

Neston Civic Society Newsletter



King Charles III England Coast Path

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Website: nestoncivicsociety.uk



Neston Civic Society

Campaigning for a better built and green environment

Helping to preserve Neston’s rich history, its vibrant past and its sustainable future for over 40 years.

Neston is an important historic town which has been occupied since Saxon times. A town of warm sandstone and mellow brick, with many fine historic buildings, it is a beautiful place to live, work and visit.

Neston Civic Society is concerned with the Local Environment, Planning, Architecture & Conservation.

Particular areas of concern to the society are:

- Choice of windows and doors, particularly in period properties where design and materials are of great importance to the style of the house.
- The impact of shop fronts and advertising along the most important roads in town.
- The use of well chosen building materials that blend with the distinctive character of the town.
- Improvements in and about Neston with particular emphasis on the Conservation area.

We send our views on planning applications to Cheshire West & Chester Council (CWaC).

Meetings are usually in the United Reformed Church Community Hall, Moorside Lane, NESTON CH64 6UZ, at 7.30 p.m. on the third Thursday of January, March, May, July, September, and November (the AGM).

We usually have a talk, followed by complimentary tea, coffee, and biscuits.

21 November Dan Trotman, from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds at Burton Mere Wetlands, **will talk about the work of the RSPB, after the AGM.**

January 2025 On a different day of the week from usual our new MP **Samantha Dixon** will be speaking. Details will be obtainable from her office 01244 343 229 or email samantha.dixon.mp@parliament.uk



20 March Paul Lunn, Head of the Veterinary School at Liverpool University, will talk about **Ideas for the Future of Leahurst.**

15 May Nick Lightfoot, Curator of Ness Botanic Gardens will talk about **What makes Ness Gardens Special.**

Committee

Chairman Brenda Marple
chairman@nestoncivicsociety.uk

Secretary Lindsey Hinks
secretary@nestoncivicsociety.uk

Treasurer Janet Griffiths
treasurer@nestoncivicsociety.uk

Derek Hogg
Michelle Johnson
Rob Ward

Ruby Holloway Bequest

The Society sent £4000 from the Ruby Holloway bequest to NC&YC for the renovation of Neston Civic Hall. NC&YC have a good track record of getting things done, and if anybody can breathe new life into the Hall, they will.

The bequest still has funds, and we welcome suggestions.

GENERAL PRACTICE in NESTON

Then, Now and Future

Dr Tahir Awan gave a talk on July 18 2024

Dr Awan talked about General Practice in Neston, Past, Present and Future. An audience of 70 people heard about the history of doctors in Neston including links to our Library, Gunn Grove, and Yeoman Way.

He explained the complex way in which GPs are paid and organised, and discussed the manifesto pledges from the new government on health. Questions came during and after the talk. It was a great evening!



Rob Ward, Dr Tahir Awan, Janet Griffiths, Brenda Marple and Lindsey Hinks

Dr Awan first looked back to the GPs in Neston in the early 1700s, based in Vine House, and much later in Redcliffe until 1991. In 1907 Dr David Russell donated the land for the Library. In 1825 Dr John Banks married Arabella Monk, involved in the Neston Female Friendly Society, and doctors took part in the parade until the 1950s. George Ward Gunn, son of Dr George Gunn, won the VC and died in World War II.

In 1948 the NHS was founded, consultants were salaried, while GPs were self-employed.

Dr Awan showed pictures of the contrast between Redcliffe and the new premises in John Yeoman Close (also named after a Neston doctor). He noted the advantages of computers – checking medications, research and storing information, and some disadvantages – information overload, and a possible barrier between doctor and patient.

In the 1990s GP fundholding led to more work, and more services such as physiotherapy in the community.

In 2000 the Harold Shipman case led to the Janet Smith Enquiry, and changes to appraisal of doctors. In 2004 QOF (Quality and Outcomes Framework) was a way of paying doctors partly on results as well as on patient numbers. Dr Awan noted that now we live longer, and many patients had a lot of diseases and medications.

The Practice Team had also got more complicated, with, for example, advanced nurse practitioners, physicians associates, and a business manager.

In the 2000s out of hours care was separated from core GP work, OOH centres were set up, and the 111 service was introduced.

During Covid 19, GP surgeries stayed open, video and phone consultations became common, and the practice took part in the massive immunisation campaign. Dr Awan felt that this was associated with a great sense of camaraderie.

