

Parkgate Society

Newsletter 47

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Autumn 1994

Forthcoming Meetings

(8pm at the Parkgate Hotel unless otherwise stated)

Monday, 19th September

'How is Cheshire'

A talk by Dr Joan Fairhurst from Cheshire County Council on the state of the county. A topical subject in the light of the possible splitting of Cheshire into smaller 'unitary' councils.

Monday, 28th November

'Conservation in the Wirral'

An illustrated talk by Rod Tann of the Wirral Society.

Monday, 24th October

7.30pm Annual General Meeting

Our round-up of the year's business; please come and support *your* local society.

8.00pm Malcolm Ingham, wildlife officer of the Wirral Country Park, will be talking about his *'Wildlife Hospital'*.

Membership

The subscription remains at:

£3 Single or family
£1.50 Senior citizen

Mrs Valerie Place will be pleased to receive your subscriptions at our meetings or at her home (Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate).

*If you require transport to reach our meetings ring
Angela Clarke 336 1069
(24 hours notice, please.)*

Round-up of Spring Meetings

In February our friend, Pat O'Brien entertained us with research from his book *Maritime Wirral*. He gave us many snippets of information which left us wanting more.

June Lancelyn Green gave us a very humorous account of her family home *Poulton Hall* in March.

The *Great Exhibition* was an excellent talk by Bill Hawkin in April, providing a great deal of information.

Those who attended *Ness Gardens* in May were treated to a very interesting tour by the garden's director, Dr Rob Marrs. Well worth the visit even on a cool damp evening.

The Future of the Dee Estuary, was a blockbuster of a meeting in May when Dr Jemmett gave us details of his research so far, being part of a major study of British estuaries. When his report is published we hope to have him back for his conclusions which will form guidelines for the competing users of the Dee.

June's talk by Fenella Billington was a well researched and illustrated talk about artist *William Hoggatt* who painted a vast array of landscapes of his beloved Isle of Man.

The new owners of the Parkgate Hotel, Mr and Mrs Campbell are continuing the warm hospitality extended to the society, for which we are very grateful. Our low subscription fee is maintained chiefly by the generosity of the hotel in allowing us use of their rooms. Could we please try to support the hotel by our patronage.

Bridge over the River Dee

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Work is scheduled to start shortly on the *Third Dee Crossing* according to Burton Residents' Association, and reported in "Wirral Matters". The bridge will link Deeside Industrial Park to a point on the Welsh side opposite Burton Point. The dual-carriageway bridge will be supported by a 100 metres high single A-frame tower, a design approved by the Royal Fine Arts Commission who see it as a "striking gateway into North Wales". The bridge will provide a by-pass for Queensferry, Shotton and Connah's Quay. Access on the Welsh side should, when agreement is reached, be in the region of the Shotton Paper Company. The route chosen is to avoid protected nature sites.

Power Stations

Construction of Power-Gen's power station has started on the Welsh side of the estuary opposite Burton. This is being built to be fuelled by Hamilton Brothers' gas which will come ashore at the Point of Ayr. The gas pipeline linking the power station with the gas / oil terminal will now be routed along the estuary shore line instead of inland.

A future 400kv electric overhead transmission line across the River Dee is to link the new National Power power station on this side of the Dee with the electricity sub-station at Connah's Quay. Burton Residents' Association are campaigning for this to be put underground on visual and health grounds.

Jottings From The Chairman

Bollards at the Middle Slip We have for some time been urging on the Council the desirability of tidying up the Middle Slip. At present the Slip is barred to the motorist seeking a parking spot by a jumble of sandstone blocks which were placed there, shall we say unofficially. The Society has offered to pay for cast-iron bollards if the Council would fix them.

There has been a long delay, allegedly for legal reasons, which puzzled us because we could not imagine what these reasons could be. But now all has been made clear. It seems that the Slip is technically a part of the highway, and to close it requires legal provisions to do with closing a highway. Our own Council is required to consult Cheshire County Council and Chester City Council. If these make no objection, the Council's own Highways Committee has to make the final decision to issue a Traffic Regulation Order. Only then can work proceed.

