

## ***Musbury Heritage – News and Newspaper Cuttings***

### **News from Musbury Heritage**

The summer months tend to be quieter for Musbury Heritage, but now with winter approaching, I hope to be more productive. However, some progress has been made over the past months, including the following: -

I added a new section under the 'Media' heading of the Musbury Heritage website. This is called 'Maps of Musbury' and contains links to images and websites featuring old maps showing our village. Some are very detailed and give a great insight into old Musbury. Those of you who were at my Musbury Community Club (MCC) talk recently will have seen a brief tour, but if anyone would like help viewing these just let me know.

Preparing my talk about setting up the website made me look at it from a user's point of view. Whilst it is a good online store for research carried out so far, it lacks the personal touch of a display or room where people can meet and view the items. Physical items also have to be kept somewhere. Finding somewhere for this purpose seems a long way off. A pdf of the talk is available on the website, just search for 'MCC' on the Home Page.

Interestingly we had three interlopers from Kilmington's history group at my talk. They have progressed to the extent that they have a committee of 7 residents actively working on preserving their history, but they do not have a website yet. Kilmington may be double our population, but this indicates we could do better with our village history, especially as we have many people with a great deal of knowledge and expertise.

Would you be interested in joining me as a small casual group, in say The Hind, to discuss our village history? I could start the ball rolling with some topics, but I'm sure we'd have plenty to discuss over an hour or two. Villagers who are long-standing residents will be particularly welcome, as they will bring knowledge that I don't have. Though having an enthusiasm for Musbury's past will be the most essential asset!

### **Newspaper Cuttings**

During lockdown I indexed many resources such as census returns, trade directories, tithe apportionments, parish registers, etc., but, being essentially lists, none of these was quite as interesting as newspaper cuttings. I managed to index about 2000 of these and although many were simple announcements, there were also some fascinating articles. In time I hope to track down and index more of these, but it is a slow task of downloading relevant pages and writing a brief synopsis including names, places, etc. to enable searching at a later date.

To provide a flavour of what can be found I show below a few results from these cuttings.

**'Musbury Cricket'** are not two words that often spring to mind, but recent discoveries have made me put 2 and 2 together and probably make 5...

I have a couple of newspaper cuttings that refer to Musbury cricket teams. In 1852 a Colyton side 'confessed themselves well beaten by the M.C.C.' in a field in Musbury owned by Mr Jago Gillett of Knight's Farm. In 1893 a Musbury team was at home against Mr J. G. H. Hayman's Axminster XI, a match that somehow "resulted in a draw in favour of the visitors" according to the newspaper report!

It was therefore interesting when the shield pictured was recently discovered by resident, Kevin Taylor at Musbury School.



You will see it does not appear to be a very professional trophy, nor does it have any engraved winners, indeed it is blank apart from the words shown. It is about 20cm tall, which is about 8" to you and me!

It may bear no relation to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century matches and may be more relevant to the school.

Can anyone tell us more about Musbury Cricket?

## **How times change!**

Various newspapers show that Musbury had a serious water supply problem in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A pump for fresh water had been installed in 1897 outside Monmouth House (the Jubilee pump that is still in there), but from 1914 there were major concerns about the supply and also the reserves for use in a drought.

Well, rather like today, this matter dragged on, but by early 1922 a 'Water Committee' had been formed following a parish meeting. This committee met several times and by October 1922 there was a plan to install a 25,000-gallon reservoir, which would provide cover for up to 40 days. The total cost would be £200 (about £9000 today), but only £140 had been raised. This meant organising new funding events to raise the balance due.

One of these was a fancy dress dance held in the schoolroom. Nothing unusual there it seems, but as an indication of how attitudes change over time, this is quite interesting. First place in the ladies' class was a farmer's daughter, Dorothy Miller, whose winning costume I cannot write here for obvious reasons, but think Robertson's Jam. Second was the Rector's daughter, Barbara Cockerton, who came dressed as a Zulu. Whether she went the whole hog and shocked the rest of the gathering was not mentioned in the article, but as she only came second, it seems doubtful! A young lady dressed as carrots (yes plural!) came third, which makes you wonder if she got this event mixed up with the Musbury Show.

As for the men, first prize went to a nurse, at a time when a male nurse would have been a real novelty (legal recognition of male nurses was only introduced in 1919). Second prize was an Indian Chief, a subject that has recently courted such controversy with Exeter Rugby

Club. Rather boringly, third place went to the chairman of the Water Committee, Major Soper of South Cross House, who came dressed as a chef. Was the outfit borrowed from a member of his staff at the last minute?..

## **Painting of Church and School**

According to the Western Times of 24 January, 1913 – “Mr R St. John Matthews of Seaton and Richmond presented to the Rector (Rev. T Edwards) and the churchwardens of Musbury a valuable oil painting of the church, school and school-house in a heavy gilt frame, to be used by them in the best way they think fit.”

Does anyone know what became of this painting? I wonder what they mean by ‘valuable’? Is there a fortune getting dusty in someone’s loft? It seems unlikely, but the church could do with the funds!

Newspaper archives provide a rich source of information about Musbury’s history and there are now more available to index. They provide background details that cannot be learned from other archives in list form, which can only provide names, dates, etc. No doubt I will be publishing more stories from old newspapers in future issues.

*Martin Minter / Musbury Heritage / [martin@musburyheritage.co.uk](mailto:martin@musburyheritage.co.uk) / 553325*

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