Historical Notes relating to Bideford's East-the-Water Shore

Volume 3 (20th C. to present)

R. I. Kirby
Contents of the volumes

The contents of the three volumes are as follows:

- Volume 1, Introductory material and Pre-history to 18th C.
- Volume 2, 19th C.
- Volume 3, 20th C. to present.
### Table of Contents

Contents of the volumes........................................................................................................................................... 2
Introduction to Part 3................................................................................................................................................... 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20th Century</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900, the foreshore not as it ought to be.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900, bullocks run amok on Steamer Wharf</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901, draining East-the-Water and ornamental sewer vents.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901, two of Baker’s boats get swept under the bridge.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902, Bideford celebrates the end of the Boer War.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902, East-the-Water and the coronation of King Edward VII.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903, the Barton Kilns change hands.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903, an exceptional September gale.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903, terrible October flooding.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1904, Devon Trading Company moves to Clarence Wharf.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905, proposal to build out at Clarence Wharf approved.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905, advertising manures from Odam’s Wharf.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906, Heard’s executors sell Queen’s Wharf.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907, residents feeling the strain of population growth.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907, bullocks on Queen’s wharf.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907, electricity comes to the wharves.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908ish, widening of Barnstaple Street.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908, Bideford Motor Works established.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909, limestone, cement, and general goods in, clay out.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909, tragic loss of the SS Thistlemor.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909, Fulford at Queen’s Wharf.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911, Pollard exploring trips to Lundy.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913, the Pure Chemical Carbon Co. goes up in smoke.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914, Belgian refugees begin to arrive.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915, exceptional hail north of Instow.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915, Kynocks wood alcohol plant established.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915, Routley takes over Agricultural Wharf.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917, steam trains on the Long Bridge.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917, the errant Cholmondeley turns submarine hunter.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918, exemptions from military services.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918, Armistice signed.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919, repatriation of Belgian refugees begins.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920, re-opening of the anthracite mine is considered.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920, infantry horses boarding on Barnstaple Street.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920, Devonia collides with H.F.Bolt.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921, slump in shipping sees vessels laid up.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921, care of Chudleigh Fort handed to the Council’s.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922, a steamer collides with the long bridge.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922, County Council recommend widening the Long Bridge.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923 Brunswick Wharf sees the port’s largest load to-date.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923, Port of Barnstaple bolstered by Bideford’s trade.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923, North Devon Farmers Ltd on Barnstaple Street.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Anglo-American Oil do their bit to beautify Devon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-5</td>
<td>The long bridge was widened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Widening of Barnstaple Street approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Development at Sentry Corner begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Passing of the Bideford Harbour Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Lightning storm hits Bideford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Barnstaple Street widening behind schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Bideford re-gains its port status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Tarka the Otter wins the Hawthornden Prize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Stock market crash in USA triggers Great Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>Impromptu pony races on the sands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>East-the-Water becomes Bideford, East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Larger vessels laid up in the Torridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-33</td>
<td>Developing at Pollyfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Plans for a new Mortuary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid 1930s</td>
<td>Mayor of Shamwickshire elections suppressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Celebrating Empire Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>The <em>Tetty Boat</em> was broken up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Fulford, Trump &amp; Co. formed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Mine collapse at Clarence House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-1945</td>
<td>World War II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Start of the Battle of Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>The invasion of East-the-Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>The Royal Hotel a hub for D-day planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Rocket ships at railway wharf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>The crash of Wellington “P” Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Landing craft along the Torridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>Gravel barging restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>A checkpoint on the bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Tender for shops at Barton Tors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>White Funnel Lines resume cruises from Bideford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Private wharves at their busiest since the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Exceptional winter ice on the Torridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>East-the-Water features on a matchbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Last passenger service on the railway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966ish?</td>
<td>Zoo animals arrive by train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Part of Bideford bridge collapsed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Station buildings demolished on the west of the track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Western Counties Agricultural Co-op. Assoc. wound up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Public consulted concerning a new bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Looking for a change of use for the Lion Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>Gasometers demolished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Construction of Ethelwynne Brown Close approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>U. B. M. Devon Ltd. at Clarence Wharf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Final trains through East-the-Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Work started on the River Torridge New Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Rotting boats cleared from the eastern Torridge shore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Planning permission granted for the Wooda Surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>The railway tracks lifted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© R I Kirby
1985, redevelopment of the old wharves announced..........................................................30
1986, the world’s largest electronic organ...........................................................................31
1986, J.H. Bennet at Brunswick Wharf.............................................................................31
1987, Torridge District Council publishes a brief...............................................................31
1987, Bideford bypass and Torridge Bridge opened.........................................................32
1988, Queen’s Wharf merged into Brunswick Wharf.....................................................32
1988, the *John Adams* arrives on the Torridge.................................................................32
1989, an upgrade to the sewage system............................................................................33
1990, Clarence Wharf becomes a “temporary” car-park................................................33
1990, a needlework & tapestry manufacturer moves in...................................................33
1991, the Tarka Trail opens...............................................................................................33
1994, Torridge Auctions opens........................................................................................34
1996, public support a new plan for Brunswick Wharf................................................34

21st Century.......................................................................................................................34
2001, the Kathleen & May re-launched............................................................................34
2001 Manteo Way, an Industrial Link Road, opened......................................................34
2002, UNESCO North Devon Biosphere Reserve expands............................................35
2009, James May’s *Toy Stories* takes over the Tarka................................................35
2016, changes to the gas supply infrastructure................................................................35
2021, planning permission for development on the wharves........................................35

Un-dated and/or uncorroborated events........................................................................36
Wilson’s fall......................................................................................................................36

Appendix 1, Quays or wharves?......................................................................................37

Bibliography....................................................................................................................37
Introduction to Part 3

20th Century

1900, the foreshore not as it ought to be

1900 saw Bideford council considering the foreshores and their banks. “The Mayor, Messers Fulford, Braund, and Pollard, were appointed a committee to interview the owners of the foreshore of the River Bank, and discover whether the owners will forfeit their rights if the Council give an undertaking to keep the bank in perpetuity.” A later item considered the East-the-Water foreshore. “Councillor Pollard drew attention to the foreshore East-the-Water. If the Council liked to take the foreshore they were welcome to for him. He claimed and believed all of them East-the-Water claimed the whole of the land across to Bideford quay. Fortunately for those living on the west side of the river, the Board of Trade stepped in and said, “There is your boundary, and the owners of the Foreshore East-the-Water had built walls and wharves. The banks in front of the wharves, however, were not kept as they ought. Some time ago certain owners wrote to the Board of Trade who in turn communicated with the Bideford Town Council, but the latter refused at that time to interfere. The result was that the Board of Trade did not move in the matter. He now decided the Council to recommend to the Board of Trade that all the owners of the foreshore be compelled to make it good.”

1900, bullocks run amok on Steamer Wharf

On the 11 Jan 1900 the North Devon Journal reported that “Two bullocks ran amok at Bideford on plunging into the Torridge from Steamer Wharf, swimming down as far as the signal-box, where were captured and brought back to the goods yard slaughter-house.”

1901, draining East-the-Water and ornamental sewer vents

With new development springing up in East-the-Water the increased runoff was beginning to impact upon the wharves. In November 1898 Mr. Heard raised a complaint with respect to the Royal Hotel, as he believed that the drainage from Torrington Street and Torrington Lane was being discharged upstream of the bridge, rather than downstream by the Co-operative stores (i.e. the Western Counties Co-operative Association Building).

By July 1899 the state of the drainage in East-the-Water was causing enough concern to prompt the idea of a public petition, and Mr. Heard was suggesting the Surveyor should make more liberal use of disinfectant.
In Dec 1901 Messrs. Ellis & Son, of Bideford, were contracted to install a drainage system in East-the-Water\(^5\). The new sewer scheme, which was intended purely for the prevention of flooding\(^6\),

In 1911 the catalogue of William MacFarlane & Co. of Glasgow featured a particularly elegant form of ironwork vent, near identical specimens grace various parts of Bideford. MacFarlane & Co were leading producers of decorative ironwork and several of Bideford’s vents are now listed as ancient monuments. One may be seen in Torrington Street, nearly opposite the Blacksmith’s Arms car-park and another almost opposite the Wooda Surgery in Barnstaple Street. Looking like a lamppost, but with four vents and a crown on top, each has an arrow that shows the direction of the underlying sewer’s flow.

**1901, two of Baker’s boats get swept under the bridge**

In October 1901, one of Messrs. Baker’s vessels, the *Susanna*, broke loose from her mooring, dragging another, the *Sylph*, with her. The *Sylph* broke a bowsprit as she jammed in the corner of the bridge, whilst the *Susanna* caught in the fourth arch, the tide gradually squeezing her under it until her rails tore off and her mizzen came crashing down. Fortunately, the s.s. *Devonia* was at hand, and, working with men on the shore, managed to drag her clear, before turning their attention to making the *Sylph* safe.\(^7\) The Sylph was 39 tons\(^8\), the Susanna 49\(^9\).

**1902, Bideford celebrates the end of the Boer War**

Commencing Oct 1899, the Boer War (in South Africa) dragged on till June 1902, leaving 20,000 who would not return. As the news of peace reached Bideford, shops and schools closed, bunting appeared in the streets and on the ships, bands played, magistrates dismissed their cases, churches held thanksgiving services, rifle volunteers fired a *feu-de-joie*, and a small mortar was discharged from East-the-Water\(^10\).

