

# Local History News

The newsletter of the  
South Molton & District Archive  
Local History Society

The Constables Room, Town Hall, Broad Street, South Molton EX36 3AB

Charity No. 900293

December 2015

Editor – Shirley Bray



Christmas Postcard dated Dec 23<sup>rd</sup> 1908

**Officers for the year 2015 – 2016 are as follows:**

Chairman	Sheila Farrant
Vice Chairman	Carol Ryall
Treasurer	Jo Griffith
Assistant Treasurer	Sheila Farrant
Secretary	Angela Manning
Local History News Editor	Shirley Bray

Our thanks to Pam Eastman who has served as Treasurer for the past three years and also to Carol Ryall who has acted as Chairman since 2008.

**News from the North Devon Journal**

28	6	1984	Trevor Stanbury opens the 'Milky Way' theme farm at Clovelly. The Savoy Cinema in South Molton is to be converted into an architectural antiques showroom.
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12	8	1954	A full petrol tanker crashes at Umberleigh but luckily does not explode. Sir William Williams of Pilton is banned from driving for 3 years after being found drunk at the wheel.
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18	11	1954	Dr.Dubery of Chittlehampton is gaoled for 3 years after trying to blackmail one of his patients.
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Contributed by Pam Eastman

## **Food for thought by Sallie Fewings - my mother-in-laws's sayings**

Wash a blanket in May, wash a loved one away.  
It's bad luck to bring may blossom into the house.  
Don't sweep towards the door, you'll brush your luck out!  
Come in if you're thin, if you're stout, walk about!  
If you see a swarm of bees, bang a saucepan with a metal spoon, the noise will make them settle in your hive.  
A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay, a swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon. A swarm of bees in July is not worth a single fly.

## **NORTH DEVON JOURNAL - THURSDAY 4TH JANUARY 1844** **SOUTH MOLTON POLICE COURT**

At the South Molton Police Court on Monday last, before William, Thomas Southcombe Esq., Mayor; the Right Honourable Earl Fortescue, Lord Viscount Ebrington, William Flexman, Humphrey J. N. Bawden and William Binford. Esquires, magistrates of the borough:

James Lochyear was fined the usual fine 5s and expenses, on the information of Superintendent Fisher, for being drunk on the 23rd ult. He was also fined 5s and expenses, on the information the same informant, for using obscene language in the street towards him on the same day.

James Chapple was fined 2s and 10s expenses for assaulting Henry Bass and Elizabeth Gould (a woman with whom he cohabited) on the ultimo.

John Dickinson, a lad about 17 years of age, was reprimanded on Wednesday by the Mayor, after being in durance vile for one night, for disorderly conduct in the street the night previous.

Henry Tucker, of Bishop's Nympton, was fined 5s and 9s expenses, for killing a dog the property of Mr. Veysey of Roseash.

John Smyth, of North Molton, was summoned by Jacob Ridd of the same parish, for throwing dirty water over him with shovel the 23rd November, the magistrates considered this most trivial case, and that a great deal of aggravation had been offered on the one part by the complainant. The defendant had to pay one farthing; the expenses amounted to 9s of which 6s was to be paid by the defendant and the remaining 3s by the complainant.

Joan Smyth, of North Molton, was committed to take her trial at the next Quarter Sessions for the county, for stealing two large pieces of butter from the house of Mr. Peter Stoneman, during the time the funeral of his wife about month since.

Contributed by Angela Manning

### **The Borough Prison, East Street, South Molton (Present day Nos. 22 & 23)**

A new prison was built in 1828/29 at the expense of the Corporation of South Molton. Situated in East Street it contained four cells and two large day rooms, plus two strong cells. There was a good yard attached to the gaol. There was living accommodation for the prison staff. It is described as "*a very convenient and good gaol*", whereas the old gaol is described as a "*wretched place*". The new prison was built at a cost of about £2,000.

Two Sergeants at Mace, acted as gaolers and constables in addition to other duties; they also attended the Mayor; the Corporation provided them each with a house attached to the gaol, rent free; they received a salary of £5 each p.a. The senior Sergeant received 3 guineas and the junior Sergeant 2 guineas as inspectors of the market. They were provided with cloaks once every six years and a hat every other year.

There were eight constables appointed by the Mayor. The chief constable received a salary of £10 p.a. One of the constables was the Bailiff who received a salary of £4 p.a. and a house.

The policing of the town was considered sufficient for the protection of the town. Sessions of the Peace were held quarterly before the Mayor, Recorder and Justices; the number of prisoners did not exceed four and frequently there was not one prisoner for trial at the Sessions. The Grand Jury was selected by the Mayor from a list containing the names of the most respectable tradesmen of the town. The Mayor selected the foreman of the grand jury. No member of the Corporation was allowed to serve on the grand jury.

