

## WALKING TO DEVON

The Society held its AGM in the Boniface Centre on Monday 11 September, and at the meeting, Sandra Cooper, chairman for the past 3 years stood down, and the society's archivist John Heal was elected in her place. Also standing down after serving as secretary for six years, was David Nation, and Tim Sedgewick was elected in his place.



Sandy Haughton and Andrea Rowe with Ian Porter

John Heal's first act as chairman was to thank Sandra and David for the sterling service to the society throughout their time in office. Sandra will continue as deputy archivist and David continues on the committee.

Immediately following the AGM, CAHMS member and friend and Trustee of Tiverton Museum, Sandy Haughton gave a talk entitled: "In the footsteps of lace makers – celebrating 200 years of Heathcoat's factory in Tiverton".

Her story began with the birth of John Heathcoat near Derby in 1783. He set up in business on his own and after watching how his sisters produced lace, in 1808 he designed a machine to mechanise its production, and at about this time he moved to Loughborough. His new machines set him at odds with workmen who feared for their jobs and in 1816 the "Luddites" destroyed 55 lace frames.

Because of this Heathcoat moved to Tiverton, to an unoccupied woollen mill, and many of the Loughborough workforce walked the two hundred miles to Tiverton to work in the mill.

And so the celebration walk, which was organised by Sandy and Andrea Rowe from Tiverton, and Ian Porter from Loughborough. The walk took place in June and July 2016 and followed canal towpaths as far as possible. The walkers were met at the Tiverton factory by local dignitaries, Sir Ian Heathcoat-Amory a descendant of John Heathcoat, directors and pensioners of Heathcoat Fabrics.

Exhausting!

### www.creditonhistory.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 museum websites.

You can also find us on Facebook where we also have up to date information.

## Chairman's chatter

This is my first "chatter" since my election as Chairman in September. The first few talks have been very interesting and varied. I was fortunate enough to be sitting at the front for Richard Parker's talk on the Cathedral Green fire, and could hear what he had to say. I know that many of you found it very difficult to hear him. We are aware of the problem and are taking steps to improve the situation for future meetings.



Our Christmas event at the Three Little Pigs was very well attended and people were well fed by the more than adequate buffet. An enjoyable time was had by all.

The "Down on the Farm" exhibition at the museum this year was one of our most successful and it is clear that people prefer things to look at rather than a lot of reading! We have taken this on board and this year we will be aiming at a similar display.

The 2018 exhibition will be about childhood and will include toys, a sweet shop and a schoolroom. We are looking for a number of items - a chalk board, slates, an abacus, and a dunce's cap. We also need glass jars for the sweet shop. If you do have anything you think might be useful please contact Helena Sykes, email at csykes162@btinternet.com.

John Heal  
Society Chairman.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

The Society has an archive of more than 1000 photos kept in the museum. Copies of many are available for purchase and contact can be made through our website.

[creditonhistory.org.uk](http://creditonhistory.org.uk).

## 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



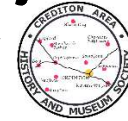
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# Crediton Area History & Museum Society



[www.creditonhistory.org.uk](http://www.creditonhistory.org.uk)



Members and Friends Newsletter

January 2018

## THE ROYAL CLARENCE FIRE



The November meeting of the Society listened to a talk by Richard Parker an Exeter-based archaeologist, entitled "The Fire at the Royal Clarence Hotel". The more complete title would probably have been "St Martin's Parish and the Fire at the Royal Clarence Hotel" because Richard's talk was mostly about the history and development of the parish of St Martins that lies between the High Street and Cathedral Close, St Martin's Lane and Broadgate, brought into sharp focus by the fire.

The parish boundaries were laid out in the late Saxon period and Richard began by showing a series of slides of the parish overlain onto a modern Ordnance Survey plan. These included the parish boundary in 1222, St Martins Gate and Broadgate, the Saxon churches within the parish and nearby, the residences of the canons, vicars choral, single clergymen and others, and finally land ownership. Richard also showed a 16C plan drawn by John Hooker that still showed how relatively undeveloped land fronting Cathedral Yard was compared with the high street which was by then fully built up.

Richard then showed a series of slides showing how the Broadgate (demolished in 1829) and the adjoining property (now Pizza Express) developed over time. Starting in 1550 with the original two-storey three-gabled building, encroaching into the cathedral graveyard in front by 1700, extending upwards in the 19C and finally appearing as we see it today by 1870. To illustrate the encroachment into the graveyard Richard showed a present day photograph of the next door building with its upper floors set back on the 16C building line and only the ground floor encroaching. Richard then moved to the St Martins Lane end of the parish and showed a series of slides of his interpretation of how the Ship Inn developed from its original two storeys in 1450 to four storeys in 1750. On the opposite side of the lane, the Royal Clarence was developing, and Richard showed a ground floor plan dated at about 1850, with the Exeter Bank and The Well House still separate properties. He then

superimposed on the plan the layout of how a grand medieval house would have fitted, and superimposed on a modern photograph, his interpretation of how 13C, 16C and 17C elevations and extra storeys added in the 18C, might have looked.

