



Parkgate Society

Newsletter

Autumn 2021

Issue Number 101

Welcome to this further edition of our Newsletter. Despite the ending of mandatory Covid-19 restrictions on the way in which we lead our lives, our social activities are still very much influenced by the continuing pandemic. We trust that you have been keeping well and hope you will find this letter an interesting and informative read.



Parkgate: A quiet moment for reflection on The Parade, February 2021
(photo; Alan Passmore)

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

Meetings 2021/22

In normal times we meet at 8pm at **The Cranston Suite, The Neston Club, Station Road, Parkgate**, usually on the third Monday of the month. For the time being, however, our meetings are on-line, via Zoom – see next page.

20 September: Annual General Meeting

at 7.30 pm, followed by
'The Bibby Line'

- Christina Spencer

18 October: 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness: a History of Pears Soap up to 1914'

- Dr Paul Duffton

15 November: 'Raptors of the Wirral and their Conservation'

- Jimmi Hill

17 January: 'Politics & tourism: The Importance of the Chester & Holyhead Railway 1845-1966'

- Dr Phil Lloyd

21 February: 'The Shadow of the Workhouse'

- Hilary Green

21 March: 'A Tour of the North Wirral Conservation Areas'

- Gillian Boulton

25 April: To be announced

16 May: To be announced

It is hoped that we will be able to arrange a hot-pot supper for one of our meetings, probably in the new year.

The Society is also looking forward to celebrating 50 years in 2022.

The Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Society's AGM will be held online by Zoom on Monday, 20th September 2021, at 7.30 pm.

Election of Officers for 2021/22: to be proposed en bloc:

Chairman: Dr Bryan Lecky

Vice-Chairman: David Johnson

Secretary: Alan Passmore

Treasurer: Derick Cotton

Membership Sec.: Derek Haylock

Election of Committee for 2021/22: to be proposed en bloc:

Dr Peter Enevoldson, Carol Fearnett, and Marie Lycett

Co-opted members to be ratified:

Tim Harrison, and Cllr Brenda Marple

Appointment of Auditor:

Clive Edwards

Any proposals from members to be considered at the AGM and any further nominations for the Committee must be submitted to our Secretary Alan Passmore at least 14 days before the AGM.

It should be noted that there will still be two vacancies for ordinary members of the Committee, even if the above proposals are confirmed. If you feel that you could contribute to the work of the Society, we would be delighted to hear from you.

MEETINGS - In normal times we meet at 8pm at **The Cranston Suite, The Neston Club, Station Road, Parkgate**, usually on the third Monday of the month. In recent times, however, like many other similar groups, our meetings have been virtual, using the Zoom conferencing facility. If you wish to be added to the list of members who already have access to this facility, please provide your email contact details to Derek Haylock (see page 12). It had been hoped that we would be able to resume our meetings face-to-face at The Club in September, but in the current situation we feel that would be unwise. We will, however, keep the situation under review and resume normal service, when we consider it safe to do so.

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 to receive 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.

News and Views

Covid-19

Our lives are still very much dominated by the spread of this virus, now in the third wave and in its more infectious delta variant. It had been hoped that we would have been able to resume our meetings at the Neston Club with our AGM on 20 September and the talk by Christina Spencer on 'The Bibby Line'. However, your Committee has taken the view that, with the number of cases still very high, our members might not yet feel comfortable about attending what would normally be a sizeable indoor gathering. We will, therefore, proceed with this event online and keep under review the prospect of returning to face-to-face meetings in the light of the progress of the pandemic; the expectation is that, once everyone is vaccinated, who needs to be, the virus will then have nowhere to go, and we can all get back to normal.

Members' attendance at our on-line Zoom meetings over the past months has been very rewarding; our speakers have coped brilliantly with the technology associated with the delivery of on-line talks, and we hope that you have enjoyed

the experience. If you have not so far tuned in to our online talks, and have access to a lap-top or other device, please join us by clicking on to the link which our webmaster Derek Haylock sends out shortly before each meeting to all members whose email addresses we have. If you have recently acquired an email address and/or would like to sign up for our online talks, please let us have your contact details; the present arrangements will continue just so long as we judge that they are warranted.

