

## Colyton Parish History Society Newsletter 23 May 2020

For two months now we have all been in lockdown against this horrible coronavirus pandemic: for those of you who are self -isolating I do hope you have at least been able to enjoy all the beautiful spring flowers basking in glorious sunshine in the gardens around your home and hear the cheerful, exuberant birdsong through an open window. Here in Colyton, those of us free to do so are very lucky to be able to take a daily walk through the flower rich green fields and woodlands surrounding the town.

Lots has been happening this month – with rare historic finds in local fields, a connection established with Americans whose ancestor was among the first Feoffees and VE Day memories. Enjoy!

Sarah Charman, Editor

### 1. Exciting discovery! – Historic Russian Lead Bag Seals



A few weeks ago local metal detectorist Peter Vernon was exploring fields near Colyford when he made an exciting discovery. Peter explained “This is a Russian flax lead bag seal – the first I have found in this area - It has now been recorded on the Lead Bag Seal web site.” A translation and explanation of the information contained on the seal which dates from 1820 is available on the project web site below at: [www.peacehavens.co.uk/BSHOME2.htm](http://www.peacehavens.co.uk/BSHOME2.htm) and there is a wealth of information at [www.peacehavens.co.uk/BSLINKS.htm](http://www.peacehavens.co.uk/BSLINKS.htm) about seals and trade. This is a fine example of a seal and a timely reminder of how outward looking this area of East Devon has always been historically in terms of trade with Europe and Russia.



Jed Dodd

Admin · 30 January at 15:42



A Russian lead flax bale seal found in East Devon by project member Peter Vernon and submitted by Stuart F Elton. I put them on here for the many enthusiasts who I know are learning to translate the Russian seals .. IDENTIFICATION GRADE EASY .

ЛД = LD / ИМ:ВИННИКО / Н56 /// NP / АБ12Н / 1820

Flax inspector I.M.VINNIKOV working out of 56 post in the port of St Petersburg, Kronstadt, Narva, Riga, Libau, Pilau, Pernau, Revel Memel, Konigsberg, Windau or Tilsit .. in 1820

Reverse:- All NP seals before 1829 are flax seals. NP mean the flax tax had been paid. The Grower/Owner/Agent initials are AB (A.B) with 12 flax plants in the bale .

..see reference IDS 1923 on page

<http://www.peacehavens.co.uk/BSINDENT1900.htm>

Total bale seals on database on 30th January 2020 is 6694

Note .. Peter .. is this seal anything to do with this area in Devon

<http://www.peacehavens.co.uk/BSCREDITON.htm>



You and 13 others

2 comments



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Peter Vernon 🙌 Thank you very much for the ID Jed. No it was not found in the Crediton area but we do have digs there so will let you know if any turn up 🙌

Like · Reply · 6d



1



Peter Vernon 🙌 Loving those links to the old mills in Devon too



Like · Reply · 6d



1

Flax has been grown in East Devon, particularly in the area around Axminster, for centuries. It was milled and refined in local flax mills for making into linen, nets, sail cloth and rope. As demand outgrew supply here raw flax stems were imported from Russia. The waste materials from the stems – which were of no use in the linen making process – were spread across the fields as fertiliser with the Russian lead bag seals still attached. Which is how the seals were preserved to be rediscovered today!

Flax is also called linseed and is still grown now for the seed, which produces linseed oil. Today it is used as livestock feed and in some health foods. Further information about flax growing in the area is available on the Axminster Heritage Centre website at <https://axminsterheritage.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/flax.pdf>

## 2. From Oregon on the ancestral trail

Our History Society receives regular requests for assistance from all over the world from people researching their family histories who have discovered that their ancestors originally came from the Parish of Colyton.

This month we heard from John Sherman who lives in Oregon. He had discovered that he was directly descended from a John Clarke who married Ann Mayce through his daughter Agnes who in turn married a Richard Conant and he enquired what information we might be able to give him about who John Clarke was? Happily we were able to supply John Sherman with various pieces of information about his ancestor. For those not familiar with the name, John Clarke was one of the first Feoffees after the Chamber was established in 1546.

