

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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Annual Membership Subscriptions

Household £5 Single pensioner £4 Company, etc. £10

The Society's membership year ends on 31st October, but new subscriptions paid from 1st July give membership until 31/10/21. If you are already a member, your address label indicates the date when your next subscription payment is due.

If you wish to join the Society, or to renew, please send the appropriate subscription to the Membership Secretary, David Phythian, 26 Primrose Road, Liverpool L18 2HE: cheques payable to 'The Gateacre Society'. Subscriptions may also be paid by bank transfer. Please email us for our account details.

Owing to the Coronavirus Pandemic, all Gateacre Society meetings and events have been cancelled until further notice. We have continued to monitor and comment on local planning applications, and the Committee has met via Zoom. Please keep us informed of local news or issues that you feel deserve the Society's attention. Until such time as an A.G.M. can be held, the existing Committee members will remain in post.

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.

In the near future we are hoping to arrange a series of talks for members using Zoom. If you have notified us of your email address, you will be sent details of these, and invited to participate.

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The Gateacre Society

A VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION

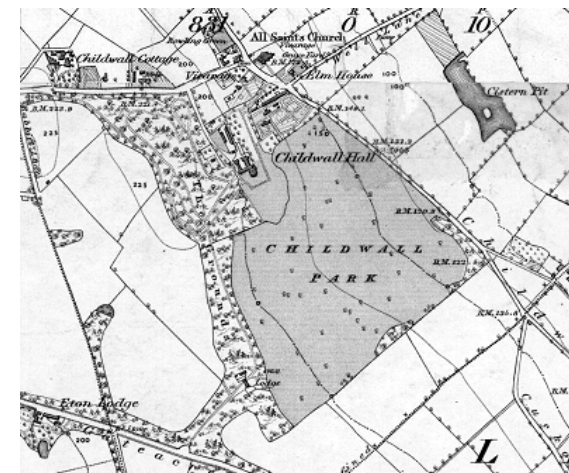
Guarding the Past - Safeguarding the Future

NEWSLETTER - October 2020

THE HISTORY OF OUR GREEN SPACES

No.2: CHILDWALL WOODS & FIELDS

Childwall Woods are shown as 'The Grounds' on 19th century Ordnance Survey maps. They were part of the grounds of Childwall Hall, which stood where the Hollyoaks studios (Lime Pictures) are today. The driveway to the hall, starting from the lodge (now a private house) in Childwall Abbey Rd, followed a circuitous route through the woods – mostly in a rock cutting – before reaching the main building. Such curving driveways were not uncommon, as they magnified the size of the estate in the minds of visitors.



An extract from the OS six-inch map of 1849

Childwall Hall was built by Bamber Gascoyne in about 1780. He was Lord of the Manor, not only of Childwall but also of Wavertree, Much Woolton and several other places, having inherited these titles – as well as the original Childwall Hall, and other properties – as a result of marrying Isaac Greene's daughter Mary. He commissioned architect John Nash to build him a new house of castellated design, which came to be nicknamed 'Childwall Abbey' (though there is some controversy as to whether this name originated as a reference to the Hall, the pub or the parish church – there never was an Abbey in Childwall).

The woods were in part a vestige of the ancient woodland which once covered much of the area, but they were landscaped – with new planting and rocky glades – to complement the architecture of the new Hall. On the other side of the building, the grounds were more open, and offered the occupants – and their visitors – fine views across the Childwall valley towards Prescott and the Pennine foothills.

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In 1824 Bamber Gascoyne died. His only child, Frances (Fanny) Gascoyne had married James Cecil, Viscount Cranborne, who in 1823 – as James Gascoyne-Cecil – became the 2nd Marquess of Salisbury. Successive Marquesses maintained their interest in Childwall and surrounding areas during the 19th and 20th centuries, even though they were resident elsewhere (at Hatfield House in Hertfordshire and Cranborne in Dorset).



Above: An 1825 engraving of Childwall Hall

In 1947 Childwall Hall – having been the home of Childwall Golf Club from 1922 to 1938 – was presented by the 5th Marquess to Liverpool Corporation for use as a further education college. However, it emerged that the house was riddled with dry rot, so it was demolished and replaced by a new purpose-designed building. The open part of the grounds, sloping down towards Childwall Lane, was to be converted to playing fields for the college, so had to be levelled by controlled tipping of household waste. Childwall Woods were opened to the public in 1966. Local residents were apprehensive; a letter in the local press referred to the “devastation resulting from wholesale and unsupervised invasions by a goodly proportion of all the future borstal inmates Wavertree and Gateacre can muster”! However, the woods have remained a much-appreciated local amenity.

