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THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Registered with the Civic Trust for the North West

Chairman: Mr. T. Brakell, Linden Cottage
Halewood Road. 428 - 3105

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Grange Lane. 428 - 3671

EXHIBITION February 21st 1978

Gateacre Chapel Hall, Sandfield Road

Some brief notes on the history as we know it so far -

DRUID'S CROSS Listed Grade II (1966) being demolished.



Architectural Description - Designed in 1847 by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes (Architect of St. George's Hall). Massive Italianate villa, stucco with ashlar quoins, strong cornice with modillions. Five bay entrance front, the outer windows drawn together, central porch of heroic scale with blocked attached Tuscan columns, triglyph frieze and cornice, enclosing arched opening richly coffered with 4 Ionic columns, doorway with fanlight. 3 bay garden side, centre with 3 windows slightly recessed, canted bay on ground floor with Ionic aedicule windows.

History - Site formerly occupied by Woolton Lodge built c. 1817 by Thos. Cain, draper, sold to Wm. Winstanley M.D. in 1828, who sold it in 1847 to Jos. Hornby of Liverpool who demolished Woolton Lodge and built the present house & named it 'Druid's Cross' no doubt from the proximity of the Calder Stones.

Occupants - The 1851 census shows Jos. Hornby age 56 and his wife (who was born in Portugal) and 3 grown-up children living here with a staff of 11 servants. By 1874 Mrs. Hornby was widowed, and she and her eldest son Thos. Dyson Hornby J.P. were in residence. 1878 Druid's Cross was purchased by Alexander Hargreaves Brown M.P. After this Sir John Brunner Bart. b. 1842 (grandfather of Lady Worsley - mother of the Duchess of Kent) who established Alkali works at Northwich with Dr. Ludwig Mond in 1873 lived there, and it was the scene of many Liberal garden parties ... Druid's Cross was a military hospital during the war, and latterly St. Catherine's Catholic Orphanage. It has been empty many years.

BRETTARGH HOLT

Architectural Description - From the only two photographs we have of Holt Hall Farm we can see that the building destroyed in the 1900's was a modest but solid two bay stone house of early Georgian type, with ashlar semi-basement, quoins, window dressings, eaves, and gable copings, and coursed rubble walling. The upper windows were 16 pane sashes, the lower had high segmental arched heads made in two stones with a keystone and splayed impost. The arches were blind; the sash windows had 3 pane centres flanked by single pane sections.

History - Brettargh is the oldest of the 4 sites in these notes. The name from Old English Brettas "of the Britons" plus ergh (or argh) "a shieling, a hut on a pasture" seems to show that when Saxon Wulfa came to Woolton in, perhaps, the seventh century, there were Britons living here. The estate area on the 1848 Tithe Map gives an idea of the second "vill" which was at the time of Domesday still separate from Woolton. We know nothing of early buildings, but carved stones survive, one (broken lintel ?) bears a date 158- (1580- 85) which suggests a building then, and another with the arms of Brettargh impaling Bushell must date from the time of the marriage of James Brettargh (1626-65) to Deborah Bushell about 1649.

Occupants - In The Brettarghs of Brettargh Holt Stewart-Brown traces the pedigree from Roger the Walker (fuller) of Brettargh 1324 through some 15 generations to James Brettargh 1675-1747 who seems to have been forced by debts to leave the Holt some time before his death. "Though never a family of the front rank, the Brettarghs of Brettargh Holt were of prominence and position in Lancashire. For many hundreds of years members of the family acted as justices of the peace, and in other official positions, and became connected by marriage with numerous important Lancashire families". They were probably never rich but for many generations were buried under the chancel within Childwall church. About 1790 the estate passed into the hands of Dr. Thomas Rawson, who in 1835 had been living at Rosehill (also there in 1816 Sheriff's Map), and in 1816 was Mr. Barron's school. By 1851, 81 acres were being farmed by Edward Bather and family, tenants of Mr. Froes, and later farmers have included Mr. J.E. Scotson and Mr. Humphries. The estate was purchased c. 1935 by Childwall Golf Club and in due course the house was pulled down.

