

8 March 2024

Colyton Parish History Society Newsletter

Welcome to the March issue of the Newsletter which is published a little early this month in order to mark International Women's Day. Thanks to Jacquie McCulloch for the following article about Florence Nightingale David. And Phil Wright for the article on the mystery bullet holes in the cockerel on the Church weather vane! Got a story to tell? Please keep contributions coming!

1. News

a) International Women's Day: Who was Florence Nightingale David?

Florence Nightingale David's life story is truly inspiring as she encountered many challenges a century ago. Colyton Grammar School celebrates her achievements.



Florence , 1977

Florence was born in Herefordshire in 1909 to parents who were elementary school teachers. They named their daughter after their friend, Florence Nightingale the Crimea War nurse. The family moved to Beer, where young Florence was tutored privately by a local parson having shown early signs of her aptitude for mathematics. He tutored her in algebra, Latin and Greek. At the age of ten, she entered formal schooling at Colyton Grammar School, which was still located in Church House, Market Place, and had only begun to educate girls in 1913.



Colyton Grammar School photo 1927 (F.N. David third row back, third in on the left)

Florence excelled at school and became CGS longest standing Head Girl from 1924-1928, and in 1929 received many awards for her academic success. She was an example of the importance of educating girls. Florence was a strong character, known for being one of the first girls to ride a motorbike to school, the equivalent of arriving by helicopter today!

In 1938 she received her doctorate in Statistics from University College of London (UCL) and continued her work there until 1939, and the outbreak of WW2.

Work in Wartime - In June of that year, David was called upon to be an experimental officer to the Board of Ordnance, where she mainly worked on statistical analysis relating to the effectiveness of various weapons, bombing patterns and analysis of anti-aircraft guns used against German bombers traveling up the Thames River. She

was credited with saving many lives during the Blitz based on her statistical work relating to the likely dispersion of bombs released from German planes.

Florence was regarded as a pioneering statistician and the importance of her work took her in 1944 to the USA (flown in an American Bomber) to view the first big digital computer (built to predict trajectories of weapons). In 1967 she returned to University of California, Riverside and established the Department of Biostatistics, followed by Head of Statistics from 1970-77.

Florence retired in 1977 and was named Professor Emeritus and research associate at the University of California, Berkley, where she continued to teach for another decade.

In 1992, shortly before her death the following year, David was awarded the first Elizabeth L Scott Award, partly 'for her efforts in opening the door to women in statistics'. Subsequently, the Florence Nightingale David Award was established and is awarded every two years to a distinguished female statistician.

Florence N. David published 10 books, and over 100 papers, her book 'Games, God and Gambling' is widely recommended as an entertaining account of the history of probability.

From the Archives, CPHS – Jacquie McCulloch

b) Mystery of the bullet holes in the cockerel solved over 80 years later – by Phil Wright

When visiting Colyton a few weeks ago to attend the Parish History Society meeting, I came through the churchyard and got into a conversation with possibly a church warden or the vicar in civvies.

I remarked on the fine cockerel that sits guard over the church and mentioned an incident that occurred during the war. On hearing this he took me inside to show me a postcard depicting the cockerel with an inscription on the back saying there were 3 bullet holes in it of which the origin remained a mystery. Not anymore!

My father Percy Wright was born in Hillhead, Colyton in 1916, son of Arthur and Minnie (Richards) They lived in a house built by Minnie's father Asa Richards whose own house Asa's Fee can be found in Dolphin Street. Arthur was one of the Feoffees from 1946-50 and ran the grocery branch of R H & J Follett for many years.



The bullet holes can be seen in the chin, top of back and in the tail!

Percy inherited his grandfather's interest in agriculture. William Norton Wright farmed at Kilmington. From memory, Percy graduated from helping William to working on local farms in Northleigh and Colyton. He was doing this when war broke out and being in a reserve occupation, joined the Colyton Home Guard.



A young Percy Wright – taken about 1930- off to Colyton Grammar school

One day in the 1970's we were walking past the church on a fine evening. Looking up at the tower he confessed to having been on Home Guard patrol with a couple of his platoon during the war when they decided to have pot shots with their rifles at the unfortunate cockerel. It must have been a moonlit night or they wouldn't have seen it in the blackout. At least one of them was a good shot.



