



# Parkgate Society

## Newsletter

Spring 2022

### Issue Number 102

A very special welcome to this, the 102<sup>th</sup>, edition of our Newsletter, which coincides with our Golden Jubilee Anniversary. We have a number of interesting articles for you and hope you will find it an enjoyable read.

The Neston Music Festival returns this year after an absence of two years owing to Covid-19. We hope you will support it, in particular the two concerts we are promoting, details of which are given in this newsletter. There are brochures available locally, which provide details of the whole programme.



*Parkgate: Leighton Banastre, The Parade  
February 2021 (Photo: Alan Passmore)*

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



The Parkgate Society  
presents  
the **Wirral Classical Players**  
in  
***'Music in late 18<sup>th</sup> century  
London'***

The Wirral Classical Players  
are a group of musicians  
brought together specially for  
this concert from members of  
the Wirral Symphony  
Orchestra.  
Soloists: Claire Griffiths and  
Angela Pettit-Jones  
Conductor: Adrian Griffiths

Following Handel's demise in 1759,  
musical life in the second half of the  
18<sup>th</sup> century continued to flourish –  
especially in London.

This Concert will include music by  
William Boyce, Michael & Joseph  
Haydn and WA Mozart.



**The United Reformed Church, Moorside Lane, Parkgate  
7.30 pm, Saturday 23 April 2022**

Tickets **£10.00** available from Nicholl's Ice Cream Parlour and Mozkitos'  
Coffee House, Parkgate; also Paisley Grey and Blue Bicycle 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)

or by card through Ticketsource by visiting the Festival website:

[www.nestonmusicfestival.org.uk](http://www.nestonmusicfestival.org.uk)

Refreshments available

## Notices

### Meetings 2022

We normally meet at 8pm at **The Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, Station Road, Parkgate**, usually on the third Monday of the month.

**21 March: Golden Jubilee** dinner at 6.30 pm followed by  
**'A Tour of the North Wirral Conservation Areas'**

- Gillian Bolt

**25 April: 'Inside Leahurst'**

- Prof Robert Smith

**16 May: 'Politics & Tourism: The Importance of the Chester and Holyhead Railway 1845-1966'**

- Dr Phil Lloyd

**19 September: Annual General Meeting** at 7.30 pm, followed by  
**'Vikings on the Wirral'**

- Dominga Devitt

**17 October: 'A History of Ness Gardens'**

- Stephen Lyus

**21 November: Hot-pot Supper** at 6.30 pm followed by  
**'Statesmanship, Tragedy & Love: A Remarkable True Tale of Parkgate's 18<sup>th</sup> Century Overseas Adventurers'**

- Anthony Annakin-Smith

**President: Michael Potts**  
**Vice-Presidents: Dr Jill Brock & Anthony Annakin-Smith**

### The Committee

The following were elected at the Society's AGM last September to continue in office for the year 2021/22:

**Chairman:** Dr Bryan Lecky

**Deputy-Chairman:** David Johnson

**Secretary:** Alan Passmore

**Treasurer:** Derick Cotton

**Membership Secretary:** Derek Haylock

### Committee members:

Dr Peter Enevoldson, Carol Fearnett, Marie Lycett, Cllr Brenda Marple and Tim Marshall

### Auditor:

Clive Edwards

There are still 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.

**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.

COMMUNICATION – Our chief method of keeping in touch with our members is via email. If you have email, but have not been receiving regular information about events, etc. from the Society, please confirm your email contact details to [secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk)

## News and Views

### The Early Days

As briefly noted in the introduction, March 2022 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of our great society. I don't think that there can be many still around who were active members in those early days, who we could now ask what was going on locally at that time; however, our constitution gives a clue to the reasons why an active group of local residents should come together at that moment to create the Parkgate and District Society, as it was then called.

At the time of the Society's foundation in 1972 Ted Heath was an embattled Prime Minister, and Parkgate, along with Neston, was part of the Wirral parliamentary constituency and represented by Selwyn Lloyd MP, who at that time was the Speaker of the House of Commons; the local council was then Neston Urban District and the upper tier Cheshire County Council. Following a series of changes since then to the structures for the delivery of local council services, the 'village' of Parkgate is now part of a Neston ward in the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester. Our former Cheshire neighbours to the north are now in the separate Borough of Wirral, part of the new Liverpool City Region. Whatever the reason for these changes over the years, they are generally de-stabilising and always costly – and in the

long term they fail to deliver the efficiency savings which are stated as the justification for change. So, with these changes and other intervening events – the Falklands war, the miners' strike, the Balkan wars, the financial crisis and Covid – 1972 now looks like a different world!

