

# Heswall News in 1941

by Jenny McDonald and Roger Lane

Recently the authors gained access to additional local newspaper archives, so we decided to investigate one of the more tumultuous years in Heswall's history.

Reading through the newspapers of 1941 it becomes clear that although it was considered a safe place to live, it was still very much affected by the Second World War. Staff or 'servants', as they were often referred to, were still being employed, while many people were seeking to buy, rent or even exchange houses in order to live in what was advertised as a 'safe' area. Many war deaths of local men occurred in that year and larger houses were turned into homes to accommodate those who suffered from the actions of war.

On a lighter note, the children had Curly Wee and Gussie Goose to look forward to in the *The Liverpool Echo*, which was a cartoon strip written and illustrated by two Heswall residents Maud Budden and Ronald Clibborn. Maud Budden lived in South Drive, and was married to a professor of architecture. She wrote the adventures of Gussie Goose and the pig Curly Wee. She also wrote sketches for *The Woolgatherers*, among others, which were performed in the Playhouse Theatre in Liverpool. Her son Julian later became a radio producer and broadcaster. Ronald Clibborn lived in *The Willows* in Irby Road. Some may remember the house for the model of the Lincoln Imp gargoyle on its side beams. A dentist by profession, he illustrated the cartoons until his death in the 1960s. The Curly Wee cartoons ran from 1938-1964. The annuals produced now attract high prices on the internet.



The King's Cinema in Telegraph Road provided light relief in the dark years of war (this building is now occupied by the Halifax). In 1941 the cinema showed films such as *It's turned out nice again* with George Formby and *If I had it my way* with Bing Crosby.

At the King's, matinees were held on Wednesdays at 2.30pm. If cinemagoers ventured further afield they were spoilt for choice. Birkenhead had *The Plaza*, *The Roxy* and *The Savoy*; in Rock Ferry, *The Palace*; in Bebington *The Rialto*; in Wallasey, *The Coliseum*, *The Gaumont*, *The Queen's* and *The Liscard Palace*; and in New Brighton there was *The Trocadero*.



The Sundial Roadhouse (now the site of Dale Court) in Telegraph Road could often be found in the advertisement columns. It was described as having 'lovely Welsh views' and sited only four minutes walk from the bus terminus, which enabled people to eke out their petrol ration. It opened only at weekends. It closed in October 1941 due to difficulty in obtaining staff. When advertising again, in 1943, presumably soon after reopening, they boasted pre-war prices, the views were described as 'Riviera-like and with grounds and walks'. It remained open until well into the 1950s.



The Sundial Roadhouse

The Births, Marriages and Deaths columns kept residents up to date with local affairs. It is interesting to note that pre-National Health Service, many births took place in local nursing homes. Most notable were the Grange Nursing Home, in Grange Road, run by Sister Kinnloch; Miss Fitzpatrick's nursing home, Hillfield, in Pensby Road; Heswall Maternity Home in Oldfield Way; and Fairhaven in Boundary Lane. Not forgetting St Faiths, a home for unmarried mothers in Gayton Grange.

Within the pages of the newspapers, war deaths were featured in the BMD columns.

Heswall men included Reginald Bruce Sutherland, younger son of Christine and David Sutherland of Heswall, who was reported missing, but had died on 6th March. Charles Fred Quilliam died on 10th June, Fred Lewis on 14th October, and John Keell Barker who was also listed as missing since the Battle of Britain in 1940. Other deaths include Dr John Stewart who had been a GP in Heswall. He opened the practice in Pensby Road, latterly Silverdale in Mount Avenue. October saw the death of Doctor Robert Littler, another GP, from Grange Road.



John Pride

John Pride, the well-known Liverpool poet, artist, etcher, and bohemian, who has been mentioned in previous articles died on 14th March at Banks Road where he lived with his friend Fred Bower. His cortege went from Renshaw Street, Liverpool, to Anfield Crematorium. His wife Lucy predeceased him by two years. As a tribute, the following week Liverpool Corporation held an exhibition of his work in Central Library Hall. John was a direct descendant of Colonel Pride, the Cromwellian general of Pride's Purge fame.

Pride's Purge was an event in the Civil War when troops of the New Model Army (NMA), under the command of Col. Pride

forcibly removed from the Long Parliament all those who were not supporters of the Grandees in the NMA and the independents, leading to the Rump Parliament. John was entitled to use the colonel's coat of arms.

Advertisements for houses required in the 'Safety Zone' of Heswall filled the Wanted Columns. People were prepared to swap, share, rent or buy furnished or unfurnished. In February a house called Sandon in Irby Road was advertised by Boulton, Son and Maples, which sold within three days for the full amount, a rare occurrence even in peacetime.

People took advantage of the need for housing such as in an advertisement for 'Wooden House 33ft x 14ft x 10ft heavily floored, suitable for storage or simple conversion to a small bungalow.'

Rye field (now Rogart), in Tower Road North was auctioned. The bidding opened at £1,000 and ended at £3,075, a figure far in excess of the reserved fixed price. Gayton Hall came on to the property market in 1941. It was advertised as "A Queen Anne Residence, having 17 bedrooms, 4 Bathrooms a garage for 5 cars and 34 acres of land". Tom Temple and family had lived there and they moved to Highlands, Tower Road North. The sum it fetched is not disclosed but it would have been minimal compared to the price of the same house in 2018 of £3,500,000. Now it occupies a mere 5.7 acres! In another advertisement for a house in Oldfield, the price of land in 1941 was £320 per acre.