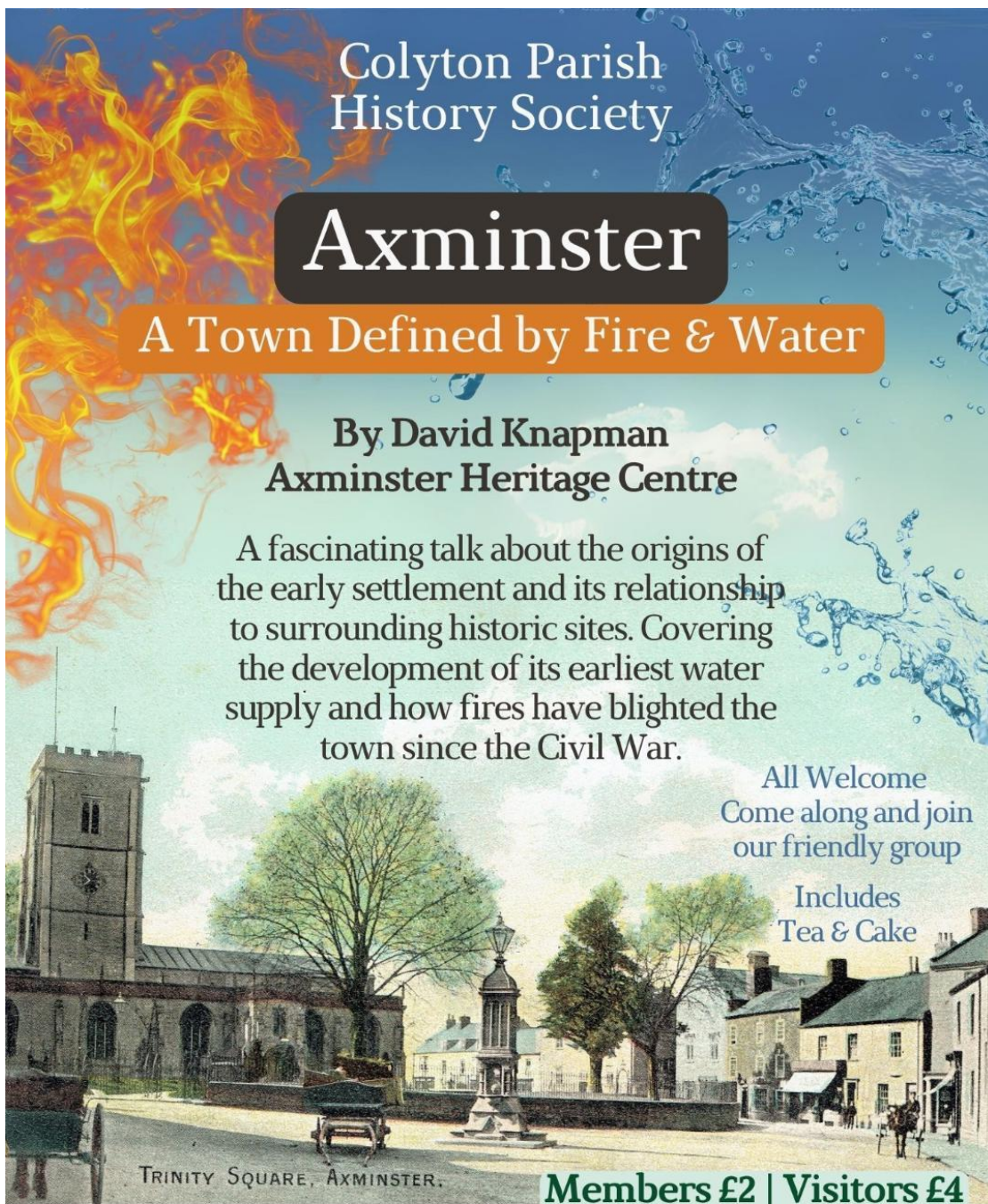
Colyton Home Guard. Percy Wright possibly back row 4th from right

My dad later worked at Bosshill Farm before moving to Farrington near Exeter Airport where sadly he died in 1980. So after over 80 years I would like to offer an apology on his behalf!

Phil Wright.

c) History Society talks

Don't forget: the next History Society talk is at **7.30 pm on Tuesday 26 March** in Colyton Town Hall. All welcome.



**Colyton Parish
History Society**

Axminster

A Town Defined by Fire & Water

By David Knapman
Axminster Heritage Centre


A fascinating talk about the origins of the early settlement and its relationship to surrounding historic sites. Covering the development of its earliest water supply and how fires have blighted the town since the Civil War.


All Welcome
Come along and join
our friendly group

Includes
Tea & Cake

TRINITY SQUARE, AXMINSTER.

Members £2 | Visitors £4

 **Tuesday 26 March 7.30pm**
at Colyton Town Hall



d) Heritage Centre - Missing CDs

The Compact Discs containing the Devon Census records for the fifty year period (1851, 1861, 1871, 1891, 1901) have been taken/borrowed from the Heritage Centre and not returned. They have not been entered in the 'Booking Out' record. PLEASE could these be returned to the Heritage Centre as soon as possible. They are an important resource for everyone to have access to.

e) Do you know what this is?

