



# Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

## Newsletter

Issue Number 81

Autumn 2011

### 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

#### 2011

26<sup>th</sup> September – “RSPB Nature Reserve -  
Past, Present and Future” -  
– *Colin Wells*

24<sup>th</sup> October – **AGM at 7.30pm** followed by  
“Birkenhead Revisited” –  
*Elizabeth Davey.*

21<sup>st</sup> November – “As We Were No.4” -*Glynn  
Parry*

#### 2012

20th Feb - “Oxton and the Secret  
Gardens” - *Graham McLean*

19th March - Spits or Microwaves?  
- *June Lancelyn Green.*

16th April - Rock Ferry in Victorian and  
Edwardian Days.  
- *Roy Dennett*

21st May - to be advised

Visitors are welcome

### AGM

**The AGM will take place on Monday 24th  
October 2011 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.

Becky Ford is not seeking re-election to the  
committee. She will be missed for all the hard  
work that she put into studying local planning  
applications, and also as an editor of the  
Newsletter. Our thanks to her for the 15+  
years she has served on the committee.

We are now three members short on the  
committee. Anyone willing to stand would be  
most welcome. Please contact the Secretary,  
urgently.

The following Committee members are all  
willing to serve again, and the officers are  
proposed by the Committee -  
Valerie Place (President)  
Moira Andrews (Chairman), Greta Simpson  
(Vice Chairman), Angela Clarke (Secretary),  
Damian Loughe (Treasurer), Jill Brock, Jill  
Owen, Rob Naybour and Jerry Harris.

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters  
are most welcome, please contact:  
Anne Williamson 0151 336 6146  
or Jerry Harris 0151 336 7406

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

£4.00 per household 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.

Printing of this newsletter has been made possible by the kind support of the Rightway Bevans Group.

**Rightway Bevans**

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## NEWS & VIEWS

**Mostyn House School** – at last there is some news. English Heritage has informed the Grenfell family that the majority of the school buildings have been listed Grade II. Suzi Grenfell and her sister Lynda Armstrong have circulated a letter announcing that this. By accessing " <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1401335> " full details can be found. The Chapel was already included on the List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic interest as Grade II\*, but now the majority of the other buildings including the underground WW II air-raid shelter and "Jarrah", the detached former master's house to the north-east of the main buildings have been added. The buildings that are excluded include the small pump house, the 1980s swimming pool building, the 1937 classroom block, including the 1970s rear extension and the 1922 infant department building. Sadly the school does not own the freehold of the carillon of 37 bells, which were gifted as a WWI War Memorial and the Grenfell family have now secured a transfer of the carillon to another school, as required by the covenant placed on them.

English Heritage give detailed reasons for its listing under the general headings of: architectural interest; design composition; setting; intactness; interior quality; specialist features; historic interest, and group value. Constructed in 1855 with late C19 and early C20 additions, the school also incorporates the C18 George Inn.

The listing inevitably has an impact on the future use of the whole site and the Grenfell family are taking advice as to how convert the buildings to alternative uses "in a manner that secures their future and respects the reasoning behind the listing. It appears likely that to help finance a sympathetic conversion of the retained listed buildings the unlisted elements will have to be demolished and the playing fields to the rear will need to be developed."

Parkgate Parade will definitely benefit from the preservation of the impressive frontage of the school, but the complexities of adapting the site to alternative use will be a huge challenge, and those living in Grenfell Park may be somewhat anxious about possible future developments. We await the next stage with interest.

**Parkgate Marsh** - As many will have noticed, over the past few weeks, a digger has been busy at work creating new pools and clearing gutters and existing pools, to create a better flow of water, to cut down the mosquito breeding area. This work has been funded by CW&C, Neston Town Council, the RSPB and the Society. There will be a public meeting in October, on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>, 10am to 4pm, in St Thomas' Church, to discuss the possibility of a boardwalk going out to a viewing platform by the new large pool. Neston Town Councillors, together with staff from Cheshire West and Chester Council, RSPB and specialist contractors will be available at the consultation to help explain the proposals and to answer any questions.

