

Parkgate Society

Newsletter

Autumn 2022

Issue Number 103

Welcome to this further edition of our Newsletter. Despite the lifting of mandatory Covid-19 restrictions earlier in the year, our personal involvement in social activities is still very much influenced by the continuing presence of the pandemic; but we are now learning to live with it. We trust that you have been keeping well during this difficult period and hope you will find this letter an interesting and informative read.



Parkgate: A quiet moment in Holywell Close, March 2015
(photo; Alan Passmore)

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

Meetings 2022/23	The Annual General Meeting
<p>We meet at 8pm at The Cranston Suite, The Neston Club, Station Road, Parkgate, the third Monday of the month.</p>	<p>Notice is hereby given that the Society's AGM will be held on Monday, 19th September 2022, at 7.30 pm.</p>
<p>19 September: Annual General Meeting at 7.30 pm, followed at 8.00 pm by 'Vikings on the Wirral' - Dominga Devitt</p>	<p>President: Michael Potts Vice-Presidents: Anthony Annakin-Smith & Dr Jill Brock</p>
<p>17 October: 'The History of Ness Gardens' - Stephen Lyus</p>	<p>Election of Officers for 2022/23: to be proposed en bloc: Chairman: Dr Bryan Lecky Vice-Chairman: Tim Harrison Secretary: Alan Passmore Treasurer: Derick Cotton Membership Sec.: Derek Haylock</p>
<p>21 November: Hot-Pot Supper at 6.30 pm followed at 8.00 pm by 'Politics & Tourism: The Importance of the Chester & Holyhead Railway 1845-1966' - Dr Phil Lloyd</p>	<p>Election of Committee for 2022/23: to be proposed en bloc: Dr Peter Enevoldson, Carol Fearnett, Marie Lycett and Cllr Brenda Marple</p>
<p>16 January: 'Statesmanship, Tragedy and Love: a remarkable true tale of Parkgate's 19th century overseas adventurers' - Anthony Annakin-Smith</p>	<p>Appointment of Auditor: Clive Edwards</p>
<p>20 February: 'The Devil's Porridge: Local Munitions Production' - Dr Trevor Evans</p>	<p>We are sad that David Johnson is standing down from the Committee, on which he has served as founder of our Community Spirit team and latterly as Vice-Chairman. We thank him most sincerely for his services to the Society over the past years.</p>
<p>20 March: 'A Loop in Time: the story of Puddington' - Gee Williams</p>	<p>It should be noted that, as things stand, there will still be three 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. See News and Views for further details.</p>
<p>17 April: 'Thomas Brassey: - Peter Bolt</p>	
<p>15 May: 'The NHS: a Prescription for Improvement: a personal view from an ex-NHS Trust Chief Executive' - Sir David Dalton</p>	<p>Members who wish to submit a proposal or nomination should do so to the Secretary at least 14 days before the AGM.</p>

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 - £8.00 Single / £12 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. Please also refer to the item on subscriptions at the end of News and Views.

News and Views

As I begin to put this edition together, we have just come out of a short heatwave, which has confirmed record high temperatures at many different locations in the country, including ours – an indication that climate change is real and that there are likely to be difficult times ahead for us, if the present trend continues, as the experts seem to agree will be the case.

Our own local difficulties are compounded by sharply rising costs in virtually every field of activity as a result of causes largely outside our control. There is a serious risk that the result will be that the nations of this world will take their eyes off the long-term goal of reducing the effects of global warming while concentrating on the short-term objectives of fire-fighting secondary problems. Let us hope that our new leaders, whoever they are, set their minds to address all the long-term problems we face, rather than go for a quick fix which in the end only makes matters worse.

The Parkgate Society

I am starting this edition with a plea for more support for the Committee. As a society we have a flourishing membership, but there is a potential crisis in the management which, if not resolved, may lead to the organisation failing to meet its objectives of maintaining the character and heritage of our unique community. The stark facts are that, as a committee, we are all aging and well aware of the urgent need for succession planning: it is time for others to come forward now and begin to learn the ropes! I have mentioned this before, but it really is time for us to look at what we do and how we go about carrying out our responsibilities in future.

In the past we have been blessed with the skill and determination of those who have stepped forward and devoted time and energy to the varied aspects of running the society. Societies like ours need both generalists and specialists in order to be successful in achieving their aims, though qualifications are less important than a motivation to take on a role and, through that, to work as part of a team to support the objectives of the organisation. We recognise that it may be somewhat daunting to step straight into a specific role, so it has been our practice in recent years to co-opt interested members onto the committee and allow them time to settle in and find for themselves a role in which they feel comfortable and could, therefore, be most effective.

