

Parkgate Society

(Founded 1972)

Newsletter

Issue Number 86

Spring 2014

Meetings

We meet at 8pm at **The Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club.**
If you need help with transport please ring Mrs Angela Clarke, our Secretary, giving 24 hours notice, on 0151-336 -1069.

Diary dates –

- 28th April** - "Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot?" - Michael Corfe
- 19th May** - AGM at 7.30pm followed by "Old Liverpool 1897-1970s."
- Glynn Parry
- 15th Sept** - "The Union Jack"- Derek Arnold
- 20th Oct.** - "History of the Victoria Cross"
- Alan Goulbourne
- 17th Nov** - "From Turnpikes to Motorways"
- Gavin Hunter

Visitors are welcome

The Annual General Meeting

Notice is given of the Society AGM, to be held at 7.30pm on 19th May, at The Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club.

There are no proposals/resolutions from the Committee, to be considered at the AGM.

Election of Officers for 2014/15, to be proposed en bloc;

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

Election of Committee for 2013/14; to be proposed en bloc;

Jill Brock, Jill Owen, Rob Naybour, Alan Passmore.

Any proposals to be considered at the AGM, and nominations for the Committee must be submitted to the Secretary 14 days before the AGM.

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact Alan Passmore, 0151 336 2917, or alan.passmore39@btinternet.com.

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.

Printing of this newsletter has been made possible by the kind support of

Rightway Bevans

All articles in this Newsletter are the property of the Society and can only be reproduced with the permission of the Society.

The Parkgate Society is a registered charity, no. 503718

NEWS AND VIEWS



Photograph taken by Allan Stephenson. Our thanks for permission to use it.

This photograph celebrates three things; **the highest tide for some years**, thanks to Mother Nature, **the refurbished Donkey Stand**, thanks to funding from Councillor Brenda Dowding, CWAC, Neston Town Council and, of course, the Parkgate Society, and last, but not least, **Parkgate's first Christmas Tree and lights**, thanks to Neston Town Council.

An inspired Angela Clarke organised, at very short notice, a carol concert around the new tree. The choir from Parkgate Primary school led the singing. Chairman Moira welcomed everyone and thanked the Town Council for the tree. The Mayor, Tom Marlow responded. After the event **Mozkitos Coffee House**, in Mostyn Square, offered free soup or mulled wine, to all. Thank you Mozkitos.

Two **other Cafés** have been set up on the Parade; **Nichols** have a few tables in the old Post Office and next to Balcony House, The **Little Café** in South Cottage, has opened. Another development is turning the old Coffee Shop into an extension of the very successful **Elephant Coffee** in Neston High Street. **Elephant®** will also house "Elephant Espresso School" in a building at the rear. The intention is to run barista courses and issue City & Guilds qualifications.

On the reverse of this it is sad to note that Parkgate no longer has its own local Store. This closed down in December and there are no rumours on it reopening. Newspapers and bread can be preordered from Mozkitos and milk can also be purchased without ordering.

The Donkey Stand will have three interpretation panels; the view across the Dee, local history and local wildlife. These are being worked on by the Society and the RSPB, and then will be installed on the prepared plinths. Also two heritage style lighting columns will be installed either side of the stand. It is suggested that a traditional style finger post is installed in Mostyn Square.

Following the outbreak of a fire, last April, which destroyed an area of the marsh, identified as a site of special scientific interest, police investigations led to two 16 year old boys from Neston and Rockferry being summonsed to court in relation to two counts of arson and damaging a site of special scientific interest. One was given

a youth referral order. The second received a curfew for two months and a youth rehabilitation order. Our thanks to the Police for their work on this case.

It would appear that a resolution to the **upkeep of the seawall** is about to happen, thanks to Brenda Dowding's persistence. SSSI approval has been given by the Environment Agency, to enable CWaC to commence the schedule of works. A study has recently taken place on the amount of work needed. The recent surge tide has helped to get this now to high priority status.

The news from **Mostyn Place**, the PJ Livesey development at the former Mostyn House School, is that the first residents are on track to move in May 2014 and anticipated the site to be complete within 18 months. The apartments in the beautiful school buildings are due to launch in the Spring of this year. The confirmed road names for the estate are George Drive, Edward Price Close, Grenfell Park, Algernon Close and Phoenix Court. Regarding the scaffolding, in mid February Liveseys stated that 16 weeks is the longest date it can be up for. Unfortunately they cannot give an exact date at this time but thank all of the residents of Parkgate for their patience. They fully appreciate the inconvenience but this is essential to the ongoing works.

