



## DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

# Newsletter

September 2014

Website: [www.dawlishhistory.org.uk](http://www.dawlishhistory.org.uk)

Dear Members,

I hope everyone has enjoyed the unusually warm and sunny summer.

I'm sorry to have to announce that sadly since the last Newsletter, two of our members have died. Paul de Lusingan who was our Treasure since the formation of the group and founder member died on 14<sup>th</sup> July. Derek Wain who produced the Newsletter for many years, published our books and set-up the equipment at the beginning of each meetings died on 27<sup>th</sup> August.

As many of you know, DLHG is a member of Devon History Society. We normally receive one copy of their newsletter. However, they now provide us with an electronic copy. We intend to e-mail this to all our members who have given us their e-mail address – so if you're interested, please ensure Sheila has your e-mail address.

And finally, for those who were not at our last meeting in August, if any of you have ideas for the Christmas Social please tell Ray Bickel or any committee member.

Regards, Mike Ralls - Chairman

### Dawlish Gazette, Feb 1915 - Ian Thomson

Extracts from a letter from Gunner Frank Criddle (Son of Mr. & Mrs. Frank Criddle of Old Town St.) who enlisted in the 2nd Devon Regiment in December 1914 and is now on Active Service with the Royal Artillery in Bangalore, India:

*We left Topsham on 12th Dec. and reached Southampton the same day. From there 3 boats were waiting to carry troops to different Ports of India. Our boat carried 2313 officers and men. So the accommodation was very crowded.*

*We arrived at Gibraltar in darkness. As we entered the harbour a three masted Schooner ran into us. There was not much damage but it delayed our sailing 6 hrs. We arrived at another Port on Christmas Day, the hottest I have ever known.*

*On entering the Suez Canal we witnessed some fine and unusual scenery and passed several armed camps, one being a Camel Corp. Regiment which had seen action shortly before. Most of the camps were commanded by English officers. The natives were at work with camels taking away sand. We were out of the Canal after about 22 hrs and entered the Red Sea where we were told by an officer to block all the portholes and put out all lights. Presumably there were enemy troops in the area.*

*We arrived at Bombay on 8th Jan. and after dinner went*

*ashore to look after the baggage and have a walk around the docks. Some of the sights we saw were really marvellous.*

*We left Bombay at midnight and arrived at Bangalore on Monday morning at 3.30a.m. After unloading the baggage and guns we had to walk 3,5 miles to the barracks. It was a very fine place with high ceilings and plenty of room.*

*The natives do all our work for us and we each pay them 4 annas a week for doing it. 4 annas are about 4 pence in English money.*

*We are only allowed 2 meals a day, breakfast and dinner. Nothing from 1p.m. to 8.30 next morning. There are several Soldiers Homes and we can get a good meal for 4 annas.*

*It is a general rule that troops have a day off on Thursday but at the moment we have only half a day as we need more training.*

*We took a walk into the Indian quarters, it was the funniest and dirtiest place that I ever I was in. There was a lovely ladies silk dress for sale in a shop for 8 rupees (about 11/).*

*I would have liked to send a dress home but the tax and postage was very expensive.*

*It is surprising what a lot of English people live and work here and there are also some big English shops.*

*Please give our regards to all our friends and family at home and we hope to have a go soon at "Kaiser Bill's Little Lambs".*

### The Bells Of St. Gregory's Church - Muriel Bradshaw

Many people are glad when they hear the sound of bells floating out over the parish on a Sunday morning. There's something very English about a peal of bells: this tradition doesn't extend to the Continent, where they continue to use a single or perhaps a pair of bells to call the faithful to Mass.

The history of bells as a means of communication, both religious and secular, goes back into the mists of time. In Saxon, Norman and early Mediaeval times, bells were hung on a simple spindle and chimed by pulling a rope attached to the spindle. Then village men began to experiment with a new way: attaching each bell to a wheel over which the rope ran down to where the ringer stood below. This gave greater control of the timing of the bell and made possible the sounding of several bells in different pattern sequences. It was a matter of pride when money was made available by gift or public effort, and another bell could be added to the 'ring'. Most parish churches had two or three bells. Many were "cast" on site in a specially prepared 'bell pit'. Each bell has its own note and the bigger and heavier the bell, the lower is its pitch. Bell metals are various kinds of bronze.



That was all well and good till the Reformation, when King Henry VIII asserted his 'right' to control parish churches. Church bells were silenced and removed, for the bells had been used to summon men for rebel causes. There was also a wry twist to all this, for it seems that bell metal was just right for

**Our next meeting will be on**

**Tuesday 7th October 2014**

**2:00 pm at The Manor House.**

**Talk entitled Devon's Fifty best Churches"**

**by Todd Gray**

making the guns he needed for his political ambitions! Later on, some hidden bells would be repaired and re-hung, and the art of 'change-ringing' would develop and flourish all over the land. The parish church was at the heart of the village community, and the team of tower ringers had high status within it. Fathers taught sons for generations.

