



TORPOINT ARCHIVES

CHARITY No 1043650

President: Sir Richard Carew Pole

Founder Members: Pat and Freda Manning

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2013

A hat trick ! Not for English Cricketers in Australia as I write , but for the Archives!

At the Civic Service in June we were awarded “ Organisation of the Year 2013 – 2014 ” by the retiring Mayor , Councillor Terry Moore.



In 1999 Pat and Freda Manning were voted “Citizens of the Year “ for their work in setting up Torpoint’s Archives and in 2008 we benefited from Councillor John Crago’s Mayor’s Charity. No other organisation to date has received all three Civic accolades ! As dedicated volunteers whose sole aim is to collect, preserve and record Torpoint’s Heritage we do appreciate this acknowledgment.

Those of you who have visited the Archives know how cramped our working conditions are and over 20 boxes of artefacts , books and maps haven’t seen the light of day since our space was reduced in 2003. Torpoint Town Council has now offered us additional space in the Annexe at the rear of the Council Chambers . Acceptance will be subject to being granted Discretionary Rates Relief...Barry ensured the application was in place within 24 hours...hopefully we shall hear if we have been successful before too long!



In financially straightened times we do understand that the Government , Cornwall County Council and Torpoint Town Council need to generate as much money as possible but voluntary groups do make an invaluable contribution and if our 2,000 + voluntary hours (per annum) are calculated at the minimum wage it is a substantial amount.



We were sad that one of our original members Morny Spurling died in May . He contributed so much to the community with his witty observations of the social life of the community . His family chose the Archives as one of the beneficiaries of the funeral collection. A new Visitor’s Book and inscribed pen holder was bought with some of this donation and last month Joan became the first person to sign in it.

Her comment was “Morny found the Archives a Treasure House of knowledge....may it go from strength to strength”

The number of database entries is mounting rapidly...such an investment for the future of the Archives and so invaluable now when searching for a person, place, photograph or a document. A successful use of our unique resource is illustrated in the rest of the Newsletter. When a couple visited recently from North Wales they wondered if we had any information about a fatal accident in Torpoint in 1902. Bunty homed in on the Document Box containing the Newspaper accounts and the Coroner's report of the accident. Maddie found a photograph of a waggonette similar to the one involved in the accident and I found details of the family in question living in Macey Street at the time of the 1901 Census. It was at that stage the visitor told us she was the Great Granddaughter of the victim of the accident!

Out and about we have provided displays for the Civic reception, Torpoint Community College 50th Birthday, Trafalgar Day Celebration and a Powerpoint Presentation to the Diabetic Circle.

E-mails have been exchanged with our member in the Phillipines since the recent disaster. Fortunately he is well and with friends has been able to help with some relief to devastated areas further south than where he lives. He expressed his appreciation for the news coverage by the BBC and was grateful to hear of the donations to Shelterbox made by the Torpoint Community.

A very busy afternoon at the Archives



Do visit us anytime if you are able as we look forward to being able to offer visitors more than just standing room!

We wish you all a Peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Best wishes,

Rosemary Pellew
(Chairperson)

FATAL WAGONETTE ACCIDENT 18 Aug.1902

Report and Inquest

A Wagonette belonging to John Robjohn of Craffhole overturned on the hill between Craffhole and Tregantle. The wagonette was carrying about 7 grownups and 5 children who were returning to Torpoint after a trip to Downderry. The injured were taken to Tregantle Fort and subsequently two grownups, a Mr. James Wyatt and Mrs. Geary died of their injuries. Also one of the children, Frederick Wyatt, died.

A typical wagonette of the period. Mr. Downing driving.

The terrible wagonette accident which occurred near Tregantle on Saturday night remains almost the sole topic of conversation in Torpoint and district, where the deepest concern is shown for the unfortunate victims. With the exception of Mrs. Mary Wyatt who remains at Fort Tregantle under the care of Dr. Wilson and his sister, and of whose recovery there is very little hope, the patients are progressing favourably. Mr James Rooke who was suffering from shock on Monday was much better, although in an anxious state of mind regarding his daughter Mrs. Wyatt, and was well enough to give evidence.



George Partridge the driver is not to be called, but he is going on favourably. Our statement of yesterday that the severe cuts and injuries were caused mostly by the bottles which were in the wagonette were borne out at the inquest by the evidence, but we are informed that they were not purchased at the New Inn, Craffhole. Mr Wyatt was much better yesterday, and also Mrs. Broad and her children.

Mr A.C.L. Glubb, the Cornwall County Coroner, opened the inquest at Torpoint Institute yesterday, touching the death of Harriett Isabella Geary. Mrs. Geary, aged 30, wife of George Geary a stoker now serving in the Battleship 'Ocean' on the China Station, died on Monday as a result of injuries sustained in the wagonette accident near Tregantle on Saturday. Mr. T.E. Reynolds was chosen as the foreman of the jury.

Charles Edward Bawden Chief Stoker R.N, brother of the deceased, said that deceased did not speak again after the accident, he believed that she was seriously injured about the head but her body was not hurt.

