

# 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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## Executive Committee (2021-22)

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Sandra Sandland *Assistant Sales Officer*  
Paula Jones

## 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.

*New members joining the Society after 1 July are regarded  
as 'paid up' until 31 Oct the following year.*

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.*

## 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](mailto: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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Our next meeting:

## BRUSH UP YOUR SHAKESPEARE

**An illustrated talk  
by Coral Greenwood**

**on Monday 26th  
September, 7.30pm in  
Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow, Liverpool L25 3PB**

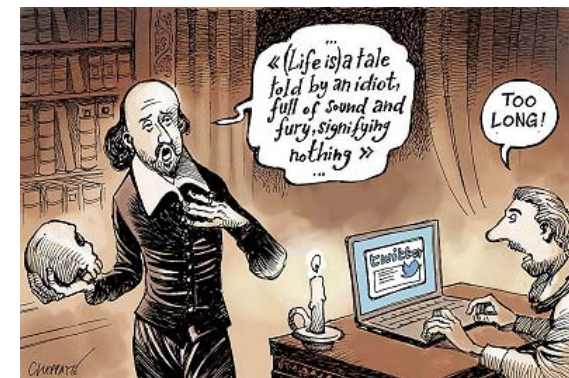
Prompted by the opening of the Shakespeare North Playhouse in Prescot, we invited Coral Greenwood – former Head of Drama at Birkenhead High School – to give us a light-hearted talk on the life and works of William Shakespeare. Coral was awarded the MBE 'for services to education', and her presentation comes highly recommended. Here's how she describes it:

“Shakespeare is one of my passions, and my talk aims to cover the gamut of his genius from his plots to his incredible use of language. It shows the influence he had on the way we speak today, including many idioms that no-one would know came from Shakespeare.

“If you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffered from green-eyed jealousy, if you have played fast and loose, if you have been tongue-tied, a tower of strength, hoodwinked or in a pickle, if you have knitted your brows, made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremony, laughed yourself into stitches, had short shrift, cold comfort or too much of a good thing, if you have seen better days or lived in a fool's paradise – why, be that as it may, the more fool you, for it is a foregone conclusion that you are (as good luck would have it) quoting Shakespeare.”

Coral's talk ends with a recitation of the prologue to *Pyramus and Thisbe* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – in costume!

**All are welcome to attend this event, which takes place at our  
usual venue – the Unitarian Chapel on Gateacre Brow**



## THE WILSON MEMORIAL – DOVECOTE OR NOT?

About two years ago – as reported in our January 2021 Newsletter – the ceiling of the Wilson Memorial Fountain collapsed under the weight of pigeon guano. Although it was speedily repaired, we do not feel that the solution is ideal, as the problem will inevitably reoccur. Furthermore the gutters are blocked with vegetation, and some of the stone roofing slates have slipped. All in all, the monument is looking shabbier now than it has done for several years.

The hexagonal sandstone gazebo was – as the carved inscription records – “erected by the people of Gateacre” in 1883 in honour of John Hays Wilson. He was a businessman – a brassfounder – who lived locally (at Lee Hall) and who was Chairman of the Liverpool Corporation Water Committee. His death in 1881 came as a shock to his neighbours. A public meeting was held to discuss how best to commemorate “the late Mr Wilson, who worked so long and so well for the purpose of obtaining an ample supply of good water for the inhabitants of this great city”.

Sir Andrew Barclay Walker, of Gateacre Grange, offered a piece of land on the corner of Grange Lane and Gateacre Brow, and the decision was to build a drinking fountain, for which water was to be supplied by the Corporation free of charge. In May 1881 it was reported that “upwards of £21 had been collected by the working classes in the district. The school children of the village ... are also contributing their pence to the memorial of Mr Wilson, who frequently entertained them at Lee Hall”.

Not everyone in Gateacre approved of the project. An anonymous correspondent in the Liverpool Mercury (21st August 1883) wrote as follows:

“At the time of Mr Wilson's death, sufficient money was subscribed for the erection of such a memorial as would be an ornament to the village and ever remind us of our late much respected neighbour. So far, the only outcome of the movement has been the destruction of the village green and the rearing of a half-completed hideous structure, which is uncommonly like a pigeon loft, and must be seen to be appreciated. The name of the architect is not, I think, generally known, but the subject has evidently been treated as a joke. The work has now been standing some months. By all that is good and beautiful, let the eyesore be carted away and hidden for ever out of sight, and the village green restored.”

Which raises an interesting question: Was the Memorial Fountain – which it is believed was the work of Walker's friend, the architect Cornelius Sherlock – also “designed to serve as a dovecote” as we have always reported? Old photographs indicate that it probably was, with what appear to be wooden rods projecting from the roof alongside at least two access points (one of which remains) for the use of pigeons. The possession of a dovecote was regarded as a status symbol in medieval times – ‘squabs’ (young pigeons) being a valued part of the diet of the aristocracy. Was this also the feeling in Victorian Gateacre?

Be that as it may, dovecotes need regular maintenance if they are to remain hygienic and rot-free. Times have changed, and pigeons have come to be regarded as pests rather than prized possessions. The Gateacre Society's Committee has concluded that the best course of action, now, would be for the roof-space of the Memorial to be sealed off, the roof repaired (using stone slates, in keeping with the originals) – and for the pigeons to find a new home.

**PLEASE LET US HAVE YOUR VIEWS!**



## SANDFIELD ROAD – FROM BAD TO WORSE

In March 2021 our Newsletter carried an item headed 'Sandfield Road Progress?' - the latest in a long line of similar articles and emails dating back to 2004 and beyond. It reported that the black-and-white Listed Building (28a-d Gateacre Brow) on the corner of Sandfield Road, was being hit by turning lorries, whose drivers failed to take account of the overhang. It also reported that meetings had taken place with Council officers, Travis Perkins managers and others to discuss possible solutions.

Travis Perkins have been extremely co-operative and helpful, implementing a 'lollipop' system whereby delivery vehicles are assisted by trained staff in making the turn and reversing along Sandfield Road. We have also, repeatedly, made a number of suggestions regarding the need for warning signs and realigned kerbs. Councillors and Highways officers assured us that they would come back with possible solutions – and Travis Perkins indicated that they'd be willing to contribute towards the cost.

Sadly, nothing at all seems to have happened since that time. There have been further collisions, and parts of the ornamental plasterwork on the first floor have started to fall away. One of the cast-iron bollards – placed on the corner many years ago at the suggestion of our Society – has recently been removed and its site cemented over. What is more, the owners of the offending vehicles have refused to accept liability for the damage to the building, despite the evidence of witnesses who took the registration numbers of the lorries involved.

**HOW MUCH LONGER DO WE HAVE TO WAIT  
FOR ACTION TO BE TAKEN?**



## NOTICE OF A.G.M.

The 47th Annual General Meeting of the Gateacre Society will be held in Gateacre Unitarian Chapel, L25 3PB at 2.30pm on **Sunday 23rd October 2022.**

We shall be providing the usual complimentary refreshments, to encourage members (and prospective members) to mingle and chat after the business part of the meeting.

We are not, however, planning a quiz or other entertainment this year. What we hope is that as many people as possible will attend, and air their views about Gateacre – 'the good, the bad and the ugly' – and what the Society should be doing about it.

Please come along, and show your support for our endeavours, if you are at all able. If you are willing to volunteer to take up a place on our Committee, so much the better.