# WIDECOMBE HISTORY GROUP

Registered Charity 114684

Newsletter Volume 40 – July 2019

## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee Members 2018/2019</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note from Kirsty</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Duchy of Cornwall</td>
<td>3 – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHG Holiday to Wales 2006</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My friend Fred</td>
<td>6 – 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM Dartmoor Prison</td>
<td>9 – 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Brave Men</td>
<td>14 – 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon Air Ambulance</td>
<td>17 – 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Beare – Liverton Industry</td>
<td>21 – 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony’s Picnic</td>
<td>24 – 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy Birthday</td>
<td>26 – 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary of Events 2018/2019</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclaimer</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Committee for 2019/2020

*David Ashman  
*Tim Whitten  
*Elaine Luxton  
*John Southcombe  
Sue Boustead  
*Terry French  
*Rose Mortimore  
*Helen Barrow

Kris Blood  
*Trustees of the Charity

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Note from Kirsty

Many thanks to Kris for keeping me up to date with the talks. Also many thanks to the Strollers for their suggestion for part of this Newsletter and especially to Mary Pascoe for organising a meeting which gave us lots of information. Guess who is 90 this month!

www.widecombe-in-the-moor.com  
email: history@widecombe-in-the-moor.com
The Duchy of Cornwall

Tom Stratton, Deputy Land Steward

Tom is the area manager for Devon, based at Princetown, and gave us an interesting insight into the workings of the Duchy of Cornwall.

The Duchy was created in 1337 by Edward III to provide an income for the heir to the throne, and their immediate family. The Duke of Cornwall is the 24th Duke to benefit from the Duchy, and has been the Duke for 50 years this year. The Duchy provides an income for himself, The Duke of Cambridge and the Duke of Sussex.

The capital assets of the Duchy are held in trust and cannot be accessed by the Duke. Any capital transaction greater than £500,000 must be approved by HM Treasury. The Duchy must be run along commercial lines by order of Government Act, and the Duchy must submit an annual report to the Treasury. The Duchy employs 150 employees in 6 national offices.

The largest landowner in Britain, the Duchy has land holdings of 53,000 hectares (approximately 130,000 acres) spread over many counties, but the largest county holding is in Devon.

The Duchy land is categorised thus:

- Rural: 48%
- Commercial: 24%
- Residential: 23%
- Development: 6%

The Commercial and Development land is run on a commercial basis and the profits used to aid the less profitable rural land, and the many initiatives that the Duchy supports.

In Devon, approximately a third of Dartmoor NP is owned by the Duchy; 3,000 acres around Cullompton; and foreshore and harbours in the South Hams area.
Most of the Dartmoor holdings have been held since the original 1337 formation, and cover approximately 68,000 acres, from Ivybridge in the South to Okehampton in the North, Mary Tavy to the West and Chagford/Postbridge to the East. There is a small amount of Duchy land in the Widecombe area. There are 60 houses, 4 pubs, 4 hotels, 21 farms, 11 small rural workshops (such as Powdermills pottery), 20,200 acres of common land and 50 other commercial properties.

Princeton is economically challenged. There is still an active primary school, but most of the community travel to Tavistock and the like. Recent work by the Duchy will hopefully lead to a more vibrant street scene by this summer, and there is a large capital building project creating a whiskey distillery complex just outside the town. It will be the highest distillery in the country. Apparently Princetown has an ideal climate for maturing whiskey.

Military training takes up 13,000 hectares (32,000 acres). This is down from 55,000 hectares during WWII. Willsworthy firing range is owned by the MoD, but Okehampton and Merrivale are leased from the Duchy; a new 20 year lease being signed in 2012. The Military pay rent, and also have a responsibility to care for the environmental aspects of the land. There is only light firing nowadays, and the area is used for basic training of all three forces.

The Duchy provides grants to a large number of initiatives. Some of those in Devon include

- Dartmoor Hill Farm Project
- Pony Moorland Scheme
- Moorskills Farming Project
- Dartmoor Mire Project - to aid the protection of the peat, reduce flooding off the moor, and provide cleaner water. Any grazers impacted by this receive compensation.
- Visit Dartmoor
• Dartmoor Woodfuel Cooperative - set up in 2009, this not-for-profit organisation now has £250,000 income
• Dartmoor Pony Action Group
• Dartmoor Commoners’ Council

The Duchy’s main archive is held in London, but the Princetown office has held onto its local archive, and although not open to the public, people can contact the office to see if the archive has any information on a specific subject.

