

Parkgate Society Newsletter

Autumn 1998

Issue Number 55

Meetings

We meet at 8pm at the Parkgate Hotel. If you need help with transport please ring our secretary Angela Clarke (336 1069) giving 24 hours notice.

Diary Dates - 8pm

1998

- 14 Sept. *Birkenhead Tramways*
by Robert Jones
- 12 Oct. **7.30pm AGM** *The Swans Fly In*
by David Cummings
- 16 Nov. *Holland*
by Clive Edwards

1999

- 11 Jan. *Hooton Park part 2*
by Steve Parsons
- 15 Feb. *Wildlife in Rivacre Valley*
by Jeff Clarke
- 15 Mar. *Local Movie Memories*
by Angus Tilston
- 19 Apr. *Monastic Houses in Cheshire*
by Elizabeth Davey
- 24 May *Knowsley Park*
by Colin Dive

AGM

Monday, 12th October, 7.30pm

According to our constitution, nominations for election of committee members shall be made in writing at least 14 days before the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. Such nominations shall be supported by a proposer and seconder and the consent of the nominee shall first have been obtained.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Two members of the committee are now wishing to retire from their posts: Ron Wright who has produced the excellent advertising posters for our events and has been a committee member for eight years, and long-standing committee member Shirley Britt, who has worked for the society for seventeen years. Our thanks and Best Wishes to them both.

Proposed for election at the AGM are Miss F.M. (Fiona) Gow and Mrs E.I. (Liz) Marrs

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Contact Mrs Valerie Place at Pendmore, Station Rd., Parkgate or at our meetings
£4.00 Family or Single /year
£2.50 Senior Citizens /year
Donations are always welcome.

NEWS AND VIEWS

The **donkey stand** plinth and plaque seems to be popular with the visitors to Parkgate. Constructed last December, it has survived in good condition and hopefully will continue to do so.

The Society has been trying to make progress with purchasing and installing a new road sign for Mostyn Square with a very short explanation of the origins of the name. If popular, two or three more would be purchased for historical places in Parkgate. These **Heritage Signs**, being new to this area are having to be fully considered by various council committees.

Earlier this year the inner car park at **Parkgate Baths** was levelled and a tarmac surface added. The height of the adjacent footpath was raised to prevent winter flooding of the path.

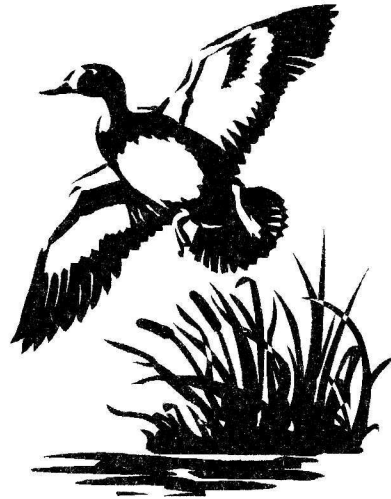
A survey by Parkgate Preservation Trust on **St Thomas' Church** was conducted. 422 replies were received with the majority of people wanting to see the church used jointly as a church and community centre.

A member of the Parkgate Society celebrated her **100th birthday** in May this year. The Society sent a plant with their congratulations.

Our Chairman having held office for fifteen years offered to step down and invited nominations for a new Chairman. The committee commended his hard work and proposed that he continue in office, which he was happy to do.

Our local **WCP ranger** has left and the Parkgate to Hooton stretch of the country park has been managed on a part time basis only by rangers from the Cheshire service.

A proposal to bridge the **marsh gullies** so that people could walk alongside the bottom of the sea wall for the length of the Parade has been rejected by the Council due to their not owning the land.



Once again **swans** have been sighted on the marsh, enjoying the large pool off the Boathouse end of the Parade. Two were seen regularly over the course of a month earlier this year. Many visitors packed Parkgate Baths car park for several RSPB high tide birdwatches.

