

Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

Newsletter

Spring 2012

Issue Number 82

Meetings

We meet at 8pm at the **Boathouse**, in April and May. At **Neston Cricket Club, The Cranston Suite** from September onwards.

If you need help with transport please ring Mrs Angela Clarke, our Secretary, giving 24 hours notice, on 0151-336 -1069.

Diary dates for 2012

16th April - Rock Ferry in Victorian and Edwardian Days.

- *Roy Dennett*

21st May - HMY Britannia

- *Capt. Hugh Daghish*

17th September - "And What Did You Collect?" - *Glynn Parry*

15th October - "Five Generation of Potts Clocks" - *Michael Potts*

19th November - "Parkgate and Beyond" - *Gavin Hunter*

Visitors are welcome

Notice is hereby given of the AGM, which will be held on 21 May, at 7.30pm, at the Boathouse, Parkgate.

According to our constitution, nominations for the election of Committee members and any proposals, shall be made at least 14 days before the AGM.

The Officers and committee members are all willing to stand again.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chairman: Moira Andrews,
Vice Chairman: Greta Simpson,
Secretary: Angela Clarke,
Treasurer: Damian Loughe

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE:

Jill Brock, Jerry Harris, Jill Owen and Rob Naybour.

Plus the ratification of co-opted committee members, Martin Barker and Alan Passmore.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

£7.00 Single / £10 Household 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 Membership Secretary, Rob Naybour.

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact:
Jerry Harris on 0151 336 7406

The Society's email address is parkgatesociety@googlemail.com

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NEWS AND VIEWS

We have to apologise to all our members who turned up for the **November meeting** to find it had been cancelled. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the room at the Boathouse was unavailable due to urgent maintenance work, and we did not learn about this until too late to make any alternative arrangements. The speaker, Glynn Parry, will return in September.

Our February talk, on **Oxton Secret Gardens** (one can actually see the Gardens (!!)) by visiting Oxton on Sunday 13 May), mentioned a 'Chinese Raffle'. A number of people wondered what this is. All the raffle prizes are numbered and so when purchasing tickets, one can select which prizes one wishes to enter the draw for, by numbering the draw tickets. QED.

Mostyn House School, while there is still no news on the future of the site, considerable repairs are needed to the front wall and roof of the covered playground (the section with the name of the school on it and the black balls on the top of the wall). This necessitated the closure of the Parade, outside the School, for three weeks while scaffolding was erected to shore up the wall. The carriageway is now open with single lane traffic flow, controlled by lights. The timescale for the repairs is not known. The transfer of the **Carillon** is ongoing and a statement will be made as soon as there is firm news. In the meantime we have included an article on 'The Bells' – see page 7.

More disruption to local businesses and visitors was caused by further **resurfacing work** along the Parade. Hopefully the new surface will last many years and not suffer from 'utility holes' and life get back to normal for everyone!

From September we are moving our monthly talks meetings to **The Cranston Suite at Neston Cricket Club**. After many years at the Boathouse we recognise that parking is increasingly more difficult for members, competing for spaces with the Boathouse diners, and a number of our members have difficulties with the steep stairs, so the ample parking at the Cricket Club and the lift to the Cranston Suite will, we hope, be welcomed by all and encourage membership. Our thanks must go to The Boathouse, for looking after us since Autumn 1999.

The 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Society is being celebrated in November, with a talk to be given by Gavin Hunter, entitled "Parkgate and Beyond".

Angela Clark, our Secretary since 1973, has written an article on the early years of the Society (see page 5), and we would like to hear from other long standing members about their memories of the early years. How do you think the Society has served the community, have we concentrated on the right things, is there anything we should be attending to in the future? We would encourage more recent members to comment on the third point. Any contributions would be welcome, by mail or phone to Jerry Harris, or email to parkgatesociety@googlemail.com .

The committee are looking at the possibility of creating some permanent feature to commemorate our 40th Anniversary and the Queen's Silver Jubilee. We will keep you posted.

By the time you read this newsletter the committee, especially Damian, our treasurer, hope that you have all responded to the **new subscription forms** sent out in early March. Damian has added some notes, on page 4, reminding us all why we needed to increase the subs.