![Image of a group of people in a field]

*Kris Blood

**WHG Holiday to Wales 2006**  
*Peter Carrett*

After the tea break Peter showed us a video he has compiled of the 2006 holiday to Wales. The places visited were
- St.Fagan’s National Museum
- Big Pit National Coal Museum
- Brecon Mountain Railway
- Cardiff Bay Barrage & boat trip
- Cardiff Castle
- Slimbridge Wetland Centre
My Friend Fred  
*John Lowe*

John gave us an interesting and affectionate talk on his friend Fred, Flight Lieutenant Frederick Hill DFC, RAFVR

Fred was born in 1921 into a mining family. He won a scholarship to the local grammar school, but his father took him out just before matriculation.

When war broke out Fred tried to volunteer for the air force, but was turned down as he was too young. He eventually joined up when he passed his 18th birthday.

He started his basic training at RAF Padgate. Finding out that some of the lads were leaving early because they were training as aircrew, he decided to also volunteer and thereby get out of basic training as early as possible.

Fred displayed a very focused, determined approach to his flying, not only learning how to fly, but also understanding the mechanics of his plane, something which helped him out of many a spot of bother during the war.

His first solo flight was on 15 October 1940, and once trained, he was assigned to Bomber Command. His first tour was as 2nd pilot flying in Hampdens for 49 Squadron out of Scampton.

On 7 Feb 1942 his plane was hit by flak, but Fred managed to nurse it back to base, for which he received a green endorsement. His first tour of 200 hours ended shortly after in March.

Fred married in May 1942, and then embarked on his 2nd tour flying Wellingtons. During this tour he was mentioned in dispatches.
He volunteered for a 3rd tour, training as a Pathfinder in Mosquitos for 692 Squadron, flying high and fast to drop the flares to light the path and target for the following bombers.

He received another mention in dispatches for a bombing raid on New Year’s Day 1945 during the Battle of the Bulge. Fred flew out a 4000lb bomb to successfully hit the mouth of a railway tunnel thus slowing down German supply routes.

The average life expectancy for a member of bomber command was 4 sorties. Over 58,000 crew were killed during the war, 44% of the men who flew in bomber command.

After the war Fred trained as a teacher.

John went on to mention a little know charity called the Not Forgotten Association. Set up by Martha Cunningham in 1920, this charity provides entertainment, outings and holidays for military veterans suffering disability or infirmity. It includes an annual garden party at Buckingham Palace, and a Christmas party at St. James Palace. John showed photographs of the Garden Party he and Fred attended in 2015 where Fred met Princess Anne.

More recently, John and Fred travelled up to the unveiling of the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln. The memorial spire is in height the same length as the span of a Lancaster bomber. The names of the men who died in combat are punched through the metallic walls with a small hole beside each name so that a poppy can be left in remembrance.

Fred’s stats:-
1900 hours of military flying on 7 different airplane types
32 operational sorties
55 pathfinder operations, 23 over Berlin
DFC with 2 mentioned in dispatches.
After coffee Peter Carrett showed a video of the Tractor parade at Widecombe Fair last year. Rodney Cruze provided a commentary, informing us of the various tractors and hay making equipment.
HM Prison, Dartmoor

Mrs Birdie Oakes-Richards, Governor

Mrs Oakes-Richards became Governor of Dartmoor Prison 4 years ago.

She started her talk with a history of the Prison from its construction in 1805-6, its first prisoners - French PoWs in 1809, followed by American PoWs in 1813 - up to its present day and possible closure.

The French PoWs were repatriated in 1814, and the Americans in 1815, although the French were soon back again following the Battle of Waterloo.

The prison closed in 1816, and didn't open again, this time as a penal prison, until 1850.

The Prison has 6 House blocks, down from the original 7. The chapel is derelict and closed off, requiring large sums of funds to repair. The Prison is a Category C for 640 male prisoners in single cells with sentences of 4 years to life.

There are work programs and also a focus on art and music. The Prison choir is a registered charity and puts on regular productions, this year’s being ‘Guys and Dolls’. The art focus helps improve self-esteem and reduce self-harm rates.

