

Parkgate Society

Newsletter

Spring 1997

Issue Number 52

Meetings

are held at 8 p.m. at the Parkgate Hotel unless otherwise stated.

If you require transport please ring the acting secretary, Anne Williamson, on 336 - 6146 giving 24 hours notice.

Subscriptions:

£4.00 Family or Single
£2.50 Senior Citizen

1997 payment is now due. Valerie Place will be pleased to receive your subscriptions at our meetings or at her home (Pendmore, Station Road, Parkgate). Newcomers are always welcome at our events free of charge, so please bring your friends.

Diary Dates

Monday 17th February

Medieval Furniture, a talk by Roger O'Neill.

Monday 17th March

Our *25th Anniversary Social Evening* see next column for full details.

Monday 21st April

William Potts, Victorian Clockmaker of Leeds. Our own Michael Potts will give his research into five generations of clockmaking.

Monday 19th May

Sir Wilfred Grenfell of Labrador.

A talk by Geoffrey Place.

Our 25th Anniversary

On Monday, 17th March we shall celebrate the launch of the Parkgate Society in 1972. We invite all our members to a social evening at the Parkgate Hotel. We shall open the doors at 7.30 p.m. and offer each visitor a glass of wine or soft drink. At about 8 p.m. two musicians will play for us - Terry Perry (clarinet and saxophone) and Malcolm Hogarth (keyboard). They will play light music with a touch of jazz. At 8.30 we hope to offer coffee, and we have been promised a few words from Peter Moore, the Society's founding father. The musicians will play for a further period before the evening closes.

In the course of all this there will be a collection of "puzzle pictures" taken in Parkgate for you to identify.



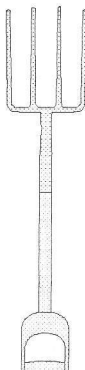
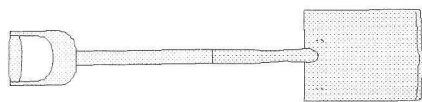
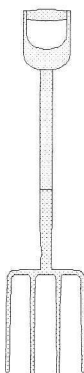
The wine and coffee will be provided at the Society's expense. It should be an enjoyable evening so do come.

Marsh Clearance

Sunday, 13th April, 10am

Let's make a special effort in our 25th Anniversary year to show our support.

All volunteers bring wellies and gloves, and meet at the Old Quay Pub Slipway.



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF THE PARKGATE SOCIETY

by Geoffrey Place

According to our constitution, the Society's aims are:

- to stimulate public interest in Parkgate;
- to promote high standards of planning;
- and to secure the preservation and improvement of features of historical or public interest.

To do these things, our constitution empowers us to perform a long list of activities, such as: to promote and publish research, hold meetings, co-operate with the local authorities and so on.

One of the Society's first tasks was to collect some information about Parkgate's history. This was done by Olive Wilcox and Hylda Wall-Jones, resulting in the leaflet *A Stroll Through Parkgate* which was very successful and provided funds for our next publishing venture, Michael Barton's *Panorama of Parkgate*. The guide book *This is Parkgate, its buildings and their story* followed in 1979, written by Geoffrey Place and illustrated by Michael Barton, which is still in print and selling well. These publications have provided the Society with its capital, so that members' subscriptions (which pay the running costs) can be kept low.

The society is often asked to provide a speaker or to lead a guided walk for other societies. These tasks have usually fallen to Geoffrey Place, whose personal research (*The Rise and Fall of Parkgate* was published in 1994 and he edited *Neston 1840 - 1940* which appeared this year) has revealed much about Parkgate that was quite unknown in 1972.

