

THE GATEACRE SOCIETY

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

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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.

Subscriptions may also be paid by bank transfer. Please email us for our account details. Alternatively they may be hand-delivered to any of the Committee members' addresses listed above.

Our Book - Gateacre & Belle Vale: in old photographs -

is on sale at our meetings and events, price **£9** (bookshop price £12.99).

Our Tea-towel is also available, price **£4**. See our website for 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 - April 2019

Our next meeting:

THE GENIUS OF BRUNEL

An illustrated talk by Mike Murphy

on Monday 29th April, at 7.30 p.m., in Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow L25 3PB

"It is obviously pointless to question Brunel's genius: no engineer – then or since – has displayed greater talent and energy across so many different, yet complementary, areas of nineteenth century industrial enterprise. All that may be done is to describe – however inadequately – the variety and scale of his achievements".

That is how our speaker, Michael Murphy, bills his talk on Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Mike was born in Birkenhead, has taught at schools in Wirral and Liverpool, and was head of history at St Francis Xavier's College. He has spoken to us several times, over the past 20 years, on a variety of different topics, and we are very pleased to welcome him back.

ALL WELCOME – Admission free – Donations invited



CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS

We are considering the production of a Gateacre Calendar for 2020. This will be a full-colour publication, and we want to show off Gateacre at its best. If you have any digital images that might be suitable for inclusion, and which you'd be willing to donate for the purpose, please contact any Committee member – or email them to info@gatsoc.org.uk – by the end of May. Note that the images must be in 'landscape' format, at least 2400 pixels wide – and as colourful (and/or seasonal) as possible!

WHO WAS LORD WOOLTON?

Our February 2019 talk – reviewed by Mike Chitty

Janet Hollinshead came to talk to us about a man who made Woolton a well-known name – though as the name of a Pie rather than a place. Who was he, exactly?

Lord Woolton was born in Salford – as Frederick James Marquis. He graduated from Manchester University in Combined Sciences in 1905, and worked as a maths teacher in Burnley. Before long, however, he changed direction, taking up two jobs in Liverpool. He was in charge of the Liverpool University Settlement – an institution, like similar examples elsewhere, using education for the benefit of deprived areas – and also Manager of the David Lewis Hostel, Club and Theatre, which had been paid for out of a philanthropic bequest from the late founder of Lewis's department store. In 1912 Marquis had married Maud Smith, who was also from Salford. They moved into a flat on the top floor of the hostel, and had two children.

In the 1920s he embarked on a new and very successful career. He had met the Cohen family – David Lewis's nephews, who had taken over the retail business on the founder's death – and was invited to work for the company. Soon, Marquis became a member of the Board – the first 'non-family' member – and by the 1930s he was Managing Director. Under his guidance, Lewis's expanded far beyond its original Liverpool base, and opened stores in several other provincial towns. In 1935 Marquis was knighted 'for services to the economy'. Janet explained that Marquis had continued to live in Liverpool. For most of the time he lived in Mossley Hill Road, but in 1938 he bought the house called 'Hillfoot' in School Lane, Woolton. Then, in 1939, war broke out.

As a result of his years of experience at Lewis's, Marquis was appointed Director of Equipment & Stores at the Ministry of Supply. He was given a seat in the House of Lords, to be available to answer parliamentary questions. The 'obvious' title, Lord Marquis, was deemed potentially confusing – so instead he chose Lord Woolton. In 1940 he was appointed Minister of Food, with an apartment in London and another in Colwyn Bay to which the Ministry had been evacuated.

Janet showed us pictures of ration books, recipe books and posters, for which Lord Woolton was responsible. The posters encouraged people to 'dig for victory' on 'the Kitchen Front'. In 1941 the chef at the Savoy in London was asked to devise a recipe for a meatless pie. Lord Woolton was by this time a very well-known figure – he gave weekly talks on radio as 'Uncle Fred', promoting the recipes – and the meatless pie became known as Woolton Pie.

It was only after WW2 that Lord Woolton involved himself in party politics. He became Chairman of the Conservative Party, and then Lord Privy Seal. Initially a Baron, he was made a Viscount in 1953 and Earl of Woolton in 1955. But he rarely visited Liverpool. The house, Hillfoot, was used as Lewis's HQ following the blitzing of their city centre premises. Eventually it was demolished to make way for the Camp Hill Road housing estate. The title, Lord Woolton, will die out soon, because the 3rd Earl (Frederick's grandson) only has daughters.

Janet ended her talk with a plea: does anyone have a photograph of 'Hillfoot'? Her account of Lord Woolton's life and work had been much appreciated by the large audience, and we hope that she will be successful in her search.

A CLEAN-UP COMPLETED

Our thanks go to the Friends of Gateacre for organising a very successful 'Great British Spring Clean' event on Saturday 6th April. Over 30 volunteers took part, including 15 from McDonalds (Belle Vale and Hunts Cross). The pile of bin bags left on the village green for collection at the end of the session demonstrated how much had been achieved. Thanks are also due to local Councillors for their support and Hug-a-Mug café for their hospitality. If you would like to volunteer for any similar events in future, please email fogateacre25@btinternet.com



THE SAGA OF THE MISSING PHONE BOX

In our July 2018 Newsletter we asked "Where's our phone box gone?". The K6-type kiosk which had been a feature of the Gateacre Village Conservation Area for so many years had disappeared, and no-one could tell us why. It would seem that both BT, who owned the box, and Ofcom, who regulate such matters, refuse to deal with enquiries from members of the public. Instead, they tell people to contact their local Council, who are supposed to handle any consultations on payphone removal. When we asked Liverpool City Council, we were initially told that they knew nothing about the removal of our box. Then they forwarded to us a copy of a letter which BT claimed to have sent to the Council's Planning Department in September 2016, listing 18 payphone kiosks that they were proposing to remove. According to the Ofcom guidance, "BT have to display a notice on the call box", inviting objections within 42 days. Furthermore the City Council should have invited representations from community groups. However, the Planning Department say that they do not recall the letter ever having been received.

When we looked at the list of 18 kiosks, we found that ours was not the only one in or near Gateacre – but the others were all 'modern' boxes rather than the classic K6 (Giles Gilbert Scott) design. They included the one outside Woolton Post Office, the one on Woolton Road (near Cuckoo Close), the one on Quarry Street (opposite Gladstone Street), and the one outside the telephone exchange in Dunbabin Road, Wavertree. Of these, only the Quarry Street kiosk has actually (over two years on) been removed. On visiting the other three, we could find no evidence of a displayed 'notice of removal' – except in the case of the Woolton Post Office kiosk, which has a printed notice (with illegible handwritten date) in a frame INSIDE the box.

The whole point of the Ofcom guidelines is to give local residents – not just payphone users (of which the statistics indicate there are only a handful in our area) – a chance to make their views known. Retention of a box for 'occasional emergency use' may well be justified if there are no alternative facilities available nearby. Even if this argument is rejected, then community groups are supposed to be given a chance to 'adopt' the box (for just £1) for conversion into, for example, a defibrillator station. In the case of the Gateacre Village box, we are still waiting to hear what went wrong, and whether it can be reinstated.

