



Braunton Memory Cafe News

Hello to you all,



It has been a busy month for Braunton Caen Rotary! Owing to Covid-19, commemorations for VJ Day were not held. But we, at Rotary, felt we could not let the anniversary pass without some acknowledgement. Some members met at the Memorial to lay a wreath and Rotarian Patrick Farelly spoke our tribute. You will see below some pictures of you receiving the Limerick Book written by Rotarian, Peter Little. Peter and his wife, Pat, have been out and about selling the book to raise funds for the North Devon Hospital's 'Over and Above' appeal.

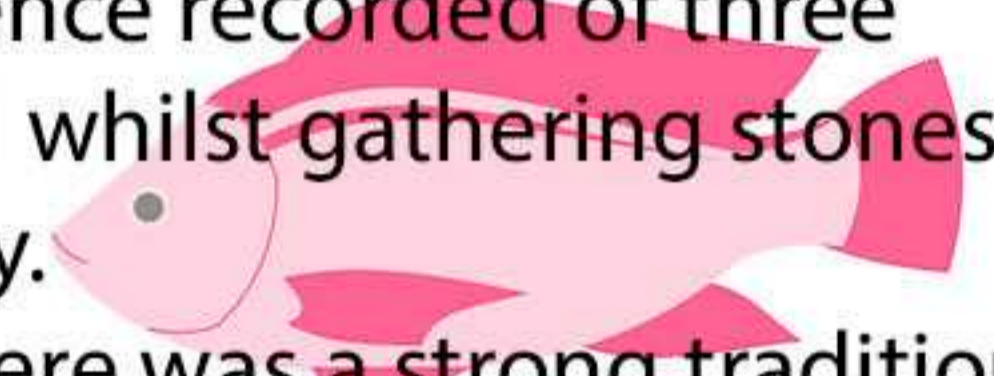
Braunton Caen Rotary members have been out again to tidy the flower beds in the Memorial Garden. We are also running a Mad Monster competition during August! We have asked people to create a monster from their household plastic rubbish to highlight the unnecessary amount of plastic that we all seem to use. We are running this in conjunction with Plastic Free North Devon and North Devon Biosphere. Overleaf you will find a poem by Martin Underhill who comes to the Memory Cafe, as well as another cartoon from Keith Worthington. We hope you are still taking care of yourselves and please remember if you want to speak to a member of the team, contact Serena on 01271 816793.



The Bidford Bar, at the entrance to the Estuary, is a bank of sand and gravel that extends about a mile. It is a hazard to shipping and can become a maelstrom of wind and waves in certain conditions. During 18th and 19th centuries many sailing vessels were wrecked in spite of two lights installed in 1822 to lead sailors into the Estuary. St Anns Chapel, named and illustrated in Saxon's map of 1605, was an early guide to sailors in navigating the tricky waters. A lighthouse was built at Crow Point in early eighteenth hundreds, known as the High Light. Subsequently another light, the Low Light, was built some 300yds further north. Both lights were used to navigate the waters until 1945 when the High Light became unstable and eventually abandoned in 1957. Now a modern navigational light is sited half a mile south of the original. Lifeboats were kept busy with crews, mainly from Appledore, who rowed across whilst farmers in Braunton kept the horses that towed the lifeboats to the sea. It took 8 to 12 horses to drag a boat. Braunton's lifeboat was suspended when both men and horses went to the front in 1914.

THE RIVERS CAEN, TAW AND TORRIDGE

The Estuary of the rivers Taw and Torridge have been used for trade and fishing purposes throughout history. There is documentary evidence of fish being taken on the Taw in Saxon Times to supply the Abbot of Glastonbury and evidence recorded of three men drowning in 1331 whilst gathering stones and sand in the Estuary.



By the 19th century there was a strong tradition of ownership of coastal trading vessels in Braunton. Local ships consisted mainly of wooden ketches and square topped schooners. Most were small and under 30 tons.

A list in the book, 'Braunton Ships and Seamen' by S. E. Ellacott shows a list of ninety-nine vessels and ten river barges and until the 20th century vessels were powered by sail. By 1914 auxiliary engines had been fitted to some vessels and were used to transport munitions and men during the First World War.

