

Greg Dawson tells us about the history of Lilley Croft in Thingwall and the surrounding area...



Some of the neat new houses of Lilley Croft.

A couple of years ago I was asked to suggest a name for a new small development of nine houses to be built in Thingwall at the junction of Beaumaris Drive and Hazeldene Way. I put forward a few names with local connections, and the powers that be chose 'Lilley Croft'. Lilley Croft has been completed on land which was once part of the Thingwall Hall Estate. Thingwall Hall was a country mansion built in 1849 by Captain John Lilley, a merchant in the African trade. It eventually passed to Miss Muriel Twigge who gifted the Hall and grounds in 1917 to the Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital to be used for the convalescence of sick children. Muriel ran the hospital as acting matron until she died in 1926 aged only 43. The hospital continued to run for many years until it eventually closed.



The country mansion Thingwall Hall, built by Captain John Lilley in 1849, as seen from Barnston Road direction.

In 1960, I remember Thingwall Hall being demolished and the houses and flats of Torrington Drive, Torrington Gardens, Hazeldene Avenue, Hazeldene Way and Beaumaris Drive being built on the site and grounds. The recently built houses of Lilley Croft stand on the site of a playground and block of garages which were built in the 1960s. The naming of Lilley Croft follows the tradition of calling roads after people who lived close by. There are other roads in the area named after people who lived in or near them.



This view of Thingwall Hall was from an old public footpath (closed in the 1960s) where it came out of Arrow Park and joined Thingwall Road East. Today, this view is obscured by the houses which stand at the junction of Pensby Road and Thingwall Road East.

In Victorian days, many minor lanes which linked the more major routes had nicknames, or no name at all. But as time went on and the postal service became more efficient, all roads had to be officially named. In most cases there was only one dwelling along these dirt tracks, so the name of the occupant was used to identify the lane. To quote a few local instances: Sparks Lane was named after Eastham-born farmer, Jack Sparks, who lived in Sandhay Cottage which still stands next to Thingwall Recreation Centre. Sandhay Cottage, which then had a four-cow shippen, an orchard and a two-acre croft, was once home to my grandparents who paid £750 for it in 1930. Whaley Lane, was named after Yeoman farmer and stonemason, Richard Whaley and his wife Katherine who built Benty Heath Farm which stands on the bend. Their initials, R.K.W., and date of construction, 1732, can be seen on the house wall. The converted barn is now Auntie Jayne's House Nursery. Gills Lane took its name from Liverpool-born market gardener, Robert Gill, who lived in 'The Cottage', which stands at the Barnston end of Gills Lane. Fishers Lane, was named after Liverpool-born bootmaker, farmer and lay preacher, Joseph Fisher, who lived at Oat Hay Farm, now the site of Paltridge Way off Fishers Lane. In Heswall, Herberts Lane was named after the Herbert family who farmed and ran a milk round from there. The old farm was demolished and the site was built on many years ago.

Interestingly, in 1843, a Liverpool ship called the *John Lilley*, bound for Old Calabar in West Africa with a cargo of cotton goods, silks, pots and pans, gunpowder and muskets, ran aground and was wrecked on Braunton Burrows, near Appledore on the coast of North Devon.



Part of Lilley Croft, looking towards Barnston Road, with Prenton in the distance and Liverpool Cathedral on the horizon.