

DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter

January 2014

Website: www.dawlishhistory.org.uk

WE ARE SORRY TO ANNOUNCE THAT UNLESS WE HAVE THREE NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS, OUR HISTORY GROUP IS GOING TO COLLAPSE. Due to ill health and re-location, WE URGENTLY NEED the following:

TREASURER; PROGRAMME SECRETARY; BOOK SALES MANAGER.

Do not feel fearful – our committee meets only four times a year and is very easy-going. Help will be given to anyone who applies. Please Contact Tricia on 01626 866927 or Sheila on 01626 895492

Dear Members,

As many of you will be aware, Derek has stepped down as Newsletter editor. I am sure you would all join with me in thanking him for producing this publication over many years.

I have, for now, taken over the role of compiling and publishing it. However, to be interesting, the newsletter relies on articles produced by members of our group. Can I therefore encourage you all to consider producing items for the newsletter—long or short—on any topic which is likely to be of historical interest to our members.

Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to finalize the programme for 2014. However, I have published the draft programme on our website (see above for address) and I will update this as speakers are agreed, ahead of providing a final printed version.

Regards, Mike Ralls

Boxing Day Soapbox Derby — Sheila Ralls

We have received an interesting photo (see top right) from John Hartnell, who now lives in Somerset. It shows the Soapbox Derby in the 1950s.

He writes: “Back in the 1950s, Dawlish had an Entertainment Committee, who ran the Carnival and a number of other events, including the Soapbox Derby on Boxing Day. This event started at the top of Third Avenue and ran down through the town finishing on the Lawn. I think this photo was taken in 1952 or possibly 1953, when my father and my mother’s cousin from Totnes were in the first three to complete the course.”



The Manor House — Mavis Stuckey

When the selling of the Manor House was proposed a few years ago, the townspeople of Dawlish marched around the town in protest and also turned out in their droves for a Parish poll to reject the proposal with a large majority.

The weekend of October 18th-20th 2013 was a testament to the hard work carried out as the Manor looked splendid, having been beautifully redecorated and enhanced with lovely displays of flowers. On the Saturday many local artistic groups set out their stalls and were seen to be well patronised. Sheila Wain and myself spent the day – except for a lunch break, when Sheila and Mike Ralls stood in – doing a roaring trade with our Local History Group books. Several people expressed an interest in joining our group and one new member signed up there and then. It was a very enjoyable experience in very pleasant surroundings and meeting lots of people – well done to all at the Manor.

East Cliff Road, Dawlish (First Instalment)

This road is not on the 1851 census so must have been built soon after, along the boundary of two fields belonging to two different tenements, part of Secmaton Farm and possibly Wolland’s that had an inn on site of Charlton Villa in 1787. The dates given for the occupiers are only approximate depending on the records available, such as census returns or Trade Directories. Unfortunately no house deeds were viewed but it may be that most of the

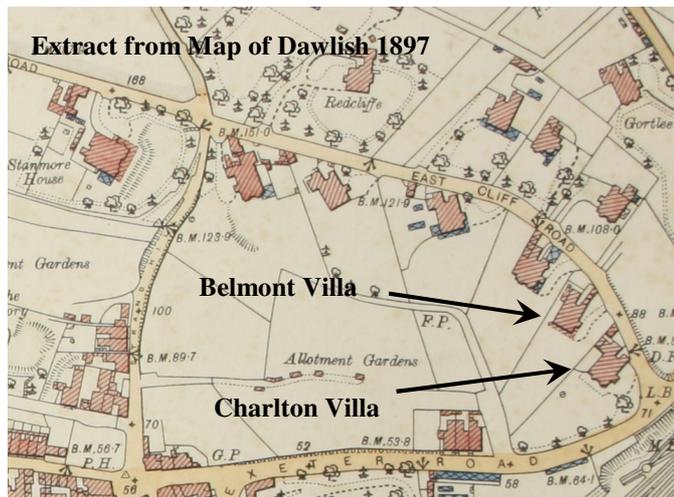
Our next meeting will be on

**Tuesday 4th February,
2.30pm at The Manor House.**

Archaeology at Ipplepen by Derek Gore

houses were not freehold but leased as shown by the changes in occupants. This was by far the usual way of living even for very rich people. Owner occupiers were rare.

