



Friends of Somerset Archives

Snippets - No. 21 – September 2011

As most people read the Snippets on-line we received a suggestion that we don't have any columns - I hope you find this an improvement and easier to read.

Have you looked at our website recently? <http://friendsofsomersetarchives.org.uk/> It's well worth a look.

I've been very lucky this year with yet another Australian cousin coming over for a visit and giving me so much information on my "Savage" ancestors from Hinton St George. Even better was when my father came across a copy of the will of Josiah Anstice of South Petherton who died in 1725 - he'd put this in his safe back in about 1975 and "forgot" - I'm hoping that once I've typed it up he will let me deposit it at the Heritage Centre. Yet another project for the coming winter evenings!!

If you have any comments, stories for the next edition or a plea for help do please get in touch.
Liz

From our Chairman, Malcolm Daniels:

One of the purposes of the Friends has always been to raise money. We have, this year, managed to donate to the Somerset Heritage Centre sufficient funds to purchase two brand new fiche readers.

The main priority of the new Heritage Centre was to make sure that the storage of the documents and artefacts of Somerset were in the best interests of longevity. This involved a lot of infrastructure including heavy air-conditioning and fire safety machinery and this took up much of the expenditure. However, one of the best ways to protect documents is to use facsimiles of important records rather than the records themselves. The most prevalent use of this principle is with films or more latterly fiches of records such as parish records. However, such fiches are quite often photo-representation of poor documents and therefore the quality of the fiche reader is of even more importance.

A number of the fiche readers that were transferred from Obridge Road and the Local Studies Library left much to be desired and so the Friends saw the introduction of better quality readers as most important - as did the management of the Heritage Centre themselves. Four new ones were purchased - two by the Heritage Centre and two with the use of the Friends of Somerset Archive funds.

There are some members who would have preferred that the money from the Friends should be used to purchase documents rather than hardware. This is a very valid argument, but your committee considered that, on this occasion, more members would benefit from the fiche reader purchase. We had also waited for a very long time for a suitable document to present itself for purchase, but this was not forthcoming at the value which we could afford.

We have concentrated, since I have taken over as Chairman, on publicity. Leaflets about the Friends have been distributed to all libraries in Somerset County Council and North Somerset

Council Control. These have gone out with an A4 pamphlet to all libraries, so perhaps members could check that they are being displayed prominently. If they are not, then please ask, politely, where they are in the library. In this copy of the *Snippets* both the leaflet and the Poster are reproduced. If you know of anywhere else that you think that they could be displayed, either use this copy or contact Frances, the Membership Secretary for a copy. Jane de Gruchy of the Heritage Centre has copies as well.

The Annual General Meeting has been moved to October 1st and will take place at the Somerset Heritage Centre. For more details see the display panel elsewhere in this copy. Mervyn Richins, the Heritage Centre's Senior Conservator is going to give a talk with illustrative background on his work at the Heritage Centre. Anyone who has worked with Mervyn will know that his enthusiasm is totally infectious and therefore this should be a most interesting session.

Another new departure will be a meeting of the Friends to be held at the Heritage Centre on October 17th. This will be a jointly run session with the Heritage Centre staff as an introduction to the Heritage Centre. It will run for most of the day. The exact format has not yet been finalised, but it is hoped to have something to interest for anyone who is anything from an absolute beginner to someone with moderate knowledge of use of the Heritage Centre.

There is a newly designed Website being developed. This will have new features which will be introduced at the Annual General Meeting. Hopefully this will make it a lot more used and useful.

Finally, can I appeal to all Friends of Somerset Archives to comment on our operations - good or bad, make suggestions of things that you would like to see happen, ideas for raising money. It is most important to recognise that the organisation is not for academics - we are all very down-to-earth people who just want to help with the promotion of our very important heritage.

*To know the best way of getting to where you are going,
one needs to know where you have already been!*

Malcolm Daniels, Chairman.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please note that the date and venue of the AGM have been changed. Due to Circumstances beyond our control, the original date and venue of Wells Museum has not been possible for our AGM.

The Friends of Somerset Archives AGM will now be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday, October 1st at the Somerset Heritage Centre.

The Centre will be open in the morning from 9 and so will be available for people to use the facilities.

