

Richard Holliday - Sixty Years in Spicer Road

At our last meeting, we were treated to an insight into one family's history living in the same road in Exeter. Richard Holliday's father lived in Spicer Road from 1943 until 2004/5, moving only once during that period, and that was just one hundred yards across the road! Richard's talk began with his research into the history of this street, then he shared his own personal experiences growing up there.



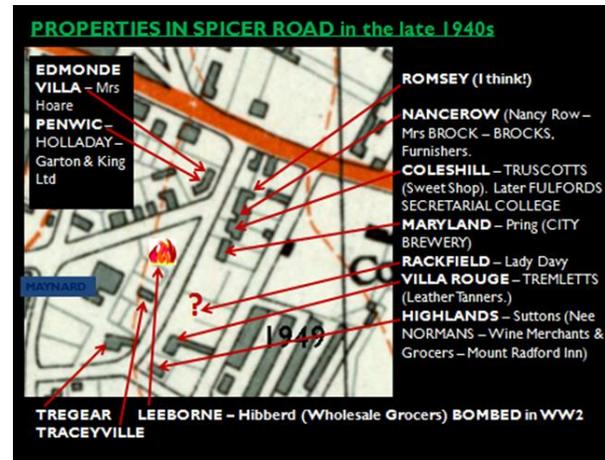
The map above shows Exeter in 1835, when Spicer Road was simply part of 'the new

road' from Barnfield to Exeter; the area around was owned by Alexandra Nurseries and was completely undeveloped.

The next map (on the right) dates from after 1854 and Spicer Road now exists.

It is likely that it got its name from Exeter's Spicer family, who were sheriffs and mayors of the city from 1587 to beyond 1708.

At the time this map was drawn up, the only major property there was 'Maryland', the estate on the map between the two roads. A map from 1904 pictured more properties along the road, and by the 1940s there were several houses; the names and occupations of the residents have been traced by Richard in the map below.



Penwic (number 5) was the first property that his father purchased in 1944/5. A Mr Westcott had bought the land from the nurseries and built this solid family home in about 1911. Richard and his two older brothers lived there with his father and his father's wife, and Richard was able to go and have a look at it when it came on the market again in 2007 - he showed us some pictures of the 40s ago which remained, and which he remembers as being the

centre of family life, and told us that when the current occupant had had the chimney swept, he'd found a letter that Richard's brother had hidden in the chimney in the 50s, asking Father Christmas for a new train set. The remains of his father's model railway were also still intact in the attic.

In 1957, Richard's father decided that Penwic was no longer big enough, and told his family they were moving, then drove them across the road! Their new house was the Georgian-built Maryland (then called 10 Spicer Rd). Built in the 1840s, it was occupied

by an aptly named solicitor, Segó Bastard, until about 1902, then sold to a builder, who divided up some of the land to build new property on.



Richard showed us various photos of Maryland past (left) - the old greenhouses, a cat that he won in a raffle (!) and the rooms that they used to play in. In 1969, when the boys were bigger (and a collective gasp could be heard in the HLHS audience at this point), Richard's father decided that the property was too large, and demolished it, building a retirement bungalow in its place (an interesting detail was that when the house was being demolished, one of the walls just fell down on its

own, suggesting it may have sustained damage when the property opposite was bombed in WW2). To fund this, he sold off half of the garden. He kept copious notes about everything involved in the build, ready for when the bungalow (right) would be sold one day; little known to him, it would never be sold. Despite having designed the bungalow as a place to end their days, Richard's stepmother broke her hip on the entrance steps and the couple moved in their 80s. The bungalow was sold to developers, demolished and replaced with incongruous modern flats (below) that sold for more than £300,000 each.



Almost all trace of the original Maryland disappeared - even the cast iron lamps have gone and only the right hand pillar remains. Thank you to Richard for this fascinating talk. I shall look at Spicer Road in a different way now. S.R.

Have you researched the history of your house, street or area of Heavitree? I would love to include or help write an article about what you've found out - please get in touch if you can help.

Polsloe Park Chapel

With the growth in population around the start of the twentieth century, Heavitree Parish looked to build new churches to serve the increased numbers living in the area. One such initiative was Polsloe Park Chapel.

Situated at the corner of Thurlow Road and Pinhoe Road, next to a Methodist Church, the Chapel was opened in 1901 opposite the former Polsloe Park Estate.

This was a time of great change and the Church seemed very aware of this. In April 1901 the Vicar of Heavitree, Rev T J Ponting, presided over the Heavitree Easter Vestry and took the opportunity to capture the new mood.

The Western Times (12th April) reports that "the vicar said that it was the first vestry of a new century, a new reign and a new episcopate. Since they had met last year they had lost their beloved queen, and there had come to an end of what they may well describe as a great age, a great reign and the end of a life of devotion".

The Vicar goes on to talk about the new Polsloe Park Chapel. The report says "He was extremely thankful for what had been done in the provision of a chapel in Polsloe Park, in which congregations had been worshipping for the past two Sundays. He trusted they would soon clear off the small debt which existed on the building".

Besley's Directory records that the chapel could sit 250 and that the Honorary Organist was Mrs A Angel.

The Chapel and Methodist Church no longer exist. The site now houses Watermore Court, a block of flats built in around 1971.

Can any readers add any further information about the chapel?

