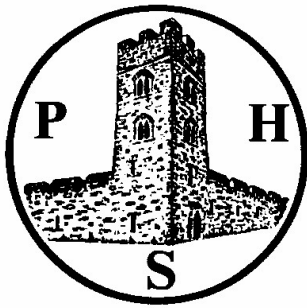




Paignton Heritage Society

Newsletter September 2020

www.paigntonociety.webs.com
www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk

Message from our Chair

What a strange year this has been so far - but a real joy has been that we have been given the opportunity to take a step back, relax a little and reflect on what matters to us all.

There is no doubt that one thing that does matter tremendously is our heritage and what we are leaving for future generations to enjoy. To this end, I was delighted to represent the Society in February when I was invited to attend the Torbay Heritage Strategy Stakeholders' meeting. I believe the consultants responsible for developing the strategy were meeting with many different groups across Torbay and the document which Eileen circulated recently is the result of the various discussions and meetings they hosted. I hope, if you feel strongly about any of the elements of the document, that you will let either Eileen or me know, so that we can pass on your comments.

I also represent the Society on the Torbay Council's Oldway and Estate Working Party and am pleased to let you know that things are slowly moving forward in respect of opening the Tea Rooms - initially this will be for takeaway drinks and cakes only, given the restrictions of Covid-19. In order to raise the funds needed to do the work to make the Tea Rooms safe, the Friends of Oldway set up a Crowdfunding Appeal with the aim of raising £7,500. They were delighted when the total amount raised was £12,806. One donation was for £1,000 and it is planned to do something special in recognition of this very generous gift. The Friends are hoping that repair work will start shortly to enable to Tea Rooms to be open before the end of the year.

We were delighted when English Heritage gave us the "go ahead" to open Kirkham to visitors and a sincere thank you to David and his band of helpers for enabling this to happen. Thanks too, to Karen for liaising with English Heritage to produce the comprehensive risk assessment, without which we would not have been able to open Kirkham. Sadly, we are not able to open the Coverdale Tower or the Clink at present.

Finally, I would like to thank Keith for offering to take on the role of Membership Secretary.

I hope you are all keeping safe and well.

Iris Butler
Chair

Coverdale Tower

Thanks to David Coaker, Karen Chapman and Colin Wood, who spent a July morning giving the Tower and Clink a thorough "spring clean" last month.

In addition to removing discarded rubbish, dead birds, countless cobwebs and other unmentionables that had found their way under the doors during lockdown, the team cleaned the roof gullies and gargoyle waterspouts that drain the water from the roof.



The condition of the Tower is becoming a concern, as water is not draining properly from the roof, and has flowed down the internal walls causing some damage. A report on the condition of the Tower has been sent to Torbay Council, and it is hoped that monies can be found to rectify the problems identified.

Kirkham House



Together with English Heritage, we were delighted to be able to open Kirkham House to the public during August. We had to limit our tours to a strict "on the hour" schedule on Sunday afternoons, and provide a talk on the House in the garden. We then invited our visitors to enter the house in their "social bubble" via the back door, and exit by the front door. By operating this way, we were able to ensure everyone was socially distancing and safe.

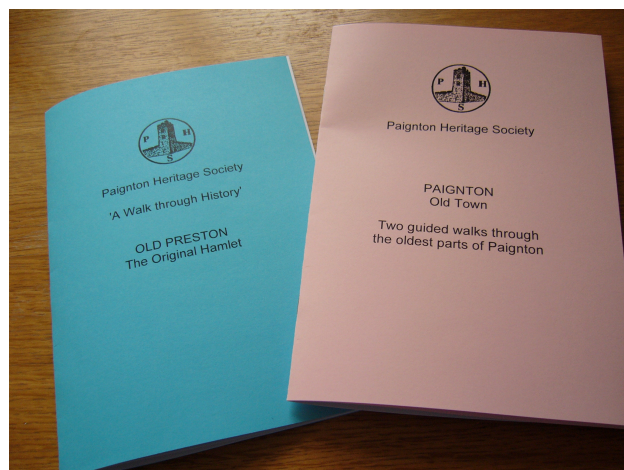
It is planned to open the House again on this basis on Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th September as part of Open Heritage Week.

PHS Leaflets

The ever popular "Paignton - Old Town" trail leaflet was first printed in 2000, and has now been updated. The new leaflet contains two guided walks around the oldest parts of Paignton and is packed with information and photographs of the fascinating history of the town (price £1.50).

A new leaflet has also been produced entitled 'Old Preston - The Original Hamlet'. Written by the late David Watts, Tony Hill and Karen Chapman, the stroll takes you around 'Peosta Tun' - old English for 'Priest's Farm'. (price 50p).

Members of PHS can purchase copies of the leaflets from Committee members at the Palace Theatre 'An Audience at The Palace' events (see below).



An Audience at the Palace

Good news. The Palace Theatre has been given the go ahead to open again with social distancing restrictions.

Sarah Hemingway, from The Palace, writes:

"We have installed protective screens at the box office desk and hand sanitizers at key points throughout the building. We have also installed a new air conditioning system in the auditorium, in response to customer feedback.

We will be opening additional doors for you to safely enter and exit the theatre and in accordance with Government guidelines visitors must wear a mask whilst inside the building, until further notice. Staff will be wearing protective face shields.

A hot drink will be brought to your seat in the auditorium before the talk begins"

Dates for the monthly Thursday daytime talks have been set for the Autumn, and will continue into 2021.