Before looking ahead, Dr Awan summarised how much work is

done now by GPs. They carry out the largest proportion of NHS activity – 353 million appointments in 2023/24. Two-thirds are still face-to-face. The total cost of Health and Social Care in 2022/23 was £182 billion, of which £40 billion went to primary care.

Some of the ideas from the new Government were to train far more GPs, allow pharmacists to prescribe more, let other professionals refer more, and move more care to neighbourhood health centres.

Dr Awan ended by quoting the motto of the Royal College of General Practitioners, Cum Scientia Caritas: compassion with knowledge, and showing us his Patient Satisfaction Measurement – huge amounts of chocolates given to the practice by grateful patients!

The size and enthusiasm of the audience showed the affection and appreciation that many people feel for Dr Awan. It was a splendid demonstration of how to explain a complex subject with clarity and humour.

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING IN NESTON

- there is no Planet B!

Notes on a talk by Adam Mitchell on May 16

Adam, of AP Mitchell Building Services Ltd, and Elephant Collective coffee shops, bars and coffee roastery, gave an illustrated talk about buildings in Neston, with an emphasis on their sustainability. With today's awareness of climate change, the carbon footprint of our buildings concerns us all.

Adam and Emma established the first Elephant coffee shop, which led to café culture taking off in Neston. Recently they moved to the former Evans Shoe Shop. The Elephant Collective set up the coffee roastery in the former newsagents at The Cross. A.P. Mitchell have offices in the former Barclays Bank.

Adam began by telling us that his son Billy looks after Elephant Coffee, and his brother Paul is a partner in A. P. Mitchell Building Services Ltd, which was founded by their father. Their offices were in Morton Court. It now has its offices at 19 High Street, formerly Barclay's Bank. They added a storey to the building, to create an HMO (House of Multiple Occupancy) with four en-suite rooms. During the building they found that many bolts were missing from steel girders: they replaced them! The rooms were let initially to Ukrainian refugees, and now to students. The offices on the ground floor and first floor had standing desks, because they thought people worked better when standing, but now most have seats. The company installs air-conditioning across north-west England.

The Elephant Bank, in the former Natwest Bank at The Cross, eventually failed as a restaurant because of the Covid pandemic and difficulties with chefs. The Elephant Collective still owns the building, and Adam recommended that we should try the quirky food from the Burger Laboratory. The Parkgate Elephant has been successful, serving simpler food.

Adam several times used the term 'when the opportunity arose', and one such was the closure of Mr Evans' shoe shop. Adam showed a photograph of the premises around 1900, when the previous building extended further forward. Now the brass buttons on the pavement show the extent of the land belonging to the premises. The outside seats and tables are not on public land. The first floor is leased to a

friend, who runs the tattoo parlour. Across the road in the former Martins Newsagents (another opportunity) Elephant set up a coffee roastery, which pro-

duces all their coffee for Neston and Parkgate, and for the van. (The van at Cheshire Oaks will soon close, as the lease has not been renewed.)

Adam then threw us into confusion, with a host of facts and figures about air source heat pumps (ASHP). Although the Government give grants (formerly £10,000, now £7,500) it still costs from £4,500 to £7,000 extra to install. In addition, larger radiators are needed, as the water is less hot. There is a shortage of qualified installers. The infrastructure to produce all the electricity needed to run ASHP (and electric cars) is not there. Adam compared the situation to building a house before the foundations. Adam was also concerned about air quality in homes, if they were made too air-tight in an attempt to reduce drafts: he suggested that positive pressure ventilation was needed. He was asked why he criticised ASHP when climate change is a huge problem. Adam said he was simply giving facts. His company had installed ASHP in Whitby High School, and many other places. In discussion after the talk, Adam confirmed that his own (modern, well-insulated) house is heated with ASHP.

Finally, to make sure the audience was really challenged, he showed a mock-up of a four-storey building behind the Lodestar. He suggested that Leahurst, with 400 students coming, meant that Neston needed flats, and Brook Street needed renewal.

What about the noise of ASHP? An audience member said they were not noisy.



Steve Quicke, Adam Mitchell, Pat Wood, Andy Mills, Roger Clow

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QUILLET COMMUNITY

It was on her way home from the Ladies Day parade in June that Margaret Offley realised that the approach to her home in The Quillet was looking decidedly uncared for, with weeds in the gutters and grass appearing on the pavement. The contrast with the gaiety of the event she had been witnessing in the town centre was marked.

“Usually I’d be driving in and out of the road, not noticing the immediate environment,” she says. “Even the seat at the bottom of the road, which a local resident Gary Green had restored for us all, had grass growing through it so it simply couldn’t be used.”

