

Crediton Area History & Museum Society



www.creditonhistory.org.uk



Members
and
Friends
Newsletter
Spring
2022

MISS SEARLE'S SWEET SHOP - Part Three

Continuing the reminiscences of Phyllis Wreyford (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.

Schooling.

All us seven year olds were very excited about going up to Standard One in the main school and my mother made me a new dress. Our teacher was to be Miss Horrell, whom I knew as she also taught us Sunday school. She used to cycle from Hookway every day.

I went up to Standard Two where my teacher was Miss Pantless who favoured me and got me to work well. I was the only one who could tell the time, so I was sent outside every day to the church clock, I was very proud to do this. We started knitting and sewing in earnest, as well as geography and harder sums.

Standard Three was a big advance; we started joined up writing, as well as the usual subjects. Our teacher was Miss Gibbings who lived with Miss Panther. Then came Standard Four – Miss Kemp – she used to teach at night school as well, and brother Bill knew her very well too. I wasn't in her class for long, as four of us were put into Standard Six with the headmistress Miss Smith. Here we did quite advanced work, as the top class was Standard Seven for the 11 year olds who were due to leave that year. At the age of 10 we could 'Sit for a scholarship' to go to the High School for girls or Grammar School for boys. Not all parents wished their children to go on to these schools, as they wanted them to leave at 14 and start work. Then one morning in assembly our headmistress announced that May Turner and I had won a scholarship. May's father was a policeman in Crediton and they lived in Mill St. We eventually got a list of clothes and games equipment etc. we needed. My mother made my tunic and blouses. We wore black stockings, thick navy knickers and had to have a pair of 'indoor' shoes to keep



May Day in Haywards School playground.

at school, and lunch times and afternoons there were prefects at the doors checking us. Mum made me a bag with my initials embroidered on it – very posh – for my indoor shoes, gym shoes, etc.. Miss Clarke was Irish so she was 'Paddy' Clarke.

The headmistress was very severe and her nickname was 'Skin'. Then there was Miss King who taught maths, geography and science. She was small and was very keen but fussy so she had the name 'Bantam'. The only other one I can remember was Miss Gray who taught Latin, she was fat and very strict; we used to say 'Emma Gray is a battle cruiser – none of Five A dare refuse her!' Miss Southall taught history, and was short but looked quite mannish always wearing fair Isle pullovers etc. so she was Sam Southall; she was Scottish.

We had 'prep' every evening which at first took about an hour, but as we were older we had to work for 1½ hours and had several subjects to do over the weekend.

For games we either had hockey or netball. We had gym in the Grammar School Boys gym as there were no facilities in the High School. Most of the lesson was taken up, putting on our outdoor shoes to walk there, then putting on gym shoes, then putting on outdoor shoes to walk back, then changing into our indoor shoes again.



CHRISTMAS EXHIBITION IN THE MUSEUM



A BUSY SATURDAY AFTERNOON IN THE MUSEUM.

We missed welcoming visitors to the museum when Coronavirus forced us to close in 2020, so the Exhibition Committee decided to put on a Christmas themed exhibition this year. We had a lot of fun putting the exhibition together. It has been very well received and we have had a record number of visitors through the doors. On Saturday 27 November, as part of the Christmas in Crediton celebration, we opened from 10:00 until 18:30 and had over 80 visitors during the day. The exhibition included a Victorian family scene, with a tree and a table laid ready for the family Christmas meal. Visitors discovered why we have Christmas stockings, advent calendars, crackers, Christmas cards, Christmas trees and so much more. Children have enjoyed a scavenger hunt, quiz and posting letters to Santa in our post box.



READY FOR OUR VISITORS!

Local people also enjoyed our display of photos of past Christmas celebrations; kindly supplied by the Crediton Courier.

We have received so much positive feedback and compliments about this exhibition, so are now looking forward to opening in the Spring with an exhibition all about the 1950's - look out for more information in the New Year.

Sadly, due to ill health, some of our volunteers were unable to take part this time, but we were delighted to welcome two new volunteers who were a great help in setting up and stewarding the Christmas exhibition. As always, we need volunteers as well as donations to help us to keep the Museum open and to continue to make local history available to all, so if you have a few hours to spare please think about joining us next year.

THIS APRIL'S EXHIBITION.

"Back to the 1950's."

.After Covid forced us to postpone this exhibition, we are finally preparing to open the doors of the Museum in April, to welcome you to go back in time to the 1950's. We are particularly interested in Crediton during this period, so if you have iconic photos, stories or artefacts from then do get in touch.



We will also be covering events such as the Queen's coronation, which will tie in nicely with her Jubilee, as well as important and social events from Crediton and around the world.

