

MIKE KEATING



SECRET LIVERPOOL

AN UNUSUAL GUIDE



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

CELLS OF THE BRIDEWELL PUB ⑤

A bar behind bars

1 Campbell Square, Argyle Street, L1 5FB
 Weekdays and Sat 12 noon–12 midnight, Sun 12 noon–9pm
 Liverpool One bus station or Central station

If you must get yourself banged up on a night out in Liverpool, insist on a cell in the Ropewalks' only surviving police station. Now operating as a pub, this 19th-century cop shop can squeeze eight jailbirds into a booth behind original steel doors and barred windows.



The constables at the Campbell Square Bridewell (built in 1861) were given the impossible task of policing the toughest part of the most crime-ridden city in the UK. Their only assistance was a truncheon and 'the nightly bucket of Guinness for the Bridewell Patrol, freshly supplied from the Guinness Boats tied up in the nearby Salthouse Dock'.

No wonder that Dickens, social explorer and insomniac, was attracted to Liverpool for a closer look at the antics of the Victorian underclass and those paid to keep them in check (26,226 arrests in 1863 alone). In preparation for *The Uncommercial Traveller*, Dickens got himself sworn in as a special constable and spent the night patrolling the low spots of his second favourite city. The following extract examines the 'various unlawful traps which are every night set for (Poor Mercantile) Jack': 'There was British Jack, a little maudlin and sleepy, lolling over his empty glass, as if he were trying to read his fortune at the bottom; there was Loafing Jack of the Stars and Stripes, rather an unpromising customer, with his long nose, lank cheek, high cheek-bones, and nothing soft about him but his cabbage-leaf hat; there was Spanish Jack, with curls of black hair, rings in his ears, and a knife not far from his hand, if you got into trouble with him; there were Maltese Jack, and Jack of Sweden, and Jack the Finn, looming through the smoke of their pipes, and turning faces that looked as if they were carved out of dark wood, towards the young lady dancing the hornpipe.'

The original Toxteth riots

During the race riots of 1919 and on the day that a local black man, Charles Wooton, was hounded to his death in the King's Dock by a white mob, the Quarless family recall being housed by the Campbell Square Bridewell for their own safety. It is also claimed that the Bridewell became a detention centre for conscientious objectors during the Second World War (unlikely) and was used as a practice space in the 1980s by local bands such as Frankie Goes to Hollywood (more likely).

What the Dickens?

While Dickens is recorded as having spent a night as a Special, the plaque proclaiming the Bridewell as the location doesn't quite add up: Sharples gives the Bridewell's completion date as 1861 but Dickens was already serialising *The Uncommercial Traveller* by 1860. So unless he was billeted on a building site, the legend is probably no more than that.

MANTRA OF THE BRONZE BEATLES

⑧

'Om Bhur Bhuvah Swah'

*Georges Parade, Pier Head, L3 1BY
James Street station or Liverpool One bus station*



The bronze statue of The Beatles at the Pier Head is hard to miss but as tourists jostle for position beside their favourite Beatle, their two-dimensional selfies miss the chance to discover a little more about 'the four lads who shook the world'. Clearly a tribute to the Fab Four, this statue conceals four symbolic messages that rarely get the appreciation they deserve.

Inspired by an early photo of the 'lovable mop-tops' that once dominated the window of HMV's Liverpool ONE store, sculptor Chris Butler commissioned Andy Edwards to produce a version in bronze. With help from family, friends and fans of the band, Andy worked for six months on the material provided and had a silent version of *A Hard Day's Night* running on a loop in his studio to create this pre-megastardom period piece.

Slightly out of step with one another and replicating the on-stage order they took before giving up on live performances, each Beatle carries a totemic feature that sets him apart from the others.

In his cupped hand, John holds two acorns (cast from nuts found in Central Park, a gunshot away from the Dakota Building), which refer to John and Yoko's 'Acorns for Peace' campaign in the late 1960s.

The camera case slung over Paul's shoulder is a reminder of his marriage to photographer Linda Eastman.

Under Ringo's boot, the 'L8' inscription is a link to his birthplace in Toxteth.

