

PARKGATE SOCIETY

Newsletter 38

Spring 1990

President	JR Cochrane CBE	
Chairman	GW Place	336 2891
Vice-chairman & Treasurer	SC Edwards	336 1190
Secretary	Mrs AM Clarke	336 1069

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Monday, 12th March, 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel

Mrs Valerie McFarland, well-known to us as an expert on birds,
will tell us about THE SEYCHELLES

Monday, 9th April, 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel

Miss Joan Houghton will give us a talk on
CHESTER ANCIENT & MODERN

Monday, 21st May, 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel

Our Chairman, Geoffrey Place, will describe
PASSENGERS AT PARKGATE

While you have your diary out, you may like to note the dates
of our Autumn meetings. They are:

17 September, 22 October (AGM), 26 November

Full details will appear in our next Newsletter.

E.P.D.Taylor Peter Taylor died on 26th November 1989.
He became the Society's Treasurer in October
1972, less than a year after the Society was formed. During
those seventeen years our accounts were, of course, kept
impeccably. Peter hardly ever missed a committee meeting,
and although he rarely said much, his comments were always
incisive and sometimes very funny.

A year ago he suffered a stroke and we doubted whether
we would see him at the committee table again: at the age
of 75, he would have been well justified in deciding that
he had served for long enough. But, after first enquiring
with humility whether we wanted him back, back he came, and
he was still fully on top of our affairs until the day he died.

We are truly grateful to have known Peter Taylor and to
have had the benefit for so long of his professional skill.

If you have any problem with transport to
reach our meetings, please contact our Secretary,
Angela Clarke, on 336 1069, and she will try to
arrange something for you.

Membership Subscription rates are:

£3	single or family membership
£1.50	senior citizen membership

The Future of Parkgate In our last Newsletter we described the consultation process for the Borough's Local Plan, and the provisions of that Plan for Parkgate. Since then, your committee have had three meetings with officers of the Council. There have recently been considerable changes in the Council's administration: our meetings were intended to explore the ways in which we, as an amenity society, could most fruitfully cooperate with the officers of the Council in our mutual attempts to enhance the local scene.

First, we had a long discussion with two old friends, Mr Dorrell and Mr Stainthorpe of the Planning Department. This meeting was to explore the details of the Local Plan, and we aired many ideas on both sides. The outcome, as always, depends on money: there is an obligation on the local authority to produce an 'enhancement plan' for each Conservation Area. One day this will actually happen! Meanwhile there are stringent practical difficulties to implementing plans for a Heritage Centre, more car parking and traffic control.

Secondly, Mr Miller, Head of Planning Services, came to introduce himself and find out how we could best cooperate. The system we have used for many years, whereby the Society was automatically sent all plans for our area and we commented on them all, has recently failed, and for several months we have not been able to respond when we should have done. Mr Miller has promised to restore the original practice, and in return we have accepted several of his proposals for speeding things up.

Thirdly, Mr Gamet, Head of Technical Services, visited us for a most productive discussion. In the past, things like litter bins, street lights and other street furniture would appear (or not) without warning or discussion, so that any complaints were always dismissed as 'too late'. Mr Gamet now appreciates our feelings and we have a better appreciation of his difficulties.

The Fort You may have noticed that the anti-invasion fort which stands on the Wirral Country Park, overlooking Station Road, has had its rifle slits blocked. We sought the reason, and learned that the fort has been misused in some unpleasant ways which fully justify the decision to seal it. Unfortunately the work has been done in a way which makes the building 'blind' and so destroys its meaning. We have suggested ways of blocking the slits and doorway in a way which still leaves the outer wall with apparent apertures, so that the building at least looks like a fort.

Our Meetings In September, Jeremy Rye from Sotheby's brought a selection of ceramics which were coming up for sale in Chester, and gave us the insight of an expert on each one.

In October, at the AGM, the Committee was elected as follows: Geoffrey Place (chairman), Clive Edwards (vice-chairman), Peter Taylor (treasurer), Angela Clarke (secretary), Shirley Britt, Valerie Place, Michael Potts, Sheila Synge, Muriel Tinker, Leonard Walker. Harold Loughran was elected as a new member.

When Mr Taylor died, Clive Edwards consented to act as treasurer.

After the AGM, Michael Benson gave us a most amusing talk about Lewis', the Liverpool department store.

In November we sent out widespread invitations to a social evening at which Leonard Walker's magnificent photographic survey of Parkgate could be seen. In January some of his photographs were on view in Neston Library, and in both places they have been greatly admired.

In January, our joint meeting with two other local societies was almost too well-attended. We stripped the hotel of chairs and people were even sitting in the doorway. They heard Nicholas Moore describe the recent policy and purchases of the Grosvenor Museum of which he is the director.

A Summary of the Proposals for the Parkgate Marsh

The following list was made at the suggestion of Jack Cox, who was interested to know what plans had been suggested for a boating lake at Parkgate.

