

# Parkgate Society

## Newsletter

Spring 2019

Issue Number 96

Welcome to this latest edition of our Newsletter. We hope you will find it an interesting and enjoyable read.



Parkgate: a relatively quiet day on The Parade

*'Working together to preserve and enhance the unique character of  
Parkgate'*



The Parkgate Society presents the **Wirral Baroque Players** in an evening of 'Music from the era of Handel's England'.

While Handel became the pre-eminent musician in England after the Hanoverian succession, he was only one of many successful composers of the time, in Britain and in Europe, some of whose work will be presented at this concert.

The Wirral Baroque Players are a local group of mainly amateur musicians with close ties to the very experienced and highly successful Wirral Symphony Orchestra.

Conductor: Adrian Griffiths



**The United Reformed Church, Moorside Lane, Parkgate  
7.30 pm, Saturday 27 April 2019**

Tickets **£10.00** available from Nicholl's Ice Cream Parlour and Mozkitos' Coffee House, Parkgate; also Paisley Grey in Neston; and from the Parkgate Society:

Phone: (0151) 336-4461; or 336-5176; or 336-2917

Email: [secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk); or  
[membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk)

Refreshments available

Concert promoted and sponsored by *The Parkgate Society*



## Notices

<b>Meetings 2018</b>	<b>The Committee</b>
<p>We normally meet at 8pm at <b>The Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, Station Road, Parkgate</b>, usually on the third Monday of the month.</p> <p><b>18 March: 'The Tay Bridge Disaster'</b> - Professor Sir Ian Gilmore</p> <p><b>15 April: 'Bittersweet – a Story of Sugar'</b> - Dr Trevor Evans</p> <p><b>20 May: 'The Hardmans' House, 59 Rodney Street'</b> - Norman Waddell</p> <p><b>16 September: Annual General Meeting at 7.30 pm, followed by 'Medicine on The Wirral – A History of The BMS'</b> - Dr Chris Brace</p> <p><b>21 October: 'Rock around The Wirral'</b> - Hilary Davies</p> <p><b>18 November: Hot-pot Supper at 6.30 pm followed by 'The Rows of Chester'</b> - <i>Tom Jones</i></p>	<p>At the Society's AGM last September the following officers and committee members were elected for 2018/19:</p> <p><b>Chairman:</b> Jill Brock <b>Deputy-Chairman:</b> Bryan Lecky <b>Secretary:</b> Alan Passmore <b>Treasurer:</b> Roger Harris <b>Membership Secretary:</b> Derek Haylock</p> <p><b>Committee members:</b> Carol Fearnett, David Johnson, Jim Lycett &amp; Marie Lycett</p> <p><b>Appointment of Auditor:</b> Clive Edwards</p> <p>There are a number of vacancies for additional members of the committee. If you feel that you are in a position to help us further the aims of the Society, particularly in the field of planning and conservation, we would like to hear from you. Please get in touch with the Secretary.</p>

**TRANSPORT** - If you need help with transport to our meetings, please ring Alan Passmore, our Secretary, giving 24 hours' notice, on (0151) 336 - 2917.

**VISITORS** - We are always on the look-out for new members and, therefore, would like to encourage you to introduce your friends to the Society. Visitors are very welcome to attend our talks – first time free – after that we will encourage them to join as full members.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - £7.00 Single / £10 Household per year. Subscriptions are due on 6<sup>th</sup> April each year. Payment can be made at any of our meetings; but we would prefer you to make payment by Banker's Standing Order. Membership, Standing Order and Gift Aid forms are available from Derek Haylock, our Membership Secretary, tel: (0151) 336-4461. Please check that your Standing Order is for the correct amount.

## News and Views

What a contrast with this time last year! A year ago we were experiencing the 'beast from the east' and a late spring. This February has been the warmest since records began, with daytime temperatures of over 20 degrees not far from here, also a record. Our gardens have been a riot of colour, as April-flowering plants have coincided with the snowdrops and other early flowering bulbs. What will this signal for later developments in the garden?

On the subject of gardens we were sad that Marsh Nurseries, who supplied many of the plants we have used to beautify our village, decided that they could not carry on their business in Boathouse Lane and closed before Christmas. We understand, however, that Russell and Paul have found a new business partner and will continue raising plants for sale from a new base in Willaston. One way or another we will continue to ensure that Parkgate is able to offer a good display of flowers throughout the year.

