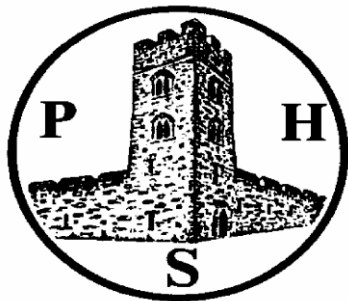




Paignton Heritage Society

Newsletter June 2022

www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk

Message from our Chair

Since our last Newsletter we have held our AGM and said 'goodbye' to both John and Anne Pentney, who decided not to stand for election this year. Your committee felt it appropriate to purchase a plaque for John in recognition of his valuable contribution to the Society, and flowers for Anne.

We were pleased to welcome Lee Hayward onto the Committee as our membership secretary.

In April we hosted John Risdon who gave us a talk on the 'History of Brixham Fishing' and in May we were entertained by Wendy Caplin, Jill Farrant and 'Station Master' Chris from the Bijou Theatre. In June, Tony Hill, one of our long standing members, is going to talk to us about 'Torbay's Aviation History' and we are hoping in July to have a guided talk and tour of Paignton Parish Church.

As life returns to normal, we are planning to hold our usual Heritage Day in September - this year with a specific theme. It has been a joy to welcome new members to our talks and we are now looking forward to a busy summer at Kirkham, with a number of mannequins (thanks to Christine Watts) enhancing the visitor experience.

Iris Butler, Chair

Committee Members

Following the Annual General Meeting (Election of Officers), your Committee members are:

Chair	Iris Butler
Vice Chair/Secretary	Karen Chapman
Treasurer	Maggie Loates
Committee Members	Eileen Donovan
	Christine Watts
	Keith Masters
	David Coaker
	Jim Milne
	Lee Hayward
	(1 Vacancy)

If you want to contact any of us, just e.mail Paigntonheritagesociety@gmail.com and your query will be forwarded.

Membership

Lee Hayward is our Membership Secretary. If you wish to contact her, please e.mail – paigntonheritagesociety@outlook.com

John and Anne Pentney

John and Anne have been Committee Members for many years. Indeed, John was Chair of PHS in the 1980's.

John has a tremendous knowledge of local history, and published his own book on Paignton – 'Turning Paignton's Pages 1500 – 1700'. For many years, John booked the speakers for our monthly meetings.

John has moved to a care home after a long time of home nursing by Anne, and we wish them both well for the future.

John and Anne will continue as members of PHS and we hope they will be able to join us at some of our events over the coming months.

Len Harwood

Many of you will know Len Harwood – a member of PHS for many years and probably the most knowledgeable of us all on the subject of Kirkham House. Len has now moved to a care home and is no longer able to join us at our meetings. We wish him well in his new home and pass on our thanks for all he has done for PHS and for Kirkham in particular.

Kirkham House

Happy 25th anniversary to us!
2022 is the 25th season of PHS volunteers sharing their knowledge with visitors to guide

them around Kirkham House. So, on this occasion, we thank all our past volunteer guides, and welcome our new volunteers – without you, there would be no Kirkham!

This Easter, we were busy at the House on both Good Friday and Easter Monday, with nearly 50 visitors. On the Monday, every single visitor was from Torbay and all of them said “this is my first visit to Kirkham – what a gem”.

If anyone is interested in helping at Kirkham, please phone David Coaker on 01803 553392.

Trail Booklets

Available on-line and payable by cheque or Paypal at:
<http://www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk>

The full range now includes -

Paignton - Harbour - Goodrington	£1.50
Paignton - Old Town (updated)	1.50
Paignton - Sea Front	1.50
Paignton – Oldway (updated)	1.50
Paignton - Medieval Paignton - Four Old Buildings	1.00
Paignton - New Town (Victorian/ Edwardian)	1.00
Preston - The Original Hamlet	1.00

There is a charge of £2 to cover postage and packaging.

PHS website

New stock of photographs is being added all the time – if you have anything interesting, such as Paignton landmarks or events, please share!

Thanks to Heather Read who has provided photos of the Evans family which will be posted on the website shortly – Mr Evans was a Baker and with his three sons Jack, George and Colin – were a very well known Paignton family.



An Audience at the Palace

The Summer programme of talks is:

- 16 June – ‘Mutiny in the Duchy, An American Uprising’ – Kate Werren
- 7 July – ‘An Unnatural History of Torbay’s Ghosts’ – Kevin Dixon
- August – no talk (summer break)

Doors open at 10.00 for a 10.30 start. Tickets for the talks are £5 for PHS members - £6 for non-members. This will include a cup of coffee.

Diary Dates

Our monthly Thursday meetings are as follows, all commencing at 7.00pm at The Gerston **Hall**, (behind the Gerston Chapel, opposite the Post Office)

Due to building work undertaken in the Hall, our last three meetings have been in the Chapel itself. We are very grateful to the Officers of the Gerston Chapel for accommodating us in this way.

