

412.7211 GAT

EVESHAMPTON  
CITY LIBRARIES  
23 MAR 197



THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Registered with the Civic Trust  
for the North West

Chairman: Mr. T. Brakell, Linden Cottage  
Halewood Road. 428 - 3105  
Hon. Sec: Mrs. S. Lewis, Grange Lodge  
Grange Lane. 428 - 3671

SPRING NEWSLETTER - 1979.

Next Meeting -

DETECTION IN LOCAL HISTORY

or WHO DUNNIT ?

A lecture with slides on two screens

by

MISS JANET GNOSSPELIUS B.ARCH., A.R.I.B.A.

on

Wednesday, March 28th at

Gateacre Chapel Hall, Sandfield Road. 8.00 p.m.

Who was responsible for the buildings we see around us? Some of our local history can be reconstructed with the help of written records, though the clues are often slender. But much has never been written down at all and we have to use other means to unravel the story. In this welcome return to Gateacre Miss Gnosspelius presents an interim report on work in progress in the Gateacre Society's Area.

DEAR OLD DIRTY LIVERPOOL - Those members (about 25) who attended joint meeting with The Woolton Society on January 15th to hear Dr. Quentin Hughes's lecture, found St. Peter's Old School full to capacity, with late comers overflowing on to kindergarten chairs. The enthusiasm was well founded, Dr. Hughes gave a commentary on various aspects of our building heritage calculated to awaken the interest of all inhabitants of the City. His lively verbal descriptions were illustrated by a succession of well chosen slides shown simultaneously by two projectors.

Dr. Hughes concentrated on those remnants we have of the period during which Liverpool was at its peak as a transatlantic seaport when the vigour of the 19th century entrepreneur was apparent in so many ways, experiment and innovation were the keynotes of the time, it was interesting to be reminded that two of the City's most important buildings - St. George's Hall and the Anglican Cathedral were designed by Architects in their early 20s.

It was emphasised that building and civil engineering were carried out with particular attention to symbolic importance, the great example of this was provided by Jesse Hartley in his design for the dock system. He considered it necessary to make strength apparent, and we saw slides of his robust, but superbly precise details in granite ranging from the sea wall to the Victoria clock tower and gatehouses.

Many structural precedents were established in Liverpool, and Dr. Hughes noted that the first recorded use of cast iron in England for the supporting columns of a church balcony was St. Anne's Church built 1770, and subsequently this material was widely used in many experimental ways, notably for office buildings such as Oriel Chambers. Also illustrated were the range of prefabricated cast-iron churches which were exported as far afield as America and Australia - 'Churches by return of post'. The Royal Liver Building too was an important first - other reinforced concrete frame building of that size had been attempted before.

It was interesting to hear that political and labour problems had their effect then as today, for although Hartley's design for an enclosed dock system would have given Liverpool another vested interests in existing warehouses held us up until after London had accepted the idea. Even a possible answer to the housing problem was affected, a speedy system of erecting

dwellings using precast concrete panels - Eldon Street flats by J.A. Brodie - ran into difficulties when arguments arose over who should apply the cement grout to the joints between the panels. The postscript was that such housing was adopted widely elsewhere, especially in Eastern Europe - with no royalties for the Liverpool inventor.

Dr. Hughes showed many fascinating slides of the lavish decoration and ornamentation of the day, ranging from the interior of St. George's Hall to the superb pubs such as the Vines and the Philharmonic which are still part of Liverpool today - even though some details are inaccessible to half the population. We were reminded that in the latter half of the C19 Liverpool had closer links with New York than with London; thus a traveller could move from a Liverpool pub - to the bar on a transatlantic liner - to a New York bar without noticing much difference in the style of the surroundings.

Many more interesting and often amusing points were covered, and I think many of us left with the feeling that we should take another look round, bearing in mind Dr. Hughes's encounter with the visiting Italian Professor who, gazing at the impressive range of classical buildings in William Brown Street, asked where we got that beautiful black stone - of such stuff was dear dirty Liverpool made.

However, we were certainly not left with any feeling of complacency as we were reminded of the frequent neglect of our unique legacy. The members who were at the recent talk on the Liverpool Museum may have been reminded of the fate of the Albert Dock as an example - while discussion continues about its possible use as a Maritime Museum the buildings decay and the Museum's splendid collection lies in store. We are grateful to Dr. Hughes, not only for entertaining us but for leaving us with much food for thought.

P. Beecham.

THE RESTORATION OF ANTIQUE FURNITURE - Mr. Ken Hughes, in his talk of 21st February, gave us a wealth of fascinating information - for two hours we were glued to our chairs and afterwards nobody wanted to go home, but crowded round him asking even more questions. Mr. Hughes obviously loves his work and passed that joy on to us.

