In 1962 the Merseyside Civic Society commissioned the Welsh designer, Richard Huws, then a lecturer at the Liverpool School of Architecture (LSA), to design a kinetic fountain for central Liverpool. Dr Richard Moore, helped by university friends, all of whom were students of Richard Huws at the LSA at the time he was designing his Liverpool fountain, has recently traced the history of the fountain – known locally as the ‘bucket fountain’ - exploring its origins, its final opening in the then Goree Piazza, Drury Lane in May 1967, its subsequent demise, its restoration between 1997 and 2000 and its present condition in the re-named Beetham Plaza.
A HISTORY OF RICHARD HUWS’ PIAZZA FOUNTAIN, DRURY LANE, LIVERPOOL

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Richard Huws, 1902-1980

The following biography of the designer focuses on his life and work before 1960, these being the sources of inspiration for his Piazza Fountain in Drury Lane, Liverpool. It has been compiled from the three main sources referenced in the endnotes.  

1.1 Richard Hughes, Education & Early Life

Richard Llywelyn Hughes was born on the 10 June 1902 at Penysarn, near Amlwch, on the Isle of Anglesey, where his father Thomas Hughes was the headmaster of the local primary school and later of Llangoed, near Penmon Point. Richard was educated at nearby Beaumaris Grammar School, but he also learnt woodworking from a local carpenter and woodcarving from a retired architect.

In 1920, he started work as an apprentice at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead, and then in 1922 won a three-year Armstrong scholarship to study naval architecture at Liverpool University. After graduating in 1925, he was obliged to return to Cammell Laird for a year, but due to order shortages was allowed to leave early.

Richard then attended Liverpool College of Art, drew cartoons for Liverpool newspapers and spent the summer of 1926 doing sketches of tourists in North Wales coastal towns. In 1927 he travelled to the Riviera to again earn money by sketching and began to sign his work “Huws”. In October of the same year, he enrolled at the, largely ex-Bauhaus staffed, Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts) in Vienna and remained there until 1930.

That autumn, he returned from the continent and established himself in Devonshire Street, London as a freelance designer and cartoonist. The following year he changed his name by deed poll to ‘Huws’ and married Edrica Tyrwhitt, an artist who had studied at the Royal College of Art and later became well known for her ‘patchwork paintings’. Subsequently, the couple had five children, a boy and four girls.

1.2 Richard Huws, Later Career

In 1933, Richard and Edrica Huws moved to Verbena Gardens, Hammersmith, where they shared a house with two other artists, Ceri and Frances Richards, while keeping the accommodation in Devonshire Street as a studio. In the same year, Richard was commissioned to design the original Triban (three peaks) logo for Plaid Cymru. In 1935, he moved his workplace to a large workshop off Tottenham Court Road and embarked on his largest project to date, ‘the Mechanical Man’ (an enormous working model of the human body) for the major Glasgow Empire Exhibition of 1938.

In 1939, just before the outbreak of war, he moved his family back to Anglesey, to Talwrn near Llangefni, and the following year returned to Cammell Laird to do war work. In 1941, he transferred to Saunders-Roe in Beaumaris to undertake more innovative war work, while in his spare time landscaping his critically acclaimed garden at Talwrn.  

In 1947, Richard Huws returned to freelance design work in London, now living near Great Ormond Street, and soon after was asked by Misha Black to join Sir Hugh Casson’s design team for the South Bank site. Here he was responsible for four designs:- the masts of Spinners for the bailey footbridge attached to Hungerford railway bridge; sail like Sky Sections and Dividing Cell Features both for the Dome of Discovery; and his greatest contribution, his iconic ‘water mobile sculpture’ for the river walk. Despite receiving great acclaim for the latter, thereafter work became scarce and in 1953, he returned to work for Saunders-Roe, at Cowes, Isle of Wight.

In 1955, he was appointed as a full-time lecturer in design at the Liverpool University School of Architecture and bought a family house in Llanrwst. In 1966 he moved to a flat in Huskisson Street, Liverpool and remained at the University until his retirement in 1969. After retirement, he then stayed on in Liverpool perfecting his fountain designs.

He finally returned to Anglesey in 1979 and died the following year after further landscaping work in his garden in Talwrn. In 1997, his life and work were commemorated there by a plaque on his house awarded by the Isle of Anglesey Council.
2: Festival of Britain, Water Mobile Sculpture, 1951

The Liverpool fountain was a direct development of Richard Huws’ original water mobile sculpture for the 1951 Festival of Britain, which at the time of the former he specifically referred to as a “prototype.” The following account of the 1951 structure has been compiled largely from a recent study of the uncatalogued Richard Huws Papers in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

2.1 A New Type of Fountain

Richard Huws categorised traditional water features as being either jets/sprays or falling cascades and thought both monotonous. As appropriate to its position outside Basil Spence’s Sea and Ship Pavilion, he wanted his festival fountain to reproduce the much more dramatic effect of waves crashing on a rocky shore, of which he was very familiar having lived as a boy close to the Anglesey coast. He realised that this could be achieved by having pivoted vessels that filled and emptied into the receiving pool at random intervals.

The brief for the water sculpture, however, was that it had to be over 40ft tall and, given an oval receiving pool only 14 ft wide, he realised that he could not have water tipping from this height. He therefore devised a fountain in which water first cascaded down upper sculptural forms in two separate streams, one filling the highest of the bucket/hoppers and one the lower, largest hopper. These then tipped when full, the water from the higher proceeding to cascade down a further sculptural stack (left photograph below), while the largest hopper tipped and emptied at right angles onto curved aluminium forms in the pool (middle). Beneath the two larger hoppers there were four smaller tipping hoppers grouped in pairs either side on the main support, these being filled directly from a pipe within the support (right).

Images from the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth and National Archives, Kew (right)

This water sculpture proved to be one of the most popular attractions at the Festival and Richard Huws put this down to the unpredictability of its action, creating elements of surprise and expectancy. It features in every video of the Festival available on the internet, one of the most comprehensive being at https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xlb3zl, which includes, as well as a short clip of the fountain in the introduction, a longer sequence showing it in action starting at the 5.10 minute point.

It was also very widely reported and illustrated in the press at the time. Even prior to the Festival, the Picture Post of 6 January 1951 illustrated Richard Huws inspecting his large working model of the water sculpture, with the caption “Something New in Fountains”. Most reports, however, including illustrations of the fountain in the Sunday Graphic (06/05/51), The Architects Journal (17/05/51), The Illustrated London News (26/05/51), the News Chronicle (undated) and Vogue (undated), and a cartoon by McGinty featuring the fountain, appeared soon after the Festival’s opening on the 3 May 1951.

