

PRINCE'S TRUST VOLUNTEERS - MAKING A RIGHT ROYAL EFFORT!

Members of Leigh Neighbours Project Board recently joined VIPs including the Mayor of Wigan, Cllr Ron Conway, at an emotional graduation ceremony in honour of a special group of young people who helped to make a real difference to the community here in Leigh.

John Gredecki and Christine Farnworth were delighted to attend the celebration at the Turnpike Gallery in December to mark the graduation of some young people from the Prince's Trust Team Programme. Addressing an audience which included proud family members, the youngsters expressed their sense of achievement and described how the 16-week action-packed course had given them important life skills and an opportunity to stretch themselves.

John Gredecki said: "When Leigh Neighbours approached the Prince's Trust Team Programme and asked them to get involved in some environmental improvement projects here in the area, we were thrilled when they agreed to help. We were really impressed by the dedication and enthusiasm which the young people demonstrated and we're grateful for all the hard work they invested here in Leigh. They are great ambassadors for young people and should be rightly proud of what they've achieved. We wish them all the very best for the future."



Nicola Ratcliffe, Groundwork's Development Co-ordinator, added: "We're delighted that so many people have come along today to recognise and celebrate what these young people have achieved over the last 16 weeks. Like most things in life, the more effort you put into this programme, the more you get out of it. This group of young people have really come together as a team, supported each other and worked really hard. We're incredibly proud of each and every one of them and wish them every success for the future."

So what is the Prince's Trust Team Programme?

Managed by the charity, Groundwork CLM [Cheshire, Lancashire & Merseyside] the Prince's Trust Team Programme is open to 16 to 25 year olds from across the north west who are not employed or in full-time education.

Described as a *once in a lifetime opportunity*, the free personal development programme gives young people who don't know what to do next a chance to take part in exciting challenges, meet new people, learn skills and grow in confidence.

This well established, nationally recognised programme ensures most participants enter employment, education or training within three months of completion. We provide payment for travel and most young people are able to keep their benefits whilst on the programme. You can also receive an achievement incentive award of up to £200 for taking part.

To find out more about the next programmes which starts in May, text the word PRINCE to 80800 (free of charge) or ring 821444 and ask for the Prince's Trust team.

The latest cohort of young people started their Prince's Trust Team Programme in January. They are pictured here clearing the grounds and memorial garden at Sacred Heart parish church in Walmesley Rd. They're due to complete their 16-week Training course in April.



In Living Memory

Leigh Neighbours is developing a new project which explores the area's social history and cultural heritage - and we're keen to hear your stories and memories!

The as yet un-named project calls on local residents to engage in activities which both explore and celebrate our diverse social and cultural history.

Alex Miller, Manager of Archives at Leigh Town Hall, is lending his support. He explains: "We want to find out what's shaped the Leigh Neighbours project area, and to encourage young and old audiences to learn about the past using print, visual and multi-media materials.

"This is a community-led project, so we're inviting local residents to tell us what they'd like to do and how they'd like to get involved. In the first instance, we'd love to see old images and learn about people's personal recollections. What was it like living in this part of Leigh half a century ago? How has the area been influenced by its past, including its more recent past?

"We're also keen that younger people take part, so we're looking to develop inter-generational projects that will appeal to local schools, as well.

"Ultimately, we aim to install a series of information panels across the area sponsored by Leigh Neighbours which will evoke memories of the past, stir people's curiosity and inspire pride in the patch.