An important act leading to the formation of the Society was the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, which was 'an Act to make further provision for the protection and improvement of buildings of architectural or historic interest and of the character of areas of such interest; for the preservation and planting of trees, etc, etc.' This Act led to the establishment of conservation areas. Following the initiative shown by the City of Chester, which was a leader in the field, the early officers of the Society were instrumental in working with the County Council over the designation of the Parkgate Conservation Area and the listing of structures as important buildings with requiring some protection against inappropriate development. There are now four conservation areas in the Neston area, around 100 in Cheshire West and 10,000 in England.

As first established, the Society's executive committee was initially supported by five sub-committees covering the different aspects of the Society's work: Conservation, the Dee Estuary Scheme, Litter, Publicity, and the Historical Aspect. The Society's Newsletter No 1 of July 1972 gives a flavour of the issues current at the time:

*The Conservation Sub-committee is concerned with the development of Parkgate as a conservation area. They are working very closely with Cheshire County Council on this project, and it is indicative of our position that Cheshire has asked for our opinions and is willing to consider them. Next week, a representative from Cheshire County Council is coming to discuss the conservation project with the executive committee. In September we are going to hold a members' meeting when these views will be explained to members and you will have an opportunity for voicing your comments. There will also be a film on conservation.*

*The Dee Estuary Committee had a members' meeting on 17 April when Mr John Noble (Chief Planning Officer, CCC) spoke to us about the effect of a Dee Crossing on Parkgate. It was expressed that a Gayton Greenfield crossing would not be acceptable for the residents of Parkgate, and a letter*

*stating this view was sent to all bodies concerned in any way with the Dee crossing.*

*The Litter Committee made itself known on 23 April by organizing the cleaning up of the foreshore of Parkgate. Any member who could not be there had adequate opportunity to read of our exploits via the local press and also the June copies of the Deesider and Liverpool Illustrated News. We are still working with the council on the litter problem and hope shortly to bring out a report on our findings and suggestions for a design for permanent litter bins along the promenade.*

*The Publicity Committee works closely with and helps other committees when publicity is needed for a particular project. Their activity is less spectacular but 'behind the scenes' a very valuable contribution to the Society.*

*The Historical Committee has been hard at work this month collecting material for a display we are having at the end of this month (see end of news letter). Also they are preparing to write a booklet on Parkgate stressing the Historical aspect. This will not come into fruition until next year because of the amount of work involved, but should be a 'best seller' when it is published.*

Over the years these formal sub-committees have lapsed, reflecting changed circumstances over time. However, the Society continues to deal with the issues that continue to be relevant today: planning, litter, the historical aspect. We are gradually implementing 'Our Vision for Parkgate', with projects that enhance the profile of the village. The booklet 'This is Parkgate', edited by our former chairman Dr Geoffrey Place, has become a best seller and merited a second edition in 2008.

## **The Winter Storms**

During February a series of three named storms in a single week did a great deal of damage to property throughout the country. In this area roofers and fencers were kept busy repairing the damage, whilst electrical engineers were also fully extended reconnecting electricity supplies and telephone cables. Most of the damage was caused by falling trees, and motorists in particular were at risk during this period. A number of local roads were blocked until the obstructions could be dealt with.

These storms and the associated high tides left a mountain of rubbish on the marsh for our volunteers to tackle on our clean-up on Saturday 5 March, and the accompanying photos show some of our team in action.



## **The North Cheshire Green Belt**

The green belt in the peninsula continues to be under threat. We are currently working with the Wirral Society and the Wirral Green Spaces Alliance to counter the threat by Leverhulme Estates to build houses on seven areas that they have identified as possible development sites. The issue is related to the Borough's lack of progress in its attempts to formulate an updated local plan. Meanwhile Cheshire West & Chester Council are currently considering two different applications for the construction of new crematoria on green belt land in the Hooton area; local residents are putting

forward a strong campaign against both schemes. The appeal by McCarthy & Stone against the Council's refusal last September of permission for a revised scheme to construct a block of retirement apartments on the former British Legion site at Willaston, adjacent to the conservation area, is currently under consideration by the Planning Inspectorate. A previous appeal for a similar scheme was refused by the inspector two years ago.

