

Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

Newsletter

Autumn 2012

Issue Number 83

Meetings

We meet at 8pm at **Neston Cricket Club, The Cranston Suite.**

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

Diary dates for 2012

17th September - "And What Did You Collect?" - *Glynn Parry*

15th October – "Potts' Clocks"
– *Michael Potts*

19th November 7.30pm – 40th Anniversary meeting including "Parkgate and Beyond"
- *Gavin Hunter*

2013

18th February – "Norway" - *Gordon Reid*

18th March - "Local Author Hilda Gamlin"
- *Michael Corfe*

15th April – "Victoria Cross Holders in the Wirral Peninsular"
- *Denis Rose*

20th May – AGM followed by "HMS Thetis"
- *Derek Arnold*

Visitors are welcome

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

The AGM was held on 21 May, at 7.30pm, at the Boathouse, Parkgate.

The Chairman, Moira, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She mentioned our 'Vision for Parkgate', which the Committee had discussed at great length, and how it may be funded. She reminded members of our pending move, in September, to the Cricket Club for our Speaker meetings. There will be more parking available and there is a lift to the Cranston Suite for those who find stairs difficult.

The Officers and committee members were elected as follows.

Chairman: Moira Andrews,
Vice Chairman: Greta Simpson,
Secretary: Angela Clarke,
Treasurer: Damian Loughe

Committee members - Jill Brock, Jerry Harris, Martin Barker, Jill Owen, Rob Naybour and Alan Passmore

SUBSCRIPTIONS

£7.00 Single / £10 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.

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Rightway Bevans

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Parkgate Society: Fond memories from 40 years ago. By Steve Norris, the Society's First Chairman

In 1971 I was headhunted from sunny Bournemouth to take on a job on Merseyside. I was born in Liverpool and it was the Institute that ensured my exhibition to Oxford so I wasn't hard to persuade. Finding a house was an early priority and a nice young man from Jackson Stopps and Staff introduced us to Sir John Nicholson who was selling Brook House on the front for the massive sum of £25,000. Vicky and I moved in and inherited two staff, Namur (after the First World War battle in which her father had fought) and Teresa. The local policeman doubled as our gardener and spent many a happy evening in our kitchen reporting in to his boss from time to time that all was well in Parkgate as of course it always was. We adored the village. The marsh beyond the wall and the beach were the perfect place to walk our dogs. We made many friends, some of whom sadly are no longer with us but the village spirit was alive and well. That said, there were issues that needed action. There was the threat of a massive Dee Barrage which would have completely disfigured the whole area. Unwelcome development was ever present even then, and we were unanimous that we needed to create a Conservation Area quickly. And above all, we wanted desperately to preserve the unique and quite wonderful character and beauty of the village. I can't for the life of me think why I was elected as the first Chairman. What I do know is that we left the area all too soon when my Liverpool assignment completed and we moved down to Berkshire. It was several years later that I was persuaded to join the County Council there, and one thing led to another so that I ultimately enjoyed fifteen years in Parliament and five of them as a Minister in John Major's government. These days I still work in London where I was twice the Conservative candidate for Mayor although my record against Ken Livingstone is as bad as most England managers'. I divide my time between London and La Sauvetat in Gascony. But I will never forget the most wonderful and all too few years we spent in Parkgate – a precious jewel of a place. It is so good to know that forty years on, the Parkgate Society is still there, with Angela at its heart as ever, working to keep that jewel shining brightly.

40th Jubilee Year and The Next 40 Years!

In this, our 40th Anniversary year, it is a good time to take a look back to see what the Society has achieved over those years and to look to its future.

The Society was formed in 1972 when its first task was to counter the proposal to build a barrage and bridge across the estuary just downriver from Parkgate, and a huge reservoir to be held by high earth banks in front of the village. Fortunately for Parkgate this plan proved far too expensive and was therefore abandoned. Shortly afterwards the original village river front was created a Conservation Area. Over the years we have kept a watchful eye on the village and using our collective voice to speak out when necessary. We hold our regular evening talks throughout the year, when we also welcome non members who, with a little persuasion, become new members. We will have a new venue for our talks in September, when we move from the Boathouse to the Cranston Suite at Neston Cricket Club.