Originally Braunton Pill, formed by the joining of the river Caen and Knowle water, curved round at Velator to Wrafton, where vessels could berth owing to the tide flood. However, in 1860, the Pill was straightened out so vessels then came straight up the river to the main quay at Velator. This meant larger vessels had access to the quay and with the arrival of the railway in 1874, trade increased and larger amounts of cargo could be easily transported and dispersed.



The ships gradually grew less and less in number after the Second World War and by 1950 had dwindled. The last commercial trawler that went from Braunton was the Prinbulyn bd32 ran by Andy Jenkins. Fishing off Bidford and Swansea Bays and out past Lundy, they trawled a 12 fathom net and hauled every 3 hours for Plaice, Ray, Turbot and Bass. She last sailed in 1983.



GOING FISHING IN 1964 FROM NICK CRICK

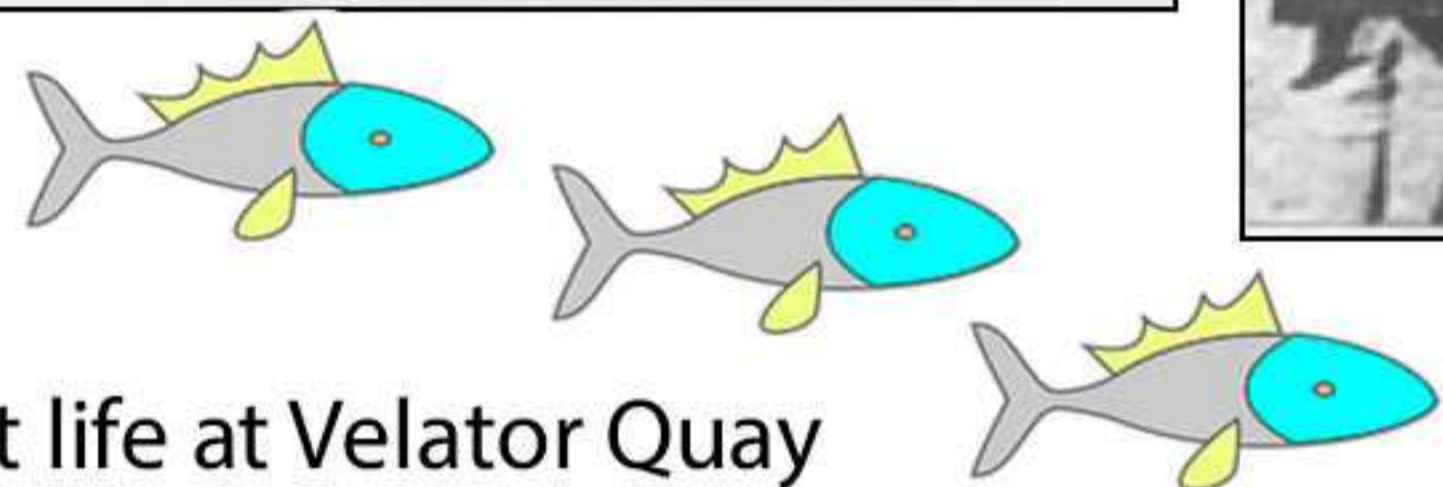


My dad Jan on the left, my uncle Sid on the right, catching a big Salmon. No, I am not in this one the boys, I think they are Jeff Miles and my cousin John Hunt.

