

# NORTH DEVON SAVAGES

The March talk in the Boniface Centre was given by Peter Christie from Bideford, entitled "The North Devon Savages". It was about the notorious Cheriton family who lived in the small village of Nymet Rowland from the late 1700's until 1880.

The family first appeared in Nymet in 1798 when John Cheriton occupied a 32-acre smallholding called Upcot right in the centre of the parish; it had no cottage and the family were said to live in a windowless barn. John and Mary Ann (they were not married) lived there, and according to the 1851 census they had 3 daughters (Charlotte, Eliza and Matilda) and a son William – all therefore illegitimate. At that time the population of Nymet was 99, living in 17 houses.

The Cheritons' notoriety began in 1854 when Christopher was fined one pound at Chulmleigh Petty Sessions for assaulting his neighbour. Over the next 25 years there were to be 66 other court cases involving the Cheritons – 35 very minor, 3 involving poaching, 13 dismissed and 15 receiving short gaol sentences.

Their living conditions fuelled their notoriety, for their dwelling was positively medieval with no windows or doors, a bed pit dug in the floor where the whole family slept, and the space shared with "a large black sow".

Their way of life was such that it attracted the attention of the local and national press, and even the home secretary Henry Bruce! In October 1871 the Daily Telegraph sent their reporter James Greenwood to Nymet to interview the family, and his article described the family as "Bestial", "Filthy", "Expressively vicious" and "Hideously dirty."

Not everyone was against them however, and support for the Cheritons came from the Reverend T.J. Lesley, an independent minister from Appledore (who had once been a minister in Lapford), who wrote a long letter to the North Devon Journal in which he wrote: "Greenwood's article was greatly exaggerated and highly sensational."

The Cheritons also made their way into print when in 1870 George Pulman wrote "Devonshire Sketches including Pixie Law and some account of ancient and modern Savages in Devon" where the Cheritons – now known as "The Savages", made an appearance. In 1898 the Devon author Sabine Baring-Gould wrote "An Old English Home" in which they featured. His novel "John Herring" talks about a family called the Cobbledicks who are obviously the Cheritons.

There was a long-running feud between the Lord of the Manor John Partridge and the Cheritons, fuelled by their misdemeanours and their lifestyle. Rumour had it that the rich farmers would like to rid the parish of the Cheritons to avoid having to pay them parish relief which was funded by the large landowners. Nymet was also a closed parish, and the landowners by not allowing house building, kept the population down, in turn keeping down the landowners' parish relief liability!

Christopher Cheriton – who by then was living with his daughter Matilda in Sandford – died in 1884 aged 81; His son William died aged 78 in 1918 and both are buried in Crediton churchyard.

A most interesting and amusing talk by Peter; what carryings-on in the tiny village of Nymet Rowland!



## Chairman's chatter

We have now completed the winter season of talks, and thanks to Judy Tucker it has been a most interesting and varied series. The April talk by Barny Butterfield was particularly informative and amusing. Unfortunately I missed the talk on the "North Devon Savages", but thanks to Mike Brett's recordings I hope to catch up on it during the summer.



The museum is now open and do try and visit. We often say how good each exhibition is, but I have no hesitation in saying this one is the best ever. Entitled "Childhood Memories", it includes many colourful exhibits and pictures. Helena Sykes was in charge of planning, with the support of a small team and they have all done a marvellous job. The Mayor felt the need to praise the exhibition at a public meeting I attended last week.

You will find a notice with this newsletter containing among other things our "Privacy Policy". This is a legal requirement under a new Act of Parliament. Please complete the form and return it to us in order that we can keep you informed of meetings, events etc.

John Heal  
Society Chairman

## 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 have up to date information.

## 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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# Crediton Area History & Museum Society



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Members and Friends Newsletter  
May 2018

## YOUNG AT HEART

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES.

This year's exhibition opened on Wednesday 11th April following a very successful preview the previous night.

The exhibition gives everyone a chance to relive their childhood through sections including children's television, comics, books, school dinners, childhood illnesses and Crediton children at play. There are sweet and toy shops and a Victorian school room. Notable exhibits in the school room include replica finger stocks and a back straightening board (made by CAHMS member and retire boat builder, Adrian Noyes), samplers and a school bible. Finger stocks were used in Victorian times to stop children fidgeting or fiddling with their hands. They appear quite barbaric and Adrian has made a spare pair for today's children to try in our play corner. An extract from a 1910 Down Saint Mary Log Book recorded by the teacher reads:

*I received an impudent letter from the mother of one of the scholars:*

*"Madam You said Tommy was dirty this morning which I can say is a lie as I wash him myself. You have been on a little bit too much lately so please mind your own business in future. I shall send Tommy to Coppelstone School tomorrow. I am not going to be upset by you every day!"*

There is a sweetshop to excite the tastebuds, with an array of old-fashioned sweets, some provided by local

confectioners, Bristows, as well as others no longer available today. The photos of children's television programmes ranging from Muffin the Mule to more recent programmes including Wurzel Gummidge have provoked many memories from visitors. The large number of toys on display include construction kits by Meccano, Triang and Lego; Dinky vehicles; a dolls' house; Pelham Puppets; Board Games and dolls.

