



DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter

September 2008

Why Did They Leave Their Homes ?

Dear Members,

In our last newsletter I mentioned that some of our members are intending to produce a book on the maritime history of Dawlish and would welcome help from other members who have access to information on this topic. Now I have a further request on behalf of Pam Robins who is researching the history of Holcombe Post Office. If you have any information, any old photographs, or contacts with people who might be able to help, please contact her.

Are there any more of you out there who have been thinking for some time of doing some research on a topic of particular interest to them? Please do not hesitate to ask for help if you need it. We welcome such initiatives Why else would I spend so much time accumulating materials in our archives?

Incidentally does any member have any information about the Dawlish Regatta which was so important an event each summer during the last century? The archives contain only a few documents and certainly not enough to write a history of the Regatta. And why do we not have a Regatta today ?

In this newsletter we publish (with permission) a letter or rather an e-mail from a lady in the USA.

DLHG is going international it seems, and why not. There are former Dawlishians in every part of the globe and it seemed appropriate to publish this letter in the same issue as Tricia's article opposite. We will always be happy to hear from exiles with stories to tell.

Bob Thompson

Next Meeting : October 6th at the Manor House commencing at 2.30 p.m.

**Dr Todd Gray
will speak about**

The Lost Heritage of Devon



Home sweet home—a Devon Farmhouse

Demerara, Victoria, New South Wales and finally in South Australia. His father was a yeoman of Edmeston Barton in Modbury, a tenant farmer of the Venerable Archdeacon Froude of Dartington, whilst his grandfather farmed Rake near Loddiswell, Devon.

"Behind the homestead (Edmeston Barton) rose a high precipitous overhanging rock, visible for miles distant. This notable rock served as a rendezvous for the peasant classes amidst the troubles arising from scarcity of provisions, want of employment, and a starvation wage. I remember hearing my father speak of one of those gatherings when he was a young man, from which several hundreds of day-labourers marched throughout the neighbouring parishes to lay their grievances before the 'Squires' and to tell those of the farmers, who were using threshing-machines for removing the corn from the ears instead of the flail, that if such operations were continued, both machines and buildings would be fired.

Unfortunate labourers! With the exception of the harvest season, which lasted only for a month, when the men would feed at the farmers' tables, their fare was scant indeed. Barley bread and water for breakfast, barley bread and cider for dinner, and potatoes with a sprinkle of salt and a little fat for the evening meal: who can wonder at peasant complanations for securing a just wage and a right to live, not simply to exist!

But the prospects of 'renting' farmers were anything but cheering. There was looming in the near distance the inevitable Repeal of the Corn Laws, which would seriously affect the tenant farmers then under lease to their landlords who would probably make no abatement of their rents. Besides there was in many a tenant-farmer's home a galling sense of vassalage to the owner of the soil, which the independent, native-born-yeoman-spirit could ill bear. Altogether, therefore it seemed better to be free than to remain in such conditions.....

There had not been in the last sixty or seventy years any encouragement to the rising yeomanry to try their fortunes under the tenant and landlord system or in the town for the young mechanics and tradespeople to compete for a position and a respectable living. Hence it has been a kind of breeding ground for America, and in later years for Australia and New Zealand."

Contributed by Tricia Whiteaway

Outing to St. Nicholas' Priory and old Exeter



Several members of DLHG were reminded of the long and fascinating history of Exeter when we met outside St Nicholas' Priory on a fine July morning. We were guided around the Priory by Kate who had been instrumental in bringing back to life the Tudor home of the Hurst family

who had very considerably left wills and inventories of their life in Exeter in Tudor times. The family were citizens of wealth and importance and the decoration and finishing of their home reflected that fact. As Kate pointed out this was a Devon Tudor house ... in other parts of the country the styles would have been different, reflecting their locations. A few parts of the Priory still retain the religious feel of its subsequent history.

After lunch the party met up again outside the Cathedral where we were met by our guide, a red blazered lady called Jacqueline, who told us about the foundations of the Anglo-Saxon Church which had been found when St. Mary Major Church was built in Victorian times and which still lie under the Cathedral Green. After learning further facts about the Cathedral and the documents held there in the library, we moved on to the White Hart Inn where we saw the stalls where the Commonwealth army stabled their horses 350 years ago. The next step was the historic quayside and then on through the former industrial area of Exeter where we had a quick look at the recently refurbished Cricklepit Mill with its lovely wild flower garden. The housing estate which now occupies the old industrial site reflects the past in its street names such as Dyers Court and Fullers Court.



