COLYTON
HERITAGE CENTRE

a. Merchant's House
Market Place
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Colyton Parish History Society Newsletter

26 July 2026

1. News

a. John Ashbolt

On behalf of the CPHS our chairman, Marian Sydenham would like to extend her condolences to Glennis Ashbolt on the sad passing of her husband John. John had been a very supportive member of the CPHS from the mid-1990s, always on hand to help set up meetings and helping conduct election of officers at AGMs.

John will be remembered most for the WW2 exhibition and publication of the book '*Colyton at War'* which marked the official national commemoration of WW2 in 2007. John worked as part of a team with Geoff Elliott interviewing many residents about their war time experiences which were recorded for posterity and form an important part of our local archive.

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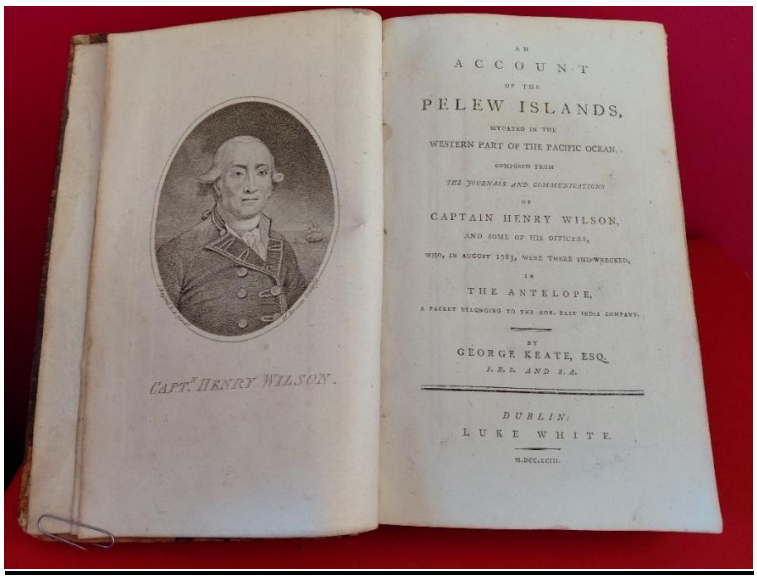
b. In Memoriam - Rt Hon Ann Widdecombe

Following the dreadful murder of former MP Ann Widdecombe at her home at Haytor on Dartmoor recently, Chairman of CPHS Marian Sydenham recalled attending a talk she gave to the local WI in Colyton Town Hall on 24 July 2012. Marian said Anne Widdecombe was a wonderful speaker and a lovely lady and the Hall was full to bursting. The talk was warmly received by all who attended. Marian also remembered her joyful performances on Strictly Coming Dancing.
Reference - https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/statement-about-the-death-of-ann-widdecombe

c. Donation by Mrs Jean Hutton in memory of her late husband Roger Hutton



An Account of the Pelew Islands and the Shipwreck of the Antelope composed from the Journals and Communications of Captain Henry Wilson by George Keate, 1788

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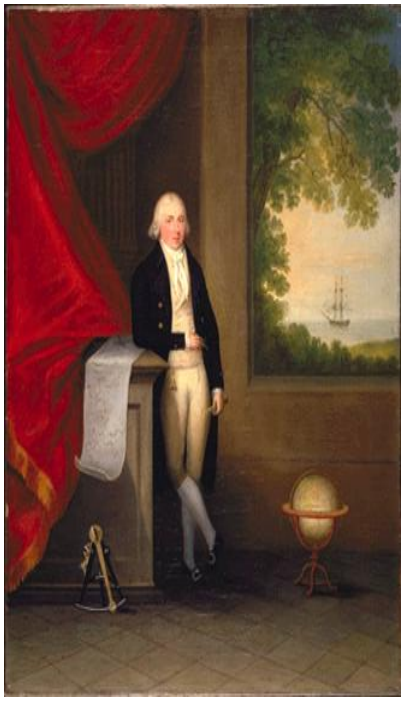
In memory of her late husband Roger, who was a long-standing member and Treasurer of CPHS, Jean Hutton has very kindly donated an important book about one of Colyton's most famous residents – Captain Henry Wilson.

