

Parkgate Society

Newsletter 40

Spring 1991

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| President | JR Cochrane CBE |
| Chairman | GW Place |
| Vice-chairman | MS Potts |
| Secretary | Mrs AM Clarke |
| Treasurer | SC Edwards |

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Monday, 11th March, 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel,

Martyn Jamieson, who gave us that excellent talk about a kestrel's nest in Yorkshire, will give us an illustrated description of

THE FARNE ISLANDS

Saturday, 6th April, 9.30 am at the Old Quay (by the sea wall)

Help us to CLEAN UP the SEA WALL (see article later)

Monday, 15th April, 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel,

Lavinia Whitfield will describe the **CHURCH**, and Geoffrey Place will talk about the **VILLAGE**

of SHOTWICK

Monday, 20th May, 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel,

David Power will give us an illustrated talk about

FERRIES ACROSS THE MERSEY

We hope to arrange a **social occasion** in the Summer, perhaps in June. We will let you know later when we have confirmed the details.

If you find yourself in need of **TRANSPORT** to reach out meetings, do ring Angela Clarke (336 1069)

Membership

The subscription rates are: £3 Single or family
 £1.50 Senior Citizen

Mrs Valerie Place will be pleased to receive your subscriptions for 1991, at our meetings, or at her home (Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate.)

Congratulations to our chairman, Geoffrey Place, on gaining his Ph.D. after five years of part-time study at Liverpool University, for a thesis on The Rise and Fall of Parkgate, Passenger Port for Ireland, 1686-1815.

Well done, Geoffrey !

Cleaning up the Sea Wall, Saturday, 6th April

For several years we used to do this task once a year, but enthusiasm flagged and the number of helpers dwindled. It is high time we had another go at this unending task. We would have picked the Civic Trust's environment Week in May, but the tides favour an earlier date.

The Sea Wall is of special interest to Parkgate, even though at least half its height has disappeared beneath the mud. Our efforts to have the wall "listed" with the Department of the Environment (which we thought we had accomplished years ago) may actually succeed this time, so the Council advises us.

Meanwhile, do join us on 6th April, clad in wellies and gardening gloves (at least). We shall gather by the sea wall in front of the Old Quay public house at 9.30 in the morning. If that hour sounds a shade early, do join us at whatever hour you do surface. There are three tasks we shall tackle; picking up litter and debris, weeding the wall and peeling back the layer of loose vegetation which laps the lower edge of the wall. For this last task, some spades or forks will be useful. We shall have plenty of plastic bags and (we hope) skips.

As well as the practical value of cleaning up this most important part of Parkgate, the project has the symbolic value of showing that we truly care for our surroundings. For that reason, those who feel that their days of active marsh-paddling are over, will be very welcome if they lend us some symbolic support, just by watching for a few minutes and giving us a word of encouragement. As we near our closing time of lunchtime, those who started at 9.30 will certainly need it !

We should like to take this opportunity to thank the Dee Venture Scouts who have also been cleaning up at the foot of the wall.

Committee business

Since the last Newsletter we have discussed many points of local interest, including the following.

Before long we shall need to reprint our guide book, This is Parkgate, to which our financial reserves owe so much. It has dated surprisingly little in the past ten years, but we shall take the opportunity to revise it for a second edition with a new cover in colour, which David Scott has agreed to design for us.

The street lights on the Parade have been very fickle recently. Not only are they often unlit, some of them have the trick of going out as you walk past them. We have complained several times to the Council, as has Councillor Mrs Andrews on our behalf.

The Council invited us to pick a design of litter bin, similar to those recently installed in Neston, to go on the Parade. They should arrive before too long.

The Local Plan, about which there have been public discussions over the past two years, has now been published. With it, the Council has published a summary of all the points raised by groups such as this Society as well as by individuals, with comments and a note of the action taken where appropriate. It is agreeable to know that, when the Council^{said} they would listen to public opinion, they meant it.

Dog Dirt - a perennial problem by Becky Ford

Will we ever see light at the end of this tunnel? As a mum with young children, I've done my bit of pushing pushchairs and steering toddlers round the daily obstacles of the dog dirt trail.

Some will remember that I raised a petition, 'Are you fed up with dog dirt in Parkgate?' a year ago. I appealed for dog dirt bins to be installed and poop scoops to be encouraged by the borough council.

Our neighbours, Chester City Council, have installed special bins in parks, ornamental gardens, golf courses etc and are pleased with their success. People quickly adopted the habit of carrying a plastic bag and the bins were found to be full on their twice weekly emptying.

