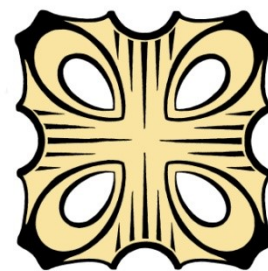


# THE WOOLTON SOCIETY

[www.wooltonsociety.org.uk](http://www.wooltonsociety.org.uk)

**ISSUE NO 357 Winter 2021**

THE WOOLTON SOCIETY - SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS



## NEWSLETTER



**Woolton Hall, a Grade 1 listed building.**

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# *Society News*

The past year has been an unprecedented one for everyone, with the nation in limbo & life as we knew it coming to a halt. When the programme of events was cancelled in March it could not be foreseen that nearly a year would pass before talks could be held again, & even then that they would be in a form that had been not been used before by the Woolton Society. However we must all learn to use the new technology if it allows us to meet again, even if online. The majority of WS members now receive their newsletter via email, & even more have access to computers, tablets & smart phones. The WS talks will be held online for the foreseeable future, until the time comes when we can all meet up again safely in St Mary's hall. It is hoped that many members will embrace the new normal, & log on to the online talks. This will also be a chance for the many long distance members to access the talks programme.

The WS is not alone in taking this step, as both the local W.I groups have moved to online. All have recognised that the alternative to online meetings is to have no meetings at all.

**Members will be sent a link to access the talks a few days before each event. Non-members wishing to hear the talk will find membership forms on the website.**

## **The Woolton Society's officers & committee 2020/21**

The annual general meeting was not held in November 2020, but all the officers & committee agreed to stay in post for the following year. However the WS has continued to operate, with committee meetings being held online. The membership secretary & treasurer have both been particularly busy, with subscriptions being paid from early October, & the account books sent off to be scrutinised in the same month. The books were not returned to the treasurer until December. The treasurer customarily reports to the AGM, with copies of the yearly accounts for all attendees. Copies of the accounts have been printed; those wishing for a copy should apply to the treasurer.

Officers & committee are as follows:

Chairman: Jean Davies

Vice chairman & hon secretary: Paul Wilkie

Membership secretary: Jean Bates

Treasurer: Charles Davies

Environment secretary: Janet Hudson

Committee members: Bob Collins, Mike Cullen, Alan Grant, John Hibbert, Viv Hicks, Janet Hollinshead, Rob Kirby

## **The Woolton Society's programme of events for 2021**

The talks will follow our usual pattern of most talks on Wednesday evenings at 7.30, with the February & October talks on Thursday afternoons at 3pm. Unfortunately, for the time being, members will have to provide their own refreshments for the afternoon talks. Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible. The parish administrator at St Mary's will notify the society as soon as the Archdiocese of Liverpool considers it safe to open the halls to public use.

### **Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February at 3pm, Ken Pye: The lost history of Woolton**

Well-known local speaker Ken Pye has a large repertoire of local history talks, & has written several books on this topic. He is a WS member, & has offered to use his considerable experience in leading the very first online meeting. This promises to be a fascinating talk, a must for all those with interest in the history of our village.

Members will be sent a link to access the talk a few days before the event.

### **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm, Marie Passey: Duke Street**

Blue Badge guide Marie Passey led our last guided walk, which was around the Hope Street area of the city centre in July 2019. Her subject now is the historic Duke Street & its environs.

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April at 7.30pm, Elaine Allen: The little red box.**

Tour guide Elaine Allen will be speaking on the history of the telephone box, which it should be remembered, was designed by the architect of Liverpool's Anglican cathedral, Giles Gilbert Scott. A little red box of his design can be found inside this great building.

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm, Rob Kirby: the Dam Busters Raid of May 1943**

WS committee member Rob Kirby gave a very well received talk to a packed audience in February 2019. This was on the development of the AVRO Manchester, the legend behind the Lancaster bomber. Rob mentioned the Dam Busters raid in his talk, & so was immediately booked to speak on this subject as soon as possible. This promises to be an equally informative evening.

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm: Quiz Night**

This will be the fourth quiz night although it may well be the first with participants playing from home. The defending champions are The Layton Ramblers who won the coveted trophy in June 2019.

