

PREFACE

Owing to the war, the mass of information contained in the late H. R. Watkin's Pre-Reformation History has not yet been digested, nor has any general history of the town after the Reformation been attempted. The writer is engaged on these tasks. The following notes were drafted for the use of the members of the Torbay Branch of the Devonshire Association. It is hoped that the notes and the sketch map may be of service to visitors interested in the history of the famous and beautiful port.

Waterside, Dartmouth, September 1946.

PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES

History of Dartmouth to the Reformation (H. R. Watkin, Devonshire Assn. 1935).

Dartmouth Castle and other defences of Dartmouth Haven (B. H. St. J. O'Neil, Archaeologies LXXXV (1936).
Dartmouth Castle (Official Guide, summary of above).

Saint Saviour's, Dartmouth, through the Centuries (W Thomson Hill, British Pub. Co., Gloucester 1938).

Borough of Clifton-Dartmouth-Hardness and its Mayors (E. Windeatt, Dev. Assn. Trans. XLIII to XLVI, 1911/14).

Dartmouth as a Parliamentary Borough (J. J. Alexander, Dev. Assn. Trans. XLIII, 1911).

Records of the Boro' of Dartmouth (loaned to and transcribed by the City of Exeter Library (DD 60501— 68053).

HISTORY

The Victoria County History describes a promontory fort on Gallants Bower (the steep ridge forming the western side of the harbour entrance, but does not give a plan. A XVII century earth fort complicates the matter. The name Gallants Bower is found six times in the county (Dev. Ass. Trans., 1929), usually denoting a summit with steep slopes.

The Domesday Record describes Tunstal, where the parish church of St. Clement stands (350 ft.) on the steep and narrow track leading down to the river crossing at "Hardness." At the junction of this track with Brown's Hill stood the chapel of Saint Clarus (ancient in 1235).

Both these dedications to Martyr Saints, and also that of St. Petrox at the Castle site indicate the presence of Celtic people prior to their fusion with the Saxons, who gradually extended their hold over the county of Devon ; but there was no township to rival Totnes, at the head of the estuary, until the twelfth century.

The Hardness ridge forms the northern side of a deep valley and tidal creek. Clifton-Dartmouth developed in medieval times on the southern rim (Crowther's Hill) and on the steep slopes above the harbour (where the houses hang like gallipots, says Prince). The houses spilled over into Southtown, which was part of the parish of Stoke Fleming.

To the north of the Hardness ridge lay the remainder of the parish of Tunstal. This formed a separate lordship, which came to be known as Norton Dawnay. The manor house stood within the large walled enclosure or "Place," now known as Mount Boone, after its seventeenth century owners.

As the shipping trade with Brittany and Aquitaine grew, the harbour side settlement increased in importance, and Tunstal village declined. The incorporation of the Borough of Clifton-Dartmouth-Hardness in 1341 was followed in 1372 by the foundation of the Church of St. Saviours in the heart of the town, marking the successful close of an eighty year struggle with the patrons of Saint Clements, the Abbots of Torre.

The tidal creek between Hardness and Clifton-Dartmouth was dammed along the line of Fosse Street in Norman times ; forming a mill

pool, which was only filled up early in XIX century. The ancient walls along the Hardness bank are of much interest. On the seaward side of the dam the celebrated John Hawley built his warehouse or "haw" late in the XIV century, and so supplemented the town quay at Baiardes-cove, and the numerous steps and jetties at Hardness.

No landward defences were constructed, but the narrow mouth of the Dart was guarded as far as was practicable. The earliest existing remains are of a large enclosure within a curtain wall and a strong circular tower by the water's edge.

These works date from Hawley's time or possibly earlier, and were matched by a smaller work on the other side of the river, called Gomerock.

When the Bretons made a serious assault in 1404 they landed in Start Bay and were completely overthrown in what Hawley calls "the scrimmage at Blakpole."