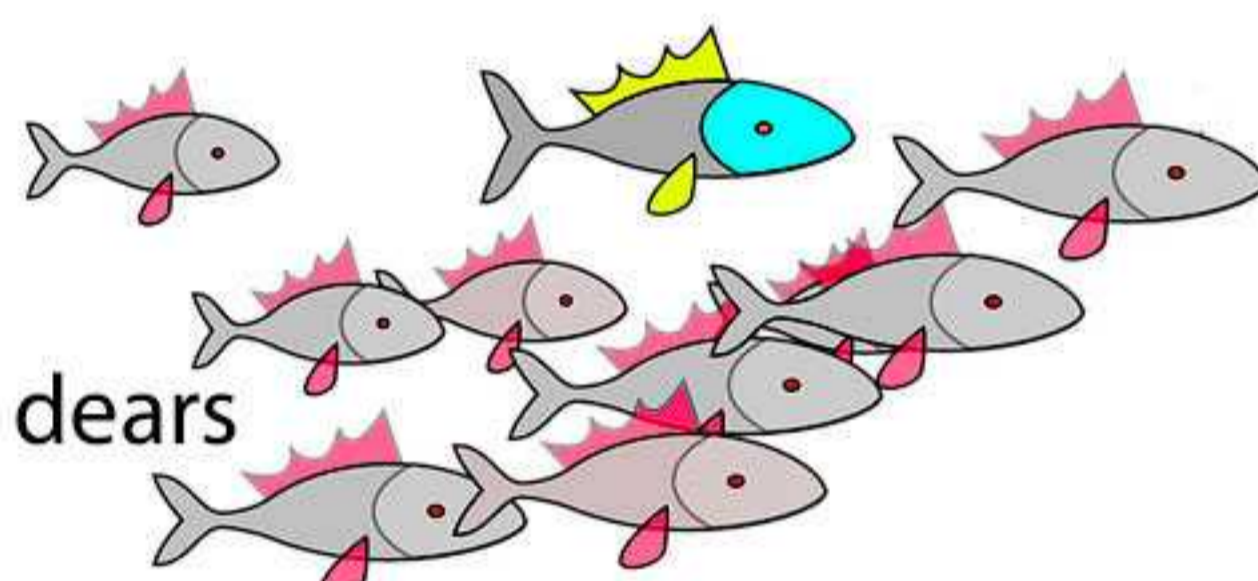


You rush home from Caen Street School because you're going salmon fishing with your dad and uncle Sid. So it's onto your dad's cross bar down to cross banks, and then you stride out with the men to Fishermans huts. Where you stop they have a smoke, a chat, and a brew, and you sit in awe. They put on Fishermans aprons and huge thigh boots, big rubber boots that come up to their waist they're so big I can stand in them. You skid and slish across the thick smelly Oose on the way to the boats. I am promptly told to sit still, I'm to be quiet. They row down to Pills mouth. Nets ready, three men in the boat, my dad on shore and me being quiet. All is still and peaceful the wait seems forever but it's just a couple of minutes and then, Sid shouts "there he jumps" and they burst into action, oars engage the water, the net is fed out over the stern as the boat arcs out in a semicircle across the river.

VELATOR QUAY



When I think about life at Velator Quay
 Ideas there are many that come to please me
 I like to think of a jolly Jack tar
 Whose come in a boat with goods from afar.
 He will rush off ashore to find him some life
 At the Mariners Arms or with anyone's life
 Maybe the ship has a cargo of coal
 Which a poor devil shovelled to keep body and soul
 From the great field went grain along down the coast
 Where flour mills and breweries are everyone's boast
 The best thought of all is a brandy or cask
 for which even the greatest would urgently ask
 From ship to the shore it silently slid
 So jolly jack tar could make a few quid
 And lads in the locals would get a cut too
 To buy up some meat to put in their stew
 The world hasn't changed you know this my dears
 So let us be happy and put aside our fears
 Be grateful for what can be put on the table
 And give alms to the poor if you find yourself able



