

Parkgate Society Newsletter Autumn 1995

Issue No. 49

DIARY DATES

Monday 18th September

Our "Charity Antiques Evening" with expert Kevin Whay. After an entertaining talk there will be an opportunity for items to be valued. Entry is by ticket, priced at £3, which includes a glass of wine. Valuations £1 per item. I hope you have all purchased your tickets. They can be obtained from Mrs Valerie Place, Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate.

Monday, 23rd October at
7.30 p.m.

Annual General Meeting.

Please come and support the Society by contributing to the discussion. We need your views so that you can get the most from us!

8 p.m.

Sue Chambers of the Burton & South Wirral Historical Society will speak to us about the History Of Neston.

Monday, 20th November

Ellesmere Port Boat Museum. Harry Hignett will be giving an illustrated talk in this, the bicentennial year of the opening of the Wirral section of the Shropshire Union Canal.

SOCIETY INFORMATION

Officials

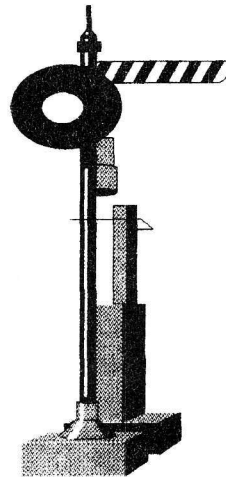
PRESIDENT	J R COCHRANE CBE
CHAIRMAN	G W PLACE
VICE-CHAIRMAN	M S POTTS
SECRETARY	A M CLARKE
TREASURER	S C EDWARDS

Meetings

Are held at the Parkgate Hotel, commencing at 8pm unless otherwise stated.

If you require transport to our meetings, please ring Angela Clarke on 336 1069, giving 24 hours notice.

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MORE...

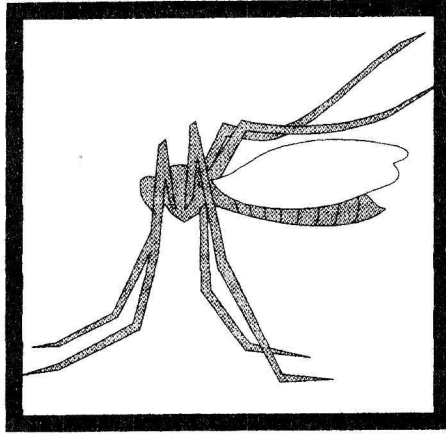
NEWS AND VIEWS.....

Mosquito Aedes Detritus

The R S P B has launched a 3 year programme of work aimed at reducing the nuisance caused by mosquitoes which breed in shallow pools on the marshes.

The shallow, salty pools are surrounded by dense vegetation which provide perfect conditions for the mosquito "Aedes detritus" to breed.

The R S P B has worked with the borough council and English Nature by spraying to kill the larvae of the mosquitoes. In order to reduce the amount of chemicals used, they plan to mow areas of vegetation around the pools nearest to



Parkgate Parade and remove accumulated silt from certain channels. Some spraying will still occur. This, they hope, will reduce the suitability of the marsh for the breeding mosquitoes.

The Committee

We are sorry that Jimmy Pratt has resigned from the committee, a man committed to the preservation of the history of Parkgate. We wish him well in his development of a Parkgate buildings preservation trust.

According to our constitution, nominations for the election of committee members shall be made in writing at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting (to be held on Monday, 23rd October 1995). Such nominations shall be supported by proposer and seconder, and consent of the nominee shall first have been obtained.

The remaining committee members are willing to serve again. They are Geoffrey Place (chairman), Michael Potts (vice-chairman), Angela Clarke (secretary), Clive Edwards (treasurer), Shirley Britt, Becky Ford, Valerie Place, Muriel Tinker, Ron Wright and Jerry Harris.

LOOKING BETTER & BETTER

Renovations and Restorations

The PARADE is looking better now than it has for many a year. The renovation of Balcony House and Seaward House (formerly the Tandoori Restaurant) has been good for Parkgate, with other houses also taking the initiative to 'smart up'.

The Ship Hotel is getting a face lift which should enhance the look of the pub.

