



# SALTASH HERITAGE

Newsletter No. 82

May 2022



# Information

President	
Chairman	Jean Dent
Vice Chairman	Bruce Hunt
Secretary	Lizzy Sharpe-Asprey
Archivist	Terry Cummings
Curator	Lauris Richards
Treasurer	Jackie Austin
Members Sec	Val Singleton

## Forthcoming events

Saltash and the railways	Isambard House (the station)	Mon. 13 <sup>th</sup> June 7pm
Family History Day	Liskeard Public Hall	Sat. 18 <sup>th</sup> June all day

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[www.saltash-heritage.org.uk](http://www.saltash-heritage.org.uk) e-mail [info@saltash-heritage.org.uk](mailto:info@saltash-heritage.org.uk)

## Editorial

A nice mix of articles in this issue with two from new contributors, Mike Mashford and Sue Hooper. Welcome to you both and thank you.

I try to make the 'Newsletter' as diverse as possible with an interesting mix of articles and points of view. This is made easier if I have a good choice of material to choose from.

If you have a story to tell or a photograph to share. Would like information on the history of Saltash and the surrounding area. Pop into the museum and talk to our experts.

*Bruce*

## Front Cover

The boat, built at Saltash and featured in the article written by Mike Mashford about the families connection to Saltash.

*Bruce*

## Chairman's Report

As Chairman I am always bowled over by the dedication of the committee members and the volunteers who keep Saltash Heritage a vibrant and exciting group. Without our volunteers things would grind to a halt, so a big 'thank you' to you all. While I am thinking about volunteers, if there is anyone that you know who could spare us a few hours to support us? The main criteria is the ability to enjoy talking to people!

You probably already know we were very lucky to have a legacy from our former President Colin Squires. It was a sizable amount including his bungalow in Frith Rd. After an enormous amount of work to clear his life's work, much of it going into our archive, some was sold, some went to local museums and libraries and finally the bungalow is now clear and ready to go up for sale. As a group we will always be grateful to Colin, he has safeguarded the future of his much loved Saltash Heritage.

It gives us the ability to think outside the box for our future. The outlook is bright and hopefully we will be able to bring all our volunteers along with us! Do you have any ideas that you think could help us?

*Jean Dent*

*Chairman of Saltash Museum and Local History Centre.*

### Saltash Heritage AGM 2022 Museum & Local History Centre

Saltash Heritage AGM this year will be held on

Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022

7.30pm

at

Isambard House  
The Railway Station  
Saltash

Your opportunity to take a look at the newly refurbished  
Railway Station building.

Following the business

Our speaker, with a fully illustrated talk

Will be

Mr. Andrew Barrett

Please bring along family and friends to this FREE event

# Cornwall Heritage Awards

On Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February four members of Saltash Heritage drove down to Wadebridge to join about 100 other contestants, who had been short listed eagerly waiting to see who had won, one of the seven prestigious awards, presented to those museums who have excelled in many ways.



Lizzy Asprey, Sylvia Caldwell, Rita Wasley and Ken Wasley enjoyed a welcome drink and networked with many other museums at the Royal Cornwall Showground in Wadebridge, whilst waiting to be seated at their table ready for the presentations.

In the Healthy Team Category, for organisations who look after their workforce of staff and/or volunteers, Saltash Heritage

were awarded a Highly commended plaque just being pipped at the post by The National Maritime Museum Cornwall.

It was a full and busy evening and as one of only four voluntary run museums at the event we held our own beautifully. The evening was available to watch on you tube and zoom,

as a number of the contestants were unable to travel to Wadebridge. We were delighted for our colleagues from the Old Guildhall Museum and Gaol from Looe when their Curator Petra, was awarded Leader of the year for her work during the pandemic keeping in touch with her volunteers on a weekly basis. The evening was hosted by Daphne Skinnard from BBC Radio Cornwall with whom we had some good laughs. I think we were



sitting on the naughtiest and funniest table in the whole room as the four of us were with The Museum of Cornish Life and the Helston Railway Preservation Society along with a couple of representatives from the Cornwall Museums Partnership who organised the event. A lot of banter shot across the table all evening.

*Lizzy*



# Royal Visits to Landulph

In this Platinum Year when we celebrate 70 years of Queen Elizabeth II's reign we look back at two royal visits to the parish of Landulph in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

In 1921 Landulph received a visit from Edward, Prince of Wales. The Prince was welcomed to the church by the Rev. Sylvanus Gregory accompanied by Mr John Spear and Mr Albert Snell, churchwardens. The ex-servicemen of the parish were inspected by the Prince before passing through the ranks of his Duchy tenants, who lined the pathway to the church, the entrance to which was adorned with: -

*A Hearty "One and All" Welcome to our Prince, Duke and Patron.*

Inside the church the Prince showed great interest in the bench ends and scrutinised the parish registers. On his way around the church he halted in front of the brass war memorial, flanked by the White Ensign and Union Jack, and examined the names of those men who gave their lives in the Great War.

Before leaving the church the Prince presented the Rev. Gregory with a testimonial in the form of an album with a list of subscribers and a wallet containing £40. The album was inscribed:

1895-1927. Presented to the Rev. S. Gregory, on resigning the living of Landulph,  
after 26 years' service - May 1921.



*Edward Prince of Wales at Landulph Church - 1921*

During his visit the Prince was greatly impressed with the ladies' bell-ringing team. From the church the Prince toured New Marsh Farm with their herd of Shorthorn cattle, and Lower Marsh Farm where he admired Mr du Plessis's flock of nearly one thousand poultry. After the Prince departed, the servicemen and ex-servicemen of the parish were entertained to supper in the Rectory Room, and the day concluded with a dance.

On the 25th July 1962 Landulph was visited by the Queen and Prince Philip.

The visit was part of a three day tour of the West Country and the Royal Train rolled into Saltash Station on the morning of the 25th July to be greeted by Local dignitaries. From here the Royal Party were taken by car on a tour of Duchy of Cornwall Farms and Estates.



*The Rev Lummis with the Queen at Landulph in 1962.*

The Queen visited Landulph Farm, the Home of Mr & Mrs Kellock Roberts and met the 22 tenants of the Manor of Landulph. The farm was principally devoted to dairying with a herd of 30 Friesian and South Devons along with 50 breeding ewes and 700 hens. The Queen was particularly interested in the cattle as Mr Roberts could tell them all apart by their faces. She commented that she was also able to do this with their own cattle although her husband (Prince Philip) could not. They were also shown the modern milking parlour, which was one of the first of its type to be introduced to Cornwall in 1960.

In the farmhouse kitchen Mrs Eileen Roberts proudly pointed out her new sink unit, to which the Queen asked "where's the washing machine?" and laughed when Mrs Roberts replied "I'm it!"

At Landulph Church the bells were ringing out to welcome the royal guests who were met by Rev G Lummis, and Church Wardens - Mr F Hosking, Mr W Blatchford and Mr H Clark Captain of the Ringers.

At the church were also the Choir, Parochial Church Council and children from Landulph School. The Rev Lummis pointed out features of the Church which were of historical interest and Prince Philip was very interested in the Paleologus Memorial and its connection to the Byzantine Emperors.

Amongst the bell ringers the Queen had a special word with Mr George Searle, whom she noticed was wearing the Coronation Medal.

After signing the Church Visitors book the Royal Party left Landulph to continue their tour and headed for farms at Smeaton & Leigh, Pillaton. (The church visitor book containing the Queens signature is now held in the County Record Office – Krensens Kernow at Redruth, along with all the parishes historical records)

The accompanying photograph was taken outside of the church. The Queen is with the Rev Lummis – Rector of Landulph and Prince Philip is behind walking with Mrs Lummis.

*Andrew Barrett*

## Extracted from Daniel Defoe Letters 1725



The town is populous and wealthy, having, as above, several considerable merchants, and abundance of wealthy shop-keepers, whose trade depends upon supplying the sea-faring people, that upon so many occasions put into that port; as for gentlemen, I mean those that are such by family, and birth, and way of living, it cannot be expected to find many such in a town, meerly depending on trade, shipping and sea-faring business, yet I found here some men of value, persons of liberal education, general knowledge, and excellent behaviour, whose society obliges me to say, that a gentleman might find very agreeable company in Plymouth.

From Plymouth we pass the Tamar, over a ferry to Saltash, a little poor shattered town, the first we sat foot on in the county of Cornwall. The Tamar here is very wide, and the ferry boats bad, so that I thought my self well

escap'd, when I got safe on shore in Cornwall.

Saltash seems to be the ruins of a larger place, and we saw many houses as it were falling down, and I doubt not but the mice and rats have abandoned many more, as they say they will, when they are likely to fall; yet this town is govern'd by a mayor and aldermen, has many privileges, sends members to Parliament, takes toll of all vessels that pass the river, and have the sole oyster fishing in the whole river, which is considerable. Mr. Carew, author of the *Survey of Cornwall*, tells us a strange story of a dog in this town, of whom it was observ'd, that if they gave him any large bone, or piece of meat, he immediately went out of doors with it, and after having disappeared for some time, would return again, upon which after some time they watch'd him, when to their great surprise they found that the poor charitable creature carry'd what he so got to an old decrep'd mastiff, which lay in a nest that he had made among the brakes a little way out of the town, and was blind; so that he could not help himself, and there this creature fed him; he adds, also, that on Sundays, or hollydays, when he found they made good cheer in the house, where he liv'd, he would go out, and bring this old blind dog to the door, and feed him there till he had enough, and then go with him back to his habitation in the country again, and see him safe in; if this story is true, it is very remarkable indeed, and I thought it worth telling, because the author was a person, who they say might be credited.

