



Paignton Heritage Society Newsletter December 2023

www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk

David Coaker
Jim Milne
Lesley Drew
Lee Hayward
1 vacancy

Message from our Chair

This year has been an exciting one for the Society as we have seen our membership numbers increase; more members attending our monthly talks and we have also enjoyed some heritage visits. I would, therefore, like to pay tribute to members of the Committee for their tremendous enthusiasm, hard work and commitment over the past twelve months. We are now working on the programme for next year and look forward to welcoming some new speakers with interesting and varied topics, plus at least one heritage visit.

I continue to represent the Society on the Friends of Oldway Committee, Oldway Mansion Steering Group and Paignton Picture House Trust. It is positive news that there is now a new masterplan and conservation management strategy for Oldway Mansion, which focuses on the restoration of the mansion and grounds, and it will be interesting to learn how this is to be taken forward. The Picture House refurbishment is going well and it is hoped it will open in 2025, however, if there is an opportunity for Heritage Society members to visit sometime in 2024 we will arrange for this to happen.

Thank you all for your continued support of the Society – we value your membership and look forward to seeing you at our events.

I and the Committee wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Iris Butler, Chair

Committee Members

Chair	Iris Butler
Vice Chair/Secretary	Karen Chapman
Treasurer	Maggie Loates
Committee Members	Eileen Donovan Christine Watts

Membership

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

Kirkham House

Apologies if you saw this article in the Herald Express, but for those of you who missed it -



“Members of the Paignton Heritage Society were treated to a fascinating presentation by the Building Surveyor responsible for work at the 14th Century Kirkham House in Paignton recently. When a boundary wall collapsed in November 2019, no-one suspected it would take almost 4 years to repair. However, what with a Covid pandemic, the very strict regulations regarding any work undertaken on a Grade II* listed building and the need for very specialized craftsmen to do the work, the wall is now beautifully restored.

The first job for English Heritage, the owner of Kirkham, was to appoint the firm of AC Archaeology to undertake a dig at the site to ensure no history was disturbed by the building repairs. AC Archaeology dug two test pits in what is believed to be the external

kitchen to the House, and unearthed a number of finds, including:

- A small amount of medieval pottery from the period AD 950 – 1350
- Animal bones (pig, cattle and domestic fowl) and scallop & cockle shells, which back up the theory that the area was used as a kitchen
- A piece of a “lightly smoked” clay pipe thought to be from the 1600’s
- The rim and neck of a phial made of green potash glass dating from the late 1600’s

Once it had been confirmed that no archaeology would be disturbed by the work, the next step was to plan the re-build of the wall. Listed Building Consent had to be sought. The right materials had to be sourced – a lime mortar mixed with red sand and local coarse grit from the local Zig Zag Quarry. The result of all this careful planning was well worth the wait.

The wall pictured above fits in perfectly with its surrounds and will do its job far into the future. Kirkham House is closed now for the winter, but will re-open to the public for tours at Easter 2024.

Riviera FM Radio – 107.9fm

Seems a long time ago now, but back in early September we were invited to the Riviera FM Radio Station at Castle Circus to give an interview on our Society’s activities.



Karen Chapman and Lee Hayward were interviewed by Marion O’Brien. Hopefully we helped to publicise all that we do, and perhaps entice a few new members to join.

It was certainly an experience to see what goes on behind the scenes when a radio show is in action.

Diary Dates

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

- **21st December** – PHS Christmas Party – a Quiz and a short presentation on old Paignton by our President, Nick Pannell
- **18th January** – Steve Nash, Group Education Manager at the Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust - as Paignton Zoo draws a close to its centenary year, Steve takes a look back at the last 100 years to reflect on how things have changed since Herbert Whitley first opened the gates to the Torbay Zoological Gardens in July 1923
- **15th February** – Lionel Digby – responsible for bringing some of the biggest names in music to the Bay in the 60’s and 70’s, Lionel looks back to this golden age of pop and rock.
- **15th March** – Brenda Loosemore – well known local actress and entertainer Brenda looks at life in Devon and asks “Is Devon Funny”.