Organisation and Membership

As a registered charity we are required to report annually to the Charities Commission in order to continue to be eligible to receive the financial benefits available from our charitable status. Locally we are affiliated to a number of other organisations in the area with whom we work closely over different issues. For instance, we are represented on the committee of the Wirral Society, the local branch of Cheshire CPRE (the Campaign to Protect Rural England); this society is committed to safeguarding green belt and other land in the whole of the Wirral peninsula against inappropriate development, working with other similar minded societies and groups across the district. We are also represented on the West Cheshire Heritage Forum, a group with diverse membership but a common interest in heritage and local history under the joint leadership of the Chester Civic Trust and the Council (CWaC); this is a useful group for sharing information and experiences, including the Heritage Open Days scheme.

During the past months your committee have continued meeting regularly over the internet, making progress largely with the routine side of the administration, necessary work which still has to be done. Despite Covid a full programme of talks has taken place over the past year, thanks to our using the Zoom technology for virtual meetings; we are conscious that this does not appeal to all our members, particularly those without internet connections, so, as noted above, we plan to return to normal service just as soon as we judge that members are ready to make the transition. We have also continued with our regular litter picks, suitably distancing ourselves from each other during the period of restriction; we notice that some individuals have been organizing their own picks too. But we do continue to wonder why people cannot take their rubbish home with them, if the Council's bins are full?

Once again we are putting out a plea for help with our work. The role and powers of the Society as set out in our constitution are quite wide-ranging, and the different aspects of our work need covering by members who could devote a little of their time to looking after them; in particular we are looking for people with an interest in local history, planning or conservation to join our team and help us carry out our responsibilities in these areas; we are also interested in recruiting generalists to assist us. If you feel you could help in any way, please get in touch.

On the subject of membership we appear to be managing to keep our numbers fairly steady by recruiting about the same number as we lose; before Covid-19, attendances at our monthly meetings had been on the increase, which is a good sign. We don't keep statistics on our members, but it is clear that we are an ageing group. This is, therefore, not a healthy position for the Society in the long term. I am, therefore, again asking all our existing members to consider whether they could introduce new friends, preferably of a slightly younger age group, to the Society. We are particularly on the look-out for new people who can work actively on behalf of the Society as well as those who are attracted by our annual programme of interesting talks. In an attempt at recruitment we are currently in the process of leafleting all homes within our area of interest.

Planning Issues

Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) have embarked on a conversation with local residents and groups on possible adjustments to the Local Plan, which still has some time to run before it expires in 2030; the Council has it in mind that there have been significant shifts in perception since the current plan was agreed: climate change, global warming and associated factors, energy saving, housing needs, poverty, and a new national planning policy framework (NPPF). As a society with environmental credentials we will be telling the Council that they should be framing the Local Plan to ensure greater protection for the countryside and for new developments, particularly within conservation areas, to be more reflective of existing building stock – the new emphasis on 'good design' should encompass not only 'innovation' and 'efficiency' but also 'style reflective of the surrounding area'.

Details of this consultation, which closes on 15 September, can be found on the Council's website:

<https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/hub-page/local-plan>

We were pleased to learn on 8 June that the government's Planning Inspector had rejected a developer's appeal against the Council's decision to refuse planning permission for a partially sub-terranean house on green belt land in Boathouse Lane, opposite the lodge to Backwood Hall. In this case the Inspector concluded that the innovative design and energy saving features of the scheme were insufficient grounds to override the Council's policy of safeguarding the countryside against housing development.

At this time the issue of the site of the former Marsh Nurseries has come to the fore again. The applicant's case had been on hold, while time was set aside for enquiries to take place on the current status of the land in question. In the event there still appears to be some dispute. The applicant's case was based on the supposition that the area where the greenhouses presently stand should be classified as 'brownfield', which, if so, would suggest that some re-development might get the 'go-ahead'. In fact, the site meets none of the normal criteria for such a designation, and the applicant has now suggested that, as the business had been conducted as a garden centre during the later period rather than a simple plant nursery for which planning approval had been granted in 1978, that status would suggest that the site should now be considered 'brownfield', and so capable of re-development for housing. We believe that this is not so, that the business never was a garden centre in the normal sense. It is expected that the case will be determined by the Council's planning committee sometime in the autumn. This will be a significant case, as the future of the greenbelt between Parkgate and Gayton may well depend on it.

The derelict bungalow at No 11 Brookland Road has at last been demolished in preparation for the construction of two detached houses on the site, for which planning permission was granted some while ago. We all look forward to seeing what will eventually replace this former long-standing eyesore.

We are hoping that a start will soon be made on the long-anticipated rebuild of the tiny cottage at No 11 Station Road. Situated mid-terrace in a prominent position at the entrance to the village, its current state (now under scaffolding) detracts from a proper appreciation of this mixed group of elderly buildings. This currently derelict grade 2 listed cottage may well be found to be one of

the oldest buildings in the village; it is constructed around a cruck frame and thought to have once been a farmhouse. The builder is currently working on other projects, but hopefully this scheme will soon rise to the top of his list.

