

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

March 2015

Editor – Shirley Bray

The Archive has been awarded a North Devon Council Community Councillor Grant of £300 (Councillor John Moore). We have decided to use this money to convert our collection of oral tapes to CDs, and Adrian Smith of Combe Martin is in the process of carrying out this work for us.

Our Annual Slide Show will take place on Friday 13th March, 7.30 pm at the Methodist Church Hall - helpers to arrive at 6.30p.m., or soon after, please. Angela has produced the posters and these are being distributed around the town and nearby villages. We will be showing 80+ pictures that have been lent for scanning since last year's slide show and 80+ that Carole and I have selected from our digital database, these are almost all of South Molton.

This edition contains the last instalment of Lilian and Denny Lock talking about the Kings Arms from a recording made in 1987. There is also an interesting article about Hugh Squier - my thanks to Jo for passing this to me.

The Museum is reopening on March 23rd and the volunteers have been busy since the beginning of January, cleaning and putting together new displays.

Continued from the December edition. Lilian and Denny Lock talking to Shirley Bray, 4th March 1987, about the King's Arms, South Molton

Both Denny and Lilian talking:

We got married on the 11th March 1950. Three months after we were married my mother died and we took over the Kings Arms. The old hay loft above the stables and the old clubroom we made into a skittle alley. Then we had major alterations; we did away with the two little smoke rooms –where ladies used to go, or a courting couple or one gentleman who always put the light out so no-one could see him drinking, and made one big bar. Since we left they have done away with the stable and there's a poolroom there now; back where they have extended used to be the stables with the stalls for the horses. Where the old cider house was, we made it into a kitchen. Where there was a kitchen, we kept as a sitting room behind the bar a private sitting room for the kids, because by this time we were having our family.

Pub life during the 1950s and 1960s: We had ladies and families. It went from barrel to keg beer and a lot more fancy drinks came into being. We used to buy spirits by the gallon and bottle it ourselves; it went out just after we took over. We used to have to keep all entries of spirits in the spirit book and the customs would come around and inspect the book; see what you bought and test it to see you hadn't put anything in it. They were very fussy they took away samples. They would take a test of any spirit; two little bottles – they would give you one and they would take one, if there were any dispute you both had a sample. They were very, very strict. Later they relaxed it and did away with the spirit book because it all came in bottles.

You had to be 18 or over to drink. I think the licensing laws were brought in in 1921; before that you used to open at anytime but they always broke the law and still do. Of course it was difficult sometimes to judge a persons age, especially when they got about 17 or 18. I remember a public school used to bring in their cricket team after they had been away playing cricket. The Masters would bring them in; they

supervised them mind so I presume they must have been pretty well the age really and they used to have halves. I used to think to myself that perhaps they were just training them how to go on. The way to catch them out is if you asked them if they were over 18 and they said “*oh yes*” was to ask them their date of birth, they couldn’t think of that quick enough; you’d catch them out on that one. Of course we’ve all broken the law, haven’t we?

You don’t get the fights in the town; in the pubs like you used to. There always used to be fights in the pubs – I’ve seen them fight in the streets. They started having an argument about something, especially Saturday night after the dance or anything like that. There would be a lot of fights and down the Labour Club down South Street, next to the old Police Station (*that’s going back a bit well not too far back in the 1930’s*). It was Snell’s Corn and Seed Store before that and they bought it and turned it into a dance hall cum club, cum everything. It was next to the Police Station in South Street opposite Moors Garage. You would have thought that that would have put them off fighting being next door to the Police Station. It was a beautiful place – the top floor was the billiard room, the middle one was the ballroom and down the bottom was the skittle alley. After it became Tom Moor’s stores behind the pet shop then Gerald Kingdon had his garden centre there. There were also public baths there, you could go and have a bath. There used to be nice dances there on a Saturday night.

Pub games during the 1950s and 1960s; there was mainly darts and men’s skittles, ladies started to play skittles in the late 1960s. It was mainly darts, table skittles and rings – they used to play a lot of rings – it was something like a dart board but there was cup hooks and they would stand back and throw the rings. Shove halfpenny, there was quite a lot of that played in the pubs. They have always played cards; the farmers played cards every Thursday afternoon, nap, they liked that. A lot of them used to love their game of cards in the afternoon. Dominoes are another game they used to play.

Beers changed and there was more fancy drinks. I remember when Babycham came in, a big splash that was. Then they cottoned on to the idea of putting a bit of blue tinfoil on top and it sold, they couldn’t sell it before that, when it first came out. Fruit juices and that sort of thing came in, there never used to be anything like that. They used to have martinis but not wine by the glass like now. The refrigerated shelves came in. Never sold wine by the glass, only by the bottle. We had a fairly good off licence on the corner.

