

Parkgate Society



Newsletter

Number 21

Autumn 1981

Chairman	JR Cochrane	336 7503
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, 6th October, at The Boat House,
at 7.30 pm, the Annual General Meeting, followed by
at 8 pm, the new Head Ranger, Mr Wilfred Wilson, will
describe the present situation and future prospects of
The WIRRAL COUNTRY PARK
- Tuesday, 10th November, 8 pm at The Boat House
CHESHIRE CHEESE
Mr Oulton Wade, of Grange Farm, Mollington, is the
right person to tell us how Cheshire Cheese is made.
- Tuesday, 8th December, 8 pm at The Boat House
The ENGLISHMAN'S HOME
Richard Foster, Director of Merseyside County Museums,
was unable to visit us as planned last May (although
he provided a very able deputy), and we are glad that
he will now be able to show us his many excellent
pictures of the development of domestic architecture.
- Monday, 21st December, 6.30 pm
Come CAROL SINGING !
Last year's tour of Parkgate was a great success. Join
us this year: we will meet at 6.30 pm in the car park
of The Boat House. With their accustomed kindness,
David and Mary Anne McCaig invite all those who stay
the course to their house afterwards.

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

If you have not yet paid your SUBSCRIPTION for 1981, please do so
to Mrs Place, Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate. The rates are only
£1 for single or family membership, and 50p for Senior Citizens.

Our Summer Tea Party

We were delighted with the response to this, our contribution to the Royal Wedding festivities. Between 150 and 200 people came - far more than we expected - and it says much for our cooks and kitchen helpers that we still had food to spare. There was plenty to do in the way of skittles, treasure hunt, shove-a-coin, penny in the pool, trial of strength, guessing weights, old photograph exhibition, food stall and various raffles. Very much in the spirit of the occasion was Melody Corner, where a pianist of 80 was accompanying musicians aged 5 to 15. Our intention was to cover our expenses, and the tickets for all activities were only 5p. We were therefore thrilled to find that our profit was £81, which was sent to the Blue Peter appeal. We have had a letter from the editor of Blue Peter, Biddy Baxter, which says that well over £1 million has been raised for this appeal to provide bungalows and electric chairs for handicapped people, and neonatal intensive care incubators to help prevent handicap in newborn babies.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to all those, especially the many young people, who worked so hard to make this tea party a success, and to Mary Anne and David McCaig who made it all possible.

Down Parkgate Way

It was a great day when the BBC team of Tony Smith, Brian Johnston and their sound recordist came to Parkgate and presented us to the listening nation. They had done their homework thoroughly and knew a good deal about Parkgate in advance. As so many members will have heard the broadcast, let us sum it up with a few highlights.

Colin Mealor pointed out the difference between a shrimp and a prawn: "Size and colour; shrimps are small and brown, prawns are a bit larger and pink. Anything over 200 to a pound in weight are classed as shrimps. Under 200 to a pound are prawns."

Jim Cochrane explained his choice of music: "The best thing that ever happened to me in my life is that I got married, last year. I've married a Canadian, and I've inherited two super Canadian children, so that's why I'd like 'O Canada'."

Eric Jervis described the tide: "The water comes straight into the shore and only the tops of the grasses show above it, and this causes all the wild life to make for the shore. It's not uncommon to see a bedraggled fox splashing through the encroaching water and making for the bank."

Reg Bushell told how he came to make his model of a fishing vessel: "To occupy my time (after his appendix burst) I made a model of a boat, the Two Brothers, a boat that Father and Mr Mealor used to work. Father had boats of his own, but I think a boat is like a horse; like a jockey likes a certain horse, I liked the Brothers."

Geoffrey Place quoted the infant school's log book for 1887: "Owing to heavy gales we were unable to have the school this morning: the parents refused to send the children as it was unsafe, owing to slates falling about the shore."

It was our Secretary, Angela Clarke, who lured the BBC to Parkgate and encouraged them when they came. We owe her our thanks for a most interesting experience.

Our Other Meetings

On March 17th we heard Walter Worth, the head gardener at Chester Zoo, describe the marvellous gardens which he controls. One fact which Mr Worth did not mention, but which will interest those who heard him, is that George Mottershead, who founded Chester Zoo, began his career as a market gardener. In his case, therefore, the plants preceded the animals.

On May 5th we heard an absorbing talk from Gillian Chitty, field arcaeologist for the Merseyside County Museums, who showed us some of the archaeological finds that have been made in Wirral.

