



## DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

# Newsletter

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

## January 2016

### EDITORIAL.

Since the November Newsletter there has been a very well attended Local History Day with contributions from a number of Dawlish groups and a Talk on "Christmas in Devon" by the ever popular Todd Gray. This talk was accompanied by mince pies and drinks of choice. Please see the follow up reports.

We continue with David Gearing's second of three instalments on the long defunct Haldon Airfield. If you look at the site as it presents itself today, it takes quite a lot of imagination to think these services actually started from there. The aircraft, of course, were not the jet airliners of today, but could take off and land on simple short grass runways.

Robert Vickery kindly updates us on the World War One Project and the Dawlish Cann and Jackson families.

The DLHG committee is involved in sorting through and cataloguing the large number of files and records kept at the Manor House.

For example, old copies of Wescott's Local Press reveal numerous interesting items on the events taking place in the community towards the end of the nineteenth century. The newspaper also reveals much of what was going on in the "outside world". These should provide us with a source for interesting articles for some time to come. Unfortunately, time and storage conditions have played havoc with the newspapers and they are rapidly disintegrating. Now photographing and archiving as digital files is required in order to keep records for future reference.

Ian Thomson

### PASSENGER SERVICES AT HALDON AIRFIELD

by David Gearing

In the article in the November 2015 newsletter I discussed the events of the first two years of operations at the Haldon airfield. By the end of 1929 the flying school established by the airfield's founder, Bill Parkhouse, was doing well and the first airshow held there attracted thousands of spectators in September 1929. This article describes the scheduled passenger services, which operated between 1933 and 1939. In a later piece I will cover other flying activities at Haldon during the 1930s, including airshows, pageants and races.

In the late 1920s the people running Britain's railway companies thought that there might be prestige and publicity benefits from operating air services co-ordinated with their railway schedules, and legislation enabling this was put in place in 1929. But it wasn't until 1933 that the Great Western Railway (GWR) led the way by chartering an aircraft from Imperial Airways to provide a service from Cardiff to Plymouth, a route chosen because it would considerably shorten the distances and times involved in travelling between South Wales and the West Country. It was 131 miles from Cardiff to Torquay by train but only 75 miles by air. The plane they hired was a Westland Wessex – a three-engined, six-seater monoplane. It was painted in the GWR livery of chocolate-and-cream and the cabin was upholstered to resemble the interior of a First Class railway carriage.

#### **Our Next Meeting: February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2016.**

#### **Devon, Land and Sea CD by Adrienne Hesketh.**

Adrienne has composed music since she was 9 years old. She has a great love of history and worked for the archaeological department in Exeter. She also writes children's books with one being self-published. The CD presentation consists of 16 piano pieces inspired by Devon's land and seascapes. Her style is her own, but can be best described as personal.

#### **Upcoming Events**

**Chudleigh History Group** – Woodway Room, Chudleigh  
**6<sup>th</sup> February 2016** - AGM and Talk "Bones under the Floor"  
**6<sup>th</sup> March 2016** – Talk "The Towns and Villages of North Dartmoor"

**Kenton Past & Present Society** - Victory Hall, Kenton  
**21st January** - Short AGM followed by talk on Exeter WW1 War Hospitals.  
Dr. Julia Neville will give a talk about her research into the seven war hospitals that operated in Exeter during World War 1.  
**8th March** - Dumnonia 400-800 AD, a talk by Derek Gore  
Derek Gore visited Kenton Past and Present in 2011 and gave a fascinating account of the Vikings in Devon. On his return visit he will talk about the Kingdom of Dumnonia, AD400-800 - the Archaeology and History of the South West in the 'Dark Ages'.

The twice-daily Cardiff to Haldon (for Teignmouth and Torquay) to Plymouth air service was inaugurated on 11th April 1933. The return fare for the complete Cardiff to Plymouth trip was £6, and £5 return for the Cardiff to Teignmouth journey, which took 55 mins. The Westland Wessex had a cruising speed of 100mph. The Haldon to Plymouth trip took an additional 25 mins and passed directly over Dartmoor. On the first day three aircraft made the trip from Cardiff carrying various senior railway officials. They stopped for tea and congratulatory speeches at Teignmouth Golf Club where they met local leaders, including Mr T. Shapter, Chairman of Dawlish UDC, before continuing for more of the same at Plymouth.

