

DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter

May 2015

Website: www.dawlishhistory.org.uk

Dear Members,

On the 7th April we held our Annual General Meeting (see Summary of AGM). As some of you will know we only had one nomination for the committee, Ian Thomson, who has agreed to take over as Newsletter Editor. This Newsletter has been a joint creation so subsequently it may have a different look and feel. We have decided to move our talks and visits programme from the calendar year to be our membership year so both start from the end of April (this year's membership subscription of £7.50 is now due). As you will know our visits programme starts with a trip to Exeter Cathedral Library and Archives on Thursday 7th May.

Another date you can now firmly put in your diaries is Saturday July 18th which has been set as the date for the **Dawlish Local History Day** which we will jointly organize with Dawlish Museum. The objectives are to raise awareness of Dawlish's history, the changes it has experienced and also kindle an active interest in its past. We have prepared a draft programme which tries to provide something for all ages, whether local or visitor. We hope to include: Photographic displays; rolling picture shows; various aspects of the Great Storm of 2014 (scale to be decided); Researching your Family History; themed areas with specific information about the history of the town, such as the Railway, Manor, Warren. We also want to include something about Dawlish during WW1, local archaeology and some hands-on experience - dressing up in clothes and handling some objects from times past, a book stall and information about local heritage walks. Dawlish Model Railway Club is also hoping to put on a display.

A number of you have already indicated your willingness to help. Anyone else wishing to help (or with any ideas) should contact the Secretary.

Mike Ralls - Chairman

A Short History of Orchard Gardens and the surrounding Lands - Ian Thomson

Last year, by chance, we came into possession of documents relating to the history of the land forming Orchard Gardens and, above it, Priory Park Road and Longlands. A solicitor had contacted us asking if we would be interested in receiving information relating to our house in the estate now forming Orchard Gardens. Being interested and, knowing that the Teignbridge planning department no longer holds documents relating to the actual building of the estate, we gladly accepted. In addition, David Gearing has kindly supplied additional material.

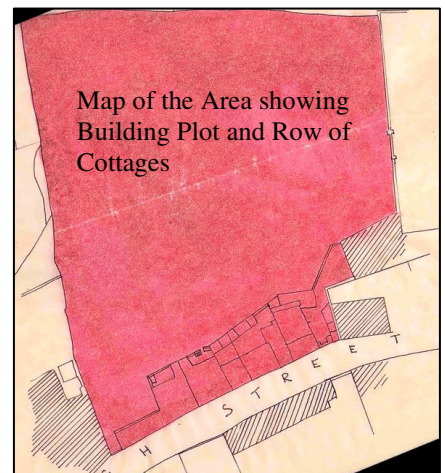
The first reference we have is to an area known as part of

"Wilkins Tenement" in 1806. This included a farmhouse, offices and land. The area passed into the hands of John Dickenson when his father passed away.

The reference in the solicitor's documents we obtained is the sale and division of lands above and including that known as Priory Park Road to a John Fortescue in 1813. This was further divided into a total of 8 plots in 1849 and sold to a number of parties. It is upon part of this area that the present houses in Priory Park Road are built.

This area (and those known as Longlands and Little Long Field which are situated above Priory Park Road), were purchased by Arthur James Slocombe in 1923. He was a local builder and decorator living at 11 King Street, Dawlish. Slocombe sold off plots of land in Priory Park Road between 1923 and 1926. It is not clear exactly when the houses were built, but No 8 was in the hands of the Slocombe sisters in 1930.

The relevance of this to Orchard Gardens is that direct access to the lands on which it is built was only previously possible from Priory Park Road above or below from the nine cottages adjoining the High Street. These cottages formed a continuous row and a number of these were demolished to provide the present access to Orchard Gardens. The estate was built in the mid to late 1920's.



An old friend of the family, who was a lad around the time the houses were built, told us tales of scrumping apples from the orchard in his youth.

Many changes in the ownership of the plots occurred until Richard Ferris of Dawlish, and Maude Ferris Dowling of Shanklin, sold lands to the said Arthur Slocombe in December 1925. It comprised of a total of nine cottages along the High Street and just over an acre of land reaching up behind. It was on these lands that Orchard Gardens was built from 1926 onwards. The initial conveyance of our house took place in September 1926 and presumably other houses in the terraces would have been bought around this date, too.

Today it is obvious that the row of cottages shown on the plan were demolished, both to provide an access road into Orchard Gardens, and to build a number of properties now adjoining the High Street. Slocombe's office occupied the building now housing the Helping Hands shop. The demolition of "old cottages" was not a problem at the time. The advent of listed buildings and their protection was far off in the future in the "Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act" of 1990.

Our next meeting will be on

Tuesday 2nd June 2015

2:00 pm at The Manor House.

**Talk entitled "Exeter's Voices of Protest
1900-45" by Todd Gray**

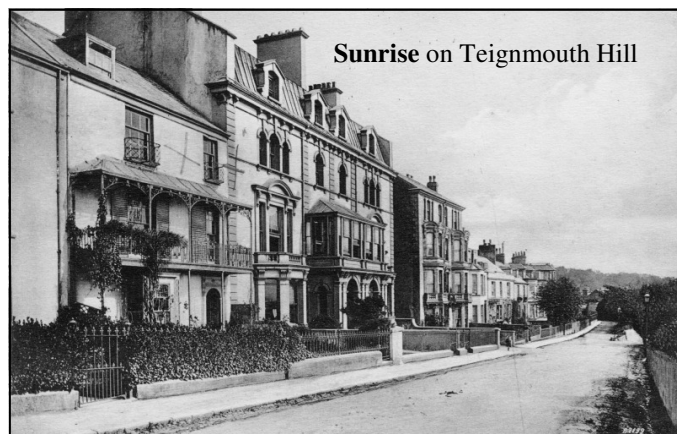
Dawlish Museum News - Mavis Stuckey

The Museum reopened on 1st May 2015 – behind the scenes working parties have been busy cleaning and checking displays. There are no big changes this year – just a little updating. The display concerning the 2014 Storm has been updated – paying attention to the part played by “The Orange Army”. The display is accompanied by a film showing previously unseen footage. The fluorescent lighting in many of the display cabinets has been replaced by LED lighting to reduce fading/damage from harmful ultra-violet light and to reduce heat. Four training/refresher courses were held for both new and regular members of staff. Please come and visit – Wed-Fri 10.30am to 5pm and Sat & Sun 2pm to 5pm.

