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Salcombe History Society

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SALCOMBE HISTORY SOCIETY 2022 AGM

The Society's Committee has taken the decision to postpone the forthcoming 2022 Annual General Meeting. However, the intention is to resume speaker meetings and other activities in due course.

IN CONVERSATION WITH STEPHEN PEDRICK

Steve, thank you for speaking with Salcombe History Society. You've now compiled three books about recollections of life in the South Hams over the latter part of the 19th century, the whole of the 20th century and the 21st century right up to today: "A Century of Memories" (2009), "Daishels and Figgy Duff" (2012), and "Brown Bods and The Scissor Grinder" (2021). Celia Willis remembered the celebrations for both Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 and her Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Barbara Hannaford spoke about how we've got to get used to a new 'normal' after the Coronavirus pandemic. You took people back to the generations before by asking them about their grandparents.



Stephen Pedrick

Your books encompass a period of tremendous social change, the impact of the two World Wars, and most recently, rapid technological developments which have transformed everyday life. As you said to Monica March “I’m trying to record social history, because I think that things have changed so much, in the way that people live today, to even within living memory.” You assembled the oral testimonies of over 170 people. Your books are also filled with marvellous photographs of the individuals you spoke with, as they are when you recorded their memories and in the past, their families and the places and landscapes of the South Hams.

What sparked your interest in this great project?

Steve: My earliest involvement in this project was in 2002, when I read an article in the “Kingsbridge and Salcombe Gazette”, an appeal for anyone that might be interested in making oral history recordings for the “Salcombe

Maritime and Local History Museum". I did not take it up immediately, but by May of 2003 I did my first interview, with a friend aged 90, and accompanied by the late Harry Fulcher, who provided the recording equipment.

Jointly Harry and I made the first six recordings and then Harry was to be out of the country for a few months and so unable to do any more, and this was when I obtained my own recording equipment and began planning and carrying out recorded interviews on my own.

In "A Century of Memories" you mentioned that 88 of the 100 interviewed could remember a time when they did not have at least two of three amenities which are now taken for granted in all households:

1. *cold water from a tap inside the home,*
2. *a toilet inside the home,*
3. *electricity in the home.*

What would you say were the most significant changes to people's lives?

Steve: I would say that one of the most significant changes to peoples' lives would be the ability to travel further afield for work.

All of those people recorded early on, who had started their working lives between the beginning of the First World War and the early 1950's, would have got work within walking, or cycling, distance of their homes, or else they would be 'living in' at their place of employment. Motor cars came in, but would have been owned only by the wealthy - probably from around the early 1930's men began to own motorcycles, thus opening their world, enabling them to travel further afield for work, and also 'courting'.



Derrick Doyle on his motorbike

Everyday life in the home was to become more comfortable and easier, with the gradual installation of services, firstly gas and water, and then electricity.

One big change was the size of families. As you said, it is unusual today to have a family with five or more children in the UK. However, just two or three generations back in time very many were from a family of five or more children and a sizeable number were from a family of 10 or more children.

Steve: The number of children in families decreased. At the end of the 19th century and into the earlier part of the 20th century it was common to have as many as eight or nine children, some families with even more. It wasn't unusual to have even 14 or 15, and I had two of my interviewees say that they knew of a family with 22 children.

You said that as well as recording and capturing the memories, it was also your intention to record and preserve the local dialect, which you reproduced, as heard, as well as is possible. Is the dialect going now as time passes? Is it kept

for posterity on your recordings?



Bill Hurrell

Steve: The local Devon accent is definitely becoming more and more 'diluted' and in decline, and I would say that there has been a far more rapid decline over the past two generations. I believe that in my grandfather's youth the broad Devon dialect was very much more commonplace - this would be partly due to there being less movement of people, both leaving the area, and also coming in, bringing with them many different dialect and accents.

Television, also, has been a major contributor to changes in language, dialect and accent, with there being such a diverse range of language spoken, that children are subjected to. I imagine it would be quite unusual today to find a child speaking in the typical Devonshire dialect and accent.