This town has a kind of jurisdiction upon the river Tamar down to the mouth of the port, so that they claim anchorage of all small ships that enter the river, their coroner sits upon all dead bodies that are found drown'd in the river, and the like, but they make not much profit of them. There is a good market here, and that is the best thing to be said of the town, it is also very much encreased since the number of the inhabitants are encreased at the new town, as I mentioned, as near the dock at the mouth of Ham Oaze, for those people choose rather to go to Saltash to market by water, then to walk to Plymouth by land for their provisions; because, first, as they go in the town boat, the same boat brings home what they buy; so that it is much less trouble, (second,) because provisions are bought much cheaper at Saltash, than at Plymouth: This I say, is like to be a very great advantage to the town of Saltash, and may in time put a new face of wealth upon the place.

They talk of some merchants beginning to trade here, and they have some ships that use the Newfoundland fishery; but I could not hear of any thing considerable they do in it, there is no other considerable town up the Tamar, till we come to Lanchester, the county town, which I shall take in my return, so I turn'd west, keeping the south shore of the county, to the Lands End.

From Saltash I went to Liskard, about 7 miles. This is a considerable town, well built, has people of fashion in it, and a very great market; it also sends two members to Parliament, and is one of the five towns, call'd Stannary Towns, that is to say, where the blocks of TINN are brought to the coinage, of which by it self; this coinage of tinn is an article very much to the advantage of the towns where it is settled, tho' the money paid goes another way.

*As transcribed from his letters*



# Mashfords at Saltash

## The Beginnings of a family boatyard



*A young Sam Mashford*

Sampson Henry Darton Mashford was always known to everyone as just Sam Mashford but to me and my sister he was granddad. He was born at Ferry Cottage; Noss Mayo in November 1883 only yards from the river Yealm. He was the eighth born child of Robert and Jane and had 5 sisters and 6 brothers. As he lived so close to the river he obviously enjoyed messing about in boats and in his teenage years he would help his father on his sailing barge **'Providence'** carrying coal and provisions to Noss Mayo from Sutton harbour in Plymouth. It was inevitable therefore that he decided on a career in boatbuilding. Just before his 15<sup>th</sup> birthday he took up an apprenticeship with Plymouth boat builder William Chant where he stayed for four years. He did another two years at the East Stonehouse yard of William Kingdom Hockings before completing his time in October 1904.

During the 1890's and early 1900's up to the start of the war, one of the most popular pastimes for

local people was to take a river trip on one of the many local paddle-steamers. There were trips to the Breakwater, Cawsand, up the river Tamar to Calstock and Weir Head, up the river Yealm to Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo, and even as far as Looe. One of the steamers which regularly did the trips to the Yealm and Looe was the **'Alexandra'**. The captain of this boat was William Henry Foote from Saltash. Only skippers who had gained their Certificate of Competence were allowed to take a steamer outside of the breakwater. One of William's daughters, May Foote often used to accompany her dad on his trips to the Yealm. On one such trip to Noss Mayo she must have met Sam and in time their romance blossomed. On 25<sup>th</sup> August 1909 May and Sam were married at the Wesley Centenary Memorial Church in Saltash, Sam was 25 and May 22 years old.

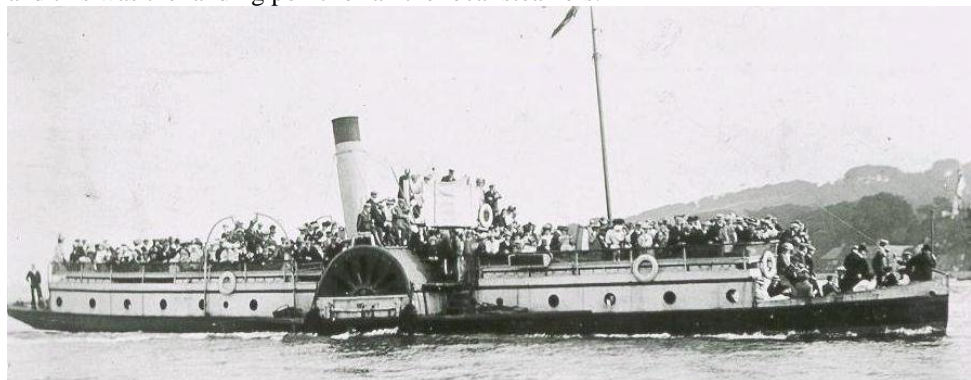


*The paddle steamer 'Alexandra' in Plymouth Sound*



Left  
*Sam Mashford*  
*May Mashford*

William Henry Foote was born in August 1855 on the Devon bank of the Tamar in the tiny hamlet of New Quay, just downstream from Morwellham. At the age of 15 he was a crewman on one of the Tamar sailing barges. Just two years later in December 1873 he married a Calstock girl, Emily Southey, and they remained living in Calstock for the next eight years or so and where they started raising their family. By April 1882 they had moved to 117 Fore Street in Saltash and William was employed as captain of the paddle-steamer '**Eleanor**'. When daughter May was born in May 1887 the family were living on the waterfront at 1 Brunel Terrace. In the following years William worked on the steamers '**Eleanor**' and '**Princess Royal**' but by 1892 he had taken charge of the '**Alexandra**'. He remained captain of this steamer for the rest of his working life but the family were recorded as living at 5 Home Park Place in 1895 according to the 1901 census. However, the 1911 census shows them living at Battery Cottage. I am not sure where this cottage was but, according to an article in the August 2021 Heritage magazine, called The Battery P.H., it seems there was a public house called The Battery near the site of the recently demolished Wheatsheaf Inn. This would make sense as the Town Quay was also close by and this was the landing point for all the local steamers.



*The paddle steamer 'Eleanor' on the River Tamar c1900*

The well-known local entrepreneur William Gilbert was the Richard Branson of his day, and had an interest in the Tamar steamers since he purchased his first vessel, the **'Victoria'** in 1854 for £600. After his steamer **'Gipsy'** was used by the Royal family in 1856 on their visit to the Bedford's at Endsleigh House, Milton Abbot, the interest in river excursions really took off. By the late 1880's Mr Gilbert's company, the Saltash Steamboat Co was running a fleet of eight steamers. In 1892 his company was merged with the Millbrook Steamboat Company owned by Mr John Parsons, the new undertaking having the snappy title of The Saltash Three Towns and District Steamboat Company Ltd. This new company with its ten steamers had the virtual monopoly of services and excursions on the river Tamar and the local area. During his lifetime William Gilbert had been an Innkeeper (Railway Hotel), a master brewer, had interests in the local brewery, Gas Company and the Saltash ferry. He was also Mayor of Saltash three times, the Coroner and Chairman of the school board. Just a year after the new steamboat company was formed Mr Gilbert died aged 73.

There is much more information about Mr Gilbert and his steamboat companies in the excellent book, *Steamers and Ferries of the River Tamar* by Alan Kittridge. He also mentions that part of the assets sold by Mr Gilbert to the new company was land, a dwelling house, workshops and buildings called The Battery at Saltash, as well as the pier, floating pontoon and moorings.

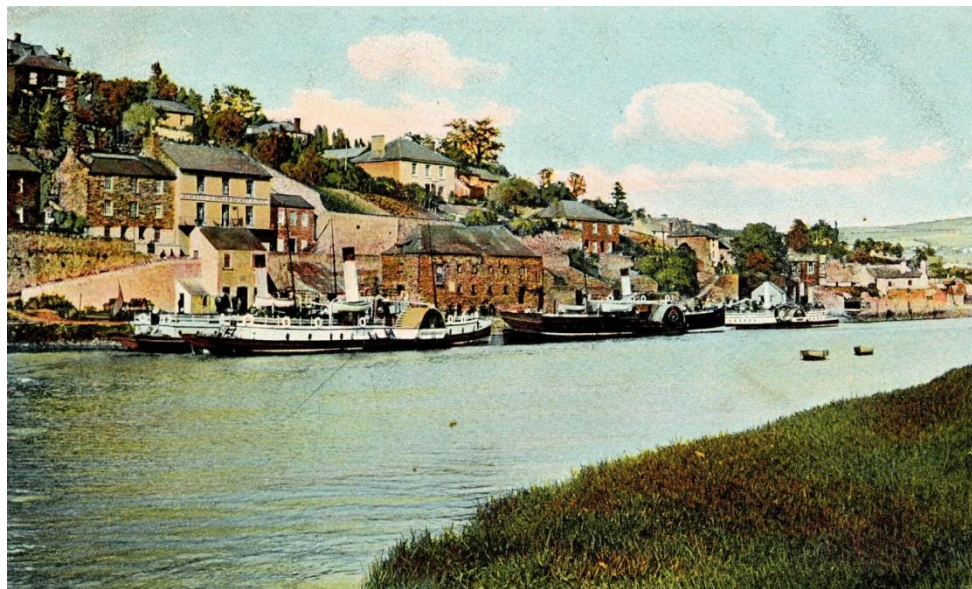


*The paddle steamer 'Princess Royal' 1906*

Meanwhile back with my granddad's family, after their marriage Sam and May lived in Noss Mayo until about 1913 when they moved to Saltash and took up residence at number 3 Home Park Place. I believe Sam was then working in Devonport dockyard, but a year later, when the war started, he was sent to work in the dockyard at Inverness. He stayed in Scotland for the duration of the war and when he came home he decided to set up his own business. He first tried a boatbuilding yard in partnership with a friend called Brabyn at



Padstow. However this was not successful and so in 1921 he decided to try again in Saltash.



*Paddle steamers, Empress, Alexandra, Princess Royal and Eleanor at Calstock c1900*



*Mashford's Yard, Saltash c1928*

Sam's elder brother Sidney had been working with his father on the barge Providence for about eight years until his father died in 1918. In 1921 Sid and his wife Lilian were still living in Noss Mayo and had a large family of seven sons. Sam only had four children at the time so he offered his house at Home Park to his brother to live in until they found their own place. The two

brothers went into partnership together as Mashford Brothers, a name which remained for nearly 80 years until the business was sold. The yard was established on the quay where the boat park is now at Brunel Green. My granddad and his family lived on a houseboat moored next to the yard. This was still the case in June 1922 as May had to go to her mother's house to give birth to her fifth child Arthur, my dad.



**Excursions.**

THIS DAY. THIS DAY. ?  
PENTILLIE TO LAND. MARISTOW TO LAND.  
WEIR HEAD TO LAND.