We wonder how long the **Station Master's House** will be allowed to deteriorate. Although planning permission has been granted to develop the existing house, it is now an eyesore when driving down to the Parade and building plot at the rear is no better now that it has been exposed.

The Friends of Parks Fields have been busy planting Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Hazel and Dog Rose around the perimeter of the field. They have replaced the gate at the Wood Lane end of the footpath. It is understood that CWAC are not intending to mow the top end and plant wild meadow seeds.

Following the public consultation on installing **viewing platforms** along the Parade to allow visitors to view the new ponds, without blocking the footpath, there will be further consultations after the plans for the areas have been drawn up. It is envisaged that the platforms will be sited at the Boathouse end of the Parade.

16th July 1912 – Parkgate has evening visit by Robert King

On Tuesday evening the 16th July, the residents of Parkgate were treated to a visit by Robert A. King in his Farman biplane. King wanted to show the boys of Mostyn House School his aircraft, so he had taken off from Freshfield aerodrome, and flown across the River Mersey and down the Dee estuary to Parkgate. He landed at about 7.30pm on the beach near the cricket ground, mist having preventing him from landing on the cricket ground. The noise of the aircraft could be heard about 10 minutes before he landed, and had attracted quite a large crowd. King took off again at about 8.40pm, having had to wait for the sand to dry out. He headed in the direction of West Kirby, there he flew low over the rooftops, circling the town two or three times and attracting the attention of a large number of residents. He then headed off towards New Brighton, where he landed on the beach near the Red Noses. On landing, King said that flying that evening had been quite hazardous as he had encountered several air pockets and at one time had dropped 40 feet. The aircraft stayed the night on the beach returning to Freshfield the next day.

Our thanks to Colin Schroeder and the Wirral Champion Journal for permission to reproduce this article.

From the Treasurer

For the last ten years, subscriptions to the Society have remained unaltered at £4.00 per year per household. Since the inception of the Society in 1972, it has greatly benefited from Gift Aid, but this has resulted in an increased amount of paperwork.

As a Society, we are now consulted more on local matters and with the welcome arrival of Neston Town Council, we are asked to become active partners in local projects. These include the work done in 2011 on the marsh opposite Parkgate Parade when we made a significant financial contribution to help obtain Matched Funding, working in conjunction with NTC, CWAC and the RSPB. Society funds will be used in conjunction with funding from the Bishop's Trust to effect visual improvements to Mostyn Square at the centre of Parkgate, by removing the bus stop, re-opening gated access to St. Thomas' Church, and improving the Churchyard. Plans are at an early stage to improve the whole aspect of the Parade, hopefully with the support of NTC and CWAC. in order to make the "Parkgate Experience" more pleasant throughout the year.

From September 2012, the society's monthly talks will take place at Neston Cricket Club which provides easier (disabled) access, better parking, more up to date surroundings and better technical facilities used in modern presentations. However, this does come at a price!

The Society is conscious of the need to showcase the work it does and in 2011 Society money was spent on display boards with printing to celebrate the history of the village.

The funds for all the above came from the members, past and present. Monies held by the Society in current and savings accounts have, as a consequence, decreased and with the subscriptions at their present rate they cannot easily be replaced.

At the Annual General meeting, two proposals concerning finance were accepted. The first changed the Society's Financial Year so it now will run from April to March. The second proposal was passed to increase the subscriptions to £7.00 per person and £10.00 per household. As a result you will have received new Membership/Gift Aid/Payment forms. I would venture to suggest that this is still very good value as the Society, will continue to present Speaker's Evenings – without charge – and maintain an overview of the best interests of the village to ensure that any changes intended to improve Parkgate have as little effect as possible on the historic nature of the village as a whole.

I hope I have been able to explain and justify adequately the need to increase the subscription and that it meets with your continued support. May I re-iterate the financial benefit the Society receives should you agree to Gift Aid your subscription. Also, from a personal point of view, Standing Orders make my life a lot easier!

