

PARKGATE SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1988

Number 34

President	J R Cochrane C.B.E.		
Chairman	G W Place	336	2891
V. Chairman	S C Edwards	336	1190
Secretary	Mrs A M Clarke	336	1069
Treasurer	E P D Taylor	336	4321

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TO BE MARSH; OR NOT TO BE MARSH?

THAT IS THE QUESTION!

- Or so the Editor of 'The News' tells us. Commencing with a historically totally inaccurate, and one might justifiably say, patronising article in the January 6th issue of his 'newspaper' the Editor started, in his eyes, 'The Great Debate - Wildlife Haven or Leisure Water Centre?', at Parkgate.

One would have thought that a 'newspaper' worth its 'salt' marsh would have discovered that the Great Debate has existed in this area for a considerable number of years. Even to the extent of a firm of civil engineers drawing up a scheme for a series of lagoons and a marina from the Ness area down the estuary towards Heswall. At that time the idea did not endear itself to the residents of Parkgate. However entrancing the thought of permanent water may be along Parkgate shoreline, it is a complex argument and there are many valid points both for and against.

But Mr Allen, hotelier, of the Wirral Association of Leisure and Tourism, who was much quoted in the article, and the Editor of 'The News' whilst quite entitled to enter the debate should not, we suggest dismiss so disparagingly the residents of Parkgate, the RSPB and conservationists in general.

Whilst cost may not be insurmountable, it certainly would be enormous and whilst the eradication of the mosquito breeding ground may be attractive, the once proposed widening of Boathouse Lane and the construction of large car parks to cope with the even greater number of visitors may not be. So let the debate continue but with our voice alongside, if not louder, than that of those people who live elsewhere in Wirral who appear to know what is best for us, who live in this 'tiny riverside hamlet' as 'The News' Editor so charmingly describes it.

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THE UNITED KINGDOM NUCLEAR INDUSTRY
8pm Monday 14th March 1988
PARKGATE HOTEL

THE WORK OF BIDSTON OBSERVATORY
8pm Monday 11th April
PARKGATE HOTEL



SHIRE HORSES & CARTERS OF MERSEYSIDE by Ted Clark of
Merseyside Heritage Trust.

8pm Monday 23rd May 1988 PARKGATE HOTEL



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* THE SAXON STONES OF NESTON *

We should explain for newcomers to the story of the Saxon Stones, that we refer to a number of stones which have lain, somewhat neglected and unappreciated, in Neston Parish Church for very many years. Also included is a stone which was rescued, as part of this project, from the structure of the church tower where it had been used in rebuilding. At the enthusiastic urging of our Chairman, we joined with the Neston Civic Society in a project to recover, research, and to display the stones within the Parish Church that they may be better appreciated by this and future generations. Continued.....

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This long running project, first suggested back in 1984, is at long last nearing completion. Our consultant archaeologist, Dr R. H. White, has given us sight of his preliminary draft of a learned article, which properly describes these stones.

The most substantial remains, representing two pieces of the same cross, appear to be part of a memorial to an individual person, and were carved between 930 and 1020 A.D.. Although this is referred to loosely as the Saxon Period, the carvings show Viking influence. Sometime after 901 A.D. a group of Norse Vikings who had settled in Ireland were apparently expelled from Dublin and then settled in the Isle of Man and the Wirral peninsular. These cross fragments may well then derive from this colonisation of the area.

The Domesday survey of 1085 A.D. does not mention a church at Neston but does mention a priest. A priest's presence would not in itself be certain evidence of a church existing at that time, but a priest with memorial crosses does suggest that Neston did have its own church before the Norman conquest. A link with the distant past indeed!

Some very substantial display stands have now been constructed for the stones and are now in the Parish Church. The vexed question as to how to fix the stones to the stands, in order that no parishioners feet should inadvertently be crushed if one were dislodged, appears to have been satisfactorily resolved with the help of stainless steel rods. We hope therefore that the work will be finished within the next few months and that the stones and the history that surrounds them will be appreciated by all who visit the Neston Parish Church.