We've had a couple of suggestions about what some of the numbers and letters stand for. Thanks to Claire Ross who has found out that in 1868 Messrs R & R Williams and Co opened a branch of their Dorsetshire Bank in Colyton. That bank was bought up by the Wilts and Dorset Banking Co in 1897, which in turn was bought by Lloyds Bank in 1914. Can anyone help with the FB and 1585?



In future whenever the town walk guides receive a new enquiry about a local historical fixture we will post the query on here and if anyone can answer the question or has useful information please let me know.

(sarah.charman@yahoo.co.uk) Also, if you've always wondered about the history of something local then send me a picture and your question and we will ask if anyone has an answer!



a. Merchant's House
Market Place
Colyton
Devon
EX24 6JR
e. info@colytonheritagecentre.org
w. www.colytonheritagecentre.org

f) New project - Tales of Home

Do you live in Colyton? Did you know there are 116 listed buildings or structures in the Colyton area according to Historic England. Listed buildings are defined as buildings, objects or structures that have been judged to be of national importance in terms of their architectural or historic interest.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1333548>

Have you ever wondered about the history of your house? Have you done any research already?. Have you made notes of what you found out? Then would you like to help us with a new project?

Colyton History Society is looking to put together a file of information about as many local properties as possible which our volunteer town walk guides can draw on to help them in telling the history of the town and to answer visitors questions as they lead walks around Colyton.

Remember - it doesn't just have to be about your home - there may be historic or architectural interest in an old derelict built structure on your land. It could be a barn, enclosure or even a pipe line or dam. And it doesn't necessarily have to be Listed or even have to be particularly old. What we are also looking for is the social history attached to your property – have members of your family lived there for generations, did someone with an interesting back story once live there, a local character perhaps or did something happen there? Is it alleged to be haunted? We will keep a file of all contributions in the Heritage Centre.

Like the idea of researching the history of your home? Who has lived there in the past? Have you discovered any amusing/sad anecdotes about your property? Or have you found any interesting items hidden away when you were redecorating or refurbishing your house? Do you have any old photos or early deeds to your property which you are happy to share?

Keen to have a go? Well our volunteers in the Heritage Centre will be happy to show you what material we may already have about your home. In return we would be very pleased to receive any information you discover to add to our files. We will take a copy of any documentation provided. This is community history in action – anyone can get involved!

If you are interested in becoming involved please do let me know.

(sarah.charman@yahoo.co.uk)



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g) New offer – Bespoke Family Research Package Visits

We have also been looking at how to improve our 'offer' to visitors keen to engage in researching their family roots and heritage here in Colyton Parish. We are lucky to have Parish Registers going back to 1538. In recent years we have received an increasing number of requests – from all over the world - for help with tracking down information about a named local family, some of whose members may have emigrated 200 or 300 years ago to America, Australia, or Canada and many other places. Indeed, there are towns named Colyton in Australia and New Zealand.

We have decided to offer a bespoke package for family tree researchers which will include a guided walk around Colyton led by a town guide and directed study assistance from one of our research volunteers into the records we hold in the Heritage Centre. A donation of £20 (for one person) or £25 for two people is requested and we will require 28 days notice to set this up.

For further details please contact us through the heritage centre website at https://colytonheritagecentre.org/contact_us/ or email me direct on sarah.charman@yahoo.co.uk

2. Other CPHS Matters

a) Behind the Scenes at the Heritage Centre – Open Morning

Come and discover the wide range of archive materials held in our Heritage Centre.

Would you like to help out for 2 hours once a month meeting visitors?

Find out more about our new projects and activities at the Heritage Centre

– come and get involved!

Tuesday, 12th March 10.30am – 12 noon

Just drop in, all welcome



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b) Reopening of Heritage Centre

The Heritage Centre will reopen for the summer season on **Tuesday 2nd April until Thursday 26th September 2024**. The Centre is open three days a week on **Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11 am to 3 pm**. Our volunteers will be happy to help with any queries you have. Entry is free. Donations appreciated.

c) Membership - Annual Subs due in January 2024

A reminder that annual membership fees for 2024 were due at the beginning of January. It is £8 for a single membership or £12 for a couple. Subscriptions can be paid at any Society meeting. Or they can be paid by standing order or BACS transfer using the following details: Colyton Parish History Society, Sort Code: 30-90-37, A/c no 00992240 (Lloyds Bank.)

3. Other organisations events

a) Devon and Somerset archives

This spring Devon and Somerset archives have organised a series of coffee time (10.30 am) online talks on the theme of researching your West Country :

- i) criminals – 15 March
- ii) poor – 19 April

For more information and to book click on the link below:

https://swheritage.org.uk/news_tags/coffee-time-talks/?dm_i=5KNS,Y6EA,4G6WD,48USA,1

4. Items you may have missed

Sarah Charman

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