

Colyton Parish History Society Newsletter

20 May 2026

1. News

a. Julia Stocker from Australia visits the Heritage Centre to pursue her family history research



Julia Stocker from Adelaide, Australia visited the Heritage Centre on Thursday afternoon, 14 May. She had previously been in touch with Penny, one of our family history researchers, seeking information about possible Stocker family ancestors from Colyton. Julia, who was travelling with members of her family, had already visited the churches at Honiton, Offwell and Shute that morning in search of information about the Stocker family from those areas. She was thrilled to see the information we have available in the Heritage Centre.

If you know or have any information about the Stocker family please do let me know and I will pass the information on to Julia. (sarah.charman@yahoo.co.uk)

b. A Happy Retirement to Hugh Dyer Westacott from us all at Colyton Parish History Society



Having reached the grand age of 94! Hugh has recently stepped back from volunteering at the Colyton Heritage Centre. Hugh has been a volunteer since returning to live in Colyton in 2016 and continues to be a valued member of CPHS. His extensive local knowledge has often been sought as family history researchers reach back to post war years.

Hugh first came to Colyton in 1944 as a 12yr old evacuee from London. He attended Colyton Grammar School and has many fond memories of happy times and childhood escapades, including helping the war effort by harvesting potatoes as a pupil of CGS.

CPHS would like to thank Hugh for his generous support and wish him many happy days in his retirement.

c. The life of controversial Colyton Vicar Mamerto Gueritz

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midweekherald.co.uk
Wednesday May 20, 2025



The Rev Mamerto Gueritz



Colyton from yesteryear

Controversial vicar's rows with residents

BORN in 1828, Mamerto Gueritz, the son of a refugee Spanish/Wallon officer, fled to England with his mother, arriving at Axmouth harbour on a fruit cargo vessel. They were reunited with his father in London and the family later moved to Plymouth around 1828.

Mamerto went up to Oxford University in 1845 and subsequently entered the church. He married Anne Derby in 1848.

After several curacies he came to Colyton in 1860, where he would serve as vicar for the next 49 years. The first 10 years of quiet religious observance, family domesticity and service to the community he would be come a controversial figure.

Thought up as a Protestant, his religious beliefs slowly evolved towards Anglo-Catholicism, as he acquired new ideas and friendships at university.

Mamerto had a fine voice, liked music and gradually introduced more choral singing into his services along with other ritual and liturgical changes. He had family pews removed from the church and introduced free seating. These innovations brought him into conflict with non-conformists, particularly Unitarians in his parish who did not like these changes which they regarded as "high church".

In 1861 he wrote to Queen Victoria complaining of the Prince of Wales' marriage taking place during Lent. When his congregation got to hear of this some of them, calling themselves "patriotic parishioners", paid for the erection of a fountain in South Square in Colyton on which it is recorded: "The surplus of a fund collected to commemorate the wedding

of HRH the Prince of Wales during Lent March 10, 1863, has been devoted to the erection of this fountain by the patriotic protestants of Colyton as a personal memorial of their national triumph and a vindication of their own loyalty by vote of canonication."

In 1864 his controversial handling of a burial request in Colyton attracted national newspaper coverage and was reported in the *London Daily News* on November 3, John Pavy, a decided Unitarian, died, and his family wanted him buried in the churchyard. This was a tricky dilemma for Rev Gueritz, causing him considerable anguish, and he demurred and procrastinated. While he accepted the man had the right to be buried in the consecrated part of the cemetery, he did not feel it was appropriate to conduct the service himself, eventually saying: "The late John Pavy having died a Unitarian, denying the divinity of our Lord, and the Atonement, I cannot conscientiously read over him, the burial service of our church."

The burial was eventually conducted by a Unitarian Minister standing in the lane outside the cemetery wall.

Non-conformists mounted a lengthy campaign to change the burial laws which in 1890 finally resulted in a change which permitted clergymen of any Christian faith to conduct a burial using their own services in any Anglican churchyard.