Bring your lunch and the Friends will provide Tea and Coffee over lunchtime so we can all have an informal Chat.

Business will start at 2 p.m. and will feature a talk about Preservation and Conservation by Mervyn Richins with a visit to the Conservation Section.

An Appeal will be announced at the AGM.

Please come along and support us. Your committee is working very hard and we will be announcing further meetings and new website features at the AGM.
A full agenda will be issued in due course

Can you help?

From Horace Toogood

On a visit to Glastonbury I met a very distant relative. In conversation she told me she had recently lost her mother and on dealing with her personal papers had found a very crumpled postcard from America. The card was addressed to her grandmother at Meare and dated August 1916, the post mark was blurred. The message on the card read "We have settled in well. Boys doing fine. Mark working hard on the farm. Love Annie" My relative knew nothing of these people and asked me to do research. The only clue she could give me was that she had once heard there was someone went to America with the name Tripp.

I first looked for an Annie in the grandmother's family but found nothing. Turning to Mark Tripp I found a man of the name from Godney near Glastonbury had sailed on the Mauritania to America in 1910 sharing a cabin with John Sealey of Westbury-sub-Mendip. Not knowing much about American records I left it at that. Some months later I was reading an account of the American Civil War on the internet and at the end was an email address. In a rash moment I sent a mail with a brief message saying I was trying to trace a Mark Tripp who had arrived in America in 1910 and where should I look for him in the records. Within a half an hour I had a reply from Christine in Texas to say if I was looking for Mark Tripp with a wife Annie and two sons the family had lived next door to her parents in New York State and she had been raised with the grandson, Gordon Tripp. I was put in touch with Gordon and able to introduce him to his second cousin in Glastonbury. Annie's real name was Eliza but she had called herself Annie from a child.

With the size of America and with a population of about 350 million what are the odds? It was suggested that I should buy a lottery ticket.

An Amble around Dunster led by Hilary Binding - from Sue Berry.

On the afternoon of Sunday 17 July, an intrepid band of a dozen Friends met under the Yarn Market in Dunster for a walk around the village, led by Hilary Binding, a local expert on the area.

Hilary started by showing us an illustration of the High Street taken from where we were standing and pointed out the houses that we could still see. The great difference was the disappearance c. 1830 of the shambles and market that used to occupy the centre of the street. We then moved on to the top of the street where we had very good views of the Yarn Market plus the castle and the skyline. Hilary pointed out that the Yarn Market was in fact the mid-16th century equivalent of an Ikea flat pack as the timbers had been cut to size elsewhere and numbered so that when they were brought to the site, the workmen knew exactly how they should slot together. The Roman numerals are still visible on the beams if you look up. Hilary then showed us some aerial photographs of the Iron Age hill fort of Bat's Castle and the Gallox Hill enclosure on the hills behind Dunster Castle. She explained that Bat's Castle had been a large administrative centre for the area while the smaller hill fort had been a farming community. She then talked about Dunster Castle itself, pointing out that the trees we could

see to the right were not, in fact, as tall as they appeared but were growing on the motte of the original castle built by the de Mohuns. The present castle was situated lower, in the bailey of the original castle, and was built by the Luttrell family and extensively re-modelled by Anthony Salvin in the 1870s. She spoke of the siege that took place during the Civil War when the castle was held by a Royalist garrison led by Col. Wyndham and besieged by Parliamentary forces under Col. Blake, better known as Admiral Blake, from Bridgwater. The remains of the siege works thrown up by the besieging forces can still be seen near the National Trust car park.

We walked on to look at the tower on Conygar Hill, Hilary pointing out the lime-washed cone of the restored pottery kiln we could see as we moved on. Conygar Tower was a folly built by Henry Fownes Luttrell in 1775. Henry Fownes had married Margaret Luttrell, his cousin and had, under protest, taken her name. It was the era when many estate owners were redesigning the landscapes around their homes and Henry was no exception. The folly, complete with a mock entrance arch and already ruined walls which are no longer visible because the trees on the hill have grown up to hide them, was not Henry's only effort to improve the landscape around the castle. At the time of his marriage, the estate's deer park was down at Marshwood in the parish of Carhampton, near the sea. Hilary told us the delightful story of how, it having been decided to move the deer to a park under the castle walls, the villagers and tenants of the estate were told to line up on either side of the road as the deer were driven up the road to prevent them from escaping. She mentioned that in the Luttrell archives there were accounts detailing how much had been spent on fencing the new park.