The plans for **Mostyn Square** are to be revisited by the Town Council. Permission to remove the **Bus Shelter** has been granted to The Bishops Trust; a gate into the churchyard will be part of their plan. See later reference to this on page 3.

The new 40mph speed limit is now in force on **Boathouse Lane** and there has already been a crash; a car rolled into picket fence on top S bend.

New **litter bins** have been placed along the Parade. Recent litter concerns in the vicinity of the fish and chip shop have been voiced and the Town Council will ask the business to assist with disposal.

**Barn Owls, Little Owls and Buzzards** nested this year successfully and the barn owls chicks have been ringed.

## **HIP-HIP-HOORAY!**

Well! Three cheers for the Parkgate Society! I feel a sense of elation following our recent progress. After years of painstaking persuasion we are getting somewhere!

It all seems to have started when we worked with the newly inaugurated Bishop's Trust and saw St. Thomas' Church refurbished and open for religious and community use.

Next we were successful in persuading Cheshire West and Chester Council to agree to repair and repaint the railings on The Parade after years of consultation with Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council and Cheshire County Council. Last year all the physical and financial work was carried out for us – not by us as previously proposed by the authorities.

Last year, after the closure of Mostyn House School, we combined our efforts with the Grenfell family and their consultants by maintaining our contact with English Heritage to ensure the latter confirmed their Listings within 11 months. Then came the new Neston Town Council, the RSPB and ourselves, all contributing finance to the excellent management programme for the marsh. The latest news is Neston Town Council, the Bishop's Trust and ourselves working on ideas and finance for the long-awaited improvement in Mostyn Square where plans are moving forward. This is another project we brought to the attention of and discussed with the former local authorities during the past 10 years.

Everything noted above proves that, by working with other interested groups, we won through and "people power" prevailed!

It is my abiding hope that everyone will join me in celebrating the culmination of our aspirations over many years of endeavour to improve and promote the past heritage of and future vision for, our unique Parkgate.

In 2012, we toast the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Parkgate Society and we look forward to seeing the fulfilment and success continuing far into the future. Raise your glass and come and join us!

Angela Clarke  
September 2011.

## **Twenty Five Years Ago - Parkgate in 1986**

### **Building Development**

After years of little activity on the building front, Parkgate now had two major schemes to worry about; namely, the estate of houses next to the Ropewalk, and the flats for the elderly in the site occupied by Bebington Ford garage (Texaco), formerly Leemans Garage. The Society put forward the name Grenfell Park for the estate of houses, reasoning that the medical missionary and social reformer, Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell (1865-1940), who was born and educated at Mostyn House, was not publicly remembered anywhere else in his birthplace. The proposed development area was once fields known as The Parks. They had been formed from part of the historic Neston Park that gave Parkgate its name. Although the builder, Redrow Ltd. used the name The Pavilions in its publicity, Grenfell Park was selected for use.

The Society hoped that the flats development on the Ford garage would prove to be a worthy successor to the garage because of their important position on the Parade. The plans looked impressive for Deeside Court as it would be called.

### **Publicity Leaflet & Society Funds**

The Society devised, printed and delivered throughout Parkgate a publicity leaflet to “wave the Society’s flag and make sure that people know we exist”.

The subscriptions were set at a level that would cover the Society’s costs, but the sale of publications had resulted in an accumulation of funds to the sum of £2,500. Members were asked to suggest uses for these funds. Previous surpluses had been used for purchasing trees, benches, and litter bins and to fund printing of publications. The guide book, “This is Parkgate, its buildings and its story”, was sold in the Thomas’s Post Office (now Nicholls Ice Cream Shop) and the Society was happy to say that the new owners of the Post Office, the Athertons, were happy to continue selling it.

