



# Parkgate Society

## Newsletter

Autumn 2020

### Issue Number 99

Welcome to this further edition of our Newsletter. At present our social lives are still very much on hold at this stage of the Covid-19 pandemic; we trust that you are keeping well and hope you will find this letter an interesting and informative read.



Parkgate: The Balcony House and the Little Teahouse (August 2019)

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

## Meetings 2020/21

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

In our last edition, however, we reported that because of the Covid-19 pandemic we had decided to curtail the 2019/20 programme of talks. Then, in only a matter of a few days we all found ourselves in lock-down. While there has since been some relaxation in the national criteria for carrying on our way of life, things are still not back to normal, and the Club are not currently able to offer to accommodate us on the dates previously fixed for our meetings or provide sufficient space for the numbers who generally attend at other times. In the circumstances the Committee have now decided to cancel the Autumn programme in the hope and expectation that we may be able to resume our meetings in Spring 2021.

We're very sorry about this, but it seems inevitable – other local groups find themselves in similar circumstances. It seems that the virus is likely to be with us for some time, and we might find that, even if it is possible to resume our programme of talks in the Spring, we may still be required to self-distance, in which case we might be required to limit the number of those attending our meetings. Let's hope it does not come to that.

During this period we will continue to keep you informed about what is going on in those spheres of interest which are of concern to the Society.

## The Annual General Meeting 2020

The Charity Commission has provided advice to societies on how they may meet the legal requirements for the conduct of their businesses during this difficult time.

In the circumstances the Society's Executive Committee has decided to choose the option of cancelling the Society's AGM, which was due to be held on Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020, and to extend the terms of officers and committee members for a further 12 months, as follows:

**Officers** for 2020/21:

**Chairman:** Bryan Lecky  
**Deputy-Chairman:** David Johnson  
**Secretary:** Alan Passmore  
**Treasurer:** Derick Cotton  
**Membership Sec.:** Derek Haylock

**Committee members** for 2020/21:

Peter Enevoldson, Carol Fearnett, Marie Lycett, plus Brenda Roe (co-opted)

This leaves four further vacancies for members of the Committee. If you would like to join us, please get in touch with the Secretary.

**Auditor:** Clive Edwards

The Society's accounts for 2019/20 were signed off by our auditor in May and approved by the Executive Committee in June. Copies are available on request. The News and Views item in this letter provides a detailed report on the Society's activities over the past 6 months or so.

**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 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 to receive 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

These past six months our activities have been much affected by the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19), which is still causing mayhem around the world and has probably affected the lives of everyone in this country in one way or another. Since mid-March the nation has been in lock-down, and only now is some semblance of normality beginning to return. It is still early days and, until a vaccine or an effective treatment is found for this disease, some precautions will have to stay in place, affecting the normal rhythm of society. The new normal will be quite different from the old. We cannot take for granted that we will be able to carry on as we have done in the past. We had to cancel our regular members' meetings during the Spring, and have now reluctantly come to the conclusion that we will not be in a position to start our planned 2020/21 programme in September – January 2021 at the earliest.

On the positive side your committee have continued meeting regularly over the internet, making progress largely with the routine side of the administration, which otherwise tends to get overlooked. Thanks to our new Treasurer, we have a new set of policies, which should ensure that we are compliant in the way the Society is run and the way we go about our business; he has also been behind the review of 'Our Vision for Parkgate', copies of which have been circulated to all members for comment. On the more practical side we resumed our litter picks in June, suitably distancing ourselves from each other; we notice that individuals have been organizing their own picks too. Despite the lock-down, crowds of people have been congregating on The Parade, encouraged by the glorious weather we have had during this period, so litter has been an issue; we are pleased that those traders who

have opened up have also made valiant efforts themselves to keep on top of the problem. In addition, the Council have increased the frequency that the bins are emptied. But why cannot people take their rubbish home with them, if the bins are full?

