

THE VILLAGE ECHO

The Newsletter of The Pavey Group of the Village of Charmouth

Newsletter No 1

September 1999

THIS IS THE FIRST ONE!

The very first sentence of the very first Newsletter is to thank all those who attended the meeting proposing the creation of the Pavey Group on Wednesday 14th July. The meeting was called to test the waters for approval and support for the creation of the Group. Forty three villagers came to the Elms to listen to the proposals; this being the majority of those we contacted. It was a very successful meeting in that it showed the degree of interest and gave the steering group the encouragement to forge ahead with the project. To this I want to add a personal thanks in accepting me as the spokesman for the steering group of the proposed society.

It was agreed at the meeting that the steering group form the committee as Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer for the new society. The creation of a board was necessary in order to apply for funding and to open a bank account in the name of the Pavey Group. It was agreed that a full committee be elected at the first official Pavey Group meeting. So Pat Stapleton stood as the treasurer, Mike Hendrick as secretary, with myself, Peter Press, as chairman. Mike felt that he could not continue with the post due to pressure of work. This is regretted as his efforts in the planning stages of the project were very much appreciated.

**The date for the first Pavey Group meeting Wednesday 29th of
September at 7pm at the Parish offices at the Elms.**



THE BIG NEWS IS THAT OUR APPLICATION TO THE HELP THE AGED FUND HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL!

Although we have known of our successful application to the *Help the Aged* Millennium Awards for some time now, I am extremely pleased to report that a cheque for half the award has been received. So now the Pavey Group has not only got a bank account, there is even a nice balance in it. There are conditions put upon the award however, the most important being that the award is not to be made public until the charity issues the formal press release. I hope to be able to give the full details on the night of our meeting.

We asked *Help the Aged* for funds to equip the Pavey Room with office goods and the necessary appliances for processing and storing information. The Millennium Award from Help the Aged is a 'one off' grant, so there will be a need to seek funds from other sources to cover the running costs of the Group.

As you are aware the parish was very interested in the creation of a mini museum in the village and gave funds and an excellent facility for setting up a memorabilia room. The name change to The Pavey Room is to honour the name of Charmouth's only historian, Mr Reginald Pavey.

OUR CONSTITUTION

We have to complete the formalities regarding the creation of the Group that were first introduced at the July meeting. We have to become "official." At that meeting, a "reason for being." statement was agreed upon. It states that:

The Pavey Group is dedicated to the preservation of the local history and traditional character of the village of Charmouth and its people.

In doing so our aim is:

To create a village resource where the social history of Charmouth's past, present and future may be recorded and preserved for our future generations.

I'm sorry - we'll have to have a committee!

We have to have a duly elected executive. This is an absolute necessity. It must be shown that the Pavey Group is a properly constituted organisation. This fact has to be shown if we are to go to other funding, be it a charity or from local government grants. It will certainly be required in our application for charitable status for the Group.

The Composition and Conditions of Membership of the Pavey Group.

The Proposal

You have already given the steering group executive status. (Although you can change it if you want). All that is required now is a decision on the composition of the committee. The tasks will not be onerous and the meetings few, but decisions have to be made in the best interests of the group.

- **We suggest the offices of:**

Chairman, Treasurer (In place) Secretary ((To be found).

**A small support group for such roles as Publicity, Membership,
Maintenance and as a Social Secretary?**

**Should the committee be able to co-opt people for especial roles when
necessary?**

Membership eligibility.

This matter was raised at the July meeting but it has to be properly pegged down. These factors are proposed:

The village born. (This should include village residents born in the immediate local villages)

Village born that live away. Descendants of folk who were village born. Long term residents of the village.

Those not local but with especial skills and a particular interest in local history.

A Subscription?

I am sorry to raise the matter, but there will be ongoing costs. Might a sum be suggested to cover cost of postage, printing, copying and office supplies?

Meetings

I think that meetings should form an important activity of the Group. It will provide for discussions, information gathering, presentations and talks, anything in fact, that might be of relevance to village history. There is also a possible social aspect to our activities in the future. Three meetings a year? Three Newsletters?

And Now To the Real Business

Reg Pavey has been dead for twenty seven years. So in the years between 1973 to the present, virtually nothing of village history has been recorded. It is the Charmouth Dark Age, the **PPP** - the Post Pavey **Period**.

