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THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Registered with the North West Civic Trust

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SPRING NEWSLETTER -

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ROSES IN THE NORTH WEST

by

Mr. R. D. SQUIRES

President of the Royal National Rose Society.

Mr. Squires, who we are fortunate to have as one of the Society's members, will give us expert advice on all aspects of rose growing - a selection of varieties suitable for the soil in our gardens, planting and pruning. His talk will be illustrated, he will show us many of the newer species and indicate some of his own personal favourites.

TUESDAY, MARCH 20th 1984 at 8 pm.

Gateacre Chapel Hall, Sandfield Road. Visitors welcome, tea 10p.

Advance Notice - visit to the two Cathedrals, guided by Professor Tarn, Head of the Liverpool University School of Architecture, Tuesday May 30th at 7 p.m.

JUMBLE SALE - Saturday 19th MAY.

THE GATEACRE NOBODY HAS NOW!

At the February meeting we were treated to a view of Gateacre through the eyes of one of its much loved personalities, Dr. Warner. Some may look to the diary of an Edwardian Lady for a whiff of the authentic, or to Pepys for a graphic account of his time. We in our turn were charmed and delighted by a fond look back, in memory, at the Gateacre of yester-year. For those of us who are incomers, like Dr. Warner himself was, we were given a picture of the village as we would in some ways wish it were now.

How did this come about? In Dr. Warner's own words his early memories revolve around three visits - first as a boy on a bike along the cinder track, gated at the end, that is now Grange Lane, and on into the wilds of Hunts Cross; secondly on the top of a Crosville bus to view the Practice in Woolton that he was later to join, "after deciding the last place I wanted to practice was Liverpool. Then looking all over the country, I at last came to Woolton and settled to live in Gateacre." The descriptive narrative of that bus journey ended with the words "It was perhaps the magnificent stand of Beech Trees at the end of Blackwood Avenue, then a newly made road, but left in its construction, that finally fixed this as the place I wanted to live. How many others I wonder give thanks for the fine trees that adorn Liverpool?"

His third visit was after the war. Celebrations on the Green and recreation ground, the Ladies playing the Gentlemen at cricket, singing "There'll always be an England" (meaning Gateacre) around the bust of Queen Victoria, somewhat naively he admitted, for change was by then on its way. The estate of prefabs under the railway bridge was being built. Was it he asked, Bessie Braddock who said, "The wealthy have had Gateacre long enough"? Unfortunately once the change had been achieved it meant Gateacre was nobody's. It is perhaps paralleled by the fact that before the introduction of antibiotics, as Dr. Warner told, if someone was seriously ill with pneumonia, then apart from giving the best of advice and visiting morning, afternoon and evening this was all it was possible to do, but it did mean that The Doctor became a friend of the family. Somehow going to the surgery and getting a bottle of pills, which in many cases will effect a cure of what were killer diseases is not the same!

The characters who made up the populace of the village years

ago were described in loving detail. (Are there no characters these days and is life so bland?)

Space forbids that all we heard can be recorded here, but fortunately I took a tape recording of the event as a prompt to my memory. It lasts some 55 minutes and is all good stuff. Our thanks are due to Dr. Warner for agreeing to this and for coming to talk to us. The tonic we received on this occasion was as good as any nostrum that could have been otherwise provided, and will perhaps serve to enliven ourselves in the preservation of all that is good in the village in which we live.

J.R.

LAND AT YORK COTTAGES - Ever since the excellent rehabilitation of York Cottages by Merseyside Improved Houses in 1978 the Gateacre Society has been trying to get M.I.H. to shoulder their responsibilities and give their attention to this piece of land in the centre of the Gateacre Village Conservation Area. But the time came when it seemed that this eyesore would be permanently with us unless we did something ourselves - a bit of self help, rather than just complaining and waiting for the other fellow to do the job, is not a bad thing.

A community effort seemed to be the answer, and when one of our members - Mr. Kirkham, the co-ordinator of the Merseyside Conservation Volunteers offered his help we jumped at it. He and his squad, from all over Liverpool, gave up a Saturday during Christmas week and another on the 4th February to do a clearance job on the site.

It was expected that residents in the cottages and members of the Society would also lend a hand, but we were disheartened to find the response extremely poor on both occasions.

The Society made a donation of £25 to the Conservation Volunteers and the Chairman of the Society has suggested that residents of the cottages might like to respond to an appeal towards this sum, since they are the greatest beneficiaries of the work done - or maybe those who are not members of the Society might like to join - contributions/subscriptions to the Hon. Membership Secretary please.