The Prison is marked for closure in 2020 - 2023, and has had its budget slashed by a third and its resettlement status removed. The latter appears to be a matter of regret for Mrs Oakes-Richards, as since there is a lack of resettlement places in the country, prisoners are leaving Dartmoor without the support that the resettlement programme provides.

Mrs Oakes-Richards writes a weekly blog on the happenings in the Prison, and this has become an interesting history of the past 4 years. Comparing it to past governors’ writings shows that although there
has been major reforms in penal procedures over the decades, the same complaints occur with each governor, namely
Staffing - never enough, never the right combination of trained staff,
Budget - never enough
Safety - always difficult to keep the inmates safe
Reoffending - always difficult to reduce
Refurbishment - costly, especially as the building is Listed
Weather - often difficult to receive supplies

Dartmoor Prison is so famous that it is said that an address of merely ‘Dartmoor Prison’ is sufficient for any letter to successfully reach the Prison from anywhere in the world. This has been proved by the staff sending postcards so addressed whilst on their annual holidays!

Questions after Mrs Oakes-Richards’ talk elicited the following additional information:-

There are gardens within the Prison walls where flowers and vegetables are grown

The Farm was given back to the Duchy as it was deemed too expensive to run, but Prince Charles is interested in the possibility of using it again for the Prison.

Drugs are a problem which increased after smoking was banned. Organised crime is fuelling the problem with drugs in the Prison having a street value 10x the value on the outside.

Reoffending across the country is 40 - 60 %. It should be noted that the average prisoner has already served 16 community sentences before finally seeing the inside of jail, so such a seemingly high rate is not so surprising.

70% of prisoners have some form of learning disability.
Main entrance to Dartmoor Prison

Over the wall and one of the buildings.
The entrance to the American graveyard. It is the same design as the main entrance and was paid for by the Daughters of the American Revolution, an organisation still going strong today and contributes to the upkeep of this graveyard and the church in Princetown.
After coffee David Ashman told the story of Samuel Hannaford.

Samuel’s father Roger farmed at Southcombe Farm, Widecombe until 1840 before moving to Higher Mead Farm, Ashburton, and then emigrating to USA in 1844 with his wife and children. It took the family 54 days to travel from New York to Cincinnati where they settled.

Samuel was Roger’s second eldest son born in Widecombe in 1835, but fell out with his father. He eventually became an architect and designed several prestigious buildings in Cincinnati, including St. George’s RC church in Corryville, Cincinnati Music Hall and Cincinnati City Hall. He was conducted into Cincinnati’s hall of fame, and was known for introducing European style architecture to Cincinnati.
Six Brave Men (men from Widecombe who did not come back)

*Peter Rennells with John Kimber and David Ashman*

**George Nosworthy:** Born at Venton on 14th January 19897 to parents James and Elizabeth Nosworthy, they had two other sons and three daughters. George attended Widecombe School and in 1911 left to take up labouring jobs.

In May 1914 he enlisted in Royal Marine Light infantry, and at the start of the War, in August 1914, was deployed in Antwerp to assist in the evacuation of the city. George was subsequently posted to the Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces and sent to Gallipoli.

On the famous landings on 25th April 1915 the Marines were landed on one of the less well defended beaches, but men from the Lancashire Regiment were landed on a beach which was ferociously defended, six Victoria Crosses were awarded to men in the first three hours of the battle e.g. “before breakfast”. One was awarded to a man from Plymouth.

George Nosworthy, the youngest man from Widecombe to die in the war, and the first from the village, died on 13th July 1915. He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial on Gallipoli.

**John Douglas Henderson Radcliffe:** Had one brother and two sisters. Born and raised in London, went to Eton and Oxford University. Family owned Bag Park in Widecombe. John joined the Kings Royal Rifle Corps as a Lieutenant in 1914, attained the rank of Captain and was fighting on the Western Front in France in 1915.

In July 1915 he was involved in the Battle of Hooge and as a result of enemy use of Flamethrowers was killed on the 30th July.

He had married Mary Bolitho from Exeter in 1912 and she lived in Widecombe for a number of years after John’s death.
**Henry Broome:** Born in Wandsworth and had 4 sisters and 2 brothers. He was butler to the Radcliffes at Paddington. He joined the Royal West Kent Regiment. In May 1916 he took part in the Battle of the Somme. Following this his regiment was moved back into a quiet area but on the 14th December this area was attacked by Germans and he was killed and two others were wounded by enemy machine gun.

