

The mystery of the missing statue

Zachariah Charles Pearson was my great, great grandfather, and I became aware of him in the late 1940s

In my grandfather's Kentish house, standing on the sideboard between the crystal glass decanters with silver chains, was a small white statue, which I have since learnt to call a "sculptors maquette". As a small child, I was fascinated with the object: If this was a man, and a ship's captain at that, why was he wearing an ankle length dress and a necklace? The purpose of the ship's wheel, on which he was leaning, was obvious: the house was stuffed with maritime artefacts, as my grandfather (Zachariah's grandson) had also been a sea captain. But the dress?

Zachariah, I was told, as well as owning a lot of ships, had been Lord Mayor of Hull—a town somewhere in "The North", and so the mayoral robes and chain were explained to me. In family folklore, this man had presented Pearson Park to the people of the town, which was where the full-sized statue could be found. Imagine my disappointment when, much later, an uncle visiting Pearson Park discovered a plaque on a stone pillar—but no statue. Where had it gone?

With more time in retirement now, I decided to find out what had happened to this statue, famous by reputation in the family but never actually *seen*. Everyone in Hull was terribly helpful: the Local Studies Library, the Archivist, the Guildhall, the Maritime Museum... but I drew a complete blank: a full-length statue of of Zachariah Pearson had clearly never been erected, and was not listed anywhere. So why the maquette? And, more to the point, why had we kids all been spun this fib since the cradle?

My enquiries uncovered some interesting things. After an inauspicious start in life, being orphaned aged four, Zachariah had run away to sea, eventually becoming a captain, a shipowner and a successful businessman. With his business partner, he ran a mail service between Australia and New Zealand, and England and America, and carried out trade in the Baltic. One of my living aunts, in fact, remembers her grandmother, Emma Jane, Zachariah's daughter, recounting how she was presented at the Tsar's court in St. Petersburg. After becoming a Town Councillor and Alderman, ZCP was elected Mayor in 1859; his portrait hangs to this day in a committee room in the Guildhall.

It was during his second period as Mayor that at the American Civil War started to bite on the economy in Hull. The southern Confederate ports were being blockaded by the Yankees, preventing cotton from reaching England, and Sculcoates Cotton Mill was closed, destituting the mainly female workforce. Anxious to acquire cotton bales to reopen the mill (and also, no doubt, with an eye to profiteering!) Zachariah's business acumen deserted him. He acquired several steamers on credit, loaded them with guns and ammunition and other equipment to support the Confederates, and attempted to

run them through the Yankee blockade into ports in North Carolina. Only one made it—the rest were either sunk or captured by the Unionist Yankees!

Practically overnight, then, in the summer of 1862, his fortune changed. He resigned as Mayor, and, in 1864, he was bankrupted for £646,000 (a pretty sizable sum even today, but massive in those days). He sold all his other assets and

worked hard to ensure that he discharged his debts eventually. From then on he lived a quiet life (at what is now no. 63 Pearson Park), working with his oldest son, Charles, as a shipping agent.

So how do these revelations help solve the mystery? In Victorian times, bankruptcy on such a scale, and of someone in a respected position in his local community, was a heavy disgrace indeed. As his personal letters reveal, he now found out who his *true* friends were. Apart from the social inadvisability of now planting his own statue in Pearson Park, Zachariah would certainly not have been able to afford it. After all, Alderman

Moss eventually paid for Queen Victoria's statue which Zachariah had commissioned and paid a deposit for. We don't know whether his statue was actually started, but it certainly does not appear to have been finished. The maquette handed down the family was probably the sculptor's early model—the only record of his hoped-for statue of glory in the park. It is likely that Emma Jane, his daughter had it when she came to live, in her old age, with her son's family in Broadstairs. The south of England being so far away from Hull, I assume no-one in the family had verified the story of the statue in the Park. They spun the tale from generation to generation—and we just soaked it up!

Marion Shaw



Engraving of Zachariah Charles Pearson by kind permission of Dr Marion Shaw

Helping to raise funds for the Friends

Postcards£2 for a set of 5
Perpetual Calendars.....£6 each
Notelets.....£4 for a set of 8

On sale at the Pearson Park Hotel

Meetings & Contacts

Meetings are usually held on the 1st Monday every two months

**Our next MEETING will be on
Monday, 8 November 2010**

All meetings start at 7 pm in the Pearson Park Hotel

All are welcome!

