

THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

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

Website: www.gatsoc.org.uk Instagram: @TheGatSoc

Email: info@gatsoc.org.uk

Executive Committee 2018/19

Brian Doman, 6 Hayles Grove, L25 4SL (0151 722 6368) *Chairman*

Rosemary Doman *Vice Chair*

Mike Chitty, 16 Chartmount Way, L25 5LB (428 7801)

Environment Sec., Newsletter Editor & Acting Hon.Treasurer

Eryl Chitty *Hon.Secretary*

David Phythian, 26 Primrose Road, L18 2HE *Membership Sec.*

Pam Ball, Flat 1 St Stephens Court, Halewood Road, L25 3PG (428 0500)

Sales Officer

John Wood, 3 Soarer Cottages, Grange Lane, L25 5LF

Assistant Environment Sec.

Sandra Sandland *Assistant Sales Officer*

Sue Coldwell, 30 Killester Road, L25 3QD

Geraldine McAndrew

Annual 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'.

The Society's membership year ends on 31st October. If you are already a member, your address label indicates the date when your next subscription payment is due.

Subscriptions may also be paid by bank transfer. Please email us for our account details. Alternatively they may be hand-delivered to any of the Committee members'

Our Book - Gateacre & Belle Vale: in old photographs - is on sale at our meetings and events, price **£9** (bookshop price £12.99).

Our Tea-towel is also available, price **£4**. See our website for 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

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The Gateacre Society

A VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION

Guarding the Past - Safeguarding the Future

NEWSLETTER - September 2019

Our next meeting:

THE GENIUS OF BRUNEL

Monday 23rd September at 7.30pm
in Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow L25 3PB

This illustrated talk by Mike Murphy - on the life and work of the engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel - was originally scheduled for last April.



ALL WELCOME - Admission free - Donations invited

OUR 45th

A.G.M.

Sunday

27th October
at 2.30pm

The Annual General Meeting of the Gateacre Society will be held in Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow L25 3PB. All existing and prospective members are invited to attend, to discuss what the Society has been doing - and should be doing - and to enjoy complimentary refreshments.

Other Forthcoming Events

(All free-admission):

GATEACRE SUMMER FAIR

Sunday 15th September

Hug A Mug are arranging a Fair on the village green, 11am-2pm, with a range of local stall holders selling their goods, tombola and game stalls.

HERITAGE OPEN DAY

Saturday 21st September

Gateacre Chapel will be open, 10am-4pm, as part of "England's largest festival of history and culture".

MERSEYSIDE HERITAGE & CULTURE DAY

Saturday 26th October

Liverpool Central Library, 10am-4pm
Stalls, talks and tours.

The Gateacre Society will have an information and sales table in the Picton Reading Room.

OPENING THE GATES FOR GOOD

Our June 2019 talk – reviewed by Mike Chitty

Over 40 people were present on 17th June to hear Major Allister Versfeld, the Salvation Army's Mission Development Officer for Strawberry Field. Over 60,000 people a year, he told us, have been visiting the gates in Beaconsfield Road, Woolton, just to look at them and take photographs. The reason is the Beatles song, Strawberry Fields Forever, written by John Lennon and inspired by his childhood memories of living nearby. From September of this year, people will be able to go beyond the gates, and visit an exhibition centre, café, souvenir shop and garden/woodland area, all the components of which will provide training and job opportunities for young people with learning difficulties. From the visitor's point of view, the attraction will be the words and music of John Lennon, experienced in a place that was familiar to him.

