



## DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

# Newsletter

January 2012

**Dear Members,**

*Arrangements for this years programme are still in progress and we cannot issue a list of guests just yet...*

*Our Secretary, Tricia, is arranging three afternoon outings: Customs House at Exeter Quay 14th May; Chudleigh Church, a walk at Rock Quarry & tea on 2nd July. A visit to Forde House Newton Abbot has been arranged for 3rd September at 2pm; the first and best room to be shown to us has to be vacated by 2.30 as a meeting is already arranged there...*

*As usual we hope to arrange a venue for cream tea after the visits.*

*Our Speaker-finder is still working on our programme for meetings at the Manor House. February details are below and we understand that October's meeting will feature local railway history.*

*The next society book project will feature the Lawn and its history. If any members or your friends have stories, photographs, facts and figures would you please contact Tricia on 01626 866927. All information will be very useful.*

*As this newsletter will reach you early in January please accept the very best wishes from your committee for the New Year. We look forward to seeing you on the 6th of February.*

*Derek Wain*

### **Christmases past – my memories**

My childhood Christmases were in the time of deprivation - World War II. Before the war I was given a Golliwog to join my black baby doll which carried me through not getting any more such presents - not that I played with dolls much, but I loved Golly. I tried endlessly to take his red jacket off but it had been stitched to his body. Having been bombed out early in the war, we lost a lot of our possessions and things were bad. Even the house we eventually moved to, nearby also on the London/Kent borders, was on the flight path of all the bombers going to London and this house had received incendiary bomb damage, suffered blast damage sending windows in and plaster all over the tea table on many occasions. Quite how my mother coped I do not know, but she did, even when her brother became a Prisoner of War in Germany. Later, especially in 1944, we spent most nights in the deeper community shelter when the doodle-bugs and V2s were sent over, day and night.

So, presents at Christmas were strictly practical - money, slippers, gloves, scarves, jumpers (home knitted of course), jackets and skirts altered from other items by my eldest sister. However, on Christmas morning I remember finding a few items in the toe of my brother's sock (washed of course) hanging outside the bedroom door - a sixpence, a Cox's Orange Apple, and did I imagine an orange, a walnut, but definitely a small fun object! I am sure I remember eating nuts at Christmas and although people have always said that no oranges or nuts were available but I am sure I had them. Was it because my eldest sister, who worked in the munitions factory at Woolwich (by the Thames) had bought them from off the ships and the occasional chocolate bar - very few and far between. Or did we have Americans in the area? I do seem to remember Canadians so perhaps they were the source. One present I do remember was a boxed building set made of cardboard that slotted together. It had two floors and took a great deal of care to get it all together without it collapsing. Looking back obviously made in the 1930s being very stylish, very much a house as seen in Hercule Poirot series.

In spite of the above, I can never remember being hungry and Christmas dinner was the usual - roast chicken (no turkeys then) and vegetables. The chicken was our own, we always kept a few that also helped out with eggs. We also grew our own vegetables and my father who was an Auxiliary Fireman in London, had a knack of picking up items when travelling around the City. Perhaps he found the oranges? Neither do I remember a bread ration for I would always go over the road to buy the bread, picking the crusty bits off on the way home. I could never get a WHOLE loaf home.

**Our next meeting will be on 6th  
February at The Manor House  
2.00pm for 2.30pm**

**Felicity Harper from  
Powderham Castle will  
give a talk on the  
Courtenay Family**

Sometimes, in the winter evenings my brother and I would take over the kitchen, (no not to wash the dishes) but for a film show as that was a good place for this event having walls covered with white tiles.

Again through my father we had a hand-turned film projector, so the curtains were drawn, the electric light bulb was removed from the overhead light and the projector's plug inserted, and seated I was ready for the show. However, we only had about 10 feet of film and that was of a winning horse coming into the winner's enclosure, the jockey jumping off the horse in triumph plus a few shots of people yelling ( no noise of course). But my brother with his mimicry and humour kept the show going for perhaps half an hour by turn the handle back and forwards so that the jockey jumped off, jumped on, off, on, twenty times, all with stupid jokes of my brother mouthed by the spectators.

We never travelled anywhere. We had no need as we had all our family together, my parents and three children (I being the youngest) my married sister and my grandparents, (Grandpa taught me chess). Christmas Day being busy with cooking and the feasting so it wasn't until Boxing Day that we sat around playing cards - Newmarket - a gambling game with pennies and h'pennies, stopping for cold chicken sandwiches, or playing board games, games you never hear of today. In the evening, my brother Fred would entertain us being a natural comic, and we would perhaps finish with a sing-song with my father playing the piano or telling family tales. The one about Carlisle Ducks I never quite got, but it always

made my parents laugh until they cried. So it might have been a time of deprivation. But not in our house!

*Tricia Whiteaway*

## **Dawlish Gazette September 1987**

### **A Dawlish Museum Exhibit**

Dawlish was one of the last towns in Devon to be served by the postal system. Prior to 1739 letters to and from Dawlish had to be collected or posted at Chudleigh, the nearest post office. In 1812 Dawlish was included in the Exeter penny post area and a receiving house was set up in Old Town Street. In 1828 Dawlish was made a Post Town and a proper post office was set-up in Mill Row (now Brunswick Place). Over the years the office was moved to various sites within the town before moving to the present Crown Office in Brunswick Place. The first post box in Dawlish was of the pillar box type and was placed in Old Town Street in 1856. No record of this box remains but it was probably octagonal and made by Mr J. N. Blatch of Gloucester. Next in 1863 a wall pillar box was erected at Holcombe Villas which has since been replaced by a modern box. The box here on display in the Museum was originally in Oak Hill and was presented to the Museum in 1961. It is similar in type to the first Holcombe Villas box. Made in 1851/2 by Smith and Volks at a foundry near Birmingham, and when first erected would have been painted a dull bronze-green with the lettering picked out in black and the crown probably gilded. Pillar box red did not come into general use until 1874-84. Note. Above the pillar box in Dawlish Museum is a picture of the post office staff assembled outside the old post office in the Strand around 1905, with the postmen in their flat caps.



Dawlish Regatta in the 1960s, viewed from Boat Cove breakwater.