John Robjohn of Craffhole said that he owned the vehicle in which the party were. It was a large four-wheeled wagonette. It would take three people including the driver in front, and six grown up people at the back. He had owned the vehicle for five years, and repaired it annually. It was thoroughly overhauled seven weeks ago and it was in good condition when it was out on hire. Mr. Wyatt chartered the wagonette to go to Downderry via Hessenford, a distance of about ? miles. Mr Partridge, driver, told the witness that he was going to take the party and that it would number six grownups and two children. The horse which was strong and quiet was over eight years old. Partridge had been in his employ seven years, he was a sober and trustworthy man.

The driver had never had an accident before. He was not licensed to carry any particular number of passengers. The witness would not have allowed twelve people in the wagonette because it would not hold them. He believed that the horse remained on its feet at the time of the accident, and had only one small cut. Inspector Miller, questioned by the Coroner, said that the driver was unable to be present but said that he had told him that when putting on the brake at the top of the hill he felt something slip, and the horse went down at full gallop for about 150 yards to the bottom of the hill. The driver did not see any wagon on the way down. The hill was fairly steep and led towards Antony from Craffhole. He did not remember the horse falling.

John Giddy of Craffhole said that about 8.30 on Saturday he was going towards Craffhole in a cart from Mr.Hill's hayfield at Liscawn, when at the foot of the hill he saw the wagonette coming down at a tremendous pace, fire coming from the wheels. He thought the horse had bolted. He got the cart in towards the hedge and the cart passed him and turned over about seven or eight yards further on. He did not think that the wheel ran up the bank, he saw the horse fall on its side which he thought checked the wagonette and turned it over. Several women were thrown to the ground but he didn't recognise the deceased. The road was fifteen yards wide and there was just room for the wagonette to pass him. By the jury:- He was sure that the driver had no control, he did not see the shafts.

John Giles Hill, farmer of Liscawn, said that he was on the spot about half a minute after the accident with 3 other men. The overturning made a tremendous noise and he heard the screams of women and children. He heard rattling before the wagonette overturned. When he arrived at the spot the wagonette was upside down and Mrs.Wyatt and two children underneath it. He saw deceased in the middle of the road and she was stunned as the rest of them were. They first pulled out the driver from under the horse's heels as he appeared to be dead and then released the children. Eight of the party were taken to Tregantle Fort, first in his wagon and the remainder were conveyed there by Mr.Stevens, a carrier. He found the horse standing upright, the right shaft was not injured but the left shaft was bent and broken. Inspector Miller showed a mark on the right shaft where it had struck the hedge.

The witness said his wife found the leading shaft pin near the top of the hill, 270 paces from the scene of the accident. He supposed the traces broke, the carriage ran down under the horses heels and forced it to run away. He had no doubt that if the horse had not been a very quiet one, it would have smashed the wagonette into atoms. Inspector Miller interposed that his impression was that the shaft of the wagonette ran into the ledge and caused it to overturn. Captain Roberts said that he had examined the place, and that they were both of that opinion. There was a lot of glass about the road and that was responsible for the party being so badly cut. Mr Nodder said that it appeared to him that the wagonette was overloaded and that it was through the weight of the vehicle that the brake smashed when it was put on. Boats had to be licensed to carry a certain number of passengers, and he thought that wagonettes should be licensed too.

A juryman submitted that the children were small the eldest being about nine and the others averaging about four. Mr Hill said the five children were not as heavy as he, and some of the passengers were heavy.

The coroner:- I suppose it would be easy to find eight to weigh as much as these twelve. Mr Hill:- I could pick on twelve people from the jury just as heavy. Coroner:- I don't think there is much can be said about the overloading. Mr W.V.Harris said he thought that there was something in it, and Mr Nodder said that some recommendation from the jury should be made to the effect that wagonettes should be licensed to carry a certain number of passengers, as in Devonport and Plymouth.

The coroner said that he had had a wagonette pointed out to him as similar to the one to which the accident happened, and he considered that six people were too much for the body of it. Mr Nodder said he thought that they should make some recommendation as he had suggested, but the coroner said they had only to deal with the cause of death.

Mr Nodder:- But the overcrowding might be the cause. James Rooke, pensioner, said that he was one of the party in the wagonette, when it started going fast he thought that there was something wrong. It went at such a rate that when the horse fell it upset. He thought he heard the driver say "the brake has gone". The vehicle just touched the hedge before it turned over. The horse began to gallop about halfway down the hill.

The jury after considering in private returned a verdict of Accidental Death adding the rider "Seeing in the district there are a large number of public conveyances for public hire, they were of the opinion that they should be submitted for inspection and limited in the numbers to be carried." They hoped that the coroner would communicate with the proper authorities on the matter. The jury also expressed sympathy with the relatives and all those connected with the accident. The foreman said it was a very sad affair and that it had cast a gloom over the town. There was never such an accident in the neighbourhood before.

From Jack Kingston's book 2, p.18, p.52