

Heavitree Jamaica: An Historical Connection - Gillian Allen



Gillian came to talk to the society about her and Martin Weiler's research into the story behind Heavitree, Jamaica. Gillian used to live in Jamaica but also came back to Exeter from time to time. The two places seemed like separate worlds, until she visited Topsham museum and got the first hint of a link between the two countries via trade and slavery. She began to learn about the Davy family, finding a tomb in Clyst St Mary graveyard dedicated to

James Davy Esq, 'late of the island of Jamaica' who died in 1825 aged 60. Gillian wondered what the Davys were doing in Jamaica.

Next, she looked in a Jamaican almanac for 1840, and found the property names of Topsham, Wear Pen, Heavitree, Devon, Tiverton etc. She discovered that the Davys had come from Countess Wear but had previously lived in Heavitree, and that they had a connection with these properties in Jamaica.

Researching the Davy family history was made easier by the fact that this was 2006, one hundred years after the abolition of the slave trade, so many families were researching connections at this time. The internet also helped Gillian to put together the story of the family, and in 2010, Geoff Davy, a descendant of the 'Jamaican Davys', contacted her from Australia, in search of more information about his ancestors.

They traced the Davy family back to the 1600s, when they were living in Wyld Court, Hawkchurch (then in Dorset; now in Devon). In 1685, Gaius Davy supported the Monmouth rebellion, and had to flee, hiding out at Heath Orchard (then in the parish of Heavitree; now Pinhoe). He lost his fortune and the family had to begin again from scratch. Two generations later, they had become farmers and were living in at Whipton Barton Farm in Heavitree parish (now 393 Pinhoe Road). In 1765 James Davy (born

1729) and his family moved to Countess Wear in the area which is now the Glasshouse Lane estate, where Gillian lives today.

They were an entrepreneurial family, and were involved in the production of limestone and coal. James's son, Robert Davy, became an important shipbuilder and his vessels would bring back goods from slave areas. Of James's eight children, four went to Jamaica, including the James (born 1765) buried in Clyst St Mary.

Gillian and Geoff flew to Jamaica to visit the places where the Davy family would have lived. After visiting Fort Charles, where their ancestors would have bought their slaves at the slave market, they travelled into the hills north of Mandeville, where the estates of Topsham, Wear Pen and Heavitree were located. Here, they met the Glanville family, who also had Devon roots. Research shows that two hundred years ago, the Davy and Glanville families had been friends, so it was quite a moving moment for their descendents to meet.

First, they called in to 'Topsham', where pimento and coffee would have been grown. All that remained of the great house, was the overgrown base of a wall, but they found the church, and a church brother named Davy, whose family had come from the area. In 1817, a law came in that required slave owners to register their slaves. Gillian displayed a very long list of James Davy's slaves on the Topsham estate.

Gillian showed us part of the will of James' brother, Edward Davy, written at Wear Pen in 1804. The will stated that he left to Elizabeth Morgan, a free mulatto (mixed race) woman "who I know", three negro women, £50 and 25 acres of woodland. To his reputed daughter, Jane Davy (by Elizabeth), £1000 to be sent to England at the age of eight years to have a decent education (Gillian wondered if she ever made this trip?). She may have died from a tropical disease, which was extremely common at the time. To his brother Thomas and sister Rebecca, both residing in England, he left the remainder of his property.

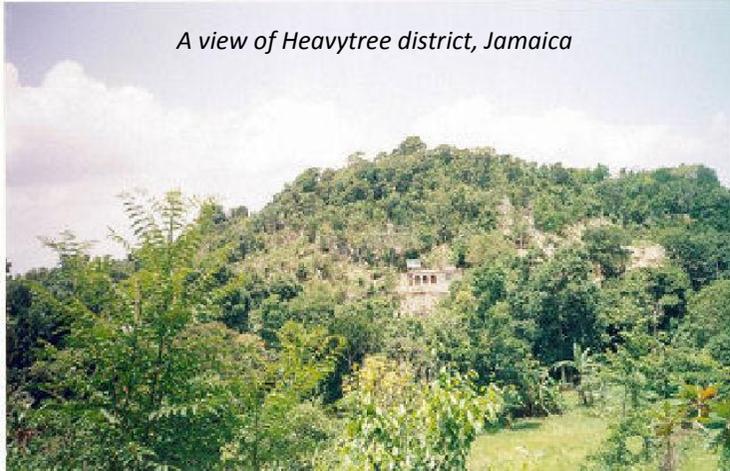
They then went to Wear Pen. The once beautiful house was dilapidated, and by 2011 there was no trace of it left at all. When John Davy, son of James, ran the estate, it had been used as a cattle ranch, the cattle then being sold on to work the sugar plantations. Gillian told us that celebrity cook, Ainsley Harriot, had traced his ancestors and found that one was enslaved in Jamaica - his master was John Davy! The nearby Skull Point, where an executed slave's skull was once displayed on a stake, as a warning to others, reminded Gillian that the Davys were probably as cruel as slaves masters as any others of the time.

