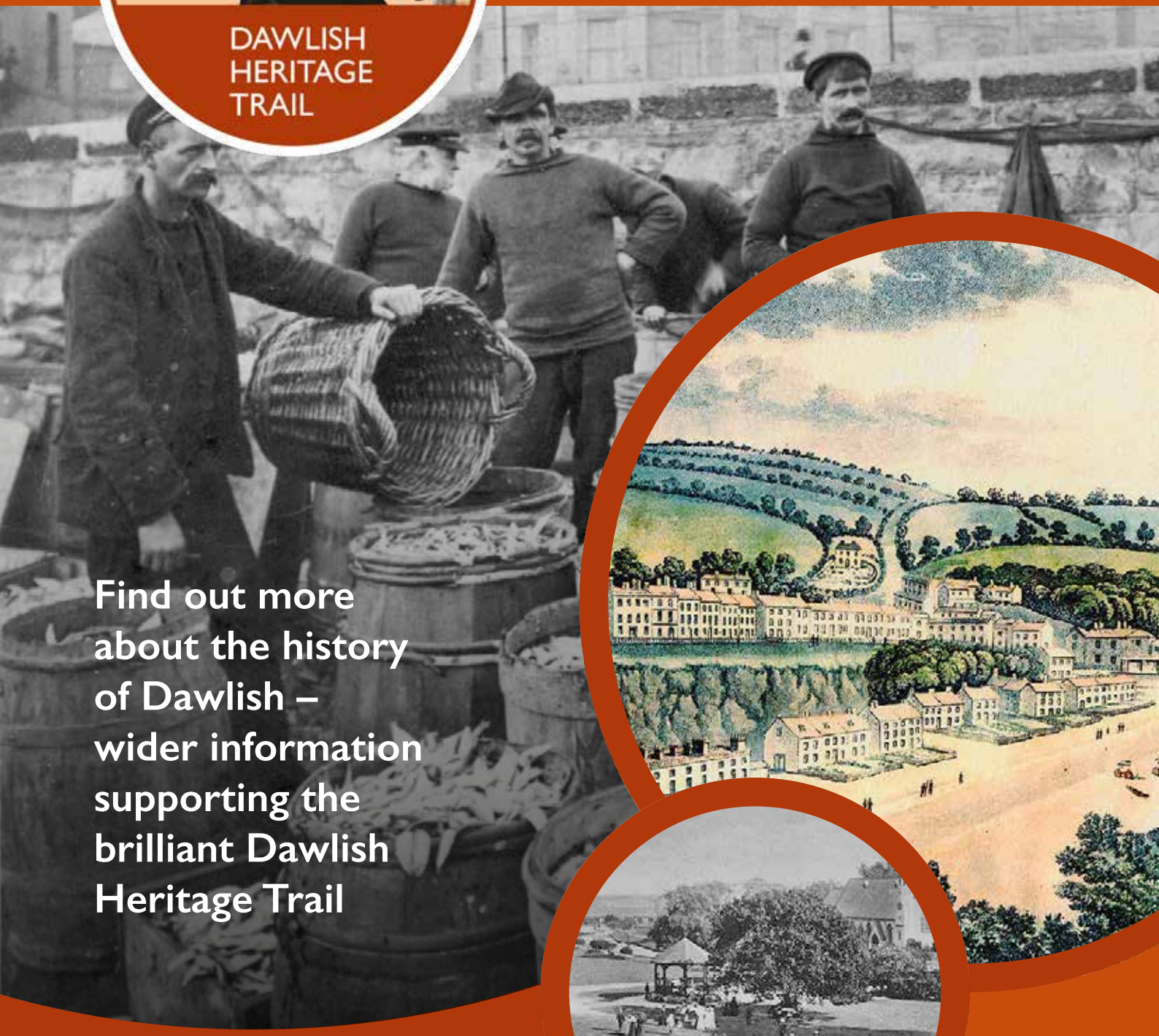
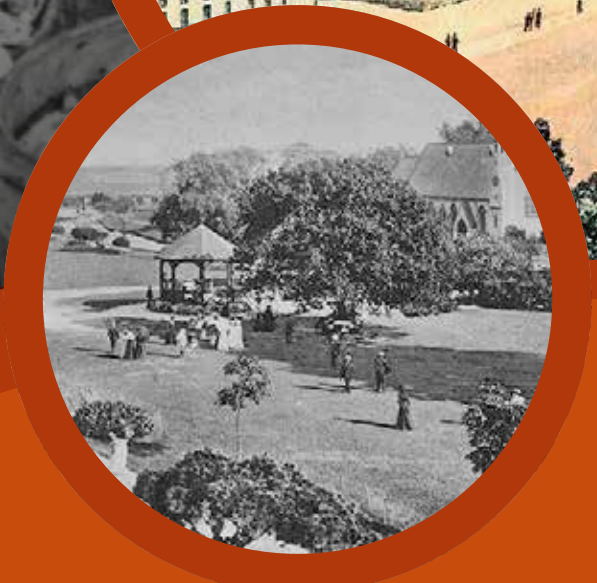
DISCOVERING DAWLISH





Find out more about the history of Dawlish – wider information supporting the brilliant Dawlish Heritage Trail

WHAT WILL YOU DISCOVER?