Following the band's brief fling with Hare Krishna while on the film set of *Help!*, George went on to become a serious devotee and close inspection of the belt hanging from the statue's back reveals some Sanskrit verse. When asked about the meaning of the text, Andy says that it was inspired by an afternoon visit to his studio while he was working on George's coat. Three gong performers from Liverpool turned up with various gongs, including a 6ft-diameter relic from George's old school, and began to play. Potters from across the Wedgwood factory found themselves drawn to the hypnotic reverberations and, as the performance ended with a rendition of the *Gayatri Mantra*, 'many were too emotional to speak, inexplicably moved ... somewhere else', says Andy. It took another full day's work to inscribe the prayer onto George's belt.

It was common for Renaissance sculptors to carve their names on sashes. Respectful of the team effort involved in his projects, however, Andy rejects the practice of adding his own signature.

WESTERN APPROACHES HQ

⑪

Britain's best-kept WW2 secret

1-3 Rumford Street, Exchange Flags, L2 8SZ

0151 227 2008

liverpoolwarmuseum.co.uk

info@westernapproaches.org.uk

10am-6pm, last entries 5pm (book online or by phone)

James Street station or Liverpool One bus station



For anyone seeking to escape the incessant intrusions of their mobile phone, the Switchboard Room of the Western Approaches Command is the ideal retreat. Known as the 'Fortress', the windowless, bombproof bunker on Rumford Street was constructed with 3-ft walls beneath a roof that is 7 ft thick and covers 55,000 ft² (5,110 m²). Barely altered since its closure (and not to everyone's taste), the bunker/museum offers an unpolished, authentic trip down memory lane. As you pass through the rabbit warren of corridors, communication chambers and sleeping quarters, it is easy to imagine that the 400 operators of the radios, teleprinters and telephone exchange on show have just popped out for a cuppa and a Wet Nelly (a moist Liverpool fruit cake).

The construction crew were told it was to be a 'restaurant' and the 400 souls who worked here for the duration of the war were forbidden by the Official Secrets Act from disclosing its true purpose. As Churchill said, 'In war-time, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.' As an island under siege, Britain depended on 1 million tons of imports every week to sustain the war effort and, as a major port overlooking the Western Approaches, Liverpool was of particular strategic importance. Churchill established his Command Centre here for what was to be the longest continual conflict of the Second World War. He later admitted that the 'wolf packs' of German U-boats were 'the only thing that really frightened me during the war'. It is probably no exaggeration to say that the Battle of the Atlantic and HQ's role within it were crucial in defeating Hitler.

The cracking of the Enigma code allowed HQ to decrypt radio and teleprinter communications and second-guess the attacking formations deployed by Admiral Dönitz. Consequently, Admiral Sir Max Horton organised his escorts into 'support groups' and 'hunter-killer groups' to protect the convoys and prevent the 'wolf packs' from forming in the first place.

Hard to believe, in today's world of satellite reconnaissance and drone technology, the elastic string stretched across pins on a giant Plotting Board represented the nerve centre of Britain's wartime defence system. The hotline phone that connected HQ directly to the War Cabinet was housed in a soundproof booth and protected by an armed guard. It is one of only two in the country still in existence.

The Cruel Sea by Nicholas Monsarrat is a fictionalised account of the author's time aboard the *Campanula* during the Battle of the Atlantic.

SECRETS OF THE ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL

15

'Seek the city where I have sent you ... and pray to the Lord on its behalf'

St James Mount, L1 7AZ
 liverpoolcathedral.org.uk
 Daily, 8am–6pm
 10-min walk from Central station or Liverpool One bus station

Towering above the old quarry of Mount Sion, the fifth-largest cathedral in the world contains hidden corners to explore and significant artefacts that are easy to miss in the overwhelming majesty of the place.



Tucked away behind the south choir aisle is the Lady Chapel – this was the first part of the jigsaw to be put in place and is accessed by a narrow flight of stairs. The stained-glass windows on the north and south sides commemorate the lives of holy women and saints, while those on the west wall are portraits of ‘Noble Women’ from the modern era, including Agnes Elizabeth Jones (the first trained Nursing Superintendent of Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary) and Kitty Wilkinson, who set up public wash houses and is buried in St James cemetery. The altar boasts a 15th-century carving of the *Kneeling Madonna* by Giovanni Della Robbia with an infant Christ added by Don McKinlay in 2002.