Our current roles and activities include:

- (a) Protection of the Parkgate conservation area
- (b) Protection of the green belt
- (c) Monitoring of listed buildings
- (d) Monitoring of local planning applications
- (e) Implementing our 'vision for Parkgate'
- (f) Promoting the story of Parkgate
- (g) Community involvement through our Parkgate Community Spirit team
- (h) Liaison with other local organisations involved in local history and heritage
- (i) Liaison with local authorities: Neston Town Council and CWaC
- (j) Collaboration as a sponsor with the Neston Music Festival
- (k) Promoting an annual programme of talks for members
- (l) Responding to queries from members and others about the local area
- (m) Making grants to local organisations or individuals in respect of projects which fall within the society's remit
- (n) Supporting local initiatives/events

We have asked in the past, with some success, for volunteers to come forward. As of now we are conscious that we will shortly probably need to fill the official posts of secretary, treasurer and membership secretary and also those of minute secretary and webmaster; additionally we would also like help with planning and heritage and someone to co-ordinate our role with the Neston Music Festival. Someone might like to take on a role as

social secretary or events manager; there could also be roles for a programme secretary and a projects manager.

Please, think long and hard about how you can help us take the society forward and future-proof our long-term existence; then tell us what you think – how you could help.

The North Cheshire Green Belt

In the last edition I said that the green belt in the peninsula continues to be under threat. Leverhulme Estates continue to push their plans to build houses on seven areas within the green belt that they have identified as possible development sites. The issue has come to the fore because of the Wirral Borough's lack of progress in formulating an updated local plan; the Council continues to adhere to the now discredited figure of 12,000 new homes needed to be provided across the borough in the period.

In the meantime Cheshire West & Chester Council (CWaC) has now decided to consider together the two different applications for the construction of new crematoria on green belt land in the Hooton area. Local residents are putting forward a strong campaign against both schemes on the basis that there is no requirement for an additional crematorium in the area, as the capacity of existing crematoria at Landican and Blacon is sufficient to meet both present and future demand.

Planning

It has just been announced that Parkgate Nurseries Ltd, the owners of the former nurseries site on Boathouse Lane, have appealed against the unanimous decision by Cheshire West (CWaC) to refuse planning permission for the construction of housing on part of this green belt site under application no. 19/03423/OUT. This appeal will be shortly considered by the government planning inspector on the basis of written evidence, including all the evidence given to the Council's Planning Committee for their meeting last year. Any new written submissions need to be lodged with the Planning Inspectorate by 5 September 2022. This can be done by sending an email to north1@planninginspectorate.gov.uk or online via the planning

portal to <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>, in each case quoting ref. APP/A0665/W/22/3296126.

The government's planning inspector has now upheld the appeal by McCarthy & Stone against the Council's refusal last September of permission for a revised scheme for the construction of a block of retirement apartments on the former British Legion site at Willaston, immediately adjacent to the conservation area, despite a previous appeal for a similar scheme being refused by another inspector two years ago. In the last few days the proposal for another similar McCarthy & Stone development at Church Lane, Neston, has also been upheld on appeal by another government inspector; he concluded that the foreseen access difficulties could be overcome by the imposition of a scheme of traffic management, which, it is felt, would seriously disadvantage existing local residents in Church Lane and Eldon Terrace.

The current planning framework places more emphasis on good design, and it seems that architects are becoming more mindful that design of new or renovated buildings should have regard to the sensibilities of the neighbourhood in which they are situated. We need to continue to be wary, however, that this continues to be the case.

It is pleasing to note that the refurbishment of the grade 2 listed cottage at No 11 Station Road is nearing completion, and we are hopeful that the redevelopment of the now vacant site in Brooklands Road will begin soon, as various planning permissions are now in place for two houses on this plot. The Planning Inspector has declined an appeal against the Council's decision to refuse prior approval for permitted development in respect of a property in Woodlands Road; this has prompted the site owner to come forward with a revised scheme to add an extra storey to his house, differing in detail only from that recently rejected.

Our Spacehive Crowd-funding Project – New Information Boards for Parkgate

We are pleased to report that we have reached our target of funding to be raised for this project; in fact we have actually exceeded the target, so we may be in a position to add further elements to it. We are, of course, very

grateful to all those many individuals and groups who have contributed so generously to this cause. We are now moving into the implementation stage, and work is now in hand on the design of the boards. These will explain the significance of the former railway at Parkgate, the Old Quay site, Mostyn Square, Parkgate's fishing industry, local shipbuilding and ship repairing businesses at Parkgate, the Dee ferries and the Old Baths site. In some cases information about walks etc will be given.

Our Website and Annual Subscriptions

By the time you read this, our new website will be up and running. We have completely revised our presentation with lots of additional images showing depictions of Parkgate past alongside current scenes. Most of the original content has been transferred to the new website, plus lots more. The layout of the menus has been revised to provide a more logical way of navigating around the site. See www.parkgatesociety.co.uk.