Captain Henry Wilson commanded The East India Company packet ship *Antelope*, which sailed from England on 6th February 1781 to carry despatches to China via the Pacific route. She sailed via Cape Horn and arrived in Macao in June 1782. On her return journey she strayed too far east, encountered storms and was shipwrecked off Ulong Island in August 1783.



She encountered gales and squally weather and eventually was flung onto rocks which presented the most dreadful scene and left no room for doubt. The ship taking heel, in less than an hour filled with water as high as the lower deck hatchways. People assembled on the quarter deck, lying highest out of the water seeking shelter from the sea and rain; here after contemplating a few moments their wretched situation, the Captain endeavoured to raise their drooping spirits, which began to sink through anxiety and fatigue, by reminding them that shipwreck was a misfortune to which those who navigated the ocean were always liable. To avoid further despair and disagreement of the crew, it was strongly recommended to every individual not to drink any spirituous liquor.

d. Request for help from Phd student - Objects concealed in buildings

Do you have any objects you found concealed in your home? A PhD student at the University of Hertfordshire has contacted us to ask if we have any stories or historic artifacts on display in the Heritage Centre which have been found in local homes. Miranda is studying rediscovered objects from buildings in Britain and Ireland along with the emotional connections people form with the buildings they inhabit.

She is interested to hear about objects that were deliberately concealed within a building (i.e. under floorboards, behind wall panels or inside chimneys). Miranda is interested in all object types and says her database so far includes everything from

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animal remains and garments to twentieth-century mince pies tucked under floorboards and children's letters to Father Christmas.

She has asked us to forward details of any such objects we hold in the Heritage Centre and would also like to receive details of any such items readers may have in their own homes. She realises that the available data may be very brief as such finds are often made during building or renovation work and not recorded in any detail, but any available information would be very much appreciated. It would also be extremely useful to know if the objects are currently on display anywhere and if any folklore or stories are associated with the object(s).

Where possible she would be grateful for information, however fragmentary, on the following: Object type(s), Description of object(s), Location discovered (including room if known),Type of building object was discovered in, Date of building object was discovered in, Date of concealment (if known), Geographical location of building object was discovered in (County or Postcode), Circumstances of rediscovery (if known), Museum reference number, Are the object(s) currently on display?
Any associated folklore, Photograph of object(s) (if available).

If you have any such finds and can provide any information about them please let me know and I will pass the information on to Miranda. (sarah.charman@yahoo.co.uk)

2. Other organisations events

a. Cannington Viaduct opening 19 – 20 September 2026

A unique heritage weekend is coming your way! For the first time in more than 60 years, the public will have the chance to experience Cannington Viaduct, the last surviving major structure of the magical Axminster to Lyme Regis Railway, which served our communities from 1903 until its closure in 1965.

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Revisit the Viaduct will take place on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 September, bringing together local history and the glorious countryside on the Devon / Dorset border in a very special celebration.
The weekend will include:
• Guided, stewarded walks from Uplyme to the viaduct.
• The opportunity to stand on the viaduct deck for the first time since the railway closed.
• For those who prefer not to make the walk, a heritage hub at Uplyme Village Hall with displays, refreshments and the premiere of a new short film telling the story of the viaduct and the branch line.
Admission will be FREE, but because numbers on the viaduct must be carefully managed, advance booking will be essential.
The online box office opens on 1 August, when full details and tickets will become available.

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This exciting community project has been made possible by a team that includes For the Love of a Railway, National Highways Historical Railways Estate, Axminster Town Council, Uplyme Parish Council, Devon County Council and South Western Railway. Its success very much depends upon volunteers and on access kindly given by Shapwick Grange Farm.

Please save the dates – and help us spread the word by sharing this post with friends, family and anyone who remembers, loves or simply wants to discover the wonderful Axminster to Lyme Regis Railway.
More info: **https://fortheloveofarailway.co.uk/viaduct**

#RevisitTheViaduct #CanningtonViaduct #LymeRegisRailway #Axminster #RailwayHeritage #EastDevon #Uplyme #visitdevon

b. Magic, Witchcraft Devon

3. Items you may have missed

How William Wordsworth was revived by living in Dorset | Bridport and Lyme Regis News

Axminster Heritage Centre facing 'uncertain' future | Midweek Herald

Sarah Charman
Editor