**J. MCBRYDE'S ANNUAL**  
MOBILISATION  
OF  
THE SALTASH FLEET OF PLEASURE STEAMERS  
WILL TAKE PLACE  
THIS DAY (TUESDAY),  
September 6th,  
OFF THE WEST HOE PIER.

**GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS.**  
Fleet Assemble off the pier at 10 a.m., and make the following  
Morning Trips:—  
Per **S.S. ALEXANDRA (Capt. FOOTE).**  
LOOE. LOOE.  
Depart West Hoe Pier 10 a.m., Return to Pier 1 p.m. Pas-  
sengers wishing to spend the day can do so, and return by Even-  
ing trip, leaving Looe 7.30. Tickets, 1s. 6d. each.  
Per **S.S. PRINCESS ROYAL (Capt. MARTIN).**  
YEALM. YEALM.  
Depart West Hoe Pier 10.15. Return to Pier 1.15. Passengers  
can land one hour. Tickets, 1s. each.  
Per **S.S. EMPRESS (Capt. TRENNANCE).**  
SOUND AND HAMOAZE.  
Depart West Hoe Pier 10.30. Return to Pier 1 o'clock. Tickets,  
6d. each. Passengers can land at Saltash 15 minutes.  
Per **S.S. ELEANOR (Capt. MOYSE).**  
CAWSAND. CAWSAND.  
Depart West Hoe Pier 10.45. Landing one hour. Tickets  
6d. each. Returning to Pier 1 o'clock.  
Per **S.S. ALBERT (Capt. QUANCE).**  
BREAKWATER. BREAKWATER.  
Depart Pottery Quay 9.45, Northcorner 9.50, bringing around  
passengers for either of the above trips, West Hoe Pier 11.  
Landing at Breakwater one hour. Return to Pier 1 o'clock.  
Tickets, 6d. each.

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR AFTERNOON.**  
Fleet re-assemble off West Hoe Pier 2 o'clock, and run the  
following pleasant Trips:—  
Per **S.S. ALEXANDRA and ELEANOR.**  
WEIR HEAD! WEIR HEAD!!  
Depart West Hoe Pier 2.30, Northcorner 2.50, Pottery Quay  
2.55, Saltash 3.10, to WEIR HEAD direct, calling at Colstock  
on the return per Elsworth. The **Alexandra** will reach on this  
occasion a special Fast Express, returning to Pier 6.30, in time  
to catch trains. Tickets 1s. 6d. CIRCULAR STEAMER and

In January 1922 Sid's eldest son, also called Sidney, joined the firm as a boat builder apprentice on his fourteenth birthday. He wrote about his recollections of the business some forty years ago for the Friends of Mount Edgcumbe newsletter. It is from his writings that I have drawn the information about the early days of the yard.

Sid Junior said that his Uncle Sam was a trained boat-builder of high standard and his father Sid was a seaman come general factotum and took care of the book-keeping. Their normal work was building dinghies, small sailing boats and whalers for the admiralty, as well as launches up to 26 foot in length and repair work to yachts and larger vessels. There was capability to berth boats of up to 60 tons alongside the wharf in order to carry out repair work. During the early years at Saltash the business employed at most three boat-builders and two apprentices. An apprentice's wage at that time was 5 shillings (25p) a week and rose annually by 1 shilling (5p) until, after a six year apprenticeship, they would be earning



the princely sum of 10 shillings (50 pence) per week. This compared to a journeyman's wage during the 1920's of £2.10 shillings a week, five times more. One of my granddads sayings regarding apprentices and their approach to work was: 'one boys a boy, two boys is half a boy and three boys is no boys at all'. This was probably quite true with most young working lads but over the many years in business he took on a large number of apprentices.

My dad told me that a unique way that Sam and Sid advertised their business was to paint the name MASHFORDS and the phone number 31 on the roof of the boatshed in large letters so that it could be seen by passengers on the trains crossing the Royal Albert bridge. One of the yachts that came to the yard for repairs was the gaff cutter "Jolie Brise", then owned by Mr Robert Somerset, a renowned sailor and founder member of the Ocean Racing Club. Built in France as a pilot cutter, she later became a fishing boat and then a racing yacht and she became famous as the winner of the first Fastnet race in 1925. She won this race twice more in 1929 and 1930 as well as successes in the races to Bermuda and Santander. The yacht has had a long career and is still going strong as a sail training vessel. She even has a pub named after her, when in 2018 Wetherspoons opened one of its establishments in Teignmouth called 'The Jolie Brise'.

By 1926 Sam, May and their five children had moved from the houseboat to live at Lander Road. This is where their sixth child was born, a son who they called Roy. The new baby obviously needed a cradle so Sam decided to make him one. However it was not a conventional cradle, it was more of a small scale rowing boat, what else would it be! The boat was about 3 foot 6 inches long and about 18 inches wide and built in traditional clinker style. It served well as a cradle whilst Roy was a baby and later as a toddler he could play in it as a proper boat. The boat was called '**Grace Darling**' after the Northumberland heroine from the Farne Islands. A very small photograph has survived showing Roy as a little boy sitting in his boat with the boatyard clearly visible in the background. (see front cover photographs of 'Grace Darling'.)





*Sam Mashford, how I remember him*

Many years later Roy moved away to Essex so the boat was passed to my dad to look after and I was therefore allowed to play with it as a young lad on the beach at Cawsand. With so much use the boat was showing some wear and tear so dad carried out some necessary repairs.

The brothers Sam and Sid continued building up the business at Saltash until 1930 when they decided to move to larger premises further down the river at Cremyll. Sidney junior continued running the yard in Saltash with a small staff, but only a year later his father died so he too moved to Cremyll. The business in Saltash ceased but it continued to flourish at the Cremyll yard for nearly another seventy years, but that is another story.

When our uncle Roy died last year, aged 95, my sister and I decided it would be a good idea for the **'Grace Darling'** to be offered to the Heritage Museum for safe keeping. She would be coming back home, very close to where she was built.



*A quartet of boats at anchor off Saltash near to the T.S. Mount Edgcumbe*

*Mike Mashford*

## More detective work

A recent enquiry via our Facebook page exercised several minds but, as usual, we eventually found the answer without being able to access records at the museum.

The enquirer attached some photographs of his aunt Queenie's wedding and wanted to know where the marriage took place and more importantly where the family was living. He knew the year was 1934 and also that the family had lived at 3 Fore Street in 1891 and at 23 Tamar Street in 1901 and 1911.



The first question was quite straightforward. Having seen many photographs of it I could identify this as more than likely being SS Nicholas and Faith Church. We have transcribed the marriage records and I have a copy of the lists at home so could find that Queenie was married in 1934 at the church.

### Don't the years go quickly?

Goodness April is here again and is it time to renew our membership of Saltash Heritage. If you already pay by Standing Order there is no need to do anything, as your bank will automatically pay us. If you still pay by cheque or cash, please post/send to the Museum for the attention of the Membership Secretary. Or, come in and see us. Your receipt will be your membership card which can be collected from the Museum in due course.

Thank you so much for your continued support of Saltash Heritage. It is very much appreciated.

*Membership Secretary*



The second photograph was again easy to identify. The pillars are instantly recognisable as being from the Masonic Hall in Fore Street (since demolished to make way for the Tamar Bridge).



The third photograph was more difficult. It was number three that they were leaving from but where was it?

Of course, had I been able to access the microfiche records at the museum the address would have been revealed from the marriage records. But, as we weren't currently going into the building very often, that wasn't an easy option. I searched the various records and photos that I have access to at home but couldn't find anything.

The next option was to ask fellow Committee members if they could help. Rachel contacted Gary Richardson who seems to know just about everything about Saltash, and especially Waterside. Sure enough he was able to say that he was fairly sure it was 3 The Beach.

A quick look at photographs of The Beach was all that was needed to confirm the location. A couple of days later Mo and I called in to the museum and checked the microfiche and confirmed that it was 3 The Beach.





The porch is clearly visible and by zooming in we could see that it is the place in the wedding photo. The cottages are now long gone having been demolished in the 1950/60's



The enquirer was absolutely delighted with the information I was able to send and is looking forward to visiting Saltash and locating the sites where his ancestors lived. The details made sense of stories told by his father of how the house would flood during high tides and he and his brother had to crawl across boards from the stairs to the window then climb into a boat and row a short distance to where it was dry and then they could go to school.

Later I heard that Gary's 3x great grandparents had lived at 3 The Beach from 1870 to 1900 and had the lean-to extension built to house fishing equipment.

