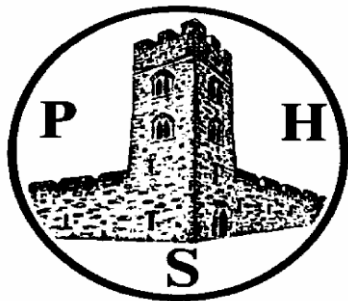




Paignton Heritage Society Newsletter March 2023

www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk

Message from our Chair

I have been delighted by the growing number of members attending our talks over recent month, which is largely due to Lesley Drew who has joined the committee with responsibility for publicity. We also have new membership cards so, if you haven't received yours yet, please contact Lee Hayward. We are actively involved in local heritage projects and visits to our website continue to grow. I hope you will continue to support the society and look forward to seeing you at future talks. We also hope you will join us at our AGM to be held on Friday, 31st March again via zoom.

Iris Butler, Chair

Committee Members

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

Membership

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

Kirkham House

Back in Spring 2020 you may recall the collapse of the boundary wall between the garden of Kirkham House and the rear of the properties on Millbrook Road.

Repair work will begin shortly, but this will take some time. Unfortunately we will not be able to open Kirkham House as usual this Easter, and it may be well into the Summer

before the work is completed. As soon as we have a firm date when Kirkham will be opened to visitors again, we will post this on the PHS website

Diary Dates

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

- **16th March** – John Keohane – Yeoman Warder of the Tower of London
- **20th April** – Lesley Drew & Karen Chapman – Memories of the 50's and 60's
- **18th May** – Janet Downer – Dark Deeds in Devon
- **15th June** – Phil Badcott – William of Orange
- **20th July** – (a change to our usual arrangements) John Risdon – A Guided Walk around Galmpton Village ending at the Manor Inn
- **August** – no meeting
- **21st September** – Kevin Dixon – Radical Torquay
- **19th October** – Jenny Ridd – Bishopsteignton – Home to Nelson's Admirals
- **16th November** – Richard Marsden – Cess Pits, Cemeteries and Sewers
- **21st December** – (provisionally) PHS Christmas Party

Oldway Update

Work towards the restoration of beloved Oldway is underway.

Firstly, allow us to dispel some myths. The House is not about to be demolished or fall down. Thanks to the support of Torbay Council and the appointment of a Project Consultant, work has begun on the roof. Drones have been used to fly over the building,

and this has identified what needs to be done.

Access to the House by the public is not possible until checks can be made of the exterior to ensure there is no danger of falling masonry. The Heras Fencing means access to fire exits is blocked – and this is why the building is closed to the public.

The interior of Oldway is generally good, and the fabulous entrance, staircase and first floor rooms need work, and this will take time, but it can all be done.

There is very good news regarding the tennis courts. The Lawn Tennis Association has agreed to re-surface the hard courts, replace the nets and line marking, and provide floodlighting.

The Tearooms, run by Friends of Oldway, are to become a CIC (Community Interest Company). Several groups now use the Tearooms for organised visits such as youth groups, the Women's Institute, walkers etc.

The Oldway Garden Volunteers, who have been keeping the grounds looking beautiful since September 2019, are now working with heritage garden consultants.

Regrettably the restoration of the Rotunda is not part of the current restoration project, and so for the moment remains locked up and secure.



An Audience at the Palace

The Spring programme of talks is:

- 16th March – Stephanie Austin – Turning to Crime (part of the 2023 English Riviera Literature Festival)
- 20th April – Phil Badcott – Folklore of Bygone Devon
- 11th May – Dr Todd Gray – Uncle Tom Cobley and All

Doors open at 10.00 for a 10.30 start. Tickets for the talks are £5 for PHS members - £6 for non-members.

PHS website

Our Web Administrator, Jim Milne, is busy with regular additions to the website. Have you had a look at it lately?

<https://www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk/>

New material for the website is always welcome.

South West Maritime History Society

You are warmly invited to join SWMHS for a day of presentations, discussion, shanties, and a guided walk, exploring the maritime history of Teignmouth.

It's at the impressive Teign Heritage Centre, on March 25th 9.30-3.30 pm, and will be followed by a guided walk.

There will be four keynote presentations, by expert local speakers, on different aspects of Teignmouth's maritime and social history:



- Teignmouth's role in the **Newfoundland cod trade**
- Teignmouth's **growth as a tourist resort** in Victorian and Edwardian times
- The little known **social history of the Stover Canal**
- **Shipbuilding** in Teignmouth and Shaldon

We'll also hear from the Morgan Giles archive team and the imminent publication of a fully illustrated and documented history of this important ship builder. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion after each session!

After lunch (bring your own, or choose from a buffet selection on the day) we have some shanties from the Teignmouth area sung live by Martin Hazell (ex-Chair SWMHS). And following the presentations, you can join a guided walk around the town centre and port

to see some of the places mentioned during the day.

