

SPRING 2011

Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

President – Mrs Valerie Place

Newsletter

Issue Number 80

Spring 2011

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

2011

- 7th February – “The Big Shop”
- *Mike Murphy*
- 7th March - “Emma, Lady Hamilton – a
reassessment”
- *Michael Corfe*
- 4th April - “Tam O’Shanter Urban Farm and
Cottage” - *Vee Gatrell*
- 9th May - “Underground Wirral”
- *Gavin Hunter*
- 26th September – “RSPB Nature Reserve -
Past, Present and Future”. –
Colin Wells
- 24th October – AGM at 7.30pm followed by
- “Birkenhead Revisited” –
Elizabeth Davey.
- 21st November – “As We Were No.4” -
Glynn Parry

Visitors are welcome

SUBSCRIPTIONS

4.00 Family or Single per year
Payment can be made at any of our meetings,
however we would prefer payment by Banker’s
Standing Order. Membership, Standing Order and Gift
Aid forms are available, from our Secretary.

AGM

The AGM took place on Monday 25th October 2010
at 7.30 pm.

A summary of the meeting is shown below –
Chairman Moira said this had been a time of change,
adjustments and some sadness. She noted our great
debt of gratitude to the Grenfell family and Mostyn
House School, for many years of support. English
Heritage are hoping the buildings will become fully
listed. She welcomed new committee members Damian
Loughe and Rob Naybour and are sorry to lose Treasurer
Nick Marten and long-serving member Stephen Gordon.
We had discussions with Colin Wells (RSPB), CWaC
officers and Neston Town council in regard to the state of
the sea wall and possible improvements in Mostyn Square
for which plans have been drawn up. We are delighted St.
Thomas’ Church is fully restored and open for worship
and events. This has been a good example of people
power coming together to save an historic building.
Treasurer Nick Marten presented the approved accounts
for the year to 31st August 2010. The society has a
steady financial position but we have suffered from
reduced interest receipts. We have made a surplus of £11
on the year. During the year we have paid £169 to St,
Thomas’ Church that we have been holding (for Christmas
lights). Income is also reduced as the Gift Aid reclaim has
yet to be submitted, this, it is anticipated will, yield around
£250. He recommends that the Committee consider a
change to the financial year to match the tax year and the
subscription year. This should simplify the accounting
process.

The following were duly elected.

Officers Moira Andrews (Chairman), Greta Simpson
(Vice Chairman), Angela Clarke (Secretary), Damian
Loughe (Treasurer)

Committee - Becky Ford, Jill Brock, Jill Owen, Rob
Naybour and Jerry Harris.

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most
welcome, please contact:

Anne Williamson 0151 336 6146

or Jerry Harris 0151 336 7406

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Rightway Bevans

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NEWS & VIEWS

Mostyn House School – there is currently no further news on the future of the buildings and site. It is understood that the proposed further public consultation expected in December did not take place, as English Heritage is yet to submit its report to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and it is not known when a decision will be issued.

The presale viewings, in November, gave many people a chance to see, for the last time, many of the fascinating items housed in the school, and even parts of the buildings not normally on view.

We await, with interest, the plans for the future.

The Sea Wall and the Marsh have been the subject of much discussion in the community for some time, but we are now hopeful that things are about to happen.

The Town Council have been actively involved in trying to find natural ways of overcoming the mosquito problem. A joint event hosted by Neston Town Council, with partner organisations the RSPB and the Merseyside and West Lancashire Bat Group (M&WLBG) took place in September. The evening was well attended by over 50 members of the public. Colin Wells, of the RSPB, spoke about the current state of affairs with regards to Mosquito Control and how, in certain areas of the Marshes, they have been able to control the Mosquito larvae problem to some extent by developing larger ponds where fish and birds can feed on the larvae and other insects. The local authority are continuing to spray the marshes and a meeting had been arranged later in September, with the relevant bodies, to discuss some of the management/drainage issues on the marshes especially in the Parkgate area.

Charlie Liggett from M&WLBG gave a presentation on the different types of bat boxes, with details on optimum location, probable occupancy and the laws with regards to checking occupancy. He also gave an insight into the different species of bats (of which there are 18 in the UK) and stated that the Wirral in particular has quite a healthy population of certain species.