Margaret contacted CW&C who told her that grass-cutting in the area “was on the list”. So she thought, “Stop whinging, get on with it yourself. So I started clearing the gutters and pavements outside my own house and worked my way down to the bottom of the road and the grassed area of Bushell Close.”

As she worked her way down the road, she found many of her neighbours joining in. She says it became a spontaneous community effort. Gary who had restored the seat some years ago set to and made three planters to decorate the road signs and provide a splash of colour at the entrance to the two roads. He also replaced the wood of the restored seat with a more comfortable timber. The seat has now been dedicated to the late Gerry Roberts who had used it often.

Resident Eunice Unger recalls opening her bedroom curtains one morning to find Margaret beavering away removing weeds from the gutter outside her house before breakfast. But Margaret was keen to emphasise the community nature of the effort, from helping with the edging of the Quillet and Bushell Close greenery to sweeping up pine tree needles.

Another resident, Jackie Brien, contacted the council and secured an extra green bin for community use. Margaret has since arranged two monthly community tidy-ups to maintain their good work into next year.

The result of the excellent community effort is there for all to see, not just for the residents to enjoy. And the newly mown Bushell Close green proved an excellent site for the local community’s “Quillympic Games” in August – but that’s yet another community story!



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COMMUNITY ENERGY

Adam Mitchell’s talk was followed by a short presentation from And Mills

Andy is a member of the Neston Earth Group, which organises the annual Neston Earth Festival, and campaigned for a Plastic-free Neston. A survey in 2023 found that respondents’ main concern after plastic was

energy. In January 2024 a co-operative was set up, owned initially by four people. The group is linked to Neston Community & Youth Centre, and an early idea was to generate electricity from solar panels on the roof of NC&YC, and on Neston Civic Hall, which is run by NC&YC, similar to a scheme in Chester, where electricity is generated from the roof of the Leisure Centre. Another

idea was to generate energy using heat from disused mine-shafts. The latest idea is to install solar panels on 6,000 square metres of land next to the Neston Recycling Centre, where Cheshire West & Chester Council had already done a feasibility study. Andy mentioned that Robert Thrift and Robina Hetherington were members of the group.

ANNE JONES

Anne Jones was a long-standing member of Neston Civic Society, and famous in Neston for her help to older people. These notes are based on memories by Sion Jones, Joan Voce and Janet Griffiths.



From 1975 to 1986 Anne volunteered to help her brother William to fundraise, promote and cook for the Christmas parties provided to pensioners of Neston and Little Neston at the Royal Oak in Little Neston.

Following redundancy as manager of the Manweb shop in Neston in 1980 Anne went to work for Social Services in Neston as the cook for the town Day Care unit providing day care for elderly local residents from its creation in Neston Town Hall in 1983 until 1998.

Anne was an advisor for Age UK in their Neston office at Neston Methodist Church from 1994 until 2018, when Age UK decided to replace volunteer advisers with a telephone contact. Anne was not backward in making her feelings known to Age UK that the loss of the Neston office would seriously disadvantage the older people of Neston. A small group of people supported by Justin Madders MP decided to try and maintain the service for the local community – providing much needed support, advice and counselling. Anne was prepared to continue, and with the support of two colleagues and a newly formed Committee, AGE UK was contacted. They accepted that Anne could continue to provide a service.

The group was named AGE MATTERS CH64 and, on Monday and Wednesday mornings the group continued to provide support for older people. Issues include benefit claims, form filling, disability applications, Powers Of Attorney and advice. During the Covid-19 lockdown Anne continued to provide support, ably supported by Jackie Gorman.

Anne was chosen by the Independent Newspaper for their Happy List. This list honoured 50 remarkable heroes who helped others during the Covid-19 pandemic. These are some of Britain's most inspirational individuals, whose kindness, ingenuity and dedication prove that the worst of times can bring out our best.

The support that octogenarian Anne Jones offered in her community was described as “invaluable, immeasurable and unstinting”. Anne - “throughout lockdown has increased her workload immensely, working seven days a week as she has experienced such an increase in requests for support and advice. She still even endeavours to visit some people, using taxis at her own expense as she does not drive.”

Over 40 years ago Anne's husband Dave was Group Scout Leader for 1st Neston Scouts.

Qualities that Anne brought to Scouting:

1. Feeding and nourishing
2. Caring and commitment
3. Ensuring everyone took part in their own way so they could achieve their potential.
4. Patience to understand what motivated and interested people, because she saw the value in what individuals would gain by giving it a go.
5. Humour
6. Generosity of her time.
7. Valuing Tradition and Heritage.