ANCHORS AWEIGH

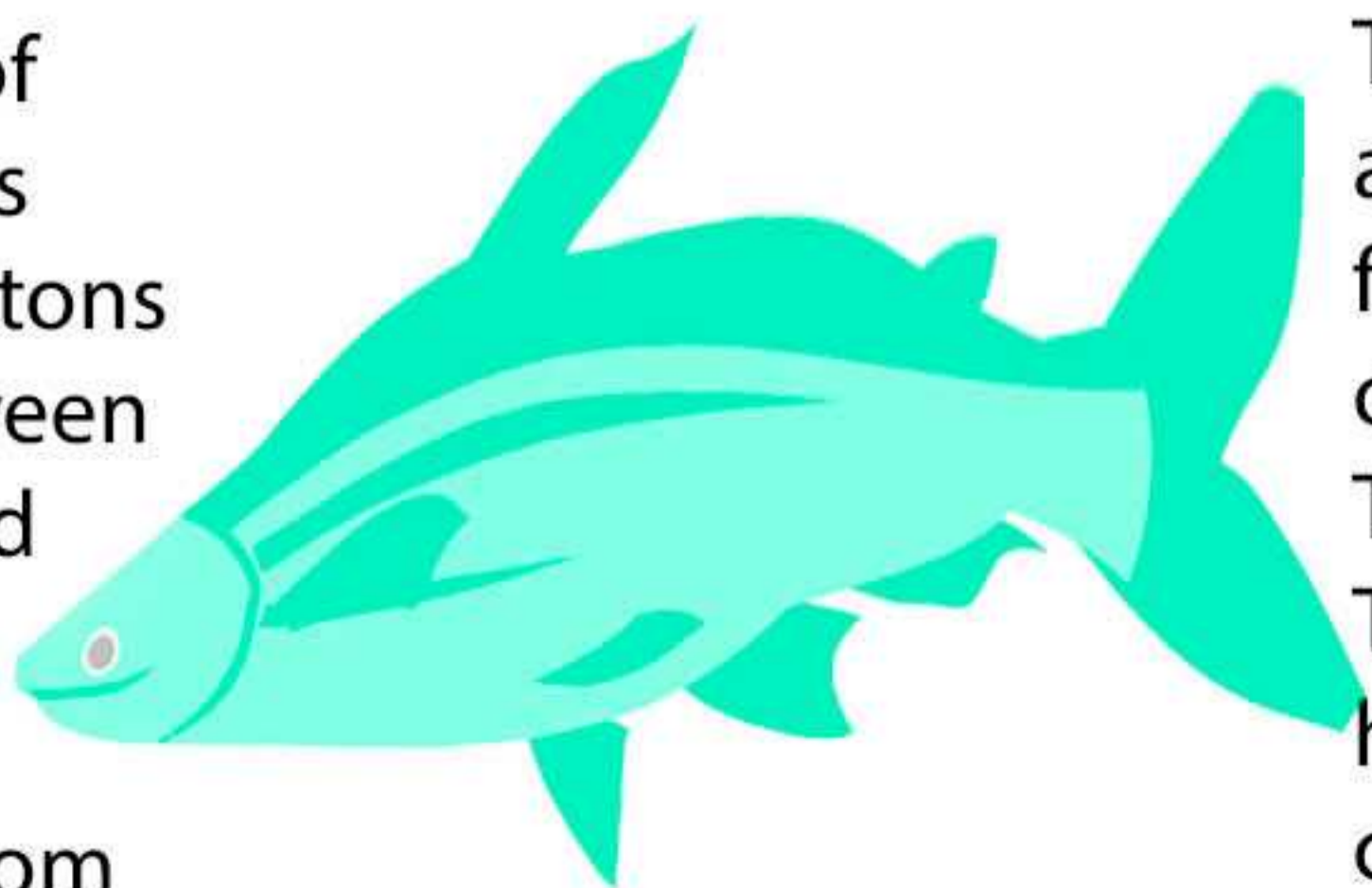


The influence of the sea and the boats remains in many ways such as pubs like the Mariner's Arms in Braunton. One other way is in the singing of sea shanties, songs originally sung by sailors as they worked on the boats. A group from North Devon called Anchors Aweigh, seen above, now brings the shanties to life. The group includes Rotarian, Peter Little. The group have performed at Teignmouth Shanty Festival, the Falmouth International Sea Shanty Festival and indeed at the Memory Cafe. They have raised over £15,000 for local charities such as the Devon Air Ambulance, the RNLI and the North Devon Chemotherapy Unit. We hope for a return visit from them to the Memory Cafe before long.

MARTIN UNDERHILL 24.08.2020



The Estuary has supported the coastal trade in coal, sand and gravel, grain, flour, and limestone. Three limestone kilns were used reduce the stone to lime which was then mixed with dung to fertilise the land, particularly important to the Bulb Farm that once inhabited part of the Great Field. Coal was often loaded and unloaded on shore by the beaching of boats. Sand and gravel were taken from the banks and it is said that two men could collect up to 60 tons a day at Crow Point. The heyday for this was between 1870 and 1914 when ports along South Wales and at Avonmouth were constructed. Coastal trading included taking China Clay from Fremington to Gloucester, limestone from Caldy Island or coal from The Forest of Dean.



There is a history of salmon fishing at Broadsands and in the 19th century this supplied the fishmongers of Barnstaple. There is a wonderful video on U-Tube called 'Salmon Netting on the Taw and Torridge' featuring a couple called Stephen and Sheila Taylor. They can be seen rowing out the nets and hauling them in again. In 1932, 6317 salmon were caught whereas today only three licences remain and few salmon are caught.