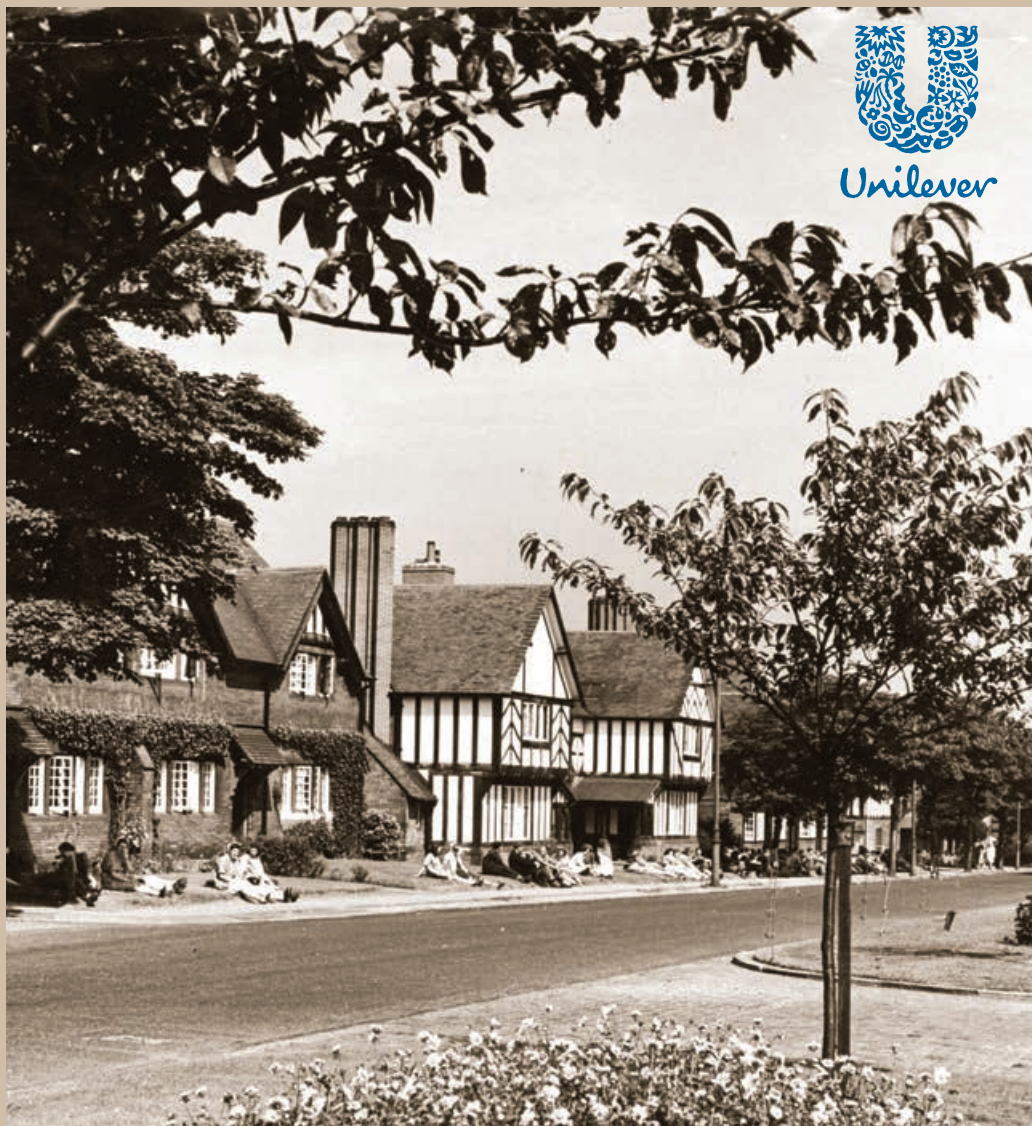




Unilever



Port Sunlight Village

SUNLIGHT SOAP

PORT SUNLIGHT

VIEW OF WORKS

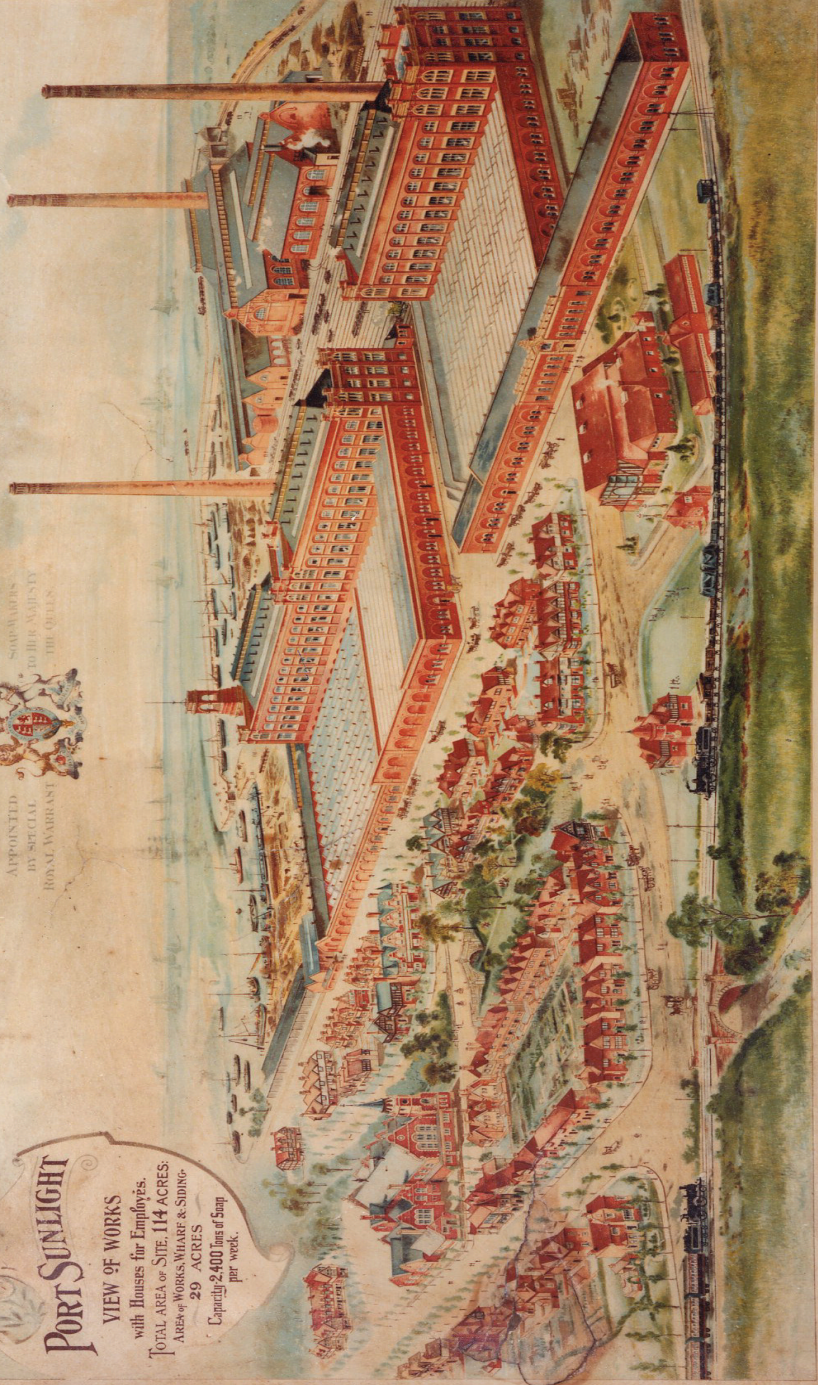
with Houses for Employees.

TOTAL AREA OF SITE 114 ACRES.

AREA OF WORKS WHARF & SIDING

29 ACRES

Capacity 2,400 tons of Soap
per week.



WORKS & VILLAGE, PORT SUNLIGHT.



William Lever

Port Sunlight was the vision of one man, William Lever, later the 1st Viscount Leverhulme. Born in 1851 in Bolton, Lancashire, the son of a grocer, he prospered in the family business. In 1884 he decided to specialise in selling individually wrapped bars of soap and came up with the brand name "Sunlight". The following year, with his brother, James D'Arcy Lever, he acquired the company of Winsor and Co. in Warrington to start the production of Sunlight soap. Sales were so successful that this factory was running to full capacity by January 1887 forcing Lever to look for alternative premises.

The location

Lever chose the site for his new enterprise after an extensive search. It was near a potential source of labour in Birkenhead, had facilities for road, rail and water transport, and there was room for expansion. Bromborough Pool, an inlet of the River Mersey, provided a dock for the factory. The land was also cheap because it was marshy and crossed by tidal inlets. In addition, the site was out of the reach of the Liverpool Dock and Harbour Authority meaning that no dock or harbour dues would have to be paid. Initially, about 56 acres were purchased, 24 being allocated to the factory site and 32 for the village. Over the following years this increased to 221 acres, of which the village occupied 130 acres and the factory the remainder. On 3 March 1888 Mrs Elizabeth Lever cut the first sod in a small ceremony attended by family and selected members of the press.