He began by explaining that a Restorer needs at least fi o

years experience in cabinet making, together with a grounding of history; without that the remains of a Queen Anne piece could be restored with Chippendale mouldings. In the past such mistakes have been made. He added that experts will accept a 25% restoration as antique, but this practice can be abused.

As Mr. Hughes continued we gained an insight into the social history of the past few hundred years, how the lesser gentry living in the country would obtain the services of a local craftsman to copy a genuine Chippendale chair perhaps, but it would be made in local wood rather than the strong mahogany, and therefore could not be so delicate, and by that time the city gentry would have finished with that style anyway.

Veneers too - up to 1875 all veneers had to be cut by two men with handsaws - by eye  $\frac{1}{8}$ " deep, then the Victorians developed machinery with steam power and circular saws and on to even more modern methods. By cutting the wood in different ways and at different angles a variety of effects can be obtained. Often great charm can be added, but unfortunately the furniture underneath is sometimes poor. Veneers were first used about 1700 and mahogany was imported as early as 1740, before that it was taxed at £8 per ton so was not very popular. However, much walnut was imported from France, but the 1720 winter there was very hard and the French placed an embargo on it; George I had to reduce the tax on mahogany to a few shillings, then later we colonised the islands where it grew.

During the latter half of the C18 there was a craze for Chinese styles and everything had to look like bamboo, even beech! Mr. Hughes produced a chair of beech which had had to be mounted in a lathe to turn the cuts out (to imitate bamboo), but as the leg was curved this must have meant centering the wood several times over - one cannot imagine such a thing these days.

#### Hints:

French polishing of about 100 years old is antique in itself, but often on a piece much older. If the polish is crazed it means that it was placed on top of other polish which was not completely cleared of grease.

Wood marked by water etc., it is necessary to know how deep the damage has gone. If only into the polish it can sometimes be corrected, but otherwise it will need stripping. Mr. Hughes strongly advised expert attention.

5.  
Mahogany never suffers from woodworm, except sometimes in the soft outer sapwood. Therefore if a piece has been attacked by worm it will be of some other wood - the Victorians were masters of disguise ! Especially where rosewood was concerned.

Never replace original upholstery, brass handles, lead linings in tea caddies, inner silk lining of cupboards etc., or the value of the piece will be considerably reduced.  
D. Roberts.

JUMBLE SALE. - A last reminder that this will be on Saturday, 17th March at 2.30 p.m. We hope the recent spell of sunny weather has started members Spring Cleaning and that jumble of all sorts will be pouring in this week - response so far has been slow. This is our biggest fund-raising event of the year, and we do very much need your help in giving us things you no longer have any use for and/or selling them on the day. If you would like your offerings collected we can arrange for this - ring 428-3671 or 3963 or 6986, otherwise take it to the Chapel Hall - Mr. Shepherd, Browside Cottage, Sandfield Road or to Mrs. Lewis, Grange Lodge, Grange Lane.

LOCAL INQUIRY - The public local inquiry regarding the appeal by Mr. M. Georgiou of 173, Grange Lane to have his opening hours extended to 11.45 p.m. on weekdays and to be allowed to open on Sundays until 11.00 p.m. was heard in the Municipal Annexe on the 6th February. The hearing lasted all day and ended with a site inspection at about 5 p.m.

Very briefly the proceedings went as follows - Mr. Leslie Black (Mr. Georgiou's solicitor) outlined his case first and called Mr. David Atherton F.R.I.C.S. as an 'expert witness'. Mr. Georgiou, who said his English was not very good, then had his submission read for him by Mr. Black. They were cross examined by Mr. Polychronakis from the City Solicitor's Department who was acting for the City Council. Mrs. Underwood of 171, Grange Lane, and a member of the Society, spoke next and then Mr. T. Brakell (Chairman).

After a break for lunch, Mr. Polychronakis called on Mr. G. Higson from the City Planning Department who put the case for the Council who were asking for the closing hour to be confirmed at 11.00 p.m. with no Sunday opening. Mrs. S. Lewis (Hon. Secretary) then read the submission from The Gateacre

Society followed by Mr. S. Davenport, Miss A. Lythgoe and Mr. L. Shepherd who all spoke in support of the Society.

The Inspector, after asking a few questions of his own, then closed the Inquiry, paid a hurried visit to the site and then went back to London to write his report. In due course we will be notified of his decision, but this may take several months.

We would like to thank all members who attended the Inquiry or who wrote letters supporting the Society and, if anyone is interested in further reading, we have the opposing submissions on our file.