We often think that the good old days are the best, but a quick look at the section on health may change your mind! There is a magnificent Punch and Judy booth with all the figures made by CAHMS member Martin Binks, and it is hoped that some shows will be held in the summer to reflect this traditional form of seaside entertainment.

A CD of nursery rhymes recorded by the 4th Crediton Brownies especially for the exhibition can be heard playing in the background to enhance the "Childhood Experience"

We are extremely grateful to those involved in bringing this year's exhibition to fruition and to those who have loaned items for the display.

In addition to the exhibition there is an opportunity for adults to support the museum and win a monetary prize by entering the Young at Heart £1 quiz. The quiz runs throughout the summer and can be obtained from the Museum or a committee member.

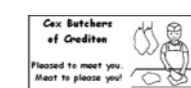
New to the museum this year are two finger posts originally made by the late Joe Mitchell from Knowle and restored by Adrian Noyes.



Helena Sykes



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## AN IN-CIDER'S VIEW

April's talk in the Boniface Centre was entitled "An In-cider's View" and was presented by Barny Butterfield the proprietor of Sandford Orchards, Commonmarsh Lane, Crediton. Barny told his audience that he first made cider when he was at school but the company was formed by him and his wife in 2002 and they took over the former premises of the Creedy Valley Cider Works in 2014. The building was apparently built by Norman and Pring Brewers in 1935 in six weeks (!) The Norman family, who owned 3 breweries in Exeter and about one hundred pubs, decided to produce their own cider because their patrons drank so much. They purchased cider barns that were on the present site, from William and George Burrows who ran a cider business at the White Hart Hotel (now the Crown of Crediton Cantonese restaurant/takeaway). The surrounding land was then in agricultural use and the lane leading to the work off Mill Street is called Tolleys, which apparently means "ploughed fields."



Historically there was no excise duty on cider. In 1763 Lord Bute put a tax of 4 shillings per hogshead (then 63 gallons) on cider. The result was devastating and a coffin representing the death of cider was carried through Crediton. There is a cider monument designed by Capability Brown at Currey Rivel on the land of cider broker William Pincet. It was commissioned by William Pitt the Elder who had opposed Lord Bute's tax; in gratitude Pincet had bequeathed his 3,000 acre estate to Pitt who spent some of his new found wealth on the monument. "An Englishman's home is his castle" is said to come from the quotation inscribed on the monument.

Barny showed slides of a straw press at Prowse Farm, East Village, so called because it is loaded with two tons of apple pulp encased in straw, built up layer on layer into a pyramid shape. This laborious contraption is still used to make 7-8000 litres per year. Cider drinking increased during 100 years war because French wine was hard to get. Barny said that the first carbonated drink was Devonshire cider and this was made possible because English glass blowers could make high enough quality glass to contain the pressure - 50 years before Dom Perignon started making his champagne!

Barny referred to Franklin's Night (19, 20 and 21st May) - the last frost of the year (when the devil and the cider maker go to fight) and he has plans to revive the tradition.

Barny talked about Owen Burrige who was the last working cooper in Crediton. Owen had given his tools to Tuckers Maltings when he retired and when Barny mentioned to the company's Jonathon Webber that he would like to purchase them, Tuckers kindly donated them. He now plans to sharpen and restore these tools. Barny then showed slides of the 10,000 gallon oak vat recently purchased from Sheppeys the Wellington cider maker; built in 1903 in Frome it weighs 7 tons empty! Barny told his audience that he had been quoted £250,000 to build one new!

Barny's talk was very much enjoyed by the large audience, and whilst he could very well make his living as a raconteur, cider making is clearly his core business.

### THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS

Came in to effect on the 25th May. This is an E.U. regulation intended to offer everyone greater control of their data. This does mean we need your consent to continue to contact you so please complete and return the enclosed consent form

## THE TANNER, THE LUNATIC AND THE PAUPER

The February talk was given by CAHMS member Ellie Babbedge from Cheriton Fitzpaine, recently retired from teaching. Ellie described the village as being kind and thoughtful.

Ellie first talked about the tannery, established at Upham, Cheriton Fitzpaine in 1713 by local farmer William Sharland. Leather tanning was very labour intensive and so Sharland build a number of cottages and a smithy near Upham to house some of the workers. William's son Peter took over the tannery in 1738 and his eldest son William took over later followed by his son Thomas in 1813. Thomas' first wife died before she could produce a son and although he married again, he died suddenly at the age of 50 with no sons to take on the business. His widow struggled on for a while, but eventually the tannery closed and the workers moved away, their cottages demolished and the property sold. Such was the importance of the tannery to the area, Cheriton Fitzpaine's population of 1200 in the 1850's had fallen to 610 by the 1890's after the tannery had closed and is no more than that today.

