

Tamar

Journal of the Friends of the Tamar Valley
Number 40 – 2018



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Cover photo: Tamar and Cotehele from above Hewton, Bere Peninsula
(a sample of the excellent photography of Tamar Valley photographer,
Dr. David Price).

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EDITORIAL

Once again, grateful thanks to the authors who have contributed to this edition of 'Tamar' – their enthusiasm and knowledge is much appreciated. There would be no journal without them.

Jill Lane details the dire health impacts on workers in the arsenic industry in the Tamar Valley, and the pioneer medical men who brought the issue to wider attention. While many articles in 'Tamar' have focused on the industrial past, Graham Hicks' profile of Greystone Quarry provides a welcome reminder that commercial mineral working still persists in our area.

Bruce Hunt and David Greenfield combine their extensive local knowledge with an account of an ill-fated proposal to build a suspension bridge over the Tamar at Saltash in the earlier 19th century. Bruce, is of course, a regular contributor to 'Tamar' – as is maritime historian Gary Hicks. Gary adds to our understanding of Tamar Valley ship-builder Emanuel Crocker, and also highlights the research potential of online newspaper archives.

We are grateful to Helen Wilson not only for her recording and reporting of Friends meetings, but also for article on those remarkable woodcarvers and businesswomen, the Pinwill sisters, about whom Helen is a great expert. Helen focuses on the fine memorial in Maker church to Piers Edgcumbe, the family heir who was killed at Dunkirk in 1940.

I have included article on the mid-19th century visits to Bere Ferrers by the fascinating Lady Shelley. Based on her diaries, the account includes some intriguing local observations, as well as background on her exotic life as a celebrity. I hope readers will forgive this self-indulgence!

Further reader forbearance is requested for my inclusion of a short extract from H.E. Carrington's 'Plymouth and Devonport Guide', which describes, in splendidly enthusiastic and ornate language, a voyage up the Tamar from Devonport to Calstock in 1828. Carrington was heading for the Morwell Rocks, but this extract describes the trip only as far as Calstock.

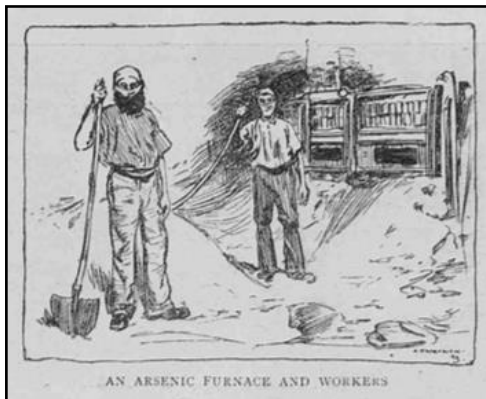
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Health problems of arsenic workers

Jill Lane

In the latter part of the nineteenth century over half the world supply of arsenic was produced in the Tamar Valley, at Devon Great Consols, Gawton, Coombe, Okeltor and Greenhill etc. The mundic ore was being reprocessed to yield arsenic. “*Arsenic works on the Tamar*”, an illustrated article by S. Baring Gould published by The Graphic July 22 1893, drew attention to the illnesses suffered by men working in arsenic production.



Figures 1 and 2 Illustrations of arsenic workers from The Graphic, July 22 1893



A few years later the Board of Guardians of Tavistock Workhouse were concerned about the number of paupers among men formerly engaged in arsenic production, meaning that Calstock received more money to pay paupers than it contributed to the Union. There had been many discussions about transferring Calstock back to the Liskeard Union, or joining it to the Launceston Union. The Board asked their Medical Officers, Dr Broderick of Tavistock and Dr Bowhay of Calstock to report. They received the report on 25th February 1899 and the Tavistock Gazette published it on March 3rd 1899, followed by other newspapers, which also published criticism of the report. An extract follows.

“RESPIRATORY DISORDERS AMONG ARSENIC WORKERS IN CORNWALL. Since the decline of the copper and tin mining industries in Cornwall a number of arsenic works have been in operation on the sites of the old mines, the attention of the Tavistock Board of Guardians has been directed to the large number of persons employed at these works who have been disabled, and have come upon the parish for support. Dr. C. C. Broderick Medical Officer of Health for the Tavistock Rural District, and Dr. Albert Bowhay, Medical Officer of Health for the Calstock Rural District, at the request of the Board, have investigated the state of matters in the parish of Calstock. and find that a large number of persons once employed at the arsenic works are in receipt of parish relief, and are suffering from respiratory diseases attributed to the effect of arsenic fumes. They have also discovered that out of 100 persons employed these works who have in the last three years 83 have died of respiratory diseases. On visiting the works, they observed that they used no protection all, while the millers and grinders had the mouth and nostrils covered only with lint and a handkerchief. They recommend the use of a wire mask covered with gauze all those employed at the works.”

The British Medical Journal published an article, saying that sulphurous acid poisoning was more likely. Several newspapers in 1899 carried articles about the report on the health of arsenic workers and the report led to much controversy. Objections that arsenic could not be the cause of the problems came especially from Mr Hubert James, manager of Greenhill Arsenic Works, who alleged that the health problems were caused by drink and the ingestion of coal dust. Mr Moses Bawden, manager of Devon Great Consols said that they were always ready to listen to suggestions for the benefit their workpeople, and, if all possible, to bring them into use.

The Workmen's Compensation Act 1897 replaced the Employers' Liability Act 1880, which gave the injured worker the right to sue the employer but had put the burden of proof on the employee. After 1897,

injured employees had only to show that they had been injured on the job. Also, the Alkali Inspectorate had been established in 1874 and the Factory and Workshop Acts 1878 to 1895 were helping to improve working conditions. Special clothing was provided for arsenic workers

Dr William Fookes Thompson was in practice in Launceston with his father Dr David Thompson (who had been Mayor of Launceston in 1877 and 1888 and was also County Coroner). Knowing of the arsenic controversy, he researched the subject and wrote a 48-page typed document '*The manufacture of arsenic and the diseases most common amongst the men engaged in it*', signed and dated March 1901 (now posted on line) although it is not known how widely it was circulated at the time.

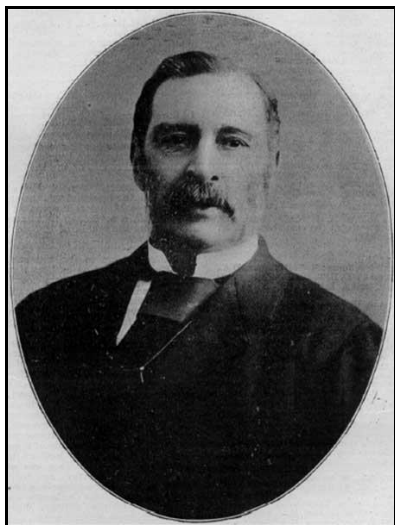


Figure 3 Dr. David Thomson 1832–1908
Thompson 1859- 1932

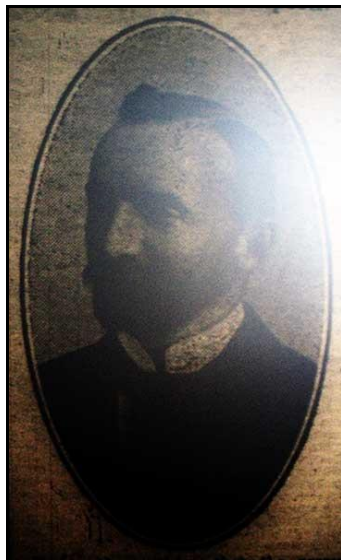


Figure 4 Dr. William Fookes Thompson 1859- 1932

After describing arsenic, its uses, and drawing diagrams of the various types of calciners and flues used in arsenic manufacture, Dr Thomson's report looks at how inhaling arsenic affects the health of the men engaged in its production. It goes on to examine several men from the Tamar Valley who worked in the unhealthiest parts of the process: the reverberatory furnaces and the flues. They were protected only by cotton wool stuffed in the nostrils and a folded handkerchief hanging down over the chin. Sometimes Fullers Earth was applied to the cheeks, forehead and arms.

He notes the findings of Dr Broderick and Dr Bowhay. There were far more paupers among former arsenic workers, disabled at much earlier age (average 40 years, compared with 58½ for the rest of the pauper population). The average duration of employment was 11½ years. They suffered from respiratory diseases, heart disease and digestive problems, and also nerve problems causing shaking and twitching, other symptoms and eventually paralysis. Millers and grinders got eczema and ulcers of the skin from contact with the arsenic.

Dr Thomson had never seen a case of arsenic poisoning in his Launceston practice, so Dr Bowhay allowed him to examine some of his patients, men in their 30s and 40s who had worked with arsenic – the prognosis was bad. Individual cases included the following:

“Daniel Wikett age 49, living in Latchley had worked at Devon Great Consols for 19 years, never underground but with arsenic. He had been in failing health for 15 years, and during the last 5 years has not been engaged in the manufacture of arsenic, but has been doing job-work on the mine, such as breaking stones, but now (Oct 1900) was totally incapacitated from work. The illness began as a cough, and he had a good deal of expectoration, which was like dough, and his breath was short. Appetite poor and often vomited. He then developed pains in his legs and arms, worse on the right side. Then a shaking developed and now he could scarcely walk.

Diagnosis: Chronic Bronchitis, which at times get acute. Emphysema with commencing dilation of the right side of the heart.

His son aged 23 had been a farm labourer but was now an arsenic worker and beginning to suffer from the symptoms.

Henry Axford, age 39 Gunnislake, began work at Devon Great Consols when he was 16. The illness started with a cough and shortness of breath, with thick yellowish expectoration which was tinged with blood. He had scars on exposed parts of the body where arsenic had fallen. Sometimes there was a rash on the lips and sores in the mouth. He used to get red patches in the folds of his skin. Gets sickness and stomach pains. Had lost a lot of weight. Prognosis: very bad. His health is gradually failing.

Samuel Buller age 34 Worked in all the arsenic processes for 14 years and the symptoms started about 6 years ago. Cough very bad. Prognosis bad. Four brothers also affected. Father worked at the arsenic works and died at 51.

Benjamin Phaer age 45 worked at Devon Great Consols 10 years and had been at home 6 years. Pain in back and difficulty walking.”

Dr Thomson summarised the effects of working with arsenic in some detail. He appreciated the measures being taken to improve working conditions of arsenic and hoped that the workers would be careful to take advantage of them.

Devon Great Consols closed down in 1901 because it could not sell the arsenic. The Duke of Bedford promised to find work for the 500 men laid off. On 3rd December 1901 The Sheffield Daily Telegraph published a paragraph beginning: *“Announcement that the Devon Great Consols Copper and Arsenic Mine has been shut down must fill everyone interested in the prosperity of the country with regret. A contributory cause possibly has been the arsenical scare of the past twelve months.”*

Greystone Quarry

Graham Hicks

Greystone Quarry is situated on the B3362, just north of Greystone Bridge and is owned and operated by Aggregate Industries UK Ltd. The quarry is named after the bridge, which in turn was possibly so called due to the colour of the local stone – grey. The bridge was commissioned by Bishop Lacy, who on 27th December 1439 gave his penitents an indulgence of 40 days to fund the building of the bridge. Did this mean “pay up and your sins will be written off”?

The ‘grey stone’ is dolerite and the earliest appearance of the quarry on the map was on the 1st edition 6-inch Ordnance Survey map of 1882. At that time quarried stone was typically wanted for quoins, lintels and hand-placed walling. The dolerite would have been rather unattractive due to its natural shape.

However, as the use of motor vehicles increased over time, the stone found greater popularity when crushed to make road stone and use in tarmac. The ‘Macadam’ part of that name is recognition of the surname of the man who pioneered metalled road surfaces and tar was mixed with the crushed stone. Tar was a derivative of the coking of coal, but is no longer used as it is seen as carcinogenic and would probably not be available anyway.