Finally they reached the district of Heavitree, amongst limestone hills and coffee trees. They noticed a 'Heavytree' church and a passerby, unaware of the link with England, assured them that it was named after a big cotton tree in the centre! All that remained of the great house was an old wall.

In 1838, after the emancipation of the slaves, estates would have become less profitable; many would have closed. Slave owners received compensation for their

slaves, and records show that the Davys received £2156 compensation for their 106 slaves. In the 1850s John Davy sold Heavitree to a French family and moved back to the UK, to the very up-market Royal Crescent in Kensington. Enslaved people would have taken the surname of their owners and so there are lots of Davys in Jamaica now. Gillian came upon Davy graves of former slaves, and told us that in one area there are so many Davys that the place is named Davyton!

The Davys continued their upwardly socially mobile life in London, educating their sons



A view of Heavitree district, Jamaica

well; Dr Thomas Davy (son of John Davy) became a doctor in the Solomon Islands, New Zealand and finally in a gold rush town in western Australia, so by the 1890's the family were based in Australia, which is how Geoff, their grandson, came to be there, on a cattle ranch.

Gillian summed up by highlighting the connections between Heavitree, Exeter and Heavitree, Jamaica, thanks to the Davy family: the Davy ships, slavery, the wealth, the name Davy and the genes that intertwined black and white history.

'Disorderly houses' in Heavitree

A fascinating glimpse of life in the backstreets of Heavitree in the early twentieth century has emerged.

Local Exeter resident Val Hawker has shared the story of her great grandmother, Ellen Coles; including the fact that she ran a couple of brothels in Heavitree.

"She was born Ellen Elizabeth Manley at Cullompton in 1860" writes Val. "She married Harry Coles in 1884 and had seven children. I'm presuming all was well until Harry's death in 1901; that's when it all went a bit pear-shaped".

"We next hear of her when she was taken to court on 13 January 1903, appearing before Chairman of Magistrates, Mr E F Studd, at Wonford Petty Sessions".

The Exeter Flying Post of 17 January reports: "Ellen Coles, of Heavitree, was sentenced to three months' hard labour for keeping disorderly houses at 2 Sivell Place and 7 Ellis Place, Heavitree, during December.

"The Chairman said the case was the worst they had ever tried. He commended PC Rowland and all who had assisted in bringing prisoner to book".

Val's researches reveal that Ellen was in court again a year later for assisting in another brothel in Cheeke Street, Exeter. This time the case was dismissed.

"I catch up with her again on the 1911 census where she is a domestic in Tiverton workhouse. She remained at the workhouse until her death from heart failure in April 1920. She was only 59", says Val.

"Of course, life was particularly difficult for Ellen's children. Two of her daughters were sent to Canada, one with Barnardos and the other through the Salvation Army. One son drowned off Plymouth Hoe and another was killed in World War One. Thankfully my grandmother survived until the mid 1970s".

By amazing co-incidence at the same time as Val was passing on this family history, the Society was contacted by a researcher with an interest in Ellis Place. It turns out the street had a further story to tell.

Ellis Place (or sometimes known as Ellis's Place) was a row of cottages, now demolished, behind where the Co-op now stands. The electricity sub-station by the back entrance to the Co-op still carries the name Ellis's Place.



The researcher was investigating the murder of Doreen Messenger, Meadow Way, Heavitree, in 1949. The man convicted of the murder, a Sidney Archibald Chamberlin, lived in Ellis Place. Amazingly he also lived at number 7; the same property that had been a brothel back in 1902. Chamberlin was hung at Winchester Prison on 28 July 1949.

Memories of Ellis Place were discussed at the Society's March meeting. Hilda Mitchelmore, recalled when she worked at a bakery in Fore Street, residents of Ellis Place coming into the shop to get their Sunday dinners heated.

The Society would love to see a photo of Ellis Place. Has anyone got one they could lend us?