GWP



- THEATRE PARKGATE -



Following the publication in the last Newsletter of one of six newly discovered playbills, we include on the next page, one of the other playbills. Although this one does not make any mention of our Parkgate itinerant Samuel Ryley it is nevertheless a fascinating document, and if the daring epilogue is anything to go by it must have been quite an evening!

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FOR THE BENEFIT OF

MR. WALSH.

THEATRE PARKGATE.

On *Fri* DAY Evening September 24 1811,
Will be presented a Comedy (written by Mrs. CENTLIVRA,) called

A Bold Stroke for a Wife;

OR, THE QUAKER'S WEDDING.

Colene Fainwell	Mr. BAILIOL
Sir Phillip Modelove	Mr. ROSCOE
Freeman	Mr. HOPE
Tradelove	Mr. EATON
Obadiah Prim	Mr. SMITH
Servant	Miss E. WALSH
Sackbut	Mr. LLOYD
Periwinkle	Mr. EDWARDS
Ann Lovely	Miss MONTFORD
Mrs. Prim	Mrs. WALSH
Betty	Miss WALSH
Masked Lady	Mrs. BAILIOL

END OF THE PLAY.

AN EPILOGUE (written by Oliver Goldsmith) to be spoken in the Character of Harlequin, by Mr. WALSH, at the conclusion of which he will jump through a hoop of Blazing fire, nearly six feet from the ground,

A favorite SONG, MR. ROSCOE.
 MEDLEY, from the Cabinet by Mr. HOPE.
 A COMIC SONG, MR. SMITH.

To which will be added that laughable Farce, in two Acts, called

THE GHOST;

OR, THE AFFRIGHTED FARMER.

Farmer Harrow	Mr. BAILIOL
Trusty	Mr. SMITH
Sir Jeffery Constant	Mr. ROSCOE
Captain Constant	Mr. WALSH
Clinch	Mr. HOPE
Dolly	Mrs. WALSH
Belinda	Mrs. BAILIOL

PIT 2s — GALLERY 1s.

Door to be opened at six o'Clock, and to begin precisely at seven.
Tickets to be had of Mr. WALSH at Mr. T. BROWN's Drury Lane, and at the usual places

C. WALSH performs as each of the above pieces are novel, not having been done here for years, they will merit a continuance of that Patronage he has heretofore experienced and gratefully remembered.

CARNES, PRINFER, HOLYWELL.

-MEETINGS-MEETINGS-MEETINGS-MEETINGS-MEETINGS-MEETINGS-MEETINGS-

Since our last Newsletter we have had four meetings, each of a quite different character, and all entertaining in their different ways.

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The Annual General Meeting was held in October and the formal business was conducted by our President, Jim Cochrane. As foreshadowed in our last Newsletter, Julian Grenfell, after fifteen years of valuable service on the committee, stepped up to become our Vice-president, and Sheila Syngé was elected and welcomed to membership of the committee. The remaining committee members were re-elected as follows: Geoffrey Place (Chairman); Clive Edwards (Vice-chairman); Angela Clarke (Secretary); Mr. E P D Taylor (Treasurer); Shirley Britt; Valerie Place; Muriel Tinker; Leonard Walker; Michael Fotts and Geoff. Topp.

In his summary of the past year, the Chairman noted that an encouraging rise in the number of guide books sold had helped us to keep the subscription down once again.

Following the AGM we watched, some of us most enjoyably for the second time, a most interesting BBC video recording of their two programmes about the River Dee from source to Sea. The inclusion of an interview on The Parade with our Chairman made it all the more interesting for us, we are grateful to him for ensuring that a historically correct perspective of Parkgate was included for the benefit of the wider viewing public.

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In November we greatly enjoyed ^{talk} about diamonds from Mr J L Pyke of the well known family jewellers. He had a dazzling tray of rings for us to examine at close quarters showing diamonds and other precious stones combined to make really superb rings the like of which most of us will not normally get quite so close to other than on such an occasion as this. He was also good enough to pronounce knowledgeably about some of our lady members finger wear, we trust no one received an unwelcome surprise!