Under the ownership of the Northcott family a decent-scale crushing plant was built. It included a great deal of concrete in its construction and it is believed to date back to the 1930s. There was also a small plant heating stone to produce tarmac. A set of concrete bins stood until the 1980s and concrete foundations have recently been unearthed during development work at the eastern end of the quarry.

The quarry, trading as the Launceston Granite Company, was sold in 1958 to English China Clays (ECC), the Cornish clay producers based in



Figure 1 Greystone Quarry from the air

St. Austell. A number of independent quarries were bought by ECC at this time. The sales inventories of some of these businesses are stored at Greystone Quarry and list details of assets from the crushing equipment to Mr Northcott's desk.

Trading as ECC Quarries, a new processing plant was built around 1974 by ECC's Marsh Barton engineering department and is still in use today but for minor modifications. The only major addition was in 2012 when a new high capacity aggregate wash plant was added, replacing one unable to meet the demand for washed materials for surface dressing. This plant is a great example of re-use and re-cycling. The feed bins were reused from Stoneycombe asphalt plant at Kingskerswell, one conveyor came from a sand plant at Leighton Buzzard and a wash screen from Meldon Quarry in Okehampton. Also from Meldon came the concrete panels forming the storage bays. This however is their third life. In their second life the concrete formed a ramp up to the crusher, and their first life was circa 1972 when they were made to deck Meldon Viaduct so that trucks could drive over it to deliver stone from Meldon Quarry to the construction site of Meldon Dam. It was a scary trip going over the high viaduct and looking down nearly 200 ft.

Given the vast mineral wealth from the Tamar Valley, it is not surprising that metal deposits crossed the site. Silver lead lodes of galena were present; the remnant of one is still visible on the western side of the quarry. This was worked at one stage as the Greystone Silver Lead Mine. Greystone Cottage on the lane by the quarry is believed to have been a blacksmith shop for the mine. Mining ventures went under different names and Greystone Mine became North Tamar Mine in 1836 and was offered for sale three years later.

Wheal Sophia anticipated meeting the Gresson (Greystone) north lode but mines' fortunes were varied. Wheal Sophia made history by being the first Cornish mine to use electric detonators underground. A reference is also made to the mine regarding a servant girl who spent her

life savings on shares in the mine and after 'calls' were made (the opposite of dividends) which she could not meet she ended up in the debtors court but avoided going to debtors' prison. The last workings were known as Greystone and East Longstone mines and included Wheal Sophia.

Within the silver-lead deposits are numerous interesting minerals associated with lead, zinc and copper. The minerals vary from eye-catching crystal specimens of chalcopyrite on dolomite to tiny specimens of rarities requiring specialist identification. Fifty-six different minerals have been recorded.

The geology is also interesting; the whole quarry is a geological site of special scientific interest, relating to features arising from the sinuous basal thrust of the Greystone Nappe. It provides one of the best inland exposures of such structures in southern Britain.

Greystone is an important aggregate producer, and today the most significant role of the quarry is the production of graded aggregate for washing surface dressing and for coating with bitumen in asphalt products. It is a very durable aggregate and provides a skid-resistant surface for roads.

The dolerite quarried at Greystone is regionally important and is supplied throughout Cornwall, Devon and Somerset and along the south Coast to Southampton. It has gone as far as Berkshire and is also supplied by sea to the Isle of Wight. A great many road users benefit from the quality and uses of Greystone aggregate and if you have stopped safely on the road in the South West of England there is a good chance you were driving on aggregate from Greystone Quarry.

What might have been: an alternative Saltash Bridge *Bruce Hunt and David Greenfield*

Brunel was not the first person to propose that a bridge be built across the River Tamar at Saltash. In 1823 Captain Samuel Brown (1776-1852) proposed that a suspension bridge with a span of 900ft and a height of 90ft should be built across the river (Fig.1 below). Not only did he propose a bridge, he drew up plans and a table of tolls that would have to be charged to produce a return for the shareholders.

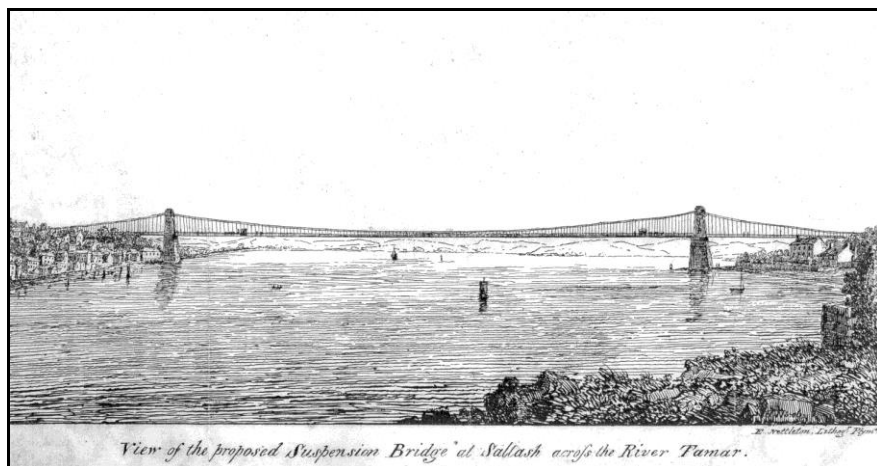


Figure 1 Sketch of Samuel Brown's proposed suspension bridge across the Tamar

The idea was not as far-fetched as may first appear, as Brown was an early pioneer of chain design and manufacture. He was responsible for the construction of a number of bridges and is best known for the Union Bridge of 1820 across the Tweed, the first vehicular suspension bridge in Britain.

Brown joined the Royal Navy in 1795, serving as lieutenant on HMS *Royal Sovereign* (1803) and then in 1805 joining HMS *Phoenix* as first

lieutenant. The following year he was appointed to HMS *Imperieuse*, followed by service aboard HMS *Flore* and HMS *Ulysses*.

During his Naval service, he carried out tests on wrought iron chain cables, using them as rigging for HMS *Penelope* in 1806 on a voyage to the West Indies. This so impressed the Admiralty that on his return in 1808 it immediately ordered four vessels to be fitted with chain cables. In 1808 Brown took out patents for twisted open chain links, joining shackles and swivels. His shackle and swivel designs were scarcely improved on for the next 100 years.

When Brown left the Navy, he established a company (known as Samuel Brown & Co and also Brown Lenox & Co) with his cousin Samuel Lenox. His firm went on to supply all the chain to the Navy until 1916, and made the chains for Brunel's SS Great Eastern, shown in the famous photograph by Robert Howlett.

Brown took out a patent for chain-making in 1816, and patented wrought iron chain links suitable for a suspension bridge in 1817. In the same year, the Earl of Buchan commissioned the Dryburgh Bridge across the River Tweed, which was a pioneer chain-supported bridge, although it collapsed the following year. Brown had been experimenting with a chain-supported suspension bridge already, building a 35ft span test structure in 1813.

Brown was invited to participate in abortive proposals for a suspension bridge at Runcorn. In September 1818, he submitted drawings for Union Bridge over the River Tweed, which was completed in 1820. At 361ft, it was the longest wrought iron suspension bridge in the world when completed. It is now the oldest suspension bridge for road traffic still in use.

In early 1822, Brown was engaged by Plymouth and Cornish entrepreneurs to design a bridge to span the Tamar at Saltash, capable of carrying "all coaches, chaises, waggons, carts, horses, and foot

passengers", so that the deprived country west of the Tamar could be "raised to an equal degree of improvement with other districts of England".

Brown estimated that his bridge at Saltash would cost £51,500 to construct and with the addition of legal fees, land purchase and the construction of toll houses the total cost would be £60,000. Brown emphasised the point that a bridge of this size would be a great attraction and could bring much trade to the town as people flocked to see the biggest bridge of its type on the world.

Brown's plans were supported by some prominent southeast Cornwall landowners. A public meeting was held and a subscription list for company shares was started. The intention was to apply to Parliament for the necessary enabling Act. Unfortunately, the funds pledged fell short to a considerable degree.

Brown's over-ambitious proposal of a 1,000ft span suspension bridge 90ft above the river attracted the attention of Marc Brunel, the father of the famous Isambard. Brown reduced the proposed span to 830ft by December 1823, when the promoters sought Marc Brunel's opinion on what he referred to as "bridges of that description when carried to an excess of bearing". He responded: "My observations are on the terror which is likely and unavoidably to be felt at the Bridge, being at an undue height, when passing over it. The middle is likely to sink down very rapidly." The proposals were abandoned soon afterwards.

Less than ten years later the younger Brunel, with some assistance from Marc, would be designing a suspension bridge of his own – over the Avon at Clifton, Bristol. And he would return to the Tamar estuary in the 1850s with his own proposals for an innovative structure to carry traffic (rail traffic in this instance) into Cornwall – the Royal Albert Bridge, which has become a lasting monument to his engineering genius.

The Tavistock Gazette and Emanuel Crocker

Gary Hicks

In pursuing research into the histories of individual ships and fishing boats registered at Plymouth, it rapidly became very clear that the most detailed accounts of the highs and lows of a vessel's life were to be found in the pages of local newspapers. If I was to find a launch report for the schooner *Annie*, built at Barnstaple, then I would find it in the North Devon Journal. Or, the loss of the brig *Jubilee*, on the Newcombe Sands on 12th November 1837, the most comprehensive report would be in the Ipswich Journal. The local paper would tell me who broke the bottle at her bow and who she was named after and, if I wished to know the names of those lost with the vessel, or those who risked their lives to save them, then I would only be likely to find this in the local paper.

Although many local Plymouth newspapers exist as filmed copies and the Tavistock Gazette survives as original printed editions held by the Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (Ref 1793), research in these sources was, and is, hard and frustrating work. Moreover, it is only likely to succeed when an actual or closely approximate date is known; reading through long runs of consecutive editions is very time-consuming.

Gradually newspapers are being scanned into digital format and becoming available on-line. Recently, Findmypast have added 1859, 1861, 1870, 1874 and 1897 editions of the Tavistock Gazette to their existing material bringing their holding from the Gazette to 153,263 items.

Readers may recall my article in the 2014 edition of the 'Tamar', relating to the vessels built by Emanuel Crocker at Netstakes (Hicks, 2014). At that stage five vessels were known, but the only launch report located was for the first vessel, which had made the pages of the Western Daily Mercury of 16 December 1864, because it was the first launch, from an improbably situated yard.

The addition of the new Tavistock Gazette material by Findmypast, prompted a renewed search, limited to the Gazette, which located launch reports for three further vessels. It also located the following report of an attempted launch of the *Tamar Queen*, which was not mentioned on the Western Dairy Mercury.

TAVISTOCK GAZETTE, FRIDAY, 9 DECEMBER 1864 “FAILURE IN
LAUNCHING A SHIP AT GUNNISLAKE

“On Saturday morning last, an attempt was made to launch a fine schooner from the building yard of Mr Crocker, Netstakes, near Gunnislake, which we are sorry to say ended in the disappointment of all who were concerned. The event was to come off at eight o’clock in the morning, and every preparation had been made for its accomplishment. From the position in which she was built it was necessary to launch her broadside on. The dogshores¹ were struck away, Mrs Bowhay the wife of one of the owners dashed the wine bottle against the bows of the “Tamar Queen” amid the cheers of the company, the ship started on her ways, but after slipping about three feet she came to a dead stop, and steadily resisted all the efforts of the ship carpenters to move her. The disappointment was very great, but it was expected that she would go off her ways rejoicing at the next high tide, and once on her native element we wish her a prosperous career. We would advise the builder to mend his ways before the next launch.”

While interesting in its own right, with an amusing play on words in the final sentence, this report does much more, because it helps settle the question posed in my earlier article concerning the position of the Netstakes yard. From this report it is clear that the slipway was not positioned so as to launch down the length of the straight stretch

¹ ‘Dogshores’ are blocks of timber positioned either side of a ship on a slipway to prevent the vessel moving before launching.

