly less red tape. Neighbourhoods will be able to agree on improvements residents can make without planning permission, such as loft conversions and conservatories. Residents will also be given the power to approve or reject new housing developments, schools and other public buildings in their areas.

Festival of Health and Activity 2011
AN INVITATION TO EXHIBIT LIFESTYLES TENNIS CENTRE, WAVERTREE, LIVERPOOL
Sunday 20 March 2011 10:30AM – 4:30PM
The Festival Health & Activity 2011 is a fun informative festival, and a great opportunity for organisations to showcase and encourage families to take up healthier lifestyles. Sport & Recreation Services is offering local partners and organisations the opportunity to come and exhibit at the festival and promote their services in an interactive environment, raise awareness and motivate local audiences. The event is being offered to organisations by invitation only. The 2011 event is sponsored by Liverpool PCT. The event will be marketed by leaflet distribution, adverts in local press, radio, poster campaign on buses, leisure centres, libraries, GP practices and health centres.

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST by 19 December. Email to: Liz.lamb@liverpool.gov.uk
Stating your: Company name Company address Contact name Telephone Email …and what activity will you be doing on your stand? Power requirements? Any other requirements?

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all the LCHForum members and our contacts a merry Christmas and best wishes for the coming new year.

Liverpool Firsts
1953 Liverpool's Lita Roza is the first woman to top the pop charts
1959 National Westminster opens the first drive-in bank
1958 Everton FC are the first English football club to install under soil pitch heating.
1959 First mass x-ray campaign
1960 Martin's Bank is the first bank to use a computer
1962 The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company is the first port authority to use a computer.

"I am a passionate believer that Britain has benefited the whole world and that our heritage, our culture, our values and more importantly our people who created those things, are worth fighting for.” Steve Blake

Rob Ainsworth
King John Around Town

Roger McGough’s regular pieces on BBC Radio 4 are just one reminder of Liverpool’s place in the world of poetry. At the Roscoe lecture at St George’s Hall on 29 November, Lord Alton, in presenting a copy of George Chandler's book on William Roscoe to the evening’s lecturer, Lord Justice Sir Brian Leveson, commented that Roscoe as well as being a leader of the anti-slavery campaign in England was a man of culture and a poet. Chandler's book contains nearly 300 pages of Roscoe’s poetry. At a more modest but more contemporary level, two of the students at Childwall School, Morgan Sefton and Emma Marsden, were successful entrants this autumn in the Liverpool Poetry of Place competition. They were presented to Gillian Clarke, the Welsh National Poet, were awarded prizes and had their poems published along with that of other prize winners.

Alan Brack wrote in the recent Wirral Society newsletter about a project entitled “Great Trees of Wirral”. This makes reference to the fine trees in Flaybrick Cemetery in Birkenhead (which is one of only five in Britain to be accredited by the Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe.) The Flaybrick website will provide information about notable trees all over Wirral. I sometimes wonder if time stands still for some in the University of Liverpool. I commented several times over recent months about a notice outside the School of Music advertising musical events which took place two year previously. These have at last been removed. Last Saturday I noted that the clock on the Victoria Building is about ten minutes slow. I remarked on this to a lady in a nearby coffee shop. "Oh, it's been like that for several months", she said. Do the authorities not realise the impression this gives to locals and visitors alike? It's as though nobody cares. (Part of the building, the original "red brick university" by the way, is inscribed as being the engineering department of what was than (1880) the University College. An inscription on another part says that it was the Library donated by Sir Henry Tate (of sugar fame). Tate is yet another noteworthy Liverpudlian whose works are hardly recognised in the city today.

I have sometimes wondered why the universities do not make more of their past and their present by having small exhibitions of their achievements where the public can see them. A room in the principal building or each of our universities, open to the public, could chart the main points of the institutions’ origins, describe the scope of present day teaching and research and highlight their biggest achievements. The universities should show off a bit more and encourage the people of the city to share in their successes.

Are Stoke-on-Trent and Milton Keynes as culturally deserving than Liverpool?

As we have said in the past, Liverpool is starved of opera. Places such as Stoke-on-Trent and Milton Keynes have the Glyndebourne Opera's Touring company a couple of times a year. Liverpool has Welsh National Opera twice. Does Liverpool with all its great cultural traditions not deserve better than this? Last year I asked why Glyndebourne Touring does not come to Liverpool. A manager replied that north west England is already well provided with opera – which could hardly be further from the truth! This year, I heard that Glyndebourne had been "warned off" coming to Liverpool by Opera North - which comes no nearer than Manchester! If Liverpool had had, if it had now, an effective arts champion, perhaps this would not be the situation. I went to the Victoria Theatre at Stoke the other night to see Glyndebourne’s La Cenerentola. I spoke with five other people from Merseyside whom I knew in the audience, which may prove the level of interest in opera there is in Liverpool and that people will travel distances to see it. I also met a lady who had come from Edinburgh to the performance. Some of these people stayed overnight in the Potteries. Good quality cultural events do bring money into town.