No talks or events are planned for July or August. Fuller details of the Summer & Autumn programmes will be in newsletters 358 & 359.

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm: Chris Tigwell, The Rainhill Trials**

The Rainhill Trials of 1829 were held to test locomotive power for the Liverpool to Manchester railway which was then under construction. Five locomotives were entered in the trials, with Stephenson's *Rocket* the only one to complete the course. This was a pivotal moment in the history of transport.

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> October at 3pm, Stephen Guy: Forgotten Liverpool, aristocracy & merchants.**

The West Derby Society's Stephen Guy, a well-known local historian & writer will be speaking on the people who made Liverpool the second city of empire in the nineteenth century.

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm: 49<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Woolton Society**

It is to be hoped that this AGM will be held at St Mary's hall, & that as many members as possible will be able to attend. Refreshments are planned!

It should be noted that the WS will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2022, so an item on the agenda could well be suggestions on how best to mark the occasion.

**Plaques Project**

The Woolton Society's plaques project began in 2019, with the aim of commemorating people or places of note in the village. The first plaques were installed & handed over to the property owners in November 2019 & January 2020, with a full report of both occasions in issue 353 of the newsletter. Since then the project has been on hold, but talks are now being held with a view to installing a further tranche of plaques this year.

Woolton House medical centre is intended to be the site of the first plaque, to commemorate Dr Carl Warner. Dr Warner was a GP who served with distinction in the war, being awarded the Military Cross in 1942. He returned to his practice in Woolton after the war, was a founder member of the Woolton Society, & later chairman & president.

A plaque is also planned for the old school house in School Lane, the oldest building in the village, with the date 1610 over the doorway. The funding for the school came at least partly from Edward Norris, of Speke Hall & Norris Green fame who made a bequest of £60 in 1606 for the salary of a schoolmaster in Woolton. The building has been through many transformations over the centuries, & is currently a nursery school.

The current owners of the medical centre & the old school are all enthused by the plan to install a plaque on their premises, & as listed buildings permission will be required the process of application has been started.

Other projected sites under discussion are the former convent on Woolton Street, the former court house & police station on Quarry Street, the Dolphin Lamp in the village centre, & the Village Club on

Allerton Road. All plaques will be in the society's house style in terms of shape, size & colour, that is, all will be circular & in a shade known as *Duchess blue*. The three plaques already installed are on 38 Linkstor Road, the former library on Allerton Road, & the Mechanics Institute on St Mary's Street. All the plaques will be made by Photocast, a nationally known company which is based in Speke. It is hoped that there will be three or more plaques installed this year, allowing for listed buildings consent, which takes around eight weeks, & up to two weeks for the plaques to be made at Photocast. It has been the custom to have a small ceremony when each plaque is unveiled, with the building owners present. In the case of the plaque to Edgar Menzies, his daughters & grandchildren were invited to see the unveiling by Chief Constable Andy Cooke. If anyone should have contact details for Dr Warner's son, or any other family members, we would be very pleased to receive them so that an invitation could be sent.

### **The Woolton Spitfire**

In November WS member & aeroplane enthusiast Bryan Workman contacted the society about his discovery of a local fund raising effort during the war, resulting in a Spitfire plane, number R7199 which had been named *Woolton* in 1941. It was then sent to join number 24 squadron based at Hendon. Mr Workman found that during the war it was not unusual for communities to club together to fund planes for the RAF.

This was clearly a subject for our resident plane buff Rob Kirby to investigate further. Rob discovered that the *Woolton* had been a joint project between our own residents & employees at Lewis's store in central Liverpool. His researches showed that such Presentation Aircraft as they were known were named for their funders, & R7199's full title was *Woolton/Lewis's Ltd*. The plane was sent initially to 24 squadron and then on to 501 squadron which was an active service unit. The plane was recorded as having been damaged in a flying accident in January 1944, returning to service in September of that year, & listed as "struck off charge" in December 1944.

