

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.

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!

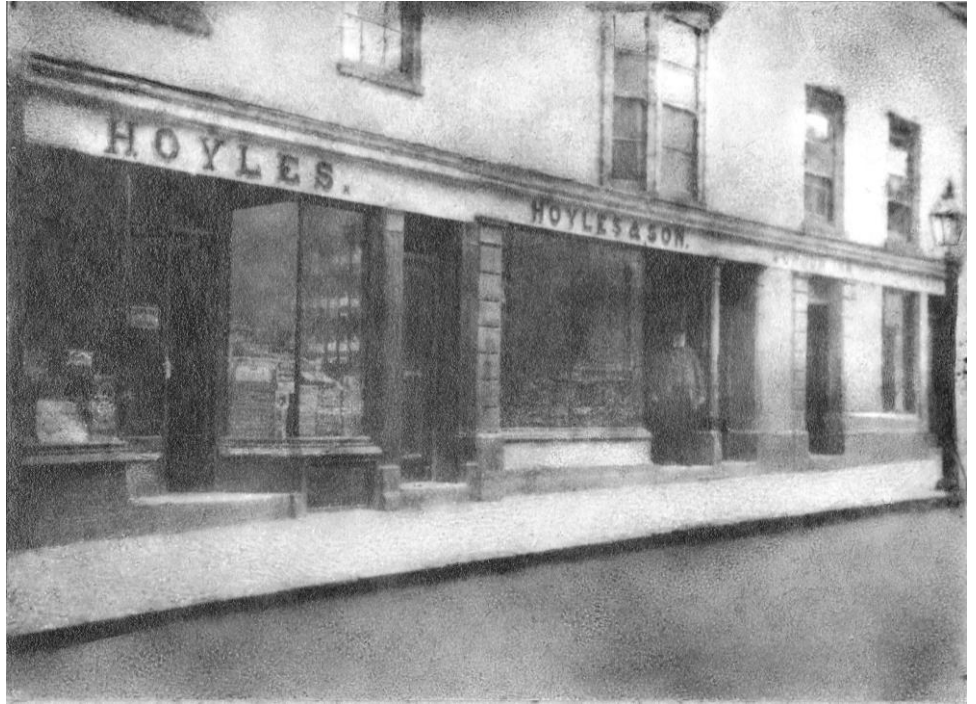
For reference, local family names are: Hoyles (my Grandmother Emily's maiden name and she came from a long line I can trace back to before 1700), Sparkes, Hannay, Webber, Langler and, a little further back by marriage, a Churchward. Other names are local but not quite Paignton.



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."