2.2 The Fate of the 1951 ‘Prototype’

After some 8.5 million people had visited the South Bank site in under 5 months, the Festival closed on the 30 September 1951. Following this, The Builder of the 15 February 1952 in an article on the ‘Future of the South Bank’ reported that an Interim Development Report, accepted by the London County Council (LCC), stated that on the riverside promenade “the ‘water mobile’ designed by Richard Huws … will be retained.” However, in
the event, all of the festival buildings and structures were demolished or dismantled, with the one exception being The Royal Festival Hall.

Later Richard Huws reported that there had been several proposals to re-erect his 1951 water sculpture including one in the mid 1960’s from the LCC. At this time, re-erection of the fountain would have been feasible as RH had kept the model and a full set of working drawings. However, in around 1976 he had lent these to the V & A for an exhibition commemorating the Festival of Britain and the museum had managed to lose them.

Despite its feasibility, he had advised against all of these proposals, regarding the fountain as “a temporary prototype”. While it was deemed an outstanding success visually, mechanically it was anything but. The backward return of the two larger hoppers, the largest of which contained half a ton of water, had to be restrained by a spring-loaded stop, while the powerful forward motion was restrained by an oil dash pot. Notwithstanding these precautions, Richard Huws later reported that the fountain “shook itself to bits before the festival ended” and that he had “spent most of my time repairing it”.

The four smaller and lower centrally pivoting hoppers, which were filled directly from the ‘rising main’ appear to have been less problematic in this respect and it was these elements that Richard Huws went on to develop for his next kinetic design to create an even more dramatic wave effect in Liverpool.

3: Piazza Fountain, Drury Lane, Liverpool, 1962-1967

Richard Huws’ Liverpool fountain was commissioned by the Merseyside Civic Society and the following account results from an examination of the proceedings of the Society’s Fountain Sub-Committee of 1962-67 and minutes of their Executive Committee of 1962-72 in the Liverpool Record Office, as well as the records again included in the Richard Huws Papers in the National Library of Wales.

3.1 The Merseyside Civic Society’s Fountain Sub-Committee

The Fountain Sub-Committee (FSC) of the Merseyside Civic Society (MCS) comprised the following members and held its first meeting in Liverpool on 10 July 1962:-

- Colin Reay, J.P., F.C.A., Messrs R.F. Frazer & Co (then chair of the MCS Executive Committee);
- F.J Gamenisch, Morecroft & Jones Septon, Solicitors, Castle St (chair of the Sub-Committee);
- Colin R. Wilson ARIBA, Messrs Hall, O’Donahue and Wilson, Bluecoat Chambers;
- J. Roy Parker B.Arch, ARIBA., Messrs Nelson and Parker;
- Mrs J.W. Hallam, Pipers Lane, Heswall, Wirral, Cheshire;
- H.F. Lewis, Studio 15, Bluecoat Chambers; and
- David Gregory-Jones of Graeme Shankland Associates (joined FSC after its 2nd meeting, after Graham Shankland had written to Mrs Hallam requesting to be represented).

At this initial meeting, Colin Wilson outlined his idea for a large fountain in a proposed new pedestrian precinct at the junction of Bold St and Hanover Street, Liverpool, to commemorate the completion of the Treweryn scheme and reported that Graeme Shankland, the City’s planning consultant, and Alderman H McDonald Stewart, the chair of the Council’s Special Redevelopment Committee, were both favourably disposed to the idea. Roy Parker mentioned that “Mr. Huws of the Liverpool University School of Architecture had been responsible for the very successful fountain on the South Bank during the Festival of Britain in 1951”, and it was agreed that he should be approached informally and his views on the proposal ascertained.

At the next meeting in August, Mr Parker reported on his meeting with Richard Huws. He was delighted to design a fountain for Liverpool, but as a principal opponent of the Tryweryn scheme would not want the project to celebrate its completion. Seemingly anxious to secure Richard Huws as the designer, the Committee agreed this need not be the case and that a water fountain to celebrate the opening of a proposed precinct was equally appropriate. “It was therefore agreed that the chairman should write to Mr Huws inviting him to submit a design for a fountain costing about £10,000” – which RH had thought was a realistic figure.

At the next meeting in August, Mr Parker reported on his meeting with Richard Huws. He was delighted to design a fountain for Liverpool, but as a principal opponent of the Tryweryn scheme would not want the project to celebrate its completion. Seemingly anxious to secure Richard Huws as the designer, the Committee agreed this need not be the case and that a water fountain to celebrate the opening of a proposed precinct was equally appropriate. “It was therefore agreed that the chairman should write to Mr Huws inviting him to submit a design for a fountain costing about £10,000” – which RH had thought was a realistic figure.

Those present at the third September meeting included Richard Huws and Graham Ashworth for Graeme Shankland Associates (GSA). It was emphasised that the main feature of the proposed fountain should be water in large quantities, with sculpture as a secondary feature and this was agreed by both RH and Mr Ashworth. Referring to his 1951 South Bank fountain, RH said that he had now developed an inherently more sculptural form in which the water would be dominant, “the acoustic value being tremendous”. Careful calculations would make it possible to ring constant changes in the flow of water and a maximum height of about 20 ft was visualised and a spread of about 60 ft would be required.
Graeme Ashworth thought that the corner of Church St and Parker St might prove a more suitable site and that it should be possible to make a start on the fountain by 1964 as part of the Ravenscroft development. RH said he agreed with Mr Ashworth that it would be essential for him to work in co-operation with the architects designing the precinct. RH offered to submit sketch designs and to get in touch with the chair and GSA when his sketches were complete.27

At the next meeting on the 3 October 1962, the chair read a letter from Richard Huws confirming his offer to submit sketch designs and a model. The Sub-Committee would be responsible for raising the fee and financial assistance would be sought from the Civic Trust initially. However, it was agreed that formal consent should first be gained from the Corporation and Graeme Shankland (although this had already been received verbally) and RH was asked to wait until this was obtained.28

3.2 Presentation and Reception of the Design

Presentational drawing - “R. Huws ‘62”

Formal consent appears to have been quickly given, as on the 23 October 1962 a further FSC meeting was convened for Richard Huws to present his initial design. To quote the meeting notes “The sub-committee were delighted to find that Mr Huws ideas were exactly what they had hoped for and much enthusiasm was shown”. Mr Meats, representing GSA, undertook to brief Graeme Shankland on the design, but added that “He had little doubt that Mr Shankland would be equally enthusiastic”. A second meeting was then proposed to show Alderman McDonald Steward and others the design and for RH to demonstrate the model.29

With several high-ranking persons attending, this subsequent meeting was not held until the 8 January 1963. However, as the chair reported at the regular FCS meeting the following day, present were Alderman McDonald Steward, Graeme Shankland, Walter Bor, the City Planning Officer and Richard Huws as well as Messrs, Wilson, Parker and Camernisch from the MCS Sub-Committee.

Richard Huws had presented his model and drawings for the proposed water feature which had “made an extremely good impression” and it appeared the planners present “were unanimously in favour of it”. The meeting had discussed the siting and, given that it was now clear that there would be long delays if the original proposed sites were adhered to, Richard Huws had proposed the nearby Williamson Square.

He thought that this more enclosed space would enhance the fountain “both visually and aurally”. He also suggested that stainless steel should be used instead of fibreglass and aluminium, even though this would increase the costs, and Alderman McDonald Steward volunteered that the Corporation were prepared to help financially. It was suggested that the model and drawings should be entered for the Civic Trust’s £500 competition and exhibited at the Bluecoat 1963 Festival and Exhibition on the redevelopment of Liverpool.30

In the event, the Williamson Square site did not materialise and in October 1963, Walter Bor replied to the MCS saying that he shared their concern at progress on the matter, but “I am sure, however, that the scheme will not end up in the wastepaper basket for sheer lack of interest on the part of the Civic Authorities … As you will know, the committee, after considering your proposal, agreed in principle and instructed the Planning Consultant to report further on a suitable site for the fountain”.31

3.3: The Liverpool Fountain Design

The presentational drawing (pictured above) which Richard Huws first showed to the commissioning MSC Fountain Sub-Committee in October 1962 appears an almost identical depiction of the fountain finally opened in May 1967. Since the mechanical problems that had plagued the 1951 Festival of Britain fountain, he had been working to design out the violent repetitive shocks and constant wear and tear resulting from the original tipping action of the larger hopper/vessels. For his subsequent kinetic fountains, he sought for a much smoother swivelling motion, free of any springs or dashpot restraining devices.32

For this he called upon his training as a naval architect and shipbuilding experience with Cammell Laird. He knew that vessels with large free surface areas capsize easily and so used mathematical calculations to design a hopper shape in which, as it tips, the “free surface builds up to a maximum and then decreases as the counterbalancing tail comes into play.”33 In this way he devised a self-righting vessel, not needing stops, in
which the remaining water in the hopper’s tail dampens the momentum as it falls back to a stable upright position for refilling again.34

Given that the Liverpool fountain was designed over 56 years ago it still looks remarkably ‘modern’, unlike the 1951 water mobile sculpture which arguably appears much more of its time. This may be because it represents a near perfect example of ‘Form Follows Function’, the shape of the hoppers being determined, as described above, to achieve this gentle forward emptying motion and a smooth transition to an equally gentle return to the upright re-filling position. As a result, an article in the Observer Weekend Review at the time of the fountain’s opening was able to quote Richard Huws as saying that he had “spent a week on the aesthetics and several years on the engineering”.35

The same article reported that he wanted to create “movement in space and time”. To achieve this he altered the number and size of the water outlet holes in the horizontal pipes, which pass through each hopper, to give different tipping times and thus an almost infinitely random action across the whole fountain.36 The emptying times were designed to vary from 15 seconds for one of the smaller hoppers to 90 seconds for one of the largest.37 Because the emptying is intermittent, RH calculated that it used a twentieth of the pumped water required by a comparable traditional cascade38 and, as the water falls in ‘blocks’, produces very little wind-blown spray unlike a traditional fountain jet.39

One aesthetic decision that Richard Huws did consciously make was to extend the supporting vertical supply pipes to above the highest hoppers, likening the overall effect to a ball of wool skewed with knitting needles.40 As shown in his 1962 presentation drawing, the fountain comprises 7 vertical bronze upstands supplying the water to the 20 stainless steel hoppers. The smaller hoppers were each cantilevered off the side of the vertical pipes, while the larger hoppers were all supported on both sides, each spanning between two supports.

While RH refers to the vertical supports as randomly placed, the arrangement is nevertheless such that each hopper is able to empty directly into the receiving pool. The original depth of the water in the pool was 16 inches, but RH would have liked more to enhance the wave effect created by the falling ‘blocks’ of water.41

3.4: The Fountain's Location in the Goree Piazza

The first indication that a site had finally been found for the fountain in a re-development scheme off Brunswick Street, comes in a letter headed ‘Fountain Sub-Committee’ from F J Camenisch, its chair, to the MCS secretary, dated the 21 July 1964. “As you probably know the question of the fountain is as far advanced for the moment as it can be”. The letter goes on to say that we understand that the developers are prepared to pay for its erection and that they are getting in touch directly with Mr Huws. Until the site is cleared, a new 2 storey car park erected and the small square laid out, there will probably be no more news.42

Around October 1964, F. J. Camenisch suggested “that the site of the proposed new fountain be known as the Goree Piazza” and after this was unanimously approved by the MCS, the secretary wrote to the Town Clerk asking the Council to consider this.43 In February 1965 the Town Clerk replied saying that, in a meeting last month, the Development and Planning Committee had agreed, this letter also revealing that the development off Drury Lane was being “carried out jointly by the Corporation and Thames Estates and Investments Ltd”44 - the latter having also agreed to the piazza’s name by the beginning of March.45 As a result, the fountain was later officially named the Piazza fountain.

A similar exchange occurred regarding the name of the new office block, Wilberforce House being eventually decided upon, this building being partly for occupation by the Liverpool Corporation planning department, with half of the accommodation sublet to the Liverpool Regional Hospital Board.46

The architects for the Goree Piazza redevelopment scheme for Thames Estates and Investments Ltd (a subsidiary of the City of London Real Property Company) were the London firm of Gotch and Partners.47 For the open piazza, the architects had proposed a rectangular receiving pool on the stepped slope up from Drury Lane with a freestanding ventilation shaft, for the underground carpark beneath the piazza, located nearby.

Richard Huws, however, considered this pool to be too small and noted that no accommodation had been made for the required water pump.48 Instead, Richard Huws designed a larger round pool and, to enhance any spectator’s experience, provided in addition to two ‘seating walls’, two round cantilevered viewing platforms. He designed the platform intersecting the pool to house the large water pump and the freestanding one to incorporate the carpark ventilation shaft. He further proposed that these and the pool be painted black to accentuate the whiteness of the water49 (see his plan and elevational drawing dated 1965, below).

On the 4 October 1965, the new MCS chair, Peter Howell Williams wrote to F J Camenisch reporting that he had received a call from Hugh Scrutton, the Director of the Walker Art Gallery, saying that he was on an Arts
Council Panel advising on suitable objects for a grant and had asked what progress had been made on Richard Huws’ “sculpture in Brunswick Street”. Williams “had no hesitation” in telling the director that the Society would be only too pleased if he could put in a request for a capital sum, but as Scrutton had asked for some designs, he now requested Camernish to ask RH what stage his designs had now reached.\(^{50}\)

Two days later, Hugh Scrutton wrote to Howell Williams, saying that he would receive an official letter from the Arts Council shortly and that the decision of the Arts Panel to make a grant of £750 to the Civic Society was “unlikely to be upset at any higher level of the Arts Council”. He specified that the decision to give £750 was made on the basis that it would cover half of the fee to Richard Huws and that “There is no doubt that your project is an outstandingly good one”.\(^{51}\)

As a one-time apprentice/employee of the firm, Richard Huws arranged appropriately for the Birkenhead shipbuilders, Cammell Laird to build the fountain, and contact has been made with an ex-apprentice welder and retired sub-contractor who were both involved.\(^{52}\) The latter recounts working at Cammell Laird and, with a colleague, being introduced to the designer who wanted different sizes and shapes of “trial buckets” fabricated from his drawings. Initially the central holes, which allow the hoppers to fill, were left out and a framework set up to test the buckets and balance them. The sub-contractor then moved on to work on Polaris Submarines, but his colleague stayed on to position the centre holes for RH, after more calculations were made.\(^{53}\)

As these trial buckets were fabricated from galvanised sheet and not stainless steel, it is possible that they were also used for RH’s similar fountain erected at the 1965 Tokyo International Trade Fair, where galvanised steel was specified - particularly as the retiree mentions that there could have been “more than one project”. He emigrated to Australia in 1969\(^{54}\), but heard later that the final stainless-steel hoppers were made by a metal worker named Billy Prescot. The above undated newspaper cutting in the National Library of Wales archive (probably from the Liverpool Echo) shows these hoppers being fitted to the bronze upstands during the course of the fountain’s construction in the new Piazza.

3.5: The Completion of the Fountain and its Press Reports

A letter from F.J. Camenisch to John Clarke of the 7 April 1967 noted that “the fountain is almost complete and the buckets are being polished to-day” while a second letter of 14 April 1967 reported that the fountain had successfully passed its latest tests, “certain modifications having been made to ensure a less violent flow of water”. He further reported that Cammell Laird had agreed to donate a bronze wall plaque in the shape of an African shield for the base of the freestanding viewing platform.

This commemorates the history of the original Goree piazzas, and concludes as follows:- “In 1967, to mark the completion of the new plaza, this plaque was kindly presented by Cammell Laird & Company (S&E) Limited, builders of the fountain”. Camenisch’s second letter also reported that the pump manufactures had donated a
door to the pump house, which had been specially designed by RH with a porthole through which could be seen
the pump in action, its capacity and makers name.\textsuperscript{56}

Richard Huws’ Liverpool fountain was finally completed and officially opened on the 2 May 1967, almost exactly
16 years after the opening of the 1951 Festival of Britain and his original iconic water mobile sculpture. The
opening ceremony was attended by, among others, the Lord Mayor, Alderman Herbert Allen, D.S. Nixon,
chairman of Thames Estates and Investments Ltd, Richard Huws and his youngest daughter Ursula\textsuperscript{56} and from
the Merseyside Civic Society, Peter Howell Williams, the chair of the Executive Committee, Mr F J Camerisch,
chair of the Fountain Sub-Committee and Colin Wilson, the Liverpool architect who had first proposed that a
fountain be commissioned.\textsuperscript{57}

The opening of the fountain made the front page of the \textit{Liverpool Echo}
that evening.\textsuperscript{58} However, the following day it was reported with
illustrated articles not only again locally in the \textit{Liverpool Echo} and
\textit{Liverpool Daily Post}, but nationally in \textit{The Guardian} and in the \textit{Daily
Express} under the heading “\textit{Space age splashdown in the city}”.\textsuperscript{59}

The same week, the fountain was further reported and illustrated in
\textit{The Observer Weekend Review} under the title ‘\textit{Mersey Splash}’ and
also in May 1967 in the \textit{New Statesman}, in an article by Kenneth Muir
on ‘\textit{Art in Liverpool’}, which commented that “\textit{one of the few successes
is Richard Huws’s delightfully crazy fountain, on a good site near the
Corn Exchange}”\textsuperscript{60}

Richard Huws was also interviewed for the Spring 1967 edition of the
Liverpool University student magazine \textit{The Sphinx}.\textsuperscript{51} Further reports of
the fountain appeared in the \textit{The Journal of Commerce and Shipping
Telegraph} and in March 1968, \textit{The Architectural Review} included two
photographs of the “\textit{Water Sculpture}” in action, alongside works by
Picasso and others, in its monthly symposium on painting, sculpture
and the applied arts – the one shown on the left (4) plus a close up of
one of the hoppers emptying (5).\textsuperscript{62}

This particular chapter in the history of Richard Huws fountain designs effectively came to an end when on the 5
January 1968, he gave a concluding talk on his Liverpool Piazza Fountain and its 1951 origins at the Annual
Meeting of the commissioning Merseyside Civil Society.\textsuperscript{63} When the Liverpool fountain was erected he had told
the Merseyside Civic Society that:-

\textit{“It is a waterfall of a strange new kind. Instead of streaming steadily, water hurtles down unexpectedly in
detached lumps in all directions....The sight and sound of waterfalls is so spellbinding that they have always
been centres of attraction in the landscape, and in the places where we work we are prompted to create them
artificially,”}\ He had added that the ‘perpetual bubblings’ of man-made fountains seriously bored him....\textit{“To make
it more exciting we contrive various means of providing additional animation, a very simple device which
interrupts the regular flow, so as to create a round of action. The sound and movement of which is no longer
that of the ever-monotonous bubbling river, but that of the restless, temperamental sea...”}\textsuperscript{64}
4: Richard Huws’ Other Fountain Designs, 1957-1979

This section again relies mainly on documents in the Richard Huws Papers in the National Library of Wales. However, there is limited information on some of the designs, particularly on his fountains for British Petroleum and Basildon New Town Development Corporation. Papers on these, including a full set of working drawings for Basildon, were deposited in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth in 2009, but subsequently ‘transferred out of the archive collection to other collections’ and cannot currently be found by the Library.65

4.1 The New York Fountain Design, 1957

In 1976, in a talk at the Institute of Advanced Architectural Study at York, Richard Huws accepted that his kinetic fountains were not appropriate for all locations.66 In 1957 he had produced a very different design when commissioned to provide a water feature for a small courtyard at the Manhattan apartment of Joseph Buttinger and his wife Muriel Gardiner, an American heiress and close friend of RH during his period in Vienna.67

As his model shows, this comprised a smooth ‘boulder’ surrounded by a horizontal groove from which the water flowed down onto a low pile of large pebbles. A letter of December 1957 from the client’s New York architect, discusses the pump size required for a flow of 30 to 40 gallons per minute, but says he is awaiting final plans.68 It seems that the fountain was not built in Manhattan, as a letter from Muriel Buttinger to RH of May 1978, says about his design “we want to order it for our lawn at Brookdale Farm” in New Jersey.69 As there appears to be no such fountain on this site nor any record in the Richard Huws Papers of a completed fountain, it is probable that it was never erected either in New York or New Jersey.70

4.2 Fountain Designs for British Petroleum, 1964 and 1965

At the time of the opening of his Liverpool fountain, Richard Huws’ interview for the University’s magazine The Sphinx mentioned that he had worked on the interior design of the British Petroleum building in London.71 In 1964 he had also presented his design for a large kinetic fountain for the new BP headquarters building in Moorfields, London, using the same basic hopper design as developed for the Piazza fountain in Liverpool.72

Unlike Liverpool, however, RH’s 1964 presentational drawing shows that this comprised 16 upstands of different heights each supplying water to only two hoppers arranged either side of the pipe tops and emptying randomly in opposite directions into a rectangular pool. Later RH reported that the BP headquarters project was stopped when the Labour government in the 60s put a brake on office building.73

The following year, however, BP were able to erect a smaller version of his headquarters fountain design on their stand at the 1965 Tokyo International Trade Fair.74 A photograph reproduced in The Sphinx, showing a small child watching the fountain in action, confirms the very similar design.75 RH later reported that galvanised
mild steel was used for both the risers and hoppers.\textsuperscript{76} As the fountain was on the BP stand, it is reasonably assumed that it was dismantled after the closure of the Fair – like his original 1951 Festival of Britain fountain.

4.3 Fountain for St James Square, Grimsby, 1972-73

The fourth of Richard Huws’ fountain designs to use the same shape of hopper as developed for his Liverpool fountain was erected in St James Square in Grimsby in 1973. This was similar to his 1964 design for the BP headquarters building in having two hoppers, emptying in opposite directions, positioned either side of the top of each supply pipe, but differed in having some 24 of these upstands, all of a more uniform height, located in a circular receiving pool. RH later likened the effect to a massed bed of daffodils.\textsuperscript{77}

Despite being the largest, having nearly 50 hoppers built of galvanised mild steel, protected internally by an extra coat of black epoxy, the Grimsby fountain was also the least expensive of Richard Huws’ fountains, costing well under a half of the stainless steel and bronze structure in Liverpool, after allowing for inflation.\textsuperscript{78}

The fountain formed the centrepiece of a sunken amphitheatre in a newly created town square designed by the landscape architect, Mary Mitchell.\textsuperscript{79} The whole scheme and, not least, the fountain received critical acclaim, the architectural critic, Ian Nairn, dubbed it “the best new town square in Britain” and wrote in his Sunday Times article of August 19, 1973:-

“In that [amphitheatre], Richard Huws puts the most spectacular of his water fountains: a self-propelled organism that works on the principle of side-pivoted cans filling with water and emptying themselves under their own weight – a kind of multiple, aquatic see-saw. You may remember a similar effect at the Festival of Britain, the happiest thing in the show”…… And the fountain is an invitation to wonder, for children of all ages. Sitting in Mary’s M’s [Mitchell’s] so quiet seats in the amphitheatre you are enthralled both by the fountain itself and by the antics of people watching it. This is “community participation" in its easiest form, the opposite of a sterile civic centre”.\textsuperscript{80}

![Grimsby fountain under construction](image1)

The scheme for “The creation of a town square and precinct for St James’s Church” was subsequently given a Civic Trust, Heritage Year Award for Environmental Improvement, the citation noting that “…shoppers may relax in the shelter of a small sunken area and enjoy the sparkle and splash of water” and that this had “already become a favourite meeting place".\textsuperscript{81}

Despite its success, the fountain was a bone of contention between the warring local political parties from the start. Ian Nairn’s July 1973 manuscript for his August article notes that, after a change in the Council, the fountain had been almost dismantled when half-way up and was now on a 3 months’ trial, ending in September. He adds “I cannot believe that having backed such an imaginative idea Grimsby will now scrap it.”\textsuperscript{82}

Although this particular passage was not published, Ian Nairn’s criticism was publicly aired in his subsequent article in the Sunday Times of October 7, 1973 – “But Grimsby have finally decided to dismantle Richard Huws’s wonderful water fountain (This Britain, August 19, 1973). Well’ that’s their loss. … Losing something good and old is bad enough; losing something good and new, when there is so little of it around is worse.”\textsuperscript{83}

As well as Ian Nairn, ‘Astragal’ also followed the saga for The Architects Journal and in a piece, entitled, “The fountain furore - round three”, reported on the 24 October 1973 that:- “Grimsby burghers are preparing to do a somersault. After the town council decided to get rid of Richard Huws’s bucket fountain (see AJ 10.10.73) the planning committee was asked to decide on a new scheme for the area – and the committee came up with a startling idea: retain the Huws waterworks.”\textsuperscript{84}
The ‘nodding buckets’, as they were termed locally, may have had a reprieve in 1973 and an old photograph posted on Facebook in 2011 from the Local History Library confirms that they were still there in 1975. They were finally replaced in around 1977 by a Victorian canopied cast iron drinking fountain, relocated from Cleethorpes, this in turn making way for the current fisherman’s memorial statue, erected in January 2005.

4.4 Fountain for St Martins Precinct, Basildon, 1973-75,

In 1972/73 Richard Huws was commissioned by the Development Corporation for Basildon New Town to design a water feature for the new town centre in a precinct bounded by shops and St Martins Church. As the precinct included a grove of plane trees, RH proposed a predominantly horizontal feature like Grimsby, having 32 hoppers paired in opposition at the top of vertical support pipes of not much more than head height, with only 8 hoppers at a higher level. At an early stage, he had conceived of a faceted form for the hoppers for ease of manufacture in fibreglass. However, in 1976, RH commented that due to price changes in materials, they would now have been made in bronze sheet.

The new self-righting hoppers were designed not only to keep out falling leaves, but to have a slower action and produce cascades of longer duration. Although all were designed to have a tipping frequency of approximately 30 seconds, RH advised that they would soon get out of phase due to their different distance from pump and slight differences in the water inlet sizes.

For maximum efficiency and performance, RH now placed the pump, and timeclock operated floodlight controls, at the centre of the fountain composition and designed a screening area for the central ring-sump to cope with falling leaves from the tree canopy.

The project received approval from the Development Corporation in Autumn 1973 but was then halted by the subsequent oil crisis and the shortages of materials and power in British industry. Richard Huws expressed hopes of it going forward again in 1976, but in the event the fountain was never built.

4.5 Fountain Design for the Harvey Centre, Harlow New Town, 1975-79

In October 1975, Sir Frederick Gibberd wrote personally to Richard Huws inviting him to design a water feature for a proposed new two storey shopping mall in Harlow town centre, asking him for ideas and costs and saying that he been talking to a “mutual friend, Mary Mitchell”. He arranged for J. A. Graham, his partner responsible for the project, to send RH drawings of the Mall. RH replied that he was “most interested in doing a design” and imagined something about 25 ft tall “with some extra excitement at pool level”, costing between £10,000 and £12,000. He suggested a preliminary meeting and the provision of a preliminary design and model.

A later letter to Richard Huws, signed Freddie, of July 1978 reported that the Harvey Centre had been delayed by an inquiry into a road closure, but that he now wanted to get the Development Corporation’s formal approval for RH’s appointment. A subsequent letter of 8 August from Graham further explained that the shopping centre, for which he now enclosed final plans, would be a 2-year building project starting that November, but that RH’s sketch presentation for the fountain would be put to the Corporation next month.

During this delay, however, RH had been designing an improved hopper having an even more reliable self-righting pour, maintenance free long-life bearings and simplicity of manufacture. As well as a description, the Richard Huws Papers include drawings of four such, 2 1/2 gallon hoppers on two supports in a hexagonal pool, signed “R Huws, Jan 1978”, under the title of “Improved Water Hopper for Intermittent Cascades (1977)”. By July 1978, however, Richard Huws was suffering health problems. He replied to Sir Fredrick Gibberd saying that he was away from Liverpool and due to a pending cataract operation, finalising the scheme would be delayed. He wrote again on 2 February 1979 reporting that he had undergone the operation, but due to a setback had needed a further period in a Paris hospital. However, he said he would now submit a final design and commented that the Mall was an ideal site for a fountain; having no wind loads, no flying spray, little risk of vandalism and the advantage of two viewing levels.
Section showing proposed fountain in mall

Drawing of fountain at pool level

For the 2-storey mall, Richard Huws proposed having shallow twin bowls arranged either side of a tall main vertical supply pipe in 7 tiers, such that the water cascaded down from one tier to the next before entering a round pool, with four sets of his ‘improved’, twin tipping hoppers arranged around the main cascade. Thus, in combining a tall cascade with tipping hoppers at a lower level, he returned to a similar overall form to that used in his first water sculpture for the 1951 Festival of Britain - for what was to be his last fountain design.

Despite Richard Huws having submitted his final design drawings of February 1979, his poor health continued and in March, he wrote again to Sir Fredrick Gibberd relaying further unspecified health problems and saying that “My obviously prudent course is regretfully to withdraw at this stage”. He advised that the fountain could still be built if the largely straightforward detailing and supervision were taken off his hands. In his commentary on the Richard Huws papers, his son also notes that “the fountain eventually fell victim to financial cuts”. Consequently, although the mall in Gibberd’s Harvey Centre, Harlow, still survives more or less as designed, it is devoid of any Richard Huws fountain.

Table 1 summarises and provides further details of Richard Huws’ eight fountain projects for which he was specifically commissioned, only a half of which were actually built and only one of which still survives - his Piazza Fountain in Drury Lane, Liverpool.

Table 1: Summary of Richard Huws’ Eight Commissioned Fountain Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of design/opening</th>
<th>Proposed Location</th>
<th>Commission for:-</th>
<th>Number of hoppers/ upstand</th>
<th>Hopper type</th>
<th>Tipping times (secs)</th>
<th>Material for hoppers/ upstands</th>
<th>Est. cost £ (excluding pool etc)</th>
<th>Design built</th>
<th>Still exists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>South Bank London</td>
<td>Festival of Britain, 1951</td>
<td>6 1</td>
<td>‘Prototype’ + cascade</td>
<td>N.K.</td>
<td>Aluminium/Sprayed steel</td>
<td>£4,500 (£134,375)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Manhattan New York</td>
<td>Mr and Mrs Buttiger</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>N.K.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-67</td>
<td>Drury Lane Liverpool</td>
<td>Merseyside Civic Society</td>
<td>20 7</td>
<td>‘Bucket’</td>
<td>15-90</td>
<td>Stainless steel/Bronze</td>
<td>£4,500 (£79,895)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Moorfields London</td>
<td>British Petroleum</td>
<td>32 16</td>
<td>As Liverpool</td>
<td>N.K.</td>
<td>N.K.</td>
<td>N.K.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1965 Tokyo Trade Fair</td>
<td>British Petroleum</td>
<td>N.K.</td>
<td>As Liverpool</td>
<td>N.K.</td>
<td>Galvanised mild steel</td>
<td>N.K.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>St James’ Sq. Grimsby</td>
<td>Borough Council</td>
<td>48 24</td>
<td>As Liverpool</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>Galvanised mild steel</td>
<td>£2,700 (£32,615)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>St Martins Pct. Basildon</td>
<td>Development Corporation</td>
<td>40 20?</td>
<td>‘Facetted’</td>
<td>All 30 approx.</td>
<td>Fibre glass/Bronze</td>
<td>£7,000 (£80,480)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-79</td>
<td>Harvey Centre Harlow</td>
<td>Sir F. Gibberd &amp; Partners</td>
<td>8 5</td>
<td>‘Improved’ + cascade</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Stainless steel/Ditto</td>
<td>£11,000 (£87,720)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Estimated cost when designed and (at 2017 prices based on the Bank of England inflation calculator)

5: History of the Liverpool Fountain, Post 1967

The early history of the Liverpool fountain after its opening on 2 May 1967 is again reliant predominantly on documents in the Richard Huws Papers in Aberystwyth. Observations of its condition prior to its restoration in 1997-2000 and details of the work carried out comes from those responsible in the Liverpool Architectural firm of Brock-Carmichael and in BCA Landscape, Liverpool.

5.1: A Target for Vandals, 1967-1997
Unlike today when all of the surrounding buildings have been converted to residential apartments, hotels or restaurants, when it opened in the Goree Piazza in 1967 the fountain was in a wholly commercial area and this and its novel nature made it a target for vandals in the evenings and at night when the area was effectively deserted. This in a city which Richard Huws later claimed was “famous for vandalism” 103.

One of the earliest incidents came when, not long after it was up and running, a Cammell Laird apprentice welder, who had helped to fabricate the bronze bases for the fountain, and his mates tipped “a box or two of washing powder” in the water to “fantastic” effect.104 This was reported in the Liverpool Daily Post with a photograph of the fountain full of white bubbles.105

In a talk on the fountain, Richard Huws commented that he didn’t mind the washing powder as it cleaned the hoppers, filters and pipes. He was much more concerned with things being thrown into the pool and hoppers, particularly paper which broke down into a mulch and clogged up the whole system.106 After only 10 days, the Liverpool Daily Post reported that it had been stopped due to litter being thrown into the hoppers, under the heading “Don’t Blame the New Fountain”.107 As a result of continuing vandalism, the fountain was further shut down for a complete overhaul, prior to January 1968, and the hoppers then cleaned once a day and the water changed weekly, rather than every week and month respectively as originally scheduled.108

Although designed to avoid the constant wear and tear experienced in his 1951 ‘prototype’, the bearings of the Liverpool fountain also showed signs of wear after 3 years. However, nothing was done about this until, with his Basildon design in 1973, a simple answer to the bearing problem was found.109 Given the amount of vandalism, however, the Liverpool fountain proved to be reasonably robust, in contrast to the 1951 ‘prototype’, and in December 1975 Richard Huws wrote that “during last 10 years this stainless steel and bronze structure has withstood an incredible amount of bashing”.110

After this, the fountain continued to deteriorate with the hoppers leaking uncontrollably, and it is thought to have been turned off completely in the early 1980s, after the death of Richard Huws.111 By this time, however, the ‘bucket fountain’, as it is known locally, had become a part of Liverpool ‘folklore’, known as much as anything for rarely being found to be working. It even had a 1970’s song written about it, sung by the Liverpool Spinners, with lyrics by Stuart McTavish and music attributed to Jennie Williams, which includes a line on this aspect.112


In 1997, however, the Liverpool Architects of Brock Carmichael were commissioned by the Beetham Organisation to convert the former 1960s office block of Wilberforce House into a mixed-use development comprising luxury apartments, offices, restaurant and bar facilities, with penthouses in a new 2 storey rooftop extension.113 The project included the conversion of the adjacent piazza into a new landscaped terrace for outdoor café/dining, BCA Landscape, Liverpool, being responsible for the design of the new external works.114 Once complete, the whole area was renamed Beetham Plaza and the scheme received the Liverpool Architecture and Design Trust 2000 Award for the Best New or Refurbished Building in Liverpool.115

Ground Floor Plan before re-landscaping

Ground Floor Plan after re-landscaping

Brock Carmichael’s plans of the plaza before and after the re-landscaping are shown above.116 To create a larger open terrace, lightweight void formers were used to build up the ground level either side of the fountain complex, above the existing shallow stepped slope which forms the roof of the basement carpark. These steps were replaced by new, steeper steps up from Drury Lane and the two original ‘seating walls’ behind the fountain
were removed to extend the new terrace to the fountain pool without interruption. The hoppers were repaired and fountain itself restored to full working order, albeit with slight leakages remaining around some of the axle points. In addition, a new scheme of decoration was undertaken, with the receiving pool finished in blue and the viewing platforms in off-white.

After the completion of the re-landscaping in 2000, the condition of the fountain complex again appears to have deteriorated somewhat. Thus, an article in the Liverpool Echo in 2004 listing the "public and private statues, monuments and fountains" that the Council had earmarked for restoration and repair in preparation for the 2008 European City of Culture, includes the "Richard Huws Bucket Fountain".

It is not known if any work was done on the fountain as a result, but a colour photograph archived in the Liverpool Record Office, dated March 2008 and entitled "Drury Lane, water fountain, L2", shows the white inside balcony wall of the far freestanding viewing platform covered with graffiti.

5.3: The Fountain’s Recent and Present Condition

A YouTube video of February 2008, however, shows the actual fountain still working well, with little leakage from the axle points, apart from one of the hoppers permanently stuck in the open position and continually spewing water. This is the earliest of some 10 clear videos of the Liverpool ‘bucket’ fountain currently posted on YouTube from which can be gauged, not only its continuing popularity, but its deteriorating, operative condition in recent years. Three videos of March, August and September 2010 confirm the general absence of leakages at this time. Subsequent videos of the August 2013, June 2014 and August 2014 show increasingly greater amounts, the first and last being taken when blue dye had been added to the water.

The YouTube video dated May 2015, as well as illustrating the continuing leakage problem, again shows one of the hoppers constantly emptying. One of the longest videos, which also reveals the poor condition of the viewing platforms, is that posted on 26 March 2017, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o91F6MAj9Wt. This shows the fountain operating more or less as Richard Huws intended, apart from the continuing leakages extending the frequency of some of the tipping times. In the most recent YouTube video of April 2018, one of the small hoppers is again stuck in the emptying position while another is very slow to return and overall the number being supplied with water appears limited.

On the 28 September 2018, on the author’s first visit to the fountain for many years, of the 20 hoppers only 2 were observed to be tipping and of these, the smaller one was occasionally getting stuck in the open position before slowly tipping back, and the larger one, while tipping correctly, was leaking badly from the pivot point. A further two (one larger and one smaller type) were jammed open and continually spewing water into the pool. None of the remaining 16 hoppers were filling at all, the water to these having been apparently turned off.

On a second visit in the evening of 7 November 2018, it was a surprise to find the fountain floodlit and around a half of the hoppers now working as intended, albeit with an even greater amount of leakage. There were no longer any hoppers stuck in their open position, but one jammed in the upright position and still filling up, with the water constantly overflowing the rim.

While the actual disrepair of the viewing platforms as shown on the 2017 video remains untreated, since the last YouTube video of April 2018 these and the pool have been given a garish multi-coloured paint job (of bright yellow, light blue and dark grey) which arguably detracts from the actual fountain.
5.4: The Uncertain Future of the Fountain

Following the commercial success of their Wilberforce House scheme, Brock Carmichael are just completing work on a similar conversion and rooftop extension of the adjacent Mersey House (now called Strand Plaza) on behalf of their client’s Primisite Developments, who are currently marketing the resulting new apartments.

This will complete the transformation of the area around the fountain from a wholly office based, commercial one to a predominantly residential one, the NW and SW sides of the open plaza now being formed by the 1997-2000 conversion of Wilberforce House, the SE side by the newly converted Mersey House and, effectively, on the fourth NE side by the Corn Exchange building (housing the Staycity Aparthotels) on the opposite side of the narrow Drury Lane.

With the sole aspect from many of the apartments on all sides being the plaza and fountain, and with night-time pedestrian traffic also generated by the adjacent hotel, restaurant and bar, the vandalism which plagued the fountain during its early years has already declined substantially. This has undoubtedly been helped by the fountain being no longer the novel attraction that it once was and, not least, by the fact that Liverpool is now a much more prosperous city than it was in the late 1960s and 70s.

With the city’s new prosperity, the threat to the fountain now appears to come from a different direction. Thus, we have been informed by a respected, independent professional source that it is understood that a developer is proposing to build a boutique hotel on the fountain site. We have been further informed that the developer’s company is reliably understood to be currently in negotiation with the present owners of Beetham Plaza to buy the long leasehold interest. The Government’s Companies House website shows that the leaseholder satisfied the mortgage, covering Beetham Plaza and the basement carpark under the fountain, on the 3 January 2019, presumably in preparation for the sale of the leasehold.

While we believe the proposal would represent an over-development of the piazza, which would undoubtedly be met with considerable opposition from local residents, we are concerned that with the leasehold acquired, the developer might initially demolish the fountain as a first step in his pursuit of the proposal. Although the freehold is currently in the hands of Liverpool Council, we are not confident that this is a safeguard as the Council have both a policy of selling off land and a record of permitting proposals from developers in other areas near the Pier Head and Three Graces which have put Liverpool’s UNESCO World Heritage Site status in serious jeopardy.

Unlike any of Richard Huws’ other water sculptures, having already survived for nearly 52 years – seemingly against the odds - we would first like to see this unique, historically and culturally important fountain made more difficult to demolish and, thereby, given a more secure future - by having it listed. Secondly, we would hope that its listed status might then help to motivate and secure the resources required to again restore the fountain to its full working condition, minimise the leakage from all of the axle points, and thereafter to provide for the regular ‘day-to-day’ maintenance required.

Finally, once restored – with perhaps, like most contemporary sculptures, the name of the designer now added - we would like to see the fountain run, using all of the bucket/hoppers, more or less continuously in the way that Richard Huws had intended - for the enjoyment of the people of Liverpool and any visitors to the City. Instead of a fountain famous for rarely being found to be working properly, if at all, it could then serve as a more positive, permanent attraction alongside the nearby Pier Head, new Museum of Liverpool and Albert Docks.

Endnotes and References

1: Richard Huws, 1902-1980

3    Huws, Daniel. (2009), Richard Huws Papers, a list of important dates in the introduction to the papers, Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, May 2009.
5    Huws, Richard (c.1968), Undated handwritten transcript of talk on Festival of Britain and Liverpool fountains, in RH Papers, NLW, Item 12.
7 The plaque reads, in English, “Isle of Anglesey Council, RICHARD HUWS, 1902 – 1980, ARTIST, Sculptor, Cartoonist, Designer, He lived and died in this house.”

2: Festival of Britain, Water Mobile Sculpture, 1951

“Water mobile sculpture” is how Richard Huws fountain is described in the list of external new works of art on page 90 of the official South Bank Exhibition, London, 1951 Festival of Britain Guide, the fountain being later referred to by RH as a “temporary prototype” in Huws, Richard (c.1968), as referenced above.

Although uncatalogued, the Richard Huws Papers are accompanied by a list of items (set of papers), each with a short introduction/commentary provided by the depositor, Daniel Huws, in 2009.


The action of the 1951 water mobile sculpture has been determined from studying the photographs and several video clips of the fountain, particularly in the ‘dailymotion’ video referenced below.


The video of the 1951 Festival of Britain at [https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xlb3zl](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xlb3zl) is probably the most comprehensive available, setting the whole Festival in context and highlighting its influence on architecture and design.

Richard Huws Papers (1951 Press Cuttings), several with sources and/or dates missing, Aberystwyth, NLW, Item 9.


Huws, Richard (c.1969).


3: Piazza Fountain, Drury Lane, Liverpool, 1962-67


Merseyside Civic Society (1963), Note of Fountain Sub-Committee members, in Proceedings of the Fountain Sub-Committee (MCS FSC), 1962-67, Liverpool Record Office.

MCS FSC (10 August 1962a), Request from G. Shankland, Minutes of meeting of fountain sub-committee, Liverpool

MCS FSC (10 July 1962), Proposals for a New City Fountain, Minutes of meeting of fountain sub-committee, Liverpool.

The Tryweryn valley in Gwynedd, included the village of Capel Celyn was flooded in the early 1960s to create a large reservoir Lynn Celyn to provide water for Liverpool and was fiercely opposed by the Welsh nationalists and others.

MCS FSC (10 August 1962b), Report on meeting with Mr Huws, Minutes of meeting of sub-committee, Liverpool.

MCS FSC (18 September 1962), Initial fountain proposals, Minutes of meeting of fountain sub-committee, Liverpool.

MCS FSC (3 October 1962), Obtaining formal consent, Minutes of meeting of fountain sub-committee, Liverpool.

MCS FSC (23 October 1962), Presentation to Sub-Committee, Minutes of meeting of fountain sub-committee, L’pool.

MCS FSC (9 January 1963), chairman’s report on presentation to Alderman McDonald Stewart, Graeme Shankland and Walter Bor on 8 January, Minutes of meeting of fountain sub-committee, Liverpool.

Bor, Walter (1963), Fountain in Central Area, Letter to Merseyside Civic Society, 29 October 1963

Although RH had been working since 1951 to progress the principles of a kinetic fountain, we have found no evidence in the Richard Huws Papers or elsewhere that the Liverpool fountain was originally designed for a new town in Lancashire as reported, for example, in the description of the ‘Bucket fountain’ included on the Beetham Plaza website at [http://beethamplaza.co.uk/bucket-fountain/](http://beethamplaza.co.uk/bucket-fountain/).


Huws, Richard (c.1968).


Clarke, John (1964), Letter from MCS secretary to the Town Clerk, Mr Alker, 27 October 1964.

Alker (1965), Re Site of fountain within the Central Area, Letter from Town Clerk to John Clarke, 22 February 65

Alker (1965), Letter from Town Clerk to MCS secretary, John Clarke, 4 March 1965.


Ibid.

49 Huws, Richard (c.1968).
50 Williams, Peter Howell (1965), Letter to chair of Fountain Sub-Committee, F.J.Camenisch, 4 October 1965.
51 Scrutton, Hugh (1965), Letter from Director of Walker Art Gallery to Peter Howell Williams, 6 October 1965.
53 Jones, Alan (2018), Email from retired CL sub-contractor in Perth, Australia, to Stewart Denham, 17 December 2018; Alan Jones was sub-contracted to Cammell Laird from the local mechanical engineering firm of R. McIvor & Sons.
54 Alan Jones was contacted through his son – Ian Jones, telephone call to Stewart Denham, 17 December 2018.
55 Camenisch, F.J. (1967), Letters from chair of FSC to MCS secretary, John Clarke, 7 April and 14 April 1967.
56 Liverpool Echo (1967).
57 MCS (15 May 1967), chairman’s Report, Minutes of meeting of MCS Executive Committee, Liverpool.
58 Liverpool Echo (1967).
61 Starkk, Mischa (1967).
63 Ibid.
64 Starkk, Mischa (1967).
66 This did not stop the Town’s Heritage Trail of 2009 nor the Basildon Echo of January 2016 claiming that a traditional water feature, now in St Martins Church precinct, is the Richard Huws fountain - when it is literally nothing of the kind.
5: History of the Liverpool Fountain, Post 1967


Calvert, Linda (2018), Re: fountain, Beetham Plaza, Drury Lane, Liverpool, Email from Historic England North West to the author, 18 September 2018, advising that while listing would not directly oblige the owners to maintain the fountain in...
working condition, it might add to pressure from local residents, councillors, etc, and would give the Council statutory powers to require owners to fix failing fabric.