



The Gateacre Society

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NEWSLETTER - October 2007

PERIODICALS

Please don't forget our Annual General Meeting

The 33rd A.G.M. of the Gateacre Society will be held on **TUESDAY 30th OCTOBER** in the Chapel Hall, Sandfield Road, Liverpool L25, starting at 8 pm. The A.G.M. is always a very sociable occasion, a chance for members to meet and chat informally (and enjoy the refreshments provided).

This year we shall also be making use of our new Lottery-funded equipment to project a selection of 'mystery photographs' of Vanished Gateacre. See how many of the places you can identify!

Our November meeting:

HALE FROM 1081 TO TODAY

A talk by Don Allerston on Tuesday 13th November
at 8 pm, in Gateacre Chapel Hall, Sandfield Road, L25



Hale Village is steeped in history, and its whitewashed cottages and bright country gardens have won it several awards over the years. St Mary's Church stands on the site of a chapel built in 1081. The churchyard contains the grave of Hale's most famous resident, John Middleton - the 9ft 3in 'Childe of Hale' - who died in 1623. The village still elects a Lord Mayor and Freemen.

Don Allerston lives in Hale, and will tell us more about the history and traditions of the village.

ALL WELCOME

Gateacre Society members free of charge - Visitors 50p

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED IN LIVERPOOL

Our June Talk - *Reviewed by Mike Chitty*

Jennifer Hoggarth, one of the Friends of Beechley Stables, gave us an excellent and stimulating talk on Tuesday 26th June.

The Grade II Listed stables once belonged to Beechley House, built about 1840 for a Liverpool cotton broker. They were at one time the HQ of Liverpool's Park Rangers service. When that was closed down in the 1980s, Bill Beeley (partner of Stanley the Counting Horse) suggested using the building as a riding school for disabled children. The weather was initially a big problem; the paddock got churned up and muddy in the winter time, and for safety reasons lessons had to be cancelled when it rained. So in 1992 an indoor arena was built.

Jennifer emphasised that Beechley is not just about 'children having fun'. It's very important to those with conditions such as Down's syndrome and autism. Riding stimulates learning skills, gives a sense of achievement, and boosts confidence. The stables offer work experience to pupils in local schools - and a psychology student from Liverpool University did some research there. Local allotment gardeners exchange manure for carrots and apples.

A raised platform and mounting block has been built to aid mounting by the physically disabled. Jennifer explained that sitting on a horse, looking down, is much more satisfying than sitting on a wheelchair looking up! The activities include weaving between cones, trotting, grooming, and various matching/stretching/ touching games. The stables are also beneficial for carers, who gain respite and the chance to talk to others. Even when they are not well enough to ride, the children can visit the stables with carrots to feed the horses.

Jennifer said that Beechley Stables is NOT now under threat - in spite of what it sometimes still written in the local press! Two years ago the stables were threatened with closure, but almost 10,000 people signed a petition. The roof has been repaired, the setts re-laid, and central heating, a saddle-strap washing machine and fitted kitchen installed. Four full-time instructors are employed, but volunteers are needed for leading, side-walking, getting horses ready, giving talks, helping at events, making tea, etc. Fund-raising activities include a summer fair in the indoor arena - with pony rides, stalls, a café on the courtyard, dog agility display, riding demonstration, and charity auction. A Christmas grotto offers photo-opportunities of 'Father Christmas in the snow'. And All Hallows Church organises nativity plays and carol services in the arena.

A new £22,000 Pro-Wax equestrian surface has recently been installed. Though the Stables are owned by the City Council, funds are limited and the Friends had to find 50% of the cost. They obtained funding from various sources, including the Riding for the Disabled Association. As a result of becoming an RDA local group, the Stables are able to take part in RDA events around the country.

Beechley riders won top places in both the Junior and Senior classes at the N.W. Regional 'countryside challenge' at Crosby. In future the Friends plan to rebuild the outdoor arena - which will enable them to host competitions themselves - and also to enclose the indoor arena for winter warmth.

Jennifer's talk prompted a large number of questions from the audience. Her enthusiasm was infectious. Everyone went away full of admiration for the good work which is carried on at Beechley Stables, and the obvious commitment of Jennifer and the other Friends.