The core of the Society's activities has always been the talks, usually seven or eight a year, which we first held at the Parkgate Hotel, then at the Boat House and now at the Parkgate Hotel again. Angela Clarke has found most of the speakers and, for a place the size of Parkgate, we get very good audiences. Over the years we have heard a wide range of speakers, nearly always on local subjects, ranging from history to present administration to future plans; from birds and beasts to flowers and insects; from stage coaches to buses and trains; from Theatre Clwyd to the Liverpool Cathedrals. There have been a very few duds - one speaker turned up fifty minutes late, just as we were all leaving - but the standard has been remarkably high. Occasionally we have had tea parties and social evenings.

The Society has always looked for ways to improve Parkgate, if within our means. Trees were planted in Boathouse Lane, in the grounds of St Thomas' and most recently in the grounds of the primary school. We have this year planted daffodils at the two entrances of Parkgate. We have bought seats and litter bins for the Parade and we have encouraged the Council to provide others. We had one failure when we paid the Council a considerable sum to improve the bus shelter and its surroundings, whereupon a new Council officer, unaware of our contribution, undid most of the work. But we were pleased when a proliferation of

signs on the lamp post in front of Mostyn Square was reduced to one. We have picked up tons of litter.

Other people's schemes to improve Parkgate are not always welcome and counter-arguments have to be found. One fellow wanted a miniature railway installed the length of the Parade! A former planning officer thought it would be a good idea to site two huge car parks on the foreshore at each end of the Parade. At a simpler level, the Council asks us to comment on all planning applications made in the village. Where these are controversial we try to reflect our members views, even when these do not agree with each other, and to draw the planners' attention to sensitive issues or possible snags.

To do this, and to report the myriad things which go wrong - dud street lamps, smelly drains, broken litter bins and so on - we have built up a rapport with officers of the Council and with councillors themselves. Because what we say is both constructive and reasonable, we are listened to. Committee members have often visited the Council offices in Ellesmere Port to discuss the enhancement of the conservation area, the problem of litter, street furniture, the description of Parkgate in the *Local Guide*, the Local Plan and so on. Our Member of Parliament visited us to discuss historic buildings.

One of our successes, described in another article, was to establish the Neston Civic Society. The funds and efforts of both societies were successfully used in a joint project to conserve, research and display the Saxon cross fragments in Neston parish church.

Foreseeing the future is a treacherous pastime. Once we invited a university lecturer to predict the future of the marsh. He told us that it would dry out in ten years and then be ripe for development. That was twenty years ago and very little has happened. So it would be unwise to predict the future in our village. This Society will continue to be vigilant, and by keeping our eyes and ears open, to seek to serve the best interests of Parkgate.

Parkgate Society Officers

<u>Acting Secretary:</u>	Anne Williamson Backwood Lodge Boathouse Lane Tel: 0151 336 6146	<u>Editor:</u>	Becky Ford The Moorings The Parade Parkgate Tel: 0151 336 5088
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Committee Members

President:	J R Cochrane CBE	Chairman:	G W Place
Vice Chairman:	M S Potts	Secretary:	Angela Clarke Anne Williamson (acting)
Treasurer:	S C Edwards		
Other Members:	Shirley Britt Stephen Gordon	Becky Ford Valerie Place	Jerry Harris Ron Wright

We send our sympathy to Angela Clarke on the tragic death of her husband, Jim, and look forward to having Angela back with us as soon as she is able.

St. Thomas' Church

The Society was extremely pleased to receive a copy of a letter from the Friends of St. Thomas' to the Neston Parochial Church Council. We reproduce it here, in its entirety, for your information.

10th October 1996

Dear Sir,

Ref: St Thomas' Church, Parkgate.

I am writing this letter on behalf of "The Family & Friends of St Thomas' " because it is only recently that we have been copied with correspondence by the Parkgate Preservation Trust regarding the recent dialogue between you both and now are better informed regarding the stand being made by both sides. The other reason that we write this letter is that many of us feel dismayed regarding the very entrenched position of the PCC which is leading to some very unhelpful publicity for the Church in general and St Thomas' in particular.