Christmas Quiz Correction

The "filled in" window in Shelton Place is just an architectural feature of the house, and not due to Window Tax as we had originally assumed. Window Tax was abolished in 1851 and replaced by a house tax. Barbara Farrell remembers watching the (by all accounts very expensive) *trompe l'oeil* painting of the curtains and cat being done about six or seven years ago.

Exeter City Footballers on Heavitree Roll of Honour

Two Exeter City footballers with Heavitree connections died in World War I.

The Supporters Trust, which owns the Football Club, has recently erected a memorial to the eleven former players who are known to have given their lives during the conflict.

Included on the stone plaque at St James Park are Frederick Henry Bailey and Edwin Clark – both amateur players. They are also listed in the Heavitree Roll of Honour produced by the Heavitree Local History Society in 2002.



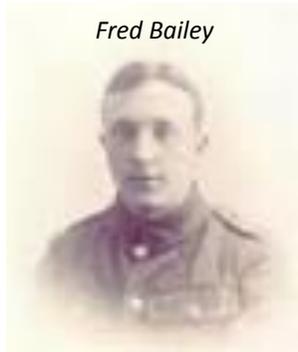
The memorial at St James Park

Clark saw active overseas service but died after an accident on a ship at Grimsby, aged 28. He slipped and fell into the sea, striking his head against a torpedo net. He died in December 1917 and is buried in Clyst St Mary churchyard (his parents lived in Clyst). He is also remembered on the war memorial in St Boniface's Church, Whipton.

The impact of the First World War on Exeter City footballers is revealed in Aidan Hamilton's book 'Have you ever played Brazil? The story of Exeter City's 1914 Tour to South America'. It is available from the Club Shop or Reception priced £20.

The 'Heavitree Squilometre'

Several members of the Society went along to Jojo Spink's dramatised tour of Sweetbriar Lane.



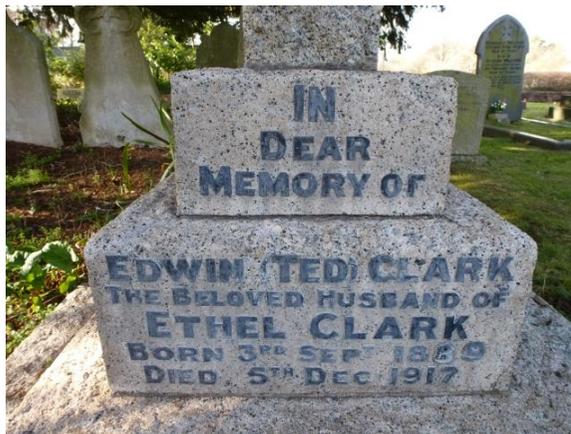
Fred Bailey

Fred Bailey was the son of R.H. and Annie Bailey of 9 Priory Road, Polsloe Priory. Fred was a notable local athlete and footballer. His obituary in the Western Times said he was 'a dashing centre-forward at soccer, and a prolific scorer for Exeter City'.

Bailey went to France in 1914 as a Private in the 24th Field Ambulance, Royal Medical Corps. Ironically he was present in a hospital when his reserve team captain at Exeter, George Thomas White, was brought in and died from his wounds.

After being sent home injured, Fred recovered and returned to the front, but he was killed on 1st July at the Battle of the Somme. He died instantaneously when hit by a shell while helping to convey a wounded man along a trench. He was 21.

Fred is buried at the Ribemont Communal Cemetery in Somme, France. He is also commemorated on the war memorials in Heavitree Church and the former St Sidwell's Church.



Edwin Clark's grave at Clyst St Mary

Edwin Clark lived with his wife Ethel at 2 Lower Summerlands, Newtown. Edwin was a Leading Carpenter's Crew in the Navy and a highly thought of footballer. His Western Times obituary said "He was known in Devon football circles as one of the best amateur soccer half-backs Exeter had ever produced".



The group was led by actors and musicians, who took us back in time to Bronze Age Exeter.

As we stood in the built up, urban area of Sweetbriar lane, we were encouraged to imagine how it was, as an ancient ridgeway. The actors painted a picture of nature - crystal clear streams, beautiful woodland and lots of space, where people worked together as part of the group, rather than as individuals today.

We looked down through the street, towards the higher ground of Woodbury Common, where Bronze Age people were buried in barrows, along with daggers, gold cups and gold neckwear. We also learnt that the Greensand Ridge of Farway, Broad Down and Gittisham, barely twenty miles from Heavitree, has around 112 barrows and is a nationally significant cemetery of burial monuments.