The Town Council have initiated a plan for the dredging of the marsh gutters and some remedial work on the sea wall. A funding partnership is being set up between the Town Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, the RSPB and the Parkgate Society. Interim urgent gutter clearance work was carried out before Christmas. There are plans for two large pools to be dug; one out from the Donkey Stand, the other near the Middle Slip. These are designed to help with the mosquito problem. We will keep you posted.

The Town Council are also looking into replacing the toilet block in **Mostyn Square**, with a more modern version and also re-aligning the car parking spaces.

In December there was an **Open Air Carol Concert in Mostyn Square**, which was attended by approximately 200 people, followed by refreshments in St. Thomas's Church. Parkgate Primary pre-school has been using the church in Parkgate during daytime hours since September whilst their classroom at the school is being made ready for them.

They have now moved out of the church and it is currently available for community uses to begin. If anyone has an art or music group needing a community room, then contact the Management Group. stthomasparkgate@hotmail.com.

With the arrival of the new **Christmas Lights** provided for Neston Town centre last December, the Mayor has stated that Parkgate (and Little Neston) must be reviewed as part of improved plans next year (2011).

So, after all the debate and disruption, **Sainsbury's Neston** opened on 1 December last. This should save wear and tear on many cars that used to travel out of town! It has to be seen if it brings other retail businesses back into the town centre as predicted. So far a ladies dress shop has appeared in the High Street, a bridal shop in Brook Street and a new ladies dress shop has opened on the Parade.

Welcome to David and Melanie, who are taking over the **Parkgate Stores**. We wish them a happy stay in Parkgate.

The **speed limits along Boathouse Lane** are under review. The 40mph stretch, out of Parkgate, reducing to 30mph and the derestricted part from 60 to 50mph.

A novel, **A Woman Undefeated**, by Vivienne Dockerty, has been published recently. Set in Neston, it is based on the author's great-aunt, in a tale of an Irish emigrant, forced, by famine, to leave her country.

The **Red Lion 2011 Calendar**, in aid of Help The Heroes, was published in December. We wish them luck with their fundraising. Hopefully it was photographed before the arctic conditions arrived in December!

Chester's Coaching Days

by Terry Kavanagh

Chester was one of the principal places served by the stagecoaches: they were running to this city from London as early as 1658. A century or so later Post Coaches ran a daily service from Chester to London and Holyhead, setting out from the White Lion Inn and the Yacht Inn, The Feathers in Bridge Street was another important coaching hostelry at that time.

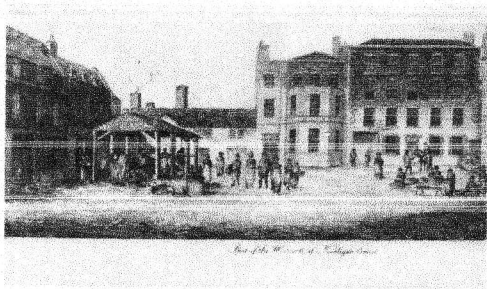
A search of contemporary newspapers gives us some idea of the conditions of travel by road in olden times. It was announced in 1747 that "the stage coach from London to Chester, and from Chester to London, going out only one a week for some time past, notice is hereby given, that it begins on Thursday 12th March 1747, to go out twice a week. By applying to Isaac Faulkner in the Bridge-street Chester, or William Griffith, at the George and White Hart, Aldersgate-street London, the Coach or places may be taken. Also the handsome by-coach to and from London"

The time then taken in coach journeys seems almost incredible to us. One of the earliest long distance routes by the stage coach services was from London through Coventry and Lichfield to Chester. This was a "Post Road", one of the principal roads of the country, but it was in a very bad condition, especially in winter with the flooding rain and drifting snow. The main coaching roads were narrow, with surfaces consisting of loose stones and great holes and ruts often three or four foot deep. Early in the 18thC the journey from London to Chester took six days. The coaches often waited a

day or so beyond the appointed starting time until a full complement of passengers was obtained. Such were the difficulties and hazards of travelling that a journey by coach meant something of an adventure, and there was always the risk of an encounter with that romantic and picturesque outlaw, the mounted highwayman, who was to be found on every main road.