As if these religious concerns were not enough, Mamerto Gueritz also contributed some trenchant views to a Parliamentary enquiry into child employment in the early 1860s. Bringing his knowledge of lace schools in his parish to bear, he commented: "I am convinced that the effects of lace making, as carried on here, are very injurious in several ways. In the schools it is unhealthy from the small size and crowded state of the rooms, the air of which is stinking... the work itself, which involves such long continued sitting and stooping over the pillows injure the chest. Consumption is prevalent amongst the people... Some of the girls in carrying their lace to be sold... get exhausted and nearly faint on the road."

Gueritz also expressed concern that lace making "... lowers the morals by making children early independent of their parents, girls of 16 or 17 going off to live by themselves."

Gueritz was also critical of the "truck system" by which lace-makers were paid with tokens which could only be "spent" in exclusive for-profit shops owned by their local employers. He tried to "induce some of the London lace houses to give out the work direct to the makers... but they would not."

He retired in 1901 when his congregation made him a gift of £100 (nearly £20,000 today) and went to live with his daughter in Exeter. A member of the Colyton Chamber of Trades for many years, he died in 1912.

It is recorded in the *Proffees Minutes* for February 13, 1912 that "during the many years he was chairman of this body he was at all times ready to give all the help and assistance that lay in his power."

This rather suggests that his Colyton flock had come to love and respect him!

With Bible in Hand

Wise words in an unstable world

It has been said that King Solomon truly was the wisest man in all the earth. In the Bible we have some of his 3,000 proverbs recorded. He also wrote down words by a prophet called Agur and in ch 30 of this Book of Proverbs there are many thought-provoking ideas.

Agur states in v5 that the word of God is pure and a shield meaning that His words are totally trustworthy; and in v8 - that you should not add to the Bible or take away from it.

He continues that there is a generation that does not respect their parents, and that there is an age when people consider themselves clean and pure in their own eyes but they are in fact unclean, polluted and unholy. There is an age, when people are arrogant, boastful and high minded. And finally, that there are those whose lips utter violence and threats, treating those who are poor and impoverished with contempt.

The whole chapter makes for interesting reading and, significantly, Paul the Apostle in 2 Timothy ch 3, says that this would happen in the final days. Once again the Bible, God's words, are sound and true!



Online Bible Courses
www.seatonchristadelphians.info



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d.

e. Hoard of Roman silver coins

Saturday, May 9, 2026 WESTERN MORNING NEWS

Hoard of Roman silver coins in batch of treasures



> Items declared treasure in Exeter include a medieval brooch and Roman coins dating from the legionary issues of Mark Antony

PAUL GREAVES
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A HOARD of Roman coins unearthed in Devon is thought to be the largest discovery of its kind in the county in recent times.

The 97 silver and six copper alloy coins were found in the parish of North Huish, in the South Hams, and are around 2,000 years old.

They were among several items declared treasure by the coroner in Exeter. Expert Dickon Perryman provided the coroner with details of the finds.

Other items included a beautiful medieval silver brooch, gold rings and fragments of gold that could date as far back as the Bronze Age.

All the treasures were unearthed on land in Devon either by landowners or metal detectorists.

Treasure inquests are held to determine how the items were found, who found them, when and where. In most cases, they are acquired by a museum.

The collection of Roman coins, 32BC-AD211, is likely to be the largest hoard of Roman silver coinage known from Devon in recent times.

The 97 silver Roman coins (96 denarii and 1 drachm) and six copper alloy (four sestertii and two sestertii, dupondii or asses) were declared treasure. The denarii range in date from the legionary issues of Mark Antony (32-31BC) to the joint reign of Septimius Severus and Caracalla (AD198-211), with the date of deposition after AD205 at the earliest.

The denarii are of types known to have circulated together into the early third century AD; Roman provincial coins do occur from time to time in the same circulation pool, being of similar size and appearance. The copper alloy coins are in relatively poor condition but, as they are contemporary with the silver coinage deposited, it is reasonable to assume they were deposited together.

Sidmouth Museum has expressed an interest in a late medieval gold icono-



graphic 'double bezel' finger ring dating from 1350-1500, was found in the parish of Musbury.

The gold finger ring has two standing figures on it with their heads bowed. These types of rings commonly feature saints and the Virgin Mary with her hand over her breast. The crown above one figure suggest the Archangel Gabriel.

