



Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

Newsletter

Autumn 2013

Issue Number 85

Meetings

We meet at 8pm at **The Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club**. If you need help with transport please ring Mrs Angela Clarke, our Secretary, giving 24 hours notice, on 0151-336 - 1069.

Diary dates – 2013

16th September - " Atlantic Rowing
Challenge - Neil Gullenship

21st October - London-Holyhead Mail
Coach Route - David Waller

18th November - Leverhulme's Rivington
- Gavin Hunter

2014

17 February - 'The Slave Ships of Neston &
Parkgate'
– Anthony Anakin-Smith

17 March – 'Burton Mere Wetlands'
– Colin Wells

28th April - "Should Auld Acquaintance be
Forgot?" - Michael Corfe

19th May - AGM at 7.30pm followed by "Old
Liverpool 1897-1970s."
- Glynn Parry
Visitors are welcome

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, on Monday, 20th May 2013. A brief summary is given below.

Chairman, Moira Andrews, welcomed about 40 members to the meeting, and thanked the Cricket Club for the use of their facilities since the start of the new Winter season. She drew members' attention to the appointment of Stephen Gordon, a long-standing member, as the Society's Vice-President, during the past year. He thanked members for his appointment and the officers and committee for their work during the past year, including the programme of talks, which had been arranged by our secretary Angela Clarke.

Moira mentioned that the first phase of our Vision for Parkgate was to be the improvement of the Donkey Stand, with work due to begin in the autumn. Mention was made of the withdrawal of the planning application for Mostyn House, to give further time to consider the comments of English Heritage on the original proposal. It was expected that revised plans would be submitted to CWaC shortly, when the Society and local residents would have the opportunity to comment once more.

Election of Officers for 2013/14, proposed en bloc;

Chairman: Moira Andrews

Vice-Chairman: Greta Simpson

Secretary: Angela Clarke

Treasurer: Damian Loughe

Election of Committee for 2013/14; proposed en bloc;

David Roberts, Jill Brock, Jerry Harris, Jill Owen, Rob Naybour, Alan Passmore

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact:
Jerry Harris 336 7406

SUBSCRIPTIONS

£7.00 Single / £10 Household per year

Payment can be made at any of our meetings, however we would prefer payment by Banker's Standing Order. Membership, Standing Order and Gift Aid forms are available, from our Secretary.

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Rightway Bevans

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NEWS AND VIEWS

Cheshire West and Chester Council Strategic Planning Committee unanimously agreed to permit the Application for development of Mostyn House by J Livesey Heritage Homes. See below for fuller report.

Our 'Vision for Parkgate'. See below for more information.

As mentioned at the AGM, **as part of our environmental responsibilities**, the Society would like to offer members the opportunity to receive Newsletters and other communication via email rather than the current printed version.

This would take the form of a PDF file attached to an email.

The advantages of this will be;

- Reduction in printing and distribution costs and time
- A saving in postal costs and shoe leather, for hand delivered newsletters
- More detailed features can be incorporated
- Urgent information can be quickly communicated, on other Society matters.
- Members will be able to digitally store newsletters for easy referral
- Full Colour images can be included

In addition

- No email addresses will be given out to any third party.

To sign up to this please email parkgatesociety@rightway.ltd.uk and your details will be recorded.

Park Fields, Parkgate - Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Award - Christine Try, secretary of the Friends, has informed us that the Park Fields open space has been awarded QE II Jubilee status. This nationwide initiative, launched in 2011 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, was aimed at collecting 2012 fields, open spaces, recreation grounds and playing fields up and down the country in recognition of the Jubilee itself. Local Authorities (and private landowners) were asked to nominate to **Fields in Trust**, Fields that they were prepared to Dedicate to this cause: the **Friends of Park Fields** persuaded Cheshire West & Chester Council (CWaC) to put Park Fields forward for this accolade. Another seven or eight fields in Cheshire were also selected by the Council and put forward for the award. Importantly, the **Deed of Dedication** protects the open space from change of use or disposal by the Council in perpetuity (unless land of equivalent size, characteristics and location within the local catchment area is offered up for Dedication in substitution). The replacement of Park Fields with land meeting stringent criteria, and acceptable to Fields in Trust would be almost impossible to envisage, and thus we can regard Park Fields as safe for a very long time or even for ever.

