

Musbury Heritage – News & More

Discussion Group

In the last Parish News, I announced my intention to try regular meetings to discuss Musbury's history. My rather uninspired name for these was the 'Musbury Heritage Discussion Group'.

The first date has been set for Saturday, 13 April 2024. It will be held in the small village hall starting at 10:30 am and will be expected to last a couple of hours. Please come along and join in the discussion, which I will start by talking about some of my current projects. You do not have to bring anything, but if you have something you would like to discuss, please do. Don't feel you will be badgered into volunteering, as I will just value the knowledge and opinions of Musbury residents past or present. There will be posters, etc. around the village nearer the time to publicise the event. All are welcome. I would particularly appreciate seeing some of our longer-standing residents there, so we can benefit from their memories of Musbury's past, but you are just as welcome if you are new to the village.



Dead Horse Lane and others

I am hardly a lover of social media, but occasionally a discussion does produce something of interest. Recently a Facebook user enquired about the infirmary that shows on old maps where Spillers Farm is today (on the right along Seaton Road as you drive out of the village). I and others pointed out this was a Veterinary Infirmary and had nothing to do with the treatment of people. This prompted another comment that as Dead Horse Lane ended just behind this infirmary, it may have something to do with its unusual name. Well, some of you may recall an article I wrote about a controversial vet named David Rawle, who operated out of this Veterinary Infirmary from about 1871. Among his many visits to the legal courts, there were prosecutions for ill-treating horses and his practice of failing to bury the carcasses of cows and horses. Whether it was for metaphorically 'flogging a dead horse' or perhaps leaving a dead horse at the back of his smallholding, he likely gave the lane its name. [Search 'vet' on the home page of www.musburyheritage.co.uk for the story about David Rawle]

This prompted me to wonder about other unusual names in Musbury. A long-standing local has told me about 'Gooseberry Lane', another dead-end that you will find running off Maidenhayne Lane. Presumably, it was somewhere people went to pick fruit off bushes, though it is tempting to think it might be something to do with the expression 'to play gooseberry'. It is a quiet dead-end lane with hedgerows on either side where perhaps an innocent farmhand may have stumbled upon an amorous couple? Will we ever know?

Does anyone know of another unusually named lane or road in Musbury? I would be pleased to hear a story or investigate a possible reason behind a name.

The Brook

Have you ever wondered where the brook that runs down through the village disappears to under The Street? We know it meanders through Musbury Barton, squeezes between the Old Post House and Yew Tree Cottage, appears again between Crossways and May Cottage, but only reappears on the other side of the A358.

The route shown opposite is from the Tithe Apportionments map of c.1839. The blue shows the line of the brook and where the colour is lighter it has gone underground.

Did you know this was an open sewer in Fore Street (now The Street) until about 1870? Tenders were requested for arching over 240 feet of the brook in March 1870, so this is presumed to have been completed within a couple of years of then. How long the brook continued to be used as a sewer is not known. There were outbreaks of Typhus Fever in the village in the 1880s, which was resolved by laying a new sewer and flushing out parts of the old system. Reports of sewage problems continued in the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, it was only in 1944 that connecting Musbury to the main sewage system was being considered.

This is not the most pleasant of subjects but is important when considering the history of the health of the people of Musbury. Hopefully, it will be possible to complete a more comprehensive account of the water supply and drainage issues of the village in due course, but more research will be needed.



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