



# Parkgate Society

## Newsletter

Spring 2000

Issue Number 58

Meetings at **THE BOATHOUSE**  
**Due to the plans for the Parkgate Hotel to redevelop the site for housing, we have decided to hold our future meetings at the Boathouse.**

If you need help with transport please ring our secretary Angela Clarke (336 1069) giving 24 hours notice.

**THE NEW MILLENNIUM  
Diary Dates - 2000 at 8pm  
THE BOATHOUSE**

- 21 Feb. *St. George's Hall*  
by Valerie Hozack (blue badge guide)
- 20 Mar. *Argyle Music Hall*  
by Gloria Wood
- 17 Apr. *Local Archaeology*  
by Keith Matthews (from the Grosvenor Museum, Chester)
- 22 May. *The Wirral Way*  
by Saul Burton, WCP Ranger.

*NON-MEMBERS ARE WELCOME*

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Contact Valerie Place at Pendmore, Station Rd., Parkgate or at our meetings.  
£4.00 Family or Single/year  
£2.50 Senior Citizens/year  
Donations are always welcome.

AGM REPORT

About sixty members attended the AGM in October. The change to the constitution, by the addition of a further objective "d) promote, encourage or financially support any activity or enterprise which tends to the benefit of Parkgate or its people" was approved unanimously.

AGM discussions included the Parkgate Hotel plans, the new WCP ranger for our area, the SUSTRANS cycle track, the new edition of our guide book *This is Parkgate*, the launch of the book *Neston at War*, dog fouling, road sweeping, traffic calming, car parking and the sea wall.

Talk Apologies

We apologise for the cancellation of the talk by David Cummings ( "The Battle of Rowton Moor" ) on 20th September, which was caused by a small fire at the Boathouse. The manager has kindly given free coffee on a subsequent occasion for the inconvenience caused.

We also apologise for the overcrowding at the talk in November, "A life of Crime". We were given a downstairs room which proved to be too small for this popular talk.

Litter Bin

The Society is paying towards a litter bin to be sited in the WCP Old Baths.

Character Appraisal

The Society is gathering information and leaflets relating to Parkgate in the present day as a millennium document for future historians to view.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

The **Cooling Towers** of Connah's Quay Power Station across the river are being upgraded to reduce the clouds of white water vapour that rise up frequently. The climatic conditions of the Dee Estuary mean that the towers have not operated as well as intended and now the shape of the towers is being altered. The project is due to finish in March 2000.

The Connah's Quay Power Station is the largest gas-fired power station in Wales.

A revised planning application has been submitted for the **Parkgate Hotel**. This plan retains the original part of the building as dwellings. The history of the building is included in this newsletter in our series of articles on Pubs & Hotels of Parkgate

The **SUSTRANS (Sustainable Transport) cycle route** is about to be constructed through our area. From the Wirral Way at Brookland Road in Parkgate, it will go up the footpath to Wood Lane, along to Boathouse Lane and up to Leighton road, the Runnel, across the High Road at the new traffic islands and into Thornton Hough. In a southerly direction from Brookland Road, the Wirral Way will be widened and surfaced, a new bridge for horses, bikes and walkers will be constructed over Bridge St. in Neston, and the route will continue through to beyond Willaston, leaving the Wirral Way at Heath Lane and on through Ledsham and Capenhurst. This will be a small part of the thousands of miles of traffic free or minor road safe cycling planned for the millennium.



### NESTON AT WAR

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- \* The murder of Moreen Branagan

*are just a few of the fascinating details in this important book*

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How many PARKGATES are there ?

Geoffrey Place

Our village derives its name from Neston Park, a medieval deer park which stood here between about 1250 and 1600. Considering the large number of parks elsewhere in the country, it cannot be surprising that Parkgate (or Park Gate) is quite a common place-name. Five of them are large enough to appear in national gazeteers - in Dumfries, Hampshire, Surrey and Yorkshire (see the list below) as well as our own. But if you count smaller places, there are six in Cheshire (which is why your postal address needs to be "Parkgate, Neston") and over 30 elsewhere. I have for many years made a note of any I came across: have you found any more ? Do please add to my list if you can. Here are all the ones I have found, by counties.