Image courtesy of Andrew Wright.

RED CLIFFS OF DAWLISH

Above: Honeycomb weathering in the soft sandstones of Coryton Cove.

This is one of Britain's most spectacular coastal landscapes. Wind and water are constantly shaping and reshaping the famous red sandstone cliffs at Dawlish, making this a really dynamic and dramatic environment.

The sedimentary rocks that form these cliffs were laid down in the late Permian period (275-255 million years ago). In those days the area that is now Dawlish was part of a large, low-lying desert, situated around where the southern Sahara Desert is today. This desert area extended throughout what is now East Devon into Dorset and across the English Channel to France.

There are two types of rock in the cliffs today. Firstly, there is fine-grained sandstone formed by the wind-blown dunes and flat sand sheets of the ancient desert. The distinctive red colour of the sandstone comes from iron oxide (rust) between the grains of sand. This is typical of rocks that were laid down on dry land, rather than below the sea.

Secondly, there are coarser rocks called breccias and conglomerates (made of angular and rounded pebbles), which are river deposits containing many angular fragments of older rocks.

These rubbly gravels were carried down into the desert from the uplands to the west by flash floods.

Many of the pebbles in the breccias were eroded from the Torquay limestone, and they often contain small fossils such as corals. You can also see fossils in the sea wall, which is built of Torquay limestone.

Once the Dawlish Permian rocks had been laid down, the movement of the Earth's tectonic plates gradually brought the British and European landmass (including Dawlish) north over many millions of years. Dawlish reached its current location around 50 million years ago.

During the last Ice Age (that ended around 9,700 BC), much of Britain was covered by a vast, very thick sheet of ice. But the permanent ice sheet didn't reach as far south as Dawlish. At that time the English Channel was dry land, because much of the water was stored up in ice. The enormous weight of ice pressing down on the land to the north raised the area of Dawlish higher. When the ice sheet finally melted, releasing the water, sea levels rose.

The water flooded the English Channel, separating Britain from mainland Europe. This gave Dawlish the coastal location it still has today.

Sandstone is relatively soft. Wind, rain and the sea are constantly eroding the cliffs, creating formations known as 'honeycomb weathering'. These are especially dramatic in the softer sandstones at Coryton Cove, which is located directly to the west of Boat Cove found at the western end of Marine Parade, also accessed via the coastal path.

Image courtesy of K. N. Page

These sandstone cliffs, NE of Dawlish Station, show lovely sand-dune cross bedding and a layer of conglomerate / stones in the upper part marking a short lived stream.

Image courtesy of Estelle Skinner

COASTAL WILDLIFE

Above:
Strangely shaped seaweed that looks like a stingray, washed up at Boat Cove, Dawlish. Seaweed is found in a wide range of different forms and colours.

The coastline around Dawlish is a superb habitat for a wide range of wildlife. There are miles of unspoiled beaches and cliffs, and the local climate is relatively mild. This makes the area an excellent place for plants and animals to thrive.

Formations in the red sandstone cliffs known as 'honeycomb weathering' provide welcome nesting and roosting nooks for a range of birds including herring gulls, rock pipits and the occasional kestrel. Down on the shoreline you can see other birds, including the energetic sanderling. It scurries in and out with each breaking wave, catching morsels of food washed up by the sea.

When the tide retreats check the high tide line for evidence of the wealth of wildlife living in our seas. The white and papery 'sea wash balls' are the egg cases of the common whelk - a large predatory snail that tracks down its prey with a strong sense of smell. Two thousand years ago it was used to make the purple dye that coloured Roman emperors' robes!

Leathery 'mermaids' purses' are actually the egg cases of the lesser-spotted dogfish - a small member of the shark family. Thick trough shells, cockles and razor shells were once the hinged armour of animals which lived down in the sand. Twice a day they were covered by the tide, and during these times they fed on plankton which they sieved from the sea.

Lift some seaweed and you may see shrimp-like sandhoppers busy doing an important recycling job feeding on the dislodged weed. In turn the sandhoppers provide a welcome feast for gulls and birds like turnstones. As their name suggests, turnstones turn over stones as well as seaweed in search of food. These cooperative birds often band together to turn over larger stones or driftwood looking for tasty morsels.

A little way to the north-east of Dawlish, the Exe Estuary is one of Europe's most important wildlife habitats. You can find a huge variety of life at Dawlish Warren Nature Reserve - in fact, it's just as rich in biodiversity as a tropical rainforest! It's home to some of Britain's most iconic species, including otters and grey seals.

Image courtesy of Estelle Skinner

Pretty common whelk shells, found en-mass at Boat Cove, Dawlish.

Image courtesy of Mike Langman

Turnstones can be spotted fluttering around large stones on rocky and gravelly shores, flipping them over to look for prey.

