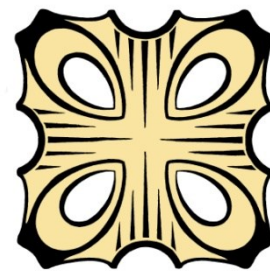


THE WOOLTON SOCIETY

www.wooltonociety.org.uk
Instagram: @thewooltonociety



ISSUE NO 377: Winter 2026

THE WOOLTON SOCIETY: SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 50
YEARS

NEWSLETTER



29 Allerton Rd, see page 4 for more information about this image.

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WS QR code

Society News

Subscriptions

All subs became due on 1st September, with the majority of members now paying by standing order. This is much appreciated by the treasurer & membership secretary as banking up cash & cheques involves a trip to the city centre to access the nearest branch of Barclays. The society now uses a card reader at markets & meetings which has reduced the amount of cash taken.

The society has not raised subs for many years, as membership subs. are sufficient to cover all costs incurred. With membership starting from £4 a year, this is very good value for money.

Adult (single) £6

Adult (joint) £9

Over 60s /student (single) £4

Over 60s (joint) £6

Members who have not yet renewed their subs will be sent a reminder with this newsletter. It would be helpful if any changes in circumstance, such as a house move or the death of a member, could be passed on to the membership secretary.

Newsletters are emailed to all members as part of their subs. A paper copy may be supplied at an extra charge of £8 per year to cover printing & postage charges.

Annual General Meeting

The 52nd AGM was held on 19th November, with the business of the evening followed by an informal social gathering with refreshments. The officers & committee are as follows:

Chairman: Jean Davies

Hon. secretary & vice chairman: Paul Wilkie

Hon. treasurer: Charles Davies

Membership secretary: Jean Bates

Committee: Bob Collins, Viv Hicks, Janet Hollinshead, Janet Hudson, Rob Kirby, Lois Murray, Paul Smith

We are delighted that two new committee members have been recruited, Paul Smith & Dr Lois Murray, who will be giving a talk in May. The post of Environment secretary is currently vacant. We hope that the post will be filled soon.

Talk in October

Alistair Baker of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission gave a very informative & interesting talk on 16th October, speaking in the role this organisation plays in caring for the final resting places of those who served & died in conflicts around the world. Alistair will be returning in September to give a further talk on the CWGC.

Programme of talks for 2026

The talks in February, March & October will be held on Thursday afternoons, starting at 3pm, so avoiding the dark evenings. The talks in April, May & September, the Quiz Night in June & the AGM in November will be on Wednesday evenings starting at 7.30pm. All talks are held in St Mary's Hall, off Church Road. The hall has step-free access & a large adjacent car park, with bus stops nearby on Church Road. Complimentary refreshments will be served at the afternoon talks from 2.30pm

Fuller details of talks later in the year will be in newsletters 378 (March) & 379 (July), on the website & Instagram & on the notice board in the village centre beside the former Coast café.

Thursday 19th February at 3pm: Ken Pye: The Bloody History of Liverpool

Well known broadcaster, author & local historian Ken Pye will be speaking on the grim goings on inside the Castle of Liverpool, the Civil War, & the massacre of citizens in the town. He will be bringing a selection of his publications for sale. Ken is a regular speaker at our talks & is a life member of the society. Please arrive early to secure a seat.

Thursday 19th March at 3pm: Bernard Nevin: Margery Booth, the knicker spy who sang for Hitler
Margery Booth was an opera star in the 1930s, now largely forgotten, who acted as an undercover spy in wartime. She rose to fame when noticed by Adolf Hitler while singing at Berlin's opera house. This promises to be a very entertaining & informative talk.

Wednesday 15th April at 7.30pm: John Coventry: Searching for The Holy Grail
The most sought-after artefact in history, The Holy Grail has long fascinated Christians & historians alike. John's talk will follow The Grail from its first century Holy Land origins through Arthurian legend & Nazi mythology into the present day.

Wednesday 20th May at 7.30pm: Dr Lois Murray: The History of Public Health in Liverpool
Liverpool appointed the first Medical Officer of Health in 1847 when Dr William Duncan was set to tackle the desperate living conditions of his patients, & to improve the city's sanitation. Dr Murray works in public health & will be speaking on the advances made in the past two centuries.

