

## Colyton Parish History Society Newsletter

13 June 2026

### 1. News

#### a. The Clink – by Claire Ross

By the mid nineteenth century a gaol was required in Colyton to hold prisoners prior to their appearance before a magistrate. At a meeting on 28 December 1846 the Chamber of Feoffees, then the general administrators of the town, resolved to erect a 'lock up house.'



*The Clink door*

*“At a Chamber Meeting this Day - - held pursuant to Notice to take into consideration an Application from the Inhabitants of Colyton respecting the erection of a Lock-up House for the security of Prisoners previous to their being taken before a Magistrate.*

*It was agreed that a Lock-up House be erected according to a plan proposed by the committee appointed to survey the spot provided a Rent equal to 5 per cent on the outlay be secured for so doing."*

A couple of weeks later, on 11 January 1847, the Chamber amended the detailed requirements for the building:

*"At a Chamber Meeting this Day held pursuant to Notice to take into further consideration the erection of the Lockup House (the Committee of the Vestry having declared their willingness to be answerable for the Rent) it was considered advisable in order to make it more compleat to alter the plan first agreed on as under*

*The floor to be Membury Stone Base 10 inches high and 4<sup>in</sup> thick Beer Stone Case the walls with dos? 2<sup>in</sup> thick which Mr Murch has offered to do. ? Mortar at 9d per foot a pair of Bak Durns 4<sup>in</sup> by 3 with a light over the Door the Door to be made of Red Deal*

*1<sup>in</sup> thick ledged and about 5ft high the rafters to be of Oak or Red Deal 3<sup>in</sup> by 2<sup>in</sup> lined and covered by 3/4<sup>in</sup> Deal Board to be covered with Lead 5? To the foot.*

*It was unanimously Resolved that the above plan be adopted and carried into effect immediately."*



*Probable location of the clink*



a. Merchant's House  
Market Place  
Colyton  
Devon  
EX24 6JR  
e. [info@colytonheritagecentre.org](mailto:info@colytonheritagecentre.org)  
w. [www.colytonheritagecentre.org](http://www.colytonheritagecentre.org)

Based on the above photo of the Clink door showing its location between a brick and a stone wall, my guess is that it was between the thatched building "Shambles" and old Market House with the door opening to the north.

The Feoffees accounts for 1847 indicate that the "Lock Up House" was seemingly built for a total of £6 12s 5d by Herman Annings.

## References

Feoffees Archive 1585f\_17\_7m

Photographs are from the collection held in the Heritage Centre

## **b. Abraham Holmes - another Monmouth Rebellion tale - by Sarah Charman**

My brother unearthed this tale while doing some family history research into the Holmes family. Abraham Holmes was a Colonel in Monmouth's army, commanding Holmes' Greene Regiment of Foot.

"Abraham Holmes, a retired officer of the parliamentary army, and one of those zealots who would own no king but King Jesus, had been taken at Sedgemoor. His arm had been frightfully mangled and shattered in the battle, and as no surgeon was at hand, the stout old soldier amputated it himself.

"He was carried up to London and examined by the King in Council but would make no submission." "I am an aged man" he said "and what remains to me of life is not worth a falsehood or a baseness. I have always been a republican and I am so still." He was sent back to the West and hanged. The people remarked with awe and wonder that the beasts which were to drag him to the gallows became restive and went back. Holmes himself doubted not that the Angel of the Lord, as in the old time, stood in the way sword in hand, invisible to human eyes, but visible to the inferior animals. "Stop gentlemen" he cried "let me go on foot. There is more in this than you think. Remember how the ass saw him whom the prophet could not see." He walked manfully to the gallows, harangued the people with a smile, prayed fervently that God would hasten the downfall of Antichrist and the deliverance of England, and went up the ladder with an apology for mounting so awkwardly. "You see" he said "I have but one arm."

