



Parkgate Society

Newsletter

Autumn 2017

Issue Number 93

Welcome to this new edition of our Newsletter. We hope you like this new format.



Parkgate: Cheshire's only coastal resort – a good place to live.

‘Working together to maintain and enhance the unique character of Parkgate’

Notices

Meetings 2017/18 Season	The Annual General Meeting
<p>We normally meet at 8pm at The Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, Station Road, Parkgate, usually on the third Monday of the month.</p>	<p>Notice is hereby given that the Society's AGM will be held at the Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, on Monday, 18th September 2017, at 7.30 pm.</p>
<p>18 September: Annual General Meeting at 7.30 pm, followed at 8.00 pm by a talk on 'The Liverpool Carters' - Sharon Brown</p>	<p>Election of Officers for 2017/18: to be proposed en bloc:</p>
<p>16 October: 'History of Birkenhead Priory' - Colin Simpson</p>	<p>Chairman: Jill Brock Deputy-Chairman: David Johnson Joint Secretaries: Angela Clarke, Alan Passmore Treasurer: Roger Harris</p>
<p>20 November: Hot Pot Supper at 6.30 pm, followed by 'RSPB Burton Nature Reserve' - Dan Trotman</p>	<p>Election of Committee for 2017/18: to be proposed en bloc: Derek Haylock, Bryan Lecky, Damian Loughe</p>
<p>15 January: 'Port Sunlight River Park' - Anne Litherland</p>	<p>Co-opted member to be ratified: Jim Lycett</p>
<p>19 February: social event - details to be announced</p>	<p>Appointment of Auditor: Ailsa Cowdell</p>
<p>19 March: 'Curious and Amazing Tales of the Wirral' - Ken Pye</p>	<p>There are no proposals/resolutions from the Committee to be considered at the AGM.</p>
<p>16 April: 'Royden Park' - Paul Greenslade</p>	<p>Any proposals from members to be considered at the AGM and any further nominations for the Committee must be submitted to our Secretary Angela Clarke at least 14 days before the AGM.</p>
<p>21 May: 'Liverpool Cowkeepers – a family history' - Dave Joy</p>	

TRANSPORT - If you need help with transport to our meetings, please ring Angela Clarke, our Secretary, giving 24 hours' notice, on (0151) 336 -1069.

VISITORS - We are always on the look-out for new members and, therefore, would like to encourage you to introduce your friends to the Society. Visitors are very welcome to attend our talks – first time free – after that we will encourage them to join as members.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - £7.00 Single / £10 Household per year. Subscriptions are due on 6th April each year. Payment can be made at any of our meetings; but we would prefer payment by Banker's Standing Order. Membership, Standing Order and Gift Aid forms are available from Derek Haylock, our Membership Secretary, tel: (0151) 336-4461. Please check that your Standing Order is for the correct amount.

Come and join us for our Hotpot Supper

**Monday 20th November 2017
in the Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club
6.15pm for 6.30pm – followed by Dan Trotman's talk
on 'The RSPB Burton Nature Reserve'**

A two-course meal of Hotpot and a Sweet

**Entry is by ticket only, available at the lecture meetings
on 18th September and 16th October;**

or you can phone one of our Committee members:

**Jill Brock: tel: 336 4589; Angela Clarke: tel: 336 1069;
Roger Harris: tel: 336 8271; Derek Haylock: tel: 336 4461;
David Johnson: tel: 336 7838; Bryan Lecky: tel: 336 5176;
Damian Loughe: tel: 336 7541; Jim Lycett: tel: 353 1008;
or Alan Passmore: tel: 336 2917.**

£12.50 per person

Don't put it off: book now!

News and Views

This summer we have attended ParkgateFest on 3 & 4 June, Neston Fair on 1 July and Parkgate Carnival on 9 July. On each occasion the weather was good, and consequently the turn-out at each event was tremendous. Moreover, it seemed that everyone had a good family day out. We had interesting conversations with a wide selection of people from far and wide; we sold some of our booklets, but so far have had only limited success in enrolling new members. It is only through having a large and active membership that we can ensure that we can contribute to the preservation of the unique environment that is Parkgate. We, therefore, encourage you all to introduce potential new members, who will not only enjoy our programme of talks and other social events, but who will help with litter picks and other environmental activities under our Parkgate Community Spirit brand. By the way, planning is already in hand to consolidate ParkgateFest into an annual event, which will be even better next year.



