



DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter

Website: www.dawlishhistory.org.uk

August 2016

St Gregory's Graveyard by David Allanach

The Dawlish Local History Group gets a number of queries over the year from people outside the area asking for help. Two recent ones have asked about graves in the churchyard.



The first was asking for information about Mary Duff, the daughter of John Duff, a Lieutenant in the East India Company's army. John had left a note in his will that his executrix should ensure that the iron railing around the tomb should be painted every year. Luckily the graveyard was surveyed more than 20 years ago and records are kept of all the inscriptions. We discovered that Mary had married a Mr James Gibson, and they lived happily together in London for 13 months until she was struck down by illness 'suffering much in mind and body.' It was decided to send her to Dawlish for a health cure, but alas she died only six months later, aged 25. The descendants of John Duff no longer have to pay for the painting of the rails as they are long gone, probably taken in the war effort.

The second query came from Australia and asked for any information about Matilda de Burgh, wife of Ulick John De Burgh, aged 43, buried on 3 October 1864. Luckily the churchyard has been surveyed and the information indexed on cards. Helpers at the church were able to unroll a large plan, which clearly showed, where the grave was. It then required a quick visit outside and stamping down some stinging nettles and a photo could be taken. The gravestone had sunk well into the ground which can happen, when it is placed upon the coffin which later crumbles away. This leaves the tantalising prospect that there might be more information on the gravestone, which can't be seen, as it is buried underground. Originally the gravestone had an upstanding cross on the top, but the mortar had crumbled and it now lies horizontally on the top.

What was on the gravestone had already been recorded, but we were able to tell the respondent the date Matilda actually died. We suggested that the death certificate might give more information about the Dawlish connection. We were kindly sent a copy of the death certificate for our records, which revealed that she was a widow but what was surprising was that she died of 'Anthrax exhaustion'. You would have thought that she would be in some isolation hospital but she was living in town in Albert Place. The informant was Ann Windcott of the same address.

If anyone can throw any further light on these queries, please contact the Secretary. Queries about graves in the churchyard can usually be answered on Thursday mornings at the church.

“Lido Days are Limited “ a talk by Earl Connolly on June 7th 2016

Our speaker presented his very comprehensive and entertaining talk on the gradual demise of the Lido from its heyday in the mid 1930s. The term “lido” is derived from the Italian word for beach, the best known one being the Lido of Venice.

The term lido first occurred in Britain in 1935 when one was opened in Edmonton, London. A lido could also be called an “open air swimming pool with recreational facilities”. The Italians pronounce the word lido with a long i as in “leedo”, the British tend to shorten it as in “lie do”.

A historic example of a lido is the Roman Baths in Bath, which were rebuilt in the 12th century. They are based on a natural warm brine spring whereas most modern pools are filled with tap water. The Roman Baths were closed in 1976 because they were allegedly the source of a case of meningitis. The oldest recorded outdoor pool is Cleveland lido of 1815 at Bathwick, fed from the River Avon. It is still open to the public, but not for swimming. The Fellow’s pool in one of the Oxford colleges is older. However, it is just for students and not for the public. 1850 saw the opening of the Clifton Lido that was reopened in 2008 after renovation. This was followed by another lido in Cirencester in 1869. It

was eventually fitted with water filters in the 1930s. Some members remembered the Penn Inn Pool at Newton Abbot from 1935, closed in 1987, when the Sainsbury Supermarket was built on the site. Many seawater-bathing pools were also built. Some refreshed by the tides. A whole series was opened in Plymouth. Another one was built at Tynemouth, Tyne and Wear, to name but a few. Many of these were shown on slides, but unfortunately, vision was severely hampered by the room being very light. The passing of the Bath and Wash House Act of 1846 led to more public baths and increased public hygiene as people became more conscious of cleanliness.



The audience was very amused by pictures of the development of bathing costumes, both for men and

women. The sexes were kept separate from each other, as there was no mixed bathing.