In May of this year, following an extraordinary general meeting, the acting Chairman of the Parochial Church Council, Sue Jones, issued a letter to interested parties outlining the way forward for **St Thomas' church**. The church has been withdrawn from sale and now we look forward to the arrival of the new incumbent for Neston Parish, and a future for the church. The Family & Friends of St Thomas' have been active in keeping informed those who have an interest in the church as a place of worship. Hopefully this central building of Parkgate will once again be restored to its peaceful but functional state.

Samuel Ryley the Actor and Author

Second part of a two part article

by Geoffrey Place

In our last edition I described Ryley's early life and his one-man show called "New Brooms" which we know he presented at Parkgate. As an actor-manager he seems to have spent much of his time in Manchester, Liverpool and Chester. He may not always have been appreciated in Manchester as he called its people "cotton-headed, cotton-hearted, cotton manufacturers". In Liverpool he rented the Theatre Royal for three consecutive winter seasons, 1798-9, 1799-1800, 1800-1. In 1797 the *Chester Chronicle* reported that "Mr Ryley, late of our theatre, is sub-manager of Kemble's company in Edinburgh." In 1806 there was a benefit for him at the Theatre Royal, Chester, of "Everyone has his fault". Ryley was in the cast: "We sincerely hope that he will meet with the fostering protection of a generous public".

Ryley is first heard of in Parkgate in 1811. A theatre company headed by Mr Walsh played in Parkgate for the summer season and Mr Ryley played Sir Peter Teazle in Sheridan's "The School for Scandal". Ryley does not seem to have been a regular member of the company. He seems to have received regular benefit performances, perhaps prompted by the fact that he was frequently in debt. In 1822 he received a benefit at the Music Hall, Liverpool, and in 1827 his "annual benefit" was at the Royal Amphitheatre.

Samuel Ryley wrote about his own life in a book called "The Itinerant, or memoirs of an actor". His first wife Nanny (Anne) also wrote a book, called "Fanny Fitzgerald or the heiress of Tremom", written in 1814.

Ryley became president of the Liverpool Forum, a debating society. One of the subjects debated in 1812 was: "Are the intellectual faculties of women equal to those of men, and do they hold that rank in society which reason and justice demand?" In 1822 he and his wife started a class in Liverpool "to instruct the youth of both sexes in the science of reading and speaking the English language divested of provincial dialect,

improper punctuation and discordant emphasis . . . to form character for polite intercourse by teaching a graceful deportment while sitting, speaking or walking."

We do not know when Ryley first came to Parkgate, though he was here in 1811. In his autobiography he wrote: "The filial affection of Anne (his wife) had augmented our family by the addition of her mother (Alice Kenworthy); and the hurry and bustle of itinerancy being ill-adapted for one whose age required quiet and repose, I took a small cottage at Parkgate at the annual rent of five pounds. Here I placed my mother-in-law, and here, thank God! she is at this moment. My small residence stands on an eminence, the base of which is washed by the returning tides of the River Dee, perhaps 50 yards from my cottage door. The Welsh mountains on the opposite shore, six miles distant, form an amphitheatre extending north and south, and when the tide comes in it covers an expanse of at least twenty miles, and presents one of the finest views imagination can conceive, comprehending everything the artist requires to constitute the sublime and beautiful. Thus situated - in full view of what I have endeavoured to describe - I am at the moment endeavouring to throw my thoughts on paper."

He loved this house, a small, square, white-washed box, and addressed letters to his wife at "Cottage of Content, Parkgate". He said that visitors, impressed by its tiny size, called it Pigmy Hall. It was generally known in Parkgate as Ryley's Castle. The house stood just to the north of the Watch House and we are told that it was never demolished, but was extended and altered beyond recognition, to form the house now called White Cottage. Mrs Kenworthy lived there until she died in 1818, aged 80.

