

TIVERTON CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Looking towards Collipriest from the top of the town hall

Tiverton Civic Society Newsletter

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During the Covid epidemic, our newsletter is being distributed by email. We hope to return to printed editions for those who prefer these after the epidemic is over. Some copies of the 2020 editions will be printed by Fax and Files for those requesting them at a future date.

Front cover photograph provided by the editor

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Chairman's Introduction

Despite the continued restrictions this year, we have, thanks to the technical expertise of Dennis Knowles, been able to maintain a full programme of virtual presentations, and we hope you have all enjoyed these. Virtual meetings have some considerable advantages, so much so that some universities and businesses are doubting whether there will ever be a return to full face to face lectures and presentations. One advantage of virtual meetings was fully apparent in John Allan's recent presentation 'Studying the Medieval Stained Glass at Exeter Cathedral' when he was able to show a level of detail on our screens which it is unlikely would have been apparent when viewed from a distance in the Mayoralty Room. Other benefits are that we no longer need to be constrained by the need for a winter break in our programme, and that we can attract speakers from distant locations. Nevertheless, we realize that, for many people, the use of this technology can understandably never replace face to face events, and we do hope to soon return to at least some meetings in the Mayoralty Room. Details of all future meetings will be posted on our website.

For most people the biggest issue facing us all is man-induced climate change, and the resultant increase in extreme climate events, including record temperatures, increased storminess, and droughts, which are resulting in devastating floods, fires, and reductions in biodiversity, with increasing levels

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of starvation and malnutrition in many parts of the world. Is there anything we, as a society, can do to combat the worst outcomes in our own town?

I have been looking at the programmes of several Civic Societies who are attempting to address these important issues, which must be of great concern to everyone. One of these is Addingham Civic Society, Addingham being a small village in Wharfedale in the Yorkshire Moors. This society has set up an Environment Group *'to help our community to take care of our natural environment and work towards a sustainable lifestyle'*, and their members are practically tackling four interrelated themes in their own community, all essential elements of the climate emergency, these being 'zero carbon', 'zero waste', 'sustainable water resources', and 'wildlife friendly/biodiversity'. A programme of action is set each of these themes, that for 'zero carbon' for instance, including raising of awareness in the community; the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency; sustainable transport; and the planting of trees and hedgerows, while, for 'zero waste' there is a campaign to repair and reuse rather than to recycle or send unwanted goods to land fill. The Environment Group has attracted many enthusiastic volunteers and new society members. Could our society do something similar? The answer must surely be yes, but only if members are prepared to come forward and help to establish, and run, such a group. Your ideas and willingness to participate would be very welcome!

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Since our previous Newsletter the rapid surge in demand and a consequent rise in house prices has led to an increase in planning applications by developers, often on unallocated land, while applications for the Eastern Urban Extension continue to be brought forward. This means that we have been very busy preparing lengthy written submissions. I have also participated in and spoken at many meetings. The MDDC Planning Committee rightly refused consent for the Tidcombe Hall and Tumbling Fields applications, while a current concern is a major application at Hartnoll Farm. There is ongoing dissatisfaction with a large proposal by Redrow Homes to build 166 homes in the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension, largely because their application is not fully compliant with the Masterplan and Design Guide.

The wider context for these planning applications is the 2020 Planning White Paper. Although, following the cabinet reshuffle of 15th September 2021, it seems very likely that the controversial planning reforms outlined in the 2020 Planning White Paper will be abandoned or considerably watered down, all political parties as well as influential bodies such as Civic Voice and the Campaign to Protect Rural England, agree that there continues to be an urgent need to improve housing design and quality.

Developments in the quest to improve Housing Design and Quality

In March 2011, Grant Shapps, Housing Minister in the coalition government, stated, 'We all recognise the bog standard, identikit Legoland homes that typify some new developments - all looking exactly the same, on streets that

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could be anywhere in the country. Whilst we are seeing good examples emerging, too often new developments are dominated by the same, identikit designs that bear no resemblance to the character of the local area. I want more developers to think outside these Legoland designs and consider how the expertise, knowledge and materials that are locally available could be best used to reflect the identity of their surrounding neighbourhood.'

