

# 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](http://www.gatsoc.org.uk)   **Email:** [info@gatsoc.org.uk](mailto:info@gatsoc.org.uk)

## Executive Committee 2017/18

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Beryl Plent, 27 Grange Lane, L25 4RZ *Local History Sec. & Joint Vice Chair*

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*Environment Sec., Newsletter Editor & Acting Hon.Treasurer*

Eryl Chitty *Hon.Secretary*

David Phythian, 26 Primrose Road, L18 2HE *Membership Sec.*

Pam Ball, Flat 1 St Stephens Court, Halewood Road, L25 3PG (428 0500)

*Sales Officer*

Sandra Sandland *Assistant Sales Officer*

## 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, but anyone joining after 1st July 2018 is regarded as paid-up until 31/10/19. 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 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

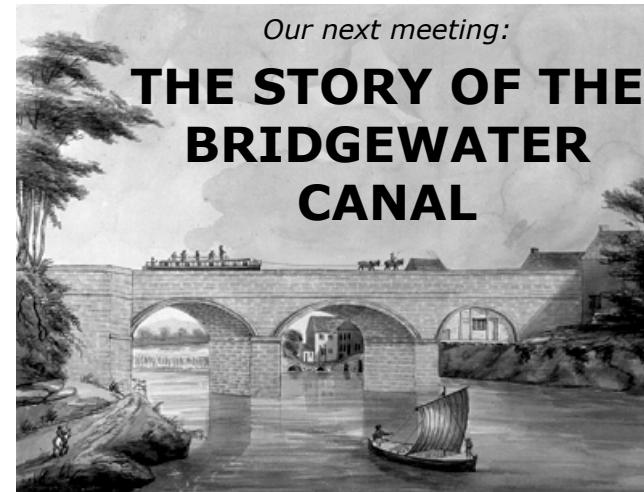
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# The Gateacre Society

*Guarding the Past - Safeguarding the Future*

## NEWSLETTER - September 2018



*Our next meeting:*

### THE STORY OF THE BRIDGEWATER CANAL

An illustrated talk by Brian Doman in Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow L25 3PB on Monday 1st October at 7.30 p.m.

With the population increase in Manchester in the early 18th century, there was an increasing demand for coal. The young Duke of Bridgewater wanted to improve the efficiency of his mines north of Worsley, and also make it easier to transport it into Manchester. He firstly dug a higher level drainage channel (sough). After seeing the Canal du Midi in France on his grand tour, and also the success of the St Helens Canal, he decided to dig a canal from Worsley to Salford. By this means he both drained the mines and provided transport for the coal.

A major achievement was the building of an aqueduct across the River Irwell. (This had to be replaced by a swing bridge when the Manchester Ship Canal was built). The present canal extends from west of Worsley, where it joins the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, into Manchester. It continues to Runcorn with another branch into a tunnel at Daresbury, from which it emerges as the Trent & Mersey Canal.

Brian Doman retired after a career lecturing in Mathematics departments, chiefly in Liverpool University. Since then Brian has followed an interest in mining of various sorts, with regular attendance at the annual conference of the National Association of Mining History Organisations with visits to a number of underground mines. He has also been Chairman of the Gateacre Society since 2009, having been Vice-Chair for several years previously. His talk will be accompanied by a number of photographs taken at various points along the canal.

ALL WELCOME – Admission free – Donations invited

# MY ESCAPE FROM THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

Our May 2018 talk – *reviewed by Mike Chitty*

This was a talk with a difference – a very personal account of fairly recent history – and it attracted a large audience. Dr Andrew Zsigmond has lived in Woolton for many years, but was born in Transylvania. He began by apologising for his strong Hungarian accent, but explained that when he left his native country at the age of 22 he spoke not a word of English.

There was no freedom and (officially) no religion in Hungary in 1956. But, after Khrushchev denounced Stalin, people began to talk more openly. In October, 150,000 workers and students demonstrated against the Communist regime, and asked to read out a list of demands on national radio. The manager called the secret police, who fired on the demonstrators from the top of the radio building and killed 55 people instantly. The uprising continued, and the head of the Army decided to support the rebels. Three days later, the Russians asked to negotiate peace – but promptly arrested the Army chief.