Image courtesy of Portable Antiquities Scheme

IN THE MISTS OF TIME

Above: The Dawlish Hoard, discovered in 2017, was buried about 3,000 years ago. It is a unique find for Britain as it consists of both Late Bronze Age gold bracelets and pieces of bronze ingot and scrap weapons. There are four gold bracelets, each deliberately folded up. In common with many Bronze Age hoards, these pieces were buried in boggy ground, perhaps because watery places were considered special.

In prehistoric times Dawlish Water was a wild stream flowing down from the Haldon Hills to the sea. The area near the sea (where The Lawn is today) was a tidal creek, and people lived on the hills overlooking the sea.

We know that around 6,000 years ago people lived on the slopes of the Little Haldon Hills. They farmed the slopes, and they buried their dead on the ridge. From their homes they may have been able to see the seashore, about three miles away.

We don't know for certain that they used Dawlish Water, but it is highly likely. The stream would have offered a useful source of fresh water for drinking and cooking. The reedbeds that grew alongside it would have provided a good place to hunt for animals like ducks, as well as reeds and clay for building homes.

It's also likely that these early people followed the stream all the way to the seashore. It provided opportunities to catch fish and shellfish, to gather useful materials such as driftwood, seaweed and pebbles, and to make salt from seawater.

The sea was also an important route for trade and communication with other communities.

Archaeologists have found evidence of prehistoric people in the area. On the nearby Haldon Hills, worked flints have been found, as well as a stone spindle whorl, a Bronze Age knife, and Roman coins. An Iron Age brooch was also found near Shutterton.

Burial mounds from the Bronze Age and the Romano-British period have been found on Little Haldon Ridge. An earthwork enclosure which may originally have been an Iron Age hillfort was also discovered at Castle Dyke, but it has not been excavated.

Image courtesy of Royal Albert Memorial Museum

Neolithic arrowhead found at Little Haldon Hill.

Image courtesy of Royal Albert Memorial Museum

Right: These fragments of Neolithic 'grooved ware' pottery were found at Haldon Hill. Note the characteristic grooved decoration. Similar pots were made across south-west England and were used for cooking and storing food.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

RELIGIOUS HUB

Above: St Gregory's Church in 1913.

Outside the present-day St Gregory's Church, the stump of a stone Saxon cross still stands. The first church on this site may have been a small wooden Saxon church, and perhaps the cross stood outside it.

If there was a Saxon church in Dawlish, after 1066 the new Norman lords demolished it. They built a stone church which is first mentioned in 1148. Nothing of this Norman church remains above ground today except a single stone 'corbel' carved with a ram's head - you can find it lying against the external north wall of the church.

The first priest in Dawlish (mentioned in documents only as 'W') was recorded in 1272. The medieval village gradually developed around the church. Being slightly inland meant the church and the village were protected from storms at sea, and floods in the marshy river valley. The villagers made a living from farming and fishing.

In the 15th century the church was rebuilt again, so some of the structure of the church you can see today is over 600 years old. It's built of red sandstone, which was quarried nearby. The tower was built first, in around 1400.

The rest of the church was rebuilt soon after, and carved pillars were added to the nave in 1438. By the time of Elizabeth I the church was in need of serious repair. In 1599 an entire tree was used to support the roof – a major piece of work which took three days to complete.

Dawlish's transformation into a fashionable seaside resort in around 1800 meant that visitors swelled the congregation in summertime. This often made the church uncomfortably cramped, so in 1823 St Gregory's was enlarged to accommodate a larger congregation. It was refurbished and enlarged again in 1875.

In the churchyard you'll find a Garden of Remembrance for local men who were killed in the World Wars. It includes a small monument to Bill Millin, who played the bagpipes to raise his comrades' morale during the D-Day landings in Normandy. You can see his famous bagpipes and find out more about him at Dawlish Museum.

The churchyard also includes the Hoare Mausoleum, built in 1865. It was designed by George Gilbert Scott for the Hoare Family, who lived at nearby Luscombe Castle. This grand monument in the Gothic Revival style is now Grade II listed.

Image courtesy of Jonny Miller

You will find Ezekiel near the choir stalls and sanctuary.

Image courtesy of Jonny Miller

Behind the main altar is an interesting picture of the Last Supper; unusually Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is on the opposite side of the table to Jesus and the other disciples.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

HISTORIC HOME

Above: The Tudor cottages in 1900.

The Tudor cottages on Dawlish High Street were built in 1539, and they are thought to be the oldest surviving homes in Dawlish. The oak ceiling beams in the living room are believed to be made of reused ship's timbers.

We know there were plenty of sailors living in Dawlish in the early 17th century, because the government kept lists of sailors in case of war. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 had shown how important even ordinary sailors and their small boats could be to defending the kingdom.

In 1619, a government list shows a surprisingly high number of seamen in Dawlish, considering that there wasn't a proper harbour there. There were 15 master mariners, 116 sailors and 15 seinemen (those who caught fish off the shore). Fishing was a family occupation, often carried on from father to son.