The organisers of Parkgatefest have decided not to go ahead with this event this year. Although last year's event attracted record crowds on the Sunday, rain on the Saturday deterred visitors on that day and consequently takings were significantly affected. The organisers are, therefore, taking stock and working out how the event can be better weather-proofed for the future. As usual, however, we recently attended the Wirral History and Heritage Fair at Birkenhead Town Hall and expect to have a presence at Neston Fair in July.

This year we are again supporting the revived **Neston Music Festival**. We have been involved in the overall arrangements and this time we are promoting and sponsoring two concerts; the first will be at the United Reformed Church in Parkgate Road on Saturday 27 April, the second at St Thomas's Church on Wednesday 15 May. Details are given elsewhere in this

Newsletter. The Festival provides a wide range of music from opera to jazz and details of the various concerts will be given in the many brochures that are being widely distributed in the area. Visit the website: [www.neston.org.uk/music-festival](http://www.neston.org.uk/music-festival).

This year we invited the Wirral Symphony Orchestra to come to Parkgate and take part in the festival, and they have offered a group of players to come and introduce us to some baroque music from the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; this was the time of the German George Frederick Handel, who moved to this country at the time of the Hanoverian succession and became one of the greatest British composers. For our second concert Sue Reid and her group 'Reid between the Lines' will return to present another programme of music from the great American songbook. Sue is a top class singer, and this will be another great evening of quality entertainment. Please make sure you get your tickets for these concerts in good time from Mozkitos, Nicholls or Paisley Grey (Neston High St) or through members of the Committee.

Our Community Spirit team continue to do good work around the village, despite the vagaries of the weather. While some individuals have their own projects, the general plan is to meet in Mostyn Square at 10 am on the first Saturday of each month and sally forth from there to different areas in need of our attention. With the support of the Neston Town Council we are again entering the Best Kept Cheshire Village competition this year, so our efforts will be concentrating on general tidiness and in particular on flower planting. We have provided additional planters this past year. It is not true that flowers will not flourish in our sea-side atmosphere, so don't be afraid to have a go in your own gardens. If you would like to join our team of volunteers, just let David Johnson know, so that he can contact you about specific events. Or, simply, just turn up, suitably attired.

Last year we reported on the draft proposals by the Boundary Commission for new arrangements for future elections in the Neston area. The forthcoming local elections on 2 May for both the Town Council and for Cheshire West (CWaC) will be conducted under the new political disposition: for the Town Council this means 3 wards instead of the previous 5, the erstwhile Parkgate ward being extended to include a significant part of the former Riverside ward and having five councillors to represent the area. The successful CWaC candidate will also represent this same enlarged area. We have been lucky

in the past that our representatives have been very supportive of the aims of this Society and hope that this will continue to be the case, whatever the outcome of these elections.



*No 1 Mostyn Square is now Salty's*

We continue to scrutinize the local **planning applications** for the Parkgate ward and monitor the progress of approved schemes. The owners of No 14 Station Road are planning an internal refurbishment of their listed premises, involving a readjustment of floor levels and also renovation of windows and doors; the classic external appearance will not be affected. Close by we continue to be concerned about the condition of No 11 Station Road, which has now been unoccupied for many years. We hope that the Council (CWaC) can take another look at the situation and perhaps intervene to save this listed building from further decay. The refurbishment of Broad Beams on The Parade appears to have stalled for the time being; the frontage has now been revealed as a recreation of its appearance a century ago as seen in the old Parkgate pictures of yesteryear. Also on The Parade we notice that the former Marsh Cat, recently No 1 Mostyn Square, has undergone another make-over and is now Salty's, while the proprietors of the Red Lion have re-badged their south wing as the Clontarf Café, a case of 'deja vu'; maybe one day we'll get a post office back there! In the meantime Mozkitos are intending to increase the size of the covered area available to their customers. These changes are all cases of proprietors responding to social

change and market forces. The two houses 'Curlews' and 'Sandpipers' are now close to completion, and it is expected that the builders will soon turn their attention to the renovation of White Cottage and the new-build to the rear of Deva Bank.



### *Clontarf Café and the Red Lion*

Beyond the conservation area we have been watching progress with Fairacre, No 35 Parkgate Road, just below the library, where we have noticed that the bold statement made by the new building is being softened with the installation of timber cladding; the flat roof is concealing solar panels. Preliminary work has started on the site adjacent to Townfield in Mill Street, prior to an archaeological dig, which is one of the conditions of the planning approval. This house will be seen as another bold statement, a design which we and the Neston Civic Society felt inappropriate within the conservation area. The building is to be known as Glen Etive House, a name suggesting Scottish baronial, but hardly fitting the actual design. We have just heard of another bold plan, about which we also have some concern. This is to build a large sunken dwelling in land opposite Backwood Lodge in Boathouse Lane. The site of about 3.5 acres is within the North Cheshire Green Belt, the bloc of farmland which separates Neston/Parkgate from neighbouring urban area of Gayton/Heswall in Wirral Borough. We have accordingly notified the planning authority of our strong objections to what we consider a totally inappropriate proposal for the use of green belt land.