The Radcliffe family paid for and put up a plaque in the Church in his memory.

**John Irish:** Born in 1895. He had one brother and seven sisters. He attended Widecombe School and then Dartmouth Grammar School. He worked at Cator before enlisting at Chatham in the Royal Marine Light Infantry in 1916.

He went to Calais and from there was posted to the front. Part of the support for the Canadians in taking of Passchendaele, near Ypres.

He died on 26th October during fighting aged 22. He has no known grave.

**John Harvey Endacott:** Born in 1894 at Throwleigh. He worked on his father’s farm in North Bovey. He married Dinah Mortimore. Apparently lived either at Isaford or Pitton. The farms had the same owners.

He applied to the Agricultural Tribunal as farmer and employee and appeared to gain exemption for 6 months. He gave his address as either Isaford or Pitton rather than his father’s farm. It is believed that Dinah must have lived at one of the farms.

He joined the Devonshire Regiment as they left India for Egypt but was then transferred to France. He was the last man from Widecombe to be killed. He was the longest serving as well. He was killed on 12th September 1918, just two months before the end of the war.
He is buried at Flesqueres Hill cemetery in France which is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves.

**William Robert Smerdon Nosworthy (Willie):** Born in 1890. He had 3 sisters who all remained Spinsters. They lived at Southway Farm. He went to the Agricultural Tribunal and was granted a 2 year delay before having to enlist. He married a girl from Ireland called Annie, nothing else is known about her.

He joined the Devonshire Regiment and went to Palestine and then Egypt. He was not involved in heavy fighting, just skirmishes with Turkish forces.

He died at Kantara, a rest zone, in January 1918 from dysentery. Hygiene was a big problem.
Devon Air Ambulance – Tony Cannon

Real People Saving Real Lives

It all started when young Kerry had a fatal accident on his bicycle. Kerry’s mother asked the question ‘What else could have been done to help Kerry?’ The answer was ‘speed’. That was in 1987. She started raising funds for a Devon Air Ambulance and in August 1992 it was launched. She decided to raise awareness by publicity and told the Bishop of Exeter that the helicopter would land on the Cathedral Green and it did.

To start with they had one helicopter operating in daylight hours 5 days a week. Then it was increased to the full 7 days. In 2005 a second helicopter was leased and in 2013 Devon Air Ambulance bought their own helicopter. As they wanted to be in charge of their own regulations they registered as an airline.

In 2016 they commenced night flying from 7pm to 2am. They realised that there was a need for this by the number of late evening call outs through the summer months. Had it been winter they would not have been able to fly.

They have 2 helicopters; 80 staff, including 23 paramedics and 8 pilots and 500 volunteers. They receive no income from central government
or county council. They are funded by the community of Devon, business and individuals. As it is locally funded this means that the money raised meets the requirements of Devon. Majority of income goes into the service.

Air Ambulance could be at Widecombe within 10 minutes flying time. Between the two helicopters they can cover the whole county in 15 minutes flying time. It takes a maximum of 4 minutes to get airborne from the callout. They work with Cornwall Air Ambulance (which was the first in the country) and Somerset and Dorset when needed.

Each helicopter carries 2 paramedics with enhanced training to work from a helicopter. Space is tight inside and one of the paramedics sits next to the pilot to help in spotting the area where they are needed. The second paramedic is already in radio contact with hospitals and services already at the incident. They carry other equipment that is not in land based ambulances. For example automatic CPR which can work for 40 minutes before needing to be recharged. It is important that the crew is physically fit to carry the equipment, not just to and from the helicopter but perhaps over gates and across fields. Ambrose is a teddy bear that is given to any child that has been airlifted from an incident. He is attached to the back of the pilot’s seat on every flight.

Patients are taken to the most appropriate hospital to meet their needs. Adult major trauma patients are taken to Derriford. There is no specialist burns unit closer than Swansea and that is where they go. 28 minutes by helicopter. Medical flights take precedence over all flights except those of HRH Queen Elizabeth II.

They can land in inaccessible places. If they land on a beach to collect a patient from a lifeboat the pilot always leaves the engine on. Nowadays in addition to landing on moors, beaches, etc. they are landing in towns.