Many thanks in anticipation – Damian McDermott Loughe

PARKGATE SOCIETY – EARLY YEARS

Parkgate received an unexpected and unwanted alarm call in 1971 when the proposed Dee Barrage Crossing was mooted to be sited from Gayton to Greenfield. This would have affected drastically the heritage, environment and ambience of those of us living here. An embankment across the Dee would alter for ever the tidal waters, road network, bird life and the future of our village.

Local residents including Rupert Allen, Ruth Bloc, Freddie French, Julian Grenfell, Eric Howe and Peter Moore met several times to discuss the way forward and so, eventually your Society was formed. The inaugural AGM was held on 17th October 1972 when Steve Norris was elected Chairman, Freddie French Secretary, and Peter Taylor Treasurer and the Constitution was adopted. Following their next Committee Meeting in November, I was asked to join as Minutes Secretary, becoming Secretary in 1973 and I have been there ever since!

By April 1973 the first major task had been achieved and the Conservation Area was in place after much discussion with the relevant authorities. During the year we had planted 62 trees on 5 different sites. We were awaiting a report from the Water Board about the Dee Barrage and were concerned about pollution on the marsh at certain points at the foot of the sea wall, which itself was in a poor state of repair and Geoffrey Place had joined the Committee..

In 1974 we became a Registered Charity, had produced our first publication "A Stroll Through Parkgate", had successfully persuaded Cheshire County Council to draw up proposals make improvements to the Donkey Stand costing £300 and had agreed to donate a further £50 from our funds. The Local Authority had been changed from Neston Urban District Council to Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council. There was no further progress on the Dee Barrage. We were concerned about a proposal for 9 more football pitches on Park Fields. Steve Norris had moved from Parkgate to pursue a career in politics and Jim Cochrane was our Chairman.

As I read through the records kept so meticulously by Geoffrey Place, it has become obvious that many of the problems we highlighted then are still with us today, namely the marsh and sea wall, planning applications, conservation, litter, street furniture, traffic flow and parking, mosquitoes and local authority finance. Time appears to pass quickly but progress is slow!

I hope this article about our origin whets your appetite for our continued work and I ask you to encourage neighbours and friends to become members. Everyone will be welcome and we need your support.

Angela.

Community Pride 2011 (Best Kept Village)

Last year we entered Parkgate in the 2011 Cheshire Community Action Community Pride Competition, in the Category 2501 – 5000 Residents. We came seventh out of seven! Tarporley came first and Willaston, second.

Becky Ford managed our entry, putting up posters to publicise our entry and noting items within the boundary needing attention from CW&C, before the inspections, which were passed on to the relevant departments.

The following is a summary of the judge's findings –

- The sand stone blocks in the sea wall are becoming overgrown with weeds and small trees, and also some of the rendering was missing. These issues had been brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities, but to no avail. There is an ongoing problem with ice cream stains on the pavements.
- On each visit the public toilets were not in an acceptable condition, the door was missing on the telephone box in Mostyn Square, and the bus shelter was in need of attention. Notice boards were acceptable.
- The public houses, restaurants and commercial premises were good.
- The cricket ground was well maintained deserving a high mark, and the churchyard was tidy. The children's play area was in good repair and free from litter. The steps leading to the Wirral Way needed weeding.
- The allotments were untidy and the fence between them and the play area was broken.
- There was an adequacy of litter bins, but a number of doors were missing or would not close and the 'dog' bin on the Ropewalk had been burnt, for some months.

These comments were passed onto Steve Robinson, Chief Executive of CW&C, whose response is summarised, as follows -

- Litter bins – those with defects were resolved mainly by replacement with new bins. The 'dog' bin on the Ropewalk was due for repair/replacement by end of January. Doors not being closed have been taken up with operational staff.
- Public Conveniences – these were fully redecorated in late Autumn 2011, inside and out. Other works are scheduled to be carried out during the winter and early spring.
- Fencing near the allotments – this is not part of the allotment fence. However the Council are arranging to have it repaired
- The Sea Wall – a site meeting was held in 2011, together with Neston Town Council and the Environment Agency Wales. Ownership of the wall was investigated, the outcome was that ownership is not clear, however, it is accepted the Council should have some "responsibilities". It was agreed that structurally the wall appears in reasonable condition, the removal of the larger shrubs and weeds on the estuary side took place in autumn 2011. It is the Council's intention to treat the weeds again this year, by spraying the full length. Shrub removal will be reviewed in early spring 2012.

