

DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter

March 2015

Website: www.dawlishhistory.org.uk

Dear Members,

In 2005, Bob Thompson and other members of the then committee drafted a Constitution for DLHG. However, it does not appear to have been formally adopted by members. He felt that we needed a clear statement covering the aims of our group, what we did and how we were managed. Ten years have obviously now passed so the present committee felt that it was appropriate to revise that Constitution and seek to get it formally adopted by the members of the group. You should shortly receive the AGM pack which will include the proposed revised constitution and other documentation to support the AGM. Can I encourage members to look at the information and please come and support the AGM and consider joining the committee.

Mike Ralls - Chairman

New Book - David Gearing

I have just finished a new booklet entitled 'Dawlish Warren: Contrasts and Changes', which will include about thirty photos from our database of historic images plus a similar number of modern photos to illustrate the text. This will be the first new DLHG publication for a while. We plan to have it available well before the summer season; given its subject it should be of interest to holidaymakers as well as locals. Here is a brief extract:

"In the late 1950s a line of small shops in wooden huts that catered to holidaymakers were built along the path from the railway arch to the beach by Ted Hockin and his father. They finally closed and were demolished in 2001 when the traders were unable to raise the funding needed to re-develop the retail space, and could not agree the conditions for a new lease with Teignbridge Council, who own the land. Jenny Norman remembers working in 'The Dairy', a shop at the railway end of the path, for two summer seasons in 1965 and 1966, soon after she came to live in Dawlish. The shop was run by Hammett's Dairies, who had a modern automated dairy factory at Exhibition Way, Exeter. As ever in seaside places, when it was fine the shop was very busy, but

when it rained there was no-one about. The most popular line was clotted cream by post. At that time clotted cream was not generally available outside of Devon and Cornwall, and therefore was a favourite gift for holidaymakers to send to family and friends, or to themselves for when they got back home. 'The Dairy' also stocked picnic supplies such as fruit, cheese and flavoured yoghurt. In the



Jenny Norman outside 'The Dairy' on Beach Road, Dawlish Warren in 1965

1960s yoghurt was something new and would have been considered rather exotic by many people coming into the shop. Other shops nearby sold buckets and spades and equipment for the beach, and summer clothes including bathing costumes, and there must have been somewhere selling ice creams. There was a small arcade of fruit and pinball machines where 'The Boathouse' pub is now. Donkey rides operated across the path on the sand in front of the shops. Behind the shops there was a large group of beach huts.

Jenny worked at The Dairy seven days a week from May to September, walking there and back from her home in Henty Avenue pushing her baby daughter in a pram, which on the way back also contained the day's cash takings! She remembers Charlie Payne, who for many years had been the manager of the Scala Cinema in Dawlish, which had closed in 1962. In 1965 he had the job of cleaning the public toilets in the car park on the landward side of the railway. He kept one of the cubicles locked, reserved for the use of the people who worked in the shops, in exchange for which he got a few benefits in kind, including pieces of fruit from The Dairy.

Jenny does not remember that there was much by way of café or refreshment facilities, apart from a kiosk next to the railway arch that sold marvellous home-made banana fritters. Canoe paddle boats were available for hire on the main beach, which then was unimpeded by concrete walls

Our next meeting:

Tuesday 7th April 2015

2:00 pm at The Manor House.

AGM & Talk-"Shops of Old Exeter"

by Christine Trigger

or rocks. On sunny summer days the first couple of hundred yards of beach would be crammed full of people; presumably most Warren holidaymakers came primarily for the seaside and wanted to take full advantage of any fine weather. Few visitors ventured down to the far end of the Warren spit, but Jenny walked there when her parents came to visit. She remembers that there was just one building left at the far end, a chalet tucked in behind the dunes and almost hidden by patches of brambles. It came to her attention because she needed somewhere to stay in the winter of 1965 and contacted the owner, but he was unwilling to rent it out because of the danger of flooding. It only lasted a few years more after this before being washed away, like all the other buildings before it. “

News from the Museum - Mavis Stuckey

The re-opening of the Museum is on 1st May, so it is fairly hectic but exciting. Several people have expressed an interest in becoming stewards. Training sessions are being arranged for all stewards both new and experienced, so hopefully we will end up with a large enthusiastic team for the new season. The displays are being updated and refreshed and Mike and Andrew have been working hard replacing the lighting in all areas to reduce the power consumption and the UV levels in sensitive displays. We are looking forward to an exciting season ahead.