It should be remembered here that the general manager of Lewis's store in central Liverpool had been one Frederick Marquis, later ennobled as Lord Woolton, the wartime Minister for Food, & famous for Woolton pie. Mr Marquis lived in Woolton at the time, & the clear inference is that his employees at Lewis's & his neighbours in Woolton were all involved in a joint fund raising effort for the Spitfire. Mr Marquis was ennobled in order to enter the government, as he was not a member of Parliament. He took his title from his place of residence, as he lived in Hillfoot Villa on School Lane, now demolished with new housing on the site. The full story of Lord Woolton's career, & his house, can be found in WS pamphlets numbers 2 & 3, written by Dr Janet Hollinshead.

Rob is currently searching for a photograph of R7199, which is thought to be on file at the Imperial War Museum. When found it will be featured in a future newsletter.

We are indebted to Mr Workman for bringing this previously unknown subject to our attention, & also to Rob Kirby for his research with the Spitfire Society. It is certain that there will be a very large audience for his talk on The Dam Busters raid to be held in May, & possibly a WS pamphlet on the Woolton Spitfire?

### **Markets and merchandise.**

There have been few markets held in the village recently, & it is not known when they will be allowed to open again. The WS will be taking part, as the markets have been found to give excellent publicity for the talks & publications, as well as attracting new members.

WS member Stuart Rimmer has now published a second edition of his book *The Old Inns & Taverns of Woolton* which will be sold on the stall. The new edition is an enlarged one, with several new entries & illustrations.

Also stocked is the memoir *Just Like Starting Over*, written by WS member Charles Roberts. This is an account of his teenage years with his friend John Lennon. There are many interesting photographs in the book, which is priced at £15.

There are also WS publications *History of Much Woolton*, priced at £3, & *Woolton Stone & Liverpool Cathedral*, priced at £5.

In stock are also five pamphlets on local history matters. These are entitled *Woolton Hall* (number 1); *Who was Lord Woolton* (number 2); *Hillfoot Villa* (number 3); *Woolton Walks* (number 4); *Woolton's Convalescent Home* (number 5). Pamphlets 1, 2 & 3 were written by committee member Dr Janet Hollinshead, & number 4 by Jean Davies. Pamphlet 5 was co-written by Dr Hollinshead with Paul Wilkie. All pamphlets are priced at £1. A new tea towel with images of the village will be produced later in the year, as this was always a steady seller on the stall.

Copies of WS publications, though not the pamphlets, as well as *The Old Inns & Taverns of Woolton* can be found in the meantime at Brown's newsagent on Woolton Street. *Woolton Stone & Liverpool Cathedral* is on sale in the bookshop of the Anglican Cathedral on Hope Street.

### **Fly posting in the village**

Recently there has been an outbreak of fly posting in the village, with one of the offending posters being pasted across the Woolton Society notice board on Allerton Road. This announced in bold letters that the pandemic was a hoax, & that our own government is waging psychological warfare on us. It was the work of The White Rose, according to the poster. More were found pasted across bus stops & flat surfaces in the village & up Church Road. They were removed by concerned residents, & the police were notified. Fly posting is an offence, & it is extremely concerning that such misinformation should be broadcast in a time of national emergency. The police have promised to investigate, & that officers will keep a look out for any more instances of fly posting.

### **From the archives: a very occasional glance at past issues of the newsletter.**

With both Woolton Hall & the old school in School Lane being referenced in this issue it was interesting to discover that the properties feature in issue number 1, dated July 1973. This is a verbatim extract from that issue.

#### WOOLTON HALL

Arising out of the application for permission to demolish Woolton Hall in January 1972 an architects report on the condition of the fabric has been drawn up by one of our members Miss Gnosselius, & is being sent to the printers this month. This report is to assist the Council in its decision as to whether the application is to be granted or refused.

#### OLD SCHOOL

You will remember that at our "Brains Trust" meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> April we discussed The Old School in School Lane (c.1610) which is in the custody of the Recreation & Open Spaces Department (late Parks & Gardens) & asked what action they could take to prevent further deterioration, especially of the roof. You will be glad to know that we have had assurance from them that they will carry out minor repairs to make the building weatherproof, & we are arranging to have a survey made by our member Mr Pietka to establish the structural state of the building.

