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THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

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Chairman: Tony McCann, Our Lady's Jun. School
Hedgefield Road 487-9301
Hon. Sec: Mrs. S.M. Lewis, Grange Lodge,
Grange Lane 428-3671

SUMMER NEWSLETTER (late) - 1981

Next meeting -

THE STORY OF WAVERTREE

A village in the City

by

MICHAEL CHITTY

on

TUESDAY the 22nd SEPTEMBER

at 8 p.m.

Gateacre Chapel Hall, Sandfield Road, Gateacre.

All welcome.

Visitors 25p.

Tea 10p.

ADVANCE NOTICE - the 7th Annual General Meeting will be
held at Gateacre Institute 19th Oct. 1981.

SANDFIELD ROAD, GATEACRE -

On Wednesday 17th June Miss Gnosspelius gave an illustrated talk on Sandfield Road. Because Gateacre Walk III happened on 30th August last year, many members were on holiday and missed it so this was a second chance to potter along the Sandfield without actually doing any walking.

The story of the new intended road is proven to have begun by 1818, but that deed, concerning the land on which 1-5 Sandfield Road were built, harks back to an earlier deed which may have contained the beginning of the idea. In 1818 David Webster, a labourer, purchased land just south of Gateacre Chapel on which he built three cottages, 1-3 Sandfield Road (later divided into 5 cottages). And so the story goes on as James Gore, builder; John Mercer, tailor; Thomas Rushton, market gardener (?); John Peters, gardener built and developed land on either side of this road - which has some of the attributes of an occupation road. These men seem to have been very much the natives of Gateacre and the people who were building at this time.

Thomas Rodick (1789-1855) who was born, son of a linendraper, in Kendal, came to Liverpool and by 1814 had buried his firstborn son at Gateacre Chapel and (when precisely ?) built 'Kendal Cottage' - now known to us as 4 Gateacre Brow. He also owned nearly two acres - probably part of Chapel Hey - between his garden and Sandfield Rd., and there he built his stable block (two operations) with Browside Cottage in which Lionel Shepherd now lives; as well as Nos. 8 & 9 Sandfield Road.

The other man of substance who contributed to the development was Ambrose Lace (1793-1870) solicitor son of Joshua Lace and he was born at Throstles Nest, Belle Vale Rd. He built 28 & 29 Sandfield Rd. - interestingly less interesting than their neighbour No. 30 which was the Peters house.

The corner Rushton used as a garden became, in 1898, the site of the Electricity Generating Station of the Liverpool District Lighting Co. Ltd., Architects - F. & G. Holme, 1 Crosshall St.

The Sandhole itself (now Lower Sandfield) was where James Gore, the builder extracted sand - in 1840 much in demand for stucco the larger houses round about - hence the relative lowness of the ground level. (For more read Gateacre Walk III, price 25p).

THE SHUTTLEWORTH COLLECTION -

On the 5th May we were fortunate to have as our speaker Mr. Barry Gilman of Alsager, who came to entertain us with his superb presentation of slides from two projectors with a synchronised sound track.

After showing two short introductory sequences of 'Cloudscapes' and 'Sunsets' Mr. Gilman had his audience captivated. His techniques were so skilful and the photography so excellent that we all had the impression we were watching a film.

To the strains of Widor's Toccato, we followed the camera through peaceful Bedfordshire villages untouched by time, their character carefully preserved against the frantic development of the 20th century. Then we arrived at Old Warden Airfield, home of the Shuttleworth Collection, which is a collection of vintage aircraft maintained in memory of Richard Shuttleworth (1909-1940), who joined the R.A.F. in 1939 and was killed while night flying 1940.

He started his collection in 1933 with an assortment of cars and motor cycles, and then decided to concentrate on aircraft - his first two acquisitions being a Bleriot and a Deperdussin.

Housed in hangars both ancient and modern, this is not merely a museum of old aircraft. On the last Sunday of each month, weather permitting, the old but beautifully maintained machines sputter into life and become airborne. By courtesy of Mr. Gilman, we saw them in the air, and heard the curious noises from the engines of such aircraft as the Bristol Box Kite, the Avro Tri-plane (1910), the Blackburn Monoplane (1912) with its fabric covered fuselage, the Sopwith Pup, Hawker Tomtit and the Flying Flea, built in the 1930s for just £100 ! As the aircraft were paraded, we followed their development from the wood and fabric to the all metal types, each one a work of art to the enthusiast.

A visit to Old Warden makes an ideal family outing. The journey from Liverpool takes some three and a half hours, admission is £6 per car - the landing fee is also £6, if you go in your own two seater aeroplane ! Further information can be obtained from The Curator, Old Warden Airfield, Biggleswade, Beds. T.B. & S.A.B.

