



Paignton Heritage Society

Newsletter June 2023

www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk

Message from our Chair

I am delighted that our membership numbers are increasing and we are always pleased to welcome members and their friends to our talks in the Gerston Chapel.

Over recent months we have been entertained by John Keohane who told us about his time as a Yeoman Warder of the Tower of London; Lesley Drew and Karen Chapman took us on a trip down memory lane of Paignton in the 1950s/60s and in May by Janet Downer who enlightened us with some Devon Stories. We are indebted to our speakers for visiting us and helping us keep heritage alive.

In May we were invited by Paignton Library to be part of their "Pride of Place" event and lead a 'Paignton's Hidden History' walk. It was a joy to have a primary school youngster join us with her family. She was thrilled to hear about the Paignton Pudding and also to be able to go into the Clink. One lady told us she had visited the Clink years ago when she was in the Girl Guides and all her life had wanted to go into the Tower – she was delighted to be able to do so as part of the walk. We were encouraged by Karen (who lead the walk and kept us amused with her history stories) to look up at buildings - as a lot of our history shows itself when we do so. Finally, you will have noticed that we have a vacancy on our committee and we plan to recruit to this post later in the year. So, if you are interested in joining the committee please get in touch with me. We hold a monthly meeting via zoom and all committee members have a role to play in ensuring that the Society continues to flourish.

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
	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

Repairs to the garden wall are underway. Unfortunately it is very unlikely we will be able to open the House to visitors this Summer.

Alan Henshaw reports "The concrete is just to strengthen and support the outbuildings' walls. Another wall of red sandstone/mudstone will be erected in the place it was before the collapse. This stone wall will be "keyed in" at 90 degrees to existing partition walls of the houses so this will give extra support."

"The mortar to be used is something the builders are interested in, and they will look at samples from surrounding buildings, ie the apple store, to see what was used there as a possibility. They are also looking at the mortar that was used about 10 years ago when all the pointing in that area was re-pointed.

It's good to know the job is being done by real Heritage builders, who will take time to make sure the job is done well, and that once completed, the wall will be good long into the future.

Alan has sent in a photo of the work in progress:



Heritage Open Days

This year's Heritage Open Days Festival will take place from 8th – 17th September. This is England's largest festival of history and culture, with free admission to many sites. Click on the link below:

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/>

Diary Dates

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

- **15th June** – Phil Badcott – William of Orange
- **20th July** – (a change to our usual arrangements) John Risdon will take us on a Guided Walk around Galmpton Village and Galmpton Creek, ending at the Manor Inn. This is an easy stroll of about 2 miles. We will meet outside the Manor Inn at 6.30pm. Number are limited, so initially this will be a members only visit. To book a place, please e.mail karencolinhouse@gmail.com



- **August** – no meeting but a members visit to The Valiant Soldier. Details on page 3.
- **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** – PHS Christmas Party – a Quiz and a short presentation on old Paignton by our President, Nick Pannell

Oldway Update

The good news is the tennis courts have been resurfaced and are looking really smart.

An hour's tennis is a very reasonable £6 per hour, or you can pay just £35 for a year's membership. Details of this, and how to book a court, can be found at:

www.clubspark.LTA.org.uk



Following the election of the new administration at Torbay Council, the future of Oldway is again under debate, but we are delighted that they are going forward with a public consultation and there will also be an opportunity to hear more by visiting Oldway on Saturday, 17th June.

An update from Torbay Council on plans for Oldway Mansion can be found at:

<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/leisure-sports-and-community/regeneration/oldway/>

An Audience at the Palace

The Summer programme of talks is:

- 15th June – “The Glass Bulldog: One Mistake Can Change Your Life” – Alison Huntingford
- 13th July – “Living with Rossetti” – Peter Marsden and Jenny Ridd
- August – no talk
- 14th September – “Agatha’s Adventures in Archaeology” – Emma Seaman

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.paigntonheritatesociety.co.uk/>

New material for the website is always welcome.

English Riviera Walking Festival

Thanks to Karen Chapman and Karen Howes for leading two walks as part of the Spring Festival.

The Autumn Festival will be held 23rd – 30th September and there are some really interesting walks featured. Click on the link below:

<https://www.englishriviera.co.uk/whats-on/featured-events/english-riviera-walking-festival>

PHS Archives

We are always adding to the Archives, and are so grateful for all the donations of photos and information.

This month, we added a fascinating Dissertation on Stella Gale, the first woman Harbourmaster to be appointed

in the United Kingdom. Our thanks to Sarah Flory who has given us permission to include her well written piece of research in our archive.

The Valiant Soldier

We have arranged a visit to The Valiant Soldier – the pub where time was never called. It is now a fascinating Museum and Heritage Centre.

