

PARKGATE SOCIETY

AUTUMN 1987

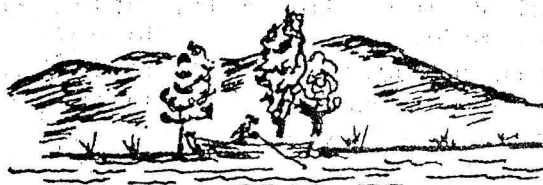
NEWSLETTER

Number 33

President	J R Cochrane C.B.E.		
Chairman	G W Place	336	2891
V. Chairman	S C Edwards	336	1190
Secretary	Mrs A M Clarke	336	1069
Treasurer	E P D Taylor	336	4321

E. & O.E. !

In the last issue of the Newsletter perhaps I should have taken the precaution of ending with 'Errors and Omissions Excepted', because the Gremlins certainly got in to the Crossword (one answer without a clue) and the wrong report on the talk at last years AGM. My apologies for any confusion; extra proof reading will have been applied to this issue. On now to matters less mundane, this year's AGM is to be held on Monday 12th October, at 7.30pm, at the Parkgate Hotel. At the AGM after fifteen years of unremitting support Mr A D G Grenfell will be stepping down from the committee, and I know that you would wish me to extend your thanks to him for his support over those years. He has assisted the Society in so many ways, particularly extending his hospitality to your committee for their meetings and opening the doors of Mostyn House School to us on several occasions which has added enormously to our enjoyment of membership of the Society.



A.G.M.

7.30pm Monday 12th October 1987 7.30pm
PARKGATE HOTEL

to be followed by
THE RIVER DEE a B.B.C. production



DIAMONDS !

Mr J L Pyke at 8pm

Monday 16th November 1987 at the
PARKGATE HOTEL



CLASSICAL LIVERPOOL

Miss M Wilson at 8pm

Monday 14th December 1987
at Mostyn House School



BUILDINGS IN WIRRAL - Mrs Elizabeth Davey

Joint meeting with Neston Civic Society
and the Burton and South Wirral local
history society; at 8pm Monday 11th Jan.
1988 at the PARKGATE HOTEL.



HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED

THEN!

PARKGATE 160 YEARS AGO

An extract from; 'PIGOT & Co's CHESHIRE DIRECTORY - 1828'

'PARKGATE is about a mile below Neston, and is of importance only as being the resort of visitors to it, in the bathing season. The houses, which are neat and modern, are disposed in a long range, facing the estuary of the Dee. A regular ferry from hence to Flint affords great accommodation to those residing on the Welch (sic) shore, desirous of visiting Liverpool. A custom house is still supported at Parkgate, confined to vessels visiting the contiguous collieries. About fifteen years ago Parkgate partook of all the importance and bustle of a sea-port, and at that time packets and other vessels were employed here in the trade with Ireland but at this period, as a packet station, it is neglected, no vessel of burthen being enabled to approach within a considerable distance of the quay, from the large sand bank which occupies the channel. The population, which has increased since 1821, consisted then of about 400 persons.'

& NOW!

The visitors still come, in even greater numbers, not of course for the bathing, the water is replaced by a wind blown sea of grass but the distant view of the Welsh hills is still as entrancing as it must have been then. No ships of any burthen come close to Parkgate anymore and the collieries are capped and built upon. We do have the sunlit white ferry on the distant shore, and on those crystal clear, mirage like days, when refraction enlarges the horizon's objects a coaster anchored off the Point of Air awaiting docking at Mostyn. A reminder of shipping past. And what of the houses? Certainly they are modern, but still with an eye to the past. What magnificent floral displays are now to be seen particularly at 'Mr Chow's' and 'Chempers', a credit to their management, a delight to the eye which would not have survived the salt spray of high waters all those years ago. The new flats on the site of the Old Garage, 'De. side Court', has added wonderfully to the style and charm of Parkgate. Still Parkgate all on one side of course! In fact your committee have decided to submit the Deeside Court development as an entry in an Architectural Design Award competition, we do hope that you approve! It does show that development within a Conservation Area can take place and enhance what is already there. Oh yes, we have too many cars, too much litter and one or two desirable points of interest, but Parkgate really is magnificent and we are fortunate and privileged to live here. Incidentally, the population of Parkgate now is about 2000, five times that of 1821.

Ed.

***** THEATRE PARKGATE *****

When you turn to the following page, which I hope you will now be sufficiently curious enough to do, you will see reproduced there one of the most significant items of Parkgate history to come to light for very many years.

This Theatre Parkgate handbill for 1811 is one of six, all of the same year, acquired in a recent auction sale by a Wirral resident, who has very kindly given us permission to reproduce it.