It is with sorrow that we have to record that our long time auditor, **Michael Lyons**, died earlier this year. A letter on condolence was sent from the Society, to his widow.

Welcome to **Stephen Gordon**, who has been appointed as a Society Vice President. **Valerie Place** is still our president, in absentia, but unfortunately she will never attend another meeting.

A fire on the Marsh, in April, seems to be the result of arson. Starting at the reed beds at the bottom of Moorside, it spread quickly towards the Parade, being halted by Fire Brigade action, level with Station Road. It is feared that many mammals were lost and the nesting area for reed bed birds. Now, in August, there is no sign of the damage to the marsh.

THE FUTURE OF THE MOSTYN HOUSE SCHOOL SITE - Following the sad closure of Mostyn House School in July 2010, the future of this historic and much-loved site has been unsecured. The School and the Grenfell family have been part of the Parkgate scene for 156 years.

On 11th July 2013, the future was secured when Cheshire West and Chester Council Strategic Planning Committee unanimously agreed to permit the Application for development from PJ Livesey Heritage Homes. Various Committee members expressed reservations but all agreed this was the only way forward.

The Society Committee was relieved to note the comprehensive list of conditions and obligations imposed in the CWaC Planning Officer's 22 page report, some of which we had urged them to include. Of particular note are the following –

5. Conservation management plan for repair and long term maintenance of Listed Buildings to be submitted.
6. Milestones adjacent to driveway to be retained and relocated within site.
8. Details of temporary building protection measures required.
9. Detailed record of air raid shelter to be undertaken
12. Environmental management plans to be submitted.

Committed sums – Playing Pitch contribution (£100,000).
 Chapel maintenance fund (£100,000)

Throughout the entire process in the last 3 years, we have taken the view that, sad as it is, a compromise has to be reached between what would be ideal and what is viable, to ensure the site does not deteriorate until it falls into ruins beyond repair. Drastic measures are needed and we believe this plan will lead to the iconic building on The Parade continuing to be part of Parkgate's heritage.

It is understood that the Grenfell Residents Group will not appeal the decision, but will try to add to the Planning conditions.

'A VISION FOR PARKGATE'. In the Spring edition of the Newsletter our Chairman Moira Andrews set out details of our vision for a comprehensive scheme of maintenance and improvements to The Parade, which are expected to get under way in the Autumn. At the same time our Treasurer Damian Loughe stated that the funding for this work was being provided from a number of different sources as match funding alongside Councillor Brenda Dowding's grant for projects in Parkgate and a significant donation from the Society.

Things have moved on quite smartly since then, thanks to the enthusiastic commitment of the team charged with developing the plans, working to a liaison group representing Chester West and Chester Council (CWaC), Neston Town Council and, of course, the Parkgate Society.

Peripheral to this scheme is the thorny issue of car parking in Parkgate, and it is here that residents will first become aware that things are happening. Already kerbside markings have been strengthened at the most congested part of The Parade, so that the regulations can be enforced more effectively, at least when staff are on hand in the area to deal with this issue – the shifts of the Council's limited number of enforcement staff are being adjusted as appropriate. At the time you are reading this, new direction signs should be going up encouraging visiting motorists to use the car parks at either end of The Parade: greater use of the Old Baths and Wirral Way free car parks should alleviate the problems to an extent.

The main area of activity in the Autumn will be the Donkey Stand. The new York stone for the surface has been selected, as has the design for the new seating; new litter bins will be provided in a less obtrusive position, so as not to offend the view of those eating their ice creams on the new benches. Details of the new interpretation boards to be sited here are still under consideration, but it is expected that separate boards will set out some of the interesting history of Parkgate, the wildlife to be seen in the area, and the interesting features of the coastline that can be viewed from this spot. As you know, the Donkey Stand is now the central location for Parkgate's Christmas lights; this year the Town Council are adding an attractive new Christmas tree to the display, and the construction works are being planned to take this further development into account.