Our next stop was brief at a spot where it was possible still to recognise the typical layout of the original burgage plots of the town and we then went on in the hope of being able to see inside the recently restored 'tithe barn'. (Hilary has her doubts as to whether this wonderful building ever actually was a tithe barn!). Unfortunately, there was an event going on there and we were only able to admire it from the outside. We peered inside the dovecote as we went past and then turned into the small, very pretty, garden at the rear of the church, once the site of the Dunster Priory cloister.

Once in the church, we sat down to hear Hilary explain the reason why the building is divided into two by a magnificent rood screen dated soon after 1498. Before the Reformation, Dunster had a small priory and the west end of the church was the monks' part; the eastern end was the parish's part. Due to arguments between the priory and the parish over who could or should do what where and when it was decided after arbitration by the abbot of Glastonbury that the church should be physically divided and the rood screen is the result of that decision.

Some members of the group were very struck by the carvings of the roof in the nave, others by the medieval tiles in the St Lawrence Chapel to the left of the Priory altar. Hilary had spoken of the Parliamentary soldiers stabling their horses in the church at the time of the siege and she pointed out the medieval alabaster tomb slab of Lady Elizabeth Luttrell (1493) in a chapel to the right of the altar. This is in excellent condition for its age and it has been suggested that it was turned over to prevent it being damaged by the soldiers. However, as one of our group noticed, there are nine holes carved into it to form a gaming board of some sort and we thought it possible this might have been done by bored grooms, waiting for the horses to be called for another assault on the Castle. A new theory, but not one backed up by archival evidence.

As time was getting on, we then left the church and eventually made our way to the former Methodist chapel in West Street. This had a plaque to commemorate a 20th-century artist but nothing, unfortunately, to tell the interested visitor anything about the building itself. Hilary

mentioned very briefly Dunster's fulling mills and the important role the cloth trade had played in the town's history but a visit to these would have to wait for another day.

We thanked Hilary for her time and all the information she had given us and then the party went their separate ways, some of us making our way the National Trust shop for a very tasty ice cream before leaving. It had been a most enjoyable afternoon.

Remedy - from Sue Berry

This Snippets' remedy is for any of you who may be suffering with a "blasting" or be "venomened". It seems fairly simple to make although you do, of course, first have to catch your adders. Actually, you don't, because what is being used here is the plant known as adders tongue and also as the dog tooth violet. It can be used for scrofula and other skin problems by using it in a poultice for external application and take the infusion at the same time. You can mix the juice with cider for internal use if preferred - it probably tastes better. The poultice can be used for old or scrofulus ulcers, wounds, and tumors, to draw out splinters and reduce swelling. The fresh root simmered in milk helps dropsy, hiccoughs and vomiting*.

To make oyl of Adders Tongue

Take adders tongue, stamp it, straine it, then take 3 parts of this juce and one part of good sallet oyle, boyle it together till it bee well mixed as you cannot diference the oyle then keep it for your use, it is good for greene wounds blastings or to anoynte any that is venomened & swelled

*This information is taken from a web site www.emedicinal.com/herbs Please read their disclaimer before trying it out!

Another recipe which some adventurous members may care to try at home, probably in a smaller quantity as not many of us will have the equipment to make and store 17 gallons.

To Make Brackett¹

Take Hysope, balme, Betony, Sage, Parsly roots, Elderbark. Ashbark, and Hope, of each one handful, Nutmeggs, cloves, ginger, Aniseds, long pepper graines, of each 2 ounces boyle all these herbs and barks in 17 Gallons of strong wort² 2 hours then take them out and put in the spill and seeds beaten with a Gallon of good Honey let it boyle a full halfe Hour then let it to work with [y]east as doe your beere and so tun it up.

¹ Also known as braggot, a type of mead where hops and/or malt are added to the mixture

² Wort is the liquid produced by steeping malt in hot water

The Museum of Somerset

The Museum of Somerset is intending to open on 29th September - having seen some of the rooms on a recent television programme I am looking forward to paying a visit.