Return to the aisle and, directly opposite the stairs, is the memorial to David Sheppard, bishop of Liverpool from 1975 to 1979 and the only ordained minister to have played Test cricket. The naturally shaped stone sculpture is embedded into the etched stonework to create a rippling effect symbolising Sheppard’s impact on the city (see photo).

Nearby is the tomb of Frederick Stanley, 16th Earl of Derby. (Stanley Park is named after him as is the cup he donated to Canada’s national sport.) Search for the ‘church mouse’ keeping him company. It is thought that the humble mouse is there to remind us that ‘all creatures (great or small) are welcome in God’s house’.

A trip up the tower includes the Elizabeth Hoare Gallery but, if ecclesiastical embroidery is not your thing, then go for the views from the gallery overlooking the great open space provided for in Gilbert Scott’s redesign. A scary ascent of the belfry stairs allows a peek at the Bartlett Bells. Continue to the very top and spot Scott’s initials on the north-west pinnacle (dated 1942). Scott claimed to have only ever designed a pipe rack before planning the cathedral, but he also found time to design the iconic red telephone box; 20,000 K6s were installed throughout the UK during the 1930s and one stands guard at the tower entrance.

Not content with the highest and heaviest peal of bells in the world, the cathedral also has the ‘largest musical instrument ever conceived’: the Grand Organ has 10,268 pipes and you can adopt one as part of its renovation appeal.

On your way out, say goodbye to Tracy Emin’s *For You*, her attempt to have us contemplate ‘feelings of love’ which is mounted above the West Doors.

As a Catholic, Scott was buried with his wife outside his masterpiece. His grave, obscured for years beneath the entrance to the car park, was restored in 2012. Secretly buried in the foundations is a time capsule from socialist stonemason Fred Bower in which he lamented, ‘Within a stone’s throw from here, human beings are housed in slums not fit for swine.’

5TH FLOOR AT THE LEWIS'S BUILDING

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The floor the lift forgot

Aparthotel Adagio, 1 Fairclough Street, L1 1FS

0151 703 7400

Open to the public on Heritage Open Days and for hotel guests or by appointment (email: h7332@adagio-city.com)

Any bus to Renshaw Street or Central station next door

Access to the famous Lewis's building via its infamous entrance is no longer possible: you will need to take a lift from the Aparthotel's reception to the breakfast bar where a real treat awaits. For locals of a certain vintage, the 5th Floor holds an iconic place in the memory as home to a cafeteria, two restaurants and a huge hairdressing salon. Some features survive, including a splendid 65-foot (20-metre) mural crafted from hand-painted (and printed) tiles commissioned from Carter & Co. of Poole and portraying kitchen utensils and foodstuffs. Etched wooden panelling, created by the Design Research Institute as a backdrop to the Mersey Rooms Restaurant, depicts over 600 years of local history.

Refurbished during the 1950s and dedicated to the 'democratisation of luxury', Lewis's was the ultimate family firm, sometimes boasting three loyal generations of the same family in its workforce. After 150 years in the city, and powerless to resist the rationalisation of the retail sector and changes in shopping habits, it closed down floor by floor. It became the nucleus of the ill-fated Central Village development and is now in the hands of another developer; the building is currently home to the



Aparthotel Adagio, a 24-hour gym and a grim replacement for the much-missed Leece Street Post Office.

Whatever its future, Lewis's was always 'much more than a place to shop': ask for it by name and, even if the driver of the 82 bus never shopped there, he will know exactly where to drop you off. 'Meeting under Dickie Lewis' remains a widely understood idiomatic expression. Inquire after the Mersey Rooms or the Red Rose Restaurant, however, and you enter shakier territory.

Closed in the 1980s, the 5th Floor ended its days as 'a repository for a surreal collection of unwanted retail paraphernalia'. This became the subject of a quirky photographic study by Stephen King: in 2009, he turned the space into a temporary workshop and interviewed 40 past employees to help him make sense of it all.

