

Parkgate Society

Newsletter 42

Spring 1992

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

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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

Wirral Footpaths

a talk by Max Kirby

Saturday, 11th April from 9.30 am, starting at the South Slip,

Help us to Clean the Foreshore

No need to stay for long ! Your support,
even your moral support, will be greatly appreciated.

Monday, 13th April, 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel

The Port of Ellesmere

an account by local author Pat O'Brien

Monday, 18th May, 8 pm at the Parkgate Hotel

Ships at Parkgate

back to the 18th century with Geoffrey Place

Sunday, 28th June, from 10 am, starting at the Donkey Stand

A Treasure Hunt

organised by Becky Ford to celebrate our
twentieth anniversary. See the next page for further
details. But come ! It will be fun.

Monday, 21st September, 7.30 at the Parkgate Hotel

An Antiques Evening for charity

For further details, see the next page.

And while you have your diary out, the AGM will be on 26th October

If you need TRANSPORT to reach our meetings, do ring Angela Clarke (336 1069)
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Twenty Years, 1972 - 1992

The Parkgate Society was formed twenty years ago, and to celebrate, we have arranged two events extra to our normal programme. Of the first, Becky Ford writes:

So that we may find all those places that eluded us in last summer's photographic quiz, we are holding a Treasure Hunt on 28th June around Parkgate. It will involve a stroll of an hour or so, looking for clues along the way. There will be a shorter alternative route for those who may not wish to tackle the longer course. Meet from 10 am on the Donkey Stand, and we shall end in the Red Lion to hear the results over a well-earned beverage.

The second event will be an Antiques Evening, at which Kevin Whay will give a short talk and will then value items which members may care to bring. At the same time we will provide a small exhibition of the Society's twenty years, and the hotel will provide a glass of wine. We will make a charge for the evening, and the profit will be given to charity. Fuller details will appear in our next Newsletter, but as that is published at the beginning of September, please put the date in your diary now.

The Parkgate Society was formed to focus local interest on the threat of the Dee Barrage scheme, and its first constructive task was to advise on the boundaries of the new Parkgate Conservation Area. An inaugural meeting was held on 15th February 1972 at the Parkgate Hotel to form a steering committee. The prime movers towards forming the Society were Peter Moore, then Countryside Officer for Cheshire, and his wife Betty, Ruth Blok who became the first secretary, and Hylda Wall-Jones. The steering committee called a public meeting on 14th March 1972 at which the Parkgate Society was officially launched.

Our next Newsletter will contain a report of our activities over twenty years.

Meeting the Chief Executive

Our concern during a long, hot summer about some aspects of the Council's administration at Parkgate led us to write, not only on points of detail such as litter, but on what we perceived to be a lack of coordination.

As a result the Chief Executive, Mr Ewbank, invited your chairman and secretary to a meeting with him and some of his officers. There was a full and frank discussion which gave us considerable encouragement. The problems facing the Council, including finance, were made plain; in particular, the Environmental Protection Act which we hoped might solve our litter problem, has been imposed half way through a cleaning contract which cannot be radically altered for two years. Nevertheless, we did persuade Mr Ewbank to agree to an extra collection from the Parade's bins on Saturdays in summer.

Our plea for better coordination (over the siting of street furniture for example) may already be partly answered. We made the point that things occur haphazardly at Parkgate because there is no master plan, as there needs to be in a Conservation Area. Mrs Clarke reports below on a meeting to site bins, and we hope to have a further meeting to discuss a master plan for Parkgate.

We are most grateful to Mr Ewbank and his staff for the evident care they have taken to study our concerns and to attempt to remedy them.

Membership The subscription for 1992 remains at
£3 for single or family membership, and
£1.50 for Senior Citizen membership.

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

Progress on Parade

Put out the flags ! The Parade is to have five new litter bins ! After 22 months of pestering, persuading and pleading, I met Council officers Glyn Roberts and Norman Stainthorpe, and we agreed on the siting of the bins, four to be supplied by the Council and one to be paid for by the Society. The Council's outlay represents 37% of their budget for this kind of thing.

