

Colyton Parish History Society Newsletter

20 September 2026

1. News

a. **Walking Cannington Viaduct - got slightly drenched!** - by Sarah Charman

Spent a fascinating, if rather wet, Saturday afternoon experiencing the grade II listed industrial architectural history at Cannington Viaduct. The viaduct once conveyed the narrow gauge light railway line from Axminster down to Lyme Regis. The line cost £67,000 to construct equivalent to some £7 million today – which seems rather cheap by today's standards of rail construction!. Its construction had been facilitated by the passing of the Light Railways Act in 1896 which permitted lower standards of building than on conventional railway lines to be used to encourage the building of rural railways..



Great grandson of Arthur Pain builder of the viaduct, beside Arthur's portrait



Cannington viaduct in the rain

The viaduct is 125 years old and stands some 260 yards wide and 93 feet high and was one of the first structures of its time to be built entirely of mass concrete, then still an innovative construction method. Begun in 1900, it was completed in 1903 and the line ran for sixty years before being closed in the 1960s. The fare for the twenty four minute journey from Axminster to Lyme Regis in 1903 was 6.5 old pence and the line greatly boosted the local economy opening up wider markets to local farmers and encouraging tourism.

I was introduced to the great grandson of the man, Arthur Cadlick Pain, who built the railway line including the viaduct and he explained to me how his ancestor made it.

Incredibly no scaffolding was used. The arch piers were built up level by level using a timber box framework method. Cement was shipped in from Lyme Regis Cobb and a cable line then winched bucket loads of mixed concrete across the valley and deposited them into the wooden boxes. The arches themselves were made of pre cast concrete. The ingenuity of Victorian men like Arthur was extraordinary.

Fortuitously, the steep land shoulders of the viaduct were naturally occurring features in the landscape. The viaduct was simply constructed to fill the gap between them. There was concern at the time about the potential for subsidence given the unstable ground on which it was built and indeed subsequently the third arch had to be reinforced with brickwork. Flagmen were employed to stand either side of the viaduct to watch for movement.



Walking across the top of the Viaduct



third arch had to be shored up because of subsidence



Cannington Viaduct

During the walk to the viaduct I met a lady who told me she could recall travelling on the line from Axminster to Lyme Regis on the way to stay with her grandparents during school holidays. I also ran into Tony and Shirley Robinson on the 3pm tour. Congratulations to the organisers and their many volunteer helpers for all the hard work that went into arranging this event. Well done!

