

Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

Newsletter

Autumn 2009

Issue Number 77

Meetings

We meet at 8pm at the **Boathouse**.

If you need help with transport please ring Mrs Angela Clarke, our Secretary, giving 24 hours notice, on 0151-336 -1069.

Diary dates for 2009/2010

2009

21 September – “Liverpool Capital of Culture – the Legacy” - *Mary Beaumont*

19 October – AGM followed by “British Humour 18th-20th Century” - *Mike Murphy*

16 November – “Cheshire Diaries – the First World War” - *Edward Hilditch*

2010

15 February – “Lever, the collector” introducing the collections at the Lady Lever Art Gallery – *Jane Duffy*

15 March – “Liverpool 1907 – 2007” a film show by *Angus Tilston*

19 April – “The work of Wirral Countryside Volunteers” - *Paul Loughane*, Wirral Wildlife Trust.

24 May – “Wayside Windmills with Wirral examples” – *Jim O’Neil*
Visitors are welcome

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact:
Anne Williamson 336 6146 or
Jerry Harris 336 7406

AGM

The AGM will take place on Monday 19 October 2009 at 7.30 pm.

According to our constitution, nominations for the election of Committee members shall be made at least 14 days before the AGM.

The following Committee members are all willing to serve again:

Moira Andrews (Vice Chairman), Angela Clarke (secretary), Valerie Place, Becky Ford, Suzi Grenfell, Stephen Gordon and Jerry Harris. Also co-opted member, Nick Marten.

It is proposed, by the Committee, that Suzi Grenfell is elected as the new Chairman. It is proposed by the Committee, that Nick Marten, is elected as the new Treasurer.

Please note that 2009/2010 subscriptions are due following the AGM.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

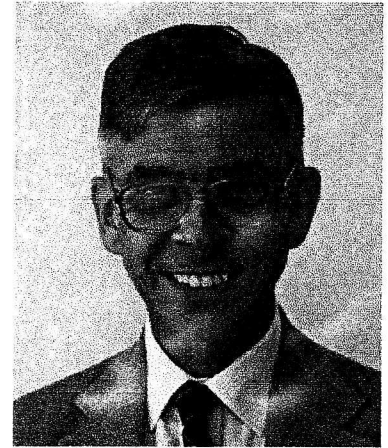
£4.00 Family or Single per year

Payment can be made at any of our meetings, however we would prefer payment by Banker’s Standing Order. Membership, Standing Order and Gift Aid forms are available, from our Secretary.

PHILIP OWEN 1946 - 2009

Many of you will already know of Philip's untimely death, on Saturday 22 August. He had not been ill, so it was a great shock to all and our thoughts are with Jill, his wife, at this time of great sadness.

Philip had been our Chairman for the past three and a half years. He was also Chairman of the Clatterbridge League of Friends, a Councillor on the recently formed Neston Town Council, was actively involved in church life at St. Barnabas Church in Bromborough, was Vice Chairman of Crimestoppers (Merseyside) and maintained an active interest in many other local organisations.



For our Society his enthusiasm was unbounded. He decided that we should have closer links with the Parkgate Preservation Trust and the Friends of Park Fields, and after proposing changes to our Constitution to allow this, instigated joint committee meetings with both groups, to ensure that, on common interests, we all sang from the same hymn sheet.

During the period of his Chairmanship, Philip had many meetings with the Borough Engineer and discussed the state of footpaths, street furniture, signage and the disrepair of the railings on the Parade. All his actions, including chairing our Committee meetings were done with good humour and charm.

At our monthly meetings, Philip always took time to update members on current topics, warmly welcomed guests and graciously thanked our speakers, often with his own thoughts on the subject of the talk.

Philip will be greatly missed by all the organisations with which he was involved.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Fairly major changes are now taking place in **Neston**. The archaeological dig has finished and it was noticeable at the end of the dig that the plastic body of a baby doll appeared to have been carefully placed by a local comedian in one of the excavated dwellings!!