*Terry Cummings*



## Looking back 12 years at the May Fayre

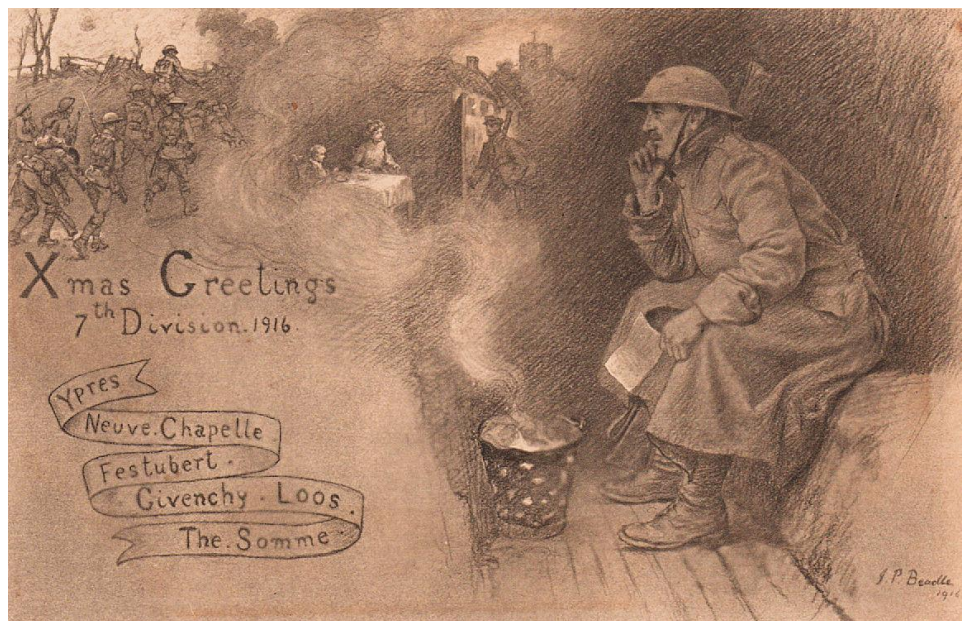


Ursula Davey, John Parsons and Carol Bedford man the Heritage stall



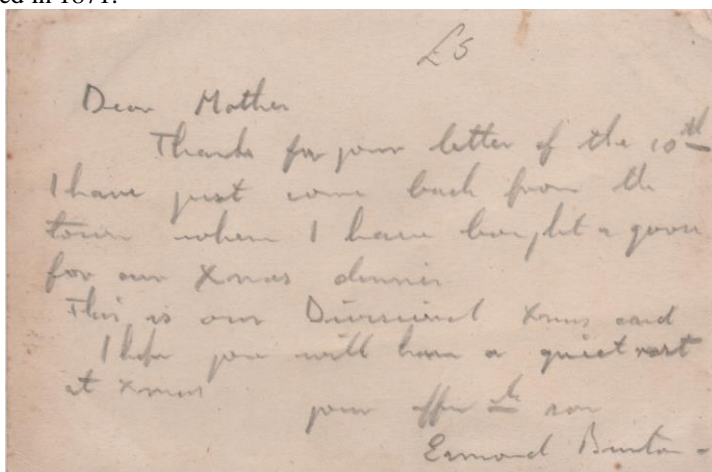
Ursula Davey Bill Myers and Elizabeth Myers

## A tale from the trenches was on the cards



"Xmas Greetings, 7<sup>th</sup> Division 1916", read the postcard alongside a picture of a greatcoated and helmeted soldier seated before a brazier. The card also recorded the divisional battle honours from Ypres to the Somme. On the reverse a soldier of the Great War had written a brief message to his "Dear Mother" telling her of his recent visit to town to buy a goose for Christmas dinner and wishing her "a quiet rest at Xmas" I had picked up the card as a curiosity at a postcard fair where I had otherwise been seeking out historic cards featuring Saltash. And I grew increasingly intrigued by it as I put it alongside my own cards each December. It was signed "your affectionate son Esmond Burton". Who was this soldier, a private or an officer? A raw teenage conscript or a seasoned veteran? Above all having endured the Battle of the Somme and survived until December 1916 did he survive the following two years in the Flanders killing fields and return home to his "dear mother"? With the aid of two good friends and fellow Saltash Heritage members I have been able to discover a remarkable amount about a most interesting and distinguished person. His military career was investigated for me by Peter Clements and his civilian background by Lizzy Sharpe-Asprey. The only Esmond Burton serving in France in the 7<sup>th</sup> Division during December 1916 was a Captain Esmond Burton of the Royal Army Service Corps born in East Molesey, Surrey. in 1886. Unfortunately many of the First World War service records were destroyed by enemy action in the Second World War and his appear the be among them. However we know that the 7th Division in which he served was formed in the first few weeks of World War I and landed in Zeebrugge in October 1914 in an attempt to support the defence of Antwerp before retreating and playing a vital role in stabilising the front at Ypres. During two weeks of hard fighting that October 18 000 soldiers were reduced

to two thousand. The 7<sup>th</sup> Division fought in most of the major battles on the Western Front through to 1917 when they were posted to the Italian front, remaining there until the armistice. Captain Burton's division gained the nickname "The Immortal Seventh". And yes, Captain Esmond Burton did survive the war and return home to East Molesey where he received his Victory medals. Then his life grew really interesting. One of six children born to Edward Burton, himself a London born tobacco manufacturer, and Ada (nee McCrae) Esmond Burton never married and survived to die in 1964 aged 79. During this time he gained a formidable reputation as a carver, modeller and architectural sculptor. He is referred to in various reference documents as being involved in many architectural pieces on well-known London buildings. His carvings, religious and secular, are portrayed on the internet and some adorn such buildings as the Bank of England as well as various monuments. Of the latter one of the finest is that for Robert Walpole, Earl Orford who died in 1759, sculpted for St Andrew's church in Wickmere, Norfolk, the stone being brought from St Paul's Island in the Pacific where the young then Midshipman Walpole had been shipwrecked in 1751.



Esmond Burton's career as a sculptor evidently bought him not only fame but fortune. When he died in his Kensington home in 1964 he had another property (his studio?) in Holborn and left an estate of nearly £63 000, a considerable sum at that time. Probate was taken out by his nephew Edward Burton who had inherited the family tobacco manufacturing business.

So I have now learned how the fortunes of war served the writer of my 1916 postcard enabling him to go on and achieve great things for posterity - a stone sculpture of his recently went on the market for £33 600. I have also learned how much our Saltash Heritage team can discover about an individual based on tiny shreds of information — thank you again Peter and Lizzy.

And next Christmas I will put up Esmond's 1916 card to his "dear mother" with added interest and pride.

*Martin Lister*



## Opening of the new exhibition 'Memories of the 1940's'

Including a selection of photographs and memorabilia of royal visits to our town to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.



On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April, Saltash Heritage was delighted to welcome the Mayor and Mayoress of Saltash, Cllr. Pete Samuels and Cllr. Mrs Brenda Samuels to the museum to officially open the new exhibition. Following the customary official opening, Vice Chair Bruce Hunt escorted the couple around the exhibition. The official party of guests then moved on into the Research room for a welcome cup of tea and some home-made refreshments. There was much laughter and amusement with certain guests recalling events during their working life in the town. Ernie Reynolds, one time Police Officer in the town, recalled many memories of his life as a local bobby way back in the 1960's, this stirred up many other memories of guests who had crossed his path over the years.

Saltash Heritage intend to take up the microphone again and interview some of those interesting

characters from the Towns past, so if you think you know of someone who might be able to tell us a few tales, please do contact the museum, of course with the prospective interviewee's permission.



Our thanks to all those present for making the event a most pleasant morning.

*Lizzy*



# Saltash Adventurers

Saltash has so many wonderful people and notable events to celebrate over the centuries; indeed, many have already been well documented. Here is another story that deserves to be told.

Proudly, hanging in the Saltash Guildhall stairwell is a plaque honouring four adventurers from Saltash who played major roles in the planning and development of Australia and Tasmania in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

They were brothers Nicholas and Evan Nepean, whose father was Saltash Mayor in 1791, James Hobbs and Sir James Penn Boucaut twice Premier of South Australia.

Their names live on in Australian place names, but were not recognised locally until 1993 when His Excellency Richard Smith, High Commissioner of Australia unveiled a plaque at the Saltash Guildhall in their honour, on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> March 1993.

After researching their history for over a year, I was honoured to instigate and lead on this project on behalf of the Saltash Town Council during 1992/3.



*Evan Nepean*

***Evan Nepean*** was born in Saltash and Baptised at St Stephens Church in 1752. Evan eventually went to London and played a significant role in the planning of the infant colony of New South Wales. He set up a Beauchamp Commission advising Lord Sydney, and became Under Secretary of State to Lord Sydney, eventually becoming Under Secretary of Botany Bay.

His name is perpetuated by the Nepean River at the foot of the hills of the Blue Mountains, which divided the infant colony of New South Wales from the rest of Australia. In addition, Point Nepean in Victoria and Nepean Highway in Melbourne; interestingly, he never set foot on Australian soil.

Evan Nepean became a Baronet in 1802, and is remembered as a very important figure in the foundation of colonial Australia.

***Nicholas Nepean*** too, was born in Saltash and Baptised at St Stephens Church in 1757. Nicholas went to Australia in the late 1700's, probably on the advice of his brother Evan.



*Nicholas Nepean*

Nicholas eventually became Lieutenant General and the Deputy Governor of Norfolk Island.

Nicholas came back to Saltash in 1793 due to bad health, and put his energy into local affairs, and eventually became Deputy Mayor of Saltash in 1804.

There is a tombstone in memory of the Nepean family at St Stephens Church Yard.

**Sir James Penn Boucaut K.C.M.G.** came to Saltash to live at the age of ten and attended Saltash School and lived in Fore Street.

He emigrated to Australia with his parents in 1846 and practised as a Lawyer before becoming Premier of South Australia in 1866 when he initiated the Boucaut Policy of Public Works.

In his second Premiership 1875-1877, he was responsible for

introducing free secular and compulsory education to South Australia. Later he was appointed a Judge of the Supreme Court of South Australia. He took the lead in the Foundation and Development of South Australia and was delighted in its evolution.

Sir James Penn Boucaut retired from Public life in 1905 at the age of 74 years, and died in 1916 at the age of 85 years. His name and his greatness will ever cling in the memory of the people of South Australia.

**Lieutenant James Hobbs** was born in Saltash in 1792, he was the younger son of William and Ann Hobbs of 'The (Ivy) Cottage' in Lower Burraton (Ivy Cottage is still a dwelling in Fairmead Road). More recent descendants of James Hobbs – the late Aubrey and Reg Hobbs were great friends of mine until they passed away some years ago. Aubrey was still living in 'Ivy Cottage' right up to his passing about 30 years ago. Reg lived the opposite side of Fairmead Road.

James embarked for New South Wales at the age of 10 years (1802) with his mother and four sisters.

James father was killed in Australia in 1799 and his brother was killed in 1801.

Lord Hobart suggested that Ann Hobbs and her five children would have a better life if they moved to Hobart. They settled in Van Diemen's Land. When he grew up, James became a Powder Monkey to load the guns with gun powder during confrontation on board ships.

James was at one time on the same ship as Captain Bligh on the 'Porpoise' in 1808. He was just sixteen years old at the time!

