



Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

Newsletter

Spring 2016

Issue Number 90

Meetings 2016

We normally meet at 8pm at the **Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, Station Road**, on the third Monday of the month.

18 April – ‘Fort Perch Rock’
- Derek Arnold

16 May – AGM at **7.30 pm**
followed by **‘Liverpool’s Williamson Tunnels’**
- Claire Moorhead

4 July - **Wine Tasting & Quiz**
7.30 for 8.00 pm
Tickets £8.00

19 September – ‘The Laxey Wheel’
- David Casement

17 October – ‘A Look at Churchill’
- Michael Murphy

21 November – ‘Parkgate – Port & Resort’
- Anthony Annakin-Smith
This talk follows the hot-pot supper at **6.30 pm**.

If you need help with transport, please ring Mrs Angela Clarke, our Secretary, giving 24 hours’ notice, on 0151-336-1069.

Visitors are very welcome to attend our talks – first time free – after that we will encourage them to join as members.

The Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the Society’s AGM to be held at the Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, on Monday, 16th May 2015, at 7.30 pm.

Election of Officers for 2016/17: to be proposed en bloc:

Chairman: Jill Brock
Deputy-Chairman: David Johnson
Joint Secretaries: Angela Clarke, Alan Passmore
Treasurer: Damian Loughe

Election of Committee for 2016/17: to be proposed en bloc:

Derek Haylock, Bryan Lecky, Dawn Lyon, Jill Owen

Co-opted member to be ratified:

Roger Harris

Appointment of Auditor:

Ailsa Cowdell

There are no proposals/resolutions from the Committee to be considered at the AGM.

Any proposals from members to be considered at the AGM and any further nominations for the Committee must be submitted to our Secretary Angela Clarke at least 14 days before the AGM.

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact:
Alan Passmore, tel: 336 2917 or email: alan.passmore39@btinternet.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS - £7.00 Single / £10 Household per year. Subscriptions are due on 6th April each year. Payment can be made at any of our meetings; but we would prefer payment by Banker’s Standing Order. Membership, Standing Order and Gift Aid forms are available from Derek Haylock, our Membership Secretary, tel: 336-4461. Please check that your Standing Order is for the correct amount.

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The Parkgate Society is a registered charity, No. 503718.

News and Views

I'm starting early! The wind is howling and the rain is lashing down as I begin to write this article, as storm Imogen passes by, wreaking havoc on the more exposed areas of the country. Do we, I wonder, notice these winter storms more than we used to, if only because they are now given names (alternately girls and boys), or have there really been more of them this time round? This past winter we certainly seem to have had more than our usual ration, but fortunately no significant damage has been caused here. It is only when one of these storms happens to coincide with the very highest tides, that the sea might be expected to flood along our stretch of coast – the marsh is proving a very effective barrier; and the fact that it gives us some protection against encroachment from the sea is an unexpected benefit of the silting of the estuary.

Equally, if not more likely, is flooding caused by drain-off from the hinterland, since some of the culverts in Parkgate are blocked and no longer able to perform their function properly. This is the conclusion of a Cheshire West & Chester (CWaC) team aiming to improve Parkgate's resilience in the event of an event of this sort. Local residents are being enrolled to act as first responders, to notify the relevant authorities and co-ordinate local reaction, before the authorities themselves are able to get here and take responsibility. A 'resilience box', which will contain the wherewithal for these first responders, is to be sited shortly adjacent to the toilet block in Mostyn Square.

There was a strong reaction by local residents, and visitors too, when The Ship emerged from a re-paint during the Autumn in battleship grey. What were the owners thinking of, going against the tradition that Parkgate is a black and white village? In fact that tradition is only just over a hundred years old. It was started by AG Grenfell, headmaster of Mostyn House School, when he built Cheltenham Place in Station Road and Sandheys Cottages on what was then The Green about 1900; and the characteristic former school frontage on The Parade only dates from a re-building in 1932. The article on page 5 presents an interesting and thought-provoking case in support of the change.