Once again we are putting out a plea for help with our work. The role and powers of the Society as set out in our constitution are quite wide-ranging, and the different aspects of our work need covering by members who could devote a little of their time to looking after them; in particular we are looking for people with an interest in local history, planning or conservation to join our team and help us carry out our responsibilities in these areas; we are also interested in recruiting generalists to assist us. If you could help, please get in touch.

On the subject of membership we appear to be managing to keep our numbers fairly steady by recruiting about the same number as we lose; before Covid-19, attendances at our monthly meetings had been on the increase, which is a good sign. We don't keep statistics on our members, but it is clear that we are an ageing group. This is, therefore, not a healthy position for the Society in the long term. I am, therefore, again asking all our existing members to consider whether they could introduce new friends, preferably of a slightly younger age group, to the Society. We are particularly on the look-out for new people who can work actively on behalf of the Society as well as those who are attracted by our annual programme of interesting talks.



The Red Lion (2019)

Our **Community Spirit** team continue to do good work around the village, collecting litter and tidying up any grotty areas. We assemble in Mostyn Square at 10 am on the first Saturday of the month and spread out from there to work in the various different areas in need of our attention. We have been concerned about hedge growth reducing pavement capacity in some places; thanks to our efforts we have met with some success in this area, though not universally. Before Corvid changed everything, we were disappointed to learn that Cheshire Community Action's **Best Kept Village** competition was no longer to be held as a result of the decision of the main sponsors Essar Oil to withdraw their sponsorship, so our efforts have concentrated on general tidiness and in particular on flower planting – you may have noticed that some additional planters have been installed since last year's inspection. Anyway, if you would like to join our team of volunteers, just let Peter Enevoldson know (email: [environmental@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:environmental@parkgatesociety.co.uk)), so that he can contact you about specific events.

We have heard that funding has been approved to complete a further section of the English coastal path in our area; this is the stretch between Marshlands Road, Little Neston, and Moorside Lane, Parkgate; between the latter and Station Road the route will continue, as now, via Manorial Road and Manorial Road South so to avoid going in front of the housing here which directly overlooks the coast. Another (and more significant) local scheme for which funding has been approved is the A494 crossing of the Dee at Queensferry, where a new carriageway is to be constructed alongside the existing road, starting in the second half of 2020. Completion of the new bridge will then enable essential repair work to be carried out on the existing bridge, built in 1960 – expect long delays as the work is progressed.

We continue to scrutinize the local **planning applications** for the Parkgate area and monitor the progress of approved schemes. I reported previously that plans had been submitted for the construction of a largely subterranean house in the greenbelt on land opposite the lodge to Backwood Hall in Boathouse Lane; the scheme includes the development of a community orchard at the southern end of the site. This 3.5 acre plot has been left fallow for some years, but the Society could see no reason why this piece of greenbelt land should be sacrificed for this eco project, particularly in view of recent decisions relating to other properties in the same vicinity, where applications for building extensions have consistently been refused. This

application was refused by CWaC, but the proposers have taken the matter to appeal. This appeal is currently being considered by the Planning Inspector on the basis of the written evidence submitted by both sides, and the outcome is likely to be known shortly. Close by in Boathouse Lane the outcome of a revised outline application for the development of land at Parkgate Nurseries is still awaited; the revised area to be developed is limited to the footprint of the existing greenhouses; this land is part of the green belt, not brownfield, and, like Neston Civic Society, we have supported the Town Council in their opposition to a plan which is contrary to both the Neston Neighbourhood Plan and CWaC's own Local Plan.

In the conservation area the refurbishment of Broad Beams on The Parade is nearing completion, and the premises will soon, hopefully, be opened as a shop – much needed by Parkgate residents. In the meantime the restoration of No 14 Station Road is now complete, and at long last a start has been made with the refurbishment of No 11 nearby. Seven Steps on The Parade has recently changed hands and, we understand, is likely to undergo sympathetic refurbishment by the new owners, who are aware of the responsibilities of owning a listed property; in this group Teal Cottage is also currently for sale, and the Old Butcher's Shop is likely to be extended to provide more family accommodation. Members cannot fail to have noticed that the extension of White Cottage is now going ahead, but they may not have observed that the new house being erected to the rear of Deva Bank is virtually complete.

