

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 Twitter: @TheGatSoc

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Mike Chitty, 16 Chartmount Way, L25 5LB (0151 428 7801)

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

Sue Coldwell, 30 Killester Road, L25 3QD *Local History Sec.*

Pam Ball, Flat 1 St Stephens Court, Halewood Road, L25 3PG (0151 428 0500)

Sales Officer

John Wood, 3 Soarer Cottages, Grange Lane, L25 5LF *Assistant Environment Sec.*

Sandra Sandland *Assistant Sales Officer*

Geraldine McAndrew

Annual Membership Subscriptions

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

The Society's membership year runs from 1 Nov-31 Oct. If you are already a member, your address label indicates the date when your next subscription payment is due. **If the date reads '31/10/20', please renew now.**

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 indoor meetings have been cancelled until further notice. We continue to monitor and comment on local planning applications, and the Committee meets 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 (listed above) 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.

If you are a member of the Society and you have notified us of your email address, you will be sent details of our Zoom talks and invited to participate.

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The Gateacre Society

A VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION

Guarding the Past - Safeguarding the Future

NEWSLETTER - January 2021

Our next talk (on Zoom):

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

by David Hearn

Monday 18th January,
7.30 p.m.

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest and most complicated campaign of the Second World War. It started within hours of the declaration of war in September 1939 and only finished with the German surrender in May 1945. The battle involved personnel from the Navy, Army and Air Force, together with an extraordinary number of civilians.

David Hearn describes the story of the battle as "one painted on a huge canvas". "My talk can only tell parts of that story but it does, hopefully, make the point that it was the most important campaign of the war. Without the involvement of Liverpool on many levels – including civilians who've never really received the recognition that they deserve – victory in the Second World War would not have been possible."



Photo: 'Capturing a U-boat'

This is a 'members only' meeting. If you are a Gateacre Society member and wish to attend the talk, please email membership@gatsoc.org.uk and we'll send you the necessary link (plus guidance notes, in case you're new to Zoom).

Please note that, if you attended our previous Zoom event – Ken Pye's December talk on 'Ancient Liverpool and Its Seven Streets', which was advertised to members by email rather than by Newsletter – there's no need to contact us; you'll automatically be sent a link for this one.

THE HISTORY OF OUR GREEN SPACES

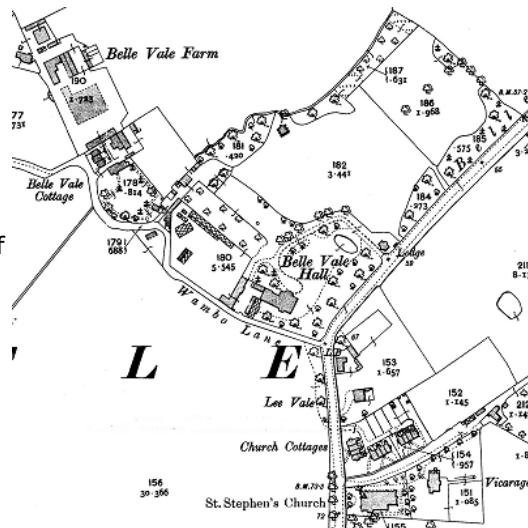
No.3: BELLE VALE PARK

Belle Vale Park was designated as a Public Open Space after World War 2, to serve the new residential district that was being created at that time (including one of the country's largest prefab housing estates). It had originally been part of the grounds of Belle Vale Hall. The hall itself stood in Wambo Lane – on the site of the row of postwar houses adjacent to the Belle Vale Road shopping parade – but its grounds extended towards present-day Childwall Valley Road (before that road existed).

The Little Woolton Tithe Map of 1848 indicates the owner of Belle Vale Hall as James Mulleneux, and the 1851 Census tells us that he was a merchant, born in Liverpool in about 1795. He lived at Belle Vale Hall with his wife, 6 children, a grandson and 6 servants. Liverpool trade directories indicate that he was a 'liquor merchant' (probably an importer of wines and spirits), his firm having premises alongside the Old Dock at one time.