Issue number 1 was only two pages long but packed with information. It listed sites to be included in Operation Eyesore, a proposal to pedestrianise part of Woolton Street from the zebra crossing to the junction with High Street, & also an invitation to the Woolton Show on August 27<sup>th</sup>, when the Woolton Society stall would have "*many interesting things to see*".

Issue number 2 in April 1974 reported that the planning application to demolish Woolton Hall had been refused by the council on the grounds that it was a listed building & not beyond repair. Unfortunately the *interesting things* to be found on the Woolton Show stall were not recorded.



As the society looks forward to its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, & the hall is still a cause of great concern, it is to be hoped that a future newsletter editor will not be writing about the further deterioration of Woolton Hall in issue 557 in the year 2072.

## *Environment, Planning News & Applications*

### **Woolton Hall**

In October 2020, just as newsletter 356 was about to be sent to print, news came that Historic England had published its annual register of buildings at risk without any mention of Woolton Hall. There was just time to insert a short paragraph reporting this, & promising more news later, before the newsletter had to be finished.

Vigorous representations were sent to Historic England from both the WS's environment secretary & the chairman. Eventually an apology for the omission was received, with the excuse being that staff from Historic England had not been able to visit the building in person because of Covid restrictions & so had not included the hall in its Heritage at Risk 2020 North West Register. This is despite the fact that the hall has been on the register for many years. The HE staff member was asked if all the buildings which were in the new register had been visited in person, but no satisfactory reply was received. Again, it was asked if Woolton Hall was deemed to have stopped falling down since it had last been seen. Again, the reply was silence.

The HE staff member has promised that Woolton Hall will be in its next *At Risk* register. Let us hope that it is still standing by then.



Woolton Hall has been a source of concern for many years, with much comment recently on social media about its condition. The Woolton Society was founded in 1972 when the hall was threatened with demolition, & though it was saved from the wrecking ball it has become increasingly derelict over the years. It had been in regular use as a function room by the previous owner, but the current owners have seen fit to close it up & it lies empty & unused. An offer of £2.5 million to buy it was turned down as not enough some years ago. The offer was from a hotel group who planned to use the hall as a wedding venue. This would have

been an ideal use as there is little land left with the hall, as the new St Julie's school's car park is a very short distance from the back wall. There is however a grand & sweeping drive to the front, & an impressive entrance. The hall is a Grade 1 listed building, & it is shameful that it has been allowed to rot.

The Woolton Society & the local councillors, particularly Malcolm Kelly, have been persistent in trying to contact the current owners, to find out their plans, if any, for the hall. All attempts, over many years, have been ignored. The council's conservation officers have also tried & failed to engage with the owners. We shall all persevere in our attempts to save the hall, & members will be notified of any progress.

These photographs of the hall show clear signs of deterioration & vandalism. How much longer will this state of affairs continue? What will make the owners take responsibility for their property?

### **From the Website**

WS member Steven Kenny has sent a link to ASCO's report on the problem of pavement parking. ASCO, the Association of Consumer Support Organisations, was responding to a consultation document published by the Department of Transport, namely *Pavement Parking: options for change*. The problem of cars & lorries blocking the pavements has been well documented in previous newsletters, as well as in the local press. Three years ago several WS committee members, with a uniformed Police Support Officer & then councillor Alice Bennett attempted to walk down Church Road at 3.30pm. The road was in gridlock, with cars parked on both sides of the road, on the pavements & across junctions. The pavements were difficult to negotiate, causing problems to anyone with mobility issues or pushing a pram. Motorists were uncooperative when asked to move, even when the request came from the uniformed officer. If the roads are less congested in 2021 it is only because the schools are not fully open & traffic density is lower. Undoubtedly the problems of selfish & dangerous parking will return as soon as the schools open again.

It should be remembered that pavement parking is illegal in London, but not in other parts of the country. London has a lower rate of car ownership per head, as well as an infinitely superior system of public transport. Londoners also know that stringent penalties are meted out to any transgressions, with cars towed away, & heavy fines imposed. Traffic wardens abound, & can be seen patrolling at all hours of the day & over weekends. Not so in Liverpool, where wardens are rarely seen & motorists know that they can escape penalties even with dangerous & illegal parking.

