

DAWLISH LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter

January 2015

Website: www.dawlishhistory.org.uk

Dear Members,

I hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Ray has now finalised our 2015 programme of talks and visits and we have printed copies available at the February meeting and it is also available on our website.

As you will see from the programme, we have our AGM at the beginning of the April meeting. As most of you are aware, last Spring was a difficult time for the History Group as a number of members of the committee had to stand down for health and other reasons. However, we appealed to the members and a number of you stepped forward to help fill critical roles. As part of that I agreed to be acting Chairman, Newsletter editor and be responsible for setting up the sound and projector facilities at the beginning of the meetings, together with my existing role as website editor. Due to other commitments I cannot continue to support all of these roles. In thinking about the forthcoming AGM can I therefore encourage members to seriously consider whether they would be prepared to take on either the Chairman's role or the Newsletter Editor role.

Mike Ralls - Chairman

Evacuation to Dawlish - Val Eaves (nee Armitage)

We arrived in Dawlish in 1944, during the Second World War. It was a dark night. There were no lights at the station and the sea was sweeping over the platform. We walked along Marine Parade until we came to a plank of wood over where it had flooded at high tide.

There was an old fisherman's cottage behind the main buildings – a two up, two down affair. Gas mantles downstairs and a bucket and candles upstairs. There was my mother, myself, my aunt and her two daughters and my gran and granddad!! How we managed I don't know. An outside toilet with spiders and newspaper for toilet paper. A tin bath in front of the fire filled with hot water from the gas stove – shared by all and then tipped outside!

Our first Christmas was spent on the beach. War defences meant we were unable to go up onto Lea Mount. Our summers were spent exploring the rocks and pools. We walked to school on our own every morning and dinners were served in the Conservative Club. Miss Gill was one of our teachers as well as Miss Godfrey.

Our cottage was owned by old Mr Tapper, who ran Tapper's shop. Does anyone know how he lost his leg? We would shop at Dyke's for groceries. And Yellands, the ironmongers was where we took our radio for a new battery and for gas mantles, which never lasted long. In

Our next meeting:

Tuesday 3rd February 2015

2:00 pm at The Manor House.

Talk - "Devon Castles" by Robert Hesketh

1945, the D-day celebrations were held in Doubleday's front garden a picture of which is in Dawlish Museum.

My father came home then, having served in Egypt. He had been away for 6 years – a stranger. He arrived at night and brought an original Egyptian dance costume and some kind of nougat. I remember we were due to attend a fancy dress effort at the Conservative Club but arrived too late!

Caroline Shephard - Nancy B. Wilson

The churchyard of St Gregory's Church in Dawlish has many graves dating back to the beginning of 17th centuries. Each headstone was placed in memory of a loved one, but those memories have in most cases faded and disappeared. Such is life. But recently one of the most obscure little stones opened up a bit of a story - of young Caroline Shephard, age 15, who died in Dawlish on 1 April 1797.

Caroline Shephard was born in London on 9 May 1781, the youngest of three children. Her father, Charles Shephard, was an attorney at Bedford-row, and he was the son of an ale-house keeper of Shoreditch. Her mother, Sophia Hinchliff Shephard, was the daughter of a silk-mercator of Henrietta Street, Covent Garden; and Sophia's maternal grandfather was Benjamin Goodison (1695-1767), a cabinet maker whose clients included King George II. At her birth she joined a sister, Sophia, born in 1779 and a brother, Charles Junior, born in 1780.

In 1790 the three children were remembered in the Will of their uncle Benjamin William Hinchliff, who left them "*my real estate whatsoever and wheresoever and also the residue of my personal Estate of what nature or kind soever*", in trust. The real estate turned out to include, among others, a property known as "Saint Georges Buildings, Hoxton Square, Middlesex".

In about 1794 Caroline's mother became ill with a condition that beset her for about two years until she died in 1796 at Bristol Hot Wells. Her passing was of sufficient note that it merited a paragraph in the Gentleman's Magazine, noting her parents and spouse, and the length of her illness.

Also in 1796, Caroline's brother Charles, still a teen, was apprenticed to his father to learn the Law.

From the year 1791 until 1801, despite having his growing family and a burgeoning career, Caroline's father Charles was also siring more children with two other women, whom he never married. Five were born to a woman recorded only as Sarah, and two to Mary Page.

There is no specific evidence giving the reason for Caroline's residence in Dawlish, but given the custom

of the time it is not unlikely that she was there attending a small residential school for young ladies.

Her headstone, placed near the north wall of St. Gregory's Church, is now almost illegible, but in 1987 was recorded as



reading:

Sacred
To the memory of
CAROLINE SHEPARD
Born 9th of May 1781
Died April 1797

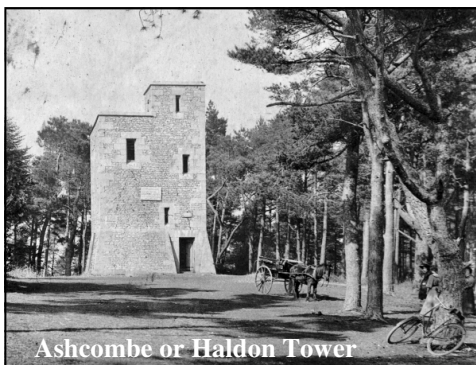
The church records describe her as being "of Holborn, Middlesex". Two obituaries referred to Caroline as "the youngest daughter" of Charles Shephard, but that was not

strictly true. She had at the time of her death at least three younger half-sisters, Emily, Harriett, and Clara Shephard. Her death, like her mother's was noted with an obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine. It described her as "a very amiable young lady."

