



Babbacombe Beach

Pictures: HARTLAND ARCHIVES

Back to a time of white walks, white dresses, gloves and parasols

A few months ago, Torquay Museum was approached by Stephen Hobbs from Hartland Digital Archive with an offering of unique Victorian holiday snaps.

These beautiful negatives were taken in 1897 by a photographer called Samuel Cann when he and his sister Annie retraced the route and places mentioned in Charles Kingsley's novel 'Westward Ho!'.

During their holiday Annie kept a journal and this is what she wrote about their visit of Torquay:

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"We reached Torquay about dinner time, and saw many of the ironclads, lying at anchor. They were stopping on their way home after the display at Spithead for the Diamond Jubilee.

"After taking photos of them, and of the bay and hills near, we walked along the promenade to the town. We found it all very clean, very white, very fashionable, and

very hot.

"White walks, white dresses, blazing sun, no breeze, and no shade. Everyone wore gloves and carried a parasol. We felt very tired, hot and lazy, and found a seat waiting for us at every few steps.

"The cliffs are sloping and covered with almost tropical plants and flowers... It is a place of ease, luxury, riches, convenience, and prettiness – it cannot be called beautiful – for it is too artificial and unromantic to stir a pulse.

"After watching the numerous yachts, and rowing boats, coming in and going out from the quay, and taking a look at the swimming and diving cove, we had tea and started for Plymouth."

Westward Ho! was a novel written in 1855 by Charles Kingsley and based on the experiences of an Elizabethan privateer, who travelled to the New World with Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh, specifically Raleigh's El Dorado expedition and the battle with the Spanish.

The author, Kingsley, was a good friend of Charles Darwin and particularly associated with Christian socialism and the working men's college.

More snaps will follow in next week's Torbay Weekly.



Gentlemen resting at Anstey's Cove.



A gentleman having a stroll along Rock Walk



A view of late Victorian Torquay from the Rock Walk