

FORTHCOMING HLHS MEETINGS AND EVENTS

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

Tue 13th Sep 2022

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

Sun 16th Oct 2022

A Stroll Through Historic Wonford.
Meet 2pm at the Community Hub in Heavitree Pleasure Ground.
This will be a jointly led walk with Heavitree Squilometre.

Wed 14th Dec 2022

'Researching Heavitree at the Devon Heritage Centre' - Brian Carpenter

Wed 8th Mar 2023

'Heavitree and the Railways' - Richard Westlake

Wed 14th Jun 2023

To be announced

The Queen in Heavitree

This month will be remembered in history as a time of huge change: when Queen Elizabeth II died, and Charles became king. Here are some photos of when the Queen came through Heavitree in 1977 towards the end of her Silver Jubilee tour. Local people remember being allowed out of school or coming out





—of their workplaces to watch her and Prince Phillip pass and wave. Visible in the background are Dunstons, Kneels, Halifax Building Society, National Westminster Bank as well as advertisement boards for Heavitree Furnishers, cigarettes and instant coffee.

The black and white photo to the right is of the Queen visiting St Loyes College on the same trip.

Thank you to Ann Avery and Darren Crabb for the photos.

Another Heavitree link to Queen Elizabeth II is the Heavitree



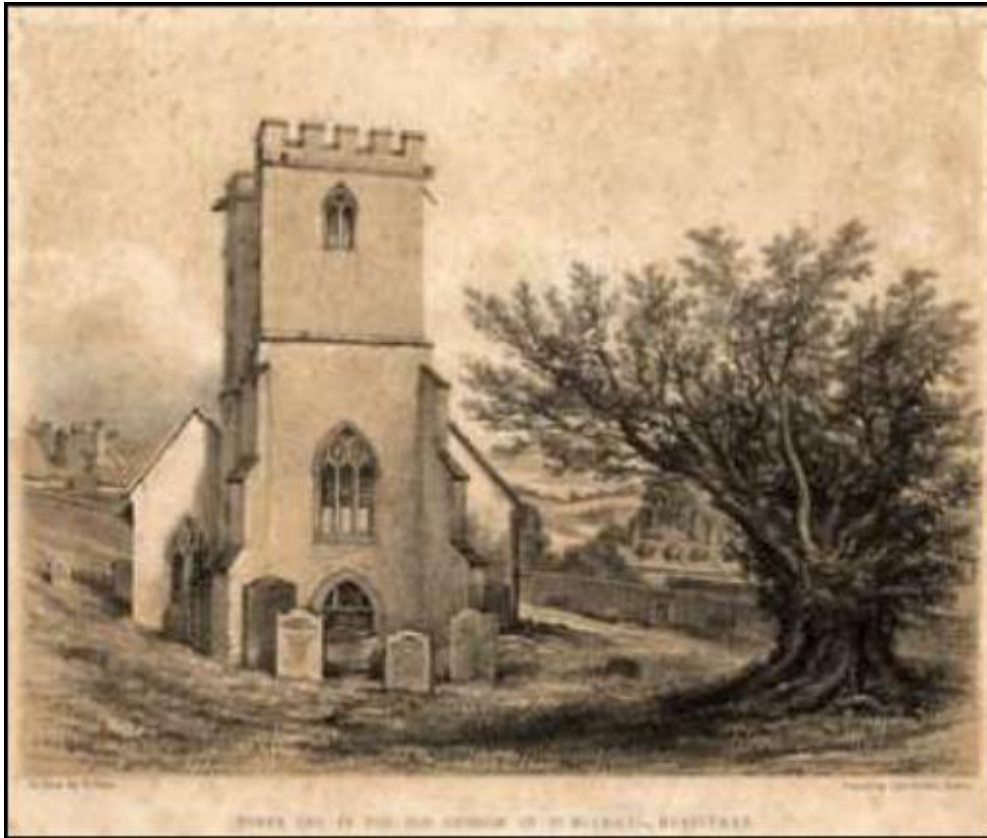
Yew. This yew should need no introduction, having received the following accolade: 'The Tree Council in celebration of the golden jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has designated the Heavitree Yew one of fifty Great British Trees in recognition of its place in the national heritage June 2002'.

In 1991 the tree was 'in a rather sorry state. The hollow trunk had been bricked up, and the Victorians had surrounded it with rubble and old stones, presumably with the intention of

supporting it. Local tree lovers have now removed the rubble and replaced it with new earth'.