LOCAL HISTORY FROM ORIGINAL SOURCES -

On Friday 31st July Mr. Jim Grisenthwaite came to talk to the Society about archives &

Mr. Grisenthwaite is now working at Kendal - one of the three Cumbria Record Offices - hence our meeting on a Friday.

He told us that the Archivists job is 'to rescue, conserve and present' archives - those documents from the past that, if we can understand them, can tell us so much about our past. The Lancashire Record Office in Preston was one of the first set up in England, and this is where much of the archive material for Gateacre and Little Woolton is to be found. Now Record Offices are established over the country - we have one in Liverpool, and with the impetus given by Family History Societies, they are increasingly used. However, in the North of England there is very little material prior to the 11th Century.

And so inexorably to Domesday Book ! We, in the land between the Ribble and Mersey are fortunate to have Domesday records - made in 1086 of land holdings at the time of Edward the Confessor, and Little Woolton has two mentions.

After this our written records become more specific as both the Wooltons were held by the Knights of St. John who, as they gathered rents from their land, made written agreements, and a survey of their holdings in 1338.

From the Reformation (c.1540) the Norris deeds provide a series of records up to the time of the Civil War. From 1788 the Salisbury deeds take up the story. These sources are supplemented by Ecclesiastical records - Parish Registers from 1567 onwards; Wills (in the Lancs. Record Office), our Tithe Map 1848. Other major sources, as well as the Enclosure maps, include Settlement Papers - certificates necessary to people wishing to move from one area to another as they had to take proof of their parish of origin to where they could be returned if they became paupers. Ale house licences are also available from 1555..

Mr. Grisenthwaite brought some fascinating examples of archives, really old pieces of parchment, with him and his racy talk sparked off a number of individual questions. J.B.G.

‡ Members will doubtless have noticed that Mr. Grisenthwaite did not talk about Gateacre in the 16th Century and we feel some explanation may be needed. Until about a year ago he was working in Chester and doing some research on this subject and we tried to arrange a date for a meeting - then he went to Kendal. When

the moment came for sending out Notices he was not available and so the Secretary had to invent a title for his talk.

NEXT MEETING - Michael Chitty, a member of our County Planning Department, is a founder member of the Wavertree Society and the Secretary, he is also a qualified Merseyguide. He has a collection of excellent slides which he will use to show us around the old Township of Wavertree which adjoins that of Little Woolton on the North side of Druids Cross Road, and tell us about its development. Members are asked to make a special note in their diaries of this date as it is a month after this Newsletter.

OAKFIELD SCHOOL - On the 1st May the Secretary attended a most successful Coffee Morning at Oakfield School, meeting Mrs. Collins, some of her staff and the young handicapped people in their care. Mrs. Collins would like to integrate these teenagers into the life of the village, and intends perhaps organising a party to do some weeding on the village green - where it is very much needed. We welcome this idea which we hope would be of benefit to them and so useful to the village.

While we were there we noticed that one of the lamp brackets from a gate pier was missing, this had last been seen with a chain round it being used to hoist the large cap stone back into position after repairs to the gateway - the Secretary had shuddered as she watched! We quickly contacted the City Estates Surveyor, told him the story, the broken bracket was found and it is now being repaired and should shortly be back where it came from.

VALLEY LINE - Some of the trainees from Valley Line, the Community Opportunities Group at 2 Halewood Road, have recently done a survey of traffic in the village - we asked them if they would make a count of heavy vehicles ignoring the 3-ton weight limit down Belle Vale Road. As soon as we have the results we shall offer them to Superintendent Riding at Belle Vale Police Station and enlist his help in stopping this lawbreaking.

WILLIAM ROSCOE - On the 28th June the Secretary attended a

Memorial Service at Ullet Road Unitarian Church, held on the 150th anniversary of the death of William Roscoe - 'Liverpool's Renaissance Citizen'. The service included Roscoe's setting of The Lord's Prayer and one of his hymns. The Minister, the Rev. Graham Murphy told the story of Roscoe's life alternating with Dr. Kennett who read - very well indeed - extracts from his poetry. After being invited to sherry in the library, we saw Roscoe's Monument in the Cloisters decorated with the Monandrian plants which were one of his special studies. Roscoe was associated with Gateacre through his great friendship with Dr. Wm. Shepherd, for 48 years Minister of Gateacre Chapel, and you will remember that Maria (nee Fletcher) the widow of Henry Roscoe (1799-1836) - William Roscoe's youngest son, lived for several years with her two children in 78 or 80 Halewood Road near to what is now Gateacre Hall Hotel where her father lived and her sisters ran a boarding school.