The shopping situation is now dire with the closure of the Somerfield Store and part of its car park and the closure of the large car park behind the Town Hall while the eighteen-month construction of the new Sainsburys store proceeds.

The Friday market is now held in Bridge Street, between Tesco car park and the Postal sorting Offices. New public toilets are due to open on the former site of Belmont Cottage and the new Aldi store, being constructed in the old Somerfield building, is due to open in November. Access to Neston Post office for those carrying large parcels or for disabled people is very difficult due to the long walk involved on the narrow pavements through the Town, illustrating why the closure of sub post offices such as Parkgate was so short sighted! But, credit where credit is due, the tidying up of Pennington's Weint, Pyke's Weint (between Galen Pharmacy and the former camera shop), and the car park accesses are a great improvement for the town, and long overdue.

Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) was formed on 1st April and the Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council no longer exists.

The new **Neston Town Council** elections were to take place in June, but as 16 candidates applied for 17 vacancies, the applicants were elected without the need for a vote. Our own deputy Chairman, former councillor and Mayor of EP&NBC, **Moira Andrews**, has been elected Chairman of the new Town Council. Well done Moira, we are sure you will serve us well.

Parkgate news. The major new development of **Neston Cricket Club** was completed May/June and the new building is a great asset to Parkgate and fits very well into the landscape of the Conservation Area. There are two large function rooms that can be hired for events and there is also a new Astroturf hockey pitch, another major plus point for the club.

Happily, there has been **local authority spending** taking place in Parkgate, with renewal of seats at the Old Quay end of the Parade, Mostyn Square, Leighton Road/Boathouse Lane, Parkgate Old Baths, new litter bins on the Parade and at Mostyn Square and cycle racks outside the Ship Hotel. New signs at Wood Lane to try to combat the antisocial fly tipping have included threatening fines and use of CCTV to catch offenders. Footpath signs have been renewed and new warning "horses" signs installed on Boathouse Lane.

Flood relief works took place at the top of Earle Drive/Leighton Road, which required road closure for some weeks and creation of a temporary works depot in a field in Leighton Road.

St.Thomas's Community Church held a very successful Bric a Brac sale this year raising approx £1300 from donated goods sold both on the day and later, and also provided the cream teas and filled batches again at the Cricket Club marquee Sunday event where £242 profit was raised. New notelets of Parkgate sold on the day raised £102. The new notelets are available in Parkgate Stores and include views of Parkgate for £2/pack of four cards with all profit to the restoration and/or equipping of the church.

Delays with building contractor/road closure and utility permissions have resulted in very little progress with the restoration since the spring.

Our Society has held a meeting with CWAC personnel to discuss the repainting of **the railings** on the Parade. The 85metre long black railings complete with 56 gold tops are in need of refurbishment. CWAC have agreed to repair them where necessary, but will not repaint them. We are investigating further.

We have forwarded several complaints to the authority that the **public toilets in Mostyn Square** are not always open and are not always in a tidy state. They agreed to act on this and also to extend the summer opening time to 7pm.

We attended **Neston Fair** with our stock of Parkgate walks leaflets, handouts and books. Our pitch attracted a lot of attention, until the rains came!!

We objected to two **planning applications**, one was for illuminated signage at the Old Quay which we considered was inappropriate in such a prominent position in a Conservation Area, and the other was for retrospective siting of two caravans together with a car parking area at the very bottom of Moorside Lane (on the edge of the marsh by the reed beds). Planning for housing was turned down here and now the field is causing much local concern due to its untidy state.

Heritage Open Days. This national event was held, for the fourth time in Parkgate, on the weekend 12/13 September. Again we are indebted to Suzi Grenfell for opening up the Mostyn House School Chapel, which always attracts attention from far and wide. This year saw visitors from New Zealand and South Africa! Again the WWII air raid shelter (The Dive), was open, thanks to Mary and Mike Everleigh; this is a big attraction for visitors of all ages. Also, this year saw tours around the parts of the school, which were once the 18th Century George Inn, which became the Mostyn Arms Hotel, and then the original Mostyn House School. This was very well supported, about 120 visitors in two hours(!), so thank you Suzi for adding this attraction this year.