Demand for the more fancy drinks started during the war; ladies were drinking some shorts, but not so much variety it was Johnny Walker whisky or Black & White whisky or port – all well known names. You didn’t stock a terrific range but names that you knew and you stuck to the same ones.

A curiosity was that at lambing time we used to sell a lot of Holland’s gin. They would come in and buy it for the lambs to combat the cold. They reckoned it saved many a lamb’s life.

In 1950 a pint of beer was less than a 1/- a pint (*Denny*). My earliest recollection was 7d for a drop of whisky and 2d for a pint of cider, but that was in the earlier days (*Lilian*). And cigarettes, I think were 1/10 for 20, Players and the better ones (*Denny*). When I was a boy the earliest price I remember for whisky was 11/6 a bottle. Jack Brayley’s grandfather, he used to send me up Browns, where Curries is now, and I remember it went from 11/6 to 12/- and I went back for another 6d and he nearly clipped me on the ear; he thought it was my fault! (*Denny*)

When we took over in 1950 there was no floor coverings, just bare boards. We used to scrub the bars through Sunday mornings, the smoke rooms and the bars. When we were courting I used to go up every Sunday morning to scrub all the bars and then Len Plummer used to give me a hand (*Denny*). Malcolm Shave put down the first linoleum. Then eventually it was carpeted gradually it got more comfortable through the years. And finer glasses, there used to be old cider mugs. Although mother had some fine Victorian glasses and you had to have

the right glass for the drink. At Christmas some ladies might have liquor. We had new bar furniture, tables and chairs and put washbasins in the bedrooms.

Mother started doing bed and breakfast in 1934 and we still have the Visitor's Book. We had to keep it and the police came and checked on it.

"May 1944 – Butch T. R., Canadian RAF"

"Sept. 29th 1947 – second visit within 6 weeks, very happy and comfy. Mr. & Mrs. Reed, 68 Elms Crescent, SW4"

There were a lot of service men, about 1943 we had a young naval officer staying and he was with Winston Churchill in Canada.

The Visitor's Book went up to 1970 when Denny and Lilian retired after 20 years as licensees. Denis Cross then took over as landlord of the Kings Arms.



The Kings Arm – early 1960s

Shipwreck - India 1656

Members of the museum staff have been researching into the life of Hugh Squier, and Jo passed me a most interesting article of how Hugh nearly lost his life by drowning in 1656.

Hugh Squier had travelled on the ship, Mayflower that had sailed from England to Fort St. George, with money for investment at Madras. From there the passengers embarked in a large decked boat that capsized with everyone on deck thrown into the sea of whom several perished. Those who were below deck, including, Hugh Squier, found themselves trapped inside the upturned boat. Luckily air was also trapped and they survived until the boat grounded and they were able to escape. Hugh Squier wrote the following of his experience to a friend Abraham Hill who lived in London.

Hugh Squier to Abraham Hill.

'I know not how farr I may depend upon Favour, although in conscience we do deserve some encouragements in respect of our many hazards and hardships, one particular whereof I shall tell you, and 'tis the strangest that ever you heard out of a Romans; which I shall tell you that you may Joyne with me in praying the Lord for prolonging my dayes in the land of the living.

'On Thursday the 24th of July (a day hence forth to be kept holy), Captain White of the mayflower, Captain Lucas of the Society, and Captain Loe of the Virgine, had taken their leave of the shoare and were going aboard their shippes with all their retinue, and not without the Company of neare all the English marchants on this place, intending to solemnize that day in valedictory ceremonies, and then to set saile; and to this purpose we had provided a Comon Country boate of about 30 tons to go off in. So, about 9 a clock in a faire morning, we weare all imbarked, being in number about 30 English men with 20 Blacks. The Englishmen lay most aloft upon the poop; only Captain Browne, Captain Lucas, and my self and Edward King lay just under them in the hould. And whyles we weare thare serious, and the rest aloft very merry in discourse, going over the Barre the boate struck aground, and by meanes of her over greate maynsaile, suddenly oversett, and turned her keell upward. Herewith as many as weare aloft fell over board. We that weare in hould endeavoured to gett out and comitt ourselves to the mercy of the sea, but could not, so suddenly the boate overturned as a man can reckon to the number of 15. Suddenly we found our selves tumbled together in the water among chests, cases of liquours, and other such lumber, with a score of sheep that weare carrying aboard; and as within a dish swimming with the bottome upwards, soe weare we all within the boate, and had the Boates keell in the Zenith: it was thare as darke as in the Earth's centre.