They have skids rather than wheels which mean that they can land anywhere, except bogs! They learnt this the hard way when a pilot landed and discovered the helicopter was still going down.
Helicopter lasts 12 years as an air ambulance. This means that it still has a good second hand value. There is a new one on order for delivery in 2020, a H145. It will have a bigger interior to work in as most of the mechanics are on top.

In order to get a helicopter call out, it is necessary to go through the normal ambulance call centre. They receive 3,000 calls per day and ones for the helicopter get put through to the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service. This is staffed by DAA’s own dedicated staff who make the decisions as to whether or not an air or land ambulance should be used.

There were 1,009 call outs in 2018 and 27,000, plus families affected, since the service started.

In 2018 11% were children; 32% female; 68% male.

238 road traffic incidents: 70 motor bikes
112 sport: 62 equestrian, 12 rugby, 10 quad bikes, 8 water based
43 self-harm

Busiest time last year was between 12pm and 1pm and the busiest day was Fridays

In 2016 they started flying at night. This required extra staff and equipment, i.e. night vision goggles at £20,000 a pair and additional lighting on aircraft. There are over 100 Community Landing Sites in the county. Not a lot on Dartmoor and none on Exmoor.

In 2018 it cost £7.5m to keep the helicopters flying. Funding comes from Legacies 33%; Lottery 23%; shops 22%; communities 15%; donations 4%; other 3%

There was a wonderful video to finish with and a final message of if anyone knew anyone who had been cared for by the DAA could they let the DAA know. Patient confidentiality precludes them from ever
knowing how a patient got on once they were delivered to the hospital. Unless they come to visit the DAA the crew never knows.

Kirsty Peake
History of Industry in Liverton – Part One
H Beare Agricultural Engineers and Iron Founders

In 1844 Isambard Kingdom Brunel had completed his Great Western Railway from Paddington to Exeter (broad gauge) and the South Devon Railway Company was formed to extend the line from Exeter to Plymouth. The SDR decided to employ I.K. Brunel to survey the route.

Brunel planned a route down the valley from Exeter tunnelling through Haldon Hill, passing Bovey Tracey and coming very close to Liverton. At this time a member of the Beare Family in business in Meeth was looking for a site, served by the railway, to build a workshop close to their customers in South Devon and Cornwall.

Henry Beare purchased land at Liverton and employed Hayman’s the builders to construct his new works and workers cottages, Hayman’s cottages and Foundry cottages. A yard was constructed on the end of Hayman’s cottages to provide storage and workshops used by the pattern makers for the foundry.

Meanwhile the Directors of the SDR decided the Brunel inland route would be too expensive (hindsight is a wonderful thing) and instructed him to survey a route down the Exe along the coast and up the Teign to Newton Abbot and on down the valley to Plymouth. Brunel decided
that this route had some steep inclines beyond the capability of the current steam locomotives and recommended the new atmospheric system. This eventually failed and a return was made to steam traction.

This left the firm of H Beare Liverton out on a limb but production started making agricultural machinery and iron manhole frames and covers and water wheels. Examples of these still exist at Hedge Barton, Manaton, Bagtor Mill, Islington, Cockington Mill, Torquay, Coombe Farm, Moretonhampstead and Morwellham Quay.
Eventually in the 1870’s Henry Beare bought land at Lower St. Paul’s Road (now The Avenue) Newton Abbot for a new works where production started around 1878. Travelling down The Avenue from Balls Corner, after rounding the bend and crossing The Lemon, houses on the left were Bear’s workers’ houses. A little way up on the left there is an arch through the houses and this was the entry to the works.

It is not clear when the foundry work ceased but the firm existed in Newton Abbot until the 1960’s when they moved to Rixey Park on the Kingsteignton to Chudleigh road. They were eventually taken over by Mason and King who still exist today.

*Peter Carrett and photographs from Stuart Beare (Pumpkin Farmer)*
Anthony’s Picnic

12 Hardy Souls arrived at Bonehill on Saturday evening at 5.30pm to remember Anthony and enjoy a picnic and camaraderie. The weather was blustery, the wind had a chill but the sun did shine.

Rugs were worn, down jackets donned, hoods were up. Salad was not advised for the picnic as most blew away. Peter and Aileen’s supply of tea was much appreciated by all.

