

December 2020 – Newsletter

Message from our Chair

Although this has been a strange year, it still seems to be passing at quite a pace and I can't quite believe that it is three months since I last sat down to write something for our newsletter.

As I write this, we are mid-way through our one month lockdown and the Covid rates are still a concern. I am hopeful that this lockdown will see the rates fall, so that friends and families can again meet up and also that we can all enjoy some festivities over the Christmas period.

Your Committee has been embracing the technological age by holding its first Zoom committee meeting. This was very productive and allowed us to discuss issues that have arisen over recent months. By the time the newsletter is produced, we will have held our second meeting and one of the items on the agenda will be to discuss whether it is possible for us to hold our AGM via Zoom.

I know that many of you will be keen to know what is happening in respect of the memorial

oak tree that is to be planted in Oldway in memory of David Watts. Tim Eley who runs the Oldway Gardening Group has been in touch with Christine and they hope to hold the ceremony sometime early in 2021 when family and friends can be present.

As your representative on the Friends of Oldway committee, I have been helping to decorate the tea rooms and am delighted to say that they are now looking so much better. All the walls and ceilings have been painted and new kitchen units are being assembled. The old floor tiles were very dirty and had to be removed and new floor covering will be laid before the beginning of December. I have been pleasantly surprised and heartened by the number of people, both local and visitors, who pop their head round the door to say how glad they are that the tea rooms are to be reopened. Many have joined the Friends and there have been many too who have offered china tea sets and teapots to be used in the tea rooms. The Friends have also been gifted two Singer sewing machines, which will be on display. Lots of people have volunteered and it is likely that initially takeaway drinks and cakes will be served and the tea rooms opened on Fridays and Saturdays.

I try to walk at least 10,000 steps a day and so am now looking forward to including, in a

future walk, the one mile stroll around Paignton Green using the leaflet prepared by Tony Hill and Karen Chapman. This is a very welcome addition to our range of leaflets – so a sincere thank you Tony and Karen for compiling this one for the Society.

It now only remains for me to say, that I hope you all keep safe and well and I will look forward to seeing you as soon as we are able to once again hold our monthly talks.

I and the Committee wish you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year

Iris Butler, Chair.

Membership

A gentle reminder to those of you who do not pay by direct debit that renewal of your membership may be overdue. The Committee are aware that as a Society, we have not been able to meet up or run our social events since March, but we are anxious to keep you as valued members. Just contact our Membership Secretary, Keith Masters to renew – phone 07749 042743 or e.mail:

keith.gmasters362@gmail.com

We have been advised of the death of a long term member, Derek Atkins, recently. Derek and his late wife, Marigold, were a part of PHS for many years – indeed at one time, Marigold was our membership secretary. Our thoughts go out to their daughter Carol and son, Nigel, at this sad time.

Coverdale Tower

Thanks to PHS member, Colin Wood, Coverdale Tower is now firmly on the Torbay Council property maintenance list.

Back in the summer, you may recall we gave the Tower a late spring clean, and since then, Colin has been liaising with Council Officers to ensure the Tower is safe and weather-proof.

- An electrician has carried out a survey recently to check and test all the electrical services in the Tower – the timer system for the heaters had failed completely, a couple of the floor socket covers were corroded and needed replacing and some of the supporting brackets for the cable conduit needed replacing.
- All that work has now been carried out and the Tower is up to date with current electrical requirements.
- Work is required on the roof to repair the lime mortar. It is unlikely this will be done this year, but temporary repairs have been made to ensure the Tower is weather proof over the winter months.
- Internal decoration work is on the list for the Spring, when the weather is better.
- The roof will be checked regularly to ensure that the leads are in place and the gullies and drains are kept clear.
- Fire extinguishers have been replaced and the building now fully meets fire safety regs.

So – well done Colin, and thanks!

Kirkham House

We were able to open Kirkham House to the public as part of Open Heritage Week on in September, and were pleased to welcome several visitors to our “restricted tour” of the House.

The collapsed garden wall is still an issue. Before any repairs could be considered, English Heritage had to ensure there was no hidden archaeology that could be damaged by the repair work. Two small trenches were dug by their archaeologists. English Heritage tell us:

"It would appear that all you can say in the PHS newsletter is that we await the archaeology report although the initial impression is that very little was found. The wall reconstruction is still awaiting final design. Beyond these there is nothing else to say for now."

However, there is a very tentative suggestion from English Heritage for the future of Kirkham House. They are considering developing the grounds as a "Medieval Garden".

There has been a fantastic response by the community to restoration of the Oldway Gardens. Can we do likewise for Kirkham? Rather than growing 21st Century flowers and shrubs, planting would be of the varieties of plants and herbs that were used in medieval medicine and cooking. Plants with sweet aromas to mask the unpleasant smells of the time!

