

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

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.

**IF THE DATE ON THE ADDRESS LABEL READS 31/10/19,
YOU'LL FIND A 'FINAL REMINDER' ENCLOSED WITH THIS NEWSLETTER.**

If you wish to join the Society, or to renew, please send the appropriate subscription to the Membership Secretary, David Phythian, 26 Primrose Road, Liverpool L18 2HE: cheques payable to 'The Gateacre Society'. 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

A VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION

Guarding the Past - Safeguarding the Future

NEWSLETTER - March 2020

Our next meeting:

THE COMEDIANS

Tommy Handley and Arthur Askey

**A talk by Elaine Allen on Sunday 15th March, 2.30pm
in Gateacre Chapel, Gateacre Brow L25 3PB**

Liverpool is a city that is noted for its comedians. It has a long tradition of producing more comedians, and comedy writers, than any other place of comparable size. This talk will be looking at two of them, born within half a mile of each other in Toxteth:



Tommy Handley, who

kept the country laughing throughout the Second World War and after with his madcap show, 'It's That Man Again', and Arthur Askey, who had the first scheduled show on the wireless - 'Bandwagon' - and who kept the country laughing until his death in 1982.

Elaine Allen qualified as a Merseyside Blue Badge tourist guide in 2007 after many years in banking. Always interested in history, and especially local history, she relished the chance to have a complete change of career after leaving the bank.

ALL WELCOME - Admission free - Donations invited

A GATEACRE VILLAGE CLEAN-UP

The Friends of Gateacre continue to maintain the planters in and around the village centre, and to organise 'clean-up' sessions to clear litter and weeds from our local streets. New recruits are always welcome; for details email fogateacre25@btinternet.com

The next Clean-up Day is on **Saturday 28th March**, and anyone willing to volunteer is invited to assemble outside the Black Bull pub **at 10 a.m.**

THE MAN WHO MADE LIVERPOOL?

Our February 2020 talk – reviewed by Mike Chitty

David Hearn came to talk to us about Sir William Brown, Bart (1784-1864) on 2nd February. We are all familiar with the name William Brown Street, but David told us about the man himself: “merchant, banker, shipowner, philanthropist, MP, soldier, magistrate, businessman and pioneer of decimalisation”.

Alexander Brown was a linen merchant in Ballymena, Ireland. He had four sons: William, George, John and James. The whole family moved to Baltimore, USA, in about 1800. In 1810 William moved to Liverpool. Within 15 years John and James had opened offices in Philadelphia and New York, while George remained with his father in Baltimore. William's job was to import linen from Ireland, then send it on to America. He also offered space for sale – for both goods and passengers – on ships sailing between Liverpool and Baltimore. By 1853 Brown Brothers (as the firm was called) was described as “the richest house doing business in America”.

One of the main tools of the business was the Bill of Exchange, which was a convenient way for merchants to transfer money between Liverpool and the USA. Brown Brothers earned a commission on every transaction. William Brown was also Chairman, and principal shareholder, of the Bank of Liverpool. Brown Brothers funded the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and made profits by buying and selling shares in railway and other companies. Browns Bank in New York was the only one to survive the first international banking crisis, in 1837, thanks to a huge loan (promptly repaid) from Joseph Shipley. The private banking firm of Brown Shipley still exists in London today, as does Brown Brothers Harriman in New York.

In Liverpool, William Brown's offices were at Union Court, just behind the Bank of England. He also built investment properties: Browns Buildings in Water Street (the statues from the roof of which are now at the entrance to Calderstones Park) and Hargreaves Building in Chapel Street. He was a generous benefactor who, it was said, gave £100 (equivalent to perhaps £80,000 today) to every Liverpool charitable appeal that came to his attention. In 1857 he gave £40,000 to enable a library and museum to be built in Shaws Brow – which as a result was renamed William Brown Street. When the Library opened in 1860, people still regarded him as an American, even though he hadn't been to the USA for 46 years. When he died in 1864 – as 'Sir William Brown, 1st Baronet of Richmond Hill' (Richmond Hill Everton, that is, not Surrey) – an obituary commented that “some element in his character denied him public affection”.

David ended his talk by lamenting that, while William Brown is commemorated by a statue in St Georges Hall, his bust is hidden away in the vaults of the Walker Art Gallery. Surely, he said, it should be on display in the Library, towards which he contributed the present-day equivalent of almost £40 million. Also, his tomb in St James's Cemetery, by the Anglican Cathedral, is sadly neglected.

The talk was both informative and enjoyable. By the end, we could fully understand why David regards William Brown as “the man who made Liverpool”.

LITTER, LEAVES AND FLOODING: Action needed

We have reported several environmental issues to the City Council in recent weeks. Prominent among them is the state of the pavements in Belle Vale Road (on both sides, between the traffic lights and Woodholme Court) where the unswept autumn leaves have been compressed to a slippery mulch. Another cause for complaint is the frequent flooding of the public footpath leading from Beechurst Road towards Belle Vale shopping centre.

If you share our concerns – or are aware of similar problems elsewhere in Gateacre – please report them yourself using the Council's 'Street Issues' web form at bit.ly/LCCsiform – or by phoning 0151 233 3001. Make sure you are given a reference number, so progress can be tracked; and preferably let us know as well.



TWO PUBS 'REFRESHED'

Our two main pubs – the Black Bull and the Bear & Staff – were both closed briefly for refurbishment during January. At the Bear & Staff, the beer garden alongside the car park has been greatly increased in size, with lights strung between wooden poles to encourage evening drinking (when the weather improves!). When we queried the lack of planning permission for these new lights and outdoor tables, we were initially told that it wasn't needed, as the poles were “not permanently fixed”. However, the Council's Environmental Health department could, we were told, take action against light pollution. Now the Planning Department has had a re-think, and has asked the owners to submit a planning application for the modifications that have been carried out.

At the Black Bull, the changes included the delivery of new tables, apparently to replace the wooden benches on the cobbled forecourt. However the old ones are still there – there are now 12 in all – despite the previous planning permission limiting them to a small strip across the front of the building.



WALLS, FENCES AND PAVING: A Reminder

Seemingly minor changes can have a significant impact on the local street-scene – and the wider environment – which is why many of them are subject to planning control.

The City Council takes enforcement action when necessary, but this process is often lengthy – meaning that neighbours and contractors are sometimes unaware of it until the work eventually has to be undone (or re-done).

In particular, it should be noted that planning permission is needed to construct a new wall or fence higher than one metre if it is next to a public highway, or two metres elsewhere. And permission is also needed to pave over a front garden, if the material used is impermeable, covers more than 5 sq.metres, and does not provide for the water to run to a permeable area such as a lawn or border.

Advice on such planning matters can be obtained from the Council by phoning 0151 233 3021