Wednesday 17th June at 7.30pm, Quiz night
The eighth annual quiz night will see the 2025 champions Chips Ahoy defending their title. All members are invited to take part, making up a table of four to challenge the current holders of the coveted Quiz Cup. There will be prizes!

Summer outing
An outing is being planned for July, with a visit & guided tour at Shakespeare North in Prescot being considered. More information in issue 378.

Summer break in August

Wednesday 16th September at 7.30pm: Alistair Baker: From the archives
Alistair will be continuing his talk from October 2025, speaking on the work done by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This talk will be on cases from their archives, so if anyone has a particular serviceman in mind, such as a family member, Alistair will find their service record & include them in the talk. Please contact the society well in advance of the talk, with all relevant service details to aid the search.

Thursday 15th October at 3pm: Professor Bryn Evans & Ian Rasmussen: The hidden history of the British Restaurant.
Prof. Evans is professor of History at Liverpool Hope University, & a world authority on the history of food. He & Ian Rasmussen, retired lecturer & speech writer will be speaking on the role of Lord Woolton in feeding the nation during the war years.

Wednesday 18th November at 7.30 pm: the fifty third annual general meeting
All society members are invited to the AGM. There will be refreshments after the business of the evening is concluded.

Please note that the society has the use of St Mary's Hall from 2.30 to 4.30 on Thursdays, & from 7 to 9 pm on Wednesdays, to allow for setting up & clearing away. Early attendance by members is appreciated to enable to allow the talks to start promptly at 3pm or 7.30pm.

Markets and merchandise.
The society usually takes a stall at the local market which is on the second Saturday of each month. The dates for 2026 are:
14th February, 14th March, 11th April, 9th May, 13th June, 11th July, 8th August, 12th September, 10th October, 14th November, 12th December.

The markets are an excellent way of publicising the society, with many new members joining after chatting with the committee members manning the stall. Merchandise as well as information is available, with the society's two books & eleven pamphlets on sale, as well as a tea towel (£6) showing images of the village, & designed by WS member Jenny Brown. There are also a few high-quality cotton aprons still available, now reduced to £6, with a design by local artist Sandra Hepworth.

The publications list comprises:

The definitive *History of Much Woolton* (£3) written by WS founder Janet Gnosspelius; *Woolton Stone & Liverpool Cathedral* (£5) edited by Dr Janet Hollinshead

The pamphlets are 1. Who Lived at Woolton Hall; 2. Who was Lord Woolton; 3. Hillfoot Villa
4. Woolton Walks; 5. Woolton's Convalescent Home; 6. Medical matters; 7. The Nuns of Woolton;
8. A guide to Woolton Society plaques; 9. Woolton Heyes; 10. The Woolton Spitfire; 11. A History of Reynolds Park.

All the pamphlets are priced at £1, with numbers 1-3, 6-7 & 9 written by Dr Janet Hollinshead, number 5 by Dr Hollinshead with Paul Wilkie, numbers 4 & 8 by Jean Davies, number 10 by Dr Rob Kirby & number 11 by Geoff Kendall

The books & tea towels are also on sale at Brown's newsagent on Woolton Street (428 2408). The book on Woolton's contribution to the building of the Anglican cathedral is on sale at the cathedral shop.

Plaques project

The society has installed nine commemorative plaques around the village since 2019, with three more now in the pipeline. They will be at the home of Liverpool FC manager Bob Paisley in Bower Road, The Elephant pub, & Ashton Square. The last two are listed so the process of listed buildings consent will have to be undertaken, which can take several months. The plaque to Bob Paisley will go ahead as soon possible as the property on Bower Road is not listed. All the residents involved have given their permission to have a plaque installed, which in due course will be manufactured by Photocast in Speke. The society's pamphlet number 8 *A Guide to Woolton Society Plaques* contains details of the first seven plaques to be installed. A new edition will be published later this year which will feature the all twelve plaques, with an account of the person or place being commemorated.

Cover picture: 29 Allerton Road.