One of James Hobbs most notable achievements was when he circumnavigated the Island of Tasmania. James was the only person at that time to complete such a thorough circumnavigation of the Island.

One of the main reasons for the circumnavigation of the Island was to report on the proposed breakwater at the Macquarie Harbour.

James was in charge of two well equipped open boats manned by twelve well-chosen convicts.

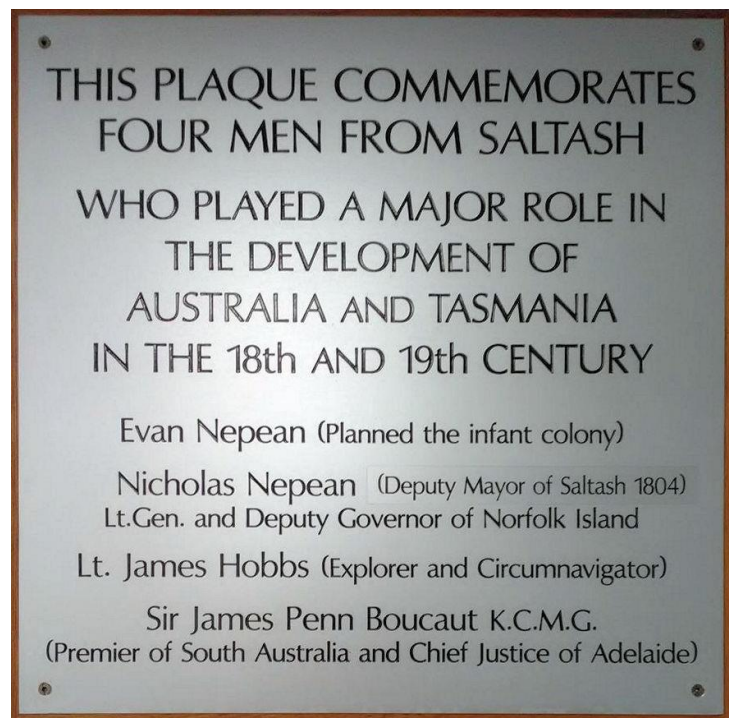
Unfortunately, they met exceptionally bad weather, and suffered serious boat damage, and food shortages; however, the circumnavigation was completed in less than six months.

This outstanding accomplishment was well rewarded, as James was granted land for his amazing achievement.

James Hobbs died in 1880 at the age of 88 years at St Kilda. He was a well-respected and acknowledged pioneer and there is a Hobbs Island off the coast of Tasmania, a Hobbs Creek, Hobbs Lagoon and Hobbs Parish all named in his honour. Further, there is a Hobbs Crescent in Saltash, just a few metres away from his Ancestral 'Ivy Cottage'.

The descendent Hobbs in Saltash are also well respected – Richard Hobbs was Mayor of Saltash in 1946 (father of Aubrey and Reg Hobbs).

Saltash was absolutely right to honour these four outstanding adventurers! And I have been privileged to boomerang their history once again!



*Sue Hooper MBE*

# Education by the sea!!

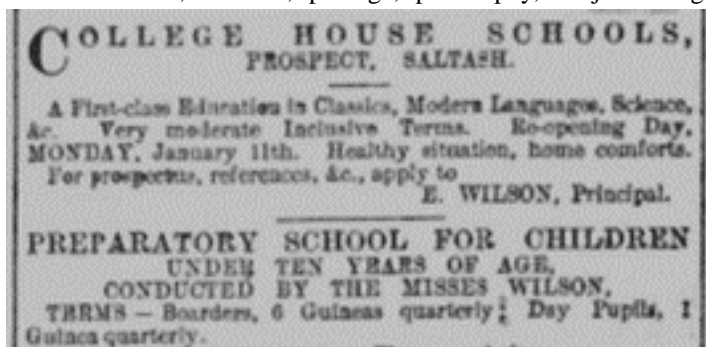
Can you answer this question? A post driven into the ground at the bottom of the river stands ten feet out of the water: One third of the length is in the water and one foot in the ground. What did it cost at 6d per foot? Could any of the twelve-year-old children you know answer this? This is just one example of an exam question set in a Saltash school in 1909. From concerns raised after watching their students trying and failing to work out the questions the Bishop of St German's response was that these exams were not for general schools, and were simply being used to separate those of potential scholarship material. I can just imagine the frustration of our "general school" teachers and students having to deal with that mentality.

Education has always been a hotly debated topic and has gone through monumental change. The idea of education is power resonates through time. For too long it was afforded to the rich, the privileged and the men. Reform, theories and societal influences have shaped and influenced ideals ending up with the UK having one of the best education systems in the world.

For this, we actually have a lot to thank the Victorians for. When I think about education in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, I think of it as overtly genderised, disciplinarian and stratified. An image is formed of a room of melancholic local children. One braced for the whip of a cane, prayers, clean hands and endless handwriting practice. While elements of my naive perspective is based somewhat on truth, there must be so much more involved. So, I decided to get a better understanding of what education was really like in Saltash in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to educate myself and to hopefully challenge my misconceptions of this time.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw numerous bills, acts and reforms set to place education in the forefront. Some failed, but many triumphed. One of the most important was the 1870 Elementary Education Act, which introduced compulsory education for children aged between 5 to 13. Voluntary schools were slowly taken over by board schools, teacher training and certification came about and employment acts for children were passed. The culmination of such change had an unprecedented impact. Between 1851 and 1900, there was a rise in British male literacy from 69.3% to 97.2%, while for females it went from 54.8% to 96.8%.

During this age of educational reform, there were countless schools in our town. They varied in size, location, prestige, philosophy, subjects taught and cost. Some were



established for decades, some came and went, some had intercontinental links, some were big enough to house boarders and some were as small as a room in a house. But they all, in one way or another had an effect on the young people who attended.

College House school was established by Mr Edward Wilson and his wife in 1856 in a large house at the top of Fore Street. Things must have been going well because in 1859 they moved up the road to take over a school in a larger building, originally run by a Mr Haly. Over the next 30 years they took in hundreds of boarders and even more day pupils. As well as this, they brought up their five children and his stepdaughter (who at one time worked as a governess). The school started taking in boys from 6-16 years and extended to girls. In 1861 there were 31 boarders, 2 assistant teachers and 3 servants. In 1867 they moved again and took over the property known now as Prospect House, which perhaps better suited their needs, because by 1871 there were 32 boarders, 3 assistant teachers and 5 servants. There are no records of numbers of day pupils, but the increase of staff could seem to reflect the workload. Also, the fees went from 20 guineas to 30 to 40 per year over the lifespan of the school. This could be attributed to natural inflation over time, but also possibly to popularity and prestige. College House advertised itself as *affording special advantages to delicate boys or whose education has been irregular*. I can imagine this covered many of the boys at that time! However, this house brought the best out of some of the boys who passed through the doors. Year on year students took and passed a range of Cambridge exams, including English, Science, French and even Law and medical. Numerous advertisements mentioned links overseas, particularly with India, Spain and Mexico. "Offering a comfortable home for children whose parents are abroad". Arthur Maddock, one of their teachers was born in India and the census of 1881 included a Canadian and even a boy born at sea! Already some misconceptions were being challenged. Large rooms, comfortable, playground, multi-national and opportunities for renowned examinations. Advertisements in papers were often headed with the title "Education by the sea". This is a sentence I would never associate with a school in Saltash, but could have been a big attraction to the boys. Taking advantage of the proximity of the water, on the evening of May 19 1870, Samuel Banbury of North Petherwin, aged 17, and a fellow boarder went for an evening walk. They went for a swim at Antony Passage, quite probably something they often did. However, on this day, the current was too strong for the boys. By the time two men in boat spotted the drama and went to their aid, it was too late. Samuel was dead.

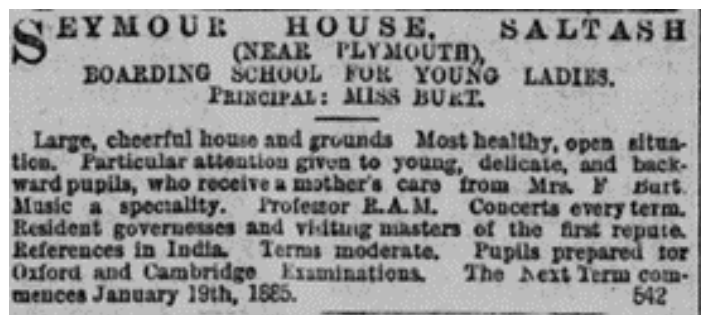


A small cohort of girls under 12 were admitted and taught under the guidance of Mrs Jane Wilson. Not much is suggested on the education they received and records have omitted their achievements in favour of the boys. This was certainly not true of the next school.