The Petty Sessions were held once in three weeks, or more frequently if required and the Petty Juries were selected by the sergeants-at-mace from the tradesmen of the town. The juries were stated to be very respectable and intelligent.

Contributed by Shirley Bray

*Source - BPP Government Municipal Corporation Report February 1834*

### **An Evacuee's Story - Fred Gale, 5 Dart Park, South Molton – interviewed by Shirley Bray, Carole Ryall and Veronica Johnston on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012.**

Fred Gale was born in 1928 at Stratford, East London, the eldest of 9 children. He was evacuated in 1940 to Georgenympton together with one sister (Flo) and 2 brothers (George and Norman). Fred was a pupil at St. Paul's school, Stratford and was evacuated with his teacher, Mr. Presley – Fred was not quite sure how many children came but says it was “a coach load” of approximately 30. The school children were aged between 10-12.

The children travelled from Paddington Station to South Molton where a charabanc was waiting to meet them and take them to Georgenympton village hall where the children were “selected” by local people. Fred

says that Mr. Rattenbury\* asked if he wanted to go with him and he replied “yes if you have a farm”, and he spent the next couple of years living at Thorne Farm, Georgenympton with the Rattenbury family. The family took another evacuee, Ron Thompson (also from Stratford). Norman aged 10 went to live with Mrs. Shortridge who was the Headmistress of the school. His sister Flo went to live with Mr. Frost at the Castle Inn and his brother George was billeted with Mrs. Leach.

The children all went to Georgenympton School where they were welcomed and accepted by the locals without any problem. The village hall was a wooden building during the war but has since been knocked down. The present day village hall was the school and the schoolroom where Fred was taught is still there, but the large stove that kept them warm in winter has gone. He recalled an occasion when there was an appeal for iron for the war effort and Fred and a couple of boys from school found an old iron bedstead in the barn and wheeled it to Georgenympton – they got told off for being late back to school.

Fred enjoyed helping on the farm; he got the cows in; churned butter to sell at the Pannier Market, South Molton and sawed logs for the fire. The food they were given was very good “no rations”. The Rattenbury’s had two daughters living at home, Ruby who was a year older than Fred and Olive who was much older, Ruby went to South Molton school. Fred thinks that his parents visited them once and stayed on the farm.

In 1943 Fred aged 14, had to return to his parents home in Stratford, it was time for him to find a job, he didn’t want to go back but his parents needed the money that he could earn. He got a job working in the warehouse of the Methodist Publishing House in City Road where he worked for 16 years. The war was still on but they took no notice of it. He remembers the doodlebugs and rockets and says that they went to sleep down the tube station when the raids were on. Fred’s sister and two brothers remained at Georgenympton (he couldn’t remember when they returned).

In 1959 when Fred was on holiday in Dawlish he took his wife to see where he had been evacuated. They called at Thorne Farm where Mr. Rattenbury's daughter Ruby (Sussex) and her husband and son David then lived. Ruby invited them to stay the weekend and since that time he has returned to Georgenympton for the Harvest Festival every year when they stay at Whitechapel with the Dullam family. He has already booked his harvest festival tickets for the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2012!

Fred moved back to North Devon 4 ½ years ago from Cambridge and now lives with his wife in a bungalow at Dart Park, South Molton.

\* I think his surname was spelt Rottenbury.

### **More from Sallie Fewings:**

Common name for a foxglove = folks glove and fairies' glove

In 1920 you could buy a farm for £30 an acre, and you could buy a small farm for £1000 and a large one for £3000.

Farmers' saying; The rooks can peck at it but they can't carry it away.



Blizzard of 1963 – Alswear Road, South Molton

Photo by Gordon Bray

### **Dates for your diary**

- Dec 4th**            **No Archive Meeting this month.**  
Late night shopping etc., at South Molton
- Dec 3 – 7th**        Christmas Tree Festival at South Molton Parish Church
- Dec 9th**            Filleigh History Society – Short talk by Sally Cotton about  
Bishops Nympton
- Dec 15th**          7.30 p.m. North Molton History Society – Films from archives  
of North Molton events and people presented by Mike  
Courtney
- Jan 8th**            **7.30 p.m. South Molton Archive Business Meeting at  
Veronica's house**
- Jan 27th**          7.30 p.m. Filleigh History Society, Filleigh Village Hall – To be  
decided
- Feb 5th**            **7.30 p.m South Molton Archive - Meeting at Sheila's house**



- Feb 16th** 7.30 p.m. North Molton History Society – Peter Christie presents “Letters to the Editor of the North Devon Journal, 1824-74
- Mar 11th** 7.30 p.m. South Molton Archive Annual Slide Show at the Methodist Church Hall, North Street, South Molton

Please send your contributions to the March 2016 issue of the News to Shirley, if possible via email – [ndlink@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ndlink@tiscali.co.uk)  
Deadline – February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016 Can you write an article/piece for the next edition? If different members write something the newsletter will become more interesting!