

Parkgate Society Newsletter

Number 26

Spring 1984

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Chairman	GW Place	336 2891
Vice-chairman	SC Edwards	336 1190
Secretary	Mrs AM Clarke	336 1069
Treasurer	EPD Taylor	336 4321

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Please put these dates in your diary !

- Monday, 5th March, 8 pm at the Boat House,
Miss P. Roberts will tell us about
THE LIVERPOOL GARDEN FESTIVAL
- Monday, 9th April, 8 pm at the Boat House,
Professor L. Broadbent,
GARDENING SINCE EDEN
Professor Broadbent lives in Parkgate, is a member
of the Society, and is an expert on horticulture.
- Monday, 21st May, 8 pm at the Boat House,
Geoffrey Place will bring our Local History
up to the First World War with
HOW NESTON and PARKGATE ENTERED the MODERN AGE
- Friday, 15th June, starting at 7 pm
A GUIDED WALK round RABY, led by Clive Edwards
Meet at the Wheatsheaf in Raby, and come prepared for
MUD underfoot.
This walk is also part of Cheshire County Council's
Guided Walks Scheme.
If you cannot come on 15th June, this WALK will be
repeated (principally for the Burton & South Wirral
Local History Society) on Sunday, 16th September at 2.30 pm

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

.... and while you have your diary out, you may like to know
that our AGM will be on 15th October.

Subscriptions Your SUBSCRIPTION for 1984 is still only £1
for single or family membership, and 50p for
Senior Citizens.

Our Membership Secretary, Mrs Place, will gladly receive your
subscriptions at any time: at our meetings, or at her home,
Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate.

Lines, White and Yellow

Unsuspecting motorists who park opposite the Old Quay public house in Station Road have all too often been hauled before the magistrates because they have illegally parked opposite double white lines. As that part of the road seems a perfectly sensible place to park, and as it was known that the bench of magistrates was also concerned about the situation, we made a number of suggestions about it to the officers of the Borough Council.

We asked first, whether double white lines were necessary at all, bearing in mind that the far worse corner at the north end of Parkgate has only a single line marking the centre of the road. The Borough Engineer came to see for himself, and told us that in his professional judgment, the double lines are necessary to prevent overtaking at that corner.

We then wondered whether double yellow lines could be painted along the curb. All motorists know that these lines prohibit parking, whereas few drivers seem to know that double white lines, whose primary meaning is to prevent overtaking, carry a secondary prohibition against parking. It seems, though, that the law actually disallows the yellow lines and the white on the same stretch of road, presumably on the grounds that both carry the message of no parking. In our opinion the law is not being realistic in this respect: it is small comfort to say that people ought to know the law if in practice there is a general misunderstanding. We cannot expect to change the law overnight, but we shall have a go, by raising this matter at ministerial level. Mrs Chalker shall hear from us !

Our third suggestion has met with better success. If double lines are a must, we said, then could they not be shorter, so that the part of the road where parking seems safe and reasonable should not fall under this prohibition. We are very pleased to learn that the Highways Committee of the Council have now accepted our detailed proposal that the lines should be removed opposite the houses numbered 7 to 11 in Station Road.

This solution is, we believe, a reasonable answer to the problem. Drivers will be free to park where it is safe to do so without carrying home an unpleasant souvenir of Parkgate. There remains the question of whether any further indication, such as a notice, is desirable or possible. Very likely it won't be, but we will keep an eye on the matter.

The Wirral Journal

When we reported in the last Newsletter on the talk given to us by Ken Burnley, the editor of the Wirral Journal, we remarked that nothing about Parkgate had yet appeared in that worthwhile magazine. That omission is now being put right. The last issue of the Journal contained an article called 'The Tale of the Hobbled Donkey - a Parkgate myth put to the test'. Future issues are scheduled to carry articles on a race for life on horseback, against the incoming tide, across the sands of Dee from Flint to Parkgate, and an account of the Nonpareil, a Parkgate ship which was wrecked in 1775.

Ashfield Hall Farm

We were represented at the public meeting which considered the fate of this land and at which an overwhelming vote of opposition to the County's proposal was recorded. Our own point of view can best be shown by quoting in full the letter which we have sent to the Chief Executive of the County Council.

"We wish to express to you the opposition of this Society to the County Council's proposal to create an industrial estate on the Ashfield Hall Farm site. This Society's area of interest runs immediately to the west of the site.

"We consider that the designation of this land as Green Belt must continue to be honoured, so that Neston and Parkgate will retain an identity of their own, rather than submerge in an ever-extending conurbation.

"We are also conscious that our own village relies strongly for its character on the protection afforded it by the Green Belt. We fear that if the principle of the Green Belt is breached at so important a site as Ashfield Hall Farm, it would be the thin end of the wedge that would eventually destroy our own protection.

"We well appreciate the need to create employment: but we feel that the opportunity should be taken to upgrade land at present derelict, rather than to destroy the heritage we have.

"We urge most strongly that the County should honour its original commitment, made when the ownership was acquired, to preserve this site as agricultural land."

Our Meetings

Our Annual General Meeting, conducted by our President, was distinguished by the warm tributes paid to our retiring chairman, Hendrik Vollers, when he was presented by the committee with a piece of glass engraved by Robert Ellison.

The committee was elected according to the nominations published in our last Newsletter. There was little discussion of our affairs from the floor, no doubt because we were all anxious to hear Dr Brian Harris, editor of the Victoria County History of Cheshire, speak to us about the history of Chester. No less than 117 members came to this meeting, making the walls bulge, a striking tribute to Dr Harris' drawing power. He shone new light on the old city with every slide he presented, and we owe him our heartfelt thanks for an enthralling evening.