The decline of the English power in France, culminating in the loss of Bordeaux in 1453 put an end to this period of prosperity at Dartmouth and other ports of the Western Channel. The Hawley family died out and shipping declined. Defence became uppermost in men's minds, and in 1462 Edward IV was granting aid from the customs revenue for the provision of a harbour chain. This was followed in 1481 by an increased grant (£30 a year) for the building of the "mighty, strong defensive tower" now known as Dartmouth Castle, from which a chain could be worked and defended. A similar tower (Kingswear Castle) was constructed in 1501 on the other side. These were amongst the earliest English works intended to employ and to withstand artillery. As time went on they were supplemented by additional batteries, first at Bayard's Cove (circa 1520) and then at the Castle (repeatedly modernised), and later by earthwork batteries commanding the outer anchorage or Range. The only serious challenge to these seaward defences was by De Ruyter in 1667.

The discovery in 1497 by Cabot of the prolific fisheries off Newfoundland opened a new period of prosperity for Dartmouth, which reached its height about 1620/1640. At that time the churches of St. Saviours and St. Petrox were largely rebuilt, and many of the houses in the town (including the Butterwalk) constructed. To provide for the shipping a great improvement was made by building the New Quay on reclaimed ground on the harbour side of the church yard in 1584. The gables and partition walls of several of the houses built there may still be seen.

The fact that the church of St. Saviour was entirely under town control may account for the repeated embellishment of this, and the neglect of any marked improvement in the Guildhall. The walls of the earliest hall still stand on the north side of the churchyard, but this was abandoned in favour of Hawley's town house, standing between Lower and Higher Street. This served, without much alteration, until 1864, when it was swept away with many other old houses to allow the building of the Newcomen road.

The activities of Sir Humphrey Gilbert and his young half-brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, accounted for the sailing from Dartmouth of several famous expeditions in Elizabethan times ; whilst additional lustre was lent by the voyages of discovery of John Davis. The towns-people, however, stuck to their fishing, and left the capable family of Hawkins to place Plymouth in the forefront as a base for overseas trading and for naval operations. Whilst the main English fleet gathered at Plymouth in the Armada year (1588), there were fitted out in the Dart Raleigh's Roebuck, and three or four small private ships, in addition to two town ships—Crescent (70 men) and Hart (30 men). The details of the crews and equipment are preserved in the Borough records.

Strong Puritan feeling amongst the leading families caused Dartmouth to declare for Parliament against King Charles ; and at the expense of the town a string of posts was fortified in 1643. Prince Maurice hesitated to risk a storm, and spent a month in bringing cannon into position before securing a surrender on 5th October. The Royalists garrisoned the town strongly, and were probably responsible for the two large earth redoubts, one on Gallants Bower, and the other above Kingswear. In January 1646 Fairfax marched

from Totnes with four battalions of the New Model. A resolute night attack down the steep slopes of Crowther's Hill by one battalion and down Tunstal Hill by another, overwhelmed the defence in the town. Both the new forts surrendered within a few hours.

Great interference with the seasonal Newfoundland fishery was caused by the civil wars, and by the wars with the Dutch which followed. The relative importance of the town declined, though the Newfoundland trade was maintained by the families of Newman and Holdsworth. They also developed an important trade with Portugal by way of exchange of dried fish for the wine of the country.

The only important development between 1650 and 1800 was the further attempt to establish a deep water quay, by the building of a pentagonal wharf known as the New Ground. Each encroachment on the harbour interfered with the tidal scour, and in consequence the silted up mill pool was drained about 1815, and the existing " Victoria " road constructed to provide a better way out of the town than that afforded by the narrow track up the Hardness ridge.

Thomas Newcomen (born 1663) carried on in Lower Street his father's business of an ironmonger. It is not known how he came to interest himself in the problem of an efficient pump for keeping down the water in tin and coal mines ; but before 1700 he was conducting experiments in the creation of a vacuum by the condensation of steam ; and it was he who designed and erected the first practicable steam engines. Before he died (in London in 1728) they were in use for heavy pumping in all parts of the country, and held their own until Watts introduced the separate condenser and other improvements in 1769.