What did Andrew Zsigmond have to do with all this? He was a 3rd year medical student, given the job of arresting the Mayor, the Communist Party Secretary and the Chief of the Secret Police! "Young man, you're making a great mistake", they told him. On 4th November, at 4 a.m., the Russian re-invasion began, supported by 2,000 tanks. The President of the Hungarian Writers' Association begged in vain for international help. Altogether 2,500 Hungarians died. Andrew and two medical student friends hid in his father's vineyard for six weeks.

"There wasn't much food, but a lot of lovely wine". Then Andrew and his friends, along with a philosophy student, an architect and an actor, travelled by train to a point nearest to the Austrian border.

It was very cold. They had a compass and a torch, but not much else. After a long detour to avoid barking dogs, they found themselves in a farmhouse two miles from the frontier. All they now had to do was to cross a frozen river and a ridge – and a snow-covered minefield! On 6th January 1957, Andrew's group arrived in Austria – one by one so as to avoid the revolving lights. They registered as refugees, and were sent to the nearest camp, a converted school.

One day an ex-London bus arrived, a National Coal Board recruiting office signing up apprentice miners for the South Yorkshire pits. Andrew and his friends arrived in Barnsley, went down the mine and took Barnsley girls to the cinema – their only way of learning English. The chest physician who examined him found out that he'd been a medical student, and invited him for Sunday lunch. He also told Barnsley's new MP, Roy Mason, who promptly asked a Parliamentary question: "Why are two Hungarian medical students mining coal?". Andrew was given application forms for various British medical schools. It was Liverpool University that offered him a place. In January 1958, Andrew became a 3rd year medical student in Liverpool, and three years later qualified as a doctor. He worked in the city until his retirement. He was appointed the Honorary Consul for Hungary in Liverpool – and in 2009 was also made an Honorary Scouser by the Lord Mayor.

Dr Zsigmond's first-hand account gave us a vivid impression of the Hungarian revolution and its aftermath. His anecdotes continued during the lengthy question-and-answer session, which gave an indication of just how much his talk had been appreciated.

## HERITAGE OPEN DAY IN GATEACRE

On **Saturday 15th September**, Gateacre Chapel in Gateacre Brow and St Stephen's Church in Belle Vale Road will BOTH be welcoming visitors, free of charge, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

*For more information see our website – or go to [heritageopendays.org.uk](http://heritageopendays.org.uk)*

## THE PUBLIC INQUIRY CLOSES

On 14th August, the Closing Statements were made at the Rights of Way Public Inquiry held at Woolton Golf Club (see previous Newsletters). Both we and the City Council argued that a right of way had been established years ago between Acrefield Road and Woolton Park via Glenacres, as a result of the unhindered movement of pedestrians and the absence of any signage or physical barriers. The Byron Court Management Company – who built a wall across the path in 2016 – described the Gateacre Society's evidence (including the 56 User Evidence Forms filled in by local residents, detailing the frequency and purpose of their journeys along the path over a period of 40 years) as "unreliable", reflecting "an over exuberance to win a cause". We know that this was not the case, and we are confident that the Inspector – whose job it is to decide whether or not to confirm the path's status as a Public

Right of Way – will be fully capable of distinguishing the fact from the fantasy. *Full details of the Inquiry, including copies of the evidence presented by both sides, can be found on our website.*

## OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 44th A.G.M. of the Gateacre Society will be held on **Sunday 28th October at 2.30pm**, in Gateacre Unitarian Chapel, Gateacre Brow L25 3PB.

We shall be reviewing the past year's activities, and inviting ideas for the future.

As usual, complimentary refreshments will be served, and we hope for a good turnout of Society members old and new.

*Prospective members are also very welcome to attend.*

## THE BIG HISTORY SHOW CANCELLED

We were sorry to hear that, for various unanticipated reasons, the exhibition planned for late September in Liverpool city centre will not now take place.

The organisers hope to rearrange it for 2019, and we look forward to participating.

## OUR LECTERN REFURBISHED

In 2008 we installed a Heritage Lectern on the village green, containing a map, pictures and brief description of some of Gateacre's historic buildings. To celebrate the lectern's 10th birthday this summer, we paid the manufacturers (Photocast of Speke) to have it repainted. *For more information on the history of the buildings featured, see our website – or our book 'Gateacre & Belle Vale in old photographs'.*

## GRANGE LANE UPDATE

Further to the article in our May Newsletter, Countryside Properties have informed us that "with regards to the verges on Grange Lane the works are programmed to commence in October".