Since that date the quest for better and more distinctive developments has accelerated, with the introduction of many government-led as well as private initiatives. Masterplans have become mandatory for all major developments, and Design Guides, or Codes, have gradually been introduced, these complementing Local Plans. Mid Devon not only has an up-to-date Local Plan, adopted in 2020, but also Masterplans for Areas A (2014/2017) and B (2021) of the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension, and Design Guides for both the Eastern Urban Extension (2015) and for the whole of Mid Devon (2020). The Design Guides were prepared by David Hawes (DHUD), an urban designer. Members of our society, including myself, were involved in the consultation and workshops for the former.

In a major new government initiative, the *Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission*, was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir Roger Scruton in 2018 and its final report was published in 2020. The main aims are:

- to promote improved design and style of homes, villages, towns and high streets, building on local tradition and applying it effectively;

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- to explore how greater community consent can be harnessed to develop new settlements;
- to make the planning system operate in support of, rather than opposition to, better design and style.

The National Design Guide was published in October 2019 (updated January 2021). This guide illustrates how well-designed developments that are attractive, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. The publication of the National Design Guide was followed in July 2020 by a major government announcement about planning policy changes, which stated, 'It is vital that new developments are delivered through a locally-led planning system with public participation at its heart, which gives communities the power to ensure new developments are of a high standard, built in the right places, and include affordable homes.'

A key element of the planning policy changes was the strengthening of *paras.* 126-136 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to emphasise the importance of good design. The NPPF is very clear in its advice that 'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development'. Consequently 'poor and even mediocre design is not sustainable.'

It was also announced in July 2020 that a new National Model Design Code was being prepared, which 'seeks to ensure that new developments are beautiful, well-designed and locally led. Developments should also fit in with local character'. The new draft code is a quest to achieve consistency by

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providing a guide to the writing of local design guides and codes. The code gives local planning authorities (LPAs) a toolkit of design principles to consider for new developments, such as street character, building type and façade. It also features environmental, heritage and wellbeing factors.

Prior to full implementation, the draft code is being tested for six months in fourteen local authorities, including Mid Devon, and, as part of this, as a stakeholder representing Tiverton Civic Society, I am taking part in two three-hour workshops during September. The first, led by Paul Brockway and David Hawes, used both Zoom and Mentimeter. It was well-presented, informative and enjoyable. It was further announced that, to support the use of design codes in the planning system, the government has created an Office for Place under the chairmanship of Nicholas Boys-Smith within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Two influential non-government surveys have been carried out for Place Alliance, a movement campaigning for place quality, which aim to inspire and raise aspirations locally. These are:

1. **The Housing Design Audit** conducted by University College, London, and the Campaign to Protect Rural England, was launched in January 2020. The Audit studied 142 recent housing developments, comparing their findings with those from a previous audit of 2004-2007. It concluded that:

- There has been a small overall improvement, but new housing design is overwhelmingly 'mediocre' or 'poor'. Most new housing is 'not meeting

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the basic requirements for civilised living'. New developments lack amenities such as green space, playgrounds, and access to shops.

- They considered that one in five of the audited schemes should have been refused planning permission outright and found that, although some areas had improved considerably, the East Midlands and South-West scored least well, in both cases significantly lower than the English average.
- The report also found that local communities regretted what they see as overdevelopment and a loss of local character and a negative impact from car and road dominated environments.
- Low scoring schemes often had little distinguishing personality or 'sense of place', with public, open and play spaces being both poorly designed and located for social interaction. Housing units are frequently of an obviously standard type with little attempt to create something distinctive.
- While most schemes are achieving the basic minimum energy efficiency requirements set out in legislation, significant numbers are still falling below them.
- Less-affluent communities get worse design and there is a continued trend (by a factor of ten) towards delivering sub-standard design outcomes for less affluent communities.