In 1619, there were nine members of the Tapley family, five Babbs and four Bricknolls making a living from fishing in Dawlish.

Despite this large number of fishermen, only two ships were recorded at Dawlish, one used for the Newfoundland cod trade, which was an important trade in the West Country, the other was probably used for local fishing. Some of the fishermen would have been engaged in the Newfoundland cod trade on vessels working out of other ports such as nearby Teignmouth.

Many local families combined farming and fishing to make a living. They often collected seaweed from the beach and used it to fertilise their fields. But without a proper harbour in Dawlish, they had to land their boats straight onto the beach.

When walking the Trail, please be mindful that there are modern day residents living in Tudor Cottages and don't take photos or view any closer than from the Tudor Cottages panel location.

Image courtesy of Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site Project

Above:
Fishermen from Dawlish were involved in the Newfoundland cod trade in the 17th century. Ships, such as this sack (trading) ship, carried supplies and men out to Newfoundland in the spring and brought back salted or dried cod in the autumn, or traded on the continent and brought back other cargo such as wine. The illustration is of the sack ship *Real Friendship* in 1668; while loading fish in Newfoundland, the vessel caught fire and was lost.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

FASHIONABLE DAWLISH

Above: The view of Dawlish from Lea Mount in 1840. The railway had not yet been built, so the town was still completely open to the beach.

In the late 18th century Dawlish began to change from a sleepy fishing village into a fashionable seaside resort.

There were several reasons for this change. George III had made seaside holidays in England fashionable by spending his summers at Weymouth. Royal endorsement meant sea-bathing became all the rage, especially because people believed it was good for their health. After 1789 travelling to mainland Europe also became more difficult, because of the turmoil caused by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars.

The growth of tourism brought a new prosperity to Dawlish. From about 1786, elegant new houses were built on Pleasant Row (which we now know as The Strand). Many of them were probably rented out to wealthy families during the summer season. Reverend John Swete brought his family to Dawlish in May 1795, and found that things had changed since his last visit. Dawlish had become fashionable, and prices had risen. Cottages which had cost half a guinea per week to rent twenty years earlier now cost two guineas at least, and some as much as five guineas.

New turnpike roads were built to fashionable bathing resorts all along the south coast, and new stagecoach routes were opened. At Dawlish, a new turnpike road was cut into the cliff to lead down from the Exeter Road to Dawlish in 1823, entering the centre of town at Tuck's Plot (the Duke of York's Gardens).

Jane Austen, author of *Pride and Prejudice*, was one of those early visitors to Dawlish in 1802, although she was disappointed by the library she found there. Local legend has it that Charles Dickens also spent time in Dawlish, and imagined it as the birthplace of Nicholas Nickleby.

The new turnpike road made Dawlish more accessible for prosperous visitors, but travelling by stagecoach remained slow and expensive. The journey from London to Dawlish might take as much as nineteen hours by stagecoach, travelling at around ten miles per hour. Until the railway was built, only the elite could afford to visit Dawlish.

Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Jane Austen, author of Pride and Prejudice, visited Dawlish in 1802.

Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Travelling to Dawlish in a stagecoach could be cold, slow and uncomfortable before the arrival of the railway.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

THE ART OF BATHING

Above:
Fashionable visitors promenade past the neoclassical bathhouse on Marine Parade in 1830. On the left you can see a bathing machine on the beach.

Marine Parade was at the heart of the transformation of Dawlish into a fashionable seaside resort. It was home to an elegant bathhouse – the last word in luxury.

Before the coming of the railway (in the mid 1800s), Marine Parade was completely open to the beach. Visitors could breathe in healthy sea air and admire the magnificent views there. And, perhaps just as importantly, they could promenade in their finest clothes, whilst seeing and being seen.

In 1804, a *Guide to Watering Places* compared the climate of Dawlish to that of Nice and Montpellier. Bathing in seawater had become fashionable, and it was widely seen as good for health. But not everybody wanted to actually swim in the sea, so in 1805 the first indoor bathhouse in Dawlish opened on Marine Parade. It was relatively small, and in 1828 it was replaced with a larger and more luxurious building.

Visitors to the new bathhouse could choose whether they wanted to bathe in hot or cold seawater. Seawater was pumped up to the bathhouse by a hydraulic engine, and then heated with steam. They could also bathe in freshwater if they preferred.

More adventurous bathers could rent horse-drawn 'bathing machines' on the beach. Bathing machines looked a bit like sheds on wheels. Inside, bathers could change in comfort and privacy, before a horse wheeled the bathing machine into the sea. The bather could then climb down a short flight of steps straight into the sea. Men and women normally bathed separately, to preserve their modesty. The sheltered Coryton Cove was reserved for gentlemen only.