If this appeals to you, please let us know. At the moment, it is tentative – but if there is interest, then anything is possible.

Walking Trails to beat Covid fatigue

Over the Summer, Tony Hill and Karen Chapman have been busy producing a further addition to our range of Paignton trail leaflets. The latest is a one mile stroll around Paignton Green, setting out the history of the area and buildings. The leaflet is priced at £1.50.

Christmas stocking fillers!

Our range now includes:

Paignton – Old Town (updated)	£1.50
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Paignton – Sea Front (new)	1.50
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Paignton – Medieval Paignton –

Four Old Buildings	1.00
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Paignton – Oldway	1.00
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Paignton – New Town (Victorian/

Edwardian)	1.00
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Preston – The Original Hamlet (new)	1.00
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If you would like to purchase any of the leaflets, they are available by e.mailing

paigntonheritagesociety@gmail.com –

Just tell us which titles you want, and give your name and address. Payment can be made using cheques, and there is a charge of £2 to cover postage and packaging. We are unable to receive payments by Paypal

An Audience at the Palace

Congratulations to the staff of The Palace Theatre who worked so hard to re-open the Theatre. Excellent precautions were in place to ensure the safety of all during the Covid pandemic. Hopefully the second lock down will soon be over, and the Theatre can resume its programme of talks:

- **10 December** – rescheduled
- **14 January** – Deller's Cafés by Dr Paul Cleave
- **28 January** – Hollywood Style by Kate Strasdin (rescheduled from December)
- **11 February** – Spout by Robert Garnham
- **11 March** – The Man Who Wrote Alfie by Ken Beevers
- **1 April** – Born into Entertainment by Anne George
- **13 May** – The Life, Legends and Legacy of Sir Walter Raleigh by Phil Badcott
- **3 June** – Torbay in the Movies by Dr Kevin Dixon
- **8 July** – Murder & Mystery on the GWR by Mike Holgate

Doors open at 10am for a 10.30 start. Tickets are £3 for PHS members (quote the password "Kirkham") – £5 for non-members.

PHS dates for your diary

See our re-vamped website for details:

www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk

Have you looked on our website lately? If not, please do so. One of our members, Jim Milne, has been tremendously busy over the last few months and has scanned (at the time of writing this) 3,764 postcards of Torbay which can be viewed via the "Postcard Archive" tab. Jim has added tags to each image, so if you want to refine your search, then you can do so.

In the ethos of the Society, we are making this a free resource to anyone wanting images of our beautiful Bay. So view, copy and (mostly) enjoy!

Thank you Jim – you are doing a superb job.

And finally:

Have you had a look at this website?

<https://www.inyourarea.co.uk/news/new-video-series-unlocks-the-hidden-treasures-of-torbay/>

"A new series of videos has been launched to explain the hidden treasures of the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark.

The series features interviews with world leading scientists and experts to unravel the facts behind Torbay's coveted UNESCO designation.

Over seven episodes Professor Iain Stewart MBE finds out what the local rocks reveal about Earth's history and climate change, evidence of early human cultures, and how the landscape and communities of Torbay, Devon have influenced writers and artists.

The launch of the series coincided with UNESCO's World Science Day for Peace and Development, which aims to highlight the important role of science in society and our daily lives.

One new episode will be released each week, starting with Fossils and Deep Time.

It will be followed by Caves, Early Humans, Today's Inspiration, Sea Level and Climate Change, Writers of the English Riviera and Marine Life of the Bay. Each episode will give people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to experience Devon's only UNESCO Global Geopark

Paignton Memories – the Hoyles Family

We were contacted by a Mr John Page, who had the sad task of clearing out his late brother's home recently. Whilst sorting through the contents, John came across a number of photographs of old Paignton, and he has very kindly consented to sharing these, and the family stories he recalls, with our Society members.

"My brother, who lived in Bedfordshire, kept a number of photographs of old Paignton, together with family photographs.

This old Victorian school picture, taken in Paignton, may be of interest since many Paignton families must have ancestors in it looking highly learned and disciplined under the unsmiling faces of the school staff; not quite as I remember it in the 1950s! Unfortunately I do not know which school is featured, nor do I know the names of any of the staff or students, but I am keen for the image not to be permanently lost, which is what will happen some 120+ years on when the next generation find it and may not even be able to work out where it came from. Needless to say, if by some remarkable chance, names can be put to faces, I would be very interested to hear.

