

Local History News

The newsletter of the
South Molton & District Archive
Local History Society

The Constables Room, Town Hall, Broad Street, South Molton EX36 3AB

Charity No. 900293 website: www.southmoltonmuseum.org

June 2015

Editor – Shirley Bray

Our annual slide show was very successful with a large number of enthusiastic people attending. Thank you to everyone who helped in any way. On March 3rd, Shirley, Veronica and Angela gave a presentation of photographs of Broad Street taken from the early 1900s - 1980's to members of the See Hear Group who meet at the drop-in centre at the Age Concern charity shop.

David Purnell is making progress with his research into South Molton's street names.

Our newest member, Phillip Norman, is planning to research the history of the Community College (former Secondary Modern School) and has written an article to explain this project.

On 19th May Veronica and Shirley spent the morning with two cousins from America whose great-grandfather had been born and brought up in the town. They were taken to the church, the parts of the town where their family had lived and to the cemetery where family members are buried. They donated £40 to the Archive in appreciation of work carried out on their behalf by Veronica.

Carole Pincombe is arranging for Archive members to go into the United Junior School during the summer holidays (probably August) to take photographs of the school. The date will be circulated when it has been arranged with the school caretaker.

South Molton: Rebuilding the community college

2015 and 2016 look to be pivotal years for South Molton's state-funded schools. With promises of new buildings for the town's primary and secondary schools such change offers a moment's pause to consider their wider changes. The secondary school's history, in particular, provides us with a case of a school that has closely tracked England's education policy changes from 1944. It has evolved constantly from the post-war provisions of Clement Atlee's LEA controlled 11-15 'Secondary Modern' school era, through to its current establishment as a comprehensive Cooperative Academy. Its serial name-changes over the years record these shifting times of both school-age schooling and adult learning. However, its being the 'big' school for a rural market town has perhaps isolated it from some pressures that have been felt more keenly in larger city schools over the past fifty years.

To celebrate South Molton's secondary school work through its first 60 years, is a project to gather recollections of school life and work from its students, teachers, parents and community groups of all ages. Recollections may come from spoken evidence, photographs, school books, letters, certificates, scrapbooks and many more, all to be collected and digitally collated to build a public online archive, and from which a history of those first sixty years can be written.

My interest is to research this era of the town's secondary schooling, when its striking Art Deco buildings first gave the town a then-new southerly skyline, and gave its children new opportunities. To capture what promises to be a similar architectural shift in the townscape, to a contemporary 2010s glass and steel building, plans are afoot to record the entire build on time-delay video, hotly followed by the demolition that follows. These films will make some history, and should involve current school students in providing us all with a lasting view of the changes, for future online viewing and lively material for the town museum.

Recording our secondary school's work, its people, events and buildings in publication, in audio recording and on film will come from collecting all available contemporary photographs, personal memories and documents. Meetings, drop-in sessions, social media sites and interviews to collect and digitise material and artefacts and will run through 2015 and 2016. Volunteers to help in this would be most welcome.

With so many people being connected with the school, a wide collection of contemporary sources should make interesting viewing, reading and listening

for future children and adults to enjoy. You may have materials you would like digitised for the archive. If so please contact me (email: phillip.norman.edu@gmail.com). I look forward to hearing from you.

Phillip Norman (Former SMCC teacher and governor)

Mayor Choosing 1930's – contributed by Sallie Fewings née Webber

It was customary after being elected that the Mayor gave a reception in the Mayor's Parlour for invited guests. On one occasion during the 1930's the Mayor invited two respected maiden ladies. The Mayor, being a whisky drinker, had plenty of drinks on offer but realised that he had nothing suitable to offer the two ladies. He asked the Borough Bailiff, who always attended the Mayor on all occasions, if perhaps his wife had something suitable.

My father William M. Webber was bailiff at that time and went down the back stairs to the bailiff's accommodation* where he raided my mother's homemade wine cupboard and took up a bottle of her homemade wine. The ladies drank it with gusto and no-one realised that mother's potato wine was probably more potent than the Mayor's whisky. The two women became intoxicated and it was apparent that they could not go home in broad daylight.

Father took them down the back stairs and they spent the rest of the day in our sitting room drinking coffee and eating mother's fruit cake. After dark, my father escorted the two ladies, one on each arm, across the Square and to their home. As they crossed the Square one of them pointed to the sky and said "Look at the moon". The next day there was a knock on the door and I answered it as my father was out. The ladies asked me to thank my father for the wonderful day that they had had!