We are told that no objections are foreseen and that, if all goes well, the work could start in the autumn.

Refuse Collection The Environmental Health department, which organises the collection of domestic refuse, had the best intentions when it printed a letter to inform householders when their refuse sacks would be collected over the Easter holiday period. Unfortunately the letter was entrusted to the Chester Chronicle for delivery, and to many householders it was not delivered at all or too late.

The Society rang up to find out what had gone wrong and also wrote a letter to suggest ways in which the system might work better in future.

We were greatly impressed by the response of officers at the Council. First, a frank apology for the error and an offer to collect the missed refuse sacks the next day, which was promptly done. This was followed by a most helpful letter from Mr Hill, the department's chief, explaining what had gone wrong and promising to put it right. We have told Mr Hill that his service is normally an excellent one, and his response to a problem only emphasises that opinion.

Developments at Mostyn Square When the deputy churchwardens of St. Thomas' suggested a lych-gate in the churchyard wall facing the Square would be a good idea, this Society welcomed it as a means of improving the Square. The bus shelter has caused much controversy in recent years, and the suggestion is that its stone might be re-used to build a gateway with seats in it, thus killing two birds with one stone.

There is a blocked-up gateway in the churchyard wall, although this almost certainly was blocked up when the building was built as a Congregational chapel in 1843. Before that there was no building on the site, just a garden, and this was probably the garden gate.

Unfortunately, just as this plan was being greeted on all sides, St Thomas' was found to have some structural defects which will no doubt gobble up the available money. But, as a long-term project, the idea for a gateway has merit and we shall watch its progress with interest.

From Mersey To Dee

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On a bright, breezy June day, I was deposited, together with friend Patrick Hughes, at the Eastham Ferry Country Park, by my wife, Marjorie, who had chauffeured us there, to start our *Cross Wirral Walk*.

After gazing over the Mersey towards Speke and up to the city of Liverpool, we set off, accompanied by Hebe our golden cocker spaniel. We soon left the wooded park by crossing a tennis court to its back right hand corner and came to Old Hall Road. This gave a greenish way through Unilever sites, until we turned left over a verge to get into Caldbeck Road, through a trading estate to the New Chester Road. We crossed over and made our way along Dibbinsdale Brook in the Brotherton Park, which is a nature reserve.

The path winds under a cliff, by the side of a stream, through woods and by swamps and passes under the railway line to Birkenhead. Emerging from the gloomy tunnel we came to Dibbinsdale, a similar nature reserve, but which also has spacious open areas. We came out onto Dibbinsdale Road where we turned right skirting Poulton Hall, left down sunken Poulton Hall Road and descended to the confluence of the Clatter Brook and the stream from Thornton Hough, then up to Raby Mere.

The mere with ducks being fed by visiting families and sea gulls circling for a bite, looked so appealing, that we sat to overlook the scene. We ate our sandwiches and tried to get a mental picture of days gone by, when it was a favourite place for a day out by charabanc, bike or foot. We re-populated the sight in our minds' eyes with the throng enjoying teas, swings and rowing boats.

As the M53 now prevents a walk fully along Raby Mere Road, we decided to go over the dam head and after looking at the site of the water mill and at a quaint little summer house still surviving from the days of the "teas", we walked up Blakeley Road, intending to cross the motorway and continue on the road to Raby. However we were tempted by a footpath sign, pointing over Bromborough golf course to Willaston and changed our route in that direction. The path was well indicated across the fairways, reached the M53 and ran along and well above it, south east through a large field, using stiles to a bridge serving Hargrave Hall Farm. We crossed the motorway and came out in Benty Heath Lane, close to the route of the Roman road, which prompted speculation on Hargrave possibly having originated as a Roman watering stop on the way from Chester to Birkenhead. From before Doomsday, Hargrave was an enclave within Raby, but was part of the township of Little Neston.