Lever's vision



Fire Station c.1902

Lever was interested in both town planning and providing decent conditions in which his employees could live and work. The provision of such housing can be traced back to 1793 and the creation of New Lanark in Scotland by Robert Owen. Other model villages followed, including Bromborough Pool (from 1853) for the workers of Price's Patent Candle Co, which is only one mile from Port Sunlight. Port Sunlight was different, however, because of Lever's interest in the Garden Suburb movement, so the housing was not uniform and the open spaces were planned and landscaped. He was also concerned to provide for the welfare of his employees with assembly rooms, a school, and even a fire station and a cottage hospital. There were also tennis courts and bowling greens, some of which are still in use.

The architects

Thirty different architects worked on the village. Until 1910 most of them were local. William Owen (1846-1910) was the first architect to be employed. He was already a friend of Lever's, having worked on the Warrington factory, and became a director of Lever Brothers in 1897. He designed the factory and the first 28 houses at the junction of what were to be called Bolton and Greendale Roads. He later worked in partnership with his son, Segar (1874-1931), on many of the public buildings in the village.

James Lomax-Simpson (1882-1976) was the son of Lever's close friend Jonathan Simpson, also an architect. James became head of the architecture department at Lever Brothers in 1910 and a director of the company in 1917. He was also responsible for the design of Unilever House in London. Other local practices that worked in the village included Douglas & Fordham of Chester, Grayson & Ould of Liverpool and J J Talbot of Wilson & Talbot, also of Liverpool.

Housing

02

The houses are arranged in blocks ranging in size from two to eighteen cottages, which concealed allotments, now gardens, behind. No two blocks are identical: one block (now demolished) was a reproduction of Shakespeare's birthplace, whilst another was based on

the timber-framed Kenyon Peel Hall in Lancashire, but most were original designs. Although the detailed planning of individual houses varies there are two standard types – the Kitchen Cottage, with a kitchen, scullery and larder and three bedrooms above, and the Parlour Cottage, which also had a parlour and four bedrooms. Each house had a toilet and most had bathrooms, which was innovative at the time for the homes of the working classes. Some larger houses were also built for managers and heads of departments. There are over 900 houses and flats in the village.

The village did not escape damage during World War II: the Collegium was destroyed and a number of houses too, although they were rebuilt. In spite of the war damage and some building work after Lever's death in 1925 (eg Duke of York Cottages) there were, until recent years, few major alterations in the appearance of the village. During the 1960s an extensive modernisation programme took place to renovate the interiors without altering the frontages. Originally, occupancy of the houses was limited to employees of Lever Brothers but, in the 1980s, residents were given the option to buy the properties they rented from Unilever Merseyside Limited (UML). Over two-thirds of the houses are now in private hands and are bought and sold on the open market. The whole village is a Grade II listed conservation area, which ensures that it retains its unique character.



A tree-lined road in Port Sunlight 1946

Port Sunlight today

The Port Sunlight Village Trust, which was set up independently of Unilever, took over the running of the village in April 1999 and since then there have been a variety of plans to build on or redevelop sites in the village, some rejected by the local authority because there were not in keeping with the character of the village. The first new build since the Second World War was Osborne Court lying between Corniche Road and Central Road on an open space originally earmarked for building by Lever but never used. The original plans submitted by UML were rejected and had to be resubmitted in the vernacular style of the village. Completed in 2000, the complex comprises 40 sheltered apartments with communal facilities in five lodges. This was followed in 2003 by Philip Leverhulme Lodge, a block of apartments on the corner of Lodge Lane and Corniche Road, which again was a space that had never been built upon residentially.

Particular controversy accompanied plans to develop the open sites on Wharf Street and Water Street, which had never previously been built upon, and to redevelop the bottom of Wood Street. There was fierce opposition from local residents because of the proposed density of the housing units and the plans for a factory-style complex of urban apartments in three-story blocks. A public enquiry in 2005 decided that the development would have a harmful effect on the traditional vernacular character of the village. A separate planning submission in 2007, in the "village vernacular" with gabled, tiled and pitched roofs, porches, bay windows and chimneys, was approved and building began in 2008.

Principal buildings

1. Railway Station

Greendale Road

Built 1914-1927

At the turn of the 20th century there was no railway station at Port Sunlight, although the railway line ran alongside. Employees had to disembark at Bebington station and continue their journey on foot. Eventually, Lever Brothers opened their own private railway stop at Port Sunlight in 1914. In 1920, to improve access to the station platforms, a subway was put in under the railway and through the back of the concert hall in the Men's Social Club, which had been built alongside the railway in 1896. The booking office was created by boxing in the front veranda of the club house. The station eventually opened to the general public in 1927 and remains virtually unchanged.