It's being organised by the **South West Maritime History Society**, so you can find out more, and book your ticket (£8) at their website:



<https://www.swmaritime.org.uk/product/2094>

Paignton Zoo - Wild Planet Trust

The Zoo is celebrating its 100th Anniversary since Herbert Whitley opened the doors to his beloved Zoological Gardens in July 1923.



Watch out for details of events.

English Riviera Walking Festival

This Spring Walking Festival will be from 22nd – 29th April 2023, and will include over 20 guided walks around our Bay.

PHS is hosting two of these walks:

All are morning walks:

Paignton's Hidden History:

Saturday 22nd April

Sunday 30th April

Shipwrecks, Steam and Seascapes

Saturday 22nd April

Saturday 29th April

To find out more, go to -

www.englishriviera.co.uk/whats-on/english-riviera-walking-festival

PHS Archives

As many of you will know, our Society has a terrific collection of photographs, books, artefacts, postcards etc on Paignton, and we are working towards moving this to a digital archive. This will allow us to make the information readily available to our members and to the public.

We are very grateful to the Torbay Council Community Development Fund, who have awarded us £500 towards the purchase of a laptop computer and portable scanner. With these, we can reduce boxes of stored paper information onto a single memory stick.

If anyone is interested in becoming involved with this fascinating task, please let us know.

And finally



Can anyone identify this old photo found in our archives – could it be Well Street (now the site of the Funeral Directors)?

If you think you can, please let us know.

The Oldway Hydram

A brook rises at Five Lanes and flows through Occombe Valley Woods. At one time, the brook is thought to have been known as the 'Budbrook' – possibly from the Anglo-Saxon 'beodan' meaning *battle* – relating to a border dispute between settlements at Polsham and Preston?

Once through Occombe Valley Woods, the brook is culverted, and it rises again in the park near Washington Close – formerly the grounds of Montepellier School. Before the brook disappears again, it passes over a small weir that is part of an anti-flood system.

The brook flows underground and crosses Barcombe Lane, where you can see brick arches in the walls on either side of the lane where the brook once flowed before being culverted. The water next rises in the garden at the rear of Spring Cottage. From there it flows to a cistern on the right of the entrance to Singer Court (formerly Fernicombe Villa – part of the Oldway Estate) as you go in. This cistern is about 20 feet deep and dates from 1902.

Isaac Merritt Singer had the original house, now known as Oldway Mansion, built – it was completed in 1875, shortly before his death. In 1897, his son, Paris, bought out his siblings' share and became owner of Oldway. He embarked on extensive alterations to the Mansion and to the gardens and grounds, for which he employed the renowned landscape architects, Archille and Henri Duchêne, who incorporated a grotto and ponds into their design. The water was pumped from the brook by use of a hydraulic ram (also known as a hydram) which is a cyclic water pump powered by hydropower.

From a cistern (pictured right), the water flows to the other side of the driveway where it passes through a ram pipe to the hydram.



Access to the Hydram is via a manhole (pictured left) which leads to a small chamber about 12 feet underground. The floor is thick with mud and silt, and the abode of massive spiders, eels and frogs and other creatures that like to inhabit dark, damp and noisy places (the pump runs constantly and produces a loud "whump" noise as the valve opens and closes).

