

## DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

# Newsletter

May 2012

*Dear Members,*

*On Friday 13th April the committee met at Tricia's house to receive our ex-chairman for a formal thanks and a presentation for all his efforts in the past 19 years as Chairman. Our association was started in 1993 and Bob Thompson has held it together since then. Many old achievements were discussed, we hope they continue in future...*

*At the AGM there were changes to Chairman, Secretary and Speaker-finder. New incumbents were voted in, Tricia as Chairman, Sheila Ralls as Secretary, and Angela Marks for Speaker-finder. One small point overlooked was voting on continuation of existing committee members. We've all agreed to stay in office so things will continue as before.*

*Our next meeting/outing will be a visit to the Customs House at Exeter Quay on 14th May.*

*We also have a visit of history members from Sidmouth on 10th May. Tricia will provide a guided tour of the town, finishing at Museum. Please join us if you wish...*

*Derek Wain*

**Our next meeting will be on  
11th June, at The Manor  
House.**

**Derek Gore will talk about  
Ports and Commerce in  
South West for the period 1st  
to 10th centuries.**

### **Remarkable catches of sprats at Dawlish Dawlish Times 16 Nov 1900**

Remarkable large hauls of fine-sized sprats were made at Dawlish on Sunday last in the sea off marine Parade, quite close to the shore. The previous evening sixty bushels had been caught in one seine (net) and amongst the catch there great quantities of large 'John Dories'. On Sunday morning the hundreds of seagulls circling round and diving into the sea at certain spots betokened the presence of millions of sprats. The first Dawlish boat that went out had a record haul. They 'shot' just after nine in the morning, and by five o'clock in the evening they had only just cleared the seine. A big seine boat and four smaller boats were filled to sinking condition from this seine. The first boat brought in realised 4s.6d. a bushel. By 11 o'clock four Teignmouth boats had shot around each other and all these were rewarded. On the beach all was animation and bustle, running the fish up from the boats, tallying and packing them for despatch to the big fish markets. The packing started about midday and continued up to a late hour, continuing the next morning. Nothing could better the weather for catching the fish. The fishermen - it was omitted to mention that Topsham and Exmouth men joined in - had expected to make further hauls on the Monday, but unfortunately the weather had become inclement. Several thousand bushels of sprats were also caught by the Teignmouth fishermen on Sunday. The average price was 3s. per bushel.

### **Dawlish Swimmers Dawlish Gazette 5<sup>th</sup> June 1920**

Last Tuesday evening between 40 and 50 swimmers, members of the local club, lined up on the breakwater for the opening dip, and at a signal from the captain, Mr J A Sampson, plunged into the sea and great was the splash thereof! This large muster eloquently testified to the keenness displayed in notation this season. Numerous spectators watched with interest the opening dip and subsequent evolutions in the water. It certainly looked as if there would be little difficulty in making up a decent water polo team.

The obtaining of the Pavilion as a club centre for evening bathing is undoubtedly proving a great asset to the club, enabling the members to keep in touch with each other. There are already over 60 members.

A meeting to consider the formation of a ladies Swimming Club for Dawlish will be held in the Infants' Schoolroom on Tuesday evening next at 7 o'clock. All interested invited.

### **Kith or Kin?**

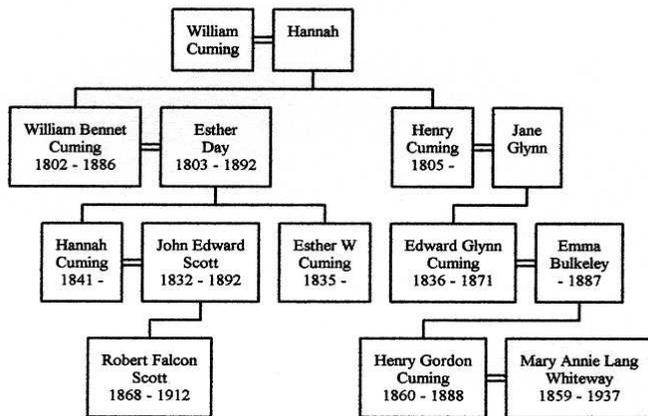
In this year of 2012 we have four huge events happening, the London Olympic Games and three anniversaries - the Queen's 60th Jubilee, the sinking of the Titanic and Captain Scott's epic trip to the South Pole. I have a little (very little) connection with the last event.

My husband's great aunts lived in a lovely thatched cottage in Combeinteignhead, one a spinster the other a widow for much of her life after only 18 months of marriage as in 1886 she had married Henry Gordon Cuming. He was born in 1860 in Liverpool and the family later moved to Mannamead, Plymouth; the son of Edward Glynn Cuming (the 'Glynn' coming from one of the big shipping families in the area) and his wife Emma. EGC was a ship's captain who died in 1871 leaving four young children whilst the mother died 1887. Luckily an aunt put the boy, Henry GC, into a naval school in Bristol where he achieved excellent grades and eleven prizes (I have his silver paper knife and a silver

meghorn). He was soon at sea but suffered from sea sickness, and if any illness or accident happened, he got it. He suffered sun-stroke in Singapore, a chill on the *'Falstaff'*, an anchor fell on his foot and he had his toes amputated, got dysentery in Calcutta, malaria in Chittagong, frost bite in New York. Finally he got typhoid fever and paralysis and died in Weston Super Mare in 1888.