We turned left, just after the Raby House Hotel, over fields, then a step left to continue along a path between hedges. The path carries on to Willaston Mill, but we took a joining path to the right and eventually came out on Willaston Road (the road from Clatterbridge to Willaston). Here we turned left and soon came to Willowbrow Road, which we entered, went immediately left onto another hedged path and wandered along a lane past a duck pond to arrive on Quarry Road, by Roselea, the house with a tower on the bend.

We passed the water tower, now a dwelling and came to the Shrewsbury Arms crossroads. Trying to keep to the country to the end as far as possible, we missed out Hinderton Road, by turning right on the High Road and after the houses, left on a path by fields to Blackkeys Lane. The fields were covered with buttercups and are always a surprise to me being so close to Neston.

cont.

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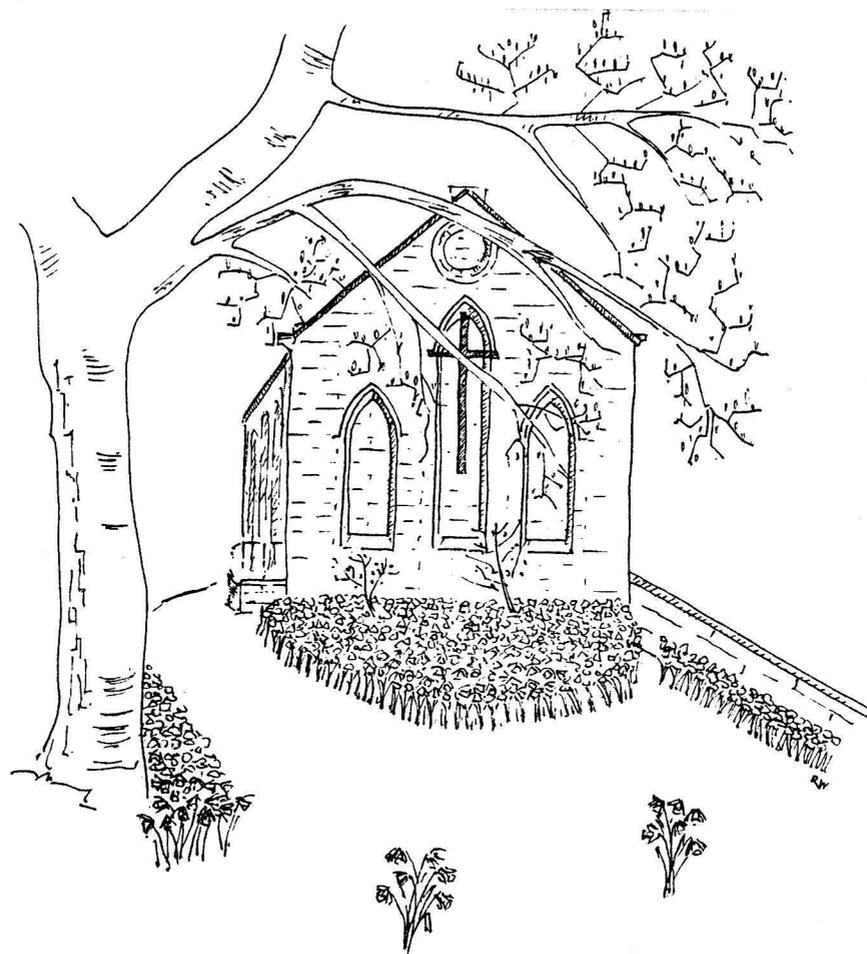
As it was the day after Ladies Day, we were able to stroll through the fair and go round the back of the church to Church Lane and down to the marsh at the ruined Old Quay House, where we completed the crossing of the peninsula.

Our walk was not quite over, as we continued past the reed bed to Moorside for much needed cups of tea. I then walked back to Woodlands Road with Hebe, who had enjoyed her day out as much as I had.

The walk, excluding stops, took about 5 hours, but was taken at a slow pace. The Wirral AZ Street Atlas proved a good guide and this very varied walk, showing how much open and wooded countryside there still remains in Wirral is recommended to you, with it's many beautiful views, including those of the Clwyd hills.

