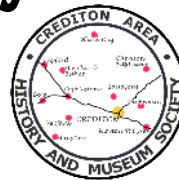


Crediton Area History & Museum Society



www.creditonhistory.org.uk



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Newsletter
Spring
2021

THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT LARGE SCALE MAP OF AN ENGLISH COUNTY

In 1759, the Royal Society of Arts, then the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, offered an annual award of £100 for the best original 1 inch to 1 mile county survey. Benjamin Donn (1729–1798) from Bideford was the first successful applicant and produced a twelve sheet map of Devon – the first significant large-scale map of an English county – each sheet being 24 inches x 19 inches in size. The map was engraved by cartographer Thomas Jefferys (1719 – 1771) the leading map supplier of his day, and was published in 1765. The map introduced a number of cartographic conventions that would become standardised in regional and county maps; the field work took his team of surveyors 5 years to complete and cost Donn of £2000 of his own money.



THE AREA OF DONN'S MAP AROUND CREDITON

Joel Gascoyne from Hull, who completed a map of Cornwall in 1699, planned to survey Devon shortly after this date but a lack of subscribers put paid to his plans. Surprisingly, forty years later it was a Cornishman, Thomas Martyn, who had already re-surveyed Cornwall and published his map in 1748, who planned to survey and map Devon, and presented proposals in 1750; he very probably began the survey but unfortunately died at Ashburton on Christmas Day, 1751. It was Donn's acquaintanceship with another Cornishman, William Borlase, a founder member of the RSA, that led to the latter's acceptance of Donn's proposal to map Devonshire, when it was submitted to the society in 1759. Donn completed his map but then faced a Herculean task in extracting the said reward from the Royal Society!

In 1787 Richard Cowl planned an up-dated map of Devon but died when he was thrown from his horse and his map was never completed. Cowl surveyed Plymouth in 1778,

his map being published by William Faden in 1780. Donn's map had a vignette title, inset plans of Exeter, Plymouth, Stoke Town and Plymouth Dock, and an inset map of Lundy. It is dedicated to John Baring of Mount-Radford who made his fortune through the Exeter cloth industry, and Mathew Lee of Ebford whose wealth came from farming and the woollen trade; both were major subscribers. Donn is the first to identify the island in Bigbury Bay by the names Bur Island or Borough Island; most larger maps had referred to it as St. Michaels or St. Michaels Rock in reference to the chapel there. Accompanying the bound book was a general index map of the county.

Donn was a well-known mathematician, writing several articles, and his *Mathematical Essays* between 1756-58. He was a surveyor and teacher of mathematics in Bideford before moving to Bristol. Donn later went on to publish a number of other less significant but popular maps including a pocket map of Bristol, a map of the west of England, several nautical charts and various mathematical tables. He died in 1798.



ASHGROVE
KITCHENS LIMITED



CHILDHOOD REMINISCENCES IN 27 HIGH STREET. Part One

(KNOWN TO MANY AS MISS SEARLE'S SWEET SHOP)

These are the childhood reminiscences of Phyllis Wreford (nee Searle) who was born on the 21 July 1916 at 27 High Street (known to many as Miss Searle's Sweet Shop) and died in 1993. She was the fourth child of William George and Eliza Searle and had 3 siblings, William, Elsie and Allen (12, 10 and 9 years older than her respectively).

Phyllis remembers Grannie Harriet Searle also living with the family, and going to the post office in Market Street to collect her 10/- a week old age pension, wearing a black lacy bonnet and a black cloak; she also remembers her and Elsie visiting Grannie Howard in Park Street.

Mother worked very hard and had the shop 'open all hours' and as a trained dressmaker she did a lot of sewing and mending. She did take Phyllis on a 'charabanc' outing to Killerton to see Lloyd George. 'I didn't know who he was, but I thought it was lovely to go that distance in a charabanc. Mother also looked around to see if there were any concerts at the Liberal Club, and I was so pleased if she said I could go with her. It was nearly always the same performers with the same songs and jokes but it was the only entertainment we had.

When I was a bit older Grannie Harriet used to take me to Tipton St John for a fortnight. She had a brother Tim there, who was married to Aunt Bessie. He was injured in a train accident earlier so he could not walk far. They had a pony called Betty and a 'Single' (horse carriage) and he often took villagers to Sidmouth or Ottery St. Mary, and I was allowed to go to. Uncle Jim liked having friends there to play cards some evenings. Their son, also Jim, used to make all sorts of jokes to amuse me and I thought him sorts of jokes to amuse me and I thought him very funny at times. He eventually married and when his wife died at their daughter Mary's birth he became depressed and even after a long time he never recovered and eventually committed suicide. There was another married brother called Francis who was a blacksmith who worked in the forge near 'Dolberries' Tipton St. John (designed, incidentally, by my father).