The Mostyn House School Carillon has now been installed at Charterhouse School. The bells were cleaned by gentle sandblasting and came up like new. A new bell frame was manufactured in galvanised steel, and a completely new transmission system. A beautiful new clavier was made using seasoned oak.

Carparking signs have appeared at both entrances to Parkgate, directing motorists to the Wirral Way car park off Station Road and the Old Baths car park.

Our continued thanks to Nichols and also, now Mozkitos for their support of the Society in selling "This is Parkgate".

May we remind you that you can now receive your newsletter via email. This will save the Society postage or the hand deliverer's shoe leather. To sign up for this please email parkgatesociety@rightway.ltd.uk.

Also if you let us have your email address via parkgatesociety@googlemail.com, we can let you have up to date news on topics of interest, or changed talks, as happened in February.

Alan Passmore has agreed to become the editor of the Newsletter. I urge members to with recollections/memories from earlier days or new thoughts on Parkgate, to get in touch with him. (Ed)

And finally, a note from Angela, our secretary –

"We are sorry to report that after many years on the Committee Jerry Harris has decided to stand down and not seek re-election for 2014/5. Over all this time Jerry has been a wise and knowledgeable contributor to the working of the Committee, a diligent keeper of the Society's archives and, in particular, a successful editor of the Society's bi-annual Newsletter. Though not a local by birth Jerry has firmly put his

roots down here, and is a great lover of the Neston area and its history, particularly Parkgate; he has also been, and continues to be, a keen supporter of a number of other local societies. As many will know, Jerry has not enjoyed the best of health in recent years and yet he has managed (through modern technology) to remain involved and keep up his contributions to the Society, even when he could not be physically present. We shall miss his sure guidance at committee in the years to come, but expect that he will continue to make a constructive contribution to the Society in a less formal way in the future. We are very grateful to him, and extend to him and his partner Polly best wishes for the future."

TWENTY FIVE YEARS AGO Parkgate in 1988

The Saxon Stones of Neston – allegedly the oldest man made objects in the town were described in the newsletter, and the story of their rescue and "re-birth" was recounted. Pieces of old carved stones had lain neglected in the Parish church for many years until in 1984 Parkgate Society and Neston Civic Society appointed a consultant archaeologist to assess them, and also to assess a stone that had been used in the rebuilding of the church tower. In 1988 progress was made with results of the archaeological report and the construction of a very substantial display stand in the Parish Church, so that they might be brought into view but be safe from accidentally landing on someone. Funding for the display was met largely (£500) by Cheshire archaeology and historic buildings fund, with smaller funding from Neston Civic Society and Parkgate Society.

The most substantial of the stones, representing two pieces of the same cross, appear to be part of the same memorial to an individual person, and were carved between 930 and 1020 AD. Although this is referred to loosely as the Saxon Period, the carvings show Viking influence.

Apparently, some time after 901 AD a group of Norse Vikings settled in the Isle of Man and the Wirral Peninsula. These cross fragments may well derive from this colonisation of the area. The Domesday survey of 1085 AD does not mention a church at Neston, but does mention a priest so perhaps there was some sort of church at Neston in these very early days.

Diamonds One of the winter talks was given by Parkgate resident Mr JL Pyke of the well known local family jewellers. His talk was enhanced by a tray of dazzling diamonds and other precious stones. Close scrutiny was allowed!

Grenfell Park "The builders, Redrow, have departed and left us with a most attractive new road in Parkgate, around the grounds of Mostyn House School. To those new residents, welcome. The name Grenfell Park was suggested by the Society and will make a fitting recognition of one of Parkgate's most distinguished past residents."

Sir Wilfred Thomason Grenfell British Medical Missionary, born Feb. 28th 1865, he became house surgeon at the London Hospital. Being interested in the North Sea fishermen, he fitted out the first hospital ship, and established land missions and homes for their use. In 1892 he went to Labrador, built four hospitals, and started

various institutions for the fishermen. He was knighted in 1927. (ref: The Modern Encyclopaedia circa 1938).