The Dawlish bathhouse was knocked down and replaced with a distinctive twin-turreted building in 1895. This was originally a gentlemen's club, but now it is a guesthouse.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

The 'ladies' bathing place' at Dawlish in 1900. In those days men and women used separate areas of the beach to preserve their modesty.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

Standing ready to rent out bathing machines on the beach in 1895.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

MARSH TO MEANDERING BROOK

Above: The Lawn in 1884, after the area had been landscaped.

The sight of Dawlish Water flowing peacefully through The Lawn is one of the most famous views of Dawlish. But it hasn't always been that way.

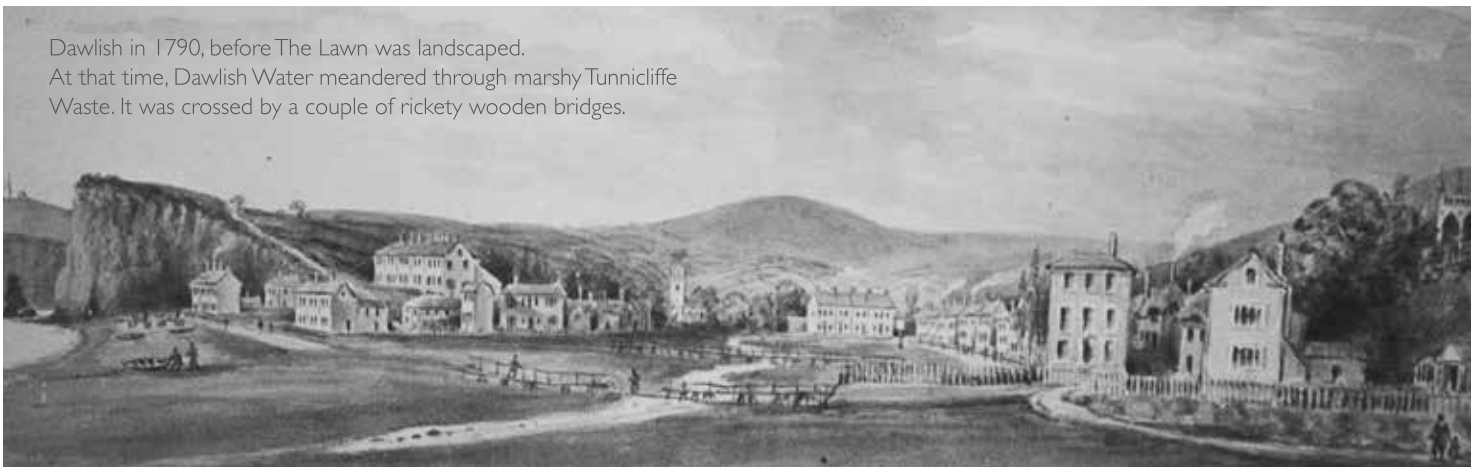
Until around 1800, the area now known as The Lawn was wild and sometimes dangerous. Dawlish Water was still a winding stream flowing down from the Haldon Hills. It meandered through a marsh called Tunnicliffe Waste, which it sometimes flooded. The villagers sensibly built their homes a little further inland, on safer ground.

But in the early 1800s, an enterprising young man called John Ede Manning saw Tunnicliffe Waste's potential. He bought the land, and in 1807 he straightened Dawlish Water within a new canal. He drained the marsh, and landscaped the area to create The Lawn. Dawlish Water flooded the Lawn in 1810, but Manning made good the damage in 1811. He restored The Lawn, and he built weirs into the stream to reduce the risk of flooding.

Some farmers continued to graze their sheep and cattle on The Lawn, as their ancestors had done for centuries. But over the following years, The Lawn was gradually developed into an elegant green where locals and visitors could promenade, socialise and relax. Bridges were built across Dawlish Water in 1828, 1844 and 1887, the latter to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. A hexagonal bandstand was added to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887.

And in 1899 a wooden flagpole was erected (replaced by a metal pole in 1971). The bandstand was replaced by the current structure in 1937. The Lawn became a popular place for games including bowls and tennis. Nowadays, fairs and concerts are regularly held on The Lawn.

Black swans have become a symbol of Dawlish over past decades. The first documented introduction was a pair of black swans gifted in 1907 by a Mr W. French of Barton Crescent. There are tales of a Mr Dart gifting a pair to the town in 1896, but no firm documented evidence. The black swans enjoy feeding on grass within The Lawn area. It is important that users of The Lawn keep dogs on a lead; two recent swan fatalities were due to dog attacks. Dawlish recently donated a pair of black swans to Carhaix, its twin town in France.



Dawlish in 1790, before The Lawn was landscaped. At that time, Dawlish Water meandered through marshy Tunnicliffe Waste. It was crossed by a couple of rickety wooden bridges.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

TRANSPORT TRANSFORMATION

Above: The atmospheric railway at Dawlish in 1848. Trains were drawn along the track by a powerful vacuum created in the pipe that ran in the middle of the track and the driver dropped a hook down into it from the brake carriage. The vacuum was generated in the atmospheric pumping station with the tall chimney on the right.