The Family & Friends of St Thomas'

Perhaps this might be the right opportunity to explain to all parties now involved with the discussion and dialogue regarding the future of St Thomas' as to who "The Family & Friends" are and why we should have considered it necessary to have a grouping of such a name. It was formed as the "The Friends of St Thomas'" following the disbanding of the St Thomas' Fund Raising Committee (a sub-committee of the PCC) in August 1995, in order to maintain cohesion of St Thomas' parishioners, together with any others who would wish to have a Church presence maintained in the village of Parkgate. It was also hoped to continue to influence the PCC to change their minds regarding the future of St Thomas'. Owing to the great number who have wished to show their support, some of whom are not necessarily church-goers at the moment, it has been considered necessary to change the name slightly in order to make the distinction.

St Thomas' Prayer Group

I should add that at the outset, when St Thomas' congregation ceased to worship formerly in Parkgate, the St Thomas' Prayer Group was formed and has been regularly meeting without a break every second Tuesday since February 1995 with the aim of seeking God's will in this matter. We believe that God would wish us to have a living, growing presence in Parkgate of worshipping believers and to act as a witness in the community. We believe that the Church should not step back from their commitment to this community or the very great opportunities available; after all this is the "decade of evangelism" is it not? It is also essential that the rising population of young people in Parkgate are catered for.

Do we need a Church building or not?

The main issue is whether Parkgate is in need of a Church building or not. The recent letter of 27th September and one of the quotes in a newspaper article suggested that ex St Thomas' folk had been successfully integrated into existing services at Neston Parish Church or St Michaels. Some parishioners are now worshipping out of the area entirely and some have stopped going to Church, both groups feel they have been let down by Neston Parish. Some of us have been attending at the other churches within the parish and the reasons for our wanting to attend, support and involve ourselves in existing services at these Churches were manifold. We outline just three; to be able to continue our worship together within the parish, maintain our link with all within the parish identified as the St Thomas' congregation worshipping at Neston, and as a source of strengthening our faith and hope for the future. This has not taken away the element of being "St Thomas' in exile" from many of us. After all, we live in Parkgate, we had a Church in Parkgate and our hearts are for the community of Parkgate. This period was only ever considered to be an

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THE FAMILY & FRIENDS OF ST THOMAS'

(Continued...)

"interregnum", a temporary measure, until the future of St Thomas' had been decided, which was to be either restoration or rebuilding, not dispensing with it entirely. (This latter point was never on the original agenda). Therefore it was not correct to assume that "successful integration" had taken place.

There is no other suitable building available for worship within Parkgate except for the Parkgate Primary School, (which was used temporarily and very successfully for several months in 1994 but obviously has its limitations) and Mostyn House School Chapel, the outcome of the discussions between Headmaster and Vicar of which we are very unclear about. St Thomas' is located at the centre of the community, in Parkgate Square, and has some ground available for improvement and extension. It's location at the centre of the community, and the fact that there is no Community Centre building available within Parkgate would lead any outsider to wonder why. Well, space is a premium within Parkgate, and it is also a Conservation Area. These two points have to be carefully considered whenever deciding on a new venture in this locality. However, plans were passed in January 1989 for an extension hall, with toilets and kitchen facilities to be located on St Thomas' grounds but the PCC had to put on hold their plans here in favour of St Michael's in Little Neston because that Church was in a state of collapse. That was understandable but we are now a number of years further on. The new Church building of St Michael's is flourishing and surely now the PCC can concentrate its efforts in a positive approach to the restoration of St Thomas' and the new extension facility already discussed. Can you not see the opportunities available of St Thomas' hall being used as a Community Centre for Village functions and the 'spin-off' this could give for St Thomas' as a witnessing Church?