- 16th June – Torbay’s Aviation History – Tony Hill
- 21st July – (provisionally) A Guided Walk and Tour of Paignton Parish Church
- August – NO MEETING

Can anyone explain what these are?

Our PHS member, Alan Henshaw, is on a quest for information. Under the ivy on a low wall in Cecil Road, on the right hand side as you approach the Milk Bottle, are three stones set in the wall. They have markings and Alan would love to know their story. I am sure the late Tony Moss told me their history, but now I can't recall it.

The first looks like the handle of a shovel.



The second one could be a family crest? The stone is badge shaped.

The third shows the wording:
"Cent – John Fyde 1745".

In notes by the late Ken Rowe is a reference to the Fyde family as having "owned land on the northern side of Kirkham Street" – does this relate to one of that family?



Can anyone shine some light on these markings? If so – please let us know.

A Medieval Bee Bole

Whilst looking through some papers in our archive, I found a note a lady had written to our former Chair, Tony Moss, stating that she thought the two niches in the outshut at Kirkham House were bee boles. Having no idea what that meant, I did a little bit of research and found the following. A beebole is a recess built into an external wall which would have housed a skep (a conical basket) used for bee-keeping. The word 'skep' is derived from the Anglo Saxon 'skeppa' meaning a basket. The woven wicker bands were covered with daub or mud, and often stitched together with blackberry briar.



In Winter, the skeps were often protected by hackles, pointy shaped straw tents. This word comes from the Old English 'Hacele' meaning a cloak or mantle.

In Spring, the bees would be killed, usually with sulphur smoke, and the skep broken into. The honey and wax would then be removed.

The oldest surviving bee boles may date from the 12th century, and examples

have been recorded from every century after that. The 18th and 19th centuries seem to have been the heyday of bee bole construction, especially on large country house estates, although many were also built on farms or in cottage gardens.

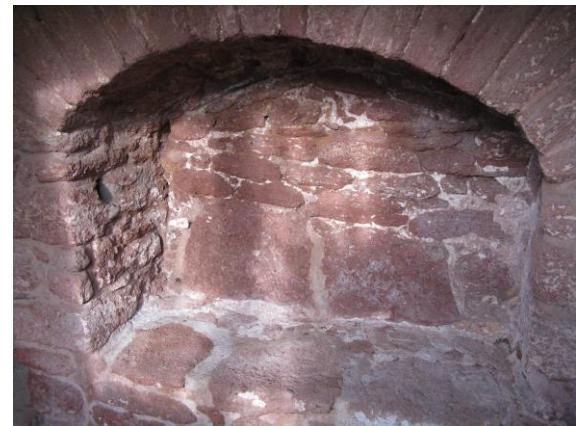
Sugar cane was unknown in the early Middle Ages, so honey was an important sweetener. Fermented honey was used in production of the alcoholic drink, mead. Additionally, beeswax was greatly valued, and was used by chandlers to make candles. Also, clerics would make writing tablets for the Church right up till the Reformation in 1536 using beeswax.

So – what about the two niches in the Outshut at Kirkham House (pictured right)? Before the Outshut was built around the mid 16th Century, the location of the niches in the wall would have been part of the exterior of the house, and was South / South East facing, making it a sheltered spot. The house would be surrounded by orchards and wild flowers, providing nectar for the bees, and it is generally believed that the House was originally used by Clerics of the Church.

I found out that there is a IBRA Bee Boles Register, and submitted the evidence to them. IBRA have now responded and I am delighted to say that they have designated them as 'potential' bee boles pending further research. Our Kirkham listing on the Register is number 1610.



Figure 27.1a Woodcut showing two wicker skeps and a bee-keeper wearing a hood with a woven insert, in Sebastian Munster's Cosmographia (Bern, Switzerland, 1545)



But ours are not the only ones in Paignton! Next time you drive or walk up Fisher Street, just before the traffic lights, look left up the driveway (please NOTE – this is a private driveway with no access to the public). On the right you will see two niches either side of an archway. These bee boles are also registered (numbers 0868a and 0868b on the Register). I believe they predate the House – possibly a garden wall to a previous property?