Contacts

Chair

Haris Livas-Dawes.....491785

Co-treasurers

Steve Bullock343043

Malcolm Dawes.....491785

Minutes Secretary

Sonja Christiansen445627/465369

Membership Secretary

Chrys Bavey471349

Website

Barbara Dodd471031

Social Events

Susan Harr.....07767 495832



Friends of

Pearson Park

www.friendsofpearsonpark.co.uk

Autumn Newsletter ~ September 2010

Notes from the Chair

I'll start with some exciting news—the large number of new members acquired at the 150th Anniversary celebration.

Congratulations are due to Chrys for making our stall so attractive and inviting. She worked the same magic on the Vista stall. We really appreciate her creativity.

ECO Fun Day in the Park

Our ECO Day was an enormous success. Susan and I were there early to see the marquee being set up. There was just a trickle of children right before 11 so we were starting to get worried. But then hordes appeared, well over 100 and the day got off to a fine start.



We had organized a very structured day as the idea was for the kids to learn about nature while having a good time. So, divided into two groups (Haris for the younger ones, Susan for the older), they all had a programme for the day. Each group had an ID game, each group went to the Wet Woodland for tracings; each group went to the Wildlife Garden and the older group had photography while the younger played a frog beanbag game. These children got to keep their bean bags and it was very sweet to see two of the younger ones playing with their frogs like girls play with dolls.

Children and parents too had a delicious lunch, all freshly prepared that morning. We thank Mrs. Penna who supplied the drinks and was enormously helpful during the day. The Pennas also supplied a bucket of water at the end of the day so the children could rinse their hands after doing their finger painting.

One interesting aspect of the day was the number of people we fed who weren't part of ECO Day. People passing through the park on other business just came in and helped themselves. There was plenty of food so we didn't stop anyone, but it was interesting that no one bothered to ask permission!

Two more points: many thanks to the members of the Friends who actually showed up to help on the day and a **big thank-you to Tim Beckley**, the HullCC Tree Officer, who was there all day being helpful. Our partners were DOC, whose role was to encourage all the children of ethnic communities to come and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust who hosted two sessions at the wildlife garden.

At the end of the day many children came and thanked me for the day and many parents also, with the request that we have a similar day next year. We surely will!

Susan's letter to the press which you'll read elsewhere in this issue reports a sad end of event. The children wanted their drawings displayed so we spent a good deal of time stringing them all and attaching them temporarily to the fence outside the conservatory so the kids could look at them and, we hoped they would last at least a day; the parents could come the next day and take some photos. Unfortunately they vanished almost immediately. We have no idea why anyone should destroy the drawings the children had worked so hard to make.

Funding news



We have started to access funding for the **sensory garden**. Our partners will be HERIB (Hull & East Riding Institute for the Blind) and Bishop Burton College. The plot we were given for an ordinary grden will now be turned into a very special place.



We are already organising one **health initiative** in the park: to help the residents of the care homes around the park to have a walk in the park (please contact Haris if you would like to know how to volunteer for this initiative),



and we are thinking about a **running trail**, which means we must measure the distance up and down the two central paths to see how many circles one would need to run to make a mile.



Further funding is available for the protection of the verges, but the trustees have not approved our choice of fencing. The fabric of the park is being slowly eroded and if they have the best interests of the park in mind they will agree to our choice, as we all saw a similar fence doing an excellent job in the People's Park in Grimsby.

Pond planting

It is very discouraging to see our money being used for something that we were not consulted about. Our photo archive shows reed planting at the Serpentine in London and we saw the same in Hampstead. You need to create a pebble base protected by some mesh so the pebbles don't drift away and then the planting consists of nothing more laborious than lifting the reed out of its plastic pot and putting it on top of the pebbles. In any case, we did not request reeds; we had a whole list of flowering pond plants we supplied to our partners in HullCC, but we got none of them.