Wirral Methodist Housing Trust have appealed against CWaC's decision to refuse them permission to build 10 semi-detached bungalow homes for the over-55s at the bottom of Moorside Lane. This scheme was not seen as necessary to meet local affordable housing need, which is the main criterion for allowing the use of green belt land for housing purposes; occupying part of the Moorside Meadow local wildlife site, it would have had an urbanizing effect on the rural landscape and a deleterious impact on the Deeside SSSI; moreover, access arrangements and site layout were considered to be unsatisfactory. It is good to see that the Council appear to want to uphold the status of greenbelt land in this neighbourhood; we hope that the Planning Inspector will take the same view.

As mentioned previously, we continue to have concerns about the future of the **Mostyn House chapel**. It is still our hope that it will eventually be possible

for this building to be opened to the public even on a limited basis, once all the practical difficulties have been sorted out.

## **Heritage Open Days (HODs) – 2020**

Chester Civic Trust state that are very sad to announce that Heritage Open Days cannot take place in Cheshire West and Chester this year, because of the constraints caused by the Covid19 pandemic. This would have been the 26th year of HODs, and Chester Civic Trust and Chester City Council (now CWaC) have been involved from the start in this national celebration of local history and architecture. However, this year, they recognise that the volunteers, who would usually open their buildings and give tours of our heritage sites free of charge, must prioritise the survival of their own businesses and activities. They promise to be back with a wonderful offering for Heritage Open Days in September 2021.

For the past few years we have been associated with the HODs programme organized by Chester Civic Trust in arranging for guided walks based on our heritage trail, and we had again decided to run a couple of walks this year on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September. In the circumstances, because of the need for distancing during these walks, we feel obliged to cancel these events this year, rather than attempt to run them independently of the main programme.

## **Summer Wrigglers – by Peter Enevoldson**

At this time of year, gardeners with water butts or who leave watering cans and buckets in the open may collect more than just rainwater. They will often find the water contains scores of tiny wriggling maggot-like larvae. Most rightly suppose these are mosquito larvae, and their reactions range from fascination to horror and anxiety.

However, fear not. Firstly, there are no longer any human mosquito-borne diseases in the UK (a form of malaria disappeared in the UK in the early 20th century). Secondly it is very likely that the wrigglers are the larvae of two species of *Culex* mosquitoes called *Culex pipiens pipiens* and *Culex torrentium*. Both typically bite birds (to obtain the iron in blood which they require for development of their ovaries) and have been known to feed on

frogs, lizards or snakes, but only rarely bite humans or mammals! They are entirely separate from the biting mosquitoes breeding in the Dee marshes.

Both species are small brown mosquitoes: the females are indistinguishable and the males can only be differentiated by examination of their genitalia under a microscope!

Along with the larvae, you may also find small (5 mm long), grey buoyant objects, floating on the water surface. These are egg "rafts", each containing about 200 eggs. If you take them with some water in a jar, you can watch the tiny larvae emerge over the next few days.

Where do they come from, and what then happens to them? Before about August, larvae develop into male and female adults which promptly mate, feed on nectar (and so pollinate plants) and the females find avian blood to allow development of their eggs, which they lay in almost any type of still water: fresh or brackish, clean or foul, ditches, pools, any man-made containers or even puddles in hoof-prints! However, from August onwards, after mating the emerged females just fatten themselves up (the males die off) with no egg development. Unlike the vast majority of British mosquitoes, they hibernate over the winter in damp, cool protected locations such as cellars, garages, sheds, stables. Those that have built up enough fat reserves in Autumn can survive till Spring, when they emerge from hibernation, develop their eggs and lay them to restart the life-cycle.