The image on page 1 of this issue shows 29 Allerton Road at its junction with Church Road South. The building as shown here is a mirror image of the opposite corner, the junction of Allerton Road & Church Road & the current site of Morecrofts. In more recent times number 29 housed Barclays Bank, & before that a branch of Martins Bank, with significant changes made to the fabric of the building so that it no longer mirrored the opposite corner. The bank later incorporated number 27, known as Lake House, which had been a school run by members of the Lott family, & steps with a ramp were added.

The image shows a group of smartly dressed gents outside the Carnival Office, but when, & what was the carnival? First thoughts were of the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, or the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria in 1897, but local historian Ron Brown has discovered that there were regular carnivals in the village, with maypole dancing & flower displays. A Bicycle Carnival was held in 1904 so this may be the one pictured.

This photograph was for many years in the office of the manager of Barclays, Gordon Nickson, who was also Woolton Society treasurer. The picture was found during the recent renovation of the building, with Ron able to photograph it; it is his copy featured on page 1. If any member should know of the whereabouts of the original we would be very grateful, as there was a plan to donate the picture to the WS before it was raffled off.

From our Archives: Winter 1996

Issues 215 & 216 were very concerned with the expansion plans of Sainsbury's:

Work is going ahead rapidly on preparations for the alterations & extensions. The existing shops in the Precinct seemed to vanish overnight.

You will notice from this month's Planning Register that Sainsbury's got a little ahead of themselves in moving the chemist & the dry cleaners into temporary accommodation before they applied for planning permission for the buildings.

Sainsbury's has been cooperative in trying to minimise problems of road works, extra traffic & safety of pedestrians in Out Lane during the operations. Traffic off the site is being stopped each day for two periods while children are going to & from the school. The site wall is being retained during excavations & a temporary gateway has been installed. Many people in the area would find it convenient if a gate in Out Lane could be provided permanently.

Should any other difficulties arise during the work, the main contractor is William Randall Construction Ltd. & their Mr Trevor Evans can be contacted via the store manager Mr D. Fearon.

Elsewhere in issues 215 & 216, Miss Lillian Hodgetts gave a talk on *Well Dressing in Derbyshire* in January, while Mr Mike Burchall of the City Planning Office held a Q & A session on *Conservation & Highway Issues* in February. These talks were held in the Village Club.

For many years Woolton Society talks were held in the Village Club on Allerton Road, as the club generously gave the free use of a room. The move to St Mary's was made after much discussion, as problems with parking in the village became such that many members, & speakers, arrived late. Also, our talks became increasingly popular, with members having to stand or sit on the floor on some occasions as all chairs were in use. The move to St Mary's was made final in late 2018, & although we now pay for the hall the advantage in having a room which will hold 95, plus an adjacent car park with step-free access to the hall made the transition very easy. The Village Club was thanked for their generosity over the years.

Environment, planning news & applications

Woolton Hall

Since the fire in August 2025 which devastated the hall, there has been silence, with residents & WS members hearing nothing from the owners of the Grade 1 Listed building.

Councillor Malcolm Kelly eventually heard in early January from the Principal Heritage officer at the council, informing him that emergency works had been undertaken at the north west elevation of the hall, that is, the part nearest to St Julie's school, in order to ensure public safety. The owners had also been given the opportunity to formulate an action plan for the building in line with the Building Act of 1984, but at the time nothing had been received from them.

Councillor Kelly replied asking about the future of the building, & costs involved. What actions did the council plan to take if the owners fail to act? Past dealings with the owners have not led to any constructive outcome as most instructions have been ignored or led only to further excuses.

Councillor Kelly had further news on 20.01.26, with a notification that the hall's owners have been notified of the costs incurred when securing the site after the fire, & these have been placed as a charge on the property. The owners had been given 28 days to prepare their action plan, with building control & heritage officers meeting them on 15.01.26 to discuss this. They have until 22.01.26 to formally submit their plan. At the time of going to print nothing had been heard from the owners.