We had been concerned about the future of the Red Lion pub on The Parade, following its closure at the end of the previous tenancy agreement. We were then somewhat assured to hear that the owners Greene King had appointed a new tenant and are now pleased to confirm that it is once more open again for business. We hope that the new tenant will be able to make a success of the business sufficient to justify some investment in the property.



The Red Lion (2019), now open again under new management
(photo: Alan Passmore)

Neston Music Festival

As you will know, we have been a sponsor of this festival since its revival in its current form just a few years ago. Owing to Covid-19 the co-ordinating committee had to cancel the festival in 2020 and again this year. The 2022 festival takes place between 22 April and 22 May; and we hope to promote two concerts during this period. With the recent relaxation of restraints on attendance at events of this sort, some of the other participating groups have decided to go ahead with a few events this autumn, as tasters for the 2022 festival. The following events are being promoted under this banner:

Thursday, 26th August – Northern Rhythm Big Band – Neston Club
Monday, 27th September – Classical Duo – Parish Church
Thur/Fri, 7/8th October – Rural Theatre – Town Hall*
Saturday, 9th October – Mersey Morris Pirate Ceilidh – British Legion
Wed., 13th October – Andrew Mackenzie Jazz – Neston Club
Tuesday, 26th October – Russian Resurrection Choir – Parish Church
Friday, 3rd December – Northern Rhythm Big Band – URC

* The Rural Theatre – date and venue still to be confirmed.

Our **Community Spirit** team continue to do good work around the village, collecting litter and tidying up any grotty areas. We assemble in Mostyn Square at 10.00 am on the first Saturday of the month and fan out from there to work in the various different areas in need of our attention. We have been concerned about hedge growth reducing pavement capacity in some places; thanks to our efforts we have met with some success in this respect, though not universally. If you would like to join our team of volunteers, just let Peter Enevoldson know (email: environmental@parkgatesociety.co.uk), so that he can contact you about specific events – or just turn up.

The English Coastal Path

We have now heard that the details have been approved by the government for the section of path between the Welsh border and the Boathouse at Parkgate, also the section between Hoylake and Wallasey; a decision on the intervening section, part of which lies in Parkgate, is still awaited. The sums to be provided for construction costs (mainly signage) and for annual maintenance appear to be insufficient at first glance.

Heritage Open Days (HODs) – 2021

This is the 27th year of HODs; Chester Civic Trust and Chester City Council (now CWaC) have been involved from the start in this national celebration of local history and architecture. Last year, because of Covid-19, the planned programme in Cheshire was cancelled, but this year a limited programme for 10 – 19 September has been put together. Full details of the events planned for our local area can be found on the national HODs website:

www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/cheshire

Local events include:

Blacon Cemetery, Chester – CWGC guided tour*;
Cheshire Archives: A Taste of History (a partially virtual experience)*;
Hooton Hall & Hangers (virtual experience);
Ness Botanical Gardens;
St Mary & St Helen's Parish Church, Neston;
St Thomas' Church, Parkgate;
Wesley Methodist Church, Chester (* for talk). * Pre-booking necessary.

For the past few years we have been associated with the HODs programme, arranging guided walks based on our own heritage trail; as previously we are intending to run a couple of walks this year on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th September. If you wish to join us, simply turn up and meet us at the bench by the entrance to Parks Field on Parkgate Road in time for a prompt 3.00 pm start; wear clothing appropriate to the weather. The walk is about 2km and lasts about 1.5 to 2 hours.

Twenty-five Years Ago – Parkgate in 1996 *by Anne Williamson*

The Donkey Stand Panel: Neston Round Table funded the first information panel to be placed on the Donkey Stand. These things take an interminable amount of time and discussion, but collaboration took place between the Parkgate Society, the RSPB, the Borough Engineer and two members of Cheshire's Countryside Service experienced in interpretive panels, plus of course Neston Round Table. Parkgate Society's design was approved, consisting of a panoramic view of the Welsh Hills with selected Parkgate buildings, originally drawn as a Panorama for the Society in 1975 by Michael Barton. It also included some bird outlines and an explanation of the RSPB Reserve. It was a big achievement and the first of several panels to enrich the visitor experience. It was positioned looking out to Wales on the Donkey stand, the area named after the donkeys that historically lined up here on Bank Holidays to take children for rides along the Parade. Their everyday job was bringing the shellfish up the slips and along to Parkgate railway station.

