

THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Registered with the Civic Trust for the North West

Hon. Secretary's Report for the year 1979/80. 6th A.G.M. 28.10.80.



During the year 7 meetings have been held in Gateacre Chapel Hall -

- 3rd Dec. Mrs. Carol Thickens talked about her work as Architect-in-charge of the restoration of Speke Hall.
- 21st Jan. Mr. Lionel Shepherd showed his most interesting slides taken while on holiday in Northumbria.
- 18th Feb. A lecture on the construction of black and white timber frame buildings in Gateacre and elsewhere by Mr. John Dewsnap.
- 19th Mar. Mr. J. Hayes from the Public Relations Dept. of British Rail showed a film and told us about the coming celebrations to be held at Rainhill.
- 22nd Apl. Nigel Carson, a most enthusiastic young man, talked about Croxteth Country Park.
- 20th May Mr. Stephen Eades talked, without slides, about the pollution in Liverpool Bay and especially Southport.

On the 31st May the Annual Jumble Sale was held in the Chapel Hall, with far fewer helpers than we had hoped for, but with the result that our funds were increased by £113.31

Saturday morning, 28th June, saw a small party of members enjoying the privilege of being shown round Speke Hall by Mrs. Thickens, and seeing the parts under rehabilitation to which the public are not admitted.

On the 30th August we had the 3rd Gateacre Walk conducted by Miss Gnosspellius and Mr. Dewsnap, who together, as always, provided a most entertaining afternoon. A very mini exhibition of maps, extracts from deeds and photographs of former residents was mounted in the Chapel Hall.

Through the year some of our local problems have been -

Gateacre Riding School, listed Grade II - Architect, Richard T. Beckett built in 1895. This was an application for conversion to a mews-type development which we did not oppose, but made suggestions which we felt would result in the scheme being less visually damaging and more acceptable to its neighbours.

Halewood House, an unlisted Victorian house in Halewood Road whose owner sought to demolish. We thought it worth saving and said so, but sadly planning permission was given for its removal.

We have been much concerned about new, unsuitable doors and windows in several 'listed' houses in the area. Their owners had been offered Heritage Bureau grants towards the cost of this work, and we and the Planning Dept. tried to ensure that the replacements were in character with the buildings. However, through a lack of comprehension or a lack of co-operation the work has been unsatisfactory and grants have been with-held. On the subject of replacement doors, I would draw your attention to No. 2 Gateacre Brow where the owner has gone to a lot of trouble to get it right and had his vandalised front door copied most successfully.

H.G.Vs passing through the village - since having warning notices of the 3-ton weight limit placed at the top of Gateacre Brow we have continued our discussions with the City Engineer's Dept. and we think this nuisance is better - if not completely cured.

We still feel that the signs on the ring road - carrying a picture of a commercial vehicle, directing heavy traffic away from our area are wrong to say 'Netherley' rather than M57 & M62 or even Belle Vale (to direct them to the shopping centre), but the City Engineer remains convinced that there is a large industrial estate at Netherley to which all these vehicles are going.

We have persuaded the County Engineer that what few Motorway signs exist should be on a blue background as elsewhere in the Country, and these will be altered in due course.

As always we have kept a vigilant eye on the trees in Gateacre, reporting those which appeared to be a danger to people or property, and looking after those covered by Tree Preservation Orders. On the 13th February the owners of the 'Rockfield' site in Cuckoo Lane were taken to Court by the City Planning Officer and fined £500 by the Stipendiary Magistrate for felling trees covered by one of these orders. The resultant publicity in the National Press brought a plea for help from an elderly couple in Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham with a tree problem and we were able to pass on information and advice.

We have tried to get something done about the state of the unused land in Grange Lane between York Cottages and the Institute. We took this up with Merseyside Improved Houses who own most of it, apart from a small piece whose owner lives in the I.O.M. and is difficult to contact. We are still working on this and hope for results shortly.

We have been in touch with the Estate Dept. of the Prudential Ass. Co., about their building on Gateacre Brow - Architect, W. Aubrey Thomas (also Royal Liver Bldg.) and they have promised repairs as soon as possible. But we seem to make little headway with Tetley Walkers who, while looking after their licenced premises, appear to have little understanding of the quality of maintenance required by their other listed buildings on the Brow.

On the 21st March a sign saying 'Netherley' was erected by the City Engineer in Belle Vale Road E. of the railway bridge, this - with the 'Woolton' sign W. of the bridge - not only cut Gateacre in half, but denied its existence. The Society worked hard to get these signs removed, writing letters, enlisting the support of our local Councillors, getting publicity (unfortunately not always of the right sort) and obtaining over 2,200 signatures on a petition, which was presented to the Lord Mayor at the Town Hall on the 23 May. It was then passed to the Highways & Environment Committee which met on the 2nd July when we were allowed to address the meeting. The City Engineer was then asked for a report and on the next occasion the Committee met - the 17th Sept. it was agreed that the signs should be removed.

We would like to see 'GATEACRE' location signs erected, but this request was refused owing to constraints on public spending. The Society is investigating the possibility of our making a contribution towards the

cost of these signs - from the Society's funds and a collection in the village perhaps ? - which might make this possible.

