

In 1898, as the estate of William Lloyd, the Lord of the Manor, was being sold off, a further 22 acres of the Dales were put up for auction, being described as “a charming dell, so well known to all frequenters of Heswall” which “offers by its natural beauty a most admirable site for the erection of one or more fine dwelling houses of artistic style with beautiful and appropriate pleasure grounds and gardens. This property will be first offered and, if not sold, will be divided into suitable building plots.” We do not know who purchased the land, but fortunately it was maintained as a single block and not built upon; it passed eventually into the hands of the Rutherford family.

The Rutherford family lived in Craigiebarns in Pipers Lane, which appears from early maps to have been a redevelopment of a house called The Warrens in about 1920 by Richard Perry Rutherford. Richard was born in 1894 and was brought up in Clifton Road Birkenhead. He was the managing director of A. Rutherford & Co., shipbuilders, engineers and boilermakers based at the Neptune Works, Bridge Street, Birkenhead. As their large property backed on to the Dales, they obviously had a vested interest to acquire the surrounding heathland. He died in 1961, and in 1969 the site of the house was redeveloped to become Warren Way. The original sandstone pillars engraved with the name Craigiebarns are still visible, now marking the drive to one of the new houses. We do not have a picture of Craigiebarns and would appreciate information from any reader who may possess one. In 1973, Richard’s widow Lilian Margaret Rutherford sold 35 acres of the Dales to the council with a covenant that it should be kept as an open space for the public. As a historical footnote, the Rutherfords had interesting neighbours at Swen Tor, at that time in the 1920s one of the few other houses on Pipers Lane, which was an undeveloped country lane running between fields. James Francis Leadley Brown moved into Swen Tor in about 1927 with his wife Edith, who was the great-great niece of Jane Austen. James was the son of Leadley Brown who lived in Dawstone, Dawstone Road, and Edith was the daughter of John Henry Hubback, a corn merchant residing in Oldfield Road. Edith completed Jane Austen’s unfinished *The Watsons* in 1928 and in 1929 published *Margaret Dashwood*, a sequel to *Sense and Sensibility*, which received good reviews. Edith’s brother John Austen Hubback became the first Governor of Orissa in India (now called Odisha).



The council had been trying to acquire land on the Dales for many years. In March 1939 the newspapers reported the wish of the council to prevent development on the Dales and to possibly purchase the land, but the Second World War stopped this possibility. In 1959 the council informed the Dales Syndicate that they would not approve dividing up and fencing the Syndicate’s land holding into individual areas. In 1962 the Syndicate donated their land to the council to use for the enjoyment of the public, subject to certain covenants. Lilian Rutherford’s sale of her 35 acres to the council in 1973 finally enabled public ownership and access to most of the Dales. It is amazing that so much heathland has been preserved when pressure to create building land has been so intense. We are fortunate that generous benefactors who donated land and the foresight of planners who prevented development have provided us with such an exceptional recreational amenity on our doorstep.



Mention should be made of Cleaver Heath, which is situated to the north-west of the Dales. Once part of continuous heathland with the Dales, it is now owned by Cheshire Wildlife Trust and is also designated an SSSI. This heathland is in part of the grounds of the old Cleaver Sanatorium that opened in 1902 to accommodate children with tuberculosis, who were thought to benefit from the healthy sea breezes at Heswall. It reverted to an adult hospital after the children were evacuated at the beginning of the Second World War. The hospital closed in 1983 and site sold in 1988 for £2 million. The old Nurses’ Home remains, now much extended as Hazelwell Nursing Home. Much of the old hospital site has been developed for housing which now separates the Heath from the Dales.

*Submitted by Roger Lane and Jenny McRonald (roger.m.lane@btinternet.com or 0151 342 9269) on behalf of the Heswall Society, which was established in 1953 “for the public benefit to conserve the heritage of the Ward of Heswall”. For more details of membership and activities please call Roger Lane or visit theheswallsociety.org.uk*

FORTHCOMING OPEN EVENTS - 2019/20

**Monday 23 September - 'Wirral's Historic Dee Coastline'**  
Speaker: Gavin Hunter. 8:00pm at Heswall Hall.

**Monday 11th November - 'Living with 60 million foreigners'**  
An entertaining talk about living in a strange country with the strange foreigners she shares her life with!  
Speaker: Christina Spencer. 8:00pm at Heswall Hall.

**Wednesday 11 December - Carols around the Tree**  
Lead by Revd Martin Cannam and accompanied by the Port Sunlight Lyceum Band. Starting at 7.15pm outside the gates of St Peter's Church, Lower Heswall.

**Monday 20 January - 'Wonderful things: Decoding ancient Egyptian Jewellery'**  
Speaker: Jacky Finch. 8:00pm at Heswall Hall.

**Wednesday 26 February - 'Construction of the Albert Dock'**  
Speaker: Anthony Clark. 8:00pm at Heswall Hall.

ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND!