

# BIDSTON VILLAGE & HILL



## Heritage Trail

A Photographic Guide

calaméo



# **BIDSTON VILLAGE & HILL Heritage Trail**

A Photographic Guide



*Liverpool from Bidston Hill*

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## TRANSPORT ACCESS

**Buses 418** (Birkenhead Bus Station to New Ferry via Arrow Park), **492 and 495** (Noctorum circulars) stop in the village

**Buses 38** (West Kirby to Eastham Ferry) and **407** (West Kirby to Liverpool) stop on Hoylake Road.

Buses 38 (West Kirby to Eastham Ferry) and **437** (Liverpool to West Kirby) stop on Upton Road (437) and Tollemache Road (38) near Flaybrick Cemetery and Tam O'Shanter Farm

**Bidston Station** is five minutes' walk from the village and has a frequent service to Birkenhead and Liverpool and a less frequent service to Wrexham.

**Parking** is available near Tesco's and by Tam O'Shanter Farm (charges may apply)

Information correct as of May 2023



*Contemporary Art near Bidston Station (2014)*



# BIDSTON CONSERVATION AREA

Bidston may mean 'Bede's Settlement', a 'dwelling on a rock' or possibly a 'bidding-stone'. The village retains a medieval layout and a number of attractive and historic buildings.

Bidston was the first conservation area in Wirral – designated in 1971 by Birkenhead County Borough. It has 23 listed buildings, 3 at Grade II\* (the hall, gateway, and mill) and 6 farmsteads (Church, Bidston Hall, Yew Tree, Stone and Ivy Farms, Lilac Cottages). Despite residential pressures in the 20th century it still has 1 farm and 4 with horses.



*Lilac Cottage showing the Ball Finials on the Gateposts*



*Bidston Church in Spring*

*'The village ... is an architectural and historical gem ...  
preserved ... for looking at, but not for living in'*

Kenneth Burnley

# GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY OF BIDSTON

Bidston is located in a drainage basin, a sheltered inlet or 'moss' – a bog with peat. The hill is composed of sandstone; c240 million years ago it was desert dunes which experienced flash floods. It is the only buff sandstone village grouping in Wirral, and this gives a unity to the buildings many of which have steep pitched Welsh slate roofs, mullioned windows, stone gables and, in later additions, red brick.

The hill is 231 feet high and has been designated a 'site of biological importance'. It includes lowland heath habitat, mature deciduous and coniferous woodland (with birch, Scots pine, oak, sycamore and beech from plantings in the 1800s.), and scrub habitat, Victorian rhododendrons, damp heath, sphagnum bog-mosses, peat hollows and areas of pooling, acidic grassland. Old pictures show that it had fewer trees in past.



*View from Bidston Hill*





*Western Slope of Bidston Hill*

# HISTORY OF BIDSTON

- Neolithic and Mesolithic finds show stone age habitation
- Roman pottery and coins found nearby
- Viking hogback stone
- Circular church yard suggests an early date
- Bidston not in Domesday Book
- 1260 - reference to Bedistan
- The parish originally included Bidston, Moreton, Saughall Massie, Birkenhead and Claughton
- To east the land belonged to Birkenhead Priory, to the west, to the Massies
- 1355- Ownership passed to Le Strange
- 1397 - the village was sold to Sir John Stanley
- 1407 - the Stanleys used the area to hunt
- William Stanley, Earl of Derby, resided here – he is said by some to be the ‘real’ Shakespeare
- 1596 – Margaret, dowager countess, petitioned against evil local gentry for killing deer and attacking her bailiff
- 1598 - Margery Hare, an honest poor woman, used to bless things but stopped after a warning
- Crimes then included refusing to attend church, playing bowls on the Sabbath and fornication
- 1636 - free school built, possibly by Earl James the Martyr who was executed in the Civil War
- 1653 – Bidston passed to William Steele
- 1662 – Sir John King, an Irish peer, bought Bidston
- 1665 - survey map created – mainly agricultural





*John and William Stanley*



*James and Charles Stanley*

*The 4th, 6th, 7th and 8th Earls of Derby – all of whom owned Bidston Hall and Village*



*The 'martyred' 7th Earl, his Wife Charlotte and Son*



*Sir John Vyner and his Family*

- 1680 - Sir Robert Vyner, banker and crown jeweller, got Bidston by mortgage
- 1727 – no voters in the election
- 1750 – mention of an alehouse
- 18-19c – eels from the river Birket taken to Liverpool; fields enclosed
- Cockfighting at Easter and Whit with jolly rural festivals according to Rev Hume's researches
- 1801 – population of Bidston was 199, population of Birkenhead, 110
- 1831 – population of Bidston was 252, of Birkenhead 2,569
- 1830s – ladies watched the hunt from the lighthouse
- 1837 - a 'superannuated' teacher and 20 children at the national school taught by a deputy
- 1847 – Bidston appears in Albert Smith's novel, Christopher Tadpole
- 19c – industry, moss drained for docks
- 1866 – railway to West Kirby
- 1884 – railway to North Wales
- 20c - residential developments encroach on the village
- 1971 – Bidston becomes a conservation area
- 1980 – Brack described the village as 'slowly dying'



# BIDSTON VILLAGE

## 1. St Oswald's Church (Grade II)

The dedication to St Oswald comes from an old bell with that name on it, but it was later realised that the bell came from Chester. No one knows the church's original dedication.

In the 12th century the church was given to Birkenhead Priory. It was rebuilt in the mid-13th century in the Early English style and the tower built in 1520 but the church was remodelled in the 17th century. There was a sundial by the south porch dated 1733 with the names of Thomas Stanford and Edward Newby, Church Wardens.



*The Church in 1850*

In 1855 it was decided that 'considering the dilapidated, ruinous, and unsound state of the present church it would be inexpedient to attempt to repair the same'. W. and J. Hay rebuilt it in Gothic Revival style using much old masonry to appease locals who were sad to see the old church disappear. A date stone can be seen above the doorway. In 1882 the chancel was extended east (the work of G. E. Grayson) and in 1908 the vestry was enlarged. In 1912 the south aisle windows by Morris & Co were installed.



*The Church in 2012*

There are a number of old and impressive monuments in the church yard and four war graves – one for each of the army, navy, merchant navy and RAF.





*The Church and Graveyard*



*Date Stones on the Porch*



*Interior of the Church – the Reredos is a Glass Mosaic by Salviati of da Vinci's Last Supper*





*Stained Glass in the East Window*



*The Tower is the oldest part of the Church*

## 2. 2-4 School Lane (Grade II)

18th century stone cottages of stone, brick and slate, with casement and sash windows.



*No. 2 School Lane*





*Front of No. 4*



*Rear of No. 4*



### 3. Stone Farm + Barns (Grade II)

18th century with earlier origin, it was once the Ring o' Bells pub (known as the 'Ham and Egg House') and at festivals served delicious ham & eggs but the landlord supposedly received smuggled liquor and drank and allowed drunkenness on the premises which annoyed churchgoers so it closed in 1868. The last landlord, Simon Croft, had to be lowered out of his bedroom window in his coffin



*Stone Farm with its Barn*



*The Barn*

There was a sign above the entrance which read:

*Walk in my friends and taste my beer and liquor;  
If your pockets be well stored you'll find it comes the  
quicker;  
But for want of that has caused both grief and sorrow,  
Therefore you must pay today; I will trust tomorrow.*

It was a little, quiet, grey village—so very grey, indeed, and venerable, and quaint, that no flaunting red brick had dared to shew itself and break the uniform tint of its gabled antiquity. The houses were grey, and the wall-fences were grey, and so was the church tower. So also was the pedestal of the sundial in the grave-yard, that mutely spoke its lesson on corroding time to all who cared to heed it. And the old grange, with its mulioned windows and ivy-covered gateway, was the greyest of all: there was scarcely any surmising as to when it had been a green damp level young house. None could have given the information but the church tower: and when that spoke it was but of the newly past, the fleeting present, or the call to the future Heaven.

Hickory led his little companion by the church, and at last they stopped at a small hotel, with which he seemed to be well acquainted.

“Whoa!” he cried, as he halted at the door. “Here’s the Ring o’ Bells at Bidston, and here we’ll put up for to-night.”

*Extract from The Struggles and Adventures of  
Christopher Tadpole by Albert Smith*

## 4. Clover Cottages (Grade II)

Two almshouses of 1901 by Woolfall and Eccles with a coat of arms and inscription – erected by widow Emily in memory of George Robert Clover.



*Clover Cottages*



## 5. Former School and School Master's House

This was probably opened in 1838 having cost £350 – it replaced the one in School Lane opened in 1636 which was destroyed in the blitz. The new school was condemned in 1982 but became a community centre in 1987.



*The Old School House of 1838*

## 6. Old Main Road

Until the M53 cut it off in the early 1970s, this was the main road from Moreton to Birkenhead. Buses 21, 22 and 28 ran through the village.

## 7 Church Farm (Grade II)

The origin of the **House** is early 16th century and it is said that it once housed a community of monks. The left wing has a cruck frame encased in stone and the main range is early 17th century with a 19th century wing added on. It has a slate roof, mullioned windows, gabled porch and stone gate posts. It has remains of underground passages and room with no access. Over three storeys there are 13 floor levels.



*Church Farm in 2012*





*Gate Post at Church Farm in 2012*

The **Granary** (Grade II) is of stone in two storeys with a double doorway, loft window, external staircase, dog kennel, single storey cart shed with 3 open bays, and pigsties at the rear. Temporary workers used to sleep in the first floor.



*The Granary at Church Farm*



*Stables at Church Farm*



The **Byre and Stables** (Grade II) date from the 18th century and have 2 storeys at right angles of 5 and 3 bays with doorways, windows and upper floor taking in slits.



*Stables at Church Farm*



The **Barn** (Grade II) is early 18th century in stone with double doors and 2 bays. There is said to be a north gable doorway and lintel.



*Barn at Church farm*



*Church Farm in 2012*

## 8. Ivy Farm (Grade II)

The house is mostly late 18th /early 19th century built of brick and stone with a slate roof. The older block is two storeys with steps to a central door and sash windows; the right hand section is single story with casement windows.



*Ivy Farm and the War Memorial in 2012*





*The later Section of Ivy Farm in 2012*



*Ivy Farm*



## 9. War Memorial

This was erected in 1920 to commemorate the dead of the Great War. On one of the panels are the words:

*Oh valiant Hearts who to your Glory came,  
Through dust of conflict and of battle flame  
Tranquil you lie your knightly virtue proved  
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved*

And next to it:

*O risen Lord, O Shepherd of our dead  
Whose Cross has brought them and whose Staff has led  
In glorious hope their proud and sorrowing land  
Commits her children to thy Gracious hand*

These are verses 1 and 7 from the hymn by John S. Arkwright



*The 1920 War Memorial*





*The Dedication reads:*

ERECTED TO  
THE MEMORY  
OF THOSE MEN  
OF THIS PARISH  
WHO GAVE THEIR  
LIVES FIGHTING  
IN THE GREAT  
WAR 1914-1919

-  
A.D. 1920



## 10. Yew Tree Farm (Grade II)

The timber-framed house predates 1697; it has three bays and a porch with a date stone.

The attached four-bay barn also has crucks.

The stables are cruck timber enclosed in stone with mullioned windows – the third bay was added later. There are pigsties against the west gable.



*The Stables at Yew Tree Farm*



*The Barn of Yew Tree Farm*



*Cruck Frame visible at Yew Tree Farm*



## 11. Lilac Cottages (Grade II)

A 17th century sandstone building with a slate roof consisting of a main range plus two gabled cross wings with mullioned and sash windows and a large chimney. The outbuildings are 17th / 18th century – originally a barn and stables - with inserted windows. In an old painting it is labelled Bidston Hall Farm. The stone gateposts have ball finials



*This old painting is labelled 'Bidston Hall Farm' -  
according to Kenneth Burnley it was once  
called the 'Old Vicarage'*





*Lilac Cottage*



*Lilac Cottage and Outbuildings – the Buttresses  
are part of the old Tithe Barn*



*Lilac Cottage in 2014*



*The Outbuildings are now Residential Properties*





*Lilac Cottage in 2014*



## 12. Former Village Shop

This house was once a shop selling tweed, then a grocer's and finally a sweet shop



*The former Village Shop*

### 13. Former Toll House

The Woodside to Hoylake turnpike (toll road) ran through Bidston and between 1841 and 1866 there was a toll house to collect the fees from travellers.



*Former Toll House*

## 14. Bidston Hall Farm (Grade II)

These farm buildings are late 18th century – a main range of nine stables with doors, windows and loft openings and another range consisting of a stable and byre with two doors and windows. They have now been converted to residential use. A millstone stands nearby.



*Former Stables of Bidston Hall Farm*



## 15. Bidston Hall (Grade II\*)

The enclosing wall (Grade II) is on a plinth and has segmental coping which rises over the segmental archway with pendent voussoirs (tapered stones) and three domed finials. In the angles of the wall are the remains of former summer house and in the centre of the rear wall is a shallow arched gateway.

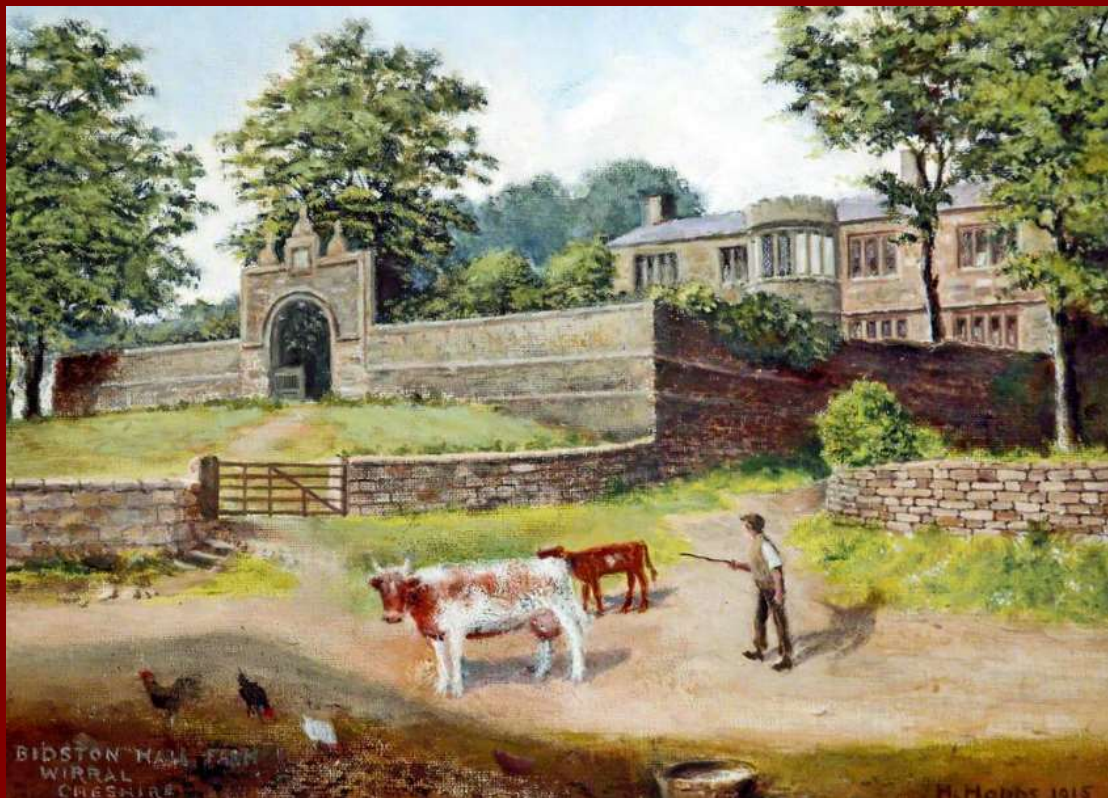
The late 16th century gateway (Grade II\*) supposedly had a pair of dice to represent the attempt to win back what was lost by gambling at cards, or, according to an alternative version related by Gamlin, a bottle of wine, hence what were said to be stone decanters. In fact both stories are fictions – the hall never changed hands in a bet!



*The Grade II\* Listed Gate to Bidston Hall*



*An old Picture of Bidston Hall*



*A Painting of the Hall by H. Hopps, 1915*

It is not known for certain exactly when and by whom the hall was built but it could have been a pre-1594 hunting lodge built in the deer park by Henry Stanley, 4th Earl of Derby. This may have been enlarged in the 1620s by William, the 'wandering' 6th Earl. After Earl



James was executed in 1651 for supporting the King his wife and son Charles, the 8th earl, retired to Bidston Hall but their financial difficulties meant the hall was lost to the Stanleys for ever. The Vyners owned from c1680 to 1966. In later years it was let out to a tenant farmer and cows were kept in the great hall. In 1966 the Faulkners bought the ruinous Hall and a major restoration was undertaken before it was later sold on.



*View of the West Front of the Hall*

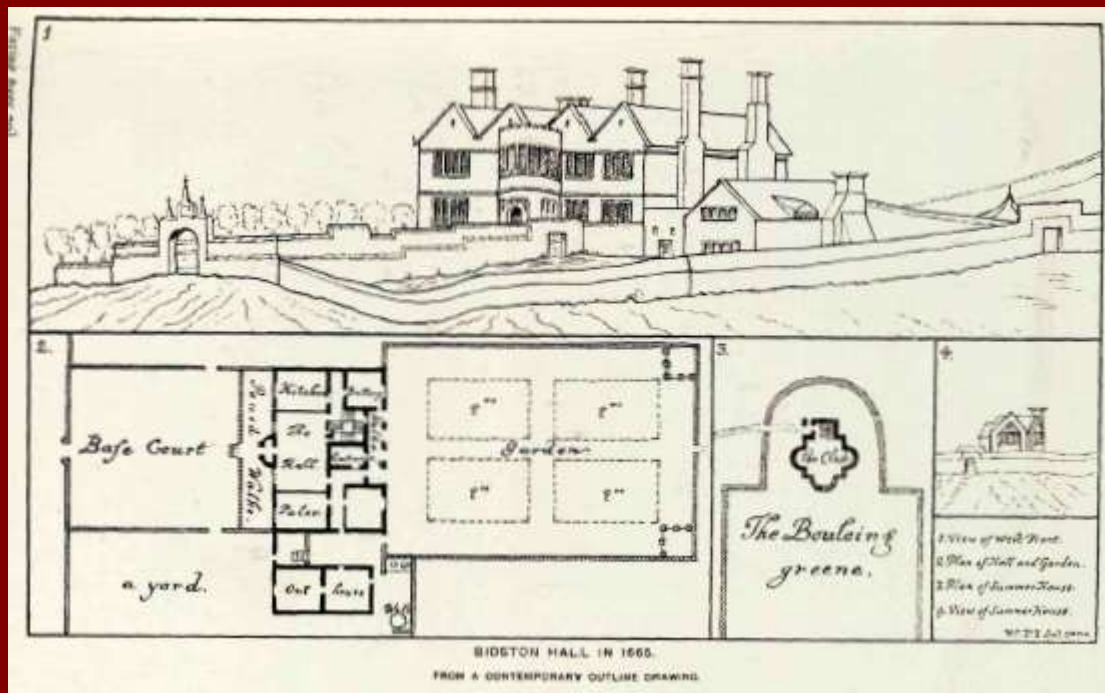




*The Hall from the South*



*The East Front of the Hall*



*The Hall in 1665 from a Contemporary Drawing*

The layout is symmetrical with a central bowed two-storey porch and a scalloped parapet on the entrance front. The rear has a four-bay loggia (1620) with an arcade of semicircular arches which was later enclosed. There are mullioned and bay windows and projecting gables. The appearance of the roof on the west was altered when the gables were replaced.

Inside there is a Great Hall, a kitchen (originally to the north), a parlour (originally to the south – later kitchen and parlour were reversed). The second staircase is more recent. Sadly little of interest remains inside.

There was once a bowling green in the grounds and there remain the foundations of a lodge (demolished in the 19th century) at the Club House – again, it is a myth that it was club-shaped because of the playing card.



There is supposedly a nexus of 'haunted' cellar tunnels under the hall, connecting witches' or smugglers' houses and paranormal entities have been reported in the hall at night - guests say they can't move or feel weighed down!

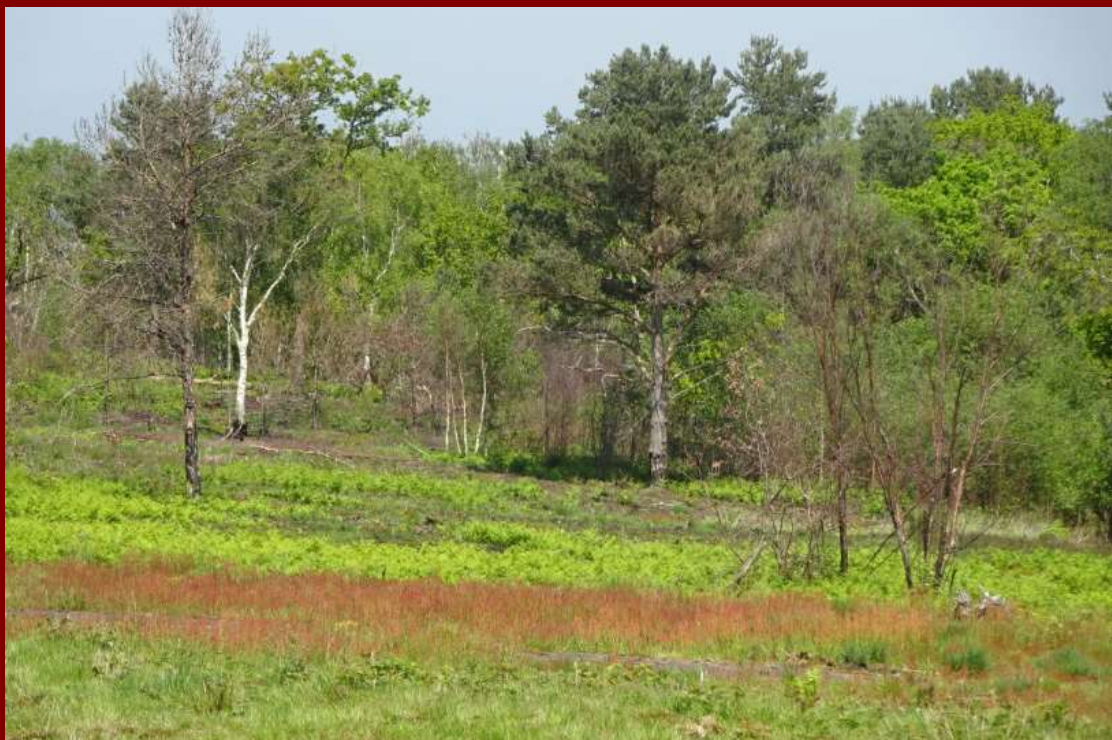


*An old Photograph of the Hall*



## BIDSTON HILL

Around 1850 an offer was made to the landowner to turn the hill into an immense quarry but the offer was refused. Vyner Road split the hill in two and so a bridge was built across it. In the late 19th century the spread of Birkenhead led to fears that Bidston Hill would be covered with houses and so in 1894 the Council purchased it from Robert Charles de Grey Vyner who accepted the lowest valuation and even donated to the fund – Eleanor Road was named after his wife. In 1907 a further 22 acres of pine woods was bought for £10,500 in honour of Edmund Taylor whose work made the purchase possible (he is buried at CE7 at Flaybrick).



*Bidston Hill*



*Old Pedestal on Bidston Hill*

An avenue, King George's Way, was opened on 25.3.1914 by the King and Queen who had already lunched at Hooton sidings and opened the Lady Lever Art Gallery. The King pressed a button at the Town Hall



to open the path and then drove past it on his way to Wallasey Town Hall.

One notable building that was originally in the area was Bidston Court, built by Robert Hudson in 1891 at a cost of £150,000 and was for a time the home of the MD of Levers and, apparently, John Laird. It was admired by Crown Prince Wilhelm of Germany. Between 1929 and 1931 it was moved by Sir Ernest Royden, a Liverpool ship owner, to the park named after his family and is now called Hill Bark, the name of his wife's former home.



*Hill Bark – once located in Bidston*

In 1941 during World War II bomb shelters were dug under the hill with 2,213 bunks and 793 seats. The entrance on was on Hoylake Road and the spoil was dumped in front. There was a canteen, staff dorms, toilets, a medical post and ventilation / escape shafts. By

the time of the cold war the tunnels were unsuitable for use because of dry rot. There are also said to be secret tunnels leading from Flaybrick fever hospital to the cemetery chapel, a smugglers' tunnel to Mother Redcap's at Egremont (unlikely, given that it would have to go under a moss) and an underground water source.

Bidston Hill is noted for numerous paranormal phenomena. Tom Slemen described it as 'one of the most mysterious and supernatural landmarks in the country'. Among the tales told are ones about covens of witches and occultists and about it being a UFO window area where strange craft and lights are seen, including one in July 2012. The 'witches' stone steps' lead to the top of the hill through the woods. Other legends link the hill somehow to Joseph of Arimathea and the Holy Grail, perhaps confusing Wirral with Wearyall, Glastonbury!

Another story concerns the Werewolf of Bidston; at some time around the 16th century the miller had an affair with a married woman and their illegitimate child was abandoned on the hill and brought up by animals. He raided livestock and the local farmers decided to hunt down the creature which they did but the vicar persuaded them to spare the life of what was still evidently a human being so they exiled him to Hilbre Island but his howls can still be heard around Biston.

Some web pages link Bidston to the 'Williams' Rainhill 'Ripper' murders of a mother and four children. The murderer, aka F.B. Deeming and Baron Swanston, was



actually from Ashby de la Zouche but grew up and married in Bebington and Tranmere. Nothing is known to link him to Bidston but it is possible that he may have lived nearby at some point.



*Views from Bidston Hill*

## 16. Horse Carving

This carving is of uncertain date – the circle round the neck may have solar significance. The later carving beneath reads the Latin 'EQUINO'.



*Carving of a Horse's Head*



## 17. Cockpit

This circle may have been a place of entertainment or perhaps a mill to crush gorse for animal feed.

## 18. Sun Goddess Carving

A cruciform figure with rays at her feet, supposedly facing in the direction of the rising sun on Midsummer's Day and thought to have been carved by the Norse-Irish around 1000 but re-cut at some point. Less obvious is a carving of a Moon God. The pair may be Sunna and Mani, children of the giant Mundilfari, turner of time; Sunna crosses the sky in her chariot pulling the sun behind while Mani's chariot was pulled by dogs though he also walks and was, apparently, the god of walkers.



*Mill Farm was once called Pansy Farm*



*The Sun Goddess*



## 19. Rock carvings

Located near the Observatory, these may date from the 18th century and are thought to be 'mummers' carvings' depicting a man with a knife and a man with a goblet, though others theories connect them to witches rituals or adverts. Mummer plays linked to seasons, life and love have pagan origins and were last performed in the area in 1935 with a revival in 2004.

## 20. Penny-a-Day Dyke

In 1407 under the Stanleys a stone-walled enclosure was built for retaining deer which got its name from the workers' pay.



*The Penny-a-Day Dyke*

## 21. Bidston Lighthouse



*The original Lighthouse*

Ships needed lights to guide them through the dangerous Horse Channel sandbanks in the Mersey estuary. One of these was Leasowe, the other was Lower Mockbegger which was washed away in 1769 and



a replacement five storey tower was built in 1771 on the hill in same alignment more than two miles from the sea, a record for any lighthouse. It could be smaller, cheaper and safer. Liverpool's dock master William Hutchinson, an ex-privateer, revolutionised lighthouse optics, installing a 13.5' parabolic mirror (probably the largest ever for a lighthouse) and oil lamp visible 21 nautical miles out to sea – it used a gallon of oil every four hours.

Some keepers were woman - Elizabeth Wilding, the wife of Richard was appointed in 1797 on condition she behaved properly and did not attempt to employ the lighthouse as a public house! Another was Ann Urmson. In 1801 Robert Stevenson (lighthouse engineer and grandfather of author Robert Louis) visited Bidston

In 1865 the tower was damaged by fire and so in 1873 – a new three stage tower was built and fitted with a recessed light chamber and conical metal roof with finial. It was designed by George Fosbery Lyster, dock engineer of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, who also designed docks and the Observatory and the Great Orme lighthouse. It cost £970 for the tower and £1600 for the lamp and £250 for glazing. The large dioptric lens with vertical condensing prisms was made by Chance Brothers of Birmingham. £1,475 was spent on the accommodation - three stone, slate-roofed cottages for keepers' families which were linked to the lighthouse by a hallway.

Leasowe lighthouse was extinguished in 1908, Bidston shone for 40 years till 9th October 1913; the Horse Channel was no longer navigable and ships used Queen's Channel marked by buoys. From 1935 Birkenhead Corporation used the cottages as accommodation and from 1974 the Natural Environment Research Council (Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory) used the tower for storage and cottage no 3 as an office. This necessitated a number of structural changes which were made in the 1970s. The lighthouse was repaired in 2000 and has been in private ownership since 2011; a not-for-profit company has been set up to preserve it and it is open for visits on a number of days each year.



*Bidston Lighthouse in 2012*



## 22. Bidston Observatory

The original Liverpool Observatory built at Waterloo Dock in 1845 but by 1866 the docks were expanding so a new site was sought and Bidston was ideal. A wall was built with a gate at the west with a chamfered segmental arch with imposts, coped gable and finial. The Observatory, surrounded by a moat to reduce tremors, was constructed from local sandstone and had two towers for telescopes, a library and a chart room and a director's house.

In 1929 the Observatory and Tidal Institute merged. The telescopes were used to watch the planets for time keeping and setting ships' chronometers and barometers. An unbroken series of meteorological and seismological records for shipping, legal, and military purposes was produced (they were consulted on the date of D Day) and it was the foremost tidal prediction centre in the world. Until 1969 the 1 o'clock gun on the Birkenhead waterfront was fired by remote control from Bidston for ships to set their chronometers for navigation.

In 1969 the Natural Environment Research Council took over the building and in 1979 the [Joseph] Proudman building for oceanographic staff and their computer was built next to the original Observatory. It was named after one of the founding fathers of the Institute, Professor of Maths and Oceanography. In 2004 the Oceanographic Laboratory relocated to Liverpool

University and in 2012/3 the Proudman building was demolished. The Observatory, largely stripped of its internal features, is now an artists' residential centre and is occasionally open for public tours.



*The Observatory in 2014*



*The two Domes which once housed Telescopes*





*The Entrance to the Observatory*

The old mechanical calculator which worked out the tides anywhere in the world was moved to Liverpool University where it can still be seen.



*The former Director's Residence*



*The Roof of the Observatory*





*The Roof of the Observatory*



*One of the two Domes*

## 23. Signalling Post



*Signal Flags and Lighthouse on Bidston Hill*

Between 1763 and 1840 Bidston Hill was a flag signalling station. From the top you could see the channel and the docks and runners had 11 minutes to raise the company flag to alert the relevant merchant house and dock workers in Liverpool of the impending arrival of their ship so they could avoid paying dockers for not working. Some of the holes were reserved for the approach of warships. At the height of operation there were over 100 flag poles and it was a popular visitor attraction, the subject of artistic designs on pottery. Only one hole is left. In 1826 a telegraph station was built at Bidston for the Liverpool to Holyhead semaphore chain and in 1861 this was replaced by an electric telegraph.