Swimming came to be regarded as good exercise and very healthy. People such as Captain Webb, who first swam the channel in 1875, increased its popularity. Gertrude Ederle was the first woman to swim the channel in 1926 and beat Webb’s time by a considerable margin in doing so. In 1896 swimming became an Olympic discipline, although there were few races and just a handful of competitors.

We then looked at the rise of changing facilities such as bathing huts, diving boards and the increase of rules and regulations concerning hygiene and safety for lidos. Rail transport and B&B boarding houses, the rise of holiday camps such as Butlins, all changed the way people spent their free time. The weather has always played a part and the post war rise of package holidays abroad with “guaranteed sunshine” has accelerated the decline of lidos with just a few of the previous hundred or so still in use.

Ian Thomson

An Admiral Escapes to Dawlish

by David Gearing

Our archive files contain a lot of material collected or created by Bob Thompson, founder of the Group. One item that came to light recently is a transcript Bob made from a document in the Devon Record Office. It is an extract from the diary of Admiral William Shield for a two month period (July and August 1832) during which he rented Brook Cottage (Brookdale) in Dawlish. In 1832 he was retired from the Navy and living in Exeter. The diary doesn’t make explicit the reason for his stay in Dawlish, but it was almost certainly to avoid an expected outbreak of cholera in Exeter. This highly infectious and frequently fatal disease had arrived in England the previous autumn, and it was thought that it was only a matter of time before it reached Exeter.

William Shield was commissioned as a Lieutenant in December 1779, so presumably he was born around 1763, and therefore he would have been about 69 in 1832. During the 1790s he was in charge of several different warships. In

1795 he was Captain of 'Audacious', a 74 gun ship-of-the-line, in the Battle of the Hyere Islands between a British-Neapolitan force and the French fleet. (Horatio Nelson commanded a smaller ship in the same battle.) He subsequently served in the West Indies, Malta and the Cape of Good Hope, before being appointed Deputy Comptroller of the Navy in 1814, and resident Commissioner of Devonport Dockyard the following year.

Shield was obviously used to keeping detailed records – this would have been required when he was on active service as a naval officer, and the habit remained. There is a short diary entry for every day, each one including a summary of the weather, and in particular the dominant wind direction, which of course would have been a preoccupation in the days of sailing ships. There was also a 'Cash Account' on the facing page of the diary in which he noted what he had spent, which is shown in brackets below. (If you want to compare these costs to modern day values, 1/- is equivalent to around £5 – so for example the turnpike fees on July 2nd would be about £11 now, and each 4/- bath about £20.) Of course, what he spent personally does not include household expenses: there would have been a separate account of such expenditure that he or his wife would have been in control of.

There isn't the space here to reproduce all the diary entries, so here is a flavour.

Monday July 2nd. Went to Dawlish. Took Brook Cottage for two months from 10th inst at £4 10s per week. Dined at the inn. (Driver of fly: 1/- Expenses at Dawlish: 16/6 Turnpike 2/3)

A fly was a small horse drawn carriage typically for only one or two passengers. Of course the railway hereabouts was still 14 years away, and travel on land was by foot, horseback or horse-drawn cart or carriage.

On July 6th he notes that he sent Mrs Grant a cheque for £36 for 8 weeks rent. In our 'Grand Houses' booklet Tricia reports that two years later the house was being offered for £100 a year by the owner, Mr Upham an Exeter bookseller; Mrs Grant was renting it from him. But in the circumstances £4 10s a week is reasonable given this was a short term rental in mid-summer, and there would have been an increased demand for houses large enough to accommodate the family and a full complement of servants from those people of means wishing to move out of the city to avoid the cholera outbreak.

Tuesday July 10th. Sent the servants and came to Dawlish to dinner. Caught in a storm. Ann and self walk in evening. (Servants coach hire to Dawlish: 10/6 Turnpike:2/3 Subscription to Rooms: 15/-)

'Rooms' presumably refers to the Assembly Rooms, a meeting place for the local gentry and wealthy residents and visitors to the town. It included a reading room with newspapers, a billiard room, a refreshment area, and rooms that could be let as lodgings.

