

## 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) E-mail: [info@gatsoc.org.uk](mailto:info@gatsoc.org.uk)

### Officers for 2004/05

Chairman: Tony McCann  
Vice Chairman: Brian Doman, 6 Hayles Grove, L25 4SL (722 6368)  
Hon.Secretary: Joan Gadd, 59 Hunts Cross Avenue, L25 5NU  
(428 8884)  
Hon.Treasurer: Eryl Chitty  
Membership Sec.: Beryl Plent, 27 Grange Lane, L25 4RZ (428 5379)  
Environment Sec.  
& Newsletter Editor: Mike Chitty, 16 Chartmount Way, L25 5LB (428 7801)

### Membership Subscriptions

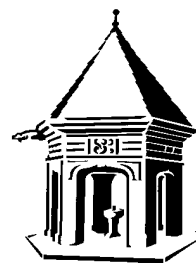
Household £3 Single pensioner £2 Company, etc. £5  
(all plus £1.50 postage if outside hand-delivery area)  
You may pay for up to three years in advance, if you wish, at these annual rates.

### 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. 31/10/05).

### 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 Beryl Plent, at 27 Grange Lane, Liverpool L25 4RZ: cheques payable to 'The Gateacre Society'.



## The Gateacre Society

Registered with the Civic Trust and as a Charity

### NEWSLETTER - September 2005

## EVENTS IN GATEACRE on Saturday 10th September



Two local buildings - **St Stephen's Church** in Belle Vale Road and **Gateacre Unitarian Chapel** in Gateacre Brow - will be welcoming visitors on 10th September 2005 as part of the Civic Trust's Heritage Open Days programme. St Stephen's will be open between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., and the Chapel will be open between 1 and 4 p.m.

We shall have a sales and information table inside St Stephen's Church, and Mike Chitty will be leading **guided historical walks** between the two venues, starting from outside the Chapel at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., and from outside St Stephen's at 12.30 and 3.30 p.m. Each walk will take approximately one hour, and will look at a selection of local landmarks - emphasising particularly the influence of the Walker family on Victorian Gateacre.

*As with all Heritage Open Days events there is no charge,  
and all are welcome to attend.*

## NOTICE OF OUR A.G.M. on Tuesday 25th October

The 31st Annual General Meeting of the Gateacre Society will be held on Tuesday 25th October 2005, at 8 p.m., in the Chapel Hall, Sandfield Road, Liverpool L25. Various officers' reports, and the annual accounts, will be presented for approval, and nominations will be invited for membership of the Society's Executive Committee.

Please note that we are very keen to recruit new members onto the Committee - whether to assist with administrative tasks or simply to take part in our discussions of planning matters and the Society's future programme of activities. Between now and the A.G.M., why not have a word with any of the existing Committee members to find out more about what's involved?

# THE HISTORY OF CUSTOMS & EXCISE

A review of our July talk by *Mary Champion*

Ron Davies, a retired schoolmaster, came to talk to us on Tuesday 19th July. Ron's subject was History and he now works, in a voluntary capacity, as the official publicist of the Customs & Excise Museum which forms part of the Merseyside Maritime Museum.

The purpose of Customs, he told us, is to collect revenue and to protect society, while that of Excise is solely to collect revenue. Excise is the tax paid on tobacco, beer, spirits, petrol, diesel and heating fuel - based on the value, or volume, or quantity. Examples of the formulae used for working it out are to be found at the Museum. From 1203 onwards, cargoes came to be loaded and unloaded at legal quays, Customs Houses were placed near the quays to keep an eye on affairs, and customs officers patrolled to prevent illegal landings. The principal officers were the Collectors, who took the money and sent it to the Exchequer in London, and the Searchers who examined the goods and assessed the amount of duty to be paid. Every major port had a Customs House - on the first floor was the Long Room where the merchants paid the duty and on the ground floor was the weighing area. The basement was used for storing seized goods.

In the mid-nineteenth century the development of steamships and the rise of the prosperous middle classes meant more people travelling. In the twentieth century airliners increased travel again. In 1909, when Bleriot flew the Channel, the Dover Customs Officer issued him with a quarantine certificate classifying his aeroplane as a yacht! By the 1950s travel had increased so much that officers could not check everyone's luggage, and the Red and Green channels were introduced.