He was executed at Lyme on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1685. He was an old and gallant officer who had served under Cromwell with distinguished reputation. He



a. Merchant's House  
Market Place  
Colyton  
Devon  
EX24 6JR  
e. [info@colytonheritagecentre.org](mailto:info@colytonheritagecentre.org)  
w. [www.colytonheritagecentre.org](http://www.colytonheritagecentre.org)

accompanied the duke of Monmouth to Holland by whom he was made a major general. In the action at Philip's Norton one of his arms was shot to pieces, so that it hung only by the flesh, and in consequence of this, being soon taken, he was stripped by the soldiers and carried naked before a justice of the peace who humanely clothed him. His shattered arm being an incumbrance to him, he laid it on a dresser, and cut it off himself with the cook-maids knife. He was hanged on the very spot where he landed with the duke.

Abraham Holmes was born in Sedgemoor in 1629 and his wife Elizabeth was born in Lyme Regis in 1630 and died about 1668 aged 38.

## 2. Other organisations events

# Roman to Norman Devon



£14 admittance fee payable through [www.stevensbooks.co.uk](http://www.stevensbooks.co.uk) or tel. 07900915469.

Refreshments will be available at a small charge.

Image courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

## Saturday 19 September 2026

9.30 Registration 10.30 Welcome

10.40 *Bill Horner,*  
**'Roman Devon'**  
Devon County Council

11.40 *Prof. Stephen Rippon,*  
**'Anglo-Saxon Devon?'**  
University of Exeter

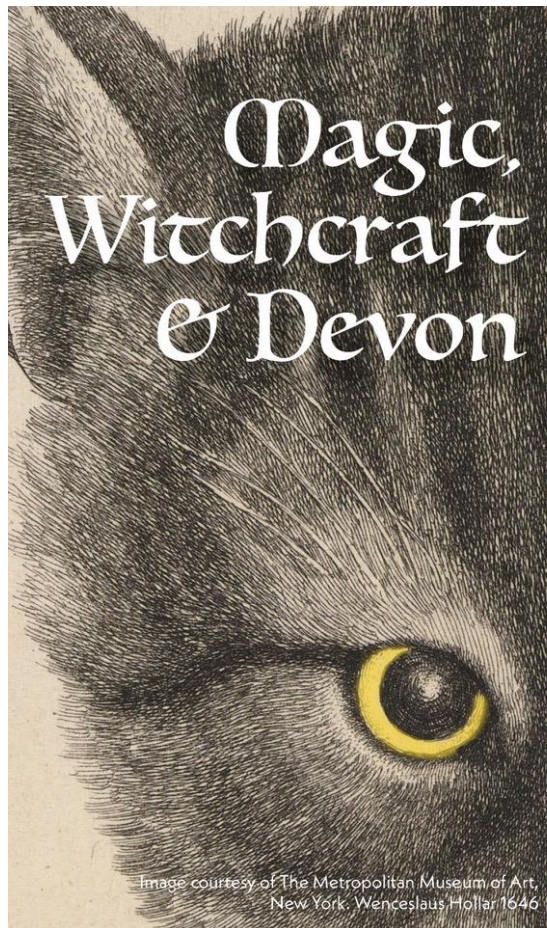
12.40 - 1.45 Lunch (available in nearby cafes)

1.45 *Derek Gore,*  
**'Viking Devon'**  
University of Exeter

2.45 *Prof. Levi Roach,*  
**'Norman Devon'**  
University of Exeter

4.00 End

Mint Methodist Church Centre,  
Fore Street, Exeter EX4 4AT



*Saturday 24 October 2026*

9.30 Registration 10.30 Welcome

10.40 *Dr Todd Gray,*  
**'13 Devon Witches, 1565-1633'**  
University of Exeter

11.40 *Prof. Mark Stoyale,*  
**'Spellbound: Witchcraft in Exeter, 1558-1660'**  
University of Southampton

12.40 – 1.45 Lunch (available in nearby cafes)

1.45 *Prof. Marion Gibson,*  
**'The Mystery of the Dartmouth Witches, 1601-2'**  
University of Exeter

2.45 *Dr Tabitha Stanmore,*  
**'Magic in Early Modern Rural Life'**  
University of Exeter

4.00 End

**Mint Methodist Church Centre,  
Fore Street, Exeter EX4 4AT**

£14 admittance fee payable through  
[www.stevensbooks.co.uk](http://www.stevensbooks.co.uk) or tel. 07900915469.  
Refreshments will be available at a small charge.