The Solomons & Wallace Simpson - Sheila Ralls

Leon Solomon was born in Warsaw around 1820. In 1841, he lived in a lodging house in Union St, Plymouth run by the Holman family. He had an independent income and did not work apparently. In 1846, he married Rose Joseph, in Plymouth. By 1851, Leon, a merchant jeweller, and Rose were living in Bond St, London with 4 children and 7 servants. In 1861, they lived at 69, Grosvenor St, Hanover Square, London with 12 children and 15 staff, including a professor of Hebrew as tutor and a governess.

During the 1860s the family moved to Dawlish and Leon built “Sunrise” on Teignmouth Hill – now Devon Court. Also, “Corfield” on Westcliff. By 1865 a Mr. Leon Solomon had bought Sea Grove, a large Gothic mansion on the cliff on the



Sunrise on Teignmouth Hill

east side of Dawlish. There were rumours that he had 25 children! It is more than a probability that Solomon re-built Sea Grove, which was renamed Lanherne. In the 1871, Census, Leon, described as a “Capitalist”, was living at “Sunrise” 6 Westcliff Hill, Dawlish with his wife Rose and 6 children and 6 servants. He died 12 Nov 1879.

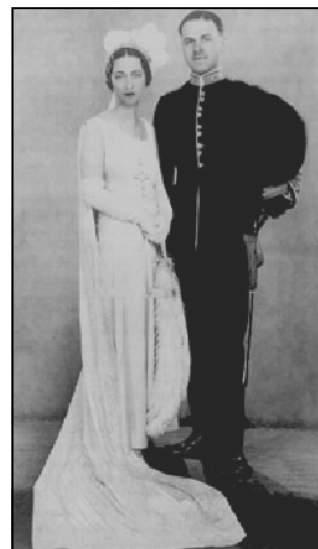
Ernest Louis son of Leon Solomon changed his name to Simpson when he emigrated to USA around 1873. He lived in New York and cofounded the international ship-brokerage Simpson, Spence & Young which has lasted for more than 130 years. In 1876, he married, Charlotte Woodward Gaines and had 3 children, Luceil, Maud and Ernest Aldrich.

Ernest Aldrich Simpson (1897–1958) was an American turned British shipping executive best known as the second husband of Wallis Simpson. He was educated at The Hill School and Harvard, and was briefly a captain in the Coldstream Guards during World War I.

"In his younger years he was described as tall, with blue eyes, blond, curly hair, a neat blond moustache and a fastidious dresser," according to an article in *The New York Times*.

He applied to become a naturalized British citizen and renounced his United States citizenship shortly after leaving Harvard during World War I. He became a partner with his father's ship brokerage firm.

Simpson's second wife was Wallis Warfield Spencer born in Baltimore in 1896. They married in London, England, on 21 July 1928, and divorced on 3 May 1937. As his obituary in *The New York Times* noted, the publicity over his second wife's remarriage to the Duke of Windsor and her subsequent fame thrust him into the role of "the forgotten man." The two remained friends, however, the newspaper noted, with the now Duchess of Windsor sending him flowers when he was in hospital for surgery and seeking his advice when working on her memoirs. He died on 30 November 1958 in London of throat cancer, aged 61.



Summary of 2015 AGM

After the usual preliminaries, the Chairman gave a summary of the group's activities over the past year, including the committee's documentation of our archives at the Manor and the progress with the Image database as well as the new book on the Warren, which is about to go to press. He thanked Mavis, who is stepping down from the committee for her efforts over many years and remembered two committee members who have sadly died this year—Paul de Lusignan and Derek Wain.

The Treasurer reported that the group had 74 members. We had invested in some new equipment but still had a healthy balance - although the subscriptions needed to increase in order to ensure that this is true in the future. It was later agreed to raise subscriptions to £7.50 a year.

A new Constitution was adopted, which is available to read on the Home page of our website.

The committee was re-elected with the addition of Ian Thomson as our newsletter editor. Mike Ralls agreed to continue as Chairman for one more year but intends to stand down at the next AGM.

Heritage Walks - Sheila Ralls

As part of Dawlish Arts Festival, I am helping to develop two Heritage Walks. During the Festival, guided tours will be offered every morning and tour guides are needed. If you would like to be involved with this, please contact Roger Whitehead at the Strand Centre or email me. You can view the Walks with links to specific information pages on the Maps page of our website.

2015 Diary Dates	
16 Apr - 11 Oct	Exhibition of paintings by Francis Hayman (18 th century Devon Artist) - RAMM
5th June	The Boys': On 21 March 1941 a RAF bomber crashes on Dartmoor by John Lowe. Chudleigh LHG
11th Jun	The Teign Valley Railway "Lost but not forgotten". by Malcolm Grigory at the Phoenix Centre, Exeter
20th Jun	'The Devon Cromwellians' by Dr Stephen Roberts, Queen's Building, Univ. Exeter, 2:00 pm
7th July	DLHG Visit to Downes House, Crediton
18th July	Dawlish Local History Day, Strand Centre, Dawlish