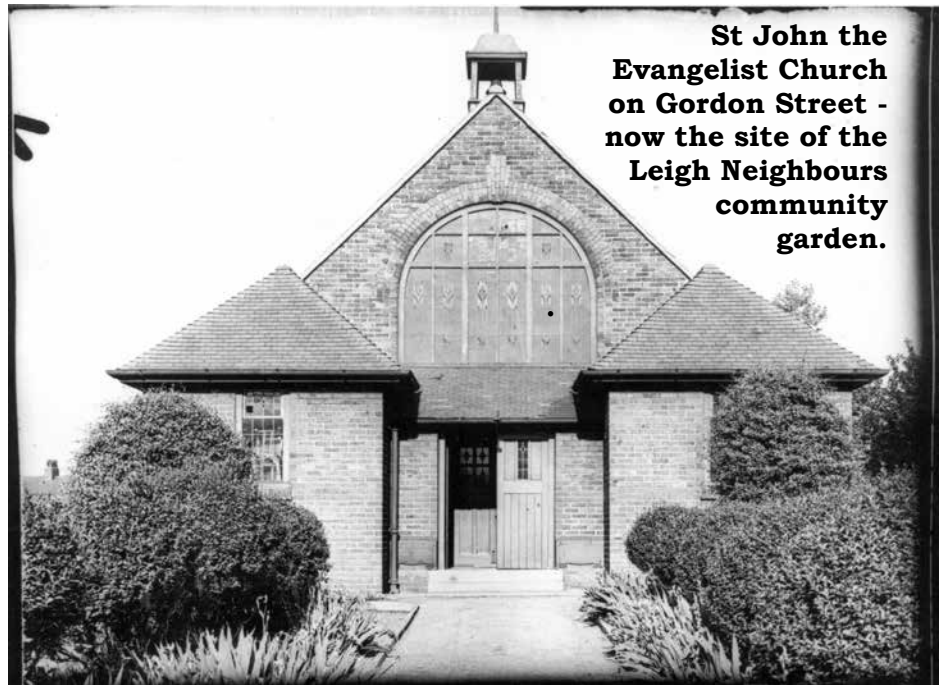


Kirkhall Lane, 1920

"We want this project to be led by local people so we're keen to hear from history buffs, groups or societies. We're open to ideas so if you have any thoughts on the kinds of activities you'd like to organise or take part in, please let us know."

Local residents, schools and community groups are all invited to get involved.

If you'd like more information, email historyproject@lnpb.org.uk



St John the Evangelist Church on Gordon Street - now the site of the Leigh Neighbours community garden.

A new perspective on an old view

Christine Farnworth has many fond memories of St John the Evangelist Church. A resident of Gordon Street for over 35 years, Christine remembers a time when the church sat at the heart of the community and played host to all manner of family celebrations, Sunday services and social gatherings. And she also recalls the day the bulldozers arrived...

"The church was important to me and my family. I was married there and christened there. My son, too. Looking back, all our most significant family events took place in that small church. I was heartbroken when it was razed to the ground and for many years the land was forgotten and neglected."

That was until Christine, with the support of Leigh Neighbours lottery money, and together with help from some Prince's Trust volunteers and Wigan Council's Restorative Justice community payback team, brought the area back to life - creating a garden for use by the entire community.

Christine, who is also a member of the Leigh Neighbours Project Board and a former pupil of the school, adds: "These days, I'm responsible for maintaining the garden on the site of the old church, and I often find myself lost in memories of how it used to be in its heyday.

"So I'm delighted that Leigh Neighbours is launching a new social history project - even more so because it's being piloted with a project about St John's. Perhaps somebody reading this has old pictures squirreled away that we could use on our community garden information panel? Or maybe they have memories of the church which we could share in?

"I hope this project catches the imagination of local people and I look forward to seeing an information panel installed at the site of St John's. It would be a fitting tribute to such a lovely old building."



Alex and Christine

The revival of Railway Road



With its busy shops, popular picture houses and of course the old technical college, Railway Road in its prime was a thriving area, full of the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Previously a proud thoroughfare boasting attractive architectural frontages, Railway Road is today sadly renowned more for its fast food outlets, litter and anti-social behaviour.

But that's only a part of the picture. There are businesses, residents and community groups who are based on, and immediately off, Railway Road who take great pride in where they live and work, and are keen to see more investment made in the area.

Which is why Leigh Neighbours is working on a plan to help improve Railway Road. And yes, we recognise it's a pretty ambitious plan!