We are now able to offer online sales of our booklets and accept online requests for Society membership. Members who have in the past paid their subscriptions in cash can, if they wish, now pay for their yearly subscription online, a method which may be easier or more convenient for them.

Adjustments to Membership Charges:

Because banks are now generally charging charities monthly fees for operating their bank accounts, including a charge of 40p per cheque, it is with regret that we must now adjust our membership subscriptions.

Accordingly, from 1st September 2022 single memberships will now be £8.00 (was £7.00) and household/family £12.00 (was £10.00). **However, this will only apply to new members and cash payers;** those who pay their memberships using the Bank Standing Order mechanism will continue to pay the existing rates of £7.00 single and £10 family. If you currently normally pay by cash or cheque and wish to pay by standing order and pay the concessionary fees above, please contact the membership secretary at membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk, who will send you the relevant form.

Neston Windmill *by Alan Passmore*

Can there be any resident of Neston/Parkgate who is unaware of the windmill that still dominates the local scene at the southern (town) end of Leighton Road? It is one of a number of mills in Wirral that have survived the ravages of time, though very few of these are currently actually lived in, as is this one.

A post mill was erected in 1729 on the west side of Leighton Road very close to its junction with Wood Lane. It was built at a cost of £180 for the Mostyn family of Mostyn Hall, Flintshire, who then owned Leighton Hall together with much of the land in the Neston area.



The Midlands post mill at Madingley, Cambridgeshire.
Photo courtesy Colin Mitchell

This mill was described as ‘the new mill’ and was shown on the Mostyn estate map of 1732; it was not the first mill in Neston, however, as an earlier mill dating back to the late 16th century had stood on the other side of the town in the area of Raby Park Road.

At some time between 1732 and 1772 a second mill was constructed a little to the north of the 1729 mill, leaving the existing miller’s cottage now sandwiched between the two of them; this was a 3-storey brick-built tower mill, representing

an advance in windmill design and construction since the earlier one. It may be presumed that this was a replacement for the 1729 mill, but this turns out not to be so, as the earlier mill continued to function for many years. The Mostyn tenant farmers were required under the terms of their lease to have their grain milled at the lord of the manor's own mills, so it was probably needed for extra milling capacity required at the time.



The tower mill at Burnham Overy Staithe, Norfolk (1816).

Photo: courtesy Wikimedia

These first two illustrations show examples of the two main different types of mill used in this country: the post mill, where the main part of the building (of wooden construction) is attached to and rotates with the central post; and the tower mill (usually of brick or stone), where only the cap (and sails) rotate, in order to adjust to the wind.

In 1822 a serious storm caused great damage to both of these Neston mills; the earlier post mill was completely destroyed, losing its top, and its remains

were later removed, leaving no trace of its former existence. The second mill was eventually restored and continued to operate until about 1885, latterly with only two of its original four sails in place.



Neston Mill, Leighton Road, following removal of its original cap and sails.
Photo: courtesy GW Place collection



The miller's cottage and Leighton Road as seen from Neston Mill
Photo: courtesy David Scott collection

The remaining mill's machinery had been removed by 1898, when the building was noted as being in use as a joiner's shop. Over the next period, however, the mill became increasingly derelict.

In 1962, however, it was reported in one of the Liverpool newspapers that the mill had been restored and was now in use as a garage.



Neston Mill now a home – July 2020
Photo: Alan Passmore



Neston Mill, as restored with new cap, but no sails
Photo: Alan Passmore July 2020

Following further renovation in 1975 the building became home to a glass engraving business until the owner's retirement from the business in 1990.

It is not clear exactly when the top floor and the sails were removed, but during the period following this event the building first had a short conical cap and later a flat cap. However, around the time it was converted into a home, a substantial new cap was added in the shape of an upturned boat to provide additional accommodation; this is the form of the building in 2022.



Neston Mill and Mill Cottage in July 2020
Photo: Alan Passmore

Adjacent to the mill is the former mill yard which, from about 1950, was used by an engineering company, which specialised in metal fabrication. Since this business' subsequent relocation, this part of the site has become a small estate of private houses: Mill View. The former miller's cottage continues to survive.

The mill itself is listed by English Heritage as a grade 2 building and, subject to the granting of planning permission, is likely to be renovated in the near future by the current owner; the accommodation is to be rationalised and the building's insulation upgraded.

