
PARKGATE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Number 31

Autumn 1986

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 !

Sunday, 21st September A GUIDED WALK round the
BOUNDARIES of NESTON PARK
2.30 pm, starting at the Wirral Country Park car park
next to the Cricket Club in Station Road. This is a
repeat of the walk undertaken on 20th June, this time
chiefly for the Burton Local History Society.

Monday, 13th October at the Parkgate Hotel
at 7.30 pm, the Annual General Meeting, followed by
at 8 pm, a talk by Dr Bevyl Cowan on
SIR WILFRED GRENFELL

Monday, 17th November 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel
POLICE in the COMMUNITY
by Superintendent M. Heathcote

The Headmaster of Parkgate Primary School, Mr Wilkinson, has
kindly invited members of the Society to a performance of the
children's Christmas entertainment. The date, which he has not
yet fixed, will probably be in the week beginning 15th December.
We hope to give you the details at our November meeting.

Monday, 19th January 1987 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel
The CENTRE of NESTON
presented by Edward Hilditch and Geoffrey Place.
This meeting is arranged jointly with the Burton & South
Wirral Local History Society and the Neston Civic Society.

∴ If you need TRANSPORT to reach our meetings, ∴
∴ do ring Mrs Clarke, 336 1069 ∴

Of course, you must have paid your SUBSCRIPTION for 1986
by now ! But just in case you haven't,

the rates are: Single or family membership £2
Senior Citizen membership £1

Your subscription should be paid to the Membership Secretary,
Mrs V. Place, Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate.

Civic Trust Environment Week

Our contribution to this national round of events was to pitch our stall on the Donkey Stand for the two days of a May weekend, brave a sharp wind and present our work and purpose to anyone who stopped to look. Our thanks are due to those hardy committee members who survived some not very friendly weather, and to the Parkgate Nursery, whose flowers in the tubs on the Donkey Stand attracted many favourable words.

Our New Litter Bins

Our never-ending battle against litter has been greatly helped by the siting of four handsome and capacious new bins on the Parade. The design is our own choice, to match two earlier bins which we also chose to suit the particular needs of Parkgate.

We are very grateful to those members who gave money (The Ship Hotel, Mostyn House School, Swift the Butcher's, Tony Smith and two private members, augmented by the Society's funds) as well as to the Borough Engineer's department for their cooperation. We have no doubt that the local authority was willing to help us because we were so clearly willing to help ourselves.

Those "Parkgate" signs

The location signs put up by the Council at the end of last year have been generally admired, although some of them seem to be in unexpected places. The traveller is not really offered much help, we felt, when he sees a 'Parkgate' sign at the junction of Boathouse Lane and the Chester High Road, well over a mile from the outskirts of the village; and it seems a strange decision to state that Parkgate starts, and Neston ends, just outside Leighton Hall Farm. We wrote to the Borough Engineer, pointing out these oddities, and suggesting that the name of the ancient settlement of Leighton should be revived and marked with signs on Leighton Road, Boathouse Lane and The Runnel.

The answer, it seems, is that the signs reflect, not what a locality ought to be called, but what the Post Office calls it. The purpose of the signs, they say, is to assist delivery vans and the like to find a postal address. The chance of getting the Post Office to acknowledge the existence of Leighton does not seem favourable, and any such request should really come from the residents of Leighton.

If any of our members who live in Leighton (there is not much point in counting the Leighton end of Parkgate) feels that the matter should be pursued, do let us know.

The Wall Painting

Our last Newsletter described a mural painting which had been found in a Parkgate house, which is in fact 'Seven Steps'. The find turned out to be not as exciting as we had hoped, but still quite interesting. David Hillhouse, the curator of the Williamson Art Gallery, says that it is Victorian, perhaps about 1880, the work of an unskilled amateur. In those days, wall paper was often sold by art shops, so that painting your own designs on the wall was more likely than now to be considered as an alternative decoration.

How should we Spend our Money ?

A year ago we raised our subscription rates because our income from subscriptions was no longer paying our running expenses. Our accumulated funds have not been garnered from the subscriptions, but from the profits of our publications. The committee thinks that these funds should be used for non-recurring expenditure: the most recent example is money spent on the new litter bins, and before that on trees for St Thomas' churchyard.

At the moment we have about £2,500. Not a fortune, but we don't want to hoard money out of miserly delight. We do have a few projects in the pipeline. We are committed with the Neston Civic Society to the plan to display the Saxon cross fragments in Neston Church, if we can get permission (a long-running and rather frustrating saga, of which we hope to have news for our next Newsletter). We are presently investigating the possibility of getting one or two more seats installed on the Parkgate Parade. And since our funds have been gained from publications, we would like to be able to launch future publications or to renew stocks of our Guide Book. A research committee, based on the Burton & South Wirral Local History Society, is preparing a history of Neston, and in about two years time they will be looking for funds.

Do you have any ideas on how such funds should be spent ? We are obliged under our constitution to spend our money to the benefit of our own area. Do please let us know if you have any suggestions.

