

Colyton Parish History Society Newsletter 17 November 2021

Following the item on evacuees a couple of months ago, Hugh Westacott contacted me about his first memories of coming on holiday to Colyton at the age of three in 1935. He has kindly written the piece below. If anyone else feels inspired to write an article for the Newsletter please let me know! Thank you Hugh. Sarah Charman, Editor

1. New

a. Memories of Colyton in 1935 – by Hugh Westacott

I first came to Colyton in 1935 when I was three years-old and my late sister, Averil, was a babe in arms. One of my father's colleagues had recommended Colyton as a pleasant place to spend a holiday, and thus it was that we took the train from Waterloo and stayed with Miss Evelyn Turl at 'Riversleigh' in St Andrew's Square.



Miss Turl and guests outside Riversleigh in c1957

Miss Turl was a charming, shy, middle-aged, lady who spoke with a refined Devon accent. She probably had regrets, but no apparent bitterness, that many of the opportunities in life had passed her by. She confided to my mother that she regularly attended weddings at the church, secreting herself behind a pillar in the rearmost pew, so that she could watch the ceremony unobtrusively. Perhaps she dreamed of what might have been as was the lot of many unmarried daughters. She kept house for her father, Mr John Turl, an elderly widower, who was one of Colyton's best-known characters and famous for composing slightly risqué limericks. He died, aged 93, soon after the war ended.

Miss Turl let out rooms to holidaymakers on terms that would strike modern tourists as decidedly unusual. The practice was known as 'taking rooms' and was popular with lower-middle-class holidaymakers who could not afford hotels. We had our own sitting room for use in the evenings, but not during the day unless it was exceptionally wet, and one large bedroom with a double-bed for my parents, and a double mattress on the floor which Averil and I shared. The house had neither gas nor electricity so Miss Turl cooked on a paraffin stove; lit the house with candles and beautiful brass oil lamps; and kept warm with open coal fires. There was a flushing toilet, but no bathroom, so we washed in the bedroom using a large bowl into which we poured the hot water that Miss Turl had heated on the stove and left in a pitcher outside our bedroom door. If we needed the loo in the night we used a chamber pot that was kept under the bed and sometimes referred to as a 'gazunder' (because it goes under the bed), and which was covered with a dainty piece of lace with the edges weighted down with beads. Miss Turl would discreetly dispose of the contents the following morning after we had left the house.



Miss Turl on the beach at Beer with Hugh's parents c1946

The arrangements for meals were also unusual. My mother would discuss with Miss Turl what we would have for dinner and then would buy the ingredients for Miss Turl to cook for our evening meal. There was a hand bell on the table which my sister and I would take turns to ring to indicate that we were ready for the second course, or had completed our meal.

After breakfast, made memorable by hot bread from Gover's bakery, the Westacott family would set out for the day either fishing for tiddlers or sailing toy boats on the pool at Heathayne Bridge, or walking to Beer to play on the beach, and then walking back in time for dinner.

So many happy memories!

2. CPHS News

Heritage Centre opening on Christmas Lighting Up Day – Wednesday, 1 December 2021

The Heritage Centre will be opening its doors for Colyton's Christmas lighting up day on Wednesday, 1 December. We will be open from 4.00 – 7.00 pm. Do come along and bring your friends with you.

3. Other Organisations Events in October and November

East Devon AONB

- a. **Saturday 20 November 2pm – 4pm - Bud and Bark Detectives**, Holyford Woods, Colyford

Trees now in disguise without their leaves – Graham Jones shows us how we can identify trees from their buds, twigs and bark. Explore Holyford Woods, one of the oldest woods in Devon, magical - full of oak, ash and hazel. Birds nest and many bats roost here. A 'goyle', a sunken stream runs through the heart of the woodland. **Booking Essential** – parking and meeting point details given on booking.

This FREE event is part of East Devon AONB's Saving Special Species Project – part of a nationwide AONB major nature recovery initiative to improve the conservation of and safeguard their areas' threatened wildlife. More information: For talks or school workshop please contact Ruth. Ruth Worsley 01297 489741 or savingspecialspecies@gmail.com

Devon History Society

- a. **Estates and Landowners in the 1920s**

The **Devon in the 1920s** project is investigating what happened to estates, country houses and landowners in the 1920s and is looking for as wide a spread of information as possible. Has your group already investigated the twentieth-century history of landowners and their estates in your community? Would you be interested in sending us what you've discovered, or sharing your researches in a Zoom discussion group? Please get in touch with Julia Neville, the Devon in the 1920s Project Manager if you can help the project at all. Email j.f.neville@btinternet.com

- b. **Devon in the 1920s Events Autumn 2021: Expert Witness seminars**
Thursday 2 December at 7.00 p.m. Housing in the 1920s with John Boughton

To book for this event (free of charge) go to [Events Archive - Devon History Society](#)

SW Heritage Trust – Devon Archives

- a. **Devon Archives and Local Studies are holding an archive event on 26 November.**

Explore Your Archive Event: A Day in the Life of an Archivist

*26 November,
10.30 am - 12.30 pm*

**Join Archivists Brian Carpenter and Esther Hoyle at this
online event for Explore Your Archive week!**

During this online event you can discover more about their work as archivists with the South West Heritage Trust. From favourite documents to interesting enquiries, Esther and Brian will give an insight into the work of an archivist. They will talk about how they came to work in the profession, the process involved when a new collection of documents is received, outreach and engagement, and aspects of their work that cannot be anticipated!

[Book the Online Event](#)

4. Items you may have missed

- a. **The Death Penny**

<https://www.midweekherald.co.uk/lifestyle/heritage/the-death-penny-on-display-in-honiton-museum-8472014?IYA-mail=849809d2-783c-47dd-98e3-4c821c95cf93>

- b. **Remembrance Monuments in Somerset**

<https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/history/remembrance-day-7-remaining-monuments-6143366?IYA-mail=849809d2-783c-47dd-98e3-4c821c95cf93>

- c. **Devon ghost stories**

<https://www.exmouthjournal.co.uk/news/devon-ghost-stories-for-halloween-8435906?IYA-mail=849809d2-783c-47dd-98e3-4c821c95cf93>

d. Devon's worst lifeboat disaster 105 years ago

https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/105-years-devons-worst-lifeboat-6119746?utm_source=devon_live_newsletter&utm_campaign=western_morning_news_newsletter2&utm_medium=email

e. Royal Clarence Hotel

https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/exeters-fire-hit-royal-clarence-6092569?utm_source=devon_live_newsletter&utm_campaign=western_morning_news_newsletter2&utm_medium=email