In January 1796, the mail between Chester and Warrington was robbed near Trafford by Thomas Brown and James Price, who were afterwards executed for the offence. In 1770 "the Chester machine was robbed by two footpads (unmounted highwaymen), coming over Finchley Common to London."

This so called "flying machine" which was introduced in 1761 and ran three times a week, had reduced the journey time from the White Lion and King's Head, Chester, to



The White Lion in Northgate St

London and vice versa to two days. It was an improved kind of stage coach fitted with steel springs to afford more comfort in travelling on the roads than the old coaches, which used leather straps for suspension. Each inside passenger paid two pounds ten shillings, outsides and children on the lap paid half fare.

Other "flying machine" services were maintained between Chester and Holyhead (which occupied three days) and Chester and *Parkgate*. From June 1762 the *Parkgate* machine with "six able horses also ran from the Golden Talbot in Chester to the Woodside Ferry Boathouse three times a week, returning on the same day to Chester. In 1772, the Liverpool and Warrington Machine commenced running twice a week from Simon Leet's, at the Pied Bull in Northgate Street.

Other coach passengers to and from Liverpool crossed the Mersey by one of the numerous ferries. The ferries in those early days were all sailing boats, the first steamer to ply on cross river traffic being the Etna, at Tranmere Ferry in 1817.

Of these ferries, the New Ferry had considerable advantages then as the distance to Chester was that much shorter. Moreover the voyage was considerably shorter than that by Eastham, and it avoided the shifting sandbanks of the river at that point, which made navigation for sailing boats both difficult and dangerous. In 1774 a coach was fixed to set out from the New Ferry Boathouse every day for the Pied Bull in Chester.

There was intense rivalry between the opposition coach owners on that line of road to the Mersey ferries and accidents happened with depressing frequency. In 1811 it was reported that "One of the Liverpool coaches was overturned a few days since, from the falling of a wheel we understand: when one outside passenger had her thigh broken, and was otherwise much injured, a second passenger had an arm fractured, a third outside had one of his legs severely bruised and the coachman was very much hurt. There are certainly no better horses, carriages or drivers than on the Liverpool road but the excessive overloading of the coaches and the violent speed at which they are so often driven, render accident frequent at this season of the year, when the roads are in general comparatively bad."

Things were no better on other routes. In 1824 there were "a great number of complaints made of the shameful mode of driving adopted by the Opposition Coaches between this City and Manchester" and the accident to the Shrewsbury to Chester coach five years later belonged to "this species of dangerous racing."

In those days, the coach drivers were generally regarded as "insolent, imposing and drunken". Yet after the great rival steam had driven coaches almost entirely off the road, these men were often remembered with affection. Even the Railway Magazine had to admit that "favourable as may be our own sentiments on behalf of railways, some there are amongst us who parted with regret from the old, agreeable and sociable arrangements of the stage-coach: who miss the burley coachman and jolly guard, and who sigh over many a pleasant reminiscence of the four-horse stage. True, these days are gone, never to return..."

We are most grateful to Terry Kavanagh, a local historian, for allowing us to use this article, which was written for Cheshire West and Chester Council Local History & Heritage magazine.

The Planning Process

In the days of the old Borough Council, the Society was sent a copy of every planning application, together with copies of all the relevant drawings. While the Society's interest was in those within the conservation area, we tended to also receive many others pertaining to Parkgate. It was also possible to see copies of the applications in Neston Town Hall. Many a committee meeting would be spent pouring over contentious plans for extensions, refurbishments etc.

With the advent of the internet and more people being able to access it, there was always going to be a time when the days of the hard copy of the application and the drawings would cease, and the electronic version would become the norm.

This occurred when the new unitary authority, Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) was formed. The Society do not even get notification now of applications, so we have to seek them out.

All applications can now be found on the CW&C website, www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk.

Go to Planning in the main menu, from there go to Online Planning Applications, then Application Search - Chester Area; search by Street Name, postcode or Application No. and then search within the resulting list. It should be noted that drawings can be large, so can be difficult to read on a desktop screen. Drawings and applications are still available for view at the Local Planning Office, in The Forum, Chester. At the top of each current application is an on-line form that can be used to submit comments.