As we look to Parkgate's future we have produced a statement of our "Vision for Parkgate", and the work which is required to bring the village back to acquiring improved comments the next time we enter the Community Pride competition.

We aim to improve the appearance of the 3 slipways, the Donkey Stand and Mostyn Square. Christmas lighting will appear for the first time (courtesy of Neston Town Council) and street lighting gradually improved (courtesy of Cheshire West & Chester). Historic information will be sited at various points for visitors and newcomers to Parkgate. Parkgate oozes history, magnificent views and sunsets, interesting bird life and protected and renowned marshes which have ASCV and SSSI status (Area of Special County Value and Site of Special Scientific Interest. To this end we are working in partnership with our Cheshire West & Chester Councillor, Brenda Dowding and her community budget, Neston Town Council, the Bishop's Trust and the RSPB, to all pull together to make a difference.

Moira Andrews

Chairman – The Parkgate Society

NEWS & VIEWS

The Society's 40th Anniversary celebration. A special evening meeting, on 19 November, at The Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, commencing at 7.30pm. Our first chairman, Steve Norris, intends to join us. At 8pm, Gavin Hunter will give a talk that he has written for the occasion, entitled "Parkgate and Beyond". We welcome old and new members, to this evening

Did you see the **Union Jack** flying high over Mostyn House School, to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee and the arrival of the Olympic Torch in the UK? Then **The Cross of St George**, was flown to mark England's participation in the Euro 2012 Football Championship.

Angela, our secretary, has been trying, again, to get a new door for **the red phone box in Mostyn Square**. Apparently the box is only there due to the next nearest being in Neston, and only two calls have been made in the last 12 months. As it is a cashless box BT do not seem concerned that it is doorless. They have been reminded that it is in a conservation area and we now await a response.

There is no up-to-date information about **Mostyn House School**, except that smart suited visitors with clipboards and 'dayglo' clad surveyors, have been seen in the grounds recently. The scaffolding still shores up the Playground wall; there is no news on its removal.