The Bath House is no longer with us and

we await with interest what will become of the site.

The Sea Wall should become more of a feature with the recent weed control taken. We hope to have at least the top of the wall repointed.

We were very disappointed not to have been allowed to enter the Best Kept Village Contest on a technicality.

The Dee Estuary Strategy Report has been produced, which aims to prepare a management strategy for the area. Copies of the report are available for viewing at local libraries.

The planning department of the borough council is seeking to put together a list of buildings not covered by the Department of the Environment's 'Listed Buildings'. The list is to make known the historical importance of the properties and to protect them from unsuitable development.

We have shown our faces at the Town Hall Open Day and at the Parkgate C.P. School summer fair to wave the flag and attract new members.

A member has offered us daffodil bulbs to place at the entries to Parkgate which should help to make a pleasing feature. Many thanks for the kind thought.

MORE...

CURIOSITY

L. A. Llewellyn-Hodge writes "I thought 'A Strange Discovery At Parkgate' might interest some of your readers. It comes from a book entitled 'News from the English Countryside 1851-1950' by Clifford Morsley, published by Harrap

A Strange Discovery At Parkgate

A curious discovery was made at Parkgate a few days ago, by some men employed by the Neston Local Board draining the premises of the Rev. Mr. Halkett. In the stables, in taking up the paving of one of the stalls, a large flag stone was discovered, which on being raised was found to cover the opening to a vault about nine feet long and six feet high. The walls are thickly bricked, as was the roof. No recollection of this cellar being extant existed in the minds of the oldest people of the village. It is supposed to have been the hiding-place for smuggled goods when Parkgate, like Hoylake, was notorious for 'running', and the bold smuggler was a prosperous member of the river-side community.

Chester Courant
26 December 1877



A reply from Geoffrey Place.

Mr Halkett was minister of the Presbyterian chapel in Parkgate that later became St. Thomas'. We do not know where exactly he lived. There are several vaulted brick cellars in Parkgate and Neston like the one described, and a similar one, sealed up and forgotten, was found a few years ago at Banastre Cottage. There is no need to assume that these cellars had anything to do with smuggling, which was small-scale and usually amateur at Parkgate.

A GOOD READ ...

The Rise and Fall of Parkgate Passenger Port for Ireland

GEOFFREY PLACE

During the eighteenth century Parkgate's location was well known. Today, the ships and even the sea have left Parkgate forever, and several square miles of grass now occupy what was for around a hundred

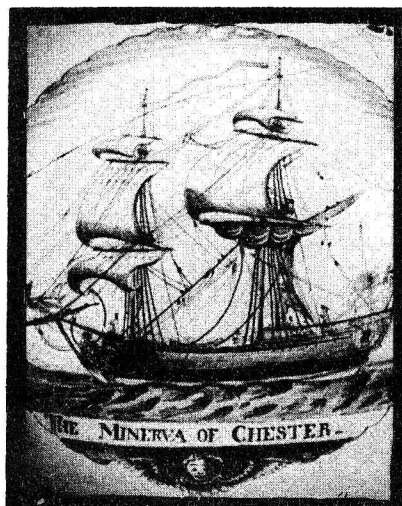
years a busy passenger port.

This is the story of those brief years, documenting the rise and fall of the port, its trade and the people affected by it. Parallel to this, the book documents the development of the village of Parkgate which grew alongside the port.

Geoffrey Place investigates why Parkgate as a passenger port disappeared and links its decline with the improved communications

afforded elsewhere. Since Parkgate's port

was active in the Irish cloth industry the author also relates the decline of Parkgate with the parallel demise of Dublin's status. Packed with detailed facts and figures, this book is an informative read, appealing to those with an interest in maritime history, as well as the history of trade links between Ireland and England



and the local history of the Mersey region.

Now available in Softback
Price £10.95
ISBN: 1-85936-23-8

SPRING MEETINGS

Richard Bartley spoke to us in February, giving us a volunteer's view of Speke Hall.

Our twin talks on the Cathedrals Of Liverpool in March and April were delivered with much enthusiasm and were very informative.

