

Parkgate Society

Newsletter

Issue Number 104

Spring 2023

A very warm welcome to this new edition of our Newsletter. In this edition we have an interesting article on Esther Briscoe, the proprietor of the former Mostyn Arms Hotel, and a report on progress with our projects in support of 'our Vision for Parkgate', together with a view of Parkgate in 1997 – in our series of Parkgate 25 years ago. I hope you will find it an enjoyable read.

This year we are again supporting the Neston Music Festival. There is a fantastic programme of music to suit all tastes. We hope you will support it with your attendance, in particular the two concerts the society is promoting, details of which are given in this newsletter. There are brochures available locally, which provide details of the whole programme. Information is also available on the Festival website: www.nestonmusicfestival.org.uk.



Parkgate: The Parade 2021 (Photo: Alan Passmore)

A special plea for help – see page 4



Parkgate Society presents
The Wirral Symphony Brass



The Wirral Symphony Brass will be playing an eclectic selection of music for 13-piece brass and percussion, to include original works by Barber, Britten and Chris Hazell along with arrangements of well-known pieces by Jerome Kern, Berlioz and Wagner. This is an exciting new venture for the Brass of the Wirral Symphony Orchestra to showcase the talented players that make up the section. The ensemble includes trumpets, horns, trombones, Euphonium and a tuba. Director: David Straughan

The United Reformed Church, Moorside Lane, Parkgate
7.30 pm, Saturday 22 April 2023

Tickets **£13.00** (including interval drink) available from Blue Bicycle in Neston;
and from the Parkgate Society:

Email: secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk: or membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk

or by card through our website: www.parkgatesociety.co.uk

or from Ticketsource via the Festival website: www.nestonmusicfestival.org.uk

2023 Meetings

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

16 January: 'Statesmanship, Tragedy and Love; a remarkable true tale of Parkgate's 19th century overseas adventures'

Dr Anthony Annakin-Smith

20 February: 'The Devil's Porridge: Local Munitions Production'

Dr Trevor Evans

20 March: 'Slave Ships of Parkgate & Neston'

Dr Anthony Annakin-Smith

17 April: 'Thomas Brassey: The Greatest Railway Builder in the World'

Peter Bolt

15 May: 'The NHS: a Prescription for Improvement: a personal view from an Ex-NHS Trust Chief Executive'

Sir David Dalton

18 September: Annual General Meeting at 7.30 pm, followed by 'The Story of Wirral'

Ken Pye

16 October: 'Triassic Wirral's Prehistoric Animals'

Gavin Rymill

20 November: Hot-pot Supper at 6.30 pm followed by 'A Loop in Time: the Story of Puddington'

Gee Williams

President: Michael Potts

Vice-Presidents: Dr Jill Brock & Dr Anthony Annakin-Smith

The Committee

The following were elected at the Society's AGM last September to hold office for the year 2022/23:

Chairman: Dr Bryan Lecky

Vice-Chairman: Dr Peter Enevoldson

Secretary: Alan Passmore

Treasurer: Derick Cotton

Membership Secretary: Derek Haylock

Committee members:

Carol Fearnett, Marie Lycett, Cllr Brenda Marple and Tim Marshall

Co-opted: Paul Thompson

Auditor: Clive Edwards

We are sorry to have recently lost the services of Carol Fearnett, who has decided for personal reasons to resign her position on the committee. We thank her for her contribution over the past few years and offer her our best wishes for the future.

At the present time there are a number of vacancies available for additional members of the committee. If you feel that you are in a position to help us further the aims of the Society, we would like to hear from you. Read more in News and Views.

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 – £8.00 Single / £12 Household per year (new members). Subscriptions are due on 6th 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 our Membership Secretary, email: membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk. Please check that your Standing Order is for the correct amount. We encourage everyone who is eligible to use the Gift Aid scheme, as for every £1 donated the Society benefits from an extra 25p.

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

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

News and Views

The Parkgate Society – please, help!

In the last edition I made a strong plea for members to join the committee and so help us fulfil the objectives that are enshrined in our constitution. These relate mainly to the protection of the conservation area and the green belt, to the maintenance and promotion of our heritage and history. The situation has changed very little since then, and I make no apology for repeating this plea in this edition. We still need additional members to serve on our committee.

