



DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter

May 2013

Website: www.dawlishhistory.org.uk

Dear Members,

Our Newsletter is getting more expensive to circulate by mail now that the post office has raised charge. If you do not live in Dawlish you can view the newsletter on our website at www.dawlishhistory.org.uk, or if you wish your own copy please send your email address to me at d.wain@tiscali.co.uk. Those without computers will still have theirs sent by mail.

Members in the Dawlish area will have a copy posted through the front door. We have a new member to organise and circulate newsletters—Mavis Stuckey. A revised members list is being prepared and other members will help with the local delivery.

We also have our first outing of the year, a visit to Haccombe Church on Tuesday 14th May at 2:15pm. You will have to contact Tricia on 01626 866927 to confirm attendance...

*Regards,
Derek Wain*

**Our next meeting will be on
Tuesday 4th June, at The
Manor House.**

**A talk on R.D. & E. Hospital
History
by
Christopher Gardner Thorpe
at 2.30pm**

Somerset Outing with Derek Gore

On Tuesday the 5th March, believe it or not, a beautiful, warm sunny day, Derek Gore took his archaeology students on a field trip to Charterhouse in Somerset. We had gone to see the site of Roman lead mines which had been worked for many years as lead was principal export throughout the Roman Empire. There were also sites of mediaeval houses - these sites were very difficult to see without an expert to point them out. There is no sign posting to indicate the wealth of archaeology on site - to the untrained eye it was just a beautiful rural scene, green fields dotted with sheep.

After leaving the site we went to Cheddar Gorge where we ate our packed lunches before heading off to Taunton where we visited the Museum - which is well worth a visit - it has recently had a £3,000,000 makeover. The history of Somerset is shown from pre-history to the present day and after your visit you can go to the very nice tea-room. The museum is free!

Mavis Stuckey

The Rev Legh Hoskins Master

Family history research can throw up some curious stories, and make some strange connections. One which I discovered while researching my Hoskins ancestors led me to a grave in Dawlish churchyard, and an extraordinary tale with many twists and turns.

The grave is to be found on the north side of the parish church, the inscription is worn away, but the burial records show it to be the last resting place of the Rev Legh Hoskins Master, former rector of Lympsfield, Surrey. He once merited a plaque inside the church, but that seems to have disappeared during renovations some years ago.

On the face of it, Legh Hoskins Master is just another clergyman who retired to Dawlish, where he died aged 60 in 1814. But his family story is a remarkable one, not least because his father is reputed to be one of the most famous ghosts of Maryland, USA. Fortunately for us, Legh Hoskins Master rests rather more quietly in his grave!

Legh Master senior was the grandson of Sir Streynsham Master, sometime Governor of Fort St George, Madras and the Master family had acquired considerable wealth, and were the owners of Codnor Castle, Derbyshire and New Hall, Lancs. Born in 1717, Legh Master was MP for Newton, Lancs from 1741-1747, and in 1750, he inherited Codnor and New Hall on the death of his father. In 1753 he married Katherine Hoskins, daughter of William Hoskins of Barrow Green Court, Oxted, Surrey, at Somerset House Chapel. This family were minor gentry, but they did have some powerful relations - Katherine's grandfather's first cousin, another Katherine Hoskins, had married the third Duke of Devonshire, and the later Katherine's third cousin was the 5th Duke of Devonshire who married the infamous Georgiana Spencer.

Legh and Katherine had two children, Legh, born at New Hall in 1754 and Katherine, born in 1760. In about 1770, Legh senior sold New Hall and set sail for America with his wife and daughter, leaving young Legh, who was only about 16, to finish his education and run the Codnor Castle estate. The couples' possessions required three ships to transport them they even took their carriages and horses. The family went to Frederick County, Maryland, where Legh bought an estate near Winchester, built a house, Avandale, and set up an ironworks which he called Legh Furnace. Here he made ordnance for the British Army, which caused him problems when the War of Independence began in 1775. If he sided with the rebels, he risked losing his English estate, if he supported the British he

risked losing his Maryland estate. Somehow he managed to survive the war and keep his properties in both countries, but during one hairy episode he escaped to the British Virgin Islands, leaving his wife and daughter in Baltimore. With just one black slave, mother and daughter managed to get through the British lines to the coast and escape in one of the smallest ships to cross the Atlantic at that time. They were shipwrecked on the coast of Wales, and finally settled in Bristol.

Legh returned to Legh Furnace and after the war tried unsuccessfully to stand for the Maryland State Legislature. He became involved in litigation with his neighbours, and made himself generally unpopular, which may have been the reason for the horrible stories which circulated about him. It was said that he tried to rape one of his female slaves, and when a male slave tried to protect her, Legh threw him into the furnace to burn alive. Then he murdered the girl and bricked her up in an old bread oven. This may have been scurrilous rumour, but during the 1930s when Avandale House was being renovated, a bricked up oven containing a human skeleton was discovered.