Wednesday July 11th. At home all the morning. Lord and Lady Exmouth, Mr and Mrs Powell called. Walked in the evening.

Lord Exmouth was the celebrated Admiral Edward Pellew, who lived at Bitton House in Teignmouth. He would have worked with Shield when he was Commissioner at Plymouth and Pellew was Commander-in-Chief of the Navy from 1817 to 1821. Pellew was 75 in 1832 – he died only six months after the time of this diary. Presumably the social customs of the time required him to call on Shield at the earliest opportunity, especially as Shield was temporarily living much closer to Teignmouth, within easy travelling distance. Shield visited or was visited by Lord Exmouth on six occasions during the two months he was in Dawlish, although the entry for their last meeting on August 20th says: *Dined at Lord Exmouth's. Not expected, notwithstanding his Lordship's invitation.* Perhaps Pellew was tiring of Shield's company – it can't have helped that Shield was unwell and out of sorts throughout August (see below).

Friday July 20th. Poor Jane confined with a very bad cold. Ann and self walked and dined with Mr and Mrs Powell. (Took a bath: 4/- Sal Vol: 1/- Post boy: 1/6)

'Sal vol' is smelling salts, routinely used until around the 1940s to revive someone who has fainted or feels faint. Taking a bath in the newly improved, luxurious public baths on Marine Parade was a special event worthy of note, and not cheap – in all Shield took half a dozen baths during the two months he was in residence.

Sunday July 22nd. At church twice. Jane not out. Walked to Luscombe in the evening.

It was normal practice to attend church twice on a Sunday. 'Jane not out' seems to mean that she was confined to the house. This is the first mention of walking in the Luscombe grounds; the Shields went there several times subsequently.

Monday July 23rd. Went to Exeter, received Pay and Pension, returned to dinner. Jane better, walked with Ann in the evening. (Turnpikes: 2/3 Lozenges and lunch: 1/6)

There is no cash entry for the hire of a vehicle of any kind, so clearly Shield had his own carriage and horses, and this is confirmed when on July 28th he records paying five shillings and eightpence for 'repairs of carriage'.

Wednesday July 25th. Wrote to Mr Creswell. Called on Lord Exmouth and Sir Charles Ekins. Beautiful day. (Turnpike: 1/- Luncheon: 1/9)

Sir Charles Ekins was another retired Admiral of the Royal Navy. He saw a lot of active service and in particular was in command of the 'Superb' at the Bombardment of Algiers, the engagement for which Pellew was created Viscount Exmouth and awarded many other honours. Ekins did not live locally, so presumably was here on a summer break, and as a previous comrade-in-arms would have been socialising with Pellew.

From July 28th Shield becomes unwell with some kind of bladder problem, perhaps the sort of infection that today could be cleared up quickly with antibiotics. He also suffered from a bad cold. A month later he was still in pain and confined to the house much of the time. However, clearly he eventually recovered, living on for another ten years.

Sunday 5th August. At church twice, received blessed Sacrament with my family. In the evening taken very ill, discharge of blood, dreadful. (Sacrament self Jane & Ann: 3/-)

So it seems that the clergy supplemented their income by charging for this special ceremony.

Wednesday 8th August. Better today, beautiful weather. Had a warm bath. Jane and Ann drove out. I was too uncomfortable either to ride or walk. (Bath: 4/- Paper and wax: 1/4)

Friday 10th August: Most wretched, no passage to the bladder. Distressing state, I know not what to do. Wrote to Tugwell. (Shaving brush: 2/- Hair cutting: 6d.)

Tugwell was presumably his physician, in Exeter. The diary doesn't record what treatment or advice he provided.

Monday 13th August. Jane & Ann to Teignmouth Regatta. I at home under low and uncomfortable feeling. Cold worse. (Jane: 10/-)

Local regattas were big events in the social calendar - the family had also attended Dawlish Regatta on 24th July and Starcross Regatta on 26th July.