Before presenting the evidence to prove that the handbills relate to 'our' Parkgate some explanation of their origins is deserved. In May of this year the belongings of the late Mr Thomas Dibdin, aged 92 of Maghull, were auctioned in Liverpool, their proceeds to benefit the R.N.L.I. Mr Dibdin was the great-grandson of Charles Dibdin (1745-1814) a dramatist and composer who started a family tradition of collecting, amongst other things, theatrical ephemera.

Merely to have 'Theatre Parkgate' at the head of the handbills does not in itself place them as relating to this Parkgate, but below we adduce the evidence which shows conclusively that they really do belong to 'our' Parkgate.

1. The handbills were printed in Holywell and at that time, 1811, daily ferry services plied between Parkgate and Flint.
2. Drury Lane, where 'tickets were to be had at Mr T.Brown's' was the name of the weint between Mostyn House School and the Ship Hotel. This is presumed to have been so named after London's Drury Lane of theatrical fame.
3. 'Mr J.Davies, grocer' is listed in the 1822 and 1828 editions of Pigot's Directory of Cheshire, viz. John Davies, Grocer, Parkgate.
4. Two of the other handbills mention 'Mr Pollard's (sic), tailor' and we find the following entry in Pigot's Directory, 'Pollard Benjamin, tailor, Parkgate'.
5. The part of 'Sir Peter Teazle' is played by 'Mr Ryley'. Samuel W. Ryley, actor, was at this time a resident of Parkgate. (See "This is Parkgate, its Buildings and their Story" page 29).

And so another small part of the jigsaw of Parkgate history is put in place. What other intriguing artifacts remain to be discovered we cannot imagine but few will match the excitement of the discovery of these Parkgate theatre handbills.

THEATRE PARKGATE.

On *FRIDAY* Evening, August 9, 1811,

Will be presented a Comedy, called

The School for Scandal.

Sir Peter Teazle.....	Mr. RYLEY
Sir Oliver Surface.....	Mr. ROSCOE
Joseph Surface.....	Mr. BAILIOL
Charles.....	Mr. WALSH
Crabtree.....	Mr. EDWARDS
Sir Benjamin Backbite.....	Mr. HOPE
Rowley.....	Mr. SMITH
Moses and Snake.....	Mr. EATON
Lady Teazle.....	Mrs. EDWARDS
Maria.....	Miss WARREN
Lady Sneerwell.....	Miss MONTFORD
Kitty.....	Mrs. BAILIOL
Mrs. Candor.....	Miss WALSH

END OF THE PLAY.

A COMIC SONG, Mr. SMITH
A favorite SONG, Mr. ROSCOE

To which will be added the laughable Farce, of

The Lying Valet.

Sharp (the Lying Valet).....	Mr. EDWARDS
Justice Guttle.....	Mr. ROSCOE
Drunken Cook.....	Mr. HOPE
Beau Tripet.....	Mr. EATON
Gayless.....	Mr. SMITH
Mellisa.....	Miss MONTFORD
Mrs. Tripet.....	Mrs. BAILIOL
Mrs. Gadabout.....	Mrs. WALSH
Kitty Pry.....	Miss WALSH

• PIT 2s.—GALLERY 1s.

Doors to be opened at six o'clock, and to begin precisely at seven.
Tickets to be had of Mr. EDWARDS, at Mr. T. BROWN's Drury Lane, at
Mr. J. DAVIES, Grocer; and at Mrs. Hall, Milliner.

CARNES, PRINTER, HOLYWELL.

THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES AT PARKGATE

Parkgate never appears to have had enough visitors to justify a permanent theatre, but surviving evidence shows that travelling players would occasionally come to give performances here. The first evidence we have for this dates from 1755, when entertainers who had been at Chester were reported to be performing in Neston, and "have had several mobility from Parkgate, who were bound for Dublin". These entertainers included an African on the slack wire and a dog that could read!

Subsequently in 1788 it was reported that "a very respectable company of comedians intend opening in the course of a few evenings. To this purpose, two very convenient and commodious temporary theatres are now fitting up, one in Parkgate, the other in Neston, at each of which the company mean to perform twice a week".

In the early nineteenth century Parkgate was enlivened by the colourful presence of Samuel Ryley, an actor whose general popularity was matched only by his inveterate insolvency. We do not know when he first set up house with his family in a small cottage next to the Watch House, but he was arrested there for debt in 1813. Ryley usually performed in Liverpool, Manchester or Chester, but on occasions, perhaps when nothing better offered or the presence of visitors made it worthwhile, he performed at Parkgate. In 1815 we learn, from reports in the Chester Chronicle, that "a theatre is opened at Parkgate, but we have not heard anything respecting the professional ability of its corps dramatique". That these actors were directed by Ryley is clear from a newspaper item six weeks later in the same year; "Mr Kaen (in Chester for one night) will be supported by a detachment from Mr Ryley's corps theatrique at Parkgate, in Richard III", described a week later as "by no means worse than what we have had here". A year later it was reported that "Parkgate will shortly possess a respectable company under the management of Mr Bennett, of the Bath Theatre.

