

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 2016

Editor – Shirley Bray

All the pictures from the HA2000 database have now been put onto the new laptop and the information copied and pasted for each one. A big thanks to everyone who helped with this task. I have now completed putting the pictures into folders although each folder still needs some sorting. This new system should make it easier to know exactly what we have and make searching for individual or groups of pictures much easier.

Our Annual Slide Show will take place on Friday 11th 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 30-40 pictures that have been lent for scanning since last year's slide show and the rest from our collection, including some of the winter blizzard of 1978 and the Livarot/South Molton Twinning celebrations of 1975.

The Museum is reopening on March 21st and the volunteers have been busy since the beginning of January, cleaning and putting together new displays. Staff are organising a display to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday and are looking for memorabilia that commemorates her wedding, coronation, silver, golden and diamond jubilees. If you have anything to lend, call in and see Alison.

South Molton Children's Home, 41 East Street

The South Molton Union Workhouse opened its doors in 1838 to provide indoor relief for the poor of the 29th parishes that made up the South Molton Union. From this time until March 1915 children lived there together with the destitute, elderly, mentally ill and "feeble minded". In 1913, The Poor Law Institution Order 1913 was introduced, article 4 of which stated that after the 31st day of March 1915, a child should not be retained in the Work House after a period of six weeks. The first reaction of the South Molton Board of Guardians to this new requirement was to postpone the problem for three months! It was then decided that the House Committee be asked to look into it and report back

They duly reported back at the next meeting with a recommendation that the Guardians apply to the Local Government Board to allow the children to be retained in the Work House, the accommodation to be arranged as follows:

The present Men's Day Room and Men's Bed Room adjoining to be appropriated for Boy's Dormitory.

The present Boy's Dormitory to be used as a Children's Dining Room

The Girl's Dormitory to remain as at present.

In reply, a letter was received from the Local Government Board stating that they would not be prepared to consent to the proposed arrangements of the Guardians or to sanction a departure from the provisions of Article 4 of the P.L.I.O. 1913.

The Committee came up with several proposals that were all refused and finally the committee recommended that a further committee be appointed to draw up a scheme or schemes to provide outside accommodation for the children of the Work House.

The next Board of Guardians Meeting was held on the 6th August 1914 (*Two days after outbreak of WWI*) when the committee reported on a scheme for the provision of Children's Homes:-

- 1. To advertise for a suitable House with about one acre of land situate within the limits of the South Molton Union.*
- 2. To make application to the South Molton Town Council for the purchase of a piece of land either at the Allotment Field situate in Barnstaple Road or in the field abutting on Parsonage Lane and near the Recreation Ground or some other suitable site for the purpose of the erection thereon of a Cottage Home for the children which could be converted into a private dwellinghouse in the event of the Home at anytime in the future not being required.*

The final result was that the committee recommended that the Guardians should rent Mr. Ford's house at 41 East Street on the terms offered subject to the approval of the Local Government Board. On the 20th November 1914 a letter was received from the Local Government Board which approved the South Molton Guardians hiring for a period of three years as from Lady Day 1915 at a rental of £40 p.a. the premises situate at 41 East Street, South Molton for accommodation of 30 children and the necessary staff.

A committee was then appointed to consider and recommend furnishing and staff arrangements for the Children's Home. On 18th February the committee, made the following recommendations:

- 1. Accommodation to be provided for 30 children.*
- 2. Any structural alterations to be made if necessary after possession.*
- 3. The Board to advertise for a Superintendent and Matron for the House, a married couple without children at a joint salary of*

£50 p.a., the officers to be competent to fulfil all the duties required.

- 4. That 12 new beds be provided for the sick wards and that 11 beds from the Men's sick wards be sent to the Children's Home.*
- 5. 2 Tables to be purchased for the Dining Room, 4 forms and 6 Windsor chairs. All these to be obtained by Tender.*
- 6. The necessary food utensils to be supplied as far as possible from the Work House.*

A month later, Mr. Alfred Wainwright and Mrs. Annie Wainwright were appointed Foster Parents for the Children's Home at the respective salaries of £30 and £20 each p.a. plus rations, apartments etc.

Mr. Albert Avery and his wife Janie, took over from Mr. & Mrs. Wainwright and were the house parents from circa 1924-1952 when the South Molton home closed. Janie Avery née Lock was a nurse at the South Molton Workhouse (by that date renamed Poor Law Institute) from 1917-1924. Albert Avery was the Porter at the Institution from 1920-1924. The couple married in 1924 (June Qtr., reg. Dist. South Molton 5b 978).



Children with Mr. & Mrs. Avery, 1948

South Molton Gazette, April 22nd 1952

CHILDREN'S HOME CLOSING NEXT SEPTEMBER

ONE of the largest "families" in South Molton will be broken up on September 30, for on that date the South Molton Children's Home is to close.