Tuesday 14th August. Very warm. Admiral Peard called. Jane and Ann drove out. I walked somewhat better today. (Requested Mr Holroyd to pay for me £5 as subscription for Cholera in Exeter.)

'Admiral Peard' was Shuldham Peard (1761-1832), the third retired Admiral that Shield socialised with when staying in Dawlish. Peard had joined the navy at age 10 and 25 years later had risen through the ranks to captain big warships of the line, one of which was the 'Audacious' that Shield himself had commanded a few years earlier.

Peard lived in Exeter and, like Admiral Pellew, was dead only a few months after the time of this diary. From this one might speculate that there must have been something in the water in 1832, and although it isn't recorded what either man actually died of, unfortunately this really was the case, and brings us to Shield's payment of £5 to 'Cholera in Exeter' on August 14th.

As noted above, although the reasons why cholera spread was still not understood at this time, it was predicted that it would come to Exeter sooner or later and the city authorities, in accordance with advice from central government, made detailed advance plans to restrict its impact. They set up procedures to record each new case, to bury victims safely and dispose of infected clothing and bedlinen, to isolate living victims, and to make a start on clearing and cleaning the most impoverished and filthy parts of the city that were thought to be most vulnerable. The first case in

Exeter occurred on 19th July 1832, at which point the authorities recruited a team of physicians, druggists and nurses to provide whatever treatment was considered useful at the time. By the end of July, there had been 45 cases of which 19 had proved fatal. Shield's donation coincided with the peak of the epidemic. On August 13th there were 89 new cases and 31 dead, but the measures to contain the disease seemed to have some success and by 13th September no deaths were recorded, and the last new case occurred on 27th October. Overall, during this outbreak of cholera in Exeter there were almost 1,200 cases and 402 people died.

Because of the continued risks of infection Shield decided to extend his stay in Dawlish by another month.

Sunday August 19th. At church twice, the Bishop presented. Received permission from Mrs Grant to keep her house to the 4th October when please God we may return to our abode in Exeter. (Due: Kitty's wages £3 paid)

This is the only mention of one of the family's servants by name. £3 would probably have been a month's wages.

'The Bishop' was Bishop Henry Philpotts of Exeter, whom Shield first visited in Dawlish on July 14th at somewhere on Teignmouth Hill. In only a short time in this post Philpotts had gained a reputation as a bully and hypocrite, and many people were critical of him for leaving Exeter at this difficult time - the campaigning journalist Thomas Latimer wrote in the 'Western Times' of him having 'run away from the cholera and abandoned his sacred duty of visiting the sick.' Latimer, who became a good friend of Charles Dickens, continued his disapproval of the bishop and the feud culminated in Philpotts suing Latimer for defamation in 1848 - he lost, much to the joy of Latimer's readers. (There is more about Latimer and Philpotts in www.exetermemories.co.uk/em/_people/latimer)

Wednesday 29th August. Cold tempestuous weather. A day of humiliation to pray the dreadful scourge now on us may cease. Twice at church. (Pained to find my cook has so little sense of religion as to feel it a hardship to go to church. This is dreadful.)

His cook's feelings are understandable. She probably had little spare time away from her duties, and being obliged to spend some of it accompanying her employer to church would not have been welcome if she was not as God-fearing as he was.

William Shield died in Southernhay, Exeter, in June 1842. The following year official records show that his widow Jane was paid a pension of £277 10s a year (equivalent to about £25,000 today). In 1845 Ann married the extravagantly named George-Henry-Orchard Pedlar, the Rector of Holy Trinity, Exeter. Unusually, to respect the memory of her father, they decided to take the name of Shield. George remained at Holy Trinity until Ann died in 1875, when he retired to live in Dawlish.