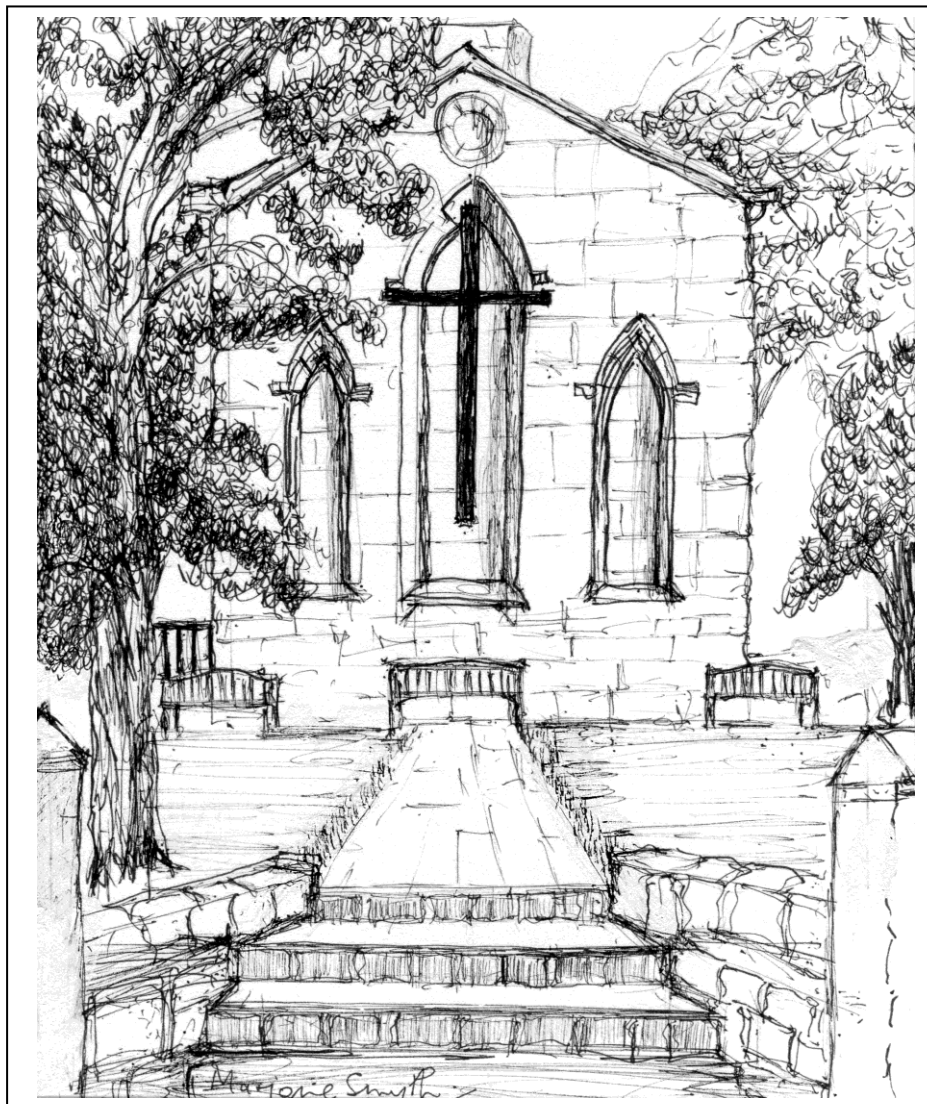
The bells from **carillon** were removed in May and taken back to John Taylor's Foundry in Loughborough for cleaning and retuning. We hope to be able to report on their final journey, in due course.



Phase 1 of the **Society's Vision for Parkgate**, (see Chairman Moira's article on the future of the Society), is for regeneration of **The Donkey Stand**. At present there is a mishmash of concrete and stone sets, litter bins distracting from the views and back to back seating.

We are working on plans for stone sets or a new type of surface being suggested by CW&C, all over the Donkey Stand, rejuvenated seating, all facing out onto the marsh, and re-siting the litter bins nearer to the line of the main sea wall.

Also we would like to see a sandstone planter along the wall in the middle of the Stand, moving the existing information panel to one side of the planter, and a matching panel depicting the wildlife that can be seen, the other side. An added possibility is placing an old dinghy, complete with suitable plants, on the **Middle Slip**. As this is part of the highway, permission has to be obtained. If any members would like to get involved in the maintenance of these schemes, we would be delighted to hear from you.



The **Bus Shelter in Mostyn Square** has finally gone and the churchyard is now accessible from the Square. It is hoped that the lighting column will soon be replaced by a more appropriate one. This pen and ink drawing was kindly produced by Society member Marjorie Smyth, to commemorate the opening up of the Church wall.

A new booklet called **Saint Thomas' Church Parkgate - A Short History** has been written by Betty Jones. It is available in Parkgate Stores, Nicholl's Ice Cream Shop, Mealor's Shrimp Shop, Lingham's of Heswall, the Parish Church, Neston and St Thomas', Parkgate for £2.50, to benefit St. Thomas'.

The 34 page booklet has numerous colour pictures of Parkgate and of the church, with local families and familiar faces in a few of the photos, and an interesting history of Parkgate and the church. Although described as a third edition, it is very much an updated booklet and in large part re-written to include recent events of 2011.

We are making another attempt to highlight the danger of the **entrance/exit to the Wirral Way on Boathouse Lane**, on the non footpath side of the road at the bridge over the Wirral Way.

Work has now commenced on the **Station Master's House**. When complete the owners will move in and then the planned house to the rear will be built.