Seymour House was a school for young ladies. I can't say when this magnificent building became a school. but it was headed by a Mrs Stivey in 1870, who left the same year. The next chapter was presided over by a sister team. Emily and Rosa Burt who were well experienced in the world of education. Their parents were both teachers, and the girls



grew up in the Plymouth school they ran, Montague house, surrounded by boarders. The education bug must have bitten them, as by 1871 they were running their own small school with five boarders in Culver Road. By 1873 they had moved into Seymour House where they would spend the next few decades. The school was advertised as being a large cheerful house, with recreation grounds. Health being the first consideration, diet unlimited, mothers care and sea bathing. Class and bedrooms were extensive and airy with views of the Albert Bridge. I know these are only words, but this also does not match my preconceptions of Victorian schooling. The 1881 census shows the school had 18 girls boarding, who were being cared for by two governesses, a housemaid, a cook and a groom. Girls were taught a range of subjects such as English grammar, arithmetic, drawing, painting, German and Latin. Visiting masters came to offer classes such as weekly scientific lectures and French by a resident Parisian! However, it was music which was the school's speciality. The girls gave regular concerts with music, singing and dance. These concerts often happened at the end of terms and incorporated the giving of awards. Some of these concerts were held in the Town hall and Star Hall to full capacity crowds and also raised money for local causes, such as the Tamar Street Mission and St Barnabas convalescent home. At one such concert, Reverend J Moreton spoke very favourably of the quality of the teaching given at the school. The audience heartily applauded performances such as Rule Britannia, Bach's Ave Maria and Mendelssohn's Autumn song as well as eloquent readings from Shakespeare, a scarf dance and an operetta called Jack Frost. The positive reviews in the papers painted a picture of real talent, professionalism and passion expelling from the girls. Some of the girls took their music further and took the Trinity College music exams. In April 1883 Emily Burt died and was buried at St Stephens marked with a handsome marble cross on a marble base with a granite plinth. A fitting memorial for an obviously important and special person. Rosa stepped seamlessly into the role of headmistress and continued running the school. By 1891, there were 17 boarders, three servants, 2 governesses and a music teacher from Cape town. The last advert for the school I found was in May 1897. This one included an interesting line. "Pupils prepared for the Oxford and Cambridge Examinations, if desired". I like to think that girl's education was starting to catch up with the boys. By 1901 Rosa had left Seymour House, and teaching, and moved in with a nephew in Plymouth. The 4 sitting room and 7 bedroom house was sold as a private home and finally turned into flats, which is how it remains today. I don't imagine there are any traces now of it's 30-year life of a successful boarding school for young ladies. A place which offered girls a wide and varied education with the arts being at the forefront. A place that supported and



entertained its town, and a place that rewarded effort and improvement as well as academic prowess. It is certainly somewhere where I would have loved to have gone! Another school had more of a turbulent

time. It was established longer than the first two, for around 42 years. This school had two names, at least 7 head mistresses and the biggest shift in educational styles and theories. This school was mostly known as the Mansion School.



The earliest record I can find of the building being a school was in 1859. Run as a ladies school by EH and E Pethybridge. They had residents, and daily pupils, but there is very little other information from this time. By June 1863 it had been taken over by a Miss Kate Slater and she spent the next 16 years at the helm. Kate had previously been a governess, so would have had experience in education. Advertisements

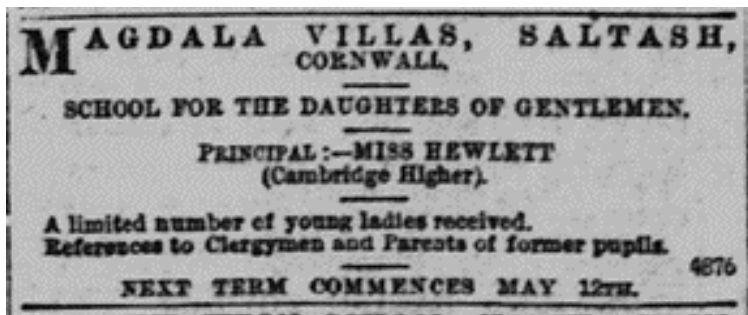
in the papers were often headed with the title “education near the sea”, Remember that?! At this time the school focused on religious, moral and intellectual training, combined with domestic comfort and constant attention. Her father was a Wesleyan minister, so I will presume religion did play an important factor here. Mansion House also outpriced Mr Wilson’s College House, at 25 guineas a term! Kate died in November 1879 in her home and workplace at only 40 years old. Luckily there was someone ready to take over the reins. Kate’s sister Sarah Jane Roberts. She had been in India for many years with her husband and raising a family. Her husband died in 1877 and she brought her children back to England. I know she settled in Saltash, as this is where her youngest child was born.



Not even 2 years after her return she found herself running this now well established school for ladies. Taking on her sisters legacy with no experience and a young family to support must have been tough. But the education offered seemed to diversify. There were classes in music and

singing, drawing, French and deportment! She was probably relieved when Mrs M A Harris and Miss E E Hooper took the school on in 1881. Sarah Roberts took her children to London, and when she died she left £324 to her daughters, which I think was a substantial amount given she had spent the last 35 years living in London by her own means!

Mrs Harris and Miss Hooper ran a “high class school” for girls. Pupils were prepared for examinations but am unsure on what. The ladies dissolved their partnership in 1883 and Miss Harris carried on alone. Maybe money was tight after the separation, as the mansion was available to be privately rented for 5 weeks over the summer.



1890 saw its next and last head mistress. Miss Kate Hewlett, as well as a name change: Westlands House. She was already well established as a head mistress. Her father was a

Commander in the Royal Navy, and one can presume that was the reason she was born in Australia. Spending time herself, as a boarder at Bolham School in Tiverton certainly gave her experience of a boarding house. By 1884, Kate had set up her own school at Magdala Villas in Saltash. Advertised as being “For the daughters of gentlemen” and only accepting a limited number of girls. She changed the name to Westlands the year after. I like to think she was ready to grow, and in 1890 Kate moved her school (and the name) to the Mansion House. For the next 11 years more boarders and daily students came through the doors. The school was connected with the society of science, letters and art, in London and had efficient professors and governesses. Careful Christian training continued, as all high-class young ladies would need! One can imagine the typical subjects were taught, and examinations encouraged. Kate herself having taken Cambridge honours exams in Literature. However, there was something slightly different on offer here compared with the other schools in the area. Preparatory classes were given on Pestalozzian and Kindergarten theories. Swiss born Johann Pestalozzi (1746- 1827) created quite a revolutionary theory on which modern teaching is based today. Pestalozzi believed in a child-centred approach. Children should learn through activity, follow their own interests and to come up with their own conclusions. Outside time was strongly encouraged and music was valued. He believed in children’s dignity and banned flogging in his classrooms. Also, which was controversial at the time, was that children should be grouped on ability and not age, and encouraging formal teacher training. Perhaps we could say that our modern teaching styles in the UK today was helped to develop by Miss Hewlett here in Saltash. Wouldn’t that be something!

The last record of Westlands as a school was in 1901. This was the end of the building’s educational life. The doors closed and Kate started a small school with her sister in Culver

Road. By 1902 the house was up for rent lending itself to a substantial family home for many years, until its eventual demolition in 1986.

There is no doubt that these three schools, each with quite different ideologies and styles, influenced the young people who passed through the doors. We can only get a small snapshot of the surface of a 40 year history and will never know the real feelings and experiences of the individuals. Though I like to think now that our local Victorian schools had a lot more to them than I first thought!

*Carly Bennett*

## Getting out a magazine is no picnic

If we print jokes, people say we are silly.

If we don't, they say we are too serious.

If we publish all original matters, they say we lack variety.

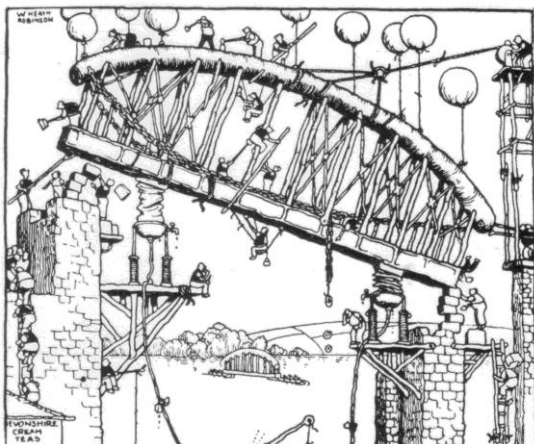
If we publish things from other papers, they say we are lazy.

If we don't print contributions, they say we don't show appreciation.

If we do, some people say the magazine is full of junk.

Some people will say we took this piece from another magazine – we did!

(Taken from Tamar Pegasus Journal June 1986, who took it from the  
RNARS Newsletter, who took it from "Long Haul" .....)



## Illustrated Talk

By

**Bruce Hunt**

Saltash Heritage

## **SALTASH AND IT'S RAILWAY**

Isambard House  
(Railway Station)

**Monday 13 June 7pm  
£2**



# Bodmin Jail (bodminjail.org)

I suppose calling the Bodmin Jail Attraction a Museum is a stretch, but there is so much history within the building and the story is so well told, I just wanted to bring it to the attention of anyone who hasn't been there. I was completely surprised by the experience when I went with my brother and his wife recently. I can't wait to take my grandchildren there as soon as possible.

We were told that the new owners had put millions of pounds into the renovation and creation of the attraction, and it was obvious. I expected to visit the old jail cells where you can read about some of the inhabitants of the prison, but I didn't expect to have their lives brought to life on the dark walk with film and drama and artifact. If you've ever been to Disneyland or Disneyworld and been to the Pirates of the Caribbean attraction, this is what it reminded me of. But being all about Cornish folk and being immersed in their settings was awe inspiring.

The adjacent restaurant was also outstanding and made our day complete. I hope you will try it.

*Denise Watkins*

## Letters

I thought you might like to see the reply I received today from Paul Hamley who made the enquiry about the Waterside house.

*Terry*

Your email and photos absolutely blew me away, I wasn't expecting anything like that and I truly can't thank you enough.

My dad always told me stories of how their house would flood during a high tide and how my dad and my uncle Ken would have to crawl across boards that would go from the stairs to the window, where they had a rowing boat tied up, my dad would then row them a short distance where it was dry and they'd go to school.

I've obviously been to Saltash on many many occasions but I never knew the exact location of their house, for some reason I always thought it was further along past the bridge.

We're planning a visit in May and we will definitely visit the heritage centre, I've been in there a number of times but not for a while.

My dad and my grandad were born in Saltash, my nan in Callington. My g grandfather was born in Egloshayle near Wadebridge, the family come from many of the villages between Bodmin and Wadebridge.

Story goes that my g grandfather moved to Saltash for work, obviously the early mechanisation of the farms rendered many men unemployed, he found work in Devonport Dockyard but would not consider moving to Devon.

Once again, many thanks; please, could I make a donation to Saltash Heritage.

# Trematon Tower is tomorrow's heritage



enjoying refreshments in a convivial atmosphere as well as the opportunity (between heavy showers) to mount the spiral staircase and enjoy the view from the top.

Crafted of local stone, some of it recycled, by local stonemason Anthony Elliott, it already appears as if it could be centuries old. This is endorsed by the solid oaken door and the window bearing the Lennox-Boyd coat of arms in stained glass created by local craftsman Mr Diaper.