*Remaining Signal Flag Post Hole*

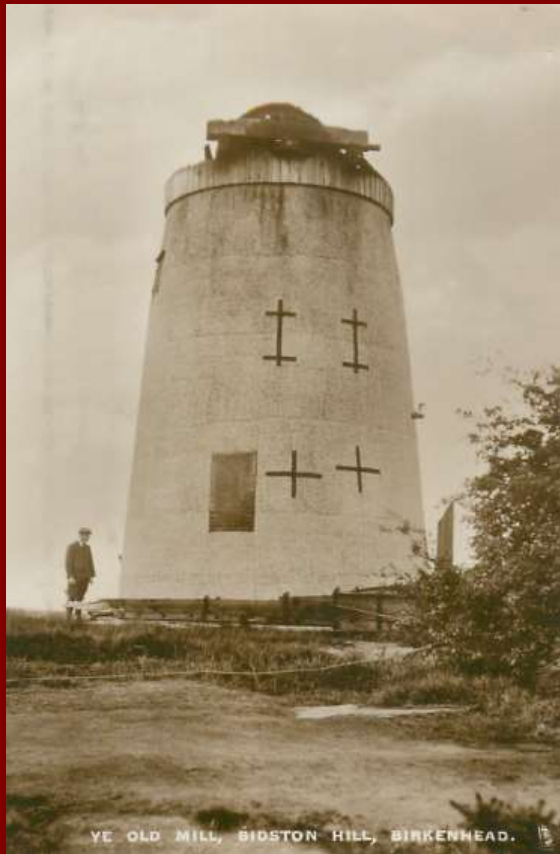
## 24. Bidston Windmill

There may have been a post mill in the area as early as the 1350s and there was certainly one there in 1596.

There is mention of a mill in 1609 and of a peg mill in 1665. By 1758 the Vyners owned the mill. In the early 1790s a gale set the sails rotating too quickly, the arms broke loose and the friction started a fire which burnt down the mill. Its foundations survive 20 yards to the north of the present mill along with signs of steps and a groove.

In 1800 a three storey 33 ft circular tapering roughcast tower mill with a boarded cap was constructed - originally the cap was turned by a sailpole but was later rotated by using a chain wheel. The millstones were on the first floor and there was a spur wheel (wooden with iron teeth) between the 1st and 2nd floors. Under the bin floor were hoppers to feed the stones. The mill had two doors to allow access wherever the sails were facing but that did not prevent one miller being killed walking out and into the rotating sails.





*The Mill before restoration and as it is now*



*The Inscription over the Door: 'RESTORED A.D. 1894'  
Right: Inside the Mill*



*The Mill today – fully restored*





*The Mill from the Rear*

Despite fires in 1821 and 1839 which destroyed the sails and machinery the mill ground corn to flour for 75 years- 122 lb every 3-5 minutes. A cart track led to the road allowing the flour to be taken away. In 1868 a visitor described the sound inside the mill as being like buzzing bees and he came out after his visit covered in white. The last miller was a Mr Youds; the mill may have broken down 1875 and it lay idle for some time. Mr Vyner turned down applications to turn it into a tea house and in 1894 it was restored by Mr Hudson of Bidston Court to coincide with the opening of the Hill to the public (as recorded in an inscription above the lintel) then again after storm damage in 1927 by public subscription – then in 1971 and the roof in 2006. It may be the first ever preserved mill and is the only one in Wirral to have retained its machinery. The remaining original sail was taken by Mr Hudson to be a chair. A plaque on the side refers to the purchase of land and woods in memory of Edmund Taylor.

Legend has it that a vaporous outline of a murdered 19th century miller can sometimes be seen and that the zombie form of satanic murderer Richard Tilly (died 1730) rises from his unconsecrated grave near mill to attack young ladies.



## 25. Tam O'Shanter Cottage

This was built about 300 years ago from local stone and reed as a heath squatter's cottage – you had three days to build a house and light a fire and then you could live there free. In 1837 Richard Lee or Leay, a stonemason, lived there and in 1840 the farm had 6 acres. In 1841 he put the carving of Tam in the gable end – a reference to the poem by Robert Burns. The cottage was badly damaged by fires in 1954 and 1975 and vermin destroyed the roof in 1965 but the building survives and is looked run by volunteers as a thriving urban farm – the rent is one pine cone per annum paid to the mayor of Wirral. One activity there is egg rolling on Easter Monday, apparently an old Wirral tradition.



*The Cottage as it used to be*



*The Cottage today*



*The Image of Tam O'Shanter*





*The Cottage in 2012*



*The Cottage today*





*The Cottage today*



*The Cottage today*





*Old Dairy Equipment*





*View of the Farm in Spring*



*View of the Farm in Autumn*





*The Farm in Autumn*



*The Farm in Spring*



*Pigs*





*Goat*



*Alpaca*





*Pony*



*Sheep*

## 26. Flaybrick Cemetery

The growth of Birkenhead meant a new cemetery was needed and Paxton was approached in the 1840s but a recession set in and nothing was done. By the 1860s the need was much greater and Edward Kemp, curator of Birkenhead Park, as appointed to lay out Flaybrick Cemetery. Catholics feared they might be excluded and there were actually riots but their fears were misplaced. Flaybrick opened on 30.5.64; it originally covered 16.5 acres, enlarged to 26 by the 1890s. The contractor was William Rimmer of Bidston Hall.



*Ruins of the Chapels*





*The Chapels at Flaybrick*



*The Cross of Sacrifice at Flaybrick*



*The Tower of the Chapels*





*Ruins of the Chapels*



*Star of David in the Gable*

There were three chapels - the RC chapel was demolished in 1971, replaced by a memorial wall, and the other two last used in 1975 and allowed to fall into ruins. Masonic carvings can be seen in the stonework.