1. c.1960 David Alford, who stood as a candidate for the Neston Council, canvassed a plan for a marina at Parkgate.
2. 1971 The Dee Barrage Scheme offered three main proposals by Binnie & Partners for a Dee crossing. All three included a marina at Parkgate. Huge water reservoirs, across the whole width of the estuary, would have stretched from Gayton to Denhall. Their embankments would have shut off the view from Parkgate. The marina (a sop for the total loss of outlook) would have had a road round it.
The Neston UDC's response was to 'welcome the return of water on the Wirral shore', and the Parkgate Society was formed to combat this threat.
3. 1974 Water Resources in England & Wales (HMSO booklet) continued to propose water storage in the Dee Estuary.
4. 1976 Derek Bryan and Derek Hill proposed to dig a self-scouring channel to join the Parkgate Deep to Heswall. The scheme was to bring 'small pleasure boats' to Parkgate.
The Parkgate Society asked several experts for their opinion: all (including the expert produced by Mr Bryan) said that the plan would not work.
5. 1976 Mr Bartlett and Mr Sibley of Heswall proposed a marina and a miniature railway for Parkgate.
6. 1977 The Parkgate Society proposed to the Council improvements to the drainage at the foot of the sea wall.
7. 1983 Ward Ashcroft & Partners proposed a massive scheme for three linked lakes, the largest covering 98 acres at Parkgate, for dinghy sailing and canoeing. There were associated works including two car parks on the marsh in front of Parkgate.
8. 1987 Ken Allan, chairman of Wirral Association of Leisure & Tourism, called for a revival of the Dee Barrage scheme for off-shore water as 'a centre for informal leisure'.
9. 1987 Jack Cox proposed a lagoon fed by a widened gutter,
10. 1988 Derek Bryan (by then a councillor) had the Council investigate opening the Parkgate and Colliery gutters. The costs would be prohibitive.
11. 1989 Graham Harrison proposed building a hotel on the marsh, and extending the width of the Parade by twelve feet.

You have probably read of the latest of these plans, on the correspondence page of the Neston News. The correspondence followed a remarkable proposal from a Mr Harrison that, amongst other improvements, a hotel should be built on the Parkgate marsh and the sea wall done away with (because it 'no longer serves any real purpose').

For a moment I was tempted by the mischievous thought that 'Graham Harrison' was a nom de plume, and the letter a spoof, cleverly designed to whip up support for protecting Parkgate against the more philistine excesses of the tourism industry. Such a spoof letter was indeed once written to promote a Parkgate enterprise - more about that later.

Certainly, no spoof could have done the job better: correspondents were unanimous in pouring scorn on its suggestions. But Mr Harrison wrote a reply, so perhaps he really does exist. His letter has to be seen to be believed. The problem with Parkgate, he assures us, is the people who live here. So now you know !

The original spoof was written about 1922, just after A.G.Grenfell had built the open-air swimming bath beyond the Boat House. A letter appeared in the press denouncing the bad influence observable at the Parkgate Baths, where young women in swimsuits could be seen displaying themselves on the sunbathing balconies. The result, naturally, was a marked increase in young men ! Freddy Griffiths, then the captain of Neston Cricket Club, met A.G.Grenfell on the Parade and asked, "Have you seen what that fool wrote in the paper ?"

"Not so foolish," replied A.G. with a grin. "Who do you think wrote it ?"

Other Matters The Parkgate Nurseries have refused our offers of payment for keeping the tubs on the Donkey Stand supplied with flowers. We are most grateful.

The gift of a new seat on the Parade (which we unwisely stated in the last Newsletter as already fixed) could not in the end be accepted, because it was not the type which could be securely anchored to the ground.

There was a lapse in the collection of rubbish from the foot of the sea wall, because this detail had been omitted from a new contract for street cleaning which came into operation last summer. The matter has now been put right, we are assured.

Our secretary is on the Council's Road Safety Committee, to whom she suggested that the 30 mph speed limit at the foot of Boathouse Lane should be moved above the bridge. The road does not meet the criteria for such a change, and it was interesting to see the very detailed explanations of why not.

A member has told us that raw sewage has been escaping on to the marsh and we have told the Borough Engineers. This problem, which does arise from time to time, is caused when a household outlet is connected (privately) to the wrong pipe. Unfortunately it is very difficult to find out where the fault has originated.

We have been more successful in persuading a local restaurant owner, via the Environmental Health officers, to keep a tighter control over his refuse disposal, which had upset his neighbours.

William Barrett was headmaster of Mostyn House from 1882 to 1889, when he left to become a very popular curate of Neston. He would have become vicar had he not died in 1899.

He wrote and sang the following verses as part of a school performance of the farce Box and Cox, in 1863.

PARKGATE.

There's a place called Parkgate in the Hundred of Wirral,
Where there's everything rustic, lark, robin and squirrel,
And that sort of thing; just the same as the Tyrol.

Parkgate's the place for my small holiday,
Yes, that's just the place for my small holiday.

You may fancy yourself by the waters of Zurich,
The atmosphere's sweet, as of hay in a new rick,
While Flint wafts the odour of Acid Sulphuric!

There are two or three lamp posts, with new gas lamps
set on 'em,
And roads kept so dry, you can't get your feet wet on
'em,
And very fine sandbanks—when once you can get on
'em.

There's a new 'gutter' forming, there is of a surety,
Where the whole British Navy may ride in security—
I mean some fine day in the distant futurity.

There's the Connah's Quay Dock—it's a scheme too
romantic;
The Liverpool people, oh! won't they be frantic,
When the trade of Parkgate takes up all the Atlantic!

We've a Local Board here, I don't wish to deory it,
Tho' I *have* heard it whisper'd, we don't gain much by
it,—
But the Chairman's about, so I'd better be quiet!

The place is one mass of excitement and bustle,
And if you partake somewhat freely of mussel,
You can go up to Neston and see Dr. R——ll.

There's not a place like it, from Land's End to
Leicester,
For the succulent shrimp and the