### **Parkgate Marsh – by Clive Radford**

*The author of this poem says came across the Society on the AboutMyArea Neston website.*

*He states that he spent his formative years in Neston, but has been living in the deep south for most of his life. His father used to take him to Prenton Park to see the mighty Tranmere Rovers. He now works in the software industry, but is also a published writer of novels, short stories, and poetry. He started writing at school, and then at university. Much of his work is founded on his experiences and observations in the Wirral and Liverpool. His 'Disclosure of a Femme Fatale Addict', set in Neston Parkgate and beyond, has been re-published by Wild Dream Publishing as a deluxe new edition in May 2020.*

*The poem entitled 'Parkgate Marsh', he says, is from way back when; he wonders if it strikes a chord with the Society's own take on Parkgate.*

Engrossed on the spring soggy marsh, canvass reflecting Clwydian hills, steel works, the coastline arc disappearing to West Kirby. Lovers promenading, fishermen sorting their catch, the distant sound of squawking gulls beyond brush strokes. Sulphur dioxide oozing from sodden ground, its odour ripe to the nostrils. Invertebrates dart across golden samphire. Wainscot and starwort flutter, make concentric circles over aster tops. Our feet never sure-footed, the wetland in constant motion.

An hour or two away from communicating the impression, observing and analysing ocular stimuli under stringent tutelage. Here, we find natural expression purifies 'visual art connection', observational skills become honed, driving for 'cultural and aesthetic' awareness, the art masters' dictionary satisfied at last. Cool soft wind swaying reeds hypnotise our stare. The dull thud sound of wild fowlers hunting disturbed quarry ignites revulsion. Further down the estuary, sandstone merges with mudflats. Ornithologists crouch in bisque grasses, transfixed by lapwing and harrier. The occasional stolen kiss and flesh parade, *in flagrante* sex between easel sessions, thoughts of faraway Giverny and Argenteuil.

We conceptualise and translate the dynamic, learn critical appraisal, develop enquiring attitude to fashion working vocabulary. But out here in the vastness of the marsh, the ghost of Nelson and Emma Hamilton bleached into rushes, shapes silhouetted against billowing slate-grey skies, the classroom seems academic, far from Monet.

Our portraiture has become crass, formulaic methodology, segmented behavioural domains more like utilitarian manifesto than sublime manifestation. On the salt marshland our fragmentation, colours, lines and tonal variations find

proper purpose. We build acrylic abstraction layer in bold thrusting motions, the flats and filberts construct depth, the liners and rounds highlighting and pinpointing herons and cormorants, the single-handed sailor navigating the Dee channel.

On Parkgate marsh the canvass breathes, absorbing crystalline hues, becomes Burroughs living typewriter, free from classroom sterility, the possibilities endless. We paint, but it could be sculpture, an impression cast in stained glass, ceramic edifice. Broad theory house themes become crafted in personal reflection, idea development un-submissive to interpretation, like mercury boiling and nitrate condensing into blazing shards of light and shade, void of turbulent form. The compulsive drive distilling art like end orgasm, gushing spikes and droplets of cornflower blue and aquamarine. Blanched almond icons forged into dark magenta base. We step back, make appreciation, our final impression beyond syllabus technique.

### **Twenty-five Years Ago – Parkgate in 1995 – by Anne Williamson**

Twenty-five years ago, I was invited to coffee at **Geoffrey and Valerie Place's** house opposite Neston Cricket Club. What a surprise, and I was the only guest, like a job interview! Why am I telling you this? That was the occasion when I was snared into joining the committee of the Society, a task that I continued with for fifteen years. My loose association continues still with writing these "twenty-five years ago" pieces for the magazine. Geoffrey Place was the Chairman of the Parkgate Society, a Governor of Parkgate Primary School, and a methodical historian of Parkgate, who was effective in cataloguing the history and preserving the Conservation Area and character of the village. **The Rise and Fall of Parkgate, passenger port for Ireland**, by Geoffrey Place Price £10.95 was advertised in the newsletter as now available in Softback.