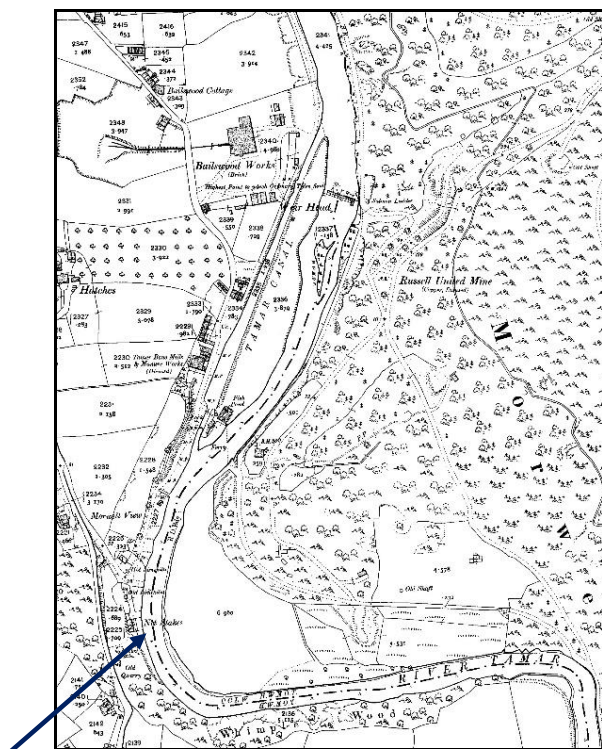


Fig.1: Location of Crocker's shipyard at Netstake

of river bordering Whimple Wood, but was instead made sideways into the river so that the bank immediately adjoining Netstake is an entirely feasible site for the yard.

Limiting the searches to the pages of the Gazette allowed searches to be made for terms which would have returned too many results to be practical in an unlimited search. Although these have not revealed a launch report for the fifth vessel, the schooner *Merit*, they have, by failing to reveal any further vessels, lent a little weight to the supposition that Emanuel Crocker built only five vessels at Netstake.

The searches also reveal a rather surprising fact concerning Emanuel Crocker (at least to me) for no published work that I know of refers to it. I had assumed that Crocker blazed like a comet across the landscape of the upper Tamar Valley, briefly building ships at the tide head.

However, the search revealed other references to Emanuel Crocker, or Mr. E. Crocker in connection with various local businesses, who might, or might not, be the same man. His obituary however, placed him in a new light. Emanuel Crocker died on 11 January 1888, aged 75, and from his obituary, which appeared in the Tavistock Gazette of 27 January, it is clear that he had many and varied business interests, being a coal and general merchant and the main shareholder in granite quarries, brickworks, and the Gunnislake gas works. The Gazette stated “that nothing short of a million of money has come to the neighbourhood through works in which he took an active interest” (the equivalent in today’s money, of a little over £82 million). The search also reveals just what a boon digitisation is, for the obituary did not appear until three editions and 21 pages after his death.

While the digitised editions of the Gazette are clearly not a complete run, those of us interested in all aspects of history of the valley, from the 1850s, now have a new source. To effectively use this source, limit your searches to the Gazette and, if at first you don’t succeed, try again, with new searches using different terms.

Reference

Gary Hicks (2014) Building at the Limit: Netstakes and the unlucky sisters, *Tamar* 36, pp.5-11.

An Edgcumbe Memorial at Maker and the Remarkable Violet Pinwill

Helen Wilson

Introduction

Piers Richard Edgcumbe, son of the 6th Earl, was killed in action in 1940 and there are several memorials to him, including one in Maker Church. This memorial, a half screen dividing the nave from the chancel, was produced by Violet Pinwill, recognised at the time as one of the most notable woodcarvers in the region. Today, Violet and her sisters, who started their Rashleigh, Pinwill & Co. woodcarving company in 1890, are becoming recognised as an important part of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the Westcountry. Violet Pinwill singlehandedly took the company forward into the twentieth century and pioneered the role of a successful businesswoman at a time before universal suffrage. The commissioning of the Edgcumbe memorial came quite late in her career but she applied her usual meticulous attention to detail and created a beautiful and fitting tribute.

At Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (PWDRO), there are a series of albums and bundles of loose photographs deposited by relatives of the Pinwill sisters. The photographs are quite distinctive; most of them are marked with the name of the church for which the piece was made, the name of the respective architect, and either 'R. Pinwill' or 'V. Pinwill'. They form the most reliable means of identifying work by the Pinwill company, but they are by no means complete in their coverage, with items from the early days under-represented and many later pieces omitted. Other evidence for identifying work is often available, however, such as contemporary newspaper reports. Occasionally, the hunt for unidentified work becomes a case of piecing together information from diverse sources and this was the case for the 'discovery' of the Edgcumbe memorial as work by Violet Pinwill.

The Pinwill Woodcarving Company

The Pinwill sisters, Mary Rashleigh, Annie Ethel and Violet Alice, worked as professional woodcarvers in Ermington and then Plymouth from about 1889. They were three of seven daughters of the Revd Edmund Pinwill and his wife Elizabeth, who encouraged their daughters to learn woodcarving from a team of craftsmen who came to Ermington to restore the church there in 1884.² One of their first large commissions was the pulpit at Ermington, completed in 1889 (Fig.1). The sisters then set up their own company, Rashleigh, Pinwill & Co., Ecclesiastical Carvers. While it was not unusual for women to learn to carve in the late Victorian period,³ it was quite extraordinary for them to set up in business as woodcarvers and the name of the company may well have been devised to give the impression that they were men.⁴ The establishment and success of the firm was due in no small part to the patronage of the architect Edmund H. Sedding.⁵ He was the nephew of Arts & Crafts architect John Dando Sedding and had come to know the family well during the restoration of Ermington church. Commissions designed by Sedding ensured a high standard was established and a good reputation gained. Other architects soon recognised their skills and commissioned work from the sisters, including Frederick Bligh Bond and George H. Fellowes Prynne.

When Mary married in 1900, she left the business. By that time they had a workshop in Plymouth, initially in Athenaeum Street in premises shared with Edmund H. Sedding. After Ethel moved to Surrey sometime

² Elaine Chaytor, *Ermington Days* (Melinga, North Cheam, 1990).

³ For example, in an advertisement for Exeter High School for Girls in *The Western Times* (19 April, 1898) woodcarving was among alternative classes available for girls not preparing for examinations.

⁴ Claire Garnett, granddaughter of Mary Rashleigh Pinwill, pers. comm.

⁵ For more information on the life and work of Edmund H. Sedding, see Helen Wilson (2016) 'The Architect Edmund H. Sedding and his Devon Churches', *Rep. Trans. Devon. Ass. Advmt Sci.* 148 pp. 255-292.



Figure 1: *The pulpit in Ermington Church, Devon, carved by the Pinwill sisters in 1889 (author).*

after 1907 to work as a woodcarver,⁶ Violet became the sole proprietor. She continued to work with Sedding, but after his death in 1921 R.F. Wheatly became the company architect, although Violet had by then established a reputation and increasingly won commissions in her own right. Violet employed other woodcarvers as well as joiners and established a large workshop in St Lawrence Yard, just off Houndiscombe Road, Plymouth. She travelled all over Devon and Cornwall, mostly by train and bicycle, to meet with vicars and churchwardens to talk about the work they required. Violet never advertised, owned a typewriter or a car, and did not employ a secretary.

⁶ Public Record Office Census 1911 (RG14 - PN3498 RD40 SD2 ED1 SN119).

By the time she died on 1st January 1957, over 185 churches in Devon and Cornwall and several in other counties contained at least one item made by the Pinwill company,⁷ as illustrated in Fig.2.

The ‘Discovery’ of the Memorial

There was no direct evidence, such as a photograph in the Pinwill archives, for the memorial to Piers Richard Edgcumbe at Maker. The information that led to its ‘discovery’ as work by Violet Pinwill stemmed from one of her employees, Hubert Minchinton. When he retired in 1951 at the age of 70, Violet presented him with an album of photographs of the carvings in which he had been involved.⁸ Not surprisingly, he was very proud of his work and during his retirement took two of his grandchildren to visit churches to see carvings in which he had been involved. His granddaughter recalls that one place they visited was Maker Church, where they were shown a memorial to ‘one of the Edgcumbes’. Following this lead, a visit to the church revealed immediately the piece in question. Not only did the memorial to Piers Richard Edgcumbe (Fig. 3) tie in with the description given, but on either side was a semi-kneeling angel in prayer (Fig. 4). This figure was an elegant device designed by Edmund H. Sedding to great effect, and used again and again by the Pinwill company long after his death.⁹ The presence of the archetypal angels on the memorial confirmed that it was indeed carved in the Pinwill workshop.

⁷ Catalogue of Pinwill work compiled from various sources: www.pinwillwoodcarving.org.uk.

⁸ Kitty Green, granddaughter of Hubert Minchinton, pers. comm.

⁹ Examples of semi-kneeling angels in prayer, designed by Sedding and carved in the Pinwill workshop appear on altar rails at Plympton St Mary (1908), Lansallos (1912), Cardinham (1921) and St Martin-by-Looe (1921) and on riddel posts at Calstock (1911). After 1921, Wheatly also designed semi-kneeling angels such as those at Abbotsbury, Newton Abbot (1924) and St Martin-by-Looe (1930s). The character of the angels changed, though, from distinctly feminine to more masculine.



Figure 2: Detail of charming pulpit at Stoke Fleming, Devon, carved with numerous animals, birds and reptiles in 1891 (author).



Figure 3: The left-hand side of the memorial to Piers Richard Edgcumbe in Maker Church, installed after 1944 (author).



Figure.4: *One of two semi-kneeling angels that enabled the identification of the memorial as the work of Violet Pinwill (author).*

The memorial consists of a half-screen separating the nave from the chancel, as shown on a postcard of the interior of Maker Church (Fig. 5). It was commissioned to commemorate Piers after he died in action near Dunkirk in 1940. The only son of Kenelm and Lilian Edgcumbe, Piers was second cousin once removed and heir-presumptive to the 5th Earl.¹⁰ After the loss of Piers, his father and mother became 6th Earl and Countess of Mount Edgcumbe, respectively, in 1944. The inscription on the memorial describes the parents as such and therefore the screen must date to after their succession. Featured on the screen are the arms of the Edgcumbe family, those of five maternal families (Arkwright, Tufnell, Hoskyns, Monk and Shelley), Eton, and Trinity College, Cambridge.

¹⁰ Rachel Hunt, *Cotehele* (Swindon, National Trust, 2013).



Figure. 5: *Postcard of Maker Church, showing the Edgcumbe memorial between the nave and the chancel (Judges Ltd).*

This discovery was exciting, as it showed that the reputation of Violet's company survived into the 1940s as one that could produce carved work of a standard to commemorate a lost Earl-presumptive. That was in 2013 and it was over two years later that Cotehele Curator Rachel Hunt got in touch to say she had found a photograph of the memorial in the archives. It was labelled 'Maker Church, V. Pinwill Carver, Plymouth'. This was clearly a photograph intended for the Pinwill albums that had, for whatever reason, been given to the family, and further confirmed the provenance of the memorial. It is thanks to Hubert Minchinton and the pride he had in his work that the 'discovery' of this piece was made and also to Rachel that a copy of the photograph is reunited with the rest of the Pinwill archive. The Edgcumbe memorial adds significantly to Violet Pinwill's legacy, and to the reputation of her business as one of the best producers of carved ecclesiastical work in the region.

Acknowledgements

I would very much like to thank Rachel Hunt for contacting me about the photograph and Jack Asquith, Sacristan and Verger at Maker at the time I visited (2016) for his interest and assistance.