Friends of the Museum of Somerset - the following talks may be of interest:

Tuesday, 20th September at 7.30 p.m. at the Meeting Room, Taunton Library, Paul Street, Taunton - David Howell will be speaking on Historic Churches of Dartmoor and Exmoor

Hopefully from October meetings will be held in the Museum itself - but please check beforehand (tel. 01823 275810)

Tuesday, 18 th October	The Galapagos Islands	George Reekie
Tuesday, 15 th November	History of the East India Company	Geraldine Beare

Non-members pay £2 per meeting.

New Accessions June-August 2011 - from Jane de Gruchy of the Heritage Centre

Not all of these collections have been listed, but they are all available for research at the Heritage Centre. If you cannot find the details on our online catalogue

(www.somerset.gov.uk/dserve), please get in touch with the Heritage Centre who can give you more information.

Parish records

Alcombe: plans of the church, 1903 (12 rolls) (D\P\alc)

Bridgwater St. Mary: registers of baptisms (1988-1999), marriages (1989-2011), banns (1978-1980, 1992-2003) and services 1990-2001 (D\P\bw.m)

Charlton Adam: NADFAS record of church furnishings, 2011 (DD\X\NDS)

Chedzoy: marriage registers, boundary maps, architects' drawings and other records, 1822-2009 (D\P\chedz)

Chilthorne Domer: marriage registers, banns certificates, service registers, visitors' book and other records, 1983-2008 (D\P\chi.dom)

Combwich: marriage register, 1988-1998 (D\P\comw)

Corfe: baptism register (1894-2010) and banns register (1940-2009) (D\P\crf)

Kilton: marriage register, 1837-1998 (D\P\kiln)

Mark: parish magazines, 1899-2003 (A\DHA)

North Cadbury: marriage register, 1957-1971 (D\P\cad.n)

Stogursey: parish magazines, 1986-2010 (A\DHJ)

Stoke St. Gregory: parish registers, graveyard plans, faculties, school deeds, historical notes and other records, 1877-2009 (D\P\sto.st.g)

Taunton All Saints: marriage register, 1894-2010 (D\P\tau.a.s)

West Coker: Banns register, service registers, accounts and church research files, 1907-2004 (D\P\cok.w)

Transcripts, copies and monumental inscriptions

South Stoke: transcripts of churchwardens' accounts & bishops' transcripts, and commentary on churchwardens' accounts, [1589-1776] (A\CJD)

West Harptree and Widcombe: Tithe award transcripts, [1841] (A\CYP and A\CKO)

Widcombe: Digitised images of churchwardens' accounts, D\P\wid/4/1/1, [1729-1822] (D\P\wid)

Withycombe: burial and grave location index, [1605-2010] (D\P\wyco)

Somerset: microfilm copies of Somerset documents held elsewhere, including manorial surveys and account of the Battle of Sedgemoor, [14th cent.-1713] (T\PH\vch)

Local government records

Bicknoller Parish Council: minutes (1998-2005), annual returns (2004-2007) and other records, 1975-2007 (D\PC\bic)

Mells: Records of the Earl of Oxford and Asquith in relation to his rôle as parish councillor, 1897-2006 (A\DGX)

Middlezoy Parish Council: minute books, account books and Frank Keirl Trust papers, 1913-2007 (D\PC\m.zoy)

Portbury Parish Council: minutes and agendas, 2006-2010 (D\PC\ptb)

Yatton Parish Council: minutes, 1994-1008 (D\PC\yat)

Somerset County Council, Highways Development Control: road development plans, 1980s-1990s (12 boxes) (C/SUDV)

Somerset County Council: plans/elevations of Milborne Port Primary School and Rosemeadow Day Centre, Taunton, 1978-1982 (C/PSCS)

Somerset County Council, Environment and Property Planning and Research Section: census statistics, 1961-1971 (C/ENPR)

Somerset County Council, County Architects' Department: staff registers 1930s-1970s (C/CA)

Woodspring District Council: rate books (mainly 1963-1991) (49 volumes) (D\DC\wood)

North Somerset Council: Planning records for Woodspring District Council and North Somerset Council, including: maps showing parish and other boundary changes (1980s-1990s); local plans and local waste plans, miscellaneous planning application files 1999-2001; and fifteen large volumes of plotting sheets (D\DC\n.som)