As I said my mother was always working but for one day a year when we went on the Sunday School outing to Exmouth, and Auntie Trewin minded the shop for her. It was such an important day for me, I remember finding my bucket and spade and cleaning them the night before. I was always a bit anxious the Sunday before we went, when the tickets were given to us by our Sunday school teacher, as you had to go 40 times to Sunday school to qualify for a ticket. We used to leave early and walk proudly carrying our bucket and spade to Crediton station, then on the train to Exmouth. We used to go on the beach and



The sweet shop in the high street.

at 4 o'clock we went to a hall in Exmouth for a free tea, then back on the train to Crediton. We were all so tired after walking up from the station but that was the only day we saw the sea for another 12 months. Some people rode home from the station by cab drawn by horses, as that was the means of transport which conveyed passengers to and from the station at that time

Brother Bill started work at 14 years at a Cornish's garage opposite the church and a couple of years later Allen started to work at Berry & Vincent as a carpenter. Elsie never went out to work, she helped in the shop which enabled my mother to do more sewing and she employed someone to work with her – one person was called Millie Snell from Little Gutton, Shobrooke. Another young lady was Bessie Carder from the Lodge at Morchard Bishop. I think it was the Earl of Portsmouth who lived in the big house there. Her parents were very humble in his Lordship's presence, almost on their knees. Sometimes she took me to stay at their Lodge for the weekend which I liked. (Part One of Five. To be continued.....)

HUBERT BERRY

Hubert Berry (1870-1947) was the fourth generation of Berrys to run the building firm that was to become Berry & Vincent in 1932. His great grandfather John Berry (1780-1863) began it all when he was apprenticed to John Prawl – a builder with premises on the corner of Park Street and Bowden Hill – in 1800, and having married his daughter Martha in 1803, was taken into partnership and took over the business on Prawl's death in 1822.



Hubert Berry

John had three sons, and the eldest William – apprenticed as a carpenter – took over the business on his father's death and introduced the woodworking side of the business in 1830. He built Crediton and Newton St Cyres stations, and Cowley Bridge Station in 1848; he built many buildings in Crediton, and it was a fall from a ladder during the construction of 133 high Street that hastened his death in 1874.

His son William Boddy Berry (1838-1907) had taken over the firm in 1862 and greatly expanded the business. His church work included restoring the Lady Chapel and he built chapels throughout the south west, and Hittisleigh School. He died suddenly in 1907 to be succeeded by the last of the Berrys – Hubert.

Hubert built Thorverton Bridge in 1908 - the first reinforced concrete bridge in Devon – still in use today and now Grade II listed. He was particularly interested in architecture and restored the Governors' Room in Crediton parish church; he also designed a series of “standard” dwellings, and Peverell in Searle Street was his “ideal seven-roomed residence”.

He owned the first motor car in Crediton, a 10 h.p. Delage registered T1680 in 1909; the number is still in use today, currently on a Volkswagen Golf. Hubert handed over management of the company to Edwin Vincent in 1915 and retired to Ottery St. Mary, and he died in Chagford in 1947

AN IDEAL SEVEN-ROOMED RESIDENCE.

HUBERT BERRY,
Union Rd., CREDITON.

Established 1770.



THORVERTON BRIDGE

What has Dame Margot Fonteyn to do with Crediton?

Born Margaret Evelyn Hookham in Reigate, Surrey in 1919, Dame Margot Fonteyn as she was to become, was recognised as a talented dancer from the age of four. Her father's work as an engineer took the family abroad from the mid 1920s, leaving her younger brother at boarding school in



Dame Margot Fonteyn

England. Always strongly supported by her mother, it appears that Margot must have spent most of her teenage years in this country because from the age of 14 she appeared in many London productions. Her supportive mother was almost always in attendance and by 1934 her father had another relationship and began to divorce Margot's mother.

When studying and working in England, where did Margot go for relaxing breaks? One answer is in a 2002 publication 'English Country Lanes by Elizabeth Chidsey. In the book various personalities are asked to describe their favourite walks in the English countryside. One chapter features Margot and states 'Margot Fonteyn used to go to Devon with her mother and younger brother for their summer holidays when she was a teenager'. There follows a detailed account of the walk from Chiddenbrook to Hollacombe Hamlets. Margot is quoted as saying 'We thought it marvellous to bring tents and camp out in the rolling fields. We would explore the country lanes, feeling the history in them and sensing the people who had used them. I loved the deep Devon lanes sunk into the dark red earth.'

The description of the walk includes a vivid description of Cromwell's Cutting and the visits of the opposing armed forces during the civil war.

Dame Margot had many colourful romantic connections in her 71 years, including a very close and long term friendship with Russian ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev.

In 1955 she married a Panamanian she had met when he was a law student in this country. A diplomat, he survived an assassination attempt in 1964 but was left wheelchair bound for the rest of his life. Margot remained devoted to him until his death in 1989 and she died two years later.

Chairman's chatter

We all know that as we get older it becomes even more difficult to cope with change. In our executive committee we have been thinking about how to proceed once the COVID 19 regulations start to be lifted.



The difficulty is knowing exactly how everyone will feel about getting out and about. Perhaps we'll all be reassured by having had one or perhaps two jabs by then. During the lockdowns many of us have got used to using Zoom, keeping in touch with family and friends and 'attending' talks etc.; life will probably never be the same again. Please do visit our website to keep up with our plans and join in if you possibly can with the various Zoom talks on offer. We hope that we will be able to re-open the museum sometime in June and restart regular talks in September but whether these will be a combination of actual and Zoom, or all Zoom, it is too soon to say.

Meantime, we hope to make use of two very positive local developments. These are Crediton Radio (www.creditonradio.org) and www.creditoninandaround.co.uk. Look them up and see their interesting and useful stuff.

David Nation
Society Chairman.

www.creditonhistory.org.uk

This is the address of the museum website. It contains information about local history, an up to date diary of events and links to other museum websites.

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.

Crediton Museum & Heritage Centre



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