Ryley later wrote, "The sight of the old town (Chester) was always cheerful to me; and became doubly so now, because it undeniably provided that the cottage of comfort was near at hand. At ten the following morning left the

coach at the village of Neston, a mile from Parkgate: and as I walked down the hill, and my little white dwelling came into view, - need I say the sight was grateful? Aye, none more delightful in all the round world, than the white walls of that village cot to the returning itinerant." There followed a poem, the last line of each verse being, "At my cottage on the banks of the Dee".

Ryley was at this cottage in 1812 when he was arrested for debt. "Poor Ryley," said the *Chester Chronicle*, "After buffeting the adverse winds of fortune for a great portion of his life, is now confined in our Castle for a small debt owing to a brother actor, Mr Ward." Another paper wrote, "Mr Crisp, the manager of our theatre, has generously offered a benefit to Mr Ryley, who is now suffering the rigours of incarceration in our Castle for the small debt of £20. We entertain no doubt but the public feeling will be generously manifested towards their old favourite." The imprisonment cannot have been too severe, as Ryley was advertised as selling tickets from the Castle, and was billed to take part in the comedy "A cure for the heartache" at his own benefit. But a week later (1st Jan 1813) Ryley wrote an intemperate letter to the *Chronicle* blaming Ward for the debt, caused by losses on a theatre run in Manchester; "Without any previous demands, I was dragged from my peaceful domicile at Parkgate." But in April the editor made a public apology to Ward for printing Ryley's unfounded charges.

Ryley used to let his cottage in the summer. In 1835 his advertisement read, "Marine Villa, banks of the Dee, Parkgate. Mr Ryley's cottage is to let for the season. 2 bedrooms, parlour, kitchen. coal house. One guinea per week.

His beloved wife Nanny (Anne) died in 1823, aged 63, after 47 years of marriage. "Beneath this stone," her epitaph reads, "the remains of Nanny Ryley, formerly of Parkgate, are deposited, and with them every hope of happiness that this world can bestow on her disconsolate husband, in whose breast a warm and enthusiastic affection of 47 years remains unabated, which time can never obliterate, nor ought but death destroy."

Nevertheless, Ryley married again in 1826, to Margaret Brooks, Nanny's niece who had attended her in her last illness. She was about 35 and he was 71. When her husband died in 1837 she was left so poor that subscriptions were raised for her in the Liverpool newspapers. She continued to live in the Cottage until it was sold in 1849. Margaret died in 1864.

Samuel Ryley was buried in Neston on 15 September 1837, aged 82. "Poor Ryley has at length passed through his last scene on earth, wherein he played many parts. Life to him was indeed a chequered scene, and his declining years were not the sunniest of that life. He breathed his last at Parkgate on Tuesday 12 September at the advanced age of 82, leaving an aged widow in a state of destitution without even the means of providing for his interment. A few individuals, residents or visitors, have raised a small sum by private subscription for that purpose."

PARKGATE HOMEWATCH

by Angela Clarke

Some Parkgate Homewatch groups are either without a co-ordinator, or the co-ordinator is no longer active within the scheme.

Not only does this make the scheme less effective, it could also affect claims made under a Household Contents Insurance Policy where a discount has been obtained for being in a Homewatch area - you might find yourself uninsured.

Surely there must be some public-spirited people out there, willing to spare an hour or so once every two months to attend meetings and deliver a quarterly newsletter? Your co-ordinator is a vital link between the community and the local police force.

The areas in need are :- Moorside Avenue, Ropewalk/Springcroft, Manorial Road and Carlton Close. Please help by contacting Angela Clarke - 336 1069

THE TOWNSHIP AND MANOR HOUSE OF LEIGHTON

- Part one - (three part article)

by Clive Edwards

The work on which this series of three articles is based is already history itself, Linda Briggs and I published articles in "Cheshire History" in September 1980 and Autumn 1981, How time flies!

The original research was carried out by Linda and myself together with the Research Group of the Burton and South Wirral Local History Society.

The form of the previous articles has been revised and some technical details and references omitted.