The report concludes that a big leap forward needs to be made with a new ethical approach to design. The largest housebuilders should embody ethical standards for the industry as a whole, because they 'build developments

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which will have profound impacts for many decades on the places and communities they help to shape, on the social wellbeing and health outcomes of their customers and future occupants, and on the environment at large.'

The report states that Local Authorities should set high aspirations for sites, and the design ambitions that they espouse should be made clear in policy well in advance of sites coming forward for development. They need to have the courage of their convictions and set clear local aspirations by refusing schemes that do not meet their published design standards.

2. **The Design Deficit Audit**, also carried out by Place Alliance, and published in July 2021. This report summarises the findings of a short survey of urban design skills and approaches within England's local planning authorities, and how they have changed over time. Reviewing the evidence, it concluded that urban design and related skills in local authorities remain at a low ebb and far below where they need to be in order to address the ambitious national agenda on raising the design quality of new development. There is no reason to think that Mid Devon District Council is any different in this respect!

Much greater detail for all these developments can be accessed online. See placealliance.org.uk/research/national-housing-audit/ and placealliance.org.uk/research/design-deficit/.

We hope these initiatives will encourage Mid Devon LPA to ensure that developments in the district are of a high quality, adhering to the agreed Local Plan.

Jeremy Salter

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Collipriest Part V:

Later Lords of the Manor and the Blundell Family

An indenture of 1700 shows Peter West of Thorverton possessed of one quarter of the Collipriest estate amounting to 144 acres. It included Cranmore Castle which contained 'three fields of tillage and other lands'. The West family had owned 2/8 of the Manor of Tiverton since 1605, bought from the Mohuns, co-heirs of Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon, who died in Padua in 1556 without issue. In 1702, Peter West purchased the moiety of the manor that had belonged to the Trelawneys. They had earlier bought out another of the heirs of Edward Courtenay, bringing their share from 2/8 to 4/8. From 1702 Peter West owned 6/8 of the Manor of Tiverton, including the Collipriest estate. He took up residence in Tiverton Castle, becoming Sheriff of Devon in 1707. In 1722, he married Dorothy Carew of Bickleigh Castle.

The West and the Blundell families had been related by marriage since the early 1600s. Harding states that when Sarah, widow of John Blundell JP, assumed the administration of the Collipriest estate, Peter West leased the holding of Cranmore Castle to her for 99 years for £110 and two broad pieces of gold. These coins were struck in the reign of James I and were sometimes called laurels. Their value was about 25 shillings. They were withdrawn in 1732. At the same time, Peter West granted her a long lease of another ¼ of Collipriest, amounting to 88 acres, receiving as a consideration £140 and three broad pieces of gold.

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When Peter West died in 1726, his son John by an earlier marriage, conveyed to Philip Blundell, grandson of Sarah, a third quarter of Collipriest to be held for his own life, and the reversion of his two uncles, Peter and John, so that the Blundells now held three-quarters of the Collipriest estate. Philip Blundell had six children. He was succeeded at Collipriest by his son Peter who had eight children. Phillip, son of Peter, was the last of the Blundell family to live at Collipriest. He sold the property to Thomas Winslow in 1770 and moved to Zephyr Lodge in Tiverton.

When John West died only two years after his father, Tiverton Manor passed to his two sisters, Dorothy and Christian as co-heiresses. The following year, Dorothy West married Sir Thomas Carew 4th Baronet of Haccombe (c.1692-1746). When her sister Christian died in 1759, Dorothy became sole heiress and Tiverton Manor passed through her to the Carew family.