These qualities were important in making Scouting enjoyable and fun for the boys and for the leaders.

Anne was Akela's assistant at Monday pack. She also supported Dave in all aspects of the Group - Friday cub pack, Sea Scouts, Pioneer Scouts and Beavers cubs. Throughout the year there were camps and trips to London or York, and fund-raising events such as carol singing and a mile of pennies at Parkgate.

One of Anne's many qualities was feeding people, which she loved. What better way of ensuring a happy camp for both boys and leaders than dishing up super food. One cub camp under canvas had roast beef and roast potatoes for Sunday dinner. Anne had brought a huge piece of brisket and produced wonderful roast potatoes over the target burner!

Anne's garden at Talana Hill became an extension to the scout hut in summer months with end of year activities and, of course, food.

Her pastoral care for scouts, cubs, beavers and the leaders was an essential part of the success of the 1st Neston Scout Group.

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SAVING LIVES AROUND WIRRAL'S COASTS

A talk by Brian Jordan, Royal National Lifeboat Institution on 19 September

The RNLI was established in 1824, so is this year celebrating 200 years. All the crews were asked to attend at 6 p.m. for photographs at exactly 6.24 p.m. – 18.24 on the 24 hour clock!

Brian began with a warning: some of his short video clips might make viewers seasick! There are 238 Lifeboat stations in the UK and Republic of Ireland, 441 lifeboats, and seven hovercraft. The busiest stations are the four in the River Thames. In 2023 the RNLI had over 9,000 launches, aided over 10,000 people, and saved 269 lives.

Lifeboats are not cheap: the Shannon costs £2.8M, the B class £322K, and the D class £101K. Training costs £1450/year.

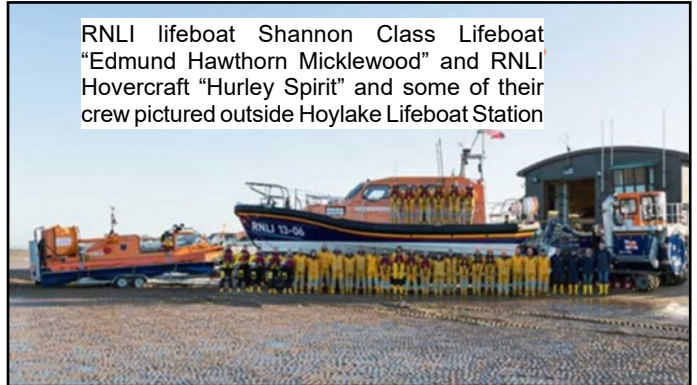
Lifeguards also help to keep people safe on beaches and in the water. Until five years ago local councils paid for lifeguards, but now the councils pay salaries, and the RNLI provides training and equipment. They operate in the summer, and in 2023 they patrolled 239 beaches, saved 86 lives, and aided 20,000 people: this often means finding lost children, and Brian suggested taking a photo of your child to make it easier for the lifeguards to find them

About 150 people die in water each year, half of them never intended to go into the water. Brian advised that if you do find yourself in water, you can float, with your ears under water.

Brian raised the tricky question of people in danger in the English Channel. The RNLI go to help people in trouble, regardless of the politics over refugees, but some volunteers had been threatened.

Volunteers comprise 97% of the lifeboat force. At Hoylake, 34 out of 36 are volunteers, with one paid cox and one mechanic.

RNLI lifeboat Shannon Class Lifeboat "Edmund Hawthorn Micklewood" and RNLI Hovercraft "Hurley Spirit" and some of their crew pictured outside Hoylake Lifeboat Station



The need for the RNLI is growing, not because of commercial shipping but because of leisure activities. Around Wirral coasts, sinking sands are a hazard, and the hovercraft is essential. The RNLI has four in action, including at Hoylake, and three in reserve.

Internationally, 235,000 people drown each year. Less than 2% of RNLI expenditure is overseas, and funding for this comes from the governments of Ireland and the Isle of Man. This included teaching people in Bangladesh to swim.

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Anne Jones

Anne was a prolific provider of cakes for all occasions. You name the occasion and she would produce a cake. She made fruit cakes and bun loaves all year round.

