

# THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Founded 1974. Charity Registration No.508024.

'Guarding the Past, Safeguarding the Future'

Website: [www.gatsoc.org.uk](http://www.gatsoc.org.uk) Email: [info@gatsoc.org.uk](mailto: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](mailto:membership@gatsoc.org.uk) quoting your name and postcode

## Officers for 2008/09

- Chairman: Brian Doman, 6 Hayles Grove, L25 4SL (722 6368)  
Hon.Secretary: Bill Blundell, 6 Sussex Gardens, Ty Gwyn, Wrexham LL11 2YB  
Hon.Treasurer: Mrs Eryl Chitty  
Membership Sec.: Mrs Rosemary Doman, 6 Hayles Grove, L25 4SL (722 6368)  
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Sales Officer: George Mason, 83 Grange Lane, L25 4SA  
Local History Sec.: Beryl Plent, 27 Grange Lane, L25 4RZ (428 5379)

## 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.

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

If you are already a member, your address label indicates the date (e.g. 31/10/09) when your subscription is due for renewal.



Our next meeting:

## THE IRISH IN AMERICA



A talk by **MIKE MURPHY** on Tuesday 17th March at 7.30 pm in Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow, L25.

The picture - a lithographic print from the collection of the U.S. Library of Congress - shows a St Patrick's Day parade in Union Square, New York City, circa 1870.

From colonial days up to the present time, vast numbers of Irish people - both Catholic and Protestant - have emigrated to what became the United States. Often in the face of prejudice and hardship, they succeeded in taking advantage of the opportunities that the new land provided. Ireland's rural poor became urban Americans, and helped the U.S.A., in the process, become rich. Come and hear the story of how it happened - and how the Irish became 'a force in the land'. Appropriately enough, this talk takes place on St Patrick's Day.

Mike Murphy was born in Birkenhead, and has taught in schools in Birkenhead and Liverpool. He is the former head of History at St Francis Xavier School, and a part time Lecturer at the University of Liverpool.

Admission free of charge - ALL WELCOME - Donations invited

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## SEFTON PARK & ITS MAGICAL PALM HOUSE

A review of our February talk - by *Mary Champion*

On Sunday 15th February we had a magical illustrated talk from Dianne Cox, a North West Blue Badge Tourist Guide, about Liverpool's Sefton Park Palm House.

Sefton Park, 269 acres in extent, was originally part of Toxteth Park - a deer park which was sold to the Earl of Sefton. The land was bought by Liverpool Council in the 1860s. Three new parks - Newsham, Stanley and Sefton Parks - were all created within two years of each other. In eighty years the population of Liverpool had grown from 2,000 to 85,000, so parks were very important.

A competition was set up to find a designer for Sefton Park. Edouard André of Paris and Lewis Hornblower of Liverpool won. The latter had worked for Joseph Paxton as architect at Birkenhead Park. The budget was £85,000 but the final cost was £250,000. To raise money, plots for housing were sold round the perimeter of the park. The park was opened on 20th May 1872 by Prince Arthur, and the procession of carriages from Liverpool Town Hall was a mile long. Henry Yates Thompson paid for the Palm House, which opened in 1896. It is 82 ft high, with a granite floor and almost 4,000 pieces of glass. It was heated by water pipes, and plants were brought from all over the world.

The Palm House closed in the 1980s when it was in a very poor state of repair. In June 1992 a campaign headed by Matthew Spencer, with supporters including George Melly, was started to save and restore it. £254,000 was soon raised, and the Palm House was reopened, minus glass, in August 1993. Then people were invited to 'sponsor a pane' at £10 each. By 1997 £2 million had been raised, mainly from the Heritage Lottery Fund. All the metal framework was removed and sent away for restoration or renewal.

The sculptures round the exterior include Christopher Columbus, Charles Darwin, Carl Linnaeus, James Cook and Henry the Navigator - and Peter Pan who has been brought from elsewhere in the park. Inside the Palm House are marble benches and sculptures. The plants include an original date palm, and banana trees which bear (very tiny) fruit.