*Arcading in one of the Chapels*



*Arcading in one of the Chapels*



*Arcading and Remains of Tiling in one of the Chapels*





*Arcading in one of the Chapels*



*Arcading and Remains of Tiling in one of the Chapels*





*Ruins of the Chapels*



*Ruins of the Chapels*

Many of the great and good of Birkenhead rest here, including:

- **Charles Thompson** d1903 – ran a mission for the poor
- **Isaac Roberts** d1904 - businessman / pioneer astro-photographer, his tomb has an Egyptian design
- **Edward Kemp** – who designed the site
- **Lucy and Littler** - the architects
- **James Taylor Cochran** d1916 – his engineering firm built the Resurgam II submarine in 1879 which sank off Rhyl in 1880
- **Catherine Tam** – murder victim 1925



*An impressive Monument*





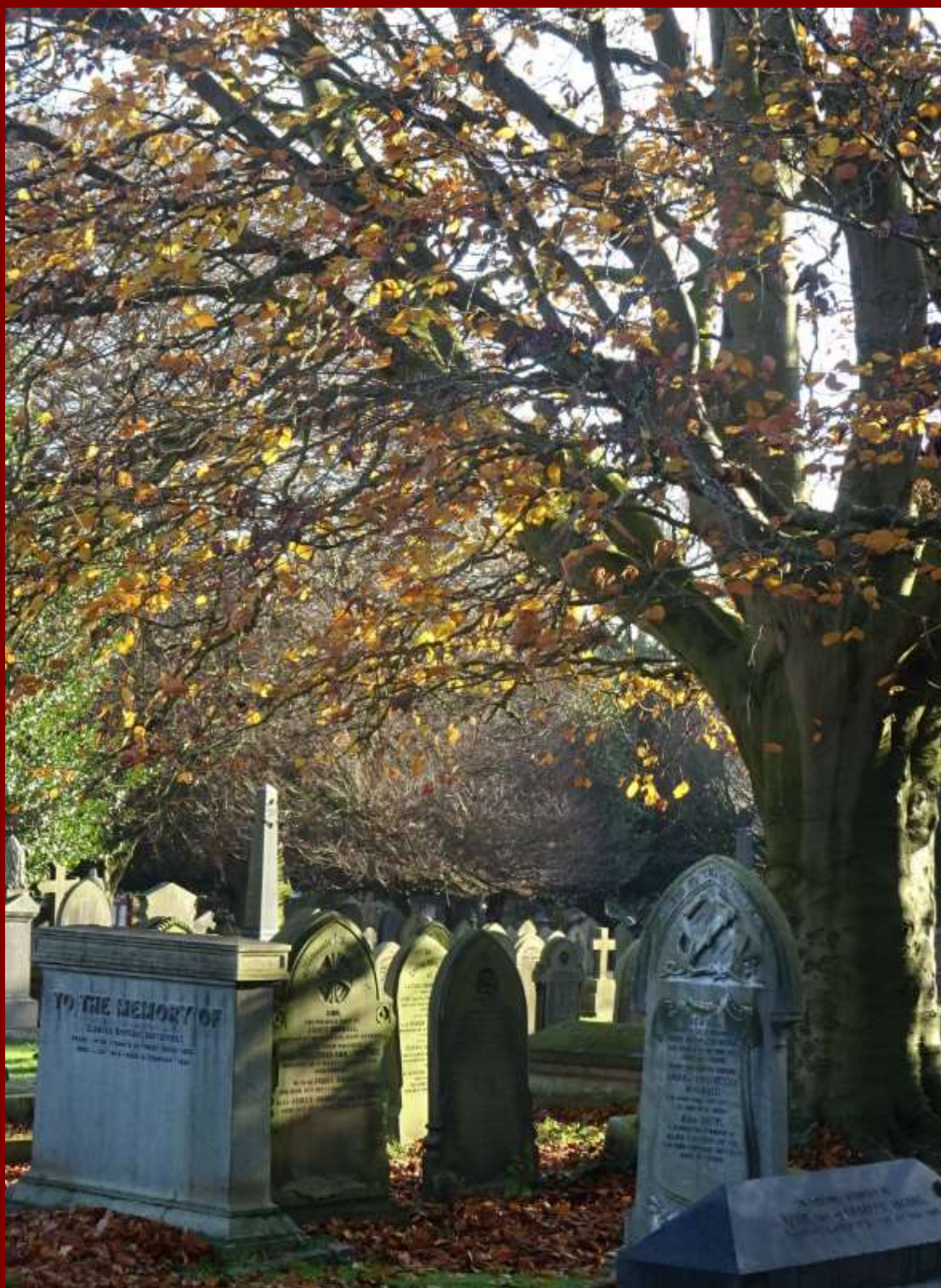
*Grave of Edward Kemp who designed Flaybrick*





*An impressive Monument to James Carlyle (d 1879)*





*The Cemetery in Autumn*





*Headstones in Flaybrick*





*An impressive Sculpture of an Angel*



The Registrar's Office and Sexton's Lodge is now in private hands. A wide variety of flora and fauna are found in the cemetery.



*Graves with the Lodge in the Background*



*The Lodge*





*The Lodge*

The Friends of Flaybrick run regular tours of the graves.

## 27. Holy Cross Church (Grade II)

A Roman Catholic church, no longer in use, by F. X. Velarde, in brick and stone with tiled roofs. It has a nave with aisles, and a chancel with a curved apse and a Lady Chapel. At the entrance is a narthex with pinnacles, a baptistery and a tower. The tower is square, with round-headed openings in the bell stage, and a pyramidal copper roof.



*The Church is now disused and in a sorry State  
(Image by ReptOn1x)*



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*'A little, quiet grey village'*  
Albert Smith







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