

Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

Newsletter

Spring 2017

Issue Number 92

Society Meetings 2017

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

- 20 February – ‘Welsh Copper’**
- Rob Toomey
- 20 March – ‘250 Years of the Liverpool Pilotage Service’**
- Geoff Topp
- 24 April – ‘All things Auctioneering’**
- John Crane
- 15 May – ‘One small Step’**
- Glynn D Parry
- 18 September Annual General Meeting**
at **7.30 pm**, followed by
‘The Liverpool Carters’
- Sharon Brown
- 16 October ‘History of Birkenhead Priory’**
- Colin Simpson
- 20 November Hot Pot Supper**
at **6.30 pm**, followed by
RSPB Burton Nature Reserve
- Dan Trotman

The Annual General Meeting

The Society's AGM has been moved from our May meeting to September, and will now be held at the Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, on Monday, 18th September 2017, at 7.30 pm.

The Committee currently are:-

Chairman: Dr Jill Brock
Deputy-Chairman: David Johnson
Joint Secretaries: Angela Clarke, Alan Passmore
Treasurer: Damian Loughe
Committee: Dr Bryan Lecky, Roger Harris, Derek Haylock, Jill Owen
Co-opted member: Jim Lycett

Auditor: Ailsa Cowdell

The Committee are also planning to hold an extra social event on **Monday 19 June** – details to be notified in due course.

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

We strongly encourage you to attend our meetings and would like you to introduce your friends to the Society. Visitors are very welcome to attend our talks – they may come first time free – after that we will encourage them to join as members.

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact:
Alan Passmore, tel: 336-2917 or email: secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk

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

1. The big news at the moment is that **ParkgateFest** is coming to our village in June. This will be the largest event to take place in Parkgate for some time. The promoters of the two-day event will be looking for the support of local people to assist in the running of the event, directing traffic and organizing the car-parking, etc.

ParkgateFest will take place on the weekend of **3rd & 4th June 2017** in the fields next to Marsh Nurseries in Boathouse Lane, Parkgate. Organised and run by local residents and traders, it will celebrate and promote the uniqueness and heritage of Parkgate - Cheshire's only coastal village - and its wonderful community, in a beautiful setting. Over two days, visitors to ParkgateFest will enjoy live music from new, established and tribute artistes; classic cars and steam engines; stalls run by traders from Parkgate Parade and beyond; exhibitors; competitions; a children's entertainment area; Champagne, beer and gin marquees; street food stalls and much, much more. In addition to the main attractions, local traders and other organisations will be taking stalls to promote their businesses. Truly a weekend for all the family, it is envisaged that ParkgateFest will become an annual event, with proceeds supporting projects under the 'Vision for Parkgate' banner.

Further information will follow, including confirmed performers, stalls and ticketing. Please check back regularly for updates. Anyone interested in performing, or who would like to book a stall or sponsor the event in any way, should send an email to parkgatefest@gmail.com. For further information take a look at the festival website: www.parkgatefest.co.uk

Don't forget! Saturday 3rd June 11am to 8pm and Sunday 4th June 12 noon to 5pm

2. We continue to have concerns about the future of the **Mostyn House chapel** as a result of its neglect since the closure of the school in 2010. The Mostyn Place Residents Association is actively involved with the local council's planning and conservation officers in working to ensure that the developers of the Mostyn House site hand the premises over in a sufficiently good state to enable its use without the need for further extensive repairs. Some progress has been made since we last reported. The Council (CWaC) have made it clear that final planning approval will not be granted until the necessary reparations to both the apartments and the chapel have been signed off by them. This work is currently in hand.

3. The former owner's plans for the redevelopment of the site of **White Cottage** on The Parade have, it seems, come to naught. The plans for the erection of two dwellings on the orchard to the rear of the house received approval from the Council early last year, but the subsequent plan to demolish the cottage itself and replace it with what we considered an inappropriate new building for this site was eventually withdrawn and the property sold to a local resident. The new owner is understood to have plans to undertake a more sympathetic renovation of the house in due course. Thanks to all those who signed the petition which our members approved in the autumn. It remains to be seen what further changes, if any, are proposed for this prominent site. You can be sure that we will be keeping an eye on the situation.