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In December we were unable to meet as planned at the Parkgate Hotel, which required our normal venue for its own Christmas festivities. We were kindly accommodated once again at Mostyn House school where Margery Wilson presented a lecture on 'Classical Liverpool'. Miss Wilson's Classical view was greatly supported by a variety of pillars, and she exemplified Greek-style pillars in some unexpected corners of Liverpool including, unlikely as it may seem, amongst the Albert Dock warehouses.

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Our January meeting held in partnership with the Neston Civic Society and the Burton & South Wirral Local History Society, was a particular treat, 110 people were present to hear Elizabeth Davey talk about the older 'Buildings of Wirral'. Together with her wide range of interesting slides, her depth of knowledge and ability to put across a not necessarily interesting subject in such a way as to hold our interest to the end was a delight for all of us who were fortunate enough to be present.

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As you will have seen from page one, our Secretary Angela Clarke has managed to arrange our next three talks which once again cover a range of topics which we hope will prove of interest to you all.

WHEN JOHN WESLEY PASSED THIS WAY. [3]

'Saturday August 31st 1762.'

'Embarked on board the "Dorset", for Parkgate. Weighed anchor at eight in the evening. Between nine and ten on Sunday morning, the Captain asked me if I would not go to prayers with them. All who were able to creep out were willingly present. After prayers I preached on Proverbs 3.17 [Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace]. We had scarce any wind when I began; but while I was preaching it sprung up, and brought us to Parkgate, between six and seven. Monday, Sep. 2nd, I rode to Chester.'

*

Three years later in 1765 John Wesley is again in Parkgate, but finds that the difficulties of travel by sea to Dublin, which so depended upon a favourable wind, are frustrating his plans so he departs to Liverpool.

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'Tuesday April 26th 1765'

As several ships were ready to sail from Parkgate, I waited there two days; but the wind continuing foul, on Friday 29th I crossed over to Liverpool. I was surprised at the evening congregation, particularly on a Sunday. So that I was not sorry the wind continued in the same points, on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, only it shifted on Wednesday morning, on which some important captains sailed immediately. But in a few hours it came full west again; so that they were glad to get well back.'

[Wesley's Works, Vol.3, Pgs.107 & 206]

*Apparently John Wesley preached not infrequently at St. Thomas Park Lane, Liverpool.

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JOHN WESLEY REMEMBERED! A COMMEMORATION SERVICE IN PARKGATE.

On Sunday 22nd May 1988 an open air service is planned to take place in Parkgate, it will commemorate John Wesley's personal commitment to the cause of Methodism. It is intended that a procession will form on Parks Field at 3 pm, consisting of representatives of the Methodist Church circuit with their banners. They will then march to Mostyn Square, led it is hoped by a Salvation Army band. An ecumenical service will then be held, conducted from the churchyard at St Thomas, Parkgate, with the assembled congregation thronging the Square below. If the weather is kind, it should be a splendid event in the best traditions of Parkgate's outdoor community activities.

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'ROYAL CHARTER' - A Golden Wreck! Did you know?

Did you know that the auxiliary steam powered clipper 'Royal Charter', which became one of the most tragic and famous wrecks in British maritime history, sailed down the Dee past Parkgate at the very start of its short but fateful life?

The 'Royal Charter' was a large ship for its day, of 2,719 reg. tons, and 336 feet (102.5m) in length but with a freeboard [the height of the deck above the sea] of only 6 feet (1.8m). Little enough you would think for its voyages between England and Australia. But it was not the ocean seas that claimed her and most of her passengers and crew, but the rocks of the north coast of Anglesey. Only some fifty miles from where she was built at Sandycroft, Flintshire near Queensferry on the River Dee she foundered in the early hours of the morning on Wednesday 26th October 1859, off Moelfre in Anglesey.