As a society we have a flourishing membership, but there is a potential crisis in the management which, if not resolved, may soon lead to the organisation failing to meet its objectives of maintaining the character and heritage of our unique community. The stark facts are that, as a committee, we are all aging and well aware of the urgent need for succession planning: it is time for

others to come forward now and begin to learn the ropes! I have mentioned this before, but it really is time for us to look at what we do and how we go about carrying out our responsibilities in future.

In the past we have been blessed with the skill and determination of those who have stepped forward and devoted time and energy to the varied aspects of running the Society. Charities like ours need both generalists and specialists in order to be successful in achieving their aims, though qualifications are less important than a motivation to take on a role and, through that, to work as part of a team to support the objectives of the organisation. We recognise that it may be somewhat daunting to step straight into a specific role, so it has been our practice in recent years to co-opt interested members onto the committee and allow them time to settle in and find for themselves a role in which they feel comfortable and could, therefore, be most effective. We still see this as the way forward.

Our current roles and activities include:

- (a) Protection of the Parkgate conservation area
- (b) Protection of the local green belt
- (c) Monitoring of listed buildings
- (d) Monitoring of local planning applications
- (e) Implementing our 'Vision for Parkgate'
- (f) Promoting the story of Parkgate
- (g) Promoting community involvement through our Parkgate Community Spirit team
- (h) Liaison with other local organisations involved in local history and heritage
- (i) Liaison with local authorities: Neston Town Council and CWaC
- (j) Collaboration as a promoter and sponsor of the Neston Music Festival
- (k) Promoting an annual programme of talks for members
- (l) Responding to queries about the area from members and others
- (m) Making grants to local organisations or individuals in respect of projects which fall within the society's remit
- (n) Supporting local initiatives/events

We have asked in the past, with some success, for volunteers to come forward. As of now we are conscious that we will shortly probably need to

fill the official posts of secretary, treasurer and membership secretary and also the roles of minute secretary and webmaster; additionally, we would also like help with planning and heritage and someone to co-ordinate our role with the Neston Music Festival. Someone might like to take on a role as social secretary or events manager; there could also be roles for a programme secretary and a projects manager.

It is important for us to have a diversity of skills and interests to call upon for fresh ideas and decision-making. If you have never served on a committee before and so are unsure of what is involved, you would be very welcome to come along to a meeting to see what is involved before deciding to join. We meet normally every month at St Thomas' Church (currently on the evening of the 2nd Monday of the month). This could be for you an interesting and rewarding experience, and you would be welcome to contribute as much or little time as you are able to spare.

Please think long and hard about how you can help us take the Society forward and future-proof our long-term existence; then tell us what you think – in particular, how you could help.

The North Cheshire Green Belt

The green belt in the peninsula continues to be under threat. As previously reported, 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 eight areas that they have identified as potential development sites. The nearest of these sites to Parkgate is the land to the east of the A540 between the Gayton roundabout and Darlington's Yard, where 390 houses have been proposed. The background to this is the lack of an updated local plan for the Wirral Borough, which is seen as an opportunity for developers to push for additional development sites. 8 appeals are to be held together in May against the Council's refusal of planning permission on all these Leverhulme sites.

Still unresolved is the planning appeal by Parkgate Nurseries against the Council's decision to refuse permission for 17 new homes on the site of the old greenhouses in Boathouse Lane, land lying within the Green Belt and designated as 'greenfield'.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in south Wirral, Cheshire West & Chester Council are still 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.

Planning

It is still 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.

The refurbishment of the grade 2 listed cottage at No 11 Station Road has now been completed and the whole terrace now looks very smart. The redevelopment of the derelict site in Brooklands Road has now begun.



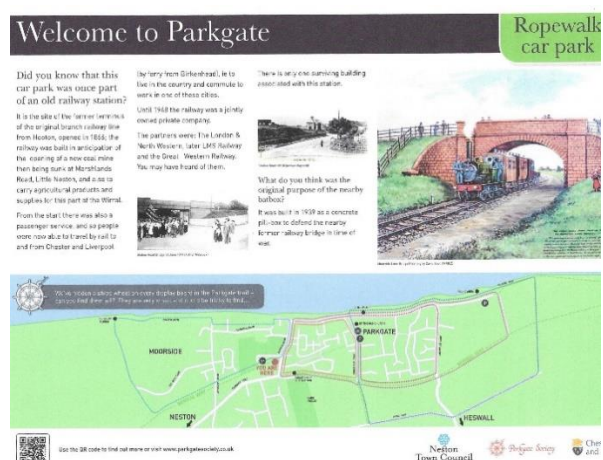
The former Salty's is due to re-open at Easter as a coffee house and wine bar as 'No 1 Parkgate'.