*the present day museum

Boy Racers 1866 – Angela Manning recently found the following article printed in the North Devon Journal:

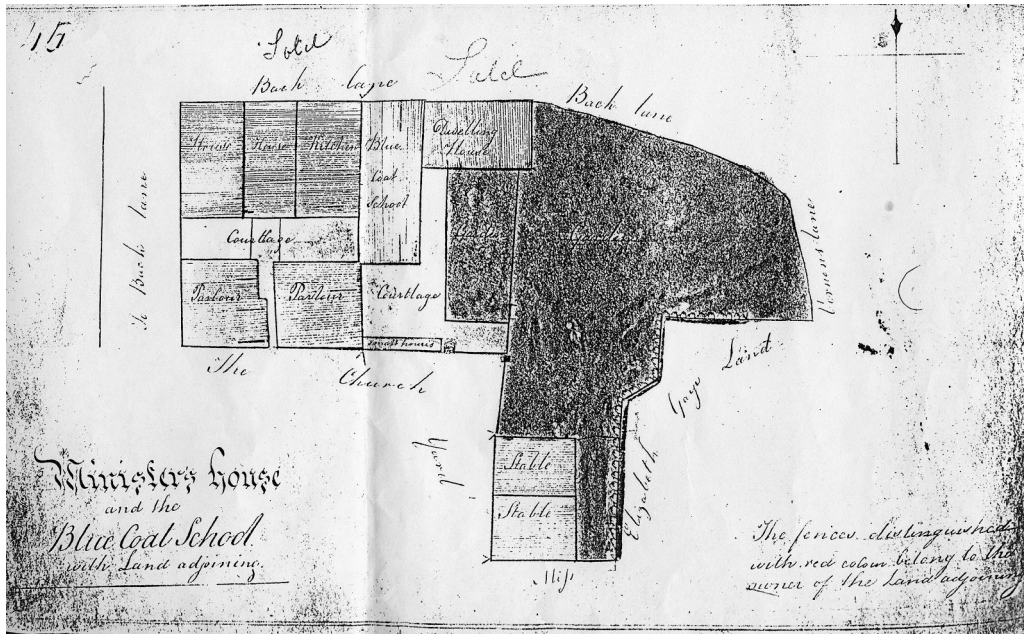
On Monday, 22nd October 1866, in the County Magistrates Court at South Molton, three local men, W. Chamberlain of Twitchen, J. Ayre of Bishop's Nympton and W. Lethbridge of Mariansleigh were fined 10/- each plus expenses for racing their horses, carts and a wagon along part of the Turnpike Road in the parish of Bishop's Nympton being an offence of the Turnpike Act. The Justice's of the day were: Rev. Joshua Bawden, J.V. Tanner and R. B. Russell, Esquires.

Angela writes that her first thought on reading this was that nothing has really changed. She lives in Bish Mill in the parish of Bishop's Nympton on what would have been a part of the old Turnpike road from South Molton to Bampton. (The turnpike house was at Sunset Cross now the Bish Mill Gate roundabout).

The Blue Coat Schools, South Molton

In 1711 a Charity School was opened *"for teaching Poor Boys to Read and to instruct them in the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion as professed and taught in the Church of England, and for Learning such other things as are suitable to their Condition and Capacity. The said School maintained by contribution of well-disposed persons to which the Corporation gave liberally towards it."*

A site was found in the Church Yard on the east side of what was known as *"The Minister's House"*. This belonged to the Corporation who gave the use of the premises rent-free. It was decided that thirty poor boys should be taken into the school and clothing provided; It was stipulated that the material for the clothes should be of *"the Manufacture of this place, and that Thomas Tepper be desired to make Six pieces of Long Ells for the said Clothing, and to be died blew, and Thirty pair of Shoes and as many pair of Stockings be made ready."*



In 1714 the subscribers to the Charity School unanimously agreed that a Charity School should be set up for teaching of girls to read, and say their Catechism, sew, knit etc., and that they said girls should be clothed all in blue and the first ten girls were admitted.

The schoolmaster had to take the school children to Church morning and afternoon each Sunday. Every school day had to start with morning prayer and end with evening prayer and each child was presented with a bible on leaving school. The scholars were to attend the school from seven to eleven each morning and from one to five in the afternoon in the summer and from eight to eleven and from one to four in the winter.

The Minute book dated February 14th 1744 has the following entry – “Agreed that all the children of the said school, except those of the Workhouse, be newclothed before the 1st May next. Also that the children of the Workhouse be admitted to be taught in the said school after the said 1st May. Also that a book be provided for the several Inspectors local men appointed.”

In 1755 it was decided that no child be admitted under the age of 8.

Sources of information

Minute Book held at North Devon Record Office – ref: B 366/3

Bawden Family Notebook – original copy in South Molton Museum

In 1850 there were two schoolrooms. There was a house for the master and mistress who received £35 a year for teaching 36 boys and 15 girls. The children were provided with a set of blue clothes every year.