She was launched of necessity sideways at Sandycroft, but only with difficulty and after a channel had been dug, after the initial attempt to launch her had failed. When eventually she did proceed down the Dee she grounded on a sandbank near Flint. This damaged her sufficiently badly to require her to be drydocked for repairs in Liverpool.

We can only guess as to the view she presented to the residents of Parkgate all those years ago, but with her three tall masts and her thin little funnel between main and mizzen she must have been a pretty sight on her way to the open sea.

Built with an iron hull, the yard where she was built was also an ironworks, her two bladed screw was novel in that it could be raised out of the water when not in use to reduce the drag whilst only under sail.

The misfortunes of the 'Royal Charter' continued on her maiden voyage to Australia when she had to return to Plymouth when she was found, in a gale off Finnisterre, to be unmanageable due to the excessive amount of ballast that had been placed in her. Some four hundred tons of sand ballast were removed from her and then her fortunes were to change for the better. She made passage now in the record time of just 60 days to Melbourne. A magnificent feat when it is considered that in the previous five months the fastest passage of a ship from England to Australia was 91 days. Her owners were now well pleased.

However in 1859 the 'Royal Charter' by now a famous and well respected vessel, was to sail from Melbourne with some 493 people on board, of whom only 39 were to survive that tempestuous October night in Dulas Bay, Anglesey. She was to become known as the Golden Wreck on account of the large quantity of Australian gold on board her. At that time the Australian gold rush was booming and some £322,440 worth of bullion was signed for by the Captain as cargo. In addition to this the passengers were carrying their own personal fortunes with them in gold coin, nuggets and gold dust. Although the vast majority of the bullion cargo was successfully salvaged and most of that within a couple of months of the wreck taking place, local Moelfre families did in many cases reap a valuable harvest amongst the rocks and along the beach in the vicinity of the wreck.

A tragic end to one of the many ships that started their sailing days, passing down the Dee across from Parkgate on their way to the open sea.

////////// GRENFELL PARK //////////////////////////////////////

The builders, Redrow, have departed and left us with a most attractive new road in Parkgate, around the grounds of Mostyn House School. To those new residents who live there, or elsewhere in Parkgate, welcome! We hope that many of them will be encouraged by our present membership to come along to our meetings. Of course they would be most welcome to join the Society, and to help us keep a watchful but not unsympathetic eye on Parkgate and its environs.

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The name 'Grenfell Park' was suggested by the Society and will, as soon as the name signs go up, make a fitting recognition of one of Parkgate's most distinguished past residents.

'Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell'

British medical missionary, born February 28th 1865, he became house surgeon at the London Hospital. Being interested in the North Sea fishermen, he fitted out the first hospital ship, and established land missions and homes for their use. In 1892 he went to Labrador, built four hospitals, and started various institutions for the fishermen. He was knighted in 1927.

['THE MODERN ENCYCLOPAEDIA' c.1938]

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SPRING IS COMING

As the newsletter is being written, in late January, with a cold wind blowing it is a pleasant prospect to look forward to Spring, which will be somewhat nearer by the time you receive your copy. We are, I am sure you would agree, most fortunate in Parkgate to be able to enjoy not just the coming of the longer daylight hours but the fresh bright green new leaves on the bushes and trees along the Wirral Way. We would do well to reflect on the farsightedness of those who saved the old railway line from piecemeal disposal some eighteen years ago. We are also in a superb position to enjoy a wealth of birdlife, not just those who are attracted to our gardens, but those that frequent the estuary marshes. You don't have to be a keen ornithologist to recognise duck in flight or the slow lumbering flight of the Grey Heron, so next time you walk along The Parade take the time to stop and watch the wide variety of birdlife that the RSPB have taken under their wing (excuse the pun) for the benefit of all of us. And if the wind is light and traffic noise permits, spare a brief moment to listen to the bird calls and songs from across the marshes.

Ed.

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PARKGATE PRIZE CROSSWORDS



Herewith the solution to the second Prize Crossword, which I presume defied completion or the financial enticement was insufficient. As once again no completed crossword was sent in, and we saved another £5. In consequence and to the relief of the compiler they will be discontinued.

Ed.