Cheshire	Parkgate	our own
	(with 3 Parkgate Roads, in Chester, Thornton Hough, Neston)	
	Parkgate House & farm	near Shotwick castle
	Parkgate and West Parkgate	Lyme Park
	Park Gate farm	Beeston castle
	Parkgate	Peover Superior, nr Knutsford
	Parkgate farm	east of High Legh
Cumbria	Parkgate	3 miles SW of Wigton
	Parkgate tarn & farm	nr Santon Bridge
Devon	Park Gate farm	Tawstock, nr Barnstaple
Dorset	Park Gate	5 miles SW of Sturminster Newton
Essex	Parkgate	1 mile S of Great Bardfield
Flint	Parkgate farm	Northop
	Parkgate House	Hawarden
Hampshire	Park Gate	7½ miles SE of Southampton
Hereford	Parkgate	Leominster
Herts	Parkgate Junior School	Southwold Road, Watford
	(named after a Parkgate Road	which is off a Neston Road)
Kent	Parkgate	NW of Tenterden
	Parkgate	Lullington Castle nr Orpington
Lancashire	Parkgate	in Ulverston RDC
Lincolnshire	Parkgate Road	Boston (leads to town park)
London	Parkgate Crescent & Avenue	Barnet, N of Hadley common
	Parkgate Gardens	N of Richmond Park
	Parkgate Road	W of Battersea Park
Staffs	Parkgate	2½ miles E of Abbots Bromley
	Park Gate Road	Cannock Wood, Rugeley
Suffolk	Parkgate farm	2 miles N of Saxmundham
	Parkgate farm	Helmingham Park, 9m N of Ipswich
	Park Gate	9 miles SW of Bury St Edmunds
Surrey	Parkgate	4½ miles SE of Dorking
Sussex (E)	Park Gate	1½ miles SW of Battle
Worcester	Park Gate	1½ miles NE of Bromsgrove
Yorkshire	Parkgate	5½ miles W of Whitby
	Park Gate	Skelmanthorpe, N of Denby Dale
	Park Gate	2 miles N of Rotherham
	Park Gate	Guiseley, 2½ miles SW of Otley
	Park Gate (farm?)	West Wilton, Wensleydale
	Park Gate	Emley Park SE of Huddersfield
Scotland		
Dumfries	Parkgate	8 miles NE of Dumfries
Kirkudbright	Parkgate	2½ miles S of Kirkudbright

## Nature Conservation in the Locality - Planning

In the Autumn of 1998 the Borough Council prepared a draft plan of guidance on nature conservation, which will be adopted for planning control purposes. There are a number of plans which cover nature conservation and these notes are merely to summarise the principle features and to indicate the areas affected in and around Parkgate.

### **Statutory Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

The Dee Estuary is designated as a SSSI by central government through the nature conservation agency English Nature. This site is also designated as a wetland of international importance and as a Special Protection Area under an EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds. As a result there are a number of planning controls which would affect any development of any aspect of the estuary.

### **Non Statutory Sites**

There are a number of non statutory sites designated to assist in the conservation of nature. Both the statutory and non statutory sites together are intended to provide wildlife corridors and links from one habitat to another. Protection of the sites helps to ensure the maintenance of the current range of fauna, flora and geological features.

The sites of conservation value close to Parkgate are:

- (a) Church Lane Meadow, Neston
- (b) Moorside Meadow at the bottom of Moorside Lane.
- (c) Neston Sewage Farm
- (d) Backwood Hall Farm

There are also designated sites of biological importance, which are reviewed annually by Cheshire County Council and Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The sites in our area are :

- (a) Moorside Farm, Neston
- (b) Wirral Way

The controls used by the planning authorities are designed to protect these sites. Some are viewed as being more important than others and on occasions are considered as irreplaceable on account of their complexity, antiquity, rarity or vulnerability. The policy is that sites of nature conservation value will be conserved wherever possible.

### **Protected Species**

Nature conservation is also concerned with the protection of species. The guidelines cover the protection given to birds, badgers, other animals and plants under the Wildlife and Countryside Act and other legislation. Where it is known that a proposed development may affect protected species, the applicant will be required, in principle, to provide information on the impact of the proposals on the species concerned as well as steps proposed to mitigate any effect. Ecological surveys may be required.

### **Protection of the Landscape and Habitat in Strategic Wildlife Areas**

The Wirral Way and Moorside are designated as Strategic Wildlife Areas and any development proposals are required to indicate which landscape and habitat features are to be retained or destroyed.

### **Conclusion**

The guidelines are complex and anyone proposing a development in any of the above areas would be advised to contact the Planning Services Department at Ellesmere Port to obtain copies of the relevant guidance and policy documents.

The pubs and hotels of Parkgate—4

by Geoffrey Place

### The Parkgate Hotel

This house was built as a private residence by Joseph Rich between 1861 and 1864, and he called it Richville. It is probable that he could not pay the builder, because Rich went bankrupt in 1865. The next owner, Edmund Hett, created a stir locally by having a black butler. Hett continued to call the house Richville and gave a fancy dress party there in 1881 to say goodbye before leaving for London. The next owner, Thomas Comber, changed the name of the house to Leighton. Comber died in 1902 and the house was bought by Harry Patrick. He used to allow local people to walk in his grounds on Sundays, and the footpath now known as the Back Path which runs from Brookland Road to Bevyll Road, used to run through his grounds to Boathouse Lane and was then called Patrick's Passage. When the house was sold in 1917 it was described as having 12 bedrooms and 23 acres of grounds, stretching all the way along Boathouse Lane from the railway to the Parade.