Appendix

The following is a list of Pinwill work in the Tamar Valley that appeared in the Friends of the Tamar Valley Newsletter Autumn 2015.

Maker	Half Screen and Altar Rails
Millbrook	Reredos and Panelling
Maryfield	Screen, Panelling and Benches in North Transept
Antony	Chapel Altar Rails
Saltash	Chapel Screens
Landulph	Chancel Screen and Font Cover
Botus Fleming	Reredos
Bere Ferrers	Panelling (only inscription now exists) and Altar Rails
Pillaton	Font Cover
St Mellion	Pulpit Bible Rest
St Dominick	Choir Stalls and Churchyard Memorial to Revd Square
Calstock of church)	Riddel Posts (with semi-kneeling angels - now at back

Further details on these and other Pinwill work may be found at:

www.pinwillwoodcarving.org.uk

Lady Shelley: illustrious visitor to Bere Ferrers

Clive Charlton

As visitors walk down through the heart of Bere Ferrers, perhaps aiming for the quay overlooking the Tavy estuary or the Olde Plough Inn, they might glance at the curious stone structure alongside the village war memorial. It is a somewhat ungainly structure, made of large randomly-piled boulders, with a rough granite stone laid horizontally on top and a granite basin at its foot. Closer inspection reveals the remains of a tap or pipe set in bricks, and a small, tarnished bronze plaque with the inscription: “This well was made by Frances Lady Shelley for the benefit of the poor in her son’s parish 1852” (Fig.1). Bere Ferrers residents did indeed use it as a source of fresh water until at least the opening of the First World War, as is evident in Fig. 2 (below).



Figure 1 *Commemorative plaque on the 'Shelley Well' at Bere Ferrers*

But who was Lady Shelley – and what was her connection with Bere Ferrers? This article provides some answers, although tantalising gaps remain.

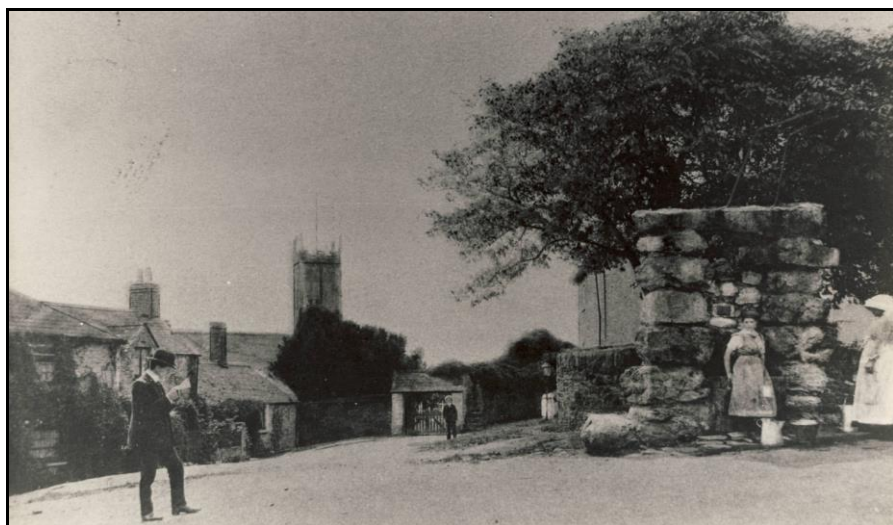


Figure 2 *Edwardian postcard of Bere Ferrers, with the ‘well’ to the right and chestnut trees behind; these were replaced by the village war memorial in 1919. The man on the left was ‘posed’ by the photographer.*

At the outset, Lady Shelley can be claimed to be one of the best-connected and most remarkable people to have visited the Bere Peninsula. Before focusing on her local encounters, some background is warranted on the essential source for her story, and certainly a flavour, at least, of her vivid and eventful life.

Lady Shelley’s writings were revealed to the wider world by the publication of her ‘diary’ in 1912, long after she had died in 1873. Her grandson Richard ‘Dick’ Edgcumbe assembled and edited a collection of her hitherto private diaries, personal observations and letters, together with his own notes, to create two substantial, fascinating volumes (referred to henceforth as ‘the Diary’). As Richard wrote in his preface: “*Lady Shelley could not...have foreseen that, after a century of oblivion, these entries would be interesting to the world at large. If she had contemplated publicity, much of that spontaneity of expression, and*

impulsive enthusiasm...would have been curbed; and these sketches of celebrated personages would have been discreetly withheld".¹¹ He was clearly an admirer of his grandmother's reputation: "...she was a clever, romantic, artistic and fearless woman, beautiful both in feature and in mind, one of the brightest, best and most loyal of women". While the Diary mostly details Lady Shelley's life among the rich and famous in Britain and beyond, as well as on several lengthy European tours, there are also three short accounts of her visits to Bere Ferrers in the 1850s.

The Edgcumbes were the key to Lady Shelley's visits. Her daughter Fanny had married George Edgcumbe, second surviving son of Richard, 2nd Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, and his wife Sophia.¹² The couple met during one of Lady Shelley's tours through Europe and married in Florence in 1834. The Edgcumbe family connection proved advantageous a decade later, after Lady Shelley's second son, Frederick had entered the Church of England, following a spell in the Royal Navy. As lords of the manor, the Edgcumbes were patrons of the parish. Fredrick's sister Fanny used her influence within the family to secure the living at Bere Ferrers for her brother when it fell vacant in 1844. He held the post until 1869.

This article cannot do justice to Lady Shelley's rich and scintillating life story, given the focus here on her visits to the South West; a sketchy outline will have to suffice. She was born Frances Winckley in 1787, the only child of wealthy parents in Preston, Lancashire. Her childhood was

¹¹ The full texts of the two volumes of 'the Diary of Lady Shelley' are available online, albeit in a rather awkward format and via cumbersome URLs. In November 2018, Volume 1 was at: https://archive.org/stream/cu31924088016732/cu31924088016732_djvu.txt and Volume 2 at: https://archive.org/stream/diaryoffrancesla02sheluoft/diaryoffrancesla02sheluoft_djvu.txt

¹² Sophia had brought most of the Bere Peninsula into the Edgcumbe estates on her marriage to Richard in 1789. She was born Sophia Hobart of Blickling, Norfolk. The Hobarts were lords of the manor of Bere Ferrers for most of the 18th century.

turbulent. Her father died when she was young, but not before leaving memories of a rather dissolute household, including:

“When my father had drunk two or three bottles of port, he played all sorts of mad pranks, and on one occasion insisted on taking me out of my bed in the middle of the night, and carried me in his coach, with four black horses, his servants in tawny orange liveries, to Blackpool (the Brighton of the North).”

Frances’s childhood and adolescence remained unsettled. Her mother remarried, to a man that her daughter recalled as being: *“of good family certainly, but of most disgusting vulgarity”*. Her mother died shortly afterwards, leaving Frances an orphan – and heiress to a substantial fortune. She was taken under the wing of various aristocratic kin and family friends, and received a thorough, if chequered private education, which gave her competence in French and music, as well as the independent, enquiring mind that is so strongly reflected in her Diary.

Among her informal guardians were Lord and Lady Sefton, who were determined not only to insert the young Frances into London society, but also to introduce her to a close friend, Sir John Shelley (6th Baronet) of Mitchelgrove, Sussex. Sir John was 17 years older than Frances’, best characterised as a popular, lovable rogue. He was a devotee of racing (and became an owner of Derby winners), shooting, cricket, gambling¹³ and drinking port. An Etonian, he moved in the highest circles; his acquaintances included the Prince Regent – and the future Duke of Wellington. However, the Seftons felt it was high time he ‘settled down’. Their match-making worked; Frances and Sir John were married in 1807.

¹³ Lady Shelley recalls in the Diary that “he contrived to lose thousands in a single night, sitting up until daylight chained to his chair by the fascination of the game!”.

Now ‘Lady Shelley’, Frances was introduced into elite social circles, which she pursued with vigour, after bearing six children in quick succession¹⁴. Once her seven years of child-bearing were over, Lady Shelley was whirled into that world of celebrity, politics and travel that dominates her Diary. Sir John evidently encouraged his glamorous and lively young wife in her immersion in high society. She reflected from old age how John “*often recklessly exposed me to the dangers of that profligate society in which my early married life was passed. It was his greatest satisfaction to see my power of fascinating minds far superior to my own*”. However, Frances Shelley rapidly emerged as far more than a mere ‘trophy wife’. She was energetic, determined, curious, adventurous, and developed a wide range of interests, especially history, politics, geography and nature. She was also very attractive¹⁵, vivacious, sociable and an ardent observer of people.



Figure 3: *The only known image of Lady Shelley*

¹⁴ There is remarkably little about Lady Shelley’s children in her Diary, especially in earlier years. Similarly, there are only sparse (but intriguing) reflections on her relationship with Sir John - but enough to suggest she tolerated his often wayward behaviour to a striking degree. Despite what must have been major differences in character and interests, Frances and John appeared to stay extremely fond of each other.

¹⁵ The only known image of Lady Shelley is a rather inadequate black and white sketch allegedly based on a miniature portrait (Fig.3).

Her verdicts on those she met and places she visited could sometimes be waspish, even snobbish. At her first meeting with Walter Scott near Paris she notes: *“his first appearance is not prepossessing. A club-foot, white eyelashes and a clumsy figure”*. But she then concedes: *“but, upon an instant, some remark will lighten up his whole countenance, and you discover the man of genius”*. On the road to Paris *“...the inn smelt horribly”* and there was *“a multitude of squalid and clamorous beggars”*.

First in London, and then on adventurous forays to the Continent, Lady Shelley became acquainted with a remarkable array of high celebrities of the day: the Duke and Duchess of York, Tsar Alexander, the great Austrian statesman Metternich, that wily French political schemer and survivor Talleyrand, Lord and Lady Castlereagh, Lord Brougham, Lord Byron, Walter Scott, Lord Palmerston and many more. She climbed Vesuvius and travelled through the Alps on a mule (*“...the keen enjoyment I felt on the brink of these precipices is not easily described”*).

However, by far the most significant among her top-tier friends was the Duke of Wellington, whom she first met in London in 1814. She became not only a devoted admirer of the ‘Iron Duke’, but also a close confidante until his death in 1852. The balance of opinion is that their relationship was platonic, but nevertheless intimate. The Diary contains many personal letters from the Duke to Lady Shelley, which give fascinating insights into 19th century history and politics. During the heady days in Paris following the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, she accompanied the great man to the theatre and grand balls and explored Napoleon’s former home at Malmaison with him by night – just the two of them alone and carrying candles. As a very accomplished horsewoman, she rode alongside Wellington at grand military parades. In his book ‘Wellington the Beau’ (2012), Patrick Delaforce describes how *“the young matron who could ride like a dream was to soon appear on the Duke’s horizon. Lady Frances Shelley captivated the Duke and accompanied him on all his military reviews as his unofficial ADC”*.

So at last to Bere Ferrers. Long after those heady days in Paris (and many later adventures, journeys and gossip), 1852 brought a double sadness for Lady Shelley; both her husband Sir John and her adored Duke of Wellington died. Bere Ferrers, the home of her son the Rev. Frederick Shelley and his young family appears to have played an important part in the time of sadness and reflection that followed. She first mentions the village thus:

“June 1852. I write this at the rectory of my dear son Frederick. What happiness to see this excellent being placed in a situation so suited to him! The enjoyment I feel in the calm of this dear home, where every wish of its inmates is to do good, has already completely restored my jaded feelings. All my business is completed. I have insured my life, so that my dear husband's debts would be paid in the event of my death”.

She then displays her characteristic geographical curiosity by summarising her son's parish rather effectively. Her visit coincided with the mid-19th century lead mining boom on the Bere Peninsula. We can imagine this inquisitive woman, probably dressed in black, firing questions at her family and other locals – and expecting answers.