Despite all this we had a laugh and a joke. Wendy told us all about the book she has written with the help of Sue Viccars from Dartmoor Magazine. We are all looking forward to the launch at Widecombe Fair.
Those eagle eyed amongst you will only count 11 here. Tim Whitten had to leave early as his wife, Cleo, had had a fall. We hope she has recovered.
Happy 90th Birthday
Born in Folkstone, Kent in July 1929. Peter’s parents were Frank and Elisabeth Rennells. He had to cope with three older sisters, Gladys, Phyllis and Doris. They all lived at 37 King Street, Canterbury, just around the corner from the Cathedral. Frank had an administrative job with South Eastern Railways. Elisabeth had left school at the age of 14 and went into service as a kitchen maid and progressed to the rank of Cook.

Frank joined the Royal Engineers at the start of WW1 and after officer training was promoted to Captain before fighting on the front line and subjected to mustard gas attacks.

After a confinement at the military hospital he was re-employed by SE Railways at Canterbury but never recovered from his injuries. He died when Peter was just 5 months old. His mother took in laundry work and Peter helped her with this.

His mother worked hard to bring him up on a meagre income in poverty. His first recollection of holidays was charabang day trips to Herne Bay and Whitstable. There were Sunday
School outings to Herne Bay once a year. He enjoyed throwing pebbles into the sea and a picnic tea. He joined in with the hymn singing as the local Salvation Army played on the band stand.

He went hop picking and joined other local families as they travelled by lorry to Bekesbourne Hop field. Here they all slept in sacks under casually constructed lean-to’s. There were no toilets and nowhere to wash. Everyone was paid by the bin load and not by the hour. Elisabeth would always bring back a length of hop bine to hang in the kitchen.

Peter attended local Sunday School and sang in the Church choir.

In late 1939 Peter’s sister Doris had moved out of Canterbury with her baby and had found a job as a live in housekeeper to two ladies in Ashprington. She kept writing to her mother to encourage her to leave ‘bomb alley’ and evacuate herself and Peter to Devon.

They finally made the 26 hour train journey to Totnes. They lived first with the Hutton family and then moved on to Avenue Cottage which was part of the Sharpham Estate. Elisabeth became housekeeper to Mrs Kirk at Ashprington House and there they lived until 1945.

He spent many happy years growing up in the community, exploring and making friends with David and Terry Phipps. He
attended Totnes School. He enjoyed art and won an art competition. He had to design a poster for War Savings. After looking at 'Flight' magazines he drew a plane going down in smoke with the crew descending by parachute with German soldiers waiting. The wording 'They gave their all, how much will you give? Support National Savings today' got him the prize.

He joined the Ashprington Platoon, South Hams Army Cadet Force (12 members) and had twice weekly parades.

At Totnes school, Peter was keen on sport and remembers the gymnasium equipment. He was in the running team and won an inter school tournament.

He had many unpaid jobs on the farm from potato lifting, cleaning stables, milking parlours, herding cows to feeding chickens. He was fascinated by the milk separator machine and the production of cream.

In amongst all this there were lots of escapades around the village and farm.

He left school at the age of 14 years and started work. There was a short spell at Baldwins Garage in Station Road. He was in charge of sweeping and cleaning the workshop, dusting the cars for sale and serving petrol. From there he joined F J Reeves in Totnes (Timber Merchants) and had several jobs. Broom pushing, sawdust collecting for fuelling
stoves in the workshop, puncture repairing a vast array of vehicles from wood trolleys, yard cranes to timber lorries.

In Peter's words 'these were great days'. Then his mother, Elisabeth, died in 1945 when Peter was 16.

Peter left Asphrington and returned to Canterbury and Kings Street to live with his sister Gladys and her husband Cyril.

Cyril took him to auctions and furniture sales and he helped carry any purchases that Cyril made. They normally ended up in the nearest pub! From there he moved to Invicta Motors, the biggest Ford agency for cars, trucks and tractors. He worked in the tractor division removing damaged cleats and replacing them (tyre maintenance).

At the age of 17½ in 1946 he joined the Royal Army Service Corps. They were responsible for moving the fighting regiments all over the world. He signed up for 5 years with the regular army.