PALACE THEATRE PAIGNTON

An Audience at the Palace

The winter programme of talks is:

7th December – Karen and Iris host “The Paignton Heritage Quiz” – we hope as many of you as possible can come along to support us!

11th January – Kevin Dixon – “Place Names: A Torbay Tour”

8th February – Nick Pannell – “Shipwrecks of Torbay”

14th March - John Tomkins – “Bringing the English Riviera to life through film”

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.

PHS Archives

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

We are very grateful to Mike McNaught who has donated three folders to PHS listing Baptisms, Marriages and Burials in the Parish of St Johns, Paignton, for the period 1559 – 1850. Mike has painstakingly transcribed the Church Registers into an easily readable format. This work will be such a useful and time saving tool for anyone researching the inhabitants of Paignton for years to come.

Thank you Mike.

The Great Paignton Paint Out

It seems a long time ago now, but on 24 September we joined in the “Paint Out” on Paignton Green. It was good to be part of the event, and see how even the most non-artistic of us can have a go at putting pen/pencil/pastel to paper!



Some of the most impressive images people produced were of the Redcliffe Hotel and the Pier.

We provided information on the history of Paignton, and were able to learn from people their memories of days out with their families on the beaches around us.

Heritage Day 2023

Our annual Heritage Day is proving to be an eagerly awaited event each year. On 7th October we again opened the doors of the Methodist Church Hall and welcomed over 170 visitors, eager to sit and browse through our folders on Paignton’s past.

We also were very grateful to Totnes Museum who loaned us a display on Samuel Chapin, the Paignton Puritan. The information was put together by Researchers from the Totnes Archives, Sue King and Jill Drysdale, and the boards made up by John Batterson of the Totnes Museum.

We were also pleased to put on a display of

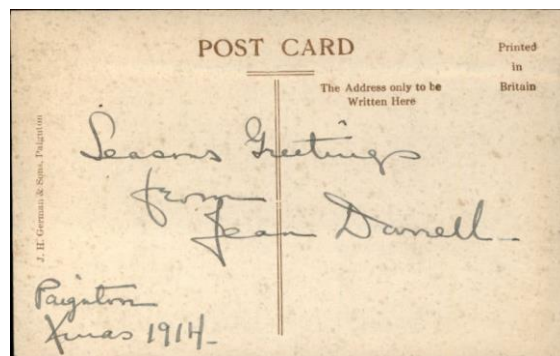
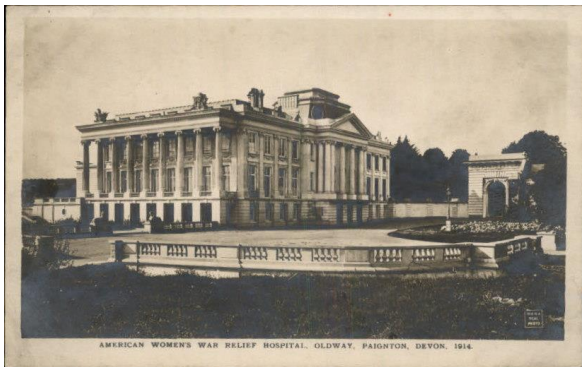


the railway at Paignton, thanks to Colin Wood who kindly loaned his framed plans for the building of Paignton Rail Station.

We have several new members who joined on the day, including our MP Kevin Foster – a big welcome to you all.

Christmas at the American Women's War Relief Hospital, Oldway Mansion

The following article was published in the Paignton "The Western Guardian" on the 31st December 1914.