While this is going on, plans are in hand to site a disused sailing dinghy at the Middle Slip as a reminder of Parkgate's past as a small fishing community. Marsh Nurseries have kindly offered to plant it up as seaside flower garden with plants which will hopefully flourish in the windy conditions of the foreshore. If someone could kindly donate some appropriate artifacts, such as old fishing nets, etc., we could consider incorporating these objects safely into the scheme. Work will also be carried out here to remove the unsightly concrete and reveal the original stone surface of the slip. There is scope for another interpretation board here.

It is a relief that, although the ownership of the sea wall is still a matter for conjecture, CWaC have agreed to take on responsibility for its maintenance.

Over the last few years the undergrowth has grown considerably, and a number of small trees have established themselves in the stonework, thus threatening the viability of the structure. Some emergency maintenance has already been carried out, but it is hoped that regular attention in future will ensure the survival of the wall in the long term.

Further work is also planned to tidy up the slipways by South Parade and The Boathouse and the area of the Old Baths.

We are confident that in realizing these plans we will help to make Parkgate a more attractive place for visitors and residents alike. There is a limit to what the Society can do on its own, but working together with other partners we are finding that we can achieve far more for our community than we ever expected when we first set out our vision.

A further public meeting is to be organised at the end of September, probably at the Cricket Club, to bring the plans to Parkgate residents and also provide an opportunity for related matters to be discussed – details to be announced in due course.

BOATHOUSE LANE

by Anne Williamson

Taking a wander down Boathouse Lane (B5135), from the Chester High Road (A540), to the point where it meets the River Dee marshes in Parkgate, one can consider life here through the ages.

Early Days

Going back as far as 1610, Park Gate was just a gathering of a few dwellings on the Dee by the gateway to the Neston deer park. Access from the few properties at the Park Gate to Great Neston was via the shore and up Moorside Lane. What is now Station Road leading up to Neston did not exist until 1787. At the other end of Parkgate was there road access? Did Boathouse Lane exist in the 1600s? It may well have been here as early as the 1500s as a means of accessing the important river fishing areas. Clive Edwards' Parkgate Society article 1999, revealed that in the c1583 survey of the Manor of Leighton, fishing took place on the river in a strictly regulated fashion. Nineteen fish yards were fixed along the river frontage. The fish yards were an arrangement of hurdles that trapped the fish as the tide went out. The Lord of the Manor took a good part of the catch. There was an inn on the site of the Boat House pub as early as 1620, known only as the Beer House, so possibly the route of Boathouse lane existed to access the pub, the fisheries and the boats on the river.

There is proof of the Boathouse Lane route a century or so later as it is marked in 1732 on the Mostyn Estates map (printed in the Parkgate newsletters by Clive Edwards) coming down from Chester Waie (the High Road). The upper part of the lane is labelled Leighton Lane to the point where it turns off to the current Leighton Road. Below this area it continues down to the Dee and is labelled Green Waie, hence this Society suggesting the use of the name Greenway for the development of the old Parkgate Hotel site in the year 2000. Incidentally, on this 1732 map the Runnel is labelled and the current Leighton Road is called Church Waie, being the route from Leighton to the church at Great Neston.

The 1777 map of Cheshire by Peter Burdett also clearly shows the course of Boathouse Lane. This one inch to the mile map shows Boathouse Lane stopping at the River Dee with no sea wall or roadway in front of the row of dots (dwellings) at Park Gate which gave directly onto the beach. By 1786 a landing stage was established at the bottom of Green Waie (Boathouse Lane) where people could catch a ferry across the river to Flint. The sea wall was extended to this end of Parkgate in the 1820s, from the middle slip to here. It was the final section of the Parade wall to be constructed and was intended for the benefit of the sea bathers and to encourage development of this end of the Parade, being called the New Marine Parade on the Mostyn sale documents of 1849.

More recently

So much for all the history, but what is there to see now? The houses at the top of Boathouse Lane are in Heswall, and in a different county, Merseyside. Progressing down the road there is the relatively new sandstone "post", inscribed CW&C JE 2000, indicating the county boundary and start of Cheshire West & Chester council area.

Shortly after this is the gate entrance to the Paintball centre, and the Parkgate show ground, part of Backwood Hall Farm, where for a number of years the Parkgate Horse Trials were held, followed also by carriage driving, show jumping and garden festivals.

