



Paignton Heritage Society

Newsletter December 2024

www.paigntonheritagesociety.co.uk

Message from our Chair

This year has been another exciting one for the Society. We have again seen our membership numbers increase and it was great that so many members came along in July when we visited Brixham Battery. Earlier in the year we were delighted when we were successful in our bid to the Torbay Local Heritage Grant Scheme and you can read about the book and booklet we are producing in this newsletter. I continue to represent the Society on the Paignton Picture House Trust and the Oldway Mansion Working Party and both restorations are progressing, albeit slowly. I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Committee for their enthusiasm, hard work and commitment over the past year and to welcome Sarah Hemingway, who we have co-opted as a committee member. Sarah will be formally proposed at our next AGM. It only remains for me, on behalf of your Society, to wish you

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Iris Butler, Chair

Membership

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

Diary Dates

Our monthly Thursday meetings are as follows, all commencing at 7pm at the Gerston Chapel (opposite the Post Office):

- **19th December** – Nick Pannell – The History of Paignton Harbour
- **16th January** – John Risdon – The History of Galmpton Creek
- **20th February** – Kevin Dixon – Torbay in the Movies
- **20th March** – David Scott – What if Hitler had invaded South Devon

Entry to our monthly talks is £4 for members, £5 for guests.

Heritage Day 2024

Again, we had a very successful Heritage Day thanks to the efforts of several of our members. This year, we wanted to capture some of the memories of local people from the war years, and thanks to Jo Tucker and Sarah Hemingway who invited visitors to our 'Memory Corner', we were able to record some wonderful memories. These will be recorded in our archive – it's not just the great and good of Paignton we want to remember, but also the stories of its people.

We had 152 visitors on the day, and the feedback was all very positive.



Book and Booklet: 'Paignton – Our Home Town'

We are delighted that the book we are producing for primary school use is going well. The first draft is with the publisher, and we hope to be able to say “roll the press” by the end of December. Our publisher is Julian Rees, whose publishing business is based in Paignton, and we are delighted to ‘keep it local’. We are planning a launch of the book and distribution to schools and libraries in February. This book will be a teaching resource, and available in school and Paignton libraries for children to read.

We also intend to fund an additional print run ourselves so we can offer copies of the book to our members and the public, so you will all have the opportunity to obtain your own copy.

In addition, we are producing a ‘booklet’ on life in Paignton during World War II using memories of the people who lived through it, with plenty of photographs and illustrations. This topic is part of the Key Stage 2 curriculum.

We are working with the teacher (who is the history lead) and a focus group of children from Oldway Primary School to make sure both the book and the booklet meet their requirements. The children have been wonderful at keeping us on our toes – one of the hardest things has been grammar and punctuation! We have discovered just how out of touch we are with the way English is taught and used today!



An Audience at the Palace

The autumn programme of talks is:

- **12th December** – The Paignton Quiz – Paignton Heritage Society. **Please come along and support us**
- **16th January** – presentation by Wild Planet Trust on the work of a modern zoo
- **23rd January** – Nick Powe – the story of Kents Cavern
- **13th February** – Don Evitts – the sensational music of the 70's
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Doors open at 10.00 for a 10.30 start. Tickets for the talks are £5 for PHS members - £6 for non-members.

The Penfold Boys

In August, we were contacted by Paul and Nigel Penfold. Their parents were Hoteliers in Paignton, and at one time owned the Bramcote Hotel on Adelphi Terrace. In the mid 60's, the family decided to emigrate to Perth in Australia. The boys said goodbye to all their friends at Curledge Street School, and they boarded a ship. The 28 day voyage took them to Gibraltar and Naples, then through the Suez Canal to Aden. They sailed across the Indian Ocean and Nigel



remembered standing against the rail looking for a mountain, as they were due to dock at Mount Pleasant. He was disappointed to learn that it was just a name – no mountains anywhere near! The boys were visiting Paignton to relive their childhood memories and thought little had changed except for the number of people and cars! It was much quieter in the mid 1960's. We found a few mentions of their father in our archives, which we were able to pass on. However, the “jewel in the crown” was when we discovered the name P H S Penfold inscribed on the chain of office we hold in our archive from the Paignton Hotels and Caterers Association. Paul Penfold was Chair of the Association from 1953 – 1956. The boys were delighted to have their picture taken wearing the chain, and couldn't wait to return to Australia to show their friends and family all they had discovered on their trip.

