

# Tavistock

## SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARY



# NEWSLETTER

## SEPTEMBER 2021

### **A few words from the Chairman:**

The past two months have been very busy with things going on with our neighbours in the Guildhall and Museum. Whilst Covid restrictions have been significantly eased over the past months with the removal of signage and restricted seating, members are asked to continue to respect social distancing etc. The West Country has been identified as an “enhanced response area”, having the highest infection rate in the UK, therefore members must be observant and responsible in the way they use the library. Windows should be opened and a flow of fresh air is important when the room is being used and members are asked to keep their social distance with masks when it is felt appropriate, for example, if in company in the library. Lockdowns etc are not currently being introduced but we must remain cautious and sensible given our membership age demographics.

We now have planning permission for the replacement of the lead downpipes, which caused so many damp issues over the lockdown period. The work to install water into the library has been completed and the area chosen for the little kitchenette has been cleared of the filing cabinet etc, so work can begin in terms of installing the kitchen facilities. Unfortunately a crack in a wall in the Museum directly above our adjoining downstairs wall has been found. The landlords, Tavistock Town Council, are involved with resolving this matter.

We were also very much involved in the Heritage Open Days in September with a number of events supporting the week-long activities. Our thanks to all the volunteers, who were involved in the events.

The Reading Room is now enjoying more visitors as well as the reinstatement of the Friday Morning drop-in sessions with coffee and cake and these are proving very popular indeed. Our thanks to all the members for making that happen, in particular to Ruth for all her hard work.

Kevin Jago has kindly cleaned the windows, an activity he did for some time before Covid but it seems he is happy to restart that work.

# About the Library Books:

## The Remarkable Pinwill Sisters [Book Review by Christopher Pancheri]

It is not often that we come upon a book that opens up a completely different world from the one we inhabit. This beautiful volume created by Helen Wilson is a rare delight.

She has assembled what is known about the members of the Pinwill family and brings them to life. She then tells the story of their encounter with the Seddings - a dynasty of architects of the front rank in the late nineteenth century. Having set the context of young women's lives in the 1890s, she provides a good reason as to why three of the Pinwill sisters should have learned how to carve wood and their remarkable decision to set up in business as professional woodcarvers producing beautiful church furnishings. Their success was hard won in competition with the well-established firms of Harry Hems and Herbert Read but the career of Violet stands out as doubly remarkable when one considers the longevity of her business over half a century. Edmund Sedding and Violet's mother emerge as the key figures in encouraging this enterprise – they offered guidance and support, the latter in terms of unconditional love and care. The survival of Violet's carving of the Christ Child from St Andrew's Church in Plymouth during the Second World War is a remarkable story in itself since all the other carving she did for this church was destroyed.

Now that there is a copy of this book in the Tavistock Subscription Library, I recommend that everyone who can should take a look at its beautiful illustrations and read it.

## William Merrifield at Tavistock Subscription Library Heritage Open Day

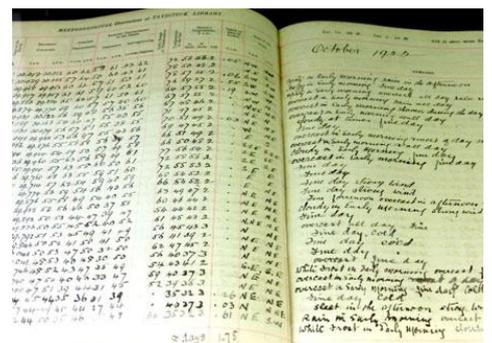
Having been asked to pen a few words about our distinguished librarian, William Merrifield (1841 to 1872), who was at the first open weekend in September, only a very brief overview of this esteemed local personality is possible.

I was not new to William having portrayed his ghost in Simon Dell's Ghost Walks. Even then what struck me was William's broad range of knowledge and skills. When you consider his early education would have been very basic both at Sunday School and then at Peter Tavy National School where religion, English and mathematics were the critical subjects. This librarian was a teacher, a keen mathematician, stone carver (of headstones), meteorologist, photographer (possibly the first in Tavistock), linguist, and much more.

William was involved in civic and Masonic affairs. After his retirement in 1872 he sat on town boards including Burial and School. He sent meteorological information to London to be collated with data from all over the country, so his information is included in the phrase 'since records began'!

William was not a rich man but his salary at the library was generous at £30 pa. He made extra cash by selling insurance policies. He had grown up in poverty although his parents did find the 2d a week for his schooling.

So, having represented William I have enormous admiration for what he achieved, apparently without blind ambition, an amazing, intelligent man and it would appear a proud and considerate father.



## The Tavy Ironworks and the power of social media 200 years later

What an incredible amount of extra information and interest a small Facebook post on the iron foundries of Tavistock has generated. Some wonderful images, too, of the Budge family and ironworks have also been sent in by someone whose privacy I will respect.

