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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  
Hon. Sec: Mrs. S.M. Lewis, Grange Lodge  
Grange Lane 428 - 3671

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AUTUMN NEWSLETTER - 1980

Next meeting -

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 6th Annual General Meeting of the Gateacre Society will  
be held on

TUESDAY, 28th October 1980

at 8 p.m. in

The Gateacre Institute, Grange Lane

We hope as many members as possible will come to this important event in the Society's year. It is the opportunity for you to express your views on what we have been doing and suggest ways in which the Society can become more effective and useful.

We need fresh ideas on how we can become more efficient in carrying out the aims of the Society and are on the look out for new recruits to the Committee - members who are willing to give some of their time and thoughts to the important and rewarding work done by the Society

Nomination forms can be obtained from the Secretary or at the meeting.

VISIT TO SPEKE HALL - On Saturday morning 28th June, a

dozen members met Mrs. Carol Thickers, Architect in charge at Speke Hall, and went round with her to see work that is being done in the second phase of the repair programme. On the south side we saw the repaired timber frame, newer chimney stack and roof of the Great Hall, preserving the appearance it has had for 400 years and more, but now sound and solid and good for another 400 years, especially if the known problem features of the design get proper maintenance.

Left of that is the Great Parlour, dated by the Liverpool History Teaching Unit as 1524, added for Sir Wm. Norris (1501-1568, he had 19 children) and this is now being repaired. We do not talk of "Jerry building" in a Grade I Listed Bldg. like Speke Hall, but Mrs. Thickers showed us how, when the timber frame of this two-storey block was exposed it became clear that the placing of the verticle timber posts bore little relation to the positions of roof trusses above. This constructional work, not nearly of the high standard of the older Great Hall, gave the structural engineers and architects sleepless nights and explained the signs of imminent failure that made the present repairs so urgently necessary.

All roofs at Speke Hall are covered with heavy stone flags, so the supporting roof trusses have considerable loads to bear, and their feet rest on horizontal timbers which, in turn are carried by timber posts. Properly there ought to be extra-large posts under those horizontals immediately under the roof truss feet to take the weight directly to the foundations, but in the Great Parlour this is not so and the horizontals, weakened by roof leaking incidents (rot and death watch beetle) were bending under the strain, the tops of what posts there were also tended to rot, and their bottom ends were weakened by rising damp. Now, under temporary cover, the flags have been stripped, the lightened trusses have been jacked up to their original levels, new oak posts have been introduced where they ought to be - under the truss feet, rotted timber cut away & replaced with new, carefully fitted, spliced and glued to the old. We are grateful that oaks still grow in England, and that there are architects, engineers and carpenters with the skill and devotion to carry out work of this kind so excellently.

J.B.G.

GATEACRE WALK III -

The 3rd Gateacre Walk on 30.8.80, again with the expert and entertaining leaders - Miss Gnosspelius and Mr. Dewsnap, started with a gem of Gateacre's architecture - the non-conformist Chapel 1700.

After a warm welcome by the Rev. Daphne Roberts we were given the interesting background story of the Chapel. It was evident that much research had been done by our guides to enable them to present this story, which not only illustrated the structural features but set the Chapel in its historical context. Our tour of the building ended with an inspection of one of the latest contributions to the maintenance of Gateacre's inheritance - the stone boundary wall, rebuilt in 1979, where it was a pleasure to be able to admire a recent example of good stone masonry and pointing.

We then moved up Gateacre Brow to the sandstone villas Nos.6 & 8. Here we followed the detective work of dating various elements which makes looking at old buildings so interesting. Among other things pointed out were the distinctive  $\frac{1}{2}$  timbered bay windows with 'Ipswich' features, popularised by Norman Shaw in the 1880s. Then to No.4 'Browside', now in course of restoration, whose history we enjoyed, followed by No.2. where the 'new' front door has been carefully copied from the old.

On to Aymestrey Court, built by Henry Tate, sugar refiner, for his daughter 1880/81 to an undistinguished but unmistakably Victorian design. Our attention was drawn to the more refined and sensitive extension of 1891, a product of the 'Domestic Vernacular Revival'. We looked at the added billiard room, while enjoying anecdotes about Queen Victoria's dislike of smoking, then to the lodge and coach-house, a charming little building again showing the Victorian taste for drawing together design ideas from far and wide.

Then a change in scale as we came to the cottages of the Sandfield, where we were looking at local clamp-burnt bricks and the effect of sewerage improvements in producing 'Bye-

law' houses with back alleys under which drains run. We looked at Nos. 28, 29 & 30 and heard the story of their building and inhabitants from 1853. The Electric Generating Station built in 1898 is a surprisingly interesting building which our guides were able to bring to life even though the majority probably pass it by without a second glance.