Having the voices on the recordings will keep the dialect on record for posterity.

The books have rich treasure trove of traditional sayings, "You can't have two

forenoons in one day”, “If Candlemas be fair and clear you’ll see two winters in the year. If Candlemas be dour and grey be sure that winter’s had ‘e’s day!”, “You great chucklehead!”, “Tin ‘tall you know”, “Fore part behind”. Do you have any favourites?

Steve: One of my favourite sayings is from Margaret Lock, who said, “When there was a party or a celebration coming up Grandma Rogers always used to say, ‘Us be goin’ to have a frawzey!’”.



Freda Penwill

Another favourite is from one of my earliest recordings, of Kathleen Weeks, who had had 11 children, and who stated of her husband “.... ‘course Henry was good in the house, he’d clean all the boots and shoes and line ‘em up be the wall ready for the morning: they don’t do that now, they don’t black and shine shoes, that’s gone out ‘adnit”.

You asked people about food they ate when they were growing up How has that changed? One feature of the early days was how important rabbits were

as food and to earn a bit of money, with huge boxes of rabbits being regularly sent from Kingsbridge by rail.

Steve: There was an abundance of fresh vegetables and fruit - the men all had gardens or allotments, there were apple orchards, and rabbit and pork were part of the staple diet. Most meals were meat and vegetables, and made from 'scratch': stews, pies, and all parts of the pig were eaten ("everything but his squeal", according to Alfred Cleave). It was acceptable then to just enter a field and help yourself to a turnip or cabbage. Gwen Foster spoke of her love for 'chitlins' (chitterlings), not available today.

There was a lot more fat eaten ("fat bacon nearly four inches thick, fried for breakfast", as told by Harold Widger), butter made fresh on most farms, and cream eaten in large quantities on an almost daily basis. 'Lambs' tail pie' (Tom Smaridge), 'Mock duck' (Doris Wood).

There appeared to be three basic meals a day: breakfast, dinner and tea, with a supper later in the evening. I would think there was little 'snacking' in between.

There were several mentions of the 'Babby's head', a meat and potato steamed pudding in a cloth, and Molly Peel recalled her 'Tripe and onion' parties, which always amuses me.

You often asked people what school was like for them, how has that changed?

Steve: There appeared to be more punishment and chastisement – to 'clip' a pupil under the ear was an accepted behaviour.

Strokes with a walking stick or a cane, for boys mainly.

Rita Luscombe spoke of having to stand on her chair and put her hands on her head for the rest of the lesson - for talking!



Helen Palmer

Also you asked about job opportunities when people left school. In the earlier interviews farming predominated, using horses mainly with machines and tractors coming in later, also fishing and work in the towns. How have employment opportunities and work changed over the years?

Steve: Of the 50 men interviewed for “A Century of Memories”, 24 were employed in agriculture, eight in construction, five in shopwork, four in fishing. The remainder as gardeners, office workers, a mill worker, and two in the Armed Forces long service.

Of the 50 women, 11 were employed in agriculture, seven were ‘in service’ in farmhouses, six ‘in service’ in houses of the gentry, 10 in shops, two in offices, three in teaching, two in nursing. The remainder in household duties.

The jobs held for those interviewed for “Daishels and Figgy Duff” were not significantly different to those in “A Century of Memories”. There was a blacksmith, a furniture remover and a boatbuilder amongst the men, and a

nanny amongst the women.

The main difference, of course, as time has gone on, is the ability to travel significantly further to a place of work, even on a daily basis.

People had little free time, often working six days a week, and working during daylight hours, so early starts in the morning.

Another area where things changed a lot over the years was travel and transportation, from early cars (many manufacturers' names are not ones we'd recognise nowadays) owned by a very small number of people, the railway to Kingsbridge which was a vital economic link, many people hardly ever travelled beyond where they lived and worked. How did you see the way in which people got about, travel and holidays, changing over the years?