The Hoyles family lived in Paignton for generations and it clearly suited them. However, following the Great War when members served in France and East Africa, it seems as if they discovered the world East of Exeter and spread their wings, the immediate family 'dying out' in Devon in 1984, at least as far as I am aware, when my Aunt, Anne Hoyles, who lived in the elevated white house on the corner of Higher Polsham Road and Torquay Road, passed on. However, my great grandfather, John Sparkes Hoyles frequently opined that he was grateful to live in the best county in the best country in the World – some accolade!

For reference, local family names are: Hoyles (my Grandmother Emily's maiden name and she came from a long line I can trace back to before 1700), Sparkes, Hannay, Webber, Langler and, a little further back by marriage, a Churchward. Other names are local but not quite Paignton.

This late Victorian photograph shows my great grandfather, John Sparkes Hoyles, with his three youngest children; Emily – standing with Florence and Percy sitting in the family kitchen garden known as the 'Croft Garden', a small orchard adjoining the Parish Church churchyard [*now an NHS car park at the rear of Gerston Hall*]. All the family's pets were buried in this garden, each with their own headstone.

It never ceases to amaze me how many old RAF officers I have rediscovered by having my uniform or mentioning my career; my circle of friends is still enormous.. Just to continue the RAF theme for a moment, my father, also John Page, who lived with his parents at [No. 2 Bishops Place, Paignton](#) (John and Emily Page (nee Hoyles)) served in the RAF during world War II. He found that it was impossible to make the last train from Newton Abbott to get home on leave. With his uniform on however, he found that he would always be invited to ride in the guards van of the last goods train to Kingswear at night and because the train had to slow for the curve in Paignton station, he could jump out of the van, land running on the platform, climb over the railings and go home; nothing ever went wrong, God bless the guard and the Great Western Railway!

The next photographs I have come across, are first, of my Great Great Grandfather Thomas Hoyles (1812-1892) taken approximately in the late 1880s outside the one of the two shops the family owned in Church Street. Next door was the London Inn (now The Coach House). The family lived on the first floor which was also combined with Nos 30 (a Grocery Store) and 34 next door either way. Behind the London Inn was the family shoemaking business. Thomas was married to Ester Sparkes from Yellands House and the Sparkes' farm at Polsham. At the time, Thomas held the record for being the longest serving member of the Parish Church Choir in which he sung for 70 years. It seems as if the shop pictured was later incorporated into the Inn, as the location of the bay upstairs window is now over the lounge of the inn. The Inn eventually became the property of one of his grandchildren, Percy Hoyles, who, having fought at Lindi in East Africa during WW1, emigrated to Australia in 1930; his widow Dorothy Hoyles returned for a visit to Paignton in 1970 during which time she sold the Inn out of family hands to the supplying Brewery. Sadly, she died in a car crash near Melbourne, Australia in 1984.

The second photograph is of the Hoyles family taken around 1895, as Percy (who was born in 1896) is not in the photograph. The two elder children, William (who set up Torquay Road Garage in 1920 (now owned by the Blackler family) and later became a director of Colsons Store in Exeter) and Rosa (who remained in Paignton at No. 49 Palace Avenue (her then recent husband Thomas Snell from Totnes and her new born child both sadly passing on in 1925)) were both my god-parents; amazing as the picture seems 'Out of the Ark'. The picture also shows the father John Sparkes Hoyles, son of Thomas in the first picture; the mother, Sarah Jane Day who came from Torquay; in addition to William and Rosa, are L to R, Edwin Hoyles who had a rather sad life after being blown up in 'No-mans Land' on the WW1 Western Front and eventually being imprisoned in Polish Silesia in a salt mine for the duration which included the turnip winter; Emily, my Grandmother with her cat who later went to live in London but returned to Paignton and Bishops Place in 1940 to escape the Blitz and Florence, who married a wool manufacturer, who was the brother of a bank manager in Newton Abbott, and went to live in Yorkshire, never to return. Interestingly, I see that the name of the Paignton photographer is impressed in the card surround of the picture.

Forgive me if this is all rather full of somewhat minutia type detail (plenty more if you need it) but I may be the only family member left old enough to remember these somewhat trivial Hoyles stories! Whilst I remember it, Percy (mentioned above) had the first motor boat in Paignton harbour in about 1911 and his friends used to dangle him on a rope off Berry Head to collect seagull eggs! As he turned out to be a free spirit, when the family took the train to Churston for regular pre-WW1 Edwardian family picnics near Broadsands, it was his job to throw the sack of any uneaten potatoes out of the train window there so that they didn't have to carry them all the way back from Churston; nobody seemed to mind in

those days! It all seems to be built up around there now but I am fortunate to have the 1891 'Churston Signal Box' nameplate residing on my landing to remind me of my Grandmother's Victorian stories. One thing that shone through more than anything was how proud they all were of England."