ABBOTS LEA

Architectural Description - (from D.O.E. List of Buildings 1975)

Large Victorian Gothic mansion, now part of a school. Red sandstone, 2 storeys, gables, attics, stone mullioned and transomed windows, rectangular and canted bay windows, stone eaves, cornice and modillions. Steeply gabled porch with Tudor-arched doorway and Gothic glazed outer porch.
Listed Grade II.

History - The site of the house was enclosed from Little Woolton common in 1805-13, allotted to the Okills of Lee and in 1848 was tenanted by Joseph Webster. Stewart-Brown records that Ambrose Lace had laid out Beaconsfield Road and by a conveyance dated 14 Jan. 1862 John Bushby bought the land, subject to a restrictive covenant prohibiting building within 10 yards of the carriage drive. Presumably he built the house.

Occupants - In 1874 John Bushby, Gent. of John Henry Bushby, shipowners (office 79 Tower Building) are recorded in Gore's Directory at Abbots Lee. We know nothing of the owners from this time until c. 1920 when Sir Benjamin Johnson b.1865 went to live there from Blundell Sands. Sir Benjamin was a native of Kirkdale and educated at The Liverpool Institute. At the age of 16 he entered his father's business - dye works and chemical cleaning. The business had been carried on for 300 years in York, Leeds and Liverpool and gave employment to between 500 and 1000 people. His great uncle Mr. Thomas Sands was Mayor of Liverpool in 1843. At the age of 28 Sir Benjamin became Mayor of Bootle, he was a Liberal and leader of his party in 1910. He stood for Parliament in Kirkdale but lost to Baden-Powell. He was knighted in 1910 and in 1917 was appointed Director-General of the Royal Army Clothing Department. In 1923 he was appointed High Sheriff of Lancaster and he was also a Deputy Lieutenant of the County. He was a Wesleyan Methodist and in 1909 married a daughter of the Rev. James Hutcheson - they had no children of their own but adopted a little girl. The property was requisitioned by the War Department in the second World War and in 1948 was bought by the Corporation of Liverpool from the then owners - Abbots Lea Limited, Reg. office 6 Bentley Road, and it has since been in use as a school.

LEE HALL

Architectural Description - Lee Hall was built in 1773. Although this was the time when the influence of the Adam brothers was strong (next year Robert Adam was designing Woolton Hall) here there is no sign of a change of fashion and Lee Hall was a rare specimen of an unaltered brick house of the Battye Langley period. Double flight of steps to stone terrace extending the full length of the front giving access to the front door at first floor level. There were two more storeys above this (4 in all), a central pediment, modillion cornice and parapet. On return wall at either end of the 5 window front were semi-octagonal bow windows running the full height of the house. Demolished in 1956.

History - Lee Park represents a "vill" or homestead mentioned in Domesday as Wibald's Lee, an area which was not then part of Little Woolton. We know nothing of earlier buildings but in Stewart-Brown's 'Notes on Childwall' a Thomas Orme of Lee is mentioned in 1609. The building of Lee Hall is attributed to the family of Okill.

Occupants - In the 'History of Allerton', John Okill a Liverpool Merchant is the first mentioned owner of Lee Hall, he was succeeded by his nephew James Okill who left the property to his son John Okill b. 1786 d. 1851 intestate. John Okill's heir was his cousin Thomas Dutton, and in Gore's Directory for 1874 William Dutton, Wine Merchant appears at Lee Hall. Then came John Hays Wilson b. 1825 of Bathgate & Wilson, engineers and brassfounders. A Liberal, he became the Chairman of the Water Committee in 1875 and was instrumental in bringing water to the City from Lake Vynwy at a time of desperate shortage. He caught a cold at Tarbock Races (held in the grounds of Lee Hall), Dr. Wood of Woolton attended him and called in Dr. Waters of Liverpool to no avail and he died in 1881. He left a widow and 1 son farming in Australia. The sandstone fountain on the Green was erected to his memory by the people of Gateacre. From 1890 Dr. Richard Caton M.D., F.R.C.P. b. 1842 d. 1926 lived at the Hall until 1903. He was associated with the University from its inception, Professor of Physiology and in 1922 was Pro-Chancellor. He was Lord Mayor of Liverpool in 1907/8.