

insight

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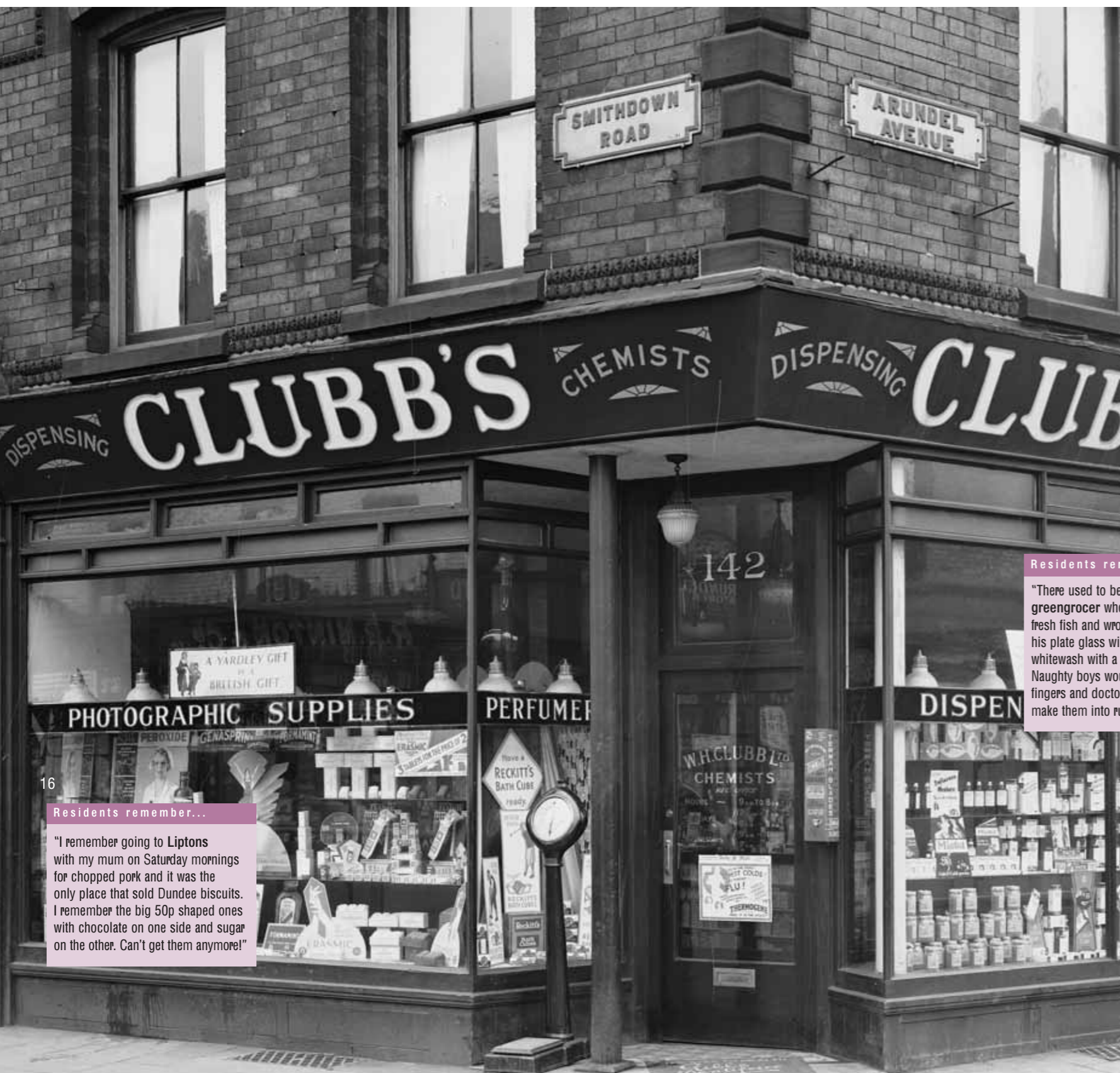


Smithdown Road

An incredible trip down memory lane



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL



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Residents remember...

"I remember going to Liptons with my mum on Saturday mornings for chopped pork and it was the only place that sold Dundee biscuits. I remember the big 50p shaped ones with chocolate on one side and sugar on the other. Can't get them anymore!"

Residents remember...

"There used to be a greengrocer who also sold fresh fish and wrote his prices on his plate glass window in whitewash with a paintbrush. Naughty boys would lick their fingers and doctor the letters to make them into rude words."

A trip down memory lane

Dafna's Cheesecake Factory, Lipton's, Wongs, The Brookhouse, the 86 bus from town, the infamous 'Smithdown 10' pub crawl... for many graduates, the words 'Smithdown Road' conjure up happy memories of student life in Liverpool.

But what about the people that aren't just passing through – the shopkeepers, bartenders, entrepreneurs and residents who have made their livings and lived their lives on Smithdown Road?