Our walk to the Old Quay House on June 11th was well attended despite the lowering clouds.

The Cricket Club's Centenary

We were very pleased that the Cricket Club's Carnival Week went off so well. Some members have wondered how the cricketers come to be celebrating a centenary when our own Guide Book states that their club was founded in 1895. Fortunately, there is no error on our part nor duplicity on theirs. Until very recently, 1881 was the earliest date for which there was any record of cricket at Parkgate - in that case, a fleeting mention of a game being played on August Bank Holiday. We have only just found out that the present club, founded in 1895, was the successor to at least four earlier clubs founded in Neston or Parkgate. In 1886 Neston Rovers twice played Parkgate Victoria - these really are cricket teams ! - and won both times. Actually the first local cricket of which we have any record was in 1859, when Mostyn House defeated Oxton. In 1874 the Chester team came here to play Neston & Parkgate, but only seven men turned up for the local team: perhaps it was as well that no centenary was celebrated in 1974.

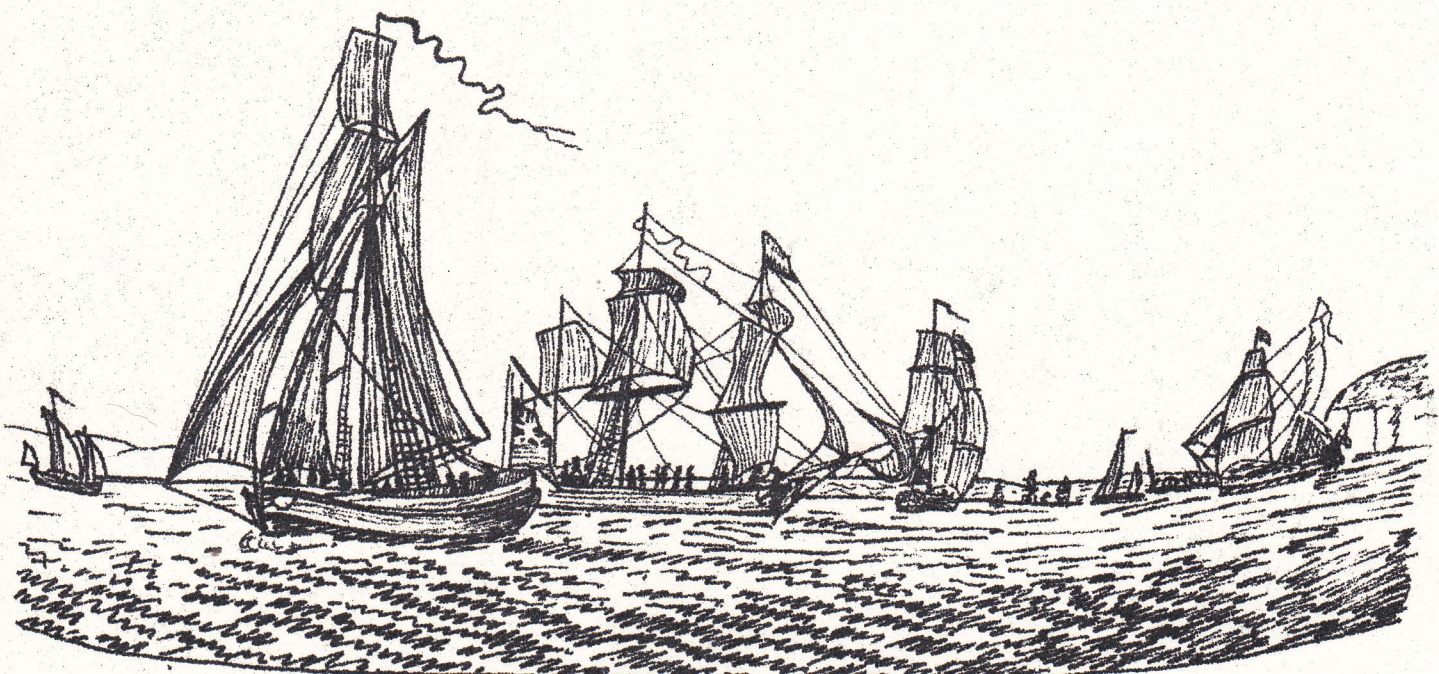
The Price of Shrimps

You may already have seen in the local press that we succeeded in tracking down Olive Dehn, the author of a notably good children's story about Parkgate. She wrote: "My association with Parkgate goes back to my childhood. I was born in Manchester, and a relation used to take me swimming in the lovely open-air baths at Parkgate. After our swim he always treated me to a pot of Parkgate shrimps ! Years later, in 1844 when my husband (David Markham) was acting at the Liverpool Playhouse, we took a house in West Kirby.