*No 11 Station Road – in need of some tlc.*

As part of the national **Heritage Open Days** programme in early September we are again organizing guided walks based on our Parkgate Heritage Trail. This year the events across Cheshire West will take place on ten days from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month. On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> we will meet at the bat haven (the former WW2 pillbox) on the Ropewalk carpark in Station Road at 3.00 pm. The walk is about 1.5 miles, but lasts about 2 hours. Participants should come appropriately dressed and shod for the weather conditions. St Thomas' Church in Mostyn Square is also taking part in the HODs scheme and will be open to visitors on this Saturday and also on the Sunday afternoon. This year we have been approached by two other voluntary groups to guide walks for their members.

### **A year in the Life of The Cabbage Patch**

Many of you will know Gill Downey, who with husband Patrick, is known to frequent the Red Lion and is well-known for her walks around Parkgate with Polly, the sheep, dog-like, on a lead. For the past few years she has been rearing young lambs rejected by their mothers at the Cabbage Patch on Leighton Road. "Visitors are always very welcome", says Gill; "Wednesday afternoon is usually a good time". Here is a short extract from her diary.



## April 2018

At 5 weeks old Ginny was turning into a strong little girl. She was making guest appearances at the local CAMEO club for the elderly, Hartford Hay Residential Home, and would often walk to Mozkitos with me for morning coffee.

Spring is flystrike season and time to give all the sheep and lambs preventative treatment. It's a terrible thing for them to get and from now right through until October we have to be on top of it.



Each year we have one or two lambs that have difficulty walking. Most of the time they are just short on essential vitamins, but they do require special attention. Unable to stand up themselves, their mothers wouldn't be able to feed them. Three days after this little boy arrived he couldn't stand. After a couple of weeks of therapy (with his mum patiently watching over) he was able to get to his feet and managed to feed for himself. Now he is a big strong boy named Noggin the Nog, and Alex will be breeding from him.

Buffy doesn't like cats. She spent 4 weeks staring at Annabelle and her daughter Beth. They were feral cats found at Seaforth dock. They had never

seen a blade of grass before and, as we needed a natural way to keep the rats down, we welcomed them to our home. They now roam around, guarding ours and the neighbouring fields, but always come back to The Cabbage Patch for their dinner.

## **The Railway at Parkgate** **A brief history, by Alan Passmore – Part 1**

### **Origins**

It is now well over 60 years since the last passenger train steamed through Parkgate, and recollections of the time when trains chuffed between Hooton and West Kirby are now a distant memory for all those Nestonians who once travelled on this route.

The first railway on the Wirral peninsula was the Chester & Birkenhead, constructed between the city of Chester and a then quite infant Birkenhead (for Liverpool); it was opened to traffic in September 1840 with its first terminus at Grange Lane, extended in October 1844 to a riverside station at Monks Ferry. Subsequent amalgamations extended the company's area of operation by adding the later lines from Chester to Warrington and from Hooton to Helsby. Later known as the Birkenhead Railway this enlarged company was itself taken over jointly by the Great Western and the newly-formed London & North Western in November 1860, but, as a joint company, it continued to be managed separately until the nationalization of the railways in 1948.

The new Birkenhead joint company, mindful of the prospect of good earnings to be made from coal traffic from a new mine being sunk at Little Neston, built a single-line branch from Hooton to a terminus at Parkgate, opening to traffic on 1 October 1866. The major civil engineering challenge of this project was the excavation of the great sandstone cutting in the section between Mellock Lane and Lees Lane. There were intermediate stations at Neston (South) and Hadlow Road, Willaston, where there was a passing loop. From Parkgate, deviating from this line at Moorside Lane, a short mineral branch was constructed to the colliery, which was situated at the bottom of what is now Marshlands Road, Little Neston; this mine eventually opened in 1874. Trains from the colliery had to reverse at Parkgate before beginning the ascent to the summit of the line, near Leahurst, on their way to the main line at Hooton.