His grandfather, Henry Cuming had a brother William Ben-net Cuming whose daughter Hannah married John Edward Scott in Stoke Damerel, Plymouth and they had six children; one of whom was Robert Falcon Scott. He was later to be-come Captain Robert Scott, the Antarctic Explorer.

### ***Descendants of William Cuming***



So is Robert Scott my husband's aunt's husband's second cousin (Yes) or cousin twice removed ? (No.)

What kin is he to my children? – a *second cousin, three times removed*.

But is he kith to me? No. *'Kith'* is *'friends'*. He would be *'Kin'*; a *second cousin, twice removed (via marriage)*...

Tricia Whiteaway

### **HMS Bay developments**

Shortly after the last visit of HMS Bay to Dawlish in Nov 1946, she was decommissioned in Plymouth for disposal. The ship was sold out of reserve service in 1947 and transferred to a fjord in Norway for storage. A company, Tristan Exploration (the name in those days of the present Tristan Investments (Pty) Ltd.), bought her and in 1950 she was towed to Holland where an ex-Uboat engine was installed. After taking her to Capetown in 1951, it was necessary to make considerable alterations to provide accommodation for the fishermen crew and special areas for jobs of various sorts connected with the fishing activities. A photographic section in a Capetown museum has a photo of her on arrival and named HMS Bay. Now known as the *MV Tristania*, she only made a couple of trips to Tristan da Cunha and in April 1952 was to be plagued by main bearing problems that resulted in a burnout some 60 miles east of Tristan island. A South African harbour tug, with the Master (Capt. Scott) of the *MV Frances Repetto* on board, picked her up and towed her to the mainland at a cost of £10,000.

Some time about 1960 the vessel was re-engined again, this time with a Dutch Bronze V-type 900 HP. But then again in Dec 1968, Jan 1969 and Oct 1975 she had similar problems which caused much expense in towing her back to Cape-town.

*Further history follows ... Derek Wain*

### **Railway Undermined Big Chasm under Permanent Way Smart Engineering work by GWR Company Traffic restored in three days.**

#### **Dawlish Gazette 11 Jan 1930**

The piece of railway line from the Warren to Teignmouth must be a veritable nightmare to the engineering staff of GWR Company. Built in 1846 by the great Isambard K Brunel and opened first as South Devon Railway, local wisacres shook their heads over it at the time and went so far as to call it 'Brunel's Folly'. It was not until Jan 8<sup>th</sup> 1867 however that the first serious damage was done. Then, a south-easterly gale tore up about 60' ft of sea wall in front of Sea Lawn house. Greater destruction was wrought on Sunday and Monday, Jan 31<sup>st</sup> and Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 1869, when 300 yards of the wall with rails, sleepers, etc were torn away and trains could not pass for several days.

Since then there have been frequent instances of damage to the walls in parts, but it was left to last Sunday night's southerly gale to cause the greatest damage since 1869. It happened at a point just beyond Riviera Terrace where a defect appeared in the line after the rough weather of Christmas Eve, since when only a single line had been working. Just here there is only a very low outer protection wall, due, we understand, to the fact that a previous owner of Sea Lawn property objected to a continuance of the high sea wall on the ground that his property would be overlooked by too much public.

On Sunday night the sea penetrated the wall low down and scooped out the permanent way in an incredible short space of time, leaving the rails and sleepers of both lines suspended for some distance over a yawning chasm about 15ft deep. It is to the credit of the watchmen during the height of the gale on Saturday night that their alertness they spotted the danger and were able to give warning to stop the 9.50pm down Exeter train from running into disaster.

Late travellers from Exeter were detained at the Warren and as soon as possible motor vehicles were dispatched to bring them along to Dawlish.

#### **A Great achievement**

Crowds of people inspected the damage on Sunday and it was generally thought that a week or two would elapse before the line was in running order again. It is a tribute to the engineering skill of the GWR staff and the spirit pervading the rank and file, that, incredible as it appeared, the line was repaired and a single line was working again by mid-day on Wednesday. It was a fine achievement in which all share the credit from the humble labourer to the chief engineer. Men worked day and night, as the tide would permit, often under trying conditions, and happily fine weather and diminishing tides assisted the effort.

In the interval motor vehicles conveyed passengers between Dawlish and Starcross, while fast through trains proceeded via the Exe Valley line. Regular travellers speak in high terms of the organising ability displayed by the GWR and the smooth way in which the service was maintained under the circumstances. At Dawlish the Station-master Mr Price, and the Staff did everything in their power to meet the emergency.