About this time Odhams commissioned two stories for their Wonder Books. I had been wandering about Wirral with my three little daughters, reading up some of the local history and inventing other bits out of my head: that is how 'The Price of Shrimps' came to be writtem. The second story was about West Kirby and was called 'The Caldly Crab'."

Help Needed

Would one of our members like to act as poster artist for us ? We used to produce half a dozen posters for each of our meetings, but recently we have not been able to do so. Willingness is, we feel, more important than artistic or calligraphic ability ! We should be grateful if somebody would undertake this task.



SUCCESS TO THE PARKGATE PACKETS.

Success to the Parkgate Packets

In our last Newsletter we published a drawing of a jug, made in the 1790s and now in the Merseyside County Museums in Liverpool, which has a design of five Parkgate packet ships on it. A member of the Society saw this and realised that he had seen something like it: a bowl which was clearly made as a companion piece to the jug. He was good enough to arrange an introduction to the bowl's owner, Lady Bibby, and she had the kindness to permit us to have photographs taken of it.

The inside of the bowl contains the same drawing of five packet ships which runs round the outside of the jug, and there are several different drawings on the outside. Some of these have been identified by Mr L.A. Burman, the Keeper of Decorative Art at the Merseyside County Museums, as traditional designs of Dutch inspiration, and there is also a ballad called 'Jemmy's Farewell and Return'. But to us the most interesting, because it is a new discovery, is the drawing of Parkgate of which a sketch is reproduced above. Just to the left of the right-hand ship there are, in fact, some houses. The ships are beautifully drawn; and the central ship with three masts, which occurs on the jug also, is probably the 'Princess Royal'. The Princess Royal was built at Parkgate by Thomas Makin, shipwright, and was launched on August 2nd 1787. She was registered as a square-sterned ship with 3 masts, one deck, measuring 70 x 21 feet, and a burthen of 132½ tons. She had a woman as figurehead. Our guide book wrongly describes her as having two masts: this was because one apparently unreliable description of her states that she was a snow, a kind of vessel with two masts. The Princess Royal was last heard of in 1810, but she lives on in Parkgate as the original "ship" of the Ship Inn.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen ...

Our Chairman, Jim Cochrane, has guided the affairs of this Society for seven years, with marked success. We still need him, but now that he has become "Mr Tennis" we cannot always have him. The Committee now propose that, in honour of his long service in the chair and as a claim to his future services, he should now become our President.

Hendrick Vollers, who has been Vice-Chairman for five years and a committee member for eight, is proposed as Chairman. Geoffrey Place is proposed as Vice-Chairman; he has been a committee member for eight years.

While totting up years of service, we should mention that Peter Taylor has been our Treasurer for nine years, while Hylde Wall-Jones has served on the committee since its inception, nine and a half years ago.

With the exception of John Reynolds who has resigned, all the existing committee members are willing to continue and offer themselves for re-election. Two new members, DL Walker and Mrs DP Britt, have been co-opted during the year and are now proposed for election.

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 should therefore be sent to the Secretary (Mrs AM Clarke, Sea View, The Parade, Parkgate) by September 21st.

Those already nominated are: for President, JR Cochrane; Chairman, HO Vollers; Vice-Chairman, GW Place; Treasurer, EPD Taylor; Secretary, Mrs AM Clarke (who, it should have been said earlier, has been our Secretary for eight years.) Those nominated as Committee members are: Mrs DP Britt, SC Edwards, ADJ Grenfell, Mrs MA McCaig, Mrs V Place, DL Walker, Mrs H Wall-Jones.

The AGM on October 6th will start at 7.30 pm, and there will be a pause between the Society's business and Mr Wilson's talk at 8 pm, in case you prefer to come for the talk only.

Varia

St Thomas' Church looked very attractive for its festival weekend in July. The Society helped, in the persons of Mary Anne McCaig and Hylde Wall-Jones who arranged flowers, and by providing items of the building's varied history. It was quite exciting to discover an account of its opening on 10th May, 1843. After the opening service, "70 friends of the undertaking sat down to dinner in the old Assembly Room, which for some years past has been used as a place of worship by the Christian society now transferred to the new sanctuary." The architects of the new Congregational Chapel, as it then was, Pritchitt & Son of York, gave their services free.