These people are at the heart of an exciting community history project that alumni are invited to get involved with, *The Secret Life of Smithdown Road*, which aims to chart the life of one of Liverpool's best-known streets. The research will be used to create one of the inaugural exhibitions in the People's City Gallery at the new Museum of Liverpool when it opens in 2011.

Nestled between the vibrant neighbourhoods of Toxteth, Wavertree and Allerton, Smithdown Road is one of the most diversely populated areas of the city.

Kay Jones, Curator of Community History for the Museum of Liverpool, said: "Smithdown is of real importance to Liverpool as it's home to such a diverse range of people-established residential areas, ethnically diverse communities and students at Liverpool's three universities. Generations of families have lived here as well as thousands of students over the years, so it really has its own character. It's unlike anywhere else in the city."

Using old maps, directories, photographs and newspapers, along with fascinating personal accounts, the project aims to discover how local shops and businesses have helped to shape the area over the years.

A group of 19 diverse shop and business owners, some long-established and some who are new to the area, have already been interviewed for the exhibition. Their personal stories are being used to investigate the opportunities and barriers to entrepreneurs along Smithdown Road and their wider social roles within the community. Photographs of the interviewees and their staff and families will be incorporated into a film which will be shown in the gallery at the museum.

To gather some of the information for the exhibition, a team from the museum also set up a mini exhibition in Oomoo Café, on the corner of Smithdown and Blantyre Road, where they held 'drop-in' days for local residents to come and share their memories and photographs of the area.

To complement this local activity, Facebook and Flickr communities have been set up which provide ex-residents from across the world with the opportunity to post their Smithdown stories and get involved in the project from afar.

"Lots of fascinating stories about Smithdown Road have already been uncovered," said Kay, "including some about local murders and haunted buildings. Current and former residents have also provided information and photographs about several much-loved but long-gone landmarks."

"Many people remember the palatial, Victorian underground toilets, which were in the middle of the road junction outside the Doll's Hospital, Sefton Park School (which is now Aldi) and the beautiful building on the corner of Greenbank Drive, which is now a Tesco."

Residents remember...

"S Richard, on the corner of Scholar Street, was a lovely, upmarket shop that sold expensive electrical goods like colour televisions, radiograms and modern vacuum cleaners (still rare in most houses then), things that people looked at and admired, rather than regularly bought."

"There are also lots of memories about Wynn's Dairy, which was at the back of the Willow Bank Pub and had its own cow and chickens back in the 60s."

Today, Smithdown Road features a cosmopolitan range of small and large businesses, from corner shops to large supermarkets, reflecting the myriad of communities that continue to make their homes along its length.

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Smithdown Road c.1910
courtesy of Greenbank Galleries



Smithdown Road 2009
© National Museums Liverpool

“Smithdown Road is in my ears and in my eyes...”



It has been suggested that the shops and people of Smithdown Road were the true inspiration for The Beatles' song *Penny Lane*. Locally, the name was used to describe not just Penny Lane but the whole area around Allerton Road and Smithdown Road. This was where the Penny Lane Bus Station was situated – the “shelter in the middle of a roundabout” in the song – which is now Sgt Pepper's Bistro.

James Bioletti is said to be the “barber showing photographs of every head he's had the pleasure to know.” John, Paul and George all had their hair cut at his barbershop on Smithdown Place. Tony Slavin's hairdressers occupies the same spot today.

The fire station where the fireman “keeps his fire engine clean,” however, is not on either Penny Lane or Smithdown Road. This is thought to be the fire station on Mather Avenue, off Allerton Road.

Residents remember...

“Clitheroe's Chemists had one of those wooden folding chairs and I remember trapping my fingers in it while my mother was being served. There was also a weighing machine and a curious 'posh' smell in the place! Opposite was Melia's where they cut cheese on the counter with proper old-fashioned wire.”

- The area of Esmedune (which we now know as Smithdown) is listed in the Domesday Book
- In the 13th century, Smithdown was part of King John's Royal Hunting Park.
- In 1850 Smithdown Road was a quiet country lane; by 1900 it had more than 800 commercial and residential properties
- Monument sculptor Evans and Co. began trading on Smithdown Road in 1899 and it is the street's oldest surviving business
- Smithdown Road once boasted 12 hotels, four cinemas, a Greek chip shop, three Chinese laundries, an Italian milk bar, a bird dealer, a herbalist and an artificial teeth maker!
- Fred Clarke of Tunstall Street off Smithdown Road was bass violist in the *Titanic's* band, who famously played on while the ship sank
- Smithdown Road got its first Chinese restaurant, Wongs, in the 1970s
- Obscure 80s Liverpool band, The Vernons, named their album *Smithdown Road*
- In 1961, George Formby's funeral was performed by Williams Funeral Directors, located on the corner of Hartington Road, and the funeral procession attracted huge crowds as it made its way along Smithdown Road
- Bruce Williams, of Williams Funeral Directors, wrote several songs for George Formby under the name Eddie Latta.