Initially there were two return flights per day. In May 1933 a further sector from Cardiff to Birmingham was added and the frequency reduced to once daily, and to encourage more passengers the fares were reduced – a single from Cardiff to Torquay was then £2 and a return from Birmingham to Plymouth was £5 10s. These fares need to be seen in the context of the average workman's wages at the time, which were around £1 10s per week. The service only ran in the summer months and closed on 30 September.

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In the early 1930s air travellers were either rich, or needed to travel somewhere quickly for business reasons. They also needed to be resilient and prepared for discomfort. With no air conditioning and little heating, the passenger cabin could get unpleasantly hot or cold, and it was usually very noisy, with much vibration from the engines. And with no forced air circulation system, the predominant smell inside was a mixture of hot oil and metal. Furthermore, the planes were not flying high enough to escape the turbulence encountered at lower altitudes. All this meant that many passengers felt sick, and the only way to escape the added smell of disinfectant used to clean up would have been to open a window. It was not until the late 1930s that planes were able to climb above at least some of the bad weather, and the cabin conditions became more pleasant, with the introduction of soundproofing, ventilation ducts, more solid fuselage structures, and upholstered seats mounted on rubber and with padded arm rests to further reduce noise and vibration. In its first season the service cost GWR nearly five times as much as the revenue it generated. One small aspect of its uneconomic nature was the provision of a dedicated bus service laid on to take passengers between Teignmouth and the airfield, an unnecessary extravagance considering the very small number of passengers arriving or departing from Haldon. Surely a taxi or private hire car would have been better, and this is what was offered by a new service started by Provincial Airways the following year. It ran between Lon-

don (Croydon) and Plymouth via Southampton and Haldon and offered private saloon car transport to and from the airfield.

In 1934 the GWR service continued to operate on weekdays in summer, but now Haldon was designed as a 'request stop'. Instead of GWR livery the planes now bore the insignia of the newly formed Railway Air Services (RAS), and the route was extended to include Liverpool. Both the GWR and Provincial services used DH84 Dragon aircraft, which had a similar capacity and speed to the Wessex, but were more modern (and possibly more comfortable). But in 1935 Haldon suffered a setback when both airlines moved their services to the newly opened Torquay Airport, which had been developed at Denbury by Provincial Airways. However, this was very short lived, as Provincial Airways failed to make a success of its internal routes and was wound up at the end of the year. As a result, the Denbury airfield closed down after only a few months of operation. The airfield site reverted to farmland, later housed a military camp, and is now the location of Channings Wood prison.—



A DH84 Dragon in Aer Lingus livery © Gabriel Desmond, www.airliners.net

RAS returned to Haldon for the 1936 summer season with a once-a-day service that ran from Plymouth to Bristol via Cardiff and Weston-super-Mare. Haldon was again a request stop, with a minimum of three hours notice required. In 1937 Exeter Airport opened and RAS services stopped there on request as well as at Haldon, and this continued through the summer seasons of 1938 and 1939, although presumably only a limited number of passengers would have used Haldon. Exeter Airport was run by the Straight Corporation headed by Whitney Straight, who Bill Parkhouse had taught to fly at Haldon in 1929. Bill Parkhouse became the Manager of Exeter Airport, where he remained with the exception of the war period until his retirement in 1956.

## THE DAWLISH WORLD WAR ONE PROJECT

By Robert Vickery

The Dawlish World War One project has revealed more about the lives of families in Dawlish, mostly of humble origin but occasionally of one that has been recorded in a DLHG publication. This short note will add something to existing biographical items on the Cann and Jackson families.

In "Dawlish Folk" is an item on The Cann Family by Tricia Whiteaway. I dare to correct and add to one sentence on Page 39, 3rd para, in which she states that Amy Cann met her future husband John Rooth at parties in Dawlish. Amy Mary Cann (1867-1950) married Richard Alexander Rooth (1866-1915) on 25th June 1895 in Dawlish. He was a career soldier and he spent the turn

of the century in India before returning to the 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers at Madras. In November 1914 they landed in Plymouth and were stationed at Torquay. On January 7th, 1915 Lt Col R A Rooth handed over the regimental colours to the Mayor and Corporation of Torquay for safe keeping. Lt Col Rooth led his battalion ashore in the first wave to attack 'V' beach at Gallipoli on April 25th, 1915, where he and most of his men lost their lives. His death is recorded on a brass plaque on the north wall of St Gregory's church. It may be assumed, without further evidence, that his widow paid for the plaque in St Gregory's. It is his only memorial in Dawlish, but his present day family have extensive records of him.