While I had a captive audience I also pointed out: the remains of a concrete litter bin in Station Road; the rotting seats on the Donkey Stand and the vanishing ones on South Parade; the dangerous railings near the Middle Slip; and the proliferation of signs on the lamppost in front of Mostyn Square.

So keep a lookout on The Parade for new bins and other improvements. A big 'thank you' to Mr Philip Bostock, Environmental Services Officer, and his staff, with whom I have regular contact.

Angela Clarke

Following the interest shown in our talk on David Winter 'Cottage Pottery', Society members are offered a 10% discount on all such items bought from Right Way Home Centre in West Kirby until the end of February. Please bring this Newsletter as proof of your membership.

A New Use for an Old Dock

Society members may be interested in a recent development affecting the estuary of the Mersey. On 4th October 1991 HRH the Princess Royal opened a new waste water treatment works constructed within the limits of Liverpool's abandoned Sandon Dock. This dock was once the home berth of Cunard's Lusitania and Mauretania and the Canadian Pacific line's Empress ships.

North West Water commenced its scheme in 1984 by removing the silt deposited over many years and replacing it with sand dredged from the Mersey to provide suitable foundation conditions. After a seven year period of intense constructional activity, the works is now operational, providing a more acceptable solution to the problem of the disposal of waste that was previously discharged to the river untreated.

The raw waste water is first raised by pumps situated within a building referred to locally as the city's third cathedral. After some screening and removal of grit it is directed into tanks to settle out the remaining solids before being allowed to flow into the river. The sediment or sludge from the tanks is heated in large cylinders or 'digesters' where it is converted into a less offensive product for disposal by ship to sea.

An attempt has been made to blend the new architecture with that of the old waterfront and the style adopted is generally acknowledged to be successful in this respect.

The £50 million complex will eventually treat all waste water draining into the Mersey from Crosby in the north to Speke in the south and will considerably improve conditions in the estuary.

Ron Wright

TV Stardom

Did you watch Granada's 'On the Road' which visited Parkgate last August? Local worthies who were interviewed were Jack Cox on his gutter-dredging plan to attract birds, Bill Collier on the making of ice cream, and Colin Meador on the dwindling stocks of shrimp. Bill Tutton of Burton was glimpsed playing the Mostyn House carillon of bells.

Parkgate Station

It is incredible to stand on Parkgate Road / Station Road and think that only about thirty years ago you could look up at Parkgate Station and a wide approach road which ran alongside Parks Field. Standing at the entrance to the Wirral Way today, trees and hedges have grown, providing a very rural scene.

As a newcomer to Parkgate and not having seen the railway with its bridge spanning Station Road, I find it fascinating to think of what had been.

For the benefit of others not remembering the station, the first train to Parkgate was in 1866 when the line from Hooton terminated at what is now the picnic area on the Wirral Country Park.

Prior to this, horse-pulled coaches had run from Parkgate to Chester and the ferries to Liverpool. When the railway line between Chester and Birkenhead had opened in 1840, an omnibus connecting with the trains at Hooton ran from the Ship inn at 9am and 6 pm. By 1857 the omnibus ran frequently (from the Pengwern Arms) and with the coming of the railway there was speculation that Parkgate might regain its former importance of the packet ship days of over forty years earlier.

In 1866 the single track, having come downhill from Neston, levelled out on to an embankment ending in a single platform on the left. A loop of track allowed the engines to rejoin the train for the return journey. A line from Ness Colliery, added in the 1870s, ended on the far side of the platform.

Parkgate remained the terminus of the branch line for twenty years. In 1886 the line was extended from West Kirby and a new station was built for the benefit of the numerous visitors on the other side of Station Road. The original station was used for goods. The extension over Station Road required a sharp curve in the line which would have caused a lot of jolting and grinding of wheels as the train negotiated the bend at a very low speed.