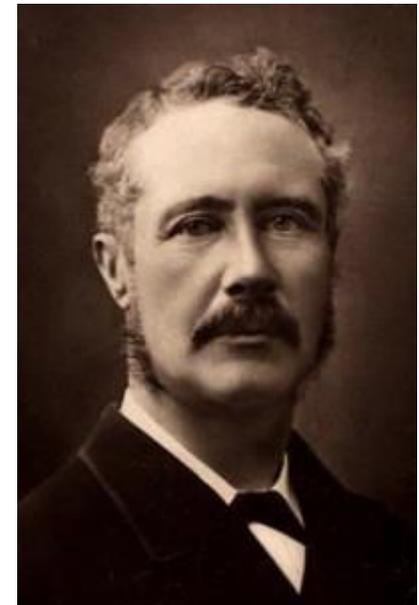
Martin Weiler

Gordon Lamp

After being allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, the Gordon Lamp at the junction of Heavitree Fore Street and Magdalen Road has finally been restored, thanks to Exeter Civic Society.

The lamp was erected in 1885 by Prebendary Barnes, the vicar of Heavitree, in memory of his friend General Charles George Gordon (1833-1885), who had stayed as a guest at the vicarage, and was who killed in his attempt to relieve Khartoum.

General Gordon was born in 1833 in Woolwich into a military background, but his family was connected with the St Thomas area of Exeter. His grandparents had lived in Lower Bowhill House, subsequently the site of St Thomas Lunatic Asylum; their memorial is in St Thomas Church. Gordon visited the church early in 1884 to see the



memorial shortly before being summoned to the Sudan where he was to die a hero a year later.

Prebendary Barnes has another claim to be remembered, as father of the actresses Violet and Dame Irene Vanbrugh, the latter of whom was chosen in 1895 by Oscar Wilde to play Gwendoline in the very first production of his play, *The Importance of being Ernest*. For more information about their lives please refer to Newsletter no.60, available on our website.

The lamp stands on the site of the old toll-house, demolished in 1884, and the inscription reads: "Charles George Gordon 26 January 1885". The 'Discovering Heavitree' publication supplies us with a little more information about Heavitree at that time:

'Public lighting was a major concern. Although gas mains were laid to private houses, it was not until 1870 that "ten lamps now illuminate the path of the traveller". By 1874 there were thirteen, and proposals were then made to more than double the number, but even after that date the small number of lamps publicly provided explains the importance attached to the provision of the Gordon Lamp after the General's death in 1885, and of Councilor Nethercott's lamp in North Street as late as 1912.

The significance of public lighting is indicated by the fact that Heavitree Urban District Council (HUDC) had a lighting committee from its creation, and found plenty to discuss and do. In 1902, for example, the Secretary of the Exeter Gas Light Offices referred to the lamp at the corner of Sivell Place:

"I find it is a general practice to use this post for tying horses to and frequently the mantles are broken, also very much damage is done by waggons colliding with it".

The committee minutes for 1908 record that "the Heavitree Brewery had paid for the new lamp fixed in Church Street in the place of the one destroyed by their runaway horse."



Gen Gordon's Last Stand by G W Joy

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS - WHAT'S IN STORE?

The first meeting of 2016 will be a bit different. On **Tuesday 8th March** (7.30pm) we will be visiting Exeter's Historic Guildhall for a guided tour. The City Council are checking if there are any Heavitree-related items amongst the collection of civic memorabilia held there. The Guildhall is of special interest as there are claims that it is the oldest municipal building in England still in use.

We are very grateful to our 'Heavitree' Lord Mayor, Olwen Foggin, for extending the invitation to us.

Our summer meeting sees us back at the Rifford Room on **Wednesday 15th June (7.30pm)** when we are very lucky to have a talk on Richard Ford of Heavitree by Professor Richard Hitchcock.

Author and traveller Richard Ford (1796-1858) lived in Heavitree House. He is well known for writing the first modern travel guide - to Spain - and is buried in Heavitree Churchyard.

Richard Hitchcock is Emeritus Professor of Hispano-Arabic Studies at the University of Exeter. He has written extensively on the history and literature of Muslim Spain. Richard helped with the project that led to the restoration of Ford's grave.

Our 2016 AGM will be held on **Wednesday 7th September**.

Non History Society Events

27th February 2016, 11am - Exeter Civic Society - Visit to Custom House at the Quay

10th March, 10am - Exeter History Society - Tour of Methodist Chapel, Sidwell Street

12th March, 2.30pm - Exeter Civic Society - Guided Walk of West Exe in Tiverton

20th March 2016, 2pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - A tour of the original cemetery grounds.

3rd April 2016, 2pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - Chinese festivals

9th April 2016, 2pm - Exeter Civic Society - Visit to St Anne's Orthodox Chapel

14th April 2016, 7pm - Exeter History Society - Exeter During the 1st World War

11th May 2016, 2pm - Exeter Civic Society - Visit to Research, Information, Learning and Development Centre, RD&E

23rd May 2016, 6.30pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - F.W. Meyer, Veitch landscape gardener

8th June 2016, 6.30pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - William Peter, Exeter Castle Keeper

7th July 2016, 6.30pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - Devon War Memorials (Todd Gray)

9th August 2016, 6.30pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - Guided tour of Northernhay & Rougemont gardens and the castle gatehouse

3rd September 2016, 2pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - Early Cinemas of Exeter

If you know of any events that you think members might appreciate, please contact me and I will include them in this section

This Newsletter was published by the Heavitree Local History Society

Editor : Sally Robinson, 48 Regent Square, Exeter, EX1 2RL

email : sallykernick2@yahoo.co.uk Tel : 01392 757004

www.heavitreelocalhistorysociety.co.uk