### **The Domesday Survey**

900 years ago, the Domesday Book project (1085AD) had begun. Parkgate Society commemorated this anniversary by starting its own “Domesday Survey”. Committee member Leonard Walker began at Christmas 1985 taking photos throughout the year of the Parkgate area.

### **Signs.**

The Borough Council installed new Parkgate signs, and the wooden signs “Parkgate a Conservation Area” were refurbished by the Wirral Country Park. The Society wrote to the Borough Engineer asking if they could install signs for Leighton, as this historic settlement was being overlooked. Their reply indicated that the signs reflect what the Post Office calls the region, not what the locality ought to be called.

### **The Donkey Stand.**

Flowers in the Donkey Stand tubs have been replenished throughout the year and have been enjoyed by many. Neston Arts Society has held a number of exhibitions on the Donkey stand.

## **ST THOMAS’ CHURCH – THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY**

So what has been happening in St Thomas’ this year so far? Our Sunday morning services at 9.30 a.m. are thriving. Our new notice board by the gate gives details of the services for the current month. The Family Praise is a more informal service (without communion) and appeals to all ages. We have a mid-week communion service each Wednesday. This is said and lasts only half an hour. Afterwards we have coffee and biscuits and a ‘Drop-in’ for local people or visitors.

Several children and a number of babies have been baptised and we have a number of baptisms booked for the next few months. The best news yet is that since the re-opening of the church last year, the Bishop of Chester has granted a licence for weddings at St Thomas’. A couple of weddings have taken place and a number are booked in for the end of 2011 and 2012.

We have also had two big events this year. Firstly, on 5<sup>th</sup> March Mollie (Mary) Bushell celebrated her 95<sup>th</sup> birthday in St Thomas’ where an Afternoon Tea Party was held for over 100 friends and relatives. Mollie’s daughter, Mary, wrote in the Visitor’s Book – “One of the high points in Mollie’s life has been the re-opening of St Thomas’ after 16 years of closure, when her prayers were answered”.

Secondly, we celebrated the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton in style, thanks to the wonderful community spirit that exists in the village. Around 130 local people

sat outside enjoying the sunshine and watching the children play games, before sitting down at beautifully decorated tables for a Royal Wedding Tea Party inside the church.

Entertainment continued with the very talented Barrie Youde reciting one of his own very amusing poems 'The Royal Wedding' and there was a crown competition for children and adults which was judged by Anne Williamson. After glasses of bubbly were distributed Nick Dickinson proposed a Loyal Toast to the newly weds, William and Catherine, and everyone stood to sing the National Anthem. The huge 'wedding cake' was then cut by Jill Pratt who was rather startled by the candles which turned out to be a couple of mini indoor fireworks.

It was really good to see people of all ages from the community having fun together and enjoying an event in the newly restored building – a dream come true after many years of fund-raising.

It has been wonderful to have our local schoolchildren in St Thomas'. Parkgate Pre-school used the building whilst they were waiting for their new room at the school to be completed and Parkgate Primary School have also used the church for telling the Easter Story, with our curate the Rev'd Alison Harris leading these groups. The school then held their Easter Service in St Thomas' and they will also be using the church for their Harvest Celebrations.

Our St Thomas' Committee meets generally on a monthly basis and we discuss a whole range of both church and community issues. St Thomas' can be hired for one off or regular events. Whilst we have some community bookings for the future, we would like to encourage more local groups to use the building for meetings, functions, classes etc. Our contact person for enquiries, viewings or bookings is Emma Dennett who can be contacted on 353 1096 or pop in to see us on Sunday or Wednesday mornings.

Valerie M Johnson – 336 7838

9 August 2011

## **An Historical Summary of Proposals for Parkgate Marsh**

Reproduced from Spring 1990 newsletter.

With the major excavation work that has recently been carried out on Parkgate marsh; the creation of scrapes/pools and clearing out of gutters and drainage channels (see News & Views), it seems appropriate to reproduce here the list of schemes that have been proposed for Parkgate in recent history.