TWENTY FIVE YEARS AGO Parkgate in 1987

Building Development

The Society was happy with the new flats development at Deeside Court stating that "they have added wonderfully to the style and charm of Parkgate". "Development within a Conservation Area can take place and enhance what is already there". The Society went as far as to put forward Deeside Court for an Architectural Design Award, although there is no record in the subsequent newsletters of whether this proved successful.

Four Astroturf tennis courts were constructed behind the Old Station House on land that Neston Cricket Club has leased from Cheshire County Council (formerly a section of WCP that had lain unused).

Committee Snippets

- A tea party was held in the grounds of Leighton Banastre to celebrate 15 years of the Society.
- Editorship of the newsletter changed from Geoffrey Place to Geoff Topp.
- After 15 years of unremitting support, committee member ADG Grenfell stood down. He had assisted the Society in many ways and had extended his hospitality by allowing use of Mostyn House School for committee meetings and for several other occasions.
- Chairman, Geoffrey Place had contributed to a two part TV programme on River Dee, Source to Sea.
- Committee member Leonard Walker continued to wander Parkgate with his camera, collecting and assembling his photographic record of the buildings and modes of transport. His collection now resides at Cheshire Records Office in Chester.

1987 Newsletter Excerpts

Historic report of the death of Mr. Vincent Crook M.P.S.
A tribute to a photographer, chemist and Postmaster
d. Oct. 17th, 1986

Mr Crook was for many years Chemist to the residents of Parkgate at his shop on the Parade, currently Parkgate Coffee Shop. He came to Parkgate in 1933 and was joined by his wife in 1936. His shop was also the Parkgate Post Office and from 1936 until 1965 he was Postmaster.

It was however to Mr Crook's keen interest in photography that we shall owe a particular and everlasting debt of gratitude, for it was through his camera lenses that he recorded so many views of Parkgate in those bygone years, some taken from the upstairs window above the shop looking down on the Red Lion frontage at high tide, with waves and spray crashing over the sea wall.

He photographed evocative scenes of sunsets over the Dee as well as the waves breaking over the Parade on many a stormy day. Several of his photographs were published as postcards and now give us a splendid record of an era in the history of Parkgate which has gone for ever.

**LET NO ONE SAY
AND SAY IT TO YOUR SHAME
THAT ALL WAS BEAUTY HERE
UNTIL YOU CAME.
N.C.C.S. AMENITIES**

This poetic and polite "Leave no litter" sign was sited adjacent to Moorside Lane Railway Bridge in the 1930s.

In 1986 and 1987 the Borough Councils of Ellesmere Port & Neston and Wirral sprayed the marshes to reduce the number of mosquitoes.

Subscriptions

The society subscriptions went up on 6 April this year to £10 per household and £7 per individual. Unfortunately nearly 50 members have not increased their subs, so our anticipated income for the year is down. This equates to about £200+ and now that we are paying for the venue for our talks it is vital that we receive the correct amounts. If you are one of those and you have sent the Standing Order form direct to your bank, or not returned it yet, please advise Rob Naybour, 0151 336 3650. If you have misplaced your forms, again please contact Rob. We hope that everyone who has not increased their subs payment will make up the difference during this year, and that we will receive the full subs next April. Cheques and cash can be taken at our speaker evenings.

Memories of Parkgate 40 years ago.

It was 1970 when the Bakers. Nina and Ray, first lived in Parkgate. Very different then, very quiet but still many visitors, especially on weekend days and evenings. The pubs were busy with young people drinking, but not much eating.

The Chinese Restaurant was a deli with a delightful young couple. The Parkgate Stores, the same. A garage was on the front, the flats, Deeside Court, are there now, a good thing because it looks much better. We had a greengrocer, a fish shop, a butcher, a dress shop, an antique shop and a Post Office. Another general shop was at the other end of the Parade, facing the Old Quay. If one knew about it, there was a baker to be found in Brooklands Road, who baked his own bread. Quite a few people gathered there waiting for the goodies.