Over 40 years ago a fund-raising committee was formed to help maintain the Sea Scout hut on Parks Field. It included Anne, Janet Griffiths, Cicely Smith, Sheila Cairns and Rosemary McMahon. They became good friends and had such fun organising Jumble Sales and Bring and buy sales which included a cake stall in the town hall, well supported by Anne, and was very profitable. They even had a Trolley

Dash in Barnes shop on the High Street.

They made strawberry teas and refreshments at the half marathons which began on Parks Field.

They also had Barn dances in the Civic Hall. The Folk singing evenings in the scout hut were very popular.

In 2014 the Mayor's charity event supported the Matthews and Monk local charity. Anne was a trustee along with Anne Tudor and two others. The two Annes knew the families in Neston who were struggling. The charity gave food vouchers at Christmas time, helped with school uniforms and supported students with their projects. They held

a Hotpot Supper with music by the local ukulele band. Anne and a number of the other scouters made the hotpot: it was lovely.

Then came the Quizzes arranged by Anne and Rose McMahon in the URC hall. Everybody donated food and Anne always provided a beautiful whole salmon. They were great fun. The supper was always wonderful.

Anne was always so cheerful despite her own problems. She was still desperate at the end to get back to the office and do what she enjoyed most – helping people. She died on 15 May 2024, and will be sadly missed by so many people.

OUT AND ABOUT with BRENDA MARPLE

In the May issue, we reported that Autumn Sweets had taken over from House of Fabulous, in Parkgate Road. It seems that things have changed yet again. The shop unit is empty and advertised with accommodation above.

The empty Hair Attitude unit on the High Street is now occupied by a shop selling mainly Vape products and snacks. It caused quite a stir in the town as the shop front advertising is very large and bright for its position, and the shelves fronting the High Street display bright LED lights and glass bongos for sale. There are large notices displaying over 18 year olds only, and the snacks are items such as crisps and soft drinks. Although this is preferable to having an empty shop, it is disappointing that something more useful catering to the wider community hasn't occupied this prominent space.



A lot of disruption was caused in the centre of the town, when, on a number of occasions, four-way traffic lights were used in connection with utilities required for the Gittins flats development. The contractors removed a number of the stone paving flags alongside Tesco, and replaced them with tarmac, which caused comments in the town. More disruption was caused over two days when the tarmac was removed later, and paving stones were put back.



Evolve architects, who had occupied the previous coffee shop owned by Elephant by the traffic lights, turning it into office space, moved out to set up in Chester. A planning application has been received for converting this into a residential unit, which seems a very good use of the space.

In Parkgate a new coffee shop has recently opened in place of Mozkitos, even though the site was previously sold with permission for converting into two residential units. The new venture is called Goose and currently serves light meals, and is open four days a week.



Lifeboats

[Continued from page 9](#)

New Brighton has had a lifeboat station since 1863, and the crews have received 48 awards for gallantry. A new lifeboat station with an inshore lifeboat is planned, near to Vale Park.

West Kirby has had a lifeboat station since 1956, with a D class inshore lifeboat. Just after the date of the talk, a new lifeboat was launched at West Kirby with a demonstration on the marine lake by the RNLI.

Hoyle can boast a lifeboat station since 1803, before the RNLI was founded, and taken over by the RNLI in 1894. There was a carriage launch, originally pulled by a team of horses, until a tractor replaced them in the 1920s. At low tide, there can be 1.5 miles of beach to cross. There was also a station at Hilbre island until the 1930s: a launch at low tide meant travelling to the island on horseback. The present station opened in 2008, and the lifeboat is now launched by a Supacat system. Lifeboats are built and repaired at Poole, in Dorset, where there is a training college and a four-star hotel.

Brian finished on a lighter note, suggesting reasons why a boat is always a she. In informal discussions afterwards, one member suggested that some of us might like to donate to the RNLI, and another that some might like to become members of RNLI. Just type RNLI into your favourite search engine, and click on donate or membership.



L to R: Brian Jordan, Brenda Marple Rob Ward, Janet Griffiths, Derek Hogg

You will have noticed the scaffolding around the Town Hall. Finally after a number of leaks, especially in the Chief Officer's room, and concerns registered in recent years, the roof is to be replaced. Weather permitting it should take about 10 weeks. The building is still owned by CWAC who will stand the cost and the town council will continue to manage it.

The Warm Hub in the front office area of the town hall will be available over the winter months. Sadly the Little Actors had to move out of the old post office due to financial costs and their provision of a warm drink will be missed.

New hand rails on the market square have been ordered and the town council caretaker/ market officer will install them. We hope that with care and maintenance they will last 20 to 25 years.