Our Golden Anniversary Projects by Derick Cotton

Over the years the Society, working closely in partnership with local councils, has produced a range of projects that have enriched the visitor experience and made our village such a wonderful place in which to live. To mark our Golden Anniversary last year we planned and fund-raised for a programme of projects.

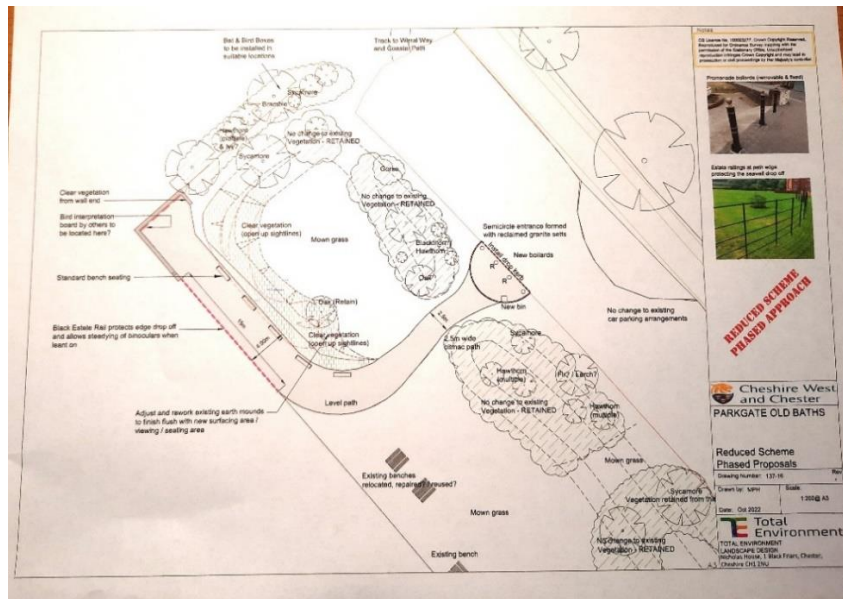
The first of these was to completely update our website, www.parkgatesociety.co.uk which carries an abundance of details covering the past activities of our Society including our newsletters since 1972, our projects, the history of Parkgate and other items of local interest. We were indebted to Gillian Lycett who helped us to produce such a wonderful gateway to our Society.

The second was to install 6 new interpretation boards giving information, along with walking maps, of the rich heritage and history at 6 sites along our Heritage Trail. A seventh board was provided by Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC). We successfully raised the funds through a crowd funding scheme and the boards should be installed in time for the 2023 visitor season. As we exceeded our fund-raising target we have been able to fund a further small development at the Old Baths car park where we plan to install two seats and three mature Rowan trees, one of the trees having been presented to us to mark our anniversary.



Replacement board for Ropewalk carpark

The third project provides an accessible viewing platform at the north (far) end of the Old Baths Car Park, particularly with mobility needs in mind. This idea had been around for a long while and, working closely in partnership with CWaC, we again successfully raised the funds through a further crowd funding scheme. The project is projected to be completed later in 2023 after the end of the bird nesting season.



Plan for Old Baths viewing platform

Given the success of the planned projects, we have added another ambition to introduce finger post signage so that visitors can be better aware of the array of opportunities during their visits to our wonderful village.

Mrs Esther Briscoe of Parkgate by Julie Holland

In a number of local history articles about Parkgate, brief mention is made of a hotel landlady named Mrs Briscoe. Upon her death the Mostyn Arms Hotel was sold and transformed into Mostyn House School. But who was Mrs Briscoe?