At the end of the First World War May Richardson bought Leighton and moved her girls' school, founded in a house, since demolished, in Moorside Lane opposite Old Quay Lane, and she called it Leighton School. She continued to run the school until 1939 when the house was requisitioned by the Army and Miss Richardson retired.

The house, with tents in the grounds, was occupied by a variety of units on their way abroad through Liverpool. Local people especially remember the Northumberland Fusiliers because they had a band which used to march them to church on Sundays.

In 1948 the house was opened as a guest house, which then became Leighton Hotel, and in due course the Parkgate Hotel.



Leighton (now the Parkgate Hotel) when it was for sale in 1917



## The Listed Buildings of Parkgate

Surveyors for the revised *List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest* came round our area several years ago and there has been much speculation about which buildings might be included in or deleted from the list. This Society even discussed the matter with our MP, Andrew Miller. At long last the new list has been released, and Parkgate's share has remained much the same.

We have lost five entries on the former list. These are 1-6 Station Road cottages, Seaward House, Ivy Cottage, the Watch House and Dee Cottages. Of these, 1-6 Station Road seem to have been deleted because of alterations, particularly to no.6, the shop. In terms of age, 6 and 7 are the youngest, being built in 1876, numbers 8 & 9 were built before 1872 and numbers 1-5 were built in the 1850s. The rest are earlier. Seaward House, the Watch House and Dee Cottages have all been altered a good deal, and Ivy Cottage is actually a new house built in an old style.

On the other hand, our four newly-listed buildings are Backwood Hall, Brooke House (built in 1903 by Aubrey Thomas, architect of the Liver Building, for himself); 16 The Parade, and (to stretch Parkgate a bit) the Manse next to the United Reformed Church.

There are three types of Grading, and most of our buildings are Grade II, as are 94.5% of listed buildings nationally. We have two buildings in the next grade, II\*; the chapel at Mostyn House and the farm buildings at Leighton Hall farm. This grade puts them in the top 4.1% nationally. (Moorside House, just beyond our boundary, is also grade II\*). We have no Grade I buildings.

Here is the full list for Parkgate:

- Backwood Hall
- Farm buildings at Leighton Hall
- Leighton House and farm buildings
- Sawyers Cottage
- Pengwern and its garden walls
- Brooke House
- Overdee
- Maplewood
- Leighton Banastre
- Banastre Cottage
- Brockleigh
- Mostyn Cottage
- St Thomas's church
- The Assembly Room
- 1-2 Balcony House
- South Cottage
- 16-19 The Parade
- Mostyn House chapel
- Prospect House
- Talbot House
- Rose Cottage
- 7-16 Station Road
- The Manse
- Moor End
- Spring Vale

## The History of Backwood

by Anne Williamson

### ITS ORIGINS

Situated at the northern end of Parkgate beyond Boathouse Lane and adjoining the parish of Heswall lies Backwood. Its land is bounded by Boathouse Lane, the Dee Estuary (beyond Parkgate Baths), runs along the county boundary up the edge of Heswall Golf Course, dips into Merseyside over to Gayton Hall and curves back to the houses of Gayton at the top of Boathouse Lane.

My interest in the history began in 1976 when we bought the semi-derelict lodge adjacent to the Wirral Way, probably known only to walkers because of its isolated position. Straight away we were keen to know when it had been built and whether or not the railway, which passed by its front door (1886-1965) had anything to do with its origins. Our historical investigations had to wait while more pressing building repairs and improvements were carried out. Our new home had rats, mice, woodworm, and a "bathroom" with an empty birdcage and nothing else (not even a tap or a drain). The largest room had a broken Triplex range and a cupboard full of old leather farm workers' boots. There was a water supply through a rusting pipe from the farm several hundred yards away, no toilet or drains and no septic tank, just an earth closet in the back yard. There was broken gaslighting and ancient electric lighting but no sockets. Many of the windows were smashed, light switches had been used as targets for airguns and the lead flashing had begun to be stripped from the roof.