Clubs, societies' and associations' records

Community Council for Somerset: magazines, account book and minute books, 1903-2007 (A\DHI)

Corfe: cricket club score book, 1859-1895 (A\DGY)

Mells: Women's Institute records including committee minutes, monthly meeting minutes and accounts, 1920-1960 (A\DGV)

Romania Social and Educational Projects: minutes, correspondence and associated papers (some records closed), 1996-2011 (A\DHB)

South Western Counties Bowls Association: minutes (1987-2011), accounts (1987-2011), constitution and championship archive (1987-2001) (A\DGS)

Winsford Land Charities: account book, 1918-2009 (A\BNS)

School records

Bathford: Records of Eagle House School, including log books, punishment log, correspondence and policy files, 1949-1982 (some records closed) (C/CHI)

Bathwick and Weston super Mare: Charity Commission papers concerning Bath Victoria Infant School and St James Church of England School, Weston super Mare, [1890]-2001 (DD\C)

Bishops Lydeard: school magazine for Connaught House School, 1952 (A\BJQ)

Burnham on Sea: St. Christopher's School records, 20th century (5 boxes) (A\CIT)

Mells and Vobster: school records, including account books, governors' minutes, teacher agreements and correspondence, 19th century-20th century (A\DGW)

Pitminster Primary School: log books (1942-2009), minute books (1914-1997), admission registers (1882-2001), photographs, sales books, scrap books and other records (3 boxes) (A\DGT)

Wellington: Court Fields Community School records, including log books, admission registers and punishment book, c.1875-1990s (4 boxes) (A\DHD)

Business records

Records of Kelways Plants Ltd. of Langport, including correspondence, invoices, orders, catalogues, brochures, account books and other papers, c.1912-1980s (22 boxes) (A\DHH)

Other records

Clevedon: deeds, ledger for unknown grocer's shop, pharmacy ledgers, notes about Clevedon Heritage Centre, Community Centre minute books, diaries of an unknown person, 1817-2001 (3 boxes) (A\CDR)

Highbridge to Glastonbury - Somersetshire central railway prospectus, 1851 (A\DGZ)

Nailsea: deeds relating to lands at West End, 1748-1882 (A\BDY)

Portishead: deeds for Glenthorne Villa, 1834-1977 (A\DFR)

Papers relating to David and Thomas Woollen, 'keepers' of Shire Hall, Taunton, including photographs, conditions of sale of Castle Green Estate, correspondence and 'An essay on Self Culture', 1852-1931 (A\DGU)

Taunton: Sketches and drawings of pillbox camouflage on the Taunton Stop Line, 1940-1941 (A\DHM)

Wellington Maternity Nursing Home: letters, subscription appeal, brochure, 1927-1951 (A\DHC)

Vernacular Architecture reports for: Manor Farm, Forton; Quaperlake House, Bruton; Beacon Lane Farm, Wellington Without; Gardeners Cottage, Kingsdon; Southern Way, Seavington St. Mary; Moorseek Cottage, Buckland St. Mary; Togford, Stogumber; Lavenders, Barton, Winscombe; Hillcrest Farm, Winscombe; MaxMills Farm, Barton, Winscombe; Rose Farm, Barton, Winscombe, 2010-2011 (DD\V)

THE YEOVIL SMALLPOX HOSPITAL - from Jack Sweet of Yeovil

It is difficult to understand, in a world from which the scourge of smallpox has been eliminated, the fear which this disease could generate. For centuries, smallpox was a fearsome and nauseating viral disease, highly infectious, and if the patient did not die in the most loathsome manner, the disfiguring scars left on the survivor could be appalling. The introduction of vaccines by the pioneering work of Edward Jenner and Yetminster farmer, Benjamin Jesty, at the end of the 18th century, and the subsequent refinements in the process, lessened the severity of the disease but epidemics still occurred. Smallpox was always lurking somewhere and great was the fear when the disease broke out.