If you have a little time to spare, we would welcome your help – in particular we need Stewards to welcome visitors to the Museum. If you would like more information or would like to loan items for the exhibition, please contact Cheryl: 07974 262025 /cherylalewis@btinternet.com

ZOOMING and YOUTUBE.

By now there can't be many of us who are not familiar with "Zooming", and the opportunity it provides us with to attend meetings and events without getting out of our chairs or exposing ourselves to Covid. Details of "What's On" can be seen on our website.

Talks that are shown live on the Crediton Library Zoom page can be viewed later on Youtube by searching there for "Crediton Library", when the talks can also be downloaded for later viewing.

SARAH GREEN

We were saddened to learn of Sarah's death only a few weeks ago; she was receiving cancer treatment in the RD&E when complications unfortunately set in and she passed away.

Sarah was a member of our society and gave invaluable help over a number of years including designing and maintaining the CAHMS website. Her enthusiasm and commitment were infectious. She was a doer, dynamic and with genuine concern for people, the environment and society in general. Sarah will be greatly missed and we send out condolences to her family and friends.

DISPUTE, DISASTER AND RECOVERY.

- an exciting project sponsored by CAHMS and led by Tony Gale

As part of his Masters degree in History at Exeter University one of our members well known as the chair of the local U3A History group, Tony Gale produced a proposal for a museum presentation based on the 1743 map of Crediton high street. The map was commissioned in 1743 by William Strode, a wealthy London merchant who was Lord of the Manor at the time. Its purpose was in part to identify encroachments onto the highway as well as establishing ownerships of property, to enable Strode to collect his rents. The plan was in 5 sections but the whereabouts of parts 1 and 2 is currently unknown. You may have seen a facsimile of the map on the wall at the museum.

The proposal provoked considerable interest and Tony became aware that there was genuine potential for an exhibition which might be of more than purely local interest. The map offers a unique early snapshot of Crediton. The format and quality of the mapping is particularly notable – it may indeed be unique. There are two contemporary accounts of the Great Fire which could be used in conjunction with the map. So, Tony proposed that he recruit several local experts to help him interpret and understand the map and present the findings at our 2023 exhibition at the museum. The experts include our archivist John Heal, another of our members, expert genealogist, Elly Babbedge from Cheriton Fitzpaine, and historic buildings expert Peter Child, also from Cheriton Fitzpaine. We agreed and the project is now well underway. Tony and David Nation have attended meetings of the Town



Council, District Council and with our County councillors and offers of support, including some financial help, have been made. Two public consultations have taken place at the museum, where Tony has given his slide show presentation and these have met with enthusiastic responses. The Crediton Courier has covered the project, an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund is intended and Tony will continue to keep us all updated on progress.

ARTHUR RICHARDSON'S LEGACY

Members will know that CAHMS has a number of artifacts that belonged to Arthur Richardson the internationally-known violin maker who lived in Crediton's Park Street for much of his life. Amongst them was a selection of timbers that Richardson had accumulated during his career, and which were gathering dust in our Search Room at Downes. Our newsletter editor, Keith Mortimer, is neighbour to Shaun Newman, who since his retirement has become a luthier (guitar maker) of some repute, having made some two hundred instruments, many of which have found homes abroad.

It occurred to Keith that Shaun could possibly use some of that timber in one of his guitars and Shaun was delighted to receive it. Shaun used 100 year-old spruce ("1922" was written in pencil on the timber), which he had to painstakingly work to make it suitable to be the guitar's top.

Shaun is pictured here in his workshop in Searle Street with the guitar, which he says has an excellent tone.

A fitting tribute from one Crediton craftsman to another.



CAHMS FIRST ZOOM TALK IN THE MUSEUM

CAHMS first Zoom talk about Copplestone Cross took place online and in the museum, on the 14 January this year. The talk was given by CAHMS member and Crediton U3A Convenor Tony Gale M.A., and the photo shows members meeting together at the museum.

The stone – which stands in the middle of the A377 at Copplestone and marks the meeting place of Down St. Mary, Colebrooke and Crediton Hamlets parishes, and is traditionally regarded as the centre of Devon – is the oldest recorded monument in Mid Devon, and is first documented in a charter of 974AD. Then it was known as “the copelan stan” which is Old English for crested, rocking or chief stone (W.G. Hoskins favoured “crested”). The highly decorated stone – a measure of its importance – has clearly been altered at some stage and it may once have had a crest. The stone is of Dartmoor granite - geologists think from Merrivale quarry about 30 miles from Copplestone.