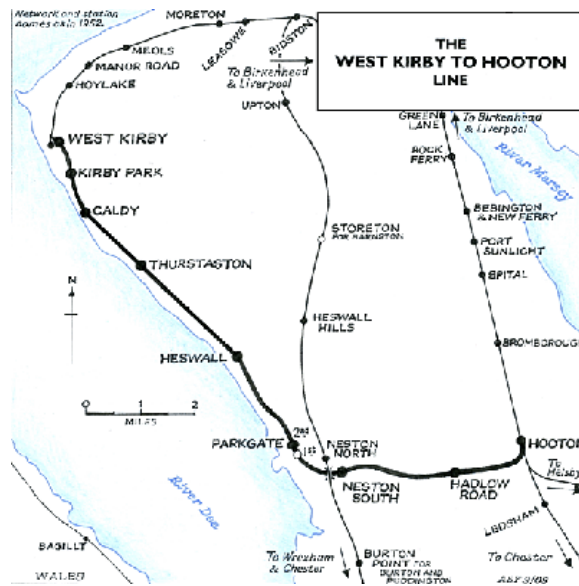
### *Neston/Wirral Colliery*

The Monks Ferry terminus at Birkenhead was not entirely satisfactory for the cross-Mersey ferry service to Liverpool, and the railway was therefore extended to a new terminus at Woodside, opened in March 1878, giving passengers direct access to the floating landing stage already being used by the better sited Woodside ferry.

### **Development**

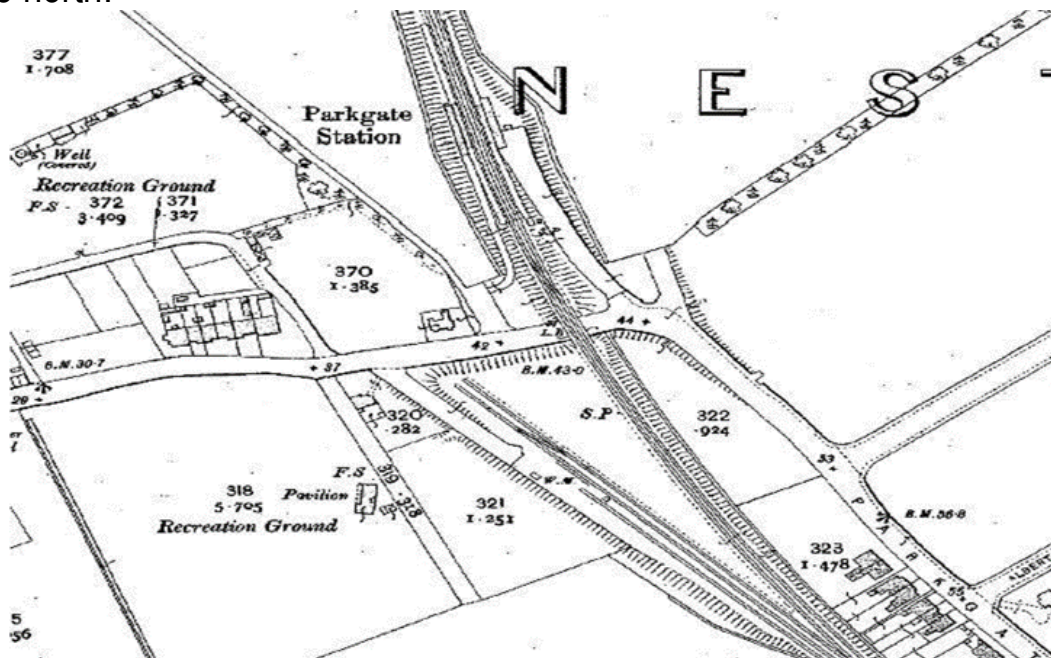
It had always been the Birkenhead company's intention to extend the Parkgate line to West Kirby, in order to develop the potential for new business from west Wirral. This was achieved almost 20 years after the original opening, when the new extension was opened to traffic on 19 April 1886, providing access at West Kirby to the Wirral Railway and so on to Birkenhead and Liverpool.

The new line followed a roughly level course alongside the Dee estuary between Parkgate and West Kirby, with intermediate crossing loops at the stations at Thurston and Heswall; a new station with passing loop was also constructed at Parkgate, as the new line deviated from the original alignment in order to cross what is now Station Road by a steel girder bridge. Most of the stations on the line were of brick construction, but this new station at Parkgate, being situated on an embankment, was largely of timber build with canopied buildings of similar design on each platform; the ticket office was on the up (for Hooton) platform, the two being connected by a pedestrian subway.