2. The Post Office

Greendale Road

Built 1891

Designed by Grayson & Ould



Post Office, Port Sunlight 1913

Originally the village shop, it was the winning design in an architectural competition. It became a post office in 1894, when three shops opened in Bridge Street, but closed in January 2005. Soon afterwards it became a tea room.



Lever Free Library

3. Lever Free Library

Greendale Road

Built 1896

Designed by Maxwell & Tuke

Although it opened initially as a Girls' Hostel, this was not popular with the female employees and it became the Free Library in 1903. It also included a small museum, which contained items that had been given or lent by Lever. The library had separate reading rooms for men and women and its members paid an annual subscription of 2d. Later, half of the building was taken over by the District Bank (now Nat West). The Port Sunlight Heritage Centre occupied the other half from 1984 to 2006.

4. Fire Station

Behind Greendale Road

Built 1902

Designed by William & Segar Owen

Situated in a lane that runs between Park Road and Wood Street, the building was originally used as stables, but became a fire station in 1906. The horse drawn appliances were replaced by motorised vehicles in 1914. There was also a fire station within the factory, built in 1885. They were operational until 1957 when Cheshire Fire Brigade built a new station off New Chester Road to serve the area.

5. The Pavilion

Greendale Road

Built 1896

Designed by Grayson & Ould

Originally the Men's Social Club, facilities included two billiard rooms and a bowling green. An annex opened in 1910 and the club was further extended in 1968. It is now known as the Lever Club. There is a bowling green alongside.

6. The Village Fountain

Greendale Road

Built 1899

Built to celebrate the 25th wedding anniversary of William and Elizabeth Lever, and paid for by employees, the fountain was moved twice before reaching its present location beside the bowling green.

7. Gladstone Hall

Greendale Road

Built 1891

Designed by William & Segar Owen



Gladstone Hall c.1913

The first public building to open in the village, it was built as a recreation hall, and also used as a men's dining room until 1910 when canteen facilities were made available in the factory. It was opened by William Gladstone, Prime Minister, on 28 November 1891. A medal to commemorate the occasion was given to employees. Lever was a friend of Gladstone and served as Liberal Member of Parliament for Wirral from 1906. The hall became the home of the Port Sunlight Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (now the Port Sunlight Players) in 1920. Over the years a stage and dressing rooms have been added to convert it into a 500-seater theatre, which hosts amateur dramatic productions and regional drama festivals.



Lunch Hour Main Gate, 1907

8. Lever House and Factory

Wood Street

Built 1895

Designed by William & Segar Owen

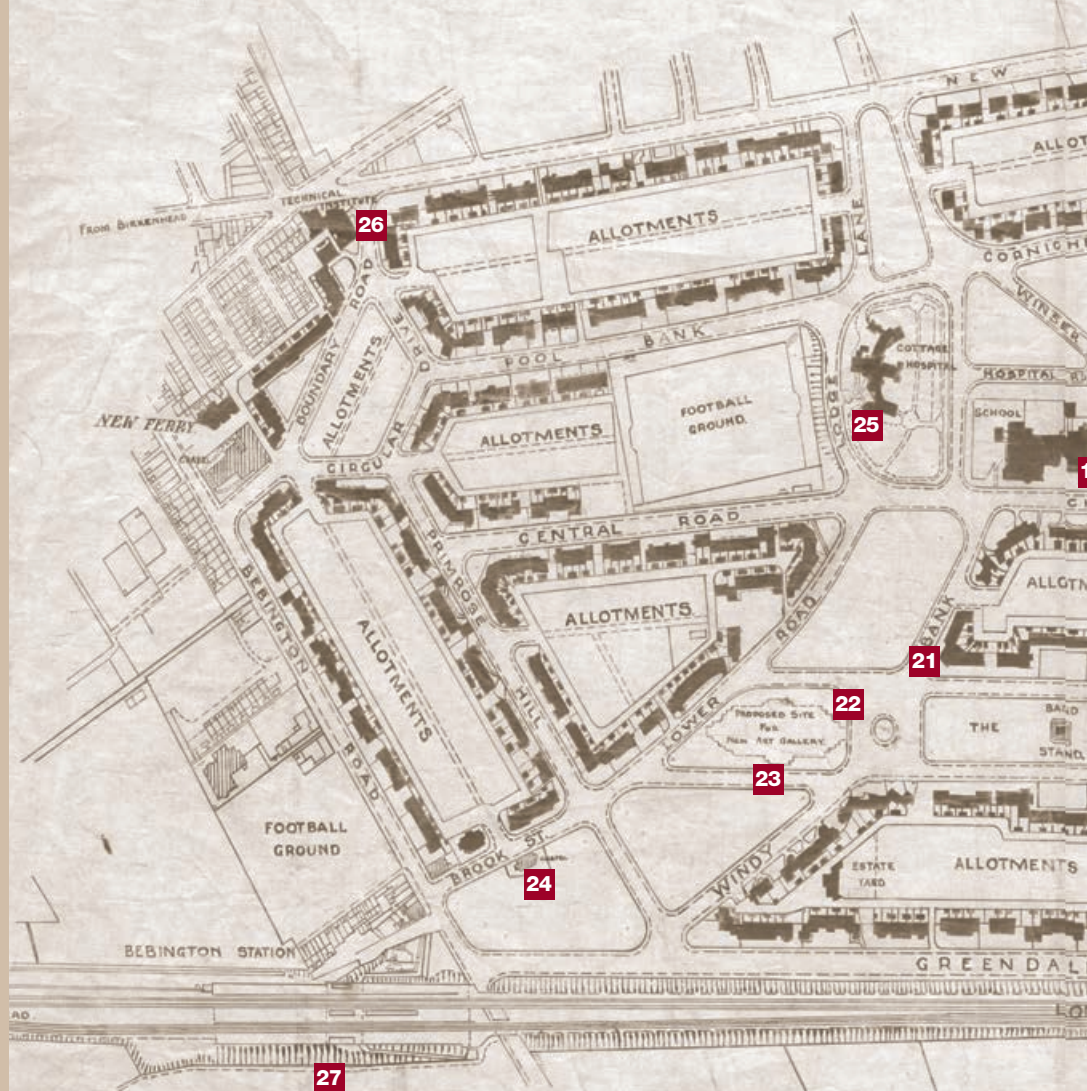
The main entrance by William Owen has an ornamental stone façade. It was supplemented by the east and west wings, housing office areas, which he designed in partnership with his son, Segar, in 1895. A third, the South Wing, designed by James Lomax-Simpson, was added in 1913-14. The factory itself, designed by William Owen, was begun in 1888, but has been radically altered over the years. All the buildings were constructed of Ruabon red brick with roofs of Dinorwic slate. The factory was completely self-sufficient: it had its own glycerine refinery (a by-product of soap manufacture), engine room and boiler house, card box making and printing departments, wood box-making department and even its own dock and harbour.



