

Parkgate Society



Newsletter

Number 22

Spring 1982

Chairman	HO Vollers	336 1359
Vice-chairman	GW Place	336 2891
Secretary	Mrs AM Clarke	336 1069
Treasurer	EPD Taylor	336 4321

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Please put these dates in your diary !

- Monday, 8th March, 8 pm at The Boat House
THEATR CLWYD
A speaker from the Clwyd Theatre at Mold, an impressive building with a most interesting programme of plays, concerts and films, will describe its story.
- Monday, 19th April, 8 pm at The Boat House
The BOAT MUSEUM, Ellesmere Port
The canal basin, where the Ellesmere Canal meets the Mersey, houses a fascinating collection of narrow boats and canal relics. A spokesman will tell us about it.
- Monday, 24th May, 8 pm at The Boat House
PARKGATE in the 19th CENTURY
Geoffrey Place will resume his series of talks on local history.
- WALKS: Geoffrey Place will lead a guided walk round the Neston Conservation Area, starting at the Neston Parish Church, on two different dates (same walk, though !)
Friday, 18th June, at 7 pm (part of the Cheshire CC Guided Walks programme)
Sunday, 12th September, at 2.30 pm (also for the Burton & South Wirral Local History Society)
- Saturday, 24th July, (see later paragraph)
OUR 10th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS !
Book the date now: full details will be delivered to you nearer the time.

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

The Old Quay Inn

Some of our members have been very worried about developments at the Old Quay Inn. The brewers who own it, Whitbread, had obtained permission from the licensing justices to throw open the whole of the downstairs space into one big bar; rumour had it that this was designed to attract motorcyclists in increasing numbers, and that "bikers" were even being turned away from other Whitbread pubs and directed to Parkgate.

The Press wanted to know the Parkgate Society's attitude to these actual or potential developments, and indeed we ourselves wished to know: our problem was to ascertain the facts, because for some time we found difficulty in pinning down any spokesman at Whitbreads. At long last, however, a meeting was arranged where we were able to discuss the situation at length.

Three members of the Whitbread management team, with the pub manager, spent an evening with five members of this Society's committee, with a solicitor who is also a member and a concerned local resident. Although there was no chance of changing anything substantial, since the work of conversion had already begun, we felt that it was an interesting meeting, and useful for both parties to hear each other's views.

We stressed the obvious things: that the pub had become something of an alien element in Parkgate and was likely to become more alien; that Parkgate depended economically on a special atmosphere which the pub's clientele did not, perhaps, enhance; that existing problems of motor cycle noise and other disturbances should not be made worse. Why, we pleaded, could not the Old Quay Inn revert to being a real "local" as we once knew it?

It was the answer to this latter question which set the scene for the brewers' case. They were satisfied commercially, they said, that the market in Parkgate for a "local" bar with restaurant was already saturated, and they would not succeed if they tried to ape other establishments. In any case, the cost of converting and re-equipping a basically unsuitable building to include a restaurant would be enormous and prohibitive - and our chairman, as an architect, could appreciate this point. It followed that the management was obliged to cater for the existing clientele. The building needs renovating badly, and the downstairs layout was uneconomic to run, difficult to heat and to supervise.

Hence the intended changes: but, they stressed, the new layout would be well and tastefully done. The long, curving bar would have a soft drinks section ("soft drinks on draught") in the middle, and only at one end would the decor include a garage scene. They believed that their present customers were respectable, and intended by judicious management to keep them so. They offered to patrol the car park at peak hours, to design bike-park areas to accord with our views, to erect noise baffles and to put up appropriate signs.

We can but wait and see. Given the existing situation we can only watch the symptoms, and be prepared to combat any undesirable ones with vigour should they arise. We shall therefore watch: and Whitbreads have offered to meet us again, if we have further points to discuss when the new arrangements are in use.

Our Tenth Birthday.

It was in March 1972 that a steering committee was formed to launch the new Parkgate Society, spurred by two looming events. One was the intention of the County Council to declare a Conservation Area in Parkgate: the other was a possible Dee Barrage. We should raise our voices, it was felt, before we were overwhelmed by decisions from outside.

In its first months, the Society busied itself with two other areas of interest: historical research, and litter. The first activity open to members was an exhibition of Parkgate's history which was the prelude to our first publication. As for litter, that endless battle, the Society was corresponding with the Council about litter bins - as we still are at the moment.

