

History Group Meeting, 10th January 2022 by Zoom

Present: Norma, Brian, Ian, John, Ffiona, Nigel, Martin, Ed, Phil, Jeremy.

Apologies: Lindsay, Anthony, John, Jennifer and Janet.

Brian opened the meeting by summarising some of the discussions that had come up during the period since the last meeting. The most extensive of these related to a possible connection between Moorcourt and the Cunard family which is being researched by Bob. Walter Morrison (1836 – 1921), of Malham Tarn, Yorkshire, was a social reformer, philanthropist, businessman and MP who died in December 1921 at Moor Court, where he had stayed during the winter months for many years. He was very wealthy with business interests in Argentina, and had also stayed at the Knowle hotel in 1900. The house was built in 1904 and converted to apartments in 1934. It has been suggested that the house was built for the Cunard family, but no evidence has come to light. Census records show Mrs and Miss Chalmers in residence in 1911 and the Sidmouth Herald records that Miss Chalmers was still there in 1934 - she died in 1935 at Balnacraig, Sidmouth.



Moorcourt today

The other item of interest was an enquiry relating to a brick marked Miller Lilley of Honiton with a possible connection to Sidmouth. It was confirmed that the site currently occupied by Bradfords builders merchants at the old railway station had previously been occupied by Miller and Lilley, builders merchants. It was not known whether they had a brickworks there, but it was felt more likely that they sold bricks made at the Honiton works.

Jeremy advertised the SVA talk on local heritage lists, that he was giving on Wednesday, and emphasised that local heritage was not just about buildings, but included other material artifacts such as walls and street furniture, as well as non-material heritage such as local stories and legends.

Brian also asked if anyone knew the status of the overgrown part of Boughmore Lane from where it joins Cotmaton Road, and in particular, whether it should be put forward as a public right of way. Ed offered to investigate and later reported back that the land was privately owned and could not be designated.

Ed reported that several old coppice woods in the Sid Valley had been added to the national inventory of ancient woodland including areas near Sand and Plyford and above Knowle.

Nigel had been approached by a New York researcher regarding a Commonplace Book of Tamsin Carslake held by the Keats museum. It is hoped that more information may be obtained.

He had also followed up on a request for information about George Illsley (1859-1943) who was listed as a bootmaker on Radway Place at the top of the High Street (where the Silver King is now). His wife was Sarah née Selley (1859-1930) and her father was chief coastguard. Extracts from George's diary are being posted on the Sidmouth Remembers Facebook site and it is hoped a complete copy can be obtained for the museum.



The East Side of Radway in 2010

Ffiona: Offered to send her researches on Eglantine in Seafeld Road. The following combines Ffiona's research with a subsequent email discussion. The house probably did not exist before 1824 as both Butcher's 1820 and Marsh's 1824 guides describe the houses in Seafeld Road jumping straight from Rosemount to Violet Bank Cottage (now Littlecourt Cottages). An etching of Rosemount by George Rowe, published in 1826 (Sidmouth's Prints, p86), is a view from Pebblestone Cottage and shows Eglantine tucked in behind Rosemount with what looks like a thatched roof. Ffiona's builder has reported heaps of straw in the attic but she has not investigated personally. "Butcher's" 1828 guide remarks, following a description of Rosemount, "adjoining is a neat and pretty cottage, belonging to Miss Rose". In 1841 it is listed in the census with the occupants being a widow, Mrs. Rose, and one servant. The owner of Pebblestone Cottage has forwarded a photograph of a colour print taken from much the same viewpoint, and clearly showing Eglantine with a yellowish,

i.e. thatched, roof. He gave an earlier date for both Eglantine and Pebblestone Cottage, but the text of Sidmouth's Prints suggests Pebblestone Cottage was not built until 1826.

Phil asked if anyone had a photo of the Roxburgh Flats that were built on the site of the Roxburgh car park in the 1950/60s and then demolished a few years later.

Ian followed up his earlier enquiry about "Lanka" in Redwood Road. The name originally referred to a house on Salcombe Hill, owned by Charles Septimus Wright, a brewer from Halifax who had lived in Colombo, capital of Sri Lanka. His widow was active locally as the National Savings Representative. Her sister died at Lanka in 1921 and her mother in 1923. Connie Wright was born in Victoria, Australia and siblings were born in Australia and China. She moved to Redwood Road in ~1937 when the houses there were built, and took the name with her. The Salcombe Hill property is listed in the 1911 census between Coastlands and Pendrean, suggesting it may have been in Alma Lane.

The next meetings will be on 14th March, 9th May, 11th July, 12th September and 14th November, at the SVA in Fore Street, starting at 7pm unless otherwise advertised.