Bringing those years into focus once again is going to require some serious individual and collective memory jogging. It may not be as difficult as it might first appear.

This is your time after all.

But First

At some stage in any research project there will be a need to refer to source materials. These exist in the County Records Office in Dorchester but finding information has its difficulties. It would be so much easier if we had our own resources. There is no reason why copies of all village historical records should not be kept in our own archive, at home, in Charmouth. This can be done:

By bringing copies of vital statistics to Charmouth. Research into the historical sources. Births, deaths, marriages. Church, chapel, Parish records, censuses. To reclaim and maintain village history from newspapers and other sources.

The intention is to gradually acquire copies of all records concerning Charmouth that are in the public domain - in other words, those that we are allowed to have. The County Records Office is aware of, and pleased about our plans, and has promised every assistance in copying the material. Much of this material is bald fact. However, it will give a solid reference base for your family research, It is good to know that the facts are there and that they are easy to get at. The simplest and most productive results and those offering the greatest reward come from your family and personal recall.



1. Who is this?

The older you are, the more there will be to remember of course but it is those distant, fading memories that must be dragged back and recorded. We can all remember, imperfectly perhaps, the stories that our grandparents used to tell. Repeatedly. There is a wealth of history in those old tales. They not only recall family stories, but also events in the village, characters that were once well known, and events that were common to all families, especially times of great trial, the two world wars for example.

The purpose of the entire Pavey enterprise is to encourage and assist in the eventual production of a history of the village of Charmouth in the Pavey tradition. If we are to contribute to that goal, the input has to come from family sources of each generation. If we are to follow in Reg Pavey's footsteps we must write about the village people This is what future generations will want to know in their search for their roots. We have a responsibility to them.

The business of family and local historical research is pretty straight forward. There's a wealth of it at hand. All you need is a pencil and paper. Let's start the research indoors and compile notes on the following:

The Family:

- The family name and inter- relationships within the village and the area. Maternal surnames - as far as you can go back without referring to sources. Grandfather's, father's, great uncle's, uncle's, trade, profession or calling. War Service in the Great Wars. Regiment or ship, decorations, campaigns and "oft told tales."

Where are they now?

The names of your family or greater family or friends who emigrated from the village this century? When? Why? Can you recall the names of the children? When was the last contact? Where did they go? Do you still have an address? Even last known addresses. And so on.

At the risk of being repetitive - this exercise will seem to have little current relevance. At the moment you know one another: but it will have relevance. Someone will ask these questions - sooner that you might think. Isn't it your experience already that you regret not having asked questions?

Links with Yesteryear

There is a constant flow of visitors that have origins or associations with the village. They come to ask of their past. The Pavey Room will answer such needs when we are fully operational, but until that time, should anyone ask for family links, then please ask them for their address and 'phone number. Failing that, send them to The Elms or to Ron or Jean Dampier at the Londis store with messages for the Pavey Group. Failing that, give them my 'phone number - 647.

It is very important to encourage this kind of interest; they might have information on other aspects of Charmouth history. They might well join the group, they might have valuable "infill" of the great gaps in village history and what is more, they might even use the Pavey Room as a repository for their Charmouth memorabilia one day. We have had family trees donated already from folk whose links with the village are well over a century and a half old. This is exactly the kind of support and information we need.

Progress report.

Roy Aldworth, the first Clerk of Works to be appointed to the Pavey group, has not only been supervising the excellent work in the Pavey Room but he has actually been doing it all. Roy has completed the main work surface and the display cases. He has also been most successful in extricating the woodworm from the top rail of the 1903 wall map. He burnt it. (Just the rail) There is still much to do before the room is finished. Volunteers would be most welcome.

Photos for copying have been received from Cecil Stork of the village Auxilliary Fire Service detachment of half a century ago. There is also a snap of Vic Hunter. Cecil and Victor looked very much younger in those days.



2. And they are?

Peter Miles of the Queens Armes has been most generous in time and talent in copying old photographs and in the layouts of the two Pavey Publications to date.

Keith Wiscombe has access to more photos and has a secret source for reproducing them. He is keen to help.

