

President	JR Cochrane, CBE	
Chairman	GW Place	336 2891
Vice-chairman	SC Edwards	336 1190
Secretary	Mrs AM Clarke	336 1069
Treasurer	EPD Taylor	336 4321

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Please put these dates in your diary !

Monday, 15th September If you missed ourGUIDED WALK round SHOTWICK

it is being repeated today. Meet outside Shotwick Church  
at 2.30 pm.

Monday, 23rd September 8 pm at Mostyn House SchoolAn EVENING of CHAMBER MUSIC

presented by Philip Benbow. Philip will be playing the  
piano on this occasion, and has gathered several  
instrumentalists to join him.

Please enter the school grounds by one of the drives  
opposite the cricket ground.

Monday, 14th October at the Parkgate Hotel

at 7.30 pm, the Annual General Meeting, followed by  
at 8 pm, a talk on NESS GARDENS

presented by Peter Cunningham.

Monday, 11th November 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel"SAMKIN and SANDPIPERS"

is the name chosen by David Britt and Colin Wells  
for their survey of the natural history of the saltmarsh.

Monday, 9th December 7.30 pm at Mostyn HouseCAROLS by the SCHOOL CHOIR in the CHAPELof MOSTYN HOUSE SCHOOL

This concert was very popular last year, and once again  
David French and Philip Benbow the organist,  
have offered us the fruits of their skill.

Please enter the school grounds by one of the drives  
opposite the cricket club.

.... and just to whet your appetites for 1986, Mr and Mrs Potts have  
been kind enough to invite us back to their house for another Cheese  
and Wine party. It was very successful last time ! You will hear  
more of this just after Christmas.

The Parkgate Hotel We are delighted to report that Mr Harry Turner,  
the manager of the Parkgate Hotel now that  
Whitbreads have taken over from Peter Barnes, has very kindly agreed  
to continue the most generous arrangement which permits us to hold  
our meetings there.

The Parkgate Mosquitoes by Dr David P. Britt

The brackish pools which form on the salt marsh in the Dee estuary when rain dilutes the salt water left by high tides, provide ideal habitats for the immature (larval and pupal) stages of the mosquito *Aedes detritus*. This is by no means the only mosquito to be found in Parkgate, but it is the one most characteristic of the area. It is sometimes called the 'seaside mosquito' because of its common occurrence in coastal regions.

As adults, most mosquitoes are happy to use man as the source of a blood-meal, but it is important to remember that only the females feed in this way ! Males are content to feed peacefully on plant juices. If you are bitten by a mosquito in Parkgate it is quite likely to be *Aedes detritus*, especially if you are out of doors, for they are vicious and persistent biters. Furthermore, they may be on the wing throughout the year if the weather is mild, although usually they will not be found in December, January or February. Other mosquito species are more likely to enter houses - females of some species regularly do so late in the year to hibernate through the winter - so if you are bitten indoors, *Aedes detritus* may not be the culprit.

Not all the flying insects which bite man in Parkgate, or elsewhere in England, are mosquitoes. Among the most troublesome biters are the tiny biting midges (*Culicoides*) sometimes called 'no-see-ums', because they frequently escape notice - until you feel 'em ! The larger horse flies or 'clegs' and biting stable flies are less numerous but inflict particularly painful bites, even through clothing. Some unfortunate people become sensitised to insect bites and react with angry weals or blisters. Much more rarely, generalised reactions may occur. However, for most people, the bites are a minor irritation and the effects are transient. None of the insects offers serious threats to health in Britain by carrying infections to man but bites may become septic if they are scratched.

*Aedes detritus* adults are rather handsome creatures, though if one is biting you, its beauty may go unnoticed ! Unlike some of its close relatives, its legs are uniformly dark rather than striped, but its long abdomen is neatly banded with whitish scales over the dark brown ground colour to give a 'pepper and salt' appearance. Mixed light and dark scales are also present on the wings. They are very efficient flying machines, perhaps the strongest fliers of all British mosquitoes, with a range of at least four miles. They have frequently been collected at Leahurst on the Chester High Road, having flown there from breeding sites on the marshes.

