

# Our heritage

Lew Baxter reflects on the risky plan to prepare a celebratory book for Liverpool's World Heritage status months before the decision was made.

It was arguably the biggest gamble in local publishing history and it could so easily have turned into complete folly and disaster; with many friends and business colleagues suggesting the latter was a clear option.

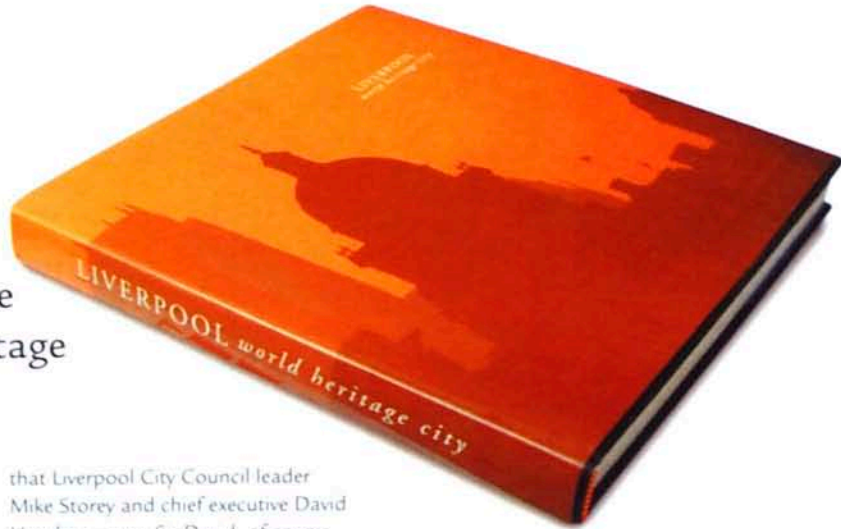
Six months before Liverpool's bid for World Heritage status was to be considered by UNESCO, photographer and publisher Guy Woodland and myself had gritted our teeth and decided to go ahead with an idea for a lavish photographic book to celebrate the city's victory.

We were also aiming to try and make a little bit of publishing history by turning a book around in record time - and that meant that it would have be-

off the presses within hours of the announcement by UNESCO's eminent heritage committee which was meeting in the ancient Chinese city of Suzhou, not that far distant from Liverpool's sister city of Shanghai.

That was the concept we put to a series of what we called celebrity partners: organisations and individuals who would share the vision and hopefully the financial risk. If the decision went against Liverpool, and there was no guarantee, the books would be worthless, perhaps just sad collector's items at best or paper-fodder for the skip.

The idea was first conceived in December last year after we learned



that Liverpool City Council leader Mike Storey and chief executive David Henshaw - now Sir David, of course had decided to pitch for both the prestigious World Heritage title at the same time as making that memorable punt for the city to be nominated European Capital of Culture in 2008.

We were further delighted when Prime Minister Tony Blair boldly agreed to write the foreword, and also in advance of the UNESCO decision.

Of course, the project needed seed corn funding, neither Guy nor myself could afford to stand the anticipated minimum £40,000 cost alone. We would need partners, sponsors to all extents and purposes.

Our first meeting with Michael Brown, vice-chancellor of Liverpool John Moores University was an eye-opener. We had thought that the business community would be our mainstay but suddenly the world of academia took up the baton. Almost without hesitation Michael Brown bravely committed the university to the project. After that we found a similar positive response from Drummond Bone at the University of Liverpool and Gerald Pillay, the recently appointed vice-chancellor at Hope University College.

Further support and infectious goodwill came courtesy of Steve Broomhead and Peter Mearns at the North West Development Agency and the Duke of Westminster's Paradise Street development along with Phil Redmond's Mersey Television and a number of others. We had the green light to go ahead, at least financially.

It was only at the celebration banquet in Liverpool Town Hall a few weeks after UNESCO had indeed graced the city with the prestigious title for its Waterfront and other areas that we realised just how close to the wire the project had come.

Mike Storey told guests that included Heritage Minister Lord McIntosh that in fact Liverpool's bid wasn't that cut and dried, other bids submitted before the city's was considered were rejected. In fact it had been touch and go.

Wryly Guy and I pondered that if the decision had gone the other way we'd have probably been burning "useless" books for months and all our celebrity partners would have been pondering their depleted coffers. As it is, the city is basking in its new found celebrity, and we are all breathing a mite easier.

**Liverpool: World Heritage City**  
Published by cities500 price UK£15

On sale at tourism centres across Merseyside and bookshops

**To win a copy of Liverpool: World Heritage City**

answer the following question. Liverpool recently won World Heritage status. Where was the announcement made? Send your answers with name and address to Vision, PO Box 48, Old Hall Street, Liverpool, L69 3EB

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## Flower Show's 'booking' its place in history

Southport Flower Show is 'booking' its place in history with a permanent reminder of its 75 years as the largest independent show in the country.

To mark the anniversary it is publishing a new coffee table book that traces the story of how the event has blossomed to attract over 100,000 visitors a year.

The seeds for the new book were sown by Objective 1 funding from Business Link for Greater Merseyside which subsidised PR company support for the design and production of the glossy 62-page publication.