The Pirate themed summer market was a great success.

The maximum number of stalls was accommodated and a large number of children enjoyed the pirate themed trail around the market run from the town council book stall. Well done to the Market and town

Hall Manager for providing the trail and the prizes.

The town council continue to hold regular second hand book stalls every 4-6 weeks.

We are very grateful for the paper-back books donated: the money raised goes to charity. We have recently supported the Christmas Shoe Box charity.

Various items which are needed by the recipients but not often donated are purchased. We have also given to the NCYC Food Bank and Ellemere & Neston Community Transport. If you are no longer able to drive and need help getting to the doctor, hospital, hairdresser or dentist etc. please contact Janet Griffiths and she will tell you how the system works, or phone 0151 355 3739.

A Halloween Market is planned for November 1st and a Christmas Market in December, where there will be a Xmas Trail, face painting, and musical entertainments. The Christmas Lights switch-on will be on November 26th. There will be a market within the town hall and children's entertainments on the market square. The Woodfall Samba band, which has had a council grant, will be playing at 6pm. There will be activities from 2pm until the lights switch-on at 7-30pm.



The Town council continue to provide Marsh Dredging with the co-operation of the RSPB. This year the very damp weather suited the mosquitoes very well. Dredging will continue in the hope that in drier years it will help keep the numbers down. This year the dredging will take place at the Little Neston area near the Harp.

The Council continue to give financial support to the main community events: Ladies Day, the Summer Fair, West Vale Fun Day and Remembrance day.

I hope you have noticed the new metal notice boards. The old wooden boards had deteriorated badly, but we can only afford one per year. We started with the board on St Thomas's square in Parkgate last year and this year the West Vale board. The old notice board on the wall outside the old Neston post office has been refurbished but the frame needs repair or replacement. The old telephone boxes on the Green at Little Neston and on Landseer Road were scheduled to be removed but after local consultation the town council decided to adopt them. It is hoped to put a defibrillator in the

Landseer box and the box on the Green will become a community box, available for local groups to make use of. The Brownies have expressed an interest in it. NTC are also responsible for the allotments on Raby Park Road, Marshland's Road and the Ropewalk Parkgate. This year there has been a lot of work to clear a recently

vacated plot which was extremely overgrown. It is planned to reorganise the plots so that those which are very over hung with trees can have a more open aspect and the shade area will be used for storage and compost. The allotments on Marshlands are to be connected to the water main. The Parkgate allotments were upgraded last year.

A Friends of the Wirral Way group is currently being formed and lead by the town council. They plan to have working groups to cut back overgrown parts and sort out flooding and get the sign posts upgraded. The notice board at the Parkgate end will have current notices and a map of the local Wirral Way with access routes shown.

Finally we have 6 vacancies on the Town Council at the moment, so if you have some time to spare please contact the council and apply to become a councillor. It is very interesting and satisfying to support your local area and to have some say.

Neston Civic Society Activities in Summer 2024

Working parties.

In June and July, we tried having working parties on the afternoon of the second Sunday. We started tidying Station Road car park, next to NC&YC, and between there and the Millennium Bridge (where a bird cherry tree and plaque commemorate Neston & Little Neston winning the Best Kept Village competition). Only a few people were able to come, but we made good progress. The photos show the bird cherry before and after clearing vegetation



around it.

We asked for suggestions of when to hold working parties, and the small number who responded suggested Saturday morning. We decided to try regular clean-up sessions on the second Saturday of the month (avoiding the first, when Parkgate Society have theirs.) at 10 a.m., meeting in Neston Market Square. Please come, if you can, on November 9, ready for cleaning up litter, and tidying the flower beds. We have hi-vis tabards, litter pickers, hoops and bags. If you have gloves or tools, please bring them.

We are also having our annual clean-up at Clay Hill on Sunday October 27th at



Photo by David Johnson

Left to right Rob Ward, Donna and Martin Pearson, Janet Griffiths

Wirral Way

Friends of the Wirral Way has been established, with our chairman Brenda Marple as secretary. The seat on the Wirral Way, paid for from the Ruby Holloway bequest, was moved to a new site, as its previous site led to complaints from a neighbour. The seat is now covered in graffiti, but we decided to live with it. At our committee meeting on October 9th, we agreed to give £200 from the bequest to The Friends of the Wirral Way for equipment.

Binding newsletters

Separate copies of old newsletters are kept in Neston library in boxes, but over the years some have disappeared. We are planning to have them bound, with ten newsletters in each volume. We have been reading through them, and listing the contents. It has been an interesting, and sometimes disappointing experience. A lot of time and energy has been expended on schemes that never saw completion, such as the Neston pedestrianisation and relief road.