Lt Col and Mrs Rooth had a son Richard Goodwin Rooth (1900-1984) who later married Gwendolen M Watkin in 1933, and a daughter Nancy Rooth (1908-2001) who married William Henry Priddle in 1946, and many people have told me of their memories of Nancy Priddle. In "History of the Manor House" by Tricia Whiteaway there is coverage of the use and ownership of the building through the years. The Jackson family occupied it for at least 48 years, from the census of 1881 until the death of Catherine Jackson in 1929. Since this DLHG publication, Nicola Phillips has written a very detailed account of the life of an earlier male Jackson, William Collins Burke Jackson, in "The Profligate Son". He so wasted his father's wealth that he was eventually transported to Australia. He married there and had a son George William Collins Jackson who was sent to England for his education and eventually entered the army and rose to Major and is the Major Jackson referred to in "History of the Manor House".

There was a steady supply of daughters in each generation but the male line was not so strong. It had all but died out by 1901 when George Wilfred Collins Jackson died, leaving only his son Wilfred George Jackson, aged 5. He was living at the Manor House with two maiden aunts, and a step-sister. Katherine and Georgina Jackson had a married sister Maude Hildyard who came to importance in the Dawlish Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) formed in 1913. She eventually became Commandant and her daughter, known as 'Poppy' served under her as Quartermaster. She was also largely responsible for organising the housing and care of Belgian refugees, for which she was recognised by the King of the Belgians after the war.

Wilfred George Jackson was the subject of detailed study for he died on 27th April 1915 on the Western Front. The WW1 project mounted an exhibition about his life and death at the Manor House. He was sent away to Marlborough College and then went on to Sandhurst Military College from which he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, being promoted to Lieutenant on arrival in France. In an action on April 27th 1915 the 3rd Battalion of the East Kent Regiment (The Buffs) were sent to relieve Canadian troops under fierce attack. He was reported wounded badly in the stomach, and missing. As the Company was surrounded by Germans and retreating, or being taken prisoner, he was left behind and it was two years before the War Office notified Catherine Jackson that he must be presumed to have died on 27 April 1915.

These are brief notes taken from the extensive accounts provided by the Dawlish WW1 project.

Further enquiries can be made to [info@dawishww1.org.uk](mailto:info@dawishww1.org.uk)

## THE BLACKMORE FAMILY

by Tricia Whiteaway

This photo shows a handsome, confident, possibly wealthy young man – his descendants thought he might have gone to Eton – certainly he has that air. However, William was born in Dawlish in 1856 at Heavigate, Dawlish, the son of Elizabeth (nee Bond) and George Blackmore – an agricultural labourer at Aller Farm where his uncle William and his grandfather Samuel also worked, so wealthy they were not. Later census



shows the parents moved to Old Town Street and his uncle had become a grocer, whilst young William at 15 was also a labourer living-in with Farmer Lee at Aller, so that rather ruins the story of him attending Eton. But was he a gardener at Eton? It seems unlikely.

By the age of 21 he was a gardener in Worksop where this photo was taken and where he met a chamber-maid Alice Highfield (born in Derbyshire). William took Alice off to Turnham Green in London where they married and where later in Chiswick they had a daughter Minnie (whose death started this enquiry back in 2003). However Kew Gardens was very very close to Chiswick.

Then they went to Niton on the Isle of Wight (but nowhere near Osborne House) where a son William was born, then within two years they returned to Dawlish, to have a further five children. In 1885 the birth certificate of his daughter Ruth shows he appears as a dairyman shop-keeper in the Strand Dairy on Park Road (where the charity shop was lately on the corner of Strand Hill) and later as a gardener; they lived in Brook Street, (not Manor Row).

