

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

Executive Committee 2017/18

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Eryl Chitty *Joint Hon. Secretary*

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Sales Officer

Sandra Sandland *Assistant Sales Officer*

Rosemary Doman

Margaret Gofton

WE NEED NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

If you would like to know more about what is involved,
please have a word with any existing member

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).

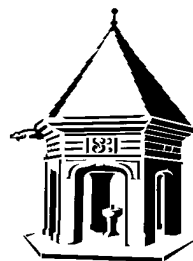
Our Tea-towel is also available, price **£4**.

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

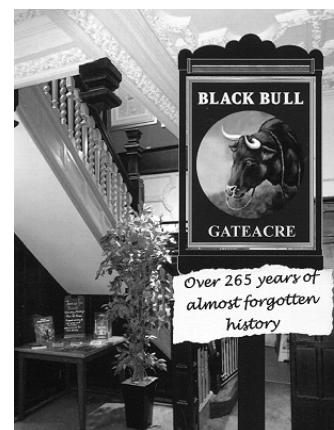
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The Gateacre Society

Guarding the Past - Safeguarding the Future

NEWSLETTER - November 2017



Our next meeting:

THE HISTORY OF THE BLACK BULL

**An illustrated talk
by Alan David Wilson**

in Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow L25 3PB
on Sunday 19th November at 2.30 p.m.

In the mid 18th Century, Gateacre was very rural: countryside, with a few clusters of houses and a crossroads where 'The Bull Inn' was located. Now called the Black Bull, the pub is still there and, whilst redeveloped over the centuries, still retains features from the past.

David Wilson, who gave us a fascinating talk two years ago about the history of the Gorse Cop, has been researching the story of the Black Bull, from its inception as a small, rural inn, with stables attached, through to the present day. We shall hear about the landlords who lived in the building throughout its history, and its various owners including the Walker family. Acts of arson, theft, celebrations and renovations all feature in the story, and the house is reputedly haunted by at least one restless spirit.

David will be bringing copies of his book for sale, price £7.

ALL WELCOME - Admission free - Donations invited

A.G.M. REVIEW

The atmosphere at our Annual General Meeting on 29th October was convivial, the refreshments - and Eryl Chitty's surprise quiz - were enjoyed by all, and the Society's Committee was re-appointed for a further year (though in the sincere hope that others will come forward as co-opted members). Sadly, Councillor Alice Bennett was unable to be there, but has undertaken to provide answers to at least some of the 12 questions we sent her with regard to local heritage and environmental issues. A number of ideas - and further issues - were suggested by the members who took part in the A.G.M. discussion, and we hope that there will be progress to report in a future Newsletter.

THE SAINT OF THE SLUMS

Our July 2017 talk – reviewed by Mike Chitty

Pauline Hurst came to speak to us on 10th July. Her subject was Kitty Wilkinson (1786-1860). Born Catherine Seaward in Londonderry, she moved to Liverpool as a child with her widowed mother and two siblings. When her mother became ill, young Kitty was sent to live and work in Caton Mill, a cotton factory near Lancaster. She must also have received a basic education there, because when she returned to Liverpool she opened a Dame School to support the family.

In 1812 Kitty married a French sailor, Emanuel Demonta. They had two sons, John and Joseph. It seems that Emanuel died at sea, and Kitty was forced to move to a smaller house that wouldn't accommodate a school. She worked at nail-making, then began taking in washing from neighbours. So impressed was her landlady, Mrs Braik, that she rewarded Kitty by bequeathing her a mangle!

In 1823 Kitty married for the second time. Pauline told us that her new husband, Thomas Wilkinson, was a gardener at Greenbank, the home of William Rathbone (a prominent Unitarian, merchant and social reformer). They lived in Denison Street, in a large house previously occupied by 'gentry', and Kitty began taking in orphan children.

In 1832 cholera struck, a national epidemic exacerbated by poor sanitation and an erratic water supply. Kitty was fortunate enough to live in a house with a boiler, running water and a drying area, so was able to take in washing – contaminated bedlinen as well as clothing – from the densely-populated 'court' houses nearby. In this, she was helped financially by the Liverpool District Provident Society, an organisation with which William Rathbone was involved.