The new station had two platforms, each 340 yards long. On the down side to West Kirby there was a general waiting room, a ladies' waiting room and other conveniences. On the up side there were booking offices and waiting rooms for the public. The approaches to the station were wide and there was a subway between platforms at a gentle gradient. The platform and buildings were made of wood. A bridge number plate was fastened to the buildings where the track went over the subway. At the other end of the building was the signal box and there was a short canopy over each platform.

The Chester Chronicle of 1st May 1886 said about the opening, "On Good Friday Parkgate was thronged with people. It is said that so many have not been seen for years assembled on the Esplanade. The opening of the Parkgate Extension Line brought shoals of holiday folks to avail themselves of the accommodation. The delightful weather drew everybody out of doors."

During the 1940s the takings at Parkgate averaged £100 in a morning, much of this in workmen's fares to Port Sunlight and Capenhurst. The signalmen and porters at Parkgate were said to have an unofficial arrangement for passing quiet afternoons, a contract with a local butcher for plucking turkeys and other poultry.

All that remains of the final Parkgate Station are the overgrown remains of the subway. The bridge over Station Road was removed in 1965. On the far side of the road part of the platform of the original Parkgate station can be seen.

Becky Ford

How Well do you Know Parkgate ?

If you don't already know the answers to these questions, the answers may be found in our guide book, "This is Parkgate". If you have parted with your copy, you can get a new one at Nicholls, Parkgate Stores, Tony Smith's in Parkgate; Russell's Bookshop in Neston; the Visitors' Centre at Thurstaston; or any Parkgate Society meeting.

1. Perhaps you would need to walk a 'tight' quarter mile here, especially when the weather is rough.
2. This cottage was named after a battle which took place in 1854 during the Crimean War.
3. Would Charles Dickens feel 'Bleak' about this change of house name ?
4. There's a 1721 date-plate on the front of this restaurant.
5. This house was where the Customs officers lodged in the first years of the nineteenth century, so they could keep an eye on the shipping.
6. Is this where you'll find a 'Ladies College' ?
7. This could be where Peter, or maybe Buggy lived.
8. This cottage is where Emma Lyon is reputed to have stayed when she came to 'take the waters'.
9. In about 1814 the Billiard Room became the Assembly Room and is now a well-known building in Parkgate.
10. London's Theatre Royal may have been an influence when this weindt was named.

Muriel Tinker

Oh, come on ! Try to answer them all before you look !

1, the Ropewalk (tightrope)
 2, Alma Cottage
 3, Brooke House
 4, the Tandooort Restaurant, formerly Seaward House
 5, the Watch House
 6, You may have either Cheltenham Place (from its name) or Brockleigh, which really was a school for young ladies. So was the Parkgate Hotel when it was called Leighton
 7, The Warren (Peter Rabbit and Bugs Bunny), but you may also claim Madriguera, which means warren in Spanish (though not in the guide book)
 8, Dover Cottage
 9, Balcony House
 10, Drury Lane.

Yes, it is time you looked at 'This is Parkgate' again !

The Sands of Dee

Charles Kingsley's famous poem appears below. Kingsley was briefly a canon of Chester cathedral in the 1870s, and for several months in each of three years he lived with his family in Chester. He was a keen fisherman and enjoyed the chance to fish in the Dee. He is known to have visited Parkgate, where he visited the Revd AS Grenfell, a cousin of his wife Fanny (née Grenfell).

But the poem was not written while Kingsley stayed in Chester, but twenty years earlier, apparently inspired by a water-colour by the artist Copley Fielding. But which painting? Alas, Fielding's output was large and the experts do not seem to know which painting it was or where it is now.

Valerie Place

The Sands of Dee

'Oh, Mary, go and call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
Across the sands of Dee.'
The western wind was wild and dark with foam,
And all alone went she.

The western tide crept up along the sand,
And o'er and o'er the sand,
And round and round the sand
As far as eye could see.
The rolling mist came down and hid the land,
And never home came she.

'Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair —
A tress of golden hair,
A drowned maiden's hair,
Above the nets at sea?'
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
Among the stakes of Dee.

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
The cruel, crawling foam,
The cruel, hungry foam,
To her grave beside the sea,
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home,
Across the sands of Dee.

Charles Kingsley