We moved on to the ruins of the mediaeval bridge where we walked in the footsteps of Catherine of Aragon and William of Orange who had entered the city through the Southern Gate which once stood near the famous "House that Moved" where our tour ended. We all managed to climb up Stepcote Hill and then headed for home. It had been a tiring but fascinating day for which we again thank Tricia who had not only arranged the tour but had managed the weather ... we experienced only a couple of short sharp showers.

Mavis Stuckey

A Letter from America

Dear Sheila (Wain),

I have been reading your news letters about the history of Dawlish and now I'm feeling a bit home sick. I have found your news letters to be very interesting on the history and stories you have been able to reconstruct. I was once a resident of Dawlish in my childhood days until I sadly had to leave in my mid teens through a family situation but from the time I left I have always classed my home base as Dawlish in beautiful South Devon even though I was born in East London. My Grandfather and Grandmother bought a Guest House in Dawlish in around 1950. From a very young age I lived with my Grandparents so that's how I got to go to Dawlish in the first place. There I've had so many happy memories and all my school friends

known now as Dawlish Community College. I've had the pleasure of coming back to visit my old stomping ground from time to time but not as much as I would like to as I now live in the San Diego area in California USA. Yes we have some very nice and lovely places to visit with mountains, lakes and wonderful ocean views, beautiful million + dollar homes (no I don't live in one of them).

I still love the Brook with the ducks and swans floating on the water and bobbing their heads under water catching their fish surrounded by the flower beds with shrubs and trees, the lawn and bandstand and shops, churches and houses. I do hope that Teignbridge Council doesn't take that all away at some point in time and put up some of the ugly modern architectural stuff and apartment buildings. I remember when they put in the Woolworth building (that took sometime getting used to) and the arcade that I have always thought out of place. I can remember that the street lights all went out at 10.00-10.30 pm Sunday through Friday and Saturday until 11.00 pm. That was in the winter - in summertime we got an extra hour. The last train arrived around 9.30-45pm and the last bus around 9 also. It was a long walk home from Teignmouth if you missed either one, trust me, I've been there more than once and I remember it because I had to be home by 10pm or else. I also remember my friends and I walking along the seawall at high tide playing a game with the waves to see who could get past the crashing waves before they crashed over the railway lines without getting wet and us getting dragged into the ocean. *Oh!* What dare devils we were !

Now that I have given you a picture of some of my memories there is one request I would like to ask of you all, if you could find out any history about the place I lived in I have tried to find it but it doesn't even come up on a map. I am interested in the history of when it was built and if anyone of interest lived in any of the 9 homes as I know they all have servants quarters joined at the back of the houses so my guess is that the people who owned them at first must have had some money and a high quality of life. My address was: Greenaways Guest House, 3 Haldon Terrace Dawlish and it was a private road. I remember it was private as my Grandfather had to close the access road off at both ends with the big iron gates once a year for 24 hours so it would stay a private road. There were 9 homes and a very large garden area in front of them. I think the council acquired half of the gardens sometime back which I was very sad to see happen as they built an ugly building there.

My Grandfather also bought the house at number 2 Haldon Terrace. He at first bought number 3 as a guest house and he kept it the same and converted number 2 into holiday apartments and also an extended guest house. He owned them until he passed away in 1960. My Grandfather's name was Albert John Turner. I do know that both homes are now rest homes. Number 9 was owned by the Thomlinsons of Thomlinsons Coaches. The 9 terraced homes are in between the old Dawlish Hospital and Orchards Gardens. *(Tricia has responded to this request for information).*

I don't know if anyone would have time to do this research as I can see by reading your news letters that you don't only gather history but you clean grave stones etc. as well. I would like to commend you all on your good work and thank you all for taking care of lovely old Dawlish. Last but not least I miss the putting green because I used to play on it a lot and it was always kept looking nice and I think it must have helped me then for my golf game today. Personally I think it gave a pretty picture of Dawlish with the bridge and brook.

To all of you thanks again. I have enjoyed the history and stories.

Sheila Fletcher