Relaxing to the Music



Little Sammy & friends

ParkgateFest – June 2017

We continue to scrutinize the local planning applications for the Parkgate ward and monitor progress of approved schemes. A number of projects in Earle Drive are now nearing completion.

For some weeks site work has been going on at White Cottage on The Parade in advance of a start with phase 1, which is to erect two family-size

properties in the garden area to the rear. The revised plans for these two houses submitted by the new owner, in order to improve their outlook, have recently been approved by the Council. The project has necessitated a realignment of the vehicular access from The Parade into the site both for the new houses and for White Cottage itself. Planning permission is expected to be granted soon for phase 2, which is for adaptations and extensions to White Cottage itself; this will create an enlarged house of symmetrical design, more sympathetic to its prominent location than the earlier plan, which was eventually withdrawn by the previous owner in the face of opposition from the Society.

Development is continuing a pace with the controversial Elan Homes project at Boundary Park. Construction of the new properties is now well under way, and we expect that the first of the 33 units will be offered for sale in the near future.

In Manorial Road plans have been approved for the demolition of Sherwood, an elderly steel-framed bungalow now derelict, and its replacement by a larger two-storey dwelling on the same footprint. The new design appears to be well suited to the locality. A range of conditions has been attached to the approval, largely in order to minimize disturbance to the neighbourhood during the construction phase.

A new single cottage-style dwelling is to be erected shortly on land to the rear of Holywell Close, where some garages belonging to the Mostyn House property holding used to stand. The developers have now satisfied the planning authority on the matter of finishes, which was a condition of the approval, so we can expect the builders to move in fairly soon.

The lengthy restoration project at Sawyer's Cottage on The Parade seems to have come to an end, and the family are, at last, back in residence. This grade-2 listed building, a one-time public house, is one of the oldest surviving properties in Parkgate. To all intents the house looks quite unchanged, whereas internally there is now a home which is much more suitable to modern family living.

As mentioned previously, we continue to have concerns about the future of the Mostyn House chapel. The Mostyn Place Residents Association is actively

involved with the local council (CWaC) in working to ensure that the developers of the Mostyn House site hand the premises over in a sufficiently good state to enable its use without the need for further extensive repairs. Our local MP Justin Madders has taken a close interest in this matter, and the Council have made it clear that final planning approval to the whole development will not be granted until the necessary reparations to both the apartments and the chapel have been signed off by them.

Unfortunately, the Cheshire Community Pride competition was not held this year as a result of the withdrawal of funding; we do not know whether the grant will be restored at some future date. Nevertheless, we have tried valiantly to address the problems of litter and general tidiness around the village, and we have had a certain amount of success, thanks to our Community Spirit team and the help of others who have made their own individual contributions.

In recent years property owners have generally been very good in ensuring that their premises are well presented, although some specific cases have proved noticeably intractable, for example the empty property in Brooklands Road. Those who use the Ropewalk will be well aware of the obstruction caused by excessive vegetation originating mainly from a number of properties in Springcroft. A number of property owners have unfortunately been neglecting their responsibility to keep under control the vegetative growth originating from within their boundary. The Council have written to the residents involved and, hopefully, will use enforcement, if necessary.

Horse Chestnut Tree Disease

Many of you will have noticed a very prominent and ugly brown discoloration of the leaves of our Horse Chestnut trees. This is very noticeable, for example, among the trees lining Earle Drive. This disease, caused by the Horse Chestnut Leaf Mining Moth, was first noted in the UK in Wimbledon in 2002 and has gradually spread north. It is likely that almost all Horse Chestnut trees in the UK will eventually be affected.

The Horse Chestnut Leaf Mining Moth *Cameraria ohridella* is small brown moth with a wingspan of about 10mm which overwinters as pupae which hatch from April onwards. These lay eggs on the leaves from May to August which

hatch in 2-3 weeks. The caterpillars then bore into the veins of leaves producing a white then brown rectangular discoloration which spreads to become confluent (Figs 1-3). In keeping with this timescale, the Chestnut tree in Fig 4 was severely cut back in April and the new growth is, so far, unaffected. The small caterpillars can sometimes be seen by the naked eye, if an affected leaf is held up to a bright light.

What is the effect of this infection? Badly affected trees may shed their leaves early. Affecting the young (or young at heart grandfathers), conkers may be small and deformed. Whether or not the disease has long term deleterious effects is not clearly established. It may slow growth and weaken mature trees, possibly making them more vulnerable to other diseases. The official Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) view is that the impact on tree life is minor. Others are more pessimistic and the tree specialist at RHS Harlow Carr told me last year that he feared that we might lose all our Horse Chestnuts.