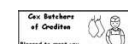
The fire started in the Castle Art Gallery building and Richard showed an 1870 sketch of the front elevation before it was rebuilt as a dental surgery shortly after. He also showed a series of slides of the very impressive interior that has been totally lost; also slides of his interpretation of how the building developed between the 15C and 17C.

Turning to The Well House, which Richard described as a "Miraculous Survival". He showed a series of slides of his interpretation of how the building developed from a 15C/16C two-storey building to the five storey building that was severely damaged in the fire.

Richard concluded his talk by showing slides of several 15C buildings in the high street that survived the fire. Slides showing how simple 15C "hall" houses with few internal partitions and smoke-blackened roof timbers (the result of there being no chimneys and smoke having to filter out through the thatched roof) developed into multi-roomed houses that grew upwards as additional stories were added. Richard's talk was borne out of the shock and sense of bereavement that the fire caused, and the realisation that the loss of historic buildings could have been so much worse. Thanks are due to Richard for his impressive knowledge of the parish that was so nearly lost.



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## THE WHITEHORSE HILL, DARTMOOR CIST



The October meeting of the society heard a very interesting talk by Jane Marchand who – prior to her retirement – was the Dartmoor National Park Authority chief archaeologist, about archaeological finds at the White Horse Hill cist burial site on Dartmoor, that was excavated three years ago.

The story began 4000 years ago when the cist (a large stone box buried in the ground) originated. It was the latest of over 200 found on Dartmoor, close to Hangingstone Hill (Dartmoor's third highest hill) near the Okehampton military road.

The cist was first uncovered in 1999 when it was reported to have eroded from the side of a mound of peat. Because of its exposed position and the unstable nature of the peat early decisions had to be made about excavating the remains. Excavation was limited to Christmas or August because the site is a military range – which meant the Ministry of Defence had to agree to the excavation. Jane told her audience that the MoD were actually very helpful and even arranged for the site staff to reside in the Okehampton Camp. Eventually the Cornish Archaeological Unit were commissioned to carry out the excavation because they had a lot of experience of excavating burials in peat. The cist top was dated to early bronze age (2000 BC) but the bottom was older and dated at neolithic.

Material was sent to Wessex Conservation Laboratory in Chippenham for examination and conservation. English Heritage's bone expert reported that the skeletal remains were those of a young person 15-22, "slight and gracile form" and carbon dated at 1800BC.

The bag found in the cist was made from an intricately woven nettle textile with finely worked calf leather. Inside were a bracelet, beads including amber – probably from the Baltic; also four studs made from spindlewood and dated to 1700 BC - the earliest evidence of woodturning in Britain.

Forty experts from as far away as the Orkneys were involved in the excavation and analysis of what turned out to be a very important early bronze age burial site and contents, and a 3-month exhibition at Plymouth Museum attracted 25,000 visitors.

Thanks to Jane for a most interesting talk.

## MINING AT NEWTON ST CYRES!

The Society's first talk of 2018 entitled "Mining and Miners of Newton St Cyres" was given by Brian Please from the Newton St. Cyres History Group.

Brian showed a series of slides to illustrate his talk and proudly claimed that Upton Pyne together with Newton St. Cyres had "the first commercially successful manganese mines in the world." He had to admit that the Upton Pyne mine was first however – opening in 1770 – compared with Newton St Cyres in 1790. The Upton Pyne workings were very shallow and the ore was extracted by surface excavation. The Upton Pyne mine closed in 1822 and the only evidence there today is the pond at the east end of the village which is the water-filled mine working.

Deeper workings were necessary at Newton St Cyres, with an access shaft, ventilation shafts and adits. The Newton St Cyres mine operated in fits and starts from 1790 and ceased production in 1882. It had its main shaft and works near Hayne Farm and an adit (shallowly sloping tunnel) emerged near Ford Farm alongside the A377. Very little evidence of the mine exists today – a fenced off ventilation shaft near Hayne Farm and the adit portal emerging near Ford Farm with a view into the adit, being the main relics. When the mines were active manganese was then used principally in the glass and pottery industries and it was used locally in Exeter and Topsham. The ore was taken to Middle Mill in Exwick (the large, sorry looking building is still there today). The nearby Buddle Lane is named after the "buddling" that took place there as part of the purification process.

Lead and silver were also mined at Newton St Cyres to the south of the village, and confusingly the main centre was at Tin Pits Hill. Lead and silver were mined in Roman times although it probably wasn't until the early 1700's that mining got underway, and carried on in fits and starts until the late 1800's. Old Mine was near Widden Cottage on the way to Common Down Plantation. New Mine was dug in a westerly direction to try and get deeper but due to a miscalculation nothing was gained.