The twisted mannequins, Diplomat hairdryers and outdated toys cluttering the place have long since departed, but listing of the building has meant that many of the original features and fittings remain. Unfortunately, Mitzi Cunliffe's bronze sculpted screen that once divided the Red Rose Restaurant was reclaimed by the artist and now resides in France (see page 76).



Memory lane

On Heritage Open Day 2017, an elderly couple turned up just to sit in the same spot they shared on their first date as 16-year-olds. 'We had our very first curry and chips here,' they said through the tears. 'You've made us so happy.'

THE STATUE OF DOMINION PUB ④

'He puts on women's clothing and hangs around in bars'

Bankfield Enterprise Hub, 32 Bankfield Street, L20 8EJ

Merseyrail to Bank Hall station

By car, take the A565 out of town and turn left down Bankfield Street



At the junction of Bankfield Street and Regent Road stands the derelict Dominion pub crowned by the statue of a 19th-century frontiersman. Axe in hand and loyal mutt at his feet, he gazes out across Canada Dock. This was the hub of Liverpool's trade with North America.

The link dates back to the 1770s, when merchants were attracted to the plentiful supply of timber. By 1852, some 963,000 cubic metres of Canadian planks were coming into Liverpool, along with 283,000 cubic metres of pine, in around 373 ships. (Liverpool in Nova Scotia shares a history of shipbuilding as well as the name.) In 1859, Jesse Hartley's Canada Dock opened to cope with the trade in wood, fish products and wheat. Liverpool was also heavily involved in Canadian emigration until 1971, with the Dominion Line a prominent player in the export of human cargo.

As the pub carries the name of the shipping line and the character on the roof is gripping an axe, it is fair to assume that this is in celebration of the timber trade, but not everyone agrees. Ruth Gregory (on www.picturesofengland.com) suggests it may show the mythical American giant Paul Bunyan, who has at least eight roadside statues to his name across the northern forests of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. On the other hand, Jimmy Conelly, who works at Terry's Timber Yard and used to drink in the pub, assures the character is a cotton picker ...

Unfortunately, the pub was closed by the authorities, so we may never know the true story. According to the *Echo*, the already derelict pub was raided by police in 2008 on suspicion of operating as a brothel. They found four working girls and a client along with PVC costumes, sex toys and a list of regulars. Based on this evidence, and in a spirit of even-handedness, they promptly arrested the girls and let the man go. It now houses refurbished commercial units topped off with this iconic logo.

NEARBY

Loco RH 224347 ⑤

At the top of Bankfield Street you will find a loco engine. You might assume (wrongly) that it was one of the many Mersey Docks & Harbour Board shunters that shifted cargo to depots around the town (preceded by a flag-waving guard). Sadly, the only relic of the MDHB fleet is in storage, due to lack of museum space. According to railway historian Dave Marden, it's an RH 224347, which never actually worked the docks but was installed in 1998 in recognition of the work of the Merseyside Development Corporation and the redevelopment of the A565 as 'Atlantic Avenue'.