What can be done? The RHS advice is simply to burn the Chestnut leaves in the autumn. A more technical approach is the use of pheromones (sex hormones). These attract the male moth, which can then be trapped. Leaf Mining Moth pheromone traps are available commercially, but the website of the manufacturer, OECOS, declines to give prices.



1. An affected 2-year-old sapling 2. Affected mature tree



3. Detail of an affected leaf 4. Unaffected new growth

If this has not worried you, think also of Acute Oak Decline, Ash Dieback Disease, Massaria Disease of Plane Trees and Sweet Chestnut Blight. Will we be left with a landscape of Sycamores?

If you cannot sleep at night, the following will not help – the Oak Processionary Moth, Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp, Emerald Ash Borer and Asian Longhorn Beetle may all queuing up in your garden. ... and Brexit won't help!

Bryan Lecky

The Heyday of Parkgate goes on Show

Miss Olive Wilcox was a keen collector of local history and an active member of the Parkgate Society in its earliest days. Following her death in 1975, her scrapbook was entrusted to the Society for the benefit of any student of local history. An item in the scrapbook describes an exhibition depicting the history of old Parkgate held at the Boathouse Restaurant in early August 1972, shortly after the foundation of the Society.

'The changing fortunes of Parkgate down the centuries, during which it has been the main port for Ireland, a fashionable watering place, and a fishing village, have been depicted this week in an interesting exhibition staged, most appropriately, at the Boathouse Restaurant, which was once the site of the coaching terminus at the Pengwern Arms.

'Entitled "Old Parkgate", the exhibition consisted largely of pictures, photographs, maps and documents arranged by the recently formed Parkgate Society and organized by Mrs Hylda Wall-Jones and Miss O Wilcox, assisted by local artist Mr David Scott.

'Maps and documents from Cheshire County Records Office were on view at a preview for members on Sunday evening and photographic copies were made for the exhibition on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Old Maps

'These included old maps, one being a tithe map of 1841, particulars of sales of the Parkgate estate in 1849, Ormerod's 'Cheshire', a plan of land and premises of the River Dee Company of 1772, proposals for an Act of Parliament to construct docks at Parkgate in 1773, a directory of over 100 years ago, and evidence concerning the smuggling of Irish soap at Parkgate in 1757.

'The only exhibit not on paper or canvas was a wooden scale model of a 30 ft shrimp boat, as used by Parkgate fishermen on the Dee estuary for over 200 years. This was made and lent by Mr Reg Bushell, a member of an old Parkgate fishing family, one of whom, Mr James Bushell (1736-1814), who sailed on the last boat to leave Parkgate for Dublin was the subject of a portrait in oils.

'Also exhibited was Robert Bushell's membership certificate of the Royal Benevolent Society for Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners, which was dated 1868 and signed by A Grenfell.

Pictures

'An unexpected gift to the society was two prints of the architect's designs for the restoration of Neston Parish Church in 1875, presented by Mrs D Jellicoe and restored by Mr David Scott.

'No exhibition in the Neston area would be complete without some reference to blacksmith's daughter Emily Lyon, later Mrs Hart then Lady Hamilton and mistress of Lord Nelson.

'Famous visitors to Parkgate. An old copy of The Methodist Recorder contained an article entitled 'John Wesley's Voyages to and from Parkgate', while there was also appropriate reference to Handel, who stayed there* on his way to Dublin for the first performance of The Messiah'.

* We now know, of course, that there is no evidence that Handel stayed in Parkgate on this occasion. In fact, he almost certainly did not. On the outward journey he sailed from Holyhead and, while he returned via Parkgate in April 1742, he simply passed through the village on his way to Chester. Ed.

Parkgate Sea Wall

Almost as far back as I can remember, I have enjoyed visiting Parkgate. Now, I'm lucky enough to live here and, not knowing much about the sea wall, I decided to find out more. The following history is a condensed version taken from the works of Geoffrey Place, Burton and South Wirral Local History Society, Jeffrey Pearson and Parkgate Society newsletters.

Before the wall

Parkgate was an important anchorage from 1613 until the first years of the nineteenth century. It had the sea, yet it had no sea wall, no quay, no jetty and, until 1786, no landing stage. Ships were obliged to anchor in the main river channel, yards away from the nearest houses. Passengers and merchandise were either rowed ashore at high tide or carried across wet sand by sailors.