Jojo plans to hold more story-telling walks in the Heavitree area. Please visit her website for more information about upcoming events: <http://interwovenproductions.weebly.com/the-heavitree-squilometre.html>.



Can you help? Drill Hall on Normandy Road

Does anyone have any information about the old Drill Hall on the juncture of Normandy Road and Alpha street? Please contact Jonathan at jonathan.wright1@live.co.uk if you

know anything about this building's history, as we have had an email from someone wanting to find out more.

Heavitree's Toll Houses

Toll-houses were an important part of early traffic management in Heavitree, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A new book, Tim Jenkinson and Patrick Taylor's 'The Toll-houses of South Devon', throws fresh light on the parish's toll-houses and shows just how extensive the local road network was.

Heavitree's Toll-houses included:

- The Marypole Head Toll-house, built at the junction of Rosebarn Lane with Pennsylvania Road to deal with travellers going towards Stoke Canon.
- Stoke Hill Toll-house, erected at the foot of Rosebarn Lane in Old Tiverton Road. It used to be known as the Tiverton and Cullompton Gate.
- Withybridge (or Blackboy Gate) Toll-house which stood on the south side of Blackboy Road just past the entrance to Mount Pleasant Road on the road to Cullompton.
- Heavitree Toll-house, built on the corner of North Street and Fore Street on the Honiton Road. It was later moved to the east of the Livery Dole almshouses.
- Heavitree Bridge Toll-house, situated on the south side of the road at the east end of Heavitree Bridge.
- Livery Dole Toll-house which stood at the point where present day Magdalen Road crosses Barrack Road.

The book, which contains information on the history of each of the Toll-houses, including in some cases information on the Toll-house staff, is available from Tim Jenkinson, 17 Monro Mead, Liverton, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6UL. Please send a cheque for £8.95 made payable to T Jenkinson.

Heavitree Boundary Walk

Please see the 'History Society Events' section for details of the imminent full length walk. Terry Bound has drawn up a much shorter walk if you would like to visit four of the boundary stones that are close together. This walk is about 1/3 of a mile in total and you can download a PDF of the route and instructions from the HLHS website.

Update on HLHS Display Material

We have now purchased professional looking display boards and a regular working party of members are working on designing a set of A3 information boards. The objective is to create high-quality materials that are quick to assemble and that draw people in at events. We are currently looking at old photographs of Heavitree, and discussing how best to display them.

Spicer Road

In our previous newsletter we asked for any details about the derivation of the name 'Spicer Road'. The book 'Two Thousand Years in Exeter' (W.G, Hoskins) states that it is 'a late Victorian road, which derives its name from the ancient Exeter family of Spicer who had property here. They lived in Exeter from the early thirteenth century (at least) until the early nineteenth, their name being derived of course from their original trade, that of a dealer of spices'.

Upcoming History Society Events

(all held in the St Michael's and All Angels Church, Rifford Room, 7.30pm)

Saturday 13th June at 9am - Beating the Bounds Walk 2015 - For those of you that are interested and that are feeling energetic, the Beating the Bounds walk 2015 will take place on Saturday 13th June, departing 9am prompt from the corner of Polsloe Road and Fore Street at Livery Dole. This is a walk that visits all 9 of the known stones that mark the boundary of the Heavitree Parish. It is approximately 14 miles long and usually takes around 7 hours to walk at a relatively slow pace. Stout footwear should be worn as part of the walk can be muddy, and obviously bring waterproof clothing if it is likely to rain on the day. No need to let us know in advance if you intend to come but please ensure you arrive before 9am to avoid being left behind.

Wednesday 17th June 2015 - 'The Roman Army in Heavitree' - J. Smith

Wednesday 9th September 2015 – AGM

Non History Society Events

6th June 2015, 2pm - Exeter Civic Society - Battle of Waterloo 200th Anniversary

8th June 2015, 6.30pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - 'Vice Admiral Godolphin Bond'

10th June 2015, 2.30pm - Exeter Civic Society - Transport Control Room, County Hall

20th June 2015, 10.30am - Exeter Civic Society Open Morning

10th July 2015 - Exeter History Society - 'Overlooked and out of Mind', Queen St Walk

23rd July 2015, 6.30pm - Friends of Higher Cemetery - Unusual Graves Tour

13th August 2015 - Exeter History Society - Old Photos 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

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