The South Devon Railway came to Dawlish in the 1840s, and it transformed the local landscape and economy. The man in charge of building it was the great engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

In 1844, Brunel persuaded the board of the South Devon Railway Company to adopt 'atmospheric' technology. Atmospheric trains were not driven forward by steam power, but were instead drawn along the track by the power of vacuums created in huge tubes.

Atmospheric trains had many advantages over steam trains. They were faster, and their motion was smoother. They ran almost in silence, and they didn't produce steam or dirty smuts (although the 'pumping stations' that created the vacuum to power the trains were both noisy and dirty).

Railway works began in 1844. The Dawlish section of the line was built by around 2,000 'navvies' working with only picks, shovels and barrows, often in appalling weather conditions. An atmospheric pumping station was built in Dawlish to power the trains. A new stone viaduct was also built so that people could continue to move freely between the town and the beach.

The atmospheric railway opened in May 1846. But maintaining it was expensive, and critics soon nicknamed it 'Brunel's atmospheric caper'. In 1848, the South Devon Railway Company switched to simpler and cheaper steam locomotives instead. The pumping station at Dawlish was demolished in 1868, but remnants of it survive in the railway station car park.

The first railway station in Dawlish was a simple wooden building standing on one side of the track. It burned down in 1873, and a new stone-built station was opened in 1875. Brunel's stone viaduct of 1845 was replaced in 1928 with the steel girder viaduct that you can see today, opening up the views of the sea.

The railway made travel much faster and more affordable. It made it easier for people to escape the overcrowded industrial cities and reach the seaside, even if it was just for a few days. In Dawlish, increasing numbers of visitors stimulated the development and growth of the town.

You can find out more by following the Brunel trail from Dawlish Warren to Coryton Cove: http://www.loveteignmouth.co.uk/see-do/heritage/brunel-trail-2/

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

A steam train arriving at Dawlish station in 1900.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

Taken around 1850, this shows the first timber railway station in Dawlish, located adjacent to the pumping station (the building with the tall chimney). The railway track crosses Brunel's stone viaduct. On the beach, bathing machines and fishermen's nets are evident.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

THE SPIRITED HOUSE

Above: Residents at Bridge House in 1937 enjoying a game of bowls. The house was substantially extended in 1929 due to its popularity as a Railway Convalescent Home.

Bridge House stands at the west end of town, close to Carpenter's Bridge. It was built in 1793 for newlyweds John Davy Foulkes and Elizabeth Fortescue, and soon became one of the grandest houses in Dawlish.

Elizabeth was the daughter of Richard Inglett Fortescue, Lord of the Manor of Dawlish. Foulkes was the commander of the East India Company's ship Asia, and in 1795 he captured seven ships of the Dutch East India Company off St Helena. Foulkes died in 1813 and Bridge House was put up for sale a year later.

Bridge House wasn't bought until 1829, when the retired Dublin vicar Reverend Theobald Walsh and his family moved in. Reverend Walsh had seven children, so he enlarged the house to accommodate them by adding the bow-fronted extension. Charles Dickens is said to have stayed at Bridge House whilst he was writing *Nicholas Nickleby,* and to have imagined Dawlish as Nicholas' birthplace.

In 1906, Sir William Gordon-Cumming bought Bridge House. He was a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the Coldstream Guards, and he had fought in the Zulu Wars and in Egypt. But he was thrown out of his regiment for cheating at cards whilst playing baccarat with the Prince of Wales and his friends. He eventually sold Bridge House and returned to his estates in Scotland in 1913.

Lady Fairlie-Cunningham then bought the house. Towards the end of the First World War, Edward VII stayed there with Lillie Langtry, and her ghost is said to haunt the house. In 1918, Lady Fairlie-Cunningham sold Bridge House to the trustees of the Railway Convalescent Homes, and it became a popular home for former railway men who had fallen on hard times.

Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Sir William Gordon-Cumming lived in Bridge House from 1906 to 1913. He was ostracized by high society after a scandal involving the Prince of Wales, when he was accused of cheating at baccarat. He is reported to have hated Dawlish!

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

THE CHANGING FACE OF THE BARTONS

Above: The Bartons in 1910.

Barton Crescent and Barton Terrace are amongst the most elegant streets in Dawlish, characterised by grand Victorian houses. But originally this area was an estate known as the Bartons, with a large home called Barton House at its heart.

The first known occupant of Barton House was Sir Peter Balle, in 1665. The Balles and their relatives, the Vernons and A'Courts, lived in the house for generations. However, by 1738 the Bishop of Exeter, Stephen Weston, was living there. In 1800 the Manor was sold to John Inglett Fortescue. Admiral Schank owned it from 1807, and his family lived there until 1867, when it was sold to Charles Gray.

Gray planned to use the land for housing. Barton House and Barton Cottage were demolished, and plans were drawn up to build new homes on Barton Meadow, starting with two new streets called Barton Terrace and Barton Crescent.

Building work started in the 1870s. New Barton House was built, along with fourteen semi-detached homes called Barton Villas. The builders were said to have used sun-dried bricks from the Ashcombe Valley.