Lady Dorothy outlived her son Sir John Carew B^t of Haccombe, living at Tiverton Castle. In 1768, she bought the 1/8 share of Tiverton Manor from Rev^d. John Spurway and was thus in possession of 7/8 share of the Manor until her death in 1772 when it passed to her grandson, Sir Thomas Carew, B^t of Haccombe, together with sole ownership of Tiverton Castle and the adjoining land. Sir Thomas had a large family who occupied Tiverton Castle for part of the year and spent the rest of the year at Okehampton Castle. The Carew family sold Tiverton Castle in 1923.

Mary Toft

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A reflection on the stones beneath our feet and human-induced climate change

Early in August 2020, I was obliged to use a geological hammer, as well as a garden spade, to dig an eighteen-inch-deep trench in a neglected garden border. This was prompted by the removal of a section of an old hedge, the roots of which had penetrated the house drains. I planned to grow a clematis hedge, using evergreen and deciduous varieties, hoping to get flowers all year round. As I dug into the subsoil, I removed not only roots but many pebbles of various sizes, part of a 'head' deposit laid down during the last Ice Age. The pebbles were well-rounded, indicating that they were water-worn, probably in ancient rivers draining the great glaciers which penetrated as far south as the North Devon coast.

Many of us have a deep red-coloured soil in our gardens. The red colour is derived from iron oxide contained in the rocks which underlie the head deposits around Tiverton. These rocks were laid down in a geological period of time known as the Permian era, a time when the land was a hot, dusty desert lying adjacent to a newly emerging range of high mountains, known as the Hercynian (Variscan) mountains. These were located at the northern edge of a continent named Gondwana. To the north, south and west of Tiverton, the rock outcrop is older, belonging to the Carboniferous era, but to the east, the outcrop of early Permian rocks widens, stretching from the south coast near Torbay north to Williton, Somerset, near the Bristol Channel coast.

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A large area of Devon west of the Exe Valley to the Atlantic coast, north of Dartmoor, is underlain by Culm Measures laid down in the Carboniferous era. The soil from this rock strata supports a soil type that produces a unique flora and fauna which is protected today. For some readers, this may be their underlying rock type. Fingers of early Permian rocks overlie the Culm Measures. A larger Permian finger stretches from Broadclyst west through Crediton as far as Exbourne, with an outlier at Hatherleigh. A smaller Permian finger stretches from Sampford Peverell to Loxbeare, west of Tiverton. This finger meets another finger stretching from Williton to Burlescombe where the early Permian rock outcrop widens eastward. These were lower valleys descending from the Hercynian mountains to the desert plain.

Over these Carboniferous and Permian rocks lie much more recent 'head' deposits, laid down in the last Ice Age (Paleolithic Era). About ten thousand years ago, Tiverton was a periglacial area. Head deposits were laid down in the floodplains of rivers that drained the huge ice sheet which stretched south from the Arctic. Older rock fragments in these deposits became water-worn, forming pebbles of various sizes embedded in much finer silty sand and clay, the origin of the pebbles in my garden. The presence of rocks formed in a hot desert, overlain by alluvial deposits laid down in a glacial climate, alerts us to the geological aspect of climate change resulting from the movement of continents over the Earth's mantle. This is a very different form of climate change to the global warming which concerns so many people today.

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Today's campaign which aims to minimise human-induced climate change concerns the impact of emissions caused by human activity on the global climate which is occurring in addition to the imperceptible changes caused by continued geological activity deep in the Earth's crust. It is focused on the survival of human civilisation in a form that is recognisable today, together with the continued existence of the rich variety of global flora and fauna. Rather than the wider geological temperature changes reflected in the hot desert rock formations and the head deposits of the last Ice Age, human-induced global warming concerns a warming of 1-2°C. This will cause sea levels to rise, flooding some of the most heavily populated areas across the world. These include the Thames basin, and, closer to home, estuarine lands such as the Exe and the Truro basins. In the south-west, this is accentuated by imperceptible geological activity, a downtilt of land (in contrast to an uplift in Scotland), a re-balancing related to the retreat of the Pleistocene ice sheets. For over a century, there has been concern about the steadily rising size of the human population across the globe and the means by which it can be fed. To this has been added, in recent decades, a concern about the impact of this expanding population on global warming. In 1798, Thomas Malthus published his 'Essay on the Principle of Population' in which he argued that humans have a natural propensity to increase the size of their population. This leads to a cycle of abundance and then shortage. He argued that uncontrolled expansion of the human population would ultimately be catastrophic. In his

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early career, David Attenborough also held a Malthusian view of population increase, which, through his extensive filming of the world's fauna and flora, evolved into his current call for global ecological conservation. In Attenborough's scenario, the expanding population is responsible for climate change, threatening the extinction of many species of flora and fauna.