**1902, East-the-Water and the coronation of King Edward VII**

In August 1902 Bideford’s plans to mark the coronation of King Edward VII came unstuck, for a planned public lunch was cancelled when the Local Board refused to grant a temporary licence so the Market could be used. The residents of East-the-Water, determined not to be deprived of their celebration, felt an independent event was called for. So, with the support of councillors Stanley Heard and J. U. Fulford, it was decided to hold a free cold luncheon for the residents of East-the-Water. Utilizing a loft provided by Mr. Heard, the initial plan was to serve five hundred people, the whole thing being funded and provided by the residents of Shamwickshire, without involving any external caterer\(^11\). The Bideford Weekly Gazette reported “The people of East-the-Water kept themselves to themselves, and warned all who were unfortunate (?) enough to live at the other end of the Long Bridge, not to trespass.”\(^12\)

---

5 “East-the-Water Drainage: The Fair-Wage Clause” North Devon Gazette 31 Dec 1901 p8 c1
6 “East-the-Water Drainage” North Devon Gazette 19 Nov 1901 p5 c5
7 “Serious Mishap at Bideford” North Devon Journal 31 October 1901 p3 c7
8 Devon Archives and Local Studies Service (South West Heritage Trust). Ref. 1976/Sylph/19223 - Sylph (19223)
9 Devon Archives and Local Studies Service (South West Heritage Trust). Ref.
10 “Bideford” North Devon Journal 05 June 1902 p8 c5
11 “A Coronation Split at Bideford” Western Times 07 August 1902 p3 c4
12 “The Great Day” Bideford Weekly Gazette 12 August 1902 p5 c1

Last updated 27 Apr 2021  
Page 7 of 38  
© R I Kirby
As those west of the Torridge watched what those “romantics” east of the water were up to, the Local Board’s decision came in for increasing criticism and, on the day itself, a local wag adorned the bridge with signs. Approaching East-the-Water the traveller could read “This way to the dinner,” but travelling westward they were informed “This way to starve.”

On the eve of the great day Railway Wharf hosted a firework display, then, on the day itself Queen’s Wharf hosted over six hundred people, assembled to enjoy the feast. Later in the afternoon, not wishing the younger folk to be left out, the people of East-the-Water provided a free tea for everyone under twenty-one, before the day finally culminated with dancing at Chudleigh.

1903, the Barton Kilns change hands

In 1903, I Baker and Son took over the Barton lime-kilns from Mr. W. Turner. With the increasing use of superphosphate fertilizers, and the use of lime for construction purposes becoming the more important revenue stream for the lime-burner, such kilns were probably of more use to a builder’s merchant than a farmer. The dramatic decline in use of lime-kilns is illustrated by the progressive reduction in references to them in the local press. Searching for “lime” near “kiln” in a database of Devon newspapers shows the number of references in each ten-year period suddenly halved, between 1870-9 and 1880-9, and by 1910-9 had dropped to around a tenth of the 1870-9 level.

1903, an exceptional September gale

In September 1903 a sudden overnight storm wrought havoc, waves reached a record height (the last train from Bideford to Barnstaple frequently being drenched with spray), and, combined with a spring tide, this did extensive damage. Persistent rain had already delayed the harvest to a critical extent, now fields were flattened, pooks of corn were scattered like chaff and ricks were demolished. Through the effects of wind burn “plants were shrivelled and young shoots blackened” as though by severe frost, and the already poor apple harvest was destroyed. Fallen ornamental trees blocked the footpath from the Long Bridge to Torrington Lane and two barges were sunk in the river.

1903, terrible October flooding

In October 1903 the area was hit by record rainfall, with Barnstaple recording 85 inches in a single day. Water stood ten feet over the Kenwith marshes and was six or seven feet deep inside the collar factory in Westcombe Valley, the epicentre of the flooding. The impact in East-the-Water was not reported, but it seems unlikely that its businesses remained unscathed.

13 “Bideford” North Devon Journal 14 August 1902 p2 c3
14 “East-the-Water Dinner” Bideford Gazette 12 August 1902 p5 c3; “Bideford” North Devon Journal 14 August 1902 p2 c3
15 “Welsh Lime” Bideford Weekly Gazette 9 June 1903 p4 c3
16 “Fearful Gale” North Devon Journal 17 September 1903 p3 c1
17 “Bideford” North Devon Journal 17 September 1903 p3 c4
18 “Floods in North Devon” North Devon Journal 29 October 1903 p5 c6

Last updated 27 Apr 2021
c. 1904, Devon Trading Company moves to Clarence Wharf

In 1904, after a period of absence, advertisements for the Devon Trading Company once again began to appear in the North Devon press, in which they mention a branch office in Bideford, without stating where it was. From this, it seems that the Company had acquired their new premises on Clarence Wharf in c. 1904. The site apparently included the property on the Barnstaple Street frontage.

1905, proposal to build out at Clarence Wharf approved

The North Devon Journal of 16 Mar 1905 reported “It proposed to construct a quay-wall front of Clarence Wharf. East-the-Water, Bideford. for the Devon Trading Co., Ltd.”

In May 1905 it was reported that the Board of Trade had acknowledged receipt of the councils proposal, i.e. that the proposed new wharf at East-the-Water, to be executed by the Devon Trading Company” be kept back to the line of the Western Counties Agricultural Association.

On 20 July 1905 the North Devon Journal carried the Board of Trade's official notice that a proposal had been received from the Devon Trading Company, Limited, for permission to construct a stone retaining wall (160ft. in length) in front of and about 35 feet from the existing river frontage line of Clarence Wharf, Bideford.” . . “the southern extremity [of Clarence Wharf] being about 400 feet north of the eastern end of the Bideford Bridge.

The National Archives have a record in their Board of Trade and successors: Marine Maps and Plans section, dated 1905 and described as 'RIVER TORRIDGE, CLARENCE WHARF, BIDEFORD, DEVONSHIRE; CONSTRUCTION OF STONE RETAINING WALL AND RECLAMATION WORKS BY DEVON TRADING CO.LTD.; assent granted; related to H7326, 3 maps'.

1905, advertising manures from Odam’s Wharf

In Jul 1905, the Topsham based firm of Odam’s started advertising the supply of manures from Odam’s Wharf, East-the-Water, with products such as “Special Turnip Fertilizer, Vitriolized Bones. Dissolved Bone Compounds. Superphosphates. Basic Superphosphate of Lime. (Hughes' Patent).” They continued to advertise from these stores until 1908. A picture from c. 1890, however, shows Odam’s signage alongside that for Steamer Wharf, and a builder’s merchant whose occupancy was very short-lived, so, by this point, Odam’s had already been operating through an East-the-Water wharf for some time.

19 e.g. North Devon Journal 18 February 1904 p1 c1; North Devon Journal 10 November 1904 p1 c3
20 “Bideford” North Devon Journal 16 Mar 1905 p8 c5
21 “Miscellaneous” Bideford Weekly Gazette - 09 May 1905 p5 c4
22 “Notice. Bideford, River Torridge, Proposed Quay Wall at Clarence Wharf.” North Devon Journal 20 July 1905 p1 c5
23 National Archives Ref. BT 356/9672
24 Bideford Weekly Gazette 4 Jul 1905 p1 c2
1906, Heard's executors sell Queen's Wharf

On the 5 Jun 1906 the North Devon Gazette carried a notice that the property of the late Mr George Heard was to be sold, the properties listed were Queen's Wharf, Grenville House (on the Quay), and 29 & 30 Mill St.25

1907, residents feeling the strain of population growth

In the near-timeless pattern of development outpacing provision of amenities, new development had taken place at Chudleigh Terrace, Grenville Terrace and Clifton Street (over the ten or twelve preceding years), leaving East-the-Water’s single post-box to take the strain. The local residents, griefed that they were being so overlooked in the provision of postal services, petitioned the Postmaster-General for a badly-needed second box26.

1907, bullocks on Queen’s wharf

In August 1907, whilst the s.s. *Merthyr* was unloading of a cargo of bullocks from Lundy Island on to Queen's Wharf, all went well as they were adroitly slung ashore by steam crane, but once liberated from their slings “more than once the men had to vamoose round a large winch with a pair of wicked horns in unpleasantly close attendance.”27

1907, electricity comes to the wharves

The earliest use of electric lighting in Bideford had been in 188728, when, only months before, the thought had been greeted by some members of the Local Board with incredulity. The possibility, however, was certainly in their mind by 189229, when they toyed with bringing the East-the-Water gas-works into public ownership, widespread public adoption was still some way off. In November 1907, notices appeared in the Bideford Weekly Gazette: from the Board of Trade, granting powers for the Mutual Electric Supply Co. of Westminster to provide an electricity distribution infrastructure30, and from the Bideford and District Electric Power and Supply Syndicate, announcing that they were applying for a Provision Order for the electric lighting of Bideford District31. The scramble was on for the electrification of Bideford.

1908ish, widening of Barnstaple Street

In Jul 1907 the local Board bought up two cottages in East-the-Water for £200, for street widening32.

---

25 “Bideford” North Devon Gazette 05 June 1906 p3 c2
26 “Local and County” Bideford Weekly Gazette 01 October 1907 p5 c4
27 “Local and County” Bideford Weekly Gazette 6 August 1907 p5 c4
28 When Messrs Tardew introduced it in their High Street store, see “The Electric Light at Bideford” Bideford Weekly Gazette 19 March 1889
29 “The Gas Question” North Devon Journal 14 January 1892 p2 c1-2
30 “Public Notice” Bideford Weekly Gazette 27 November 1906 p3 c6
31 “Public Notice” Bideford Weekly Gazette 27 November 1906 p3 c7
32 “Bideford Town Affairs” North Devon Journal 25 July 1907 p6 c6
North Devon Gazette of 22 December 1908 carried an advertising note in its “Christmas at the Shops” section which noted that “With its widened main thoroughfare and the extension of building to the South-East, East-the-Water is yearly becoming a more important part of the township.”

1908, Bideford Motor Works established

In September 1908 a new firm of motor mechanics was established, their opening heralded by both an advertisement in the local press, accompanied by a journalistic piece introducing the business. 34 “Messrs. J. Inman Emery, A.M.I., Mech. F. and F. T. Cox” who ran the business, brought to Bideford experience, as motor mechanics, gained in London, though Mr. Inman Emery also claimed “considerable and varied engineering experience in India particularly in the installation of plant for the lighting of large palaces by electricity.” More general engineering work was solicited, including drawing up “designs and specifications for motor boats for pleasure or racing,” and the lighting of country houses35. The pair also stated that they were agents for the plant and system of “The Non Explosive Gas Co. Ltd.” They claimed “A spacious and well appointed Garage will at present comfortably accommodate a dozen large cars and is capable of extension whilst its position alongside the repair works makes for a speedy carrying out of repairs. The all-British “Deasy” was amongst the cars available for inspection.