Finally, the Chief Executive reassures the Society as to the commitment CW&C have towards the Parkgate Conservation area.

Note: The bus shelter is due to be demolished in a plan to open up the old access in the front wall of St Thomas' churchyard.

Goodbye to the Carillon

Anyone who lived in Parkgate through the decades of the twentieth century will surely have fond and nostalgic memories of the melodies from the Mostyn House School carillon, although those of us who lived in the further reaches of Parkgate usually depended on a favourable wind or a still, clear day to hear the bells. Sadly, the passing of the years, together with Parkgate weather played havoc with the mechanism for sounding the bells, although sixteen of them were still playing up to the closure of the School in 2010. Now, alas, we will hear them no more in our locality.

In August 1919 Mostyn House headmaster Algernon (A.G.) Grenfell, a very energetic individual who amongst other enterprises built several houses, the two swimming pools at the north end of Parkgate, served as a local councillor and massively revamped and enlarged the school, decided on an innovative idea for a memorial to the eighty or so old-boys who died in the Great War. He drew up plans for a '**Peal of 25 chromatic bells**' to be hung in a belfry which would be an extension to the school chapel, and submitted the plans to the Neston and Parkgate Urban District Council. Under the bells, which were exposed to the elements, would be a '**Clavier Chamber for the Bell-player**'. Subscriptions were made for the memorial, including £500 from the brother of Allan Appleby Drew, who had been a pupil at Mostyn House School and Charterhouse, and had returned to teach at Mostyn House School, before serving in the war; he perished at Neuve Chapelle. The company that supplied the bells was John Taylor & Co, in Loughborough, a firm that is still in business today, as the largest bell foundry in the world. The bells themselves are stationary and are struck by clappers connected by wires to batons on the clavier, the batons being struck with the fist, along with foot-activated pedals for the heavier bells.