CW&C recognizes the important role that Parish and Town Councils have in determining planning applications. They provide a local perspective and make comments on applications within a local context and with the benefit of local knowledge. In view of the importance of this role, Parish and Town Councils must be consulted on planning applications under national planning legislation. So, applications can also be seen listed in the monthly agenda of the Neston Town Council – Planning, Environment & Regeneration Committee.

It is possible to attend these meetings and speak for up to three minutes on any item of business included in the agenda. Notice of these meetings, the agenda and minutes of past meetings can be found on the Council website <http://nestontowncouncil.org.uk/>

If you have any concerns over planning matters or wish to comment on individual applications, please contact a member of the Society's committee.

Extracts from

**A TOPOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY
of ENGLAND**

By Samuel Lewis

1849

Comprising the several counties, cities, boroughs, corporate and market towns, parishes, and townships, and the islands of Guernsey, Jersey, and Man

With

HISTORICAL AND STATISTICAL DESCRIPTIONS

7th edition, vol III Publ. S. Lewis and Co., London.

PARKGATE, a hamlet, partly in the township of Great Neston, and partly in that of Leighton, parish of Neston, union and Higher division of the hundred, of Wirral (sic), S. division of the county of Chester, 12 miles (N. by W.) from Chester.

It is situated on the bank of the river Dee, about half a mile westward of the village of Neston; and consists of a long range of houses, which all face the river, a command a magnificent view of the opposite coast of Wales. The quay and parade have been very much improved, at a considerable outlay, by the spirited owner, the Hon. Lloyd Mostyn; and the place is much frequented by visitors during the bathing season. There are several hotels, among which is the Mostyn Arms, a spacious establishment replete with every accommodation. Over the estuary of the Dee is a ferry to Bagilt (sic) and Flint. Formerly Parkgate was a sea-port of some note, and packets and other vessels were employed, especially in the trade with Ireland; but at present it is neglected as a port, vessels of burthen being prevented from approaching the quay by a large sand-bank, which impedes navigation of the river. There was a custom house, but the business has been transferred to Chester. An act was passed in 1847 for a railway to Bebington on the Birkenhead and Chester line, five miles in length, which will render this place, from the greater facility of reaching it, a still more fashionable and favourite resort.

PARKGATE – (A Ditty!)

There's a place called Parkgate in the Hundred of Wirral,
Where there's everything rustic, lark, robin and squirrel,
And that sort of thing; just the same as the Tyrol.

Parkgate's the place for my small holiday,
Yes, that's just the place for my small holiday.
You may fancy yourself by the waters of Zurich,
The atmosphere's sweet, as hay in a new rick,
While Flint wafts the odour of Acid Sulphuric !

There are two or three lamp posts, with new gas lamps set on 'em,
And roads kept so dry, you can't get your feet wet on 'em
And very fine sandbanks – when once you can get on 'em,

There's a new 'gutter' forming, there is of a surety,
Where the whole British Navy may ride in security –
I mean some fine day in the distant futurity.

There's Connah's Quay Dock – it's a scheme too romantic;
The Liverpool people, oh ! won't they be frantic,
When the trade of Parkgate takes up all the Atlantic !

We've a Local Board here, I don't wish to decry it,
Tho' I *have* heard it whisper'd, we don't gain much by it, -
But the Chairman's about, so I'd better be quiet !