The source of the information comes from a Leighton survey, circa 1583, inventories of 1574 and 1620 and an Estate Map of 1732. The papers concerned were passed down to the Mostyn family who were the last major landowners in Leighton (now part of Parkgate), Neston and Thornton Hough, which were three of the eight townships making up the Parish of Great Neston.

The Survey of c.1583

This was a rough draft in secretary hand of a general survey of the manor of Leighton and as well as giving details of the boundaries, dole stones and fields, gave a detailed description of the manor house and its rooms and of its farm buildings, outhouses, courtyards and gardens. The date of the document is probably 1583, shortly after William Hough (son of the then owner, Richard Hough) wrote to his son-in-law, William Whitmore in 1582 regarding a survey.

Drawing up the plans

The group translated the document using the clues it provided, into the plans shown with this article. The directions of the compass were referred to 29 times, the length and breadth of the four courtyards and two gardens were given, and the area of the orchard. The out-buildings and the length of the house were referred to in terms of bays, which we took as around 16 feet.

Quotations

"The manor house of Leighton is situated upon a bank some what rising above the town one the Est Side".

"All the bilding that stands with in the 3 Iner courtes is covered with blew sclate, all the windowes belonging to the haule, parler, chambers, closets and privies being all Joyned to gether (bie) glased and lattist".

"In the same orchard is tries of divers sortes of fruites, 108 appeltries and 8 pertries. In the West End of the same orchard is a privie covered with sclate. In the est end a bowling allye; at the north end of it an arber, all about the north side a walke set one both sides with thorns and appeltries".

The working life of the Manor House and farm

A busy and varied life is revealed for this small community, far more self-contained and independent than in the modern day. The livestock included cows, oxen, pigs, horses and hens, as well as fish kept in fish 'panes'. There was a kitchen garden and orchard, and we know from the inventory of 1574 that the crops were wheat, rye, barley, oats, hay and peas. Craft and trades indicated by the buildings and rooms are: brewing (malting house, kilne and brew house), baking of bread, wood work, cheese and butter making; and the 1620 inventory mentions the curing of bacon and salting of beef, and also the spinning of linen thread.

It is tempting to imagine the Leighton people playing on their bowling alley at the same time as Francis Drake in 1588, as the Spanish Armada approached.

The Inventory of Richard Hough of Leighton 1574

Following Richard Hough's death an inventory of his possessions was carried out on 14th December 1574. It was taken by "Thomas Potter, Heugh Bordman, Laurence Coke and William Bellin."

Details of the household items will follow in the next newsletter. The agricultural and trading items were (partly put into modern English) :-

	£	s	d
2 shed carts ("weanes" = haywane) , ploughs, harrows and their equipment	4	0	0
12 oxen	36	0	0
16 cows (kyne)	21	6	8
16 young beasts	26	0	0
6 calves	1	0	0
2 horses (nags)			
2 mares			
1 colt	12	0	0
2 young fillies			
2 old geldings			
7 old swine	2	15	0
11 "shots"			
Wheat and rye	6	6	8
Barley	20	0	0
Oats	6	13	4
Peas	2	6	8
Hay	4	0	0
Corn upon the ground to the sowing of the bushels of wheat	6	13	4
10 trees that lie fallen in the wood	1	13	4
	150	15	0

The late J. Philip Dodd, a local historian who specialised in agriculture derived a lot of information from this inventory:

"When the farming element in the inventory is analysed it becomes evident that the economy was highly orientated towards livestock, which accounted for two thirds of the total farming capital. Although some butter and cheese was presumably made for domestic purposes the cattle represented a breeding and rearing unit, with dairying and its off-shoot of pig fattening as the less important aspect. This is apparent from the number of oxen which were greatly in excess of what may have been required for draught purposes including ploughing. More significant in terms of the rearing emphasis were the sixteen young beasts, presumably the offspring of the 16 kyne. These would be about 18 months old at time of the valuation given and were evidently being wintered, some for sale fat in the following Autumn and some probably to make up the oxen stock which would be materially reduced at the Michaelmas sales in 1575. Most of the cows had not then, December 1574, produced their calves and no doubt some would prove to be barren.

