

Armchair Adventurers

Have been exploring the Tamar Valley and Main Island Orkney the last few months. A few snippets..

The Tamar Valley

Legend has it that the river Tamar was created when a nymph called Tamara was disowned by her father for playing with the giants Taw and Tavy. She cried so much that she turned into a river and flowed into the sea, the giants were so upset they decided to join her. Tavy succeed but Taw was deceived by a witch who sent him in the wrong direction to flow to the north coast for ever away from Tamara.

The river features narrow passes with steep sides and gentle meanderings through wooded areas and often breathtaking views.



Calstock Roman fort

A 1st century Roman fort dated to 50AD was found accidentally by a team from Exeter University whilst investigating a medieval silver mine. They were working on a spur above the river Tamar near to St Andrews church in the parish of Calstock. It is only the third Roman fort to have been found in Cornwall.

Calstock Viaduct



Calstock is dominated by the magnificent railway viaduct which was built between 1904 and 1907 by John Lang of Liskeard. Constructed from 11,148 concrete blocks it is the largest viaduct to built in such a way in Britain.

Market Gardening

Apart from copper, the Tamar Valley was known for cherry and apple orchards, and had the earliest strawberries in the country. In the change to market gardening, James Lawry, a St Domenic man, whilst on a visit to Crystal Palace in London in 1862 heard of 'Covent Garden market', on visiting it he discovered their earliest strawberries arrived in June, while back in the Tamar Valley their crop was much earlier. Upon learning the difference in price for Strawberries in London as opposed to Devon, there seemed little to lose. On returning home, he requested his father to send strawberries to Covent Garden, but these were picked wet and rotted. Undeterred, he went on to make punnets and eventually supplied the earliest 'out of door' fruit in Britain.



Daffodils

The Double White was particularly popular due to the need of a white flower in churches for Whit Sunday and for funerals. Due to their late flowering period and shortage of other white flowers at that time of year, their intense perfume and long survival as a cut flower were extremely popular. Sadly the industry has changed and the flower seems to be fading into oblivion.



We found much more including a seated burial, Anne Glanvill, the heroine of the Tamar, brick, copper, lead industry, bridges and tunnels, navigation canals, battles and barges.

Main Island Orkney

The Orkney Islands are an archipelago in the Northern Isles of Scotland, situated off the north coast of Great Britain. The people are known as Orcadians; they speak a distinctive dialect of the Scots language and have a rich body of folklore. Orkney contains some of

the oldest and best-preserved Neolithic sites in Europe; the "Heart of Neolithic Orkney" is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Orkney's geology is quite breathtaking, and thanks to millennia of wild weather and seas crashing ashore, much of it can be found in plain sight for even the layman to enjoy. About 100,000 years ago, the islands were covered by ice from the Scandinavian ice cap, extending across the floor of the North Sea.

Maeshowe is a Neolithic chambered cairn and passage grave, built around 2800 BC, sited to the south east of Loch Harray. A mound encases the tomb which is 35m (115ft) wide and 7.3m (24ft) in height. Within the mound is a complex of passages and chambers built of carefully crafted flagstones aligned so that the rear wall of the central chamber is illuminated on the winter solstice.



The Ring of Brodgar

Sitting in a natural amphitheatre the Ring of Brodgar Stone Circle and Henge is an enormous ceremonial site dating back to the 3rd millennium BC. It comprises a massive stone circle, originally consisting of 60 stones of which 36 survive, plus at least 13 prehistoric burial mounds and a large rock-cut ditch surrounding the stone circle. Scottish geologist Hugh Miller, visiting in 1846, wrote that the stones 'look like an assemblage of ancient druids, mysteriously stern and invincibly silent and shaggy'.



This is but a small taste of what we have discovered so far. There are palaces and pirates, pottery and Viking brooches, evil Stewart landlords and the effect of an unpaid marriage dowry on the ownership of the Islands. A joining of crowns but not of government and debts following colonial aspirations in the Americas.

If you would like to know more please contact us via the **CONTACT** page on the **Honiton u3a website:** <https://u3asites.rg.uk/honiton>