## **Planning**

It is quite apparent that planning applications continue to take longer to resolve than used to be the case before Covid-19. However, local builders continue to be busy around the area. It is very noticeable that purchasers of established property are tending to undertake more substantial changes to their new dwellings than they would have done in the past, usually adding a considerable amount of additional living space before moving in; homes are clearly growing in size, sometimes at the expense of garden size and thereby wildlife habitat. The current planning framework places more emphasis on good design, and it seems that architects are becoming more mindful that design of new or renovated buildings should have regard to the sensibilities of the neighbourhood in which they are situated.

It is pleasing to note that the refurbishment of the grade 2 listed cottage at No 11 Station Road is currently proceeding well, and we hope that the redevelopment of the now vacant site in Brooklands Road will begin soon – planning permission is currently being sought for two houses on this plot. The Planning Inspector is currently considering an appeal against the Council's decision to refuse prior approval for permitted development in respect of a property in Woodlands Road.

## **Some reflections on Parkgate**

Those of us living in or visiting Parkgate have a certain picture of the village in their mind, which may vary according to individual circumstance. For visitors, what first springs to mind is undoubtedly ice cream, followed by fish & chips and the lovely views across the estuary; for long-term residents there may be memories of friends who have moved away and no longer live here, and 'how the place has changed!', for others 'a friendly village, but I wish



they would do something about the traffic/parking'. All these things are true; Parkgate is a friendly place, and those who settle here would generally not wish to live anywhere else, despite all the traffic congestion on The Parade.

If you look at some of the Society's archives, however, as you can via our website: [www.parkgatesociety.co.uk](http://www.parkgatesociety.co.uk) you will find that not all observers in the past have been quite so charitable in their views of our village. For example, Geoffrey Place tells us in his history of Mostyn House School that Mrs Jane Grenfell, who took up residence here in 1863, when her husband Rev Algernon Sydney Grenfell took on the headship of the School, took a very dim view of her new home, when she recorded her first impressions of the premises and their human contents:

*'It was January 1863 when I first saw Parkgate. I had never seen such a horrible hole in all my life. The house was very tumble-down and dreary. There were about 60 boys in the school, the most extraordinary lot of mixed louts that you ever saw, some with fancy waistcoats and some with whiskers, but all with the look of being strangers to soap and water. Baths were never dreamed of, except the small foot-tubs once a week. The boys slept two to a bed on very hard straw palliasses. No parents ever dreamed of coming near the place.'*

The previous head Rev Edward Price had boasted of the quality of his school's bathing facilities and had assured parents that each pupil had his own bed. During his tenure the number of pupils had roughly doubled, but clearly the number of beds had not.

A few years earlier, just before the Mostyn Arms became a school, Kitty James, a young schoolgirl, holidaying in Parkgate in 1854, let her father know what she thought of the place. This letter, found by our former member Geoff Topp, first appeared in the Autumn 1980 edition of our newsletter. Your current editor has been looking further into the lives of the characters she mentions.

*Parkgate, August 4<sup>th</sup> (1854)*

*My very dear Papa*

*According to your desire I write, but Parkgate affords so few subjects for a letter that I scarcely know what to put in it.*

*We are enjoying ourselves upon the whole pretty well, but we find Parkgate so very dull, that we think it will be better for health and spirits to make a change; and have therefore fixed to go to Rhyl next Wednesday. We found a family here, when we came, of the name Platt from Chester. Mr Platt is a chemist near Bolland's. They belong to Mr Knill's church and are a very nice family indeed. They went away last Monday.*

*Minnie is writing to Mr Griffith today, as he desired; she is now about as well as usual, except the toothache; while I am writing, she would be glad if you would send her some gutta-percha in your next letter.*

*We go sometimes to Neston on errands, but it is too long for Minnie, so she takes a donkey wherever she goes. As it is rather cold here now, we have a fire in our lodgings. Have you cold weather in Wrexham?*