Against the Malthusian view, others argue that technological advance has enabled the world to support an increasing human population, a view which historical evidence undoubtedly supports. The question that arises from this debate centres on whether or not further technological advances will ultimately lead to a catastrophic implosion in which not only the human population, but also much of the planet's flora and fauna, will be decimated.

Undoubtedly, the excesses of humanity are responsible for damaging waste now littering the planet, its atmosphere and space. Seventy years ago, thrift was encouraged, but entrepreneurs argued that frugality undermined efforts to rebuild the post war economy. With the development of synthetic technologies, particularly those based on oil and coal, today's 'throwaway society' took root, placing our planet's resources under increasing strain and threatening climatic stability. The threat to Earth's flora and fauna has grown exponentially. Increased levels of carbon-dioxide in the atmosphere in particular is blamed for the development of man-made global warming. While global warming may be easier for humanity to adapt to than global cooling in terms of feeding, clothing and housing the increasing global human

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population, it brings long-term threats. Undoubtedly, the future global population will depend on new technological advances for its long-term survival. The global Covid-19 pandemic is illustrative of this dependence.

The need to reduce the impact of man-made global warming remains a priority if future generations are to enjoy a reasonable standard of living.

While international organisations, governments, institutions and business will determine the effectiveness of attempts to combat human-induced climate change, it is important that individuals too play their part. Today's increased emphasis on caring for the environment could reduce the speed of global warming. The habits of our 'throwaway society', particularly its dependence on some single-use items, and the habit of dropping litter, need to be managed and modified to reduce the threats arising from global warming.

Fern Clarke

Roy Webber

It was with sadness that we learned of the death this summer of one of the longest-serving members of Tiverton Civic Society, Roy Webber, aged 93 years. For many years, Roy was 'Mr. Rossiter', the chemist on the corner of Bampton Street and Gold Street. He was a high-ranking freemason who contributed very substantially to the well-being of Tiverton, and was deeply involved with the life of St. Peter's Church. Roy was a good story-teller, and an enthusiastic member of the community who used his talents to assist with the achievement of many important local projects.

Editor

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William Buckland, Earth Scientist and Theologian

The extraordinary area of coastline on either side of Lyme Regis, now part of the UNESCO World Heritage site, has inspired many leading geologists because of its remarkable geology, fossils, and landslips. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries these included Sir Henry de la Beche (1796-1859), founder and first Director General, of The Geological Survey, who lived at Lyme Regis until the age of 14, and is celebrated for his study and mapping of the rocks of Devon and Cornwall, although his reputation has recently been tarnished due to links with slave ownership; William Conybeare (1787-1867), a distinguished geologist celebrated for his work on the Carboniferous period, who had family links to Axminster, eventually becoming rector in 1836; Mary Anning (1799-1847) an untrained but still celebrated amateur geologist living in Lyme Regis, who, from a very early age, excavated and displayed an astounding series of fossils of large extinct animals, eventually to become known as dinosaurs; and William Buckland (1784-1856), the subject of this article.

Most descriptions of William Buckland's life concentrate on his many accomplishments and only briefly sketch his early life. However, these early formative years laid the foundations for the future and are vital in understanding his later achievements. In particular, the superb natural environment in which he grew up was enormously influential, while the patronage of the Blundell's old boy network played no small part in promoting his future education! This is discussed by J.M. Edmonds in the *Devonshire*

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Association Transactions for 1978 in an article entitled, 'Patronage and Privilege in Education: A Devon Boy Goes to school, 1798'.

