

THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Founded 1974. Registered Charity No.508024.
A member of the British Association for Local History
and the Merseyside Civic Society

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Membership Subscriptions

Household £4 Single pensioner £3 Company, etc. £6

If you wish to join the Society, please send the appropriate subscription to the Membership Secretary, David Phythian, 26 Primrose Road, Liverpool L18 2HE: cheques payable to 'The Gateacre Society'.

If you are already a member, your address label indicates the date when your next subscription payment is due.

Our Book - *Gateacre & Belle Vale: in old photographs* - is on sale at our meetings and events, price **£10** (bookshop price £12.99).

Our Tea-towel is also available, price **£4**.

Visit our website - or contact Beryl Plent or Pam Ball for further details.

DO YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS?

If so, and if you would like to receive your Newsletters by email instead of by post, please let us know by sending a message to membership@gatsoc.org.uk quoting your name and postcode



The Gateacre Society

Guarding the Past - Safeguarding the Future

NEWSLETTER - March 2016

Our next meeting:

THE REAL ELEANOR RIGBY

A talk by Alice Bennett

on Monday 4th April
at 7.30 p.m.
in Gateacre Chapel,
Gateacre Brow L25 3PB



Eleanor Rigby Whitfield, the granddaughter of stonemason John Rigby, was born in Woolton village in 1895. She was 'buried along with her name' – as Eleanor Rigby Woods – in St Peter's churchyard in 1939. This talk is a socio-cultural historical view of her life. It will focus on the domestic and the personal, provide an insight into working-class family life, and consider the difficulties of being an Edwardian and post-WW1 female. Alice Bennett's 'detective work' was triggered by the discovery of one of Eleanor's schoolbooks. She will talk about this, and other Rigby family artefacts, and will speculate on the coincidence of the connection to the Beatles.

ALL WELCOME – Admission free – Donations invited

THE BIG HISTORY SHOW

An event taking place in St George's Hall, Liverpool, on Saturday & Sunday 9th-10th April, 10am-5pm.

BBC Radio Merseyside's 'Big History Show' will be bigger than ever this year. Exhibitors will include local history, heritage, family history and special interest groups from right across Merseyside. We shall be there with a selection of pictures and publications about Gateacre. Our friends the Belle Vale Prefab Project will also be represented.

Admission is free of charge. The café will be open, and afternoon teas will be available. There will also be a programme of 16 talks by guest historians (Tickets £2 each – in advance from St George's Hall shop or at the door) and a special Local History Question Time Panel Event (£2.50). Our website contains further details.

THE GORSEY COP, GATEACRE

Our November 2015 talk – reviewed by Mike Chitty

David Wilson worked at the Crying Tree – the most recent trading name of the Gorsey Cop – prior to its closure. He took an interest in the building's history, and on 29th November came to talk to us with his findings.

Built around 1870 – and named after the much older farm behind – it was one of three large houses built at the north end of Grange Lane. The original entrance was by the stone gate-pier that still survives on the corner of Gateacre Park Drive. The first known occupant was Betsey Cunningham, a Manchester cotton broker's widow, who had moved her family back to Liverpool in the 1850s. She lived at Oakfield in Cuckoo Lane before moving to Gorsey Cop and dying there in 1872. Betsey's sons, Walter and Harold, took over their father's cotton broking business. They also loved horses, which they grazed locally.

The next owners of Gorsey Cop were the McKechnies. Alexander McKechnie lived there for about 30 years. His father was a copper smelter who had moved from Scotland to Widnes. McKechnie Brothers went worldwide, making copper-related products. The family at Gorsey Cop won awards at Crufts for their terriers. After WW2 Gorsey Cop was bought by BICC. It still had grape vines and tennis courts, and was used as a club for managers. It also had a staff welfare function; if an employee at the Prescot factory had a problem, they were told to 'go to Gorsey Cop'. David showed us photographs from the BICC era, which he had been sent (from America) by a descendant of the last manager.