The family of Scale (now Seale-Hayne) had acquired Mount Boone in 1724, and extended their possessions until they held most of the lands in the neighbourhood. The family opened the shipyard at Sand Quay in 1800, and built a new road and floating bridge (the Higher Ferry) in 1831.

Many old houses in Clifton-Dartmouth were demolished in 1864, to create the great ramp called Newcomen Road as a new exit from the town ; but it cannot be said that any of these improvements are suitable for an age of motor traffic. First railways, and then motor lorries took away the coastal and river traffic in country produce and building materials ; but shipbuilding and bunkering of deep sea vessels did something to redress the balance. Moreover, in 1863 the Admiralty moored in the river the Cadet training ship Britannia, to be succeeded forty years later by the great shore establishment to the north of the town.

A great change in the appearance and lay-out of the town was effected in 1882, when the numerous jetties and slips, stretching in jagged line from Bayard's Cove to the Gas Works, were clamped into the even sweep of the North and South embankments. The New Quay of 1584 was left with access to a boat float, but the New Ground Quay only survived as a fair ground and public gardens. In 1930 the embankment was continued across Combe mud, which was converted into an additional park.

Unfortunately the works necessary for a minor naval base have temporarily robbed the town of this amenity. This accentuated the shabbiness caused by bombing in the Butterwalk area and by the neglect of the older houses under the threat of slum clearance, which has similarly affected Whitby, Yarmouth, and other ancient coastal towns. Considered as a unit of local government the ancient borough is one of very slender financial resources, and the problem of re-development is by no means an easy one.



NOTES ON SAINT SAVIOUR'S CHURCH

General Remarks. Good masonry is not at all common in Dartmouth, no doubt owing to the intractable nature of the stone. The general style of work is frequently much older in fashion than that in districts more fortunately placed. On the other hand, wood work both in construction and decoration has always flourished. The influence of the shipbuilding craftsmen should also be noted.

Main Arcades. The two arcades were constructed in 1372, with the chancel extension in 1400. All except the two western bays were rebuilt in 1630/1635.

Transepts. The south chapel with its roof *parallel* to the main roofs was constructed in 1437, and the north chapel appears to be of the same period.

Tower. This formed part of the original building of 1372, but was raised a storey and the pinnacles added in 1631.

Screen. The chief architectural feature of the interior of the Church is the fine Rood Screen of 13 bays, complete with its two stone stair ways. It is thought that most of it was worked in the last years of the XV century, but in the chancel side (in the centre) appear the initials I.P., said to be those of James Pelliton, Mayor in 1567-8. Some of the figure paintings on the lower panel are original ; but a good deal of the upper gilding and painting is XVII century.

Pulpit. The stone pulpit is probably of the same date as the screen. It was altered in Restoration times by the addition of Royal badges in wood.

Chancel. The chancel founded by John Hawley has been much restored since 1400, but his memorial brass survives in good condition, with the much inferior brass of Gilbert Staplehill, who was one of those concerned with the large alterations to the Church circa 1630. A new east window was inserted in 1614, and in 1819 this was blocked by the huge picture by Brockedon, now preserved in the west end of the south aisle. This in turn was removed in 1890 and a new window inserted. All this is evidence of the zeal of successive

generations of townsmen for the Church, even if fashions change and are not always happy. The altar frontal (from the

Westminster Abbey Coronation hangings) conceals the very curious communion table, vigorously carved with figures of the four Evangelists. The date of these is much disputed. They appear to be Elizabethan, but figure carvings for such tables are very rare, if not unique.

Nave. The elaborate seats of the Corporation are dated 1817. A pleasant feature is the character of the bench ends, several of which form simple individual memorials. From the nave may be seen the three fine candelabra or "branches" hung in the time of Queen Anne.

Roofs. The roofs were raised and largely rebuilt in 1630/ 1635, when some of the painting was done, but the chancel and nave were re-roofed in the XIX century.

Western Gallery. The fine front of this gallery is dated 1633. It is embellished with the arms of the leading townsmen, who seem to have thought it a good opportunity to display the coats provided (at a price) at the Heraldic visitation in 1620. The Royal Arms were added in 1660. Other galleries have appeared and disappeared as fashion changed in the XIX century.