Sadly in April 1892 his daughter Minnie drowned, not where it was thought in Dawlish but in the Higher Reservoir in Teignmouth. Her obituary said that she was taking a note to a Capt. Mitchell for her laundress mother but had stopped by the reservoir, took off her socks and shoes but slipped into the water and drowned. Her mother was quickly brought, then her father who searched for her but the water was too muddy. At this time they were living in Sandymount, the house on the corner of Exeter Road, Teignmouth, and Higher Buckridge Road, just above the cemetery, a lonely place at that time with very few houses around except Venn Farm (in Bishopsteignton) just up the hill. There is a possibili-

ty that he was the gardener for the cemetery as Sandy-mount was recognized as such.

Later in 1895 William took his family to Worksop probably to look after Alice's elderly parents, and where they finished off their family with two more children, Martha and Victoria. There they remained and in 1911 William



was listed as a gardener 'not domestic'! so possibly working for the local Council? His eldest brother turns up as a railway guard in Abergave-

ny, his next brother was a butcher in Old Town Street and another a greengrocer, also in Dawlish.

There were more Blackmore cousins in Dawlish but that will be another story. So the mystery remains as to where did he get these wonderful clothes in 1879. Instead of the popular new (and cheaper) lounge-suit, he is wearing a white double-breasted waistcoat (more suited for evening dress?), a form of stock instead of a tie and a frock-coat with deep buttoned cuffs – very old fashioned for 1879. Living in Worksop, the area was known as the Gateway to the 'Dukeries' as four dukes had their estates in this area, so the second-hand (and third-hand) clothing shops must have done a good trade when the dukes changed their clothes. Did he have first choice when the Dukes or rich farmers were nagged by their wives to 'tidy themselves up!' and buy new clothes? We shall never know – but what a character!

## DECEMBER MEETING

At our December meeting Todd Gray came to talk to us about 'Christmas in Devon'. He reminded us that many Christmas traditions that we might suppose have ancient origins (a decorated tree, carol singing, seasonal greetings cards, crackers with terrible jokes, turkey) were actually initiated at various times during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Charles Dickens was one influence: his popular Christmas stories encouraged these new traditions to be widely adopted. Todd emphasised that until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the majority of people lived a hand-to-mouth existence and found it very difficult to celebrate Christmas at all. There were established practices, some particular to Devon or the West Country, that allowed them to beg for and receive bits of money from well-to-do folk living in big houses or local farms. This enabled them to buy ingredients for a decent meal on Christmas Eve, but they might have to visit twenty different places in the locality to get enough.

Todd also took the opportunity to introduce a new book by Derek Gore: 'The Vikings in the West Country', which was formally launched at an event at Dawlish Library that evening.

David Gearing

## DAWLISH HISTORY DAY

The beautiful weather brought out crowds of local people, who enjoyed displays of old photographs and stands with information about the archaeology, WWI and WWII, the Railway and Tourism. After studying the displays and historical objects as well as the Dawlish Model Railway Club's layout, visitors could rest while watching a rolling picture show of old images or get advice on exploring their family history. Many visitors were born in Dawlish or long-term residents and they provided information about people and places not previously known to the History Group or Museum. There was also an opportunity to see the best images of the Great Storm of 2014. We had many positive comments about the event – the only criticism was that it was only on for one day!

The Museum and DLHG would like to thank all those who came along to help make the event a great success as well as those who came along to see the exhibition and support this event, which we hope to repeat in the future.—

### Calendar and Visits planned for 2016

Thursday May 5<sup>th</sup> at 2pm Visit to Teignmouth Museum.

This will start with a 15-20 minute talk on the history of Teignmouth followed by an opportunity to explore the museum's collections. These include shipping in the River Teign, the Morgan Giles shipyard and Teignmouth and Shaldon's links to the sea. There is a £3 charge per person for the visit and transport will be by rail, bus or car.

Tuesday July 5<sup>th</sup> at 2pm Visit to Kelly Mine nr Lustleigh.

Kelly is a Devon iron mine and is open to the public as an industrial heritage site. We will be able to trace the whole process from mining the ore, via the adit and shaft, to the dispatch of the final product from the drying shed. There is also a small museum to explore. Parking is limited to 5 to 6 cars, so sharing of cars may be necessary. The site is sloping and uneven and there are no refreshments, so a return to Bovey Tracey is suggested. A £2 donation per visitor would be welcomed.

Tuesday September 6<sup>th</sup> 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).

N.B. There is no museum report in this edition.