

# Dawlish Gazetteer

## **Bacon Bridge**

Officially known as **Alexander bridge** it crosses Dawlish Water between Alexander Road and Barton Hill. It was probably first conceived by John Edye Manning as part of his development scheme around 1807 and would have been required when Brookdale the distinctive thatched cottage on the corner of Brunswick Place was built. The first bridge was wooden and was swept away by the floods of 1810. The replacement bridge only lasted until 1825 when a stone bridge was built and this has been rebuilt and improved since. The bridge gained its nickname because there was once a butcher called Mr Tripe who had a shop adjacent to the bridge.

## **Boat Cove**

This cove did not exist before the railway arrived and the breakwater (*see Pout Wall*) was built. The fishing boats used to be laid up on the main beach but the building of the railway line meant that they couldn't be drawn up so far and were therefore more vulnerable to the high tides and storms. Nonetheless the transfer of the boats to the new cove was a slow drawout process as it was easier for the fishermen to land their catches near the colonnade. However the fishermen were not always welcome on what was declared to be the ladies swimming beach after 1864. In 1860 a mound was built up between Red Rock (*see entry*) and the cliff to give extra protection to the boats from the prevailing south westerly winds and thus giving more meaning to the original name of *Shelter Cove*. Throughout most of the twentieth century the cove was where both fishing and leisure boating was based. Unfortunately a considerable amount of sand has been scoured out exposing the rocks underneath which make it a less desirable anchorage.

## **Carpenters Bridge**

This is the bridge over Dawlish Water in Church Street. It was the oldest crossing in town and had been a county responsibility since 1690. The original county bridge was a narrow two arched stone construction. In 1864 it was widened with a single arch added alongside the original. In 1875 the double arched side was badly damaged by flood water and when it was rebuilt the following year it had a matching single arch. The 1864 widening was the responsibility of John Carpenter of Gatehouse as Surveyor to the Board, hence the name and he is remembered by a commemorative plaque on the bridge. John Carpenter is associated with a number of building projects in Dawlish.

## **Clump of firs**

On the skyline at the highest point above the northern side of town is the 'Clump of firs'. They were originally planted by Captain Charles Knighton R.N. on land he owned celebrating the birth or birthday of his daughter Lucy born in 1811. No one knows how many trees were originally planted but one thing is certain Lucy was an only daughter and did not have '*Seven sisters*' which is one of the alternative names. Further information is available in the book *More Dawlish Folk*.

## **Coastguard bridge**

If you know that the line of limestone buildings just beyond the station platform were built for the coastguards the reason for the eponymous name of this bridge will be obvious. A coastguard station was first established around 1809 and there was a path from Exeter Road down to the coastguard's (then known as Preventives) building at the base of the cliff. When the railway was built the original coastguard boat house and base was destroyed. A new watchhouse was built on the landward side of the railway and the boathouse on the seaward side connected by a bridge. The bridge and boathouse were built of limestone as were the later buildings to accommodate the coastguard men. The boathouse was demolished in 2021 to make way for the new sea defences but part of the original limestone steps remains.

## Colonnade

The dictionary meaning is 'a range of columns placed at regular intervals' (usually supporting something above). The railway still refers to the viaduct near the station as The Colonnade. It seems that once they hit on a name they rarely change it. The name aptly summed up the first structure in this location with its 9 columns closely spaced providing a number of fairly dark passages giving access to the beach. The Colonnade was put up by the railway in 1846 and lasted until 1928. The first idea was to replace it with something similar but a campaign in Dawlish demanded something lighter, where visitors could look through it to see the sea. Townsfolk collected a sum of money to show that they were in earnest and the railway redesigned the structure to give its current form.

## Coryton Cove

Situated beyond Boat Cove and Early's Wall this is the best beach in Dawlish today. Although it has always had its admirers before Early's Wall (*see below*) was created its access was more difficult. What its very first name was we don't know but it is believed that from the 1700s it gained the nickname *Bishop's Parlour* in recognition that Bishop Weston had once been stranded there when the tide came in. [However some sources say that this name was attributed to the cove that used to exist between Boat Cove and Coryton Cove]. For reasons not yet established in 1848 William Dawson named it *Crane Cove* on a watercolour that he published. From 1864 until beyond the turn of the century the beach was known as *The Gentlemen's Bathing Cove* as from that date gentlemen were banned from swimming on the main beach as this was designated for females only and the gents had to retreat out of sight around the corner. Eventually in 1911 families were allowed back on this beach and it gained its current name. There is a chicken and egg situation about the name Coryton but almost certainly the beach was named after the nearby railway tunnel. The tunnel itself was named after a Miss Coryton who lived at Cliff Cottage in the early 1800s which was the only building with a view of the cove at that time.