Leisure Water Centre for Parkgate? The newsletter editorial of 1988 was critical of the tourist industry for wanting to impose a leisure water park on us, with raised lagoons. The local papers had again been active in publicising the scheme. However, Mr Cox, one of the members of the Society had proposed a better idea, to merely create a lagoon widened from the existing gulley. His plans met with considerable favour, in agreeable contrast to those which would impose more concrete than water on Parkgate front. "His ideas had the virtue of common sense and modesty". The Society expressed its views to the Council. "We believe that the attraction of Parkgate for those who enjoy its outlook is the vast horizon and the sense of untamed space. We should be sorry to see any development which would enclose our view or make the foreshore artificial rather than natural." *Well said, don't you think? And at last we now, 25 years later, have our natural lagoons to enhance Parkgate.*

The Royal Charter

A clipper, with auxiliary steam power built at Sandycroft, Deeside. Wrecked off Moelfre, Angelsey, 26th October, 1859.

The Royal Charter, which became one of the most tragic and famous wrecks in British maritime history, sailed down the Dee past Parkgate at the very start of its short but fateful life. It was a large ship for its day, 336 ft (102m) in length, but with a freeboard (height of deck above sea) of only 6ft (1.8m), little enough you would think for its voyages between England and Australia. But it was not the ocean seas that claimed her and most of her passengers and crew, but the rocks of the north coast of Angelsey, only some 50 miles from where she was built at Sandycroft, near Queensferry. She foundered in the early hours of the morning on Wednesday 26th October, 1859, off Moelfre, Angelsey.

She was launched of necessity sideways, but only with difficulty and after a channel had been dug, after the initial attempt to launch her had failed. When eventually she did proceed down the Dee she grounded on a sandbank near Flint. This damaged her sufficiently badly to require her to be dry docked for repairs in Liverpool.

We can only guess as to the view she presented to the residents of Parkgate all those years ago, but with her three tall masts and her thin little funnel between main and mizzen, she must have been a pretty sight on her way to the open sea.

Built with an iron hull, the yard where she was built was also an ironworks. Her two bladed screw was novel in that it could be raised out of the water when not in use to reduce the drag when only under sail.

The misfortune of the Royal Charter continued on her maiden voyage to Australia when she had to return to Plymouth when she was found, in a gale off Finnisterre, to be unmanageable due to the excessive amount of ballast that had been placed in her. Some 400 tons of sand ballast was removed from her and then her fortunes

were to change for the better. She made passage now in the record time of just sixty days to Melbourne. A magnificent feat when it is considered that in the previous five months the fastest passage of a ship from England to Australia was 91 days. Her owners were now well pleased.

However, in 1859, the Royal Charter, by now a famous and well respected vessel, was to sail from Melbourne with some 493 people on board, of whom only 39 were to survive that tempestuous October night in Dulas Bay. She was to become known as the Golden wreck on account of the large quantity of Australian gold on board her. At that time the Australian gold rush was booming and some £322,440 worth of gold bullion was signed for by the Captain as cargo. In addition to this, the passengers were carrying their own personal fortunes with them in gold coin, nuggets and gold dust. Although the vast majority of the bullion cargo was successfully salvaged and most of that within a couple of months of the wreck taking place, local Moelfre families did in many cases reap a valuable harvest amongst the rocks and along the beach in the vicinity of the wreck.

A tragic end to one of the many ships that started their sailing days in the Dee.

The Parkgate Regatta & Sailing Club

A sailing regatta was held at Parkgate from 1827 until 1921. In September 1842 Mr John Rigby brought his beautiful new steamer The Lapwing to anchor opposite the Mostyn Arms Hotel and invited the regatta committee on board for wine. In the final two years of the event it rained and it is thought that that hastened the end of the annual tradition.

In 1843 a Dee Yacht Club was founded at Parkgate and continued to meet here until 1872.

Station Road Cottages

The dating of Station Road Cottages, opposite The Old Quay pub, was attempted by Geoffrey Place in the 1970s, and reported in the Parkgate Society 1978 Autumn newsletter. He used four maps and some documentary evidence from title deeds to produce the dates.

The 1732 map (A) shows on the left, Seaward House, which incidentally carries a date plate of 1721, and next to it the site of Barnoon, which was later rebuilt as a taller house. It could be seen from the map that there were then no houses on the right side of Barnoon, where numbers 16, 15 and 14 were built later. There was a group of houses higher up the road, where number 12 is now and this group stretched across the line of the present roadway. The road up to Neston was made in 1787 as a new section of the Turnpike Road to Chester, and later, with the advent of the railway, became called Station Road. Before that date, the route to Neston

was along the open shore to Moorside. From this map it is evident that none of the Station Road cottages had been built by 1732.