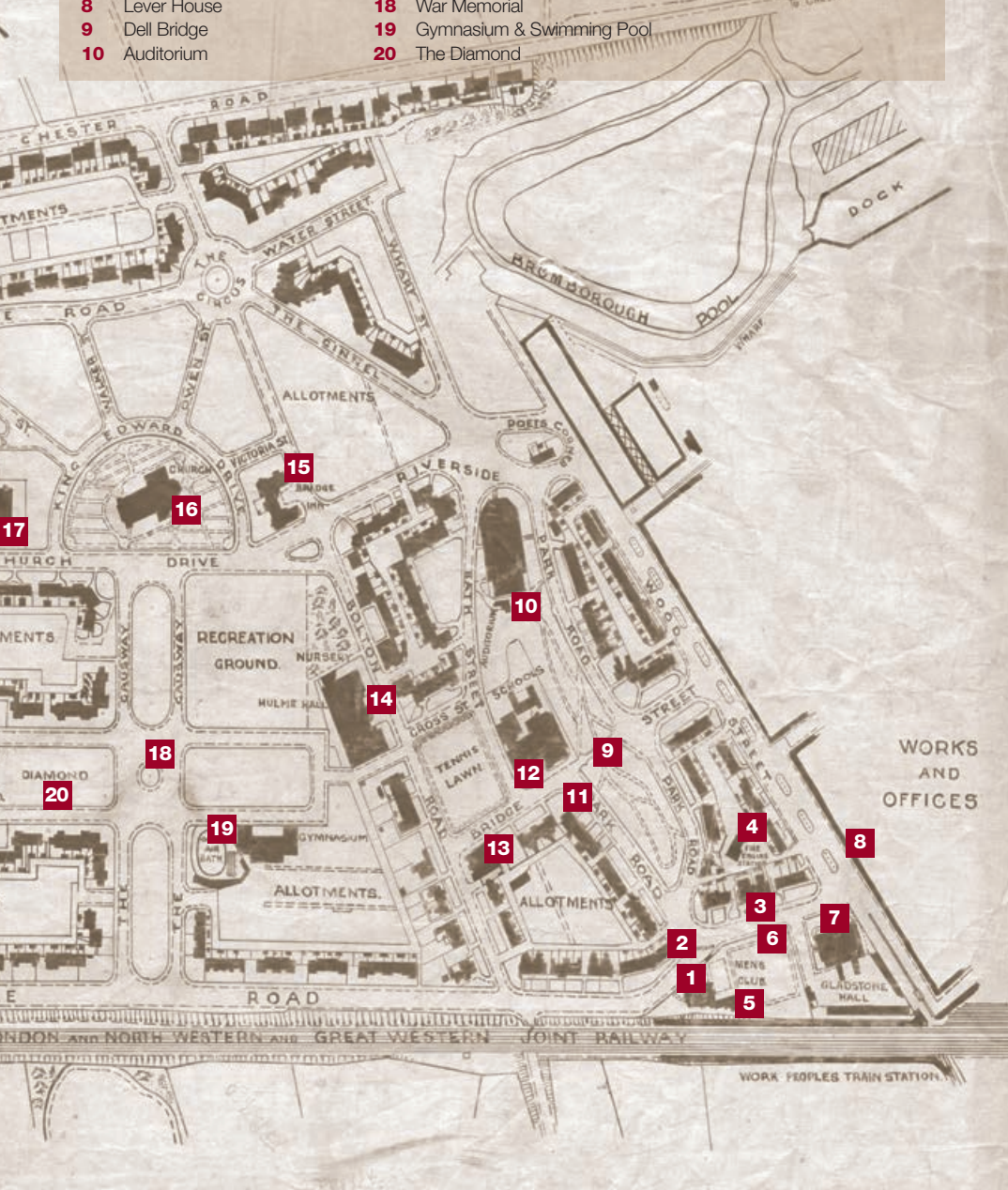
*Lever House entrance
c.1900*

PLAN OF THE VILLAGE OF PORT SUNLIGHT

1914



- | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----|---------------------------|----|---------------------------|
| 1 | Port Sunlight Railway Station | 11 | Bridge Cottage | 21 | Girls' Club |
| 2 | Post Office | 12 | Lyceum | 22 | Lady Lever Art Gallery |
| 3 | Lever Free Library | 13 | Collegium | 23 | Leverhulme Memorial |
| 4 | Fire Station | 14 | Hulme Hall | 24 | Duke of York Cottages |
| 5 | Pavilion | 15 | Bridge Inn | 25 | Cottage Hospital |
| 6 | Fountain | 16 | Christ Church | 26 | Hesketh Hall |
| 7 | Gladstone Hall | 17 | Church Drive School | 27 | Bebington Railway Station |
| 8 | Lever House | 18 | War Memorial | | |
| 9 | Dell Bridge | 19 | Gymnasium & Swimming Pool | | |
| 10 | Auditorium | 20 | The Diamond | | |





The Dell Bridge and Lyceum, Port Sunlight 1904

9. The Dell and Dell Bridge

Bridge Street

Built 1894

Designed by Douglas & Fordham

Dell Bridge was constructed over a ravine that was a former inlet of the River Mersey but which had been drained to provide a natural arena for the Auditorium. The Dell is the only drained channel to have been retained as a landscaped feature.



The Auditorium

10. Auditorium

Sited in the Dell

Built 1903; demolished 1937

Designed by Grayson & Ould

Opened on 13 June 1903 by the Mayor of Bolton (Lord Leverhulme's home town), the auditorium was intended to be an open-air theatre on the lines of a Greek amphitheatre and was situated at the north east end of what eventually became the Dell. The unreliable northern climate meant that walls and a roof were subsequently built in 1906. The auditorium could seat 3,000 and came to be used