

## KINGSTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS FOR APRIL 2015

What a splendid evening we spent in Kingston Reading Room on Thursday, February 26th when Bill Scarratt entertained us with an illustrated lecture about Joseph Whidbey and the making of the Plymouth Breakwater entitled '*The Great National Undertaking*'. First Bill took us back to the danger posed by Napoleon Bonaparte and the French Fleet with Napoleon's boast that if he could control the Straits of Dover for six hours he could invade England. At the time our country didn't have a safe harbour for the Channel Fleet and this was a constant concern for the Admiralty thus in 1806 they assigned Joseph Whidbey and his associate John Rennie to survey Plymouth Sound and propose plans to make it safer for Royal Navy ships. Their plan for a detached breakwater across the rocky shoals in the centre of the Sound was eventually accepted and work commenced in 1812 when Whidbey was appointed superintending engineer at a salary of £1,000 per annum. Four million tons of Devonian Limestone was quarried from Oreston then transported in specially designed vessels to be deposited on top of Shovel Rock, the foundation stone. Bill explained, in great detail, how the Devonian Limestone had been laid down millions of years ago containing the bodies of ancient sea creatures as well as coral, this rock was ideal for building the breakwater, later it was capped with Granite. It was eventually completed at a cost of £1,500,000 in spite of two mighty storms. Joseph Whidbey lived at Bovisand Lodge overlooking the site during construction, which is now surrounded by a caravan site. He retired in 1830 to Taunton and lived at St James House where he died on 9th October 1833; he never married and was looked after both in Plymouth and Taunton by Henry and Catherine Oglan. Our next meeting will be Thursday, March 26th at 8pm in Kingston Reading Room when Merv Freeman will be giving us an illustrated talk about the history of Kingston Fire Station. Also, our outings this year, will be a visit to The Cookworthy Museum on Thursday, April 23rd 2pm, £1.50 pp entry (or £2.50 pp if you wish to have tea & cakes) the second will be a trip to Lady Astor's House in Plymouth on Thursday, May 28th 2pm, £5.25pp booking essential with *Margaret Cocks*, The Limes or Tel: 01548 810765. All details of our programme are on our website [kingstonlocalhistory.co.uk](http://kingstonlocalhistory.co.uk) or Kingston Parish website [kingstonparishcouncil.co.uk](http://kingstonparishcouncil.co.uk) A list of our Publications can be obtained from *Joyce Masters* 01548 810340 :-[jayceem@talktalk.net](mailto:jayceem@talktalk.net) for any other information about the Society please contact Chairman *Jennie Stanley* 01548 810819 or [stanz@stanz.plus.com](mailto:stanz@stanz.plus.com)