



Parkgate Society

Newsletter

Spring 2020

Issue Number 98

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



Parkgate: Hilbre class Hi-C takes to the water again – High tide: Feb 2020
(from a photo by Ina Bushell)

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

Notices

Meetings 2020	The Committee
<p>We normally meet at 8pm at The Cranston Suite, Neston Cricket Club, Station Road, Parkgate, usually on the third Monday of the month.</p> <p>16 March: 'Wirral Smugglers & Wreckers' - Gavin Chappell CANCELLED</p> <p>20 April: 'The Bibby Line' - Christina Spencer CANCELLED</p> <p>18 May: 'Raptors of the Wirral and their Conservation' - Jimmi Hill CANCELLED</p> <p>21 September: Annual General Meeting at 7.30 pm, followed by 'Neston Coal Mining' - Anthony Annakin-Smith</p> <p>19 October: 'Cleanliness is next to Godliness: a History of Pears Soap up to 1914' - Dr Paul Dufton</p> <p>16 November: Hot-pot Supper at 6.30 pm followed by 'The Construction of the Albert Docks' - <i>Anthony Clark</i></p>	<p>At the Society's AGM last September the following officers and committee members were elected for 2019/20:</p> <p>Chairman: Dr Bryan Lecky Deputy-Chairman: David Johnson Secretary: Alan Passmore Treasurer: vacancy Membership Secretary: Derek Haylock</p> <p>Committee members: Dr Jill Brock, Carol Fearnett, Tim Lunt and Marie Lycett</p> <p>Appointment of Auditor: Clive Edwards</p> <p>In the absence of a permanent appointment Alan Passmore has been looking after the Society's finances as Acting Treasurer. The Committee has now co-opted Derick Cotton with a view to him taking over the treasurer's post in the new financial year.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p>	

SUBSCRIPTIONS - £7.00 Single / £10 Household per year. 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 Derek Haylock, our Membership Secretary, tel: (0151) 336-4461. Please check that your Standing Order is for the correct amount.

Reflections on Coronavirus/Covid 19

When the cover photo was taken just a month ago, little did we know what we were in for with the onset of this dreadful virulent disease, which has come from nowhere and spread around the world with incredible speed, affecting the lives of populations everywhere and doing untold harm to the economies of countries everywhere. Comparisons have been made with the effects of the outbreak of 'Spanish' flu in 1917-21. The effects on our lifestyle were spelt out by the Prime Minister in his speech to the nation on 23 March, when it was stated that we should all confine ourselves to our homes for the foreseeable future and only go out under specific conditions in case of necessity. We do not know what will be the effect on us of such a lengthy period of self-confinement: what will be the effect on our community and the nation: how will we survive: and what will things look like when we come through this ordeal? There is much confusion right now. Virtually all work which may be considered not to be essential has come to an end; the result: towns and cities are deserted and eerily quiet, factories too are silent, the empty roads and the absence of planes flying overhead contribute to a silence now filled with birdsong instead of traffic. And we are now digging for victory in order to produce more of our food in our own gardens.

As a responsible society we have had to put up the shutters and cancel our meetings for the foreseeable future, suspend our litter picking and flower planting activities, postpone till next year the Neston Music Festival, including our sponsored events. Let us hope that we come through this dark period relatively unscathed, so that we can pick up our normal way of life and resume our customary activities as soon as possible. In the meantime, if you need help, eg with shopping, please let us know, and we will see what can be done to assist you. And remember, whatever your situation, follow the guidance and keep safe.

News and Views

(this section written before Corvid 19 came to affect our lives)

What a contrast with this time last year! Last year February was the warmest since records began, with daytime temperatures of over 20 degrees not far from here, also a record: this year that month has seen a series of storms that have inundated large areas of the country and flooded many homes and businesses not too far from here.

Fortunately, the restricted rain catchment area of Wirral protects us from the worst of these conditions, and so we have to be thankful that we are spared from some of the worst effects of this type of weather. We commiserate with those who have been affected by the flooding and hope that they can soon be restored to their homes and businesses. On the other hand, it has been relatively mild for the time of year, and our gardens have again been a riot of colour, with normally later-flowering plants competing with the snowdrops and other early flowering bulbs.