Fund Raising

When the St Thomas' Fund Raising Committee was formed the PCC never did allow us to have a clear project, i.e. the agenda was "to raise funds to rebuild or restore St Thomas', or to be used generally within the parish". Many were concerned as to who would make the final decision in what area the funds would be allocated within such a broad fund raising statement and thus without a clear objective all our efforts of raising significant funds were thwarted. We were also informed that we were not allowed to seek funding from outside of the Church community even though many non-church-goers wished to give. Even the latest effort of raising funds by the Vicar in March this year from St Thomas' congregation contained an element of confusion :-

It was to give money either:-

1. for God's work through his Church generally; and/or
2. for the maintenance & restoration of the structure of St Thomas' or, in the event of our not needing it all for the present building then:-
 - (a) used for general church work in Parkgate.
 - (b) used for other historic churches
 - (c) be returned to me/us
 - (d) given to following charity (please specify)

In our view it was hardly surprising that this did not produce fruit as it did not contain one single objective at its heart. It was also observed that this was not to be a 'parish wide' effort, as the new St Michaels had been, but limited to St Thomas' congregation only.

One Last Chance ?

Last March, Fr Alastair's letter to 'Fellow Members' and Friends of St Thomas' stated, and I quote that "it is important that church members work together with the conservationists to give them the chance of discovering whether there really is the will amongst local people to pay for the restoration of the existing building... To help them with this we have suggested that we form a joint committee with them..." From the letter received from the Parkgate Preservation Trust we note that at least two meetings have taken place but we have not been party to the outcome except from that stated by the PPT in their letter. We also sense a very positive attitude from the Parkgate Preservation Trust in their willingness to work with the PCC and raise funds in order to restore St Thomas', but on the basis of the letters received this does not appear to be reciprocated by the PCC.

It is our wish for those of us who call ourselves "The Family & Friends of St Thomas'" (as ex worshipping members of St Thomas' or who wish to be in the future), to be kept informed about the PCC's efforts and attitudes regarding
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THE FAMILY & FRIENDS OF ST THOMAS'

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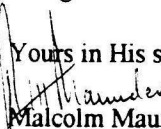
this whole matter and the reason why the letter of 27th September from the PCC to the PPT is so negative. However, our immediate concern is the PCC's closing paragraph regarding "putting the building on the market" and the need for "getting the best deal possible". Apart from these terms being particularly upsetting to Christians who have worshipped in that Church building over the years, if the PCC have decided to wash their hands of St Thomas' entirely then we, the Church family, as the Christian laity of St Thomas', should be the first to know. The PCC should be reminded that they unanimously agreed not to sell the site incorporating St Thomas' at their meeting held on 24th July 1995 (Option 3).

We note with interest the suggestions raised by the Parkgate Preservation Trust in their letter of 30th September regarding their suggestions to the PCC recommending a Feasibility Studies Grant to examine the opportunities and costs of repairing, adapting and extending the church building for joint worship and community use. We also note their suggestion of a 'shared church' with other denominations in this area of 'hugely expanded population'. With this last point in mind there is always the possibility that other denominations would be interested in becoming involved on an ecumenical basis and the Anglican Church could then have the opportunity of managing the first 'ecumenical church' of its kind on the Wirral. (This has been successfully achieved in other parts of Britain and in the Middle East).

In Conclusion

The reason for this letter is to ensure that the past and present concerns of the Christian community in Parkgate are explained with some clarity, to try and express our continued desire for a Church in Parkgate, and hopefully to endeavour to ensure that good communications are maintained between the Parkgate Preservation Trust and the Parochial Church Council to this end. We ask you to please remember the Christian people who have had a lifetime in Parkgate and continue to attend and support the Church and who look to the Church for many aspects of their lives. There was one very important factor which was missed by Neston PCC, the fact that Parkgate is a sensitive, close community, and should be handled appropriately; but do you not realise that this can be built upon positively and with evangelism at its heart? We believe it is not too late.

Yours in His service.


Malcolm Maunder
for and on behalf of
THE FAMILY & FRIENDS OF ST THOMAS'

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The group of researchers who recently published the book *Neston 1840-1940* are now turning their attention to the Parkgate and Neston area during the Second World War.

