

Music at the Manor

The year 1893 saw one of those inspired moments in history when, by chance, a fascinating story began to unfold.

William, the first Viscount Leverhulme, purchased Thornton Manor, a modest country house, in which he, his wife Elizabeth Ellen and his son William Hulme would make their home. Twenty-five years of reconstruction and alterations under the Viscount's detailed instructions and personal scrutiny made the manor and grounds into the breathtaking residence that we see today.



Music was an important part of the Leverhulme family's life, as well as being a part of his entertaining of friends and important visitors. Picture the scene – ladies in finery and gentlemen in high stiff collars would take the air round the landscaped grounds before proceeding into the entrance hall where drinks would be served.

At a sign from a uniformed attendant, those present would gather in the splendid 1902 Music Room. Here,

they would be entertained by some of the most celebrated musicians of the day. One of the features the Viscount had added was a pipe organ, built into a small balcony overlooking the assembled guests – a unique feature, even among great houses.

An imaginative look into a time long gone, perhaps, but there are plans to bring back to life Viscount Leverhulme's original dream of creating a family house in which friends would gather to enjoy the lovely surroundings and relax in good company.

The team that intend to make this a reality has the same imagination and sense of history as had the Viscount himself. As part of the Wirral Arts Festival, the Orchestra dell'Arte, together with the present owners of the manor will be hosting a trio of top artists from the Welsh National Opera in an intimate recreation of a musical house party from the earliest days of the Music Room.

Once more, the superbly decorated and furnished space will resonate to some of the very best voices in the UK. Known by the collective name of Volante, and in the company of international concert pianist John Gough, soprano Emma Mary Llewellyn, tenor Simon Crosby Buttle and baritone Julian Boyce will perform some of the best known items from the world of grand opera and musical theatre.

The programme ranges from the intrigue and lascivious antics of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the sun-drenched arena and tragedy of Bizet's *Carmen*, and the comic but dangerous meddling with a legacy of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, to the charm and innocence of Gilbert and Sullivan's foray into the craze for all things from the Far East of that time, *The Mikado*.

Along the way, Volante will not forget to spice up the programme with a delightful duet between two spiky felines and a loving tribute to the land of Wales.

On Monday 8 October 2018, Music at the Manor will commence in the original way, with drinks and canapés served from 6.45pm to the sounds of music played by the Hillcrest Ensemble. Following in the historic footsteps of the Viscount's guests, we will stroll in the grounds until summoned to the Music Room at 7.45pm, at which time the years will roll away and we will be swept along on wings of song.

As the music plays and the evening light fades, just take a look up to the organ loft... you might catch a shadowy glimpse of the Viscount himself who will be thoroughly enjoying the spectacle. He would certainly approve.

Tickets for this very special evening are £29.50, including reception drink and canapés.

For further information: www.thorntonmanor.co.uk • Tel: 0151 353 1155
www.wirralartsfestival.co.uk • www.dellarte.co.uk • Tel: 07867 528034

Open Day on the Heswall Dales



The Friends of Heswall Dales, in conjunction with the Ranger, will be holding an open day event on Saturday 15th September between 11.00 am and 3.00 pm. The theme is 'The Treasures of the Dales', and volunteers will be on hand to point out some of the features of this beautiful local nature reserve with its rich flora and fauna, as well as stunning views over the Dee Estuary.

A map is being produced to help guide people around the site – why not come along and take some time to explore the woodland walks, as well as the areas of lowland heath which contribute to the Dales having its SSSI status. It's a wonderful place to walk, breathe in the fresh air and take in the sights and sounds of nature – easy to forget sometimes that you're so close to the centre of Heswall!

The Friends' group was formed 18 months ago with the aims of supporting the conservation work on the Dales, encouraging more visitors to the site as well as improving their experience whilst there. We already have over 80 members, but are always keen to recruit more people who are interested in helping to preserve this hidden jewel in Heswall – please feel free to ask members on the day about the kind of work we do.

Everyone is welcome along to the open day, although you should bear in mind that the Dales is a nature reserve rather than a park, and is on several levels with some steep paths in places. Care should be taken whilst walking around the site and stout footwear is recommended.

There are various entrances onto the Dales, although the main entrance is down from Oldfield Road about 400m north of the Quarry Road junction. If you follow the signs to the Ranger's cottage you'll be able to pick up a map and other information about the site. There is no parking on the reserve so anyone driving there should park in the adjacent roads. You can find out more information on the Friends' website, at www.heswalldalesfriends.co.uk.

Customers and staff at the Johnny Pye helped raise £500 for the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF) through raffles, collections and selling ABF wristbands. For further information about the ABF visit their website: www.soldierscharity.org