The tower is eco-friendly with spaces where bats, owls, and hawks may be encouraged to nest. As it mellows into the countryside it is hoped that future generations of Essanians walking the lanes will come to regard it as a historic local landmark.

*Martin Lister*

Heritage and history are an ongoing process. While enjoying and preserving history as our heritage we are also ourselves creating what future generations will be preserving as their own past.

A feature of our Saltash countryside which it is hoped future generations will consider add to its attractions and interest has recently been created on land which they own by our patrons Viscount and Viscountess Boyd. The Voss Tower stands on an elevation in the middle of a field from which it commands fine views across the Tamar and Lynher valleys towards the sea. Inland it looks out to Dartmoor and Bodmin Moor and the rolling green hills in between. Lord and Lady Boyd invited representatives of Saltash Heritage committee and trustees to a reception held in a marquee in the field by the tower. Martin Lister and Mrs Sue Hooper MBE were among those



## Update from the archives

After two long years I decided it was time to re-open the Local History Centre in March and have already welcomed several visitors. We're looking forward to getting back to some form of normality.

Space is still something that we do not have enough of but we have managed to move a few things around. Thanks to Don Berrey we now have shelves in the ground floor store so in the next few weeks we should be able to relocate a few boxes. It's just as well, as Mo and I have been working on many of the files from Colin Squires' bequest and have been gradually moving them to the museum building.

Colin kept files on a huge number of subjects and it will take me many months to deal with entering them on to the database. Up to now Mo and I have made lists of almost 200 separate topics, probably amounting to well over 3000 entries. On a good day I can usually do somewhere in the region of 20-30 entries, so a few weeks work left!

## Effects of the pandemic

Initially (March 2020) we decided to close the Heritage building other than for someone going in once a week or so to check the building was OK. As time went on I found that the regulations allowed access "to do voluntary work that could not be done at home" so Mo and I were able to go in and start sorting out some of the drawers and files that haven't been accessed for many years. We made lists of all the documents that needed scanning and those that needed to be transcribed. Some transcribing can be done from photocopies - others can only be done from originals and, as there was a potential risk to the documents, only a couple of our expert transcribers could deal with them.

I am now two years behind with the routine work in a job that is always endless but I am now looking to train some others to help with the cataloguing.

As a bit of "light relief" I spent a couple of months with Kev Hale sorting 850 slides of the construction of the Tamar Bridge. I was able to produce a book of the colour images in time for Christmas. As the building was still closed I organised socially distanced collection of the books from our house. In the run up to Christmas I sold over 100 books from home. The book is now available to buy from the museum.

## Outreach work

Contrary to what is being said my Outreach programme came to an abrupt halt at the start of the pandemic. It has yet to begin again but I'm hoping that perhaps by the autumn I will be able to restart the programme. Prior to the pandemic there were probably half a dozen people who were doing work at home. Lockdowns and social distancing rules meant that it all had to stop as we couldn't access the building. Even when things eased a bit it was only possible to involve a couple of people.

Anthony was able to continue scanning newspaper cuttings and we worked out a system for collecting and delivering them safely. I would send a text or email and he would leave a bag hanging on the garden gate for me to collect and I would replace it with another. After a while I had a request for some cuttings that were a bit more uplifting as the previous batch had been a bit depressing – all deaths, suicides, inquests, funerals etc.



I did manage to find enough tasks that Rita could help with, including typing and sorting out some of the bundles of documents from Colin's bequest. Again it was a case of sending an email and leaving a carrier bag on the doorstep.

### Colin's bequest

As you probably know, Colin Squires left his entire collection of books, documents and maps etc. to Saltash Heritage. When I first saw the bungalow I realised that there was a mammoth task ahead and my initial thoughts were to involve a team of people in sorting everything out. Lockdowns soon put paid to that idea! It ended up with Mo and I going to the bungalow for an hour or two every weekday to gradually sort through what seemed an insurmountable pile of paperwork.

As it turned out, it was probably the best thing for just the two of us to deal with it as I have had to look at every piece of paper to determine whether it could be added to the collection or not. I think it would have been impossible to deal with it as methodically with a team of people.

As we worked through the papers we boxed them up ready for a more thorough sort at a later date. Over the past few months we have brought boxes home, sorted



The contrast is evident in these  
*Before and After* pictures

through the files and created what seem to be endless lists of draft entries (currently housed in six large ring binders). There are still many boxes that have been put into storage, ready to be worked on over the coming months (years?).

Apart from a very small number of boxes Mo and I have dealt with all of the books and papers from the bungalow as well as clearing the bulk of the rest of the contents. Now that the bungalow has been completely cleared we can relax a little and concentrate on other things – including opening the Local History Centre.

*Terry Cummings*



# Strange, but true!!

**Question:** How can a jury of leeches forecast the weather?

**Answer:** In a Tempest Prognosticator – that's how!!

I was first made aware of this as it was aired on Radio Cornwall a couple of months ago. Barometer World Museum in Devon (a new one on me!) was putting such an instrument up for sale. I checked their website and found the following:-

FOR SALE one special **LEECH BAROMETER** only one previous owner, fully working (leeches not supplied)

Barometer World after much research and skilled work built a complete working copy of the famous 'Leech barometer more commonly known as 'The Tempest Prognosticator' First exhibited by the inventor in 1851 at The Great Exhibition in London. Designed in the style of Indian temple architecture, it is a complex and glorious extravaganza to predict storms using leeches! This gold plated exhibit of Victorian eccentricity was exhibited at Merton in our exhibition (now closed) . It is almost certainly the most bizarre example of unusual weather forecasting that has been produced.

I wanted to learn more so did a bit of research.

Dr. George Merryweather from Whitby had many opportunities to interact with leeches



and realized that leeches change their 'lifestyle' based on the weather. Specifically, when the weather is normal, such as sunny days, leeches will only be at the bottom of a glass jar. But just a few hours before a thunderstorm struck, the leeches immediately emerged from the water, began to get excited and started to climb to the top of the jar.

Merryweather built a device made up of 12 glass bottles, each containing a live leech and about 4cm of water. At the neck of the bottle a whale horn plate is attached. The plate is attached to a small hammer that knocks at a metal bell.

When a storm is detected, leeches will move out of the water and climb to the top of the bottle. However, they will be blocked from going further by the plate. As they struggle to escape the bottle they can push the horns off and the hammer will ring the bell. Merryweather could rely on the number of

consecutive bells to predict the storm.

After spending the best part of a year creating the tempest prognosticator he wrote a letter to the Philosophical Society advising them of his weather-predicting leech device. He also

lobbied the English government in an attempt to get them to use his design along the coastline to assist boats and other sailing vessels.



Sadly for Merryweather, the English government chose to throw their weight behind the invention of a ‘storm glass’, which was a liquid-filled jar that produced copious crystals whenever storms were in the vicinity.

Although the invention of the tempest prognosticator never gained traction, it did at least perform a secondary role of housing the leeches for medical purposes, when they weren’t predicting inclement weather.

### Two things to add:-

1. I think I heard on the news that the instrument remained unsold when it came up for auction.
2. The collective name for leeches is a ganon but the following could explain the reference to a jury – and there were twelve leeches giving judgment on the weather! Apparently Merryweather was somewhat of a quirky fellow, referring to the leeches as the ‘jury of philosophical counsellors’. He even designed the machine to be circular and incorporate clear glass jars, so the leeches would not be subjected to ‘the affliction of solitary confinement’.

*Jackie Austin*

Thank you to our contributors.

Bruce Hunt, Mike Mashford, Jean Dent, Lizzy Sharpe-Asprey, Carley Bennett, Martin Lister, Andrew Barrett, Sue Hooper, Peter Clements, Terry Cummings, Jackie Austin, Denise Watkins, Valerie Singleton, Keith Asprey.

A summary of research into those named on  
Saltash County Grammar School 1939 - 1945 War Memorial.  
with the addition 2009 Afghanistan Conflict casualty.



*This War Memorial is in Saltash Community School.*

These are the names of pupils of Saltash County Grammar and Saltash Community School killed in action during the Second World War and subsequent conflict. Not all were Saltash born and bred but lived in other local towns and villages in the surrounding area and attended the County Grammar School at Saltash. This could explain why not all are named on other Saltash War Memorials. The WW2 casualties are commemorated in perpetuity by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Leading Airman **Gerald John ASHTON** was the son of John and Clare Ashton of Saltash. His grave is in St. Stephens by Saltash Churchyard. Killed during training to be an Observer at HMS Condor, Royal Navy Air Station Arbroath.

Flying Officer Pilot **Ronald John BORDISS** RAFVR. Son of Joseph William and Eva May Bordiss, of Torquay. Pilot of a Lancaster Bomber detailed to attack the marshalling yards at Lille. "This aircraft is missing; nothing being heard from it after take-off". Remembered with Honour Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension.

Private **W. John COWLING** 1st Bn., Cambridgeshire Regiment. Baptised at St James Church, Torpoint. W. J. COWLING on the Torpoint WW2 Memorial. He was a Japanese Prisoner of War: Remembered with Honour on the Kranji Memorial Singapore.

Air Artificer 4<sup>th</sup> Class **Lionel Edmund GREET**. HMS Glebe. Son of James and Florence Greet of St. Austell. Remembered with Honour Khayat Beach War Cemetery, Israel. HMS Grebe was the Royal Navy designation for the pre-war Alexandria airport during its use in World War II as a shore base for aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm.

Engineer Officer **Frederick Marrack MITCHELL**. SS Ceramic. Merchant Navy. Lived with his Grandparents at 12 Maristow Terrace Saltash. German Submarine *U-515* torpedoed SS Ceramic during cold weather and rough seas in mid-Atlantic. Remembered with Honour Tower Hill Merchant Navy Memorial.

