

Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

Newsletter

Spring 2003

Issue Number 64

Meetings

We meet at 8pm at the **Boathouse**.
If you need help with transport please ring Mrs Angela Clarke, our Secretary, giving 24 hours notice, on 0151-336 -1069.

Diary dates –

3 February – Films of local places and events, presented by Angus Tilston,

17 March – The Eden Project by Dr RA Dutton

28 April - Ancient settlements in Wirral by R Cowell

2 June – The Williamson Tunnels by Claire Moorehead

Visitors are welcome

SUBSCRIPTIONS

£4.00 Family or Single per year
£2.50 Senior Citizens per year
Payment can be made at any of our meetings or directly to
Mrs Valerie Place,
Pendmore,
Station Road,
Parkgate.
CH64 6QJ

Standing order forms are available, if required.

DONATIONS ARE WELCOMED

Registered Charity No. 503718

AGM

The AGM took place on Monday 22 October 2002.

1. The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. The President sent his apologies.
2. The Minutes of the 2001 AGM were taken as read.
3. The Treasurer presented the accounts which showed that the Society's finances are in a healthy state. The Chairman advised members that subscriptions continue to cover the Society's running costs.
4. The committee were declared re-elected, as follows: Geoffrey Place (chairman), Michael Potts (vice chairman), Clive Edwards (treasurer), Angela Clarke (secretary), Valerie Place (subscriptions secretary), Becky Ford, Stephen Gordon, Philip Owen, Anne Williamson (newsletter) and Jerry Harris (newsletter).
5. The Chairman reported that the Society is now thirty years old. He paid tribute **Julian Grenfell**, a founder member, whose support over those years has allowed us to print our newsletters at minimal cost. Now that he has retired as headmaster of **Mostyn House School**, his daughter, **Suzanna Grenfell**, has agreed to continue the arrangement.
6. Our support for **St Thomas' restoration fund**, via the Bishop's Trust was mentioned.
7. A question from the floor about the closing time of the new gate to the **Old Baths**, was answered, by our County Councillor, David Andrews.
8. A plea for articles/ reminiscences for the newsletter, was made.

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact:
Anne Williamson 336 6146 or
Jerry Harris 336 7406

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NEWS AND VIEWS

Christmas Decoration for Parkgate was on the agenda this year. The Society was asked to contribute to decorations. The committee agreed to a one off payment towards the cost of Christmas lights. Nothing materialised. Perhaps next year this may happen. What are your opinions? Whilst on the subject of Christmas, the Parade was very busy on New Year's Day, with family groups all along the front taking in the air and the view.

The **Wirral Way** work has continued with the ditches being dug out by JCB along the Boathouse to Backwood section. Some new fencing was installed between the horse path and main path along the more dangerous areas above the new ditch.

The committee has drawn our councillor's attention to the rotten state of the seats on the **donkey stand**.

We are pleased to have received interesting **newsletter articles** from Parkgate residents, Arthur Draper (sufficient for 2 parts), Cheryl Swift (2 articles) and Rob Marrs (Dee salt marsh). We have had to hold some over for future editions.

Amongst **planning applications** for our area has been one to remove a hedge in Boathouse Lane. This is situated either side of Boathouse Lane bridge on the Barnacre side, so that the footpath along the roadside can be extended up to the bridge. There is an application by the architects of the Bishop's Trust for remedial work to the structure of St Thomas's church.

There is an 18-month **road closure** order for the Parade in order that inspection and work can take place at the Old Butcher's Shop. The closures should be for short periods only within the next 18 months.

Gary and Aileen Hodgson gave up their posts as licensees of the Red Lion in December 2002. They have run the pub for 10 years or more and have also been very active in running the Charity Cricket Match at the Cricket Club each June, the Parkgate Hotel closure party, and in general fund raising for the church, bringing in several thousand pounds.