If you were in this area during the War and would be willing to help our research, please contact Geoffrey Place (336 2891).

On this page and the next, with our thanks to the author for his kind permission, we reproduce an article which first appeared in the Weekend supplement of the Daily Telegraph on 22 September 1996.

THREE SEALS IN A SAUCER OF SAND

With weighty backpack, **Christopher Somerville** spends a night on the island of Hilbre, and delights in its wildlife, history and solitude.

The oyster-catcher was tugging steadily at a morsel in the sand bank, oblivious to the rain and wind that were cutting horizontally in across the Dee estuary. I got to within a few feet of him before he spotted me through the haze: then the scarlet bill jerked up, the sickle wings spread and he flew off down the salt-water channel towards the sea, piping shrilly in alarm.

Beyond him the hills of the North Wales coast were blurred into milky grey as rain swept across the low-lying islets humped in the sands a mile off the Wirral shore. The tide was ebbing fast, pulling its rippling skirts away towards the western horizon and leaving the three Hilbre islands - Little Eye, Little Hilbre and Hilbre itself - alone in a vast saucer of sand that glinted with subdued tints of silver.

I trudged on through pools and runnels of salt water, sending more oyster-catchers skimming away from their feeding grounds. My backpack dragged uncomfortably, weighted with food, drink, bird-

books, binoculars, clothes and sleeping bag. Spending a rainy night on Hilbre is not an exercise to be taken lightly.

The largest of the Dee estuary islets is only a few hundred yards long. Its bunkhouse is spartan. There are no shops here. No fresh water - Hilbre's supply comes from the skies via the gull-spattered roofs, the gutters and storage tanks of the island's handful of buildings. You hump across the sands everything you need on your back. But that hour's walk from the civilised seafront promenade of West Kirby is a walk into paradise for those who delight in seabirds, seals, strange histories and unbounded solitude.

Until the great melt at the end of the last Ice Age raised sea levels, the three sandstone knolls were joined to the Wirral shore. Erosion has separated them so that from the mainland they look like three seals swimming north-west. In clear sunshine they gleam green and red; in foul weather they glower in black, indigo and dun, remote and dour, yet always alluring.

I rounded the tiny slip of Little Eye, treading over inch thick plates of sandstone compressed into a dusky red sandwich topped with a green salad of coarse grass. Clumps of it nodded to the wind in their sheltered crevices. Shells of winkles cockles and mussels lay between the ribs of sand as I splashed on past Middle Eye, dotted with the round pink heads of thrift.

"Back in a few minutes - here's the bunkhouse key - help yourself!" called Vicky Seager from the window of her Land Rover as she drove past with a couple of shore-going visitors. I had last set eyes on Vicky five

years before, when she was only three months into her job as custodian of Hilbre Island and Dee estuary ranger. She had been a bit overwhelmed then by all the attention of local journalists. They just couldn't get enough of the "Lone Ranger on the Rocks" angle - and a girl to boot.

Since then, Vicky has begun to learn a little about the islands. Or that's how she puts it. I thought differently when, towards sunset, she invited me to join her on an evening foray among the rocks. Pointing here, gently unearthing there, Vicky quietly expounded the private lives of the sea anemones, rock-boring molluscs, starfish and pincer-waving shore crabs that are her day-to-day neighbours.

What she didn't know about life on, in and under the rocks of the tide-line - and to this untutored observer it seemed precious little - she later meticulously researched and noted down for me. Daily life for the custodian of Hilbre, however, is not all rock-pooling. There are visitors to see to, including up to 2000 Merseyside school children in the summer months who explore the beaches and caves.