After being lobbied, our local authority is to make Stanney Fields Park in Neston an experimental dog bin area. I suggest that bins should be sited on the Parade, Parks Field, the Ropewalk and at the Old Baths. However, we are unlikely to get any in Parkgate in the near future.

Surely between ourselves we can be more vigilant at reporting or tackling offenders. Someone must know who it is that leave their dogs loose or uncaringly let them **fou!** in the middle of the pavement for everyone else's inconvenience.

I believe it's time we all put some effort into this aspect of 'cleaning up Parkgate.'

Did you know that Cheshire County Council takes control of its own stretch of the Wirral Country Park on April 1st, 1991. We then hope to have a discussion with the new countryside manager about points of interest to Parkgate.

The Changing Countryside - True or False ?

Addressing a Royal Society of Arts conference last year, a government minister felt obliged to point out that the countryside is not a museum, but a place where people live and work with all that implies about economic and social change.

The minister concerned thought a combination of ignorance and nostalgia to blame. But a paper at the same conference, by a member of the Economic and Social Research Council, identified the conservation movement as a major culprit. In the last twenty years it had been responsible for suffusing public debate with the notion of a countryside which is inherently under threat, but which consists largely of agriculture and wildlife habitats.

Only in terms of land use is rural England now agricultural England. In all other senses - economically, occupationally, socially, culturally - rural England has now been comprehensively "urbanised".. Middle class newcomers have formed powerful local coalitions to resist precisely those developments intended to boost the manufacturing and service industries on which any revival of prosperity amongst most of the long-established inhabitants depends.

Somehow, the paper continued, we have so organised matters that conservation, development and social vitality have emerged, not merely as different or separate strands of contemporary rural life, but as though they were in conflict with each other.

A Civic Trust Questionnaire

Together with other societies we were asked to participate in an 'audit of the environment'. The following is a summary of the findings.

The health of the High Street. In the last few years:

- The number of occupied shops has stayed much the same;
- 56% are aware of underuse of accommodation;
- 82% say it has caused buildings to look 'scruffy';
- the variety of shops has increased;
- the majority regretted the loss of specialist shops like greengrocers, chemists etc.
- 60% have at least one grocery shop offering a telephone delivery service.
- 72% said that getting to shops was a real problem for a significant part of the community.

Pedestrianisation

32% said there is no real need for it; 17% said there is.

57% of those with pedestrian shopping areas say that it has provided a new vitality

28% say people are nervous walking through these areas at night.

18% say vandalism has increased, but 86% say any sacrifice entailed in pedestrianisation has been worth it.

Multi-story car parks

26% say they are reasonably well kept; 73% say they make women nervous at night.

Bus deregulation

32% say it has improved the service, but 31% say it made things worse.

Traffic in residential areas

26% would favour stricter enforcement of parking laws, and 19% would favour stricter enforcement of speeding limits.

Town centre management

It was suggested that many towns would benefit from Town centre development, maintenance of Town Centre facilities, promotion of a 'Town Centre Image'.

32% said there was no real need to consider these ideas; while 38% said perhaps they should be considered, and 22% said the ideas should be looked at urgently.

Finally all were asked to identify their town's most crying need:

49% nominated THE TRAFFIC PROBLEM.

The Annual General Meeting

Two new committee members were elected: Mrs Becky Ford and Ron Wright.

The remaining committee members were re-elected: Geoffrey Place as Chairman, Michael Potts as Vice-chairman, Angela Clarke as Secretary, Clive Edwards as Treasurer; and as committee members, Shirley Britt, Harold Loughran, Valerie Place, Muriel Tinker and Leonard Walker.

The chairman gave as an example of our problems the fate of a report on 'Listed Buildings. The Society had commented on the listing of 38 buildings in Parkgate a dozen years ago and had then been assured that our detailed points (particularly in accuracy of description) had been accepted by the Department of the Environment, and that the Sea Wall would be added to the List. When a reappraisal was planned, we discovered that no action had been taken on either issue. So we have tried again, and have eventually (after applying pressure for an answer from our own Planning Department) been given renewed assurances. We can only wait and see what trickles through the narrow channels of bureaucracy.



VIEW OF PARKGATE FROM THE RIVER DEE.

This sketch of Parkgate was printed on the Sale Plan for the auction of the Mostyn estate in 1849. As the sketch does not show the Congregational chapel (now St Thomas' church) built in 1843, it must have been drawn before that year.

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