The book on the ***History of the Feoffees of Colyton 1546 – 2016***, which is available for purchase in the Heritage Centre, contains a specific reference to the death of John Clarke "*.... a distinguished member of the Feoffees body. He was one of the men who journeyed to Westminster in 1546, and to this worthy a lengthy obituary notice occurs, as follows "John Clarke, the elder of Coliton, merchant was buried IX of Aprill, who in his lyfe time was the cheffest traviler of the purchas of the manor of Coliton, and the markets, with other lyberties pertaining the same, as aperieth by the pattend - and deceased the VI day of Aprill 1585."*

We were also able to put John in touch with people who could help him with enquiries into the Conant family. And most exciting I suddenly remembered two American sisters who several years ago attended a Feoffees Banquet. They too were descended from John Clarke and we were able to show them their ancestor's name in the Feoffees archives. As the Feoffees' Bailiff I had communicated with them at the time of their visit in 2014 and so I contacted them again and asked if they were aware of John Sherman – they were not – and with their agreement I have now been able to put John in touch with them. (The visit was covered in an article in the Pulman's 'View From' newspaper in February 2014 – see below

## Family connections bring special visitors to Colyton





**The Colyton Chamber of Feoffees was joined by two special guests at their annual banquet on Friday evening.**

Sisters Paula Futrell and Beth Uiterwyk were visiting the town from Rochester, New York and Hampton, Virginia in the USA after discovering they were direct descendants of one of Colyton's original Feoffees, John Clarke.

Beth has been tracing her family's genealogy for 35 years, first starting in America and then finding family in England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany and Poland. She joined the London Genealogy Society 15 years ago, which led her to find further records, including those of John Clarke and his second wife, Agnes Macye, who were married on June 29th 1544 at St Andrew's Church in Colyton.

The sisters previously visited Colyton with their mother in 2001, during a tour of parishes in England where they had found family connections. However, at the time, they had not known Mr Clarke's connections with the Feoffees. They had wondered why his death records had been so extensive compared to others they had found, later realising this was because he was such a notable figure in the town.

Paula and Beth returned for a two-day trip last week and were among the guests of honour at the Feoffees' banquet at the town hall. They also enjoyed a guided history tour around the town, including Colyton Parish History Society's new heritage centre at the Merchant's House in Market Place.

The Centre will be officially opened on Thursday, April 3rd at 11am. *Article from Pulman's 'View from Colyton', Tuesday, February 11th 2014*

<https://colytonheritagecentre.org/2014/02/family-connections-bring-special-visitors-colyton/>

### **3. VE Day Memories**

A personal reflection below from local resident Trevor Glasper about his father who was killed on the last night of the German war - 18 April 1945.



A 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute to  
Captain Harry Gasper MC



Durham Light Infantry attached to the Cameronians S R  
Killed in action demobilising a German Automatic gun on the last night of the German war  
in Velzen NW Germany 18<sup>th</sup> April 1945, aged 32 years

**An Eighth Army Desert Rat** who was awarded the **Military Cross** in the lead up to the **Battle of El Alamein** on the night November 1/2 1943 despite being wounded, he achieved a supply route through enemy minefields which in turn enabled a **Bridgehead** to be set up **for the Battle of El Alamein**.

So great were his achievements not only was he **Decorated in the Field** and when Despatches got to **Westminster**, **Mr Churchill** declared that the **Church Bells** which had been silenced since war began were to be rung throughout the nation as it marked a turning point in the war.



Faithful unto death



By his son Trevor Gasper

April 18<sup>th</sup> 2020

If anyone has any personal or family recollections of VJ Day – Victory over Japan Day - which is coming up in August and would like to share them with us please contact me at [sarah.charman@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sarah.charman@yahoo.co.uk)

Incidentally for anyone too young to know VJ Day was celebrated twice on both 15 August 1945 and again on 2 September 1945 when the Japanese administration officially signed the surrender document. <https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/VJ-Day/>