Building of the wall

The 'Old Quay' at Neston fell into disuse in 1704 and its stones were sold in 1799 to Sir Thomas Mostyn. It is thought that these same stones were used to build the central part of Parkgate's sea wall the following year. This central section, from the Watch House (or Middle Slip) to the Donkey Stand, was the first part of the wall to be built.

The absence of mooring posts and the concave aspect of the wall suggests it was not built for the benefit of ships; instead, the wall, together with the road, formed a promenade for stylish visitors to parade along during the sea-bathing season. Hence the name '*The Parade*'.

The bulge in the wall, where the Donkey Stand is today, was created by building the sea wall around a house that once stood there. This tall, narrow house was originally a custom house, then Parkgate's first Assembly House. It was later converted into a sea-bathing house before being demolished in 1840.

The next section of the sea wall to be built, around 1820, extended from the Donkey Stand down to Prospect House and the following section finished the southward extension to the South Slip. This was completed around 1830.

In the 1840s Edward Lloyd Mostyn, as Parkgate's landlord, appeared keen to develop Parkgate. Part of the development included repaving and completing the Parade. It was then that the north end of the sea wall from the Watch House (Middle Slip) to the Boat House was built and was described as the *New Marine Parade* in 1849.

Ownership/Responsibility

In 1849 The Mostyn family held an auction at Mostyn Arms Hotel, where Parkgate was sold off in ninety-six separate lots. Edward Mostyn's enthusiasm for improving Parkgate could now be seen as an attempt to enhance the chances of selling the lots.

Although it was a condition of the sale that most purchasers "shall contribute towards keeping up in the repair of the Sea Wall against the Estate", the lots sold had carefully delineated boundaries, none of which included the foreshore.

Present owners hold no title to the foreshore, and the Mostyn estate offices deny any ownership. The sea wall and the immediate foreshore was not included in the sale by the British Steel Corporation to the RSPB in 1979, so they don't own it. The District Council in 1884 briefly declared ownership. The former Neston Council has repaired the wall in the past and now Cheshire West and Chester Council have accepted responsibility for maintaining the sea wall, as it supports the road. But they too refute ownership.

From the Boat House to the Old Baths car park

The grey wall running from the Boat House to the Old Baths Car Park seems to have been built in 1923 when the headmaster of Mostyn House School, A.G. Grenfell, opened an open-air swimming pool. A pillar fell from this wall in 2007/08. Whilst the wall was being inspected for more damage, a stone in the wall was discovered - its inscription read "A.G. 1924".

Uses

Originally the Parkgate wall was built as a promenade wall, but it has served many more purposes over the years:

- When Parkgate was a fishing community, nets were hung to dry on the railings adjacent to the Middle Slip, and fresh flatfish used to be weighed on the walls and sold from there. Now people eat their fish and chips whilst sitting on the wall.
- In 1811 people were invited to watch, from the sea wall, a display of fireworks on the shore.
- The wall offers the village of Parkgate protection from flooding when the waters surge up the marsh during high tide. It's not fool-proof, though, as some high tides in combination with particular weather conditions – strong westerly winds and low barometric pressure – have occasionally managed to breach the wall.
- Donkeys used to take children for rides from the Donkey Stand up to the South Slip and back in the late nineteenth century. They must have used the wall as a guiding line.
- Today, during high tides, hundreds of birdwatchers line the entire length of the wall to view the raptors and other birds fly up and down the marshes in search of food.
- Past and present, children have enjoyed walking up and down the wall, as evidenced by the grooves worn into the sandstone along the wall parapet.
- It's a very useful step-up point when trying to avoid bumping into oncoming walkers on the narrow pavement.
- It provides an excellent viewing point for the expanse of marsh, the Welsh hills and spectacular sunsets.

- It also serves as a fantastic hunting vantage point as evidenced by the little black cat who regularly sits on the wall at the bottom of Bevy Road, with ears pointed, eyes down, fully alert to the slightest hint of a mouse amongst the grasses below.

Past threats

In 1847, the discovery of a coalfield at Parkgate was announced. Borings hinted at the existence of coal and leases were taken up for mining. Luckily, no further action was taken. The Dee Barrage Scheme was proposed in the early 1970s. This came to nothing, and so it was for the boating lake suggested in 1983.