We shall celebrate our tenth birthday on Saturday, 24th July, with a gathering which at present seems likely to be a tea party at about 4 pm followed by a barbecue. Our Royal Wedding tea party at Mr & Mrs McCaig's house, The Saltings on Manorial Road, was such a success that we have eagerly accepted their generous invitation to come there again. We shall not settle the details until much nearer the time, and we will let all members know what they are.

Another project for our festive year is under way: we are having some greetings cards printed, using some of the pencil drawings of Parkgate which appear in our guide book, "This is Parkgate". The cards will have no message inside, so that they can be used at any season. When they are ready, we shall sell them at our meetings.

Our Meetings

We have had a most enjoyable autumn season. The new Head Ranger of the Wirral Country Park, Wilfred Wilson, told us about all the parks in Wirral which are under his control. One of these is Brotherton Park, which many of us had not heard of and which looks well worth a visit.

Oulton Wade gave us a fascinating evening when he explained to us how he makes Cheshire Cheese at his farm at Mollington. It is a much more complicated and laborious business than seemed possible to us before he spoke.

Richard Foster was both entertaining and scholarly when he showed how building technique for ordinary homes has developed from medieval times. As our chairman remarked, it is notable how much better the details of a building often look on a slide than in reality, because one's attention is being drawn to them.

Just before Christmas we went carol singing. A surprisingly large number of people turned out, sang vigorously at various points including a long visit to the Parkgate Nursing Home, and gratefully enjoyed the hospitality of the McCaigs when our voices had given out.

Its the BBC Again

You may like to know that the BBC has been visiting Parkgate again, this time with a camera. We have no idea what it is all about, but the result can be viewed on a Schools broadcast which will be shown first on Monday, 26th April at 09.08, and it will be repeated on Friday 30th April at 11.40 am.

Parkgate Viewed from Afar

How many members can recognise this quotation ?

"From the height behind Pen-y-maes, a field away, you could see across to the Cheshire plain; and once, sitting with my father in the trap on his way down to Mostyn for beer, I asked him what that place was over the water, with all that sand ? He said it was another country, where Welsh was not spoken and the public-houses were open on Sunday. I remembered the Sahara, and asked if it was Africa ? He laughed and said it was, and that on a clear day you could see elephants walking in and out of Parkgate."

It comes from Emlyn Williams' autobiography, "George". His father was an innkeeper for a time in a village near Mostyn. The incident would have been in 1909 when the author was four years old. Unfortunately it seems scarcely possible to see Parkgate with the unaided eye from that spot; but perhaps it was scarcely possible to see the elephants !

The Panorama of Parkgate

Even without elephants, the Parkgate Parade looked very attractive in the panoramic view which Michael Barton drew for us seven years ago. We have now sold the last of them. We are grateful indeed to Nicholl's for selling them for us, and we have presented Mr and Mrs Thomas with the framed copy which has been advertising the Panorama in their shop for so long. No doubt this print will now become a collector's piece.