Turning to the horse stock, here too breeding and rearing were the significant features as is indicated by the two young fillies and the colt which would be in his second year.

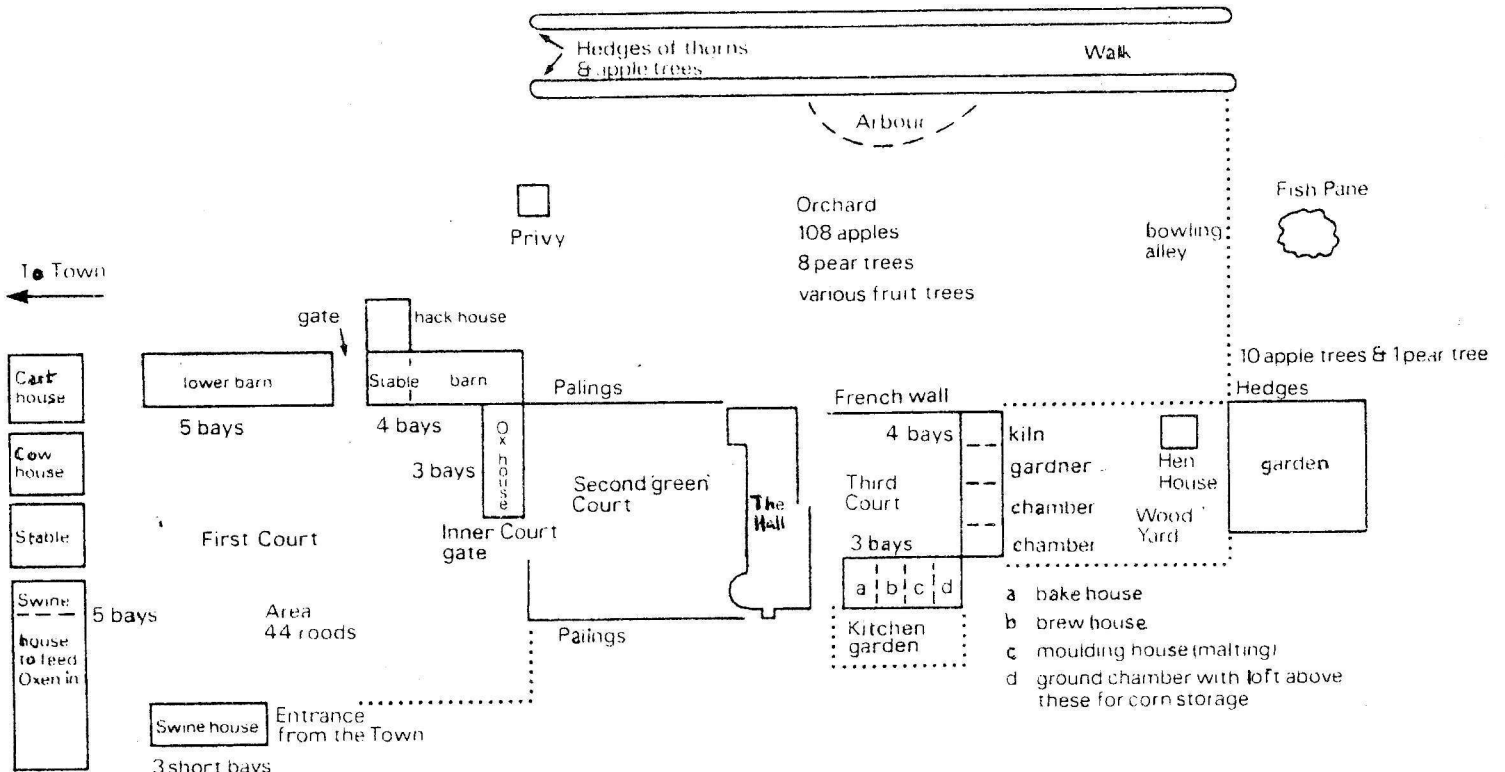
Insofar as cultivation was concerned, although the stock of winter sown corn from the harvest of 1573-4 included both wheat and rye, it being the common practice in the Wirral to grow both, it is interesting to note that only wheat was being grown as the winter grain for 1574-5.

