

Crediton Area History & Museum Society



www.creditonhistory.org.uk

Members
Newsletter
August 2019

THIS YEAR'S EXHIBITION. "CREDITON STATION - A BRIEF ENCOUNTER".

The centre piece of this years' exhibition is an excellent model of Crediton Station, which for many years resided at the Station Tea rooms. The exhibition caters for all from the rail enthusiast to those with an interest in social and local history. It covers the difference the coming of the railway made to the town and the people – local men going off to war, wounded soldiers coming to the VAD hospitals, commuters, evacuees billeted in the area, daytrippers and holidaymakers. We are also showcasing local trades and industries who sent or received goods by rail and station refreshments of the 1940s. There are 3 DVDs of local trains, evoking memories of steam and the stations of Devon.

We have accounts of local memories such as:

"In the 1920s we'd go perhaps once a year to Crediton (5 miles away from our home at Colebrook) with my mother. We'd walk down to Yeoford Station 2 miles away and catch the train. After shopping there would always be a treat, a visit to Labbett's Café."
(Within Living Memory Devon WI)

Another account, worrying, yet humorous was :

'One early scam was to serve coffee and soup from the platform that was so hot that passengers could barely manage a sip before the guard blew the whistle for everyone to rejoin the train. At which point the mugs were tipped back into the pot to be reheated for the next batch of passengers'

Also on display are a number of fascinating and rare items including Newton Saint Cyres food tokens for railway workers; a LSWR boundary marker; parts of a GWR silver tea and dinner service; Yeoford Station Clock; the "Crediton" Locomotive nameplate and crest which until recently was housed in the Council Offices, and the "Courier" nameplate, on loan from Sue Read of the Courier newspaper.



That the exhibition has come to fruition is due to the efforts of the following: Martin Binks, Paul Cleave, David Dornom, Cheryl Lewis, Mavis Monaghan, Adrian Noyes, and Colin and Helena Sykes. Between them they built the ticket office, refurbished and repaired the station model, made the automated train donations box, researched facts and figures, and acquired and made clothes. Phew! A big Thank You to all of them for their efforts.

Do come along to the exhibition as there is so much of interest for all. Throughout the summer we will be running competitions for adults and children including a return of last years most successful 'mystery item'

The exhibition is open until the 26th October.



ANTIQUITIES IN PROFUSION

The January lecture was given by Shirley Blaylock, a conservation officer with the Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA). Shirley told her audience that the authority was established in 1954.

Shirley discussed Hawkcombe Head near Porlock and Ven Combe, both mesolithic (6500BC) encampments where evidence of flint knapping and flint tools had been found.

Unlike Dartmoor there are few large standing stones on Exmoor and most stones barely rise above the low vegetation. Little is known about their purpose.

There are a number of bronze age barrows on Exmoor, including five at Dunkery Beacon, but unlike Dartmoor there are no known kists (stone chest)s. Up until the early bronze age (3000 to 2000 BC) there were no dwellings on Exmoor, although from 1500 BC onwards evidence of settlements and field systems began to appear. The dwellings were mostly thatched wooden structures, although around the Valley of the Rocks at Lynton, stonework was used for the low walls.

Exmoor was declared a Royal Forest in Saxon times and reserved for the King's hunting and no one was allowed to live there. So settlements developed around the edges and Dunster in particular has many medieval buildings. Its western boundary marks the border between Devon and Somerset. One John Knight the son of a wealthy ironmaster purchased the Royal Forest from George III in 1818 and set about reclaiming and improving the land, in the process dramatically changing the landscape.

Shirley described a post medieval catchwater leat system used on parts of Exmoor as late as the 19th century. This was a system of "gutters" cut into the hillside that diverted water from a spring or stream to irrigate the fields.

Unlike Devon where signposts are mostly made from timber, on Exmoor cast iron has traditionally used. Most were taken down during WWII and only reinstated after the end of the war. ENPA was awarded HLF funding in 2017 to refurbish the rusting signs.

In the 19th century iron mining took place in the Brendon Hills and ore was taken to Watchet harbour for transportation to Welsh steelworks. The venture was never profitable and the mines closed down later in the century. An attempt was made to re-open some mines in the 20th century but this also failed. Today some buildings remain as private houses and the inclined plane engine house and other industrial buildings have recently been conserved with Heritage Lottery funding. Earlier evidence of mining in the Iron Age is found at Sherracombe, using simple clay furnaces that produced a distinctive "tap slag".