The weather was kind to us in April and a big thank you to all who helped clear the marsh of driftwood and litter. It was particularly pleasing to see groups of teenagers lending a hand.

Geoffrey Place's talk on Parkgate and the Sea-Bathing Cure attracted a large audience. We were shown Parkgate's place in the development of sea-bathing, its uses and the buildings involved at the time.



**REMEMBER: FOR LIFTS
TO SOCIETY MEETINGS,
CALL 336 1069**

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Extract from a communication from L.A. Llewellyn-Hodge

Further to the question of the Middle Slipway, raised in the Spring Newsletter, the following might be of interest.

When we bought "The Old Watch House", in 1977-8, the wrack and detritus brought in the tides covered a large part of the Middle Slipway, right outside our cottage, high tides moving it almost into the road. Not wishing to look out on such a scene, and feeling that the slipway should be a feature of "Old Parkgate", I began slowly to 'reclaim' it from the encroaching marsh. I made many acquaintances as I did so, some asking "would I stop when I got to the Boathouse?", and others telling me stories of when they were young and the tide come right up to the wall.

Unfortunately my labour of love rebounded on me, coinciding as it did with the burgeoning night-life activity along The Parade. I soon found that the slipway I had laboriously cleared was now used as a car park. So, in an effort to prevent this, I contacted the officer responsible for highways, Mr Bell. After a thorough examination of the problem, his temporary solution was to provide and place the Cheshire sandstone blocks across the slipway.

The stones were sited on 24th June 1986 and, though not exactly things of beauty in themselves, solved the problems of inconsiderate motorists. Over the years they have provided relief for tired feet and aching bones to a variety of visitors, and pleasure to countless numbers of children who delight in using them as stepping stones.

I respectfully suggest that there is nothing 'unofficial' about the siting of the stones. Whilst I am in full accord with the siting of cast iron bollards, I would like to make a plea that the Middle Slipway remains a Parkgate feature, and does not deteriorate into an overflow car park.

Edited by:
Becky Ford

to whom all contributions should be submitted. We may be able to include photographs in support of features in future issues.

The Moorings, The Parade, Parkgate.

Telephone: 336 5088

PARKGATE PUFFERS, AN "HISTORICAL" SKETCH BY AN OMH BOY (1930 - 1935)

The Birkenhead Lancashire and Cheshire Junction Railway opened its main line on 22nd September 1840. It justified its splendid name by the fact that it opened a line to Walton on the London & Northwestern (LNWR) near Warrington (1850), but it was very much a local line in Wirral, and was a satellite of the Euston Party. The branch line through Parkgate belonged to the line.

In the 19th century the only means of travel other than rail was by horse power. As a result there were many schemes for railways proposed, each town felt it should have one, and as a result there was a whole host of intrigues across the country. All proposals had to be approved by Parliament, but no government funds were used, shareholdings and floatations were the order of the day. Consequently, small companies were eaten up by bigger companies and power houses developed.

In so far as the Wirral was concerned, three such power groups emerged; the Euston party and the LNWR under Captain Mark Huish, the Paddington party (originally the Merchant Venturers of Bristol - but the name Brunel comes forth), and the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway under Sir Edward Watkins, (HQ in Manchester). There was a terrific battle for power in the area around Shrewsbury, and small companies aided by Paddington fought against the Euston party. The small firms were dubbed the "Fighting Shrewsburies", and it is interesting to note that the bridges of the Shrewsbury and Chester were built to take the GWR board gauge.

The LNMR & GWR both came to Chester, the former with its main line Crewe to North Wales, and the latter via Shrewsbury. An act of Parliament in 1860 made the Birkenhead company into joint GWR & LNWR ownership, known as the Birkenhead Joint. This gave the GWR access to Merseyside at the terminal at Woodside for passengers at Birkenhead docks for freight.