3 TON WEIGHT LIMIT - Members will have noticed the new signs, erected in mid. February, at both ends of Belle Vale Road and King's Drive prohibiting vehicles of 3 tons or over from using those roads except for loading and un-loading. As this measure is something the Society has been working on since 1975, and is the first on Merseyside for environmental reasons, we felt inclined to put the flags out, but before we could do so a number of complaints were received. Some members feel that two of these signs have been wrongly sited and that they should be at the top of Gateacre Brow instead of by the traffic lights in the centre of the village, they say that heavy traffic is still coming down the Brow, causing pollution and vibration damage to our listed buildings - which the ban was supposed to protect, then finding the way barred down Belle Vale Road turning either right along Halewood Road or left along Grange Lane, roads already dangerous due to the amount of traffic carried and each containing a school. We have written to the County Engineer thanking him for implementing this measure but suggesting that a warning notice at the top of the Brow, indicating that there is no through road for heavy vehicles might solve the problem. We think the answer may be that it is early days yet, and that when regular users of this short cut to the Motor Way find their way barred they will cease to come down Gateacre Brow.

We ask members to keep a look out when they are in the village and let us know what is happening.

PUBLIC FOOTPATH - Early in February the public footpath between Grange Lane and Cuckoo Lane - first shown on the 1848 Tithe Map, was closed in connection with the development of the site at Rockfield' in Cuckoo Lane. Residents

7.  
who use this footpath - and there are many, have asked us for help in getting it opened again as soon as possible. We wrote to the City Engineer asking if he was aware of the closure and if the correct procedure for closing a public right of way had been observed. We received his reply this morning, saying that the path had been closed illegally and that he was requesting the City Solicitor to take appropriate action against the person responsible, under Section 121 of the Highways Act 1959.

On the 26th February a new enterprise started in Gateacre - The Smithy Tuck Shop. Mr. and Mrs. V.E. Coates, members of the Society who live in Smithy Cottage, have converted the Cobblers shop on the corner of Rose Brow and Cuckoo Lane into a Sweets and Grocery shop. This building, designed by Cornelius Sherlock in 1870 as a 'shoeing shed' for Sir Andrew Barclay Walker of Gateacre Grange has the wide doors and louvred ventilators related to this original use. There are still iron rings in the wall inside to which horses were tied while shoeing was carried out - we were able to take a photograph of these before the alterations were completed.

We are glad to see one of our 'listed' buildings being cared for and finding a new use. We are also happy to say "Welcome back" to Miss Claire Crinnon - a friend to many Gateacre people for so long at the old Post Office. Good luck to the venture.

CHRISTMAS CARDS - These were very popular and were all sold before Christmas, with inquiries for more still coming in. The Chairman, Mr. Tim Brakell, who did the original drawing of the South side of Gateacre Brow with the Prudential building in the foreground, has very kindly given it to the Society. We are having it framed and then it will be offered for sale - the proceeds to go into the Society funds. It should be ready within a week or two - enquiries to the Secretary please.

MEMBERSHIP - The number of new members is encouraging, we are gaining ground all the time. But the more members we have the more effective we can be, so if you know of anyone who might be interested - a neighbour perhaps, let our Membership Secretary know and she will provide an application form, Mrs. Sheila Bee, 'Velova', Grange Lane, Tel: 428 - 5497. If anyone would like an extra Newsletter to pass on please contact the Secretary.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS - These are now sent to us each week by the Planning Department.

- 7 Lower Sandfield - to erect kitchen and bathroom extension and front porch. This appears to be a good rehabilitation of a cottage in the Conservation Area.
- Lower Sandfield - to erect single storey extension to the existing factory. We think this will be quite acceptable, the area in front is to be landscaped and trees planted.
- Corbishley's Garage - to demolish existing building and erect new office, stores and toilet buildings. A great improvement.
- Chez Philippe - (listed). to convert existing vacant stable block to wine bar and restaurant.

BIRTH: We congratulate Mr. and Mrs. M. Beecham of Chartmount on the birth of a daughter - Lisa. 30 January 1979.

#### APRIL MEETING -

On the 25th of next month we are hoping to have Mr. Peter Shields of Gateacre Nursery to talk to us. Mr. Shields, who has had many years experience in this type of work, has agreed to give a short talk and then to spend the rest of the time available in answering members' questions. So come prepared with paper and pencil and your questions.

#### MAY MEETING -

This year the Gateacre Village Conservation Area is ten years old and to celebrate this important anniversary we have asked John Harrison - Conservation Officer for Liverpool to talk about his work. The new Conservation Area Leaflets (about which we were consulted) should be out by then and we are also hoping to arrange an exhibition - maybe in Harriet Steel's shop after she has vacated the premises.

S.M.L.