## Early's Wall

Early's Wall is the promenade between Boat Cove and Coryton Cove. Originally there were two spurs either end of Lea Mount running into the sea with a cove in between. Families would often picnic in this cove, as they were banned from Coryton Cove after 1864. One family was picnicing there in August 1885 when there was a landslide which killed 3 of the party and injured others. As a result the local Board had the cliffs scarped and much of the debris brought down was formed into a platform behind the new sea wall. The work was undertaken by a builder named Richard Early who had previously been associated with installing the fountain in Tucks Plot. Unfortunately a dispute arose between the builder and the Board who refused to pay all his bills. He went bankrupt and so emigrated to Australia, however his work has stood the test of time and his name is still associated with the area today.

## Elephant Rock

This is the nickname given to **Langstone Rock** and it is easy to see why when looking from Dawlish Warren at the arch on the end of the rock. This nickname has been in use since at least Victorian times. If the sands of Dawlish Warren didn't exist Langstone Rock would be on the corner of the entrance to the Exe estuary. The nearest important landmark was Langstone Cliff House, now a hotel, hence its official name. It only became an isolated rock once the railway was built and according to some railway notices their name for it is *Red Rock* which has caused some confusion. When there was only a single railway track the farmer could move his cattle via a bridge over the railway but this was no longer possible when the cutting was widened for a second track and to stop the possibility of landslides. The rocks below the outcrop have caught out a number of boats over the years and several desperate rescues have been made by hauling sailors up the cliff on Langstone Rock.

## Jubilee Bridge

This bridge completed in 1887 is named in recognition of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. It is the latest in a succession of bridges at this spot which links the north and south of the town and may have been useful to get grain to the Strand Mill. We know that there was a rudimentary bridge, probably allowing pack animals to cross here by at least 1787 as it is shown on the earliest detailed map of the town. There are illustrations of a rickety plank bridge which was in place until Dawlish Water was canalised. A new structure was provided but lasted a very short time before being washed away by the 1810 floods. A new humped wooden bridge was built which lasted until 1844. This was replaced in 1844 by an iron bridge with a distinctive tall lamp post at its central point. Unfortunately this bridge proved too narrow for all the traffic and thus the Jubilee bridge was conceived. This bridge too has faced traffic problems and so the original two way traffic scheme was changed and it became part of a one way system.

### **Kings Walk**

The original walkway no longer exists as it was encased in concrete in 2020 as part of the new sea wall. It was the path between the sea wall and the railway running from the railway viaduct to Boat Cove which was created when the railway formation was widened and the second railway line was installed to create a double track railway all the way from Paddington to Plymouth. It was opened, without ceremony in May 1902 but was named the Kings Walk in honour of Edward VII whose coronation was in August 1902. Partway along the walk between the viaduct and the subway was a steep flight of steps to the beach this was known as **King Harry's Steps**.

### **Lady's Mile**

Today this could refer either to the holiday campsite or the coastal footpath from the junction of Warren Road with Exeter Road along the top of the cliff and round the front of the Langstone Cliff Hotel to the carpark at Dawlish Warren. The campsite took its name from Lady's Mile Farm on which it has grown but in previous times that was known as Week Farm. The footpath has been much expanded since the second world war. There are descriptions of it originally being a fairly narrow way and unmade up. One tale of how the name came about is that the ladies from Powderham Castle used to ride over regularly for the exercise but did they use the footpath or Week Lane which runs through Lady's Mile Farm?

### **Lawn**

This green area in the centre of the town is a man-made construction created around 1808 by John Edye Manning. The area had originally been part of the estuary with the winding stream and the silt mostly covered in rough vegetation. The area at this stage was known as *Tunncliffe Waste*. Manning straightened the brook and raised the level of the surrounding area to create a park around which he could build houses. Fairly soon after it was created this piece of land became known as the Lawn and has always been used for leisure purposes, albeit in its early days it was also used for grazing cattle. More information in the book 'The Lawn Dawlish'.

### **Lea Mount**

Nowadays this is the park at the top of the cliff bounded by the road (originally a track) to Holcombe and Teignmouth. For centuries this was just rough ground and may have been a useful place to look out for enemy shipping. In the 1840s the railway company made a path up the cliff from Marine Parade to move staff concerned with building the railway but this was not a public path at this time. Throughout most of the early nineteenth century the land at Lea Mount belonged to the owners of Great Cliff house at the end of Marine Parade and was referred to as Great Bottom. When the council wanted to build a footbridge to Boat Cove it needed some land from Great Cliff House and the owner decided to sell his house and grounds. The council then seized the opportunity to enhance the amenities by rebuilding the cliff path for public use and so Lea Mount came into the council's possession. At this time Dawlish gained a new resident as Thomas Lea moved into Sea Grove House (later Lanherne) He had been an M.P. and obviously wanted to make his mark on

Dawlish. He bought the land at the top of the cliff from the council and then gifted it back to them as public space. In his honour the council named the area Lea Mount. At this time trees were planted and new paths created. It was a well regarded space and concerts were put on here in the summer.

It gained a new importance during WW2 when it had both a lookout point and gun emplacements, the signs of which are still with us today.

### **Mount Maria or Moriah:**

Old Dawlishians have identified it as the grassy area above the footpath to Coastguard Bridge.

During WW2 there was said to be a gun emplacement on this grassy area.

