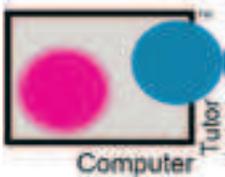


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Sunday 2nd June 2019
11.00am–15.00pm at Heswall Hall

Due to the overwhelming success of our Taste of Christmas event each year and the demand for more events like this, Heswall & District Business Association (HDBA) are delighted to be launching this NEW annual Summer event which will showcase the best Heswall has to offer.

The next year (1929) saw the Boy Scouts International Jamboree come to Arrowe Park. The Boy Scout movement was born in Birkenhead in 1908, making Arrowe Park the ideal venue for the Jamboree. There were 50,000 scouts from over 60 different countries; most arrived via Upton Railway Station. There were eight camps in the Park with up to 4,000 scouts in each and in Upton and Overchurch were two other camps, each with between 9,000 and 10,000 scouts. Also, 50 Polish girl guides 'camped' in Fearnley Hall (a Grade II listed building, built in 1843), Woodlands, Birkenhead. Unfortunately it rained every day during the 14-day Jamboree and very soon the feet of thousands of boy scouts and over 320,000 visitors made the ground like a quagmire. Even so, I believe the scouts enjoyed themselves and consumed over 50 tons of food daily, supplied by MacSymon's of Liverpool. The boy scouts had busy organised days and finished off with a camp fire sing-song from 9 to 10pm. Many VIPs visited the jamboree, including the Prince of Wales, Prince George and the Duke of Connaught. Some of the big open fields were made into Arrowe Park Golf Course, which was opened on the morning of 30 July 1931 when Alderman McVey drove off the first ball. Local professionals and champion golfers played three matches, then the course was open to the public. In the afternoon, the rally ground, for bowls, tennis, cricket and football was opened by Alderman Egan and the children's recreation and cricket grounds were opened by Alderman Clarke. During the day, luncheons and teas were served as The Wingates Temperance Band played.

Once the Park was opened to the public, the huge Hall (which had been extended in 1844, 1870 and 1880) was no longer in demand as a gentleman's residence. In the 1930s, Hubbard and Martin used part of the Hall as a restaurant. During the Second World War, Arrowe Hall was used as a hospital wing and the Park was used as a camp for many units of Allied soldiers, including British, American and Free French. The Free French included a contingent of African troops from Senegal who entertained locals with their enthusiastic games of football played in bare feet. Many of the soldiers camped at Arrowe worked on Wirral farms to relieve boredom and for ale money as they awaited D-Day.



This year marks the 90th anniversary of the International Scout Jamboree held at Arrowe Park in 1929. To commemorate the Jamboree, this statue of a boy scout, with a really nice message inscribed, was unveiled on the main drive into the Park from Arrowe Park Gates in 1931. As can be seen, it has since been resited in the trees outside Arrowe Park Hospital.

They came in very handy at harvest time. Some of the best farmworkers my dad ever employed were three Bretons from a unit of Free French. They were fit, strong, country lads who had small farms of their own back in France. After the war the areas of the Park used for tank training were levelled and re-sown.

Work eventually started on the building of the Woodchurch Estate and the number of people visiting the Park rose sharply with so many new houses being built through the 1950s and '60s. In those days people were not so well off; few families had cars and there was no daytime television. Adults as well as children had to entertain themselves, rather than be entertained and the Park and its facilities were well used. Uniformed park police patrolled the Park in those days and made sure that visitors kept to the paths and drives. People were not allowed to wander through the woods or walk around the perimeter of the golf course as they do today. Cycling and horse riding were not permitted and dogs had to be kept on a lead. Anybody breaking the rules were soon put in their place by the park bobbies. In 1982, 22 acres of parkland were lost when Arrowe Park Hospital was built and since then, a lot more ground has been lost to car park building. Also, parts of the well looked after playing fields and cricket grounds have been lost to tree plantations and the encouragement of wild scrubland. The seven cricket pavilions and the wooden shelters with benches inside have all gone. The Victorian sandstone boathouse is still to be seen (sadly in a ruinous state) hidden in the tiny inlet on the east side of the lake. The large sandstone gateposts in and around the Park, with varying amounts of the original ironwork still affixed to them, are a reminder of long ago when the Park was a fenced working estate with grazing livestock. Where Arrowe Brook enters the Park, a very old watering place for livestock survives where part of the riverbed and bank has been cobbled with sandstone blocks. A straight track ran from the adjacent field gate, across an old bridge to the gateway on the opposite side of the wood. Only some large stones from the bridge remain in and around the brook. Both sets of large sandstone gateposts are still standing; however, the old track is overgrown but some cobble stones are still visible.

There was more wildlife in the Park years ago. Until the 1970s there were still hares in the woods and a lot of rabbits on the golf course, behind Top House Farm and The Warrens. Today, these animals are not seen in the Park, but since then grey squirrels have become numerous. On the lake, tree-nesting Mandarin ducks have appeared in more recent years and sometimes egrets can be seen. There are foxes and a good variety of birdlife in the woods, including woodcock, nuthatch, tree creeper, green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker and the occasional raven. Sadly, over the years since the teams of police, woodsmen and gardeners have been sacked, the upkeep of the Park has gradually gone downhill. But it is still a pleasant and peaceful place to walk early in the morning, when the very loud and fast 'yaf, yaf, yaf, yaf' laughing call of the green woodpecker (also known as the yaffle) can be heard.

Without the Liverpool slave trade and the Shaw family there would be no Arrowe Country Park. Arrowe Hall, must have been very dear to the hearts of the Shaws as even as late as 1954, those born there in Victorian days were still being brought back from far afield to be buried in the family grave at Woodchurch Church, marked by a large inscribed monument. Today, the former manor house, Arrowe Hall, a Grade II listed building, is a complex of private residences.