

# Parkgate Society



## Newsletter

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Chairman	JR Cochrane	336 7503
Vice-chairman	HO Vollers	336 1359
Secretary	Mrs AM Clarke	336 1069
Treasurer	EPD Taylor	336 4321

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Please put these dates in your diary ! ←

→ Tuesday, 17th March, 8 pm at The Boat House

Walter Worth, head gardener at Chester Zoo, will describe

#### The GARDENS at CHESTER ZOO

Many members will know these magnificent and unfailingly colourful gardens, which are well worth a visit even for those whose interest in the animals is limited.

→ Tuesday, 5th May, 8 pm at The Boat House

Richard Foster, Director of Merseyside County Museums, will give an illustrated talk about

#### The ENGLISHMAN'S HOME

Mr Foster is an expert on domestic architecture through the ages. He has many fascinating pictures to show how houses have developed in style; some from this area, but with examples from all over the country.

→ Sunday, 10th May, at 2 pm. Come and help us to

#### CLEAN the FORESHORE !

Come and glow with community spirit ! Wellingtons and very old gloves are a must. We shall start at the South Slip (by the Old Quay public house) and plastic sacks will be provided. This is the weekend after the May Day holiday, so there should be plenty to pick up. We do need you !

#### WALKS

→ Geoffrey Place will be leading a walk; starting at the Wirral Country Park car park next to the Cricket Club, visiting Moorside, following Old Quay Lane to the ruins of the Old Quay House, and returning along the river bank. This walk will take place on two different dates:

1. Thursday, 11th June at 7 pm. On this date the walk is a part of Cheshire County Council's Guided Walks programme.
2. Sunday, 20th September at 2.30 pm. On this date the same walk is being provided for the Burton Local History Society, but Parkgate Society members are also welcome.

IF the weather has been wet, prepare for mud on the last section of the walk, although it is not essential to return this way.

You may like to make a note that our Annual General Meeting for 1981 will take place on 13th October.

If anyone needs TRANSPORT to reach our meetings, do ring Mrs Clarke at 336 1069.

### Down Our Way ?

The producer of the BBC programme "Down Your Way" is going to visit Parkgate with a view to making a programme here. The BBC still have time to change their minds; but if they do broadcast down our way, we can thank our Secretary, Mrs Clarke, for sowing the idea. If it all works out, the programme will be broadcast on Sunday, 8th March, with a repeat the following Tuesday, 10th March. Let us keep our fingers crossed !

### Our Meetings

Our Annual General Meeting on 30th September, though largely routine business, was also notable for the decision not to raise the subscriptions, which remain at only £1 for a single or family member, and 50p for Senior Citizens. We are able to keep these low rates, partly thanks to our generous friends who cut our running costs by providing a number of services free of charge; and partly because our income from publications has given us a very healthy bank balance. As we always hope to produce further publications when we can afford to, please continue to recommend the guide book "This is Parkgate" and the "Panorama of Parkgate", both available from Nicholls, to your friends.

The idea floated at the meeting of paying subscriptions under covenant turned out, on further examination, to be more trouble than it would be worth.

There followed an illustrated talk by John Tench, who described the history and present problems of Burton Manor.

Jack Barlow's talk about Wirral transport since 1850, on 4th November, was a great success. Here was a real enthusiast, able to trace in detail the many changes in transport during that period. During the later part of his talk there were many sighs of nostalgia as some well-remembered tram or closed railway station appeared on the screen.

We tried a "festive evening" in December, which went down very well. First, the choir of Mostyn House sang, with verve and charm, some Christmas carols: most were little-known, and two were home made. Then, the Parkgate Society was presented with a Certificate of Honour to mark our long struggle with the litter problem. It is not a victory medal, alas, but is certainly a well-won campaign medal. The presentation was made by Mark Andrew of the Keep Britain Tidy Group, well supported by members of the County and Borough Councils. Finally there was general conversation, much helped by wine, cheese and a Christmas cake. It was a varied and complicated evening, and we owe thanks to many people for making it a success.

Just before Christmas, Mrs McCaig organized a most successful carol singing tour of Parkgate. Our Chairman's bride provided us with some handsome designs for notes of greeting which our carol singers popped through people's letter boxes on their way.

We have felt much encouraged by the number of members who have attended our meetings during this period.

### THE PRICE OF SHRIMPS

Who was Olive Dehn ? Can anyone tell us ? She spent a summer on the Dee estuary, probably in the 1930s, and wrote a splendid children's story about Parkgate, which a member found for us.

The story is about Rebecca Mapletop, who ran out on to the sands with her cockle basket on her seventh birthday. Her footsteps were heard by the Witch of the West, who was sitting in her Cave of Quicksand, pickling shrimps. She drew Rebecca down beneath the estuary and made her shell shrimps for seven years. When the girl was 14, she begged the witch to let her go home to renew her dress, which was now much too small. The witch reluctantly agreed, and said she would collect Rebecca on the quayside at midnight; but in the improbable event that the witch should forget, the spell would be broken.

So Rebecca returned home, carrying a jar of potted shrimps. When the landlord of the Boat House Inn tasted the shrimps, he declared that this recipe must stay in Parkgate, and so the spell must be broken. He invoked the help of Jonathan Swift, who was staying with him, and Swift gave Rebecca a parcel and told her to leave it on the quay wall. The witch found the parcel, and was soon so engrossed in Gulliver's Travels that she forgot the time. When she realised that midnight was past, she conjured up a storm so furious that it silted up the river and ended travel between Parkgate and Ireland. The recipe for potted shrimps has been relished ever since, but "what a heavy price to pay for a pot of shrimps !"

This excellent story was published by Odhams during the 2nd World War, in a book called "The Children's Own Wonder Book". The successors to Odhams Press, though helpful, have not found any record of the author of this story or its origin. Does anybody know who Olive Dehn was, or where this story was first published ?



*Olive Dehn*

### VARIA

We were gratified to see this generous note of our recent efforts, as recognised in 'Contact', the newsletter of the Civic Trust for the North West.

The Society was again asked to provide decorations for the pulpit of St Thomas' church for their harvest festival, and we are grateful to Mrs McCaig for arranging them.

The very successful Festival of Local History at Burton in September included a display relating to Parkgate arranged by Geoffrey Place. The display showed the Volunteer regiments who used to camp in Parks Fields, and also the Parkgate Regattas.

The old colliery quay at Ness, mentioned in our last Newsletter, may very soon be tidied up in a way that will preserve it and commemorate its former use, if the Borough Council can find the money.

Our handsome new masthead on Page 1 has been provided by Mrs Cochrane.

### **Societies in Brief**

Parkgate Society has recently shown real altruism by expending much effort in trying to encourage the formation of a society in neighbouring Neston. The new society will "go public" just before Christmas, secure in the knowledge that Parkgate has lent them a cash guarantee and with the services of a Parkgate committee member who will be able to share his long experience with them.

"SUCCESS to the PARKGATE PACKETS"

Thanks to the courtesy of L.A. Burman of the Merseyside County Museums, we are able to show you this commemorative jug which is in the museum store. It is eight inches high, apparently made in Liverpool, probably in the 1790s. It shows five packet ships altogether, four of them being two-masted brigs, and the fifth a single-masted cutter. These drawings of actual Parkgate passenger vessels are of course, of great importance to the study of Parkgate's history.