Apart from these particular problems we have inspected the Planning Register regularly and made recommendations where we thought appropriate to the City Planning Officer.

On the 21st April Queen Victoria came back to Gateacre, looking splendid after her restoration by the Museum. The missing figure '7' from the date of her Golden Jubilee 1887 has now been replaced too.

The Lord Mayor visited the Woolton and Gateacre Societies on 7th Oct. at the start of a tour of Liverpool's Amenity Societies organised by Mrs. Scarland of the Civic Trust for the North West. I was not able to be present but understand that the visit was most successful. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman and members of the committee met him in the Octagon Room at Woolton Hall where we had arranged an exhibition, and later we were able to show him round Gateacre, telling him about our problems and achievements.

Other matters, outside the Society's Area, we have worked on include - Salvage of expensive and often irreplaceable building materials necessitated by demolition or improvement schemes in the City - not destruction as so often happens. We are happy to report that, at last there seems to be a growing awareness of the problem - both by our Councillors and Heritage Bureau.

Following a report by the City Planning Officer on the neglected state of some of Liverpool's 'listed' buildings, the Planning & Land and Finance Committees are considering setting up a Liverpool Buildings Fund. The City receives £200,000 from Central Government each year towards restoration work in the 11 'outstanding' Conservation Areas, and it is suggested that a similar sum be made available by Local Government towards the restoration of historic buildings outside these areas. We are lobbying our Councillors and asking for their support.

We have supported the Merseyside Civic Society, and other conservation groups in their efforts to save 1 Upper Parliament St. This very fine 'listed' Georgian house became in 1828 the South Dispensary and here the first anaesthetic in Liverpool was administered in 1847. The County want to demolish it for the Inner Ring Road which the City is opposing. Meanwhile the house still stands and we are still working on it.

We have also objected to filling in the Albert Dock, designed by Jesse Hartley, opened in 1845 and now part of an 'outstanding' Conservation Area. A Public Inquiry is to be held in January.

The Local History Unit has been busy throughout the year working on research which will lead eventually to the publication of the History of Little Woolton.

This work has taken us to Bodenham, near Hereford and Brinderwen near Oswestry visiting people whose families were resident in Gateacre over 100 years ago - and a great deal of useful material was collected.

We have been visited, twice, by Mr. Hamilton-Fletcher from Richmond whose family connections with Gateacre go back to before 1682, and we are corresponding with Mr. Rodick of Salcombe whose gt. grandfather lived at 4 Gateacre Brow from c1814 and who called it Kendal Cottage.

During the preparation for Gateacre Walk III much was learned about the area of Gateacre which lies in Much Woolton - bounded by Halewood Road and Gateacre Brow. Copies of the notes for this walk are on sale at 25p.

We recently received a letter asking for information about the work of Sir Ernest George, the eminent Victorian architect, for Sir Andrew Barclay Walker at Gateacre Grange. We did not know that Sir Ernest had been working here but we are checking and look forward to adding this distinguished architect's name to our list of thirteen known architects in Little Woolton.

A week ago we received from the British Library a photocopy of a Rental dated 1549. This is from the collection of Norris Deeds held by them and contains a list of names of tenants and their holdings in Little Woolton which belonged to King Edward VI. These, when transcribed, should add much to our knowledge. If any of our members can help with reading 16th Century writing we would be delighted.

We have been fortunate in getting to know Mr. James Carter of Tarbock who recently wrote a history of that Township. He has shown great interest in the Society as his family used to live in Sandfield Road; and he has presented us with two of his own drawings - one of the Halfway House in Belle Vale Road and the other of Netherlee Farm - both unfortunately now demolished.

Other Societies - We keep in touch with other local amenity societies, and helped with the formation of the St. Michael's Hamlet Society which was inaugurated on the 29th October last year when Miss Gnospelius and I were present.

We receive regular Newsletters from the Wavertree Society and the West Derby Society and an Annual Report from the Merseyside Civic Society to whom we are affiliated.

During the year the Committee has met on 8 occasions, 4 newsletters, notices of meetings, a mini-history of Gateacre Institute, a booklet on Gateacre Walk III and Christmas Cards \$ have all been produced.

Membership is increasing slowly and now stands at 228 and subscriptions are due from to-day. This remains the same amount as it has been since the Society was formed, but we are asking members who live outside the hand delivery area to contribute £1 extra for Newsletters and Notices or 50p. for Newsletters only to help with the cost of postage.

It has, I think, been a busy and useful year and I would like to record the thanks of the Committee and their gratitude to all those members who have helped in many different ways when we have called on them - particularly those who make our deliveries, address envelopes and provide us with tea and biscuits at our meetings.

Finally, I would like to add my personal thanks to Mr. Brakell, the Chairman who is retiring after four years, to Miss Lythgoe who has made the job of Secretary less arduous and to Mr. and Mrs. Shepherd for their many kindnesses.

S.M.Lewis, Hon.Secretary.

\$ New Christmas Cards with a view of Gateacre Village will be on sale from the Secretary from the 17th November.