The Neston Neighbourhood Plan has been proceeding along its way through the statutory processes; it was submitted to CWaC on 16 November 2015, following the public consultation period, and has now been endorsed by the independent inspector, subject to some minor technical re-wording. Compared with other similar plans being produced, it seems to be a model of its sort. However, before it can come into force as part of the statutory planning framework, against which proposals for building in the Neston area can be determined, local Neston residents are now being asked to vote on it in a local referendum on 5 May (at the same time as the election for Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire). Only if it is approved in this way, will it assume legal force. If you wish to familiarise yourselves with the details of the plan before casting your vote, there are still opportunities for this before polling day – we understand that it can be viewed at Neston Town Hall, Neston Library and via the internet at www.consult.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/file/3601749

Further attempts are being made to improve road safety and ease the problems caused by traffic congestion in Parkgate. Double yellow lines have recently been put down in Station Road around the entrance to Grenfell Park, to reduce the traffic hazard at this point; and work has started on the upgrading of the Station Road carpark, to make it safer and more attractive for potential users, and to increase its capacity. In another development the Council are proposing to extend the 20 mph zone to include virtually all residential roads within the parish of Neston; in Parkgate the only exceptions will be Boathouse Lane and Parkgate Road/Station Road as far as the start of the current 20 mph zone along The Parade.

For the first time since 2011 we have made a submission on behalf of Parkgate under the Cheshire Community Pride Awards scheme; the area covered is roughly that bounded by Boathouse Lane, Wood Lane and Earle Drive. We expect a preliminary visit by the judges shortly, to be followed by a more thorough inspection in June. We have been busy on the litter front and encouraging our businesses and residents to try to keep their premises and public areas tidy; we have been successful in persuading the Council to clear the growth from the sea wall and some of the pathways. A number of property owners have been active recently in carrying out renovations to their premises, which have improved the general ambience of the village, so we are hopeful of a better result this time around.

The idea of having a hot-pot supper with our November meeting last year turned out to be very successful – we had our largest attendance in some time – so we have decided to repeat this format for our meeting on 21 November 2016, when Anthony Annakin-Smith will be our speaker.

We have also been exploring the idea of holding another social function in June, when we don't normally hold a meeting. In the event, the June date does not work, so we are now finalising arrangements to for a wine tasting evening with quiz at Neston Cricket Club on Monday 4 July. We hope that this is something you will enjoy and we encourage you to bring friends along to share in the fun. There will have to be a charge for this event, and tickets can be purchased at our next

meetings, price £8.00. Posters and email news updates will give further details. If you want to know more, contact Angela Clarke (336-1069), Alan Passmore (336-2917) or Derek Haylock (336-4461) or any other members of the Committee.

The Society's new website is now up and running. Thanks are due to our webmaster Derek Haylock and the other contributors for all their efforts in putting together what we believe is a very interesting and informative package about the Society and about Parkgate. Visit the site at www.parkgatesociety.co.uk and let us know what you think. More details are given on page 6.

We are very pleased that Michael Potts has agreed to become a Vice-President of the Society. During the past year Roger Harris and Laura Spencer have been co-opted onto the Committee.

Our Vision for Parkgate

We were surprised to learn earlier in the year that the paving on the Donkey Stand was to be replaced. The Council had been closely monitoring how the stone was wearing, following some early cracking not long after it had been laid, and the contractors decided to replace it with more durable stone at no cost. The job took rather longer than we were given to expect, but fortunately the work was completed and the seating reinstated just before Easter; the opportunity has been to add an air pump for the use of cyclists, like the one already installed outside the former NatWest bank in Neston.

Since last summer we have been working away with a small working party preparing our boat 'Hi C' for mounting on the Middle Slip as small flower garden and a reminder of the fishing industry that was once based there. We were somewhat taken by surprise to discover that we had to apply for planning permission to fix the boat permanently in its position, but hopefully that will be granted soon and the boat could be there in the not too distant future. Marsh Nurseries have kindly offered to do the planting.