Potential future threats

These include more madcap 'development' schemes, lack of funds for renewal and repair, and Underground Coal Gasification (UGC). A recent article (27th June 2017) in the *Telegraph* on major tourist attractions facing extinction highlighted similarities with problems the Parkgate wall is facing. The volume of tourists visiting the Taj Mahal, for example, are wearing down the marble walls and floors. The effects of global warming are causing the glaciers of Mont Blanc to retreat. In the same way, global warming may result in more storms and tidal surges which, combined with high tides, will cause further damage to Parkgate wall. And, like the Great Wall of China, it suffers from natural erosion with parts of the wall simply weathering away, plants growing in the wall accelerating attrition, and tourist damage.

So, there we have our Parkgate sea wall, with its careworn façade, crumbling in places and patched up in others; but still here, still surviving, still retaining a certain charm and beauty. Which isn't a bad analogy for old age in general!

Linda Haylock

Twenty-five Years Ago Parkgate in 1992

Celebrations of 20 years of the Society and of the Conservation Area

The newsletters and diary show that 1992 was largely a year of celebrating twenty years of the Parkgate Society and various events were planned to do just that. The Society had begun in 1972 as a response to plans to create a Dee barrage, which would not only have altered the character of the estuary, but the large embankments necessary for the reservoirs would have blocked Parkgate's view of Wales. Local people gathered at The Parkgate Hotel (which closed in 2000) to form a steering committee to represent the community in finding a plan and a voice for the area. The steering committee of Peter Moore, the Countryside Officer for Cheshire, and his wife Betty, Ruth Blok who became the first secretary, and Hylda Wall-Jones, called a public meeting for March 1972, at which the Parkgate Society was officially launched. Still looking back to 1972, their first major constructive task was to advise on the boundaries of the new Parkgate Conservation Area.

In 1992, the celebrations of the previous twenty years work took the form of two additional events in the calendar, a Treasure Hunt around Parkgate, starting at the Donkey Stand and finishing at The Red Lion, and an Antiques Evening where members could have items valued. In addition, the Autumn newsletter was largely devoted to looking back at the Society and the community of Parkgate over its previous twenty years. There was an article summarising the many things achieved by the Society, its uncovering of the history of the area by careful research and its subsequent publications being a major achievement. There was an April clean-up of the marsh, talks on 'Wirral footpaths', 'the Port of Ellesmere', 'Ships at Parkgate', 'Leahurst Veterinary Centre' and 'Publishing village history books'.

Litter, Litter and more Litter

Secretary Angela Clarke wrote, "Put out the flags! The Parade is to have five new litter bins! After 22 months of pestering, persuading and pleading, I met Council Officers and we agreed on the siting of the bins, four to be supplied by the Council and one to be paid for by the Society. The Council's outlay

represents 37% of their budget for this kind of thing.” The Society also managed to persuade the Council to provide an extra collection on a Saturday in summer. How things have improved today with our seven-day litter collections and increased number of bins. Litter and bins might seem a boring topic but the attitude that visitors should take their litter home prevailed for many years, particularly in the Country Park car parks.

Parkgate on TV

Granada TV’s “On the Road” visited Parkgate and interviewed Jack Cox on his gutter dredging scheme to attract birds, Bill Collier (Nicholls Ice Cream Shop) on the making of ice cream, and Colin Meador on the dwindling stocks of shrimp. Bill Tutton of Burton was glimpsed playing the Mostyn House carillon of bells – the bells no longer heard in Parkgate, having since been removed and re-installed at Charterhouse.

Anne Williamson



This drawing by John Pride, dated 1935, shows Talbot House as the ‘Green Shutter Café’ with the bulk of Mostyn House School prominent beyond. It was at Talbot House that Mrs Maria Fitzherbert, the estranged wife of the later Prince Regent and King George IV, stayed in 1798 or 1799.

Diary Note: Heritage Open Days 2017

Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 September
Parkgate Heritage Trail: Guided Walk
Meet at St Thomas' Church, 3.00pm
(NB. Church open 2.00 to 5.00 pm)

Contacts

If you wish to raise issues of relevance to the Society, please contact one of the joint secretaries:

Angela Clarke: Tel: (0151) 336-1069
Email: enquiries@parkgatesociety.co.uk

Alan Passmore: Tel: (0151) 336-2917
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Queries about membership should be addressed to our membership secretary:

Derek Haylock: Tel: (0151) 336-4461
Email: membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact the Editor:

Alan Passmore, tel: (0151) 336-2917 or email:
secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk

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The Parkgate Society is a registered charity, No. 503718, founded 1972.

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