The early isolation of cases and the immediate vaccination of contacts was the main reaction of the authorities charged with the custody of public health. During the 19th century, many City and Town Councils built hospitals to isolate the deadly infectious diseases, such as scarlet fever and diphtheria and special hospitals were provided for isolating smallpox cases. This is the story of the Yeovil Smallpox Hospital and as some of the events occurred just over a century ago, it shows the great advances which have been made in medical science and the treatment of disease.

In 1870, Yeovil suffered a serious outbreak of smallpox and although the number of cases was relatively small and there were fewer deaths compared with other fatal infections, the memory was traumatic and still lingering twenty years later. At the Yeovil Town Council meeting of 6th March 1893, the Borough Surveyor could still cause shudders when he reported "The only matter which called for attention for February was a case of smallpox. Owing to the prompt action of the Superintendent of Police, the bedclothes which the patient had used during her fortnight stay in the town were destroyed within an hour of the case being notified." The Sewage Committee followed with a report on two sites for a suggested small isolation hospital for the treatment of smallpox and cholera cases. One site, and that favoured by

the Committee, was in a field owned by the Council at Lyde Lane some half a mile from Sherborne Road, and the other was in a field in Ilchester Road near the cemetery! The Council decided to build the hospital, with accommodation for a caretaker, wife and four patients at Lyde Lane, where the nearest house and public road were over 200 yards away. At the following meeting, plans of the scheme were presented and passed, although one Councillor objected to the estimated cost of £400 being charged to the rates "as the building would to an extent be erected for the benefit of posterity."

Despite the speed at which the Council built the hospital, two years later in the summer of 1895, Dr. Garland, the Medical Officer of Health, reported that it had not yet been used. This happy state of affairs was not to last, for in the following November, the first case of smallpox was admitted to the hospital from a house in Orchard Street and, due to the prompt action of the Medical Officer of Health and Mr. Eveleigh, the Sanitary Inspector, the danger of an epidemic was avoided and no other cases occurred. The patient, who came from Exeter, survived the ordeal.

Trouble broke out again in March 1896 when a case of smallpox was admitted to the Yeovil Union Workhouse in Preston Road. There was no specific accommodation in the Workhouse for isolating the victim who was placed in a small, smoky, low-ceilinged room, 15 yards from the dining hall and the men's and children's wards. Dr. Marsh, the Union's Medical Officer, supported by the Poor Law Guardians, made a personal plea to the Council to allow the Lyde Lane hospital to be used for this patient. Although the Council had a legal right to refuse admission, Dr. Marsh hoped that it would "not allow any feelings of red tapism to interfere with their legal duty to the community and for the sake of public safety." However the doctor was reminded quite forcibly that when the Council had asked the Guardians to join in providing an isolation hospital for town and country cases they had declined to do so on the basis that they had sufficient accommodation of their own. Doctor Marsh and the Poor Law Guardians were then lectured by the Councillors over their "petty fogging policy" and other similar matters. Although the Guardians had some supporters on the Council, their plea was dismissed on the grounds that, although the hospital was empty, the victim had been in and about Yeovil on market day and it might soon be needed by people he may have infected. It was suggested that the Guardians might put up a temporary structure in the grounds of the Workhouse for their case!

Two further smallpox cases were subsequently isolated in the town, but no more occurred at the Workhouse and all three patients, one a child, survived and made a full recovery.

During the next five years there were no smallpox outbreaks and the isolation hospital slipped quietly out of the public gaze as the Council concentrated their efforts on other municipal matters.

The opening years of the 20th century were greeted by the last great epidemic of a severe form of smallpox, Variola Major. Between 1901 and 1905 some 4,300 people died of the disease in Great Britain and 1902 was the worst year with over 2,000 deaths. The Council was now thrown into a state of near panic because in December 1901 they were informed that following a High Court decision, a local authority with an isolation hospital could be required to accept "paupers" with infectious diseases. The Council could now be forced to accept patients from the Workhouse and armed with this decision the Poor Law Guardians refused to co-operate in providing funds to extend the four-bed Lyde Lane establishment to cater to the possible increased need. With smallpox raging in the country and a suspected case taken into the Lyde Lane hospital, the Medical Officer of Health reported to the Council in January 1902, that if an outbreak of the dangerous and highly infectious scarlet fever occurred in Yeovil, there would be great difficulties in isolating these patients, many of whom would be children, as well as smallpox cases. The Council was also reeling from the shock of a major collapse of some 243 feet of a main trunk sewer which had just been laid from the Pen Mill Sewage Works to the west of the Town Station.

