



FORTHCOMING HLHS MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Unless indicated below, meetings are held at Heavitree United Reformed Church, on the second Tue of Mar, Jun, Sep & Dec, commencing at 7:30pm.

Tue 14th Jun 2022

'Hidden histories of Heavitree' - A joint meeting with Heavitree Squilometre and Interwoven Productions

Presentations will include an update on recent research on Ladysmith Road (including Edwardian bricks), local maps including the 1813 tithe map held by the Cathedral Archive, and Exeter City's first ever football ground (which was in Heavitree).

Tue 13th Sept 2022

AGM + 'A social history of the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital' - Stephen Pettet Smith



A Lifetime in Chard Road

Fred Cole was born in Heavitree on 4th May 1929, and at one year old, his family moved into a brand-new house on Chard Road. In 2022, at almost 94, he still lives in the very same house. I'm so grateful that he was willing to share some of his memories with us.

Chard Road:

Fred's house was completed in 1927 and has stood for nearly 100 years, withstanding the Exeter Blitz and many changes to the area. Fred says that you wouldn't recognise Chard Road when he was a boy there. Turning right from his front door, there were two shops on the

corner. Fred had a stammer so his mother would send him to the shops with a note so that he didn't have to speak. As you walked down the hill and towards the bottom of Whipton Lane you'd come into fields and orchards with apples and pears growing. It felt like the countryside. There was a smaller, rickety wooden bridge over the Northbrook, which, back then, was exposed. Fred and his friends would sometimes steal fruit from the orchards. He was the leader of the gang. One day they went into one of the orchards and he said, 'I've an idea there's a policeman in this orchard.' They went running off and Fred caught his trousers on some barbed wire and tore them, but they got home safely. He relaxed but then came a ring on the doorbell.



It was indeed a policeman, but he was a nice policeman. 'Hello, Constable, any trouble?' asked Fred's father. 'Yes - you got a boy called Freddy Cole? He's been pinching apples and pears'. After this Fred's father gave the policeman a nice juicy pear to eat, and once he'd enjoyed it, said,

'That's one of the pears my boy pinched!'

The houses were quite modern for the time, with gas and electricity, and indoor and outdoor toilets. Each room had a coal fire, and Fred and his mother used to lay them first thing in the morning.



When the houses were new, they just had the floorboards showing. Most people couldn't afford carpet, so they had lino put down.

In 1949, only three people on Chard Road had cars. Fred knew many of the families who lived there, but most have now died. There is nobody left from Fred's childhood on the road, and Fred remembers a time when 'everyone seemed to be friendlier' (although he very much appreciates talking to his neighbours and their children).



Ladysmith School:

Fred went to Ladysmith School, when the girls and boys were still separate. They went in through their own gates and had their own playgrounds, but the boys frequently went into the girls' playground and Fred managed to have a girlfriend despite the separation of sexes. He always remembers her as being the only girl who wore a proper school dress and belt in the school's colours – the rest of the girls wore their own clothes.



The teachers were very nice, despite all carrying canes, which they used 'very often'. They were kind to Fred, and wouldn't ask him to read out

loud, because of his stammer.

Like most children, Fred left school before he was 14. He went to work on the railways, like his father, and showed me the coal dust which is still under the skin of his forehead, from when he once fell many feet into a pit of hot coal, when he was cleaning out the smoke box. The scars, like everything else around Fred, tell a story. After twelve years as a fireman, Fred became a train driver and worked until he was 63. The photo below shows Fred driving a train along the Dawlish/Teignmouth line.



Heavitree in WWII:

It is unsurprising that Fred's memories of the War and the Exeter Blitz still haunt him today.

Chard Road must have felt very different with the threat of German attack. The pleasure ground, which is just behind the houses, had 7ft deep trenches dug along it, so the Germans couldn't land their gliders. The children played in the trenches with pretend guns or toy cars. Many people don't know that there were six anti-aircraft guns stationed in the pleasure ground.

The Home Guard was formed, to keep civilians out of mischief. Windows had to be blacked out and cars couldn't have their lights on: everywhere was pitch black.



Everyone was issued with a gas mask, and at school there were weekly drills to make sure you could put them on quickly – if you weren't fast enough, you'd be in trouble. Babies had to be put inside a special box before being put inside the shelter.

