



DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter

March 2012

Dear Members,

Well, the recent mild weather has been very welcome after the cold start to February, let's hope it continues. As you will see from the details below our next meeting commences with the Annual General Meeting, we hope there is a good attendance....

*At many recent AGMs our chairman, Bob Thompson, has asked for a new Chairman to step forward. Unfortunately Bob is suffering from some health problems and probably will be standing down this year. For a couple of years I have taken on the extra tasks our Chairman covered (book production, newsletter etc) so the remaining responsibility is just the normal Chairman's duties. We **really** need someone to come forward if the group is to continue.*

Our current book production concerns the development of the Lawn in Dawlish. Do you have any information, stories or photographs of its situation? Please contact Tricia 01626 866927 or myself, 01626 888463, if you can help.

Derek Wain

**Our next meeting will be on
2nd April, The Manor House.**

AGM at 2pm

**Followed by
Mr Bill Horner on
'Recent archaeological
events in Devon.'
at 2.30pm**

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum re-opened to the public on 15 Dec 2011 – as I was in Exeter that day with half an hour to spare I decided to pop in and have a look around.

The Victorian entrance in Queen Street remains virtually the same as is the entrance hall with the impressive staircase leading to the upper floors which I understand have been updated to a very high standard. I have been reliably informed that Gerald the Giraffe is in residence somewhere up there along with an elephant and other animals who have all had a 'make-over' – I didn't have time to visit them this time.

I concentrated on the ground floor – I was given a floor plan but not being good with maps I decided just to wander around. I was thrilled to find myself in a big gallery with well presented showcases detailing the different stages of the history of Exeter which I found fascinating – so much so that I didn't have time to visit the very inviting teashop – I will certainly try it out on my next visit.

I would recommend a visit – I'm certainly going again with more time to explore, where else can you find so much of interest for no charge and no time limit (except for the opening hours). The Museum is open from 10am to 4pm every day except Monday – believe me it is well worth a visit.

Mavis Stuckey

Tragic Boating Fatality

Smart and plucky rescue by Dawlish boatmen Dawlish Gazette 1 May 1920

There was a tragic boating fatality off the Warren on Tuesday afternoon. Chief Coastguard Baker (of Dawlish Station), Ship's corporal Patrick Dean (HMS Valiant) and William Demaine, (ex- Metropolitan policeman of Lancashire Force) went out for a sail in the 14ft coastguard dinghy shortly after lunch. Mr Demaine is Dean's father-in-law. There was a stiffish WNW wind blowing with occasional squalls; indeed, risky conditions to go for a sail in a small boat. The party went with the wind towards Langstone Cliff. When about 2½ miles from Dawlish and off the Warren, Coastguard Legg, who was on look-out bridge, saw the boat suddenly heel over and capsize. He ran and informed Mr Ernest Cotton, a well known boatman and an experienced sailor, who lives in one of the Coastguard houses. Cotton at once hastened to Boat Cove, half a mile away, and went to the rescue in his sailing boat. On his way he informed Messrs R & J Rackley, two other boatmen, who put to sea in a rowing boat. With a hard and freshening wind at his back Cotton's boat made splendid headway and he was fortunately just in time to save Baker, who had kept afloat in the water nearly an hour, and was lapsing into unconsciousness. The task of getting the drowning man into the boat was one of extreme difficulty and danger, and the fact that it was done without catastrophe reflects no small credit on the resource and seamanship of the plucky rescuer. The other two men had disappeared. Cotton's only course with strong wind at his back was to sail direct to Exmouth, where he arrived with Baker in an unconscious condition. Artificial respiration was at once applied and he was eventually brought round and put to bed at the Coastguard House.

In the meantime the Messrs Rackley had found the body of Demaine, but could see nothing of Dean, who was a strong swimmer. They rowed into Exmouth with the body. An Exmouth boatman, H Hockings, recovered

the capsized boat, which was floating bottom upwards and towed it into Exmouth.

The utmost sympathy is felt with Mrs Dean in her terrible bereavement. A sad feature of the case is the fact that the late Mr Demaine's son arrived at Dawlish on the evening of the fatal occurrence on a visit to his father and sister.

The greatest credit is due to the three Dawlish boatmen for going to the rescue in such ugly weather, particularly to Mr E Cotton, who hazarded everything by sailing to the spot. He is noted for his skill in handling a sailing boat, and never did he put his seamanship to better use than on this occasion.