'GATEACRE' SIGNS - The Secretary and Miss Gnosspelius have recently visited Kent Street, the Corporation premises where street furniture is made and stored, and discussed the problems in making our special district signs with Jack Thompson - the foreman in charge. He has been most helpful and we feel that we are making progress - though slower than we had hoped.

LEE PARK SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB - The application for a licence to sell intoxicating liquor at this proposed club, on the old coal yard alongside the former railway line in Belle Vale Road, was adjourned again in May and yet again in July. We understand there is some difficulty over conveyancing the land. Our Solicitor is keeping an eye on this application and will let us know if the case is likely to come up in September.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS - We have not been receiving our usual weekly list of new applications from the City Planning Office due to the typists' strike, but since the last newsletter the following have come to our notice -

Bear & Staff, Gateacre Brow extend existing car park
Midland Bank, Gateacre Brow 1 storey staffroom extension
and out of our area, but of interest -
Childwall Abbey extension of Pub. House into adjoining stables

The Stable Block at Druids Cross

by the Gateacre & The Woolton Societies, jointly.

When Jospeh Hornby (1794-1853) of H. & J. Hornby & Co, merchants trading with Russia, decided to move from Everton in the 1840s, he chose the most famous architect in England, Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, to design his new house, 'Druids Cross' in what is now Druids Cross Road.

Elmes, a young man born in 1814, had won fame with his designs for St. George's Hall, where building had begun in 1841. This talented architect who overworked and died in 1847, left only a few buildings in Liverpool of which the Collegiate School, the Stables at Allerton Tower, the Lodge to Druids Cross and this Stable Block are the sole survivors.

Druids Cross house in scale and magnificence was arguably the most impressive house in Liverpool, both outside and internally; it was a palazzo for a merchant prince. The Stable Block was in stone as a foil to the painted stucco of the house - from which it would be glimpsed as an Italianate accessory.

The house, long used as an orphanage and then empty for many years and vandalised, was given Listed Building Consent for demolition, with conditions, in 1978. The conditions were ignored & the Developer and Contractor were both fined.

In the new development plans it was understood by the City Planning Office that the Stable Block was to be converted to residential use, but by 10 January this year the Gateacre Society were made so anxious by its accelerating deterioration that Mrs. Lewis wrote to the D.O.E. asking for it to be 'spot-listed' immediately - before it became a dangerous structure. The spot-listing was not achieved until 21 May, a few days after the Dangerous Structure Notice had been served. We have written to Mr. Haseltine about this delay.

A few days later we were told that the Developer proposed to demolish without Listed Building Consent - because that could take months to obtain - and he was prepared to pay the fine. On 5 June we visited the Developer to ask how we could help, and he told us he would be prepared to sell, but he felt that the fence he was then erecting around the Dangerous Structure would act as a challenge to vandals and be down within a week. The breaching

of the fence would make the building again a danger, and he would be unwilling to spend more money repairing it.

No-one at the D.o.E. could tell us how to stop a bull-dozer approaching a Listed Building - this question remains unanswered. We therefore wrote an explanatory leaflet, with a drawing, and circulated it to all the neighbours in Druids Park, requesting their help in keeping a watchful eye on the hoarding, and in seeking a purchaser.

On 2 July the Developer advertised the property for sale - asking for offers over £35,000. Later we heard that such offers had been made and on 10 August Mrs. Scarland, CTNW, rang the Developer and was told that a sale had been agreed and a contract was being drawn up.

This time we seem to have found a way of saving a Listed Building - have we ?

BEACONSFIELD HOUSE - This house on the North side at the top of Beaconsfield Road and one of our most interesting 'listed' buildings is causing us a certain amount of concern - members may have noticed its sad state of neglect - windows broken and slates missing from the roof. We have spoken to the Planning Department and they have been in touch with the owner. We understand the house may be put on the market quite soon and we hope it will have some attention before winter comes. Originally the house was a lodge or gardener's house belonging to the Beaconsfield estate (as was 35/37 Beaconsfield Road) built by Ambrose Lace c1830 (?). We have no photograph of the large mansion he built there, demolished for the building of Hill Croft Road and New Croft Road - has any member one by any happy chance ?

LAND AT YORK COTTAGES - We have been worrying Merseyside Improved Houses about getting on with the job of landscaping this site, but at the moment they are busy coping with problems caused by the riots in Toxteth so we must be patient.

S.M.L. 17.8.81.