Doors open at 10am for a 10.30am start. Tickets are £5, with a £2 discount available to members of PHS (e.mail Keith.keith.gmasters362@gmail.com for the members' password you will need to quote) Tickets that were purchased for talks earlier in the year will be automatically carried forward and valid for the new dates.

- **18 September** – Mayflower 400: Legend and Legacy by Jo Loosemore [**NOTE:** change from publicised date)
- **8 October** - Rock around the Bay by Lionel Digby
- **26 November** - From Stable to Palace - celebrating 65 years of Bijou Theatre Productions
- **10 December** - Hollywood Style by Kate Strasdin
- **14 January** - Deller's Cafés by Dr Paul Cleave
- **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

Flatpole Cabbages

You may recall our competition to grow the tallest Paignton flatpole cabbage last year.

Karen Chapman has put her entry to good use by drying the stalk out over the winter, carving and varnishing it, and now is the proud owner of a fine walking stick!



PHS dates for your diary

All talks have been cancelled until the lifting of the present restrictions.

However, if any members have any suggestions for events we can safely put on during this time, please let a member of the committee know. We will do all we can to keep the Society going, even though we cannot meet as a group for the moment.

Membership Secretary

Firstly, our thanks to Anne Pentney who, after many years, has decided to take 'early retirement' from her role as Membership Secretary. Anne (and husband, John) will continue as valued members of the Committee.

Keith Masters has volunteered to take over the role, and so if you have any queries regarding membership, please contact:

keith.qmasters362@gmail.com -
(phone 07749 042743)

A tale of lockdown

In the words of Monty Python - and now for something completely different! Colin Wood has taken pen to paper to record his "ramblings" on lockdown! Colin lives in the Polsham area of Preston.

The Sands of Time by Old Rambler.

A lockdown story - some of which might be true.

At the start of all this nonsense we suddenly found ourselves, along with so many others, with a cancelled holiday and under strict lockdown with nowhere to go.

We were however fortunate in that we received a full refund from our holiday company almost immediately and, rather than just stick it back in the bank, we decided to invest it along with some time and effort in to the garden.

When we bought the house almost six years ago it came with a fairly large mature and well cared for garden but, although we had maintained the garden up to a point, as neither of us were particularly interested in growing produce we had rather neglected what had been a well ordered vegetable and soft fruit garden to the point where it had become little more than a jungle.

This area was to be our lockdown project. We decided that we would clear it completely and dig out a small wildlife pond, with a seating area next to it, so that we could gaze into its depths observing the wildlife while sipping on large glasses of Rioja. We also decided to use some of our holiday refund money to buy some larger plants to provide the sort of impact that

might take ten years or more to achieve otherwise.

Making plans and decisions is the easy bit, of course, but we set to and after a week or so of considerable effort (and some shocking bad language from my wife who, it seems, has a very low opinion of brambles) we had the ground cleared. We then looked at where we would like to position the pond and the larger plants and started digging.

At this point what seems like a rather pointless ramble becomes a bit more relevant to Paignton and the Heritage Society.

As we dug holes in the chosen places in the garden, we found that under a foot or so of rich topsoil was a layer at least two feet deep of sand. Not sedimentary sand but loose coarse sand with numerous fragments of sea shells and those sea smoothed pebbles that litter the beach and are thrown ashore in huge numbers whenever there is a fierce easterly.



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Digging large, deep holes requires a great deal of physical effort but provides very little exercise for the brain so, as I dug, I looked at the ever

growing piles of what was clearly Paignton beach sand and I wondered how and why such a huge amount of Paignton beach had made its way some five or six hundred yards inland and in to our garden.

Eventually a memory flickered around in the back of my head of a talk that we had attended some years ago given by the great John Risdon, possibly the only man to know more than Google, certainly when it comes to Devon matters.

In a talk on an entirely unrelated subject he mentioned that Polsham Green had been created in its present form by local landowners and householders taking topsoil from their land and gardens down to what is now The Green. For each wheelbarrow full of soil delivered, they could take away a barrow load of sand to improve their own gardens and fields.

With this in mind I decided to dig deeper.

It is a story that I imagine is well known to many members of the Heritage Society but it is worth telling again briefly.

The areas that are now known as Polsham Green and Paignton Green were until the late 1800s known as Polsham Sands and Paignton Sands, and the whole area was regularly inundated by high tides until the sea wall was built - the wall being completed in 1868.



Now protected from the sea, the sands were apparently much appreciated by both locals and the growing numbers of holiday makers as a space for recreation. By 1870 about half of Polsham Sands had been levelled and seeded. Then in 1873 the Paignton Local Board decided to finish the job with the 'Sand for Soil' offer which is how so much of Polsham Sands came to be in our garden.

Well the work is now done and we are sitting here by the pond; the frogs have gone, dispersed around the garden, but there are plenty of newts, pond skaters and various aquatic creepy crawlies to observe still and a variety of dragonflies patrol the air space around us (who knew that the Emperor Dragonfly was so big and vividly coloured?). The wine is Malbec rather than Rioja but we are not fussy.

We have our large and ferociously expensive exotic plants in an area that we call Sorrento in memory of our long lost holiday.

We also have a huge pile of Polsham Sands at the top of the garden. We have sifted the larger stones out of it and put them in to the pond but there is still an awful lot of sand left.

I wonder, do you think Torbay Council might like it back?