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.

Our programme of speakers for 2025 will soon be posted on the website.

Oldway Mansion

It is a delight to report that things are finally happening with regard to Oldway. A new working party has been set up, and our Chair, Iris Butler, will be a member of this group and will represent Paignton Heritage Society.

The working party's first priority will be to make the building water-tight. The Council is undertaking a 3D modelling of the Mansion to help with the design for the future.

Oldway Garden Volunteers

Congratulations to the Garden Volunteers who have been awarded an outstanding Level 5 in RHS South West in Bloom “It's Your Neighbourhood Award” four years running, 2024, 2023, 2022 and 2021. Additionally in 2024 they were awarded the RHS South West in Bloom discretionary award, The Michael McGahey Trophy for exceptional community effort and the RHS Community Engagement award. Well done all of you.

History of Torbay Ladies Hockey Club

In 1939, at the outbreak of World War 2, so many young ladies left Paignton to join the services that local hockey clubs struggled to make up their teams. Two ladies, Greta Huggins and Barbara Hughes, stepped forward to form Torbay Ladies Hockey Club – an amalgamation of players from Torquay Women's Hockey Club, the South Devon Blues, the Scarlet Runners from Brixham, the Turfs and the Rangers. In addition to Greta and Barbara, founder members included Betty Winsor and Joan O'Donoghue (an England international player).

In June 1940, Plymouth suffered their heaviest night's bombing of the war, as the city was blitzed by the Luftwaffe. The next day, Torbay Ladies had a fixture against the Plymouth side, Mannamead, but having heard of the devastation of Plymouth, and having seen the skies to the south west lit up by the fires burning, they tried to telephone to see if the game could go on. Unable to get through, but not wanting to let the other side down, Torbay Ladies set off in cars for the match. When they neared Plymouth they were stopped by the road blocks of the Civil Defence, who were not letting people into the city without good reason to do so. The intrepid Torbay Ladies hid their sticks and said they were making for the Efford Crematorium for a funeral (the crematorium being near to the Mannamead pitch), and so were let through the barriers.

Arriving at the pitch, Torbay found the Mannamead Ladies waiting for them, and the match went ahead. The score is forgotten, but the gratitude of the Plymouth side for the effort Torbay had made to support their friends in such a troubled hour was long remembered. Goalkeeper Nancy Wilson recalled standing in her goal during that match and hearing the sound of explosions in the City. She looked across to a church which she thought had survived the bombs, but on the journey home, she realised only a shell of the building remained.



Torbay's first pitch was in Victoria Park, Paignton. The land had originally been marshland, flooded by high tides, but the area had been drained and the sea defences built around the 1890's. The pitch was located where the former Lidl's Store stands, and there were also tennis courts marked out. Later, the pitch was moved to the other side of the Park, by the main Torquay Road. A lovely pavilion was built where the teams could sit and have tea after the game. Unfortunately this building began to sink into the reclaimed land and had to be demolished in the 1960's.

During the 1970's, Torbay were a very strong side with some high standard players including Ros Vinten and Sheila Jarvis (England internationals) and Isabel Crocker and Jane Hares (West of England players). They were also strongly supported on the administrative side, with Doreen Carey, herself a Devon County player, acting as Secretary from 1964 to 1986.

One fact few clubs could boast is Torbay's goalkeeper record. Between them, Nancy Wilson and Karen Chapman kept goal for the first 57 years of the club's existence. Nancy played in goal from the Club's beginnings in 1939, and retired in 1970, whilst Karen joined the club in 1967 and kept goal until her retirement in 1996.

Ladies hockey was generally played as 'friendlies' with one or two cup competitions over the season. However in 1989, league hockey was introduced, and Torbay found themselves in the Sun Life West Clubs Women's Hockey League Division 1, along



with Kingsbridge, Mannamead, Plymouth, Penzance, Camborne, Bude, Falmouth, Liskeard and Bodmin. The Victoria Park pitch was not up to league standard, and so the team had to move.