In those days there was an **annual Spring marsh clearance**. A skip would appear on the prescribed day and many people, with their gloves and wellies, would turn out for some exercise and fresh air after the high tides of the Spring Equinox and the human indulgences of Easter. It would soon be filled with all manner of rubbish from the marsh.

**Balcony House, dating from 1750**, was standing resplendent in its renovated and freshly painted condition. For a building that was to be pulled down and replaced with six flats, it is indeed a fitting and constant reminder of the achievement of this Society and the just formed Parkgate Preservation Trust. They saved this building, without which Parkgate would look so different today. This battle had been won, but the next battle for Parkgate conservation was to be the Church. **St Thomas's Church in Mostyn Square** had been closed due to structural problems and was decaying. The Parochial Church Council had announced their intention to demolish it within the next 12 months to avoid maintenance costs. Soon after, a 'For Sale' sign appeared, suggesting its possible use as a site for a MOT testing Station. To lose this focal point and historic but simple sandstone church, dating from 1843, would be a disaster for the Conservation Area of Parkgate, and so a new and longer battle began.

**Seaward House**, the former Tandoori Restaurant at the south end of The Parade, was renovated, **The Ship Hotel** had a facelift and **the old Bath House** was demolished after a serious fire.

**Springcroft** had its paved footpaths resurfaced with tarmac and the cut-through from the Ropewalk to Springcroft was renewed also. Work on a **replacement gas main** along The Parade had taken place, bestowing peace with the closure of the Parade. Peace which caused the serious suggestion of implementing "Pedestrian Only Sundays". Accidentally, while covering the new gas main with concrete, the main sewer was filled too for a distance of about 20 feet, extending the period of closure and disruption of The Parade and also causing a large outflow of sewage onto the marsh.

Mr Llewellyn Hodge sent a letter to the Society about the **Middle Slipway**, which had recently been the subject of much discussion. In 1977/78 he had bought The Old Watch House (which has its origins in 1720) and had looked out on the detritus that was building up and obscuring the cobbles of the historic old slip. He felt that "the slipway should be a feature of Old Parkgate", so he began to reclaim it from the encroaching marsh. He soon found that the slipway that he had laboriously cleared was now being used by tourists for parking cars. After consulting the Highways Officer, the temporary solution was to place large sandstone blocks across the slipway. The stones were sited in June 1986. He wrote, "They solved the problem of inconsiderate motorists. Over the years they have provided relief for tired feet and aching

bones.....and pleasure to countless children who delight in using them as stepping stones.” He concluded his letter stating that his wish was that the Middle Slipway should remain as a Parkgate feature, that there was nothing unofficial about the siting of the sandstone blocks, and that he was in full accord with the 1995 proposed plan to replace them with cast iron bollards.

Leonard Walker retired from the Society’s committee in 1995. Notably, whilst on the committee, Leonard undertook to produce a **photographic record of Parkgate** in the mid-1980s. This extensive collection of photos was put on display in Neston Library for some time and was then put into safe storage. Jerry Harris took Leonard’s place on the committee and soon began helping with the newsletter production, eventually producing and editing it for many years. He also spearheaded the **Heritage Open Days** in Parkgate.

The committee met with Tom Miller, the head of Planning Services, Cheshire, to discuss the Conservation Area coordination, and Geoffrey and Valerie Place spoke to our MP, Andrew Miller, to discuss **Listed Building Policy and Conservation Areas**, which he then took up in the House of Commons.

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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For information about membership of the Society contact Derek Haylock at  
[membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk](mailto:membership@parkgatesociety.co.uk)  
or phone (0151) 336-4461

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Don’t forget our website: [www.parkgatesociety.co.uk](http://www.parkgatesociety.co.uk)  
– also the heritage trail for pictures of old Parkgate: [www.parkgateheritagetrail.org](http://www.parkgateheritagetrail.org)

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