Steve: There were several makes of cars that are no longer made, for instance Clyno and H.E. The old 'Trojan' cars had a chain drive and the driver had to get out and walk up steep hills alongside it.

Travel and transportation has changed vastly - from Gladys Williams' account of travelling from Plymouth to Batson in a cart pulled by a horse, and Bill Hurrell's grandfather being a driver for a 'four-in-hand', to 59 of the 100 people recorded for "A Century of Memories" having travelled in some form of air-borne transport, Dorothy Taylor having flown to Australia eight times.



Tom Rogers

The books contain a unique record of the effects of the World Wars on the South Hams. Many served in the armed forces, families could be separated for years on end, many lost loved ones. Badly injured servicemen returning after the First World War. Direct experience in the Second World War of bombings and aircraft attacks in the South Hams, with shocking loss of life, damage to property and livestock. Also taking in evacuees from the big cities. What were the biggest impacts of the Wars on people's lives?

Steve: Almost everyone interviewed had something to say about the effect of war, either serving in the Armed Forces, or memories from a child's perspective, or in connection with having lost a family member, or more than one. The South Hams certainly did not escape from enemy action, and there are some tragic and poignant accounts.



Bomb damage to houses in Kingsley Road, Kingsbridge

Are there any other memories or changes you'd like to mention?

Steve: There are three couples, who had been married for over 70 years.

I love the simplicity of the account of Gladys Login's wedding day.

I found it very interesting that Wilfred Login had been away from Devon for 30 years - living in South Africa - and yet when I interviewed him in 2004 and 2007, he had one of the richest Devonshire accents of all those I have interviewed.

Another interesting, but poignant, fact is the number of people interviewed who spoke of one or both of their parents having died when they were young children, in a few cases leaving their children orphaned.



Thank you very much, Steve.

Copies of “A Century of Memories”, “Daishels and Figgy Duff”, and “Brown Bods and The Scissor Grinder” can be obtained from stephenpedrick@btinternet.com or The Harbour Bookshop, 2 Mill Street, Kingsbridge, TQ7 1ED, Telephone: 01548 857233, www.harbourbookshop.co.uk or Salter’s Bookshelf, 1 Russell Court, Fore Street, Salcombe, TQ8 8BS, Telephone: 01548 844464.

SALCOMBE HISTORY QUIZ

Some of these questions should test your knowledge about Salcombe’s history!

1. How old are the oldest artefacts recovered from a shipwreck off Salcombe?
2. Who commanded the garrison which held Fort Charles for the King during the Civil War?
3. Where did notorious ‘Hanging’ Judge Jeffreys hold a court in autumn 1685?
4. Did Napoleon Bonaparte ever visit Salcombe?
5. Who were John Ball, William Bonker, James Vivian, John Evans and Henry Harnden?
6. What was the Azores Run?
7. When were street-lamps first lighted in Salcombe?

8. Who paid for Holy Trinity Church?
9. What was the name of the first lifeboat?
10. What was The Salcombe Harbour Hotel called before?

See below for the answers.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. [Bronze Age](#). Artefacts dating from between 1,300 and 800 BC were recovered from the seabed at Moor Sand and Salcombe Cannon sites from 1977. Dives by South West Maritime Archeological Group found nearly 400 objects, including tools and weapons, copper and tin ingots (the raw material for making bronze), gold ingots and rare gold bracelets or torcs. The finds are currently with the British Museum. Wreck sites of this age are extremely rare in British waters. Only one other Bronze Age wreck has been confirmed, Langdon Bay in Kent, which dates to the Middle Bronze Age.
2. [Sir Edmund Fortescue](#) (1610-1647). Born at Fallapit House, East Allington. In 1633, he married Jane Southcote of Mohuns Ottery near Honiton. Appointed Sheriff of Devon by Charles I in 1642, Fortescue was well-organised, determined and courageous, but lacked sufficient resources of men and arms to long sustain the fight for the King. Fortescue wrote to his friend, Colonel Edward Seymour of Berry Pomeroy, the Governor of Dartmouth, on 23 August 1644, by which time Fortescue recognised he would not be granted additional horse or foot, "This is the last act of the play. God grant that each man may do his part well". Fortescue's garrison held Fort Charles against the Parliamentary siege from January to May 1646. It was the last place to hold out for the Royalist cause during the Civil War. He surrendered on favourable terms to Colonel Ralph Weldon, then in command of Plymouth, and died at Delft in 1647. You can see the massive key to Fort Charles and Sir Edmund Fortescue's spurs at Salcombe Maritime Museum.
3. [Batson Hall](#). James II named Judge George Jeffreys (1645-1689) as Lord Chancellor in 1685. After Monmouth's Rebellion, Lord Jeffreys travelled the West Country to conduct trials of captured rebels, known as the 'Bloody Assizes'. 1,381 rebels were found guilty of treason.