Between the 1750s and 1770s Daniel Briscoe (b1732) was a mariner and trader living in Parkgate, sailing a ship called King George between there and Dublin. In 1771 he was reportedly carrying 22 troop horses to Ireland,

alongside his usual passengers and merchandise. November 1775 shipping reports show that he was importing Irish linen cloth on the vessel King George. He married twice and with his second wife Mary Thomas, who he married on 28 January 1766, he had a son Daniel junior, who was baptised at Neston parish church on 13 December 1775. In the 1780s Daniel senior had a career change. On 17 April 1787 the Chester Courant carried an advertisement which declared that Daniel Briscoe, late master in the Dublin trade, had set up his house as an inn. The inn's name was given as the Talbot Inn and Custom House Hotel. He later took on the George Inn, when it was put up for rent in 1808. Each year, around May and June, Daniel would take out advertisements to announce that the George Inn was open for the sea bathing season. As Daniel grew older, Daniel junior took over the running of the inn.

In the late 18th/early 19th century, Briscoe was a common surname in the area around Parkgate, and it happened to be the maiden name of the woman who became Daniel Briscoe junior's wife. Esther Briscoe was the daughter of John Briscoe, a farmer in Ness, and his wife Elizabeth. She was baptised at Neston church on 9 October 1782 and she went on to marry inn keeper Daniel Briscoe by licence at the same church on 23 February 1811. The marriage notice in the Chester Chronicle called her Miss "Hetty" Briscoe. This is the only record where that version of her name was used. Daniel's father Daniel senior (of Parkgate) died on 8 Sept 1812 at the age of 80 and was buried at Neston on 11 Sept. For a while Daniel junior continued to run the George Inn. On 22 June 1813 he placed the customary announcement in the local paper to say that the George Inn, Parkgate, was open for the sea bathing season. It was the last such announcement he made. On 16 Jan 1814 Daniel Briscoe junior died after a short illness. He was just 39. At the age of 32, Esther did not see herself retiring quietly into widowhood. In May 1814 she took out an advertisement in which she thanked the public for their "kind and liberal support" to her late husband and announced her intention to continue running the George Inn. She offered transport, board and lodging, sea bathing machines and dinners at the shortest notice. She also knew that she needed to offer good transport routes to bring in visitors. In 1817 she advertised that a new post coach was to run between the George Hotel at Parkgate and Chester on a daily basis.

The Napoleonic Wars involved more than 2 decades of recurrent warfare between France and other powers in Europe, including Britain. High taxes,

rising food prices and unemployment put the British economy under severe strain in the early 1800s and holidaying by the sea was not in the forefront of people's minds. However, after hostilities ended in 1815, some effort was made to improve the resort of Parkgate and bring back the visitors. Esther Briscoe took the opportunity to refurbish the George Inn. She had the property refitted and enlarged, and in June 1819 she announced its re-opening, with a new name – the Mostyn Arms Hotel – after the Mostyn family who owned the inn and much of the land and property in Parkgate.



Illustration of the Mostyn Arms Hotel, taken from the Parkgate Society website

Adept as she was at serving her guests, there was always the odd challenge. In 1824 a curious tale involving Mrs Briscoe attracted the interest of newspapers around the country. In August that year a man appeared at Parkgate dressed in clothes of a fashionable cut and quality. He said his name was Charles Thompson. Mr Thompson called at the Mostyn Arms, ordered a dinner, drank two pints of wine then tried to leave without paying. In lieu of payment Mrs Briscoe grabbed the man's hat and retired into the bar with her prize. The man marched off, but a couple of days later he was apprehended and brought up before the Mayor and Magistrates of Chester. He proceeded to tell the magistrates a long and meandering story about how he was a gentleman by birth, family connections and education, and how he came to be "ruined". He'd fled to America and Canada looking for a new life, before coming back to the UK. He'd found himself in Chester and paid for lodgings there, but

he had no money for food. He left Chester in an “insensible” state and walked 12 miles when he found himself in Parkgate. Hungry and tired, and believing that he was shortly to come into some money (from a source that he didn’t share with the magistrates), he entered the Mostyn Arms and asked for dinner. When presented with the bill, he gave his name as Thornhill and told the waiter he had no cash, so would pay tomorrow. The waiter replied, “That won’t do”. There was an altercation, during which Mrs Briscoe took his hat. Mr Thompson told the court: “She gave vent to very strong language and loaded me with opprobrious epithets”. He asked the magistrates for their “humane concern”. And he got it! Not only did Esther Briscoe not get her payment, but Mr Thompson got his hat back, and the magistrates clubbed together to give him between £2 and £3 “to relieve his temporary wants”!