There is evidence of at least four foundries in Tavistock in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: the Higher Foundry, later also known as the Tavistock Iron Works or Mount Foundry; the Lower Foundry in Parkwood Road; the Bedford Iron Works in Lakeside and the Tavy Iron Works in Mount Tavy Road. The Tavy Ironworks was located close to the new Stannary Bridge at the end of Dolvin Road. In fact it spanned the river Tavy with a little footbridge joining the two sites together. The Tavy Ironworks was the youngest of the three with the original building being the older, smaller one on the Parkwood Road side of the Tavy (later owned by the electricity companies) with access from Parkwood Road under the railway bridge. The newer building is the current large industrial building converted into flats in Mount Tavy Road next to Stannary Bridge. The Tavy Iron Foundry had been established by two brothers, James and Henry Pearce, with the Tavy providing motive power.

The older site (off Parkwood Road) was originally part of the Gill lease and known as the Lower Foundry of the huge Tavistock Iron Works but in the 1840s, it became a woollen mill before reverting back into an Iron Foundry, known as Tavy Foundry, in 1850. In 1860 the site was bisected by the railway. By 1886 the original foundry building on the Parkwood Road side became the source of the first electricity generated in Tavistock using a dynamo machine driven by the foundry turbines.



Left: Tavy Ironworks

Right: Tavy Ironworks, formerly a woollen mill



In 1890 the foot bridge was built joining the original foundry with the newer site which was established because there was no room to expand on the Parkwood Road side of the river. James' death in 1893 resulted in the Tavy Foundry being sold for a price of £8,000. A company called the Tavy Iron and Engineering Works took over the business but in 1899 the business was again sold, this time to Petherick & Stenner. In Market Street in Tavistock there are drain gullies with Petherick's name on them from this foundry. Six years later, in 1905, the foundry was bought by G.H.Budge & Son. Mr Budge senior had run the Lumburn Iron Foundry beside the (now) A390 road in the Lumburn bends area but he now closed that site and moved to the Tavy Ironworks site spanning the Tavy. In 1914 the Parkwood Road premises commenced generating electricity regularly for the town and thereafter remained associated with electrical supply and provision until the next century. The site temporarily closed during The Great War but was reopened and continued operations until the 1930s, in later years from the Parkwood Road site only. They produced iron castings, street furniture, drains, manhole covers, stoves, laundry fire bars and drag shoes for horses.

George Budge junior assisted his father in running the foundry until closure before the Second World War. The post has generated much interest including some images of the Lumburn Foundry; Mr Budge's senior and junior; as well as images of the work force in the last few years shared with the kind permission of one of their descendants.



Left: Tavy Ironworks, Lumburn Foundry

Right: Mr Budge



## A controversial letter from Sabine Baring-Gould

We were recently offered a quantity of books about the Devonshire Regiment, the Devon & Dorset Regiment etc by Dick Eberlie and we are happy to accept those for the collection. He also offered a letter written by the Rev Sabine Baring-Gould to his wife's great uncle, John Quick. Mr Quick was our librarian at the start of the last century. The family thought that it might be nice to have the letter mounted with the photograph of Mr Quick, which they donated some years ago, for display in the library and were willing to pay for the framing of it.

Our Membership Secretary Penny transcribed the letter, which, with respect to the good Reverend, was rather difficult to decipher! The translation reads:-

Lew Trenchard

1 Dec. 1917

Dear Mr. Quick

If you have in the Library the Statutes at Large, will you very kindly look out for me Act 3, James I, Ch[a]p[ter] 5, sec[tion]s 18-20.

I want to know what the provision was for keeping presentations to livings out of the hands of Roman Catholic patrons.

I have been laid up this 6 weeks and unable to get into Tavistock.

I remain

Sincerely

S. Baring-Gould

After some consideration it was felt that the contents of the letter were a little too controversial to display in the library and might be better offered elsewhere. I will follow that up sensitively with Mr Eberlie. (Simon Dell)

## Jewish Pedlar Dolls at Tavistock Subscription Library

I wonder if any members are able to help me? I'm writing a book about the lives and representation of Jewish pedlars in England. I was fascinated to find out that there were two dolls representing husband and wife Jewish pedlars, which had been donated to the Tavistock Subscription Library in 1948. Thanks to the wonderful research of Penny Gardiner into the records of the Library, we have found out that the dolls were donated to the library from the estate of Miss Leamon of Wadebridge. The dolls were made by Mrs Leamon who died in 1888. The dolls were then loaned to Tavistock Parish Council and in 1977 were sold to a private buyer.

Penny has found an image of the female pedlar (see attached) but thus far no photograph of the male has been found.

If you have any memories of these pedlar dolls, or who they were sold to, I would deeply appreciate hearing from you.

Many thanks

Professor Tony Kushner, University of Southampton  
(email: [ark@soton.ac.uk](mailto:ark@soton.ac.uk))



Penny Gardiner discovered that the photos of the dolls sent to Sothebys in 1975 (of which they now have no trace) were taken by I E A Kilpatrick. Does anyone know who that may be? Any ideas?

Jess would welcome any pictures, book reviews on recent acquisitions in the library, articles stories etc for the next newsletter so do please get in touch with her at [jessfmaslen@gmail.com](mailto:jessfmaslen@gmail.com) if you would like to submit anything or get involved