1909, limestone, cement, and general goods in, clay out

In 1909, when room permitted, the Bideford Weekly Gazette carried a summary of the local shipping news. An entry for February36 showed the Annie waiting for water at Mr. Fry’s Wharf on 12th, Althea, with manure for Victoria Wharf on 9th, Clara May to load Clay on 10th, s.s. Scotchman, at Baker’s Wharf with road stone on 12th, and Devonia at Baker’s Wharf with general goods on 13th. In the same period almost all cargoes at Bideford Quay were of coal, but one was a part cargo of cement.

A snapshot, taken from three consecutive weeks in Sept. 190937, paints a picture of ships discharging agricultural supplies, building materials, and general goods at East-the-Water's wharves, whilst clay was being loaded from them. Bideford Quay had more vessels visiting it, most to discharge coal, but some to lay up. The details are presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date in 1909</th>
<th>Point of arrival</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 7th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Wolt</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 9th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>s.s. Devonia</td>
<td>To discharge general goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 9th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>s.s. Hopetown</td>
<td>To lay at quay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 10th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>To discharge manure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 10th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>Naiad</td>
<td>To load clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 10th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Olive and Mary</td>
<td>To load gravel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33 "East-the-Water.” North Devon Gazette 22 December 1908 p10 c4
34 Bideford Weekly Gazette 22 September 1908 p4 c5
35 “New Engineering Works at Bideford” “Bideford Weekly Gazette 22 September 1908 p5 c5
36 “Arrival of Ships” Bideford and North Devon Gazette 16 February 1909 p5 c2
37 “Local and County” Bideford Weekly Gazette 21 September 1909 p5 c3; “Local and County” Bideford Weekly Gazette 14 September 1909 p5 c2; “Local and County” Bideford Weekly Gazette 28 September 1909 p5 c3
### Historical Notes relating to Bideford's East-the-Water Shore (Volume 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date in 1909</th>
<th>Point of arrival</th>
<th>Ship</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 10th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Wave</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 11th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 12th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 13th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Maud</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>Rainbow</td>
<td>To discharge limestone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>Setti</td>
<td>To load clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>Wolt</td>
<td>To load clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Susannah</td>
<td>To discharge Coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 16th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Corn Flower</td>
<td>In ballast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 18th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>Louisa</td>
<td>To discharge cement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 18th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>s.s. Devonia</td>
<td>To discharge general goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 20th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Ada</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 23rd</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Edith</td>
<td>To load gravel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 23rd</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Purveyor</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 24th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>s.s. Hopetown</td>
<td>To lay to quay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 25th</td>
<td>East-the-Water</td>
<td>s.s. Devonia</td>
<td>To discharge general cargo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 26th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Eliza Murry</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 26th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Sarah Jane</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 27th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Dewm</td>
<td>To discharge coal, then dispatched with coal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 27th</td>
<td>Bideford Quay</td>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>To discharge coal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1909, tragic loss of the SS Thistlemor

The loss of 21 lives when the SS Thistlemor foundered in Bideford Bay hit the headlines, not least because the Thistlemor had burned flare lights from midnight, only to have them noticed at 4 a.m., by a coastguard who was then unable to get the lifeboat people on the phone. These events prompted (unheeded) calls to the Board of Trade for an effective coastguard service in the Bristol Channel. Stung into some response, the people of the local area commissioned Gabriel, the stonemason, to produce a monument, which was then available for inspection at his yard in Barnstaple Street, prior to being erected in Northam churchyard.

---

38 “Coast Watching in the Bristol Channel: Cardiff Chamber’s Comments” West Somerset Free Press 25 December 1909 p7 c5
39 Exeter and Plymouth Gazette 25 November 1910 p10 c5-6

Last updated 27 Apr 2021 Page 12 of 38 © R I Kirby
1909, Fulford at Queen’s Wharf

By 20 April 1909 J. U. Fulford & Son’s had begun advertising their presence at Queen’s Wharf, East-the-Water.40

1911, Pollard exploring trips to Lundy

T Pollard of East-the-Water was selling tickets for a limited series of trips to Lundy on the the S.S. Hebridean, a ship registered to carry 312 passengers. This seemed to be by way of exploring the possibility of attracting new visitors to Devon by providing such boat trips. The Hebridean would offer a mix of trips from Bideford and Ilfracombe.41

1913, the Pure Chemical Carbon Co. goes up in smoke

In 1911 the Pure Chemical Carbon Company of Dewsbury had established a plant on part of the extensive Bartlett site, producing carbon products from Bartlett’s waste wood. The plant contained an engine weighing 300 tons, with a 13 ton flywheel. In March 1913, however, 500 to 600 bags of charcoal within a cast Iron Shed caught light, it was believed through self combustion. With the Fire Brigade unable to do more than contain the blaze, that seems to be the last mention of the company.43

1914, Belgian refugees begin to arrive

From Oct 1914 Exeter claims to have led the way in welcoming Belgian refugees to Britain’s provincial cities. The came in their thousands, but the public were initially very supportive and welcoming, as there was a general feeling that, but for the Belgian putting up such a stout resistance to German advance, Paris would have been overrun, bringing the war much closer to home. From an Exeter reception centre groups were distributed throughout the county, particularly to places, like Bideford, that were part of the railway network.44

Contingents of refugees came to Bideford, where some worked in East-the-Water’s remaining pottery and at the Kynochs munitions factory. By Nov 1914 there were 45 in Bideford, but this would eventually climb to about 200.48

40 “To Ensure a Good Hay Crop” Bideford Weekly Gazette 20 April 1909 p4 c1
42 “Occasional Notes” North Devon Journal 29 June 1911 p8 c1
43 Western Times 18 March 1913 p2 c2
45 Alison Grant. North Devon Pottery. Appledore, Devon:Eadward Gaskell, 2005 pg 52
46 Peter Christie. Secret Bideford. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2015, Pg 80

Last updated 27 Apr 2021
Page 13 of 38 © R I Kirby
A tragic incident from August 1917 allows us to give a name to one of the Belgian Refugees. An eleven-year girl, the daughter of “M. Denys, a Belgian living at Gas Works Cottages, East-the-Water, and employed at the Government Works” was killed by the night mail train whilst trespassing on the line. The Mayor expressed his sorrow that “such an end should have befallen one of the Belgian refugees.”

1915, exceptional hail north of Instow

On Sunday, July 4th 1915, travellers, arriving in East-the-Water from Instow, would have brought news of a freak hailstorm that swept by just north of the community. Slates and upturned buckets had been left pierced “like bullet holes,” whilst six hailstones had been picked up and found to weigh “three quarters of a pound” and at “Leigh one was found to be over five inches in circumference.”

1915, Kynochs wood alcohol plant established

With the onset of war in 1914 the demand for cordite shot up, as did the demand for the acetone needed to make it. In 1915 the Office of Woods and Forests, in the guise of Kynochs, established a wood alcohol plant in Bideford, which was then placed under the direct control of the Ministry of Munitions. The name of Kynoch's foreshore is linked to this company.

At the outset of the war acetone was produced from wood alcohol and that in turn by fermenting wood to destruction. But the short supply of such wood led to the development of a new process that could utilize a much more readily available crop - maize. Maize may not ever have been used in the Bideford factory, but today it is still widely grown on local farms, with most apparently used as animal feed. The rapid soil erosion associated with this crop may help explain why the Torridge shore seems to be muddier these days than it was in the past.

The “munitions factory proved short-lived, and closed in 1919.

1915, Routley takes over Agricultural Wharf

In 1915 Frank Ernest Routley, a corn, seed, and manure, merchant, acquired the entire of Thomas Fry’s business on Agricultural Wharf.

49 “Bideford Fatality” North Devon Journal 02 August 1917 p8 c4
50 “The Great Hailstorm In North Devon: Bideford’s History” North Devon Journal 29 July 1915 p7 c4
54 “Bideford” North Devon Journal 10 July 1919 p6 c4
55 North Devon Record Office (South West Heritage Trust), B611, Papers of the Fry and Routley Families” The National Archives. Online:http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/d50d5cbb-6ec4-498a-9775-6d765d7f85d7 Accessed 24 Sep 2017
1917, steam trains on the Long Bridge

In 1916 the engines of the Bideford, Westward Ho, and Appledore Railway were commandeered for use on the Western Front.56

The North Devon Journal reported that “with the Westward Ho [sic] Railway closed and no entertainments on the river bank or Pill, Monday was probably the quietest Bank Holiday in Bideford since the outbreak of War.”57

“On Sunday several hundreds of residents assembled to witness the transference of the Bideford, Westward Ho, and Appledore Railway engines “Kingsley,” “Torridge,” and “Grenville” across Bideford Bridge to East-the-Water, preparatory to their removal on the London and South Western Railway to other spheres of usefulness. Temporary lines were laid across the bridge [sic] and the locomotives proceeded across under their own steam without mishap. The event was unique, even in the history of Bideford’s Long Bridge.”58

In Feb 1985 Model Railway Constructor magazine carried information about these engines, a summary of which is tabulated on the Minor Railways & Tramways Locomotives page. This suggests that they were 2-4-2T, built by the “Hunslet Engine Co. 1900”, with no.s 713, 714, 715 BWH&A. The page confirms that they went to the Government in 1917, but then adds “(Reputedly lost when SS Gotterdammerung [sic] was torpedoed off Cornish coast, in fact they went to Ministry of Munitions factories).”59 The Gotterdammerung had been seized from its German owners at the outset of the War, hence the unusual name.60

It now seems that the Grenville and Torridge departed from Avonmouth, Bristol, on a vessel bound for France, only for their conveyance to be torpedoed and sunk at the entrance to the Bristol Channel.61 On 22 October 2001 Yorkshire Post carried the news that the wreck had been discovered, the identity of the engines being certain, as only three of their type had ever been built, those being the three engines from Bideford.62 Robin Jones, of Heritage Railway, confirmed how unique the engines were and that the third, named Kingsley, had been scrapped.63