ASCO's report comments on this situation & is well worth reading in full. The report can be found on ASCO's website: [www.asco.org.uk](http://www.asco.org.uk) then on the members' page.

### **Planning Applications**

The Woolton Society has been unable to access planning applications for this edition of the newsletter. It is known that the council's planning officers are working from home, but this should not prevent access to information which ought to be freely available. The society has asked for many years to be sent automatic updates of all planning applications from the L25 area, requests which have fallen on deaf ears. The current list of applications has been requested for some weeks now, without any result. It is hoped that a full report of all local applications will be in future editions of the newsletter, if & when the WS is allowed to access the planning register.

A member has contacted the website to ask about land on Speke Road, between Camp Road & Jeudwine Close. This land, with historic sandstone walls, has now been fenced off with a sign saying that it is private property. Residents with any information on this are asked to contact the society via the website [www.wooltonociety.org.uk](http://www.wooltonociety.org.uk)

No news either of the planned development at Woolton Manor, where an estate of million pound eco houses is proposed by Rushton Properties. This development is on Green Wedge land, & was vigorously opposed by the Woolton Society.

*Springhill* a property at the far end of Runnymede Close was bought by a developer in 2019 with the intention of demolishing the existing building to erect a block of flats. This is planning application **19F/1748**. As the land has an elevated position this would have a severely detrimental impact on the existing properties on Runnymede Close, as well as on Woolton Park as the plan is to create a new entrance to the flats on the higher road. A concerned resident has now contacted the WS to report word that the development company intends to purchase the land where the telephone exchange is sited on Woolton Park, opposite the Bishop's Lodge. More news as we have it.

# Woolton News

## Woolton in Bloom

The very popular calendar has now sold out, with many thanks going to Brown's newsagent on Woolton Street which sold over 100 copies. The calendar was advertised as *Woolton's Hidden Gardens* as the Open Gardens event had to be cancelled in July last year.

It is not yet known if the garden event will be held in 2021, or held over until 2022. Gardeners & residents will be notified in due course.

Planting in the village continues, led as ever by horticultural manager Kerry Peacock. Those wishing to help should contact Kerry or any of the regular volunteers as they work in the village. There is usually a WiB stall at the market where enquiries may be made.

For more information & pictures go to the WiB site on [www.wooltoninbloom.wix.com/wooltoninbloom](http://www.wooltoninbloom.wix.com/wooltoninbloom)

## Friends of Reynolds Park

The FORP meetings have not been held recently, but it is hoped that members will take part in the Great Spring Clean organised by the Keep Britain Tidy group. This is planned for dates between May 28<sup>th</sup> & June 13<sup>th</sup>. In the past FORP has organised litter picks in & around the park, which have been very successful in terms of keeping the park in good order.

The Friends have also applied for funding for further development of the wildflower meadow, & another fixture in the children's play area.

FORP chairman Geoff Kendall has objected on behalf of the Friends to a planning application made by Liverpool football club regarding Stanley Park. The club has plans for developing part of the park, which is grade 2\* listed. Geoff has objected on the grounds that there is no necessity for the club to take park land & also because of the environmental impact it would have. Stanley Park is in Walton, an area with little green space & many houses are without gardens. Open green space, once taken, will never be regained.

FORP may be found online at:

[www.friendsofreynoldspark.co.uk](http://www.friendsofreynoldspark.co.uk)  
[www.twitter.com/reynoldsparkfrs](https://www.twitter.com/reynoldsparkfrs)

[www.facebook.com/friendsofreynoldspark](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofreynoldspark)  
[www.instagram.com/reynoldsparkfrs](https://www.instagram.com/reynoldsparkfrs)

## The Womens Institute

Both the local W.I groups have turned to Zoom meetings in the past year. The Woolton Wanderers & the Women of Woolton (WOW) have taken successfully to online meetings, with quiz nights, book clubs & craft sessions as well as general meetings with a speaker.

In all cases a link is sent to members a few days before the meetings, so that everyone knows the date & time well in advance. The meetings have been very successful, confirming that new technology is not to be feared.