The 1841 Census lists Thomas and Catherine Wilkinson in Frederick Street. The first public washhouse opened nearby in 1842 – an undertaking said to have been inspired by Kitty's efforts. Pauline showed us a statistical table indicating that the customers were a mixture of washerwomen, servants and private individuals. The 1851 Census lists Kitty as 'Matron of the Corporation Baths' (Thomas having died in 1849). Two years later, the baths were rebuilt in Upper Frederick Street, and by this time other baths had been opened: in Cornwallis Street and Paul Street. In addition to the facilities for the washing and drying of clothes, these had plunge baths for males and females, as well as individual baths. Pauline mentioned that soap and a towel were only available as 'extras'.

Before she died in 1860, Kitty Wilkinson had been given a silver teapot with the inscription 'Presented by the Ladies of Liverpool'. William Rathbone, apparently, bought this teapot from the family after her death, and it was the Rathbones who first brought Kitty's story to the attention of a wider audience.

Kitty Wilkinson's grave in Liverpool's St James's Cemetery is marked by a simple headstone. When the Anglican Cathedral was built nearby, however, her name and portrait were incorporated in a memorial window by the entrance to the Lady Chapel. And more recently she has become the first woman to be the subject of a statue in St George's Hall.

Pauline's talk was relatively short, but triggered a long series of questions which she was happy to answer. It also gave rise to reminiscences from audience members, who as children had been taken to various public baths in Liverpool "whether they needed a wash or not"!

GO-AHEAD GIVEN FOR THE 231 HOUSES

There were 32 objections from local residents to Countryside Properties' planning application 17F/1805 (see last Newsletter) in respect of the former Gateacre Comp school site. Our Environment Secretary, Mike Chitty, spoke against the proposal at the City Council's Planning Committee meeting on 24th October, as did our ward councillors Alice Bennett and Malcolm Kelly. However the Committee decided to approve the planning application in accordance with the Planning Officer's recommendation.

We can only hope that two of our criticisms – the company's failure to produce the promised Residents Travel Pack (to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport in preference to the private car) and the Council's failure to improve a 'nearby' public open space (as compensation for the lack of on-site recreational provision) – will be remedied over the next few months. Currently, we are told, only £80,000 of the £231,000 'section 106 money' handed over by Countryside to the Council has been earmarked for spending, and that will pay for propping-up the Allerton Oak in Calderstones Park (hardly a benefit to the residents of the new Gateacre housing estate)!

A RIGHTS OF WAY PUBLIC INQUIRY

The Planning Inspectorate has told us that our Right of Way Claim in respect of the path from Acrefield Road to Woolton Park, via Glenacres and Byron Court, is to be the subject of a Public Inquiry – starting on 27th March 2018. The venue will be Woolton Golf Club, and anyone with a view to express will be invited to attend. If you have used the path on a regular basis at any time over the past 50 years, and would be prepared to give evidence at the Inquiry as one of our 'witnesses', please contact Mike Chitty as soon as possible.

MORE ABOUT THE 174 BUS

The new timetable for the 174 bus service (Belle Vale-Penny Lane via Gateacre) came into force on 23rd July. Three months on, we have sent some comments to Merseytravel. The loop via Reynolds Park and Woolton Village – introduced to replace the withdrawn route 173 – is very useful for residents of Gateacre Park Drive and Gateacre Village, but has not been well publicised. The timetable leaflets being handed out by Merseytravel are full of errors – including misspellings and an inaccurate route map – and don't give departure times for any of the stops in Gateacre Village. The drivers are complaining that they are given 28 minutes for the whole journey, whatever the time of day – and the knock-on effects of traffic congestion in the mid/late afternoon last for a long time afterwards. Our request for a new southbound bus stop and a relocated northbound stop in Grange Lane has still not been answered. Merseytravel's response to all of these points is currently awaited, and will be reported on our website.

Right: An extract from the Merseytravel leaflet. Spot the mistakes!