57 “Bideford” The North Devon Journal 31 May 1917 p8 c3
58 “Bideford” North Devon Journal 02 August 1917 p3 c3
60 Western Mail (Cardiff, Wales), 23 October 2001 “World War I tank engines found on seabed; HERITAGE: Divers plan to raise locomotives sunk by submarine”. (n.d.) >The Free Library. (2014).Online: https://www.thefreelibrary.com/World+War+I+tank+engines+found+on+seabed%3b+HERITAGE %3a+Divers+plan+to...-a079367549 Accessed: 11 May 2017
63 Western Mail. Cardiff, Wales. 21 Oct 2001. Cited at The Free Library. S.v. World War I tank engines found on seabed; HERITAGE: Divers plan to raise locomotives sunk by submarine..” Retrieved Feb 06 2021 from https://www.thefreelibrary.com/World%2bWar%2bI%2btank%2bengines%2ffound%2fon%2fseabed%3b%2bHERITAGE %3a%2bDivers%2oplan%to...-a079367549
In an article in Model Rail (UK) 9 Feb 2017, the author (name unknown) reported that he had researched the supposed loss at the Public Records Office and found no record of an S.S. *Gotterdammerung* being lost, or of any other loss matching the description at an appropriate time 64. These were not the only steam engines to be shipped to the western front, and others ended up sunk of Cornwall, as the sinking of the 2866 ton French ship *Saint Chamond* testifies to 65. She was torpedoed 14 miles North of Saint Ives Head, on April 28th, 1918, on route from Glasgow to Saint Nazaire, by the German submarine U 60 (*Franz Grünert*). She carried a general cargo, but is known locally as the Train Wreck, as the most interesting part of her cargo is a number of steam engines, of which six or seven remain 66.

**1917, the Cholmondeley turns submarine hunter**

Restarick’s shipyard had been focused on non-military shipping, so it is unusual to find one of his boats serving a fully military function, especially as it was one of his former mission ships. In July 1917 the *Cholmondeley* (a ship of 64 tons) 67, re-named *George L. Muir*, was converted to serve as *Padre*, as one of the 'Q' ships, armed decoy vessels used to entrap enemy submarines 68. The fate of another of Restarick’s vessels highlights the need for a role like that of *Cholmondeley*, for, on 29 Apr 1918, the *Johnny Toole* was sunk by German submarine U 105, en route from Newport to Ballycotton 69.

**1918, exemptions from military services**

In March 1918 Bideford Borough Tribunal re-considered exemptions from military service for East-the-Water based “Wm. John Way, 36, Grade 2, coal merchant, and Frank E. Routley, reduced from Class A to Grade 2, seed merchant.” The National Service representative suggested that “there were several firms with these trades in the district, and that by co-operation some of the tradesmen might be released. Other places had found that co-operation could be carried out.” Whereupon Mr. J. U. Fulford, another East-the-Water seed merchant, observed “It works all right in big towns, but it won’t work in small towns. There is too much trade jealousy.” Leaving the representative to observe “It is a discredit to Bideford,” before granting temporary extensions for both exemptions 70.

**1918, Armistice signed**

On 11 Nov 1918 the armistice was signed, bringing to a conclusion the ‘War to end all wars’

---

64 “My life's works – where are they now?” Model Rail (UK). 9 Feb 2017
Duncan Fielder has this vessel as the 64 ton *Bridesmaid*, launched by Restarick in 1882 [Fielder, History of Bideford, 1985, 81]
69 “Johnny Toole” uboat.net, Online: [http://uboat.net/wwi/ships_hit/3190.html](http://uboat.net/wwi/ships_hit/3190.html) Accessed 17 July 2017
70 “Bideford Borough Tribunal” North Devon Journal 21 March 1918 p3 c1
1919, repatriation of Belgian refugees begins

By the end of the war 8,000 Belgian Refugees had been housed in Devon, but their initial welcome to the UK seems to have been vaguely defined, as ‘for the duration,’ and, as the war dragged on, the public attitude had rather cooled. Many Belgians were also eager to return (it is unknown how many decided to stay), so a process of repatriation began, with responsibility for its oversight delegated to local Government Boards in Jan 1919. In May 1919 Bideford Town Council were informed that the last of the 200 odd refugees, that the town had maintained since Feb 1915, had now been repatriated.

1920, re-opening of the anthracite mine is considered

Much later, in 1965, Cynthia Burgess recollected the events of 1920, when a mining engineer, by the name of T. Thornton, looked into the viability of re-opening the mine. Naving found samples of anthracite in the local soil, he then looked to open up the tunnel in “Clarence Yard” (formerly Way’s Yard, but, in 2021, a car-parking area opposite Clarence Wharf). This was the tunnel said, according to Cynthia, to run “under the hill from Mines Road and emerging in the higher cellar of Clarence Yard.” The economic slump of the 1920s had left numerous South Welsh miners unemployed, providing a ready source of labour to clear the tunnels, so work was soon underway. The spoil was “loaded into horse-drawn butts and dumped on the riverside near the Goods Station.” Cynthia would recall “plaguing my father Mr. William Way, to take us into the tunnel,” which he eventually did. The miners found considerable quantities of soft anthracite. A pitch-like-substance was also found, and, at his home on Barnstaple Street, Mr. G. Phillips, a manufacturing chemist, turned this into somewhat excessively carbolic soap on a small scale. However, the enterprise eventually folded through lack of funding.

1920, infantry horses boarding on Barnstaple Street

In 1920, Chaplin & Co. of Bideford (near the good's-yard) and John Way and Son. (opposite Clarence Wharf), had both “Boarded-out” light draught horses, suitable for Field Artillery.

1920, Devonia collides with H.F.Bolt

In 1920 the Devonia appears to have been operating out of Brunswick Wharf as the ketch H.F. Bolt, delivering coal to I. Baker & Sons., collided with her as she was moored. There was apparently an arrangement between the steamship company and Baker's men that the latter would shift the Devonia when the moorings were needed for a delivery.
1921, slump in shipping sees vessels laid up

December 1921 saw twenty-three vessels, mostly large steamers, laid up on the river between Appledore and Bideford. Postcards from the period show three moored just north of Railway Wharf, off Southcott Marsh.

1921, care of Chudleigh Fort handed to the Council's

On August 24th the War Memorial Committee handed over the care of Chudleigh Fort to the Council. The entire of Peace Park having been purchased by public subscription as a War Memorial for Bideford’s fallen sons.

1922, a steamer collides with the long bridge

On 23 Nov 1922 the North Devon Journal reported that a steamer, leaving her berth, collided with the eastern end of the bridge, damaging the ironwork and the railings of the ornamental garden adjacent to the wharf.

1922, County Council recommend widening the long Bridge

Devon County Council's Bridges and Main Roads Committee adopted a report recommending that the Long Bridge be widened and that the council should contribute toward the cost of so doing.

1923 Brunswick Wharf sees the port’s largest load to-date

On 23 March, the Western Morning News carried a picture of the German Steamship Weser, moored at Brunswick Wharf to discharge a cargo of superphosphates from Holland, with the suggestion that this was, at that time, believed to be the largest cargo ever landed at the port of Bideford. The Weser appears to have been a vessel, launched in 1923, of 997 tons grt, and 67.4 x10.5 meter.

1923, Port of Barnstaple bolstered by Bideford's trade

Commenting upon an article in the Western Morning News and Mercury, that noted “a great increase in trade of the Port of Barnstaple,” Mr. W. T. Goaman cited testimony, from an Appledore merchant, that there were two or three ships to Bideford for every one bound to Barnstaple. In support of this observation, one alderman noted that his business was based at Northam and Westleigh, but he could only get a small boat up to Barnstaple once a fortnight. Concern was expressed that, as Bideford no longer enjoyed independent port status, the expansion, of the town's maritime trade, contributed to the reputation of Barnstaple as a place for business, rather than to that of Bideford.

77 “Bideford in 1921” North Devon Journal 29 December 1921 p3 c4
78 “Bideford in 1921” North Devon Journal 29 December 1921 p3 c5
79 “Bideford” North Devon Journal 23 November 1922 p8 c4
80 “Bideford's Historic Bridge” North Devon Journal 23 November 1922 p3 c1-2
81 Western Morning News 23 March 1923 p1 c5-7
83 “Thriving Bideford; Claim to Pride of Place as Port” Western Morning News 27 March 1923 p3 c5
1923, North Devon Farmers Ltd on Barnstaple Street

It is, as yet, unclear how long they were there for, but in 1923, at least, North Devon Farmers Ltd., Agricultural Merchants & Engineers, were on Barnstaple Street (on Newcombe’s Wharf)\(^\text{84}\). They were still there in 1953, as, at that time, the Barum milestone was affixed to their wall\(^\text{85}\).

1924, Anglo-American Oil do their bit to beautify Devon

In January 1924 the Anglo American Oil Co.’s North Devon division, based in Barnstaple and with a depot in East-the-Water, led the way in support of a growing movement to preserve the beauty of England by doing away with billboards, becoming the first big concern to take down all of theirs\(^\text{86}\).

1924-5, the long bridge was widened

In 1924-5 the Long Bridge was widened and restored using reinforced concrete, with facing to restore its traditional stone appearance\(^\text{87}\).

In February 1924 a lorry, belonging to the Anglo American Oil Co., and driven by Charles Cloke, an experienced driver, set out on a round from the company’s East-the-Water depot, carrying 300 gallons of oil and forty two-gallon cans of petrol. Turning across the bridge it passed under the archway of the travelling crane, but, on coming to the temporarily narrowed section, it broke through the temporary plank side-walk and wire railings to plummet to the bed of the river. The two-ton tanker ruptured, creating a slick on the river, and both the driver and his son (who was assisting him) were badly injured. The injured parties were removed to East-the-Water slipway, beside Pitt's Motor Works, where a doctor was in waiting to treat them\(^\text{88}\).

1924, widening of Barnstaple Street approved

The Devon and Exeter Gazette of 23 August 1924\(^\text{89}\) carried a report a scheme had been approved, for the widening of Barnstaple Street and Station Hill, with the installation of five foot wide footpaths, and the acquisition of property to allow it to happen.