“This place, Beer Ferrers, was the deer-park of the Ferrers family, and is bounded by the two rivers, Tamar and Tavy. It rises into an elevated plateau, dotted here and there with farmhouses and fine trees. On the Tavy there is a tiny port and old church. It once returned a member to Parliament. It has now a large mining population. Wages are high. In the mines they work for eight hours out of the twenty-four, and the men relieve each other in gangs. Every month the work is "bid " for, and taken by three or more labourers, who earn good wages. But the work is unhealthy, owing to the great heat in some of the deep mines. The men are paid a portion of the value of the ore, which, there being no coal on the spot, is sent to Wales to be smelted. The stratum is shale, and the depth of the soil is not great. The pasture-fields are full of white clover, and the hedges are decked with every variety of wild flower and fern.

From the high ground you see the men-of-war anchored in the Tamar, with the picturesque village of Saltash rising above the river”.

The Diary then reveals a most unusual and dramatic geological event¹⁶:

“August 12. We felt a tremendous earthquake shock at Beer Ferrers at 7.30 this morning. It was not felt at Plymouth, but...it was first felt at Beer Town, where all the crockery ware on the shelves rattled for some seconds. We heard a great noise, like the blowing up of a powder magazine, which we thought must have occurred at Plymouth. The house rocked to its foundations. I happened to be writing at the time, and the pen was dashed out of my hand. At Beer Alston...the shock was greater. Tiles were thrown from the roof, people rushed into the street, and in the new mine close to the Tamar, those who were working in the upper gallery rushed below, believing that the earth had fallen in upon the men working there.

At Tavistock a chemist told me that all his bottles rattled and shook so much that he expected them to fall to the floor. On the Moor many of the great stones were detached from the Tor, and at Two Bridges the landlord told us that while he was in his stable the noise and shaking was so great that he ran out thinking that the building would fall about his ears”.

The earthquake certainly failed to intimidate Lady Shelley. She writes at length about an expedition on horseback to Crockern Tor and Wistman’s

¹⁶ This earthquake is recorded in the British Geological Survey (BGS) database as being of ‘Intensity 6’ on the European Macroseismic Scale: ‘Felt by most indoors and by many outdoors. Many people in buildings are frightened and run outdoors. Small objects fall. Slight damage to many ordinary buildings e.g.; fine cracks in plaster and small pieces of plaster fall’. Her recall is accurate; the BGS record does indeed show Bere Alston as experiencing the strongest tremors.

Wood on Dartmoor, where her spirit of adventure exceeded the accuracy of her historical interpretation:

“We visited the Croken Tor, the headquarters of Druid superstition, which rises abruptly from the Wisemans Wood, below the Hill of Bards. This wood is a curious survival of the ancient forest. A tree, that had been cut down a few years ago, showed seven hundred circles, which, under a microscope, were so close together that Archdeacon Froude, who examined it, was of opinion that it must have been in existence during the expulsion of the Druids and the destruction of their pagan rites.

I mounted a forest pony, which I procured at Two Bridges, and made a circuit of the Moor. I believe myself to have been the first person who ever attempted to reach the Wisemans Wood on horseback. Three weeks' rain had made the ground very boggy and the moss-covered stones exceedingly slippery. My clever pony picked his way over great blocks of granite, and I found it harder to keep my seat than if I had been taking a Lancashire double post and rail. Having with difficulty reached the wood, I dismounted, and broke off a small branch from one of those curious, stunted oaks that are not more than twelve feet high.

Having tied up my pony, I began to ascend the Tor on foot, an ascent which I found far steeper than before, and the tract more closely strewn with granite boulders. The hill was very soppy, and I regretted that I had not worn a Bloomer costume! However, I breasted it, undaunted by the thunder which growled overhead, and the large raindrops which descended upon me.

This wood is not more than three miles from Prince's Town, where convicts are employed building, draining the land, and cutting peat for fuel. I venture to prophesy that this wild district will, through man's labour, develop into fruitful fields. The fine soil, the gushing streams (for here rise most of the Devonshire rivers), will make this wilderness bloom like the rose; and one hundred years hence all trace of former solitude will have disappeared”.

The Dartmoor adventure was followed by a journey down the Tavy and Tamar to the Dockyard and Stonehouse. Would she have been rowed by a party of Bere Ferrers boatmen? The Diary contains a brief but interesting account of Lady Shelley's visit to the Dockyard. As a minor celebrity, she was given a personal tour, and was intrigued by what was then the latest in warship technology, in the form of HMS *St. Jean d'Acre*, which would still be under construction in the Dockyard. This ship was the Royal Navy's first screw- and sail-propelled 101-gun battleship and entered service in 1853 (Fig.4).

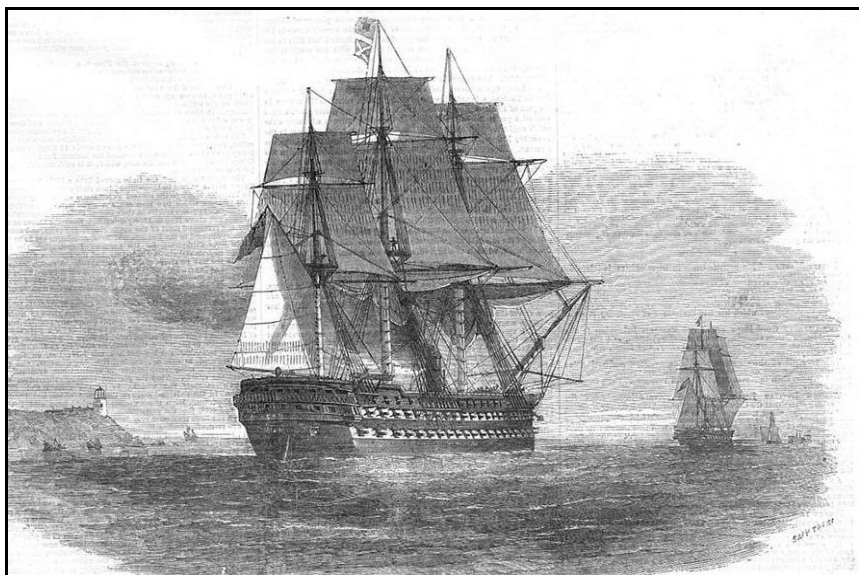


Figure 4: HMS *St. Jean d'Acre* leaving Cork for the Crimea, 1853

“After luncheon we visited the Dockyard, and I was much impressed by the enormous quantity and dimensions of the masts and anchors. We went on board H.M.S. Ste. Jeanne d’Arc¹⁷, a new steam ship which is to

¹⁷ Lady Shelley's keen observational powers failed her here. The ship was actually HMS *St. Jean d'Acre*, commemorating the fortified town successfully

carry one hundred guns. She is 236 feet in length! In another place I saw them making a screw-propeller. I believe that no ship will in future be without one. In the biscuit-making, which is now done by machinery, four men now do the work which formerly employed forty. There are no convicts working in the Yard. From a summer-house in the centre of the Dockyard we obtained a fine view of the surrounding country”.

Frustratingly, there is no direct evidence that Lady Shelley’s party visited the Edgumbes, although it is very likely that she called at the family’s ‘Winter Villa’ on the Stonehouse Peninsula, or even Mount Edgcumbe itself¹⁸. Encounters with her daughter Fanny’s family by marriage was surely inevitable, although the only diary reference comes in the form of an anecdote:

“The Queen was at Mount Edgcumbe not long ago, and the police are full of stories about her activity. At seven o’clock one morning her Majesty landed at Cremyll and walked up to the stables at Mount Edgcumbe. Having sent for the coachman, whom she knew, her Majesty said: " Joseph, get a carriage ready at once, and drive us round the Park." The Queen would not allow anyone to call Lady Mount Edgcumbe, and after a very pleasant drive, she returned to breakfast on board the Royal yacht. Later in the day her Majesty playfully quizzed Lady Mount Edgcumbe, and called her a "lazy lay-a-bed." A week later the Queen of the French also visited Mount Edgcumbe, but her proceedings attracted no special attention”.

Lady Shelley returned to Bere Ferrers on February 25 1853. Here, she delivers a splendid geographical error: *“I arrived today at my son’s rectory at Bere Ferrers in Cornwall”* (this author’s emphasis).

defended by the British and Turks against the French in the Napoleonic Wars – and not ‘Joan of Arc’.

¹⁸ Given Lady Shelley’s fascination with history, its ownership by the Edgumbes and its proximity to the Bere Peninsula, it is surprising that Cotehele House is not mentioned in the Diary.

She passed the first anniversary of her husband's death with her son. On April 1, she writes: *"The snow and frost have disappeared, the sun is brilliant and hot, and the high banks are covered with primroses. March 28, and succeeding days, brought back many sad recollections of this time last year; but the predominant feeling in my heart is one of thankfulness for the great blessings which have so completely softened the blow, and have enabled me to realise that... my life is still of value to my children, and to many kind friends"*.

Lady Shelley found at Bere Ferrers a place for personal and spiritual healing: *"My son walked constantly walked out with me during the sad week, so that it passed without anguish; and I can now open a new page of my widowed existence with an earnest prayer that the Christian feeling which my residence here - after a severance of the ties of forty-five years...will have a beneficial effect on my future life"*.

The third visit to the South West was in September 1854¹⁹, although perhaps the novelty of the area had worn off. Lady Shelley writes briefly of personal refreshment and the benign nature of Frederick's household: *"What joy to return once more to the true home of heart and affections! Here I breathe the atmosphere of love, where everything bears the impress of a truly Christian spirit, and where my dear son and his wife make all around them happy"*. But then the Diary moves on to vigorous discussion of political affairs, and then a lengthy account of her trip to France. Once again, the intrepid traveller, she is joined by her son Spencer at *"the London Bridge station...we crossed over to sleep at Boulogne"*. They travel through Paris, Lyons and Avignon to Cannes and Nice, where she records extravagant parties and political discussions with such luminaries as Lord Brougham and the Duke of Hamilton. Bere Ferrers would have seemed a very distant world.

¹⁹ The Diary contains no further references to Bere Ferrers, although it is likely that Lady Shelley did make further visits, as Frederick was Rector until 1869.

There were further lengthy tours - to Ireland, the North of England and the Scottish Highlands²⁰. When She was already in her eighties, Lady Shelley moved to new house built for her at East Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Here, in her last years, she was regularly visited by Queen Victoria from Osborne House. Indeed, the Queen visited her on the day she died, February 24, 1873, aged 85.

The brief Diary records of Lady Shelley's visits to the Tamar Valley are interesting enough. But as so often, equally intriguing are the omissions and questions – the realm of speculation and imagination. What did Bere Ferrers villagers make of the visitor to the Rectory, as she made her way along their local roads and doubtless attended services at St. Andrew's church? Did they know who she was? Did she speak to them or just ride imperiously by on a fine horse? How did Lady Shelley travel to and from Bere Ferrers? The railway from London had opened to its Millbay terminus in Plymouth in 1849²¹. Its opening would have made travel far swifter and more convenient. However, the journey on to Bere Ferrers may well have been by water (of course, the railway did not open until 1890). Or did Lady Shelley ride through the high-banked lanes north of Plymouth and across the Tavy at Chucksford or Denham Bridge? Where else did she go during her visits – and who else did she meet?

Finally, the 'Shelley Well' in Bere Ferrers is still something of an enigma (Fig.5). What prompted Lady Shelley to pay for its construction? The memory of the scourge of cholera in 1848-9 would still have been raw just three years later. With the local mining industry at its height, Bere Ferrers would have been an overcrowded insanitary slum, with the perils of poor water supply and sanitation all too obvious. Frederick's infant son, Henry, had died in 1851, so the dangers to health were

²⁰ By the second half of the 19th century, railways and steamships had made travel far easier, if still tortuous by today's standards.