There has been much talk recently about controlling the Parkgate mosquito menace. The implications of any attempted control programme are enormous. Even in areas of the world where mosquitoes carry life-threatening human disease, like malaria or yellow fever, attempts at control meet with limited success and eradication is impossible. Chemical assault on the breeding grounds is the measure most likely to be considered here, but the area to be treated is extensive, especially in view of the flight range of the adults. Furthermore, the treatment would need to be repeated again and again at considerable cost to have significant effect. Even if *Aedes detritus* could be defeated, there would be no respite from other biting insects, some of which breed on the marsh, but others certainly do not.

There is no specific treatment for *Aedes* mosquitoes at any

stage of their life-cycle, so the application of noxious chemicals would have incalculable knock-on effects for other inhabitants of the marsh. If the mosquitoes went, we might have to say goodbye also to the swifts, swallows and house martins which visit us annually and scoop large numbers of these and other insects from the sky. The herons and wading birds are equally dependent on the marsh creatures they consume which in turn prey on mosquito larvae. It appears that a pact with these irritating insects is part of the price we must pay for living in this attractive area.

We are grateful to Dr Britt for this lucid account of the mosquito problem. It would seem that sufferers will have to place their trust in insect repellent.

The Subscription

As with the mosquitoes, here is another problem which just won't go away. Our subscription rates were fixed ten years ago, and they have hitherto covered our basic running expenses, which have been kept remarkably low. Any other expenses have, in recent years, been met from self-generated funds made of the profit from our publications. Not surprisingly, ten years of inflation have now caught up with us, and it is necessary to set new rates, as follows:

- Family or individual membership     £2
- Senior citizen membership            £1

These rates are payable from the publication of this Newsletter. Our Membership Secretary (Mrs V Place, Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate) will gladly take them.

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 should therefore be sent to the Secretary (Mrs AM Clarke, Sea View, The Parade, Parkgate) by September 30th.

The present officers and committee members are willing to serve again, and offer themselves for re-election. They are:

- GW Place (Chairman), SC Edwards (Vice-chairman), Mrs AM Clarke (Secretary), EPD Taylor (Treasurer), Mrs DP Britt, ADJ Grenfell, Mrs V Place, MS Potts, Miss M Tinker, GA Topp, DL Walker.

The AGM on October 14th will start at 7.30 pm, and there will be a pause between the Society's business and Mr Cunningham's talk, in case you prefer to come for the talk only at 8 pm.

Parking Restrictions in Parkgate

Our roads, having acquired a new surface, are about to acquire a new system of yellow lines. Amongst other improvements, the complete replacement of double white central carriageway markings with yellow curb lines will, we hope, end the difficulties encountered by visiting motorists on the corner opposite the Old Quay inn, and improve safety.

The Borough Engineer allowed us the chance to comment on his plans, and we were able to applaud their good sense. The old-fashioned and unenforceable 'No Parking' directions painted on the road are now superseded, and the curious situation in Coastguard Lane is rationalised.

### The Saxon Stones at Neston

In Neston parish church there are five carved fragments of Saxon crosses; four of them are heaped somewhat randomly just inside the door, and a fifth is firmly embedded in the wall of the tower, visible only to those who penetrate the belfry's ringing chamber. A plan has been formed to restore proper recognition to these ancient clues to our heritage, by cleaning them, describing them in scholarly detail, and putting them on permanent display in the church.

The Neston Civic Society and the Parish Church Council are enthusiastic in their support for this scheme. We have lent our organisational support, and hope, when costs are known, to offer financial support as well. As by far the oldest objects in the district, these carvings some belated respect.

### New Bins for Litter

Our latest stratagem in this unending war, is to ask for sponsorship from local shops and enterprises which, with the help of Keep Britain Tidy, will enable us to buy the sort of bins which suit Parkgate. So far we have had a positive response from Nicholls, the Parkgate Stores, Tony Smith and Swifts - but a good standing bin is expensive, and the promised contributions will not even pay for one complete bin. This Society is pledged to buy one, so we shall certainly get two, though naturally we are hoping for more. Any ideas from our members will, of course, be very welcome.