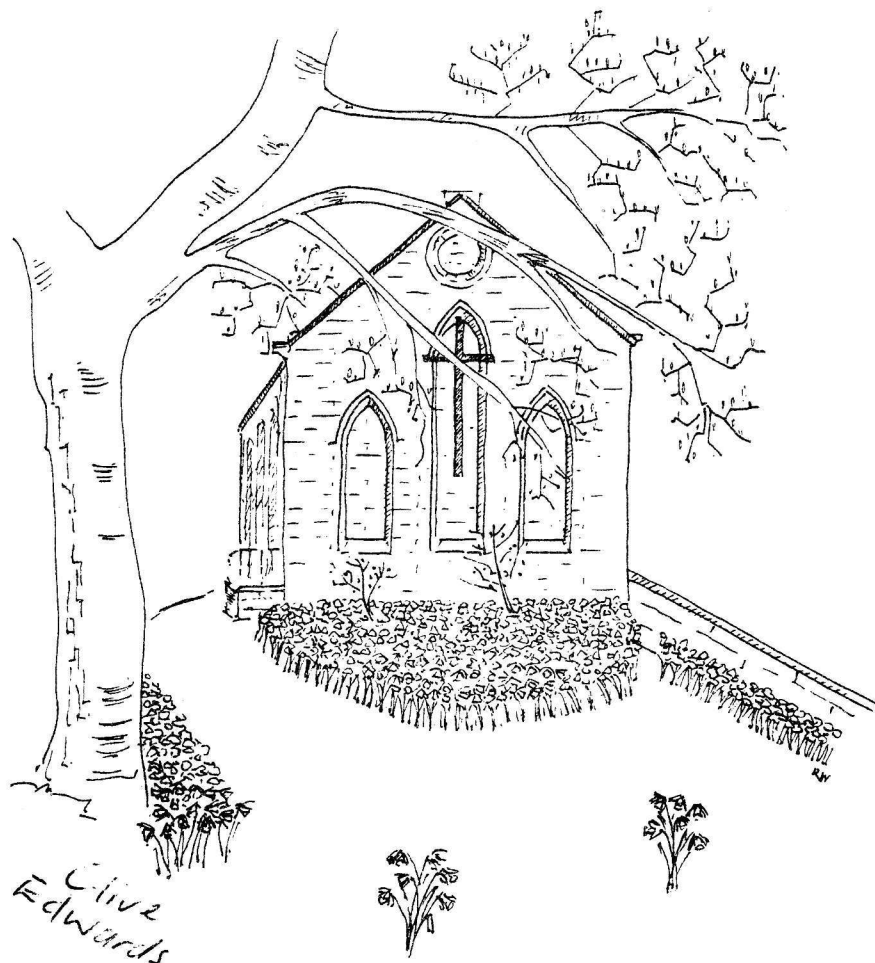
In so far as the Sir Edward Watkins party was concerned, the M S & L was a partner in the Cheshire Lines Committee; this outfit established the line from Manchester Central to Liverpool Central via Northwich into Chester Northgate station. Sir Edward had his eyes on the Wrexham coalfield and supply to the Cheshire salt workings, and a main snag was the River Dee at Queensferry. On 18th August 1887, a great ceremony occurred at Queensferry when Mrs Gladstone blew a whistle and the first cylinder of a new bridge was lowered into place. Two years later the bridge was opened by Mrs Gladstone. It had to be a swing bridge to allow river traffic on the Dee. A line to Chester from Queensferry was ready, and in 1896 the North Wales & Liverpool Railway was opened with a line from Queens ferry to Bidston. This line through Neston became part of the Great Central Railway when the M S & L opened its London extension to Marylebone in 1900.

Watkins was chairman of the Metropolitan and also of the South Eastern & Chatham lines in Kent. He instigated borings for an early Channel Tunnel. "Sir Edward Watkins", declared Gladstone at the bridge ceremony, "is one of those men who is wicked enough to desire that a tunnel should be constructed under the Channel ... and I must confess ... that I am wicked enough rather to agree with him." (This was two tunnels prior to our present one.)

So much for background. The inheritors of the Birkenhead Joint Line used the Woodside terminus to run trains onto their own metals. The LMS (ex LNWR) ran trains to London; the coaches were normally attached to trains from North Wales and Chester. These facilities were faster than the GWR express which reversed at Chester, where their main engines and restaurant car formed into the train. The GWR also ran trains via Shrewsbury, Hereford and the Severn Tunnel to Bristol and the west country. They also ran through-trains to Oxford, Reading and Bournemouth, also to Guildford, Margate, Hastings & Brighton.