A hoard of 12 medieval silver short-cross pennies, found in Goodleigh, were likely deposited together. They range in date from the time of Henry III and have an earliest date range of about 1232-1234.

The Museum of North Devon has expressed an interest in acquiring them.

Barnstaple Museum has expressed an interest in a late medieval gold iconographic finger ring discovered in Claxton in 2024 by metal detectorists. The ring features an engraving of St Christopher crossing a river. These rings were affordable variations on luxury products and date from 1400-1500.

A silver 'fede' finger ring discovered in Shute dates from 1150-1500. Fede rings were given as a love token. They feature two hands clasped together. They word comes from the Italian mani in fede (hands in faith/trust).

Tavistock Museum has expressed an interest in a post-medieval gilded silver dress hook, a heart-shaped oval with intricate detail discovered by detectorists and over 300 years old.

It was described by coroner Philip Spintney as a 'very intricate item indeed, with 22 holes spaced around the rim with intricate metal work known as filigree on the main body. A hook is soldered to the back.'



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

f. Colyton Houses Through Time community project

The project is making good progress with researching the history of individual properties in the Colyton area. The research is also throwing up lots of questions about issues such as road name changes and architectural design features such as the classical Greek revival of the mid eighteenth to nineteenth century.

Brian Carpenter from the South West Trust's heritage centre at Exeter has kindly agreed to attend the project group's next monthly meeting on **Saturday 13 June 10 am to 12 noon** in the Sunday School Building and provide advice and guidance, based on his years of experience in researching house and family history. If anyone would like to come along you will be most welcome.

2. CPHS News

a. Making a difference - Volunteers Needed to help run Colyton Heritage Centre

Can you spare 2 hours a month? Are you newly retired perhaps? Or new to Colyton and want to get involved in the community? Or just curious about Colyton's long history - then why not come and join our friendly band of volunteers in the Heritage Centre?

We are in real need of more volunteers to welcome visitors to the Heritage Centre during the summer months and help with their queries about family history research - otherwise we are going to have to reduce our opening hours. Don't worry full training will be given!

b. Organising the History Society

There are also some exciting opportunities to get involved in different aspects of running Colyton Parish History Society and the Heritage Centre - eg we will be looking for a new Treasurer in the autumn.

We are also looking for:

- someone to arrange the Society's monthly executive committee's meetings and take the minutes ,
- a membership organiser - to process membership applications
- a co-ordinator for volunteers in the Heritage Centre to set up and maintain the volunteer rota, and
- someone to plan the Society's annual programme of talks which would offer that person the opportunity to liaise with speakers and develop the annual speaker programme.



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The History Society will be entering its fifth decade next year and getting involved in any of these roles would give you the exciting opportunity to help steer its development for the next half century!

If you are interested in any of these voluntary roles please do email me any queries you may have and let me know your contact details and (sarah.charman@yahoo.co.uk) or speak to any member of the Society's executive committee.

c. **CPHS Membership – Reminder Annual Subscription due in January 2026**

A reminder that annual membership fees for 2026 were due from the beginning of January. The rate is unchanged at £8 for a single membership or £12 for a couple. **If you pay online please do remember to download and complete the membership form and let us have it back so we have your contact details and email address! You can bring completed forms into the Heritage Centre – please mark FAO Treasurer.** 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) NB There is also an opportunity to Gift Aid your contribution.

3. **Items you may have missed**

- a. Rare Roman villa threatened by farming damage reveals rare mosaic and bathhouse remains in Devon | Archaeology News Online Magazine <https://share.google/aUjCNJSLu9rsDiRZe>
- d. New book details SAS hero's secret wartime life in Dorset | Dorset Echo <https://share.google/lqx6Wzpz66j5xdMp>
- e. The 50th anniversary of the Two Moors Way in Devon | Great British Life <https://share.google/KS0VxDzaqorYvZjkN>
- f. How 500 year old map still influences how we think about borders <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/first-bible-map-published-500-years-ago-still-influences-how-we-think-about-borders/ar-AA1Rmp9j?ocid=msedgntp&pc=HCTS&cvid=69d0f37f6fdb41f8933253fec74bc3c0&ei=28>

Sarah Charman
Editor