

SVA History Group meeting 14.3.2022

Present: Nigel, Phil, Ian, Ed, John

General discussion about Sidmouth resident, Bill Lancaster, who has a large collection of Sidmouth films. Nigel will speak to him and see if any can be copied for the Museum archive.

Ed spoke about the new Museum digital display that he has assembled which shows both our wild flowers and previous historical surveys. A 3rd edition Hutchinson town guide included a wild flower list which had been copied from an earlier one by Dr Cullen. Ed thought it unlikely that POH would have known of this inclusion and it was not repeated in any future guide.

Additionally, the Hutchinson Fern book is especially valuable as it includes the marginal and not very legible hand written notes of the Sidmouth postman and botanist John Sparks. Sparks mentions the origin of the name of Alexandria Road. In 1882 the British Navy bombarded Alexandria in response to an Egyptian nationalist uprising. A small British vessel, the Condor, was able to get close to the fort and destroy it. The victory was reflected by rejoicing at home and the phrase 'Well done, Condor!'. During this discussion we learned that the Temeraire was another of the British vessels. However, the famous 'Turner' Temeraire was broken up in 1838.

Phil spoke about the initiative to improve Glen Goyle and the website Friends of Glen Goyle which describes its history.

Ian will complete work on Salcombe Regis cemetery during this year. He mentioned that at least 2 of the burials, after newspaper investigation, were suicides. Clearly the practice of banning a Christian burial to those who committed suicide was by no means universal. He is also giving feedback to relatives of the Gigg family who are looking at their family ancestry.

John has again suggested that the building (now Fat Face) receive a Blue Plaque in view of the huge importance of Arthur Ellis to the town as well as the importance of the building itself as his very popular cinema. He mentioned that the Cinema (1919-1959) in Ottery St Mary in Jesu Street has a Blue Plaque.

Nigel summarised an article to appear in the SVA Magazine about Dr Tom Pullin (1824-1911). He was both a GP and MOH. His love for publicity as well as his medical exertions made him one of the best-known people in the Sid Valley. He was probably a very good doctor although his basic training was in the 1840s and it is doubtful that he spent much time with new ideas. At the time of the coronations of both Edward VII and George V he gave 'royal' mugs to all the children in the Sid Valley with his own name and MD FRCS on them.