²¹ The South Devon Railway connected Plymouth with the Bristol and Exeter Railway at Exeter, and the B & E in turn connected with the Great Western Railway at Bristol. Through services were operated from London to Plymouth, as all three railway companies used his broad gauge track.

poignantly close. Presumably, Lady Shelley spent time promoting, discussing and planning the new water source. Who did she consult? Did she influence its curious design? Where did the large uncut boulders come from (they are not local to Bere Ferrers)? Who did the work? Equally unclear is how clean water was brought to the new water tap. Was there a grand ceremony to declare the ‘well’ open?



Figure 5: *The Lady Shelley ‘well’, Bere Ferrers (actually a water tap)*

Over a century and a half has passed since Lady Shelley made her visits to Devon. She lies in a surprisingly modest grave in the churchyard at Whippingham on the Isle of Wight (Fig.6). But her rustic stone ‘well’, with its little plaque, still stands in Bere Ferrers as a reminder of a quite extraordinary woman who found both peace and much of interest in this corner of the county.



Figure 6: *Lady Shelley's grave in Whippingham churchyard, Isle of Wight.*

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Parkrun comes to the Tamar Trails

Jane Kiely

I am not a runner myself but the concept of Parkrun fascinated me and I wanted to bring it to our lovely area. The idea of people all over the country, indeed now the world, meeting at 9.00 on a Saturday morning to do a 5K run in all weathers, all run by volunteers, seemed such an easy idea. First mention was at a Partnership Meeting of the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) when half the membership leant forward and said what a brilliant idea, and the other half said “what’s that”?

So often in life things just come together, and it so happened that Kate Blake at the Tamar Trails was also considering it, and I had met some runners and discovered this whole new world of running. We had a meeting, got as many contacts in the running world as possible and started talking about it in February/March 2016 with a representative from Parkrun attending to advise what we were actually embarking on. It all seemed great but we had no money! As a Trustee of the Tamar Community Trust, I discussed this at our next meeting and got their support and it was agreed that as a Trust we would apply to Sport England for a grant. This we did and finally got approval in August 2016!

By the time everything was sorted out the start date turned out to be Halloween 2016. Several of us went up to do the car parking, and we had been warned that there would be Parkrun tourists arriving to wish the latest edition to the Parkrun family good luck – however, we didn’t expect 172 people to participate! Many of the participants were dressed up for Halloween and the atmosphere was brilliant. The car park was full and has continued to be thus every Saturday morning since then! Mostly by 10.00 the people have gone but a few still enjoy lingering in the Beech Café with coffee, bacon butties and friends!

Whilst waiting for the money and the start date Colin, who meantime had taken over the café and started a running shop at the Tamar Trails, also started a running club there, so there was a lot of interest in Parkrun from the very start. Colin is out on the trail at 6.30 Saturday mornings setting up and checking the route, and by 8.15 people are arriving to check in and get in place for the 9.00 am start. The fast runners are back soon after 9.20, and by 9.45 most people are back - hot, happy, and checking their latest time. Once people are checked in in the morning all the times are put on the computer each week for people to see their improvement - or not of course! Everyone helps everyone, sometimes people run, sometimes they are the volunteers.

The numbers have settled to an average of about 100 each week now some 18 months down the line, but it is so popular – it doesn't matter whether you are almost professional in your lycra, or a new comer getting off the sofa to get fit, everyone is made very welcome, and people come for a variety of reasons. We are very lucky in the Tamar Valley as our Tamar Trails Parkrun is all off road and has proved extremely popular. It is a win-win situation for the café, the Trails and local campsites and B&B's and of course all the happy runners.

Why not come along and try it for yourself?

See **Tamar Trails parkrun website:**

www.parkrun.org.uk/tamartrails/

By River to Calstock: extracted from ‘Excursion to the Weir Head and Morwell Rocks’ by Henry E Carrington: The Plymouth and Devonport Guide, Devonport 1828

“We shall now consider the reader embarked with us at Newpassage for a voyage to the Weir Head and Morwell Rocks - a most interesting summer day's excursion. Having quitted the landing place we glide leisurely among the numerous noble vessels of war that rest peacefully on the bosom of Hamoaze. Voyages up the Tamar are generally commenced at day break, at which time the harbour is beheld under one of its most attractive aspects. When the sun rises, the golden light from the East touches the masts and sides of the ships with mellow light, beautifully contrasted by the depth of shadow which the surrounding objects throw into the water, while the fields and hills and buildings on shore become gradually more distinct as the blue mists of morning roll slowly away on the wings of the rising breeze. Nearly opposite Newpassage is Thanckes, the seat of Lady Graves, widow of the late Admiral Lord Graves. The house, which is unassuming in its exterior, is pleasantly seated at the head of a small bay, near some fine groves of ancient trees. On the right bank of the river are the extensive Government Powder Magazines connected with the warlike establishments of the port. Higher up the harbour are seen the nobly swelling woods of Antony, the seat of R. P. Carew, Esq. Above Antony the picturesque Lynher or St. Germans river is beheld receding behind its romantic promontories. Opposite the mouth of the Lynher are the Kinterbury Powder Mills, the explosion of which a few years ago was attended with the loss of two lives.

The Tamar suddenly contracts in breadth at Saltash. This borough town is built on the slope of a very steep hill. The ferry house on the opposite shore, and the few neat white washed dwellings scattered along the beach, over hung with dark green foliage, have a very pleasing effect. Above Saltash the river again widens and assumes the appearance of a broad inland lake. The bustle of the harbour is no more perceived, but

the monotony of this broad sheet of water is here and there relieved by the red sail of a solitary barge, or by a flock of sea gulls, flapping their white wings over the rippling wavelets. The surrounding scene is composed of richly cultivated fields, umbrageous woods, fruit-hung orchards, nestling villages and embattled church towers rising above the silent dells, shelvy weed-grown shores and straggling copses.

A skilful pilot is needed to traverse with safety this part of the river. Immense tracts of mud stretch out from either side which, when slightly covered with water, are so extremely delusive that they can scarcely be distinguished from the deeper portions of the channel. Parties have frequently been detained all night on these flats, for if a boat once grounds on the ooze she is almost always obliged to await the coming of the next flood tide before she can be floated off.

Tamerton Creek is seen winding inland to the little village of the same name, and beyond it, on the same line of coast, is the finely wooded estate of Warleigh, with its ancient mansion almost hidden by venerable trees. Nearly opposite Warleigh is Moditonham creek, at the head of which is the modern-built mansion of C. Carpenter, Esq. Not far distant are the villages of Landulph, and Botus Fleming. The church of Landulph stands on the very edge of the water, and its antique embattled tower adds an interesting feature to the landscape. Within its walls is a monument of brass bearing the following inscription:

Here lyeth the body of Theodore Paleologus, of Pesaro in Italy, descended from ye imperial lyne of ye late Christian Emperors of Greece, being ye sonne of Camilio, ye sonne of Prosper, ye sonne of Theodoro, ye sonne of John, ye sonne of Thomas, second brother of Constantine Paleologus, the 8th of that name, and the last of yet line yt reigned n Constantinople, until subdued by ye Turks ; who married wt. Mary, je daughter of William Balls, of Hadlye in Suffolk, gent, and had issue 5 children ; Theodoro, John, Ferdinando, Maria, and Dorothy, and departed this life at Clifton, ye 21st of Jan. 1636."

“The vault below the monument having been opened about twenty years ago, a single oak coffin was discovered, which, on lifting the lid, was found to contain the body of Paleologus in so perfect a state that the features were clearly distinguishable. He appeared to be above the common height, the countenance of an oval form, with an aquiline nose, and he had a white beard of considerable length. The parish register of Landulph being imperfect from the year 1628 to 1619, has unfortunately left a degree of uncertainty with respect to Paleologus and his family. The Rev R. Polwhele conjectures that he died at Clifton while visiting Sir Nicholas Lower; be this as it may it does not appear that he ever possessed the manor of Clifton, or any other estates in this parish.”²²

Not far from Landulph is the estuary of the Tavy. After having passed the village of Hall's Hole, the hamlet of Cargreen, and the deserted mines of Beeralston, we speedily arrive in the more solitary reaches of the Tamar. The channel ever and anon catches glimpses of Pentillie Castle, rising magnificently above the winding river. On approaching more closely to that lordly domain we cannot help being charmed by the varied aspect of the dark woods, the majestic air of the many-pinnacled building, the peaceful serenity of the green-swarded glen at its foot and the picturesque dwellings scattered along the margin of the stream.

On the summit of a conical mount near the house stands a small stone tower, embosomed in a grove of fir trees. Beneath this building are deposited the remains of Sir James Tillie, a former owner of this domain, whose interment in this romantic spot has given rise to the following strange story, extracted from ‘Gilpin's Observations on the Scenery of the West of England’.

"Mr. Tillie, once the owner of Pentillie House, was a celebrated atheist of the last age. He was a man of wit, and had by rote all the ribaldry and commonplace jests against religion and scripture, which are well suited

²² Quoted from Gilbert's ‘History of Cornwall’.

to display pertness and folly, and to unsettle a giddy mind, but are offensive to men of sense, whatever their opinions may be, and are neither intended, nor adapted to investigate truth. The brilliancy of Mr. Tillie's wit, however, carried him a degree further than we often meet with in the annals of profaneness. In general the witty atheist is satisfied with amusing his contemporaries, but Mr. Tillie wished to have his sprightliness known to posterity. With this view, in ridicule of the resurrection, he obliged his executors to place his dead body, in his usual garb, and in an elbow chair, upon the top of a hill, and to arrange on a table before him bottles, glasses, pipes and tobacco. In this situation he ordered himself to be immured in a tower of such dimensions as lie prescribed, where he proposed, he said, patiently to wait for the event. All this was done, and the tower, still enclosing its tenant, remains as a monument of his impiety and profaneness. The country people shudder as they go near it."

On this tale are the following remarks in Gilbert's 'History of Cornwall'. "The interment of Sir James Tillie in this romantic spot certainly gave rise to many ridiculous stories, to which an air of probability has been given by the narrative of Gilpin. But nothing can be more false than his account of the body having been placed in a chair, with a table, laid out before it with bottles, glasses, &c. On the contrary, the body was placed in a coffin and deposited in a vault; and the choice of situation will not appear strange when it is considered that in the room above Sir James Tillie had, perhaps, enjoyed the happiest hours of his life. His last will and testament has lately been examined by his heirs at Doctor's Commons, and in this document it is observable that, so far from his principles being atheistical, they breathe throughout a disposition fraught with the utmost submission to the will of Divine Providence, and a perfect confidence in the wisdom and mercies of the Creator".

We shall find nothing worthy of particular notice till we arrive at Cotehele. The woods are here truly noble, and clothe the bank nearly down to the water's edge. Having disembarked, we wind through a dark

bough-canopied lane to Cotehele house. It was erected about the reign of Henry VII. It is seated loftily, and is surrounded by trees of the most majestic stature and shadowy massiness of foliage. From the date 1627 carved over the doorway, it is conjectured that the building underwent some repairs in that year. This renovation however must have been very trifling, since the air of the mansion conveys an idea of great and undeniable antiquity. It is quaintly described by Carew as "anciente, large, stronge, and fayre, and appurtenanced with the necessities of woode, water, fishing, parkes, and milles, with the devotion (in times past) of a riche furnished chapelle, and charitie of almes houses for certaine poore people whiche the owners used to relieve."

The general appearance of Cotehele is something between the old manor-house and feudal castle. The features which chiefly strike the eye are several square embattled towers, grey with the rust of many ages, and which contain some of the principal apartments. The walls are most picturesquely lichened, and here and there a shoot of dark green ivy, or a tuft of moss more than usually bright, affords a relief to the sombre tint of years which, perhaps, would otherwise offend by monotony the eye of taste. It would be impossible to describe the feeling of silence and of solitude that broods over this interesting spot. Though situated close to the busy scenes of a navigable river, it is as completely hidden from public observation as if it were buried in the depths of an untrodden wilderness. Nothing disturbs the stillness but now and then the cooing of a domestic pigeon, or the wilder gush of melody poured forth by some untamed minstrel of the leafy forest - and in short, everything that meets the eye, every sound that falls upon the ear, conspires to delight the imagination with a dream of departed days.

