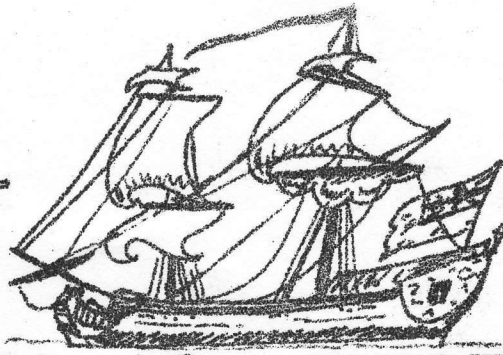


PARKGATE



SOCIETY

Number 19

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 1980

Chairman	JR Cochrane	336 2378
Vice-Chairman	HO Vollers	336 1359
Secretary	Mrs AM Clarke	336 1069
Treasurer	EPD Taylor	336 4321

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Please put these dates in your diary ! ←

→ Tuesday, 30th September, at The Boathouse,
at 7.30 pm the Annual General Meeting, followed by
at 8 pm, Allan Kingsbury, the Principal of Burton Manor,
will speak about

The HISTORY and PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS of BURTON MANOR

Burton Manor is correctly, perhaps a little dauntingly, described as a Residential College for Adult Education. It is also a most delightful place to visit, and its story is interwoven with the story of this district. We are sure you will enjoy meeting Mr Kingsbury.

→ Tuesday, 4th November, 8 pm at The Boathouse,
an illustrated talk by JN Barlow on

TRANSPORT in WIRRAL since 1850

Jack Barlow was going to speak to us last March, but unfortunately had to go to hospital. He is now fit and is ready to share with us his lifelong enthusiasm for trains and buses.

→ Monday, 8th December, 7.30 pm at The Boathouse,

The CHOIR of MOSTYN HOUSE will sing CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Please notice the starting time: 7.30 sharp, because the singers will have to go to bed before we do !

After the carols, there will be refreshments available, and we hope to enjoy a very pleasant social evening.

As we expect that a large number of members will want to come to this meeting, we shall admit MEMBERS ONLY on this occasion. However, on a family membership you are free to bring anyone you are prepared to call 'family', and we shall not ask the relationship !

If anyone needs TRANSPORT to reach our meetings,
do ring Mrs Clarke at 336 1069

Our Meetings

We have noticed that the attendance at our meetings is markedly lower than last year. Why is this? It certainly is not lack of members, and if all our members turned up together, we might be embarrassed to know how to seat them. It is also true that, compared to similar societies who think that an audience of thirty is large, our meetings are undoubtedly well supported. It is because we suspect that a change may stimulate renewed interest that we have arranged a meeting in December to hear the choir of Mostyn House. But if you have any suggestions to help us plan a better programme of meetings, please let us know. And please come!

Our first meeting of 1980 suffered bad luck, in that our speaker had to enter hospital. Our Chairman, Jim Cochrane, rallied round at short notice and gave a most interesting description of the work of a magistrate.

Our next meeting was, alas, an embarrassment. Our annual clean-up of the foreshore has been so well attended for years past, that we are astonished that so few people came this year. There were contributing factors, and we shall try to avoid them in future; but this was a disappointing day.

The local history talk in May, always the most popular of our meetings, was about 'Customs and Smugglers'. Geoffrey Place was able to show that there was little serious smuggling at Parkgate, no doubt because the authorities took considerable steps to prevent it. The Customs records at the Public Record Office in London have yielded a good deal of information about the later years of the Customs establishment at Parkgate.

Our most recent meeting was a 'walk', which followed the boundaries of the medieval Neston Park from Mostyn Square up to Wood Lane, along to Buggen Lane, down Moorside Lane and so back to Parkgate. As a dress rehearsal for this tour, Geoffrey Place had earlier conducted a similar walk for Cheshire County Council, which was well attended.

Help Wanted

Will somebody please offer to deliver Newsletters to our members at the north end of Parkgate? It involves a not very long walk, twice a year. We are very grateful to the Morrison family who have done this task for some years, but we now need someone else to do it. Please give Angela Clarke a ring (336 1069) if you will do it.