Legh Master died in 1796 and had to be buried three times, as his coffin rose out of the ground during periods of heavy rain twice. He was eventually interred in the Church of the Ascension Burial Ground, Westminster, Maryland, under a heavy stone slab. But local folklore says even this failed to keep him buried, as the stone cracked, allowing his spirit to haunt the Furnace hills and the Wakefield Valley Golf Course, riding a grey horse with a sheet over his head and shoulders. Ghost tours still visit his grave.

Legh Master junior's life was rather less eventful. He lived with his mother and sister in Redland, Bristol until he became Rector of Lympsfeld, Surrey in 1781. He remained there until 1806, when his mother inherited Barrow Green Court, and, as she was the last surviving Hoskins heir, added her name to his. He doesn't appear to have lived at Barrow Green - he moved to Exmouth in 1806, and after his wife died there in 1812, moved on to Dawlish, where he died in 1814.

Almost a hundred years later, a distant kinswoman also came to live in Dawlish. Violet Cavendish Bentinck of Weech House was also a descendant of the Hoskins of Barrow Green Court. Katherine Hoskins, Duchess of Devonshire was not only her ancestor (and thus the Queen's) but also a forebear of Princess Diana.

The Hoskins Master family, descendants of the Rev Legh, owned Barrow Green Court until the 1960s, although few of them actually lived there. It is now owned by Mohammed Fayed, and his son Dodi is buried in the grounds of the house which once belonged to Princess Diana's Hoskins ancestors.
Angela Marks

Snow, and still more snow.

The Dawlish Gazette Fri 4th January 1963

Dawlish experienced the heaviest fall of snow for over 60 years on last Saturday night when a gale from the South-East brought near blizzard conditions to the town. The Brook was frozen over in more exposed reaches and the ice was covered in a thick layer of snow.

The surrounding countryside, particularly Haldon Moor, presented a fairy-like appearance. It was a pity that the weather remained so dull – sunshine would have added beauty to the scene. Some of the country lanes have been impassable; the road to Teignmouth at Thorns Cross was closed to traffic. The second blizzard forecast for Tuesday/Wednesday did not

arrive 'til Wednesday night; snow continued through Thursday.

Railways busy Sunday.

The Sunday papers from London which usually arrive from Exeter by road came all the way to Dawlish by rail. Approximately 14cwt of newsprint is delivered to Dawlish on Sundays.

Dawlish station was very busy with passengers to London, the Midlands and North of England on Sunday. Many people, who had arrived in town by car for the Christmas holiday, left them at the hotels and returned home by train. The station dealt with a never-ending series of telephone calls from people inquiring the times of long distance trains. On Monday trains were also patronised.

On Monday morning at high tide and with south-easterly gale blowing, it was found necessary to impose a speed restriction on the down-line for about an hour. There was no damage to the line, only a small quantity of ballast had been washed away from the track. Starcross ferry did not run on Monday owing to rough seas.

Milk Deliveries.

The men who had to face the worst of the blizzard were the local milk rounds-men who completed all their deliveries by Sunday afternoon. Normally they start at 2:30 am and complete by about 11 am. Mr Gordon Gay pays tribute to their tenacity, particularly those men who had to deliver on foot. People were most appreciative of the service. Farmers used tractors to take their milk to the collecting points.

Kenton cut off.

Kenton was practically cut off on Sunday. With bus service suspended and nearest railway station a hazard 2 miles away, people 'stayed put'. A tribute is due to those who delivered milk and Sunday papers in difficult conditions. No out-going mail was collected from the village on Sunday. The evening service at the Methodist Church was abandoned and the carol service of the nine lessons, to have been held at All Saints', was postponed until this coming Sunday.

Church services.

There were very small congregations in all the churches in Dawlish. At the Parish church the choir sang carols, including 'In the bleak midwinter' and 'See amid the winter snow', but the carols service was postponed for a fortnight. Mr Charles Spencer, organist of St marks who lives at Kenton was unable to get to the church. Mr H.J.Taylor could not drive to Kenton to play at All Saints' and the service was sung unaccompanied in four-part harmony.

Lorries stranded.

Traffic hold-ups in Dawlish district were far more serious on Thursday and business deliveries were also brought to a full stop. A number of long distance lorries and business vans were halted in Station Road because of the impossibility of driving up Teignmouth Hill. Lorries were also brought to a halt along Iddesleigh Terrace earlier in the morning, but these were only held up temporarily. The bus service was also stopped.

That was what Dawlish experienced just 50 years ago!