Torbay Ladies HC c1987:

Back: Doreen Carey, Betty Winsor, ?, Sheila Jarvis, Nuala Horne, Val Hammond, Jane Hares

Front: Iris Butler, Sue Allen, Sue Saunders, ?, Jenny Mitchell

Memories of Hockey in the Park – Victoria Park, Paignton

On Saturday 11th October 1969 I played my first game of hockey in Victoria Park for Torbay Women's Hockey Club's 2nd XI as their goalie. I was 15 and they relaxed the rule that you had to be 16 to play women's hockey, as they were short of a goalkeeper. We lost 6 – 3 to Salcombe Ladies.

Torbay had two teams – a 1st XI and a 2nd XI – and whilst the first team played, the second would cheer them along from the pavilion with "ooh – fine shot Sheila – pass! Pass to Valerie!". Ladies' hockey was a very genteel sport then, and all matches were "friendlies" – it wasn't until 1990 that Torbay began to play league hockey and the game was taken more seriously. Teams from as far as Plymouth (Mannamead Ladies), Exeter (the Green Dragons and the Exeter Ladies), Tiverton (the White Eagles) and Sidmouth would travel to Paignton on a Saturday for 'bully-off' at 2.30 pm.

Many of the faces that would turn up on a Saturday afternoon at Victoria Park in the 70's were well known in Paignton – Greta Huggins (who I remember playing with as my right back when she was well over 60 years old), Nancy Wilson (1st XI goalkeeper), Betty Winsor (umpire), Kay Baker (Bakers, the Paignton chemist shop), Doreen Carey (Secretary of the club for many, many years), Ros Vinten (games teacher at Torquay Girls Grammar who also played hockey for England), Sheila Jarvis (also an England player), Jane Easterbrook, Iris Butler, Val Hammond and a young Jane English to name a few. I remember Ros returning from an England coaching session and trying to introduce a 4-2-4 (four forwards, two midfielders, four defenders) system to our play. We had played 5-3-2 (five forwards, three midfielders and two defenders) since we formed in 1939, and all that could be heard was "well who am I supposed to mark?".

The Club played at Victoria Park until the end of the 1989 season – in 1990 the Club began to play league hockey, and the Victoria Park grass pitch was not up to league standard. A part of the problems with the pitch was the need for the club captain to arrive half an hour before the game with a shovel to remove any offending doggie doo from the D (the semicircle around the goal in which the ball had to be for a shot to be taken). From 1990, the Club played their matches at Churston Ferrers Grammar School's pitch, and later at the Clennon Valley all-weather astro pitch.

Hockey at Victoria Park had certain draw-backs. In one match, I remember a lady carrying a large tray of eggs - she was determined that she had right of way across the pitch, even though 22 ladies were charging round yelling, wielding sticks and chasing a very hard ball. She did make it across, but I still say some of the eggs were scrambled by the time she reached the far side.

Another time, I was in goal and we were playing the Green Dragons from Exeter. As their centre forward neared and prepared to launch the ball at goal, a poodle ran in front of me and the goal, closely chased by a stout lady shouting "Mind my Pookie! Mind my Pookie!" – somewhat distracted, I watched the poodle and lady as they raced towards the park exit, only to then see the ball fly past me – it was considered very unsporting of Green Dragons to claim that goal.



Then there was the Saturday of the South Devon College of Arts & Technology (now South Devon College) students' Rag Week. A procession of students on decorated flatbed lorries drove past on the Torbay Road and stopped at the Hyde Road traffic lights. Several of the students let out a whoop and jumped off the lorries to leap over the low wall (there were no railings then) and invade the pitch. They stole our ball, and refused to return it until a ransom had been paid – fortunately Betty, our umpire, had a few coins in her pocket for their collecting tin.

Once the match was over, the team captain would shout "Ladies – three cheers for the Dragons", or whoever else we were playing, and the team would reply "Hoorah, Hoorah, Hoorah". Then came the most important part of the afternoon – tea. There was a big electric water heater in the Pavilion and in fine weather both teams would sit outside with cups of tea, and feast on sandwiches (provided by the defence) and home-baked cake (provided by the attack). As goalkeeper, I was excused tea-making as it was my job to provide the oranges for half time.

Fond memories – I finally hung up my boots in 1996 having played in goal for Torbay for 27 years, and to this day I cannot walk through Victoria Park without remembering the adrenaline rush of excitement as a ball flew past my head, and the feeling of relief that I still had my front teeth intact.

Karen Chapman – November 2024