St. Gregory's tower was built in 1400, and soon housed a peal of five bells which called people to worship. A single bell was sounded three times as the Host was raised and shown to the people, so that all who were housebound could pause for a moment and join in the parish worship with a prayer. There was also the 'telling' bell which gave news of the passing of a loved one, counting (telling) the years of that life so that the whole parish could share in the sorrow and sober thanksgiving. Our bells have been re-cast several times: one in 1614, others in 1677, 1735 and 1742. In 1784 the whole set was melted down and cast into a peal of six. Two new bells were added in 1911 to celebrate the coronation of King George V. This brought the peal up to its present tally of eight.

They are operated today by a keen group of ringers: men and women, some well experienced, and happily, a number of young learners, keeping alive an old and honoured craft. They ring before Sunday services and for special occasions and marriages, practising on Wednesday evenings in the watchful care of Tower Captain Fiona Rock Evans. They entertain visiting teams, and join in competitions. We wish them well!

Many older bells bear inscriptions cast into the metal at their birth. Some have the names of the donors or the churchwardens or the original bell-founders. We have rather a special one here on one of the bells in our St. Gregory's peal. It sums up the hopes and intentions of all of us who love Dawlish and want it to be a good place to live and to visit for delightful holidays. On the bell the message is:

“PEACE and GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD”

### **The War Memorial - Maurice Criddle**

At this time when the 100th Anniversary of the start of the "The Great War" is being commemorated, I would like to



show you the scene at the dedication of the Dawlish War Memorial on 19th February 1921, which was followed by a service at 2.45pm in the Parish Church of St Gregory the Great that adjoins the Memorial. The photograph from my collection was taken by the photographers long-time based in Dawlish, Chapman & Son.

If one visits the Memorial and looks at the plaque facing the church, the name of Petty Officer W J Criddle will be seen amongst the long list of Dawlish men who gave their lives in the 1914-18 War. William John was in the Navy and at the time of his death was serving on HMS Amphion, an Active-class scout cruiser and the first one of the Royal Navy to be lost in the War. She struck a mine and sank on the third day

of the Conflict. One of the survivors was another man from Dawlish who by chance lived in the same Dawlish street as my relative. This survivor was able to come home and tell the Widow of WJ exactly what had happened. Another part of the tragedy was that my relative died when his baby son was only one year and two weeks old.

On the 6th August 2014, one hundred years to the day after his death, a Service of Commemoration for William John was held in the Parish Church. This was arranged by Dawlish Town Council and Churches Together in Dawlish and District and was attended by relatives and friends together with members of the two organizing bodies.

William John was descended from another branch of the Criddle's from the branch mentioned by Ian in the last Newsletter, and my Father, who was badly wounded in the Great War but made it home, was from yet another branch. All of these lived in Dawlish.

### **Dawlish Museum News – Mavis Stuckey**

This has been a very interesting year at the Museum with displays honouring the First World War, D-day 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and The Great Storm of 2014, which have attracted a lot of interest. The new dressing-up corner and quizzes have proved very popular with children. Visitor numbers for this year look good but as the Museum is open until the end of September, we are expecting a few more. Comments in the Visitors Book are all very complimentary and encouraging. There have been evening visits by the Conservative and the Rotary Clubs both of whom kindly donated the profits from raffles to the Museum. We are happy to arrange visits for any club group. If anyone is interested or would like to know more, please call the Museum on 888557 on Tuesday or Friday mornings between 10am and 12am or drop in for a cup of coffee.

### **East Cliff Road Addendum - Maurice Criddle**

The last Newsletter (July 2014) contained the final instalment of the East Cliff Road article and with regard to Wickham Lodge it said that from about 1947 to the 1980's it was possibly a hotel. As a native and resident of Dawlish I can explain that it was the residence of Dr J H Gibson, his wife, two sons and a daughter. The sons are both doctors now. Doctor Gibson had his surgery and waiting room in the house. This was before our present day Health Centres.

At the time, there were two other doctors in the town, both of whom had their surgeries at their residences. Dr Peterkin's was in Westcliff Road and Dr Batterham's was in Barton Terrace.

The property Overcliffe was also mentioned in the article and I can add to the information shown too. Mr Langdon senior lived there and it was indeed a chemist but his shop was in Cullompton to and from where he commuted daily. He had a wife and two children. His son Peter, as mentioned, and a daughter, Rosemary. They lived at Overcliffe for part of the Langdon residency.

### **2014 Diary Dates**

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 7th Oct  | DLHG - Talk entitled "Devon's Fifty Best Churches" by Todd Gray                             |
| 11th Oct | DHS AGM + WW1 Conf. Univ.of Exeter 10am - 5pm   |
| 23rd Oct | Memories of Old Newton Abbot, Town Hall , Newton Abbot 7:15pm                               |
| 12th Nov | DHS "Exploring Devon's Historic Landscape", Emma Rouse, Mint Methodist Church, Exeter 2-4pm |
| 2nd Dec  | DLHG - Christmas Social   |