*There does not seem to be many people here at present, and Grandmama thinks Parkgate much duller than it used to be.*

*I think I had better finish my letter now, as it is near to post time, so with best love from all of us to dear Mama, who I hope is much better, and yourself, and kisses to little John and his sister.*

*I remain,*

*Your affectionate daughter,*

*Kitty.*

*PS. So please write to me. I hope you will forgive that great blot.*

Notes:

John James (1808-88)

Kitty James wrote this letter to her father John James at Elwy House, No 4 King Street, Wrexham. He was a solicitor in practice there: the firm still exists under the name of James, James, Hatch & Co of Priory St, Wrexham. John was the son of Thomas James of Wem who had started the legal partnership of James & Hatch in the old gatehouse in Priory St, Wrexham, in 1823. After a short period of independent practice in partnership with Cyril Jones, John decided to join the family legal practice started by his father. He married his first wife Mary Anne Painter at Brymbo on 16 June 1829; her

father John Painter was a printer with a shop in Wrexham High Street. She died on 29 November 1836 – an obituary was placed in the local paper on 3 December. John then married his second wife Catherine, daughter of Thomas Hilditch and Sarah (nee Ireland) of Oswestry in the St Asaph district during the final quarter of 1838; she died at Wrexham during the first quarter of 1843. His third wife, who he married at Salford in late 1851, was Anne Elizabeth, daughter of John Farrer of Liverpool, manager of the Kenrick and Bowman Bank in Wrexham High Street.

Just a few years before this letter was written, in 1851, the census of that year shows that solicitor John James, originally from Wem, Shropshire, was now widowed and living with his two daughters Minnie and Kitty, plus two servants, in the parish of Esclusham Below, in the Wrexham area; shortly afterwards he was appointed on an annual salary of £80 as the first Town Clerk of the new municipal borough of Wrexham, an office he held from 1857 to 1879. The 1861 census finds him, now aged 53, still living at this same address in King Street, with his current wife Anne Elizabeth (37), from Liverpool, and three further children: John Farrer (8), Sarah (7) and Thomas Reginald (5), all born at Wrexham; it appears that neither of the children of John's first two marriages were still living with their father.

Ten years later, in 1871, John James, town clerk and solicitor, was now living at Plas Acton, Gwersyllt, with his wife Anne Elizabeth, his son John Farrer and a further daughter Mary Elizabeth (7), born at Gwersyllt; also resident in this household were three servants, including a nurse; sadly 'little' John Farrer James died not long afterwards at Wrexham, aged 19, in 1872, in circumstances unknown. Plas Acton was a substantial gothic house, set in 25 acres of grounds, that had been built for him a few years before, in the early 1860s – demolished in the 1970s for the A483 Wrexham bypass.

Following his retirement from the town clerkship in 1879, after more than 21 years, and his subsequent appointment as one of the new county magistrates, in a unique double ceremony, a joint presentation was made to him on 20 August 1880. Following a public subscription he was offered a specially commissioned full-size portrait by Liverpool artist W Broadle and an illuminated manuscript. The current mayor of Wrexham Alderman E Smith presided over the event held in front of an audience of all the great and the good of the area. Details of the proceedings were extensively covered in a report in the Wrexham Advertiser of Saturday 23 August 1880.

The speeches clearly give the impression of a man who was not only a visionary thinker but who had, with other like-minded individuals, been instrumental in driving forward the development of the town in the period since it had been awarded its royal charter. His own speech details some of the achievements he was most proud of during his term of office. The portrait was donated to the Council.

The 1881 census shows that John was again widowed, still living at Plas Acton, but now working as a county magistrate following his retirement from his clerkship. At that time his unmarried daughter Sarah (27) – ‘little John’s’ un-named sister mentioned in Kitty’s letter – and his other son Thomas Reginald (25), now also a solicitor, were living with him, as was his father-in-law John Farrer (83), from Liverpool. It seems that Anne Elizabeth James, John’s wife, may have died in London, as there is a death record in this name at the age 51 in the Marylebone district during the first quarter of 1875, which appears to be a correct fit. John James was a non-conformist and played the organ at the presbyterian chapel in Chester Street, Wrexham, an organ which he himself had procured from a church in Liverpool; he survived his wife for 13 years and died at Wrexham at the age of 80 during Spring 1888.