The litter left by August picnickers has to be cleared, bunkhouse accommodation has to be cleaned, and sundry cuts and bruises attended to. The Mersey Docks and Harbours Board maintains a tidal gauge on Hilbre which has to be read. Auxiliary coast guard duties vie with slide talks and guided walks, report-writing, organising conservation volunteer work, wall building, concrete setting, storm damage repair. Then, of course, there are the bird-watchers, spider experts, moss fanciers, botanists and invertebrate

specialists to welcome, help, instruct and learn from.

Hilbre is a famous port of call and staging post for migrating and wintering birds, especially waders. The enormous sandy larder of the Dee estuary supports 30,000 oyster-catchers, 17,000 knot and 14,000 dunlin in winter, as well as many thousand redshank, lapwing and curlew, and ducks such as pintail, wigeon and shelduck. Land birds call on Hilbre in enormous number during spring and autumn migrations- swallows, pipits, warblers, goldcrests, finches. Members of the Hilbre Bird Observatory have been recording these miraculous arrivals for 40 years. Stout-weather gear, binoculars, and notebook are the only Hilbre fashion accessories that count during winter gales, when groups of bird-watchers brave the discomfort of the wave-splashed hide to enjoy sightings of Leach's petrels, divers and skuas. Hilbre has always had a human population of some sort. The main island is barnacled with buildings: the bird observatory, the old Telegraph House where Vicky lives, the ruined lifeboat station that houses the tide gauge, a handful of cottages whose owners holiday out here. Also the bunkhouse, where I dumped my pack with a sigh of relief and lit the gas under a kettle of filtered rainwater.

Later, as I wandered over the few hundred yards of Hilbre, a sense of history began to sink in. Here was the pond whose narcissi, shaking in the rain-laden wind, had been planted by medieval monks who toughed it out on the islands for four hundred years. Here, in the walls of the 19th-century Telegraph House, were older stones that belonged to the Seagull Inn, when that resort of

smugglers, wreckers and seafarers waiting for a wind to Ireland was flourishing on Hilbre 200 years ago.

Among the red rocks of the island's southern side I sat at the entrance to Lady's Cave and relived the legend that might be a true story: the beautiful but reluctant bride-to-be washed up dying in the cave after casting herself from her father's ship on hearing that her lover was dead. Through binoculars I watched colony of grey seals, a crowd of slug-like shapes, hauled out on a sandbank. Fifty yards from where I sat, others floated with flippers and muzzles raised clear of the turning tide, pushing their necks against the flow of water and snorting as they enjoyed the tickling sensation.

Figures were moving far off shore among the estuary sands as darkness fell: shrimpers in yellow oilskins, dragging their big triangular nets through the water. Back at the bunkhouse, Vicky apologetically handed over a couple of candles - the generator had spluttered to a halt. But I didn't mind. I sat by the Calor Gas fire in the flickering light of the candles, reading about Hilbre in one of Vicky's books and listening to the wind and rain.

A knock on the door heralded Martyn Jamieson, dripping wet and looking forward to a can of beer and a good chinwag. Senior Ranger with the Wirral Country Park, enslaved by wild birds since boyhood, Martyn has one burning ambition for Hilbre.

The old Buoymaster's residence and other Trinity House buildings on the island have recently come into Wirral Borough Council's hands, and if Martyn has his way they will

be converted into a study centre for residential courses - bird-watching, naturally, but also music, painting, photography, botany and any other subject he can interest people in.

The Buoymaster's house could tell a tale or two. "See the little cupboards?" said Martyn as we explored by torchlight. "The members of the Hilbre Island Club - a drinking club, basically, early this century - kept their booze in those. Prince Philip used to sleep in this bedroom when he came here birdwatching. How I'd love to see that fireplace all blazing and surrounded by people singing or talking about their day."

Money is the stumbling block, Martyn explained, as the three of us broke open the beer cans. He would like to see oil companies, at present busy prospecting around the estuary, come forward with some funds to back up the fine green woods of the PR departments. Failing that, the EU might stump up, or there was always the National Lottery. We sat spinning possibilities until Vicky, at the window, pronounced the tide on the make. I watched the yellow gleam of Martyn's lights bouncing over the sands until they were blotted out by rain.