St Thomas's Church fundraising had a successful launch in September with plenty of press coverage and since has had various events such as a coffee morning, sale of artefacts, Christmas bazaar, a carol concert, house to house carol singers, and Christmas cards for sale. This January, there is a leaflet drop to every house in Parkgate and some nearby areas (approx. 1400 properties), giving information on the church and a simplified gift aid form for donations. Over £50,000 has been raised or donated and a heritage lottery grant has been submitted and is under consideration.

The next event is a **fun quiz night in the Red Lion** on Tuesday, 25th Feb. 8.30pm. There will be snacks and a raffle. Just turn up.

Memories of Parkgate (part 1)

By

Arthur Draper

I was born in Grantham House, High Street, Neston, on 13 May 1932. My mother, Elsie May, was born in Liverpool in 1903 and lived to the age of 93 years (d.1996). My Granddad Jellicoe was blacksmith at the Neston colliery. He died as a result of an accident that occurred when capping the cages. These were the lifts that took the miners to the pit bottom. My mother often spoke of taking granddad's dinner along the old railway line to the colliery, often a bowl of scouse wrapped in a tea towel.

My Grandma Jellicoe was born in 1858. I was brought up mostly by my grandma and she would tell me about stagecoaches that used to come to Parkgate. Men in tall hats and ladies in flared dresses. She died during the war, in her eighties.

We moved to Parkgate when I was two years old. My Aunt Emily Jellicoe, who lived in Raby Road, Neston, was an all weather lady and loved kids and company. She would have a bell tent, army style, pitched at Moorside. She would camp on the field opposite the fresh water spring, which everyone that visited Moorside would drink out of, lovely fresh water. I think it is still visible amongst the reeds. We kids would spend the weekends under canvas, feet to the pole. Everything was self-sufficient. Collecting samkin (sea vegetable), cockles, mussels, shrimps and treading fluke with our feet. All the food was cooked on an open fire. My Aunt Em was an all weather swimmer and loved to swim in the tide. She later drowned in the Parkgate swimming baths, of a heart attack.

During the war years there were plenty of things to do for us kids, in Parkgate. We spent lots of time at the army camps, including Miss Richardson's old Leighton School on Boathouse Lane. This barracks was handy for soldiers being shipped from Liverpool landing stage. We would play on the commando course, swinging on the ropes and so forth. When the soldiers paraded along the Parade singing songs, like *Roll out the Barrel*, *It's a long way to Tipperary* and *The Siegfried Line*, we kids would March behind them, singing with them. We'd go down and inspect the decoys, which were situated on Gayton golf links: these would be switched on at night to confuse the German bombers. Then there was the searchlight battery situated half way up Boathouse Lane, where the soldiers would give us sweets.

A German Junkers 88 bomber was brought in sections to Bevyl Road and assembled to its original state for the public to see. I think the admission fee was 3d (just over 1p in today's money). There was also a German plane shot down at the end of Gills path leading from Moorside. One of the Peters family of fishermen retrieved a parachute from it. I had a great time collecting shrapnel from the ack-ack batteries. We would look on the sands because it was easy to find in the holes it made. Some times we would get a bonus by finding incendiary bombs that hadn't gone off. We never gave a thought to these being dangerous.

Although food was fairly short during the war years, we never went without in our house. My father was a well-known character about here; he had a nickname (Never in Doubt), as some of the old timers will remember. He used to meet the soldiers in the pubs and bring them home. Some of them worked in the cookhouse and they would bring butter, sugar, jam, tea, bacon and other foodstuffs, with them. We had various evacuees who stayed with us, from Wallasey and the Channel Islands. My brother and I had to share the one bed with the girls from the Channel Islands. We were all very young, between 8 and 9 years old. Then we had the excitement of sleeping in the air raid shelters when there were raids on. One of my jobs was to take the weekly wash, on a sit-up-and-beg bike, to the Neston laundry. I think it was about half a crown for a bagfull. Another of our chores was to get up about 5am and go mushrooming with my father, before school - in the season, of course.