HISTORY OF THE SANKEY CANAL

Our September Talk - *Reviewed by Mary Champion*

On Tuesday 18th September, Peter Keen gave us a talk and slide show which he entitled 'The Rise and Fall and Rise of the Sankey Canal'. It was a tale of triumph. We heard about the building of the canal, its heyday, its decline, and its miraculous rebirth.

In the 1700s Liverpool was growing fast and needed cheap coal. So did the Cheshire salt industry. The turnpike roads were in very poor repair, and it was felt that improvement of the waterways might be the answer to the transport problem. The Sankey Brook was proposed as being a suitable waterway, and Parliamentary powers were obtained to make it navigable. But, instead of this, a separate canal - the first in England - was built alongside it by the engineer Henry Berry from Parr. This canal carried coal downstream from the St Helens area, and later carried other raw materials upstream for the industries in the growing town. Ten locks had to be built, because the ground was not level.

The Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened in 1830. This - the first railway in England - crossed over the Sankey Canal which was 70 feet below. A railway link from St Helens opened in 1832, and in 1845 the St Helens Canal and Railway Company was formed to operate both the canal and the railway. Many industries were established alongside the canal, but its heyday was quite short-lived. Competition from the railways meant that it was gradually used less and less. In 1958 the Sankey Sugar Works, situated directly alongside the canal, ceased to use it. This factory was its last regular customer, and the canal was officially closed in 1963. The locks soon became derelict. In 1984 a lock-keeper's cottage was demolished, and the rubble dumped in the canal.

Peter Keen, our speaker, and other energetic people decided to restore the canal to navigable standards, and in 1985 the Sankey Canal Restoration Society was formed. By 1992, half the canal was clear. The local authorities were very co-operative; they wanted to clean up the area and had made a good job of restoring two sets of lock gates. The ultimate aim is to link the canal to the national network. There is a canal archive, guided walks, way-marked paths, all supported by dedicated fund-raisers.

Peter gave us a good evening, with lots of slides, and showed us what can be done with a lot of hard work and enthusiasm.

MORE ABOUT THE A.G.M.

At our Annual General Meeting on **Tuesday 30th October** (in the Chapel Hall, Sandfield Road, at 8 pm) we shall be receiving the Annual Reports and Accounts, and electing a Committee for the coming year. This has been a very eventful year for the Society, and there will be plenty to report and discuss.

All members and prospective members of the Society are invited to attend, and anyone interested in joining the Committee will be very welcome to put themselves forward for nomination at the meeting.

HOW YOU CAN HELP US

Apart from coming to the A.G.M. and volunteering to join the Committee, here are some ways in which you can help the Society to prosper:

1. IF YOU ARE A TAXPAYER, please sign a Gift Aid declaration. (It will cost you nothing, but will enable us to claim 28p from the taxman for every £1 you've given us).

2. IF YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS, please agree to have your Newsletter sent electronically rather than by post. (See back page for details).

THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Founded 1974. Charity Registration No.508024.

'Guarding the Past, Safeguarding the Future'

Website: www.gatsoc.org.uk Email: info@gatsoc.org.uk

IF YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS

and would like to receive your Newsletters by email instead of by post, please let us know by sending a simple message to membership@gatsoc.org.uk quoting your name and postcode

Officers for 2006/07

- Chairman: Tony McCann
- Vice Chairman: Brian Doman, 6 Hayles Grove, L25 4SL (722 6368)
- Hon.Secretary: *Post vacant*
- Hon.Treasurer: Mrs Eryl Chitty, 16 Chartmount Way, L25 5LB (428 7801)
- Membership Sec.: Mrs Rosemary Doman, 6 Hayles Grove, L25 4SL (722 6368)
- Environment Sec.
& Newsletter Editor: Mike Chitty, 16 Chartmount Way, L25 5LB (428 7801)

Membership Subscriptions

Household £4 Single pensioner £3 Company, etc. £6

You may pay for up to three years in advance, if you wish, at these annual rates.

Already a member?

To find out whether you are a paid-up member of the Gateacre Society, please check your address label, which indicates your membership expiry date (e.g. 31/10/07).

Not a member? Want to join us?

If you wish to join the Society - or to renew - please send the appropriate subscription to the Membership Secretary, Mrs Rosemary Doman, 6 Hayles Grove, Liverpool L25 4SL: cheques payable to 'The Gateacre Society'.