At the inquest at Exmouth into the death of William Demaine, aged 50, Station Officer William Baker stated that the weather was 'not too bad' when they set sail but got squally when they reached Langston. He tacked a couple of times but on the third the boat would not come about. Ship's Corporal Dean asked to let have a try and taking the tiller headed the boat off the wind. A squall caught her and over she went. Dean and himself made attempts to save Demaine – who was lying face downwards in the water and showed no sign of life – but had to desist. It was difficult to hold on to the boat which kept turning over. After about an hour Dean slipped off and disappeared. Witness tried to get a lifebelt on Dean. He himself was almost exhausted when Mr Cotton's boat arrived and he was rescued.

The medical evidence was that Demaine died from shock and not from drowning and a verdict was returned accordingly.

The Jury warmly commended the efforts at rescue of Messrs Cotton, Rackley (2) and Baker.

The body of ship's Corporal Patrick Dean was recovered in the river Exe a few days later.

2012 at Dawlish Museum

Dawlish Museum is, at the time of writing, a hive of activity behind closed doors. A dedicated team of folk are using their various talents to set up several displays reflecting the exciting events of 2012. Pride of place goes to the Olympic Gold Medal won by Fred Holman in the 1908 Olympics – this medal has been on display for some time but is now in a far more prominent and updated display. On the subject of medals another display shows the OBE awarded to Margaret Farrer for services to midwifery and the Silver Jubilee Medal awarded to her sister Emblyn. The three sisters Emblyn, Margaret and Beatrice were all stewards and good friends of Dawlish Museum.

We cannot of course ignore the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II so a small display is being prepared to honour that event. This year is also the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic so that is another event we are doing our best to honour – it might not have a direct connection with Dawlish but there is always the sea in common and even here we know how dramatic that can be.

The displays featured over the past year are also receiving a clean-up so will be shown to the best advantage when the Museum re-opens on 28th April including the re-vamped and extended Victorian/Edwardian kitchen.

Volunteers are always welcome on Tuesday and/or Friday mornings – if you have a talent or interest – cleaning brass, washing china, general housekeeping and any other skill pop in for a coffee and a chat anytime and meet 'The Gang'.

Mavis Stuckey

Dawlish Boatmen Honoured Dawlish Gazette 19 June 1920

A large crowd gathered round the Lawn Bandstand last Saturday when a public presentation was made to Mr. E. Cotton, Messrs R. & J. Rackley and master Geo. Cotton, local boatmen who went to the rescue in the recent boating fatality off the Warren. The circumstances are well in mind. By the overturning of a sailing boat in squally weather Ship's Corporal Patrick Dean, of HMS Valiant, and Mr. William Demaine, ex-Metropolitan Policeman were drowned whilst the other occupant, Chief Coast-guard W. Baker was saved in the nick of time by Mr. Ernest Cotton, who at great hazard, sailed to the spot being accompanied by his nephew, master G Cotton. Messrs Rackley rowed to the scene of the disaster and picked up the body of Mr. Demaine. There was a nasty choppy sea running at the time.

Mr. J. H. Ellis, (chairman of the committee) was pleased to announce that £80 had been subscribed, the money coming not only from Dawlish people but from places as far apart as the North of England, Birmingham, and Penzance – (applause). The expenses were low, local trades people have met them in a generous manner. Referring the action on the men which they wished to recognise, Mr. Ellis said that as an old sailor he knew the danger of going to the rescue in such weather in little cockleshell boats – (applause). The committee had decided to equally divide the money collected amongst the three men and the boy – (applause). Although it was true that only one succeeded in effecting a rescue, yet they all went out with the same intentions – (hear, hear,). The committee in their wisdom had thought it well that the boy should not have the money. At the same time they were handing him so that he would be able to take out his girl on Sunday and regale her to strawberries and cream – (laughter).

Mr. Lonsdale, a visitor, also made a few remarks.

Mr. W. C. Hawking J.P., chairman of the Urban Council, made the presentation handing to each of the three men a cheque for £18 17s. 6d. and to the lad a silver watch and chain with medal attached, inscribed "For bravery, Dawlish, 1920", 15 National savings certificates and £1 5s. cash. Mr. Hawking said they were proud to know that now, as ever, the Dawlish boatmen had risen to the occasion and proved equal to the emergency.

Cheers were spontaneously raised for the boatmen by the crowd.

Mr. Cotton, speaking for the recipients, "thanked one and all for their kind appreciation".

Mr. Hawking proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Ellis for the energetic way in which he had worked on behalf of this testimonial. He had given a great deal of time as well as money to the fund – (hear, hear).

Councillor J. H. Lamacraft jun., seconded, remarking that the success of the fund was largely due to his efforts.

Mr. Sidney Knapman was hon. sec. and Mr. N. B. Leechman, hon. treas. of the committee.

The Town Band kindly gave their services for the occasion.