mainly by Lever Brothers and the residents of Port Sunlight for their own functions. It was also used for the first distribution of co-partnership certificates in July 1909. The auditorium was too large in proportion to the stage and poor acoustics led to its demolition in 1937. The area was landscaped and planted as a leisure garden.

11. Bridge Cottage

No 23 Park Road

Built 1892

Designed by Douglas & Fordham

Bridge Cottage is the largest house in the village. Lever lived here from 1896-97 whilst Thornton Manor was being altered for him. It then became the Parsonage House for the Minister of Christ Church. It was used as a location for the film "Chariots of Fire".

12. Lyceum

Bridge Street

Built 1894-96; enlarged 1898

Designed by Douglas & Fordham



Lyceum

Built as the Park Road Schools for the village children, church services were also held there until the church was built. The schools could accommodate 350 boys and girls and 150 infants but, as numbers increased, a new additional school was built in Church Drive in 1903. Originally run as a Board School, control of Park Road passed to Cheshire County Council as a result of the Elementary Education Act of 1902. Park Road and Church Drive schools operated in tandem for a number of years until Lever Brothers gave notice in 1915 that they required the Park Road building. It was renamed The Lyceum and from 1917 used as a staff training college for some time, and also as an assembly hall for many purposes, including company AGMs. In 1951 a Men's Club opened in part of it and the other half was used by UML as a drawing office, although latterly it was occupied by Unilever Archives (from 1984 to 2006). Two of the bowling greens lie between the Lyceum and Bolton Road.