Mostyn House was a boarding school. So many little boys started school there and were well looked after. We listened to the Carillon played by the pupils. This is now being sent to another school, so somewhere in England another crowd of pupils will learn the delights of bell music.

Not many people turned up at the first meeting of the Parkgate Society. We were all concerned about a marina being built on the marsh, with a road on the barrage, to Wales from Parkgate. There were pile drivers taking tubes of soil from various areas, but the marsh was deemed unsafe for the barrage and the traffic. Mr and Mrs Place were in charge and organised many trips for members. We visited Shotwick Village and because it was undergoing up-dating, many of the cottages were empty. The tenants of one kindly allowed us to go in and view it and also the farmhouse. There were history walks along the marsh. Meetings were held in Mostyn House School and the boys entertained us with carols and mince pies.

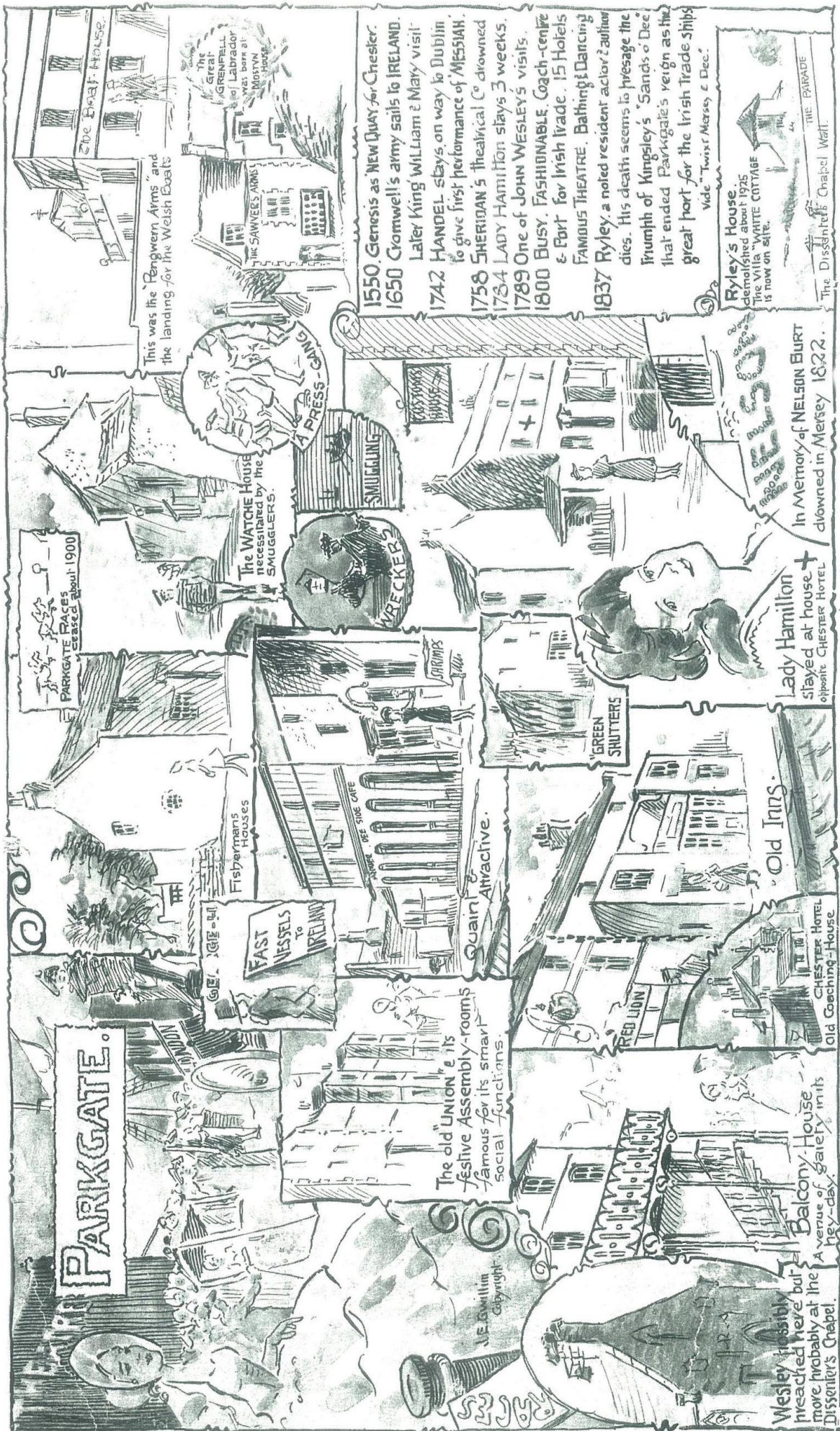
There was a kiosk where the Marsh Cat is now, selling ice cream and sweets. Another important shop was the Chemist. They sold everything; haberdashery, including drugs. They sold so many various items that when VAT was introduced, the stock was disposed of and the shop closed. This is now a café. Neston Cricket Club is thriving again; we have seen three buildings there, the original being burnt down.