Malcolm Bowditch came to the village in early August. Although he lives away now, he maintains a very active interest in the village history. He expressed great interest in the Pavey proposals and has offered to help in any practical way even at that distance. He lives in Broadstone, but has volunteered to help in the recording of information. This can be easily be done by email.

Is there anyone who could give Pat, Roy and myself an occasional hand? We need help at the Pavey Room and other odd jobs. The great need is for a secretary and someone for those other committee positions. If anyone would care to volunteer - we'd be ecstatic

The frequency of the Newsletter is yet to be decided. However the suggestion is that it be produced three times a year and circulated to precede our meetings. This issue is heavily weighted with the current business - all the organisational stuff. Future issues will reflect the historical topics. It is hoped that there will be some input from the members on family matters, recalled events, village characters, etc. Any little tale with Charmouth association would be ideal. I can foresee such entries as: *My Family on Rockall: an Immigrant's Lot.*

This title is not a bit serious but subjects in a similar vein would make interesting reading and more importantly, ensure that these stories are recorded for the future.

There has to be a **Readers Write** section and an equally important one, a **Writers Wrong** section. Remember the object of the exercise is to build up a body of village lore that will eventually be compiled as a village history. We have to create a means of receiving, discussing and correcting information, so these two sections would be a good means of establishing facts - at least as near as possible.

The Identiquizzes

In this issue, photos of the past have been published. Each one poses a question. The hope is that someone will recognise a face, a location, or will remember a story about the subject. Again, it helps build up the picture. If you have answers - **tell me.**

If you have any suggestions or criticisms of this Newsletter, or ways in which it can be improved - **tell me.**



3. What is

the date?

Finally, I have included an article that was written a year or so ago to accompany an application for the Heritage Fund bid for the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre. I have entered it in this issue as it is relevant village history. It can serve as an example of what might be done in future issues and for the eventual production of a history of Charmouth. If there's anything that needs correction - **tell me!**

THE OLD CEMENT FACTORY

The history of the old factory on the west beach at Charmouth relies almost totally on the brief description to be found in Mr R.W.J Pavey's *A few Notes on the North West End of Charmouth and the People who Lived There*. Reginald Pavey was born in Charmouth and for most of his working life was a schoolmaster at Clifton School. Upon his retirement he returned to the village and between October 1968, and March 1969, compiled a three-part history of Charmouth. In these slim, hand-typed note-books, Pavey provided a fascinating glimpse into village life of over a century ago. It is quite evident that he enjoyed listening and recording the stories of older inhabitants.

He was a diligent chronicler. Pavey, who is well remembered today, made the point that he had clear recall of the 1880's. It follows therefore, he could quite possibly have known someone whose father was at Waterloo. This might be an



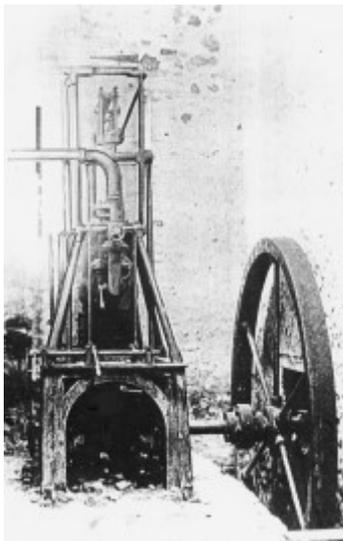
overly dramatic example, but it illustrates the point perfectly. With the passage of time, his tales of the locals and the events he recorded, have provided a fascinating insight into an earlier day. His writings have had the effect of foreshortening the time tunnel, bringing the past into much sharper focus Charmouth has little vernacular history, only bald statistics. Before Pavey, there is virtually nothing relating to the dynamic element within any society - the people. How much of human history has been lost by this lack over the centuries? Reg Pavey deserves his unique place in the history of the village. He stands as the key link in a memory chain that has provided an almost tangible contact with the people of Charmouth's past. The role of the Pavey Group is to follow his example.

Pavey could not give an exact date for the construction of the old cement factory. He could only prove that it had not been there in 1850. The evidence for this is a water-colour, a beach scene by a Miss Templer, dated 1850. There is no building on the west beach at that date. There is a clue to the dating however, but it is now concealed behind the studding of the walls of the theatre of the Charmouth Heritage Centre.