### Sales Outlets for our Guide Book

The closing of the Green Bottle caused, as we expected, a severe drop in the sales of 'This is Parkgate'. Hitherto we have relied solely on the kindness of our friends who have sold our book with no profit for themselves. We have now revised this policy, and have offered the book to any retailer at the normal commercial commission. This decision was made not only to maintain sales, but to achieve wider recognition for the guide book. At the moment there are eleven outlets selling the book.

We are very grateful to Mr and Mrs Thomas at Nicholls, who were offered the same commission, but preferred to take nothing for their trouble. They have been our loyal supporters for many years.

On the subject of our publications, please do not forget that we still have a stock of greetings cards showing portraits of Parkgate buildings. Get some at our next meeting.

### Road Names

One of the achievements of our very first publication, 'A Stroll Through Parkgate', was to establish in print that our village derives its name from Neston Park - and not, as some fanciful writers of the 19th century supposed, from a mythical park below Leighton Hall. Imagine our displeasure, therefore, to find that a builder from Chester was calling his new development behind Woodlands Close, 'Leighton Park'. It is now too late to alter, but we would appreciate in future the chance to comment on such road names, and we have asked our local councillors to try to give us that chance.

Much the same happened, before this Society was founded, when the Tithebarn estate was built. On this site was once Leighton Cottage, and a house was made from its outbuildings which its owner called, out of whim, Tithe Barn. Since then, generations of schoolchildren have supposed, from the evidence of the road name, that there really was once a tithe barn at Parkgate. There was not !

Gayton Sands R.S.P.B. Reserve

by Colin Wells

I guess to many people who can remember the days when the sands off Parkgate were regularly flooded by tides, the large expanse of marsh now the RSPB reserve looks like a large tract of wasteland ! However it is the presence of this vast area of vegetation which attracts many birds to the region. The majority of saltmarsh plants are extremely valuable to birds because they produce enormous quantities of seeds. Great numbers of wildfowl feed on these seeds during the winter months. With the control of shooting, certain species have increased and the reserve has become nationally important for twelve species of wildfowl and internationally for seven species. In fact it is becoming one of the most important wildfowl and wader reserves in the country.

To give you an idea of the numbers involved, the following counts have been extracted from the reserve's log book for the 1984 season: Mallard 4,670; Teal 2,125; Pintail 8,000; Shelduck 6,070; Oystercatcher 19,000; Grey Plover 1,168; Curlew 3,000; Redshank 2,780; Dunlin 12,000; Knot 12,000.

Unfortunately the majority of wildfowl and waders are difficult to see as they spend most of their time on the sandflats and along the edge of the marsh. The best time for birdwatching on the reserve is during the big winter tides which reach the Parkgate Parade. The Old Baths car park and the footpath to Gayton Cottage are the ideal places to watch the large flocks of birds moving before the incoming tide. Other birds which are more frequently seen during these tides are Peregrine, Merlin, Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl and Water Rail.

An information sheet on the reserve is available from the Warden: please enclose S.A.E. For any further information about the work of the reserve or the RSPB, do contact me:

Colin Wells, Marsh Cottage, Denhall Lane, Burton, S Wirral.  
336 7681

Our Meetings

In March Leonard Walker enchanted his audience with his excellent photographs of his trip round the world. As befits the 900th anniversary of the Domesday Survey, we have asked him to make a photographic record of Parkgate as it is today; not concentrating merely on the historic or the obvious, but looking for detail and recording examples of modern housing as well.

In April, Brian Danger told us about his memories of being editor of the Heswall and Neston News.

In May, Mr BH Coles gave us an unusual and very interesting insight into his work as a vet, especially with wild birds.

Our walk round Shotwick in June was very successful; almost overwhelming, though, as about three times as many people turned up as we expected. Fortunately the two householders who had kindly invited us to see inside their houses were not put out.

Please do not hesitate to ring Mrs Clarke (336 1069) if you need transport to reach our meetings.

We are grateful to Muriel Tinker for helping to decorate St Thomas' church for their flower festival, and for attending a meeting of the North West Civic Trust at Styral.