On a Saturday night they would have a dance at Rigby House, an old convalescent home, on the front at Parkgate. The Rigby Players were formed there. I also remember the sand artist, I think he came from Liverpool, who used make all sorts of shapes out of sand, in front of Mostyn House School. There was also the Mostyn House School Band that used to play. About 100 yards out from the front of Mostyn House School there was a semi-circle of stone, they used to say it was the bandstand.

PS Gill's path was a path that went out in a westerly direction from Moorside. It was man made by two local wildfowlers, Harold Gill and Monk Jones. Mr Gill lived at the Warren, next to the Red Lion pub, on the Parade. He was a very clever man and made his own punt guns and punts. He was a real outdoor man and nearly all the year round wore shorts; he was the colour of teak! He often spoke to me about how much trust they had in one another when they were shooting on the tide. Many a time they would have some hair-raising experience but always came through, with the grace of God.

THE PARKGATE MURAL IN 'THE SEVEN STEPS'**By Cheryl Swift BA**

Over eighteen years ago, a small section of the mural was uncovered. The overbearing and unusual tree found on one of the walls was investigated by experts from the Walker museum but they deemed it unimportant. Because of this disclosure, we recovered the wall and it was forgotten about.

However, three years ago, my sister was redecorating the room for her two children when she uncovered the main mural on another wall in the room. We realised straight away that this was not an unimportant find because it was so well preserved and in keeping with the history of Parkgate as a seaport. We stripped away layers of paper very carefully on every wall of the room and it emerged that the whole room had been painted. Sadly, the front of the house had been rebuilt thirty years ago and one wall had been lost, but the remaining walls seemed to tell a story.

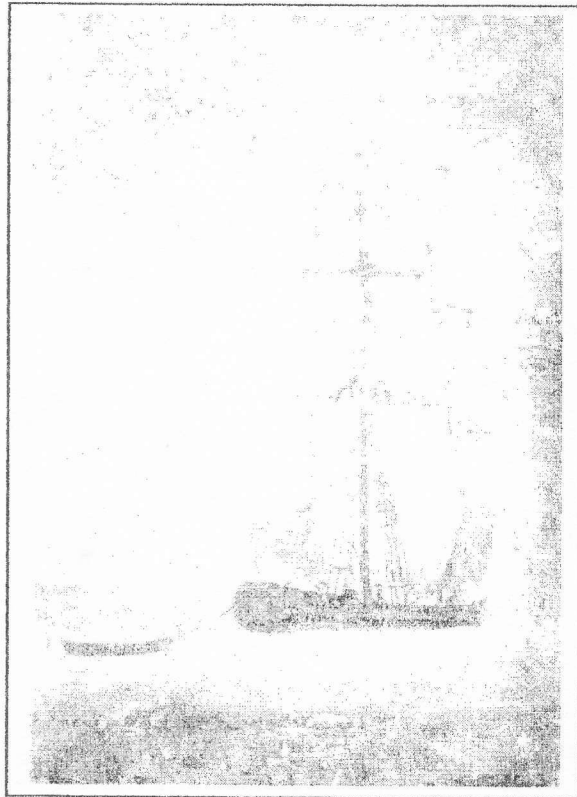
The mural covers nearly four walls and is in very good condition considering the amount of wallpaper that was covering it. The area around the fireplace is very interesting, as the painted tiles seem to depict a story, however, they are slightly damaged.

Once the mural was uncovered I was uncertain what to do with it and who to contact. I photographed it and tried to contact people through e-mail. I received some very strange responses – people asking me if I was joking and someone thought I had sent them a photograph of wallpaper! Eventually, I received advice from The National Trust who contacted English Heritage on my behalf. The rest is history, the Northwest inspector for English Heritage visited the house and a long process was set in motion. To date I have been visited by many experts but no-one can say for definite why it was painted and for what reason. I am told that this is the only example in the country of this sort of mural in a reasonably small cottage. This is why English Heritage have granted all three properties grade 2* listing (The Old Butchers Shop, and Teal Cottage).