IRWIN'S MURAL

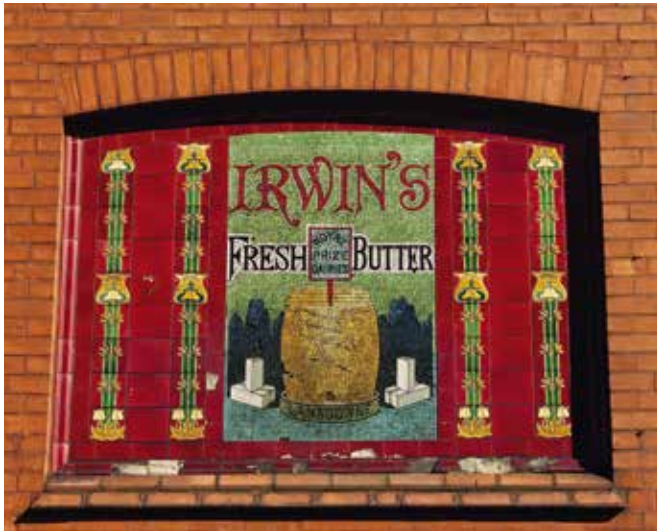
⑥

Spooky ads

2A Allerton Road, L18 1LN
Any bus to Penny Lane

Hiding behind St Barnabas Church, on the wall of what is now a betting shop, is a splendidly preserved tiled mural for one of John Irwin's many grocery stores – a reminder of a fading age of commercial art. Irwin was an Irish immigrant who set up shop in Westminster Road in 1874, promising 'value, variety and quality'. By the 1950s, the family chain had established over 200 shops with distinctive façades. Many featured adverts in terracotta or terrazzo for a business intended to last, but in 1960 the chain of 212 shops was sold to Tesco to kick-start its battle for world domination. The advert on Allerton Road, proclaiming the prize-winning quality of their butter, is probably the finest surviving example.

These faint reminders are known as 'ghost signs' and represent a window on an era of commerce that has all but disappeared. With the advent of computerised graphics, photography, machine-made lettering and mass-produced billboards, there is little call for this level of individual artisanship. Luckily, there are still people who seek to protect and preserve these works.



Other great ghost signs in Liverpool

The History of Advertising Trust (HAT) has a wonderful online archive of ghost signs (www.hatads.org.uk), with a fair proportion submitted from Liverpool by Caroline and Phil Bunford. They published the first book on the subject, *Liverpool Ghost Signs*, featuring local ads for Cooperative Societies, dairies, bakeries, booze and fags. One of their favourites is our John Irwin mosaic, but there are several other reminders of his empire (especially the terracotta facade on 95 Green Lane, L13 7BB).

Another terrazzo gem can be found at the junction of Eastdale Road and Wavertree High Street (L15 4HW), celebrating the work of the Toxteth Co-Operative Provident Society. The ultimate example, however, has to be the mosaic in the entrance to Fitwell's embroidery shop (276 Smithdown Road, L15 5AJ): the building was intended to be the Hatfield Hotel but, due to local resistance and objections from the landowner, the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, it never had a guest or served a pint.

Other ghost signs mentioned in *Secret Liverpool - an unusual guide* include those relating to cowkeepers and dairies (see page 206) and Ma Noble's toffee shop on London Road (see page 120).



According to Richard Gregory's excellent website (www.signpainting.co.uk), hand-painted signs publicising elections and gladiatorial contests already existed in Pompeii. Some have even survived the eruption of Vesuvius. In the 18th century, William Hogarth was not averse to earning a few bob painting signs, and the Victorian era became known as the Golden Age of English sign writers. Their work was displayed in fairgrounds, on barges and on public transport, but also on the walls of businesses and residential properties. According to the History of Advertising Trust (HAT), these painted signs (and more permanent murals and mosaics) were made to last, but over time they have faded alongside the memories of the people and products they sought to proclaim.

FLORENCE MAYBRICK'S POLICE CELL 12

'The English Dreyfus case'

The Old Police Station, 80 Lark Lane, L17 8UU

0151 728 7884

larklanecomcentre.org.uk

Merseyrail to Aigburth station, then across Aigburth Road

Bus 82/82D from Liverpool One bus station



At the back of the Old Police Station on buzzing Lark Lane can be found a 'two-minute wonder': a tiny museum devoted to a scandal which shook 19th-century England to its hypocritical core. The Police Station is now a community centre, but in 1889 it was the temporary home of a woman whose court case sparked a wholesale critique of the British legal system.

James Maybrick was a self-medicating oddball with a vivacious American wife, Florence, 23 years his junior and thought by some to be the most beautiful woman in Liverpool. Outwardly prosperous and happily married, they lived at the palatial Battlecrease House, 7 Riversdale Drive. In 1889, Maybrick fell ill and died in excruciating pain. His wife (who was having a fling with his chum, Alfred Brierley, at the time) was eventually accused of poisoning the cuckold with arsenic stripped from fly paper.

During the well-publicised trial, the judge seemed more impressed by Florence's morals than the flawed forensic evidence and, as Captain Halsey might have warned her, court cases in Liverpool do not go well for visiting Americans, dead or alive (see page 95). The judge, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen (Virginia Woolf's uncle), directed the jury to consider the 'horrible and dreadful thought that a woman should be plotting the death of her husband in order that she might be left at liberty to follow her own degrading vices.'