The Planning Dept and Local Zoning: The Parkgate Society had regularly sought to invite officers of the Borough Council to meet and discuss Parkgate and meetings took place on several occasions to decide on how best to preserve the unique character of Parkgate. The committee also assisted the

Cheshire Planning and Conservation Officers in the drawing up of the Conservation Area, based largely on the inclusion of the many Listed Buildings and the historic and unique features of the “village”, such as the Parade and sea wall. Recent collaboration with Mr Tom Miller, Head of Planning, gave information on how best to preserve Balcony House and on other planning thoughts relating to Parkgate.

This era saw the setting out of Cheshire’s new structure plan, with zones of Green Belt, Mersey Forest, etc. The Parkgate section of the structure plan was pictured in the 1996 newsletter. Parkgate had areas zoned as **Green Belt, Coastal Zone, and Area of Special County Value (ASCV)**. In **Coastal Zones** development should be restricted to those activities for which a coastal location is essential. Any development on the estuaries should, wherever possible, be located within areas already developed and should provide public access to the shore. **Areas of Special County Value** are protected against any development, chosen for their landscape quality, or their archaeological, historical or nature conservation importance. These zones are still in place today and have huge relevance to the current planning application for building houses on the Marsh Nurseries site, Boathouse Lane, which lies within all the above 3 zones, namely, Green Belt, Coastal Zone and ASCV.

Parkgate Preservation Trust: Formation of a preservation trust had been discussed for some time in relation to saving Balcony House from demolition. A committee member of Parkgate Society, Jimmy Pratt, left the committee to set up the PPT, with the objective of preserving historical, architectural, and constructional heritage in and around Parkgate. He gathered eleven locals as Trustees with experience in property management, finance and law, and a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity was formed. This Trust enabled the handling of property and large sums of money, which the Parkgate Society was not equipped to do, although they did work in harmony with the Parkgate Society. Their major achievement was the rescue and structural refurbishing and refitting of St. Thomas’s Church in Mostyn Square, which was begun at this time.

St Thomas’s Church. Discussions were continuing with the newly formed Parkgate Preservation Trust, and the Parkgate Society with the Parochial Church Council, the Vicar of Neston and his solicitor on the way to save the historic church at the centre of the village. The good news was that PPT had

managed to achieve Listed Building status Grade 2 for the church, thus preventing its demolition, but the way forward was to be long and drawn out, costly and uncertain.

Publications: Last year, Geoffrey Place had just published his book, *The Rise and Fall of Parkgate, passenger port for Ireland*, and now this year, 1996, a major work of local history and the must-go-to book for anyone with local interest was published, **Neston 1840-1940**, and edited by our Chairman, Geoffrey Place. This book was compiled from the research of many members of the Burton & South Wirral Local History Society, but mainly by Susan Chambers, Clive Edwards, Edward Hilditch, Clare Johnson, Kate Kelly, David and Hilary Morris, Geoffrey and Valerie Place, and David Scott, of whom the main authors were Susan Chambers, Edward Hilditch and Geoffrey Place. The artwork for the book's cover was provided by local artist and historian, David Scott. They acknowledged many local contributors and expressed their gratitude to the Parkgate Society for the generous loan to assist with the financial demands of the publication. Originally the purchase price of the book was £9.95 and after a quick google just now I see that the book (second hand) can be sourced online for approx. £20. It is an interesting read, has 120 illustrations and many aspects of Neston life are covered.

The Strange Weather: Looking back over the weather records at Ness Gardens for 1995, reported in the 1996 newsletter, shows that we had a fall of snow on Christmas morning 1995 and that December had been the coldest for 20 years with its lowest temperature of -8.4C. April and August 1995 had been the sunniest on record, June had been the driest for 19yrs., and October was the warmest ever and driest since 1969. Global warming!

Birds: On a simpler note, which I hope the reader will forgive, my own diary for 1996 showed the first Cuckoo of the year was heard on 28th April. Nothing unusual as we had noted the arrival of the Cuckoo in Parkgate every year for many years, around the last week of April, until sadly we no longer heard nor saw that welcome herald of Spring. Am I allowed to look forward in this retrospective article? My diary for the new Millennium was sadly Cuckoo-less. BUT. Occasional sightings of Cuckoos around the north of the Wirral have been recorded recently (2021), and one was seen, but not heard, at Parkgate Old Baths for several days just a few years ago. See www.deeestuary.co.uk for any unusual bird sightings in Parkgate and around the Dee/Wirral.