- c. 1960 David Alford, who stood as a candidate for the Neston Council, canvassed a plan for a marina at Parkgate.
- 1971 The Dee Barrage Scheme offered three main proposals by Binnie & Partners for a Dee crossing. All three included a marina at Parkgate. Huge water reservoirs, across the whole width of the estuary, would have stretched from Gayton to Denhall. Their embankments would have shut off the view from Parkgate. The marina (a sop for the total loss of outlook) would have had a road round it. The Neston Urban District Council's response was to "welcome the return of water to the Wirral shore" and the Parkgate Society was formed to combat this threat.

- 1974 Water Resources in England & Wales (HMSO booklet), continued to propose water storage in the Dee Estuary.
- 1976 Derek Bryan and Derek Hill proposed to dig a self-scouring channel to join the Parkgate Deep at Heswall. The scheme was to bring "small pleasure boats" to Parkgate.  
The Parkgate Society asked several experts for their opinion: all (including the expert produced by Mr Bryan) said that the plan would not work.
- 1976 Mr Bartlett & Mr Sibley of Heswall proposed a marina and miniature railway for Parkgate.
- 1977 The Parkgate Society proposed to the Council improvements to the drainage at the foot of the sea wall.
- 1983 Ward Ashcroft & Partners proposed a massive scheme for three linked lakes, the largest covering 98 acres at Parkgate, for dinghy sailing and canoeing. There were associated works including two car parks on the marsh in front of Parkgate.
- 1987 Ken Allan, Chairman of Wirral Association of Leisure and Tourism, called for a revival of the Dee Barrage Scheme for off-shore water as "a centre for informal leisure".
- 1987 Jack Cox proposed a lagoon fed by a widened gutter, with a raised area between the gutter and the sea wall including a hard path.
- 1988 Derek Bryan (by then a Councillor) had the Council investigate opening the Parkgate and Colliery gutters. The costs would be prohibitive.
- 1989 Graham Harrison proposed building a hotel on the marsh, and extending the width of the Parade by twelve feet.

## **A Cotton Mill in Parkgate?**

Terry Kavanagh, whose article on Coaching we published in the Spring Newsletter, asked if we knew of the Cotton Mill in Parkgate/Neston?

He sent us the following - From *Adams's [Chester] Weekly Courant*, 12 Jan. 1779:

To be sold by Auction,  
At Great Neston, in the county of Chester,  
On MONDAY the 25th January, 1779,  
"The Entire stock IN TRADE of Mr. SAMUEL WILLIAMSON, *Check, Cotton, and Linen  
Manufacturer,*  
now a Bankrupt, consisting of A Great Number of Looms and [Spinning] Wheels,  
a fresh and valuable Assortment of Reeds, Geers[sic], and all other Utensils used in the  
Weaving Business, two Warping Mills, a set of Warping Bars, a complete Calender, an Indigo  
Mill, and all necessary Fixtures and Utensils used in Dying[sic], and Bleaching; likewise a  
large Quantity of Manufactured Goods, viz. Checks and strip'd Cottons of all Sorts, LInen and  
Cotton Handkerchiefs, strong home-made Linens, &c. &c. Also a Quantity of white Yarn.  
"The Sale to begin at twelve o'clock the first Day and continue till the Whole is disposed of."

On trying to find out more, we enlisted the help of local historians from The Burton & Neston History Society.