The stone is decorated on all 4 sides, and although the south west face is now heavily eroded and the north east face eroded to a lesser extent; all 4 faces were recorded by Sir Henry Dryden (1818-1880) and published in “The Antiquary” magazine. The north east face has two pictorial panels – one of two figures embracing and one of a figure on a horse, and a speculative article written by C.E. Way in 1878 suggested that the horseman was Bishop Putta because the stone is reputed to have been erected in 806AD as a memorial to him since he was supposedly murdered nearby when travelling between Crediton and Bishops Tawton. This story has become garbled over the years and Way's conjecture became widely accepted. It even fooled English Heritage whose Copplestone Cross interpretation panel informs about the murder of Bishop Putta of



CAHMS MEMBERS IN THE MUSEUM

Hereford and Later Rochester in 905, whereas the Hereford Putta actually died in 688AD almost 250 years earlier!

The cross was moved from its original position in 1969 in advance of road improvements, when the C1840s truncated pyramidal stone base was replaced by the present-day lower stonework.

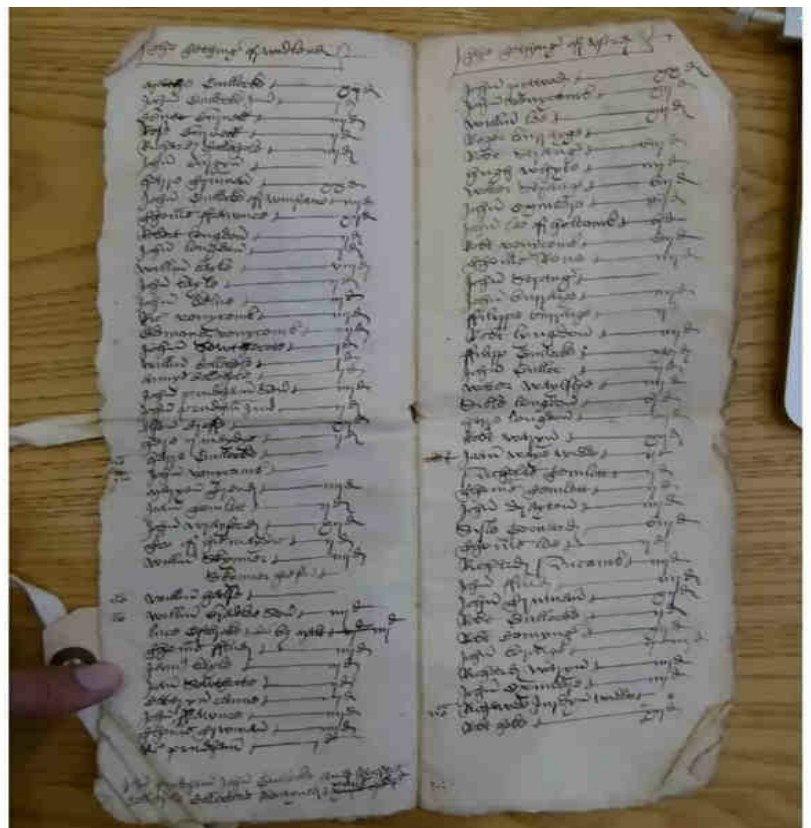
DR. TODD GRAY UNEARTHS FASCINATING INSIGHT INTO SIXTEENTH CENTURY CREDITON

In a recent Zoom lecture offered by the Devon & Cornwall Record Society, of which CAHMS is a member, well known academic and prolific author Dr Todd Gray spoke on discoveries he had made of 16th century records of local taxation in various Devon towns. Major amongst these was Crediton.

Todd gleaned a huge amount of information during his research, which will form the basis of a new book in due course, and Crediton will feature prominently in that. For us lesser mortals, it was enough to try to read the handwriting and this extract from the Crediton pages illustrates the problem!



Todd Gray



These really are Crediton cases!

“CREDITON” TEA SET

Margaret Atkinson from Wellington; (her father was Joe Mitchell of signpost fame) recently donated to the Society an 18 piece tea set featuring historic images of Crediton.



Each plate has a different image but the cups all have the same two images, with no image on the saucers. Margaret thinks she bought the set new probably about 25 years ago. We have contacted Bearnese Auction House in Exeter but they had no information about the set. If anyone can enlighten us, do let us know. The images show a plate and cup, and the maker's mark.

TEDBURN HISTORY AND INFORMATION SOCIETY

This new society contacted CAHMS chairman David Nation to announce that they have now acquired the use of the former chapel of rest at the village cemetery (not near the church) on a pepper corn rent



and are open for visits there every Wednesday from 2-5pm.