The council came around and gave people a choice between an indoor or outdoor shelter. Fred's family had the outdoor, dug out style of shelter. They also lived by a couple who were very frightened of the war, so Fred's dad cut a hole in the privet hedge at the bottom of their garden, and every time an air raid siren went off, he and Fred went to check if they were ok.

Fred was coming up to leaving school age when the worst night of the Blitz happened. Before

Exeter was directly targeted, the risk had mostly been from planes dropping unused bombs on their way home. On Fred's birthday, on 4th May 1942, at six minutes past midnight, the sirens sounded. Fred's family rushed to the shelter. His sister, who was eight years younger, sat on his mother's lap. Fred sat next to his father, with the dear old cat on his lap. The noise was terrible:

'You've never heard such a noise in your life, with the anti-aircraft guns in the park all firing, and the planes overhead and the shells exploding.'

At one point, Fred's poor old dad looked at him, put a hand on his arm and said, 'Boy, I think we are coming to the end of the road.'

The planes were so low. Fred peeped out of the shelter and saw the sky lit up with shells, and in the flashes you could see the bombers, all black with a cross on the wing.

When finally the siren sounded the all clear, the family didn't know what they would see. They couldn't believe it when they saw their house was mostly intact. The back doors were blown open and the catch broken in half, but the glass was unbroken. Most houses on the street had several ceilings come down inside, and of course many houses were destroyed and lives lost in other parts of Heavitree and Exeter.

One of the first people Fred saw was a Home Guard Sergeant, who said: 'Young chap, you're not in the army. I suppose you'll be very pleased your school has been hit. See that glow in the sky? That's your school burning.'

This was the senior school at Ladysmith. Luckily it was only two ends, and they were patched up and the school did not have to close.

The next day Fred went into town and saw the devastation first hand – there were no shops, no houses – Sidwell Street only half standing, the High Street was

all rubble. Everything was gone, replaced with mountains of rubble.

Fighting in WWII:

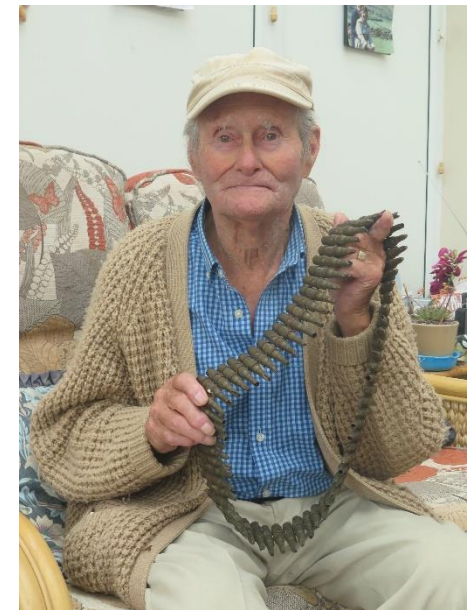


Fred was called up in 1944, and in training was soon recognised as a first-class sniper. As a corporal he had many experiences, but one that he particularly remembers is an encounter with a Japanese soldier in Indonesia (the picture to the left shows Fred and his comrades in Indonesia, waiting for the Japanese, who were on their way to attack. I asked why everyone looked so cheerful, and he said that they had a job to do and just had to get on with it). The two young men were firing at each other when they somehow came together. The Japanese man was only in his twenties, and spoke fairly good English. He told Fred

where he was from in Japan and said something along the lines of:

'English Tommy, don't you think it's about time we packed all this nonsense in?' and threw down his rifle and bullets. Fred did the same. Fred still has some of these bullets, which he brought back to remind him.

There were various prisoners of war in Exeter, and Fred became pally with a couple of Italian P.O.W.s. They came into his kitchen for a cup of tea and told him about their experiences and where they came from. They were kept at a P.O.W. camp where Tesco is now. The Germans wore red and the Italians blue, and there were also Japanese P.O.W.s in Heavitree. Fred's family had a Dutch girl called Annie come to stay with them for a period after the war. She was 12 years old. Later on, her 18 year old sister also came to stay. The Dutch had had a terrible time under the Nazis and coming to England was seen as a holiday. One night Fred took the older girl to the Odeon to watch a film. When they came out, some P.O.W.s were



walking along Sidwell Street, and she gripped his arm so tightly and said that she couldn't walk past them. They crossed the road and she spat in the gutter.