13. The Employees' Provident Society / Collegium

Bridge Street

Built 1894; destroyed 1941

Designed by Douglas and Fordham

This building housed three shops (butcher, grocer and draper) run by Lever employees according to co-operative principles, but it was unsuccessful and Mac Fisheries took over the running of it in the 1920s. The upper floor was an assembly room called the Collegium, which was used for dances; the Girls' Institute; and the Boys' Brigade drilled there. It was destroyed by enemy action in March 1941 and not rebuilt. The Church Hall, built after World War II, lies just behind this site.

14. Hulme Hall

Bolton Road

Built 1901

William & Segar Owen

Built as a girls' dining room, to seat 1500, and used until 1910 when canteen facilities became available in the factory. The name comes from Lever's wife's maiden name. Although two temporary exhibitions were held there in 1902, artworks and pieces of furniture and china from Lever's collections were displayed there from 1911 onwards until the opening of the Lady Lever Art Gallery. It was used as a centre for Dutch and Belgian refugees in the 1st World War, but later became a military hospital, and was used by the American army in the 2nd World War. For many years it has been used for exhibitions, conferences, wedding receptions and social events - the Beatles played there in 1962!



Hulme Hall



The Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight 1910

15. Bridge Inn

Bolton Road

Built 1900

Designed by Grayson & Ould

The Inn took its name from Victoria Bridge, designed by William Owen in 1897, but since demolished. The bridge used to cross a tidal channel of the River Mersey, which was filled in 1909-1910. It was originally opened as a temperance hotel with dining and tea rooms and a few guest bedrooms but, in 1903, a deputation of villagers requested that a licence be applied for. Lever had to agree to a referendum and over 80% voted in favour of a licensed public house! The Bridge Inn has been enlarged and the entrance front and interior have been altered.

16. Christ Church

Church Drive

Built 1902-04

Designed by William & Segar Owen

Christ Church was built at Lever's personal expense for £25,000, in red sandstone in a Perpendicular style, as a memorial to his parents. The foundation stone was laid on 30 September 1902 and the church was officially opened on 8 June 1904. Undenominational when built, it was later vested by Lever in the Congregational Union (now the United Reform Church) and is one of the largest churches in the area, capable of seating 1000 people. Adjoining the west end is the Lady Lever Memorial, a rib-vaulted loggia, or narthex, also by William & Segar Owen (1914). The bronze effigies under the loggia of Lady Lever and Lord Leverhulme are by Sir William Goscombe John.

17. Church Drive School

Church Drive

Built 1902-03

Designed by Grayson & Ould

Church Drive School was built in response to the Elementary Education Act of 1902 that transferred responsibility for education from local boards to County Councils. For a number of years Park Road Schools and Church Drive ran in tandem, but Church Drive became the sole school in the village in 1915 when Lever Brothers requested the return of the Park Road building.



Christ Church

18. War Memorial

The Causeway

Built 1919-1921

Designed by Sir William Goscombe John

Construction of the memorial began in 1919 at the intersection of The Causeway and The Diamond and was completed in 1921. Goscombe John was a friend of Lever's who also worked on other pieces for him. The theme was "defence of the home". The stonework is granite and the sculptures bronze. In the centre is a runic cross and at the base, two soldiers defending a wounded comrade and groups of women and children. Relief panels depicting children and the armed and medical services are found on the surrounding parapet. The unveiling ceremony in December 1921 was performed by Sgt. T G Eames, who had been blinded during the first Battle of the Somme. He was assisted by Pte. Cruikshank VC and Lord Leverhulme. Inside the memorial is a copy of 'The Golden Book', which contains the names of Port Sunlight residents and Lever Brothers employees worldwide who served in the forces during the 1st World War.



Aerial View with War Memorial Centre Left c.1950

19. Gymnasium and Open-Air Swimming Pool

The Causeway

Built 1902; demolished 1975

Designed by William & Segar Owen

The gymnasium was a functional, weather-boarded building. It was opened on 8 October 1902 by the Mayor of Birkenhead. After World War II the lower floor was used as a shop by Mac Fisheries until 1963 and as a Boys' Club. The building closed in 1971 and was demolished four years later. It is now the site of the Garden Centre. The open-air swimming bath, on the same site, was supplied with warm water from the glycerine works in the factory and was in use until 1970. It was filled in and became the car park for the garden centre.