At the time, Backwood (the Hall, Farm, Land and houses) was owned by the Parrington family and Ron Parrington, whose father had owned the estate before him, told us that our lodge originated in the 1860s, about 1866, and had been an entrance lodge for the Hall, the front drive of which passed down to what is now Parkgate Baths car park. The other entrance to the Hall and farm reaches Boathouse lane at the top bend at the sandstone lodge. There is a further lane and footpath across to Wood Lane. Historically, the estate consisted of substantial old sandstone farm buildings, the farm cottage, the two lodges, a large walled garden and of course the beautiful Hall in an enviable position overlooking the Dee and the Welsh hills. Farm buildings have since been added, as was a new house for the Parringtons (Willow House). In the 1990s one of the sandstone farm buildings was converted into three mews cottages and the old bungalow by Heswall golf course was replaced with a new house.

Keen to discover more, I visited Chester Records Office and looked through old maps of the area. Eventually finding an Ordnance Survey map (6 inch/mile) surveyed 1872-74, which clearly showed the estate and labelled "Backwood Hall", the two "Lodges" and a "Kennel" next to the walled garden. The farm buildings and the walled garden could be made out on the map as could the two main driveways. So now I knew, the lodge had been built as part of the Backwood estate and not built by the railway which did not cut past its door until 1886.

When were our lodge and Backwood built? Going back further, Bryant's map of 1831 showed Backwood as "Backwood Lodge". It showed both driveways with a square where our lodge is. Could this square have been a former dwelling on the site? There was no name by the square and all other houses seemed to be named on this map. Perhaps there had been a pond or a cattle shed originally on the site of our house. Interestingly, at the bottom of the lane, where it meets the estuary (far end of Parkgate Baths Car Park) there was a property called "Short House" and one field along the estuary towards Heswall next to the stream (county boundary) by the golf course, was a property called "Long House": both have disappeared without trace.

Was Backwood Hall (formerly known as Backwood Lodge), once the Lodge to a grander house, or was it a country shooting lodge for a rich owner who may have lived elsewhere? Local houses of note were Leighton Hall and Gayton Hall. Could Backwood have been a former lodge to either of these? The history of Leighton Hall is well documented (see previous Parkgate Society Newsletters) and does not as far as we know so far include Backwood. Undoubtedly, much of Backwood's land was once owned by the Leighton Estate and a major part of the woods and fisheries that sustained Leighton in the 1700s and earlier were situated on land now part of Backwood. Although there is no evidence to support or disprove the theory, the most logical interpretation is that it may have been built as a grand shooting lodge to take advantage of the woods and fisheries of Leighton. Were the woods of Leighton still in existence when Backwood was built? It is not known when Backwood was built because the title deeds were thought to have been lost in the War, but it is known that a vestige of the woods of Leighton were still standing in the 1840s.

On the 1732 map of Leighton (see Autumn 1999 newsletter), the woods occupy much of the land on the Backwood side of Boathouse Lane. Backwood is not in existence on this map and neither is the section of Wood Lane that meets what is now Boathouse Lane (then Green Waie). There is a strip of cultivated land sandwiched between Gayton Parish and Leighton Woods where Backwood would be. Perhaps Backwood was built on the far (back) side of the woods (hence its name) and eventually spread its ownership of the woodland.

I decided to research the parish records and the census returns (all available at Neston Library) to see if I could establish when Backwood had been built. After many hours of work and many interesting diversions into other local families of woodsmen, fishermen and seafarers, I had looked through Neston Baptisms 1829-1860,

Marriages 1837-1891 & 1891-1911,

Deaths 1813-1837 & 1837-1861 & 1861-1890,

Census Returns 1841, '51, '61 & '71.

I eventually came up with the earliest date that these records could put on Backwood, 3/1/1822, with the death recorded of Elizabeth Bennett of Backwood, died aged 70 years. Her husband Edward died 1829, aged 77 years. In the late 1820s Joseph and Mary Whitehead were farm labourers at Backwood and had a son, Joseph, baptised. Interestingly, a Samuel Whitehead, son of Joseph Whitehead, farm labourer Backwood, is noted in the marriage registers in 1837 as marrying "underage".

In the 1980s, the present owner of Backwood Hall, keen also to trace the origins of his house, commissioned research on the hall. This also identified Edward Bennett as the earliest recorded resident of Backwood, but noted that the Land Tax Assessments for 1778-1832 suggest that Edward Bennett probably bought the property in 1792, but the document does not give the property's name. Backwood may have existed before this, but so far to my knowledge no other records have been found. However, it is likely that Backwood was built when the woods of Leighton still existed and could have been a shooting lodge or retreat for a gentleman to make use of the sporting and fishing facilities of the woods, the fishponds and of the river Dee

My research continued through the 1800s and into the 1900s: more to follow.

Parkgate Society Newsletter

Editor: Anne Williamson (336 6146); Secretary: Mrs Angela Clarke (336 1069);

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