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THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Registered with the North West Civic Trust

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SUMMER NEWSLETTER 1984 -



BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE MUSEUM

by

MR. R. WADSWORTH

Some members will recall that six years ago we had Mr. Keith Priestman talk to us about the work of his department at the Museum, now we look forward to the visit of Mr. Wadsworth who will continue the story and bring us up to date with the conservation and restoration taking place in the Museum workshops.

TUESDAY, 26th JUNE 1984 at 8 p.m.

Gateacre Chapel-Hall, Sandfield Road. Visitors welcome.

Slides

Tea 10p.

Advance notice -

On the 24th July Mr. Harry Gascoine Arthur will give an illustrated talk on Isambard Kingdom Brunel F.R.S. 1806 - 1859.

## ROSES IN THE NORTH WEST.

It was a pity we did not have a larger audience for a most delightful evening on March 20th when Mr. Squires, President of the Royal National Rose Society came to entertain and instruct us on our justly famous English roses. As he said, it was a pleasant change to hear about something growing rather than concentrating on buildings. We were pleased to know we live in a wonderful area for rose growing and that common sense rather than elaborate expertise is needed, but we were given expert advice on pruning and weed and pest control. But most enjoyable were Mr. Squires' beautiful slides of many of his favourite varieties; what a treat they were - making us want to go home and start our rose-gardens all over again. For those not present we pass on his advice to visit Calderstones Park, Ness Gardens and Windle Hall (Lord and Lady Pilkington have always looked after their own roses) and lastly Chester Zoo gardens where they have the benefits that come from elephants!

Mr. Squires told us that roses named after members of rose-growing families will invariably be successful, and he revealed that the finest white rose will appear at the Chelsea Flower Show for the first time, but he could not disclose its name. Thank you very much indeed for our lovely evening and we hope that you will come and talk to us again Mr. Squires.

N.L.

## VISIT TO THE TWO CATHEDRALS

Wednesday 30th May saw another interesting and informative event in the programme of the Society - this was a memorable outing amongst so many others. I have, over the last few years, visited both Cathedrals on a number of occasions, but this was by far the most enlightening. Our guide, Professor Tarn, really had the subject at his finger-tips.

We were taken, in the case of the Anglican Cathedral, on an historical journey through the events leading up to the building of the largest Cathedral in the world. He explained the reasoning behind the planning for appointing Giles Gilbert Scott (later Sir Giles) as Architect, and

how the design progressed in stages as the Architect matured and the money ran out!

The Professor pointed out that for the Liverpool of the day (and even now) it has got to be the biggest and the best; seen through his eyes and with the interest he was able to pass on to us, we began to see what he meant.

Next, to the Metropolitan Cathedral - which is really two Cathedrals. Not to be beaten, so to speak, the Catholics had planned a grand Cathedral (on the style of St. Peter's) whose architect was Sir Edwin Lutyens. Alas, a world war and rising costs meant that it was never built beyond the crypt where we see the glory that might have been and the building techniques employed. At ground level starts the now famous modern edifice that some wit has named the 'Mersey Funnel'. Our guide explained, due to the change in the pattern of liturgy in the intervening period, the rationale of how the planning of a church building had altered. Whereas the Anglican Cathedral had taken nearly a century to build, the Metropolitan Cathedral (architect Sir Frederick Gibberd) was completed in what seemed no time at all, using modern materials and techniques.

A great amount of detail as to the construction, reasoning and requirements - both in the past and present - was skilfully interwoven into the tour of both buildings; far beyond my ability to report here. "Never again", said our guide "is it likely that anyone will build a great Gothic pile in the traditional manner in which Liverpool's Anglican Cathedral has been built". Whether the Metropolitan Cathedral has set the modern trend remains yet to be seen. The twist in the tail is that the architect for the Anglican Cathedral was a Catholic, and for the Metropolitan Cathedral a non-conformist ! This expresses the spirit in which the churches can work together. J.R.

NORTON PRIORY - On the 1st May the Society's party got out of the coach on a lovely evening at the secluded site of Norton Priory.

The house of Augustinian canons moved here from Runcorn in

1134, it was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1536 and after the Reformation Sir Richard Brooke built his house here. The house was rebuilt and remodelled twice before being finally demolished, leaving apparently nothing but a "loggia". So when the excavators got to work in the 1970s they did not expect to find much but now a major site is revealed - particularly interesting because it is the only site of its kind to be excavated by modern methods. Much more is yet to be found as funds permit.

Our guide, Miss Bearpark, took us across the cloister into the 'church' - the plan is very clear in the grass (itself some 9" below floor level) - a long narrow nave, transepts and, further east, a long choir. The most striking remains are the "Runcorn" red sandstone coffins, some with decorated stone lids. Lionel Shepherd laid himself out in one which was said to have first been occupied by a 6' man; for Lionel it was a nice fit at the shoulders. Three of the other coffins are grouped together, probably for a prior and two children, suggesting deaths in an epidemic. For archaeologists this raises the practical question of whether stone coffins were made to order or kept in stock, and to throw some light on how long it takes to hollow out a sandstone coffin there is a project for a mason to make one as a full size experiment.

The museum is entered through the "loggia" and work in restoring this, the only building left standing, shows that it was part visitors' waiting room - with stone seats - and part a vaulted "undercroft" for storage (with a little well to keep shellfish in for Fridays). The "Late Norman" doorway - duplicated for symmetry in the C.18, interesting to test one's eye to see which is which - leads to the prize-winning museum which is packed with finds such as leather shoes, pottery, jugs, wooden bowls and wine casks, coins, lead piping, buckles, whetstones, a skeleton in a coffin, tiles, sculptures ... too much to tell here.

For those who were not able to go with us, we recommend a visit.

J.B.G.

PUBLICITY LEAFLETS -

Quite soon now we hope to get out our

new leaflets advertising the Society, they will say why Gateacre is special, how and why the Society was formed, what we do and what our achievements have been so far. We intend to circulate them widely, so if one comes through your door we would appreciate it if you would use it to try and interest someone else who is not yet a member. We have over 300 members at the present time, but always remember that the larger our numbers the larger our 'voice' when it is raised about something concerning the village.

ADVERTISEMENTS ON GRANGE MEWS -

Realising that Mr. Eckman has not yet sold all the houses at the old Riding School we acknowledge the need for one Estate Agent's sign, but we feel it unnecessary to continue advertising the firms who did the roofing and installed the alarm systems and we have written to the Planning Dept. to say so. We hope these extra signs will shortly be removed.

SEFTON PARK SOCIETY -

This Society has brought out a book about the history, architecture, wildlife and ecology of the Park. Copies can be obtained at our meetings or from the Secretary - well worth the price of £2.95 if just for the chapter on the history of the area from medieval times.

PLAYING FIELDS AT ST. FRANCIS XAVIERS -

We are greatly concerned about a planning application asking for Residential Development covering this whole area - about 14 acres. In the 1974 City Plan for the Outer Areas this land is shown as 'private open space', and our concern is that such open spaces are being gradually eroded for housing and this affects the amenities of the neighbourhood. We feel that all members and their friends should be aware of what is going on - particularly those interested in education, as there is a possibility that other school playing fields may be phased out before long.

CAVERN WALKS -

Has everyone seen the new building in Matthew St. (behind British Home Stores) ? This seems to us a "nice" modern building that is fun to look at. Well done its architect.

S.M.L. 16.6.84.