What could be done? Various suggestions were put forward, including the construction of a galvanised iron shed or a tent, in the grounds of the isolation hospital or in the Council's adjoining field. The Council decided, however, that during the national smallpox outbreak only patients with the disease should be admitted to the hospital. Mercifully, the suspected case did not develop smallpox but the seeds of doubt about the adequacy of the isolation arrangements had been sown. The Sewage Committee were instructed

to look into the matter and the following June they recommended that a mortuary and wash house should be added to the Lyde Lane hospital which should then be used for infectious diseases other than smallpox, and a site acquired for a special smallpox establishment. Government rules prevented smallpox hospitals from being built within a quarter of a mile of any hospital or dwelling and therefore the Council could not build the new smallpox hospital in the surrounding fields it owned at Lyde Lane.

In the summer of 1902 smallpox broke out in the area and the Yeovil Town Council debated long and hard on what should be done to protect the townspeople from this dread disease. Earlier thoughts about the provision of a special smallpox isolation hospital were thrust aside in the need to do something quickly and the Council decided that only smallpox cases should be admitted to its general isolation hospital at Lyde Lane. It was agreed, however, to appoint a married couple as caretakers, together with a trained nurse to take charge of the hospital in the event of an outbreak of the disease because, as an Alderman reminded the Council "It is necessary for a caretaker to be appointed and it is highly necessary in the interests of the trade of the town, retail and staple, to have a trained nurse when there is an infectious disease." He seemed to have forgotten the interests of the health of his fellow townspeople!

Thankfully, Yeovil escaped the epidemic and once again the subject of a smallpox hospital slipped from Council and public gaze in the shadow of more interesting topics such as the long running battle between the Council and its former Borough Surveyor, Mr Armytage, over fees alleged to be owed him for water and sewage works projects.

In July 1903, a serious and potentially deadly Scarlet Fever epidemic broke out and the Lyde Lane hospital could not cater for the large number of patients, mainly children and young people, going down with this highly infectious disease. The Council discussed the possibility of purchasing, either some Berthon pre-fabricated wooden and iron framed huts or putting up tents for the patients. It was decided to buy two Berthon huts because they could be dismantled when they were not needed, and were also recommended for use in smallpox outbreaks.

During the previous months, talks had been taking place with the Yeovil Rural District Council on a scheme for building a 20-bed isolation hospital in Yeovil or near Odcombe, to be shared between the two authorities. The Town Council decided, however, not to enter into a joint arrangement, as it had agreed to provide the additional hatted accommodation at the Lyde Lane site, Yeovil was self sufficient. The need to provide a remote site for the smallpox hospital had not been entirely forgotten but it seemed that landowners were not particularly anxious to offer land to the Council; one site at Marston Magna was offered for £325 but this was rejected as too expensive.

The Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Garland, now put forward a claim for a salary increase arising from the greater workload he had undertaken in connection with the scarlet fever outbreak and in January 1904 the Council decided to make enquiries of other towns to find out how they paid their Medical Officers for such work. Sadly Dr Garland died shortly after the Council meeting.

During 1904, the Lyde Lane hospital was in constant use, mainly for the treatment of scarlet fever, and smallpox once again slipped from the agenda. The subject resurfaced in October 1904, when the Council was offered the 21 years lease of a field some three miles from Yeovil adjoining the present A37 Dorchester road at Whistlebridge. The Sanitary Committee prepared a scheme for siting a smallpox hospital in the field, either in the form of a temporary shed or a tent, together with a water supply and a tree planting screen along the roadside. The matter was discussed at the December meeting when a Councillor voiced his concern at the proposal because he understood that the field was liable to flood and exclaimed that "This is a nice place to put a smallpox patient in a canvas tent!" However the Council decided to proceed with the scheme and the Lease was entered into.