1924, development at Sentry Corner begins

Those who worked on the wharves needed a place to live, so some mention of housing schemes in their hinterland is not entirely inappropriate. Commencing around 1924 four houses had been built at Sentry Corner, though by 1928 only two had sold\(^\text{90}\). Much larger schemes were to follow in 1933.

---


\(^\text{85}\) W. Ascott, Random Notes on Old Bideford and District. Bideford: Gazette, 1953, advertisements on the back pages

\(^\text{86}\) “Local” North Devon Journal 10 January 1924 p4 c7

\(^\text{87}\) Whiting & Christie, Long Bridge, 2006, pg 17

\(^\text{88}\) “Sensational Accident at Bideford” North Devon Journal 7 February 1924 p7 c2

\(^\text{89}\) Devon and Exeter Gazette of 23 August 1924 p5 c5

\(^\text{90}\) “Bideford Builder’s Bankruptcy” North Devon Journal 25 October 1928 p7 c5
1925, passing of the Bideford Harbour Act

A Bideford specific act was passed, incorporating sections of other enabling legislation, e.g. the 1847 harbour docks and piers clause act91.

1927, lightning storm hits Bideford

Following a lightning storm that lasted most of the night, the North Devon Journal reported that “Damager to Bideford was considerable,” listing instances of animals being struck by lightning, chimneys toppled, and streets inches deep in water that left mud and gravel behind. A strip of roof was blown from one of the new houses in East-the-Water, where, elsewhere, a kitchen was washed away when a sewer overflowed92.

1928, Barnstaple Street widening behind schedule

By May 1928 the project for widening Barnstaple Street was dragging behind schedule, but needed only the tarmac laying, which, it was hoped, would be completed by the holiday season93.

1928, Bideford re-gains its port status

Thanks, in no small part, to the activities of a local-lad made good, Sir William Readon Smith, Bideford had thirty-three ships registered there, at 271,000 tons, this exceeded that at any of Devon's other ports. A deputation to Winston Churchill, Winston Churchill, persuaded him to reinstate the town as a port94. The event was marked by the presentation of a silver galleon to the Borough and the beating of the bounds of the port by the Appledore lifeboat (then celebrating its 100th year)95.

1928, Tarka the Otter wins the Hawthornden Prize

Henery Williamson’s book, Tarka the Otter, was awarded the Hawthornden Prize for Literature, introducing the book to a far wider audience and securing its fame.

1929, stock market crash in USA triggers Great Depression

On 29 October 1929 (Black Tuesday) a stock market crash precipitated panic on Wall Street. The effects lasted as much as ten years, and it is estimated that international trade slumped by up to 50%96. There was probably no part of the UK that failed to feel the Depression’s impact, and traders on the wharves would certainly have been effected.

91 Report of Planning and Economy Manager to Bideford Harbour Board Working Group, Harbour and Pilotage Activity Quarter 2, Torridge District Council, 22 Nov 2018
92 “Great Thunderstorm in North Devon” North Devon Journal 08 September 1927 p3 c2
93 “Road Work: Barnstaple Street Improvement.” North Devon Journal 17 May 1928 p8 c5.
95 “Shades of Devonshire Captains Hover Smiling: Bideford a Port Again” Derby Daily Telegraph 29 August 1928 p7 c4-5
1930s impromptu pony races on the sands
Following the closure of the once-popular pony racing venue near Abbotsham, known as Shebbertown Racecourse, in c. 1930\(^97\), perhaps prompted by the depression, there seems to have been a thirst for more basic, cheap & cheerful, entertainment. It is at this period that the tidal sandbanks of East-the-Water were used for impromptu races\(^98\). Held as a prelude to the annual Bideford regatta, but not a formal part of it, this was not the first time races had been held on the sands, as similar racing is reported from 1882 (see above).

1930, East-the-Water becomes Bideford, East
For centuries that suburb of Bideford on the east of the Torridge had been consistently known as East-the-Water (though the hyphenation often varied), but from about 1930 onwards “Bideford, East” begins to appear in the local press instead\(^99\), until, by 1940, that new name had almost entirely replaced the old, even though most maps preserved it.

1931, larger vessels laid up in the Torridge
During the Great Depression of the 1930s, it was commonplace for larger vessels that lacked work to moor up in sheltered estuaries and 'sit it out.' The Western Times of 25 August 1932 reported that 30 vessels were laid up in the Torridge, with some having been there over a year, others having left and returned. These were large vessels (1,743 to 7,9006 tons), with the largest being three tankers (Scottish Chief, Scottish American, and Scottish Minstrel)\(^100\), belonging to Tankers Limited, of London\(^101\). At least seven of these ships, all Elder Dempster fleet cargo boats, were still there in 1938, when several of them were reportedly leaving\(^102\). Pictures from that period show numerous vessels moored on the Torridge, mostly on the eastern side between Instow and Tapley Park, but some off Westleigh and Windmill Lane. One postcard, with a view taken from Upcott, appears to show three such vessels moored just downstream off Cross Park. In 1933 the owners generously opened several of the vessels to the public, with a 6d entrance fee, and organised a dance on another, the money raised going to the Bideford Carnival fund\(^103\).

1930-33, developing at Pollyfield

\(^{97}\) The last mention in the press seems to relate to the auction of the grass keep of the racecourse in the Western Times of 17 April 1930 (p1 c3)
\(^{98}\) Fielder, History of Bideford, 1985, 82
\(^{99}\) e.g. see “Properties For Sale” North Devon Journal 23 January 1930 p1 c4, entry for “Sunnyside”
\(^{100}\) “30 Idle Ships in River Torridge” Western Morning News 25 August 1932 p7 c2
\(^{102}\) “Ships in the Torridge” Western Morning News 29 September 1938 p4 c2
\(^{103}\) “Idle Ships as Dance Halls”Aberdeen Press and Journal 09 August 1933
The Council already had a site developed at Sentry Corner, but subject to restrictions on the type of housing that could be built. In 1931 they were considering a further site at Pollyfield and in 1932 a site for forty-two new properties at Sentry Corner. The building itself took place in 1933, at a cost of between £12,000 and £13,000, and with delivery for tenant occupation within seven weeks being a feature of the project. Planned to be completed within a year, the project looked set to complete in half that time. The developer used by the Council was The Universal Housing Co. Ltd. of Rickmansworth. The first 20 houses were opened in April 1933, with rents fixed at five shillings for a two bedroom house and six shillings for a three bedroom one, with 120 applicants for the 42 houses.

The scheme was so successful that, in April 1933, with the original scheme nearing completion, the Council decided to apply to the Ministry of Health for the funds to extend it. It is said that, around this time, winning designs for homes were exhibited at the Ideal Housing Exhibition, and that, in 1927, a modest two-storey red brick house, designed by Gordon Allen, was exhibited, subsequently to be erected around the country by the Universal Housing Co Ltd. The source of this is a Wikipedia article that lacks citations, so the information needs verifying, but this might tie in with this Rickmansworth based company building homes in Bideford.

Peter Christie has published two photographs showing these houses under construction.

1933, plans for a new Mortuary

In Nov 1933 the Sanitary Committee submitted plans to the Local Board for a new Mortuary at East-the-Water at an estimated cost of £380.

Mid 1930s, Mayor of Shamwickshire elections suppressed

In East-the-Water the Shamwickshire Election, in which a mock 'mayor,' often accompanied by a 'mayoress' (also male) were elected, amidst satirical speeches and general revelry. As in most places that had such 'mock' elections, they were inclined to become a drunken and unruly affair. Having flourished in the 1920s, the festivities, with their rolling tar barrels, liberal consumption of alcohol, and drunken speeches, gave such offence to the town council that they were suppressed in the mid 1930s.

1935, celebrating Empire Day

104 “Bideford Housing” North Devon Journal 21 May 1931 p8 c3-4
105 “Bideford Town Council and Sentry Corner” Exeter and Plymouth Gazette 15 July 1932 p20 c5
106 North Devon Journal 19 January 1933 p4 c1
107 “Bideford Housing Development” Western Times 7 April 1933 p6 c2
108 “Bideford Housing Matters” North Devon Journal 06 April 1933 p7 c2
110 Christie, Illustrations, 2008, 64-65
111 “Road Improvement Schemes” Devon and Exeter Gazette -Plymouth 17 November 1933 p13 c5
112 Fielder, History of Bideford, 1985, 83
A special tea for about 200 people was organised East-the-Water, with local dignitaries in attendance, including both the Mayor of Bideford and the Mayor of Shamwickshire (Mr. T. Squires), the later appearing in a rather more sober manner than in years of yore, and dutiful paying his respects to Bideford’s mayor. East-the-Water always seems to have been rather more inclined to royalist sympathies than the remainder of Bideford, and often seemed more ready to host such royalty-related celebrations. On this occasion the King received a telegram, reading “Greetings of loyalty and affection; we are celebrating Empire Day; from the children of Shamwickshire, Bideford, Devon,” to which he replied with thanks.

The Mayor of Shamwickshire would continue to be a part of East-the-Water life, but henceforth his reformed worshipfulness would generally make his appearances at charitable or fund-raising events. Often this would be the local carnival113.

Combe Martin carnival also seemed to get in on the act, featuring a Mayor of Shamwickshire in 1945114.

These days the mayorship has been revived, but with the mayoral appointment an honorary position, and the Mayor of Shamwickshire appearing occasionally in support of Shamwickshire events.

1936, the **Tetty Boat** was broken up

The Tetty Boat, worked at one time by Bob Kivell (aka ‘old Bob of all’) and subsequently single-handedly by his son Tom (aka ‘Royal’ Kivell), was finally broken up, having plied the local waters for over a hundred years115. Prior to the outbreak of the first world war, the Tetty Boat was often taken to Fremington for clay, navigating Fremington Pill as far as Muddlebridge before loading up to 30 tons, then returning and shooting the Long Bridge to unload at Binney’s Slip, opposite Tanton’s Hotel. Another frequent run took her from the gravel banks in the estuary to New Kiln, at Annery Brickworks, Landcross116.