The origin of the name has been a complete mystery but a passing reference in a guidebook of 1803 may hold the clue. After describing the home of William Watson called Sea Grove (later Lanherne) above what later became the railway station carpark it mentions that in the extensive grounds '*nearer the sea a whimsical mount, in imitation of the natural rock has been raised, formed into a cell on the inside*'. The cell was supposed to be for a hermit monk. Other descriptions talk of a folly and place it in the direction of, but probably not at, the start of the path to Coastguard's bridge.

Mount Moriah has biblical associations which would link to the idea of a monk's cell.

### **Newhay**

The meadow beside the parish church, pronounced New-ee, which for a long time belonged to the church but which is now public open space.

### **Old Maid**

Lying just off Early's wall is a stump of red rock. It looks unimpressive today but apparently in the latter half of the eighteenth century it was a 'tall pointed rock with an archway through it'. However by the end of the century the arch had disappeared. In this form it figured in one or two illustrations and with imagination it is possible to see how it got the name Old Maid. According to Carter 'many years later it appeared to be dangerous and the top was removed' although other accounts suggest that the head disappeared after the army used it for target practice. What was left was then called *Toad Rock* as that is what it resembled but with further erosion it is difficult to know what to call it now, although some call it *Muffin Rock*.

### **Piazza**

The dictionary definition of a piazza is 'a square or open space surrounded by buildings' but in Dawlish it describes the tarmac-ed area with the wooden seat shelters at the seaward end of the Lawn close to where the tourist information office used to be. This is a fairly recent designation completed at roughly the same time as the Strand improvements. The hope was that this would become an outdoor market area.

### **Pout Wall**

This is the breakwater protecting Boat Cove built by the railway in 1846. Originally built of limestone, it was later strengthened with granite and more recently with concrete. The original had buttresses on the landward side which were later filled in.

Pout is a name for several kinds of fish. There is an obvious link here with the wall protecting fishing boats in Boat Cove, alternatively it could be linked with the idea of people fishing from the top of it.

### **Red Rock**

This is the pinnacle to one side of Boat Cove. It was originally attached to a finger of cliff on one side of Lea Mount. This had always posed a barrier for accessing Coryton Cove, however there was a fissure in the rock which acted as a tunnel through which people could make their way when the tide had gone down some way. The fissure was called *Cows Hole* as the cove between the two

fingers of cliff was where cowrie shells could be found. According to Cornelius Red Rock had previously been referred to as either '*The Bishop*' or '*The Old Bachelor*'.

### **Rockstone Bridge**

Links the higher end of Exeter Road to the sea wall. Fishermen and walkers campaigned for this bridge as the sea wall footpath between here and Coastguard bridge (*see above*) was lower than now and often under water. The bridge was built in 1870 and started close to what was originally an isolated building called Rockstone House which in later years was better known as a hotel. For some reason this bridge is also sometimes called Black Bridge.

### **Stilling basin**

The basin structure on the seaward side of the railway viaduct which is designed to reduce the energy of the sea as it meets Dawlish Water at high water especially during stormy weather and thereby lessen the possibility of flooding in the town.

### **Thompson's Gate**

Before the stepped cycleway was created there was a sign by the archway from Beach Lane into the grounds of Lanherne/Sea Grove with this name.

### **Tucks Plot**

Situated between the two bridges over Dawlish Water nearest the sea. Originally this was tidal mudflats but the area was delineated when the bridge nearest the sea was first created. The bridge was not on the 1887 map but a crude plank bridge must have been created soon afterwards, probably for pleasure seekers to move from the end of Beach Street to the new promenade created along what became Marine Parade. The area came into its own once Brunel had straightened the channel of the brook and moved it to a more direct course towards the sea. The effect of his work was that the area was no longer covered by the tides. The area had become an island surrounded by roads and there was grass on the ground. This encouraged entrepreneurs to let their animals graze there. There are illustrations of a flock of sheep on this land but the most famous user was a Mr Tuck once known for running the first public baths in town but latterly better known for his donkey carts which were often used by the invalids in town. His donkeys grazing on this area were so well known that the whole place became known as Tucks Plot.

The first attempt to beautify the area was when the fountain was added in 1881. It was not until 1898 that public access was encouraged and a path laid down. It was at this point that the council searched for a more upmarket name for the area and eventually settled on *York Gardens* which is still the official name today although locals continue to refer to it as Tucks Plot.

The bus company calls this area *The Green*, but they seem to be alone in this.

### **Waterloo Bridge**

This footbridge is situated halfway along the Lawn between the Jubilee road bridge and the Shaftesbury footbridge and connects the Strand with Brunswick Place. It seems likely that the bridge got its name from being opposite Waterloo House. This house was completed soon after Wellington's famous victory against Napoleon in 1815 as it was finished before nos 17 & 18 next door which were built in 1817.

The path across the Lawn connecting the two roads opened in 1828. There have been several bridge structures. Originally it was wooden and certainly by 1840 it had a central support in the middle of Dawlish Water. This was replaced by a dainty metal structure with concave supports in the bank on each side however this was swept away in the floods of 1875 and replaced by something sturdier.

Documents: Dawlish gazeteer.

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