(Mr Dodd considers that rye was actually included in the quantity of wheat, he continues:)

If we assume that the sown corn included both wheat and rye and that the seed was taken from the harvest of 1573-4 then it would appear that barley was the major cash crop and balanced against this was the wheat and rye sown in the autumn and winter in the proportion of three parts to one of spring sown oats. Viewing the system as a whole about one third was in winter corn and oats, one third in barley, and the remainder in fallow from which a grass cut was taken and also a catch crop of peas."

The next newsletter will include plans of the Manor House itself and give details of its contents.

Leighton Hall c.1583



Measurements	Length Yds	Breadth Yds	Area Roods
First court	68 3/4	47 3/4	44
Second court	34 1/4	33 3/4	16 + 2 yds
Third court	24	23 1/2	9
Wood yard	34 3/4	25	13 1/2
Garden	21 1/2	21 1/2	9 1/8
Kitchen garden	20	8	2 1/2
Orchard	10 1/2 roods	5 roods	1/4 acre + 12 1/2 roods

The Pubs and Hotels of Parkgate - Part 1

THE SHIP OR THE UNION

by Geoffrey Place

The present Ship Hotel occupies the site of three buildings, probably adjoining. Before the 1850s the front part, facing the Parade, was a house and shop which at one time housed the post office. Behind it was the Ship Inn, and behind that was another inn called the Black Bull or Bull's Head. It was reached by the passage or weint called Drury Lane, between these buildings and Mostyn House. In 1829 "the licensed public house, the Black Bull at Parkgate was to let, with eight bedrooms. It is not heard of again.

The Ship has a very much longer history, as the name at least, can be traced to the mid-eighteenth century. In 1758 the Freemasons' Parkgate Lodge was meeting at the Ship in Launch, and they possibly continued to meet there until 1775. But whether this inn was on the site of the later Ship, there is no means of telling. In 1772 Betty Wright, who advertised that "she keeps the Sign of the Ship at the lower end of Parkgate" could accommodate visitors for the sea-bathing season. But which is the lower end?