#### Kitty (1839-1929) and her sister Minnie James (c1836-after 1881)

What became of the author of this letter and her sister? As noted above, John James was married three times, and these two girls, Mary Anne (Minnie) and Katharine (Kitty), were aged 17 and 14 respectively at the time the letter was written. They were half-sisters, daughters of John’s first two wives, after whom they were each named, while their brother ‘little John’ was a child of his third wife Anne Elizabeth Farrer, originally from Liverpool, who he had married in Salford in 1851. This latter would be the woman, her step-mother, that Kitty refers to as ‘dear Mama’. The 1861 census finds these sisters not living with their father, but with their paternal grandmother, at No 19 King Street, Wrexham, close to where he was living; this lady Petronella James (81) was said to be a landed proprietress, originally from Bloomsbury, Middlesex – she seems, in all probability, to have been the grandparent in charge of the sisters during their brief holiday in Parkgate.

Mary Anne (Minnie) was born at Wrexham on 1 August 1836 and christened there at the Chester Street Chapel on 17 May 1837, the daughter of John and (the late) Mary Anne James, who appears to have died within a few

months of her child's birth. Her sister Katharine's birth was registered in the Wrexham district during the final quarter of 1839; her mother Catharine appears to have died in the first months of 1843, very possibly in childbirth – the death certificate would confirm.

By 1871 Minnie (34) was married with 6 children under the age of 8 – she had married William Wynn Kendrick, a mining engineer from Ruabon, in the Wrexham district in Spring 1862 and was now living in Hall St, in the Bache area of Llangollen in the Corwen district – Kitty (31), however, was still single and still living with her elder sister, as was their grandmother Petronella (91), who subsequently died in the Corwen district, aged 92, during the final quarter of 1872. Ten years on, the 1881 census finds both sisters living separately in Rugeley, Staffordshire. Minnie (44) was at The Woodlands with her husband William (43) and four children, born variously at Erbistock, near Wrexham, Walsall, Staffs, Llangollen, Denbighs, and St Fagans, Glamorgan. Kitty (41) was now an annuitant, living independently in Church Street; had she, I wonder, followed her sister around the country to all the different places that William's work had taken his family up to this point, or was it by coincidence that both sisters were living in the same town at this time? I have not been able to find Minnie and her family in subsequent British records, so it may be that they emigrated sometime during the next ten years.

Kitty, on the other hand, is next found at Cheltenham; in 1891, now aged 51, she was living with Harriet Eyton (53) a single woman from Overton-on-Dee, Flintshire, at Glen Holme in the parish of St James; both were said to be living on their own means. It would be reasonable to assume that the two women were well known to each other from previous family acquaintance locally in the Wrexham area. Ten years later, however, in 1901, she is found boarding at Holmlea, Station Road, Keynsham, north Somerset, the home of a master builder Edward Harvey, from Herefordshire, his wife Mary and their family. What could be the reason why she was living with this family in this particular small community, situated between Bristol and Bath? By 1911 Kitty, now aged 72, was back in Cheltenham, staying as a visitor with another master builder James Smith and his wife Charlotte at Exmouth House, Hewett Street; also staying here was a blind woman Eliza Letitia Eyton (83), from Overton, Flints, the eldest of the four daughters of an apothecary and surgeon John ap Ellis Eyton of Willow House, Overton, and

sister of Harriet. Were the James and the Eytons related in some way? Katharine James appears to have survived the Great War and, although not identified in the 1921 census, seems to have died at Cheltenham, aged 89, during the early months of 1929; her friends Harriet and Eliza Eyton both also ended their days in Cheltenham in 1916 and 1921, aged 81 and 93.

The evidence shows that Kitty had lived a long, but somewhat peripatetic life, particularly after she and her sister went their separate ways. In fact, it seems that she probably had limited contact with her father, after he married his third wife in 1851, although he (or perhaps her grandmother too) appears to have made sufficient financial provision for her to lead an independent life, without needing to have to take a formal job to support herself. A less likely scenario is that she was employed to act as companion to various different ladies, through the offices of such magazines as 'The Lady', which commonly found situations for women looking for such an arrangement. Such positions would no doubt have been quite common in a well-to-do town like Cheltenham. In the circumstances one is bound to wonder whether Kitty's was a happy or a fulfilled life; did she ever give further thought to her brief time in Parkgate, and what did she think about the other places she visited during her long life? In her younger days Parkgate, under the Grenfells, was attempting to model itself on Cheltenham – note Cheltenham Place and Cheltenham Walk; in the event it seems that Kitty preferred the real place and decided to make her home there in her later years. One is left wondering she left any further evidence of her life, and did she think any of the other places she visited as dull as Parkgate?