In response to this story, a letter from a notable Parkgate resident Samuel Ryley was published in the Chester Chronicle on 3 Sept 1824. In it Mr Ryley said that “in Mrs Briscoe keeping the hat, it might lead to a wrong conception of her feelings, which I know from long experience, are human and compassionate...and her conduct was highly justifiable.” He talked about how Mrs Briscoe was deceived by “...he who under the mask of gentlemanly deportment and respectable appearance, obtains confidence of the unsuspecting, and swallows the property of an unprotected widow, without the means or intention to pay for it”.

In 1847 local businessman and historian William Williams Mortimer singled out the Mostyn Arms Hotel for comment, saying that it was “a spacious establishment, replete with every accommodation”. But Esther Briscoe didn’t just run the hotel, with its hot and cold seawater baths and dressing rooms. In surrounding buildings and meadows she kept horses and coaches, cows, pigs and chickens. The Cheshire Tithe Maps of 1847 show that Esther was the tenant of significant parcels of farmland in Parkgate. She had 7 acres of pasture on one side of Station Road (the land at the back of the present day Mostyn House, including the new housing development). On the other side of the road she had 23 acres of meadow land forming a large square bounded by the present-day Station Road, Parkgate Road, Moorside Lane and Manorial Road – taking in the sports ground, tennis courts and cricket club.

Another local historian, Hilda Gamlin wrote about Esther Briscoe in 1897. She’d interviewed an elderly couple from Parkgate, who in their youth had

bought Esther's bathing vans off her. Mrs Gamlin wrote down the couple's memories of Esther Briscoe: "There were then at least 13 hotels in Parkgate...the principal one was the George. This hotel maintained its high reputation as late as 1855. The comforts were superintended by mine hostess Mrs Briscoe, who was never non-plussed by unexpected arrivals, for she kept a large stock of plum puddings ready boiled and tied up to meet emergencies. They were easily warmed while the first course was prepared and partaken." When the Mostyn family started selling off their property in Parkgate in 1849, Esther raised a mortgage and in 1854 she announced in the press that she had bought the Mostyn Arms Hotel. Going for the hard sell, her advertisement praised the health-giving breezes off the Dee and the ease with which travellers from Liverpool, Chester and Manchester could reach the hotel. But Parkgate was no longer the tourist attraction it once was and there was competition, some of it not that far away. Across the peninsula New Brighton had been developing as a resort since 1830. In 1847 Mortimer wrote "New Brighton...promises to be one of the most fashionable places in this part of the kingdom".

The 1851 census shows that the hotel wasn't just providing a home for 65 year-old Esther, but also her unmarried daughter Mary Ann, 37, and her unmarried sister Mary, 67. Also living and working here was a man said to be her nephew John Briscoe, a widower, aged 51, who was employed as ostler to take care, in particular, of the establishment's horses and carriages that plied the route between Parkgate and Chester; when he married Mary Rogers in Feb 1821, he was said to be a coachman, son of John Briscoe of Parkgate, a publican. According to the census there were five other resident staff employed to look after the domestic side of the business.

All appeared to be going well, until a death notice was published to announce that Mrs Esther Briscoe of the Mostyn Arms Hotel had died on 6 February 1855, at the age of 72. But that wasn't the whole story. On the following day an inquest took place at Parkgate. The jury was told that Esther had been labouring under a great mental depression for some time. A strict watch was being kept on her and Esther's daughter Mary Ann was sleeping in her mother's bedroom. On Monday evening (5 Feb) Esther was missed from the house, but a search for her in the dark proved unsuccessful. She was found the next morning in one of the outbuildings at the back of the hotel. Esther was hanging from a beam by a strip of red flannel, quite dead and cold. The jury

returned a verdict of suicide while in a state of temporary insanity. The Cheshire Observer provided a sympathetic report of the case, saying that Mrs Briscoe was highly respected and pecuniary difficulties arising from losses in the business were thought to be the cause of this rash act. The Liverpool Standard commented: "She was well known throughout this and adjacent counties, having kept that much frequented hotel for nearly half a century". Esther Briscoe was buried at Neston on 10 Feb 1855. By the end of February the hotel was up for sale and her daughter and sister had to find new homes.

