



Part from being the birthplace of yours truly, Budleigh Salterton was made famous by a painting by Sir John Everett Millais. His picture "The Boyhood of Raleigh" was painted from the Octagon, situated in the Fore Street, and marked by a blue plaque. Hayes Barton, the famous birthplace of Sir Walter Raleigh, is only two miles from the town. The ancient wall featured in the background of the painting still stands today!

The town's reputation was also made famous by literary giants such as P.G. Woodhouse and Noel Coward who featured the town in his play "Blythe Spirit". It was also a former home to the eminent novelist Anthony Trollope, featured in one of the Miss Marple murder mysteries and even got a mention in Monty Pythons Flying Circus.

Situated at the mouth of the River Otter, This seaside town nestles on the edge of a pebble beach beneath spectacular red cliffs. Its pebbles, or cobbles, were swept to the shores by ancient rivers and are unique along the Jurassic Coast. The Dorset and East Devon Coast has been officially ranked alongside the Great Barrier Reef as one of the natural wonders of the world. The spectacular coastline provides a walk through time of 185 million years of the earth's history and stretches from nearby Exmouth in Devon to Old Harry Rocks in Dorset.

In the name alone lies a small pocket of local history. Budleigh Salterton - Saltern or Salterne as it was once known - takes its name from the salt pans that used to be used to collect local salt for preserving. Although freely available on the coast, salt used to demand a high value inland. The salt itself was collected by monks and the pans were made at the local Otterton priory. The priory made much of its living from its salt production, distributing it via pack animals to many of the villages sprawled out along the stretch of the River Otter. Before this time, the town was known as "Ottermouth" and its sheltered location has made it a popular settlement since Roman times.

The smooth pebbles on the beach are unusually large for the East Devon area. Many are reported to have

been thrown up onto the beach from the Great Storm of 1824 and remained there to form the foundation of today's long stretch of beach. It was around this time that Budleigh began to build up its reputation as a popular Victorian coastal holiday town. The over large pebbles were even sold as souvenirs to visitors wishing to use them, amongst other things, as paper weights. Today, the sea has reclaimed much of its treasure and there's a sign warning of a fine for taking pebbles away from the beach!

Budleigh Salterton boasts the largest Croquet lawn outside London, and holds a significance in the history of the game. In July 1898, at the Budleigh Salterton Croquet Tournament in Devon, the reigning Champion of England, Mr. C.E. Willis was beaten by

"a lady, tall, upright, very young," and "of very delicate figure" who had "never played in public before. Later in the year she repeated the feat at the Maidstone Challenge Cups, which were held at Wimbledon because of a typhoid scare, and caused the doubters to reconsider their earlier pronouncements that the Budleigh Salterton result had been a fluke. During



this meeting, she won all three events - the Open Challenge Cup, the Ladies' Challenge Cup, and the All-Comers' First prize - not a bad first season's work. This young lady was Lily Gower, the daughter of Erasmus Gower of Castle Malgwyn near Cardigan, and she went on to become one of the three all-time great women players.

But it's the beach that's the best thing I remember from my childhood. In the Winter the sea comes crashing in and it's brilliant to walk along the prom in the wind, while the sea-spray whips into your face. And in the summer when the sun shines, the sea is so blue and like a mill pond, there's nothing better than relaxing on the warm pebbles with a great big ice-cream! (but I'm sure the sea used to be warmer when I was a kid)

OUR HOME TOWN

by Andrew Mead

Pictured Below:
The beach looking east.