The picture to the right has this description written on the back:

'Grandad 1948.

Soldier in Heavitree Park with a mate back from the firing line for a rest.'



'My Sweetheart':



Fred was on leave in 1949, wearing his army uniform with stripes on his arm and his carrying his rifle. He and a friend walked past a train at Exeter Central and there she was, looking out of the window and the smile she gave him was 'a smile from heaven'.

Despite his friend telling him to hurry up, Fred said,

'No, that girl on the train smiled at me, a lovely smile, and I'm going back to talk to her'. They had seven or eight minutes before her train departed, and Fred found out that

her name was



Doreen, she worked at Madam Lakes hairdresser's in Sidwell Street, and she was on her way home to her parents' home in Crediton.

Before he left, Fred checked and double checked that she would be on that same train tomorrow. And she was. This time he got on with her. She had two or three girlfriends with her and Fred said, 'Why don't we go and sit in that coach there on our own.'

He walked her to her home in Crediton –



no drinking, apart from shandy or lemonade. Fred couldn't dance very well, but Doreen could. There were several black American soldiers who stayed in Exeter for a few years after the war, and they very politely asked Fred if they could dance with his wife – he was happy to let them as they were much better dancers!

not right to the front door, in case they were noticed! It was getting close to tea-time so Fred waited in the park for Doreen to return after she'd eaten. After a fortnight, he met her parents in their cottage, and after courting for 12-18 months, they were married in Heavitree Church in 1951.

Fred said that their period of courting involved going dancing or to the pictures. The Gaumont Cinema had a dance hall, and they went almost every Thursday night. People smoked a lot but there was



After their marriage, Fred and Doreen moved to 8 Roseland Crescent, and had their two boys there. They later moved back to Chard Road and lived there for the rest of their marriage. Fred's house is full of photos of him and Doreen. He loves to talk about his 'one love', with the 'loveliest smile' he has ever seen in his life.

Sally Robinson

St Mark's Church Exeter 1912-2012: David Oates



Our history society has always been interested in what happened as the parish of Heavitree expanded, and the contrasting images of St Mark's Church as a tin tabernacle building in 1912,

with the 1937 church that stands today, really

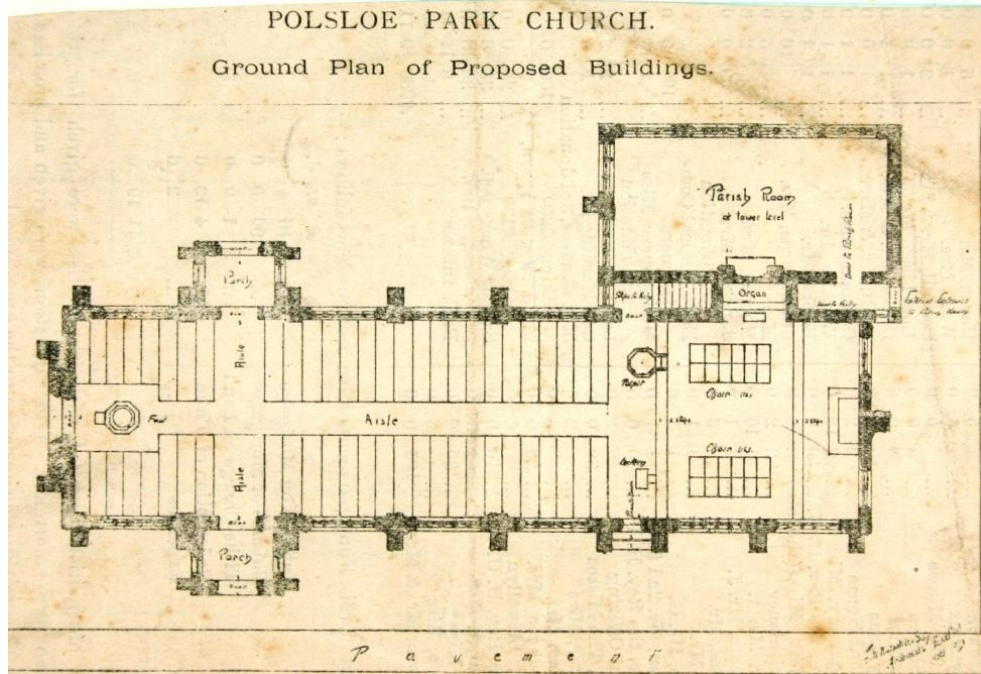
illustrate the changes that happened as the population of Heavitree grew. David first showed us a map from around 1890, which showed very few houses on Pinhoe Road, the female reformatory and the tram lines which reached Mount Pleasant. There was no church on Manston Road, nor where the present one stands.