Neston Village Fair

In July we had a stall at Neston Village Fair. Lots of members came to visit, and we recruited some new members. We discovered an error in the 2019 Town Trail: on the 1732 Mostyn Map, the key shows the Brewers Arms at 93, whereas it is 94. On display was the bell that the Neston Post Office used to ring when they had a telegram to deliver: the first boy to arrive would get 6d for delivering it.

New Projector and Screen at URC Community Hall

At our September meeting, we were delighted to use the new projection facilities that the URC had installed. There is now a screen that comes down, and a built-in projector, both operated by remote control. Thanks to Frank Wood for helping us use this successfully.

Ness Conservation Area Map

We are still working on a map of Ness Conservation Area, which was started years ago but stalled when our helper left the country. As soon as the future of the Wheatsheaf is known, we'll return to the job.



Neston Hustings for the July General Election

Some personal observations by Rob Ward

Written after the 19 June event but published only now

For me the stand-out comment came from Nick Brown, the Green candidate, who pointed out that Sam Dixon was going to win the election, so there was no need to vote tactically. If you wanted proportional representation, to rejoin Europe, and to combat climate change then vote Green!

The hustings was organised by Ann Clowes, Chairman of Neston & District Churches Together. Unfortunately, Ann tested positive for COVID on the day. Pauline MacDonald, Secretary of NDCT, introduced Elwyn Parry from outside the constituency to chair the meeting.

Most questions were submitted in advance. For me, the most interesting question came from the floor at the end. What one issue do you feel most passionately about? Simon Eardley (Conservative) cited jobs and growth; Nicholas Goulding (Reform UK) the betrayal of Brexit; Nick Brown (Green Party) social and environmental justice; and Samantha Dixon (Labour) the NHS caring for us from cradle to grave.

Questions submitted in advance included:

- how to make sure Neston's needs were not forgotten;
- whether to support shooting sport;
- how to get empty shops occupied;
- how to combat climate change in the face of short-term pressures;
- how to improve public transport and roads;
- whether to raise personal tax thresholds;
- how to protect women's rights and improve sex education;
- how to restore faith in politicians;
- how to protect us from false news powered by artificial intelligence;
- and whether six weeks is too long for an election campaign.

We learned a bit about each candidate.

Simon Eardley (Conservative) works in Liverpool for Mersey Maritime, and is a Church of England Reader. He is a CWaC Councillor for Saughall and Mollington (which includes Puddington). His family live at Ince, and his brother shoots clay pigeons. He is in favour of shooting deer, to produce venison, which is a healthy meat. He is keen to keep free parking in Neston, and said that Labour had increased parking charges in Chester. He noted that litter and weeds make the area unattractive. He has supported the planting of trees to combat climate change. He came to the event using car share, noting that the C22 bus did not run in the evenings. He was critical of the Labour Party cutting spending on roads in CWaC, and praised the £2 bus fare. On taxes he cited the reduction in the rate of National Insurance and the drop in inflation, which had risen because of international events. On gender issues he said it was a sensitive matter, and wanted to distinguish between biological sex and gender. He acknowledged that trust

in politicians had been damaged, but he was a councillor to serve the public. He was keen to protect older people in particular from online scams. He thought a four-week election campaign would be better, and did not like the Americanisation of our campaign, which should be to choose the best local candidate.

Nick Brown (Green Party) is a teacher in a Chester secondary school with many deprived children. He was happy to support target shooting but was against all blood sports. His father had run a sweet shop, but decreased spending and the move to online shopping had forced closure of many shops. Neston needed a bank and a post office, and a community hub could be a solution. He was critical of the Conservative government for banning onshore wind farms. Nuclear power did not give us security, as the uranium had to be imported. Wind power and insulation were two obvious ways to combat climate change. He would nationalise public transport and encourage active travel, including cycling, and introduce a £1 bus fare. He said that taxes were good, as they paid for schools, science, hospitals, roads and defence. A tax of 1% on people with over £10 million, and 2% for those with over a billion would raise £70bn. He was critical of the Conservative government for introducing Section 28 in 1988, which made people afraid to speak about homosexuality. The transgender issue was a delicate matter, but better sex education in schools was essential. On trust in politicians, he said that MPs and councillors were there to help people. The Green Party had no whips, so each could vote as they thought best. To meet the challenges of AI and fake news, we need to spend more on police and on education. Six weeks feels a long time, but the campaign needs to be that long.