The site now awaited its first patient and this was not long in coming. On 17th June 1905 a case was isolated and the 50 years old man who had come to Yeovil from Somerton, where smallpox had broken out, was hastily isolated in one of two Berthon huts taken from the Lyde Lane hospital and quickly erected at Whistlebridge. Dr. Page, the new Medical Officer of Health, reported to the Council that he believed the

outbreak had been contained and the question of providing a permanent store building in the field was discussed. Dr Page suggested that the building would store the collapsible Berthon huts, because they could not be properly disinfected, and he did not think it wise for them to be returned to Lyde Lane after use. There was also the problem which could arise if there were patients of both sexes at Whistlebridge as they could not share one tent or hut, and the nurse employed to look after them would have to live somewhere on the site. No action was taken on Dr Page's suggestions and the smallpox patient, who only suffered a mild attack of the disease, left his hut at Whistlebridge some 14 days after admission.

Smallpox struck again in October 1905 when a nine years-old boy contracted the dreaded disease. The Medical Officer of Health reported that the case had come to his attention as he was passing the boy's home and the mother had called him in to see what was wrong with her son. It appeared that the boy had been confined to bed for one day but had been at school on the two previous days. Dr Page found the lad to have the characteristic eruptions of the fourth or fifth day of a smallpox attack, modified by primary vaccination. The two huts were quickly re-erected at Whistlebridge and the nurse and the boy were installed the same evening. Disinfection of the victim's house was carried out and all members of the patient's family were re-vaccinated. The source of the outbreak could not be traced, although it was believed that a hawker of goods, who had lodged nearby, was the probable carrier of the disease. After isolation for five weeks and a cost to the Council of £15 for his treatment, the boy recovered and was sent home.

Once again Yeovil had a lucky escape because no other case occurred the town, but Dr. Page once again impressed on the Council the need for a permanent store at Whistlebridge in view of the considerable work which had been required to bring the site into use at short notice. He believed any delay could increase the danger to the public and having experienced the shock of two outbreaks of the disease in one year, the Council finally agreed to build a galvanised iron store building on the site.

Finally the Council had established a smallpox hospital for the townspeople of Yeovil, albeit in a very rudimentary form, some 12 years after the subject was first debated. A serious outbreak occurred in 1909, when one patient died and the hospital was in use for some two months. Several months later, the Sanitary Committee reported to the Council that at the time of the smallpox outbreak, Mr Abbott, the former Inspector of Nuisances, was supplied with a mackintosh at the Council's expense for use in connection with his duties. The mackintosh was still in Mr Abbott's possession, and when the Town Clerk had asked for its return, the former employee had claimed that it had been given to him. The Sanitary Committee disagreed, and recommended that court proceedings should be taken for the recovery of the garment. A Councillor wondered whether it was advisable to have the coat back after it had been used in the smallpox hospital, but there was laughter when another Councillor understood that Mr Abbott wore it to his Sunday chapel meetings. The recommendation was adopted but history is silent on whether the mackintosh was recovered.

The Whistlebridge hospital was never used again after the 1909 incident and in 1922 the field was leased to a local farmer. As the century progressed, so did community action to contain all forms of infectious diseases and in 1929, Yeovil joined in a County-wide scheme to contain smallpox. The lease of the Whistlebridge field was surrendered in 1930 and because no-one wished to buy the Berthon huts they, and all other equipment, were burnt.

The Lyde Lane isolation hospital was taken out of use in the early 1930's and during World War II served as a mortuary for air raid victims and as a hostel for "difficult" evacuee children. The building was demolished in the 1960's when the Yeovil Borough Council developed the site and surrounding land for the Pen Mill Trading Estate.

Future Events of The Friends

Beginner's Guide to the Somerset Heritage Centre - Monday, October 17th. An all-day event to be presented in conjunction with Heritage Centre Staff - still in the planning stage at the moment

A pre-Christmas get together Saturday, November 19th. More details to follow.

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Items For Sale

We still have a number of books and CDs that Paul Mansfield has kindly donated to the Friends for sale to help raise funds.

We have the following titles.

Norris' Taunton Journal 1725 to 1727. Indexed and filmed by Paul Mansfield. A full facsimile of the original with an index on one cd-rom for £4.00 post free to the U.K. and £4.60 overseas.

Books

A Catalogue of Unfortunate Incidents - Inquests and Death by Misadventure in 18th Century Somerset and Surrounds. - £6.00 including UK postage. Please make cheques payable to The Friends of Somerset Archives and send to 102 Monks Dale, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 3JH