What we're proposing is to form a working group made up of partner agencies and other stakeholders, including residents, community groups and businesses, to find out what their vision is for Railway Road and its immediate perimeter - and to agree on ways in which everybody can contribute to its revival.

Chair of Leigh Neighbours, Susan Gredecki, says: "The decline of Railway Road is a tragedy for the whole town. There are some wonderful buildings, but unfortunately several have been left empty and neglected, and are a magnet for anti-social behaviour.

"But there's still a sense of community in this once flourishing neighbourhood and that's what we want to feed and nurture. It would be an amazing legacy for Leigh Neighbours to spearhead such a revival, and I urge local people to have their say in our consultation. When people put their heads together, and work towards a shared vision, great things can be achieved!"

When people put their heads together, and work towards a shared vision, great things can be achieved!" Susan Gredecki, Chair of Leigh Neighbours

We've already begun the consultation but we still want to hear from as many people as possible. We'll shortly be publishing a consultation questionnaire on our website and we invite people to complete it and let us know what they think. Alternatively email info@lnpb.org.uk and ask us to send you a copy. The more opinions and ideas we get, the more informed we are.

We're open to all ideas, from litter picks and greening campaigns... to art projects and heritage trails. Let's be really ambitious: **what do YOU think we can ALL do to make a difference to Railway Road?** In the meantime, we're holding a litter pick on Friday 7th April, 10am - 4pm along the length of Railway Road... and we'd love it if you would join us! In the meantime, you can keep up to date with how we're getting along in future issues of our newsletter, by visiting our website, or by following us on Facebook and Twitter.



Taking part: some enthusiastic volunteers from True Colours got stuck in during last year's Clean for the Queen campaign.

RAILWAY ROAD LITTER PICK

**Friday 7th April
10am - 4pm**

**Meet at the car park
opposite the old college.
Free refreshments and
lunch provided.
Everybody welcome!**

Summertime!!!

(Well, not quite just yet!)

**But we're hearing on the grapevine
that there's plenty to look forward
to this summer here in Leigh...
including some brand new events!**

Leigh Carnival 4th June 2017

Find out more at [Facebook.com/LeighCarnival](https://www.facebook.com/LeighCarnival)

Leigh 10k Road Race

**Sunday 13th August
More details to follow!**

Be my *crafty* Valentine!

Proudly holding her masterpiece aloft, it's easy to see that 6 year old Ava Karecci was clearly thrilled with the results of all her hard work! Ava and her nan, Jean Cull of Bonnywell Road, joined other local families at our recent St Valentine's-themed craft workshop at As in Eden and had a whale of a time! You can see more pictures from the workshop on our website. Meanwhile, if you're interested in crafts, why not consider laying on an event of your own or starting a new group? Don't worry - Leigh Neighbours can help with logistics and funding! For more information on how to apply for funding or for advice on organising an event, email us at residentsfund@lnpb.org.uk



INVESTING IN COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Members of Leigh Neighbours Project Board were delighted to attend the official re-opening of Kingsleigh Methodist community centre in January, following its recent refurbishment.

The renovation - which included new windows, boiler, kitchen refit, new toilets and decoration throughout - was made possible with a £25,000 grant from Leigh Neighbours.

Speaking at the ceremony, vice-chair of Leigh Neighbours Project Board, Jan Eckersley [pictured far right] said: "This venue is an important hub for the entire community and home to many clubs, groups and societies. One of our priorities is to invest in local community facilities so that people have access to places where they can meet up, share experiences and support each other. By investing some of our National Lottery money into this refurbishment, we've ensured that Kingsleigh will continue to play a vital role in our community for many more years to come."

Meanwhile, speaking on behalf of the church, Gillian Baglee [pictured next to Jan], said: "We're so grateful to Leigh Neighbours for the funding and delighted at the results. I also have to thank members of the church who have worked so hard to bring this ambitious project to fruition."

For further information about the centre, contact Gillian on 606630 or npsphoto@btinternet.com



Jan Eckersley, Vice Chair of Leigh Neighbours Project Board, proudly unveils a plaque to mark the occasion.