Smuggling reached its peak in the 1700s. High duties on imported goods led to organised smuggling on a grand scale - spirits, tea and tobacco were in great demand. An electric map in the Museum shows that smuggling was rife all over the country. The smuggler was often portrayed as a romantic figure, and there are many tales of smuggling in the North West - but not enough room to include them here!

Nowadays, the war against drugs is of paramount importance - lorries and cargo ships are frequently used for smuggling. Also the trade in 'endangered species' has become a problem, much of it ivory which comes in disguised. Other smuggled objects are guns, pornographic books and films, and fake goods. The Museum makes people aware of the problem - and the high-tech equipment which is used to combat it - and trained officers speak to children in schools.

This is just a résumé of Ron's fascinating talk. Many of us, I am sure, will be off to see the Customs & Excise Museum, which is situated at Liverpool's Albert Dock.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING MEMBERS OLD AND NEW ON HERITAGE OPEN DAY AND AT THE A.G.M.**

## 'FRIENDS OF GATEACRE' NEWS

- ◆ All the effort put into this year's Gateacre in Bloom displays seems to have paid off. Representatives of the Friends of Gateacre Committee have been invited to the North West in Bloom awards ceremony in Bolton on 23rd September - which means that Gateacre has definitely won something!
- ◆ To help raise funds for winter planting and other activities, the Gateacre in Bloom Portfolio - as presented to the judges when they 'did the rounds' in July - has been produced this year in the form of a 2006 Calendar. Full of colour photographs of Gateacre Village, it is now on sale at £5 a copy. To order, speak to any Committee member of the Friends of Gateacre. We also hope to have the calendars on sale on Heritage Open Day - and at our A.G.M.
- ◆ Top priority at present is the drawing-up of an improvement scheme for the former Cricket Field in Belle Vale Road. Two seats have already been installed, and wildflower planting around the edge is proposed for the autumn. The Friends of Gateacre are inviting suggestions from local residents on other features which could be incorporated.

## OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR DAY

The turnout for the Friends of Gateacre's Home Front Recall event on 21st August was greater than anyone had expected - and a good time seems to have been had by all.

From the solemn act of remembrance at the beginning to the singalong at the end, the village was buzzing with activity, and a big vote of thanks is due to those who planned and managed this very successful event.

## Gateacre Chapel News

**On Sunday 9th October,  
'CONSERVATION STARTS WITH ME':**

A very special event for families, starting with a multi-faith service and ending with hands-on activities in the Chapel Hall. See local publicity for further details.

## A Doorway Saved - A Time Capsule Found

In our May 2003 Newsletter, we reported that we had persuaded Bellway Homes to salvage an old stone doorcase - including a lintel dated 1652 - when the former Gateacre Hall Hotel was demolished. This historic feature has now been re-erected within the grounds of the new apartments (Woodsome Park) which have been built on the site, and we are planning an 'unveiling' ceremony in October to publicise it. What we had not anticipated was that, when the demolition team came to remove the old stonework from inside the hotel, they discovered a 'time capsule'. This was a glass jar stuffed with documents which had been hidden there in 1881, when alterations were being carried out to what was then a private house occupied by Mr George Hunter Robertson. Among these documents - which the finder has kindly donated to the Gateacre Society for safe keeping - are copies of the Liverpool Daily Post, the New York Weekly Herald and a Cheshire Lines railway timetable, together with a pen-and-ink drawing of the old doorway and a fascinating handwritten account of life in Gateacre in 1881 by Mr Robertson's two teenage sons. We shall be putting this material on display at our A.G.M. on 25th October, but meanwhile anyone who would like to come along to the unveiling ceremony - which we hope will be covered by the local media - should contact Beryl Plent (tel. 428 5379) for a personal invitation.

## History on your Doormat?

Almost 3,000 copies of our 'History on your Doormat' leaflet - see last Newsletter - were distributed by the Friends of Gateacre in mid-August. Members of the Gateacre Society living outside the area covered by this free delivery should receive a copy with this Newsletter. (If you have not received a copy by either of these routes, please let us know and we will make sure that you get one). The remaining copies will be on sale on Heritage Open Day and at our future meetings, price 20p each.