The Neston Conservation Area

After two years of discussion, the new Conservation Area has now been formed. It includes all the High Street, Parkgate Road down to the United Reformed Church, and an area bounded by Buggen Lane and the Wirral Way. Quite a large part of this space falls within our own bounds of interest, as extended by us when we thought that the Neston Conservation Area would be considerably smaller. We have now decided that we could not look after so much ourselves: the new Area, containing as it does so many of the commercial interests of the High Street, clearly merits a Society of its own.

Much of our recent energies, therefore, have been concerned to invite a steering committee to form a sister Society to ourselves. To this end, we asked some likely individuals to one of our own committee meetings and put the idea before them.

We are now happy (and relieved !) to report that they have just held their first independent meeting, and have now established a committee for the Neston Civic Society. The aims of the new society, like our own, will be to watch, discuss and champion the best interests of their locality, with special reference to the new Conservation Area. They hope to hold their first public meeting before Christmas, and there to unveil the new Society.

The officers of the new society are: Chairman, Mrs Clare Johnson (336 4786); Secretary, Mrs Linda Briggs (336 4783), Treasurer, JF Rushton (336 4329). There are four other committee members at this stage, and both the Chamber of Trade and the Parish Church Council are well represented.

The Parkgate Society has lent to them a cash guarantee to smooth the financial path, and a committee member to share experience. We have every confidence that the Neston Civic Society will be a success, and we wish it well.

The Burton Local History Festival

Here is another set of dates for your diary - Thursday, Friday, Saturday, September 18th, 19th, 20th. On these days there will be a festival at Burton which should be well worth a visit. There will be a local history exhibition (with two displays provided by the Parkgate Society) in the Village Hall, art and craft demonstrations in the Pear Tree Barn, and at the Burton Manor Gatehouse there will be an exhibition of historic costumes and a film show. There will be other attractions too, starting at 2 pm on Thursday and 10 am on the other days, continuing into the evening. The Burton Local History Society is raising the funds to publish a History of Burton. Our own Society, remembering how much benefit our own publications have brought us, is supporting this venture by guaranteeing to buy several copies of the forthcoming book.

The Committee's Rag Bag

You may have seen in the local paper that we have been involved in discussions about the Colliery Quay at Ness. Actually this was not our pigeon, but the Wirral Society's, and their Chairman kindly invited our representative to go along. We were also able to provide the Planning Department with the known history of the quay.

Our secretary has had discussions with the police about certain parking difficulties in Parkgate. We also asked the Council to restore the 'No Cycling' notices which used to stand at either end of the Ropewalk. Despite a decision, according to the local paper, that no action was to be taken, the notices have nevertheless appeared ! Well done, somebody.

We were rather disappointed when we opened the new and seemingly attractive Official Guide to the Borough, to find that many of the references to Parkgate, both present and historical, were misleading or just plain wrong. We wrote in sorrowful tone, regretting that no local eye (ours in particular !) had been asked to scan the copy and pick out the more obvious errors. We are glad to report that we had a constructive reply which promised cooperation 'next time'.

In fact our long campaign to improve the accuracy of references to Parkgate is now bearing fruit. Fortunately our guide book, 'This is Parkgate', appeared just in time for Alan Brack to make use of it in his new book 'The Wirral'. He did not get it all right - many authors do not realize that the New Haven/ New

Quay/ Neston Quay/ Old Quay were all the same place, and none of them Parkgate. The New Quay below Neston, by the way, became called the Old Quay when a new New Quay on the Welsh side (now called Connah's Quay) was formed in the 1740s. But Alan Brack got most of it right and is well worth reading. If you happen to meet journalists, writers, students or even schoolchildren who are interested in Parkgate, do not hesitate to steer them towards us, particularly towards Geoffrey Place, so that we can help them get the facts right.

As affiliated members of the Civic Trust, we were glad to welcome the secretary of the North West Civic Trust, and its Liverpool representative, when they paid us a visit in June. We discussed our hopes and worries, from litter upwards. We cherish a dream, quite impractical at present, that one day by some chance (or millionaire) we might be able to find and equip a permanent exhibition room, where we might have a local history display, show the work of local artists, sell our publications. Being optimists, we mention it sometimes to people who might make grants for such a thing. You never know

The only recent planning applications of interest or controversy have been attempts to encroach on the Green Belt at the north end of Parkgate, and we have opposed them. There was not much we could do about the monster drain which will take water from the air conditioning plant of the new factory, whatever that will now become, except to urge tidying and safety precautions at various stages. We suspect that a far larger pipe than necessary was provided.