William Buckland was born at Axminster on 12th March 1784. His father, Rev^d Charles Buckland, was the second of three brothers who were educated at Blundell's, John, the oldest, being an important influence on William's future education. Charles was awarded a Peter Blundell scholarship to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, graduated in 1776, became curate of Shute and Colyton, and, later that year he was appointed as Rector of Templeton near Tiverton under the patronage of Sir John de la Pole of Shute, a fellow Old Blundellian, who also owned Templeton manor, and who, in 1793, further augmented Charles's limited finances by facilitating his appointment to the vacant livings of Trusham in the Teign Valley, and West Chiselborough near Beaminster. In 1783, Charles married Elizabeth Oke, who came from a long-established family of prominent landowners around Axminster, and, despite the considerable distances to his parishes, he lived in Axminster throughout his married life, playing a considerable role in the education of his children. He was an enthusiast amateur naturalist and geologist, and during long walks he passed on both these interests to William, who later wrote that the rocks of the region had enchanted him, stating that 'they were my geological school, they stared me in the face, they wooed me and caressed me, saying at every turn, Pray, Pray, be a geologist!' He also wrote, in a later letter to Henry de la Beche, that 'the love of observing natural objects, which is common in most

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children, was early exhibited by my aptitude in finding birds' nests and collecting their eggs. I also made observations on the habits of fishes in the Axe, particularly flounders, minnows, roaches, eels, and millers' thumbs.'

William, together with his brother John, joined Blundell's School on 7th August 1797, but he was destined to spend less than a year at the school because, during his first term, it was decided that, following the recommendation of his uncle John, an experienced Fellow and Tutor at Oxford, he should be entered for the prestigious Winchester College scholarship. He was intensively coached in the Classics for the remainder of his time at the school. In addition to an oral examination, sponsorship for his entry was all-important, his most influential supporter being Henry Addington MP, Viscount Sidmouth, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and from 1801-1804, Prime Minister, who was persuaded by Sir John de la Pole to write a letter of recommendation. The outcome was successful, William being nominated for a scholarship by the Warden of Winchester in the summer of 1798, and there he continued his education, largely in the Classics, while continuing to follow his interests in natural history and geology in his spare time and holidays. However, when it appeared unlikely that he would obtain a Scholarship to New College, Oxford, with which Winchester College has always had close links, his uncle John, who had, until 1797, been a Fellow of Corpus Christi, recommended him to take the entrance scholarship at that much smaller college. Having removed him from Winchester John intensively coached William for six months at his parish

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at Warborough, Oxfordshire, and in May 1801, he was successfully elected as the Senior Scholar for Devonshire.

William gained his BA in Arts and Mathematics in 1804, but he had also attended classes in Geology, Mineralogy and Chemistry, starting his extensive fossil collection. In 1809 he was elected as a Fellow of Corpus Christi, being ordained the same year, and at this time he met William Conybeare, who was to become a lifelong friend, travelling with him to visit Mary Anning in Lyme Regis and to study Geology in Ireland and Germany. He was appointed Reader in Mineralogy in 1813. The Prince Regent appointed him Regius Reader in Geology in 1819. He became the university's first Professor of Geology. With this new post, he became a Canon of Christ Church in 1825, thereby holding a leading theological chair and a leading scientific chair at the same time.

One of William's most famous papers, published in 1822, for which he received the Royal Society's Copley Medal, described a cave at Kirkdale in Yorkshire where he had found the remains of 23 ancient animals, including many from warmer climates, including hippopotamus, hyena, lion, rhinoceros and elephant. He also, in 1823, investigated a cave at Paviland in the Gower Peninsula, where he discovered a skeleton 'The Red Lady of Paviland', which has since been found to be that of a male, about 33,000 years old, the oldest human remains found in Britain. Other caves he investigated included Kent's Cavern in Torquay. William also coined the term coprolite to describe the fossilised faeces of animals, many being found in the Lias rocks near Lyme

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Regis, further analysis providing valuable information about the anatomy and diet of extinct creatures.