Jonathon Wild of the Woolton Hall action group has also contacted the council, asking under the Freedom of Information Act of 2000. He has had no reply as yet. He has also contacted the police & fire service for information about the speed with which the fire spread. It was a very dry Summer but

the hall was riddled with damp. The official line is that kids with matches were responsible, but was an accelerant used?

More news as we have it.

Woolton Picture House

Better news now from the cinema, which was open for the twelve days before Christmas, showing favourites such as *It's a Wonderful Life* & *Elf* to packed houses. They now plan a short season of films around Valentines Day, such as *Casablanca* & *Some Like it Hot*. These are now nearly sold out too, showing the extent of support that the cinema is generating.

The WS has supported the reopening the cinema since the very beginning as we see it as a community asset which we wish to preserve. We now plan to help further by donating £2,000 to the fund. This is a large sum for the society, though one we can afford, & has been discussed at committee level. Members are asked to comment on this decision, as we will not go ahead with the donation if there is significant opposition. **Please reply within 14 days** as time is of the essence for the fund-raising effort. Contact the society by email or by writing via the membership secretary at 11 Manor Way, Woolton L25 8QY. The cinema will be run by new community interest company and the aim is to raise £700,000 to purchase & renovate the building, first opened in 1927 but closed in 2020 & empty since then. Over half of the money has now been raised, with fund raising to continue. There is an undertaking to return all funds raised if the target sum is not raised by April 2026.

Members wishing to make their own contributions should go to the website www.wooltoncinema.com where there are several options given for making donations. Please encourage others to support the reopening of the cinema as a community led asset.

A Community Interest Company (CIC) is a specialised limited company in the UK designed for social enterprises that benefit the community rather than private shareholders. They combine commercial trading with a social mission, ensuring assets and profits are primarily reinvested into their objectives. CICs must pass a "community interest test" and are regulated by the [CIC Regulator](#).

Oral History/Cinema project

The WS has been contacted by a group also fund raising for the cinema who are conducting an independent survey on Woolton Picture House. They are keen to speak to residents who have memories of cinema going in past years & who would be willing to be interviewed in an oral history project. If interested please contact clarecanning3@gmail.com

Recent planning applications of note

Many planning applications are seen by the WS each week, as the planning list for the entire city is sent to us although only the applications for the Much Woolton & Woolton Village wards are relevant to our members. Single storey extensions, & tree works outside the conservation area are not recorded here, though members can go online to check the entire list using the Planning Explorer:

www.liverpool.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control

25LP/3246 23 Ashton Drive L25 0NP

Application for Certificate of Proposed Lawful Development for change of use from C3 dwelling house to a children's care home (C2) to care for one child.

15F/2894 Footpath adjacent to 289 Hillfoot Avenue L25 0NN

Application to install one BT Street Hub & to remove associated BT payphones.

25F/2658 72 Kings Drive L25 8RH

Application to vary condition 2 attached to planning application 24F/3177 (to erect two 2 storey dwellings with 4 solar panels, an air source heat pump, & carry out associated landscaping works following demolition of existing garage) so as to make amendments to the approved drawings.

25H/2626 3 Watergate Lane L25 8QH

Application to erect a 2 storey side extension, single storey side extension with 2 roof lanterns following the demolition of existing garage, rear extension & conservatory.

25H/2345 24 Stoneyhurst Road L25 8SS

Application to erect a 2 storey extension to side following demolition of existing garage.

25H/2220 35 Layton Road L25 9NE

Application to erect a part 2 storey, part single storey extension to side & rear, with a single storey extension to front.

25H/2208 17 Barford Road L25 0PN

Application to erect a double storey extension to side & rear.

25H/2197 Hillside House, Glenrose Road L25 5JT

Application to erect new boundary walls with piers & metal railings to front & part sides of the property, with new entrance gates & associated landscaping to front as to create additional parking space.

Woolton News

Woolton in Bloom

The calendar for 2026 was even more popular than usual, selling out before Christmas. It featured images of old Woolton taken from the Woolton Society's own archives, with several of the pictures having been seen in the newsletter. Many photographs in our archive were donated by Bea McKenzie, a founder member of the WS & hon sec in the 1970s & 1980s. Bea's mother, also Beatrice, was a member of the Lott family, with an image of their motor business illustrating December. It is thought that Doman & Lott later became McKenzie's which members may remember in the village. Members of the Lott family can be seen outside the house on Church Road South on the page for June, & are also seen on a Church Road without traffic in August's image.