The Parkgate branch served into these services which could be boarded at Hooton. There was also (pre 1939) a through-coach from New Brighton and West Kirby to Euston, which left Parkgate at 10.45 and arrived at Euston at 15.05. An extract from the 1936 LMS winter timetable is given overleaf.

MORE NEWS ...



St. Thomas' Church

At the time of writing St. Thomas' Church has been further threatened with the announcement of the Parochial Church Council's intention to demolish the building within the next 12 months to avoid maintenance costs.

We would be horrified if this did indeed happen and will do what we can to prevent it. As with Balcony House, we have seen attempts to discount the worthiness of buildings described as plain and therefore uninteresting. Simplicity too has its merits and a future should be found for the building.

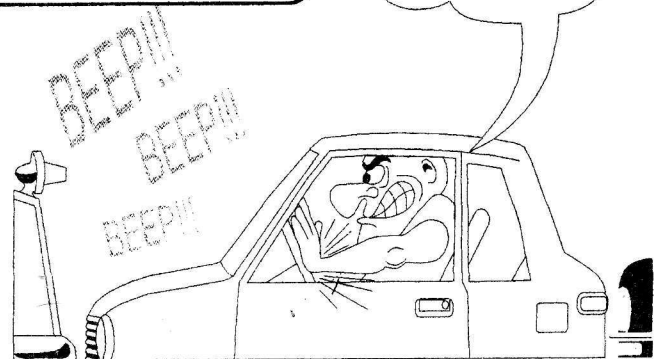
The church was built in 1843 by a Yorkshireman named Rawson who was visiting the seaside resort of Parkgate. First used as a Congregational then a Presbyterian chapel, it was rented by the Church of England in 1910 and bought in 1917.

New road signs have sprung up proclaiming "The Parade" at frequent intervals. Although not works of art, they are an improvement on the old broken signs. Some new, narrow litter bins have been installed in keeping with current design.

A long stretch of hedge laying along the Wirral Way has been created by the countryside ranger and his volunteers. This improvement runs between the bridleway and footpath south of Brookland Road. Currently overrun with nettles, due to the opening up of the ground area, hopefully the vegetation will progress onto a wider range of plants.

The Parade

@#!!!*??@**@!



PARKGATE AD 2000

Anne Williamson expresses a few concerns

Sounds futuristic but it is less than 5 years away. What will Parkgate be like then? What threats are lurking round the corner? Something will have happened to St Thomas's church, but what other changes are likely. On sunny and warm days might we be greeted by:

Parkgate Conservation Area

Sorry Full Up
Waiting Time
90 Minutes

Like the armband system that applies during popular swimming times at Neston Recreation Centre, we could push the Parking Disc Zone system to its conclusion by issuing one hour parking passes (just long enough to buy shrimps, ice creams, postcards etc. and have a gentle stroll). Locals would of course have a P.R.I.Z.E. - Parkgate Residents individual Zone Emblem - to enable free access at any time to pop into Paul's, pick up a postal order, or pay for a portion of chips. Several Parkgate folk enjoyed the "peace" of the road being dug up and closed a year ago and seriously suggested pedestrianised Sundays. So in the year 2000 we might, at weekends, actually see the double yellow lines that were quaintly painted here and there along The Parade!

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Pedestrianised Sundays would cause a major bulge of cars at each end of the front. The Old Quay and The Boathouse would have to resort to the unfriendly "No admittance to this car park" sign that The Ship has favoured in recent years. The peaceful housing areas would be decorated with yellow lines, or cars, or as now ... both. Mondays to Saturdays would also cause a little more of a hitch.

Perhaps, being a conservation area, we could have one huge car park at each end and run the front as a Theme Village with a coach and horses service to take people along The Parade, or we could import an idea from Douglas, Isle of Man and have horse drawn Victorian trams.

But people like their cars. They want to be able to have all their belongings with them, not to have to choose whether to take the baby's push chair or the packed lunch on the coach, trap, or tram; they want the convenience of having everything with them all the time.