Land was obtained for a church in 1899 and the Iron Church was erected and first used in 1901. The foundation stone for

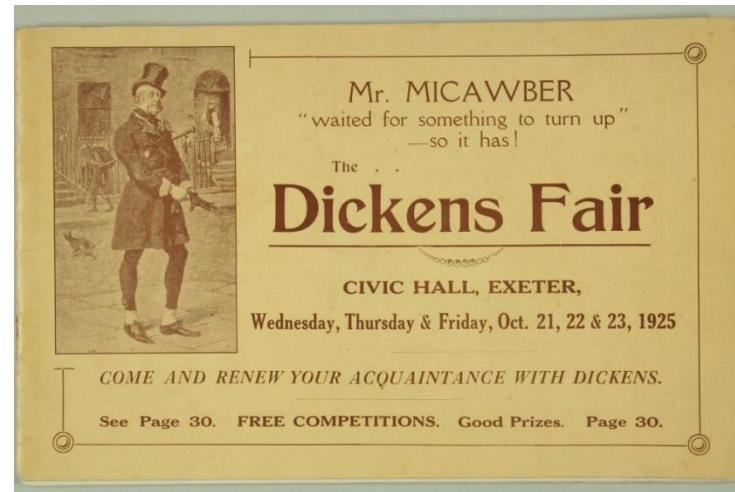


the new church was laid in 1910 and this church was first used for services in 1911. This 'Mission Chapel' is visible in Manston Road on the 1910 map. Other churches in the area were The Mount Pleasant Methodist Church and Polsloe Park Christian Chapel.

The Polsloe Park Fund was set up to raise money for a bigger, grander church that would seat 500 people. In 1910 the foundation stone was laid by Archibald Lord Bishop of Exeter, and gradually money was raised to build more and more



of the church.



Rev. John Goundry came after WWI – his name is still in his copy of the English Hymnal at St Mark's church today, and he held many fundraising events, including a Dickens Fair in 1925 and a Shakespearean

"Just a going to begin! Pray come for'ed, come for'ed!"

PROGRAMME. Wednesday, Oct. 21st.

2-30 p.m.	<p style="text-align: center;">OPENING CEREMONY. By THE VERY REV. THE DEAN OF EXETER.</p>	
3-0 p.m.	<p style="text-align: center;">"LOOSING PURSE STRINGS." THE VISITORS, TO MUSIC BY ORCHESTRA.</p>	£ s. d.
3-45 p.m.	<p style="text-align: center;">BURLESQUE—"Who the dickens is Dickens?" FOR CASTE, see page 52.</p>	
4-30 p.m.	<p>TEASE.</p>	
6-0 p.m.	<p>OCCASIONAL MUSIC. ORCHESTRA.</p>	
7-45 p.m.	<p>THE ? CONCERT PARTY. FOR ARTISTS, see page 52.</p>	
8-30 p.m.	<p>REVELLRY.</p>	
10-0 p.m.	<p>CLOSE.</p>	

Piano kindly lent by Messrs. GUEST.

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Stall Holders.

<p style="text-align: center;">"We'll look about for a second-hand stool."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WHITE ELEPHANT.</p> <p>Mrs. SPILLER. Miss CAMPBELL. " GODFREE. " SPILLER.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">"Half a loaf is better than no bread."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CAKES.</p> <p>Mrs. JOHNSON. " DEAN.</p>										
<p>"Things pass away, like a tale that is told."</p>											
<p>ICE CREAM.</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Miss SUSSEX.</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Miss LORAM.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" ANDERSON.</td> <td>" REW.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" BANISTER.</td> <td>" WILSON.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" EDWARDS.</td> <td>" WOOLLAND.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" KIMBERLEY.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Miss SUSSEX.	Miss LORAM.	" ANDERSON.	" REW.	" BANISTER.	" WILSON.	" EDWARDS.	" WOOLLAND.	" KIMBERLEY.	
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paid a huge amount towards the new church. The church was always reputed to be paid for by British workmen as they were the ones who had made her rich by buying her woodbines! The Wills Foundation continues even today, and recently funded a new organ for the church.

