

THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

Founded 1974. Registered Charity No.508024.
A member of the British Association for Local History
and the Merseyside Civic Society

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

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Annual Membership Subscriptions

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

If you wish to join the Society, please send the appropriate subscription to the Membership Secretary, David Phythian, 26 Primrose Road, Liverpool L18 2HE: cheques payable to 'The Gateacre Society'.
The Society's membership year ends on 31st October. If you are already a member, your address label indicates the date when your next subscription payment is due.

Our Book - Gateacre & Belle Vale: in old photographs - is on sale at our meetings and events, price **£10** (bookshop price £12.99).

Our Tea-towel is also available, price **£4**.

Visit our website - or contact Beryl Plent or Pam Ball for further details.

DO YOU HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS?

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



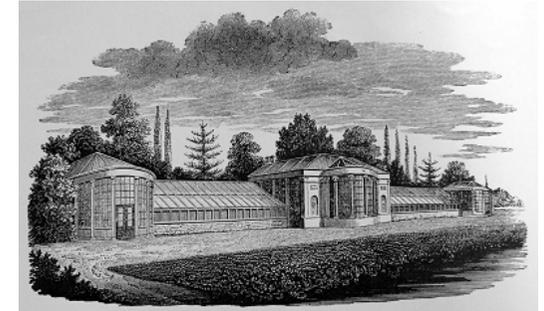
The Gateacre Society

Guarding the Past - Safeguarding the Future

NEWSLETTER - March 2017

Our next meeting:

LIVERPOOL BOTANIC GARDENS 1802-2017



An illustrated talk by Steve Lyus
in Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow L25 3PB
on Sunday 19th March at 2.30 p.m.

Steve Lyus is a committee member of the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group, and a Camellia Show Judge. He retired in 2009 from a lifetime working in the computing industry, and moved to the Wirral to create a garden for the many ericaceous plants he had propagated over the previous years. He volunteers at Ness Botanic Gardens, helping the botanist manage the gardens and collections there.

Steve found out, by chance, about Liverpool's amazing Botanic heritage, and was shocked to hear in 2014 that the remnants were about to be sacrificed silently on the altar of council budget cuts. Ever since then he has continued his research. and now talks to as many societies as he can to promote the existence of what is still left. There is a Gateacre connection, because William Shepherd - minister of Gateacre Chapel - was one of the founders of the original Botanic Garden over 200 years ago.

ALL WELCOME - Admission free - Donations invited

THE BIG HISTORY SHOW AT ST GEORGE'S HALL

This year's Merseyside Big History Show, organised by Ken Pye, will take place on **Saturday 29th** and **Sunday 30th April**. Admission will cost just £1 (in aid of the Minton Tiled Floor restoration) and there will be talks, exhibitions and information tables staffed by representatives of local history societies, etc., from all over Merseyside - including ourselves. For further details, please refer to our website nearer the time.

SPEKE HALL IN WORDS AND PICTURES

Our December 2016 talk – reviewed by Mike Chitty

Anna Alexander – a volunteer guide at Speke Hall – came to talk to us on 4th December. She wore the costume that she uses for her tours. Her illustrated talk took us from room to room through the house, and by the end we were fully informed about William Norris, Frederick Leyland, Adelaide Watt and others who, in their very different ways, made their mark on the present-day Hall.

We heard about Adam and Eve, the yew trees in the entrance courtyard which are between 500 and 1,000 years old. We read the inscription 'EDW N ANO 1598' which was put there by Edward Norris, alongside the 'Eavesdropper Hole' which allowed him and his servants to find out who was calling, and what they were talking about, before opening the door. Those were the days of religious persecution, and the Norrises were Catholics. We saw the room where Masses had secretly been held, and the Priest Hole where the celebrant could hide if necessary. Anna showed us the ornate plasterwork and over-mantle commemorating William Norris's 19 children.

By the 18th century Speke Hall was a ruin, with cows living in the Great Hall and the roof collapsing. But Richard Watt of Wigan, who had moved to Liverpool and owned sugar plantations in Jamaica, saw its historical value and its potential. He spent £73,500 of his profits from the slave trade (the equivalent of perhaps £6.5 million today) on buying the building and setting about its repair and restoration.