1936, **Fulford, Trump & Co.** formed

The next step in the expansion of the Fulford business empire

1936, **mine collapse at Clarence House**

A large cavity appeared, following a heavy storm, in “the walled garden of Clarence House.” The garden of Clarence House, according to the article, lay behind Clarence Yard, “where the Way family had carried on business as coal merchants for generations.” This hole, caused by part of a mining shaft caving in, was of similar in size to one that would appear later, c. 1965, to swallow up Mr. William Way’s roses and vegetables117.

113 “Bideford” Exeter and Plymouth Gazette 31 May 1935 p19 c2
114 “Carnival Queens” North Devon Journal 13 September 1945 p7 c4
115 Grant & Hughes. North Devon Barges. Appledore, Devon: North Devon Museum Trust, 1975, 16-17
116 Grant & Hughes. North Devon Barges. Appledore, Devon: North Devon Museum Trust, 1975, 16
1939-1945, World War II

In 1941 the police clamped down on black-out infringements, with those prosecuted and fined including individuals in Glenfield, Old Torrington-road, Bideford East, Sunnyside, Bideford, and Torridge Street, Bideford East.\(^\text{118}\)

The Bridge Trust, then owner of the two small areas of garden beside the eastern end of the bridge, allowed water tanks to be installed, for the use of fire-fighters.\(^\text{119}\)

An air-raid shelter was constructed in the playground of the Torrington Street school, whilst at the East end of the bridge and in the churchyard at St Peter’s public further shelters were constructed.\(^\text{120}\)

In event of invasion, bridges and their approach roads became strategic targets. To defend Bideford’s several measures were taken: Pollard’s wharf gained a machine-gun post; the steam lorry fleet of the Devon Trading Co. stood ready as a mobile roadblock, to be deployed at the junction of Barnstaple Street and the Old Barnstaple Road; a mortar pit was installed above the cemetery.\(^\text{121}\)

Older residents remember the Americans concreting over an area behind the ship-on launch, but most were, at the time, probably of an age to be more interested in the sweets they recall were given out by “the Yanks” at Victoria Wharf.

The Ketch *Bessie Clarke*, built by Restarick in 1881, found a new life as a mooring point for a barrage balloon.\(^\text{122}\)

10 Jul 1940, start of the Battle of Britain

10 Jul 1940 is seen as the point at which Hitler turned his attention to the conquest of Britain.\(^\text{123}\)

1942, the invasion of East-the-Water

In September 1942, East-the-Water found itself invaded at daybreak, not by Hitler, but by a platoon of the 24th Battalion, from Torrington, as part of a Home Guard exercise.\(^\text{124}\)

1944, the Royal Hotel a hub for D-day planning

The Green Room in the Royal Hotel was used for meetings by senior military officers involved in the preparations for D-day and taking significant strategic decisions.\(^\text{125}\) Following the war, one general, referring to the Royal Hotel, noted “More secrets have been discussed in this room than probably any other hotel in the country.”

\(^\text{118}\) "Black-out Fines" Western Times 26 September 1941 p8 c5
\(^\text{120}\) Peter Christie. Secret Bideford. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2015. Pg 88
\(^\text{124}\) “H.G.’s Big Weekend” North Devon Journal 1 October 1942 p4 c2
\(^\text{125}\) The Royal Hotel; A Brief History of the Royal Hotel. Bideford:Royal Hotel, 2016 (electronic manuscript printed on demand), 12.
1944, rocket ships at railway wharf

A picture\(^{126}\), probably taken in 1946, (but possibly in April 1944), shows two naval vessels at Railway Wharf. Both were Landing Craft Tank (Rocket) Mk, or LCT(R)3 vessels, a type of rocket barge (known colloquially as a “rocket ship”). Based on the design of a landing craft normally used for carrying tanks, these were specially adapted for use on D-day. Each was fitted with batteries of “beach rockets,” capable of a salvo of up to 1,064 rockets, depositing about 17 tons of explosive over an area of 685 by 145 m, from a two mile range. After reloading once the launchers were then jettisoned and the vessels served as ferries\(^{127}\).

One of the vessels shown in the picture is the American LCTR 425. The American’s LCT(R)3s were based at the US Navy’s European ‘Base II’, in Roseneath, Argyll and Bute, Scotland, but in preparation for D-day these formidable weapons needed to be moved to the south coast. On 20 Mar 1944 a convoy (comprised two LCFs, three LCTRs, and three LCGs) set sail, bound for their new home in Dartmouth, from which they would take part in training for D-day in South Devon. LCTR 425 accompanied this convoy, which is known to have visited Appledore on route, before reaching Dartmouth on 4 April 1944\(^{128}\).

1945, the crash of Wellington “P” Peter

On 7\(^{th}\) March 1945 a Wellington bomber, “P” Peter, of 407 (Demon) Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force’s Coastal Strike Command, crashed in a field near Round Hill\(^{129}\). A simple monument stands beside the Tarka Trail to recall the event. The squadron, part of which were based at Chivenor from Dec 1943, regularly flew sorties against German shipping and helped protect friendly vessels from u-boat attacks\(^{130}\). The Squadron’s Operation’s Record Book (ORB) recorded that ‘F/L Ernie Duckworth J.25370 Pilot and Captain of “P” Peter, taking off shortly after 20.00hrs on a routine SE Homing Flight under perfect conditions, was unable to gain height because of engine trouble and crashed into a field near Bideford some minutes later.’\(^{131}\) The ORB goes on to mention that the Wellington, with its crew of six\(^{132}\), skidded through a stone and scrub hedge-bank in the process, three of the crew died and one was seriously injured. The names of the casualties being Flt/Lt E. V. Duckworth, P/Off. J. K. Andrews, P/Off C.J. Butler, and Fg/Off A. Izenberg (injured).

---

126 Bideford Buzz February 2011. Page 9
129 Text of monument on the Tarka Trail near Kynoch’s Bank, visited personally in 2016.
Eyewitness testimony from an elderly resident of East-the-Water suggests that the bomber came down across East-the-Water, for, as a boy, he watched it fly low across Nuttaberry Hill, between Gas House and the gas retort, before finally crashing in the fields beyond\(^1\). To raise the stakes even higher, the land south of the gasworks housed a munitions dump. One can only imagine the struggle Duckworth had to avoid coming down on the gasworks and what might have happened had his aircraft done so.

First on the scene appears to have been Walter Johns, a plumber and fitter at the nearby Gasworks whose bravery would subsequently earn him the British Empire Medal (Civil Division). Johns, a member of the Bideford Auxiliary Unit\(^2\), closely followed by an airman called Paddon, arrived to find the forward part of the plane a mass of flame. One airman had been thrown clear, so Johns and Paddon dragged him to safety. The airman confirmed that there were three still inside, so Paddon & Johns returned to search for further survivors. Hearing cried for help, Johns crawled beneath what was left of a wing and entered the plane through a hole. There he found a trapped airman, suspended between the engines and the stays. Releasing the man, Johns was carrying him out on his shoulders when the floor beneath them collapsed, his feet touched the ground, loosing his balance the two fell to the ground. Sliding the casualty onto his back, he was then able work him out until Paddon and another rescuer could take the man’s feet and drag him out. The three then carried him clear. Thankfully the plane had no bombs on board at the time and an engine shielded the rescuers from the small arms ammunition that was exploding\(^3\).

**1946, landing craft along the Torridge**

Visitors returning to the area for the summer season were greeted with scores of landing craft along the shores of the Torridge and at Instow. Westward Ho! was still under military control and the decision had been taken to set up a training ground for Combined Operations in the Taw/Torridge estuary\(^4\).

**1940s, gravel barging restricted**

For much of the preceding half-century gravel barges had been a familiar site in East-the-Water, with the Kivell barging dynasty based there and gravel routinely landed at the wharves, initially for potteries and later for builder’s merchants. By the 1940s, however, it had become apparent that so much gravel had already been removed that it had effected the hydrology of the estuary, making navigation more difficult (through shifting the Bideford Bar and making navigation channels shallower and more prone to change), destroying the mussel trade, and removing the protection given through gravel banks acting as natural breakwaters\(^5\). Grant and Hughes suggest that the measures taken were too few and too late to stop this decline\(^6\).

---

\(^1\) David Fulford (former Mayor of Bideford), 2016, personal communication.

\(^2\) “Medal for a WW2 Bideford Auxiliary unit Member” Posted by Bideford 500 at https://blog.bidefordheritage.co.uk/category/category4/ By Fri, September 20, 2013 13:51


\(^4\) ‘North Devon “Invasion”’ Western Times 09 August 1946 p4 c2

\(^5\) Grant & Hughes. North Devon Barges. Appledore, Devon: North Devon Museum Trust, 1975, 21

\(^6\) Grant & Hughes. North Devon Barges. Appledore, Devon: North Devon Museum Trust, 1975, 21
1950, a checkpoint on the bridge

For a weekend in August 1950 the Ministry of Transport announced that drivers could be stopped on the eastern end of Bideford Bridge, their aim being to solicit views on the future pattern of trunk roads in the area. This was one of four check-points which were active in the area.¹³⁹

1950, tender for shops at Barton Tors

Acceptance of a tender for £6,628, for four shops at Barton Tors, was recommended to the Ministry of Health, by the Council.¹⁴⁰

1954, White Funnel Lines resume cruises from Bideford

In 1954 the White Funnel Line celebrated their centenary, as part of which they announced their first trip from Bideford since 1924 would be on Friday, 4th June. Their proposed itinerary included cruises along the coast toward Clovelly, round trips to Ilfracombe, and day trips to Swansea.¹⁴¹ On that first excursion for thirty years the wharf-workers witnessed the Cardiff Queen cruising past, a twin funnelled vessel, built in 1947, and capable of carrying over a thousand people at speeds of up to 18 knots.¹⁴²

1956, private wharves at their busiest since the war

In March 1956 a local press report suggested that Bideford’s private wharves were at their busiest since the war.¹⁴³ The article inferred that some of the wharves had been deepened to take coastal vessels, the latest of which being that of Messrs I Baker and Sons Ltd. An accompanying picture showed m.v. Celebrity discharging cement at Baker’s, and m.v. Stan Woolaway discharging gravel at the Devon Trading Co Ltd. The correspondent noted “If need be, Bideford, including its municipal quays, can now accommodate five vessels of aggregate tonnage 3,500 at the same time. Bideford (including the private docks) handles sea-cargoes averaging 2,000 tons weekly.” Shortly after this, in June 1956 the m.v. Stan Woolway would become possibly the first of the local sand dredgers to be fitted with radar.¹⁴⁴

1963, exceptional winter ice on the Torridge

The Torridge froze over and the severe pressure of ice building up against the bridge was a cause for concern.¹⁴⁵ Scaffolding was erected to reinforce the bridge against the pressure.