The historian and author who has been working on the history of the mural, Brian Curzon, believes that it is at least 1820's, whilst the house is pre 1725. According to his research, the scene that I have may have been modeled on a form of wallpaper. However, other experts have suggested that the mural may have been painted to entertain a merchant who may have lived in the house. The ensign on the boat is not visible, hence, identification has not been possible but the main part of the mural does reflect a tropical maritime theme. My family bought the property in 1849 from the Mostyn Estate, who sold the majority of Parkgate at this time. According to my records, the house was lived in pre 1849 by two brothers from the 'Parr family', who worked for the Mostyn Estate and lived in the house rent free.

To date no conservation has been carried out on the mural because it was important to protect the building due to the condition of The Old Butchers Shop. The room has been fully documented and photographed for 'The National Monument Archive' and the next step is to have the mural cleaned and preserved, but this is going to be expensive.

I would be grateful to hear from anyone who might be able to help or advise on financial grants etc. my phone number is 0151 336 4123.



BURIALS AT THE PARKGATE CHAPEL

St Thomas' church did not gain that name until the Church of England bought it in 1917. Before that it was a nonconformist chapel, owned by the Congregationalists between 1843 and 1858 and by Presbyterians from 1858 until 1884. It then had occasional use only before the Church of England leased it in 1910.

There are seven gravestones in the burial ground, which date from its nonconformist days. All residents of the parish of Neston, whatever their religious allegiance, had a legal right to burial in the public graveyard at Neston parish church. Those buried at Parkgate must, therefore, have preferred burial beside the chapel they knew. Recently some wild rumours have circulated about secret, illegal burials of illegitimate babies in this space - someone even claimed that shipwrecked mariners were buried here, not realising that no ships had come to Parkgate for 25 years when the chapel was built. Such rumours can be dismissed as flights of fancy.

The earliest burial here was in 1847, although the gravestone bears no date. William and Edward Williams, twin sons of John and Frances Williams, of Yew Tree House, died three days old and were buried on 15 April. An article by James Stonehouse (*Chronicle 1882*) confirms that this was the first burial. WH Williams was also buried in the grave.

The next burial, commemorated by an obelisk, is also of children, the sons of William and Eleanor Pritchard of Little Neston. William Pitt Pritchard died in 1855, aged 17 months, and his brother (name illegible) died, aged 8¹/₂, in 1859.

The next memorial records six members of the Spratt family; four buried here and two in Glasgow. Margaret and Robert died in 1855 and 1856 aged 3 and 6, and were buried in Glasgow.



James (1864 aged 3), John (1866 aged 4 months) and Robina (1873) are buried here with their mother Margaret (1887 aged 41).

Henry, son of Esther and Thomas Scott, of Little Neston, who died aged 10 in 1870, is buried with his mother (1868, aged 37).

A memorial to the Samuel family records the burials of Walter (no date) and his wife (1869 aged 52). Also Margaret, daughter of George and Elizabeth Samuel, died aged 2 in 1876.

The next gravestone states that Hannah, wife of Charles Jellicoe of Neston, died in 1881 aged 42 and her granddaughter Ellen Coventry died in 1861 aged 8.

The last gravestone names Hannah Hill who died in 1882 aged 55. The *Chronicle* of 1 February 1882 tells us that Mrs Hill was a maidservant at Backwood Hall.

These melancholy records emphasise how short life could be, especially for children, before our time.



During a recent Internet search for Parkgate the following was revealed-

Obituary June 23rd, 1820

Liverpool Mercury Newspaper

Mr James Whitely, of Liverpool, aged 46 years, was unfortunately drowned in attempting to cross the dangerous sands, which separate Parkgate from Flint.