

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'.



The Gateacre Society

Registered with the Civic Trust and as a Charity

NEWSLETTER - April 2007

Our next meeting:

WEST DERBY

An illustrated talk
by Stephen Guy
on Tuesday 17th
April, 8 pm,
in Gateacre
Chapel Hall,
Sandfield Road,
Liverpool L25

Stephen Guy is Chairman of the West Derby Society. He will talk about this ancient community which is older than Liverpool - the city that swallowed it up in the 1890s.

King John is said to have hunted in the royal hunting forest at West Derby, where a castle was built in early Norman times. Last traces of the simple fortress were removed in the 1950s. Ancient West Derby Village was rebuilt by the Earl of Sefton in the 1850s to make a suitable entrance to the newly laid-out grounds of his stately home, Croxteth Hall. However, historic buildings such as the Tudor Courthouse and Yeoman's House and village stocks were retained. The West Derby Society campaigned for the 1586 Courthouse to be restored, and 2007 is the third year it has been open (every Sunday between 2 pm and 4 pm, admission free). It is manned by Society volunteers.

Stephen is also a trustee of Grade II-listed Lowlands, a mansion in the Village which has been the home of the West Derby Community Association since 1957. In March 2007 the Heritage Lottery Fund gave the green light for a £1 million restoration and renovation of the 1846 building, due to start in September 2007.

ALL WELCOME - Gateacre Society members free of charge - **Visitors 50p**

GATEACRE COMP'S 50th BIRTHDAY

Gateacre Comprehensive School took in its first pupils in 1957, and Lisa Mitchell, drama technician, has been given the job of marking the 50th birthday this summer. She is hoping to compile some video footage of former pupils and staff wishing the school 'Happy Birthday', as well as to arrange a number of events in July to which old boys and girls will be invited. The celebrations may also include a photographic display, so anyone with memories or material that would be suitable for inclusion is urged to get in touch - either directly with Lisa at the School or with the Society so we can pass them on.

'BINGO & BOOZE' in the Chapel Hall

A social evening, in aid of Chapel funds, is to be held on Friday 27th April, starting at 7.30 pm - price £3 for a book of draw tickets. Bring your own food and drink (wine, etc.). Further details from Joan Chidlow on 428 8432.

FINDING OUT ABOUT FAMILY HISTORY

Our December Talk - reviewed by Mary Champion

On Sunday afternoon, 3rd December 2006, Adrian Wood came to speak to the Gateacre Society. He has traced his family back to the seventeenth century in Woolton, using Church records and Census returns.

At the time of the 1841 Census, Peter Blackburne was married to Mary (née Holland) and had one son. Their daughter, Margaret Blackburne - Adrian Wood's grandmother - was born in 1846 in Woolton Street, and in 1848 the family moved to premises at the bottom of Gateacre Brow as butchers. By the 1851 Census there is no mention of Peter, and Mary is shown as head of the household. Adrian showed us a tapestry worked by Margaret in 1857. This sampler made its way to Sweden through marriage, and was returned to the Wood family only recently.

The 1861 Census showed John Blackburne, the eldest son, as a butcher in Woolton Street with his sister and a younger brother. He moved his premises back to Gateacre (Belle Vale Road/Halewood Road) about 1868. Meanwhile Margaret had married Alexander Bibby Wood in 1865, when she was 19. She had a number of children - of whom 7 survived. In 1868 she and Alexander opened a grocers shop in Woolton Street, probably in the same premises as the previous butchers, and in 1871 they moved to Quarry Street where the Census described Alexander as 'coachman and beerseller'. He later joined Evan Davies, and they traded for many years as Davies & Wood, Carriage Proprietors. Alexander also drove horse trams from Liverpool to Wavertree.

In 1874 Alexander fought a bare-fisted boxing contest on a field in Church Road, Wavertree. He won and a grateful sponsor offered him the choice of three public-houses. Alexander and Margaret chose the Railway Inn in Rose Lane (on the site of the present Rose of Mossley). They stayed there for 25 years and then moved into one of a pair of houses they had built at the top of Rose Lane (where Tesco's car park is today). Alexander died in 1909, but Margaret lived in this house with unmarried members of her family until she died, aged 88, in 1934.