Outing to the Kelly Mine by David Gearing



Demonstration of the ore washing process at Kelly Mine

On July 5th a large group of members visited the Kelly Mine near Lustleigh. The mine, which was most active during the first half of the 20th century, worked deposits of micaceous iron oxide, also known as 'shiny ore'. It was never a big operation, and probably no more than ten people worked here at any one time. Production of the finished product - a black dust with shiny flakes in it, peaked at 202 tons in 1907. This was marketed as 'Devonshire Sand' or 'Pounce' and was used to absorb the ink on hand written documents prior to the invention of blotting paper. It was also used as a pottery glaze, as a substitute for graphite, and on its own or mixed with graphite it was 'black lead' for protecting stoves. But ultimately its main value was as the basis of an anti-corrosion paint, which was in great demand for the protection of metal structures of all kinds. The mine closed in 1952 after an underground collapse. Due to a legal dispute all the equipment at the site was left untouched, rather than the usual practice of selling it for scrap or moving it for use in another mine, and subsequent owners have encouraged its preservation. So Kelly now has a unique collection of mining machinery on the site where it was actually used.

The enterprise is run by members of the Kelly Mine Preservation Society, who have undertaken much restoration work over the last 30 years. Our guides conducted us round the site and described the whole process from mining the ore to the dispatch of the final product. They also demonstrated the equipment that is in working order: the ore washing strips, and jigging and stamping equipment, and other machinery in the mill. The settling tanks, waterwheels and the mine tramway, with its wagons and haulage winch, are not in use, but help to visualise what it was like in its heyday. It was clear that many of the tasks involved in extracting the 'shiny ore' from the mined material were very physical, repetitive and dirty, and apparently were often undertaken by teenage boys straight from school, until they could find something better.

When the mine was in operation the site was largely devoid of trees, and sheep grazed in the fields around. Sixty years on and the mine site is now in an attractive, rather overgrown, woodland setting with high trees all round.

News from the Museum June 2016 by Mavis Stuckey

It looks as if 2016 will be another good year for the Museum. Visitor numbers are good so far. There have been several return visits from people who have been in previous years when they have visited Dawlish. As usual locals seem very scarce. The storm display is still very popular as are the WW1 ongoing displays. Needless to say that there have been many compliments concerning the Wedding Dress display, all of which have local connections. The stall on the Strand on 28th May had a very good day – we made some money and also sold several DLHG books.

Coming up next!

August 2nd 2016. The Jurassic Coast and it's hinterland by Tony Burges.

Tony is born and bred in Devon and has a deep passion for Dartmoor and the coast inspired by his training as a Royal Marine. Leaving the Marines he took over the family business for 35 years. He has worked on Seaton, Sidmouth and Devon Councils. His talk looks at the 95 miles of the Jurassic Coast through Devon and Dorset, which includes Durdle Door, Lulworth Cove, the Isle of Portland, Chesil Beach and Lyme Regis.

Tuesday September 6th at 2pm Visit to the South Devon Railway at Buckfastleigh.

A visit to the railway will start with a guided tour of the museum which guides you through the history of the branch. We would then break for a cream tea and conclude with a return trip to Totnes Riverside. Public transport is poor to Buckfastleigh so car sharing again may be necessary. The return train journey would be £12.20 (senior citizens £11.40) plus refreshments in the café (Cream Tea £5.50).

Saturday September 10th, (10:30am to 4:30pm) History Open Day at the Strand Centre

We are working with colleagues from the Museum to prepare for a second History Open Day event, which will include displays of various aspects of the life of Dawlish and district using pictures, artefacts, explanatory text and video. Topics covered will include the Railway, Tourism and Leisure, the Violets Industry, Shops and Trades, Education, and Dawlish people in WW1, and there will be a rolling display of historic images - now with captions. Please come along - last year's was a big success, and this time there will be some new material not seen before.

October 4th 2016. The Victorian carte de visite photograph: some scenes of Dawlish and other parts of Devon by Dr Sadru Bhanji.

Sadru is a retired NHS consultant who turned to local history as a hobby. His research is driven mainly by curiosity and has resulted in a number of publications in various academic journals. An avid collector since childhood his current interests include photographic depictions of Victorian Devon which has led to the development of this talk.