Dawlish Gas Works and the Leaman Family-Sheila Ralls & David Gearing

Dawlish gas works was first built 1847 on the site now occupied by Barton Hill car park. From 1848, gas was used to light some streets, as well as being distributed by cast iron pipes to houses and commercial premises for cooking and heating. The works were rebuilt or expanded several times. In 1890 there were two gas holders and the buildings were extensive.

At this time, the Leaman family lived at the works. William was born in 1857 in Plymouth and his wife Ellen (nee Allford) in 1855 in Marychurch, Torquay.



In 1871, William's family lived in Tormoham, the old part of Torquay. He was working as an errand boy. At this time, Ellen was a domestic servant along with her sister, Susan, at 6, Vaughan Parade, Tormoham, the

house of John Katabu, a confectioner. William and Ellen married in Newton Abbot in 1876.

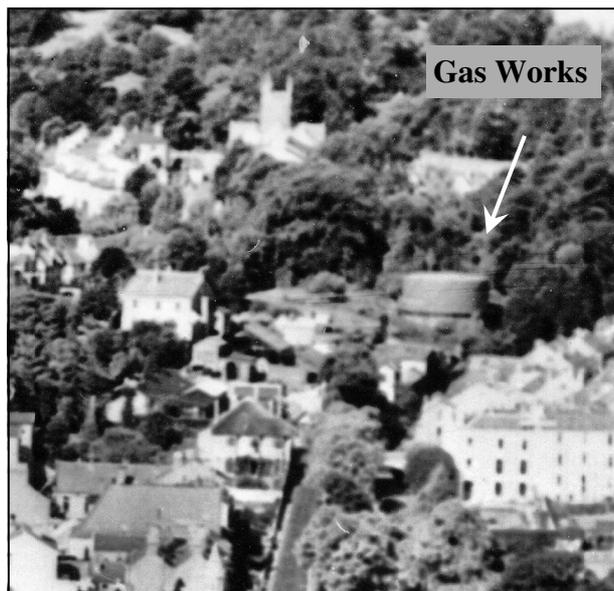
In 1881, William was a gas stoker in Newton Abbot. They lived at St Paul's Rd, Wolborough with their two young children, William and Louisa.

In 1891, the family lived at the Gas Works, Dawlish,

where William was a stoker. They now had 3 sons and 3 daughters but little William may have already died.

In 1901, the family still lived at the Gas Works but William was now the Gas Works Manager. They had ten children living at home. Louisa, 20, housemaid; Charles, 18, a gas works stoker; Mary E, 17, a drapers assistant; Henry, 15, is a Groom; Stephen, 14, is a Grocers errand boy; Evelyn, 11, Floria, 8, Edith, 6, Frederick, 5, and Herbert, 3 were at school/home.

In 1911, William, widowed, had moved to 4, Alexandra Terrace in Dawlish. He was still the Gas Works Manager. Of his 14 children, 3 had already died. His daughter Evelyn was housekeeper and sons Herbert



John (scholar, 13) and Frederick (electrical student, 15) as well as a grand-daughter Alice (3) were also living there. William's son Henry was a casualty of WW1. He was born 1886 and married Blanche Irene Jefferies, in 1909. Henry worked as a Railway Engine Stoker with G.W.R and lived in Bristol with Blanche and daughter, Hilda Blanche. After war broke out, Henry enlisted in Bristol as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers. He died in 1916, on 21 December, age 30 of wounds at the battle of The Somme. He is buried in Aveluy Communal Cemetery, France and is commemorated on the Dawlish War Memorial.

2015 Diary Dates	
2nd Apr	DFHS "Lost Devon" Felicity Goodall, Devon Rural Archive Shilstone 18:30 £5
16th Apr	DFHS "Who do you think you are? Live" NEC, Birmingham 9:30-17:30
24th Apr	DHS conference "Renaissance in Devon – Woodcarving", Avenue Methodist Newton Abbot 10:00 – 17:00
7th May	DLHG visit to Library and Archives, Exeter Cathedral
9th May	DFHS "Three Generations of an Exeter Pharmacy", 14:30 The Mint Methodist, Exeter