In the 1870s, his descendant Miss Adelaide Watt rented out the building to Frederick Leyland, who had taken control of the Bibby Line and used his wealth to assemble a collection of artworks including paintings and furniture, for which Speke Hall provided the ideal backdrop. His visitors included Dante Gabriel Rossetti and James McNeill Whistler. Whistler's mother nursed the Leyland children through bouts of scarlet fever.

It was Adelaide Watt who, in the 20th century, decided to bequeath the Hall to the National Trust. Anna explained how the Trust has sought to preserve as much as possible of the building's original fabric, while highlighting later additions such as the kitchen with its Edwardian range, the servants' hall with its bells from 1856, and the bathrooms (including one with William Morris wallpaper). Although much of the old furniture had been sold off and dispersed long ago, the Trust has been able to acquire replacements – including a billiard table (from a Garston working-men's club) which it is believed was the very one purchased by Frederick Leyland from Waring & Gillow of Liverpool.

Anna explained that she shows adults round the Hall on Sundays, and children during the week. The children come from schools in Wales and Lancashire as well as Merseyside. They always want to hear ghost stories. Anna has concluded that one of the best-known Speke Hall stories – about the baby thrown into the moat, and his distraught mother who stabbed herself to death – was probably invented by Adelaide Watt; but that doesn't stop people asking to hear it.

At the end, Anna showed us extracts from the 'Rental of Thomas Norris', a 20ft long document that mentions numerous people and places which she is hoping to identify. Anna's enthusiasm was infectious, and many of those present were, as a result, looking forward to taking a 'fresh look' at Speke Hall in 2017.

GOODBYE TO THE BRIDGE INN

'Development Site For Sale' is the message currently displayed on the Bridge Inn on Childwall Valley Road. There has been a pub in this location – its name derived from Naylor's Bridge on the other side of the road – for over 150 years, but it has now closed down and is awaiting demolition. Planning permission has been granted for a small supermarket on the site – as foreshadowed in our October 2015 Newsletter – and a developer is currently being sought to implement this.

The present building is an attractive example of 1930s architecture, designed by Harold Hinchcliffe



Davies (1900-1960) who grew up in Orient Drive, Woolton. However, attempts to have it designated as a Listed Building and/or an Asset of Community Value failed. When it was built for Messrs Higsons in 1938, as a 'luxurious hotel', the site was envisaged as a major road junction, being the intersection of the new Childwall Valley Road (which was intended to continue as far as Warrington) and Kings Drive (i.e. the proposed Liverpool and Merseyside Outer Circle route from Garston to Crosby). Neither of these road schemes, however, was completed.

LIVERPOOL BUS REVIEW

Merseytravel has published details of its proposals for saving money on 'non-commercial' bus services. In our area, the main change proposed is the withdrawal of the 173 service between Belle Vale and Sefton Park, and its partial replacement by a re-routing of service 174. The deadline for comments on the proposals, via Merseytravel's website, is 16th March.

If confirmed, the new timetables will come into effect in July 2017. The plan is that route 174 will run between Belle Vale and Penny Lane (without the evening/Sunday extensions to the Picton Clock and Allerton Library) every 30 minutes during the day and every hour in the evening. From Belle Vale Road the buses will travel in a loop via Halewood Road, Out Lane, Kings Drive, Woolton Village, Church Road, Woolton Hill Road and Gateacre Brow, before turning left into Grange Lane. The return journeys from Penny Lane to Belle Vale will follow the same route in reverse.

This detour will provide a useful link between Gateacre Park Drive, Reynolds Park and Woolton Village. It will also offer additional stopping points in Gateacre Village (outside the Black Bull and the Chapel).

GLENACRES RIGHT OF WAY UPDATE

Liverpool City Council received 5 objections to its Definitive Map Modification Order (see our last Newsletter) and 40 letters of support for the Order. Our thanks go to all those who took the trouble to write. The correspondence will now be referred by the Council to the Planning Inspectorate. If, as we hope, they decide to confirm the Order, then the footpath from Acrefield Road to Woolton Park will be officially designated as Public Right of Way No.77, and the brick wall on the Byron Court boundary will have to be removed or modified.