We are pleased to announce that **Suzi Grenfell** has agreed to stand as Chairman, for the next 12 months, and **Nick Marten**, the new bursar at Mostyn House School, has agreed to become the Society's Treasurer. We ask for members support at the AGM. Sadly **Anne Williamson** is not standing for re-election, after 15 years on the committee. She will be sadly missed and the committee thank her for all the work she has done over the years, however, we hope that she will continue to contribute to this newsletter.

Parkgate resident **Barrie Youde**, who in his spare time is a compulsive writer of light verse, has kindly allowed us to include one of his poems in this newsletter. His published works include "Beyond the Bar – a Light History of the Liverpool Pilot Service" and "Sitting on a Bollard", published by Laver, Liverpool.

BAREFOOT ON THE GOLF-COURSE

The pond was like a mirror,
The scattered clouds reflected,
The sun set at the Point of Air.
Perhaps I genuflected.

The minnows rose for oxygen,
Made surface rings concentric:
A toad sat on a lily-pad,
Grotesque, alone, eccentric.

The dew was falling heavily,
Bare-foot I walked the fairway,
A hubbub from the club-house bar;
I did not envy their way.

I am a humble trespasser,
I pay my fees by care.
Each summer evening as I walk,
I'm grateful that I share,

The peace, the view, tranquillity.
I'm grateful no-one chases.
I'm bare-foot, please, at times like these,
And never will change places.

BY

TWENTY FIVE YEARS AGO Parkgate in 1984

In 1984 **Parkgate Society subscription** remained at one pound for an individual or family, and 50p for a senior citizen.

The United Reformed Church, Moorside Lane, celebrated its centenary.

Mostyn House School choir sang in the Cathedrals of Chester, Carlisle, and Liverpool, and also held a concert for the local community.

The pubs of Parkgate.

The Boathouse pub/restaurant was sold. Peter Barnes, over the course of his 6 year ownership, had transformed the place and had extensively rebuilt both the building and the trade. Having proved successful with the Boathouse, he moved up the road to the Parkgate Hotel (eventually closed in 2000 and is now Parkgate House and Greenway) to work his wonders there. Our Society moved with him, and in fact our talks returned to their original venue of the Parkgate Hotel.

The new owners of the Boathouse, Tetley Walker, immediately refurbished (once again) and rearranged the interior, moving the position of the bar, etc. Meanwhile, the Parkgate Hotel's newly created Admiral's Inn section on the Barnacre side of the building became so popular that local residents were soon suffering from the overflowing car parks and general late night rowdiness of the guests. There were many complaints from residents and new car parking spaces were created to try to halt the spread of car parking into The Looms, Tithebarn Drive and Barnacre. The problems continued despite the best efforts of the management.

There were further problems at the other end of Parkgate with Whitbread's motorbikers' pub, The Old Quay, where the noise and speed of the motorbikes continued to plague the locals. Police tackling the problem managed to give out plenty of speeding fines, including some to the locals!

The Liverpool Garden Festival

One of our society talks was on the Liverpool Garden Festival, UK's first International Garden Festival. Many Wirral people made the journey over the water to visit Liverpool's new attraction and it received much media attention. The Government was attempting to regenerate the area and billed the festival as "a five month pageant of horticultural excellence and spectacular entertainment". The Toxteth riots of the early 1980s had led to the formation of the Merseyside Development Corporation which instigated this project. The derelict South Docks area by the Dingle was cleared of industrial waste and landscaped into a site containing more than 60 gardens, public pavilions, a festival hall, a pub, a miniature railway, a yellow submarine and statue of John Lennon, and recognition of other Liverpool stars as well as the Beatles, such as Cilla Black, Ken Dodd and Liverbirds' star, Nerys Hughes.

Since 1984 the site has changed a great deal and recently a housing development has taken half the original area. The large Festival Dome was demolished in 2006.