Charmouth Parish Council gave half of the upper floor of the building for the creation of the Heritage Centre in 1984. In 1993 the other half of the upper floor was rented from the parish. During that year, a theatre and projection room were built. During construction, two finely inscribed signatures were exposed. They were cut into a block of lias in the wall by the fire escape stairs. Although the names were of no real interest at that time, the elegance of the carving was such that the surnames were remembered by the work party. Both names were Pryers – one was Giles and the other was his brother Paul. There was a date in the 1850s and was thought

to be 1854. None of the working party on that day is absolutely sure. Subsequent research of the Pryer family, (that had no association with the factory signatures) has produced much data and personal links with descendants of two branches of the Pryer family. This association has provided a comprehensive Pryer family tree and as a result, some light can be cast on the most likely date of the building of the factory.

The 1851 Census identifies Giles Pryer as a mason and plasterer. Kelly's Dorset Directory of 1859 describes Giles as a builder. The same census tells of a Paul Pryer who was also a mason. The Pryer family tree shows that Giles and Paul were both masons and confirm that they were brothers. There were no other adult Pryers in the village at that time. So the other name engraved on the wall had to be brother Paul. At a later date, Harry W Pryer, Giles' son, became a builder and monumental mason and one of the most prominent characters in Charmouth over the next seventy years. However, he was only 10 years old in 1854. The two signatures on the factory wall were those of Giles D. Pryer (1805 - 1881) & Paul Pryer (1821 - 1858)



The Beam Engine

The relevance of the foregoing has a direct bearing on determining the date of the construction of the old building. There was no factory in 1850; Paul was dead by 1858. Thus the year 1854, even if imperfectly recalled, seems a most likely date.

The building is a unique structure in many respects. It is built of beachstone - nodules of chert and flint, rounded limestones, and blocks of Blue Lias. There is little evidence of any refinement in the construction. Neither is there any evidence of imported stone. It was built of material directly at hand, straight off the beach. Consequently it is a solid, honest, unadorned, functional structure - in every sense a factory.

The factory must have been an equally unique enterprise for its day in rural Dorset. It was built for a Plymouth company named John Morcombe and Son. Although the business of cement and lime-making was an ancient rural craft, the Charmouth undertaking was a conception of some considerable scale. The

production of lime must have been based upon the volume of local needs. The larger the community the greater the requirement. It is a reasonable question to ask, given the size of the building, why production on such a scale was envisaged for a village the size of Charmouth with a population of only 664 in 1851. By that date the post Napoleonic War building boom was all but over in the village, most of the prestige dwellings having been built by the 1860s.

Other than for local consumption, the probable consumer base for sand and cement would have been confined to the Marshwood Vale. There are entries in the Parish Records of concessions relating to the hauling of beach materials dating from the 17th century to quite recent times. Many of the older locals recall the names of those engaged in hauling rock, sand and gravel from the beach to Wootton and Whitchurch Canonicorum. Pre-eminent among these is Mr Gerald Glyde who as a lad just after the Great War, came to the beach by horse and cart to collect building materials for the Pass estate at Wootton Fitzpaine.

The production of cement was based upon the abundance of washed out limestone on the east and west beaches of Charmouth. The 'roundstones' were gathered at low tide by horse and cart. They were taken to the factory for crushing, grinding and then, with an admixture of clay, fired to produce cement powder. Mr Len Hunter, the beach superintendent for many years, recalls the time in the 1950s when a part of the building now occupied by a clothes shop, was totally filled with a clay. It took five lorry loads to clear it. This was presumably the store for the clay material used in the cement making process. Roy Aldworth worked for Bert Smith, a local builder, as a young man. He remembers Bert identifying the Charmouth cement. Evidently the cement powder imparted a distinctive reddish colour when mixed. Is there any reddish concrete or rendering left in the village?

Mr Pavey quotes Jim Bridle, the landlord of the Royal Oak from 1923 to 1939, who told him of the method used to collect the raw material. There was evidently an opportunity of "pin money" for the womenfolk of the village in those days. Whilst the larger stones were brought in by horse and cart, smaller stones called "washers" were gathered by women working in pairs with a basket. They were paid 3d a basket that held 40lbs when full. There was a far greater profit to be made after a SW or SE gale.