The Mulleneuxs were still at Belle Vale in 1861, but by 1871 a new family was in residence: the Harrisons. The 1871 Census describes Thomas Harrison (aged 27, and born in Liverpool) as a "Merchant & Shipowner", living at Belle Vale Hall with his wife, 3 children and 5 servants. In 1881 the description was "African Merchant & Shipowner". By 1901 he was retired, but still living at Belle Vale Hall with his wife, 3 grown-up sons and 4 servants.

Clearly, Thomas Harrison was a wealthy man (though he was not connected with the famous Harrison Shipping Line). In retrospect, his main claim to fame is that he was the grandfather of the actor Rex Harrison! The 1911 Census form for Belle Vale Hall was completed by Sara Harrison (Thomas's widow) as head of household, and lists those present: her son Thomas, her son William Reginald, the latter's wife Edith Mary and 3 children (all born in Huyton), plus 5 servants. One of the grandchildren was Reginald Carey Harrison (aged 3) – i.e. the young Rex. He later wrote about his childhood memories of bike rides from the family home in Huyton to Belle Vale to see his "eccentric grandmother".



An extract from the OS 1:2500 map of 1907



A watercolour sketch of Belle Vale Hall c.1815

In the 20th century, Belle Vale Hall became the registered office of Belle Vale Orchards Ltd, the farm to the north being a fruit farm. The jam factory was, in the 1930s and 40s, operated by John Irwin Sons & Co Ltd, but it later became Blue Cap/Newforge Foods – the British home of Spam – and is now the site of Morrisons petrol station and supermarket.

Belle Vale Park was, sadly, described in 2001 as "a declining asset with no purposeful role to play in contributing to the quality of local life". However, landscape architects The Appleton Group were employed by Liverpool City Council to revitalise it. Their Masterplan included an "outdoor performance space", an all-weather crown bowling green, a "boulevard" and an "interactive water feature". Today, although few of the proposed features were ever implemented, the park is much better cared for than it was in the past, and the Friends of Belle Vale Park are keen to ensure that this improvement continues.

GRANGE LANE VERGES

The recent wet weather has led to a rapid deterioration in the condition of the new grass verges on the west side of Grange Lane. When the redevelopment of the former Gateacre Comp School site was first proposed, we were assured that the existing raised verge – an attractive feature of the area for so long – would be retained. In the event, the whole ground level was lowered – but new verges were created by Countryside Properties in between the house driveways.

Following early damage to the newly-turfed areas, plastic posts and chains were provided by Countryside to protect them. Most of these barriers have, however, now been removed (to simplify mowing of the grass), and several of the verges have degenerated into muddy, rutted eyesores. Some of the residents have taken the trouble to replace the posts outside their own houses, and we hope that this will eventually become the norm. Meanwhile, we understand that other measures are being considered by the Council, in consultation with the residents, and we hope to be able to report on these options in due course.

THE BROWN COW

We are pleased to note, from the latest list of planning applications received by the City Council, that an application has been made to refurbish the Brown Cow pub, without affecting its architectural character, and to bring the overgrown area at the rear back into use. The reference numbers are 20F/3258 (planning permission) and 20L/3311 (listed building consent).

The application states that the owners, Hawthorn Leisure – who are currently seeking a tenant – hope to "attract a broad range of new customers" to the pub, which will remain "wet led" (i.e. no substantial meals). A feature will be the "extensive garden", created following the demolition of the existing rear extension.

WILSON MEMORIAL

Our thanks go to Cllr Kris Brown and LCC's neighbourhood officer Noel Kelly, who took swift action when the ceiling of the Wilson Memorial collapsed in November. Many years' accumulation of pigeon droppings had caused the timber to rot, but this has now been remedied. In all, we are told, over 30 sacks of bird droppings were removed!

When the Memorial was erected in 1883 – paid for by "the people of Gateacre", as the sandstone inscription reminds us – it was designed to serve as a dovecote as well as a drinking fountain. The local pigeons seem to be well satisfied with their refurbished accommodation.