Why do people come to Parkgate anyway? It's either the plethora of food, drink and snack outlets that tempt them, or the view. Having given it some thought, I concluded it must be the latter. Being able to sit in comfort and look across to Wales comes first and the food and drinks is secondary. After all, the road alongside the West Kirby Marine Lake is always full of people

in cars looking at the view and it doesn't have the attraction of numerous pubs, cafes, chip shops and ice cream outlets with which to tempt people.

So, if we must have cars, could we build a lower level car park on The Marsh and have a Fishguard idea of a low-tide only car park? At least it would be barely visible and it could be used most days of the years at Parkgate rather than a few hours per day as at Fishguard. (An added attraction of this would be the fun we locals would have, watching unwary visitors paddling back to their beloved vehicles!) Access could be provided by a mini-roundabout jutting into The Marsh at Mostyn Square - a mini-roundabout of lovely old sandstone blocks laid into the road in the decorative pattern of a large cross ... a transformation of neat regular sandstone church to St. Thomas's mini-roundabout -1995-2000 in one neat solution!

Another one
parking without a
P.R.I.Z.E.!



MORE...

Parkgate station was built high up on a bridge edge over the road. It was mostly of timber construction with vehicular access on the "up" side (i.e. the "train for Birkenhead" side); the booking office was on this side. There was a subway under the rails and also pedestrian access to the down platform. The signal cabin was at the Heswall end of the main building. There were goods sidings on the Neston side of the road bridge, with a connection to the goods branch for the colliery at Little Ness.

The writer came back to Parkgate in 1954 to stand by HMS Ark Royal then completing at Cammell Laird shipyard. For about 9 months he lived at Parkgate (at Seaview with Noni Gooding - and close to the Red Lion). At one time there were about six officers staying there. Some used to get car or bus to get to the yard, but sensible ones used the railways. Services were still good, but ceased in the early evening.

The ship commissioned on 21st February 1955 and the crew who had been waiting at barracks in Devonport were moved up by special trains the previous day. One group of the crew spent the overnight at the RAF station at West Kirby, and the railway branch was opened especially to pass up a special train. Glorious overtime for the branch signal staff! It was arranged that the writer should join the train at Parkgate to let him alight. The special was about 2 hours late, but even so, the last hours of this momentous evening was spent in the signal box until "train clear of section" was signalled from Hadlow Road.

SUNDAY, 20th FEBRUARY

C—Naval Baggage Special from Keyham. W634.

	arr am	dep am		arr am	pass am
Saltney Jn.	..	12X20	Rock Ferry	..	12 56
		SL	Mersey Jn.	..	12X53
Chester Cutting	12L25	12L27			SL
Ledsham Jn.	..	12 37	Birkenhead Blackpool Street	1 0	..
Hooton	..	12 41			

For Cammell-Lairds Yard. BG, 16 vanfits BG—260 tons.
Western Region P return as required.

A—Special Move 20 NA 3. From Keyham. M995.

	arr PM	dep PM		arr PM	dep PM
Chester	SL 9	5L15	West Kirby	..	6†15
Ledsham Jn.	..	5 23	Thurstaston	..	6 23
Hooton	SL27	5L37	Heswall	..	6 27
Hadlow Road	..	5 42	Parkgate	..	6 32
Parkgate	..	5 48	Hadlow Road	..	6 38
Heswall	..	5 53	Hooton	6L43	6L53
Thurstaston	..	5 57	Ledsham Jn.	..	6 57
West Kirby	6 5	..	Chester	7† 2	..

7 and Cafe Car—240 tons.
Crewe P Class 4 Tank (ex L.M.S. 2—6—4).

By Commander Jim Woolley of Cheriton, Hants., an "Old Boy" of Mostyn House School.

SUBSCRIPTION NEWS ... SUBSCRIPTION NEWS ...

Due to our having to pay a room charge for our talks we will have to consider the possibility of raising our subscriptions at the AGM. We urge you to tell your friends how worthwhile membership is!

1995 Membership:
£3.00 per FAMILY
£1.50 CONCESSIONS

please pay overdue subscriptions to Mrs Valerie Place, Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate.

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