Adrian concluded his talk by listing the sources of information which are available to family history researchers in the Liverpool Record Office, and also some which he had been able to consult in the University Library. He had a number of examples on display, and answered many questions from the appreciative audience.

HISTORICAL WALKABOUT

The sun shone on Friday 2nd February when a school party, from Our Lady of the Assumption Primary, visited Gateacre Village Green. Year 4 pupils (8/9 year olds), teachers and some Mums were given a potted history of the listed buildings that could be seen from the village centre. They listened attentively, pictures were passed around, and they were encouraged to ask questions. Interest was shown in the memorial fountain and they enjoyed being 'hands on' at the Queen Victoria monument. We trust the outing proved inspirational, resulting in further discussion and some enjoyable follow-up projects in the classroom.

Beryl Plent

NORTON PRIORY

Our September 2006 talk

- reviewed by Mary Champion

We had a good meeting on Tuesday 26th September. Kathy Williams gave an illustrated talk entitled 'Norton Priory: Life and Times'. Kathy is very involved with the Priory Museum and steeped in knowledge.

Ethelfreda, a daughter of Alfred the Great, built a fort in about 911AD, more or less where the railway bridge at Runcorn is now. Then, after the Norman conquest, Halton Castle was built. Baron Halton founded a Priory near the river, for a community of Augustinian Canons, and in 1134 he moved it to Norton. The team of master masons, whose personal marks can still be seen on the stonework, took 45 years to complete the church, then started work on new living accommodation for the canons - with a sanitation system well ahead of its time.

The canons ate well in their refectory, and because the water was not safe to drink they each had a beer allowance of 8 (weak) pints a day. They worked in teams copying books, and took in boys from the age of 12 for training. In 1390 the Priory became an Abbey. A cross was acquired, containing a portion of the 'true cross' brought back from the Crusades, and also a large statue of St Christopher.

In 1536 Henry VIII closed the Abbey down. All the canons were given livings elsewhere in Cheshire. The ruins and grounds were sold to the Brooke family. The buildings were demolished, except for the undercroft - no-one knows what happened to the wooden cross - and 200 years later a Georgian house was built on top. By 1928 this had become an empty shell.

About 1970, curiosity led people to investigate what was left. A Norman arch was found, leading to the undercroft, and also the statue of St Christopher in the original entrance to the Abbey. This became the biggest archaeological excavation of its type in Europe. As well as the Abbey ruins (now a Museum) there is a herb garden, ice house, sculpture trail, laburnum arch, herbaceous border - and wonderful bluebells in the spring. Definitely worth a visit!

PLANNING NEWS

GATEACRE PARK DRIVE. Application ref. 07O/0483 has been submitted to erect a replacement neighbourhood shopping centre with associated car parking and service delivery areas, following demolition of the existing buildings (i.e. all of the existing shop units including the former KwikSave store and Othello's restaurant). This is an Outline application only: the drawings show about 130 parking spaces (compared with the existing 53), a service yard at the rear, together with new buildings accommodating a mix of food and non-food retail uses. The new blocks will be subdivided 'to suit occupancy', and no design details are currently available. The official closing date for comments was 29th March, though a decision on the application is unlikely to be made until May.

GRANGE LANE. Application 07O/0891 has been submitted to redevelop the site of Gateacre Comprehensive School 'by the erection of 114 dwellings and the layout of a children's play space and landscape amenity area (existing playing fields to remain)'. This again is an Outline application, to establish the principle of residential development so as to enable the plans for moving the School to Belle Vale to proceed. Liverpool architects Taylor Young were commissioned by the City Council to draw up a scheme, and their plans envisage a housing estate within the 'footprint' of the existing school, accessed from Grange Lane. The application is available for inspection at Millennium House, Victoria Street, Liverpool, and individual letters inviting comments have been sent to a large number of local residents - the closing date now being 25th April.

BLACKWOOD AVENUE. Application 07PT/0352 was submitted in February to erect a 12-metre tall 'imitation telegraph pole' phone mast, and associated equipment cabins, on the central reservation of Blackwood Avenue at the junction with Woolton Road. We sent in an objection, and were pleased to hear that permission was refused on 28th March.