As to what became of Esther's family, her sister Mary does not appear in the 1861 census; it seems that she died, aged 77, in 1857 and was buried at Neston parish church on 14 July 1857. Esther's daughter Mary Anne left Parkgate and went to work as a housekeeper at the Lion Hotel, Wyle Cop, Shrewsbury, where she was found by the 1861 census. Soon afterwards, at the age of 47, she married widower John Basnett Chambers, a hotel keeper of St Olave's parish, Chester, at St Bride's parish church, Liverpool, on 15 June 1861. This couple were not to enjoy a long marriage, however, for Mary Anne seems to have died only a few years later, her death at the age of 55 being registered in the West Derby district of Liverpool in the third quarter of 1868; she was buried at Walton-on-the-Hill on 1 September 1868. Her husband died in Liverpool in early 1870, aged 61; he was resident in Everton at the time of his death, and was buried at Walton-on-the-Hill on 14 March 1870. According to the Liverpool Mail of 12 April 1856 Esther's nephew John Briscoe, who had formerly run the coaching side of the business at the Mostyn Arms, died on 7 April, aged 53, at his son's residence at No 46 Wolfe St, Toxteth Park.

With the Hotel's contents and livestock auctioned off in the months after Esther's death, the lease of her estate passed into the possession of the Rev Edward Price, who turned it into Mostyn House School for Boys. And there Esther Briscoe's story should end. But! On 3 February 1906 the Birkenhead News carried an article about the history of Mostyn House. It said "Mrs Briscoe ran the hotel prosperously enough until 1854 (sic), when she unfortunately fell upon trouble, and hanged herself in the scullery. Her ghost has been the terror of many a late-to-bed kitchen maid ever since." In the summer of 2013 a project began to convert the existing Mostyn House buildings into 45 apartments, and build 47 new houses on the land that Esther Briscoe used to farm. Not a stranger to a refurbishment project, did Esther stay around to watch what was happening to her building 200 years after she walked those floors?

MOSTYN ARMS HOTEL, PARKGATE,

Four miles from the Hooton and Sutton Stations on the Birkenhead, Lancashire, and Cheshire Junction Railway, and 12 miles from the city of Chester.

IMPORTANT AND EXTENSIVE SALE of HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, Linen, Glass, 1,000 ounces of Silver Plate, Plated and Sheffield Goods, Spirits, and Ale, Cows, Horses, Carriages, Omnibus, Bath Water Cart, Harness, Wheat, Oats, Beans, Potatoes, and Straw, and all other effects, late the property of Mrs. Briscoe, deceased.

MESSRS. CHURTON

Have received unlimited instructions to SELL BY AUCTION on Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, the 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 26th, 27th, and 28th days of 1855, commencing each day at 11 o'clock punctually, the contents of the extremely valuable EFFECTS appurtenant to the named extensive Hotel and Premises, comprehending the contents of the well-manufactured

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE,

chiefly in mahogany, upholstered in hair cloth, damask, chintzes, adapted to the entrance-hall, bar, seven sitting and numerous bed and dressing rooms; wardrobe of bed and table linen, amongst which are upwards of 100 sheets; services of cut glass, china, and earthenware, and ornamental china, costly service of upwards of

1,000 OUNCES OF SILVER PLATE,

several articles of which are beautifully chased; plated Sheffield goods, super Brussels and Kidderminster carpets, brilliant chimney and pier glasses, in appropriate frames, articles of the kitchen, domestic, and out-offices, mangling and cellar of

PRIME OLD WINES, SPIRITS, ALE AND PORT consisting of very superior Port, Sherry, Madeira, Champagne, Rum, Brandy, &c.; two cows, five harness horses, very excellent Clarence, painted yellow, purchased; double Brougham, strong-built fly, four-wheeled phaeton, Bath chair, well-built omnibus, constructed to carry inside and 14 out; water cart upon broad wheels, quarter red wheat, oats and beans, 300 bushels of Kemp and potatoes, upwards of 20 tons of old hay, quantity of 1 straw upon the tallents, several sets of pair-horse and harness and saddlery, horse clothing, stable utensils, &c.

ORDER OF SALE:

First Day.—The whole of the out-door effects, cows, carriages, harness and saddlery, wheat, oats, beans, potatoes, hay, and cellar of wines.

