

Dear Councillor Baugh

Re: Watling Gate House and Newton Park

I have been reading with interest the letters and articles in The Sale and Altrincham Messenger regarding Watling Gate House and Newton Park. I have also been passing the information on to my sister who lives in the Rhondda Valley in South Wales. Until the Trafford Newspaper came out this month we have been unsure how we could contact anyone to lodge our vote for keeping these wonderful facilities open, other than publishing a letter in SAM. Therefore, we are writing to you, since you published your address in this month's Trafford News.

WE ARE OF THE OPINION THAT WATLING GATE HOUSE AND NEWTON PARK SHOULD BE REFURBISHED AND KEPT, AS COLONEL NEWTON INTENDED, AS A FACILITY WHICH COULD BE ENJOYED BY THE PEOPLE IN THE ALTRINCHAM BOROUGH.

The reason why we are so interested in keeping Watling Gate open is because we have so many happy memories of the building and it is too beautiful a building to let 'go to the dogs'. Let us explain:

Firstly, when I was a pupil of Park Road School (I am 71 now) we were, once a year, crocoddiled across the playing fields from school to Watling Gate to see the dentist! As if we weren't scared enough we had to go through the main hall of Watling Gate and there, lying on the floor, was a real stuffed lion, which, presumably had been killed at some time by Colonel Newton himself, it was acting as a rug and one of the main features of the room. The room was beautifully decorated with lovely velvet covered furniture.

Years later we had the privilege of being able to explore Watling Gate much more fully because, as one of the articles published in SAM so rightly says, Watling Gate (by this time a nursery) had to be tenanted by a member of the staff of Altrincham Borough Council. Our uncle, Orlando George Clay who used to work in the Surveyors Department at Altrincham Town Hall, and his wife Irene, were chosen to be tenants and caretakers of Watling Gate and lived there whilst looking after it for many years before the Chief Librarian and his wife took up residence.

As a family we had many happy hours at Watling Gate. Auntie Irene's family came over regularly from Yorkshire and we had many family parties. I held my engagement celebration there on November 5th one year - our memories go on and on.

In the room off the main hall were stored many exhibits which were we believe originally intended to be shown off in a museum - we were allowed to peep in there but not allowed through the door (even though accompanied by our uncle, and by this time responsible teenagers) - it was always kept locked. There was a large stuffed crocodile behind bars at the back of the building - he must have crumbled away completely by now!

We contend that Watling Gate and its attached Park should be refurbished and made into a Museum (which Altrincham needs and ought to have anyway to show off its history) and the park should also be kept beautiful for public use. What an interesting day out it would be in the summer for families to visit somewhere where they could find out some of their local history and then enjoy a picnic in the park. New swings, see-saws, etc. should be installed with seats and picnic tables available. A few park benches (as there used to be) could be provided for grandma's and grand-dads.

When dusk falls substantial park gates could be locked until the following day (as they used to be) - so making this a place of safety overnight. If a dog walk was necessary surely something could be arranged nearer The Pelican Hotel, well out of the way of the Park and Watling Gate House itself.

This is part of our heritage - please do not let it slip through the fingers of Trafford Borough Council.

We would be pleased if you could express our views as a matter of urgency at any meeting you may attend in the near future - **BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE TO RETRIEVE THIS LOVELY HOUSE AND PARK.**

Yours sincerely

Monica Brooke

Mrs Monica Brooke and Mrs Edwina Sass (nee Holmes)