The Welsh National has an active Friends group in Liverpool. They could lobby the company’s HQ in Cardiff, city much better provided with opera than Liverpool, and also Liverpool City Council for the opera to come here more often. (Though whether they would get a response form either is a matter for speculation). Opera-loving readers living in the boroughs
around Liverpool could urge their Councils to maintain their contributions to WNO performances in the city. The residents of these boroughs benefit from culture in the city and the city’s culture boosts the attractiveness of these boroughs as places for inward investment. If we are to have in the future a City Mayor and be ruled by a Local Employment Area Council, as is forecast, it is to hoped that they will pay attention to the benefits of having high grade music here, benefits which are economic as well as cultural and social.

At Stoke, it was interesting to hear that that one of the soloists, Nicholas Mulroy, and two members of the chorus, David Butt Philip and Michael Wallis had been in the choir of Liverpool’s Metropolitan Cathedral.

Conducting the Phil
Meanwhile, along with the England’s three other major classical orchestras in the English provinces (in Manchester, Birmingham and Bournemouth), the Phil is to suffer a 6.9% cut in its Arts Council funding. This highlights the importance of the Phil’s well-developed system of Members, Patrons and Sponsors. These arrangements allow supporters opportunities to be in close touch with the Phil’s people and activities and are not treated just as begging bowls, as some members of certain other Friends organisations are.

There is a graded system of Members. For £100 a year, for example, one becomes a Silver Member. This provides opportunities to meet members of the orchestra, conductors and soloists. It also permits attendance at some of the orchestra’s rehearsals. During these, the conductor is obviously facing the orchestra so the handful of Members attending can’t always hear what sweet (or other) words the maestro is saying to his troops. Having no musical qualification myself, I am intrigued that some conductors of classical music seem mainly to just beat time, whereas others, like Vasili Petrenko, are obviously in total command of every member of the orchestra and are willing them to play the exactly kind of music they want.

I have boyhood memories of that great conductor (greatest of them all?), Sir Thomas Beecham, who was spoken of as “Tommy” by his players (though most certainly not to within his hearing!). At one concert at the Phil he turned on his podium and addressed the audience, which at that time was not all the done thing. “In all my years”, he drawled, “I have never been at a concert where the printed programmes were in every respect correct. But never, I regret to have to tell you, have I conducted at a concert, as is the case this evening, where one whole work to be played has been omitted from the printed information distributed to you”. It was Beecham who once remarked: “The English may not like music, but they absolutely love the noise it makes.”

Another memory of the Phil is of a 1980s day when the conductor of the evening, Norman del Mar, of the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, turned to the audience before beginning the concert and said: “Ladies and Gentlemen, this may be the last concert you will ever hear in this hall. The government is abolishing Merseyside County Council, which is the sponsoring body for the arts in Merseyside, without to date making any alternative provision for future funding”. As it turned out, other arrangements were eventually made and the Phil survives, gloriously. But we should not trust too far those people down in London who are in charge of the purse strings.

A fund-raising thought: What would the Phil charge to let generous subscribers conduct the orchestra for a few minutes, even in a rehearsal? Could be a money-spinner. But then the players might not like it.

Adolf Hitler, John Masefield and futtocks
When a new sign was put up at the John Masefield pub in New Ferry, the locals said that the portrait on it looked like Adolf Hitler. Assuming that it was in fact meant to represent the former poet laureate, why here? The answer is that the bard (and also Ian Duncan Smith and Christ Woodward) were pupils aboard the wooden cadet training ship HMS Conway which was moored for many years alongside New Ferry. This former battleship (originally HMS Nile) was built in 1839, saw action in the Crimean War and in the Caribbean and was moored in the Mersey in 1876, replacing a ship of the same name which had been in the Mersey since 1857.
It was relocated in the Menai Straits in 1941 to escape the German blitz and then ran on to rocks in 1953 while being moved to Birkenhead for a refit. It was later destroyed by fire. Congratulations to the pub for putting up photos of the ship and information about its history. One of the photos shows cadets climbing the “futtocks”. (A new word for you? I had to look it up myself. It means the rigging of a sailing ship).

**Behind the time**
Why is the clock on the red-brick, original Victoria Building of Liverpool University ten minutes slow and has been slow for weeks, according to a local shop keeper? Not a very good advertisement for a university.

*Andrew Pearce*