The long-awaited heritage trail plaques were manufactured during the Autumn and were put in place before Easter. The locations are: Dover Cottage, Mostyn House, Balcony House, Seven Steps, St Thomas' Church, The Old Watch House and Pengwern/Sawyer's Cottage. We hope that they will give enjoyment to our visitors and that our residents will take pride from the stories they represent. We are particularly pleased that Sir Wilfred Grenfell, who is generally regarded as the most celebrated person to have been born at Parkgate, is now at last officially recognised in the place of his birth. We are very grateful to the late Cllr Brenda Dowding for the funding for this project from her local member's budget. The formal unveiling of St Thomas' plaque, as symbolic of all seven, took place in Mostyn Square on 1 April with the Mayor of Neston Cllr Mike Shipman and Lesley Irvin, deputy church warden, on behalf of the Vicar of Neston Rev Alan Dawson. We would like to think that further heritage plaques might be added to the trail in future, if funding can be found, and we would be delighted, therefore, to hear your suggestions for other premises that might be recognised in this way, together with a brief justification for their inclusion in a list of future projects.

The 'village' of Parkgate has a very interesting, if not very long past, which is told in a number of publications that are available locally, and our ambition is to have further interpretation boards installed in order to tell more of the Parkgate story. At the present time we are working on boards to be erected at the Middle Slip and the Boathouse Slip, explaining the historic significance of these two otherwise seemingly unremarkable areas.

Parkgate Community Spirit in Action

As you may have read recently, the fines for dropping litter are to be increased, and it has been suggested that those seen dropping litter are tackled by passers-by and asked to pick up their litter – although that is not something we would recommend. However, in Parkgate our Community Spirit team were out and about on a number of occasions in 2015 litter picking, primarily on the Marsh, but also around the village. As an indication of the litter collected the photograph on the next page shows bottles removed from the verge in Boathouse Lane in the week before Christmas. What was not photographed were all the empty wine and beer bottles, cans, plastic bottles etc. that were also collected. Four green bags were filled in the stretch from Wood Lane down to the bridge. Being on the left hand side of the road going out of Parkgate all this rubbish would appear to have been thrown out of passing vehicles.

This year we are entering the Cheshire Community Pride competition and, to have any chance of success, we need to have a good tidy up and to constantly monitor the tidiness of the village. During the course of 2015 we filled over 300 green council bags of rubbish, and this year we will be having regular litter picks that will be publicised for people to come along and lend a hand.



Some of the rubbish retrieved recently from Boathouse Lane

This year Her Majesty the Queen celebrates her 90th birthday, and there are to be celebrations across the country with street parties etc. As part of the celebrations there has already been a national "Clean for the Queen" event in conjunction with Keep Britain Tidy. This country-wide initiative took place over the weekend of 4th – 6th March. Our event was on Saturday 5th March, when 27 volunteers, suitably clad against the cold breeze off the marsh, met at 9.30am in the grounds of St Thomas' Church on Mostyn Square, Parkgate.

The obvious place to start work was the Marsh, for which a number headed. The rest of the team split into pairs and headed off to the Wirral Way, Park Fields, Wood Lane, Boathouse Lane and the Ropewalk park area. The car parks on Station Road, Mostyn Square and the Old Baths were also targeted, as were the lanes and weints leading off the Parade.

After two and a half hours of litter picking, 62 bags had been filled and left for the Council's Streetscene staff to collect and dispose of. The volunteers were blessed with good weather and all agreed that they felt better for being out early on the Saturday morning getting some exercise and plenty of fresh air. The event ended with chips and a hot drink kindly supplied to the volunteers by Neil of Parkgate Fish & Chips.



Community Spirit Volunteers

David Johnson

The Ship Hotel, The Parade

There was much comment before Christmas, when the Ship emerged from a major re-paint with a complete change of character. The management responded with the following statement, which was first published on AboutMyArea and will be of great interest to all our readers:



The Ship Hotel in its new guise

'Parkgate and its buildings have not and cannot remain unchanged forever. In order to attract new generations to come and live, work and spend time and money, Parkgate must evolve, change and reflect the times we live in, as it has done successfully over the past 300+ years from Georgian port to vibrant leisure destination and residential area. We more than most, acutely appreciate the need for Parkgate to retain its charm as a seaside resort of yesteryear, hence what we believe to be our sympathetic refurbishment of the building inside and out.