A side-shoot which had grown from a very much older tree (now gone), was found. It is possible to see the old roots of the previous tree over a wide area around the surviving trunk. It looks as though the original trunk was cut down but has regenerated itself from the stump. It also seems that the church tower close to the tree was completely rebuilt in 1541 – could be a possible time when the original tree was felled. The Heavitree Yew is a well-developed fragment of a very old tree. The fragment has a girth of 10' 1" at its narrowest close to the ground and looks very much like the William Spreat drawing of 1842.

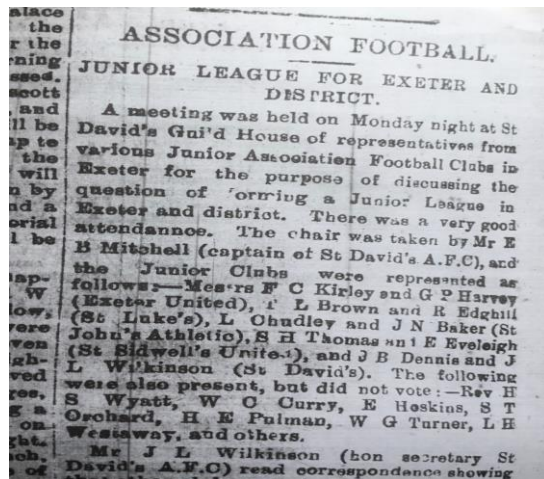
Sally Robinson



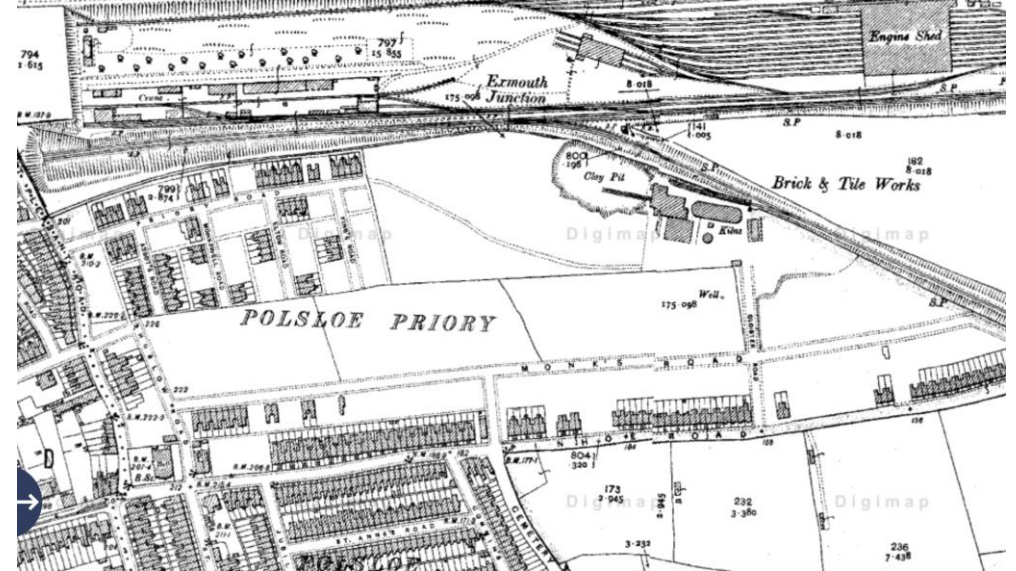
Hidden Histories of Heavitree Pinhoe Road Football Ground: The Grecians First Home

St Sidwell's United (now Exeter City) played their first two seasons (1901/2 and 1902/3) at a ground generally referred to as Pinhoe Road, although sometimes reports just said Mount Pleasant. It was a sloping pitch roughly in the area in which Monks Road is situated.

As this is the club's first-ever ground, we are keen to establish exactly where it was. Frustratingly, we don't have any maps showing the location, neither do we have any photographs of the pitch or



even of a St Sidwell's team. We know photographs were taken of local clubs at the time – so they must be out there somewhere! Below is a map of the likely area in the early 1900s:



It's likely, although not conclusive, that St Sidwell's played on the same sloping pitch at Pinhoe Road that was used by Exeter Wesleyan United and Exeter Athletic during the 1900/1 season. It may well have been on land owned by the Countess Dowager of Morley. There's a Morley Road off Monks Road.