Once a much loved local pub in Buckfastleigh, in 1965 the brewery withdrew the license from the licensees, Mr and Mrs Roberts. The Roberts responded by shutting the doors behind the last customer, and just left everything as it was. After Mr Roberts died, Mrs Roberts continued to live above the pub for several years.

Eventually Teignmouth Council helped the local community to purchase the property in 1997 to save it from the bulldozers, and a Trust was set up to preserve this unique piece of British social history.

<https://valiantsoldier.org.uk/>



We will meet outside the Centre at 1.15pm on 23rd August. Entrance to the Centre is £3.50 and afterwards those who wish can join us for a cream tea in the village.

Please e.mail Lesley Drew at lesley-chris.drew@sky.com if you wish to come along – we have 25 spaces available, so it's first come, first served.

If you can offer anyone a lift, please do so at our next monthly meeting on 15th June.

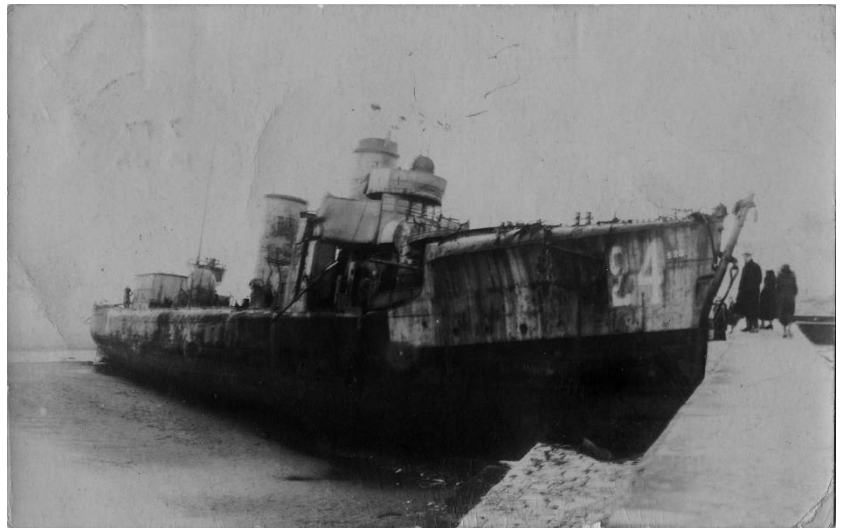
Ex-German Destroyer Ashore on Preston Sands and the story of Brixham Life-boatmen's Ordeal

The following is the account given in the "Paignton Western Guardian" of 16 December 1920

"On Sunday (12 December 1920), two surrendered German destroyers, which were being towed from Cherbourg to Teignmouth by the London tug Warrior, to be broken up, put into Torbay for shelter, it being impossible for the tug to make headway up the Channel in the teeth of the gale. The boats had very small crews on board. Anchor was dropped about a mile from the shores of Torquay in what was regarded by seaman ashore in none too favourable a position. Towards evening the wind increased in intensity and heavy snow showers obscured all lights of the craft. About 11 pm the Chief Officer at Brixham Coastguards received telephonic communication that the destroyers had broken adrift. Signals of distress were distinctly heard. The Brixham life-boatmen were summoned by rocket about 11.15 pm and before 11.30 pm the boat was launched under the command of Coxswain W. G. Sanders. The Denaby tug Dencade, also steamed off at full speed to render assistance. The crew of the Board of Trade Life Saving Apparatus, under the command of the Chief Officer of the Coastguards, stood by in readiness for the service until about 12.20 am, when they were dismissed as a telephonic message stated that one destroyer was ashore. The Paignton L.S.A. crew, under C.O. Parvin, rescued the three men comprising the crew after the vessel (T 189) had run aground at Roundham Head. The work of the rescue was difficult, as heavy seas were breaking over the wreck. The Dencade was the first to return to Brixham after a thorough search and location of the wreck. The life-boatmen also returned after they had ascertained the other craft was still riding safely at the anchor.



Towards dawn the easterly wind renewed its intensity with snow storm squalls. The other German destroyer (S 24) broke adrift and drove ashore at Preston, between Torquay and Paignton. Again the Brixham lifeboat was manned and launched and two Brixham tugs went across the Bay to render assistance while Brixham rocket apparatus was also hurried to Paignton. As there was some difficulty getting a full crew for the Torquay lifeboat, Mr William Brown, a local boatman over 75 years of age, volunteered to be one of the crew. Paignton L.S.A. crew received a second call at 6.30 am and the men on the destroyer were rescued by aid of the breeches-buoy, the work being rendered difficult by the heavy seas. Of the six men comprising the two crews, five are natives of Deal (Kent) and one of Southampton. The Brixham lifeboat reached the vicinity about 8 o'clock.