Parkgate's Visitor Centre

The possibility of creating a visitor centre was discussed by a number of impressively important groups: Cheshire's Countryside & Recreation Director, our Borough Council's planning Dept., Wirral Borough Council's Wirral Country Park, The County Council, The Civic Trust, The RSPB and our Society. They were all

involved, showed interest and gave good advice, but, twenty five years on, we still do not have a visitor centre. Perhaps when the church in Parkgate opens as a "community church", that issue hopefully may be resolved.

Planning Matters

Local residents expressed concern at the felling of trees in the new development at **the Moorings**. The County Planning Department reassured us that trees planned for preservation were in fact being preserved and that felling largely involved poplars and this was advisable near the new houses due to their habit of growing quickly to a height then toppling over.

The Society successfully campaigned to change the parking restrictions outside houses 7 to 11, **Station Road**, where several unsuspecting people had fallen foul of the magistrates by parking where double white lines were present in the centre of the road. The "no overtaking" lines having the other function of banning parking.

We opposed the County Council's proposal to create an industrial estate on the green belt land at **Ashfield Hall Farm**.

Litter

A grand clean up of the marsh along the sea wall took place, prompted by the kind offer of a driver and lorry and help in the form of the local cub packs. This appeared to be the year when the society began seriously to push the local authority to take some responsibility for the appearance of this tourist gem of ours. Thankfully they now do!

1984 seemed to be a very busy year in Parkgate!

Bathing Ban in famous Resort

In 1870, our Local Board* arranged for notices between the South Slipway and The Boathouse Inn *Banning Bathing on the Foreshore*. Their explanation being:

"....there having been many a complaint made by visitors, who naturally objected to have bathers disporting themselves right under their windows"

Whilst ladies paid for the use of horse drawn bathing machines to allow them to bathe in seclusion, it was common in these times (long before the invention of lycra speedo bathing trunks) for men to bathe naked!!

* Before the days of Municipal Boroughs and Urban District Councils, local authorities in urban areas were known as Local Boards or Local Health Boards. They originated in 1848 as a result of cholera epidemics and were given powers to control the cleanliness of streets, water, sewers and slaughter houses.

ROYAL HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS WITH PARKGATE/NESTON

On 14th August, 1642, Charles I sent this letter to the Mayor of Chester: (spelling is somewhat historical!)

Trusty and wellbeloved, Wee greete you well. Being informed that divers Goods belonging to the most trusty and right sincerely wellbeloved Cosin (*cousin*) the Lady Duchess of Buckingham, are arrived out of Ireland, and landed at Neston not farr from the Citty of Chester: and the said Lady Duchess desiring that those her Goods may be brought into a place of more security than where they were landed and at the present now are. Wee have thought fitt to require you to take all the said Goods into your own and especial Care and Custody in your House or such other place of the said Citty where they may be secure: and so keepe them, until the said Lady Duchesse shall be send for, or otherwise dispose of them: Which wee shall take well at your hands.

The other, rather uncertain token of more or less royal interest derives from the alleged visit of Mrs Fitzherbert, the wife of the Prince of Wales, later to become George IV. Her visit seems to have been a memory recorded by Hilda Gamlin in her book "Twixt Mersey and Dee", where it was said that Mrs Fitzherbert "rented a large house up the shore because there was good stabling attached to it." She was said to have paid for mutton and potatoes to be provided for 700 soldiers camped at Parkgate while waiting to sail for Ireland, "for it was at the time of the great rebellion." This would put the date at 1798 or a little after, at which time the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert were estranged.

The only contemporary evidence for the visit, though, is in this brief note, by Lord Stourton:

"In the meantime, whilst the negotiations were pending, she obtained a promise from His Royal Highness that he would not follow her into her retreat in Wales, where she went to a small bathing place." In Wales! Oh, poor Parkgate!

The above, researched by Geoffrey Place, appeared in the Spring 1984 Parkgate Society Newsletter.