4. Following the reconstruction of the **Station Road car park** earlier last year, 4,000 bulbs were planted during the autumn with the assistance of children from Parkgate Primary School. The children also came up with a new name for the car park, which on the official re-opening was named the Ropewalk Carpark after the historic path of that name which is close by. At the time of writing spring bulbs are everywhere, but there have been no signs of the ones we had planted until very recently, when a few very shy individuals belatedly began to show themselves. The next phase of work for this area will centre on the WW2 pill box:

the box itself is to be adapted to accommodate bats, while the roof will become a small eco garden.

5. We have been informed that at the recent AGM of the Friends of Burton Manor Gardens there was a presentation given by the new developers for the **Burton Manor** site & College building. The developers in question are the same group who are building the Dee View houses & apartments on the Alexandra Hall site in Heswall and their proposal for Burton Manor is to create apartments as enabling development in order to finance the restoration of the Hall and other parts of the property.

The extent of enabling development is as yet to be decided, but Donald Insalls of Chester are the architects involved in the project, which should be a good sign. There is also a willingness to consult with local interested parties who have had a long-standing concern over the future of the building, since it was first offered for sale. We also learn there are no plans to intrude on the greenhouses and walled garden, where the Burton Manor Friends operate, and the Mawson garden will be kept. Of course, it is still early days, but the parties involved are local and, as far as we know, have a reasonably good track record regarding such developments.

Hopefully this scheme will turn out to provide the much-needed security for the future of Burton Manor after a long period of uncertainty.

6. We continue to scrutinize the local **planning applications** for the Parkgate ward. These mostly relate to small house extensions, whilst a few involve adding an upper storey to a single-storey dwelling or, as in Parkgate Road, the replacement of a modest bungalow with a much larger dwelling. For the most part these developments are uncontroversial, but in a few cases we have not been happy where a proposed design has appeared to be out of keeping with the location or, perhaps, an over-development of the site, and we will continue to submit formal objections in such circumstances, where we think it appropriate. Generally, we are not in favour of garden infill, except where the plot is of sufficient size to take the development quite comfortably. The significant renovation scheme at Sawyer's Cottage, a Grade II listed building at the north end of The Parade, which I mentioned in the Autumn Newsletter, is now virtually finished; the internal re-modelling has produced a much more practical layout for modern living, whilst the house retains its characteristic outward appearance.

7. We have been very pleased with the responses to the **additional events** we have organised for you during the past year. We are particularly grateful to Laura Spencer of Mozkitos for her contribution to the success of the events with which she was associated. The hot-pot supper and the curry & quiz night both attracted a good turn-out. Your favourable responses are an encouragement to us to arrange further similar activities for the coming season of events.

Cheshire Community Pride Competition 2016 Best Kept Village (population 2501-5000)

Sponsored by Neston Town Council, the Parkgate Society entered the Cheshire Community Pride Competition for the Best Kept Village (BKV) competition. The competition is organised each year by Cheshire Community Action and is open to villages across the whole of Cheshire. There are seven BKV awards, each related to the size of the population of the village entered. Judges visit each village and, using a strict set of criteria, award points across six sections. The judges visited Parkgate in May and June 2016, taking photographic records to help score each section. The results of their visits and the awards were announced at a ceremony on October 13th at Sandbach Town Hall. Although we did receive

a "Little Gem Award" for St Thomas' Church gardens, we were unsuccessful with our other entries and, rather sadly, Parkgate didn't even get a mention in the BKV awards.

I have now received a copy of the judges' report with their scores and have had a few days to analyse the results. There were 9 villages entered in our section this year and I am pleased to

report that at least we did not come last, as we did in 2011, Parkgate came 6th. In other words, we have improved Parkgate and I am definitely looking forward to next year when I am sure we can do even better.