4. [Nearly](#). Napoleon (1769-1821) boarded 74-gun HMS *Bellerophon* (known as the 'Billy Ruffian') off Rochefort at 8 a.m. on 15 July 1815 and surrendered to Captain Frederick Maitland. Maitland gave Napoleon his own captain's cabin. *Bellerophon* sailed to Brixham, then to Plymouth. Great numbers of sightseers came to stare at Napoleon, which he seemed to appreciate. Maitland wrote that Napoleon, "whenever he observed any well-dressed women, pulled his hat off, and bowed to them", and *Bellerophon* had to put out her boats around the ship to keep the gawpers away. *Bellerophon* was ordered to cruise off Start Point and for two days sailed up and down between Start Point and Bolt Head. Napoleon would have seen Salcombe and no doubt wished he could come ashore. On 31 July, Admiral Lord Keith and Sir Henry Bunbury, under-secretary of state for war, arrived on *Bellerophon* to inform Napoleon that he was to be transported to St Helena. Napoleon replied that 'his blood should rather stain the planks of the *Bellerophon*' than he should go to St Helena. He wrote to the Prince Regent (later George IV), 'I am not a prisoner, I am a guest of England'. It made no difference. A week later, Napoleon was transferred to 80-gun HMS *Northumberland* for the 4,400-mile journey to exile in St Helena. He died there on 5 May 1821.
5. [Salcombe shipbuilders](#). They and their families ran the shipyards in Salcombe which built fast schooners, brigs, brigantines and other vessels during the 19th century.
6. [The orange schooner trade between England and the Azores](#) from November to May. Oranges were an especially popular treat at Christmas. Until steamships took over, fast Salcombe schooners were usually the most numerous sailing vessels engaged in this trade in mid-Victorian times – 'wooden ships and iron men'. It was high volume business - Charles Dickens wrote in 1854, "The total quantity of oranges imported into the United Kingdom cannot be less than three hundred million in round numbers", but sea conditions were often very challenging and there was huge pressure to make haste. The fastest schooners could maintain a speed of 12 knots, sometimes more.
7. [October 1836](#).
8. [Public subscription](#). Construction costs amounted to £2,605. The Earl of Devon donated the site and the architect was J.H. Ball of Plymouth. Holy

Trinity was consecrated and opened for services in 1844.

9. [Rescue](#). On station in 1869. She was followed by the *Lesty, William and Emma* and the *Sarah Ann Holden*. They were housed at the Lifeboat House at South Sands, built in 1877/8 and closed in 1925. Motor lifeboats thereafter were the *Alfred and Clara Heath, Samuel and Marie Parkhouse, The Baltic Exchange, The Baltic Exchange II* and currently *The Baltic Exchange III*, and inshore lifeboats *Joan Bate* and currently *Gladys Hilda Mustoe*.
10. [The Marine](#). Salcombe's first big hotel, opened in 1880. Before becoming a hotel, it was called Ringrone House, built for Lord Kingsale in 1839. The Marine changed ownership and name in 2010. Other watering hole name changes include the Fortescue Inn which used to be the Union Inn and the Ferry Inn which was the Commercial Inn.



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