Most of the houses in East Cliff would have had coach-houses in the grounds but interestingly the census returns show no inhabitants so it seems they arrived daily. Likewise the houses did not have enough grounds to graze horses so they must have been hired or grazed on nearby farmer's fields. These coach-houses were converted to full dwelling houses probably from the 1940s.



CHARLTON VILLA had 16 rooms. Peter Margary, a civil engineer with South Devon Railway appears to be the first to live here from 1854 or earlier to 1868 when he died. From 1848 at least four of his daughters were married in St. Gregory's church. In 1868 it was offered for sale with a 99 year lease, presumably taken up by Thomas Burnett followed in 1879 by Rect. James Mayne, then in 1883 by Mrs Plowden Weston. In 1889 Maj Gen. David Welsh who had previously lived in Brookdale Terrace then Barton Terrace, moved to this house (more information on this family appears in the book *Mary's Secret Life*). After his death in 1890 his widow Helen and daughters Mary and Helena stayed for a year or two with a cook and a maid. From about 1900 until 1939 the three Gamlen sisters were here and



in that age when the poor needed hospital treatment, they had to ask for a 'Recommend' to enable them to get treatment. The Gamlens were the largest supporters of this system.

After the war the house became a hotel when in 1947

the Woodgates were the occupiers as in 1955 they had planning permission to update the property by installing nine wash-basins in the bedrooms when Messrs Colmar, Goodwin and Butler were living here. The Buckland brothers had it until the 1970s as many locals held their wedding receptions here. For many years there was talk of a new hospital in Dawlish and the grounds at Burseldon (opposite) were considered, and Charlton would become the nurses home. However, this plan fell through and although it was run as a hotel by Messrs Dennison and Moors in 1986, due to the changing nature of holiday trade preferring self-catering, in 1989 it had permission to demolish the house and build 36 warden-controlled flats.

BELMONT VILLA had 12 rooms, the first recorded occupier from 1854-81 was Miss Mary Roberton from Chudleigh. Her mother had lived in Piermont House, and after her death in 1853 she was buried in Dawlish and Mary moved into Belmont. She had a cousin, the well-known artist Peter Orlando Hutchinson of Sidmouth who would often visit. He was a true Victorian antiquarian whose interests covered archaeology, geology, genealogy, heraldry, astronomy, science, chemistry, as well as being a talented artist, engraver, worker of leather, carver of wood and stone, a singer who played the flute and French Horn - and was also a good gossip! His diaries are full of his trips to interesting houses and archaeological sites, the finds from which he gave to the newly-built Museum at Exeter. Two Australian skulls he acquired he gave to Dawlish Museum (an early one in Cosen's Institute). He also wrote of being here on May Day and saw little Dawlish girls who dressed and carried their dolls in a cradle around the town hoping for a penny, whilst another custom in Sidmouth branches with flowers and ribbons tied on were carried. He answered the problem of how many trees were originally planted on the area we know as the Twelve (Seven?) Sisters on the town's skyline, as in 1875 he says there were now only 23 (originally 24). He mentions the field Mr Lea bought over the railway tunnel for £250 which he presented to the town, now named Lea Mount. In 1875 he was visiting when St Gregory's church was being improved and enlarged and hoped that it wouldn't be 'overdone' as many others had been, and the next year he noticed that the old font at St Gregory's church was left standing outside in the frost.

A most interesting man! I wish he could return and give us talks as he knew the area well and had stories on so many people - I am sure we could have him for every meeting before he ran out of interesting facts.!

The occupiers following Miss Roberton were Thomas & Jane Wrigley Wiley in 1891-1911, in 1923 Mrs Brown, in 1930 Rev. Barnes, then 1937-51 it was Dr Lees who in 1935 lived in Church House. Finally he was followed by Dr Andrews who proposed two dwellings to be built in 1972, but this was not agreed.

Tricia Whiteaway