Sergeant Nav. **Christopher Arthur RICHARDSON**. RAFVR. Son of Ernest Albert and Marie Ernestine Richardson, of Saltash, Cornwall. Navigator of a Halifax Bomber shot down at Malden, Germany. Remembered with Honour Uden War Cemetery, Netherlands.

Electrical Artificer 3rd Class **Frederick William STACEY**, H.M.S. Hurworth. Son of William John and Frances Mary Stacey, of Torpoint. HMS Hurworth struck a mine in the Mediterranean and sank. Remembered with Honour Plymouth Naval Memorial.

Serjeant **Heber Ernest TRAYS** Royal Army Ordnance Corps. Son of Mr. and Mrs. William Trays, of Torpoint, Cornwall. Remembered with Honour Alamein Memorial. H. E. TRAYS on the Torpoint WW2 Memorial.

Lieutenant, **Arthur BOND** Duke of Cornwall Light Infantry: attached to the 1st Battalion Devonshire Regiment when he died in Burma. Son of Percival and Beatrice Emma Bond of Callington. Remembered with honour in the Imphal War Cemetery. India.

Civilian **Raymond Robert CREWS**. Home Guard. Clerical Officer of H.M. Dockyard, Malta. Son of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Crews, of 5 Beatrice Terrace, Torpoint. Died at H.M. Dockyard. Remembered with Honour Malta, G.C.

Civilian **Joan GOAD**. 16-year-old Daughter of Frederick and of Dorothy Goad of Fore Street, Saltash. Killed in Saltash during a German Bombing Raid. Buried in an unmarked communal grave in St. Michael Churchyard, Landrake.



Lieutenant (E). **Lionel Frederick GUPPY**. H.M.S. Hermione. Son of Headmaster Comdr. Frederick and Rose Guppy of 9 Beatrice Avenue Saltash. HMS Hermione was torpedoed by the German submarine U-205 in the Mediterranean. Remembered with Honour Plymouth Naval Memorial.

Electrical Artificer 4th Class **John James NETHERCOTT**. H.M.S. Courageous. Son of George and Edith and husband of Nancy Nethercott, of Torpoint. HMS Courageous was torpedoed by a German Submarine off the southwest coast of Ireland. Remembered with Honour Plymouth Naval Memorial. [J. J. NETHERCROFT on the Torpoint WW2 Memorial](#).

Sapper. **Austin John SUMMERFIELD**. Royal Engineers. Son of Samuel and Susanna Summerfield, Castle View Farm, Forder, Saltash. Remembered with Honour Medjez-El-Bab War Cemetery. Tunisia.

Leading Aircraftman. **Edward Claude Frederick VOSPER**. RAFVR. Son of Claude and Dorothy Vosper, of Saltash. He died while flying training in South Florida. Remembered with Honour Arcadia Oak Ridge Cemetery. USA.

Flying Officer. **Ronald James WIDDECOMBE**. RAFVR. Son of Alfred and Eva Widdecombe, of Saltash. His aircraft was shot down over Germany. Remembered with Honour Runnymede Memorial.

Sergeant Air Gunner **RAYMOND FOOT OLIVER JAMES** RAFVR. Son of Susie James, stepson of George Aire, of Landrake. Aircraft went missing on supply drop to Yugoslavian Partisans. Remembered with Honour Belgrade War Cemetery. RAYMOND JAMES on the Landrake WW2 Memorial.

### **Afghanistan Conflict**

Acting Corporal **Richard 'Robbo' ROBINSON** 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Rifles. Killed during an ambush in Helmand province, Afghanistan, on Saturday 17 January 2009. Remembered with honour in St. Stephens-by-Saltash Churchyard. RICHARD ROBINSON on the Armed Forces Memorial 'Roll of Honour'.

We will remember them.  
Compiled by Peter Clements 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.

Saltash Heritage has much more information about these War Casualties.

# Stories from the Sharpe family Memory Bank

## The Saltash Fire Brigade.

It was in the late 1970's following another move for the Sharpe family to a larger house. With five children, two adults, a large dog, two cats and a rabbit they moved to an 8 bedroomed ram shackled terraced house in Home Park Road. We loved that old house, so much room, to house every child in the neighbourhood. The ceilings were falling down, the doors wouldn't shut, the plumbing rattled and my father condemned the gas supply. It took nearly three years to put that lovely old house and garden back into a welcoming home. The neighbours were brilliant, and next door on one side, we had a family of three generations. Our lives were about to change with them as neighbours, and what was, to become life time friends. We had Alfie and Frannie even then getting on in years along with their son, Coddy and his wife Curly, both older than ourselves, and their two teenage children. Thirteen of us, dressing up for parties, propping each other up, swapping garden vegs and plants always there for each other. Having bonfire parties in the summer and barbecues in the winter, fishing and prawning down on the river and so many other adventures.

This particular night, or I should say early morning, I had been up twice in the night when the phone rang and my other half was called out on a farm call, then a further call to a calving which is where he was when I heard a loud knocking at the front door. The clock said 6.15am. I jumped out of bed in my pyjamas, only to find Graham my 19 year old next door neighbour at my front door, in his y fronts, screaming 'fire, go out the back door and move your car quick, there is a big fire on the allotment.'

The allotments were what is now known as Biscoombe Gardens, at the rear of our properties on the lower end of Home Park Road. This was just a very narrow lane away. I quickly woke up my eldest son and told him to watch out of the window at the rear of the house and get all his brothers and sisters out of the front of the house, if I shouted to him to do it, but for now stay indoors. Grabbing the car keys still in bare feet and pyjamas I ran out the back up the very long garden where the cars were kept, at the bottom of a very narrow lane. Drove the car up and parked it on Lockyer Terrace, as others in the road were doing. I have never seen some of them in their pyjamas before.

Graham still in his y fronts had phoned for the fire brigade. Meanwhile suggested I grabbed my garden hose and connected it to the tap outside the house. Our gardens were so long and the hose old so that by the time I got it anywhere near the end of the garden, the water just dripped out, and all the plants had a good watering through the split joints in the old hose.

At that point the Saltash Fire engine arrived. It attempted to reverse down the lane, guided by the chief officer who was standing behind it. We all shouted 'don't do it', as we knew from experience that the dustcart could not get around the bend in the lane. Suddenly a crash was heard as the engine hit the curve in the wall and completely blocked the lane. Firemen then had to climb over the back of the engine running down the slope towards us, where the Chief was about to jump over the wall into the allotments, We shouted at him, as he was in mid-air, not to jump just there. The reason being the old man who owned that part of the field, kept a pile of bags filled with soot against the wall on his side, to put on his allotment. Meanwhile the old man's shed was well ablaze along with many fruit trees. A rather black faced fireman poked his head back over the wall and shouted 'water. ' The

other firemen ran back up the hill to the rear of the engine and connected fire hoses, The lead firemen shouted 'water on' and the message went up the line. After a couple of minutes he looked down his hose and said, 'where is the water' and we all shouted, 'around your feet', as we were now paddling in a river of water running down the lane. Someone had connected the hose to the wrong pipe. We then told the Chief that the old man who owned the shed, dried his onions in it with a small heater and sometimes if he had been to the pub, he slept in the shed. Bearing in mind this was before mobile phones the Chief said we must phone the police. This, Graham did and very shortly 2 Policemen arrived in their patrol car with flashing lights. The firemen now had more control of the fire. Unfortunately the two Policemen could not get past the Fire engine as it was completely blocking the lane and the fire men were still putting out the fire. There were high garden walls on the other side of the lane, preventing the Policemen from coming down to the remnants of the shed. Meanwhile quite a number of the householders were outside watching the events. One suggested the Policemen climb on top of the engine and climb over. This received very strange language from the other side of the fire engine. Then someone else suggested they could come through their garden and house and walk down the road in the front of our houses, coming back, through my house to walk up our garden to talk to the Chief. I walked back to the house to let the two policemen walk through, unfortunately my guard dog in the kitchen was not happy about letting two men dressed in dark uniforms walk through her kitchen and I had to hang on to her in my pyjamas with wet feet as she growled and barked whilst two nervous policemen disappeared up my garden.

The suspected crime scene was taped off, the fire engine with a dent in its rear and some rather sooty firemen left some while later, just as my other half returned home for breakfast. He then complained bitterly that some dirty Policemen would not allow him to bring his car back down the lane into HIS drive until they had a forensic team in to check there had not been anyone sleeping in the shed. He was not happy having been out working all night, until he heard the story, which did cause huge mirth in our household. We just assumed that the dirty policemen had also come a cropper with the bags of soot. We later heard that our elderly allotment owner had not been sleeping in his shed, but admitted he left the heater on to dry out his onions. And he was most annoyed about all his bags of soot being split leaving piles of soot everywhere. He did not seem to be too bothered about his shed, which was now a pile of ashes.

PS This might be a funny story, but true. I have to say in the previous house I lived in, the house next door caught fire, this was very serious and the Saltash Fire Brigade arrived quickly took complete control of the situation and had to enter the house wearing breathing apparatus and were absolutely brilliant preventing the flames from coming into my roof as well, and we could not fault them. They were there for many hours and never left until everyone and everything was sorted out. Once again my other half was out on a call!

*Lizzy Sharpe-Asprey*

# South East Cornwall Museums Forum

In our **5th** year -present our

## Grand Family History & Local History Day

### Liskeard Public Hall

West Street, Liskeard

### Saturday 18th June 2022

**Welcome** 10.0am - 3.00pm

Commonwealth War Graves

Commission

Cornwall Family History Society

Liskeard & District Museum

Old Cornwall Society

National Maritime Museum

The Bartlett

Lawrence House, Launceston

Linkinhorne History &

Community Archive

Lostwithiel Museum

Stuart House, Liskeard

Saltash Heritage Museum &  
Local History Centre

Saltash U3a Genealogy

Callington Archives

Old Guildhall & Gaol East Looe

Cornwall online Parish Clerks

Torpoint Archives

Devon Family History Society

Elliotts Store T.P.S. Saltash

Lostwithiel U3a. Local History  
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**NAAFI CANTEEN**

### Home made refreshments

**FREE** Day - open to all

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