Further reading: Neston from Stone Age to Steam Age, Burton & Neston History Society (BNHS), Ed. Susan Chambers
Neston from 1840 to 1940, BNHS, Ed. Geoffrey W Place
The Windmills and Watermills of Wirral – a historical survey, by Rowan Patel

The Dee mosquito: the great survivor

by Dr Peter Enevoldson

It has been a very bad year for local marsh mosquitoes (*Aedes detritus*, fig.1), since their breeding pools dried up so early this year and the weather has been so dry. However, they are so well adapted that we can be sure they will survive to pester us in the future. Previous work has shown that the August and September spring tides will refill the breeding pools and trigger a synchronised hatching of eggs lying dormant in the mud (they can survive unhatched in the mud for at least a year), and a peak of adult mosquitoes a few weeks later.



Fig. 1: Female *Aedes detritus*
(photo. by Prof. R. Beynon)

Further observations on the marshes and experiments in my garage over the last three years have expanded our knowledge of this pest:

1. Overwintering:

Adults are all killed by the cold, but the species survives as eggs in the mud and larvae (Fig. 2) in the breeding pools. We expected many larvae would die off during the winter, but weekly semi-quantitative observations of marsh pools have shown this not to be the case. Furthermore, although larvae must breathe at the water surface (Fig. 2), they survive the pool surface being completely iced over (one can easily find live larvae after breaking the ice). Even more startling, they can survive being completely encased in ice for days. Fig. 3 shows results from 6 days of subzero temperatures in

February 2019: there were six layers of ice (arrows) and at least 3 layers of encased larvae. When this ice block was thawed, 60% of larvae embedded for 3 days were still alive, and 20% after 5 days!



Fig. 2

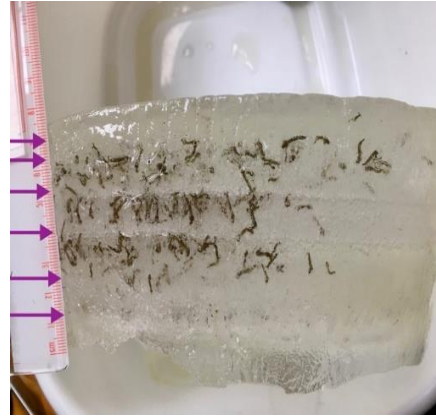


Fig.3

However, these winter weekly observations demonstrated that inundation by very high tides (arising from the combination of spring tides and westerly winds) decimated larval numbers. Most larvae are washed out of the breeding pools and left high and dry when the water recedes. Yet even then, some survive in the pools, despite having been covered by a meter of water.

2. Cannibalism.

Observations on the breeding pools and experimental rearing have shown evidence that larvae eat one another or at least the corpses of their fellow larvae (it is rather more difficult to prove they actually kill one another). Rearing larvae together, five larvae one day suddenly become four the next with no trace left of the corpse! This has been shown before in many other species, including some mosquitoes, and also that this increases the number of larvae surviving to adulthood.

3. Protandry

Larval rearing studies have revealed that the male adults tend to emerge a day or two before the females. This phenomenon, where the males arrive first is widely seen in insects and migrating bird populations, is known as protandry, and was first described by Charles Darwin. This almost certainly leads to an evolutionary advantage. Exactly how such an advantage should arise in mosquitoes is not clear, but it is notable that before they can

function, the male mosquitoes' genitalia undergo a 180° rotation in the first 24 hours of life!

4. Global warming

Contrary to popular belief, heat waves like the recent one do not suit mosquitoes (the breeding water dries up, killing the larvae, and the heat desiccates the adults). However more gradual, sustained warming will certainly impact the mosquito population directly and through changes in the weather, tide levels and vegetation. The northward spread of exotic mosquito species in recent years from south east Asia and Africa to mainland Europe is well documented. Public Health England maintain a surveillance programme, to which the Parkgate data are provided. As yet, no such species have appeared locally. However, of interest, larvae of a species called *Culiseta litorea* have been found for the first time on the Dee marshes in the last 3 years. This mosquito bites birds, not mammals or humans, but the significance is that it is has only ever been found previously in southern England. This recent discovery locally and in Anglesey may perhaps be in indication of global warming.

Parkgate during Covid



A few visitors enjoy their ice creams on a beautiful day at The Parade
in July 2020

Photo: Alan Passmore

Heritage Open Days 2022

This year the Society is again planning to lead walks based on our heritage trail; this will be on Saturday and Sunday 17 & 18 September, starting at 3.00 pm. Meet at the Ropewalk carpark in Station Road. The total distance is about 2 miles, taking about 2 to 2.5 hours. Dress appropriate for the weather conditions. Come along and learn about Parkgate's interesting past.

Contacts

For general information about the Society contact Alan Passmore at
secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk

For information about membership of the Society contact Derek Haylock at
membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk

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

We are always looking for articles or suggestions for future Newsletters; if you have any ideas on subjects of local interest, please contact the Editor:
Alan Passmore at secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk

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