Before I close, I must thank the Footpath Society for their useful signposts.

Clive Edwards



Ron Wright has captured *St Thomas' Church* in bloom this spring prior to the church's unfortunate closure awaiting repairs.

A Window on the Past

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An unusual glimpse of former times in Parkgate has come to light through a sale catalogue. The catalogue lists the entire contents of the house of G.B. Eaton, sold by auction in May 1941.

George Eaton was a wealthy bachelor, who was captain of Neston Cricket Club, 1920-1921, and its President, 1924-1925. From at least 1934 he was living at 5, Cheltenham Place. This is the house now called Wyndale, one of the terrace of black and white houses opposite the cricket ground. These houses were originally called Cheltenham Place after the nearby Cheltenham Walk, or Ropewalk. By 1939 all these houses, originally numbered 1-6, had been given names, and only Eaton's house retained its number.

The kitchen equipment gives evidence of the transition from old to new. There was an electric iron, but still two flat irons. Cooking was done on an oil stove, and there were two drums of oil in the outside shed. The scullery contained an "Iceberg rapid freezer", but I don't think this was a refrigerator but an ice-making machine. Does anyone know how it worked? The absence of a refrigerator made the meat safe, with perforated zinc panels to keep out flies, a necessity. To preserve eggs in isinglass, there was a galvanized egg preserver, an echo of the days when eggs were seasonal and could not just be picked from the shelf. Surely out of date by 1941 was a knife cleaning machine for steel knives - does anyone know how that worked?

The most modern piece of equipment in the house was a regulation stirrup pump with ARP nozzle, designed to fight fires from incendiary bombs.

The rest of the house gives fascinating glimpses of George Eaton's life. His hobbies were clearly cricket, salmon fishing and shooting. But he had some mouth-watering antique furniture, much good pottery and china including several pieces of Liverpool and Herculaneum ware, and collections of antique wooden nutcrackers and Welsh love spoons.

His pictures were mostly of the sporting print type, but one would dearly love to know the present whereabouts of three local pictures he had: a pastel drawing by C.W. Kirby, "A Winter Evening, Parkgate"; a watercolour by T.V. Deacon, "Moonlight, Parkgate"; and best of all, a gilt-framed watercolour, "Parkgate", by John Pride.

Judging by the auctioneer's "by order of G.B. Eaton", the owner of all these good things had not died. Why was he selling literally everything in his house? If anybody can throw any further light on the life of George Eaton, we would love to know.

Geoffrey Place

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Multi-cultural Parkgate

If you are on the Parade on a weekday in April, July or August, you may be approached by a teenager who begins "Excuse me, I'm a French student. I'm doing a quiz about Parkgate and I wonder if you could tell me" The students' visits are arranged by a local company, Live And Learn Abroad; they each stay with a different English family and have English lessons in the morning in groups of four in the home of a teacher, who also organises outings in the afternoon.

I have taught several groups in the past two years and found it interesting to see Parkgate and the Wirral through young French eyes. They tend to think English food is inferior; they are surprised we manage without two cooked meals a day and don't have bread at every meal. But they are usually enthusiastic about our countryside, our shops and such local attractions as the cathedrals and the Mersey Ferries. Slices of English life seen from my flat in Mostyn Square intrigue them; lessons have been stopped by the sight of a horse and rider in Coastguard Lane, the weekly cleaning of the telephone box, and dozens of identically dressed primary school children posing beside the daffodils they had planted in the church garden ! I have also been hard put to explain why a distinctly unseaworthy boat has ended up in the Square.

The students usually spend one afternoon doing the quiz which is designed to help them find out about Parkgate and to give them a chance to speak and understand English. They often comment on how friendly people are and I am grateful to those who take the time to answer the questions or to tell them where they can find the information, or just say politely that they live 20 miles away and don't know any of the answers. I vary the questions depending on the ability of some of the students and have to update them each time, but here is a sample :

- 1: Which cricket club owns the cricket ground in Parkgate ?
- 2: What is the number of the house in Station Road which has the name Nelson outside it ?
- 3: What was the Indian restaurant called ? Why did it close ?
- 4: Give the names of the 2 schools in Parkgate. At which do parents pay fees ?
- 5: How much does it cost to send a postcard to France ?
- 6: Why does the post box outside the post office have a yellow top ?
- 7: When is the last postal collection on weekdays ?