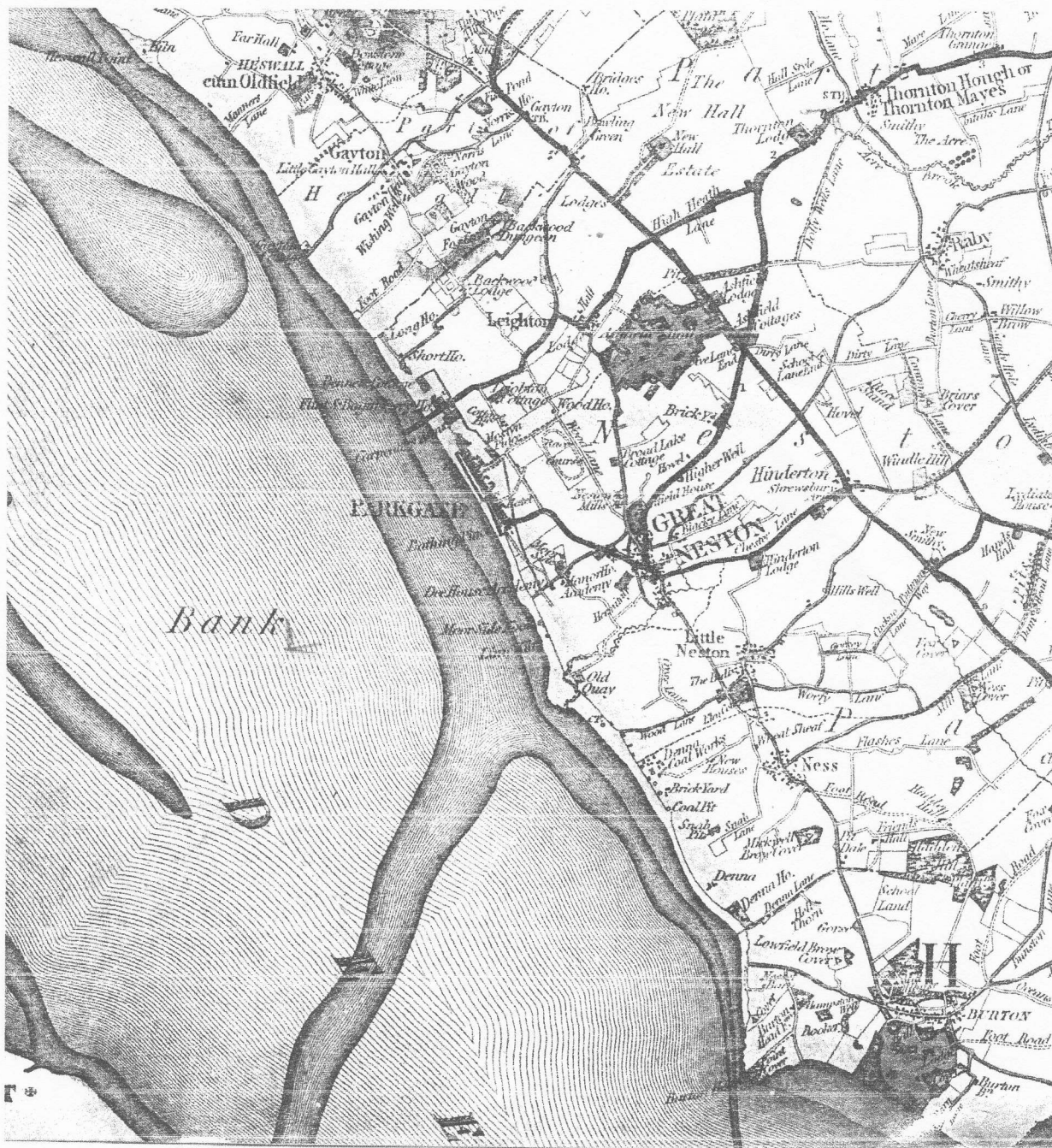
The place is one mass of excitement and bustle,
And if you partake somewhat freely of mussel,
You can go up to Neston and see Dr. R----ll.

There's not a place like it, from Land's End to Leicester,
For the succulent shrimp and the playful Nor' Wester,
In fact it's the gem of the County of Chester !

Parkgate's the place for my small holiday,
Yes, that's just the place for my small holiday.

This was written and sung, as part of a school performance of Box and Cox, by William Barrett, head boy of Mostyn House School. He later became headmaster of Mostyn House, from 1882 to 1889. He left to become the very popular curate of Neston and would have become vicar, had he not died in 1892, on All Saints Day. It is assumed that the Dr Russell referred to, lived in Vine House. Can anyone identify the tune that this would have been sung to?

Over the page is another interesting old map, this time by A Bryant. At 1¼ " to 1 mile, it carries much detail in some areas. See the racecourse on Parks Fields and the two mills in Leighton Road. His maps were soon eclipsed by the first OS maps. The Bryant map of Cheshire is found in two versions: six sheets (plain), part of which is shown here, or two large sheets (coloured), folded in a slip case. Both versions can be seen at the Cheshire Record Office.



A Bryant -1831