'Parkgate is famed for its Georgian/Victorian architecture, however if the Georgians or Victorians could see Parkgate now they would be aghast at some of their stunning buildings demolished, covered up, fitted with uPVC windows, garish signs, plastic guttering, and dare I say being painted black and white. The buildings' original render with mouldings round windows and doors and the quoins would have been deliberately left unpainted, or painted with white wash to subtly show the detailing of those buildings. The render designed to look like stone. The 'black and white trend' in Parkgate is most likely to have been started by Mr. Grenfell when he decided to put mock Tudor cladding on the Georgian building of Mostyn House school (originally an Inn). This being completely out of context in terms of locale and the building and would have looked very out of place when originally done, but making a loud statement as was no doubt the intention, as a marketing ploy to attract the well-heeled of Cheshire to send their little darling Johnny there to board. Perhaps trying to emulate some of the grander Tudor style schools of Chester. The building being so large and prominent inevitably had an influence on the locale and so other properties jumped on the black and white band wagon. We did the same in 1997/8 when we bought the building. The black and white scheme being totally inappropriate for the period and style of the building and surrounding buildings, nothing about the Ship and very little of Parkgate suggests mock Tudor or Tudor. Black and white does nothing for a building. It does the opposite of enhancing a building; it in fact hides the features, black not showing up any shadow or relief. Black and white was not chosen for its aesthetic nature by our ancestors; the materials were chosen for their protective properties; lime was used as a wash to protect the daub from weather and happened to dry white, and the timbers black due to the tar the timbers were treated with, again to protect it from the elements.

'A good example of change in Parkgate is to look at Nicholl's Ice cream, the Art Deco building next door to us. This no doubt would have been hugely controversial and challenging in its day with a charming Georgian villa being demolished to make way for it. Nicholl's is now seen as not only a charming example of 20s/30s architecture but also intrinsically part of The Parade's architecture. This shows that your view of change can very much depend on your standpoint.

'The Ship was originally rendered (which would have appeared stone-like/grey) and wasn't white-washed until much later in life. It was painted beige in the 70's & 80's by Forte Hotels with bright green plastic awnings on with a rather interesting

1970s extension with PVC windows and fascias. Which I am sure was de-rigueur at the time. We think by looking at many photos we have, the first time in its life that the Ship was painted black and white was by us in 1998, jumping on the black and white band wagon, but in hindsight we now feel an inappropriate colour scheme. So this year we decided to take a slightly different route, and try to differentiate the Ship from its larger dominant neighbour, often being confused with and undistinguishable from Mostyn House. We looked for inspiration at other buildings on Parkgate's parade and noticed two others looking great in grey. Grey also appears to be a popular colour generally at the minute with many other far more prominent historic buildings going grey, Oddfellows lodge in Chester, Clarence Hotel in Llandudno, Joseph Benjamin in Chester and receiving accolades from many quarters in the process.

'We're glad to have received many complimentary comments about the colour but there have also been those that don't like it. I have to say, it's saddening that little mention has been made of the huge effort and expense that has gone into the Ship in recent years to give what we think is a very positive contribution to Parkgate and the wider area. The sympathetic refurbishment of the interior & exterior, creating 30+ additional jobs, and giving those visiting or living in Parkgate a vibrant quality place to spend time. Developers have approached us several times in recent years about purchasing the Ship and demolishing it for redevelopment of the site. Not being listed would have made that quite possible and likely, especially considering the prices achieved next door. Instead we made the decision to invest significant time and money into the building, to give it a new lease of life, making a viable and vibrant business of the Ship, and we would like to think giving Parkgate a business it can be proud of.

'In summary, a certain W. Churchill once said "To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often" on that note it will only be 3 years until we change the colour again no doubt...'

Michael Watson

We have a new website

The Parkgate Society has a new website www.parkgatesociety.co.uk. The aim is to promote the Parkgate Society, not Parkgate itself. It showcases the achievements we have made in the past, for the benefit of Parkgate residents and visitors; it advertises what we are doing at the present time; and highlights what we hope to achieve in the future.