### The other characters

Geoff Topp thought that 'Mr Griffith' sounds like the family doctor. If so, he may have been Thomas T Griffith FRCSE of 84 Chester Street, Wrexham, a general practitioner at that time. He was a local man married to a Scottish wife Ann M; both were aged 55 in 1851; he was still in practice in this street in 1861, but now at No 23. They were both still here in 1871, Thomas now a justice of the peace as well as a consulting surgeon and Ann's place of birth stated as Keavil, near Dunfermline. Thomas Taylor Griffith died in Wrexham, aged 80, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 1876, while his widow Ann Mary Griffith died almost a year later, at Wrexham, aged 81.

According to Geoffrey Place, Henry Platt (of Platt & Son, chemists, 13 Foregate Street, Chester, founded in 1816 and sold in 1866) built Alma Cottage on the Parade, Parkgate, for himself in 1855, the year after this letter was written. It is clear, therefore, that he must have liked Parkgate, but it is not known for how long or, indeed whether, Henry Platt actually lived at Alma Cottage full-time; maybe the house was used, by him as a weekend or summer cottage. Henry Platt was born in 1817 at Stonely in the parish of Burland, near Nantwich, and christened at Acton on 11 May, son of Thomas, a farmer, and Mary; his wife Elizabeth (nee Wright) was from Grappenhall, near Warrington. In 1851 the family were living in Foregate St – he had, in fact, already been there in 1841 – while ten years later they were in Eastgate St, Chester. By 1871, however, the family had moved to London; they were then living in Hampstead, Henry still working as a chemist, while their son William (27) was in practice as a general medical practitioner.



Eastgate Row—Platt and Son, Chemists.

**Platt & Son,**  
**Chemists to Her Majesty,**  
Eastgate-street Row, Chester.

Importers of German and French Seltzer, and other  
Medicinal Waters.

Depot for all the most approved Intentions for Ladies whilst  
Nursing, and Infants, which have received the approbation of  
the leading London and Country Accoucheurs.

Lists, with Prices, forwarded on application.

Schweppe's Soda, Potash, and Lemonade Waters at  
Wholesale Prices.

Bollands of Eastgate Row, Chester, established in 1846, was until its recent demise a high-class purveyor of teas and coffees; prior to this it was well-known as a luxury grocer and confectioner in Foregate Street.

In his latter years the Rev. Richard Knill (1787-1857) was, from 1848, minister of the Independent Chapel in Chester, then in Foregate Street, but later in Queen Street. He was born at Braunton, north Devon, a carpenter's son, and after training at the Western Academy, Axminster, had worked as a missionary in Travancore, India, and then at St Petersburg, Russia, for the

London Missionary Society. Back in Britain he was, from 1842, congregational minister at Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, before his final move to Chester. In his last years he was instrumental in introducing the young Charles Spurgeon (1834-92) to the ministry. He died in Chester in 1857, aged 69, after 9 years of service there. Like Knill, John James was also a non-conformist and used to play the organ at the Chester Street Congregational Church, Wrexham.

Kitty's letter was posted at the Parkgate post office, which then was in the building which now forms the Parade end of the Ship Hotel. The old Ship was behind the post office. The sub-postmaster at the time was Edward Hollingshead.

### **The Recent Marsh Fire**

There can hardly be any resident of Parkgate who is unaware of the fire which swept through the reedbeds on the marsh between Moorside Lane and the Old Quay during the evening of Saturday 19 March, threatening nearby properties and leaving a blackened area of about a square kilometer in its wake. The blaze probably started about 6 pm and burned fiercely for well over an hour before being suppressed by the crews of six fire appliances who were called to the scene. A helicopter was also called in to identify any hotspots which might have potential for a further outbreak, and the area was declared safe before midnight.