*These items sound like hand loom weaving equipment. . . . The date is a little early for an industrial type of mill, whether water or steam powered. Some hand loom weavers worked for an agent, on piece work, so this could be the case here. Interesting. (Sue Craggs)*

*Wherever the estate was, it was bought by Joseph Hayes, Neston brewer for £14. It might not have been in Neston, two of the trustees were from Chester. This Williamson was a relative nephew (?) of Williamson involved in slave trade. (Sue Chambers)*

*Sam Williamson's property was in the area behind and to the left of Nicholl's ice cream shop in Parkgate. (Clare Johnson)*

*I have been studying the Williamsons for a while though not especially this Samuel – my interest was in his father, also Samuel, a Parkgate sailmaker and his relation William (we don't know exactly what relation – maybe a distant cousin) who both invested in the slave trade.*

*I was aware from a couple of sources that Samuel jnr. was bankrupt by 1779 but I hadn't seen this ad before. He described himself as a 'checkmaker' around this time and had previously called himself a 'draper' and a 'clothier' so clearly he was making cloth and clothing locally. Checks and other fabrics/garments were often exported to Africa to trade for slaves (apparently keeping thousands of Lancashire women in work), and I wouldn't be at all surprised to find evidence that Samuel jnr's goods were used for this purpose.*

*I'm no expert on late C18 industry but I'd tend to agree with Sue that this sounds like a hand loom business; certainly there is no evidence for a steam powered mill locally at any time and, given local geology, I can't think there was a water powered one either. Nevertheless it is very interesting and is one of the few signs of large(ish) scale industry in the area at this time, besides the colliery of course. It would be worth trying to find out where it was. Samuel jnr. had taken a lease on premises in 1767 in Drury Lane, Parkgate (between The Ship and MHS today) for an established herring business which, amongst other markets, sold fish for slave plantations; it comprised several buildings. I don't know when the herring business ended but later (early C18) the premises had become a theatre. Given that the ad mentions 'a great number of looms' and other equipment they would have needed lots of space so I wonder if the cloth-making business was sited there between (in time) the herring business and the theatre.*

*The Williamson's had a poor financial record. On death, the value of William's estate appears to have been less than his debts; and William's brother, Croft, had gone bankrupt in 1762. And then Samuel jnr. went bankrupt too. Ironically when this happened he was still being entrusted with winding up William's estate – and he had died nine years previously. In the early 1780s Samuel moved to Holywell and owned at least two boats.*

*Not sure any of the above helps, but the ad is a nice bit of local interest to add to our knowledge of late C18 Parkgate and I will bear it in mind when looking at other material around this time to see if I can fill in any gaps. (Anthony Annakin-Smith)*

All very interesting and intriguing, with an element of speculation. Hope more comes to light, one day!

You will remember “**Parkgate – A Ditty by William Barrett**” (Head boy and later Headmaster of Mostyn House School in the late 1880s) that appeared in the Spring 2011 newsletter, had a response by Helen Staveley-Taylor that was published in the Parkgate Society newsletter of Autumn 1990.

The Response chronicles Mostyn House at that time with its changes from being a boarding school for boys to a day school for both boys and girl pupils. The twentieth century has now gone, as has the School and the South Wirral postal description!

**1990 Response to William Barrett. (Parkgate - a Ditty).**  
by Helen Staveley-Taylor

There's still a place called Parkgate in the Hundred of Wirral,  
Where pestilence roams in the form of the squirrel  
And rats and mosquitoes; quite unlike the Tyrol.

You may fancy yourself by the Pacific Sea  
But most of the year, grass is all you can see;  
If you stand on tiptoe, you can just see the Dee.

The Parade is alight in the evenings round here,  
People sit on the wall and discourse over beer  
Just as they've done for many a year.

And tourists flood in to taste salt and ice cream,  
To yon urban dweller Parkgate is a dream,  
Only litter behind them reminds us they've been.

And the modern young schoolboy still in green and blue,  
Daily he comes now and even girls too,  
For them, Mostyn House values for life will hold true.

Progress goes on and folk come and go,  
We watch buildings go up; estates seem to grow,  
The twentieth century in Parkgate seems to show.

There's a scheme to build bridges from Wales to here,  
Some call it progress, “There's nothing to fear”,  
But what would it do to Parkgate's atmosphere?

There's the Parkgate Society, now part of the lore,  
Who inform and conserve; they comment and deplore,  
Fighting to keep things that have proved good before.