Second Day.—The glass, china, service of silver plate and Sheffield goods.

Third Day.—The wardrobe of bed and table linen.

Fourth Day.—The entrance-hall and staircase, bar, five rooms on the ground floor, tap, back hall, and waiters' passage.

Fifth Day.—The furniture of 15 bed and dressing linen room, and music room.

Sixth Day.—The kitchens, housemaids' closet, furnishing two sitting rooms, and five bed and dressing rooms.

N.B.—Catalogues may be had at Sixpence each, at the Arms, Chester Arms, Ship and Ferry House, Parkgate, Neston; Monk's Ferry Hotel, Birkenhead; 'Mercury' Lord-street, Liverpool; and from Messrs. CHURTON Auctioneers, Chester and Whitechurch, Shropshire.

Julie Holland
Heswall
January 2023

References:

Newspaper records of the day

Parish, census and land tax records

Tithe map records

Book: “The History of the Hundred of Wirral” by William Williams Mortimer, 1847

Book: “Twixt Mersey and Dee”, by Hilda Gamlin, 1897

Book: The Rise and Fall of Parkgate”, by Dr Geoffrey Place, 1994

Pamphlet: “This is Parkgate – Its Buildings and Their Story”, by Dr Geoffrey Place, Parkgate Society, 1979

Twenty-five Years ago – Parkgate in 1997 by Anne Williamson

The Parkgate Society had been in existence for 25 years in 1997, the subscription was £2.50/year for Senior Citizens and £4/year for a single or a family. Meetings were held at the Parkgate Hotel (where Greenway is now). To celebrate the anniversary there was wine, music and coffee, courtesy of the society funds, and a quiz to identify the puzzle photos taken in Parkgate. Income for the Society funds not only came from annual subscriptions, but also from sales of *A Stroll Through Parkgate* written by Olive Wilcox and Hylda Wall-Jones, *The Panorama of Parkgate* by Michael Barton, and from 1979 onwards, *This is Parkgate, its buildings and their story*, written by Geoffrey Place and illustrated by Michael Barton.

Local Books. Following the recent 1996 publication of the book *Neston 1840-1940*, an appeal was put out for people to help with research and memories for the next book being planned, *Neston at War 1939-1945*, which would be edited by Geoffrey Place, and was published by The Burton and Neston History Society in 1999.

Another local book was published in 1997 about Arthur Bulley of Ness Gardens, *A Pioneering Plantsman: A.K.Bulley and the great plant hunters*, which commemorated the Centenary of Ness Gardens.

This year, 1997, we were sad to lose our Wirral Country Park ranger, Bernie McLinden, who moved to Flintshire to further his career as a ranger.

Parkgate awaited the construction of a small sandstone plinth on the Donkey Stand for displaying of the interpretive plaque.

More daffodils were planted on the approaches to Parkgate.

The site of the demolished Bath House (Old Baths) which had recently been gutted by fire, was rapidly becoming a dumping ground and eyesore. The Council stepped in to enforce the removal of the portacabin and accumulated rubbish from the site.

Care 4 Kids charity ball was held for 2yrs running on the Old Baths Fields. A huge marquee was used for this function which was attended by 400 guests, with money raised to benefit Claire House and a Children's ward at Arrowe Park Hospital.

Land adjacent to Boathouse Lane was donated to a charitable organisation, Badger Pony Sanctuary, still in existence now as the Parkgate Pony Sanctuary.

The church PCC were applying to have St. Thomas's Church, Parkgate, demolished, as the Congregation, considering the depressed state of the building, had voted for a rebuilt, warm, comfy new church. However, the local press had reported that the church was to be put up for sale and a commercial For Sale board appeared in Mostyn Square, suggesting potential use as an MOT testing station and garage. The locals had to act quickly to protect the building from demolition.