Grass erosion in the Park

We note there are two huge dirt patches in the centre of the park so it seems the rule about not playing organized football is being contravened. We had no objections to kids kicking a ball around as long as they are careful of other users of the park, but a park is not a sports ground and there are plenty of the latter around for teams to use. Also the grass is disfigured by a number of black spots where picnickers have lit barbecues. We hope that people will realize the damage this does to the grass and not use barbecues in the park.

BBC Interview

I was interviewed for BBC Radio Humberside breakfast show. The interviewer and I walked around the park and I talked about all the initiatives of the Friends. The interview is now available on the website for everyone to hear. The broadcast time was 7 in the morning so I suspect not many were up at that time on a Saturday.

Haris Livas-Dawes

Exhibition at History Centre needs your input

The Friends of Pearson Park are once again teaming up with the design students of Bishop Burton College.

After successful collaborations which resulted in the design of the Friends' logo and production of the exciting wet woodland eco project signage and tree plaques, the college is now producing an exhibition.

The exhibition will take place in Hull's new state of the art History Centre this winter, including the busy Christmas and New Year holidays. The exhibition is being developed by the second year foundation degree design students, and will take an accessible look at the history of Pearson Park, as well as the "Friends" themselves. **Your input is vital**—so please contact the Bishop Burton team, and email your photos, stories and ideas to:

quickhistories@hotmail.co.uk

Past experience suggests the Bishop Burton designers will deliver a professional and original exhibition which will give people an excellent insight in to the heritage, conservation and future of the park and the work of the Friends.

The exhibition will run from 20 December 2010 to 31 January 2011. Details of the exhibition and the Centre can be found at www.hullhistorycentre.org.uk

Andy Hempel, Bishop Burton College

A walk in the Park—can you help?

A suggestion from Sonja concerns four nursing homes around Pearson Park. They have been briefly visited to hear their views, and three of them would welcome help from the Friends. This would involve taking elderly, often unfirm, people for short walks or wheelchair journeys into the Park. **This article is to ask members for expression of interest and genuine support.**

The idea is to arrange—necessarily at fairly short notice—a roster for assisting these elderly people in enjoying the Park when the weather is suitable. A few hours a week would be sufficient, but as Sonja is often away and still works almost full time, the project would require somebody able and willing to take on the main responsibility for organising these visits by phone. Sonja would of course help. Living near the Park would be a great advantage.

Sonja lives at 87 Welbeck Street (tel: 445627/465369) and would welcome people contacting her concerning this proposal.

Sonja Christiansen, Minutes Secretary

Membership report

Membership numbers: we now have **66** subscribing members, **33** of whom are new this year, and **5** of whom pay by standing order. We have 6 Partner members.

Recruitment: in spite of wind and rain, people flocked to our stall at the Pearson Park 150th Anniversary Celebrations on 28 August. We acquired **18 new members**, almost managing to beat our previous record of 19 in August 2006, on an even more rainy Family Fun Day in the Park.

Chrys Bavey, Membership Secretary

Extract from letter to Hull Daily Mail, from Susan Harr

The Day was rounded off by the children's enthusiastic finger-painting of something they had seen during the day. The resulting beautifully coloured pictures were strung along the hedged fence in front of the Conservatory, for all to see. How sad it was, then, that during the night the children's work was torn down. At 6am, when two of our committee members were walking their dogs, not a single painting remained...It seems that there is an element that delights in spoiling the efforts of everyone else.

Particularly deplorable is this behaviour when it affects the work of young children, who behaved impeccably—each one a credit to their parents and school.

Photos from our ECO Fun Day



The display that disappeared



At the park we did brass rubbing and tree bingo. Before lunch we went to the wildlife garden to look for bugs and we used nets, tubs and tubs with tubes on them. I caught a butterfly in one of the butterfly nets. After lunch we did finger painting of what we had seen in the park. At the end me and Annabell did a quiz about the park. After that we went home. My favourite bit was the quiz.

Alice, age 8



Photos: Haris Livas-Dawes

BAT WALK

in Pearson Park

Tuesday 5 October 2010

- ★ Meet at **6 pm** in Pearson Park Hotel for a talk by a member of the East Yorkshire Bat Group
- ★ Guided Bat Walk from **6.30 pm to 8 pm**
- ★ A chance to see stars and planets later on
- ★ Wear warm clothes and sensible shoes
- ★ Accompanied children welcome