The entrance to the House is through a Gothic moorstone arch-way, leading into a quadrangular court, from which the spectator is enabled to take a more minute survey of the various parts of the edifice. A large pinnacled and embattled tower is the principal feature. The windows are latticed and rather heavy in appearance. Access is obtained to the

different rooms through a Gothic hall, in which are preserved a number of very interesting curiosities. The light is admitted through windows dimmed by painted armorial bearings much injured by time. The walls are covered with suits of ancient armour, eleven of which are complete, with arquebusses, pike, halberts, swords, bows and arrows, and other offensive and defensive instruments of warfare. Besides these are numerous trophies of woods-craft, consisting of pairs of branching stags' horns.

The interior of the mansion is shewn to strangers by the housekeeper, a polite old lady, almost the only occupant, and whose venerable air is in happy unison with the objects of which it is her greatest pride to discourse. An hour or two cannot be more delightfully spent than in exploring the chambers of Cotehele. The original furniture being carefully preserved in its pristine state, almost everything that strikes the attention awakens recollections of the long-flown age of romance. The rooms are hung with tapestry, the work of fair fingers now mouldered into dust. One of the doors opening into the hall conducts to a massive stone stair-case, ornamented with grim, decaying portraits of some long-forgotten personages of the olden time. A sleeping apartment in the northern tower is said to have been occupied several nights by Charles II. If his majesty possessed a taste for the picturesque, he must have been much gratified by the lovely prospect which the window of this room commands.

The house contains a great quantity of antique furniture and other curiosities of the most interesting description. Among these are some rich old bed hangings, a variety of ancient china, a Saxon sword about two feet long, a music book dated 1556, a painting of the Adoration executed in 1569, rudely carved ebony chairs, curiously ornamented brass fire-dogs more than four feet high, earthenware drinking vessels of great age, an ancient cabinet, with many other rare articles the enumeration of which would be tedious. There are no grates in the apartments, the fires having been always kindled on the hearths.

Connected with the house is a small chapel, over which is a pinnacled and battlemented turret, containing a place for bells, formerly used to summon the neighbouring vassals to join in the devotions of the Coteils. In the Gothic window over the altar are the armorial bearings of Edgumbe, Rame, Durnford, Pole, Carew, Prideaux, and other families, emblazoned in stained glass now in a state of extreme mutilation. The altar displays a neat crucifix and its velvet furniture is very rich. One of the cloths is embroidered with the figures of the twelve apostles. This little place of prayer contains two portraits, representing, it has been supposed, Sir Thomas de Cotehele, the last male heir of the family, and Helena his sister who became the wife of William de Edgecombe.

After this long digression, which, however, it is hoped, has not proved altogether uninteresting, we will return to our boat. The aspect of the scenery at this part of the river is exceedingly impressive. The woods swell up in magnificent masses, displaying every hue and disposition of foliage. The rocks that edge the bank are picturesquely lichenized, and, when the river presents an unruffled surface, are mirrored in the flood with pleasing fidelity. The effect of evening music in this spot is enchanting. The tones echo pensively through the hollow sounding woods, and the harmonious cadences die beautifully away among the winding reaches of the stream.

On turning a reedy point of land we behold the village of Calstock. The church is seated on the summit of a steep slope and commands a noble view of the sinuous Tamar and its charming banks. It may be mentioned, as an instance of the extraordinary manner in which the stream winds, that after the voyager has sailed five miles above Calstock he again arrives immediately beneath the church of that village, the long ridge-like peninsula on which it stands being washed on both sides by the waters of the Tamar.“

Book Review
Stephen Docksey

Robert Waterhouse, *The Tavistock Canal: Its History and Archaeology* (The Trevithick Society, 2017). 538 pages, 633 illustrations. Limited Edition Hardback. ISBN 9780993502132. £50.00. Softback. ISBN 9780993502149. £30.00.

What was once proposed as two slimmer volumes on the history and archaeology has become one volume covering both facets, weighing in at 5lbs, heavy enough when reading in short bursts in an easy chair but hardly usable in the field. I worked under Robert's direction at Morwellham for several seasons, excavating the lime kiln incline wheelpit, the incline turntables at Incline Cottage, Mill Hill canal basin, the small lime kiln beside the Ship Inn, railways on the lime kiln quay and the sample dig on the canal incline. All these excavations are discussed with archaeological surveys, reconstruction drawings, photographs and documentary evidence, putting my and my colleagues' exertions into context.

Making full use of the Bedford Estate papers, held at Exeter, and other documentary sources, Robert covers the history of the canal from its inception to its sale back to the Duke of Bedford in 1873. The canal, though closed as a working waterway, was not abandoned; it still supplies the hydro-electric generating station at Morwellham.

The use of the canal water as a power source is well covered, with discussion of the mines associated with the canal, leats from the southern terminus running as far north as the Bedford estate and the wheel at the bottom of the Impham valley, by Weir Head, and as far as Gawton. Other users were lime kiln inclines at Tavistock, Morwellham and New Quay, agricultural wheels at the Duke's model farms at Crowndale and Morwellham and two waterwheels pumping water for the Morwellham Waterworks Company. There is evidence for 50 waterwheels powered by the canal.

The archaeological recording is extensive and impressive, amply illustrated with photographs, plans, sections and reconstruction drawings (as illustrated by Fig.1 below). There is a full discussion of what is to be seen in the Morwellham tunnel and an account of the surface remains on the line of the tunnel. A field survey, supported by Estate maps, of the site of the incline on the collateral cut to Mill Hill revealed it to be at Lumburn hamlet and not, as was long thought, at Mill Hill. A chapter on the archaeological evidence for the plateway and railway systems reveals how much remains in situ, especially at Morwellham, supported by a large number of artefacts recovered or visible as recyclings.

The text is easy to read, but the book is not easy to use. For example, the accessible mine workings within the tunnel, with Robert's plans and sections, are covered in the historical chapter on the canal mines and not in the archaeology of the tunnel. Again, the archaeological recordings of the small lime kiln at Morwellham, which as a structure predates the canal, appears in the historical chapter on canal-side and associated industries and not in the archaeological section. Again, references to illustrations in the text require a search several pages before, or after. It should be borne in mind that editing by the publisher to reduce Robert's manuscript to a commercial proposition may have given rise to these problems. But attentive reading and use of the book enables one to navigate the layout without too much difficulty.

Proof reading could have been better. For example, the Delafontaine engraving is dated 1741, not 1727 as in the caption. Again, references to illustrations in the text are not necessarily correct, though generally they are. It was intended that a CD should be included in the book with additional information; this has had to be withdrawn because of copyright infringement. However, I am assured by the publisher that there was little on the disc that was not covered in the text.

Don't let these comments put you off. This is an important study, the result of many years' research in the field and at the desk, and is a major

Meetings of the Friends of the Tamar Valley – 2017
Helen Wilson, with contributions from Clive Charlton, Jane Kiely and
Anthony Lewis

The Friends held 14 successful events in 2017 and our thanks must go to Jane Kiely for all her work in organising speakers and events and for taking bookings for the summer excursions. For the first talk of the year in January we welcomed Clive Charlton, who spoke about ‘Lady Shelley: Close Confidante of the Duke of Wellington, Enthusiastic European Traveller, and Visitor and Benefactor to Bere Ferrers’. This was a figure that Clive has been researching since he discovered that she visited Bere Ferrers in the 1850s and left a legacy that remains to this day – the Shelley Well. A plaque states ‘This well was made by Frances Lady Shelley for the benefit of the poor in her son’s parish 1852’. Fortunately for Clive, Lady Shelley wrote a diary that was edited and published in two volumes in 1912 by her grandson Richard Edgcumbe, father of Kenelm the 6th Earl. She was born Frances Winckley in 1787 and married Sir John Shelley, 6th Baronet, in 1807. Through her marriage she entered the top tier of society, including the sphere of the Prince Regent, the future George IV, and became a close friend and confidante of Wellington. On her travels she met Lady Emma Edgcumbe, a connection that led to the engagement of her daughter Fanny to George Edgcumbe in 1834 and for her son Frederick to become Rector of Bere Ferrers. Frances recorded her 1852 visit there to see her son and paid further visits in 1853 and 1854. The diaries project an image of a woman who was a charming, sociable, chaste flirt, social climber and snob, yet with a passionate interest in history, politics and science – an able woman in a male-dominated world²³.

At the February meeting, Sue Andrew presented a fascinating talk on the Three Hares motif. This enigmatic image is of three beasts in a circle, each of which has two ears, but between them they have only three,

²³ This topic is covered by an article in this edition of *Tamar*.

forming a triangle at the centre of the design. In Devon the Three Hares are found on wooden roof bosses in 16 churches, with one example in Cornwall in Cotehele chapel. Sue showed us images from Cheriton Bishop, Sampford Courtenay, where there are three examples, and Widecombe, as well as many others. They are mainly distributed on Dartmoor, with some in north Devon and a few in other West Country churches. Quite why there is a concentration in Devon is not known, but this was the start of a long exploration of the origin of the motif for Sue and her co-researchers, Tom Greeves and Chris Chapman. They began by debunking the myth that the symbol represented ‘the tinnerns rabbits’ and went on to trace the use of the Three Hares motif back to sixth-century Buddhist cave temples on the edge of the Gobi Desert in China. From there it probably travelled along the silk road through Asia, the Middle East and Europe, where they found many examples. Consequently, the symbol was adopted in the worlds of Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The talk was illustrated with numerous images from the book ‘The Three Hares: A Curiosity Worth Regarding’.

In March we welcomed back Ron Smith to talk about ‘Slavery in North Africa’. In his usual lively and forthright style, Ron gave a very entertaining account of ‘white slavery’ in North Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries. He related some of the grim and lurid episodes from the period when the ‘Barbary pirates’ were a much-feared peril for both seamen and coastal communities in Europe, including those of the South West Peninsula. The scourge of piracy and coastal raids stretches back through medieval times, but perhaps the most notorious and lethal threat emerged in the 17th century. From 1609 to 1614, Spain expelled the many ‘Moriscos’ from the country (descendants of the defeated Moors). Resettled in North Africa, many became corsairs (pirates) and developed fleets of fast-sailing armed ships that roamed the Mediterranean and eastern Atlantic seaboard in search of their (Christian) prey. Many thousands were snatched from ships at sea as well as in raids on coastal communities. In 1625, 25 ships and their crews were seized just off Plymouth. In 1627, Lundy Island was captured by Barbary pirates and

used as their base for five years. Cornwall was targeted on several occasions, including in 1645, when 240 people were captured from coastal communities by a pirate fleet and taken into slavery. Ron brought his talk to a close with reference to the British and Dutch bombardment of Algiers in 1816. The defeated Dey of Algiers was forced to release 3000 European slaves. Although North African slavery continued for a while, European naval supremacy ensured its eventual demise.

The April talk was on a topic at the heart of the history of the Tamar Valley: 'Local Daffodils: A Market Gardening Perspective' by Jo Totterdell. The growing of daffodils in SW England started on the Scilly Isles, with its milder climate, coming to the mainland in 1882 and thence to the Tamar Valley. The war years saw daffodil fields turned over to growing vegetables and by 1943 the industry was reduced to only 500 acres. Jo Totterdell's family, which can be traced back many generations in and around St. Dominick, were very much a part of the market gardening and flower industry in the Tamar Valley. She arrived with dozens of specimens of daffodils to show us, some still grown in gardens and others surviving after being discarded in hedgerows when the fields were grubbed up. Jo's great aunt started the business in St Dominick with the early-flowering 'Magnificence' daffodil, but tulips, irises and anemones were grown as well. This was very much a 'hit and miss' business and sometimes the family made nothing at all from their hard work. Bunches of flowers were packed 60 to 70 in hardwood boxes. These were picked up by Fred Rogers in one of his vans that went from village to village collecting flowers for delivery to the railway station to be sent on to the wholesalers. We finished the evening marvelling at the variety of daffodils that Jo had brought along. These included the cultivars 'Lucifer' from 1890 and 'Horace' from 1894, as well as 'Acropolis' that won the Award of Garden Merit from the RHS in 1953.