Ringling Chamber. This fine apartment, open to the body of the Church, is a worthy setting to the fine peal of bells which gladden the town on Sundays and on all other occasions.

South Door. The figures 1631 are almost certainly the work of the smith who was paid in that year 5/10d. " to mend the Church door." The date of the remarkable strap hinges is a puzzle for the experts.

NOTES ON THE

PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT PETROX

SOUTH TOWN, DARTMOUTH

Dedication. There are at least eight churches in Devon dedicated to the Saint, who lived in the sixth century.

Foundation. It is possible that a chapel was built by St. Petrox himself, but it is difficult to believe that in so exposed a position it could have survived the piratical centuries that followed. There are, however, under the later fortifications more than one spring or well, and the association (as was frequent) of one of these with the earliest chapel or cell might help to bridge the centuries. It is interesting to recall that the relics of the Saint were carried &ff to Brittany by the monks of St. Meen in 1176, and brought back to Bodmin by direct order of Henry II. Were they landed at the mouth of the Dart ?

History. A deed of 1192 mentions the monastery of Saint Peter, and it would seem that for some time there was a cell of monks, maintained perhaps to afford a light for mariners. In 1332 a licence was given by Bishop Grandisson to celebrate mass in the chapel of St. Petrox, " built, as it is said, of old, in the parish of Stoke Fleming." The continuous use of the site as that of a church for the parish of South Town dates from this period. It is doubtful, however, whether any large building existed before 1641, when the enlargement of Saint Saviour's may have stimulated the parishioners of South Town to activity. The font is certainly of early character, but it was "discovered" half-buried in the churchyard, and *may* originally have belonged to another church. The West Door and the Pulpit are both dated 1641, the three brasses of earlier date appear to have been moved and grouped together.

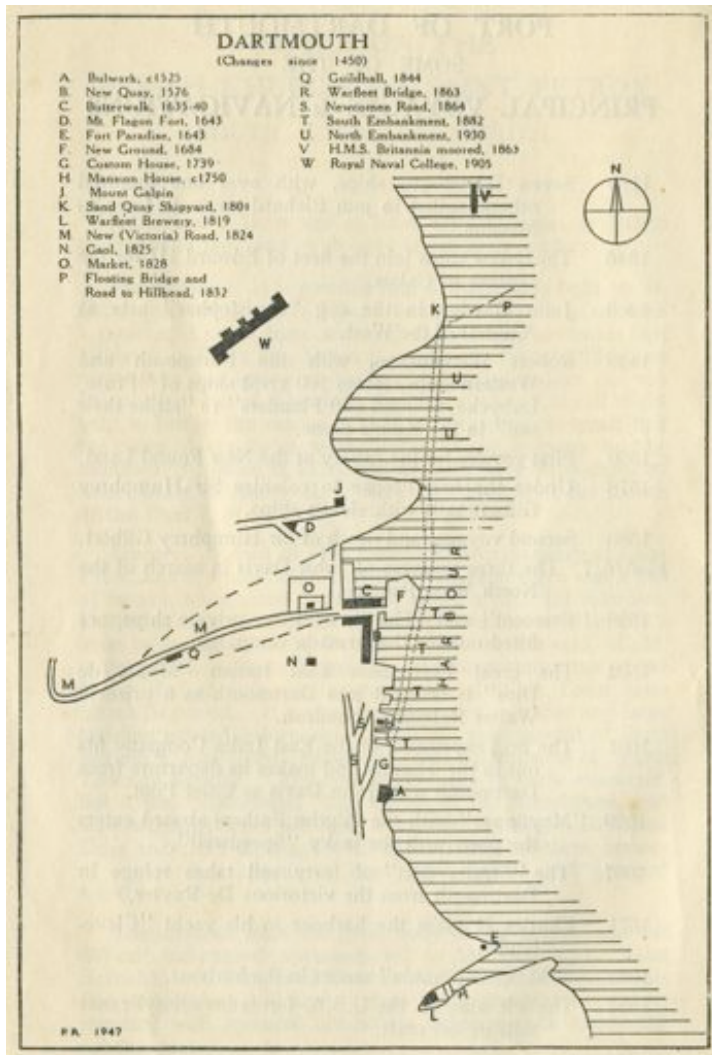
The distance from the main body of the parish, and the difficult and rugged approach led to the building of Saint Barnabas as a Chapel of Ease in 1833 ; but the Incumbents and parishioners still have a care for their ancient heritage, standing with splendid symbolism, upon a rock above the surging sea.