The only detailed information we have on the ground comes from Sid Thomas when reminiscing in the Football Express in 1939. Referring to St Sidwell's United, he wrote: 'This little team operated at first in a field on which Monks Road has since been built. In those days there were very few houses on that side of Mount Pleasant, and the whole of the

land down to the bottom of Pinhoe Road was entirely unbuilt upon.’
‘I remember well that we tried to take a gate in those days and had a sentry-box placed at the entrance to the ground. Result of the first game was that something like 9d was collected. You will see that “gates” were a sore point even in those days, but I saw the time arrive when amateur soccer drew thousands to its matches.’

Even so, there were signs that association football was growing in popularity. For St Sidwell’s second league game of their first season at home to St David’s, the Evening Post reported that it ‘drew a good gate’. Their next home match against St John’s Athletic was in front of a ‘fair number of spectators’.

It’s also from these newspaper reports that we can glean more about the ground. The most prominent feature was the slope. There were regular mentions, for example, about sides having to ‘play up the hill’. It seems most likely that the slope ran west to east, down towards the Polsloe Bridge area.

This would tie in with the issue of the sun – a problem to this day at St James’ Park which is on a similar axis to the Pinhoe Road ground. Indeed, when St Sidwell’s played the second half up the slope in their very first match against Dawlish, according to one report: ‘The home team had to face the sun but continued to hold their own.’ And hold their own they did for two seasons before the move to St James’ Park.

Martin told us why Exeter City are known as the Grecians. In the past, people who lived in St Sidwells area used to refer to themselves as Grecians, St Sidwells being the first place outside the Roman city walls. This tradition dates back to the 1600s. When people used to write to the Express and Echo, they might sign it ‘from a Grecian’. Charles Dickens even mentioned the Grecians of St Sidwells! Martin Weiler

Discoveries in the Cathedral Archives and Heavitree History

Jojo Spinks from Heavitree Squilometre came to share her latest research with us. In March, she, Laurie (from Ludwell Life) and I went to visit the Cathedral Archives to see what they had about Heavitree. The most interesting things that we discovered were two old maps. Jojo talked to us about how having two historical sources can make us pretty certain about historical facts we otherwise could only speculate on.

The two old maps in the Cathedral Archive are:

* ‘Map of the Tything of East Wonford in Heavitree,’ (This is a copy of a map made in 1813 – we don’t know where the original is or when it was made)

* ‘Map of the Tything of Polesloe and Rolestone Barton in Heavitree, Devon’ (1785)



used for.

For example, ‘Lower Butts’. This piece of land is shown on the 1888 map as Pengelly’s brickworks, located behind Roseland Crescent. Looking at the historical features there, the long wall that stretches along today’s Pleasure Ground, you’d be forgiven for thinking that this was something to do with the Victorian Market Garden that was located where Roseland Avenue and Cobden Villa are now. If you look closely however, the wall is made of Heavitree stone. John Cinnamon and John Allen said that when you come across big ashlar blocks like these, you’d be going back into Tudor times. Post Black Death, builders were taking a lot of care, and were skilled craftsmen. The cob above the Heavitree stone could actually be Victorian, but looking beneath it – could we actually have a Tudor wall in Heavitree Pleasure Ground?



This is where looking at the tithe maps is interesting. Lower Butts extended to Middle Butts and then Higher Butts, which starts us thinking that this land could have been used for archery.

In 1511, Henry VIII ordered that all men under the age of 60 regularly practise archery, and that fathers be responsible for providing their sons and young male

Jojo explained how what are really interesting about these old maps are the field names. These predate the Victorian land grab and sometimes stretch right back into Tudor and even medieval times. They can give us clues into what the land was

servants with archery equipment and training. In 1541 he said that the inhabitants of every town "shall cut Butts and shoot at them."

Looking at the wall on its own would not be enough evidence to say that this area was used for archery; looking at the tithe map field names alone would not be enough evidence, but with both sources together, we can quite confidently say what this area was used for.



Squillometre Ladysmith Road Celebration

Jojo also talked to us about Squillometre's work on Ladysmith Road; an area of research voted for by the local public. The project was interrupted by the Covid pandemic but has now finally been celebrated with local residents.