In 1871, the first house in Barton Terrace, called *Florinville*, went on sale. *Florinville* and Numbers 2, 3, 4 and 8 were built in a neoclassical style. Numbers 5, 6 and 7 were built by 1839, but they were built in a different style, and they still have their original wrought iron gates and railings. All the houses in Barton Terrace had gardens leading onto Barton Lane. Barton Crescent was completed in stages in the 1880s and '90s by different developers, and the style of the houses is more varied.

Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Admiral John Schank had a distinguished naval career and was a talented naval architect. He probably settled in Dawlish in the 1780s, by 1807 had purchased Barton House with 30 acres of land, and died there in 1823. See his portrait in Dawlish Museum.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

THIRST QUENCHING HISTORY

Above: High Street in 1906. In the background you can see the raised pipeline of the Ferris Brewery crossing the road.

Between 1817 and 1928, the Ferris Steam Brewery and Lemonade Works stood on Dawlish High Street. It was the largest business in Dawlish.

The buildings covered both sides of the road, and they were connected by overhead pipes. The brewing section stood on the south side of the road. The buildings have now been converted into residential dwellings.

At its peak, the Ferris Steam Brewery and Lemonade Works supplied beer and lemonade to 28 pubs in the area. The lemonade was said to be "the best in Devon". But the recipe was jealously guarded by the Ferris family, and it died with them. Oatmeal stout produced here was also considered by many people to be better than Guinness from Dublin.

On Old Town Street, a Gothic alcove in a wall hosts a Victorian drinking fountain. It no longer provides running water, but it provides a window into the Victorian past of Dawlish. In those days this street bustled with people using the shops and businesses that lined it.

Clean running water was rare, so countless local people must have paused for a drink there.

The inscription reads "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow." It records the date when the fountain was built, March 1877, and the initials of the woman who paid for it (C. D.). Charlotte Dick lived with her sisters Elizabeth and Ellen in New Bridge House, which lay behind the wall. Nowadays it is known as Brook House.

Nearby is the site of one of Dawlish's Victorian forges. It would often have been very hot inside the forge. It's very likely that the blacksmiths who worked there used to escape the heat from time to time by taking a refreshing drink of water from the fountain.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Local History Group

The Old Town Street forge in 1938.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

Old Town Street in 1908, with the drinking fountain in its alcove on the left.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

THE MANOR HOUSE AND THE OLDEST BRIDGE IN TOWN

Above: The Manor House in 1900.

The Manor House was built in around 1808 by John Ede Manning. This was just a year after he had begun landscaping The Lawn in the centre of Dawlish. In those days the Manor House stood right on the edge of the town.

Manning put the Manor House up for sale in 1810. It included large drawing and dining rooms, seven bedrooms, servants' quarters and two water closets (toilets), which were a great innovation at the time. Outside was a double coach house and four stables, as well as three acres of lawns, pleasure grounds and meadows. When the Manor House was sold again in 1872, the sales particulars described the pleasure grounds as being "of unusual beauty".

The Manor House was privately owned until 1946, when it was bought by Dawlish Urban District Council. Since then it has been used as Council offices with a community centre.

Near the Manor House at the west end of Dawlish, you'll find Dawlish Old Bridge. The original bridge was built in the 17th century where an ancient pathway from the north crossed Dawlish Water before leading on to Holcombe and Teignmouth. It became a County Bridge in 1690, but Dawlish had to contribute to its upkeep.

The bridge was widened to accommodate increased traffic in 1864. But in 1875 Dawlish Water flooded and the bridge was badly damaged. John Radford was trying to save the bridge's stonework when he fell into the flooded stream, and he was swept away. His body was recovered from the beach the next morning.

The bridge was rebuilt by civil engineer John Carpenter in 1876, and it has been known as Carpenter's Bridge ever since. Look closely and you will find a stone plaque commemorating his work.

Image courtesy of Sheila Ralls

Carpenter's Bridge

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

The civil engineer John Carpenter rebuilt the bridge in 1876 after it was badly damaged in a flood.

Image courtesy of Sharon Medway.

STORM DAMAGE & ORANGE ARMY

Above: Storm damage to seawall and railway line, 2014.

Dawlish has become famous for its beautiful and dramatic railway line, which runs along the seafront. Being so close to the sea makes this an unforgettable journey for passengers.

However, this is also the most difficult and expensive stretch of track in the country to maintain. Even in good weather, the track is exposed to sea spray which rusts the rails. And in bad weather, high winds can whip up the sea until it batters the sea wall below the track with elemental power.

On February 4th 2014, an unusually fierce storm struck Dawlish. Local resident Robert Parker said it was "like the end of the world". Part of the sea wall collapsed into the sea, leaving the railway track hanging in mid-air. This cut off the vital railway link between much of Devon and Cornwall and the rest of the country.

Three hundred Network Rail staff had the job of repairing the railway line. They became nicknamed 'the Orange Army' because of their high-visibility clothing. They had to get it repaired and open again as soon as possible, because thousands of people and businesses depend on that railway line.