Next is the Lodge and one of the lanes to Backwood Hall. The Lodge was not present on the 1849 Tithe map, although the long section of wood that borders the road has been here since that time. The Lodge had been built by 1872 most probably by Theodore Rathbone JP and farmer, who owned the Hall at the 1871 census. Originally the Hall, dating from approx. 1760 and visible from the Wirral Way just south of Heswall Golf Course, only occupied an area of 15 acres at the back of the woods of Leighton, and for many years was surrounded by the lands of Glegg and of Mostyn. After the great sale of Parkgate by the Mostyn family, the owners of the Hall were able to expand its land ownership to include most of the north side of Boathouse Lane.

At the end of the long straight section of road with beautiful views of Wales are the bends by West Point that claim many cars! In 2011/2012 in response to the large number of crashes and the excessive speeds being witnessed a number of complaints were put to the Highways by local residents. After their assessment, this resulted in the 30mph speed limit at the bottom of the road being extended up towards Wood Lane junction, and a new 40mph speed limit being introduced from this point along the previously de-restricted Boathouse Lane up to the county boundary at the top. Despite these measures there continues to be plenty of crashes on these top bends above the Leighton road junction. Sections of that white palisade fence at The Knoll and the sandstone wall opposite have been damaged so many times! Historically, a short lane with a few properties was straight ahead, by the garden of West Point. Leighton had quite a collection of properties in centuries gone by.

Below the Leighton Road turn off, a large part of the field to the left next to the road was in 1732 called Barnacre and was marked on the map as cultivated land of the lord of the manor and his tenant. All the farmland to the right to approximately the WCP bridge was woodland in 1732. Much of the land around here was owned by the Leighton Estate and a large part of the woods and fisheries that sustained the Township of Leighton in the 1700s were situated on the land that is now Backwood, with large areas called "the woods", "the old woods" and "fish ponds with woods". Numerous people were employed in the Township of Leighton as woodsmen. A vestige of the woods of Leighton were still standing in the 1840s and the lane from Neston towards the woods, Wood Lane, lead to a house called Wood House, where Brook Lane is now. The OS map of 1872 s does not show Wood Lane emerging on to Boathouse Lane, neither does it show the current gated lane to Backwood opposite it, although they are present as tracks on the 1831 map by Bryant.

In the war years there was a searchlight at the end of the lane to Backwood. The book "Neston at War" published in 1999, states that the Parkgate searchlight with generator and sound locator was manned by a sergeant and 11 men and was originally sited in a field off Bevyl Road, but was transferred to the site opposite Wood Lane where soldiers lived in camouflaged bell tents and was defended by small guns in sandbagged emplacements. In Arthur Draper's Memories of Parkgate, Parkgate Society newsletter Spring 2003, he remembered the searchlight battery situated half way up Boathouse Lane where the soldiers would give him sweets. He also recalled Miss Richardson's Leighton School (Richville/Parkgate Hotel) army camp where he and his friends would play on the commando course ropes.

May Richardson's girls school, originally built in 1860 by Joseph Rich and called Richville, was established in about 1918 and throughout the War was used by army units. In 1941 a battalion of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers moved in. They had to put out numerous incendiaries during the blitz of Liverpool and took charge of a German pilot who baled out over the Dee. They stored ammunition, used local fields for training and recreation, and where Hardings Garage is now, were some sheds which they used for their motor transport. The Boat House Cafe run by the Misses Smith was popular with them and they used the Grenfell's swimming Baths, which had opened in 1923 beyond the Boat House, for a swim. The pool was filled with salt water from the Dee and had a high dive board, a springboard, a flat area for sunbathing and facilities for ladies and gentlemen's changing. The Looms and Barnacre were local field names, but there was never known to be a Tithebarn in Parkgate, just a small barn, near Richville, that had once been converted to a house. Hamilton Close is named after Lady Hamilton, mistress of Nelson.

At the start of this millennium, Sustrans (Sustainable Transport) developed a cycle route through this area. The route marked with blue signs passes down the Runnel, along part of Leighton Road and onto Boathouse Lane. It then departs up Wood Lane and reappears down in Mostyn Square bringing many cycle tourists into Parkgate. It was this cycle route that produced a cycle crossing traffic island on the Chester High Road at the Runnel, and the red and cream Millennium Bridge in Bridge Street, Neston.