The novelist Richard Doddridge Blackmore's well-known book "Lorna Doone" was based around Badgeworthy Water, one more of Exmoor's many claims to fame.

Thanks to Shirley for a most interesting talk.



Shirley Blaylock

LIVING WITH SMELLS

The February lecture - "Living with smells" - was given by Carol Vivian from Cornwall.

Vivian began her talk by discussing the Romans' love of cleanliness and how they built many bath houses. Their ideas went with them when the left England towards the end of the third century however, and it wasn't until the Middle Ages that bathing became popular again.

King John was noted for taking a bath tub on his travels, accompanied by "William the Bathman" and later his son Henry III frequently "washed his hair"! By the 13th Century there were bathtubs in many royal households and in 1275 Edward I had water laid on to a bath in Westminster Palace; in 1351 Edward III had hot and cold water in his bathroom! Frequent washing didn't catch on until the 20th century however, and when in 1945 an old Cornishman was asked how often he washed his hair, he replied "Wash me head! Why I should just as soon think about washing me feet!"

Carol described how in the 1800s bathrooms were still extremely rare, and that most houses did not have them until well into the 1920's and many not until the 1960's. Carol talked about practices in Cornwall where animal and human waste was not allowed to be taken off the farm, and had to be spread on the land. "Urban dung" was also taken to nearby farms including to what is now Carol's farm at Trelawne, East Looe. Outside toilets were known as "necessary houses" and inside toilets (where they existed) as "necessary rooms". For royalty and the wealthy, comfort increased in 1775, when Alexander Cumming invented the "S bend" that prevented sewer gases entering buildings.

A series of Public Health Acts in the 19th century – driven by intolerable conditions and smells in large towns and cities – gradually improved drainage and sewage disposal. London's sewers were constructed in the mid 1800's under the direction of civil engineer Joseph Bazalgette, and 83 miles of brick sewers were laid, capable of carrying 430M gallons of sewage per day, discharging into the Thames downstream of the city; work was completed in 1865 and still functions today.

Carol talked about changing conditions in Polperro, where sewage continues to be discharged into the sea today - albeit screened to remove solids - but at least residents no longer empty their chamber pots into the street or the sea!

Thanks to Carol for her interesting talk, her knowledge of sewage disposal in Cornwall is very impressive!



Carole Vivian

“NURSE AT THE FRONT”



CAHMS chairman John Heal with Dick Robinson and his wife Lisa at the Crediton Festival event in the Boniface Centre on the 17th June.

**Do you have some time to spare?
Are you thinking of Volunteering?
Do you enjoy meeting and chatting to people?
Then Crediton Museum needs you!**



**We are seeking more stewards for our exhibition.
If you would like to find out more please call
Cheryl (01363 776307) or Helena (01363 877434)
No experience needed as training and support will
be given. You just need a friendly outgoing nature
to join our team**

SHOBROOKE HISTORY GROUP EVENT AT UPPINCOTT



Farmer Nick Lee of Uppincott pointing out landmarks visible from extensive views at Raddon Top. Here there is an Iron Age fort discovered after 1984 aerial photos led to field work in 1993. Worked flint and other artefacts have subsequently been discovered.

DO YOU RECOGNISE THIS BUILDING?



We had an enquiry through our Facebook page as to the whereabouts of this building, said to be in our area. Initial thoughts were Haywards School but the building stone is different. If you know do let us know!

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All commence at 7.30pm at the Boniface Centre, unless otherwise shown. For more details and to keep up to date, visit “Whats On” on our website.

- 9 Sept** CAHMS AGM at 7pm. Afterwards talk by CAHMS member Keith Parsons “Crediton in WW1”
- 23 Sept** “Not one of us”. Individuals in Exeter who were famous or notorious, 1450-1950. By Dr Todd Gray. Bow History Society (BHS) event.
- 8 Oct** North Devon Shipwrecks. 2pm-5pm North Devon Record Office. £5 including cream tea. Booking essential. Call 01271 318795
- 9 Oct** Talk on church roof bosses by Sue Andrew. A Newton St Cyres History Group (NSCHG) event.
- 14 Oct** “Air power and the Salmon Brothers in WW1” by David Baker
- 28 Oct** “South West Secret Agents” by Laura Quigley. A BHS event.