- 8: What are the names of the 3 pubs in Parkgate ?
- 9: What is the name of the area with seats near the post office ? How did it get its name ?
- 10: In which year did the fish and chip shop win a prize?
- 11: Why do the chip shop staff look carefully at any notes they are given ?
- 12: To which saint is the church dedicated ?
- 13: On what day is the hairdresser's salon shut ?
- 14: Where are the public toilets in Parkgate ?
- 15: Where can you eat (a) an Emperor's banquet ? (b) The Fish not Interested in Flying ?
- 16: What time can you get a bus to Birkenhead between 2 and 3 pm ?
- 17: Name two buildings in Parkgate where older people live ?
- 18: What large bird which feeds on fish can often be seen on the marshes ?
- 19: To which port did ferry boats from Parkgate sail in the 18th century ?
- 20: Name two famous people connected with Parkgate. What is the connection ?

Live and Learn Abroad is always on the lookout for host families (which may be a couple or a single person). If you would be interested in having one of the students (usually in the 14 - 17 age group) as a paying guest, contact Jenny Rowland on 632 1995.

Fiona Gow

Quiz Answers : 1. Neston. 2. 15. 3. Jhinook; there was a fire. 4. Parkgate Primary School; Mostyn House School. Fees to be paid at MHS. 5. 25p. 6. Sunday collection. 7. 5pm. 8. The Old Quay, The Red Lion, The Boatouse. 9. The Donkey Stand; donkey rides used to start here. 10. 1990. 11. To make sure it is not forged (there is a notice to this effect). 12. St. Thomas. 13. Monday. 14. Not in the churchyard, as the direction of the sign suggests, but at the front end of the carpark. 15. Mr Chow's; Ogdens' Fish Restaurant. 16. 2.47pm. 17. Parkgate Nursing Home; Decide Court. 18. Heron. 19. Dublin. 20. Any 2 of Wilfred Grenfell (brought up here), Emma Hamilton (born in Ness, stayed here and took sea bather for a skin complaint), John Wesley (sailed to Ireland from here) and J.M.W. Turner (painted here)

News and Views

Balcony House is now in the process of being renovated, to be converted into 3 dwellings - a great relief to us all.

Contrary to our report in the last Newsletter, the Back Path has now been given a coating of reclaimed gravel and the bridge has been levelled giving an "all-weather" finish.

Shrubs have been planted around the Play Area on the Ropewalk, some still surviving!

Dog bins are multiplying. Leisure Services, who empty them weekly, claim they are being well used. Unfortunately the persistent offenders still manage to leave a trail of devastation.

Although no longer organised by ourselves, the annual Marsh Clearance in May was poorly attended. However, a large amount of driftwood and debris was shifted by the small band.

On the same day as the marsh clearance, the Open Day was held in the Town Hall, a day when local organisations put out their flags. Many council departments were also represented.

It is a great shame to see Elm Grove House in Parkgate Road looking in such

a sorry state after a fire. We await action on the former Indian Restaurant which had a similar fate, plans having been submitted to convert to 5 flats and a self-contained cottage.

The work by North West Gas involving replacing gas mains in The Parade has been deferred until the autumn and we are assured that the road will not be closed at weekends.

The top of Little Lane has been coated with chippings, bringing a welcome end to the former quagmire.

I was amazed to see what appeared to be 2 magnificent Angelica plants in full flower on the marsh opposite Nicholls and The Warren. The sea wall is becoming a home to an increasing diversity of plants.

We have just received a marvellous account of the Childhood Memories of a visitor to Parkgate during the years 1920 - 1929. Mrs Ryder stayed with her Aunt in Balcony House and we will be including this in our next Newsletters.

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