Our Community Spirit Group tidied up the Ropewalk Park, Station Road.

Despite the loss of Marsh Nurseries as the suppliers of many of the plants we have used in the past to beautify our village, we have continued to maintain the planters and other areas that we have been looking after in the past few years. While we were not completely successful in the **Best Kept Village** competition last year, we were very pleased to win a Little Gem award for our boat Hi-C, which is pictured on the cover. We were also pleased for our neighbours Neston, who won the award for Most Improved Village, an award which they will keep, as the competition will not be run in future, owing to the withdrawal of the sponsorship. We have decided that we should join the **Neston in Bloom** organization, which is affiliated to the Town Council through the Neston Greening Group; we feel that we could benefit from a closer association.

We continue to scrutinize the local **planning applications** for the Parkgate ward and monitor the progress of approved schemes. We are concerned about proposals which might be a threat to the green belt, which protects the space between the settlement of Parkgate/Neston and neighbouring communities. We are, therefore,

pleased that CWaC, as the local planning authority, has refused an application relating to Boathouse Lane, where it had been proposed to construct a subterranean house opposite Backwood Lodge, and at the bottom of Moorside Lane, where the proposal was to erect ten bungalows for the over-55s adjacent to the marsh; in this latter case the developer has appealed to the planning inspector, so the matter is not resolved. In another significant decision the Council has recently refused the current owner's proposal to create a separate 'granny apartment' adjacent to their house, on the grounds that the scheme amounted to the construction of an additional dwelling on land outside the existing settlement area; the existing house, close to Boathouse Lane, is situated in an area of countryside within the designated green belt. Two other significant applications are not yet resolved: that relating to the Parkgate Nurseries site, which was considered by our membership at our October meeting, and the McCarthy & Stone proposal for the Brook Meadow site, off Church Lane.



The Parade, Parkgate, from The Donkey Stand – June 2019

No 11 Station Road, a grade 2-listed building, has now been sold, and we hope that the new owner will soon come forward with an acceptable plan for its refurbishment; No 14, close by, has now been restored and turned into a house fit for modern living without obvious change to its appearance. This still leaves No 11 Brooklands Road to be tackled – there is planning approval for the erection of two houses on this derelict site. The renovation of Broad Beams on The Parade is now largely complete, and the expectation is that these premises will be opened in the near future. Building is proceeding apace with a substantial new house to replace the former bungalow

Sharwood on Manorial Road, just within the boundary of the conservation area. Work has also commenced in Wood Lane on the construction of a new home to replace the former dwelling known as Mill House, adjacent to the former windmill in Leighton Road.



The Parade, Parkgate, July 2019

As part of the national **Heritage Open Days** programme in September we are again organizing guided walks based on our Parkgate Heritage Trail. This year the events across Cheshire West will take place on ten days from the 11th to the 20th of the month. On Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th we will meet at the bat haven (the former WW2 pillbox) on the Ropewalk carpark in Station Road at 3.00 pm. The walk is about 1.5 miles, but lasts about 2 hours. Participants should come appropriately dressed and shod for the weather conditions. St Thomas' Church in Mostyn Square is also taking part in the HODs scheme and will be open to visitors on this Saturday and also on the Sunday afternoon.

It continues to be a matter of regret that it is still not yet possible to add the Mostyn House Chapel to the list of local properties available to visitors under this programme or, indeed, on other occasions for use for other purposes.



Mostyn House Chapel – still not open to visitors – September 2017

The Ropewalk, Parkgate

Anthony Annakin-Smith is about to bring out an article on The Ropewalk at Parkgate, which may be of interest to the Society's members. It is actually intended for the next edition of Cheshire History, but he has agreed with the editor that it can be pre-published on the NestonPast website, which members are welcome to consult at <https://www.nestonpast.com/learning-the-ropes-parkgate-rope-making-and-the-ropewalk/>

The article looks at Parkgate's ropemakers, the history of local rope-making and the origin of the name The Ropewalk (which, surprisingly, was only confirmed in 1955!). Ropemaking was a vital part of the industry of ship building and ship repairing, which was carried out at Parkgate throughout the eighteenth century, during the time that Parkgate was the point of embarkation for Ireland and ships sailed from there to all points of the compass.