References

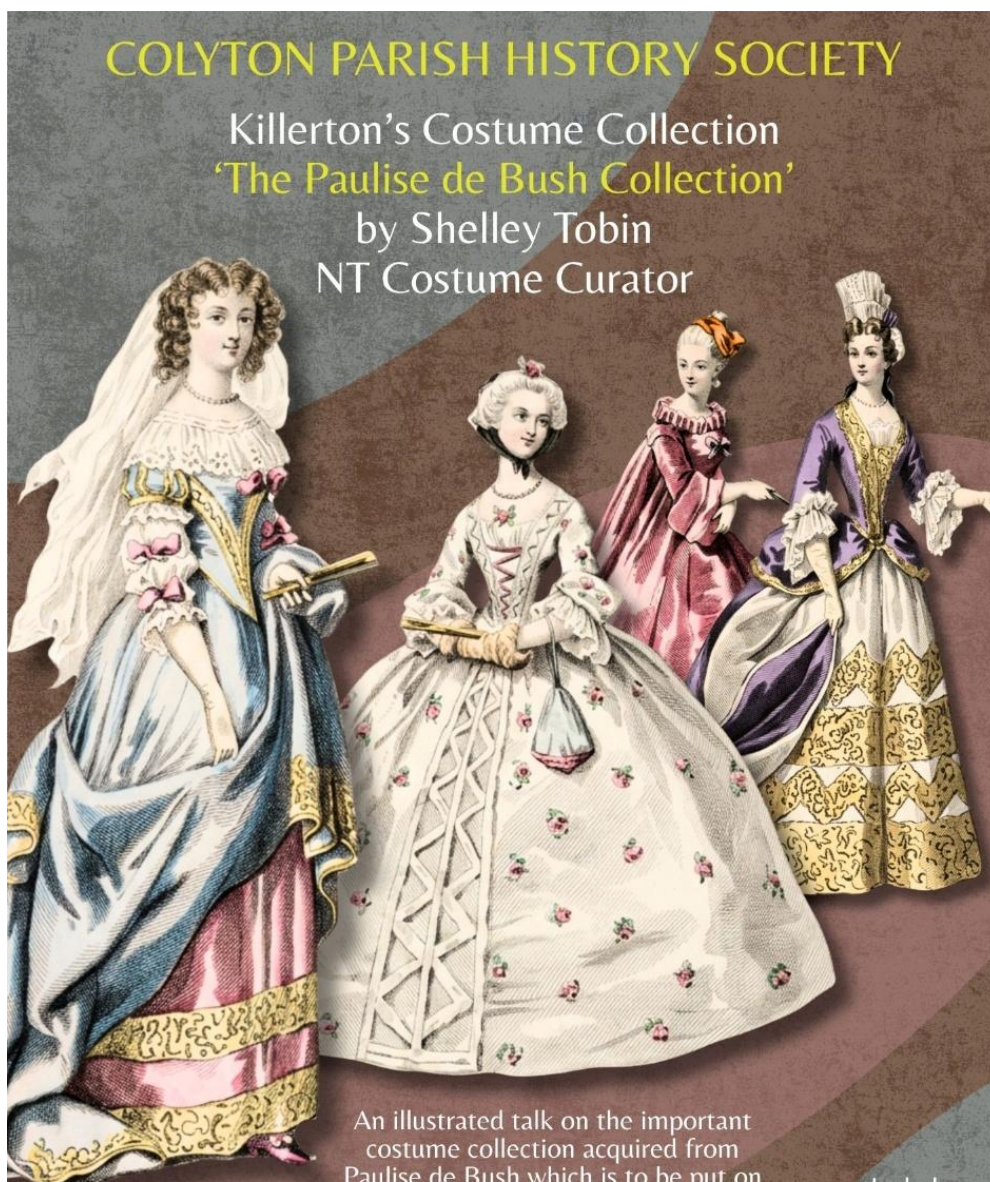
Information on display at the exhibition in Uplyme community hall.

[Cannington Viaduct reopening 'rare opportunity for the public' - BBC News](#)

[Cannington Viaduct - Graces Guide](#)

2. CPHS events

A reminder that the CPHS autumn talk programme begins this coming **Tuesday 22 September** at 2.30 pm with a fascinating talk by curator Shelley Tobin on Killerton's costume collection. Members £2 Non Members £4. All our welcome. Do come along.



COLYTON PARISH HISTORY SOCIETY

Killerton's Costume Collection
'The Paulise de Bush Collection'
by Shelley Tobin
NT Costume Curator

An illustrated talk on the important costume collection acquired from Paulise de Bush which is to be put on show at Killerton for the first time