The Society is run by Karen Fletcher, tel. 07999490637, kb61856@hotmail.com, and Malcolm Little, tel, 0164761511, malcolmlittle1954@gmail.com

The photos show that they have set up this little chapel very well, with maps and many binders containing local information.

A CASE OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN THE 17TH CENTURY

The following is an extract from one of the notebooks of Mr Alfred Edwards a Crediton historian who lived in the 19th century.

At Crediton May 29th, 1670.

Mr T____ a non-conformist was desired by Mrs Northcot to pray in her family home, which accordingly he did. At which time came in one Philip Lendon, pretending to the gentlewoman his great desire of hearing something that might do his soul good. So she admitted the masked Hypocrite into her house, who after a little time went forth and informed the Constables there was a conventicle* at Mrs Northcot's. Five, therefore, with some others, came and found a few of their neighbours in the house, who were on May 30th summoned before Justice Tuckfield; who only upon the oath of this informer, convicted them of a conventicle (a cladestine

religious meeting); fined the minister £20 and the gentlewoman £20 for her house. Because the minister was no housekeeper, he levied £10 of the fine upon her, and £10 upon G Bodley, a weaver. According to Mrs Northcot, standing corn was seized and sold for £30 which was worth £50 or £60. And Mr G Bodley's very looms were distrained and carried away, whereby he was much disabled from getting a livelihood. And so barbarously cruel were the Officers in distraining, that they took away a poor weaver's clothes, and endeavoured to take away a poor maid's shift. And this gentlewoman Mrs Northcot is so perpetually disgusted (?), that she can scarcely talk with a friend about her ordinary affairs, but she meets with disturbances. Sometimes the Officers breaking open her doors when there is no meeting nor grounds of suspicion in that regard; so that not being able to endure their impetuosities, rage and oppressions any longer she is forced at last to leave the Town, where she was very charitable to the poor.

MOTOR CYCLE TEST AT CREDITON

The following is an extract from the Western Times dated Jan 5 1923

A large number of motoring enthusiasts assembled at the St. Lawrence Green, Crediton on Saturday morning to witness a motor cycle test by Mr. J. Eddy of the firm of Messrs. Pike and Co. Ltd, Exeter. The test, which was very interesting, was given on a £28 1½ h.p. Junior

Excelsior, 150 c.c., weighing only 112lb. The course chosen was St. Martin's Lane and George Hill, having a gradient of 1 in 5, and considered the steepest in the district with a distance of about 3/4 mile, Mr. Eddy gave his first demonstration by going up solo and afterwards ascended the hill again with a passenger on the carrier. The track was in a very rough condition owing to the heavy rain and wash. The test was in every way satisfactory and the rider was thanked for his demonstration.



The Great Chamber

ST NICHOLAS PRIORY, EXETER

A small group of CAHMS members visited Exeter's St Nicholas' Priory in August, where we were guided round by retired engineer Barry Flicker – all of course wearing our masks and social distancing!

The Priory (a small monastery) is claimed to be the oldest

standing building in Devon and has rare Norman features. It began life following William the Conqueror's victory at The Battle of Hastings, when in 1087 monks set up a new community in Exeter dedicated to St Nicholas a late Roman saint.

Medieval monasteries were laid out on four sides of an open square and all that now remains of the original buildings lie on its north and west sides. The buildings were remodelled and enlarged at the end of the fifteenth century and after the Dissolution of the Monasteries the Priory became a private house, was refurbished and “gentrified”, and Exeter merchant Nicholas Hurst occupied it with his family. After the family died out, the building fell into disrepair until it was purchased by Exeter City Council in 1913. Over the years the council has gradually consolidated the building, and 15 years ago it closed for major repairs – re-opening three years later to presented as the wealthy Elizabethan merchant's house that can be seen today. If you've never been there it's well worth a visit!



Looking into the Norman cellar



Barry Flicker in the Parlour

Chairman's chatter

Our exhibition designers led by Helena and Cheryl did a great job with the 'Xmas at the museum' mini exhibition which reminded people that we're still around! Many thanks to all those who helped mount and staff the exhibition. We're very exhibition. Following the lifting of COVID restrictions we will re-open the museum on the 20th April with the 1950s exhibition that was planned for 2020. More stewards are needed if we are to open as long as we used to so if you are in the slightest interested, please let us know.



We now have two archiving teams working two mornings a week at Downes. There is a huge amount of this interesting work to do so again, if you would like to really get stuck in to the history of our area and the people who lived and worked here, please get in touch.

After a reasonably successful period working with Crediton Library and local history groups to organise Zoom Talks during the pandemic, we will start 'actual' talks at the Boniface Centre in September. Details will be on the 'What's On' page on our website.

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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Supported by:

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