A Publicity Leaflet

Although we have a very healthy membership and our meetings are always well attended, we need to wave the flag from time to time, to make sure people in our area know that we exist, and know how to contact us. To this end, we have printed a publicity leaflet and shall shortly deliver it throughout Parkgate. You don't need one, of course, and if you get one by accident, please pass it on to someone who may like to see it.

"Grenfell Park"

When a new road name has to be decided, the decision is made by the Highways Committee of the Council in consultation with the local councillors. As road names tend to embed themselves into the local history of the area, we asked our own councillors whether we might have the chance to hear about any such names before they were decided, so that we might offer comments where necessary. As a result, we were asked to suggest names for the housing development by Redrow Ltd next to the Ropewalk.

All that area was once fields, known collectively as The Parks, as they had been formed from Neston Park. We hoped also that such a large development might commemorate the name of Sir Wilfred Grenfell, Parkgate's (and Wirral's) most celebrated son, who is not publicly remembered anywhere else in his birthplace. We then checked with the builder that his own name of The Pavilions, quite attractive but lightweight, was intended only for his own publicity and was not being offered for permanent use.

So we suggested "Grenfell Park". One of the yardsticks

for road names these days is that they must not sound like an existing name, in case the ambulance or fire services might be confused. We suggested that Grenfell Park, Parkgate, would not really sound like Grenville Road, Neston, and we are glad to say that our proposal has been accepted.

We are grateful to our local councillors for giving us the chance to make our recommendation, and we hope to be allowed similar chances in the future.

Thank you

The chief outlet for our guide book, "This is Parkgate", is and always has been the Parkgate Post Office, where the Thomas family were generous enough to sell it at no profit to themselves. The new owners are Mr and Mrs Atherton, who have most kindly agreed to continue the same arrangement, thus helping to generate the funds which have been discussed on page 3. We are very grateful to 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 28th. 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 S Britt, ADJ Grenfell, Mrs V Place, MS Potts, Miss M Tinker, GA Topp, DL Walker.

The AGM on October 13th will start at 7.30 pm, and there will be a pause between the Society's business and Dr Cowan's talk, in case you prefer to come for the talk only at 8 pm.

Our Meetings

Our three talks in the early part of this year were all of great interest in very different ways. In March and April we heard about the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and about Port Sunlight village. In May, though, we enjoyed a fascinating talk by Geoff Topp on the postal history of Wirral. Those of us thought it might be about boring old stamps were utterly wrong: it was of riveting interest on all manner of subjects.

Research

On the next page we publish a graphic account of the incident which brought the Parkgate Packet Company to its knees and contributed to the decline of shipping at Parkgate: the shipwreck of the King George in 1806. Accounts of this disaster have been printed before, but we have never before seen this one, which was found by Valerie Place while researching in the National Library of Ireland, in the pages of Faulkner's Dublin Journal.

The Loss of the King George Packet

from Faulkner's Dublin Journal, 23 September 1806

On Saturday 14th at one o'clock pm the King George Packet, Captain Walker, put to sea from Parkgate with more than 150 persons on board, bound for Dublin. The wind blew strongly against the voyage bearing from the west and the sea was high. In a few hours the vessel had not made more than one and a half leagues when she struck upon a sandbank called the Dorrpool, distant about four miles from Parkgate, upon which when the tide went down she lay perfectly dry and without injury. At 6 o'clock in the evening the passengers were seen from Parkgate and the adjacent shore walking round the vessel upon the dry bank.

Between 11 and 12 o'clock at night the cries and shrieks of those on board were distinctly heard in the most distressing and piteous sounds, the sea ran so high it was impossible to lend assistance from the land, yet the people on shore did what they could but to no purpose. As morning approached the vain efforts of many on board struggling for life amidst the rigging (amongst which were seen two women with children on their backs) of the hopeless wreck became visible; and she shortly after went down with every soul on board who all have perished in the devouring deep with the exception of six persons.

At 4 am on Monday 15th the tide drifted on shore the boat of the King George Packet having on board the six persons saved, namely Henry Walker (brother of the captain and mate of the vessel), Williams and Roberts, two of the crew, a boy and a blacksmith. By these the account given is as follows; that when the vessel lay upon the dry bank, she was examined and appeared to be uninjured, and the captain intended to put to sea the succeeding tide, on the approach of which as a precautionary measure he threw out an anchor, but alas, this measure proved fatal, the anchor and the heavy following tide coming in contact with each other, the vessel struck upon the bank, the sea ran very high and the water began fast to make the hold.

People were very frightened and those in the hold in their struggles to ascend on to the deck actually cut at each other with knives. The vessel struck a second time and the water increased; many took to the boat, which by the heavy sea was soon nearly swamped and several who were in her preferred the vessel as a place of greater safety, and again went aboard the packet, amongst those was the captain. The vessel struck a third time and went down with all on board.

There were four cabin passengers, one a farmer from Leicestershire who had with him six rams.

She is now fastened by an anchor to the sandbank and lies on her side with her keel towards Parkgate, and her head to the Welsh coast, her lower mast and rigging out of the water. The King George Packet belongs to Mr Brown of Liverpool. She was formerly a privateer and carried sixteen guns and was afterwards employed as a Harwich packet. This was her second voyage to Dublin for which service she had lately been patched up. She was considered as too sharp built for the sands.