The calendar for 2027 will feature the Open Gardens event to be held this year on **Sunday 12th July**. Programmes with details of all the gardens open on the day will be available well before then, with more information in the next newsletter, out in March.

WIB volunteers meet on Wednesday & Saturday mornings at 10.00 in the lock-up opposite the car park on High Street, & are directed by horticultural manager Kerry Peacock. New volunteers are always welcomed to help with planting & maintenance, just turn up or ask at the market stall. Note that WIB receives no funding from the council & every penny has to be raised by their own efforts.

For more information & pictures go to the WIB site at:

<https://wooltoninbloom.wixsite.com/wooltoninbloom>

Friends of Reynolds Park

The park is a hidden gem in the city, but is not yet included in the Fields in Trust agreement, whereby the council pledges that land will not be lost to development. However, FORP has been assured that Reynolds Park will be included in the next tranche.

The Friends will be holding a Spring Clean in the park on **Saturday 28th March** from 10.00 to 12.00. Gloves, litter pickers & bin bags will be provided.

Friends chairman Geoff Kendall announced his retirement at the last meeting, as he will be moving to North Wales. He has served as chairman for twenty years & will be much missed. A new chair will be elected at the next meeting, in March.

Meetings are held in Woolton Tesco's café at 7pm on the following dates:

Wednesday 11th March, Wednesday 13th May, Wednesday 16th September, Wednesday 11th November, which includes the AGM. All are welcome to attend.

FORP may be found online at:

www.friendsofreynoldspark.co.uk

www.twitter.com/reynoldsparkfrs

www.facebook.com/friendsofreynoldspark

www.instagram.com/reynoldsparkfrs

The Gateacre Society

The next talk given by The Gateacre Society will be on **Sunday 1st February** at 2pm when David Roscoe will be speaking on The Royal Albert Dock.

Talks are held in the Unitarian Chapel on Gateacre Brow, & are free to attend though donations are welcomed.

Contact the society on www.gateacresociety.co.uk emailthegateacresociety@gmail.com

The Friends of Gateacre

This is a small group of volunteers who provide all the plants for Gateacre Village. More helpers are now needed, as Spring planting will begin shortly, & volunteers to assist with the watering will be needed after that, especially if we have another dry Summer.

Anyone willing to volunteer should email: mccormack_patricia@yahoo.co.uk & give contact details.

The Reader

The Reader organisation is a literacy charity based at The Mansion House in Calderstones Park. It has the aim of promoting literacy in adults & children, with reading groups & activities held daily. The adjacent Story Barn holds events for children of all ages, with many activities in school holidays. The Reader welcomes volunteers to work at the charity, both in the house itself & in the gardens. Posts vary, with meeters & greeters on the welcome desk, those based in the shop or the heritage room, & those conducting tours around the house & park. Reading Heroes are also needed, who work with individual children to encourage their literacy skills.

Those interesting in volunteering should enquire at the welcome desk or on www.thereader.org.uk The Reader also has a café & a coffee shop, plus an ice cream parlour. The Mansion House is also home to craft studios which offer sewing & knitting classes, with wood turning instruction being held in the former boathouse by the lake. The website has more information on all activities.

The Arts Society

This meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 2pm at The Bridge Chapel Centre, Heath Road L19 4XR

Lectures for the next few months are:

Bill Powell: *Salvador Dali* on **18th February**

Harry Venning: *Cartoonist* on **11th March** (please note this is the 2nd Wednesday)

Tyler Butterworth: *A bit of a Carry On* on **15th April**

Membership of The Arts Society costs £50 a year, though non members may attend for a fee of £6.

Honour for Woolton Society member

WS member & local resident Sarah Beresford has been awarded an OBE in the King's New Year's Honour list. Sarah works in prison reform & the award is in recognition of her dedication & work with the families of prisoners. Congratulations Sarah.

Issue 378 of the newsletter will be published in March 2026.