I have copied the comments from the judges and noted their overall points score against the possible points available per section (1). This will assist us to target one or two areas to improve for next year's competition (2).

In 2011 we received a total of 425 marks (62%) and this year we received a total of 648 (83%). In every section, apart from one, we increased our scores. The one section that let us down badly was the Allotments on which the judges commented, ***"The Allotment area is mostly overgrown. There is little evidence of it being used adequately. It has the space to provide a number of allotments, but the whole area needs to be cleared to make effective use of this valuable land". Scored 11/30***

This is rather disappointing after our successful efforts to improve the area by the replacement of the fencing around the allotments with very smart new fencing. Unfortunately, several allotment holders had left rusty wheelbarrows and other derelict equipment visible to all. Having previously raised this with the Town Council I will be discussing this again with the Neston Looking Better group at the next meeting and urging them to put pressure on the tenants to improve their allotment.

With regards to the other sections we will need to continue the good work on litter picking and cutting back overgrown areas. However, we need to ensure that BKV posters are displayed in the shops and restaurant windows. Tidy the area around the public toilets with planting etc. Highlight the historical artefacts, Coal Trolley, the Pill Box and, of course, our new addition on the Middle Slip. We will need to keep the grass verges and hedges etc. tidy and weed free. Certainly we will be looking for some targeted support from CWaC and the Town Council with some of the paved areas particularly. Other areas will be down to our Community Spirit volunteers to assist.

David Johnson

Footnotes:

- (1) Details of the judges' scoring can be found on the Community Spirit page of the Society's website: www.parkgatesociety.co.uk
- (2) We have been informed that the Community Pride competition will not be held in 2017; whether it will be re-instated in subsequent years remains to be seen. However, regardless of the outcome, we will continue with the help of our Community Spirit team to work for a tidy and attractive local environment.

The Parkgate Society's Website www.parkgatesociety.co.uk

Our website has been online since November 2015; it was developed to advertise the Parkgate Society and to inform its members and the general public of activities occurring in Parkgate.

There are now 21 pages of information available on the website. These range from a detailed history of Parkgate since 1610 and the history of the Parkgate Society from its start in 1972, to "Latest Information" pages informing readers of what is currently happening in Parkgate. There is also a page on "Our "Vision"; outlining what we would like to do to improve Parkgate in the future.

It is viewable on standard computer screens, laptops, iPads & other tablets, and mobile phones.

As a niche website we do not expect to get the millions of 'hits' that sites like Google or Facebook receive on a daily basis. Having said that, our daily 'hit' rate range is 20 - 40 a day, with occasional peaks: 30 July 2016 saw 102 hits and 6 October 43 hits. I have no idea why these occurred.

You might expect that all our visitors are local; however, the location of the 7,500 visits we have had in the last 12 months covers 92 countries worldwide, from 6 continents. We had no visitors from Greenland or Antarctica, but the list of countries that did visit us is interesting.

Unsurprisingly, visitors from the UK were the highest number at 3,539 (47.19%). The USA was 2nd, with 1,269 visitors, and China 3rd, with 1,187 visitors. Europe, excluding UK, had 700 visitors. We had 144 visits from Israel, 73 visits from Russia, 10 visits from Japan, 9 from Brazil and 8 from Australia.

Do we really reach out to the residents of these countries, or is it that Parkgate Society members are well travelled? There is no way of knowing.

I try to keep the web pages updated as I receive information. If you have any information to add to our website, please email me at webmaster@parkgatesociety.co.uk.

Derek Haylock

The Strange Tale of the Ghost in Parkgate's Tea House by Barrie Youde, the Parkgate Poet



The Little Tea House in Parkgate, 'South Cottage'.

South Cottage on The Parade has been owned for about four years by Alison and Carlos Mangani (Alison is local, Carlos is Argentinian), and they operate it very successfully as The Little Tea House.