In 1824 he was appointed as the first post-charter President of the Geological Society, and during the inaugural meeting he announced the discovery of a giant lizard at Stonesfield, which he called Megalosaurus, the first named dinosaur. In 1832, he became President of the British Association.

William spent much time attempting to reconcile geology with the belief of the established church that, as outlined in the Book of Genesis, the world and its species had been created in six days about six thousand years previously, and that the surface of the land had been modified by the biblical Great Flood. He and other geologists maintained that the world was vastly older, and he proposed that each 'day' should be seen as a vast length of time, gradually realising that he had found no evidence for the Great Flood. He also embraced the theory of Georges Cuvier who believed that the earth's surface had undergone many radical changes or catastrophes, across vast periods of time, which had wiped out whole species, making way for the appearance of newer, more advanced life forms. In addition, he met and travelled with Louis Agassiz, the Swiss geologist who believed that much of the landscape had been modified by the action of ancient glaciers. He became an enthusiastic convert to the theory, which explained much that he had previously ascribed to the Great Flood. Naturally, many people disagreed with his ideas, which

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challenged religious scholarship, but 'his conclusions were to change the relationship between science and religion for all time' (Simon Winchester).

In 1825 William, aged 41, married Mary Morland, aged 28, herself a geologist and accomplished artist. Their year-long honeymoon in Europe was an extended geological tour during which they met many leading scientists, including Georges Cuvier, and Alexander von Humboldt. They had nine children, five of whom survived into adulthood. Frank, the eldest son, a natural historian, became, like his father, a celebrated scientist and eccentric. *'The Man Who Ate the Zoo'* is a fine recent biography by Richard Girling.

William Buckland was undoubtedly a very popular figure with many influential friends. He was a regular visitor to Buckingham Palace, and in 1845 the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, recommended his appointment as Dean of Westminster, one of the most influential ecclesiastical posts close to the royal family, which came with the living of Islip in Oxfordshire. For the last seven years of his life, his mental health steadily deteriorated, and he died on August 14th, 1856, being buried at Islip.

William is now best known for his antics and eccentricities, including his apparent desire to eat his way through the entire animal kingdom, offering mice in batter and steaks of bison and crocodile to guests at breakfast, but reserving the viler things like moles and bluebottles for himself. However, these eccentricities mask his many achievements. He was undoubtedly the most colourful and clever of all 19th century geologists, a great showman-

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scientist and a populariser of science who attracted enormous attendances to his lectures and sermons. In a recent biography *Caves, Coprolites and Catastrophes*, Allan Chapman states that 'William Buckland not only laid geology on a firm, empirical foundation, but propelled it ahead as a new and potent intellectual force' and that 'he always had a big, sort of larger than-life aura. He had a tremendous, mad sense of humour, immense, irrepressible energy, formidable intellectual power, and a gift for making friends.'

I have led or participated in countless fieldwork visits to the marvellous World Heritage Coast between Exmouth and Studland Bay. Most of the visits have been from Blundell's, and it has been gratifying that some pupils have been enthralled by the same landscapes that inspired William Buckland over 200 years ago. The most recent fieldwork visit I led, however, was with a group of Exclusive Plymouth Brethren teenagers carrying out their GCSE studies. They are literal Christians who continue to maintain that the world was created in six days about 6,000 years ago, Darwin's Theory of Evolution being anathema to them. They believe that any distortions in the landscape can be explained by the biblical Great Flood. They would not appreciate the story of William Buckland, but it is hoped that the visit would, as with him, have sparked an interest that would stay with some of them for the rest of their lives!

Jeremy Salter

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Best of the Collections

Recently, staff at Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life have been undertaking research for our online series of talks based on our collections. This autumn we are giving two talks on the best of the museum's collections, and we've been investigating items on display and hidden away in our stores.