The Holmans and Ashcombe Tower - Sheila Ralls

Ashcombe Tower, also known as Haldon Tower, was built in 1833 as an observatory or folly, originally part of the Mamhead estate and possibly by Salvin, who designed Mamhead House in that year.

Herbert Holman (1862 – 1928) a barrister, was born in Topsham and married Sophia Hawkes Andrew in Exeter in July Quarter of 1877. They bought the Tower and surrounding land



Ashcombe or Haldon Tower

as a country house in addition to their London residence.

In the 1901 census, son Paul Holman with his older brother Alwyn H Holman were boarders at Banstead Hall, a private boy's school in Surrey. They both went on to Jesus College Cambridge to study law.

In the 1911 census, his father, Herbert, is at Ashcombe Tower, Holcombe Down, Dawlish with his visiting brother Thomas J Holman, who was retired from the sea: and the caretakers Mr and Mrs Overend. At the same time, the three daughters, Dorothy, Eileen and Hester are at their home in Lancaster Gate with servants and a visitor. The housemaid, Bessie Pillar, 23, is from Dawlish.

Paul Holman was born in Streatham, London on 7th February 1893. At Cambridge, he was a member of the University Operatic Society and a keen sportsman. He was admitted into the Honourable Artillery Co. as a Private in the 1st Battalion on 26th August 1914, shortly after taking his final bar examination. According to the Western Press Holman "was so eager to proceed to the Front that he would not wait to get a commission before doing so, and he was on the eve of returning to England to take up one of the commissions which had been offered him", when on the night of 16th February 1915, Private Holman was on sentry duty outside the billets in Locre, Ypres, Belgium, when he was hit by a "stray shot" and killed. His estate of £4,099. 8s.8d was left to his father. He is commemorated on Dawlish War Memorial.

Alwyn Haskell Holman, also a barrister, served with the Royal Navy during the First World War and was killed in the Blitz on 26th September 1940 at 7 Holland Villas Road, Kensington, London, aged 51. His daughter, Benita died soon after from her injuries. He left his estate to his widow Myfanwy and his brother, Herbert Leigh Holman. As the Holman family were connected to Dawlish, Devon as well as London, Alwyn and Benita Holman were cremated and their ashes subsequently taken to Devon and scattered on the sea.

Herbert Leigh Holman, the third son, was born 3 Nov 1900

at Haldon Tower. He also became a barrister. In 1923, he sailed on the White star liner "Dorio" from Liverpool to Montreal but soon returned to England.

In January of 1932 Vivian Hartley met Herbert Leigh Holman, whilst staying at her aunt's in Teignmouth. He was a man 13 years her senior, but possessed an English charm and intelligence that Vivian found captivating. He resembled Leslie Howard, one of Vivian's favourite actors. Born in 1900, Leigh was educated at Harrow and Jesus College, Cambridge.



Vivian & Leigh

Gwen Adams lived on the Ashcombe Estate as her father was the estate bailiff. Her mother was renowned for her cooking, especially of cakes. She remembers the Holman family. Leigh Holman was a barrister for Lloyds the underwriters. Gwen lived in the valley of Ashcombe – one day the doorbell rang and she went out to be greeted by the most beautiful girl with lovely black hair and blue eyes and very petite. She was 18 the same age as Gwen. Leigh Holman was engaged to Vivian Hartley and they had come to ask whether Gwen's mother would make their engagement cake which she did.

They married on 20 December 1932, and lived at 6 Little Stanhope St, London W.1. Despite his disapproval of "theatrical people", she completed her studies at RADA and took his name to become Vivien Leigh.

On 12 October 1933 in London, she gave birth to a daughter, Suzanne but in February 1940 Leigh Holman agreed to divorce Vivien, so that she could marry Laurence Olivier later that year. Holman was granted custody of Suzanne. He maintained a strong friendship with Vivien until she died in 1967. He died in 1982.

Hester Mary Holman born 1899 was living at Holcombe Down when she died in January 1934. Hester was an artist but very fond of horse riding. She was riding on Haldon one day and fell off her horse. Her brother, Leigh Holman, happened to come along and picked her up but she died and



Hester Holman

is buried in Ashcombe Church.

Her mother, Sophia also lived at Ashcombe Tower until her death on 3rd February 1933.

Dorothy Andrew Holman born in 1888 was a painter. She served, during

the First World War, as a V.A.D. nurse in France and Alexandria. In 1939, Dorothy moved into 25 The Strand, Topsham. She died in 1983, leaving her house to become Topsham Museum. More information about the family can be found at the museum.

2015 Diary Dates

21st Jan	"Centuries of Change" Ian Mortimer, Lustleigh History Soc. 7:30pm Village Hall
14th Feb	DFHS "Stumbling thru a Wartime Childhood" 2:30pm Mint Methodist, Exeter
4th Mar	RAMM "Metal Mining in Devon & Cornwall Past & Future" 1:10pm (book place £5)
9th Mar	DHS "From the Grass Roots" Devon Heritage Centre, Sowton
2nd Apr	Devon Rural Archive "Lost Devon" 6:30pm Shilstone, Modbury £5