North Devon Journal 28th February 1878

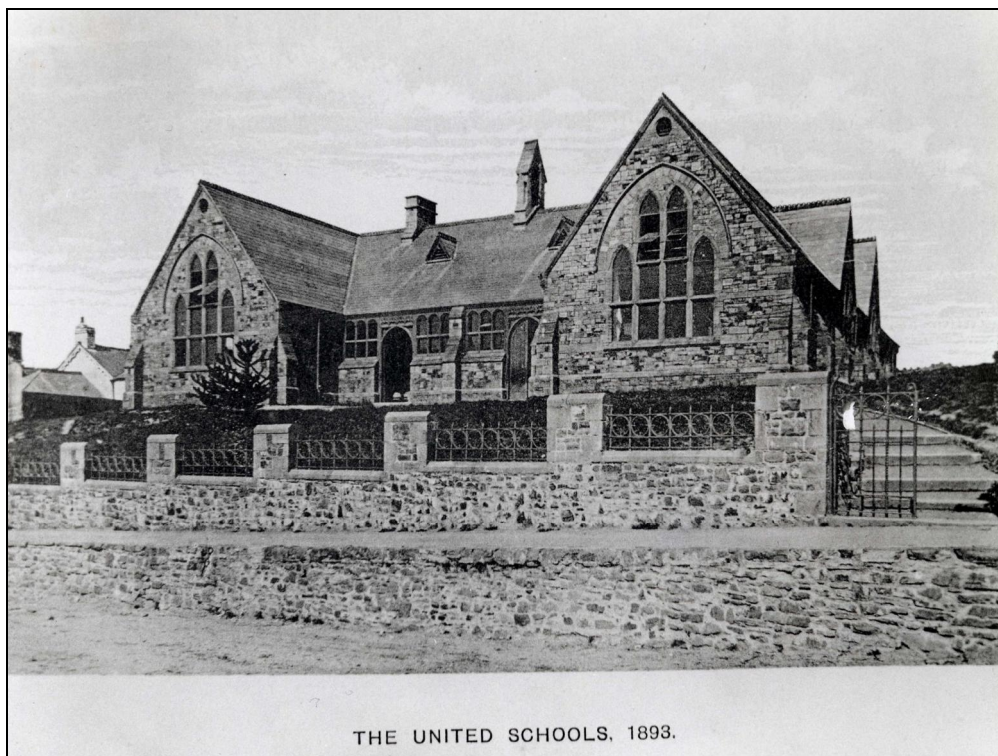
“THE BLUE COAT SCHOOLS – Twenty-three of the children of these schools, having passed a satisfactory examination in the three R’s before the Diocesan Inspector of Schools some time ago, were last week presented with the usual gift of clothing for their good conduct, industry, and regularity of attendance. The style of the clothing is more modern and useful than that which has been presented on former occasions. Instead of the swallow tail coats, vest, and breeches of the same material for the boys, it now consists of a monkey jacket and vest of blue serge, well lined with unbleached calico, with trousers made of green cord, similar to that worn by railway porters; and instead of the ugly old covering for the head, it is now a black cloth hat with peak. The girls also now have a dress and covering for the shoulders of the same material (blue serge), with a black straw hat trimmed with ribbon, instead of the usual calico nightcap. The children presented a very smart appearance, and were evidently very proud of themselves in their new clothes.”

Whites Directory published 1878 (this entry was by this time out of date and probably refers to 1876/7)

“Bluecoat School – Its present endowment consists of £25.15 new four per cent Stock. 2 schoolrooms, with a house for the master and mistress are provided by the Corporation. The Master and Mistress receive £35 per annum for teaching 36 boys and 15 girls who are clothed in blue

once a year. Formerly the charity clothed and educated 45 boys and 20 girls”.

In June 1877 the Blue Coat Schools, The National School and the Hugh Squier School amalgamated to become the South Molton United Schools and new school buildings were erected in 1878 at the cost, including the site, of about £2,465.



Contributed by Shirley Bray

More history of the setting up of the United Schools can be found in the Archive Room in a box file plus as a document file on the computer.

Dates for your diary

- June/July** **South Molton Museum Exhibition** – “Quietly flows the Stream”
- June 5th** **South Molton Archive** – Visit to North Devon Hospice
- June 16th** **7 p.m.** North Molton History Society – Talk and visit to the Exmoor Centre, The Green Room, Dulverton
- June 24th** 7.30 p.m. Filleigh History Society – Lynmouth Flood Disaster – Sally Wilson talking of her personal experiences.
- July 3rd** **South Molton Archive** - Village Walk, North Molton – meet at 6 p.m. at the rear of the Pannier Market
- July 22nd** 7.30 p.m. Filleigh History Society – Guided tour of Bideford by Peter Christie (time to be announced)
- August** **South Molton Archive** – United Junior School photographic session – date to be announced
- Aug 7th** **7.30 p.m. South Molton Archive - Business Meeting** at Sainsbury’s meeting room
- Sept 4th** **7.30 p.m. South Molton Archive** – Business Meeting – at Sainsbury’s meeting room

Please send your contributions to the September issue of the LHN to Shirley, **if possible via email**, although any contribution will be gratefully received – ndlink@tiscali.co.uk
Deadline – August 25th 2015

The Local History News can now be found on the Archive’s section of the South Molton Museum website, www.southmoltonmuseum.org