This article gives you a sneak preview of some of these, starting with an abstract from the bye-laws and ordinances of Tiverton, printed in 1767. This shows the fear of fire that the town had following so many devastating incidents in previous years:

- Every inhabitant who shall carry any fire, or burning coals, uncovered, in any street of the said town, or shall light, put, or keep, or cause or suffer to be lighted, put, or kept, any fire of fuel under his or her furnace, kettle, cauldron or other utensil whatsoever, to brew or wash in the night time, within his or her dwelling, or other house, after Nine o'clock in the evening, or before Two o'clock in the morning, shall forfeit 10s.
- Every dyer, clothier, baker or brewer, who shall use, and burn, in his trade, within the said Town, any kind of furse or browse; and every inhabitant who shall lay, put, place or suffer to remain, in the same room where any oven, furnace, or cauldron, shall be erected, any furse, browse, wood or other fuel whatsoever, except such only as there shall or may be immediate occasion to use or burn, shall forfeit any sum not exceeding 10s.

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- Every occupier of any dwelling house, or other house, wherein any chimney shall, at any time, be on fire, so as the flame thereof shall appear at the top of any such chimney, shall forfeit 6s. 8d.

The bye-laws specify fines for wandering pigs, geese or ducks that stray into the street or Church yard, and specified fines for fouling the town's water.

Another rare document in our collection is the articles of the Union Society of Tiverton for relieving each other in sickness and burying their dead. It was established in 1716. The copy we hold dates from 1855. The rules were strict about who wasn't allowed to join:

'No person to be admitted into this Society who is not a resident in the Town of Tiverton, and none above the age of 30 years, nor under 20 years, no person afflicted with the gout, or any other disorder; no apprentice, innkeeper, comber, weaver, husbandman, bailiff, or bailiff's follower, no brawler, nor any person whose weekly wages are not adequate to his clinical pay, or of dishonest character.'

Presumably the combers and weavers of the, by then, defunct wool trade were exempt as they had their own societies and clubs which were a cross between friendly societies and early trade union groups. The Union Society would pay of doctors' fees for broken bones as long as they were not the result of any unlawful exercise such as cudgel playing, wrestling or the like. Meetings provided each member with a pint of ale each from the expenses of the club. The society held an annual feast day on 8th September, and resident

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members who didn't attend the dinner were fined. Any members who committed fraud, embezzlement or with venereal disease would be for ever excluded from the society.

Sticking to archival documents, our engineer's notebook from the Exe Valley Railway is an incredible document; not least because it was discovered in Freemantle Australia in 1993. The notebook was compiled by W. J. Cotton, a civil engineer working on the construction of the Exe Valley Railway from Stoke Canon to Tiverton. This pocket book is full of written notes and illustrations to record his work. Such notebooks are a very rare. Mr Cotton's notebook contains information on bridges and culverts, but also some buildings along the route. The railway opened in 1885. Unfortunately, very little is known of Mr. Cotton, or how the book ended up in Australia. For those of you who are interested, some of the book has been reproduced in an excellent book by Amyas Crump on the museum's railway collection which is available from our shop.

To discover more gems in our collection please join us for our talks. 'Our Museum Favourites' takes place via zoom on Wednesday 29th September, 6-7pm and 'More Museum Favourites' on Wednesday 20th October. Tickets are available through the museum's website.

Update on the museum:

The museum has faced another challenging year in 2021 with the extended lockdown at the start of the year, and reduced income whilst we rebuild

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services and our capacity. We are delighted to welcome our new Learning & Participation Officer and start to welcome schools back into the museum. Unfortunately, we have had to launch an emergency roof appeal to help us repair failing coping stones on one gable on the listed building which was a former National School. Any local support is very much appreciated, either through visiting, joining our membership scheme or by donating to our roof appeal online at: <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/16950>.

Pippa Griffith