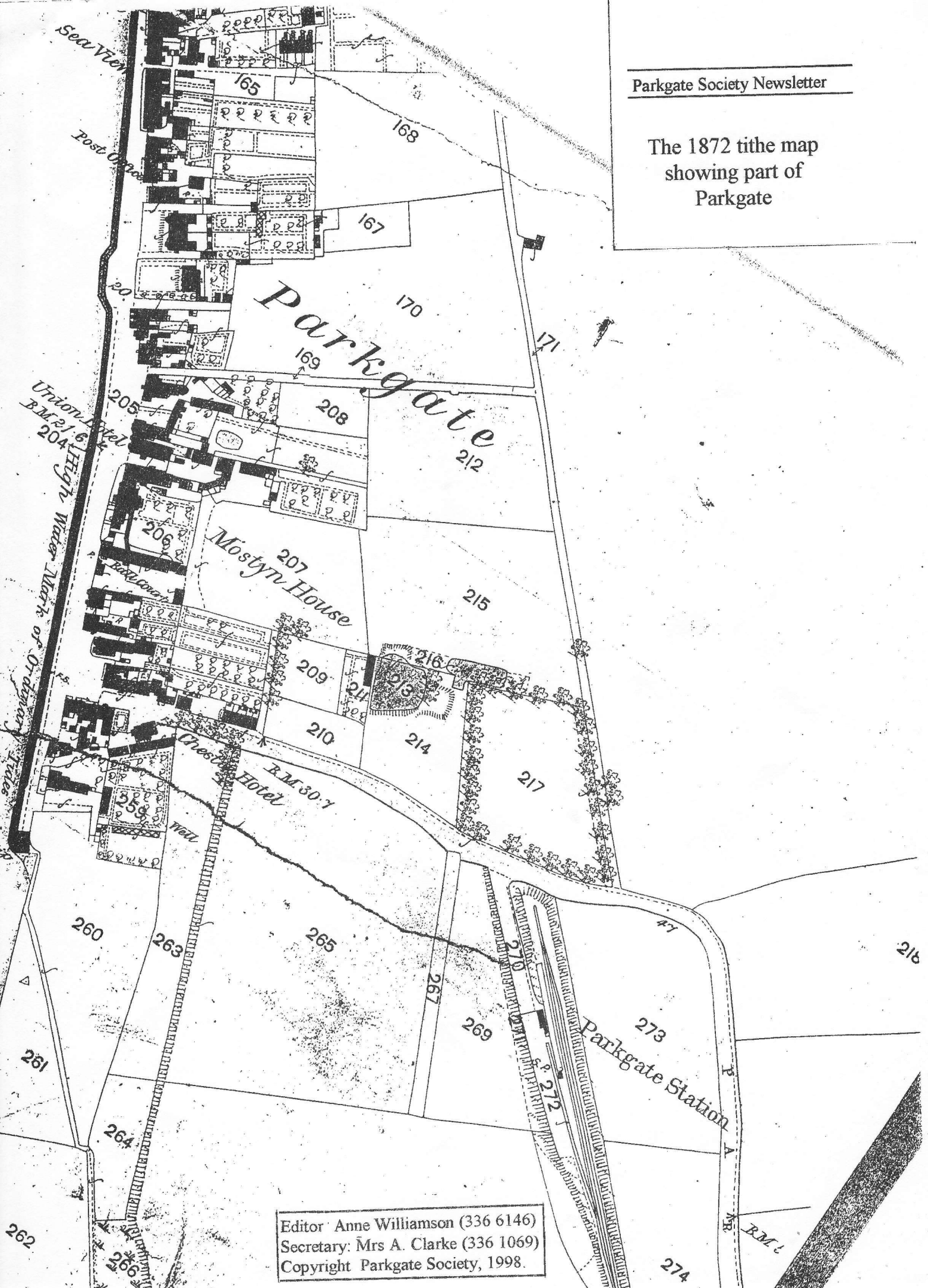
The first mention of the Ship, definitely in Drury Lane, is in 1822 when it is variously called the Ship and the Princess Royal. The Princess Royal was a passenger-carrying ship sailing between Parkgate and Dublin. It was built at Parkgate in 1787 and was still sailing in 1809. It seems likely that, if the present Ship Inn was named after the Princess Royal, then those earlier mentions of the inn name, before the ship was built, are likely to have been elsewhere.

In 1859 the Ship Inn belonged to the Parkgate Hotel Company which rebuilt and enlarged it, apparently making all three houses into one. But the expense bankrupted the company. In 1860 a new owner reopened it as the Union Hotel "now complete with entirely new furniture". The Union as an inn sign sometimes refers to the union of England and Ireland in 1800. Clearly this name does not, and perhaps it reflects the union of the three houses. The hotel went bankrupt again in 1865.

About 1876 John Acton, previously at the Chester Arms, became landlord. He was a keen freemason, and from then until 1922 the Freemasons met in a converted stable and coach house behind the hotel.

In the 1970s the hotel was refurbished by new owners and reverted to its former name, The Ship.

The 1872 tithe map showing part of Parkgate



Editor: Anne Williamson (336 6146)
Secretary: Mrs A. Clarke (336 1069)
Copyright Parkgate Society, 1998.