Come along & join our friendly group

Tuesday, 22nd September 2.30pm

COLYTON TOWN HALL

Members £2 | Visitors £4

Includes Tea & Cake



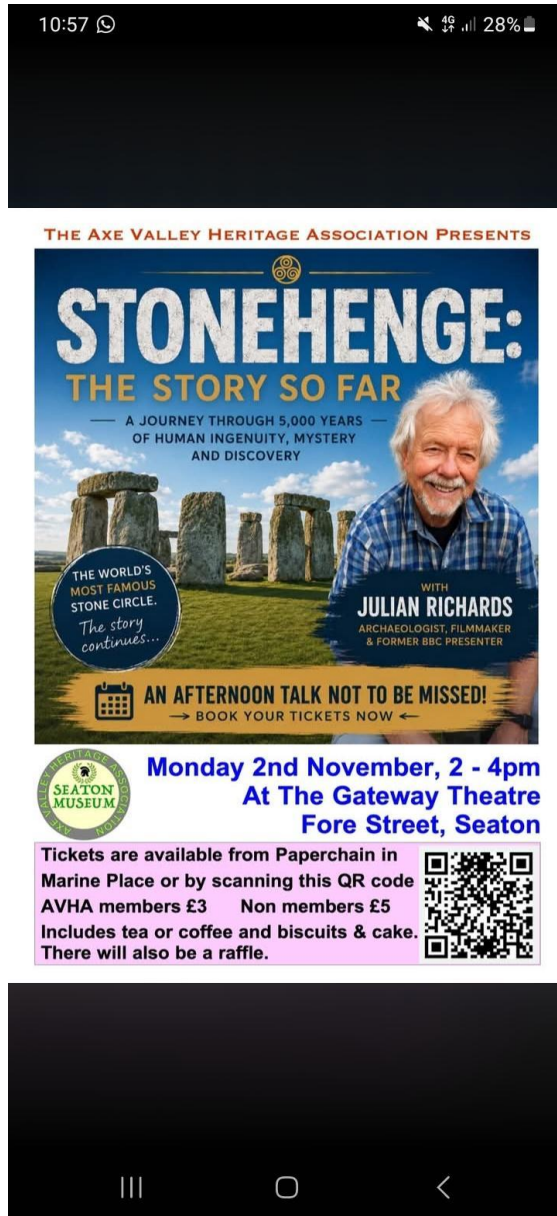
2026

3. Colyton Houses Through Time Project

A further reminder that we are planning a small exhibition in Colyton at the end of October in the Sunday School Building to reveal our findings about the history of selected houses in Colyton. The exhibition will take place on **Friday and Saturday 30 and 31 October from 10 am to 4.00 pm** and is free to enter. We do hope you will come along.

4. Other organisations events

a. Axe Valley Heritage Association



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THE AXE VALLEY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

STONEHENGE:

THE STORY SO FAR

— A JOURNEY THROUGH 5,000 YEARS —
OF HUMAN INGENUITY, MYSTERY
AND DISCOVERY

THE WORLD'S
MOST FAMOUS
STONE CIRCLE.
*The story
continues...*

WITH
JULIAN RICHARDS
ARCHAEOLOGIST, FILMMAKER
& FORMER BBC PRESENTER

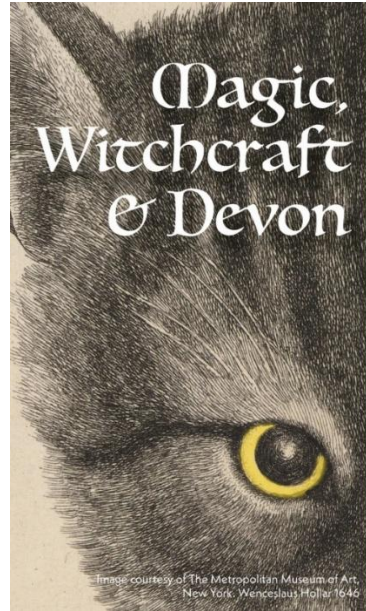
AN AFTERNOON TALK NOT TO BE MISSED!
→ BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW ←

 **Monday 2nd November, 2 - 4pm**
At The Gateway Theatre
Fore Street, Seaton

Tickets are available from Paperchain in
Marine Place or by scanning this QR code
AVHA members £3 Non members £5
Includes tea or coffee and biscuits & cake.
There will also be a raffle.

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b. Magic, Witchcraft Devon



**Magic,
Witchcraft
& Devon**

Image courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York. Wenceslaus Hollar 1646

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 Stoyke,*
'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 or tel. 07900915469.
Refreshments will be available at a small charge.

5. Items you may have missed

a) Pioneering astronomer

[Remarkable life of Mary Browne celebrated in Sidmouth | Sidmouth Herald](#)

Sarah Charman
Editor