When they originally started, people were interested in the build of the road, which is very long. Initially it looks fairly uniform, but the 1906 map shows a big gap in the middle. Also, why were there so many different styles of houses along the road, in 'pockets' of the same type? Heavitree council school opened in 1906 and lots of housing was probably going up at the same time. This was a time of rapid, energetic development – you can see fields just being snapped up and the houses reflect the old field shapes. One landowner owned the unbuilt upon gap, and it seems he hung onto that bit of land and just sold it off little parcel by little



parcel. The shop was built in the 1930s.

Obviously the higher end was connected with the Brick and Tile works, but it is interesting that the houses feature so many pale bricks, when Sampson's yard was making red bricks. The polychrome (pale)

bricks can't be quarried in Exeter – so where did they come from? The residents gradually pieced together that the arrival of the railway in Exeter would have made it far easier to transport the pale decorative bricks from Candy & Co in Newton Abbot into the City. The building of the Exmouth Junction in 1908 would have made it easier still to reach the Polsloe area. As we imagine the

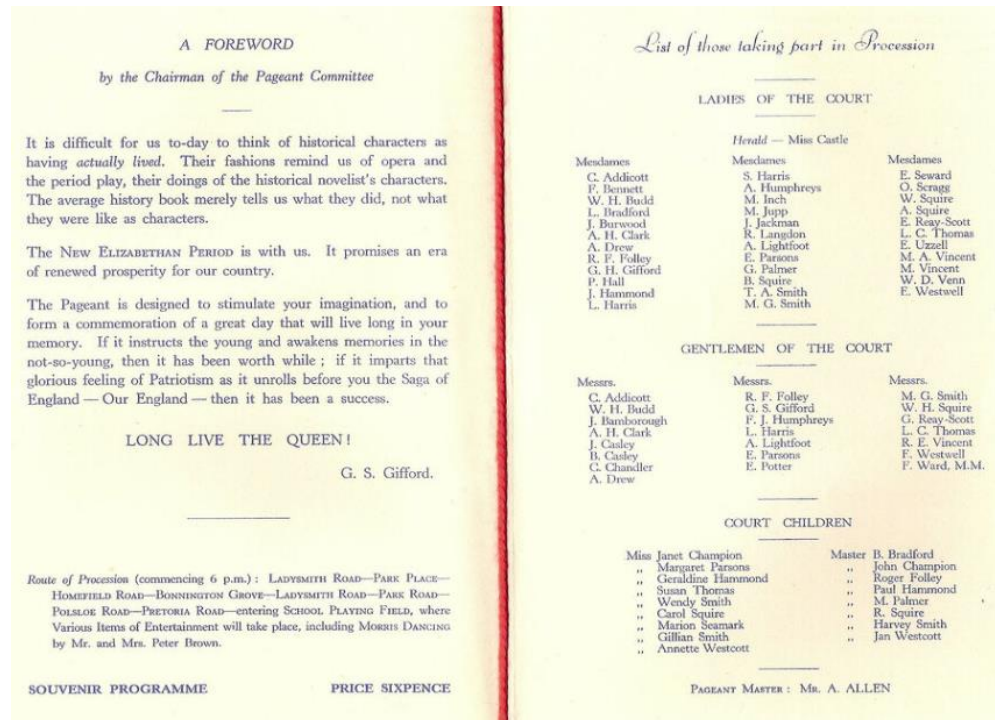
entrepreneurs of Heavitree of that time – Nethercott, Vaughn and Henry Sivell, sat in meetings wanting gas lamps, trams, their own park, maybe it really was just the *joie de vivre* of the time; a Belle Epoque enthusiasm, that made the builders fancy something special.



The Squillometre Ladysmith Road project wasn't just about history, but was a way to bring people together. Taking inspiration from the finials from windows, and using the double line of pale bricks as a motif, artists ran a workshop in Ladysmith Infants School, looking at architectural features and using ideas



generated to create a plaque at no.1 Ladysmith. This was a way of introducing young minds to history all around us. There was also a party – a historical pageant. After being locked down for so long, residents just wanted a party. They spoke to a resident, Bob Squires, who had been part of the 1953 historical pageant coronation party and still had a



programme. The day was very successful; what was especially nice is that older residents, younger people and children all mixed – it was very patriotic, joyful and happy.
Sally Robinson



This Newsletter was published by the
Heavitree Local History Society

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Please contact us with any enquiries via the
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