Allister summarised the history of the site, and explained how the original Victorian house had been purchased by the Salvation Army as a children's home in the 1930s, replaced by a purpose-built establishment in the 1970s, which in turn was closed down in 2005 as policies changed in favour of 'care in the community'. For over ten years the building lay empty as its owners wondered what to do with it. Eventually it was decided to make it the hub of a new venture – the Steps to Work programme – aimed at improving the employment prospects of 18-25 year olds. Only 7% of people with learning difficulties, we were told, currently get into paid employment. The Steps to Work programme aims to "educate employers, equip trainees and engage the community" - and to "raise the eyes and lift the heads" of the young people involved. There is, in addition, a spiritual aspect to the project – 'Fresh Expressions' – which is reflected in the provision of a Chapel for visitors, other areas for quiet contemplation, and a 'talk table' in the café to reduce feelings of isolation.

Only a proportion of the trainees will find permanent work at Strawberry Field. Partnerships with colleges and employers are being developed, with training places being negotiated and 'support into work' being offered after the formal course has finished.

Allister's presentation sparked off a large number of questions, the first one being: When will it be open? (We now know that the date is Saturday 14th September, the proposed opening hours being 10am-6pm, seven days a week). What facilities will there be for coach parking? (None on site, but a drop-off layby on Beaconsfield Road to ease the current congestion problems). Will it be financially viable? ("We have donors all over the world" was the reply, though the hope is that the income from the exhibition admission charges, the café and the shop will make a substantial contribution towards the running costs).

Those of us who attended Allister's talk went away full of admiration for the project, and looking forward to visiting the café and grounds on a regular basis after they open in September.

We are very grateful to RICHIE THE RANGER for stepping in at short notice to give us a talk in April, in place of Mike Murphy (whose 'Brunel' talk will now take place on 23rd September). Richie's theme was 'Merseyside's Unsung Greats' – a very entertaining presentation indeed. Owing to the 'quiz show' format, we shall not be publishing a review; Richie will be giving the talk elsewhere and doesn't want us to reveal the answers!

OPEN AT LAST!

Public Right of Way No.77 – from Acrefield Road to Woolton Park via Glenacres – was finally reopened on 25th July. Our thanks go to all those local residents who supplied the necessary evidence at the Public Inquiry last summer.



NEW PLANS FOR THE BRIDGE INN SITE

The freehold of the Bridge Inn (and the adjacent betting shop) has been purchased by TJ Morris Ltd, who trade as Home Bargains. They are proposing to build a large retail store (over 3 times the size of their existing unit in Belle Vale Shopping Centre) with a 100-space car park alongside. The planning application reference is 19F/1932. One of the factors the City Council will have to take into account, in deciding whether or not to grant planning permission, is the impact the new store will have on existing shopping centres – notably Belle Vale. We have suggested that, by amalgamating some of the currently vacant units, it should be possible to meet Home Bargains' floorspace requirements within the Centre, and thus avoid jeopardising the viability of the existing building and some of the stores within it.

MORE CHANGES AT THE BLACK BULL

Mitchells & Butlers, the owners of the Black Bull, have submitted proposals (planning application 19F/1987 and listed building consent applications 19L/1950 & 19L/1989) to 'refresh' the appearance of the building and to maintain its 'kerb appeal'. There will be internal alterations, and a few changes at the rear, but the most contentious aspect of the plans, from our point of view, is the display of the name BLACK BULL on the front elevation. As far as we are aware, the traditional inn sign on Gateacre Brow has always been regarded as a sufficient indication of the name of the pub, and we shall be lodging an objection. We are also querying the 'colour visual' which was submitted to illustrate the proposal. It shows the hedges and shrubs removed from the road frontage (and replaced by flower beds) and modern-style tables and chairs scattered across the cobbled forecourt, rather than confined to a small area as required by a previous planning permission.

A 5G PHONE MAST PROPOSED

Planning application 19F/2058 has been submitted to erect a 20 metre high mast on the central reservation of Blackwood Avenue, in place of the existing 12 metre mast. The closing date for any objections is 24th September.

HANNAH COLEMAN

- who was the first headteacher at Our Lady of the Assumption Infants School - died on 29th July aged 105. She used to live at Elmsvale, Belle Vale Road, took a keen interest in local history, and was a member of the Gateacre Society for many years.