Finally, we have great pleasure in congratulating our Chairman, Jim Cochrane, on his engagement to be married.

The Annual General Meeting

Our Constitution lays down that, 'Nominations for the election of Officers shall be made in writing at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting. Such nominations shall be supported by proposer and seconder and the consent of the nominee must first have been obtained.'

Any nominations to the Committee should therefore be sent to the Secretary (Mrs AM Clarke, Sea View, The Parade, Parkgate) by 16th September.

The four present Officers of the Society, named at the head of this Newsletter, are willing to continue and offer themselves for re-election. The remaining committee members are: SC Edwards, ADJ Grenfell, Mrs MA McCaig, GW Place, Mrs V Place, JH Reynolds, Mrs H Wall-Jones. All are willing to continue and are nominated for re-election.

The AGM will start at 7.30 pm on 30th September, and there will be a pause between the Society's business and Mr Kingsbury's talk, planned to start at 8 pm, in case you prefer to come for the talk only. The Committee is having to consider the possibility of having to adjust subscription rates, and we shall report our deliberations at the AGM.

Kitty James' Letter

One of several responses, most gratefully received, to our request for information about Parkgate in days past, is shown on the next page. It is a letter in the possession of Councillor Geoffrey Topp, and it is remarkable how much it has been possible to find out about the people mentioned in it.

Parkgate
August 4th (1854)

My very dear Papa,

According to your desire I write, but Parkgate affords so few subjects for a letter that I scarcely know what to put into it.

We are enjoying ourselves upon the whole pretty well but we find Parkgate so very dull, that we think it will be better for health and spirits to make a change; and therefore have fixed to go to Rhyl next Wednesday. We found a family here when we came of the name of Platt from Chester. Mr Platt is a chemist near Bolland's. They belong to Mr Knill's Church and are a very nice family indeed. They went away last Monday.

Minnie is writing to Mr Griffith today as he desired, she is now about as well as usual except the toothache, while I am writing she would be glad if you would send her some gutta-percha in your next letter.

We go sometimes to Neston on errands but it is too long for Minnie so she takes a donkey wherever she goes. As it is rather cold here now we have a fire in our lodgings. Have you cold weather at Wrexham?

There does not seem to be many people here at present and Grandmama thinks Parkgate much duller than it used to be.

I think I had better finish my letter now as it is near post time so with best love from all of us to dear Mama who I hope is much better and yourself and kisses to little John and his sister.

I remain,
Your affectionate daughter,
Kitty.

PS. So please write to me. I hope you will forgive that great blot.

Notes Kitty James wrote to her father, John James of Elwy House, King Street, Wrexham. He was a solicitor: his firm of James & Owen still exists as James, James & Hatch. John James (1808-1888) was Town Clerk of Wrexham, 1857-79. He was married three times, and these two girls, Mary Ann (Minnie) and Katherine (Kitty) were 17 and 14 at the time of this letter. They were half-sisters, daughters of the first two wives, and 'little John' was a child of the third wife.

'Mr Griffith' sounds like the family doctor. If so, he may have been Thomas T Griffith, 84 Chester Street, Wrexham, a general practitioner at that time. Gutta-percha, a rubbery but non-elastic latex, was used for filling teeth in those days.

Henry Platt (of Platt & Son, chemists, 13 Foregate Street, Chester, founded 1816 and sold 1866) built Alma Cottage in Parkgate in 1855. R. Bolland was well-known until quite recently as a luxury grocer in Foregate Street.

The Rev. Richard Knill was minister of the Independent Chapel in Chester, then in Foregate Street but later in Queen Street. He had worked in India and Russia for the London Missionary Society, and died in 1857, aged 69, at Chester after nine years there. John James was also a non-conformist, and used to play the organ at the Chester Street Congregational Church, Wrexham.

The letter was posted at the Parkgate post office, the building which now forms the Parade end of the Ship Hotel. The old Ship was behind the post office. The sub-postmaster then was Edward Hollingshead.