*The Hooton to West Kirby branch line and associated lines at 1896.*

With the new Parkgate station open, the original station and yard then became a goods yard, where local freight was handled and the coal trains reversed. The new station at West Kirby sat next to, but separate from the Wirral Railway station, the physical connection between the two lines being a short distance to the north.



*Plan of about 1910 showing the Parkgate station of 1886 to the north of Station Road and the site of the original station to the south, now a goods yard with cattle or coal dock and sidings. The stationmaster's house occupies plot no. 320.*



*The former steel girder bridge across Station Road, Parkgate, built for the 1886 extension; the Girls Guild procession was held as part of the local celebrations for the coronation of George V in 1911; the station entrance is to the right.*

## Services

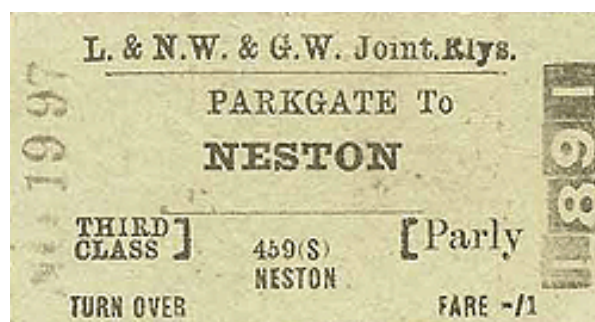
At the time of opening most passenger trains ran between Parkgate and Hooton, but some ran through to Monks Ferry, then the terminus of the Chester to Birkenhead line, for the onward ferry service to Liverpool.

In 1895, just a few years after the opening of the West Kirby extension, there were ten trains each weekday in the up direction to Hooton, of which six travelled through to Birkenhead Woodside. In the other direction there were eleven trains through to West Kirby, while on a Tuesday and a Saturday there were late evening services that terminated at Parkgate. On Sundays there were four trains in each direction.

In 1922, just before the grouping of the country's railways into four main companies: Great Western, Southern, London Midland & Scottish, and London & North Eastern, there were fourteen passenger trains in each direction on weekdays, with five on Sundays. The first trains of the day were the 6.27 am from West Kirby and the 6.45 am from Hooton; the last being the 9.20 pm from West Kirby and the 9.45 pm from Hooton, though a later train at 11.24 pm from Hooton terminated at Heswall. A number of trains, including the 8.20 am from West Kirby, ran through to Birkenhead Woodside; some passengers for Birkenhead and those for Chester had to change at Hooton. Children from

Neston and Parkgate attending grammar schools in West Kirby would travel by the 8.12 am train from Neston, two minutes later from Parkgate. For trains travelling in the opposite direction four or five minutes were allowed between these stops, probably because of the adverse gradient.

In the summer of 1932 there were 23 down trains and 22 up trains Monday to Friday with an extra service on Saturdays, and seven in each direction on Sundays. This was the time when local residents were offered the greatest choice of services, but the line was losing a lot of money in making this generous provision. The warning signs were already there.



*Third class single ticket for travel from Parkgate to Neston – price one old penny (0.4p).*

To be continued.....



*This Edwardian photo shows how the sea wall was constructed near Overdee; there was a post & wire fence where the railings are now.*



## *'Reid between the Lines'*

Sue Reid has made a very strong impression on the local musical scene in recent years with her expressive voice and inherent sense of timing. Following her success here in Parkgate in 2018 we look forward to her return visit.

Sue presents another varied programme of songs, largely from the Great American Songbook, but also with some blues. She is well supported by a group of experienced musicians, who accurately reflect the mood of each song. Special guest Brian Hall will also add some vocals.



**St Thomas' Church, Mostyn Square, Parkgate  
7.30 pm, Wednesday 15 May 2019**

Tickets **£7.00** available from Nicholl's Ice Cream Parlour and Mozkitos' Coffee House, Parkgate; also Paisley Grey in Neston; and from the Parkgate Society:

Phone: (0151) 336-4461; or 336-5176; or 336-2917

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Refreshments available

Concert promoted and sponsored by *The Parkgate Society*



**Diary Note: Heritage Open Days 2019**

Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 September

Parkgate Heritage Trail: Guided Walk

Meet at the Ropewalk carpark, Station Road, at 3.00pm

St Thomas's Church also open to visitors on these dates

**Contacts**

If you wish to raise issues of relevance to the Society, please contact our secretary:

Alan Passmore: Tel: (0151) 336-2917

Email: [secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk)

Queries about membership should be addressed to our membership secretary:

Derek Haylock: Tel: (0151) 336-4461

Email: [membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk)

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

Alan Passmore, tel: (0151) 336-2917 or email:

[secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk)

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