There is a lot of history on the website, researched by members of the Society, including a very detailed "History of Parkgate". There is also a page that covers the history of the Society itself; the reasons why it was formed, and some of its notable achievements. Street names in Parkgate are also explained, again researched by members of the Society. There is also a list of the Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings in Parkgate, and how the Society safeguards these buildings. There are also some old photos in the Gallery; we would like to have more so, if you have any additional old photos, we would be pleased to include them.

The site is also packed with information about what is happening in Parkgate, and what our Community Spirit Volunteers are up to. There is a list of all the local traders: their opening hours, their phone numbers, and websites – a useful resource when you want to order a take-away, or book a table.

We hope you find it interesting and informative. If you have any comments, or ideas for inclusion on the website, please email webmaster@parkgatesociety.co.uk, or post to Webmaster, 60 The Looms, Parkgate, CH64 6RF, or hand it in at one of our meetings.

Details of how to contact committee members are given on the "About Us/Committee" page.

Derek Haylock

The Mostyn House bells are officially dedicated at Charterhouse

At a moving and uplifting service of dedication at Charterhouse on 10th May 2014, the Carillon of Bells was re-dedicated and the bells played publicly for the first time in their new location. Mary Eveleigh, who taught pupils to play the bells at Mostyn House School, was present at the service, writes:

The carillon from Mostyn House School in Parkgate has now been successfully installed at Charterhouse.

After the end of the First World War, a memorial fund was set up to honour the memory of the boys from Mostyn House School who lost their lives whilst fighting in the war. From that, the carillon was commissioned in 1918 by the then Headmaster AG Grenfell (known as "AG") from John Taylor and Co Ltd of Loughborough.

Thirty one bells were cast, which made a fully chromatic three octave carillon which was installed on an open air steel frame. This frame was installed above the building that linked the chapel to the school with the clavier housed in a room below. AG encouraged the pupils to play the carillon and he composed a series of calls which were played at specific times during the day, such as meal times and bed times.

A memorial plaque was placed in chapel, and on Ascension Day 25th May 1922 the Lord Bishop of Chester dedicated the carillon of 31 bells to the memory of: "Alan Appleby Drew and the other four-score old boys who fell fighting for England in the Great War".

However, the memorial inscription in the belfry of the chapel states: "The bells are no part of our freehold. If ever Mostyn House ceases to be a school they are to be offered to an English public school, preferably to Charterhouse, that they may go on speaking to English boys as long as England lasts".

Sadly, Mostyn House School closed in 2010 and the carillon, by now with thirty seven bells, was offered to Charterhouse. Several of the boys named on the memorial plaque were also old Carthusians. Charterhouse was able to accept the offer, thanks to the generous financial support of the Trustees of Mostyn House Griffin Project, the Carthusian Trust and John Taylor and Co. of Loughborough.

The bells left Mostyn House last summer (2013) for refurbishment at Taylors in Loughborough.

They have now been hung in an empty bell tower in the old chapel at Charterhouse.



The Old Chapel, Charterhouse



Trevor Workman & members of the Charterhouse Carillon Society

A new clavier has been made and installed along with a new light oak bench for the musicians to play in comfort. Watching over this is the original memorial board. Access to the tower is by a winding stone staircase and then a steep climb up a steel spiral staircase.

In this the centenary year of the start of the First World War, on Saturday 10 May the carillon was rededicated at Charterhouse to the memory of all of those from both schools who fell in conflict.

The service was held in the tiny old chapel. The hymn that was sung was slightly out of season, but very appropriate, "Ding dong merrily on high."

After the service everyone was led out onto the lawns beside the chapel to hear the inaugural carillon recital by Trevor Workman from the Bournville Village Trust. He played pieces by Mozart, Albinoni, Elgar and Haydn. It was such a privilege to be there and to hear the bells being played by a master of his craft.

After the inaugural carillon recital was performed by Trevor Workman, members of the Charterhouse Carillon Society then played us into lunch, as the boys of Mostyn House School did every day in the past.