An archway has been knocked through from the kitchen to the dining room to facilitate service – and everything is as beautifully presented as anybody might wish. My wife Katriina uses it regularly to entertain her chums and told me a few days ago that Alison was seeking to do some historical research. Could I help? Could I please call and see Alison?

I had already told Alison and Carlos as much as I know (ever knew?) about the place. We scraped the barrel and even mentioned its legendary hauntedness, which I assured Alison that I had managed to dismiss with logical explanations for all funny noises, etc. Alison then mentioned that a few days previously a friend had called to see her. The friend (in the kitchen at South Cottage/The Little Tea House) had said, "I can see somebody on the stairs and she is smiling at us, as though she approves of everything that is now happening here."

"I know who that is!" I said immediately, interrupting Alison and freezing at the same time.

Alison then said, "A lady, quite tall, dressed in clothes from the 1930s?"

"Yes. That is Kay Lecoustre, my mother in law, without a doubt."

"Can you tell me anything more?"

The fact that a friend of Alison (without any knowledge of the history of South Cottage) could describe with some accuracy my late mother-in-law, almost 35 years deceased, is mysterious, to say the least!

I walked home, shaking but happy, and then sent Alison the information below - which I hope may be of interest and might stir some memories for readers.

'I'm very happy to tell you about life at South Cottage from 1962 onwards, when I arrived on the scene.

'I had met Sue Lecoustre (daughter of the house) that year at a party. In September 1962 I arrived on the doorstep for the first time to collect Sue, prior to embarking on a date somewhere. The door was opened by Sue's mother, Kay; and I soon realised that the family was, if anything, larger than life and most welcoming. Aged 19, I was not short in height, but as I stood on the doorstep Kay seemed to tower over me. She was tall, dressed in slacks (unusual at the time, for a woman then in her early fifties) and had a booming voice. She didn't exactly say "Come in, Big Boy!" - but the welcome was not far off it in spirit!

'Kay Lecoustre was born Kathleen Vaughan Jones in 1909. Her father was a stockbroker: she grew up in Oxtou and went to Birkenhead High School. She had three brothers and the entire family was very sporty. Kay met Reginald Herman Lecoustre at some time in the early 1930s and they were married in 1936.

'Reg was the son of Captain Charles Louis Albert Lecoustre, who had been the Chief Examiner of Merchant Navy officers at Liverpool. As one who would have been examined by old Captain Lecoustre (but for the generation gap), I was duly respectful. Captain Lecoustre (who died in 1933) was the son of a Frenchman, who became a naturalised Briton. Reg was an accountant in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board and, like Kay, was a most kind and generous host. They were both extremely kind to me; and in 1969 Sue and I were married at Neston Parish Church. We then went to live at Mollington, near Chester.

'At South Cottage the Lecoustre family consisted of Reg and Kay and their two children (Susan, born in 1944, and Peter, born in 1947). During the war Reg served in the Army (reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel), and Kay served (until Susan was born) in the Land Army in Lancashire. By 1944, their family home was at Mellorscroft (now Knowles Cottage, on the corner of Bevy Road) and shortly afterwards they bought South Cottage from Sir Rex Hodges.



Kay Lecoustre at Neston Parish Church 1969 on the occasion of her daughter Sue's marriage to Barrie Youde. Dressed quite untypically and very differently from how she 'appears' at South Cottage!

'Completing the family in 1962 (when I first arrived on the scene) were three dachshunds (Mitzi, Gretel and Elizabeth), plus a Mynah bird, which had originally lived near Neston Station. Its ability to mimic the whistle of a steam-engine was astonishing. It had also seen much horse-racing on television and would frequently shout, "Five to Four the field!" and "Bobby Docherty" – although we never did know who that was!

'If ever I happened to be at South Cottage at 5.30 pm, Reg would inevitably declare, "I can hear the bolts being drawn back at the Red Lion" – and off he and I would trot for several pints. Kay and Reg were stalwarts of the Cricket Club. Reg was a life Vice-President, and they were all more than competent tennis players.