Nicholas Goulding (Reform UK) runs a taxi company, and was an Army officer. He referred to Labour and Conservative as the Uniparty. He would support shoot-

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ing, but it needed to be controlled. For shops, he had spent 20 years lobbying for small businesses, who need lower tax, less red tape and looser planning laws. On climate change, he said the cost of net zero was too high: he would stop all subsidies to renewable energy, and increase the use of oil and nuclear power. On transport, he would cancel HS2. He said the government had a scheme for taxi companies to provide transport in communities with no buses, but the rules were so complex that no company had ever done this. He would increase the threshold for tax, so nobody would pay tax if they earned under £20,000. He would abolish the green levy, saving £500 a year each. Immigration of six million people in the last 10 years had reduced wages. He would support women's rights, but treat each case individually. He would abolish the Human Rights Act. On faith in politicians, he accused Labour and Conservatives of lying in their manifestos. He said that AI was good and bad. The government had failed to tackle scams, and cited a case where criminals trading between Cheshire and the West Midlands were not caught because the two police forces did not communicate. A long campaign was needed for Reform to overtake Labour and Conservatives.

Samantha Dixon (Labour) was MP for Chester, and previously Leader of the Labour Party in CWaC. She grew up in Cheshire, and was a Councillor for 12 years, so knows the area. She promised to hold surgeries in Neston. The cost of gun licences varies greatly between regions, and should be uniform. Brook Street properties were owned by a London company. The town needed investment. Leahurst was a major and increasing source of income to the area. On climate, Great British Energy would boost off-shore wind, solar and nuclear energy, and stop dependence on Russia and the Middle East. The C22 bus stopped at 6.30 p.m., and her transport this evening had been an electric car, but we need more charging points. Buses and timetables were the job of local authorities, and more devolution would help. Cancelling the A27 Arundel bypass would release £1M to fill potholes. Taxes, she said, were at a 70-year high, with the biggest increase since WWII. Labour would close tax loopholes. On women's rights, the 2010 Equality Act protected women. She had won one election as a councillor by two votes, and never took votes for granted. She thought the country was divided by culture wars, and politicians should emphasise the points on

which they agree. Trust had to be earned by listening, and hard work. She said that AI needed stronger regulation, but it could help the NHS. We need to reduce barriers to data centres. Six weeks was needed for voters to register and the election to be organised.

Stephen Gribbon (Liberal Democrat) is a councillor from outside the area. He was unable to attend, but sent written replies to questions. He said he did not come from the area, but had a good understanding due to spending many years here. His aim was to be available and known to people, as he does in his present role as a councillor. A close friend is a keen user of guns for target sport, and he learnt a lot regarding the control and the use of sports firearms. Removing or converting empty properties would be high on his list of things to do. The Lodestar pub needs renovation or change of use. Incentives should be given to people investing in empty properties. Short-term election bribes drive him mad! We should start with creating walking buses for schools and encouraging people to walk to local shops rather than taking the car. We need to insulate properties, give realistic incentives to installing solar panels. Japan invests in hydrogen plants for generations ahead. To travel around the Chester area for him is a car journey. Too few rural buses mean they are seldom relied upon. The roads need investment and many arterial routes have drainage problems that need addressing. He is a keen promoter of public transport. He would push for a rise of ½% for those on higher incomes to subsidise real living wages. He finds it incredible that there are people using food banks. People should have incentives to return to work. Single sex toilets, sports etc should remain so. Sex education should be age relevant, and information passed to parents/ guardians and allow them to approve what their child is taught. As a councillor he is active in his community and approachable. A reputation is gained by constant good and honest performance. Removing waste will allow funds to be spent elsewhere. We must protect our planet for future generations. His goal will be to educate how to stay one step ahead of criminals, especially those using AI. He said 6 weeks was OK but there should be a limit on the number of leaflets, and sanctions should be given to those who give false information. Recently his party won a battle to secure £20 million for a new leisure complex: two other parties celebrated the same result on leaflets even though they had no part in the process.

Samantha Dixon was elected as the MP for the constituency of Chester North & Neston.

She held a Fairtrade coffee Morning at Neston Community & Youth Centre on September 20th. She offers to meet constituents in person, or to talk by phone, or on video link. Details are on her website <https://samantha-dixon.co.uk/>

After the election Ms Dixon was appointed as a Government Whip

She is due to talk to Neston Civic Society in January 2025.