Brixham Life-boatmen's Ordeal

The life-boatmen underwent a terrible ordeal, the marvel being that what occurred passed without fatality. The boat was under full control and acted most seaworthily when, in the white mass of breaking seas, an unfortunate breaker hit her hard on the starboard side and ere the crew had time to realise their peril she was overwhelmed and capsized. Fortunately she recovered herself magnificently with all her gallant crew safe aboard. Second Coxswain T. Blackmore, who was swept beneath the mizzen sail, saved himself by clutching the mizzen shroud and being pulled aboard by Coxswain Sanders. Bowman W. H. Mogridge also had a thrilling escape. He found himself being lifted bodily out of the water by the main mast, the top of which had come in contact with his life-belt and he had to clamber down the mast into the boat. Only three were not thrown out of the boat, the coxswain W. G. Sanders and Messrs W. Pillar and H. Dalley, the latter two clinging to the weather life lines. All the other owe their lives to tenacious clinging to the life lines. The affair was only a matter of seconds, but it was a nerve-testing ordeal. The men were loud in their praises of the exceptionally cool manner in which Coxswain Sanders controlled the craft. He never faltered in his presence of mind to do the right thing at the right moment. The least hesitation might have caused a terrible disaster, as the craft was only a few lengths from the shore. Immediately the Betsy Newbon righted herself, Coxswain Sanders stayed her, and regained control. His **SPLENDID SEAMANSHIP**, coolness inspired confidence amongst his crew. They cannot speak too highly of his excellent seamanship, and it was the most exacting ordeal he had experienced during the 24 years he has been coxswain. He had the fullest confidence in the self-righting capabilities of the Betsy Newbon, and she did not fail at the crucial moment. On the other hand, Coxswain Sanders has publicly expressed his warmest admiration of the excellent discipline and prompt attention to his orders, factors which he declared brought the lifeboat through a turmoil of bursting white seas. That testing has proved that Brixham has a lifeboat coxswain and crew worthy of the finest traditions of lifeboat work, ready to take the fullest risk in the magnanimous work of "The Red Cross of the Sea." Even after her terrible experience, not one man flinched in determination that the Betsy Newbon should be manoeuvred closer to the destroyer to ascertain if any sailor remained on board, the men being determined to take the fullest risk to save where human life showed any signs of existence.

The crew of the "Betsy Newbon" were Coxswain W.G. Sanders; Coxswain T. Blackmore; Bowman W.H. Mogridge; Crew, F. Tucker, W. Pillar, E. Dalley, A. Stamp, W. Coleman, H. Lovell, A. friend, J. Sparks and J. Holland. When the boat arrived at Brixham, in addition to the usual coffee provided, hospitality shown by Capt. J. Churchill and Mr H.F. Browne, was heartily appreciated. The men were allowed to proceed to their homes for dry clothing before getting the boat into the boathouse.

The affair created quite a sensation in the Town. Amongst the fishermen there was satisfaction at the ready manner in which the lifeboat righted herself.

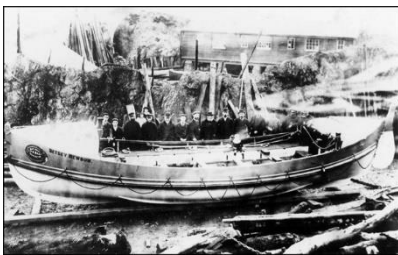
A Lloyd's message states that the two destroyers are the T 189 and S 24. The former has broken her back and lies on a rock bottom. If the present weather continues she will become a total wreck. The S 24 is lying on a sandy bottom, buckled 30 feet from the stern and (*word unclear*) near the stern. She is high and dry at low water."

In its edition of 6 January 1921, "The Western Guardian" reported that "the wrecks of the two ex-German destroyers lying on the Paignton shore were sold by auction by Mr Ralph Dugdall, in the presence of a large crowd of sightseers. Mr H. Shaw of Brixham purchased both, giving £545 for the S 24 (555 tons) lying off the Preston Sands and £100 for the T 189 (646 tons) resting on the rocks at Roundham Head. "



In its edition of 3 February 1921 reported that "the German destroyer that drove ashore at Preston has been salvaged and towed to Brixham Harbour."

On 3 March 1921 it was reported that condemned British E Class Submarine purchased by Mr W.H. Shaw to be broken up was berthed in the Inner Harbour on Thursday by the side of the German destroyer. Both craft are berthed close to the King Street side of the Harbour.



Footnote: the Betsy Newbon II served as the Brixham lifeboat from 1896 to 1922. She was launched on 56 occasions and saved 46 lives. In 1922 she was sold and used as the yacht Zingari. Subsequently she was wrecked.

Our thanks to PHS member, Paul Hope, who transcribed and provided this article for the Newsletter.