We are very grateful to Nina and Ray for their memories. If this has prompted you to remember earlier times in Parkgate, we would like to hear from you.

The 'cartoon' on the next page is one of three that I have come across over the last couple of years. They are all similar, in the same hand, with a well dressed lady, with a sedan and carriage, in the top left hand corner, and many of the references to Public Houses and events are repeated in all three. One version has a square rigged sailing ship tied up alongside the sea wall!! The latest event date on each version is 1925, the demolition of Ryley's House, so we can assume that this is about when they were produced. The question is by whom? One version has JEG copy^t on it, on another, no initials, and as can be seen, on this version, JEGwillim. Who is this person? Obviously someone with knowledge of Parkgate and an affection for the place. I have consulted with the Williamson Art Gallery, who hold many works by local artists. While the style is recognised, the name is not. It has been suggested that it may be a local newspaper reporter. Can anyone throw some light on this mystery?

Jerry Harris

If you wish to own a copy of the 'cartoon', a colour tinted version is available from the Art Gallery in Neston High Street.



PARKGATE

PARKGATE RACES ceased about 1900

This was the "Penguin Arms" and the landing for the Welsh Boats

FAST VESSELS to IRELAND

The WATCH HOUSE necessitated by the SMUGGLERS.

FISHMANS HOUSES

1550 Genesis as NEW QUAY for Chester.
1650 Cromwell's army sails to IRELAND.
1742 HANDEL stays on way to Dublin to give first performance of 'MESSIAH'.
1758 SHERIDAN's theatrical Co drowned
1784 LADY HAMILTON slays 3 weeks.
1789 One of JOHN WESLEY'S visits.
1800 BUSY. FASHIONABLE. Coach-centre & Port for Irish trade. 15 Hotels & FAMOUS THEATRE. Bathing & Dancing
1837 Ryley, a noted resident actor & author dies. His death seems to presage the triumph of Kingsley's 'Sand's of Dec' that ended Parkgate's reign as the great port for the Irish trade ships
Wide "Twist Mersey & Dec."

The old UNION & its festive Assembly-rooms famous for its smart social functions.

J.E. Cowling Copyright

Wesley possibly preached here but more probably at the Dissenters' Chapel.

RED LION

GREEN SHUTTERS

SMUGGLING

WRECKERS

THE SAWVEES ARMS

THE BEAF HOUSE

Balcony House
A venue of gaiety in its hey-day.

Old Inns

Lady Hamilton stayed at house opposite CHESTER HOTEL

In Memory of NELSON BURTT drowned in Mersey 1822.

Ryley's House demolished about 1925 the Villa WHITE COTTAGE is now on site.

The Dissenters' Chapel Wall.
THE PARADE