Forty Years Ago: Two articles by Dr Geoffrey Place

(1) Autumn 1979 Newsletter – The Parkgate Pilot's Jug

In a small dining room of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company, in the Port of Liverpool Building, there is kept a commemorative ale jug, holding 10 pints, which was made at the Herculaneum Pottery in Toxteth. On the jug's side is the painted inscription:

Banrad Rilton

Pilot 1805

Parkgate

The Society was asked if we could find out any information about this strangely-named pilot, or about any pilots in the Dee, or why this jug was made. We were able to help with the first two queries, but unfortunately not, so far, with the third.

It seems that the pilot's real name was Barnard Relton, and the mistaken spelling on the jug suggests that the painter was asked to copy something without being able to read it. Barnard Relton was a mariner from Parkgate, born about 1755, who died between 1806 and 1808. This information comes from the records of the Point of Air Lighthouse Trust. When that lighthouse was built in 1777, the Trust was given the duty to license pilots for the Dee estuary, and ships were obliged to use them. In the first thirty years of the Trust most of the pilots came from Parkgate; Barnard Relton was first licensed in 1787 and was regularly re-licensed until 1806.

We are grateful to the Port Services Director and his staff, and to the County and City Record Offices in Chester, for their help in a most interesting quest.

In our last Newsletter we described this commemorative jug, owned by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company, and painted with the name of Barnard Relton, a Parkgate mariner who was registered as a Dee pilot between 1787 and 1806. The owners have generously supplied a photograph of the jug, and the drawing below was taken from it by 13-year-old Lee Langton, a pupil of Michael Barton (who illustrated the guide book 'This is Parkgate'). Lee has just left Mostyn House with an art scholarship to Worksop College.



Drawing, from a photograph, by Lee Langton

(2) Spring 1980 Newsletter – The Minerva Bowl

Thanks to the kindness of Mr LA Burman, the Keeper of Decorative Art at the Merseyside County Museums, we have been able to examine an 18th century Ship Bowl, which shows an authentic picture of a ship which is known to have conveyed goods between Parkgate and Dublin.

The Minerva of Chester was a ship-rigged brig, first heard of in 1751, when two shares of her (an eighth and a sixteenth) were for sale at Parkgate, and in the same year it was recorded that she carried Irish vagrants from the Old Quay House of Correction to Dublin. In 1752 Dr Patrick Delany wrote to his sister-in-law that he would send a coach to Chester to take her to Parkgate, “where I will appoint the best vessel upon the coast, the Minerva, with the civilest and soberest Master, Captain Matthews, to meet you”.

Both John Matthews and Gwyn Brown were recorded as masters of the Minerva in 1759, when the Chester customs books show that she carried Irish linen, and dry’d hog meat, from Dublin to Parkgate. She was still sailing in 1768 and 1769, when John Byrne and Captain Frampton were commanding her, as Lloyds Lists record.

Mr Burman thinks that the bowl was made in Liverpool, perhaps by Christian or Pennington, between 1765 and 1775. The bowl has a diameter of 10 inches, and is made of tin-glazed earthenware. Mr Burman says that it was the practice for artists to go and sketch the actual ship for these commemorative bowls, so we have here a real Parkgate ship of the mid eighteenth century.



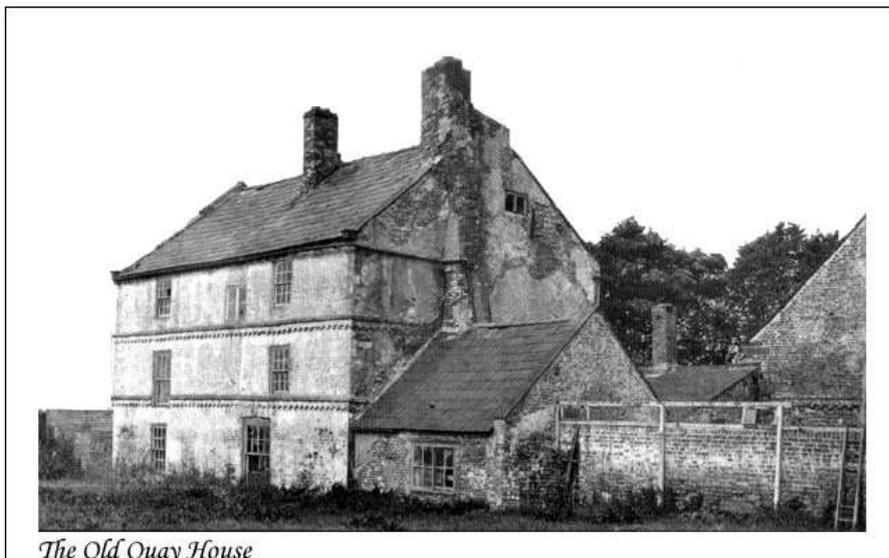
'The Minerva of Chester', drawing by Lee Langton