The next map, not shown here, drawn in 1811, shows that five cottages had been built by then. These were the ones now numbered 11, 12, 14, 15, 16. The site of 13, a very narrow house, was at that time a short passageway leading to the garden of Seaward House. Number 16, known as Dover Cottage, was present in June 1784 as the home of Mrs Downward, because a letter exists from Emma Lyon who was staying there for a sea-bathing cure. Number 15 is known as Nelson Cottage after a young boy called Nelson Burt who drowned in the Mersey in 1822 when he was swept overboard in a storm when crossing from Liverpool with his father on the paddle steamer, Prince Regent.

By the time the Mostyn family sold their Cheshire estates, including the whole of Parkgate, it can be seen from map (B), the 1849 sale plan, that two more had been built, number 10, and number 13, which filled in the narrow passageway. In that sale, the land fronting the road above the cottages was bought by Richard Matthews, a fisherman, and we know that by 1852 he had built four cottages on his land. These were numbers 1 to 4, and he seems to have added number 5 soon afterwards. Maps (B) and (C) also show the buildings opposite that were present before The Old Quay pub and its car park were constructed in 1963.

After this, but before the first large scale Ordnance Survey map was made in 1872 map (C) numbers 8 and 9 were built. The remaining numbers 6 and 7 were built after 1872, but before 1898.

The coming of the railway in 1866 from Hooton to Parkgate, resulted in a station for Parkgate on the Neston side of the road.

Later, in 1886 the line was extended from Parkgate to West Kirby and a new station was built on the other side of the road, allowing the former site to become a goods yard. Numbers 6,7,8 and 9 Station Road cottages would have been constructed during the railway era.

In summary: cottages 1,2,3,4, 1849-1852 ,

5 soon after 1852

6, 7 1872 – 1898, the most recent cottages.

8, 9 1852 – 1872

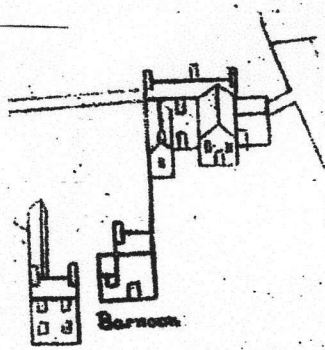
10, 13 after 1811, before 1849

11,12,14,15,16 after 1732, before 1811, the oldest cottages.

No. 16, Dover Cottage is pre-1784.

MAP (A)

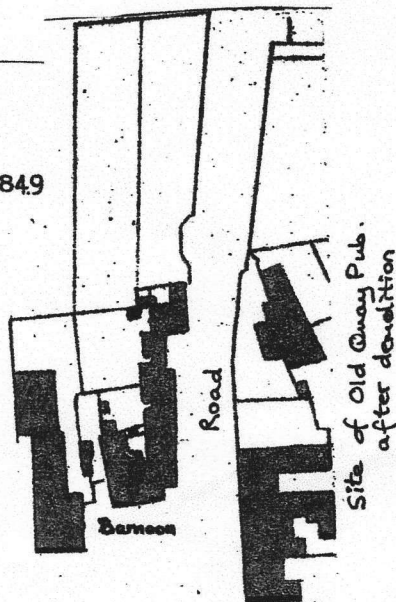
1732



The Eighteenth-century Station Road Cottages
From "This is Parkgate, its buildings and their story"
Publ. 1979 Parkgate Society.
Drawing by Michael Barton

MAP (B)

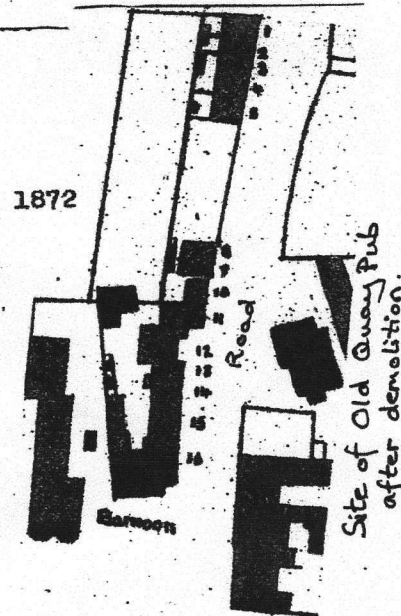
1849



River Dee

MAP (C)

1872



River Dee

The Eighteenth-century Station Road Cottages