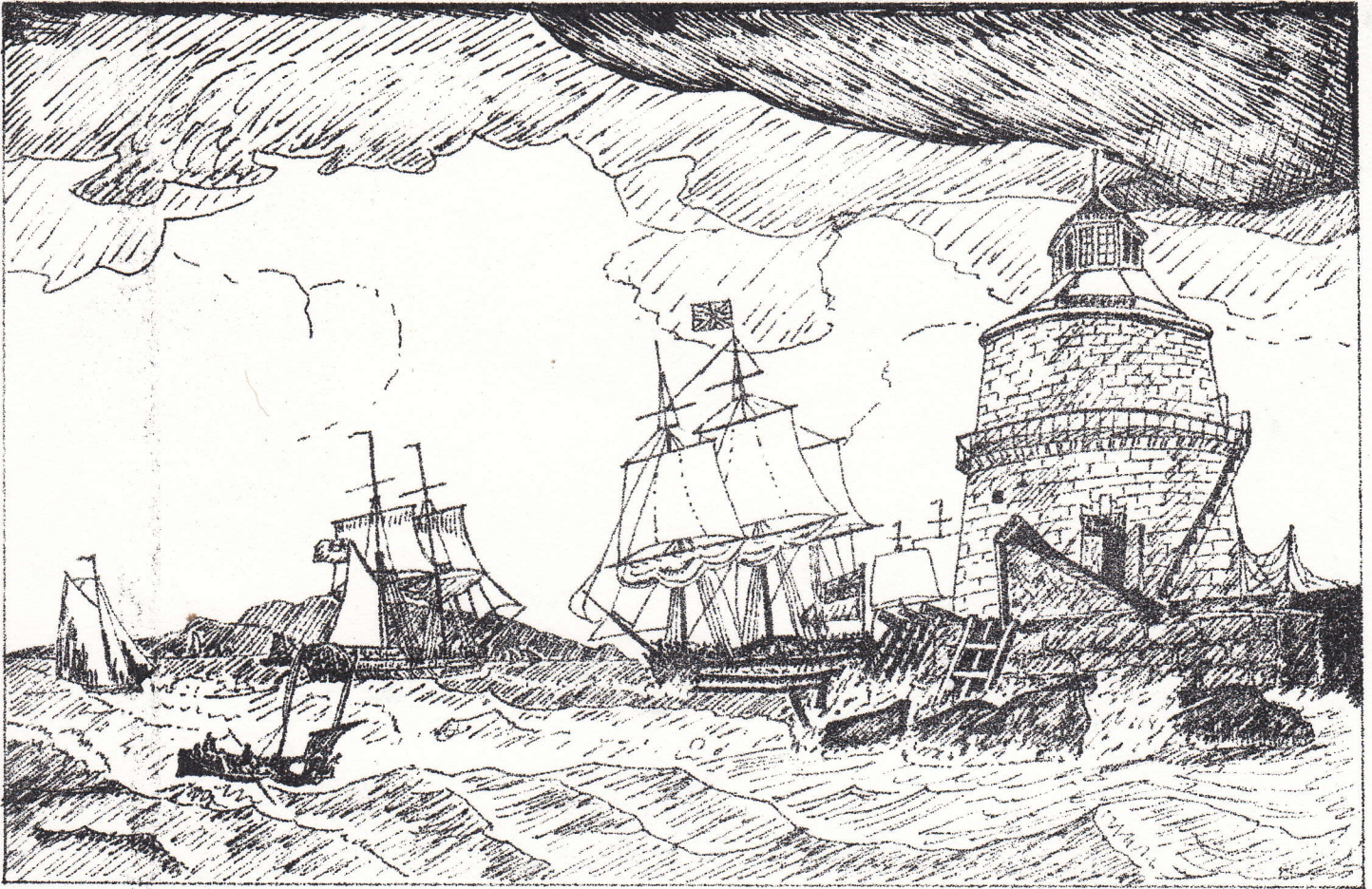
Items Various

As we do every year, we set up our stand to advertise the Parkgate Society at the New Residents' Open Evening which the Council holds annually in the Neston Civic Hall. It always seems to us that there are far more exhibitors than new residents, and we have suggested to the Council that perhaps the late Autumn is not the best time to hold this Exhibition. In fact it is an interesting occasion to attend; there is more going on in Neston than you might suppose !

The Jubilee Seat which the Society presented to Parkgate, and which is subject to occasional attacks, has lost its commemorative plate. We are in the process of replacing it.

Visitors to our meetings who have been irritated that the pictures projected on to the screen have tended to stray on to the ceiling or the curtains behind, will be relieved to know that at last we are going to buy our own screen, large enough for our purpose. We are grateful to friends who have been lending their screens all these years.

We were again asked to decorate the pulpit of St Thomas' Church with flowers for their Harvest Festival, and we are grateful for Mrs McCaig for arranging them.



This sketch is taken from a large oil painting by the marine artist JT Serres, called "The Lighthouse in the Bay of Dublin". What, you will ask, has this to do with Parkgate ?

The large ship flying the Union flag, next to the lighthouse, is believed to be the Royal Yacht Dorset, which sailed regularly into Parkgate between 1753 and 1812. It was a Royal Naval vessel placed at the disposal of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and it carried both official passengers, and those who made private arrangements with the captain for their passage.

Your tame historian spotted this painting when he was on holiday in Suffolk, and it reminded him of a watercolour, by the same artist and dated 1788, which is in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. The watercolour is called "The yacht Dorset leaving Dublin Bay", and it looks very similar to the sketch shown above, except that the ship is sailing in the opposite direction. Unfortunately it has not proved possible to get a photograph of the watercolour (unless we had the skill to take the photograph ourselves at Greenwich) so a direct comparison has not been possible.

Actual pictures of ships known to have used Parkgate are few and far between, so that even tentative clues are welcome.

The Parkgate Letterhead

The letterhead on this Society's stationery is taken from the writing paper made for the Pengwern Arms, before that hostelry closed its doors as a result of storm damage suffered in 1882. A member has given us a photocopy of an actual letter written on the Pengwern Arms paper, from a Mrs Margaret Browne to her bank manager in Liverpool.

Any such memorials of old Parkgate, however trivial, are always welcome for the Society's collection.