PORT OF DARTMOUTH

SOME OF THE

PRINCIPAL VOYAGES & NAVIGATIONS

- 1190 Seven Dartmouth ships, with over one hundred others, sailed to join Richard coeur de Leon at Messina.
- 1346 Thirty-one ships join the fleet of Edward III for the capture of Calais.
- 1403 John Hawley in the cog "Christopher" acts as
Admiral of the West. 1449 Robert Wennington, with the Dartmouth and
Western ships, forces 100 great ships of "Prase,
Lubycke, Holond and Flanders" to 'strike their
sail" in the King's name.
- c.1500 First voyage for the fishery at the New Found Land.
- 1578 Under the first license to colonize Sir Humphrey Gilbert sails with eleven ships.
- 1583 Second voyage, and death of Sir Humphrey Gilbert.
- 1585/6/7 The three voyages of John Davis in search of the North West Passage.
- 1588 "Crescent" and "Hart", with five private ships, are fitted out for the Armada campaign.
- 1592 The great Portuguese East Indian "Madre de Dios" is brought into Dartmouth as a prize to Walter Raleigh's squadron.
- 1601 The first expedition of the East India Company fits out in the Thames and makes its departure from Dartmouth with John Davis as Chief Pilot.
- 1620 "Mayflower" with the Pilgrim Fathers aboard enters the port, with the leaky "Speedwell".
- 1667 The "Straits fleet" of forty sail takes refuge in Dartmouth from the victorious De Ruyter.
- 1671 Charles II visits the harbour in his yacht "Cleveland".
- 1863 H.M.S. "Britannia" moors in the harbour. 1944 The left wing of the U.S.A. forces invading France sails in 480 craft.



GENERAL INFORMATION

For information concerning Dartmouth as a resort the reader is referred to the Official Guide (apply to Town Clerk, Guildhall). The following notes may be of service to visitors:

CENTRE: The centre of the modern town is the Boat Float, between the New Quay and the Embankment. Here is the G.W.R. Pontoon from which S.S. Mew crosses to the railway terminus at Kingswear. Here also is the bus terminus for the upper part of the town (Townstal) and also for Dittisham and the fine coastal road to Kingsbridge (via Stoke Fleming, Blackpool Sands and Torcross). Boats for fishing and rowing may be hired here, as well as motor launches for the river run. The taxi stand is also here.

FERRIES: Car ferries start from each end of the Embankment. In addition a passenger launch runs from the South Embankment.

STEAMERS: The steamers for the magnificent river trip to Totnes start from the South Embankment at times governed by the tide. Passengers may land at Dittisham or Duncannon (for Stoke Gabriel).

CASTLE AREA: There are splendid views on the South Town road leading to the open sea at the mouth of the river. The Castle and Saint Petrox Church are open daily. Hard by the Castle is the bathing cove and the small beach of Sugary Cove. The upper path leads up to Compass Cottage, from which a path slants down to Compass Cove, whilst the main path leads on to Redlap and Stoke Fleming.

POST OFFICE, South Embankment ; **FOOD OFFICE,** Foss Street ; **EARLY CLOSING,** Wednesday ; **MARKET,** Friday. **HENLEY MUSEUM,** Anzac Street.

KINGSWEAR: Buses for Brixham start outside the Station. Fine views may be obtained from the lane leading towards the mouth of the river (small beach at Beacon Cove) and from the path alongside the railway to Higher Ferry.

LUNCHEONS and **TEAS** at the Hotels and Cafes in the centre of the town. Teas at the Castle, Stoke Fleming, Blackpool (Beach) and Dittisham