- 11 Nov** “Three Hares” by Susan Andrew.
- 20 Nov** “Food in World War 2”, By Dr Paul Cleave, Exeter University. A BHS event
- 25 Nov** BHS AGM and social evening
- 9 Dec** CAHMS Christmas party.

2020

- 13 Jan** “Charles Newton Lovely and the Exeter Workmens’ Dwelling Company” by Richard Holladay
- 10 Feb** “The Falklands conflict” by Bob Edwards
- 11 Mar** “The Queens wheelwright” by Greg Rowland
- 20 Apr** (N.B. **THIRD** Monday)
“Lundy through time” by Simon Dell

CAHMS entry 50p members, £3.50 non-members
NSCHG entry £2.00. BHG entry: members free.
£3.00 non-members

THE ACLAND FAMILY OF KILLERTON AND HOLNICOTE

The April talk was given by Denise Melhuish, the house and collections manager at Killerton.

Denise told her audience that Killerton was purchased by Sir John Acland the 1st baronet in the 17th century. She described how the estate had grown over the centuries from a smallholding to what it had become, largely because the Acland family had a strong male line and acquired significant estates through marriage. Holnicote on Exmoor was acquired when Thomas the 7th married Elizabeth Dyke in 1745. Sir John very astutely swapped sides during the Civil War, thus avoiding the large fines imposed on other landed estates, thereby preserving the family's wealth.



Denise Melhuish

Killerton was rebuilt in 1778 – initially as a temporary residence whilst a new house was planned in the grounds, but after spending the then enormous sum of £3000 with builder James Wyatt it was hardly started and only the buried foundations remain today.

Denise talked about the great hunting parties at Holnicote, that sometimes went on for days. The Aclands other passion was horseracing and Diane described the silver gilt cup won by Thomas the 7th' horse Grecian in 1777.

Thomas the 9th married Harriet Hoare in 1808 and their eldest son Thomas the 10th became a Tory MP (previous Aclands had been Liberal) for West Somerset in 1837. He lost his seat because he opposed the corn laws and supported Wilberforce. He owned a yacht called St Kilda, named after the Scottish archipelago, and he donated money to build housing there. Francis the 14th was a Liberal MP who was influential in setting up the Forestry Commission.

There was discord in the Acland family over women's suffrage. Eleanor – wife of Richard the 15th was a suffragist (peacefully in favour) but her daughter Gertrude was against and set up the Exeter anti-suffrage league, and in 1910 even held a garden party party at Killerton!

Richard the 15th gave both estates (amounting to 14,000 acres) to the National Trust in 1944, with the Trust paying outstanding death duties and Anne's marriage settlement, and the family's continuing use of a house on each estate. The gift included the Acland Archive that is now kept in the Devon Heritage Centre at Sowton, and which is such a valuable resource.

Thanks are due to Denise for a most interesting talk.

Chairman's chatter

July is upon us and we are still awaiting a decent spell of good weather! Hopefully we will soon have had a little more sun and warmth.

Our summer outing was to Sherwood House, touring the gardens and the impressive panelled hall. Our secretary, Tim, talked about Sherwood's history.

This year's exhibition, "Credition Station: A Brief Encounter" is proving to be one of the most popular ever. Thanks to Helena Sykes, Cheryl Lewis and the rest of the team for all their hard work.

Alan Sharpe has been the society's treasurer for more years that I care to remember, so having well and truly "done his bit" we now have a new treasurer Gloria Petherick who will take over from Alan soon. We still have other vacancies and would welcome more new faces.....

I look forward to seeing you at the AGM on the 9th September and throughout the winter season.

Enjoy the summer!

John Heal
Society Chairman.



www.creditionhistory.org.uk

This is the address of the museum website. Do add it to the Favourites on your computer. It contains information about local history, an up to date diary of events and links to other

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

We have an archive of more than 1000 photos in the museum. Copies of many are available to purchase. Contact us through our website.

Our Corporate Friends

Please don't forget to support the local firms whose logos appear in our literature - see below. Without them we would not have a museum. Our income is insufficient to cover the expenses.

Credition Museum & Heritage Centre



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