Dates for your diary

- Mar 13th** South Molton Archive Annual Slide Show – 7.30pm at the Methodist Church Hall
- Mar 23rd** Museum reopens
- Mar 25th** 7.30 pm. Filleigh History Society – Talk by Richard McLaughlin – The Memorial Stone near Brendon Two Gates
- April 10th** 7.30 pm, South Molton Archive Business Meeting at Sainsbury's
- April 21st** 7.30 pm. North Molton History Society – Charles Noon – Parson Jack Russell and the terriors named after him
- April 22nd** 7.30 pm. Filleigh History Society – An illustrated talk re preparations for D-Day on Braunton Burrows by the US army
- May 1st** South Molton Archive - Village Walk, Atherington/High Bickington
- May 10th** Filleigh History Society - Walk around Newton St. Cyres
- May 27th** Filleigh History Society – Evening walk to view the WW2 remains on Braunton Burrows
- June 5th** 5 p.m. South Molton Archive visit to the Hospice – a tour of the house and grounds followed by tea and biscuits on the terrace.

Please send your contributions to the June 2015 issue of the News to Shirley, if possible via email – ndlink@tiscali.co.uk
 Can you write an article/piece for the next edition? If different members write something the newsletter will become more interesting!
Deadline – May 22nd 2015.

'But that aire which was surprised within the concavous inside of the Boates hould, wherein we weare at her sudden over turning, proved sufficient for us (close prisoners) to breath in ; and so we 4 Christians and some 20 Gentues sate on the Thoughts² with our heads above water withinside the boate, although withoutside the boate the water ran over her. And in this condition we lived 2 hours, in the mean tyme praying heartily that myne and Friend's estate might fall into mercifull mens hands, and recommending my soul into my Saviour's mercy for salvaçone, as for my bodies I had small hopes.

'Captain Lucas after telling me it was impossible to be preserved, and a folly to think it, I answered him that Besides the remembrance of miracu-

¹ The following extract has been kindly communicated by Mr. R. H. E. Hill, who published it in *Good Words* in 1903 under the title of 'An Adventure in India in 1656.'

² *Thoughts, thwarts.*

lous Jonah in the Whales Belly, in humane reason it was possible for us to continue alive a long tyme ; and if any of these men that weare tost overboard weare saved, They would use some meanes for us also, Unless they might give us over for dead (as in deed they did), the boate being a top of us, and water for the most part a top of the boate, so that but little of her appeared.

'So I advised Captain Lucas to throw off all his clothes that we might be ready to swimme if any opportunity should present : which hee did, and I also, though I had 30l. in Gould besides a little manuscript booke of 7 yeares collecçions in my pockett. Therefore I went wading through the water, and groping about the inside of the boate in that most perfect of darknes untill I found an hollow beame, and thereto I tyed my breeching with a strong tape, saying to my fellows, This shall be found whatever becomes of me. All this whyle most hyddeous weare the outcryes of the distracted Gentues calling upon their pagods, etc.

'In fine, the boate running ashoare upon the sand, and whyles the water was as high as our necks, with our feet we digged a pitt in the sand neare the boates side, in doing whereof the current helped us ; and then sinking downe into the water and diving, krept out under the side of the boate one by one. Then after we weare gott out from under the boate, we founde wee had a water of some 180 paces over, and middle deep to wade through, the current whereof ran so stiff that, in attempting to ford it, 16 of our company had there perished before us, yett the major part escaping. Captain Lucas and I held each other by the armes and (naked) waded through the current, suckering each other in perilous stippes ; for if either had but lost his footing and fallen downe, the violent torrent was so great we should neaver have rise more in this world.

'At last, being gott out of the water as naked as Adam, we had a mile and a halfe to run to the Towne, with the hott sand scalding under our feet, and the sun scorching over our heads, and caused all the skin of our bodies to peell off although we ran a pace ; and the first Christian we mett was a good dutch man whoe lent me his hatt and slippers.

'The tyme we continued under the boate was about 2 houres. The persons lost weare Mr. Leigh, a tall, ancient gentleman of 62 yeares, an old servant to the East India Company ; Besides mr. Martyn Bradgate, the 2^d man in the Companys service at Metchlepatam ; also Mr. Watling¹ who went merchant of the mayflowre, and three others.' (*Hill Collection*, 24th Sept., 1656.)

¹ *Mr. Watling*, Mr. Henry Watkins, who came out in the *Mayflower* as supercargo.