The Old Quay House

How many of us remember the building known as the Old Quay House, which once stood close to the old quay at Neston, at once was the far end of Old Quay Lane? Not many, I guess, as it is now well over 70 years since it was demolished. The two post-card photos showing this building were taken not long before its demise.

I was minded to write a few notes on this subject on reading Anthony Annakin-Smith's recent article on Parkgate's ropemaking industry, where he states that the ropemaker Thomas Downward lived here for a time in the late 18th century, when his father-in-law William Aldcroft was the overseer. That would have been during the time when ships were no longer sailing from here, but the building was operating as a house of correction, where miscreants were detained, particularly Irish vagrants awaiting deportation to their home country under the regime of the old Poor Law.

Over the years of its existence this building served a multiplicity of purposes. A map of 1677 by Andrew Yarranton shows it as the 'brick house' at Neston Key; it is said that it replaced an earlier house of timber construction, whose origin may have gone back to Elizabethan times, when the key (quay) was first constructed. Until about 1710 the building was an inn, whose customers would have been mainly travellers to Ireland or folk awaiting the arrival of passengers from there, before this business was lost to Parkgate, when the adjacent key fell out of use as a result of silting. In 1750 the lease of the building was taken over by the justices of the County of Chester for the purpose of establishing a house of correction there.



Houses of Correction were established under the terms of the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 and they were normally used to hold pre-trial prisoners and those convicted of

minor crimes and sentenced to short periods of imprisonment, generally with labour, which commonly was the beating of hemp (used in the production of rope). The purpose of this decision was to deal with the problem of Irish vagrants, who were becoming a burden on the local parishes. Many Irish men came over to Britain seeking seasonal work as agricultural or general labourers and, so long as they had work, they lived here quite happily, as they were entitled to, and got on reasonably well with the local population. In times of hardship, however, if outsiders (whether British or Irish) lost their employment and could not find further work, under the terms of the old Poor Law, they would be classed as vagrants and returned to the parish of their birth, which had the duty to look after them, if they became destitute. If they had been settled for some time in an area other than their own parish, that could have been very difficult for them, particularly if they had families. Ships other than the royal yachts were required to carry vagrants, where requested, and during a period of 50 years over 25,000 Irish vagrants were returned to their homeland through Neston, sailing from Parkgate.



Old Quay House

By the end of the 18th century the Old Quay House was becoming dilapidated, and the magistrates began to look around for another local building which would meet their requirements. Such a house became available at the bottom of Moorside Lane, and this became operative from 1802 as the Moorside House of Correction. This house was more conveniently situated for linking with the shipping at Parkgate, though that business had very little future at that time.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 transferred the responsibility for looking after the poor from individual parishes to local boards of guardians, or unions; there were 11 such unions covering the county of Cheshire, each having the power to build and run their own workhouses – the local union covering Wirral (apart from Birkenhead), had its workhouse at Clatterbridge, the origin of the present Clatterbridge hospital. The Old Quay House became a private house in c1915, but it had become derelict by the 1940s. During World War 2, the Home Guard used it as target practice, reducing it to little-more than rubble. Very little evidence of this former house is to be found today.

Heritage Open Days 2020

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 September
Parkgate Heritage Trail: Guided Walk
Meet at the Ropewalk carpark, Station Road, at 3.00pm

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

Contacts

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

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

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The Parkgate Society is a registered charity, No. 503718, founded
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Don't forget our website: www.parkgatesociety.co.uk

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