¹³⁹ “Bideford Check for Minister” North Devon Journal 10 August 1950 p5 c3
¹⁴⁰ “Applications for Bideford Houses” North Devon Journal 21 September 1950 p8 c3
¹⁴¹ “Sailings from Bideford (Town Quay) by the Steamers of the White Funnel Fleet” poster for 1954 season. P. A. Cambell, 1954
1963, East-the-Water features on a matchbox

In 1963 Bideford Bridge (and with it East-the-Water’s wharves) featured as one of only four designs in the Old West Country Series of matches, produced by the Two Counties Match Company of Honiton.  

1965, last passenger service on the railway

27 March 1963 marked the publication of Beeching’s report “The Reshaping of British Railways,” which made the closure of the rail line to Bideford one of its recommendations. Thus, 2 October 1965 saw the last regular passenger service leave Bideford Station, severing a major artery into the town. Occasional passenger excursions, however, continued to use the line from time to time. As some demand remained for occasional freight specials, the odd train still used the line, primarily for the transport of clay. These too would cease, but not until 1982.

1966ish?, Zoo animals arrive by train

Derek Barnes recalls animals for Bideford Zoo arriving by train. This Zoo was only open between May 1966 and Oct 1970.

1968, part of Bideford bridge collapsed

On 9th Jan 1968 the two western arches partially collapsed. Vital services links survived, but were threatened by any further deterioration of the situation. There was also the danger of a gas explosion if the main was severed, though this was avoided. The bridge also carried the transatlantic telephone cable, which leaves our shores in Cornwall. That, unfortunately, was severed. Yet that was only temporarily, and when the telephone link via the Long Bridge was finally closed in January 1981, it had linked the countries for 150 years.

The need for people to continue to get across the Torridge became a pressing issue and various means were deployed to get those without cars across the river, including: travel via Great Torrington; a “Salmon Boat Ferry” operated by the towns Salmon fishermen (using three boats); the use of military amphibious vehicles operating from Instow.

1968, station buildings demolished on the west of the track

Peter Christie has published a picture from 1968, of the demolition work in progress.

147 “History of the Railway to Instow and Bideford” Bideford Railway Heritage Centre. Online:www.bidefordrailway.co.uk/line-history/ Accessed 11 May 2017
148 “Zebras arriving by train?” Bideford Buzz, Nov 2010, pg 9
150 Fielder, History of Bideford, 1985, 85
151 Fielder, History of Bideford, 1985, 98
152 Personal communication from Derek Barnes, a former Salmon Fisherman
153 Christie, Illustrations, 2008, Pg 85
1971, Western Counties Agricultural Co-Op. Assoc. wound up

In 1971 the Western Counties Agricultural Co-operative Association was wound up154. and it was probably at about this period that the Association’s mill on Victoria Wharf was demolished as it is marked as a mill on O.S. mapping from 1963. It does not, however, appear on the 1:2,500 O.S. map of 1973.

1975, public consulted concerning a new bridge

With the growth of traffic the Long Bridge was increasingly a bottleneck. Several proposals for a new route that bypassed the town to the north were put to the public in 1975, with responses required by 4th August. The exercise considered several approach roads and two crossing locations, as well as the possibility of bridge clearances of 32, 52, or 78 ft, or even an opening bridge.

1976, looking for a change of use for the Lion Store

Planning use history indicates that a change of use to become a retail outlet, was refused in 1976, at which time the previous owner are given as 'Fulford Trumps.' It looks as if the application was refused because a similar one had been approved elsewhere.

1980s, gasometers demolished

The gasometers were finally removed in the 1980s155.

1980, construction of Ethelwynne Brown Close approved

Designed by London Architects Herber Percy & Parker, the company responsible for the 2021 design for the redevelopment of Brunswick Wharf, Ethelwynne Brown Close is listed on the UK Modern House Index, a database of modern British houses of architectural interest156. Planning permission for Ethelwynne Brown Close was sought in 1979 & 1980. Thereafter, it was built in two phases. Duncan Fielder’s History of Bideford included a picture of the recently completed development dating from July 1984157 and in 1986 the development was awarded a commendation in the Civic Trust Awards for that year158. The close is named after a former mayoress, who was organist at the Bank End mission chapel159. At the time of her appointment in 1865, Ethelwynne Brown was only the second female mayor of Bideford in the 392 years since the towns charter was granted160.

154 National Archives, Board of Trade papers, Ref. BT 31/43307/14088, catalogue description.
156 UK Modern House Index. Online:http://ukmoho.co.uk/html/building/15743.html Accessed 17 Feb 2021
157 Duncan Fielder. A History of Bideford. Chichester, Sussex: Phillemore, 1985. Fig. 28.
160 Newspaper clipping with date but no citation, “Bideford” Bideford & District Community Archive. Online: https://www.bidefordarchive.org.uk/bideford?id=335amp;Itemid=111 Accessed 24 April 2018
1980, U. B. M. Devon Ltd. at Clarence Wharf

In 1980 United Builders Merchants Devon Ltd. appear to have moved onto Clarence Wharf (as, at that date, they sought planning permission for a new sign\textsuperscript{161}. Later U.B.M. seem to have sold the site, which included land needed for the Woods Surgery, to Torridge District Council, then leased back part for themselves. Sub-letting sections of it to other organisations such as Bridge M.S.C.

1982, final trains through East-the-Water

In 1982 the final freight trains rolled through East-the-Water, laden with ball-clay from Meeth\textsuperscript{162}. A final passenger excursion train was run on the railway line on 6th November 1982\textsuperscript{163}.

1984, work started on the River Torridge New Bridge

Contractors Edmund Nuttall Ltd. commenced construction of the new bridge, to relieve the strain on the Barnstaple Street/Long Bridge route across the river. The new bridge was to be 650m long, with 8 spans, and constructed from 250 prestressed segments, 'glued' together\textsuperscript{164}.

1985, rotting boats cleared from the eastern Torridge shore

In 1985, prompted by the accumulation of abandoned, rotting vessels on the Torridge’s eastern shore, Torridge District Council intervened to clear the worst of the mess\textsuperscript{165}.

1985, planning permission granted for the Wooda Surgery

Planning permission, originally granted for an application submitted in 1982, was re-submitted in 1985, and again approved. It detailed a Surgery/Health Centre, with parking spaces, on part of the land of UBM Ltd, and part of the old Goods Yard\textsuperscript{166}.

1985, the railway tracks lifted

The railway tracks were lifted in 1985, as work began to clear the line for the Taw/Torridge Country Park (now the Tarka Trail)\textsuperscript{167}.

1985, redevelopment of the old wharves announced

On 16/5/1985 the North Devon Journal announced plans to redevelop the Brunswick Wharf area of

\begin{enumerate}
\item Torridge District Council, Planning Application no. 1/0785/1980  (1/1489/80/8/483), received 22 Aug 1980
\item “History of the Railway to Instow and Bideford” Bideford Railway Heritage Centre.
  Online:www.bidefordrailway.co.uk/line-history/ Accessed 11 May 2017
\item “History of the Railway to Instow and Bideford” Bideford Railway Heritage Centre.
  Online:www.bidefordrailway.co.uk/line-history/ Accessed 11 May 2017
\item British Architects in Europe First day cover issued by Edinburgh:British Philatelic Bureau & Leicester:Thought Factory, 12 May 1987
\item Christie, Illustrations 2, 2009, Pg 176
\item Torridge District Council, Planning Application 1/0484/1982 received 26 May 1982, also 1/0171/1985  
  (1/484/82/8/483) received 1 May 1985.
\item “History of the Railway to Instow and Bideford” Bideford Railway Heritage Centre.
  Online:www.bidefordrailway.co.uk/line-history/ Accessed 11 May 2017
\end{enumerate}
East-the-Water’s old wharves\(^\text{168}\) Nothing was to come of these.

**1986, the world’s largest electronic organ**

On 19/6/1986 the North Devon Journal reported that Wyvern Organs, Bideford, had produced the world's largest computerised electronic organ.\(^\text{169}\) Wyvern were based on the old School site in Torrington Street

**1986, J.H. Bennet at Brunswick Wharf**

In Jan 1986 planning approval was sought for change of use at Clarence Wharf.\(^\text{170}\) The accompanying plan marks a coal yard at Brunswick Wharf.

A development brief, dated August 1987, identifies J. H. Bennets Ltd. as present on Brunswick Wharf.\(^\text{171}\) Other, occupants of the wharves at this point included:

- Fuelserve Ltd, coal/solid fuel distributor;
- Bideford Martial Arts Club;
- R. Harris & Sons, builder’s store;
- C.S. Taylor, carpenter/joiner;
- Riverside Resprays, vehicle body repairs;
- Community Programme.

**1987, Torridge District Council publishes a brief**

With Torridge District Council now owning a substantial site on Clarence Wharf, and the owners of Queens and Brunswick wharves all indicating a willingness to sell, the Council drew up a Development Brief, in an attempt to set the agenda for future developments, for example, by indicating that housing would not be considered a key element of future development (which was seen as being more a mix of homes, offices, shops, and craft industrial units), by highlighting the need to retain a sense of the history of the site, by identifying the need to preserve a walkway alongside the river front at Clarence Wharf, and by pointing out potential issues, such as the possibility that expansion of port activities might depend upon retention of facilities on this shore.