Brian also showed a slide of the names of the many people involved in the mining, and – perhaps not surprisingly – many were Cornish or of Cornish origins, and many stayed and married in to the community. Sadly Brian also had to refer to a number of deaths, and in 1842 John Crump and John Barnes were found dead at the Forde Farm adit portal having been washed down the adit by flood water. And in 1853 William Nichols who was mine captain at the silver mine died when he was riding up the mine shaft in a "kibble" (bucket) and was knocked out and fell to his death.

A grim end to a fascinating talk.



Brian with treasurer Alan Sharpe

## THE RED CROSS SIGN SEQUEL

The appeal for information about the sign in Market Street together with further research has thrown more light on the sign. Several older members remember visiting the hall during WWII to receive their dose of malt extract.

Others remember it being a tile shop run by John Bexter. The building was subsequently demolished by Eric and Alan Rodd in order to open up an access from North Street.

"Devon 31" and "Devon 56" on the sign refer to the two WWI VAD hospitals in Crediton. Devon 56 being the isolation hospital in the grounds of Crediton Work House (now two dwellings in the grounds of Western Lodge) and Devon 31 being the former Liberal Club and now the General Buller pub, with the ward being in what is now the bar main seating area. The British Red Cross website has revealed the names of many local people who worked in the hospitals, notably Elinor Louisa Buller of Downes and Constance Shelley from Shobrooke Park. Most notable, because there is a photograph of her is Bessie Matthews from East Village who served from August 1917 to March 1919; her pay was £20 p.a.. Her neice is Cath Metherall who has lived in Okefield Avenue with her husband John for more than 60 years, and she remembers her well. Bessie moved up north with her husband after he was discharged from the army.



Bessie Matthews

## JOE MITCHELL'S FINGER POST SAVED



Joe Mitchell was a carpenter who learned his trade from his father who ran a wheelwright's business at Knowle Village, near Coplestone, where Joe was born in 1908. As the family business ran down, in 1929 Joe got a job with Devon County Council, after demonstrating his carpentry skills by making a test piece! Over the next 43 years Joe made and maintained all the finger posts (signposts) for miles around. Repairs were often carried out on site, which Joe reached by bicycle, and all the work was done with hand tools. The distinctive design was Joe's and the material used solid Devon oak for the post and pine for the fingers.

Following Joe's death in 1993 "Carpenter's Cottage" was sold complete with some of his tools which were subsequently donated to the museum by the new owner.

Very few of Joe's finger posts remain and they are likely to eventually disappear altogether. So Crediton Museum have recently been delighted to acquire Joe's 3-finger post that stood outside Forches Cottage in Higher Road until about 20 years ago. The fingers point to Tiverton etc. to the east, Okehampton etc. to the west and 'Crediton 1/2' to the south (down Alexandra Road).

The photo shows committee member David Nation with the finger post, along with some of Joe's carpentry tools.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

CAHMS events 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.

- 12 Feb "The tanner, the pauper and the lunatic". By Eilly Babbedge
- 14 Feb "Mills in the Devon landscape", by Martin Watts Newton St Cyres History Group event.
- 26 Feb "Prostitution in North Devon", by Peter Christie. Bow and District Historical Society event
- 12 Mar "The North Devon savages", by Peter Christie.
- 14 Mar "18C Newton St Cyres" by Brian Please. NSCHG event.
- 26 Mar "Mills in the Devon landscape", by Martin Watts BDHS event.
- 9 Apr "An in-Cider's view", by Barney Butterfield
- 18 Apr "Devon's Lost Industries", by Felicity Goodall Crediton U3A event
- 18 Apr "The Pirate Queen", by Susan Ronald. NSCHG event.
- 23 Apr "Belgian refugees in Devon", by Ciaran Stoker. BDHS event.

- 14 May CAHMS Village Tour
- 16 May "WWI Hospitals in Exeter", by Julia Neville NSCHG event.
- 28 May "Margaret Pedler: Zeal's Queen of Romance" BDHS event.
- 25 Jun "The Church of St James, Jacobstowe". BDHS event.
- 23 Jul Visit to Dowrich. BDHS event
- 15 Aug "The River Exe over time", by Dr. Jenny Bennett. Crediton U3A event.
- 19 Sept Talk on the ancient three hares motif. NSCHG event
- 24 Sept "Okehampton - Historic Gateway to North Dartmoor", by Andrew Thompson. BDHS event
- 17 Oct The rise and fall of Mosley's Blackshirts in Crediton and Devon", by Todd Gray. Crediton U3A event.

CAHMS entry 50p members, £3.50 non member  
NSCHG entry £2.00. BDHG entry £3.00 non members