The Smithdown lowdown

The University has awarded Honorary Degrees to 13 esteemed figures in recognition of their success and contribution to society.

Peter Bounds (LLD) was Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council between 1991 and 1999 and is recognised for helping to reshape the city by introducing a wide range of regeneration initiatives. He currently works as Chair of Renew North Staffordshire and is also Chair of Liverpool Cathedral and Company Secretary of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society.



Professor Dame Sally Davies (DSc) is Director General of Research and Development and Chief Scientific Adviser for the Department of Health and NHS. She chairs the UK Clinical Research Collaboration and is a board member of the Office of the Coordination of Health Research.



Jim Eyre OBE (LLD) is one of Britain's most innovative architects whose commissions include Liverpool's Echo Arena and Conference Centre. He is partner and director of Wilkinson Eyre Architects, the only practice to win the RIBA Stirling Prize two years running. A graduate of the University, he received an OBE in 2003 for services to architecture.



Jude Kelly OBE (LittD) is a leading theatre director and is recognised nationally for her achievements in founding and developing community theatre companies. She is currently Artistic Director of the Southbank Centre in London and pioneered the cultural aspects of the London 2012 Olympic bid. She was awarded an OBE in 1997 for services to the theatre.



Sir Paul Nurse (DSc) is one of the UK's foremost biological scientists and is currently President of the Rockefeller University in New York. A Fellow of the Royal Society, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2001 for discoveries associated with the cell cycle and was also the driving force behind the development of Cancer Research UK.



Lord Bhikhu Parekh (LLD) is an internationally-renowned political theorist who is an active member of the Labour Party in the House of Lords. He is Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Westminster and is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and the Academy of the Learned Societies for Social Sciences. He is the recipient of a Distinguished Global Thinker Award and the Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize for his lifetime contribution to political philosophy.



Vasily Petrenko (DMus) is Principal Conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. Born in St Petersburg, he conducted the St Petersburg State Opera and Ballet Theatre and State Academy Orchestra, before taking up his post at Liverpool in 2006. Last year he was appointed as an Honorary Professor in the University's School of Music.



Professor Bernard Raveau (DSc) is founder and Director of the National Research Centre of Technology in Normandy. He previously led both the Laboratoire de Cristallographie et Sciences des Matériaux and Research Centre for Superconductivity in Caen and is a member of the French Academy of Sciences. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry in 2009 for his pioneering work in materials science.



Paul Roy (LLD) is the founding partner of NewSmith Capital Partners, Chairman of the British Horseracing Authority and the former Co-President of Merrill Lynch's Global Markets and Investment Banking division. A generous supporter of the University, he chairs the Development Foundation and was instrumental in establishing both the University of Liverpool Management School and the Paul Roy Chair in Strategic Management.



Professor Sir John Sulston (DSc) is one of the most distinguished scientists in the UK. The first Director of the Sanger Institute in Cambridgeshire, he was a main contributor to the Human Genome Project and received a knighthood for services to genome research in 2001. A year later, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for research into the way genes control the division of the body's cells and development of organs, which led to significant discoveries about the pathogenesis of various diseases.



Julian Treuherz (LLD) was Keeper of Art Galleries for National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside between 1989 and 2007 and supervised the ambitious renovation of the Walker Art Gallery which brought a series of high-profile exhibits to Liverpool. A prolific art writer, he has produced numerous books, articles and essays, with a particular focus on 19th-century British art.



Tung Chee-Chen (LLD) is Chairman, President and Chief Executive of Orient Overseas (International) Limited, one of the largest and most successful shipping corporations in the world. He is also a non-executive director for the Bank of China and PetroChina. Born in Shanghai, he completed his degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Liverpool, graduating in 1964. He served as Chairman of the Hong Kong Shipowners' Association between 1993 and 1995 and Chairman of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce between 1991 and 2001.



Professor Wang Jianhua (LLD) is Chairman of the University Committee of Xi'an Jiaotong University, where he has formerly worked as Associate Professor, full Professor and Director of the University Science Research Office. For the last six years he helped the University to develop the Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) in partnership with the University of Liverpool – a unique Sino-British model for higher education. He is Vice-Chairman of the Electrical Society of China and Chair of the Chinese Special Committee of Intelligence Device and System in Electrical Equipment.



Get involved!

Did you live on or near Smithdown Road as a student? Do you have a special memory of the area? Perhaps a favourite shop or shopkeeper? Share your story and you could be part of the People's City Gallery in the new Museum of Liverpool.

You can give the Museum team your feedback via:
Facebook: www.facebook.com/smithdownroad
Flickr: www.flickr.com/groups/secret_life_of_smithdown
Tel: +44 (0)151 478 4409
Email: kay.jones@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk



or write to: Kay Jones –
Curator of Community History,
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Albert Dock,
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For more information about the project visit:
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/galleries/peoplescity/smithdown