The decision to close the establishment, which has been in existence since 1915, was made recently by Devon County Council Children's Committee. A new home is being built at Braunton.

Some of the children, at present numbering 26, will probably be boarded out locally, and the remainder will go to Braunton.

In charge at South Molton for the past 30 years have been the superintendent and matron, Mr. and Mrs. A. Avery, who will retire when the home closes down. Previously Mr. and Mrs. Avery were at Beech House for four-and-a-half and six years respectively.

Mr. Avery told our reporter that over 1,000 children had passed through the home and were spread out in all parts of the world. The youngsters had become responsible citizens holding positions such as trained nurses, relieving officers, N.C.O.'s and W.O.'s in the Army, painters and masons. Some had gone as far afield as East Africa and Australia.

As many of the former inmates visit their home, Mr. and Mrs. Avery, who are to reside in South Molton, will keep an open house for them for holidays and short stays. When they retire they are to take two of the girls from the home with them. The establishment employs a staff of nine, who will all have to find jobs elsewhere.

Contributed by Shirley Bray

Sources:

South Molton Workhouse records;

Kelly's 1923 trade directory;

Board of Guardians Minutes – held by North Devon Record Office

South Molton Gazette

The following amusing story was sent to me by Sallie Fewings

In the 1930's the Town Council appointed a SHOPS ACT INSPECTOR. The man who was appointed was a friendly man who knew most of the people in South Molton.

The rules were:

1. Checking closing times of shops
2. Inspecting shops for adequate facilities for the employees
3. Only perishable goods allowed to be sold on Wednesdays (half day closing)

The inspector thought some of the rules were petty and turned a blind eye to some of them. After all, didn't he sometimes run out of tea and sugar on a Wednesday afternoons himself!

In friendly South Molton everything was going well until a shopkeeper who had a big shop, wrote to the Town Council and said that the Shops Act Inspector was not doing his job properly and that some of the smaller shops were selling goods after hours. One of the Town Council took umbrage at this and decided to take action. In the evening, he went to the telephone box on New Walk steps and rang the said shop owner. He said he was ringing from the George Hotel and that they had run out of cheese. The big shop owner was caught in the act supplying goods after hours.

The Shops Act Inspector was called; he did his duty properly and the shopkeeper was duly summoned!

Sallie says that she does not condone the rights and wrongs of this case; it's up to everyone to decide for themselves.

The National School, South Molton

The National School was established in 1834 when the South Molton Corporation built a school in North Street at a cost of £500. The North Devon Journal of February 26th 1834 reported that a few days earlier the Mayor, Mr. J. E. Cutcliffe had laid the foundation stone and that the Church bells were rung for the occasion. The article goes on to say that the school was to consist of two large and lofty rooms, one for boys, the other for girls, with a spacious play ground, calculated to hold at least four hundred children, the whole to be built at the expense of the corporation.

A house for the School Master was added in 1850. The schoolrooms consisted of one large room for the boys on the ground floor and one above it for the girls. The school was supported entirely by voluntary subscriptions and the children's fees until in 1861 it received a legacy of £1000.

In 1877 the school, together with the Hugh Squier school and the Blue Coat school, was amalgamated into the United Boys & Girls Schools (the present day United Junior School), which was one building but split into two schools one for the boys and one for the girls, with the playground divided by a wall. This new school had its official opening in 1880. The corporation sold the National school to the Trustees of the adjoining Congregational Chapel when the rooms were used for a Sunday school and lectures. The building was demolished during the 1960s and a bungalow built on the site.

The logbooks for both the National School and the United Girls and Boys Schools can be found in the Record Office at Barnstaple. The entries give the date the child was admitted, the child's date of birth, the name and address of the father and in some cases the last school the child attended and the standards the child attained.

Dates for your diary

Mar 11th	South Molton Archive Annual Slide Show – 7.30pm at the Methodist Church Hall
Mar 21st	Museum reopens
Mar 23rd	7.30 pm. Filleigh History Society – Talk by Dennis Bater – The History & development of the WWII airfield at Winkleigh
April 1st	7.30 pm, South Molton Archive Meeting at Sheila's
April 19th	7.pm. North Molton History Society – A guided tour of the Masonic Lodge, South Molton. Time to be confirmed
April 27th	7.30pm. Filleigh History Society – Talk by Mrs. Maggie Ford – Stately homes in North Devon, including Filleigh
May 6th	South Molton Archive - Village Walk, Georgenympton
May 25th	Filleigh History Society – Talk by Adrian Richards – Journey around Australia as a £10 pom.
June 3rd	7.30 pm, South Molton Archive Meeting – venue to be arranged

Please send your contributions to the June 2016 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 2016.