The Orange Army worked on round-the-clock shifts to rebuild the track, often in appalling conditions. They worked through strong winds, high seas, and freezing rain. But they got the job done, and the railway line reopened on April 4th 2014. This was just in time for the Easter Holidays, which helped to protect the vital tourism industry in Devon and Cornwall. In total the repairs cost £35 million.

The coastal path is a fantastic place to walk, giving magnificent views of the coastline. But be careful when walking along the coastal path. It runs very close to the sea, and it can be dangerous during bad weather. Alternative paths run along the clifftop. A short section of the coastal path passes across the beach near Dawlish, and this section is impassable at high tide.

Image courtesy of Elliott Wright.

The Orange Army worked round the clock in all weathers.

Image courtesy of Elliott Wright.

Members of the Orange Army celebrate the line's reopening.

Image courtesy of Dawlish Museum

D-DAY BAGPIPER AT THE MUSEUM

Above: The Knowle in 1907. The tenant was the local doctor, Dr Charles Lovely, who had his surgery in the house.

Dawlish Museum was originally Knowle Cottage. The cottage was built by Mr Upham between 1811 and 1839, on a knoll overlooking Dawlish Water. This explains the museum's homely scale and design.

The lower part of Knowle Cottage's grounds was sold to Dawlish Gas Company in 1847. However, the cottage and its garden were improved, and the cottage was leased out. Dr Charles Lovely was a tenant from about 1897. He was a prominent local resident and councilor, who had his surgery in the house. It was normal for local doctors to have their surgeries in their own homes until the local Health Centre was built in 1970.

Dawlish Urban District Council bought Knowle Cottage in 1913. The Council used it for offices until 1946, when it took over the Manor House. The cottage became Dawlish Museum in 1969.

Today its most famous exhibits relate to former Dawlish resident and bagpiper Bill Millin.

Aged just 21, Bill was part of the commando unit of the 1st Special Services Brigade that landed on Sword Beach in Normandy on D-Day (June 6th, 1944). The Germans tried desperately to stop the British landing on Sword Beach by bombarding it with mortars and raking it with gunfire. In these hellish conditions, Bill played his bagpipes to raise his comrades' morale as men fell dead and wounded all around him. He was the last ever bagpiper to play in battle.

Bill lived in Dawlish from the 1960s until his death in 2010. He led the Dawlish Carnival, and often played his bagpipes at weddings and other events. You can see his famous bagpipes in Dawlish Museum, along with his kilt (which his father wore during the First World War), his beret and his dirk.

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D-Day bagpiper Bill Millin lived in Dawlish from the 1960s until his death in 2010.

Image courtesy ofEstelle Skinner

MODERN DAWLISH; AMBITIOUS TOWN

Above: The Dawlish Countryside Park is a great place to exercise your dog. Walk to the top of the ridge to appreciate the extensive views.

An interesting comparison with our historic information is a brief look at modern Dawlish society.

Similarities lie in the continuing draw of the beaches and coastal environment for recreation and leisure, and The Lawn has remained a popular green-space asset and hub of the town.

However, Dawlish is an ambitious town, responding to the changes in modern society by following an increasingly sustainable path; it is known as a Transition Town. Transition Dawlish provides information on its website and runs a range of events, including advice on reducing plastic use. Local businesses are now pledging to reduce single-use plastic (inspired by the Blue Planet 2 and Drowning in Plastic series), and good advances are being made.

Modern wildlife assets in the nearby area include the Exe Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA), which is host to internationally important concentrations of water birds, over the winter period in particular, and Dawlish Warren Special Area of Conservation (SAC), host to a range of rare botanical species.

The Dawlish Countryside Park is specifically designed for this purpose, and is just a short distance from the Warren. It is a real hit with dog walkers and other users, and has seen up to 200 visitors per day since its opening in September 2017. Owners can allow dogs to run free in the Countryside Park, and can enjoy a fine view of the ocean from the 'Coffee Curve' bench as well as expansive views from the top of the ridge.

The Park is also providing a home for important breeding pairs of cirl bunting. The cirl bunting is on the RSPB red-list for conservation concern due to significant population decreases in the past few decades. This sparrow-sized farmland bird is striking, with males boasting a bright yellow chest. They are relatively tolerant of visitor disturbance, and benefit from the specially designed dense hedgerows and shrubby areas in the Park where they can take cover as well as build their nests. The spring barley crop in the Park is also for cirl buntings, the weeds in the winter stubble being a key food source, and the sight of golden heads of barley glinting in the sunshine is a wonderful sight. Have a look here for further information on the Park: https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/sports-and-leisure/parks-and-open-areas/parks/dawlish-countryside-park/

Image courtesy ofMike Langman

If you are lucky you may see the pretty cirl bunting in the Countryside Park.

Image courtesy ofEstelle Skinner

A visitor checks out the coastal view through the eyes of a bespoke bird of prey carving.

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