The Great Parkgate Infill (Part 1) *by Michael Potts*

Introduction

It is only when faced with aerial photographs taken in the 1920's, 1960's and more recently, that one realises that Parkgate, and the southern part of the village, has undergone an enormous change resulting in very little open space remaining amongst a concentration of housing.

Parkgate has for many years been defined as the piece of land stretching from the railway line in the east to the Parade in the west and held together by Boathouse Lane in the north and Station Road in the south. In 1855 a lease of The Mostyn Arms Hotel was granted to Edward Price who began the development of the site as a school. It remained leasehold until it was purchased by his nephew Algernon Sydney Grenfell in 1875 from the estate of the great railway contractor Thomas Brassey. I assume that there were subsequent purchases of land near the school for use as playing fields and cricket and football pitches as well as for the expansion of buildings which took place under the headmastership of Algernon George Grenfell, after he was appointed in 1890. From then on there was an abundance of open space within the school boundaries.

1920s



This photograph illustrates well the lack of development behind the Parade at the Southern end. Working down the photograph, one can see Wood Lane starting to be developed at Brook Lane, then the railway line which is now the Wirral Way coming to The Ropewalk and the long line of trees. The Ropewalk was the Mostyn House School boundary, and the pitches were known as Top Pitch, the Hundred and then Sandheyes, as one moves from right to left.

1960s



Here one can see the impact of the development of about 80 houses in Springcroft. The Mostyn House pitches are intact and clearly in use. The large classroom block in the middle beside the water tower was completed in 1939. The Chester Arms has been demolished and the Old Quay has taken its place. When looking at the previous photo, one can only think it was a shame to allow the interesting Georgian buildings fronting the South Slip and Station Road to be demolished. Sadly, one can't turn the clock back!

2010



This photo illustrates so clearly the impact of the Redrow development in the 1980's, when approximately a further 80 houses were built on the pitches of Mostyn House School. The pitches are now reduced to the bare minimum but at least a significant amount of open land remained in the village. That, of course, disappeared in the last ten years, after the school closed and P J Livesey & Company Ltd acquired the site for development for 44 houses and 40 apartments in whichever school buildings were considered suitable for development.

One might ask the question as to is there any land left suitable for development. Within the accepted boundary of the village, there is only the land connected with Parkgate Primary School and the small public amenity area by the Ropewalk. Hopefully that will remain as it is.

An unusual occurrence!



Photo: Alan Passmore

On Sunday morning 25 July this vehicle was observed having nose-dived over the sea wall opposite the Old Quay pub. A note attached explained that the car had rolled forward from the spot where it had been parked in Station Road the previous evening, while its owners were dining in the pub. It was quickly removed on the Monday morning. For this short period of time, however, it appeared that Parkgate had a new attraction!

Parkgate

*My adult life extends, it seems, to more than sixty years,
Enjoyed throughout and fortified by spirits, wines and beers,
As sampled, here and there, in many places, up to date:
But none with greater pleasure than the alehouse in Parkgate.*

*Red Lion is alive again. The lockdown's been and gone.
Coronavirus lurks, of course. The danger lingers on.
But spirit is there still amidst the beer and the wine;
And I am privileged to say this local pub is mine.*

*I do not own the title, nor the licence nor the building.
Nothing can I give by any means nor any gilding.
For I am but a customer. My thirst I choose to slake,
Occasionally. Not too often. Pleasure yet I take.*

*To hear the local gossip, be it better or for worse,
To hear the ghosts of fishermen and cricketers rehearse
Their days of glory long ago and cricket, still today.
I'll sink a pint of Guinness and I'll toddle on my way.*

*And think about Red Lion, still, and everything it means,
In service to the village and its spirit and its genes.
For Parkgate is a special place. None ever wish to leave.
It merits preservation and survival, I believe.*

Barrie Youde
07.08.2021

Contacts

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

Alan Passmore, tel: (0151) 336-2917 or email:

secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk

All original articles in this Newsletter are the property of the Society and
may only be reproduced with the permission of the Society.

For general information about the Society contact Alan Passmore, as above

For information about membership of the Society contact Derek Haylock at

membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk

or phone (0151) 336-4461

For queries about litter picks please get in touch with Dr Peter Enevoldson:

environmental@parkgatesociety.co.uk

For information about Parkgate and the Society look up our website:

www.parkgatesociety.co.uk

– also the heritage trail for pictures of old Parkgate: www.parkgateheritagetrail.org

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

Published by The Parkgate Society August 2021