Ellie's second tale entitled "The Lunatic" was about Herman Taylor, an agricultural worker who lived in the village and who had married Catherine in 1704 and had a family. He laboured on farms around Upham and although he was never in the Poor House, he did receive money twice from the village's Tucker's Bequest and entries in the village Poor Accounts record money spent on his medical treatment. Ellie wondered why the parish spent so much on an ordinary farm labourer because in total the Poor Account spent more than fifty pounds. It appears he wasn't cured however because Ellie later found details of a twenty four watch being kept over him for two weeks. After that Ellie could find no further records of Taylor and no burial record but his wife Catherine had remarried and bore her new husband a child. Taylor's children remained in the village and were not stigmatised as lunatics and their children so often were.

The third part of Ellie's talk was entitled "The Pauper". Prior to the Crediton workhouse being built the poor were looked after in their respective villages. Before the dissolution of the monasteries, the poor would receive help from them so after there was nowhere, increasing pressure on parishes. Henry VIII and Elizabeth passed Acts that regulated how the poor were cared for and enabled parishes to collect rates from property owners to care for the poor.

The village Poor House was built by John Harris (the absentee lord of the manor) in 1648; it later became the village school and is now a private house. Harris also built paupers' cottages the rents of which went to the Poor House; they were later sold off and five are now the Ring o' Bells pub.

Thanks are due to Ellie, whose talk was well received by her large audience.



## ROBIN LANGHORNE

The Society had learned of the sad death of Robin Langhorne, at the age of 92.

Robin came to Crediton as a young teacher at what was then Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, and saw out his whole career at the school. Details of his career and other achievements will, I am sure, be addressed in other tributes to him. I will concentrate here mainly on his contribution to CAHMS.

He was a founder member of the Society in 1984 and he served three periods as Chairman. His final term ending in 2002.

During the early years of the Society the emphasis was more on achieving a museum, and exhibitions were held almost every year. The first of these exhibitions was on the Civil War and Robin persuaded his school to provide accommodation for it.

Robin was a regular speaker at meetings, a task that came easily to him because of his teaching career. He also led tours of the town and regularly guided visitors around the Parish Church of which he was a Governor, elected to the post in 1976.

In 1992 the Society acquired many documents from Arthur King Robinson which were the foundation for our archive, and were initially houses in premises in North Street, but in 1996 when an unaffordable rent was demanded, Robin, along with Mary Blamey, obtained permission from Henry Parker to use the former Estate Office at Downes for a peppercorn rent and the archives have been held there ever since.

In recent years Robin took more of a back seat, but he still gave regular talks, and for as long as he was fit to do so, walks around the town. At his death he still held the post of Auditor to the Society.

John Heal



## DOWRICH VISIT



34 members assembled at Dowrich near Sandford on Monday 14th May, at the invitation of CAHMS member Michael Lee who has lived there since 1981 and farmed the land there all his life. Dowrich is Listed Grade II and has sixteenth century origins, but as the photos in Michael's book "Dowrich - the story of an old Devon House and its Farm" show, it has been altered on many occasions during the intervening years. The photo shows members listening to Michael, with the gatehouse in the background. A retiring collection raised £68.55 for Sandford Church

### Review of Ellie Babbage's book "The Bidlakes of Bridestowe" Roxana Kelsey

The time period covered is from the mid 13th century to the present day. Numerous Bidlakes are detailed (omitting those already researched and published). There is also a chapter on the Bidlake-Wollocombe line of succession. There are many illustrations with excerpts from original documents and there is a comprehensive index at the end of the book. The Civil War and other subjects are reported at some depth, also how the war affected the West Country and how the Bidlakes may have been involved. The Bidlake clock makers in London also have a well illustrated chapter. There is an intriguing chapter entitled "The Bidlakes and the Young Pretender" which shows how truth can be stranger than fiction! The pretender was Richard Becklake of Crediton, a servant who conned many people in high places that he was a Bidlake and true heir; certainly there is enough material for a novel. There is also a brief history of Bidlake House. This is an easy and informative read for those with an interest in local history. The book is available at the museum and in the Community Bookshop.

### 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.

28 May "Margaret Pedler: Zeal's Queen of Romance" Bow and District Historical Society 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 Dart-Moor" by Andrew Thomprson. BDHS event.

17 Oct "The rise and fall of Mosley's Blackshirts in Crediton and Devon." by Dr. Todd Gray Crediton U3A event

17 Oct "Fairgrounds at War. 1939-45" by Kay Townsend. A NSCHG event.

22 Oct "Devon Great Consols - a Mine of Mines" by Rick Stewart. A BDHS event.

14 Nov "The Clarence - A History and Update" by Dr Todd Gray. A NSCHG event.

21 Nov "Crime and Punishment." by Sir Neil Butterfield. A Crediton U3A event.

26 Nov Bow History AGM and Social

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