The church site was cleared, Violet Wills increased her donation, and an appeal was made to the people of Exeter for final donations. Finally the church was consecrated (preceded by a lunch at Dellers) and there was a procession from the old church to the new.

Church records show estimates for the cost



Fayre in 1927. Goundry was obviously a proactive man who threw himself into his role!

Several more vicars helped the cause, with Rev John Freeman being recruited to see through the building, and then Dame Violet Wills, a well-known woman who had grown rich from cigarettes,



burial records from the time.

Rev Freeman decided to leave, as he had three small children and wanted somewhere rather safer for them (Violet Wills had offered her house as an option). The next vicar refused to accept the position as he decided living at 13 Mont le Grand was too far away from the church. Rev Archibald Calder came next, and was considered a safe pair of hands. Rev Poulton followed him (though it was reported that he only had a third-class degree!).

Bells were acquired in 1951 – made from melted down bells from

of blackout blinds in 1940, and that discussions had been had about whether a conscientious objector could continue to serve as an officer of the church. The Exeter Blitz destroyed many buildings in the area and took the lives of parishioners. We can see this in the

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BURIALS in the Parish of _____ in the				
County of _____ in the year One thousand				
nine hundred and _____				
NAME.	Abode.	When Buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was Performed.
Gerald James Reed No. 489 Jain	Pulhoe Rd	7 th May 1942	13	J. Freeman
Peter Anthony No. 480 Gregory	137 Pulhoe Rd	9 th May 1942	1½	J. Freeman
Harold F Keith No. 491	Pulhoe Rd	9 th May 1942	36	J. Freeman
John Wayman No. 492 Lynton	Pulhoe Rd	9 th May 1942	61	J. Freeman
Samuel Parkhouse No. 493	30 Naulis Lane	10 th May 1942	40	J. Freeman
Beatrice May Mandy No. 494	Pulhoe Rd	11 th May 1942	66	J. Freeman

former Exeter churches. A new west window was funded, with two local saints: St Sidwella and St Katherine.



LEARNING THE ROPES

BELL-RINGERS at St Mark's Church, Exeter, practising with their Vicar, the Rev. C J Poulton

the consecration of the church, Mrs Claire Gordon wrote to David. She was the

daughter of the Rev Freeman, and was the little girl in the picture with Dame Violet Wills. She remembered an air raid in Mont le Grand – it had been her job to carry the baby down to the basement!
Sally Robinson

In 1975 the Manston Road church was sold and a new church hall was built by the present church. There are now six modern houses where the original tin church stood. For the 75th anniversary of

Bangor
23rd October 2012
Dear Dr. Oates,
Thank you for your kindness in sending the photographs. My mother is in the centre of the picture and I am the little girl who presented the flowers to Dame Violet Wills. I hope you and the present minister and all the congregation will celebrate and sing Praise to our wonderful Saviour our Lord Jesus Christ in His love
Claire

Northbrook Walk – May 2022

We had glorious weather for our Northbrook walk. Six of us walked from the source up near Rollestone Farm (off Pennsylvania Road) down to the confluence with the Exe behind the Crematorium. We explored some of the major tributaries including streams coming down from Stoke Hill (near Rixlade Farm), the Pennsylvania estate and Beacon Heath (the Whipton Brook). All of these are quite substantial in their own right.

We thought we might do a future walk starting near the top of the Whipton Brook and follow 'Heavitree's river' down that stem. It joins the other stem in by Vaughan Road. Martin Weiler

The source near Rollestone Farm



Looking down to the Northbrook Valley from near the source



The river in Mincinglake



Northbrook emerging from its culvert by Polsloe Bridge station



This Newsletter was published by the Heavitree Local History Society

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Please contact us with any enquiries via the form on our website:

www.heavitreelocalhistorysociety.co.uk