These are the only clues to theatrical activity at Parkgate to be gleaned from the pages of the Chester Chronical. We do not know exactly where the actors performed; there may have been more than one place, and it seems likely that the premises of inns were used since they were already places of public resort. A writer in 1879 stated that "Ryley used to give a series of entertainments at the Parkgate Theatre which was situated in the lane above the Union Hotel". In Ryley's day this inn was the Ship Inn as it is again today, and the lane was known as Drury Lane, after the famous London theatrical street of that name, no doubt as a result of the theatrical performances which took place in premises off the lane. He also wrote "The theatre had formerly been a herring house. Ryley's handbills stated that his entertainments were under the patronage of Sir Thomas Hesketh or Sir Andrew Corbett, who were constant visitors to that place (Parkgate). A favourite piece of Ryley's he called 'His Drooms' in which he exhibited a number of puppets or pasteboard figures, making them by some mechanical process show the most ridiculous grimaces; whilst he played a violin and sang a ditty of his own composing, the chorus of which was, 'Make faces, Make faces!'"

Another writer stated in 1897, "that the theatre was in the Assembly Room of the Mostyn Arms Hotel". This was on the south side of this hotel whereas Drury Lane was on its north side. So, perhaps actors performed in both places, but neither could be called a permanent theatre.

WHEN JOHN WESLEY PASSED THIS WAY.[2]

'Friday April 21st 1762.'

'I rode to Parkgate and found several ships; but the wind was contrary. I preached at five "in the small house they have just built," and the hearers were remarkably serious. I gave notice of preaching at five in the morning, but at half hour after four one brought us word that the wind was come fair and Captain Jordon would sail in less than an hour. We were soon on the ship, wherein we found about three score passengers. The sun shone bright the wind was moderate, the sea smoothe, and we wanted nothing but room to stir ourselves; the cabin being filled with hops, so that we could not get into it, but by climbing over them on our hands and knees. In the afternoon we were abreast of Holyhead, but the scene was quickly changed. The wind rose higher and higher, and by seven o'clock blew a storm. The sea broke over us continually, and sometimes covered the ship, which both pitched and rolled in an uncommon manner, so was informed, for being a little sick. I lay down at six in the morning. We were then near Dublin Bay, where we went into a boat which carried us to Dunleary [sic]. Here we met a chaise just ready in which we went to Dublin.

[Wesley's Works, Vol.3, p.83]

* Further extracts will be published in future Newsletters *

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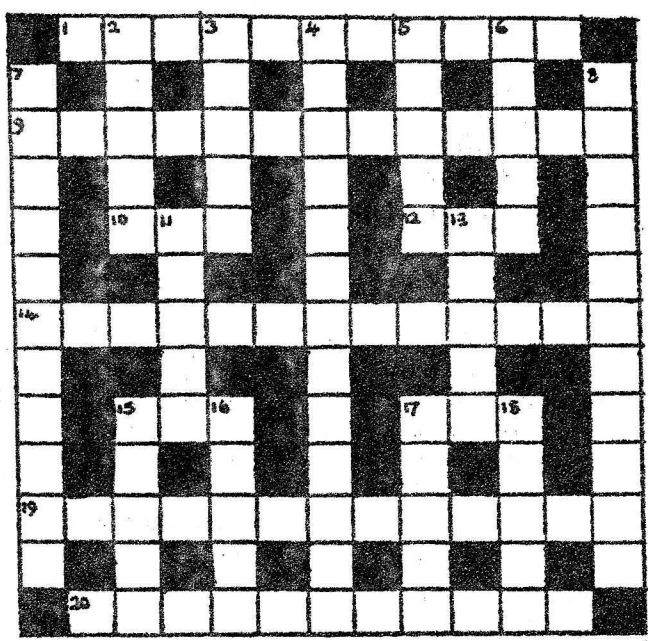
The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 7.30 pm on Monday 12th October 1987, at the Parkgate Hotel, Moathouse Lane. The officers and committee, with the exception of Mr A D L Grenfell, are willing to continue in office. Mrs S Synge has indicated her willingness to serve on the committee should her nomination be supported. If there are any other nominations they must be nominated to the Hon. Secretary (Mrs A M Clarke, Sea View, The Parade, Parkgate) by September 28th 1987. Nominations must have a proposer and seconder and be accompanied by the consent of the nominee. The present officers and committee are: G W Place (Chairman); S C Edwards (Vice-Chairman); A M Clarke (Secretary); E P D Taylor (Treasurer); S Britt; M Tinker; V Place; M S Potts; G A Topp; D L Walker.