Parkgate became a Conservation Area in 1973 and a few years later wooden Conservation Area signs, made and installed by the Wirral Country Park rangers, were placed on the two road entrances to Parkgate, Boathouse Lane and Station Road. In the same year, 1978, the Parkgate Society began holding meetings at the Parkgate Hotel which had just been taken over and refurbished by Peter Barnes, formerly of the Boathouse Pub. Also in 1978 the Cheshire Green belt council proposals were published which gave protection from building to Park Fields and also the land to the north side of Boathouse Lane. In 1997, the Society planted trees and daffodils in Boathouse Lane. More daffodils were planted subsequently, extending up to Wood Lane.

The Wirral Way was formed in 1976s, from the disused Hooton to West Kirby railway line, and crosses under the road. For many years the Society had pressed for construction of a walkway adjacent to this bridge, so that pedestrians could walk all the way up Boathouse Lane, without having to dice with death on the road. In 2006 the Highways repositioned the route of the road slightly to allow the installation of a pavement along one side, allowing people to walk the length of the road in relative safety. Around this area was a Smithy Croft in the old days, although as the road has slightly altered its course here when the railway came through, it is difficult to say which side of the road it was on.

The Parkgate Hotel closed down and the grounds were developed to make Greenway in 2000. Opposite, the pony sanctuary, which was established in 1984 as Badger Pony Sanctuary, took over the fields in 1997 and changed its name to the Parkgate Pony Sanctuary.

At the end of your wander down Boathouse Lane is the Boat House pub and restaurant, where it is pleasant to stop for a beer in the evening and if you are lucky see a glowing red sunset over Point of Ayr, at the end of North Wales. In the car park there used to be a large sandstone barn where the sand yachts for Mostyn House were stored, and behind the car park were Bennett's Cottages.

Historically, where the waves used to crash upon the walls of the Boat House (formerly known as the Beer House, The Ferry House, The Pengwern Arms, The Boat House Cafe), the Dee marshes have developed. In the 1940s sailing yachts regularly sailed up and down, but now, on a very high tide there are only occasional canoes as the only water craft to be seen.

A large portion of the Dee marsh is owned by the RSPB who purchased it in 1979 creating the Gayton Sands bird reserve, a major wildfowl and wader sanctuary, that attracts many visitors to Parkgate. In 1987 in conjunction with Wirral Borough Council, the first of many RSPB high tide bird watching events began in Parkgate, which today are extremely popular and bring many visitors to the area, eager to spot Water Rail, Short Eared Owl, Barn Owl, Little Egret and Great White Egret, to name but a few. The natural history of Parkgate is indeed rich, with salt marsh plants and birds, insects and bats, etc. and Boathouse Lane itself is probably one of the best roads around for varied, plentiful and colourful wild flowers, from the springtime daffodils planted by the Society, to the many wild flower species and the colourful gorse hedgerow. But, more on that subject at a later date – perhaps!

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Rob Naybour, our Membership Secretary, who has been given a special award as an AgeUK Wirral volunteer, has suggested that members may be interested in The Active Ageing Project.

This offers a programme of activities and services aimed at promoting an active healthy lifestyle amongst older people. Health Promotion remains an integral part of the Active Ageing Programme designed to raise awareness of health issue amongst older people and to promote an active health lifestyle, combat isolation, promote independence and choice.

Our list of activities include Line Dancing, Yoga, Tai Chi, Low Impact & Chair-based Exercises, Bridge, Card Making, Craft & Art Classes, Computer Courses & Tuition, Reflexology, Therapy and Chiropody.

Through our Wanderers of Wirral Travel Club, we offer a wide selection of Day Trips, Weekend Breaks and Short UK Holidays.

Our Men's Health programme includes the Allotment Project based in Bebington/ Rockferry border and two walking groups; "Wirralside Walkers" and the more strenuous, "White Top Walkers". In addition there are the Pedal Pushers; this is a cycle group that meets in Birkenhead Park every week.

For more information please contact – Active Age on 0151 482 3456.