I think the bells have found a wonderful new home where they will be again be played regularly and they will "go on speaking to English boys as long as England lasts."

Mary Eveleigh

Some Interesting Facts about Parkgate & Wirral

The name Wirral means 'myrtle corner' and comes from the old English 'wir', a myrtle tree, and 'heal', an angle, corner or slope. This would suggest that the area was once covered in bog myrtle. Though this plant is no longer to be found locally, it is said to be growing at Formby, not far away, so maybe this was true for this area in years gone by.

The earliest occupation of Wirral dates from around 7000 BC, shortly after the last ice age, and before Roman times it was occupied by a Celtic tribe called the Cornovii, whose territory extended from Shropshire; with a major legionary base at Chester it is not surprising that there is much evidence of the Roman occupation in Wirral – the Storeton quarries were being worked in this period. Some years after the Roman withdrawal in 410 AD the Anglo-Saxons came to settle in Wirral, and the area became part of the kingdom of Mercia.

There was an epic battle in Wirral in 937, the battle of Brunanburh – its location is disputed, but generally thought to be Bromborough. From the late 9th century Vikings from the Norse Kingdom of Dublin began to settle amicably in north Wirral, eventually with the agreement of the Mercian King. But then things turned sour as a result of a dispute over control of the Kingdom of York, which led to an invasion by Olaf, King of Dublin, in support of Constantine, King of the Scots', claim. The result of this battle was decisive and it confirmed England as an Anglo-Saxon kingdom under Athelstan, King of Mercia and Wessex, grandson of Alfred the Great.

Parkgate, believe it or not, was, along with Neston, used as a port over several centuries, under the jurisdiction of Chester, but its operation was always dependent on the weather and tides. A 'new cut' of the River Dee was excavated in the 18th century to improve access to the ancient port of Chester, which subsequently diverted the course of the river to the Welsh side of the estuary.

Although there is evidence of early trading from Meols, from Roman times Chester was Wirral's main port and from the 14th century it was trading with Ireland, Spain and Germany. Vessels would lay-to in the River Dee, awaiting wind and tide, but, as the Dee began to silt up, handling of the shipping moved progressively further downstream for new anchorages. Finally, as a result of continued silting, Parkgate's shipping trade ceased and the business was transferred to the River Mersey, which, of course, confirmed the supremacy of Liverpool as the regional port – its first dock, the former Old Dock, having opened in 1715 in what is now the heart of the City of Liverpool. Instead of shipping, Parkgate now has alongside its sandstone sea wall 100 sq. kilometres of salt marsh, most of it owned by the RSPB.

There is a great deal of sandstone in Wirral (and other parts of Cheshire too). There are two parallel sandstone ridges on the peninsula, forming the highest points in Wirral: extending from Grange Hill, West Kirby, to Burton, and between Bidston and Storeton; the highest point, surprisingly, is Poll Hill, Heswall. Thor's Rock on Thurstaston Common is an atmospheric place to visit, while the views from nearby Thurstaston Hill are the best on Wirral. Sandstone is a classic sedimentary rock, consisting mainly of sand sized minerals or rock grains, composed of quartz and/or feldspar, which are the most common minerals in the earth's crust. Wirral's sandstone is mainly coloured red. Over the years it has been used extensively locally for building purposes, including Neston quay, before the re-use of that stone for the sea wall at Parkgate.

During the Second World War the owners of two houses with large cellars in Parkgate had them converted into air-raid shelters, which were used by local residents for protection against enemy bombs. A series of small lights was placed on the Marsh to trick German bomber pilots into believing they were flying over Liverpool. How successful this ruse was is debatable. In fact, amongst the many bombs that fell in the area, some were dropped on the marsh between Parkgate and Heswall, and my late husband could remember swimming in the crater made by one of them!

Moira Andrews

Contacts

If you wish to raise issues of relevance to the Society, please contact one of the joint secretaries:

Angela Clarke: Tel: 0151-336-1069 Email: enquiries@parkgatesociety.co.uk

Alan Passmore: Tel: 0151-336-2917 Email: alan.passmore39@btinternet.com

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Don't forget our website: www.parkgatesociety.co.uk