Now that this preliminary work has been done we trust that M.I.H. will finish the job - in time for the Garden Festival?

JUMBLE SALE - This important annual event will be held on

Saturday, 19th May. We would be grateful for all your unwanted goods - and can collect if necessary. We would also appreciate help in setting out the stalls on the evening before the sale &/or a couple of hours of your time on THE DAY, say between 1.45 - 3.45 p.m.

NORMAN SCULPTURE IN HEREFORDSHIRE CHURCHES - On 21st Feb.

Mr. Dewsnap treated us to an enthralling talk about the Workshop of Sculptors flourishing 1140-70, enriching e.g. the half round tympanum over a doorway, arches, capitals and mouldings. Most of us have nodding acquaintance with Norman zigzag carving, but beakheads - the row of bird or beast heads with beaks biting into a roll moulding - are not often seen so vividly as in Mr. Dewsnap's slides.

Workshops of Sculptors - rather than 'schools' - are not uncommon, but the 3 men who worked together in the 12th century in Herefordshire were highly individual and inventive and what still remains of their work is technically excellent.

We can still trace influences ranging from what was "in the air" of their time, pre-Conquest interlacing work, and Viking dragon heads, and so on. Reading Abbey founded 1123 was an outstanding building; its daughter house at Leominster (c.1130) still has capitals on the west portal of more than usual quality and zigzags around an arch ring here as well as at Shobden (c.1140-5) at right angles to the wall surface - so unlike the rich but unimaginative west front of Iffley (1170) show that Herefordshire was no backwater. But the patron of Shobden was Oliver de Merlimond, and we know that he made a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, going on foot through Paris and western France. If one of these sculptors went too, with a sketchbook, more sources would be explained.

The South door of Kilpeck, sheltered from the weather by a porch for centuries (but alas no longer) is fresh and brilliant - excellent stone was used. Above the tympanum (a tree of life ?) the arch has zigzag carving at right angles to the wall surface surrounded by a roll moulding and series of 'beakheads' - but not a boring repetition of 14 similar heads, 2 or 3 are fairly standard types but there is a flying angel, a serpent, a pair of fishes and all so vivid. The outer ring of interlacing work has dragon heads at either end and is populated with birds having strangely elongated claws, fabulous beasts and links of the chain are inverted animal-lion?- heads.

The jambs are two dragons in knots with interlacings, the colonnettes, to the right symmetrical trails and palmettes above birds with long claws and to the left two lean warriors in Phrygian caps, the stylised folds of their clothing in rolls - Mr. Dewsnap didn't say 'pipecleaners' but likened them to rolls of plasticine - all linked with thin trails. This doorway can be attributed to the Master of the Workshop who is thought to have died c.1155. A second master carved the colonnettes of the Chancel Arch, 3 figures above each other (cf. St. Denis, Paris, 1132-44) in which St. Peter shows signs of an Irish metalwork influence. A third master was responsible for the corbel heads around the exterior. Other works of these three are still to be found in Herefordshire.

J.B.G.

NORTON PRIORY - Following the excellent talk by the Curator Mrs. Muldoon last July and in response to members requests the Society has arranged a visit to Norton Priory on Tuesday evening May 1st.

The group will be shown round the site and museum, the gardens too should be particularly interesting at this time of year when they will be approaching their best.

There will be a coach leaving Gateacre Brow (opposite the Prudential Building) at 6.50 p.m. - return about 9.30 p.m. in Gateacre. The cost of transport will be £1. per head, and the museum charges 70p. for adults, 30p. for pensioners and children.

The coach we have booked is a 33-seater, so if you wish to come on the trip please let the Secretary have your cash/cheques as soon as possible please, when you will be issued with tickets.

S.M.L. 8.3.84.

NOTE: There are still just a few members who have not yet paid their subscriptions, are we to take it that you no longer wish to remain members and this is good-bye? As a reminder we will place a red cross on the front of this Newsletter, and we are sorry but this is the last one you will receive unless payment is made.

The first of the papers in this collection is a letter from the Secretary of the Board of Education to the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago, dated June 1, 1906. The letter discusses the proposed changes in the curriculum of the University of Chicago, and the Board of Trustees' response to these proposals. The letter is signed by the Secretary, and is addressed to the Board of Trustees.

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