The Palm House is open every day from 10.30 a.m., and is hired out for events. While the Council give a small grant, the place has to be self-supporting and hosts weddings, concerts, conferences, etc. The catering facilities and loos are in the basement. At least three major free events are held each year.

Sefton Park itself is also, currently, being transformed. £5 million has been allocated to the park's restoration. Hard surfaces will be repaired, tree work done, waterways cleared, the lake restored, the café refurbished and a new boat house provided. It is already a wonderful place to visit - and will be even more wonderful soon.

## MORE SHOPS FOR GATEACRE PARK DRIVE?

An outline planning application (ref. 080/2065) has been submitted to build shops and offices on the site of the existing Gateacre Park Motors premises in Thurne Way. The proposal is for a three-storey block containing 7 retail units on the ground floor, and 14 self-contained offices above. As the application is only for outline permission, there is little further information, but the 'illustrative layout' drawings submitted with the application show a 29-space car parking area off Thurne Way with the same access points as at present, and no through route (either for vehicles or pedestrians) to the adjacent Gateacre Park Drive shopping precinct.

In our comments to the Planning Department, we have suggested that the two sites should be treated as a single entity (the owners of the Gateacre Park Drive precinct having already been given outline planning permission to demolish and redevelop it) so as to maximise the benefits to the local community. We have questioned the need for offices, and have asked that the pedestrian access arrangements be re-thought so as to make walking to these local shops an attractive alternative to driving further afield.

## OUR NEW COMMITTEE

We are pleased to report that the 'replacement' Annual General Meeting on 15th February was very well-attended (by 43 people, including at least 33 paid-up members of the Society) and the constitutional changes set out in our October 2008 Newsletter were approved.

The Society's Executive Committee now consists of the following members:

Pam Ball, Bill Blundell, Mary Champion, Eryl Chitty, Mike Chitty, Brian Doman, Rosemary Doman, Tony McCann, George Mason and Beryl Plant.

At its meeting on 17th February, the Committee appointed new Officers (see back page). The Society's Chairman is now Brian Doman; Tony McCann having stood down, owing to ill-health, after no less than 28 years in the Chair. And we are pleased to say that we now have an Hon. Secretary: Bill Blundell, who we welcomed onto the Committee for the first time at the A.G.M.

Bill lives a long way from Gateacre, but he became a familiar face at our Local History presentations last year and we were delighted when he offered us his services. Bill's local credentials are impeccable: his great-grandfather was Joseph Blundell, who ran the smithy at Cuckoo Lane/Rose Brow in the late nineteenth century, and his grandfather was George Blundell, cycle-maker of Woolton!

The Committee has decided not to appoint a Vice-Chairman for the time being.

## ST GREGORY'S HOUSE TO BE DEMOLISHED

In spite of our objections, the City Council's Planning Committee on 3rd February approved the application (ref. 08F/3079) to demolish the red-brick Victorian building known as St Gregory's House, Halewood Road, and replace it with a four-storey flat-roofed block of 14 sheltered flats. Other objectors to the proposal included our local Councillors Barbara Mace and Barbara Collinge, and Florence Gersten of the Save Our City Campaign.

Councillor Collinge is now a member of the Planning Committee, which means that she cannot normally speak freely about planning applications in advance of the decision, but at this meeting she 'declared an interest' as a Ward Councillor and spoke against the plan in that capacity, arguing that there are already too many empty flats in Gateacre.

Our own objection was based largely on the architectural merits of the existing building, and the inappropriateness of its proposed replacement, but these arguments were dismissed by the Planning Manager (who recommended approval of the application) on the grounds that the site is outside the Gateacre Village Conservation Area and the existing building is not Listed.



Pictures: St Gregory's House (originally 'Red Lyn') and - below - an artist's impression of the proposed new building (courtesy of Cass Associates, architects).