---


\(^{170}\) Torridge District Council, Planning Application no. 1/1545/1985 (1/1545/85/8/483), received 14 Jan 1986


© R I Kirby
1987, Bideford bypass and Torridge Bridge opened

1987 saw the completion of the new Bideford Bypass that would carry the North Devon link-road past congested Bideford. From an East-the-Water perspective, the new road brought some much-needed relief of the congestion in Barnstaple Street, but also made it easier for tourists to bypass Bideford’s traders. Central to the bypass was the construction of a bridge across the Torridge.

The new bridge was built of box segments, pieced together as a series of balanced cantilevers. The original specification, using only Portland blast-furnace slag cement, set too slowly to keep to schedule, so the mix was changed to include a proportion of ordinary Portland cement, each section containing a slightly different ratio, thus blending the colour change across the bridge. The finished structure, designed to look attractive, yet capable of resisting the impact of a 2500 ton displacement vessel (travelling at six knots with a 2.5 knot following tide) in conjunction with 60mph wind gusts, won the overall award in the The Concrete Society’s 1988 awards competition.

On Sunday 10 May 1987 local people were allowed to walk across the new Torridge Bridge, and also through it.

1988, Queen’s Wharf merged into Brunswick Wharf

In June 1988 planning approval was sought (subsequently granted) for the open area at Queen’s Wharf, then being used for car parking, to be used as an extension of the Brunswick Wharf coal-yard, providing it with a safer entrance. The applicant was J. H. Bennetts Limited, of 72 Market Jew Street, Penzance.

1988, the John Adams arrives on the Torridge

Whilst the Kathleen & May is, perhaps, the best known historic vessel associated with East-the-Water, she is not the only noteworthy vessel to have graced the eastern wharves in recent years. The John Adams, launched in 1934, and used as a dockyard tender by the Irish navy, was sold on to a private owner in 1988 and brought to Bideford. In 2011 she was in the hands of Peter Herbert, who began her restoration. She was designed as a steam coaster, but as steam was becoming obsolete by the time she was launched, she was fitted with a diesel engine. Unfortunately, Peter Herbert died before he could finish the restoration work, but he remains one of Bideford’s enduring characters.

He is credited with having sailed around the world by the age of 17 and with remarkable feats of single-handed sailing, such as:
• bringing a ninety-foot vessel over the bar, in a force ten, whilst suffering from a broken leg\textsuperscript{180},
• bringing a 300-400 ton vintage First World war freighter into Bideford and, unaccompanied, manoeuvring and mooring her\textsuperscript{181}.

1989, an upgrade to the sewage system

New pumping stations were constructed by South West Water in East-the-Water to feed sewage to a new fine screening plant\textsuperscript{182}.

1990, Clarence Wharf becomes a “temporary” car-park

In August 1990, planning approval was granted for Clarence wharf to be used temporarily as a car-park\textsuperscript{183}.

1990, a needlework & tapestry manufacturer moves in

Planning history indicates the approval, in 1990, of a change of use for the Torridge Auctions site, from Lion Stores warehouse to manufacture of craft, needlework, product, office and store. The proposal was submitted by A & S Deighton, Quality Needlework & Tapestry Manufacturers.

1991, the Tarka Trail opens

In 1987 the Taw/Torridge Country Park was established using the disused railway line between Barnstaple and Bideford, the line having been purchased from British Rail for £515,000\textsuperscript{184}.

On 21 May 1991 the linear Taw/Torridge Country Park between Barnstaple and Meeth is said to have opened to the public as the Tarka Country Park\textsuperscript{185}.

A Tarka Project plaque, on site at Bideford Station, identifies that a ceremony took place nearly a year later, when H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, officially opened the Tarka Trail on 28 May 1992\textsuperscript{186}.

Elsewhere Tarka Project documentation states that the Tarka Country Park only finally adopted its Tarka Trail identity in 1994\textsuperscript{187}.

\textsuperscript{183} Torridge District Council, Planning Application no. 1/1417/1990, received 15 Aug 1990
\textsuperscript{184} "Recreational Infrastructure: Tarka Trail". Tarka Project. Tarka Country. Online:http://www.tarka-country.co.uk/tarkaproject/recinfra.html Accessed 31 July 2009
\textsuperscript{185} "Recreational Infrastructure: Tarka Trail". Tarka Project. Tarka Country. Online:http://www.tarka-country.co.uk/tarkaproject/recinfra.html Accessed 31 July 2009
\textsuperscript{186} Photograph taken by R.I.Kirby on 8 May 2013.
1994, Torrige Auctions opens

Planning history indicates a change of use of the Torridge Auctions site to an auction room was permitted in 1994.

1996, public support a new plan for Brunswick Wharf

Unimpressed by designs for a 9 million pound complex drawn up by leisure consultants Thorburns, Verona Tammes, of Westward Ho!, launched a somewhat smaller-scale counter proposal, including a shopping mall, science gallery, motel, and restaurants. A petition supporting the proposal soon gained five hundred signatures and a model of proposed development was displayed in a High Street shop.

21st Century

2001, the Kathleen & May re-launched

The last few sailing coasters to grace our shores all operated out of the Taw and Torridge ports. Of these, the last trading schooner was the Bideford registered, 136 ton, *Kathleen & May*. After ending her working life in 1960 and then passing through a succession of other owners, she was eventually bought by Bideford businessman Steve Clarke, who, with the help of considerable local support, lovingly restored her. Re-launched in 2001, she moored at Brunswick Wharf functioning as a tourist attraction, and becoming something of a symbol of the community. Eventually, amidst considerable local disappointment that the wherewithal was not forthcoming to keep her in Bideford, she was sold again and moved to Liverpool. Her legacy lived on for a while in the logo of the local primary school, and still does in the naming of the developments at Kathleen Grange and May Court.

2001 Manteo Way, an Industrial Link Road, opened

The opening of Manteo Way on 17 May 2001, combined with the decline in Bideford’s port activities, paved the way for the focus of industry to migrate away from the wharves, by offered far better road access and more modern facilities for businesses.
2002, UNESCO North Devon Biosphere Reserve expands

In 1976, Braunton Burrows, one of the finest dune systems in the northern hemisphere, was designated a biosphere reserve under the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme. The reserve was then significantly expanded in 2002, to become the first of series of "new style" biosphere reserves in the United Kingdom, reserves that acknowledge, study, and interact with the changing patterns of human activity in their hinterland. The East-the-Water shore, part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest that covers the whole of the Torridge up to Bideford Bridge, falls within the buffer zone, or second tier, of the reserve.

2009, James May’s Toy Stories takes over the Tarka

In 2009 the TV program James May's Toy Stories featured an attempted to reconnect the site of Bideford station with Barnstaple Junction, using OO scale models. Unfortunately, the last train, the Hornby prototype model for the production models of a Class 395 "Javelin", and burnt out at Instow at 12:18am the day after the trains left Barnstaple at around 3:00pm. In 2011, May returned to complete the challenge with the help of the German model railway attraction Miniature Wonderland, racing several model trains over the 9.89 miles from Barnstaple to Bideford. The first train to arrive at Bideford was a Hornby Intercity 125, followed by a hydrogen-powered train and finally, May's own model of LNER 'Pacific' 4472 Flying Scotsman.

2016, changes to the gas supply infrastructure

Use of directional drilling to lay a new gas-supply pipe-line under the Torridge, to support the level of new development in the area (and presumably reduce the vulnerability of the supply line that runs under the bridge).

2021, planning permission for development on the wharves

Granted to developer Red Earth (headed by Simon Friend). After revision to reflect input from Historic England, the design considered was somewhat less modern than the original proposals, and lower in height next to the Royal Hotel. Features included:

- multi-story apartment and studio blocks, inspired by late Victorian mills and stores (Victoria Wharf, Queen’s Wharf);
- setting back existing building line opposite to the Royal Hotel;
- raising the level of the site to counter flooding whilst hiding car-parking underground;
- demolition and re-building of the ‘Baker Building’ next to the bridge approach;
- restoration and reinforcing of the attractive original stonework of the quayside so that it could be retained.

198 Reported in pamphlets sent out to local residents, including the author, by the contractors.
Public plaza, with cafe, restaurant and retail units.

Plans were approved by a majority of 8 to 1.

**Un-dated and/or uncorroborated events**

Some fairly recent events are a matter of local-knowledge, so are worth recording. But those who recall the story often do not recall the date, or necessarily the correct facts. Further research is usually able to corroborate (or correct) their accounts. However, for some events that proves impossible. This section is for events such as that, which seem worthy of record, but would benefit from a date or from further supporting evidence.

**Wilson's fall**

Whilst overseeing a hoist, to the top floor loft at Victoria Wharf, workmen had to lean out over the significant drop, and, whilst doing so, were secured by a strap around their waist. A man named Wilson was engaged in this task when the harness broke and he fell, landing in a lorry below. Fortunately, he landed on a load of empty sacks, which saved his life, even though he still broke his leg.
Appendix 1, Quays or wharves?

Whilst both wharves and quays are structures built out into the water where ships berth parallel to the shore, the original distinction was that a wharf was built on pilings, whereas a quay was built on fill. Hence, older records refer to quays on the East-the-Water shore. Latterly, the distinction seems to have been more closely related to the presence or absence of storage buildings, such as warehouses or cellars on the structure, with those with such structures being deemed wharves, even when they are built on fill. Hence, as they developed and were incrementally built upon, East-the-Water's quays became wharves.

Bibliography

The following bibliography includes several works consulted for general background (for which abbreviations may have been used in the footnotes).


W. Ascott, Random Notes on Old Bideford and District. Gazette Printing Services, 1953


Daniel Defoe. The Storm or, A collection of the most remarkable casualties and disasters which happen'd in the late dreadful tempest, both by sea and land. 1704. Printed for G. Sawbridge, and sold by J. Nutt in London . reproduced as “Of the Effects of the Storm” Online: https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/defoe/daniel/storm/appendix.html Accessed 2 May 2017


John Leland. Edited by Lucy Tomlin Smith. The itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535-1543. Parts I to III. London: George Bell & Sons, 1907.


Inkerman Rogers. A Concise History of Bideford. No publication date or details given.