At dawn, a pale light woke me. I dragged myself to the window and looked out on a world of infinitely subtle grades of grey, brown and silver. The outgoing tide was coiling seaward in its snake-like channels. Two seals rolled and flapped lazily, half in and half out of the water; and a thousand oyster-catchers, turnstones and plovers stepped fastidiously among the worm casts, intent on breakfast.

HOW TWO SOCIETIES WERE FORMED

by Geoffrey Place

It was in 1971 that the plans for a Dee Barrage were unveiled. The intention was that a road should be built across the estuary, on an embankment with a bridge over the actual river, and that inside that embankment there would be reservoirs for fresh water. Several positions for the crossing were proposed, and one of them was from Gayton to Greenfield, a short distance down river from Parkgate. If that scheme had been chosen, the whole character of the estuary would have been altered - from Parkgate's point of view, destroyed. Not only would the roadway have been visually intrusive, but the earth walls needed to retain the reservoirs would have gone far towards destroying the view from Parkgate to the opposite shore. In exchange for this loss, it was planned to build a boating lake between the Parade and the reservoir embankment. Neston Council actually approved the scheme on the ground that it would "bring back the water to Parkgate".

The Parkgate Society was formed to combat this threat and to propose that, if a barrage had to be built, it would be further up the river. At about the same time, the new idea of Conservation Areas was being launched, and the Society's first task was to advise on the boundaries of the new Parkgate Conservation Area.

An inaugural meeting was held at the Parkgate Hotel on 15 February 1972 to form a steering committee. The chief promoter was Peter Moore, the Countryside Officer for Cheshire County Council, who lived in Parkgate and was instrumental in the formation of the Conservation Area. But his official position precluded Peter from being an officer of the Society and much of the organising impetus came from Ruth Blok. Those who formed the steering committee included Peter Moore, Ruth Blok, Rupert Allen, Hylda Wall-Jones and Olive Wilcox.

The steering committee called a public meeting at the Parkgate Hotel on 14th March 1972, at which the Parkgate Society was officially launched. The first chairman was Rupert Allen with Hylda Wall-Jones as vice-chairman. Ruth Blok was secretary and Betty Moore was treasurer. Both Rupert Allen and Ruth Blok left the district within a few months and the next chairman was Steve Norris, then living at Brooke House, who has later become well-known as an MP, a junior minister and for other reasons which readers of the tabloids will recall. There were many changes in the committee in the first year or so, but in 1973 the Society began to settle down with the recruitment of Angela Clarke as secretary (what an inspired appointment that was) and Peter Taylor as treasurer.

Parkgate does not have any official boundaries because administratively it has always been a part of Neston. For this reason the new society was called The Parkgate & District Society, although we tend to shorten it these days. After the Parkgate Conservation Area was established, there was then talk for several years of making another one in Neston. In 1978 two officers of the Borough Council came to discuss with our committee the formation of a conservation area at the west side of Neston - Buggen Lane, Mill Street, Church Lane and Parkgate Road. We agreed to include this area within our own boundary and to monitor it. But the conservation area was widened, at the suggestion of the Wirral Society, to include Neston town centre. We did not feel we could look after that as well, so we set about establishing a sister society. In June 1980, when the Neston conservation area was officially proclaimed, we began asking likely Nestonians if they would form a committee. This was done under the chairmanship of Clare Johnson, and the Parkgate Society provided a loan of £50 and lent a committee member for a year. The Neston Civic Society was officially launched at the Civic Hall on 11th November 1980.

The Dee Barrage Scheme would have been astronomically expensive, luckily for us, and was shelved for ten years. At the end of those ten years there was no longer the expected demand for water reservoirs (largely because Liverpool's industries had declined) and a new road to Wales is being built at this moment, 25 years later, well away from Parkgate.