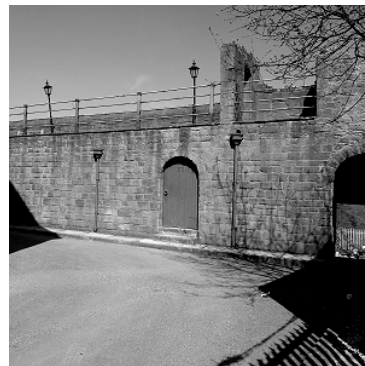
After the closure of the College in the 1980s, the future of the open area was in doubt – it was considered for housing development at one time – but ultimately it was decided to keep it as a nature reserve and informal recreation area. The Friends of Childwall Woods & Fields have been very active in securing its preservation, and have plans for its further improvement. Their volunteers support the City Council by carrying out various maintenance tasks.

The College buildings were sold to Phil Redmond's Mersey TV company. Part became the Brookside 'shopping parade', and later on doubled as Chester for Hollyoaks. Access to the woods is from Childwall Abbey Road, Countisbury Drive, Woolton Road and Quickwood Close. They and the fields – which can be entered either from the woods or from Childwall Lane – remain a popular venue for family outings, dog walkers and anyone else seeking peace and quiet, fresh air and exercise.



Above: Childwall Woods today

Below: 'Chester City Walls' off Childwall Lane



MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Society's Committee has reluctantly decided that subscription rates will have to be increased. The current rates, unchanged since 2006, sometimes don't cover the cost of posting the Newsletter. Fortunately, over 50% of our members opt for email dispatch, so we've been able to avoid an unduly large increase. The new rates (introduced on 1st July) are as follows: £4 for a single pensioner, £5 for any other type of household, and £10 for a 'company' member (business, school, etc.). We continue to invite members to pay for 3 years at a time. Existing members who have already paid in advance will, of course, not have to pay any more until their subscription becomes due for renewal.

The new membership year starts on 1st November. Your address label – or email header – indicates the date on which your current subscription expires, and if it reads '31/10/20' you are invited to renew now by sending a cheque (payable to The Gateacre Society) to the Membership Secretary, David Phythian, at 26 Primrose Road, Liverpool L18 2HE.

Alternatively, if you wish to pay by direct bank transfer, please email us – membership@gatsoc.org.uk – for details of our sort code and account number.

BEAR & STAFF UPDATE

As part of the recent refurbishment, the outdoor drinking area between the pub and Gateacre Chapel was fitted with 'festoon lighting' suspended between wooden poles, which extend onto the grass verge alongside Gateacre Brow. This provoked complaints from nearby residents, and led to the submission of a retrospective planning application (20F/0918). Although permission has now been granted, the intensity of the lights is subject to strict limits. (Condition 4 specifies that “All external lighting fittings shall be orientated so that measurements taken at any nearby habitable roomed windows do not exceed 6 lux”).

A few weeks later, a timber fence was erected along the western boundary of the pub car park. Although mostly a replacement for one that was there before, it has eradicated much of the previously-landscaped strip, and has hidden the historic 'flagstone fence' featured in our Jan.2020 Newsletter. A retrospective planning application (20F/1943) has been submitted, but has not as yet been determined. In our comments to the Planning Dept, we objected to the section of fence nearest to Gateacre Brow, arguing that it is harmful to the character of the Conservation Area and to the setting of 10 Gateacre Brow – a listed building.

Finally, on the other side of the car park, two sycamore trees are threatening the stability of the Chapel's ancient boundary wall. Five years ago we suggested that these trees should be felled, and replaced by more-appropriate (less-damaging) species. Nothing has been done, however, and we have recently asked the pub's owners to reconsider our request.

OUR INSTAGRAM QUIZ

The closing date for our Gateacre Picture Quiz was 31st August. There were 20 pictures (all taken within a 20-30 minute walking distance of Gateacre village during Lockdown) and 40 questions. Our congratulations go to the winners: the owners of Elmsvale House in Belle Vale Road, which is currently being refurbished; and to the runner-up, our member Anna Alexander. The pictures, questions and answers will remain on our Instagram page for all to see – at [instagram.com/thegatsoc](https://www.instagram.com/thegatsoc).

If you'd like to see more pictures (we've got plenty more in reserve) please 'follow' @TheGatSoc, which will encourage us to launch another quiz in the near future.

GATEACRE IN BLOOM

The planters in the village centre have been maintained by the Friends of Gateacre volunteers throughout the spring and summer. We are pleased to report that they have successfully applied for grant aid to replace some of the half-barrels, and the new containers should be in place quite soon.

THE DEFIBRILLATOR

On 6th October, the new Gateacre Village defibrillator (see our November 2019 Newsletter) was 'unveiled'. It is on the wall adjacent to the Care Pharmacy at 183 Grange Lane.