The tour included all the cottages in the Sandfield, the gable end of the Dale Mews Stable block, Lower Sandfield and the site of the 'sandpit' whence it is likely material for the stucco work on many of the large houses in the vicinity came. Rehabilitation of Lower Sandfield cottages is well underway, the re-used bricks in the bathroom extensions were admired, but sadly the glazing bars in the new windows have gone wrong.

At this stage the party (of 24) was ready to retire to the School Hall (1897) for tea (by Mrs. Wardell and Mrs. Shepherd) and the mini Exhibition, having thoroughly enjoyed the walk.

NOTE: Anyone unable to take part can enjoy the excellent booklet on the history and the buildings visited - available from the Secretary or Mr. Shepherd at Browside Cottage - 25p.

P.B.

NEWSLETTERS - We use up a lot of space reporting on past meetings so that members, who support what the Society is doing but are unable to come and hear our lectures, are kept up to date with our programme. But it has been suggested that maybe it would make for more interest if members were to contribute items/ideas/letters. Please tell us what you think, contributions, which would be very welcome, should be sent to the Secretary.

'NETHERLEY' & 'WOOLTON' SIGNS - On the 2nd July a deputation from the Society attended a meeting of the Highways and Environment Committee, to whom our petition went, and the Secretary was allowed to read our submission. A debate followed, ably contributed to by Councillor McVeigh, and the upshot was that the Chairman - David Croft asked the City Engineer to report "... upon the points raised by the petitioners, and upon the general question of signposting throughout the City". This report will (we hope) be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on Sept. 17th 10.00 am. in the Municipal Annexe. Come and hear what happens, read the

Society notice board or we will tell you all the news at the A.G.M.

PRUDENTIAL BUILDING - One of our members noticed the flowers growing in the gutters of this 'Listed' building (1889 Architect W. Aubrey Thomas - Royal Liver Bldg.) We spoke to the Manager - Mr. Austin, also asking if the garden at the rear could be tidied up. We were assured that the work would be put in hand before the winter.

'THE GOOD LOOKING HOUSE' - We have a copy of this recent, very good, well illustrated book by Beverley Pyke which explains how important and financially rewarding it is to care for historic buildings, even the modest ones, in the correct way, not wasting money on 'fashionable' frivolities - see Merseymart 10th Sept. page 12! He explains about windows, doors etc and how necessary it is that they should be kept in character with the original house, and not 'improved' with pseudo Georgian features which are quite out of keeping. The book may be borrowed from Miss Lythgoe, 168 Gateacre Park Drive, 428 - 3963.

LORD MAYOR'S VISIT TO GATEACRE - On the 7th October the Lord Mayor of Liverpool will be coming to Woolton and then on to Gateacre to see the work of the Gateacre Society, look at our 'Listed' buildings and hear about our problems. The visit has been arranged by Mrs. Scarland of the Civic Trust for the North West, as part of a programme of visits designed to introduce him to all the local amenity societies in Liverpool.

We shall be telling him how in 1972 the City Planning Officer wrote to a number of people in the vantage, knowing of their interest in conservation and the environment and asking them to form an amenity society - so in 1974 The Gateacre Society was born. We will be telling him how we are informed of all planning applications in the Society's area and asked to make representations about these after consideration by our Technical Services Sub-committee, explaining that we have no power over these applications (that is the function of the City Council), but that very much as a

Constitutional Monarch we can ".be consulted, encourage and warn " about the implications of proposals that, from our local experience and knowledge, seem to us to be issues that should be considered before decisions are made.

UNTIDY SITE AT YORK COTTAGES - We have been in touch with Merseyside Improved Houses about this overgrown plot of land fronting onto Grange Lane, and understand that they are ready to purchase it when they can come to some agreement with the owner of part of it who is not being very co-operative. They say that they would have no objection to residents clearing away the rubbish and generally tidying the place up as a temporary measure. Maybe this is something that members of the Society could help with? At present we are making enquiries as to whether it would be possible to obtain the loan of a skip and have it emptied, free of charge from the local authority.

FROM THE PLANNING OFFICE -

- 121 Belle Vale Road to use premises as a fish and chip shop.
- Gateacre Hall Hotel (Listed) erect entrance vestibules to hall and lounge.
- 47 Belle Vale Road to use dwelling for child minding.

PHOTO COPY SERVICE - The Valley Line Community Opportunities Group at 2a Halewood Rd. now have a copier capable of producing facsimilies up to 14" x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". They are offering this service at 5p. per copy, Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

WOOLTON SOCIETY A.G.M. - This will be held in St. Peter's School Hall, Church Road, Woolton on Mon. 27th Oct. 8.00 p.m.

GATEACRE SOCIETY - Next meeting 25th November when Jim Grisenthwaite will give an illustrated talk on old deeds relating to Little Woolton - should be fascinating.

19.9.80. S.M.L.