She was found guilty and given the ultimate penalty. A public outcry led to the sentence being commuted (and the judge having a mental breakdown). Florence was released after 15 years and returned to America, where she died alone having lost her son to poisoning when he mistook a cyanide solution for a glass of water (some people never learn).

James Maybrick was buried in Anfield cemetery and that might have been an end of it but for the discovery, in 1992, of a diary in Maybrick's own hand which showed that he was even more infamous as a criminal than a corpse – over a century after his 'murder', the man hit the headlines again as the self-proclaimed Jack the Ripper.

Ripperologists are divided over the authenticity of the diary: forensic scientists have branded it a fake, but at least one historian claims to be 'more than 90% convinced'. At an international conference in 1998, it was unhelpfully concluded that the 'fascinating' discovery was the 'work of a disturbed mind'.

HADLOW ROAD RAILWAY STATION 38

A 'must-see' reminder of the age of the steam train

Hadlow Road, Willaston, CH64 2UQ

willastoninwirralresidents.org/friends-of-hadlow-road-station-2

Merseyrail to Hooton, then walk or cycle 2.4 km via the Wirral Way (concealed entrance on the left just over the railway bridge)

By car, take M53 to Jct 4, then follow the A5137/B5136/B5151 to Willaston.

Hadlow Road is clearly marked opposite the Nag's Head

For those rail buffs too young to recall the age of the steam train, Hadlow Road Station is a 'must-see' reminder of the days when even the tiniest hamlet was served by the railway.

Lovingly restored to their 1950s glory, the stationmaster's house, waiting room, booking office and signal box are decked out in traditional livery and adorned with distinctive maroon signage from the days of British Rail. The ticket office window doubles as a portal into this bygone age with its very own Skimbleshanks snoozing on the stationmaster's chair, oblivious to the man's breakfast cooling on the desktop. Dotted around the office are working timetables, adverts and the odd 10-bob note: you can almost catch the sooty whiff of the 11.39 as it disappears into the night.

The station is a tangible reminder of the branch line that opened

in 1886 and linked the colliery at Parkgate (see page 260) to the BJR connection at Hooton. An extension to West Kirby enabled onward travel to Chester and Liverpool and, via New Brighton, to Euston. At its peak, Hadlow Road handled 40 passenger trains per day and survived the closure of the colliery in 1927. In 1956, however, BR closed the passenger service and in 1962 the last goods train stopped at all of the former passenger stations and any remaining fixtures and fittings of value were removed. The 20-km track was taken away to form the Wirral Way, a footpath, bridleway and cycle track running through the country's first designated Country Park. The station was restored as one of two visitor centres on the route and, since 2014, has been maintained by the Friends of Hadlow Road Station.

Until the 1960s, stations such as this were the lifeblood of rural communities across the country, but the fate of Hadlow Road foreshadowed the demise of many of the others. In 1962, Dr Beeching, a trained physicist with the heart of an accountant, was hired by the Minister of Transport (a road builder) to axe 30% of branch lines across Britain.

Fresh milk is no longer delivered by rail and the porter got his P45 yonks ago, but at least Hadlow Road still has its cat.



MIKE KEATING



SECRET LIVERPOOL

AN UNUSUAL GUIDE

Discover for yourself the haunts of slave traders, privateers and press-gangs, the hideaway of a suspected assassin and the desecrated grave of a self-professed Jack the Ripper, track down the birthplace of rail travel and the oldest pavilion at a first-class cricket ground, marvel at a life-size replica of the world's first submarine and the original home of the Epsom Derby, be gobsmacked by burial stones older than Stonehenge and one of the earliest human settlements to be found anywhere in the UK, take a turn on John Lennon's first musical instrument and snigger at the sight of Queen Victoria's dildo, meet toads that sing, World War II's best-kept secret and the world's first (and smallest) skyscraper, toast the UK's greatest female athlete in a brew named in her honour or go for a spin on the only purpose-built F1 race track in the country.

For tourists and locals who have outgrown Hop on-Hop off bus excursions, river cruises and Beatles tours, *Secret Liverpool - An unusual guide* is an indispensable guide to the curiosities of 'England's finest Victorian city', designed for people who prefer to customise their own itinerary or simply wander where the mood takes them.

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