In November Dr Ian Wallace spoke to us about the butterflies and moths of Wirral. This turned out to be an increasingly amusing evening, for when Dr Wallace was past the butterflies, which were merely colourful, he really warmed to his task with the caterpillars, which were weird, faintly horrible and frequently ill-fated. It was for these tiny monsters that Dr Wallace reserved his true enthusiasm.

Alas, our December meeting was almost as ill-fated as the caterpillars, for our speaker, Racster Dingwall, was seized with the dreaded bug and confined to his bed. Your luckless chairman was required to take the stand, and at short notice he spoke about 'The Port of Parkgate'.

Our secretary organized a trip to Theatr Clwyd at Mold to hear a Christmas concert. Not a great many members came - it has been our experience that our members do not, on the whole, want to go on trips - but those who did had an enjoyable evening. It was an ambitious programme provided by local amateurs, and like the caterpillars, it had its funny moments, sometimes for the same reasons!

Visits and Advice

The committee have recently had the benefit of two discussions about actual or possible developments locally. The first took place when we were visited by Mr JE Myers, an architect who has drawn up a variety of plans and suggestions for Neston town centre. Mr Myers explained these to us, and then showed us his ideas for a Heritage Centre. You will remember, no doubt, our dream that one day we might have an Exhibition Room at Parkgate. If Mr Myers' proposal were to take root at Parkgate, we would be delighted to have a hand in such a scheme. But (there are many buts) his idea exists only on paper, although many people would like to see it become a reality. It needs not only a site but the capital to build it, and most important in the long run, the means of running and maintaining it. Perhaps one day a combination of bodies: ourselves, the RSPB and other parties who would have material to display, the Wirral Country Park, the Council: together we might provide a splendid attraction for Parkgate's visitors.

We are very grateful to Mr Myers for visiting us. We are also most grateful to Mr Len Ward, the Borough Planning Officer, for joining us in a wide-ranging discussion of local problems and possibilities.

We spoke of traffic and parking problems (where could you provide extra parking in Parkgate, without wrecking what we seek to preserve ?) of a Heritage Centre, which Mr Ward would welcome should the means become available; of planning policy as it relates to Parkgate village as well as to surrounding land; and of many related matters. We felt it was a most stimulating conversation, in which Mr Ward showed himself sympathetic towards the spirit of Parkgate.

Pictures for Patients

We have been asked for help by a ward sister at Clatterbridge Hospital, who looks after patients who are elderly and mentally ill. Had we any photographs of the locality in times past, she asked, which would help to stimulate her patients and get them to talk.

We were glad to pledge our assistance, and after borrowing some suitable photographs, we are getting them copied and enlarged. We are obliged to Mr Derek Appleton who is doing this task. We hope the photographs will be ready very soon, and that they will prove useful.

The Plaque for our Seat

The seat which the Society presented to Parkgate in the year of the Queen's jubilee, and which stands in front of the Old Quay inn, has once again lost its commemorative plaque, as was reported to us at the AGM. We ordered a new one, but it had been made with a mistake and had to be re-done. Hence the delay. Mr G Cain has most kindly agreed to fix the plaque, recessed and fastened in a way which he believes will be very difficult to prise off, at no cost to the Society. We are very grateful to Mr Cain for his generous offer. The Society is indeed fortunate to have so many friends who give freely of their time and trouble.

Varia

We are grateful to Neston Library, and to Broad Beams in Parkgate, both of which have agreed to sell our Guide Book for us.

The Society has bought a stand for a slide projector. After years of juggling with old boxes and telephone directories, it is a great relief to have one.

There have been few difficult or controversial planning applications in the past six months. However, we have been able to reassure members about trees in the churchyard (which were felled because of incipient disease) and about trees on the new housing development at The Moorings. In that case, the County Planning Department assured us that the trees planned for preservation have in fact been preserved, new planting is promised, and the felled trees were mainly poplars, whose habits make them unwelcome near houses.

Royal Interest

The King's official representative, in the persons of the Lords Lieutenant of Ireland, quite often passed through Neston in the 17th century or Parkgate in the 18th century. Direct royal interest in these parts is harder to find, but here are two examples of it.

On 14th August 1642, Charles I sent this letter to the Mayor of Chester:

Trusty and wellbeloved, Wee greete you well. Being informed that divers Goods belonging to the most trusty and right sincerely wellbeloved Cosin the Lady Duchess of Buckingham, are arrived out of Ireland, and landed at Neston not farr from the Citty of Chester: and the said Lady Duchess desiring that those her Goods may be brought into a place of more security than where they were landed and at the present now are. Wee have thought fitt to require you to take all the said Goods into your own and especiall Care and Custody in your House or such other place of the said Citty where they may be secure: and so to keepe them, untill the said Lady Duchesse shall send for, or otherwise dispose of them: Which wee shall take well at your hands.

The other, rather uncertain token of more or less royal interest derives from the alleged visit of Mrs Fitzherbert, the wife of the Prince of Wales, later to become George IV. Her visit seems to have been a memory recorded by Hilda Gamlin in 'Twixt Mersey and Dee', where it was said that Mrs Fitzherbert "rented a large house up the shore because there was good stabling attached to it." She was said to have paid for mutton and potatoes to be provided for seven hundred soldiers camped at Parkgate while waiting to sail for Ireland, "for it was at the time of the great rebellion." This would put the date at 1798 or a little after, at which time the Prince and Mrs Fitzherbert were estranged.

The only contemporary evidence for the visit, though, is in this brief note, by Lord Stourton:

"In the meantime, whilst the negotiations were pending, she obtained a promise from His Royal Highness that he would not follow her into her retreat in Wales, where she went to a small bathing place." In Wales ! Oh, poor Parkgate !