"Christmas in Paignton

Cheer for the Wounded at the Hospital

For the most part, the exception being some showers early on Boxing Day Christmas passed off very quietly and therefore very happily, in Paignton. The quietude was external; it was as usual, essentially a home holiday, and the subdued conditions out of doors was the measure of the warmth of the many family reunions in the homes. Familiar faces were missed in many homes, because of the terrible war and the fact that so many have enlisted or are on service, but where possible absent ones returned as yore to the family circle.

Christmas Day was bright and cheerful, with a mild temperature, and those who had to be about experienced favourable conditions. The Church services were very fairly attended during the day, but after dusk the lighted windows and drawn blinds testified to the homeliness of the festival.

The wounded at the two local military hospitals, likewise the patients at the Cottage Hospital, were excellently catered for.

The American Women's War Hospital at Oldway was a scene of brightness and cheerfulness that could scarcely be surpassed. Evergreens and mottoes, flags and draperies, rendered the wards the acme of cosiness, and special Christmas fare was served with sumptuousness remarkable even for this magnificently managed institution. A delightful touch of home was infused by the presentation to each of the 165 patients of a large stocking -these were specially made by the nursing Sisters and others - which each man received in the morning. They contained all sorts of acceptable gifts, including a very thoughtful present of a handsome cigarette case, with the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes embossed, from the American Women's Committee; a very pretty card and box of chocolates from Mrs. Harcourt, one of the Secretaries, a pretty card from Miss Fletcher, the Matron; a neat matchbox from Nurses Hewat and Mackenzie, with their initials engraved thereon; and a khaki handkerchief from the ladies of the bureau.

After the mid-day dinner, the Commandant, Lieut. Col. R.C. Gunning, accompanied by Mrs. Gunning, the Chief Surgeon and Mrs. Beale, and the Matron, visited each of the wards, wishing the men a Happy Christmas and a speedy recovery. The Commandant distributed to each patient a special Christmas card from their Majesties the King and Queen. This was a handsome photogravure of their Majesties, and on the back of each card was a lithograph in the King's handwriting:

"With our best wishes for Xmas, 1914. May you soon be restored to health. Mary R.; George R.I."

The present was, quite needlessly to say, received with the liveliest gratitude and pride by the gallant soldiers, who were delighted to receive the Royal cards, and who appreciated their Majesties' kindly thought very deeply. It was hoped to distribute presents from Queen Alexandra and the Princess Mary's fund, but these not arriving in time were left to be the subjects of the New Year gifts. The Commandant, who spoke a few pleasing words to the inmates of all the wards, also distributed a box of chocolate from

the firm of Messrs. Cadbury, and a handsome card from another well-known firm. Lieut. Col Gunning expressed his great pleasure in handing these gifts to the patients, especially those from their Majesties. The Committee provided a very excellent dinner of roast beef, plum pudding, mince pies, apples and bananas, which were all thoroughly enjoyed. The Plymouth Breweries sent a bottle of beer for each convalescent patient. Handsome presents were very generously sent by the Committee for each member of the staff, and Christmas Day, 1914, will long be remembered by all at the hospital.

In each happily decorated ward, entertainments were given by several performers, and a really merry Christmas Day was spent by all concerned.

At the Larches Red Cross Hospital the wards were gaily decorated with holly, mistletoe, etc., and a very jolly high tea at 6.30 was followed by music and games; the wounded Belgians and the staff spending a very happy day.

The Cottage Hospital was likewise gaily bedecked with a profusion of holly and other adornments, and the patients' tea, to which friends were invited, was characterised by that cheerfulness which always attends on the Christmas function. Special seasonable fare was served, and with gramophone selections the time was most pleasantly spent. At both the Larches and the Cottage Hospital the Parish Church choir sang carols in the evening."

The following Christmas scenes are undated but are probably from the period 1914 – 1917.



Mary Ward



Harcourt Ward



Malborough and Singer Wards



St George and Astor Wards



Greetings from the Executive Committee of the
American Women's War Relief Fund
Xmas 1917



Reproduced by Paul Hope - September 2023