In 1952 Peter met Tessa who was training to be a Nurse at Canterbury Hospital. They were married in 1955 and lived in Kings Street. They had 4 children, Sue, Jan, Keith and Adele. They left Canterbury in 1966 and moved to Plymouth.
This had been a long held dream for Peter to return to the West Country. He was working for Briggs Tyre Service. Still working for them, they moved to Marldon in 1968 and covered Paignton and Preston. He immersed himself in the community becoming involved in the Parish council, local football and cricket teams and the PTA.
After a time he went to work for South West Water in Paignton. His last job was as the South West Representative of Baines Rubber of Tunbridge Wells as a design engineer/sales representative.

Sport is a big part of Peter’s life. He played football for the army team when based in Edinburgh. In Kent he played for a team in Canterbury and later on he was involved in running the successful Marldon Spurs team of the mid to late 70’s and early 80’s. He managed the youth team.

He played cricket in Kent (Biddenden) and helped set up the Marldon Cricket Club in the 1980’s and was involved as a player and official for many years, indeed carried on playing into his seventies.

After a number of years living in Mid Devon with Tessa’s mum and sister, Peter, Tess and her sister Sheila moved to Widecombe in 1993. Peter retired to enjoy village life in the moors he adored as he loved walking and exploring and the moors.

Never one to be idle, though, Peter had a retirement job with the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) team, distributing leaflets to Information Centres, village shops and cafes in the South Hams. He became associated with the Totnes School of English, accompanying students on trips to areas and places of interest. He passed on his rich knowledge of the area, including its heritage, local trades, crafts and wildlife attractions in his own humorous and light-hearted way.
Throughout his life Peter has had a passion for drawing and painting. From that early arts award at school, he has always found enjoyment and relaxation through sketching and painting, particularly using oils for his wild Dartmoor or Cornish mining landscapes, two of his favourite subject matters. At various times Peter has also had a go at etching, marquetry and other creative forms, and as his intricate detailed pencil or ink drawings of boats and buildings demonstrate, he has a great eye for detail.

Sadly Tess, his wife of 50 years, died in 2006.

Peter met Miho and they married in 2009. Miho and her sons, Takumi and Kei, have become a very important and cherished part of his life. Together they have built a very successful AirBNB business where they welcome visitors and friends from around the world.
Peter joined the Widecombe History Group at its conception and was the voice that persisted and finally got North Hall excavations started. For this in 2013 he was awarded First Prize in the Edward Morshead Award.

Having set the wheels in motion for North Hall, Peter then set his sights on his next project – WW1 Widecombe Book of Remembrance. Like all his projects, Peter became totally involved in this and, with the help of John Kimber and David Ashman, started with a blank sheet of paper.
We now have 51 names in the Book of Remembrance. Anthony Beard and Peter started the research in 2013 and ended in November 2018.

That is a brief view of Peter’s story so far. Peter is not one to rest on his laurels and we all look forward to the next chapters in his life.

Happy 90th Birthday, Peter
Thank you for being you.
Diary of Events 2018/2019

2019

1st May       AGM & talk by Peter Rennells on WW1
5th June      Devon Air Ambulance / Louise Newbery
15th June     Anthony’s Picnic/Bonehill, Widecombe at 5.30
22nd June     Self drive visit to South Zeal & Guided walk & Finch Foundry
27th June     2nd Ashburton History Walk/Brian Lewis
3rd July      A love Letter to Dartmoor in 365 Photos/Jo Bradford
25th July     Self drive visit to John & Audrey Whetman Deer Park Farm, Chudleigh/hay meadows, flowers, invertebrates
7th August    A History of Kelly Mines, Lustleigh/Colin Vosper
18th August   Self drive visit to Kelly Mines, Lustleigh
4th September Ancient Tracks/Michale Bennie
23rd Sept.    Self drive visit to the Italian Gardens, Ipplepen
2nd October   Stover Canal/Roger Harding
5th October   Self drive visit to the Stover Canal/John Ellis
6th November  Secret Wildlife on Dartmoor/Paul Rendell
4th December  Free for Discussion

2020

8th January  Christmas Party & Photo Quiz/Robert Hesketh
5th February Dartmoor’s Factory Floor/Rob Steemson
4th March    Introduction to Dartmoor’s Geology/Josephine Collingwood
1st April    Dartmoor Preservation Society
6th May      AGM/Shallowford/Julie McDade
3rd June     Confessions of Guide Book Writer/Sue Viccars
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