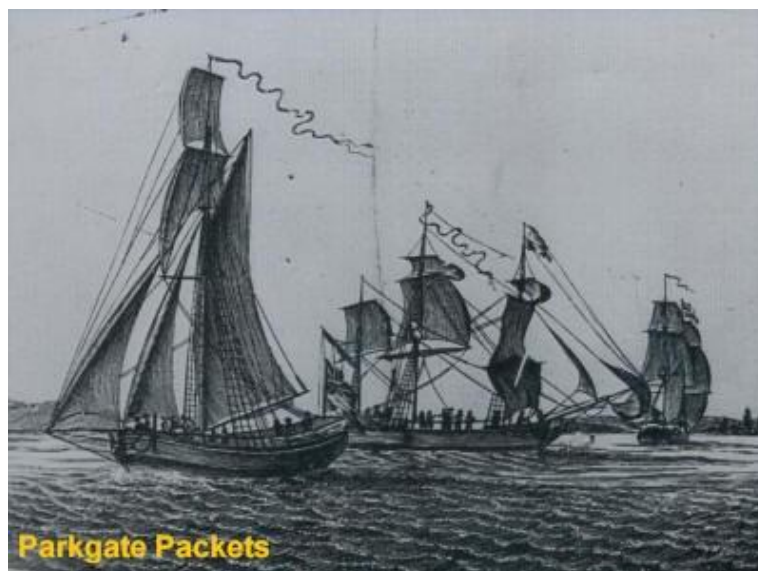
An interesting historic excerpt from The Architectural Review (vol. LXXV111 Sept. 1935) caught my eye in our 1997 newsletter. The funky Art Deco colour scheme of the Nicholls Ice Cream shop building in 1935 was Eau de Nil ceiling, ivory walls, aluminium door architraves and window bars, and tangerine door. The floor and stairs are laid with black rubber tiles. The frames of the steel chairs are painted Eau de Nil and the backs and seats are black. The tabletops are of black glass. WOW!

Aunty Jean, Jean Benbow, who ran the playschool in the URC church hall for many years and looked after many, many local children's early play and first experiences of socialising away from their home, retired this year. There was a party at the Copper Grill (now Britannia Spice) and a picnic presentation with the Mayor. Playschool was missed in our community.

The new addition to the view across the river Dee, Connah's Quay Power Station, was officially opened in 1997. It is positioned adjacent to the former coal fired power station site which closed in 1984, whose cooling chimneys were part of the skyline. In 1997, this new power station was one of the most technically advanced in the World and met the annual energy needs of virtually half of Wales. It was powered by gas via an underground pipeline from the Point of Ayr. The gas drove four turbines which produced the electricity. The cost of the building was in excess of £500 million. The white clouds that billow into the sky were not smoke, just steam.

Swans were busy on the marsh this year, and the first cuckoo was calling on the 3rd May. When did the swans and cuckoos depart?

This article was originally compiled with the intention of its inclusion in the Autumn 2022 Newsletter.



Parkgate packet boats in the Dee channel in the late 18th century waiting to sail for Dublin



**The Parkgate Society presents
Thelma Hardy and Friends**



Thelma Handy (Joint Leader of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra) and Friends return to the Neston Festival, following their sell-out performance last year. Formed by some of Wirral and the North West's leading string players, these musicians have shared concert platforms together all over the world - not least as members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, but also as passionate chamber musicians in their own right.

Thelma Handy (1st Violin); Sarah Brandwood-Spencer (2nd Violin);
Vikki Wardman (Viola); Alex Holladay (Cello)

With a wealth of festival experience and their reputations for making and recording chamber music at the very highest level, they come together tonight to perform a programme of French and Russian String Quartets.

**The United Reformed Church, Moorside Lane, Parkgate
7.30 pm, Saturday 29 April 2023**

Tickets £15 (including interval drink) available from the Blue Bicycle, High Street, Neston, or Parkgate Society Website (www.parkgatesociety.co.uk), or from Ticketsource via the festival website (www.nestonmusicfestival.org.uk) or at the Society's monthly meetings.

Heritage Open Days 2023

Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 September
Parkgate Heritage Trail: Guided Walk
Meet at the Ropewalk carpark, Station Road, at 3.00pm

Contacts

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

Email: secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk

Queries about membership should be addressed to our membership secretary:

Email: membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk

For queries about litter picks and environmental issues, please email:
environmental@parkgatesociety.co.uk

Articles or suggestions for future Newsletters are most welcome, please contact the Editor: secretary@parkgatesociety.co.uk

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The Parkgate Society is a registered charity, No. 503718, founded 1972.

Don't forget to browse our website: www.parkgatesociety.co.uk

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

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