'Sadly, Reg died in 1978 and Kay in 1983 (still living at South Cottage at the time) at our house at Mollington, where she simply had a colossal heart attack one morning and was dead within about four hours. Sue died of breast cancer in 1985 and even her brother Peter died in 2010, so now they are all gone. I sold up at Mollington and came to live at South Cottage in 1986. I lacked either the will or the strength to do anything else. It was my bolt-hole and had become my spiritual home. After I had met and married Katriina in 1992, Peter was godfather to our daughter Annina, which pleased me greatly. We moved to Deva Bank that year.

'I have not the slightest doubt that Kay would have not only approved, but would have been delighted to see The Little Tea House today. I can visualise her standing on the stairs, greeting arriving guests, or else standing in the new archway in the dining room (as it was), holding court. It is all lovely – just as it always was'.

Finally, some verses on the subject from the Parkgate Poet:

KAY'S COTTAGE

I did not see the ghost at all,
But always thought she might be there.
It was a splendid woman, tall;
And she was smiling, on the stair;

And greeting all unto the house
With warmth, for there was fun about her;
And strength. She would not harm a
mouse.

In virtue, not a man would doubt her.

When someone said she had been seen,
I did not doubt. I simply froze.
I was not witness to the scene,
But kept, as always, on my toes.

It was the Lady on the Stair,
The mistress of this house of old,
Basic, with straightforward air,
And all else was as good as gold.

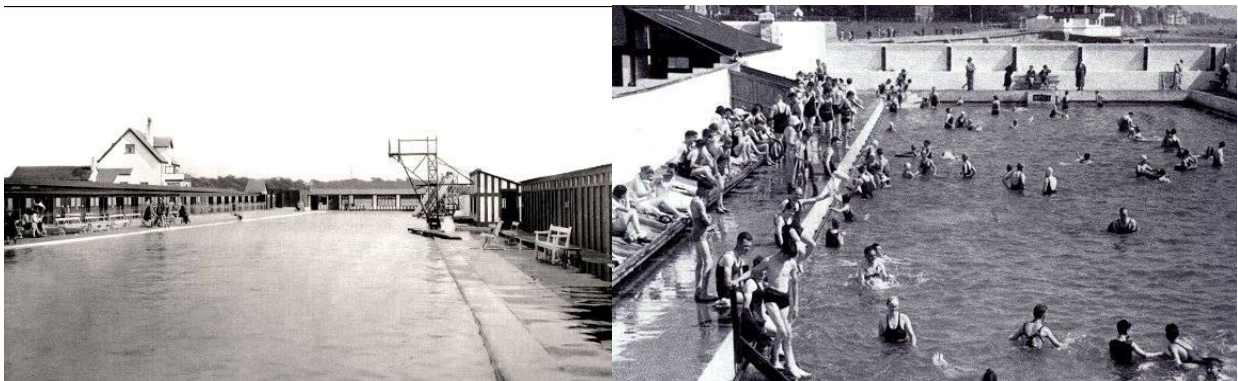
The Little Tea House carries on
Where once there lived the Lady mortal.
And may good fortune rest upon
Its tea and cakes, within the portal!

Barrie Youde

09.02.2017

(Owner, South Cottage, 1986 -1992)

The Old Baths



Parkgate baths in the 1930s
(David Scott collection)

The former open-air baths on the North Parade operated in the period 1923 to 1950. They were constructed for Mostyn House School during the headship of AG Grenfell. To recoup some of the cost of their construction, they were opened to the public, and proved extremely popular in the period between the wars. The main pool was 100 yards in length, and a second (smaller) pool was added in 1930. Water was pumped from the Dee and filtered before entering the baths, but the supply became increasingly problematic as the continual silting of the estuary took its toll on this system. Then, with the prospect of war looming, the baths were sold in 1939 to raise capital for the construction of an underground bomb shelter under the school playing field; however, they continued to be used intermittently from then, as more and more desperate attempts were made to address the problem of the water supply, until final closure became inevitable in 1950.

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www.parkgatesociety.co.uk

forget our website:

