TIVERTON CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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View of the Tower and Surrounding Scenery from Exe Bridge, Tiverton, drawn by Henry Haseler. From Picturesque Views on the River Exe*, Tiverton, 1819.*

Tiverton Civic Society Newsletter

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Committee Members and Members with Special Responsibilities

Janet Rendle	President
Jeremy Salter	Chairman and Treasurer
Dennis Knowles	Vice Chairman
Fern Clarke	Hon. Secretary & Newsletter Editor
Randall Thane	Membership Secretary
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Anne Davies	Heritage Open Days, Walks and Refreshments
Mike Sanderson	Planning; link to CPRE

Mary Cross, Frank Connock, John Rendle, Tara Fraser

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Our thanks to Fax and Files for printing this newsletter.

Our thanks to Peter Maunder for the picture on our title page.

Chairman's Introduction

In a recent poll published online in February 2024 by the website ILiveHere, it is stated that 'Tiverton has been found to be the fifth most depressing town to live in Britain despite being near some of the country's most beautiful landscapes …. Data shows that Tiverton is among the top five most dangerous small towns in Devon, and ranks among the top 20 most dangerous overall out of Devon's 402 towns, villages, and cities …. Its crime rate soars above the county's average, coming in at 10 percent higher than anywhere else in the region'. This data is of doubtful provenance. No crime rates for the town have been available since November 2022 when Devon & Cornwall Police stopped sending data to the open-source data.police.uk service!

One wonders about the point of such surveys. No detailed analysis has been carried out for Tiverton, or for any of the other towns listed. The 'poll' is based entirely upon members' online opinions and votes, and most of the comments shown have been randomly trawled from 'online forums'. It is surprising that reputable newspapers, including *The Sun*, *Daily Express* and *Mirror* give coverage to an inadequate and unrepresentative poll such as this!

As a prospective parliamentary candidate for Tiverton and Minehead states 'Any exercise such as this has no value at all; it merely allows a section of the population with nothing more useful to do with their time to voice their own frustrations.' It is significant that Falmouth, voted the most depressing town in Britain in this survey, was, on 15th March, selected by the *Sunday Times* to be one of the most attractive places to live in the United Kingdom! 'While the scale may be more modest and the weather less reliable, Falmouth is "the closest thing this country has to the kind of city-by-the sea lifestyle of California or Barcelona".'

Of much greater interest and value is the research entitled **'**England's Cultural Heritage Boosts Life Satisfaction', which was published on 24th March by Historic England, and which shows nationally a modest but noteworthy

connection between our cultural heritage and personal wellbeing. The research, which was based on the experiences of 24,823 people revealed a link to happiness: individuals residing close to dense cultural heritage areas reporting higher levels of life satisfaction. It also stressed the role of Grade II listed buildings, which are more common and visible heritage assets at a local level, and are identified as primary drivers of increased life satisfaction.

This research suggests that the existence and abundance of local heritage, particularly those assets that are more integrated into our daily lives, plays a significant role in enhancing wellbeing. It states that 'by understanding and valuing the role of cultural heritage in our lives, we are empowered as a society that acknowledges and benefits from the wide array of advantages offered by our historical past. It is not just about a visit to a medieval castle or a stroll through a historic garden; it is about the everyday encounters with our heritage that serve as pathways to wellbeing. Heritage assets are essential components of our collective wellbeing.'

Historic England has often championed Tiverton. In 2018, they nominated the Tiverton Conservation Area, which covers the town centre and much of West Exe, as one of Six Amazing Conservation Areas in England, confirming that the town has one of the country's finest conservation areas, albeit classified as 'Heritage at Risk, Very Bad and Deteriorating'. Tiverton has 291 listed buildings and structures, most of which are rated Grade 2. There are many more in the surrounding rural areas, with a total of over 2,500 in Mid Devon.

Tiverton certainly has its problems, including petty crime and vandalism, homelessness, a shortage of social and affordable housing, and an absence of A-Level teaching in the state sector. It has many assets and is a vibrant place in which most of its citizens are proud to live. There are several outstanding attractions, the town has a remarkable history, and there is a magnificent built heritage. Tiverton Civic Society cares for the beauty, history and character of Tiverton and its surroundings. We aim to protect and preserve the good things we all enjoy. Long may we continue to do so! *J. Salter*

From Bridge Street to Bond Street: the remarkable career of John Chaplin of Tiverton (1783 – 1872)

Picturesque Views on the River Exe, perhaps the most appealing and attractive book ever produced in Tiverton, came out in 1819, printed by Theodore Parkhouse of Bampton Street. The driving force behind the publication, John Chaplin, is sadly an entirely forgotten figure. In my attempt to uncover some of Chaplin's life story, I have encountered confusion and contradiction along the way which has only served to bury his considerable achievements all the deeper. Nevertheless, one's impression of the man is that from first to last he was driven by an almost unbounded ambition, which seems to underpin the publication of *Picturesque Views* as well as all his other endeavours, some of which I have attempted to set out in the following article.

Chaplin was born in Tiverton on 17 January 1783, the second child of Joseph and Mary Chaplin, neé Quick. His father was the landlord of the White Ball inn on Bridge Street, a respectable tradesman but by no means wealthy enough to send his son to Blundell's school. We know nothing of John's education – though the best he could have hoped for was to attend Chilcott's School in St Peter Street. If so, he probably left at the age of 14 and entered into an apprenticeship as an upholsterer.

In 1810, at the age of 23, Chaplin married Mary Ann Worthy, daughter of the late Thomas Worthy, an Exeter fuller. Within a year or so he had opened a shop right in the centre of town at what is now 39 Fore Street (Superdrug), then recently converted from a private house into two shops. Chaplin took the one next door to the Lewis mansion (Argos). To mark his new enterprise, he commissioned a trade card which proudly proclaims: "*J Chaplin, cabinet maker and upholsterer, paper hanger and carpet warehouse, opposite the Three Tuns, Tiverton*".

In the first few decades of the nineteenth century, Tiverton was a thriving market town, a place which attracted respectable incomers to some of the

medium to large residences which were situated in and around the town, many of which have long since gone. Although the woollen cloth trade which had sustained the bulk of the population for centuries was slowly dying, this had little impact on the upper echelons of society who would have formed the prospective customer base for Chaplin as a retailer of home furnishings.

Trade card of John Chaplin, c1815. University of Leeds Library

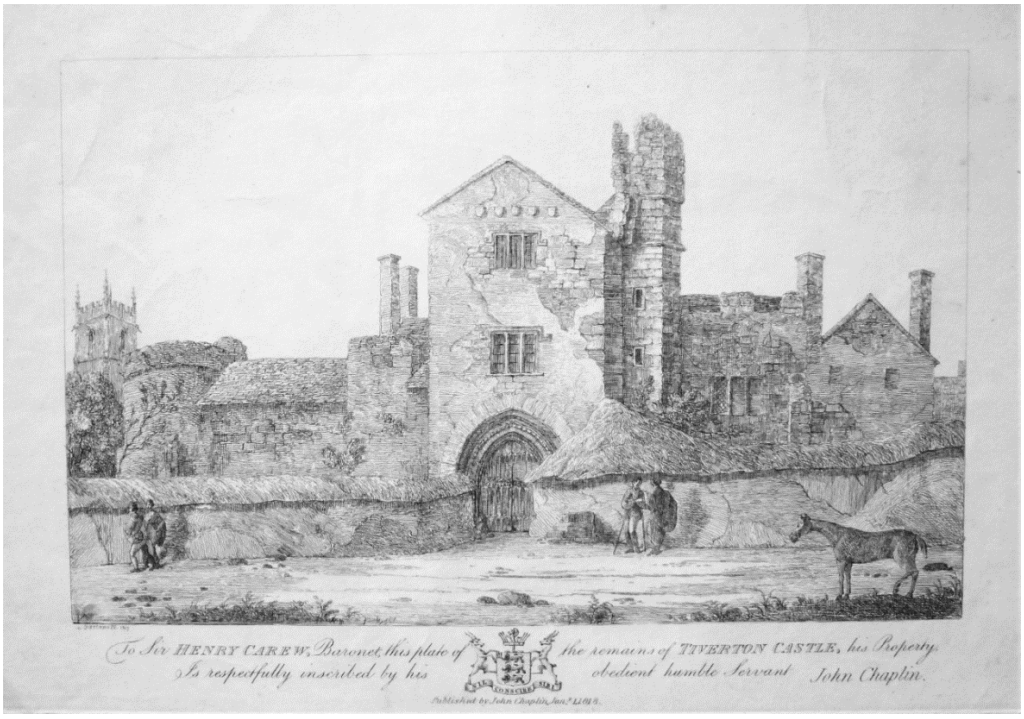
Opposite Chaplin's shop stood the Three Tuns, Tiverton's premier hotel. In about 1818, one William Reeves arrived from Ilfracombe to join Richard Hawkes, the proprietor, in business. Reeves, a vintner, opened a "coffee room", no doubt wishing to attract the custom of the town's wealthiest inhabitants. These same people were Chaplin's prospective customers, and it wasn't long before the two men teamed up in a bold and ambitious plan to attract even more wealthy people to the town.

The enormous mansion house which had been built in the 1780s by Tiverton's leading cloth merchant Benjamin Dickinson (located on the site of the present Greenslade Taylor Hunt and Boots the Chemist, No. 5-9 Fore Street) was unoccupied. Dickinson died in 1806 followed by his son John in 1812. Dickinson's grandson chose to live at the family's other residence, Knightshayes, leaving the townhouse vacant. Chaplin and Reeves planned to convert the building into an hotel (presumably as an up-market extension to the Three Tuns) and agreed with Dickinson in 1818 to take an option to buy the freehold of the building for £4,500.

The publication of Chaplin's *Picturesque Views on the River Exe* in 1819 was clearly part of their strategy to attract well-heeled visitors into the proposed

hotel. In the text Chaplin emphasised Tiverton's attractions. Trout abound in the Rivers Exe and Lowman - "*the author has known one hundred and thirty fish taken by the fly in one day*". The town "*possesses a billiard room and a fine bowling green.*" Naturally he gives his partner some publicity too - "*Reeves's Coffee Room is well regulated and most respectably supported.*" For lovers of fine art, he states that "*B. Dickinson Esq possesses several paintings of considerable merit*" and proceeds to list pictures by Giorgione, Blanchard, Titian, Reubens, Cuyp, Breughel and others. The volume also includes detailed descriptions of St Peter's Church and the Castle to guide the visitor, as well as describing the picturesque scenery of the Exe valley and the delights in store for those who choose to embark on an excursion to Bickleigh or to Oakford. The volume is beautifully adorned with seven hand-coloured plates, commissioned from Henry Haseler (see front cover), Lancelot Elford Reed and John Baverstock Knight, drawing masters based in Sidmouth, Tiverton and Blandford in Dorset respectively.

In addition, Chaplin commissioned a pair of uncoloured engravings of Tiverton, the Castle and the Church, which were for sale separately.

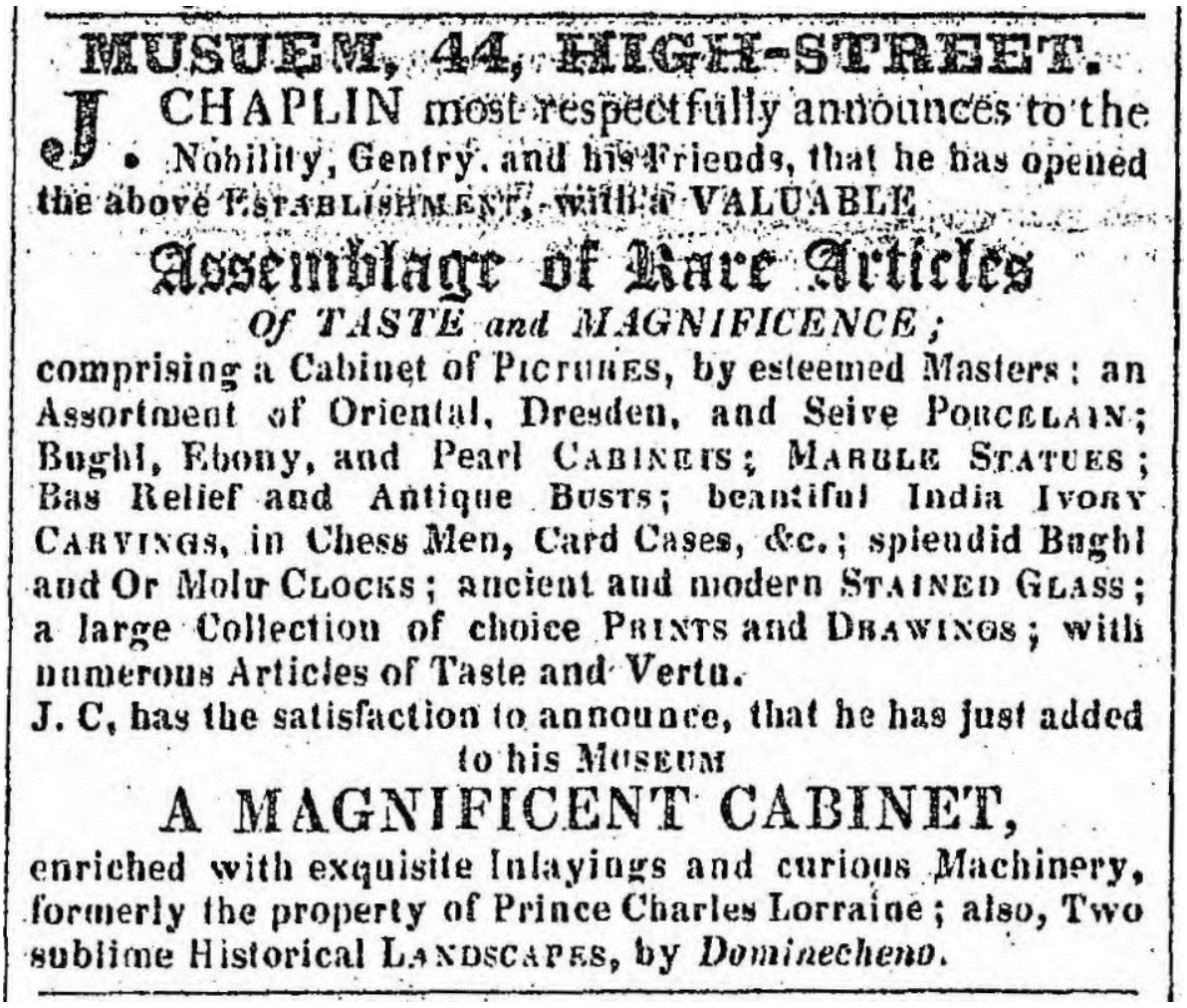


The Remains of Tiverton Castle, published by John Chaplin, 1818.

In spite of what is claimed on his trade card, it is unlikely that Chaplin was a practical cabinet maker. His shop in Fore Street was almost certainly just a retail outlet for quality home furnishings and decorations, and his knowledge of pictures suggests that he already had a considerable interest in fine art, which would become the focus of his business in time. This interest may have sprung from his being able to study Dickinson's art collection on which he lavished so much detail in *Picturesque Views*. The pictures themselves may have originally been acquired from Holland by Oliver Peard, Dickinson's ancestor who had been Tiverton's leading mid-eighteenth-century cloth merchant. Peard's principal customer in Amsterdam, Abraham van Broyel, had been an avid art collector. The idea of importing Dutch and Flemish pictures, which would become the focus of Chaplin's later career, may well have been inspired by what he had seen and learnt in Tiverton.

The hotel and visitor project proved a disappointment and we are told by William Harding (Vol. 1, page 227) that 'the speculation was abandoned'. For those who could afford to travel, the Continent was now re-open to visitors after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and Tiverton was simply not attractive enough to bring in large numbers of tourists. Undeterred, Chaplin decided to relocate to where the customers were, and where better than his wife's home town of Exeter? In about 1820, the Chaplin family made the move. By now he had three young children to support, two daughters, Ellen and Frances and a son, John. He set himself up as an auctioneer, dealing in fine art and antiques, based out of offices at 3 Castle Street. His advertisements in the *Exeter Flying Post*, show that he sold a whole range of second-hand goods, libraries of books, china and glass, jewellery, fancy goods and household furniture. These auctions were conducted either on the premises of the vendor, or in hired function rooms in hotels or inns in the city.

Selling other people's second-hand goods wasn't what Chaplin really wanted, fine art was his passion, and in August 1824 he advertised the opening of an antiques shop on Exeter's High Street, which he dubbed a 'Museum' – the city's first.



MUSUEM, 44, HIGH-STREET.

J. CHAPLIN most respectfully announces to the Nobility, Gentry, and his Friends, that he has opened the above ESTABLISHMENT, with a VALUABLE

Assemblage of Rare Articles

Of TASTE and MAGNIFICENCE;

comprising a Cabinet of PICTURES, by esteemed Masters; an Assortment of Oriental, Dresden, and Seive PORCELAIN; Bughl, Ebony, and Pearl CABINETS; MARBLE STATUES; Bas Relief and Antique BUSTS; beautiful India IVORY CARVINGS, in Chess Men, Card Cases, &c.; splendid Bughl and Or Molu CLOCKS; ancient and modern STAINED GLASS; a large Collection of choice PRINTS and DRAWINGS; with numerous Articles of Taste and Vertu.

J. C, has the satisfaction to announce, that he has just added to his MUSEUM

A MAGNIFICENT CABINET,

enriched with exquisite Inlayings and curious Machinery, formerly the property of Prince Charles Lorraine; also, Two sublime Historical LANDSCAPES, by *Dominechend.*

Chaplin's 'Museum' boasted a whole host of fine art and antiques, including wax figures, antiquities, geological specimens, fossils, shells and even an Egyptian mummy which had been purchased for £435 at Plymouth Custom House. However, even this great emporium in the heart of Exeter's bustling city centre did not satisfy him and by 1826 it had closed (Todd Gray, *St Martin's Island*, p58). Chaplin's enormous ambition had still not been fulfilled - the only place where his talents could truly flourish was in London.

After a mere six years in Exeter, Chaplin and his ever-growing family moved once more. By now a further four children had come along, three boys Charles, George and Jonathan and a girl, Caroline, making the total up to seven. Not a man to do anything by halves, the Chaplin family's new home was in John Nash's newly built terrace known as The Quadrant in Regent Street. They lodged there at number 78, sharing the building with several

other tenants. It cannot have been an easy start for the newcomers to the capital; the transition from big fish in the small pond of Exeter to small fish in the enormous pond that was late Georgian London would have been a challenge even for someone with Chaplin's ambitions. Those early years in London were marked by personal tragedy, with the loss of two of his children, Caroline in 1829 and John in 1833, both buried at St James's church, Piccadilly.

It is beyond the scope of this article to trace Chaplin's career as an art dealer in the capital. Suffice it to say that it was not long after the family's arrival there that Chaplin found his true métier, dealing in Dutch and Flemish old master paintings. Rather like Oliver Peard three quarters of a century earlier, Chaplin developed a business relationship with one Albertus Brondgeest, an artist and art dealer based in Amsterdam, through whom it is likely that he sourced most of his pictures for resale in London. In March 1852, Chaplin's son Jonathan would marry Brondgeest's daughter Agatha Gerardina in Amsterdam. Chaplin's success in business allowed him to open a gallery at 49 Great Marlborough Street in 1836. Some ten years later, he would move again, this time to the prestigious address of 88 New Bond Street. Chaplin retired from business in around 1850, not far short of his 70th birthday, leaving the Bond Street gallery to his son Jonathan. However, none of his children had their father's flair for business and the picture dealership soon closed after his retirement.

John Chaplin and his wife Mary Ann retired to live initially in Pawson's Road, South Norwood, but in 1861 they returned to Devon to Norwood Cottage (now known as The Old Cottage), a house which is still extant on Dawlish Street in Teignmouth. John Chaplin died there in December 1872, aged 89. His wife Mary Ann died just over a year later in January 1874 at the age of 84.

Hitherto no one has linked John Chaplin of Tiverton, author of *Picturesque Views*, with the proprietor of Chaplin's Museum in Exeter and the "celebrated" art dealer John Chaplin of London. Art historians have conflated John Chaplin with his namesake who spent most of his career in Paris and

whose son Charles became a successful, though now forgotten, French artist. The difficulty is compounded because John Chaplin's entry in the 1851 census contains many errors. The proof, however, is to be found with his eldest child Ellen Worthy Chaplin. She married William Garbett Westaway of Tiverton at St James's church Piccadilly on 1 March 1836. The Westaways lived in Tiverton, William being a tailor in Fore Street. In the 1851 census for 88 New Bond Street (Chaplin's gallery) we find Jonathan Chaplin, picture dealer, age 25, born in Exeter and his nephew William [John Chaplin] Westaway, Ellen's son, age 14, born in Tiverton.

Peter Maunder

Collipriest Part X: World War II and the Postwar Years

Although Collipriest remained in the ownership of the Carew family throughout the war years, it was commandeered by the War Department on the outbreak of war, and indeed Westexe South became something of a garrison. Several infantry regiments were billeted in and around Tiverton, and the streets were busy with military vehicles. There were Nissen huts in open spaces in Westexe South and in the field in front of Collipriest House, with troops billeted in the house itself, and officers in Howden House west of the river. The young Derek Williams spent his childhood at Collipriest and well remembers firing practice of Ack-Ack guns going on in the woods above Stable Farm. No doubt he could still identify the trench into which fell the spent ammunition of small arms fired from the Great Orchard Field on the opposite of the combe.

An amusing incident occurred when troops billeted in Collipriest House noticed that a section of the cellar had been bricked up. Apparently the Carews had concealed their stock of wines there 'for the duration', but some enterprising infantrymen became suspicious, demolished the barricade and made short work of what they found hidden there!

Towards the end of 1943 and early in 1944 American troops, the 4th Infantry Division known as the Ivy League, replaced British troops, causing a certain amount of disturbance in and around Tiverton, and eventually leaving plenty of evidence to show that they had been here. Many anecdotes of their escapades are told locally, although not all of them can be believed. However, one incident bears repetition.

Collipriest Cottage, whether built of cob or stone, was certainly thatched, and was thought to be the demesne dwelling of the ancient Collipriest Barton. It was commandeered for the use of American officers. However, it seems that a careless G.I., possibly stubbing out a cigarette-end accidentally set fire to the thatch. The cottage and much of its history was completely destroyed and not rebuilt until 1947. Several splendid farm buildings including Collipriest Dairy stood 'over the wall' behind the cottage and escaped fire damage, although unfortunately they have become very dilapidated since. 'Collipriest Dairy' was evidently still a dairy-farm supplying milk locally, and was run by a Mr. Courtenay. One cannot help speculating whether he could trace his ancestry back to the Courtenays who were once Lords of the Manor! The history of that whole site at the foot of the Iron Age Settlement of Cranmore Castle could well prove to be even more interesting than that of Collipriest House if it could be researched before it becomes completely derelict.

In addition, the Americans took over Howden House, Collipriest House and colonies of Nissen huts west of the Exe and in the field below Collipriest House. A Bailey Bridge was thrown across the Exe in front of Collipriest House to facilitate communications between all the establishments and to avoid the long march into town and out again. (This was probably the route used by J.D. Salinger, author of *The Catcher in the Rye* who claims to have carved his name on one of the trees on the hillside!) Military vehicles were obliged to use the longer route via the old Exe Bridge, and sentries were placed in the lodges near the bridge at the bottom of St Andrews St. and at the entrance to Collipriest Lane, to challenge all comers to 'Stand and be recognised'.

The greatest secrecy was always maintained. It is believed that Collipriest was being used in connection with an elaborate hoax being formed as part of the strategy for the invasion of Europe by the Allies. It was known through our own Intelligence Service that the Germans were confidently expecting the Allies to invade the mainland of Europe by the shortest route across the Channel, from Dover to Calais - little more than 20 miles. Consequently, while the actual invasion was being planned further to the west and south where the coastline of Europe was less heavily defended by the Germans, a 'decoy' invasion was being formulated at the same time to mislead the enemy into thinking that their expectations were correct.

An army equipped with make-believe armour and vehicles constructed of inflatable rubber, wood and canvas, was being mustered in the hinterland to the east of Southampton to form the notional 'First U.S. Army Group' of over a million men under the leadership of General 'Blood and Guts' Patton. This American General had fallen foul of his senior officers after an incident at the time of the invasion of Sicily, and up to this point had not been included in the plans for the Normandy landings. However, he was undoubtedly a competent general, respected and feared by the Germans, and being something of a showman too, he was the ideal organiser of such a ruse.

His staff compounded the deception, arranging fictitious training exercises and manoeuvres, details of which could be picked up by German Intelligence without too much difficulty. It is thought that at this time Patton set up a radiocommunications centre at Collipriest to disseminate his orders covering these activities, however no such activity is recorded in his biography. Even after the events of 6th June 1944, the Enemy was still convinced that Patton was assembling a fleet for the invasion of Europe, and large German forces were pinned down in the Pas de Calais area for the whole of June and most of July 1944 to meet the expected attack.

Derek Williams recalls the eerie silence when he awoke one morning to find that the Americans had departed overnight, taking all the equipment they

could with them and destroying anything that had to be left behind. (Years later several American gas-masks were found abandoned in a small seldom-used room in Collipriest House!) Whatever the activities of the Americans at Collipriest may have been, they ceased suddenly when troops were mustered along the coast of south Devon to take part in the Normandy landings.

Collipriest Post-war (1945 onwards)

Presumably Collipriest House lay empty for year or so until the cessation of hostilities. On 28.9.45, Peter Gawen Carew, son of Charles and his wife Ruth, sold much of the remainder of the Estate to Alderman Leslie Stagg, Auctioneer of Tiverton, for the sum of £4,358. It included the Mansion House and Lodges either side of Collipriest Lane at the Little Silver end, but not Holwell or Lower Collipriest. In 1954 two houses and some land at Little Silver were sold to E.J. Pembry and Kasimir Klepandra.

Alderman Stagg resided at Collipriest House until his death in 1972, and was followed by his widow. The house and some of the surrounding land was sold in 1979 by the Trustees of Alderman Stagg to a developer who converted the building into thirteen separate apartments. There were still pigs and poultry in the farm buildings and the coach house remained open-fronted. The developer intended to convert the stable-block into a house for himself, but finally it was sold off separately and became two self-contained flats known today as ‘Stable Farm’.

Collipriest House is described by estate agents as a Georgian mansion and that is the impression given by the west-facing front. But to live here is to be aware that we are the latest of a long line of people who have dwelt in the combe continuously since Anglo-Saxon times, and may themselves have had ancestors who lived in the shelter of the Iron Age settlement on the crown of Cranmore Castle. As W. G. Hoskins once stated, ‘Everything is older than we think’.

Mary Toft

Wetter or Drier? – Some Rainfall Data for Tiverton 2008-23

Anne Davies has recorded rainfall over many years in Blundells Avenue and her monthly figures for the past 16 years are presented here.

TABLE 1 Monthly Rainfall Figures (mm) – Blundells Avenue Tiverton

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	**Total**
2008	122	39.5	113	57.5	77	47	138	137	124	67	66	64	**1052**
2009	95.5	79	46	35.5	64.5	64.5	166	38	34	93	196	79	**991**
2010	88	51	61	30	26	44	62	72	43	62	103	48	**690**
2011	73	51	23	8	47.5	83	21	53	61.5	90	48	96	**655**
2012	87	32	15.5	175	33.5	167	143	95	75	134	199	212	**1368**
2013	145	47	72	32	67.5	24.5	31	48	52	197	90	142	**948**
2014	206	223	52	81	24.5	81	24.5	124	11	83	158	60	**1197.5**
2015	119	64	55.5	28	74.5	33	89.5	134	53	52	98.5	119.5	**920.5**
2016	148.5	93.5	97	21	46.5	77.5	12	53	84.5	34	154	76.5	**898**
2017	57	71.5	69	16	68	57.5	133	48	106	36	58	117.5	**837.5**
2018	133	54.5	131	91	25	0	29	77.5	45	55	165	155	**961**
2019	71.5	50	90.5	69	34.5	85	36	76	86.5	144	176	157.5	**1076.5**
2020	95	183	88	27	12	113.5	46	75	30	156	70	166	**1061.5**
2021	113	85	72	9	126	49	75	49	78	155.5	31	126.5	**969**
2022	56	58	74	14	33	42	6	77	78	83.5	200	127	**848.5**
2023	149	9	179	90	40	1	91	56	95	138	122	155	**1125**
Mean	*109.9*	*74.4*	*77.4*	*49*	*50*	*60.5*	*68.9*	*75.7*	*66*	*98.7*	*120.9*	*118.8*	**974.9**
Median	*104*	*56*	*72*	*31*	*43*	*53*	*54*	*73*	*68*	*86*	*112*	*123*	**965**

Climate figures offer endless fascination and the opportunity to analyse the numbers in many ways. Presenters on television may have told us that the climate is becoming drier and that we should resort to growing cacti in the garden, but their statements appeal to our far from accurate memories.

The impact of rainfall depends on the number of days on which rain fell and the intensity per hour. It also depends on the temperature by day and by night, on the vegetation cover and other factors. The spring months are of particular concern to all who raise crops from seed. Are they really getting drier within recent memory?

I have done some analysis of the rainfall statistics to identify some trends in rainfall. I have selected only a few months of the year for this article. The

mean rainfall (of the 16 annual totals) is 974mm (*c*.38 inches). By comparison, the mean of the annual totals at Stoodleigh for the past 12 years is approximately 1200mm (*c*.48 inches), 226mm (*c*.10 inches) higher.

Mean (average) rainfall figures give us little guide as to what to expect. The actual rainfall for a specific month from one year to another rarely corresponds to the mean figure. The numbers in Table 2 show the number of times the rainfall of a given month was within 10% of the mean figure for that month over 16 years.

TABLE 2

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual Mean
2	2	4	0	2	2	2	5	1	3	0	4	7

The mean figure is particularly troublesome for the spring months. However, for the annual total, rainfall is more likely to be within 10% of the mean (974mm) – 7 out of 16 years. The median rainfall figure (for which half the numbers are above this figure and half below) has been added to Table 1 and for the annual total figures the median and mean are noticeably close.

Each month shows wide variations. This is revealed in Table 3 which takes the ratio of the lowest monthly figure to the highest monthly figure for each month apart from June which has a zero figure for 2018, making the comparable calculation impossible. The months of February, April and July show a particularly wide variability.

TABLE 3

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
3.6	24.7	7.7	21.8	10.5		27.6	3.6	11.2	4.5	6.2	4.4

How variable is the rainfall within a year? 2022 was remarkably variable with the driest July and the wettest November of all the sixteen years. 2012 had the highest annual total, but began with a relatively dry three months, followed by the wettest April, June and December of all the sixteen years. 2011 did not have a single month over 100mm and was the driest year, but was followed by the wettest year, 2012 (Graph 1).

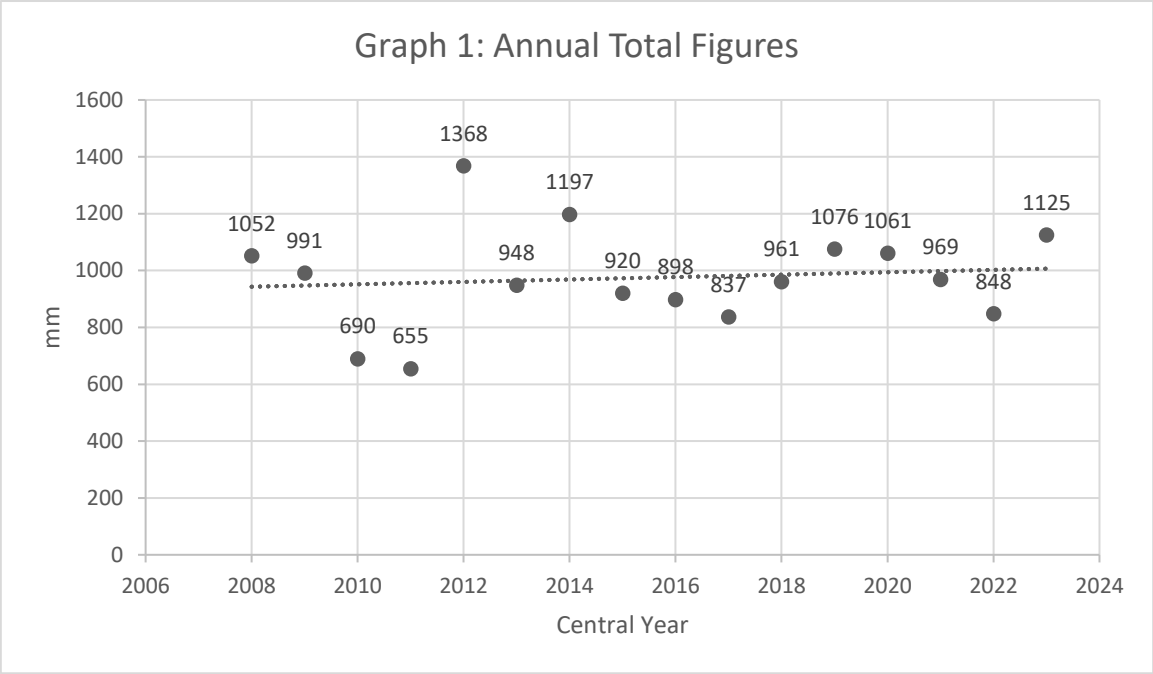


Table 4 gives the ratio of the lowest monthly figure to the highest monthly figure for each year. The figure for 2018 has a month with 0mm where no ratio is possible. 2023 has a month with a figure of 1mm making a very high variation. The size of variation in 2010 contrasts with that of 2022.

TABLE 4

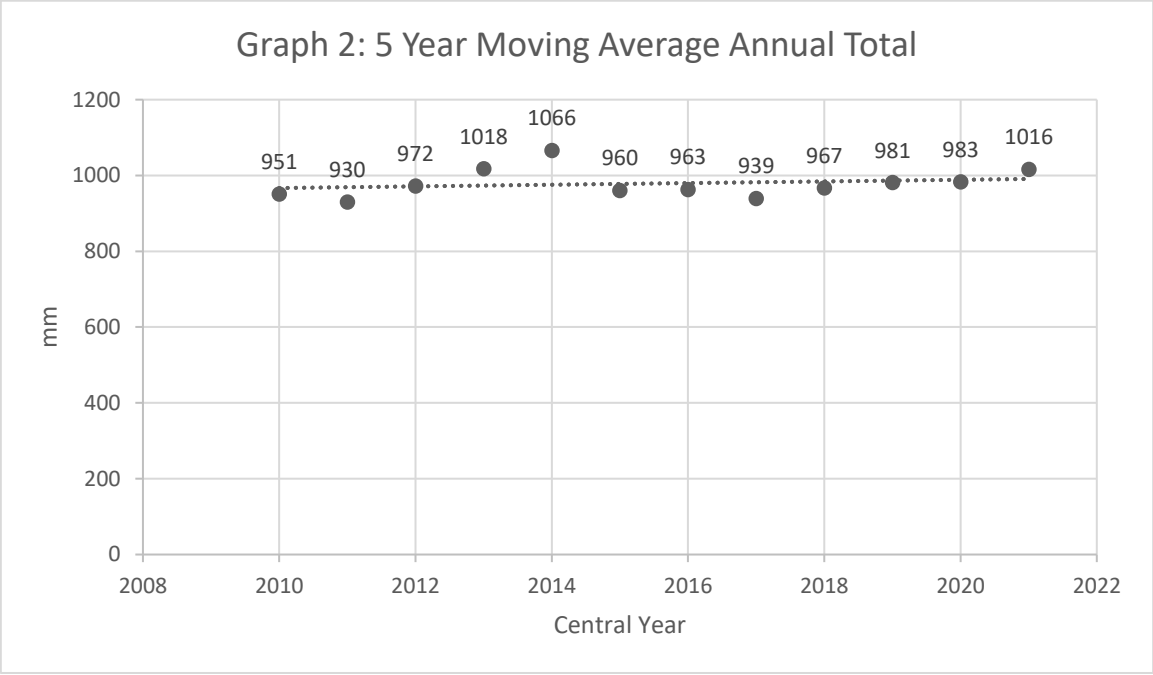
2008	***2009***	***2010***	***2011***	***2012***	***2013***	***2014***	***2015***
3.49	5.7	3.9	12	6.62	6.3	20.2	4.7
2016	***2017***	***2018***	***2019***	***2020***	***2021***	***2022***	***2023***
12.8	8.3		5.1	13.8	17.2	33.3	179

The wettest and driest months show few surprises though July and August have been the wettest months, and July has also been the driest month.

TABLE 5 The number given is the number of times each month was the wettest or driest

Wettest	November 7	December 2	February 2	October 2	July 2	August 2
Driest	July 5	April 4	May 2	June 2	September 2	February 1

Taking the annual total figures, and calculating a 5-year moving mean (so 2008 to 2012, then 2009 to 2013 etc.) we find that the variation is lower, the highest figure is just 14% more than the lowest. Comparing the individual annual totals (Table 1), the highest is 108% higher than the lowest. The trend line on Graph 2 shows no significant change. The figure for the 5-year mean is at the centre of the band, so 2008-12 is at 2010 and so on.

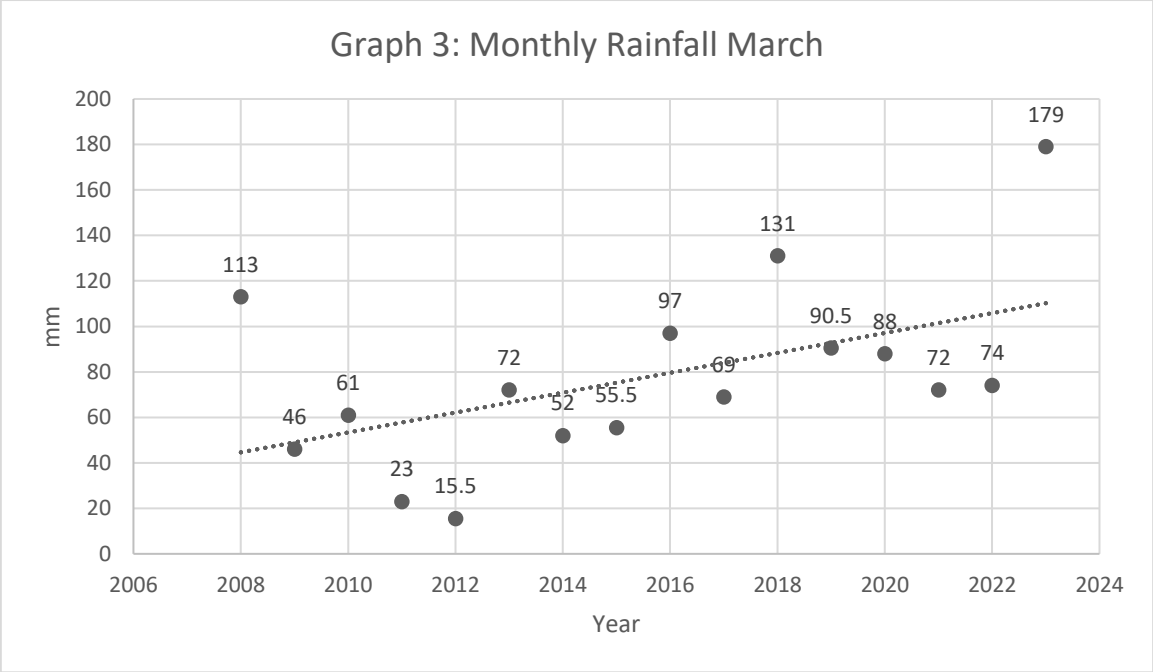


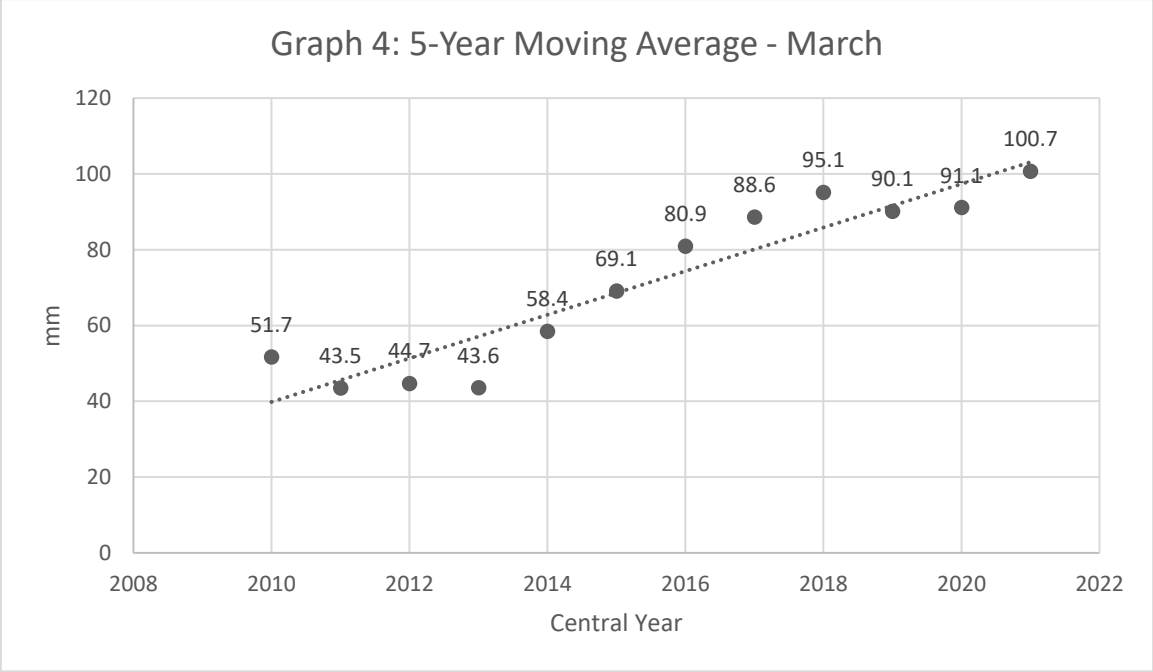
Only a limited display of trendlines for selected months can be presented in this article. The use of a trend line as a predicator is measured by its R^2 value.

R^2 is the coefficient of determination that measures how well a trend line predicts an outcome. It is on a scale between 0 and 1. The R^2 for a trend line measures the scatter of the data points around the trend line – a higher figure has data closer to the line. A low figure may show a noticeable trend but the actual figures are widely scattered which makes it difficult to predict ahead. For simplicity I am taking a value of 0.5 or above as being a useful trend line. The value for Graph 2 is 0.04, a weak upwards trend. Graph 1 has a value of 0.01.

To follow the investigation of wetter or drier, March shows its variability.

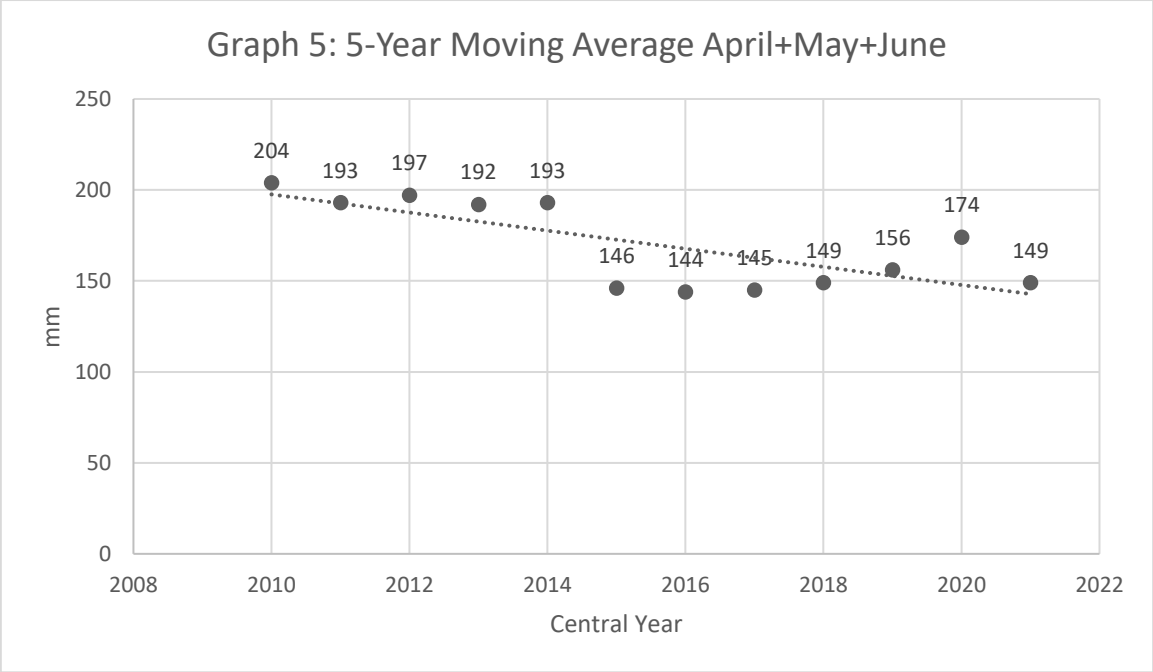
In Graph 3 showing March figures, there is an upward trend but the variability restricts the trend as a predictor. The R^2 value is 0.26. Taking the 5-year moving mean shown in Graph 4, a clearer trend emerges from the scatter.





The March 5 year moving mean (average) is the strongest trend (upward) of any month. The R^2 value for Graph 4 is 0.88. The most recent six figures are all above the earlier six figures.

Looking at the months of April + May + June (Graph 5) when seeds are sown and early crops need to get a good start, the 5-year moving mean (average) shows a definite downward trend ($R^2 = 0.55$).

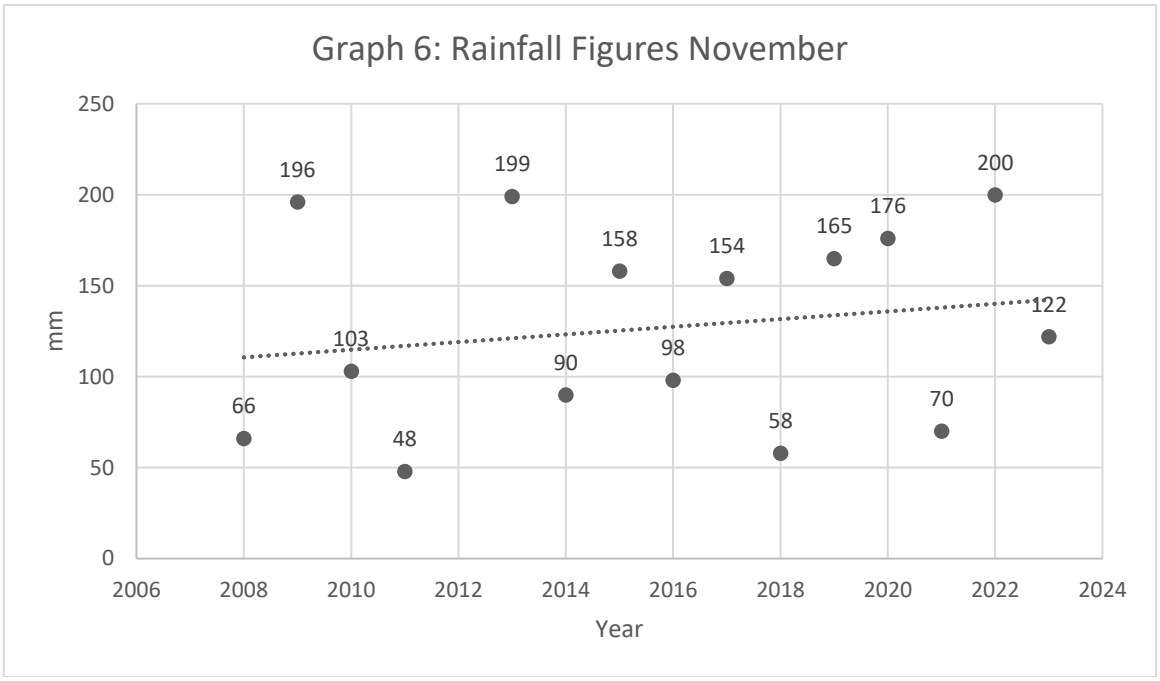


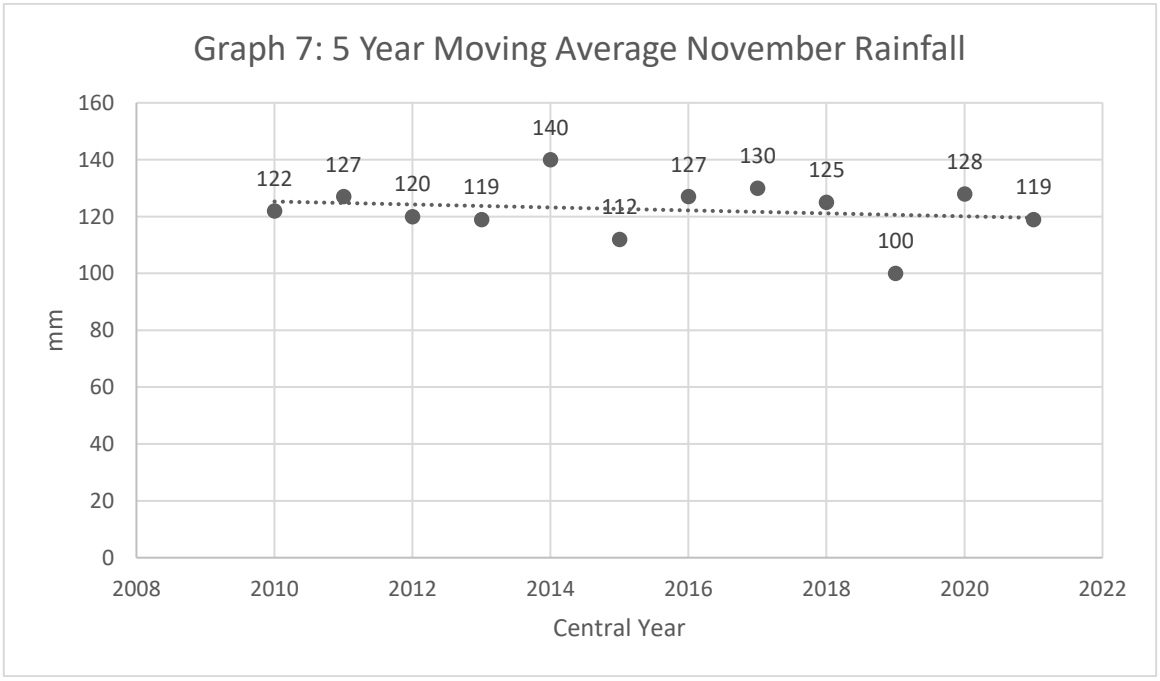
The recent 7 figures are all below the earlier 5 figures. Graph 5 displays the division. Whether there will be another phase with lower figures we have yet to see. The April + May + June totals before being merged into a moving average show no significant trend ($R^2 = 0.08$) – the variability of each of the months masks any trend – but a trend emerges in the 5-year averaging.

Moving to the winter months, are they getting wetter? Looking at November figures (a key month for topping up the hydrological system), 66mm in 2008 was followed by 196mm in 2009, 48mm in 2011 was followed by 199mm in 2012, 31mm in 2021 was followed by 200mm in 2022. The variability stands out more than any trend. R^2 for Graph 6 is 0.03.

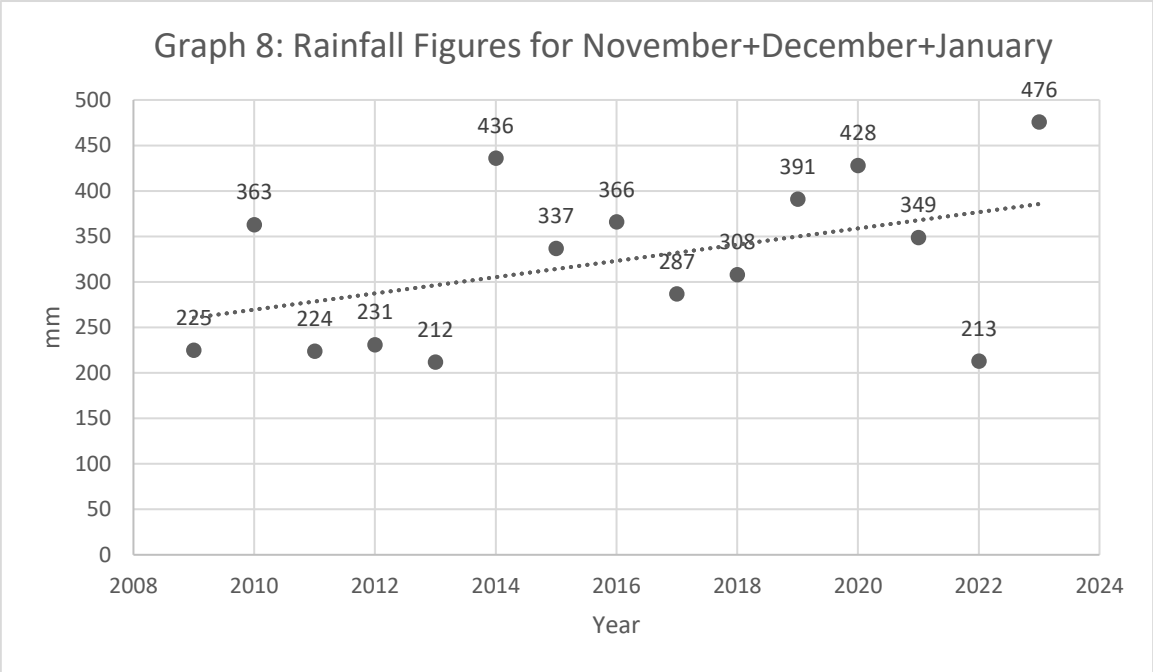
Looking at the 5-year moving average for November, the pattern looks very different, with the variability much reduced by the averaging of the ups and downs. However, the R^2 of Graph 7 is the same as that of Graph 6 at 0.03, but shows a slight downward trend as opposed to the slight upward trend of

Graph 6. Caution is needed before drawing any conclusion, but for November it does not seem to be getting wetter or drier, just a continuing variability.

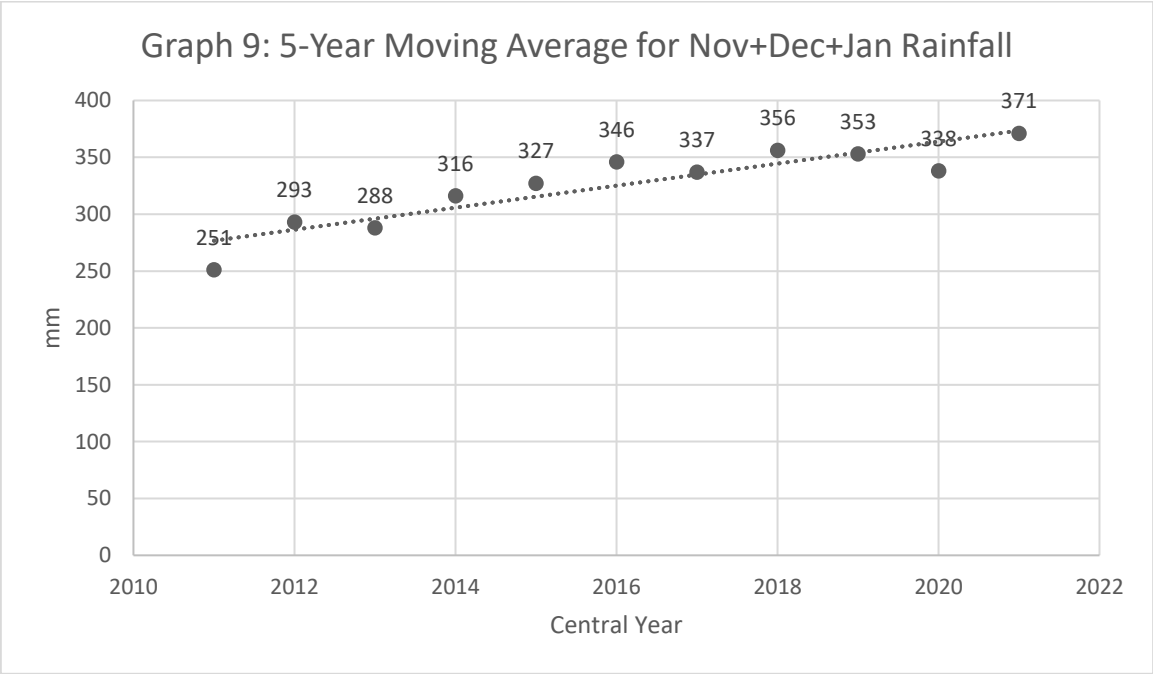




Taking the winter months of November + December + January, the figures may give some indication as to whether the winters are getting wetter. (The November and December of 2008 are added to the January of 2009 to give that winter and plotted against 2009).



The trend of Graph 8 is upwards but with R^2 of only 0.2. Plotting the 5-year moving average for these winter figures in Graph 9, the variability is smoothed out to give $R^2 = 0.8$, a relatively high result indicating an increase in winter rainfall.



To summarise the variability, Table 6 gives the mean rainfall for each month and its Mean Absolute Deviation (MAD) – an average of every figure's distance from the mean. The table then gives this as a percentage of the mean – the larger the percentage, the more variable the month.

TABLE 6

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Mean	109.9	74.4	77.4	49	50	60.5	68.9	75.7	66	98.7	120.9	118.8	974.9
MAD	32	36.4	29.2	33.6	22.1	30.9	44.1	23.7	24.8	41.5	50.3	36.4	130.8
%	**29**	**48**	**37**	**68**	**44**	**51**	**64**	**31**	**37**	**42**	**41**	**30**	**13**

April and July stand out as the most variable months. These monthly variations combine to give much less variation to the annual totals.

From all the months and their 5-year moving averages, Table 7 summarises the R^2 value. A wide scatter reduces the figure, but from the 16 years using 5-year moving averages, some values show a distinct trend with values above 0.5. Many months show very slight trends.

TABLE 7

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
R^2	0.001 level	.005 up	0.26 up	.006 down	0.01 down	0.05 down	0.15 down	.05 down	0.19 up	0.06 up	0.03 up	0.25 up	0.01 up
R^2 5 yr ave.	0.08 up	0.22 up	**0.88 up**	**0.55 down**	0.08 down	**0.52 down**	**0.55 down**	0.14 down	0.4 up	0 level	0.03 down	**0.53 up**	0.04 up

April+May+June	R^2 = 0.09 down	Moving Average R^2 = **0.55 down**
Nov+Dec+Jan	R^2 = 0.2 up	Moving Average R^2 = **0.82 up**

So, with the constraint of these 16 years, the Spring to Summer shows some downward trend so perhaps drought tolerant plants may be needed. The winter period shows an upward trend. However, the fog of variability is so pronounced that it is unwise to use the trend line as a predictor. Members will have their suggestions. Members may also have other records and analyses for presentation to the Society.

Geoff Clarke

Thanks to Anne Davies for providing the rainfall data for 2008-2023.

Gold in the Exe Valley

The Exeter Volcanic Rocks, which I discussed in the previous Newsletter, have for long been associated with the presence of gold, and this brief follow up outlines the considerable speculation during recent decades about the possible commercial exploitation of this valuable mineral.

Reports of finds, particularly in the Crediton Trough, have occurred over a long period. In 1840, it was reported that a gold ingot been found by a group of miners at North Tawton in the Crediton Trough. This, however, was impossible to confirm, because any evidence quickly disappeared! Following the worldwide interest which followed the discovery of substantial gold deposits in California in 1849, and the subsequent 'Gold Rush', there was renewed interest in Southwest England's deposits, although the so-called 'North Molton Gold Rush' of 1856 seems to have amounted to very little.

A full technical report: '*Exploration for Gold in the Crediton Trough, Devon*' was published in 1994 by the British Geological Survey, and this sparked a renewed period of interest. The report was the result of soil testing, analysis of geological pits, and a deep borehole at Upton Pyne, these being carried out in both the Crediton Trough (an area running from Hatherleigh and Jacobstowe in the west through North Tawton, Crediton and Newton St. Cyres, to the Exe Valley in the east) and the Tiverton Basin (centred around Calverleigh; one of five Permian rock outliers where gold deposits might be found). It was confirmed that there is widespread presence of small grains of gold, in watercourses and in the Permian rocks, especially where they are underlain by volcanic rocks. Larger concentrations were found in several places, including Thorverton Quarry, Posbury Clump and Newton St Cyres, and it would be in such locations that any future exploitation is likely. The report also suggested that, based on the evidence collected, other specified parts of the Crediton Trough and Tiverton Basin merited follow-up studies. The report is available on the NERC Open Research archive, https://nora.nerc.ac.uk/id/eprint/534608/1/MRP133_WF94.

This report led to considerable excitement, and, in 1997, the mining company, Crediton Minerals, found gold at locations near the town, and, after yields proved promising, it spent £200,000 test-drilling in the Crediton Trough. At the time, the firm's chairman, Jeremy Metcalfe, said: 'We may be in sight of a gold deposit of substance', and headlines in national newspapers such as that in the *Independent*, 'Gold strike in Devon may net mining company a fortune', continued to stoke widespread national interest. A later, 2011, article in the *Crediton Courier* stated, 'There's gold in them thar hills - and with the price of the precious metal skyrocketing - it could mean that Crediton will soon be the next Klondike!'

To date, no deposits have been found which would make mining commercially viable, there has been no Gold Rush and there is also local concern about the potentially adverse environmental impact of mining operations. However, fuelled globally by continued insecurity, the price of gold has reached unprecedented levels during 2024, at the time of writing being over £17.30 per troy ounce, and the future may lead to a different assessment! In the meantime, hopeful gold seekers continue to pan some local watercourses, and regular gold-panning courses are run during the summer months at Holsworthy, at the western end of the Crediton Trough. The website address is https://devongoldrush.com/!

Jeremy Salter

Panning for gold

Tiverton's Watch Committee

Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life relies on people donating items to the collection as we do not have the funds to purchase items. The things that people have stashed away still amaze us. Very recently we were given a fascinating volume of hand written minutes from the Tiverton Watch Committee. 'The Watch' was an early incarnation of the police. Before there was a nationally organised initiative for crime prevention, law enforcement was dealt with at a local level, with town authorities taking responsibility. Tiverton had its own police force between 1845 and 1943, although at the start, the taxpayers of the borough were extremely unhappy at having to pay the police rate.

The Watch Committee was the police force's governing body, as things became a bit more organised through the 19th century, when concern was growing for the apparent increase in crime. The Committee would have mostly been members of the Tiverton Borough Council.

The first entry in this volume, from November 1853, details Policeman Rowe being recommended for a monetary reward for his 'conduct in capturing Scoins', convicted of sheep stealing. A few pages further on we find the same Policeman Rowe being reported by Inspector Harford for 'neglect of duty', after returning a day late from a leave of absence. It seems Rowe had headed off to Barnstaple on his day off, fully intending to return later that day. He claimed that, despite being on time to pick up the returning coach, no such coach appeared and he was stranded, not returning until the following evening. Problems with public transport are apparently not just a recent issue! The next entry indicates that a satisfactory letter was received by the committee from the Landlord at Barnstaple, backing up Rowe's story. All resolved it seems.

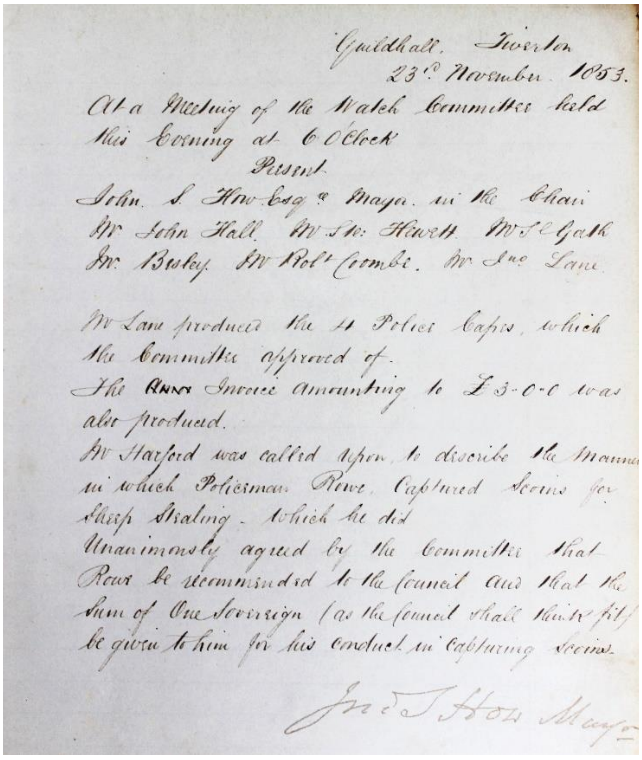
And yet, a few more pages on, we find Mr Rowe has handed in his resignation. He had been asked to leave, returning his uniform, because 'the men would not further work with Rowe'. So perhaps there was more to the story!

The museum has a couple of items relating to the Watch Committee dating from 1874, including a tender from John Cann to make overshoes and an advertisement for a new constable. Reading through the minutes from 1874 Melhuish and Son made some new helmets, and Robert Ellis made some clothing. Towards the end of the year, it was agreed the force needed new capes as the existing ones had holes in them. In May 1874 PC Grant resigned and the committee agreed to issue the 'usual hand bill' (see picture overleaf). John Morrell of Tiverton (age 28, height 5 ft, 8 ½ inches) was appointed later that month. He was given the uniform of his predecessor PC Grant, which was altered to fit. PC Morrel resigned in November, and Richard Alford of Tiverton (age 27, carpenter) was appointed out of twelve applicants. PC Alford was again given the altered uniform of PC Morrell.

In 1929, the existence of Tiverton's police force was threatened when Government commissioners arrived in the town and attempted to convince the borough authorities to merge with the county police. Chief Constable Beynon fiercely defended the eleven-strong force in an extended session at the borough court; the commissioners eventually departed, and the continued service of the Tiverton Borough Police was assured for many years more. It was not until 1942, when the pressures of the Second World War took their toll on Devon, that the force finally amalgamated with the county. Chief Constable Morris of Devon visited the force on 28th November. He provided them with new warrant cards and welcomed them into the county police family.

Part of Tiverton's gaol on St Andrew Street was used as the town's police station, probably from the 1860s when the new Town Hall was built. The police station was based in what had been the governor's accommodation. The gaol closed in 1878 when all prisoners were henceforth sent to Exeter gaol. The Police Station remained until 1956 when it relocated to Beechwood on The Avenue.

Pippa Griffith



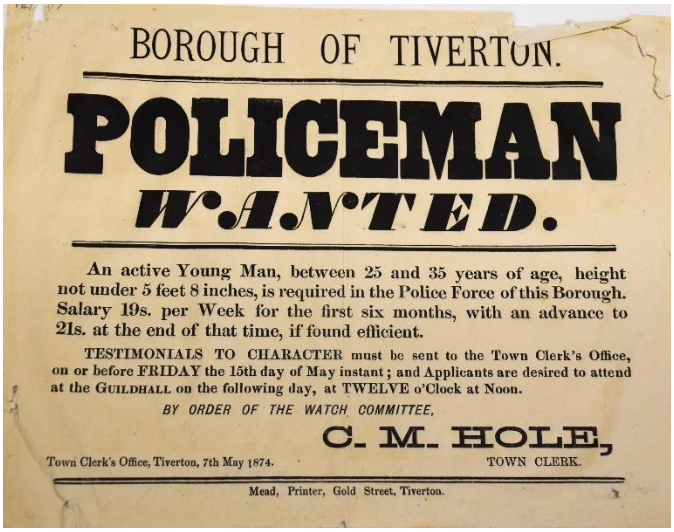
Guildhall, Tiverton
23rd November 1853.

At a Meeting of the Watch Committee held this Evening at 6 O'Clock
Present
John S. How Esqre Mayor in the Chair
Mr John Hall Mr Ste: Hewett Mr Sl Gath
Mr Besley Mr Robt Coombe. Mr Jno Lane

Mr Lane produced the 4 Police Capes, which the Committee approved of.
The [illegible] Invoice amounting to £3-0-0 was also produced.
Mr Harford was called upon to describe the manner in which Policeman Rowe Captured Scoins for Sheep Stealing - which he did
Unanimously agreed by the Committee that Rowe be recommended to the Council and that the Sum of One Sovereign (as the Council shall think fit) be given to him for his conduct in Capturing Scoins.

Jno S How Mayor

Left: The first entry in the Watch Committee minute book from November 1853.



BOROUGH OF TIVERTON.

POLICEMAN WANTED.

An active Young Man, between 25 and 35 years of age, height not under 5 feet 8 inches, is required in the Police Force of this Borough. Salary 19s. per Week for the first six months, with an advance to 21s. at the end of that time, if found efficient.

TESTIMONIALS TO CHARACTER must be sent to the Town Clerk's Office, on or before FRIDAY the 15th day of May instant; and Applicants are desired to attend at the GUILDHALL on the following day, at TWELVE o'Clock at Noon.

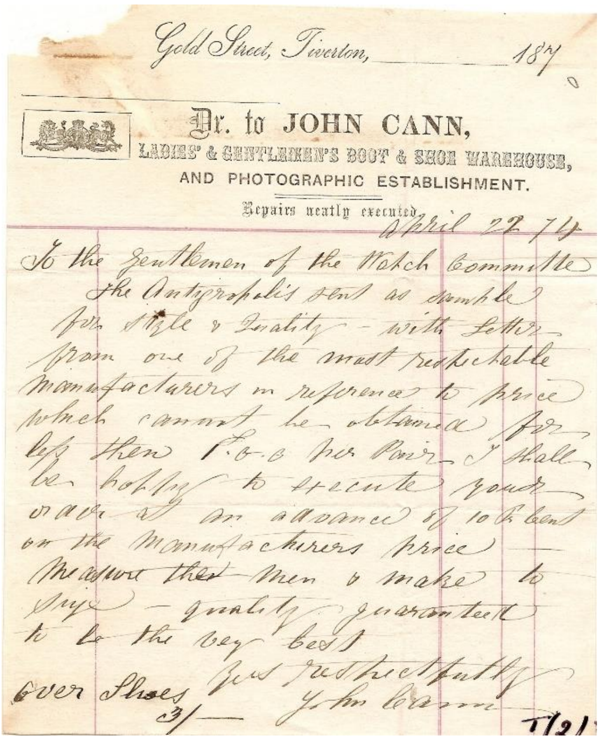
BY ORDER OF THE WATCH COMMITTEE,

C. M. HOLE,
TOWN CLERK.

Town Clerk's Office, Tiverton, 7th May 1874.

Mead, Printer, Gold Street, Tiverton.

Right: Poster advertising for policeman between 25 and 35 years of age, and not be under 5 feet 8 inches in height, 1874.



Gold Street, Tiverton, 187

Dr. to JOHN CANN,
LADIES' & GENTLEMEN'S BOOT & SHOE WAREHOUSE,
AND PHOTOGRAPHIC ESTABLISHMENT.
Repairs neatly executed.

April 22 74

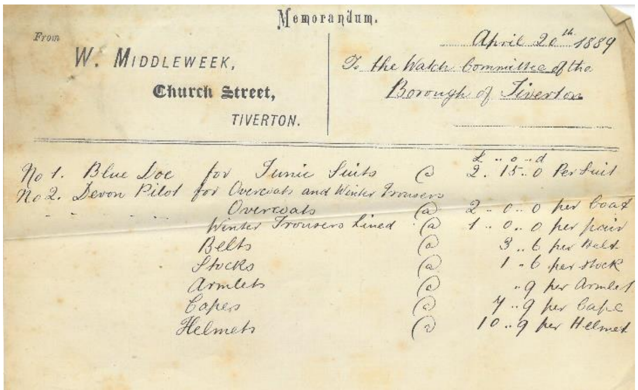
To the Gentlemen of the Watch Committee
The [illegible] sent as sample for Style & Quality - with Letter from one of the most respectable manufacturers in reference to price which cannot be obtained for less than 1-0-0 per Pair. I shall be happy to execute your order at an advance of 10 Per Cent on the manufacturers price - measure the men & make to [illegible] - quality guaranteed to be the very best

Yours respectfully
John Cann

Over Shoes 3/-

T/21

Left: Tender from John Cann for supplying members of the watch with overshoes, 1874.



Memorandum.

From W. MIDDLEWEEK,
Church Street,
TIVERTON.

April 20th 1889
To the Watch Committee of the Borough of Tiverton

No 1.	Blue Doe for Tunic Suits	@	2 . 15 . 0	Per Suit
No 2.	Devon Pilot for Overcoats and Winter Trousers			
	Overcoats	@	2 .. 0 .. 0	per Coat
	Winter Trousers Lined	@	1 .. 0 .. 0	per pair
	Belts	@	3 .. 6	per Belt
	Stocks	@	1 - 6	per Stock
	Armlets	@	.. 9	per Armlet
	Capes	@	7 .. 9	per Cape
	Helmets	@	10 .. 9	per Helmet

Above: Tender for uniform from 1889