* To be followed by the River Dee - BBC Film * - at 8 pm

AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM AGM

PARKGATE PRIZE CROSSWORD No.2

A copy of the Society booklet 'This is Parkgate, its Buildings and their Story' by your side will be of assistance with some of the clues. Good luck!



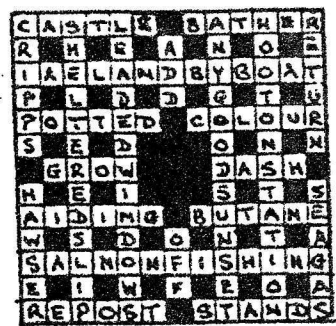
CLUES :

ACROSS

- 1. This Ass, should not sit. [6.5]
- 9. Add the Navy's alcohol to the butter. [4.2.4.3.]
- 10. Not Aye! [3]
- 12. Was once a lamb. [3]
- 14. Snow, in Parkgate, appropriate for Anne. [8.5]
- 15. A pie without tea; becomes a picture. [3]
- 17. Poisonous in Egypt. [3]
- 19. Significant sailor with local consort. [6.3.4]
- 20. By request, stop. [3.2.6]

DOWN

- 2. Englishman's wooden heart. [5]
- 3. A keen sailor carries one. [5]
- 4. A type of yacht, on the horizon. [4.2.7]
- 5. A financial map, for the priest. [5]
- 6. Of great use to the talkative viking. [5]
- 7. In a Parkgate cocktail they may be called shrimps. [5.6]
- 8. Would the occupants of the Watch House expect the Butcher to do this? [7.4]
- 11. Aubrey was the first, for Bleak House. [5]
- 13. A long Parkgate Lane, may, have led through them. [5]
- 15. A strong globe holder. [5]
- 16. Poor man's salmon; without the Sea. [5]
- 17. Danes, would have to rearrange themselves, to be so high. [5]
- 18. Black cats; running wild. [5]



SOLUTION P.C.1.

WIN A BOOK TOKEN - £10 : The first correct solution to No.2 received by Geoff. Topp, 14, Woodlands Close, Parkgate. by Noon on Sunday 11th October 1987 will receive the book token, which is the unclaimed prize for No.1 plus £5 for No.2.

Meetings of the Parkgate Society

We have enjoyed a most interesting variety of talks this year. Our March meeting, billed as a wine-tasting, turned out to offer a glass of a single wine, but that seemed very agreeable after a well-presented tour of vineyards and winemaking by a representative from Duttons, the Chester wine merchant.

In April we heard a most instructive talk about the River Dee which has become the most managed river in the country. Mr Hodgson showed us the ways in which the flow of water is closely monitored and controlled, but his prime interest is in the fish, which are also closely monitored and controlled. He is responsible for hatching large numbers of salmon and trout eggs.

In May, those of us who came to hear a talk about the Cheshire Conservation Trust had two, pleasant surprises. First, our speaker was Ken Burnley, the editor of the Wirral Journal. Secondly, his photographs as well as his description of the several nature sanctuaries which he manages, and the animal and plant life which they harbour, gave us a really well-spent evening.

In June we celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the Parkgate Society, in the beautiful garden of Leighton Banastre. We are very grateful to Mr and Mrs Mould for the generous way they let us clamber over, not only their garden, but their kitchen as well. On a day of uncertain weather the sun shone for just long enough. As well as scones with clotted cream and home-made cakes, we were entertained by some young dancers, pupils of Anne Millington, for most of whom this was a first performance in public. Our guests were generous in buying raffle tickets and we were able to present a worthwhile sum of money to some local good causes: to Mrs Mould's favourite charity, The Winged Fellowship Trust; the Scouts, who kindly lent us tables and chairs; and our own fund to restore the Saxon cross fragments in Neston church.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT WEEK - 1987

Shirley Britt and Muriel Tinker valiantly arranged our contribution to National Environment Week, which was held between 25th April and 4th May, by arranging a display on the Donkey Stand on Sunday 26th April. In addition to publicising the work of the Parkgate Society there were details of other local amenity groups, RSPB leaflets and posters showing details of the work of the Gayton Sands Reserve. Beautiful flower tubs provided by The Parkgate Nurseries enhanced the general appearance of the display. As it was a warm and sunny afternoon there were many interested visitors from near and far who welcomed the provision of information and many remarked that they thought Parkgate was unique.