*Photo: Anthony Annakin-Smith*



Experience of previous similar fires has shown that the vegetation will recover fairly quickly, though it is likely that many of the creatures that live in the reedbed will not have survived; the birds, however, will have fled elsewhere and may return in time. It is understood that a pair of marsh harriers were building a nest in the area; obviously their plans for raising a family here this year will have been upset.

It is believed that the fire did not begin spontaneously, and the police have been talking to a number of people about the incident; some arrests have been made. The event was widely reported on TV and social media, with drone pictures giving a graphic picture of the intensity of the blaze. Local residents have been asked to check their CCTVs and report any relevant information to police.

## **‘Our Vision for Parkgate’ Crowdfunding Project**

Our members will be aware of the Society’s ‘Vision for Parkgate’ which was the brainchild of our former chairman Moira Andrews and the late Cllr Brenda Dowding, a plan we put forward as a response to a general feeling expressed at the time that Parkgate was looking rather down at heel and not making the most of opportunities to present itself as an interesting place to live or visit. Details of the ‘Vision’ can be found on the Society’s website: [www.parkgatesociety.co.uk](http://www.parkgatesociety.co.uk)

The ‘Vision’ is essentially a list of projects and actions designed to address some of the particular issues identified; some of these have already been completed either in whole or in part, eg. upgrading of the Donkey Stand, heritage plaques, some interpretation boards, the ornamental boat and flower planters. To provide additional funding for one particular element of the ‘Vision’, explaining a number of the interesting aspects of the story of Parkgate, which may not be obvious to the casual visitor, the Society, working closely with Cheshire West, has signed up with Spacehive to crowdfund a £6,000 project to commission a series of interpretation and information boards around the village. Subjects for new boards include: the former fishing industry, the Dee ferries, the former ship building & repair industry, the Ropewalk garden, the Old Quay site, the old baths and Mostyn Square.

We are looking for sponsorship from local organisations and businesses and, of course, individuals, including members. The Spacehive organization will need to be satisfied that the project is well supported by the local community and will require evidence to that effect; this may be in the form of the number of 'likes' registered on the project website: [www.spacehive.com/parkgate-society-interpretation-boards](http://www.spacehive.com/parkgate-society-interpretation-boards) For your votes to be authenticated you will need to register your address in the process, but with no commitment at this stage. What we need is lots of 'likes' and then lots of small pledges.

## The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

This special event is being commemorated locally by a street party in Mostyn Square on Friday 3 June. It is understood that the council will be providing street furniture and entertainment, while residents will be expected to provide their own food and drink. A number of tree planting events are also taking place in the Neston area under the Queen's Green Canopy scheme.

## Talbot House in 1935



This well-known sketch by John Pride, dated 1935, shows this early 18<sup>th</sup> century house as the Green Shutters Café and Guest House. At this time there was also the Little Garden Tea House operating in the garden to the rear. In 1939 the proprietor of this establishment was Arthur R Hitchmough.



The Parkgate Society presents the

### ***'Vale of Clwyd Singers'***

The Vale of Clwyd Singers (VOCS)  
is a mixed a cappella group  
of 16-20 professional and trained amateur singers  
from North Wales, Chester, Liverpool and the Wirral.  
The group has sung throughout North Wales,  
Merseyside and Cheshire, and has been part  
of the Brandenburg Choral Festival in London.

Tonight's concert will be a  
collection of early sacred and  
secular music, madrigals, folk  
songs, and 20<sup>th</sup> century  
classical and popular songs.

Conductor: Adrian Griffiths



**The United Reformed Church, Moorside Lane, Parkgate  
7.30 pm, Saturday 14 May 2022**

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)

or by card through Ticketsource by going to the Festival website:  
[www.nestonmusicfestival.org.uk](http://www.nestonmusicfestival.org.uk)

Refreshments available

## Heritage Open Days 2022

Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 September  
Parkgate Heritage Trail: Guided Walk  
Meet at the Ropewalk carpark, Station Road, at 3.00 pm

### Contacts

If you wish to raise issues of general 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)

For queries about litter picks please get in touch with Dr Peter Enevoldson;  
[environmental@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:environmental@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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Don't forget our website: [www.parkgatesociety.co.uk](http://www.parkgatesociety.co.uk)

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