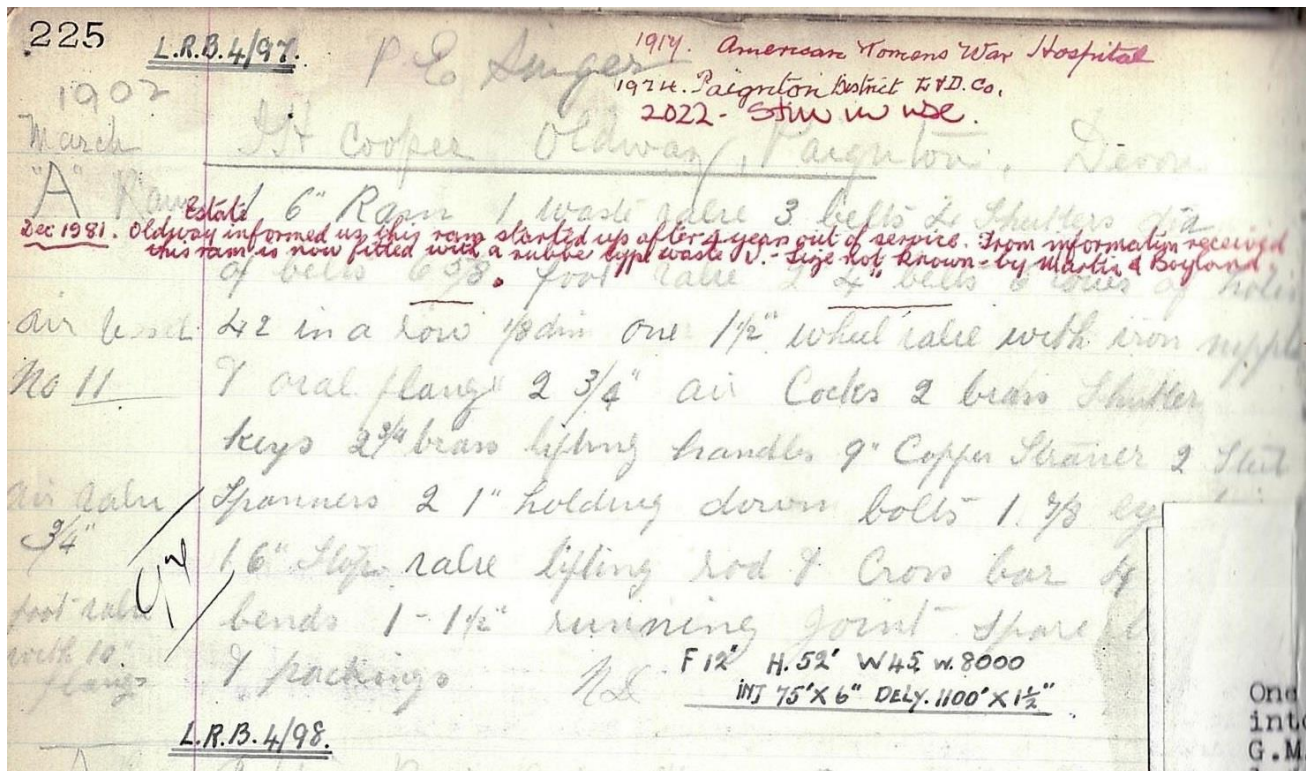
I was fortunate enough to be invited to view the Hydram in October 2022 by the service engineer, Mark, who had been called out as the pump had stopped and needed re-starting. Watching Mark pull on his waders and descend down to the pump, I have to admit I had no wish to see the machinery "up close". Mark soon found the reason why the pumping had stopped – the picture (right) shows the grizzly remains of a six inch eel that had swum into the valve. Removal of the dead creature and a quick 'rinse and clean' soon had the pump going again.



In 1772, John Whitehurst suggested the use of a hydraulic RAM to raise water, but it was the brothers Pierre and Joseph Montgolfier who, in 1796, developed the first practical machine using this principle.

The basics of the machine have changed little over the years, but early in the 19th century, the great engineer, Josiah Easton, bought the Montgolfier's patent together with the manufacturing business of John Whitehurst, and proceeded to produce RAM which are still in use around the world today. In 1928 the business was purchased by the Green & Carter Company, who continue to supply RAMS and parts worldwide today. I am very grateful to Mr Charles Doble, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Green & Carter Ltd. who has kindly let me have a copy of

the original records from the manufacturers, John Whitehurst, dated 1902 and showing the order for the Hydram in the name of Paris Singer.

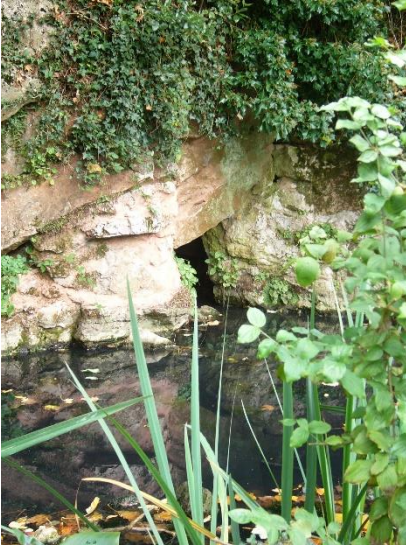


The picture below, also supplied by Mr Doble, shows a typical hydram in operation.



The original Hydram, installed in 1902, is still very reliable and efficient. It extracts water from the brook and pumps it uphill to Oldway Mansion. Unfortunately the exact route the water takes is not known. Old photographs show a fountain between the Rotunda and Mansion, so possibly

this was fed by the pumped water. It is known that the water runs underground across the east front of the Mansion and through the gardens to emerge above the grotto, where it cascaded into the pond below. The pond used to be home to a valuable collection of fish, and so in times of dry weather, if the brook was running low, mains water could be diverted to supplement the hydram supply. There is a manhole cover giving access to a valve that can be opened to allow mains water into the hydram flow in the lawn in front of the east side of the Mansion, but it has not been used for many years. Water from the pond is lost through evaporation and leakage into the ground, so there is no outflow.



To complete the story of the brook, once past the Hydram it runs under Torquay Road and emerges briefly beside the aptly named 'Brook House'. It is culverted underneath the rear gardens of the houses in Manor Road and under the railway line. It can briefly be seen in the corner of the Colin Road car park, where there is a service access. Finally it emerges from a pipe on Preston Sands, near the 'Boathouse' and flows out to sea.



Karen Chapman, November 2022

References:

Our Village: A Short History of Preston – C R Lewis
Green & Carter - website