### 3. Items you may have missed

- a) Sadness as 200-year-old Plymouth's Saltram tree felled - BBC News  
[Sadness as 200-year-old Plymouth's Saltram tree felled - BBC News](#)

Wednesday June 10, 2025

midweekherald.co.uk

# TV historian helps reveal the story of Devon's secret army

Lewis Clarke  
lewis.clarke@newsquest.co.uk

MOST people strolling along the east Devon coastline see little more than sweeping beaches, dramatic cliffs and the occasional weathered pillbox overlooking the sea.

What they do not see are the ghosts of a secret war that never happened. Beneath quiet fields, hidden among woodland and concealed behind seemingly ordinary structures, lies evidence of one of Britain's most extraordinary wartime preparations – a clandestine network of men, women and children trained to resist a Nazi occupation from within.

It is a story that has fascinated historian and author Andrew Chatterton for more than a decade. Now it is reaching a wider audience through a new documentary made alongside historian and broadcaster Dan Snow, with filming taking place across the country and on the beaches of Budleigh Salterton.

Andrew, who lives in Budleigh Salterton, said: "I think we tend to imagine Britain in 1940 as a bit DoD's Army – old blokes with pitchforks waiting to take on the Germans. But actually, the layers of highly secret, highly ruthless defence that Britain had in place were incredible." Across Britain, secret underground bunkers were constructed. Specially selected civilians were recruited, trained and prepared for an invasion that, thankfully, never came.

The organisation at the heart of the story was known as the Auxiliary Units.

Far removed from the image of elderly Home Guard volunteers, these men were often farmers, gamekeepers, quarry workers, miners and others with intimate knowledge of the local landscape. Many were skilled with weapons or explosives.

Grouped into patrols of six to eight men, they were expected to disappear underground if German troops landed.

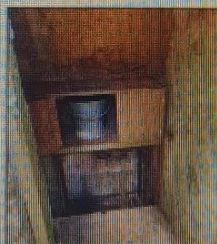
"They had enough rations for about a fortnight," says Andrew. "That essentially represented their life expectancy."

Their role was not to confront invading forces head on. Instead, they would emerge under cover of darkness to wage a campaign of sabotage.

Alongside them operated an equally secret sister organisation known as the Special Duties Branch.



Dan Snow and Andrew Chatterton on the beach at Budleigh



The toilet bunker (with the toilet up and the ladder diving underground)

Its recruits were very different. "They recruited elderly people, teenage girls, mothers, doctors, vicars and publicans," Chatterton explains.

These individuals blended naturally into every-day life and could observe enemy movements without

attracting attention. By 1944, historians believe there were around 7,000 men in the Auxiliary Units and more than 5,000 people involved in the Special Duties Branch network. Yet almost nobody knew they existed.

Every participant signed the Official Secrets Act. Most took their secrets to the grave.

"Probably 80 to 90 per cent of the people involved never told anyone anything," Andrew says.

For Andrew, Budleigh's appearance in the documentary carried special significance.

"Budleigh is a really interesting one," he says. "It's a good potential invasion beach."

Even now remnants of wartime defences can be found along the coastline. Pillboxes still stand overlooking the sea. Observation posts remain hidden in plain sight. Beaches now occupy positions that once housed anti-tank guns.

During filming, these locations helped demonstrate how heavily

fortified Britain had become during the summer of 1940.

Andrew believes many local viewers will be surprised by what lies hidden around them.

Along the east Devon coastline, secret underground bunkers still survive.

Perhaps the most astonishing discovery featured in the documentary is a secret wireless bunker hidden beneath an outdoor toilet in Devon.

Its entrance was concealed beneath what appeared to be an ordinary lavatory.

To gain access, operators had to release a hidden mechanism, lift the toilet structure and descend a ladder into a concealed underground chamber.

"It is one of the most remarkable things Dan has ever seen," Andrew says.

Filming took them from Cornwall to south Wales and beyond.

Viewers can watch the documentary through Dan Snow's History Hit streaming platform.

Sarah Charman  
Editor