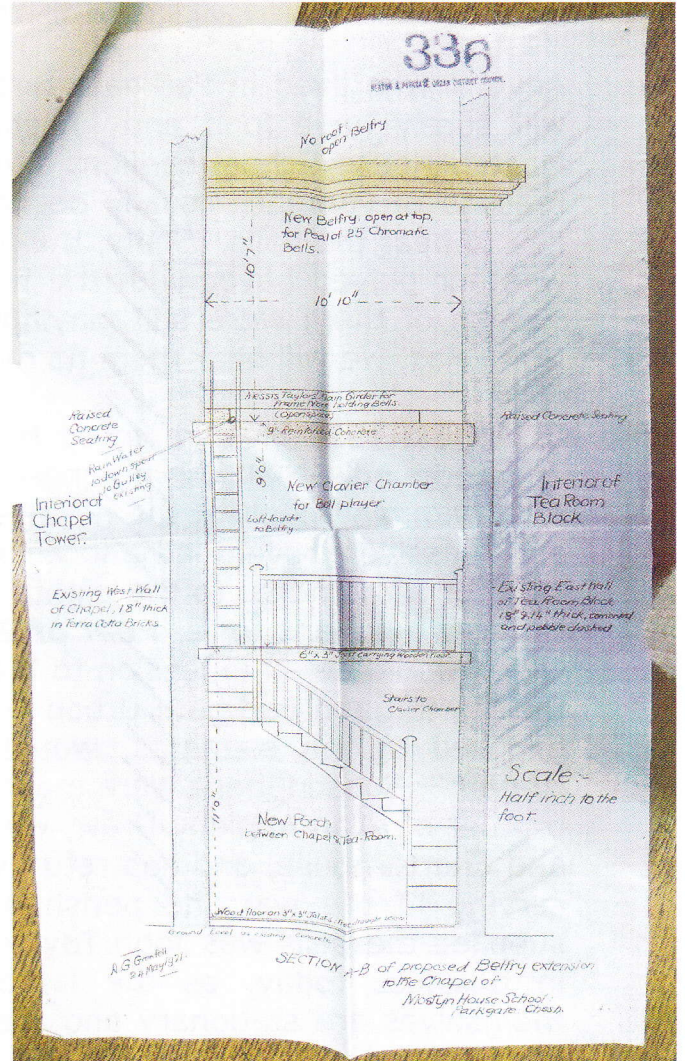
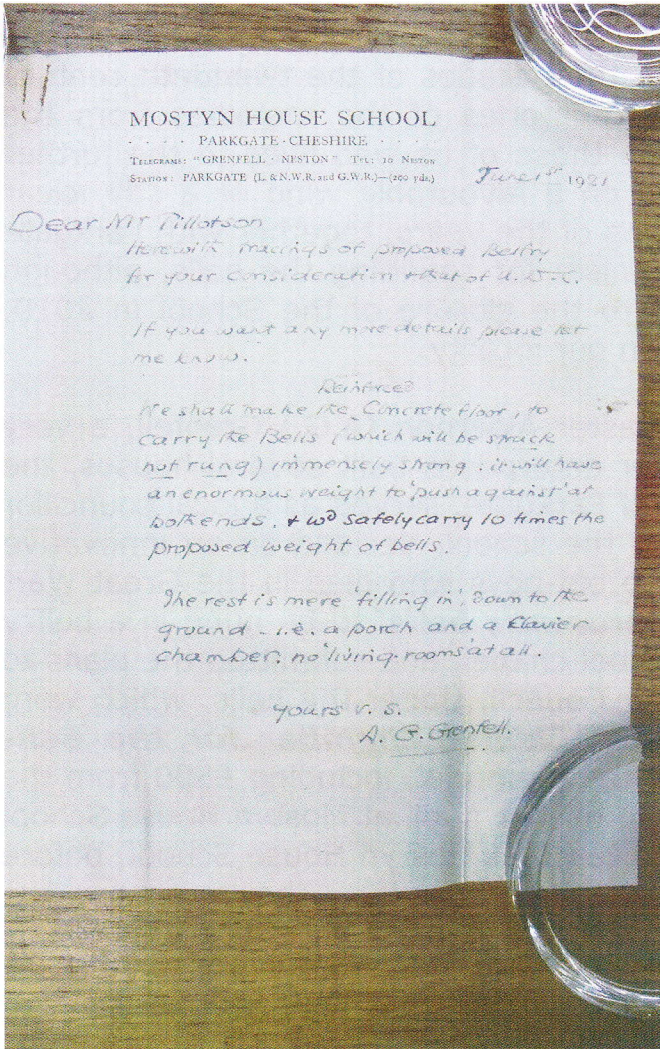
Construction was completed in the summer holidays of 1921, with thirty-one bells in fact, at a total cost of £2,725. It was intended to add a further six bells at some point. On 25 May 1922 the memorial was dedicated to the memory of those '**who fell fighting for England in the Great War**'. A panel placed in the chapel entrance named seventy-eight of them individually. In January the following year the six new bells were added, and the old chapel bell went to the church of the medical missionary Wilfred Grenfell, Algernon's brother, in Newfoundland.

And so the Mostyn House Carillon pealed out for nearly ninety years. The bells were not a part of the freehold of the school, and there was a covenant in the deed of gift for the memorial that if the school were to close they would go to another school, preferably Charterhouse.

That school has expressed its willingness to take them, and Cheshire and Chester West Council have given listed building consent for removal subject to various works for the protection of the bells and the building.

Susan Chambers- Burton & Neston History Society

This planning application, dated 1921, for the Mostyn House School Carillon Tower, has recently come to light.



From the Chester Chronicle 1812 -

"An Irish Robbery! A butcher was stopped on the Parkgate Road by two Irishmen, who not only robbed him of his money, but made him exchange his coat for one of theirs. He had not gone far into the night when he heard them pursuing him. He crossed a hedge and hid in a ditch. The Irishmen also crossed the hedge but continued across the fields. The butcher made his way to an inn and there he discovered that his new coat had £23 sewed into the lining, which amply compensated him for his losses and alarms."