In the late 1950s the building became a 'closed door casino'. Part of the curtilage became the site of Acresgate Court flats. In the 1970s the (by then legitimate) casino was acquired by Philippe Overd, the Algerian head chef at Liverpool's Adelphi Hotel. Gorsey Cop became Chez Philippe, his 'dream' French restaurant. David showed us a photograph of Prime Minister Harold Wilson speaking at a function there. It was a popular venue – but in business terms not a success. One night, fire broke out in the basement. Although the fire brigade managed to save the building, the insurance company refused to pay out, and Philippe was ruined.

In the 1980s the name changed again, this time to Grange Manor. New owner George Downey installed artworks and stained glass, and turned the stables into the American-themed Penrods bar. More changes followed – Elaine Wilson seeking planning permission for a hotel before going bankrupt, and 'two gentlemen from Blackpool' renaming it Harry's Bar – as successive owners struggled to run the premises at a profit. Eventually Enterprise Inns – a subsidiary of Bass Taverns – took over and it became the Crying Tree.

David finished his talk with 'a bit of fun'. Lots of people, he said, believe that Gorsey Cop is home to ghosts. A lady in Edwardian dress walks on the ground floor and in the garden, a man in Victorian costume walks on the upper floors, and children say they've seen a 'woman who looks like a witch' in a corner of the former stables. David and his colleagues had 'felt something brushing past' at the top of the stairs, and 'seen a shadow walking across the bar'.

A new phase in the life of the building is about to begin, because in September 2015 it was sold yet again. David's talk was a reminder that history does not stand still. We have him to thank for bringing together information about the Gorsey Cop that might otherwise have been lost.

REMEMBERING HORACE JONES (Part 2)

"Between the wars, my grandparents did not go on holiday with their children. Money was tighter then, of course, and the farm was only rented. My mother used to tell me that they saved up for a day out in Southport each year. On the great day, my grandmother and her four children would catch the train from Gateacre to Southport quite early. My grandfather, having looked after the horses etc., would follow on a later train and arrive in Southport in time for lunch. How times change! My grandfather's family were originally carters from Old Swan, and before that from North Wales, somewhere near Northop, I understand. My grandfather could remember Queens Drive being built through pretty much open countryside. An amazing project, just before the first world war. When the farms around Gateacre were sold to the Corporation for development, my grandparents were staggered that their former neighbours who owned their own farms were receiving sums of around £200,000."

Chris Gibbins, the author of these memories, is one of the 11 surviving grandchildren of Horace Jones - the man who gave his name to Jones Farm Road. He lives in the West Midlands. We always welcome reminiscences of life in Gateacre, and information about personalities from the past, for possible inclusion in the Newsletter and on our website.

GATEACRE COMP HOUSING SITE

Site Preparation Works commenced on 4th February and are expected to take 28 weeks. The Project Manager is Tony Smith – email anthony.smith@urbanregen.co.uk – who has supplied us with details of the complex sequence of operations involved. (See our website for further information). We have been assured that as much as possible of the excavated material will be re-used on site, and contractors' lorries will be directed away from Gateacre village. Countryside Properties Ltd are due to take over management of the site in May/June.

20mph UPDATE

Further to our October 2015 report, the City Council has now published a draft Traffic Regulation Order. Notices are posted on lampposts all over the area, and the deadline for any objections is 14th April. We have identified a number of anomalies in the scheme, which will see a 20mph speed limit imposed on most (but not all) of Gateacre's residential streets. We have put a map of the proposals on our website.

A SUMMER COACH TRIP

Our friends the Wavertree Society are planning a day trip to the Potteries on Saturday 23rd July. The coach will be picking-up in Gateacre, and Gateacre Society members will be invited to buy tickets. As with last year's excellent visit to Hebden Bridge, the itinerary will include both heritage sites and regeneration projects. Further information and booking details will be included in our next Newsletter.

YOU can help Gateacre BLOOM

The Friends of Gateacre are looking for more volunteers. They need people to help with planting, weeding, watering and tidying-up, as well as with publicity and fundraising. However much or little time you have available, they would like to hear from you. Please phone 0151 722 6862 or email chair@friendsofgateacre.org for further information.