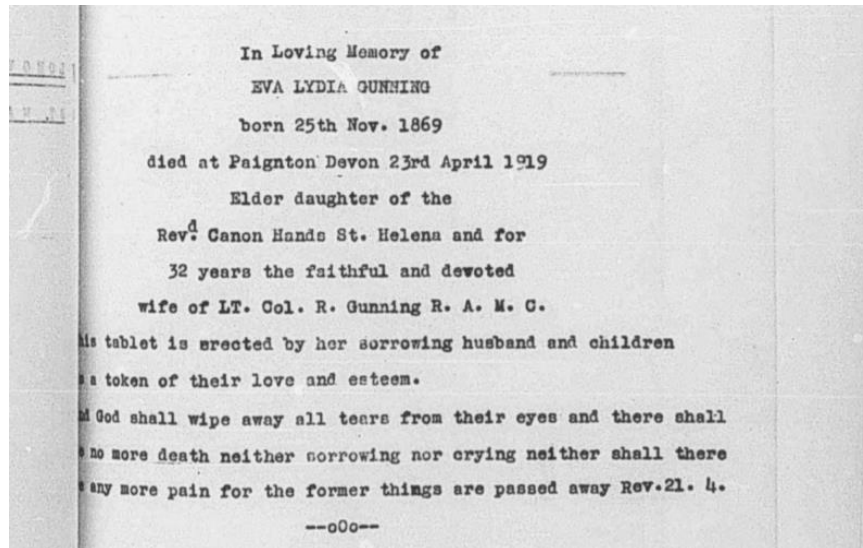
Robert Cardwell Gunning

This whole tale starts on St Helena – in the South Atlantic – an unlikely 5,000 miles away from Paignton.

Several years ago, St Helenan schoolchildren undertook a survey of every burial site on the island and, as part of my own Chimes family research, I was reading through it in detail. It was quite a surprise to find a memorial to an Emily Louise Jackson, nee Warren, who had been born in Paignton – but no further details were available.

Even more surprising was a second Paignton-related memorial - to Eva Lydia Gunning (nee Hands) who was born to one of the Vicars on St Helena in 1869, and who married Enniskillen-born army

surgeon, Robert Cardwell Gunning, in 1887, while he was stationed on St Helena. Robert was aged 33 and Eva just 17. At this stage I was still more interested in the Hands family – Eva's father John had been the officiating Vicar at my own great grandparents' wedding on St Helena, but then it became apparent that her husband had had a significant role in a chapter of Paignton's history.



Above is a copy of the St Helena inscription which uncovered this whole tale.

Robert Gunning served the army around the world, including postings at St Helena, Bengal, Gibraltar, Chester, and South Africa during the Boer War. By 1904 he was officially retired, as a Lieutenant-Colonel, and 1911 saw the Gunnings resident at Redhill in Cleveland Road. They had four children – two girls and two boys. At the time of the 1911 census the eldest, Norah, was married to John McDowall, a surgeon at the Royal Naval Hospital in Plymouth. The elder son, Cardwell, was 22 and described as a student. Lurline and Edward, aged 11 and four respectively, were still at school.



More research is required on their home: since 1911 Cleveland Road has changed markedly but it looks likely that the former Redhill is, in 2022, No. 7, named Mandalay. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 propelled Robert Gunning to break his ten-year retirement. In September he was installed as Commandant of the American Women's Army Hospital at Oldway Mansion. Thousands of wounded soldiers passed through the hospital from 1914 to 1919, after Paris Singer turned Oldway over to the military for the duration. Queen Mary visited the Hospital in November 1914, which caused quite a stir in Paignton. The visit was intended to be private but thousands of residents turned out to greet the Queen.



November 1915 & Queen Mary (6th left) at the Army Hospital, Oldway. Robert Gunning (5th right) was accompanied by his wife, who may be 4th right in this photo.

Friends of Oldway undertook a project to document the sterling work of the Hospital at Oldway. The brilliantly informative website can be found at:

<https://americanwomenswarhospital.com>

and there is a static exhibition, currently in storage, but which will be displayed as soon as space becomes available for it in Oldway Mansion. The website includes plenty of interesting articles and snippets, and is peppered with many fascinating photos.

Robert Gunning retired for a second time in 1919, and continued to live in Cleveland Road. His wife Eva died within weeks of the hospital's closure, at the South Eden Nursing Home (pictured here) on Paignton seafront which was situated in the terrace of buildings between Sands Road and Adelphi Road. She was 49. Eldest daughter Norah was living in Tarroway Road in 1918 with husband John but by 1923 they were resident in Plymouth, where John died in 1955. Norah died in Surrey twelve years later.



The Gunnings' elder son, Cardwell Sinclair had a lengthy career in the Indian Civil Service, and married in Calcutta in 1922. He was awarded an OBE, and died in 1951.

The third child, Lurline, married in Totnes, in 1921. She, too, died in Surrey, in 1970.

The youngest child, Edward, spent almost all of his childhood in Paignton. He died tragically young, aged 22, in India.

Robert Gunning, meanwhile, remained in Paignton for a while following the death of his wife but, by the time of his own death in 1930, he was living near his two daughters in Surrey. His death was reported in the British Medical Journal.

Researching my personal family tree unexpectedly led to a Paignton connection, which was quite significant in terms of the town's history too. Robert Gunning's importance in Paignton's Army Hospital during World War I has also left an exceptional variety of photographs.