The Diamond looking to Art Gallery

20. The Diamond

Built 1910-1949

Designed by Ernest Prestwich

In 1909-10 the river channels to the north and east end of the site were filled in and levelled and in 1910 a competition was held among students of the Liverpool School of Architecture for a revised plan to complete the village. Prestwich was the winner and his plan included a revised and extended layout for The Diamond to turn it into a formal space. It became a wide avenue, containing a rose garden, which provides a vista leading to the Lady Lever Art Gallery at the north end. The road on the east side is King George's Drive and on the west side is Queen Mary's Drive, named in honour of their visit in 1914. A bandstand, designed by Lomax-Simpson in 1906, was moved from the site of the Lady Lever Art Gallery in 1910 to the centre of The Diamond, but demolished in 1932. The fountains in front of the gallery, with a bronze sculpture entitled "Sea Piece", were designed by Sir Charles Wheeler in 1949.

21. Girls' Club

King George's Drive

Built 1913

Designed by J Lomax Simpson

Integrated with the housing at the north end of King George's Drive, and originally used as a Girls' Club, this building became the Port Sunlight Residents' Association and Social Club shortly after the formation of the Association in 1964. It stood empty for some years until the Heritage Centre moved there in 2006.



Lady Lever Art Gallery

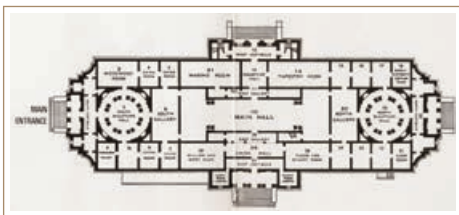
22. Lady Lever Art Gallery

The Diamond

Built 1914-1922

Designed by Geoffrey Owen
(younger son of William Owen)

The gallery was created as a monument to Lever's wife, Elizabeth, who died in 1913. Work began in 1914 - King George V laid the foundation stone on 25 March - but it was not completed until 1922, when his aunt, Princess Beatrice, performed the official opening on 16 December. It is the only building in classical style in the village and is built of reinforced concrete clad in Portland stone. It is 364 feet long, 140 feet at its widest point, and covers one acre. The core of the collection was formed from part of Lever's vast collection of antique English furniture, Chinese porcelain, Wedgwood, sculpture, tapestry and needlework, enamels, and paintings. In 1978 the building and its contents were presented to Merseyside County Council by the 3rd Viscount Leverhulme. Today the gallery is administered by National Museums Liverpool and its board of trustees.



Lady Lever Art Gallery, Floor Layout



Unveiling of the Leverhulme Memorial 1930

23. Leverhulme Memorial

Queen Mary's Drive

Unveiled 1930

Designed by J Lomax-Simpson;
sculpted by Sir William Reid-Dick

William Lever died in 1925 and the memorial was subscribed to by his colleagues. It is situated in front of the west entrance of the Lady Lever Art Gallery. Lomax-Simpson re-designed the western end of Windy Bank to provide an axial setting for it. The memorial consists of a polished granite column rising from a fluted base. The main figure represents Inspiration and the figures at the base represent Industry, Education, Charity and Art, which were all driving forces in Lever's life. Reid-Dick also sculpted the figures over the east and west entrances to Unilever House in London.

24. Duke of York Cottages

Greendale Road

Built 1932

Designed by J Lomax Simpson

One of the last major building projects in the village until the construction of the sheltered housing in Central Road in 2000, these cottages were opened by the Duke of York (later King George VI) on 31 May 1934.

25. Cottage Hospital

Lodge Lane

Built 1907

Designed by Grayson & Ould

Built as a miniature replica of an urban hospital with 12 beds and two cots it was staffed by a doctor, matron, three nurses and three maids and paid for by the company. The building was extended in 1910 and 1931. A nurses' home, Lodge Lane House, had to be built by 1940 to cater for the increased staffing levels. It closed as a hospital after the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948 and re-opened as a training centre in 1950, providing residential courses for Unilever managers and supervisors. In 1984 the training centre closed and the building was sold into private ownership along with Lodge Lane House. It was converted into an old people's home and ran as Sunlight Lodge for about 20 years. After standing empty for a while it re-opened as the Leverhulme Hotel and Spa in 2008. The renovated building had two new two-storey structures added on either side to create a 40-bed hotel run by the owners of the award-winning Hillbark Hotel in Frankby (also on the Wirral).



Cottage Hospital 1913

26. Hesketh Hall

Boundary Road

Built 1902-1903

Designed by J J Talbot

Hesketh Hall, which takes its name from Lever's mother's maiden name opened as a Technical Institute and was paid for by Lever himself rather than the company. Later, it was used for social functions and the United Comrades Federation took over one room on the ground floor in 1921. During World War II it was occupied by government departments. In 1950 the building re-opened as the club premises of the United Comrades Federation and also the Boys' Club. The latter remained there until 1963. The hall is now the headquarters of the Port Sunlight branch of the Royal British Legion.



Duke of York Cottages 1934



Information Guide No. 1



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