Pavey describes the layout of the factory and these general dispositions can be seen today. From the front, the eastern elevation, there were double doors at the centre of the building. This corresponds with the entrance to the modern fossil shop - the ancient wooden lintel is still to be seen. At the back of the fossil shop a door leads to the right into a narrow, longer room. This was the original site of

the engine and boiler room. Here a small beam engine with a large fly wheel was situated. A photograph of the engine taken by Sam Hansford before the turn of the century exists. The engine and the other machinery were taken out just after the Great War. The chimney stood on the exterior wall of the boiler room, at the NW corner of the building. The footings can still be seen. The chimney was a useful reference point for fisherman until the early 1950s. Two other store rooms now form the modern beach cafe. The upper floor was gained by stone steps at the north west corner of the building, and from a ladder inside. It was on this floor that the grinding operation took place. The floor joists are substantial. Two enormous grindstones remained in the corner of the floor until the area was taken over by the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre in 1984. The stones were lowered through the joists to the ground floor with great care, anxiety and an excess of advice. The stones can be seen to the west of the building on either side of the seat in memory of Bert Smith. Immediately to the west of the building, in the cliff, the shell of one of the kilns can be seen. This is all that remains of Charmouth's great leap forward into the Industrial Revolution.

The history of the cement making enterprise is short. The business did not flourish, perhaps for those reasons suggested earlier. The place was put up for auction in 1867 and it evidently reverted to the Pass estate, the original landowners. The long decline of the building began. It remained Manor property until it was sold to Charmouth Parish in 1938. That is as much as is known. Pavey reported that he could find no evidence of the factory ever having been worked again.

It remained derelict for many years. It was used as a store for fishing gear, lobster pots, and fishing boats in winter. Later it became the headquarters of the local Scouts and the upper floor a miniature rifle range. The storms took their toll; what is now the cafe' and the upper floor were open to the skies. Pavey says that as a boy it was a wonderful place for hide and seek.

Surprisingly the building was not used by the military during the war. The church hall, the tennis courts and Loosmore's field were encampments for a considerable number of American troops, but the old factory continued to be used by the parish as a store for deck chairs and tents. In 1940. the east beach was virtually a war zone, being both tank-trapped and mined. Meanwhile on the west side of the river, the beach superintendents Henry Peach and Harry Stork, continued to hire out deck chairs throughout the wartime summers. Andrew Peach described his task as a boy, of having to collect abandoned deck chairs between Lyme and Golden Cap.

By the early fifties the years of neglect had taken their toll. The north end wall of the building began to buckle as the "A" frames of the roof leaned northwards.

Bert Smith, the local builder undertook the work as the fear of collapse required a shortening of the roof line and the reduction of the upper floor to its present dimensions. It was at this time the chimney was taken down and the old stone steps to the upper floor removed. A beach cafe had been opened after the war by the Miss Pigeons, three sisters from Lyme Regis, who sold their lease to Barney Hansford in the early fifties.

In 1982 a public enquiry was called to consider the matter of reckless fossiling practices on the Charmouth cliffs.

To this end, in 1984 the Dorset County Council proposed the creation of an interpretative centre at Charmouth. Support for the project fell into place and by that summer the Countryside Commission, West Dorset DC, and The Pilgrim Trust had aided the scheme. Charmouth Parish most generously gave half the upper floor area of the Old Cement Factory. The Pilgrim Trust approved not only of the proposal, but particularly with the grant's application *for the use and preservation of a distinctive historic structure*. As a result, in the summer of 1985 the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre came into being.

Since then it has become one of the foremost national educational centres, with a world wide reputation for the study of Jurassic fossils.

Since that date the organisation has burgeoned. This season (1998) over 52,000 visitors came to the Centre and the numbers of schools visiting this year has brought over 6,000 youngsters. It is now one of the most famous British interpretative centres. It is unique in that it is one of the world's foremost sites for the study of Jurassic fossils.

There is a nice historical turn to this story. Once the roundstones were collected for the production of cement. (One shudders to think on how many priceless, unclassified fossils were reduced to concrete under its original purpose). Today they are collected for the unique fossils they contain. These are now displayed at the Centre not only for scientific and teaching purposes but for the pleasure and wonder of our many visitors.



The Cement Factory



Woodsman



The School When?

The Pavey Group
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