We were privileged in May to play host to historian and archaeologist Andrew Thompson with a presentation on 'The Dukes of Bedford and their Relationship to Tavistock'. John Russell was gifted the lands of

Tavistock Abbey by Henry VIII in 1539 and was granted the title of Earl of Bedford in 1551. His descendent William was created 1st Duke of Bedford in 1694. The Earls and early Dukes took little interest in Tavistock, having their family seat at Woburn Abbey and owning an estate in Bloomsbury, London. It was John Russell the 6th Duke who was the first to show some interest in Tavistock. Although an active Whig MP, he and his family tended to stay in the cottage orné built at Endsleigh between 1810 and 1816. The Bedford Estate itself consisted of 12,000 acres and was administered by stewards, who became the eyes and ears of the Duke. A 1752 map shows Tavistock still in its medieval pattern of N-S streets joined by West Street. This was probably the original planned town laid out by the Abbey. Change was to come, however, with increasing wealth from mining. The ensuing redevelopment of Tavistock by the 6th and 7th Dukes was colossal, and it became a planned town for mining. The end of the Bedford era came in 1911, when the 11th Duke, in a fit of alarm about changing tax laws, decided to sell off almost the entirety of his estate. Tavistock was divided into 628 lots and £123,000 was raised in sales. Fortunately, the civic buildings were sold to Tavistock Town Council at favourable prices. Today, several of these historic civic buildings are being restored, preserving for posterity the best of what was wrought by the Dukes of Bedfords.

The first excursion of the summer was a guided walk in June around the Old Cotehele Deer Park with Stephen Docksey. It was not exactly the warm summer evening we had hoped for, but a rather grey sticky one. There is little left of the deer park now, but from various maps it is possible to trace where it was. Some of the walls are still standing, though there seems to be very little documentation from which to glean detail. We walked up to Prospect Tower and then down on to Lady Walk. The walls can be seen clearly there as they now form the boundary between field and woods. We then walked up into another field with a herd of semi-interested cows, on the other side of Prospect Tower and ended up on the footpath which comes up from Newton, as it

is thought that the deer park originally went down into the Morden Valley. By this time the rain had started and having finished our quest we made our way back. Stephen is planning to do a lot more research into Cotehele Deer Park but with very few documents to work on, it is proving quite difficult.

Later in June, the day after the anniversary of the opening of the Tavistock Canal in 1817, the Friends were led on a guided walk with Simon Dell along this most impressive and important part of the industrial history of the area. For the many mines around Tavistock one of the main problems was the need to transport their ore to, and goods from, the port of Morwellham by packhorse on poor roads. The brilliant engineer John Taylor initiated the idea of constructing a canal between the Tavy and the Tamar. His final plans for a 4½ mile canal with a tunnel through Morwell Down were produced in early 1803. Another idea behind the canal was to fully exploit tin and copper lodes in Morwell Down, utilising the water to power the mines efficiently. Work began in August 1803 and went well, with copper lodes soon cut by the driving of the tunnel into the northern side of Morwell Down and a new venture, Wheal Crebor, was established. The tunnel was finished by the end of 1808, but it was not until August 1816 that the canal itself was finally complete. It was formally opened on 24 June 1817, amid much pomp and ceremony, including a 21-gun salute by ships on the Tamar. We stopped at various points along the Canal, including the impressive Crowndale railway viaduct, the lock section and the enormous aqueduct across the river, made up with spoil from the excavation of the tunnel. At the far side of the aqueduct is where the Mill Hill Cut came in, although there is little evidence of it today. At this point the Canal enters private land and so we returned to Tavistock.

In July we enjoyed a guided tour of Pentillie Castle Garden with owner Ted Coryton. During an introduction Ted related the rigors and benefits of appearing on *Country House Rescue* in 2009 and learning to exploit one's assets before leading us outside to explain more about the garden's

history. The beautiful woodland gardens stretch over 55 acres around the Castle and along the banks of the River Tamar. In its heyday umpteen gardeners were employed and large flower beds could easily be maintained. Nowadays, the gardens are not highly manicured and are wilder than most. They were laid out by Sir James Tillie in c.1705 and then enhanced and embellished by Humphry Repton, who was commissioned by John Coryton in 1809 to ‘work his magic’ on the Pentillie Gardens. Another garden designer, Lewis Kennedy, was invited to re-design the ‘pleasure gardens’ at Pentillie in 1813. The group was led to the mausoleum of Sir James Tillie, which has been extensively restored. His statue sits centre-stage looking across the Tamar Valley. The views here are stupendous and far-reaching and with swallows swooping around below us, it felt like quite a privilege to be there. We returned on a path that skirts the walled garden and then climbed the final leg to the Castle, where tea and cakes were served. Afterwards, some of us went down to the river to see the boathouse and lodge.

In early August we teamed up with Calstock Parish Local History Group for a guided tour of Crownhill Fort, the best preserved of Plymouth’s Victorian defenses, owned and managed by The Landmark Trust since 1987. In the 1860s Lord Palmerston’s government felt very much in danger of an attack from the French under Napoleon III. In order to defend Plymouth’s naval base, ten forts and batteries were built on a ridge to the north, with Crownhill Fort the largest of these. Construction began in 1863 but by the time of completion in 1872, Napoleon had been exiled and the threat from the French was minimal. Consequently, the defenses were called ‘Palmerston’s Follies’ by the press. Unlike many of its contemporaries, Crownhill Fort was used by the military until 1985. The Landmark Trust then acquired Crownhill Fort and undertook major work to restore the site to its late Victorian layout. We were guided around the top of the Fort to see various guns on the ramparts, including one of Moncrieff’s ‘disappearing’ mountings, before being treated to the firing of a small cannon on the parade ground. After lunch at the pop-up cafe, we descended into the bowels of the Fort, down long dark

stairways. We visited several caponiers that extend out into the ditch around the Fort, from which all angles can be covered by gunfire. Finally, we walked around the *chemin des rondes* to exit again onto the parade ground. This was a thoroughly enjoyable day, with a few surprises

The first talk of the autumn was from Graham Wilson entitled ‘A Load of Codswallop’. After finding a bottle at the age of 13 that turned out to be 110 years old, Graham has been hooked on ‘bottle digging’ – unearthing bottles from old tips that reflect the social history of Victorian life. The problem for manufacturers of carbonated drinks bottle 150 years ago was how to stop bottles blowing and corks popping. One of the most successful was Hiram Codd who patented his design in 1875. Glass bottles contained a glass marble and an Indian rubber seal in the neck, which was pinched in. After the bottles were filled upside down, the pressure forced the marble against the seal in the neck. Opening the bottle required a wooden plunger provided with the bottle, which was often referred to as a ‘walloper’ and hence ‘Codswallop’. Beer drinkers derided soft drinks by calling them ‘a load of old Coddswallop’ and so that term arose (although some dismiss this as folk etymology). By the 1920s, screw tops came in and the origin of the phrase became obscure. Graham, with permission from land owners, digs up old rubbish dumps in Devon and Cornwall to find his treasures and is proud of his huge collection of bottles. He brought along many of the best to show us and in the process explained the different types that he collects. There are the Codd’s, some of which (only about 1 in 100) still retain their marble. Hamiltons were produced in the early 1800s and were not designed to stand up as they have a pointed bottom. Ginger beer bottles with the makers’ names on them are quite common but Graham has some rare examples, such as one from Heavitree Brewery that he dug up in Callington. Local breweries in the 1880s and 1890s are well represented in his collection. From Callington he has, among others, Fairweather, Golding and Jackman, and from Calstock, Bowhay and Skinner.

The October meeting brought a presentation by Helen Wilson on 'Excursions in the Tamar Valley: Postcards Home'. Helen focussed on excursions that people took from Plymouth to places up and down the river, by foot, ferry and paddle steamer, which she illustrated with postcards. She began with ones of Plymouth Hoe when it was a place to promenade of a Sunday afternoon or wander along the Pier. If people wished to venture further, they might take the Cremyll Ferry over the estuary and walk through Mount Edgcumbe Park to Beechwood Cottage tea garden. From there, people could walk northwards over the hill and down to Jupiter Point, to catch a ferry across to Antony Passage. Their route would then take them through the village of Forder and towards St Stephen's Hill, near the bottom of which was another tea garden at Apple Tree Cottage. Walking up the hill to Saltash there were several other refreshment establishments. For the wealthier and even more adventurous, from about 1860 paddle steamers were available for excursions on the River Tamar. By the early part of the twentieth century, the cost of such excursions had come down to the point where many more people could afford them. These steamers ran from various points in Plymouth, including Phoenix Wharf, West Hoe Pier and Promenade Pier. They also picked up passengers at Mutton Cove, North Corner and Saltash Pier. On the right tide the steamers could go upstream past Cotehele and stop at Calstock, where passengers alighted for a walk around and possibly go over on the ferry to James' Passage Inn on the Devon side. The steamers may have gone on as far as Morwellham, the last place on the river at which they could moor. People walked upstream along Duke's Drive to the popular beauty spot of Morwell Rocks. After returning to the boat, the journey would continue upstream to Weir Head, where the steamers turned around for the trip back to Plymouth.

The November talk was by Chris Painter, and entitled: 'Rome: Myths, Monsters... or just Magnificent!'. The Reverend Chris Painter is Priest in Charge at the Calstock Parish churches of St Andrew's, Calstock, St Anne's, Gunnislake, and All Saints, Harrowbarrow. His visit to us this

evening was not, however, in that capacity; it was to talk about one of his passions – the Romans. This dates back to his early childhood, when he had a Roman suit of armour and a toga, and on into adulthood when he undertook a four-day walk of Hadrian's Wall. Many of us are familiar with what the Romans gave to Britain, including 10,000 miles of roads and the introduction of rabbits. Chris is fascinated by the idea of thousands of Roman soldiers in 55 BC being confronted by the weird and wonderful British natives. Although there was warfare, the Romans 'conquered' more by co-opting local people to run things for them and by being adaptable to local customs and ways. When real opposition arose, however, the Roman Army used tactics and discipline to defeat Boudicca. Chris painted a fascinating picture of the Roman mind and conveyed his enthusiasm for this aspect of history. And we should remember that the Romans were at one stage stationed in a fort at Calstock, just beside the church.

In December we received a presentation from Ed Buckingham on 'The First Cornishmen to Climb Everest'. Later in the month 15 Friends visited Pentillie Castle for Christmas lunch. After drinks in the lounge we moved to the dining room with its large windows and wonderful views over the Tamar's oxbow bend. We were served on one long table, with another smaller group there as well. Lunch was cooked to perfection and we were a happy, jovial little band and much noisier than the other group! It was back to the lounge in front of a big log fire for coffee, before reluctantly leaving Pentillie.

The Friends of the Tamar Valley

Meetings are held usually on the first Friday of every month at 7.30 pm at the Tamar Valley A.O.N.B. Centre, Drakewalls, Gunnislake, Cornwall. Visits and walks are arranged for the summer months. The full programme of meetings is published in the Friends' Newsletters.

Committee 2018 / 2019

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Jean Sharman

Long-term Bere Alston resident and local history enthusiast, Jean Sharman, passed away in November 2018. She contributed a number of articles to 'Tamar', notably a series on the river's ferries. Jean was also a great authority on, and promoter of the local history of her home community.