

SOCIAL HISTORY

The Mohuns and Luttrells dominated Minehead as they did Dunster and the Luttrells were especially concerned to keep control of the parliamentary borough.¹ There were no resident gentry. Robert le Webbe was a major taxpayer in 1327 but the others were mainly farmers.² Joan and Alice daughters of nief John Stone paid to be manumitted in 1409 and 1411 but niefs were still recorded in the 1460s and the court leet regularly presented women as scolds in the later 15th century and in 1481 the leet fixed labourers' maximum winter daily pay at 1½ d.³ In the 1580s the court ordered a woman to be put in the stocks and vagabonds including children to be imprisoned on bread and water.⁴

In 1525 two taxpayers were assessed at £40 including a merchant and 91 people were taxed on wages of 20s a year or more.⁵ In 1581 45 people were taxed on goods and only three on land.⁶ Mercantile wealth is evident from wills and inventories but there are no great monuments although Robert Quirke the younger is remembered in his almshouses and yeoman Alexander Ewens for the theological library he gave to the church in 1673.⁷ Chest tombs in the churchyard date from the late 18th century or later and the finest is that of Francis Pearce, farmer of Bratton (d. 1771).

The population increase in the 17th century led people to let out furnished property, a widow received £4 to feed a boy at her table in 1637 and later there were lodging houses at Quaytown.⁸ By 1668 c.50 houses had been subdivided and wealthy people leased houses to sublet. Only four single storey houses were recorded but out

¹ Below, parl. representation.

² F. H. Dickinson (ed.), *Kirby's Quest etc.* (Som. Rec. Soc. 3), 245.

³ SHC, DD/L P26/6, P28/13/1—2, P28/14/2.

⁴ SHC, DD/L P3/18.

⁵ TNA, E 179/169/168.

⁶ A. Webb, *Two Tudor Subsidies* (Som. Rec. Soc. 88), 105.

⁷ Below, this section; M. Siraut, *Somerset Wills* (Som. Rec. Soc. 89), 97—8.

⁸ SHC, DD/SP Inv. 1637/67, 1665/35, 1674/35; DD/CH 13.

of 225 recorded dwellings 42 had two rooms, 22 three and 36 four. Only six had more than six bedrooms but 39 had a parlour and 24 storehouses had up to two chambers over, possibly providing accommodation for servants and workers.⁹ In 1721 five copyholders had sublet without licence.¹⁰ By 1753 houses had been demolished or kept in hand probably for political reasons.¹¹ Early 19th-century poverty meant cottagers were in arrears but fear of losing an election forced the Luttrells to remove the threat of eviction from 21 people in extreme poverty including a man who had sold his only bed leaving his family sleeping on straw.¹² In 1846 115 people petitioned John Fownes Luttrell to grant leases of property he had kept in hand before the Reform Act to prevent people being able to vote against him, because of the destitution of working people, especially when the Bridgwater to Minehead Railway project failed.¹³

By 1861 houses were again in multiple occupation especially in Frog, Middle and Quay Streets and the surplus of households over houses was 71.¹⁴ In 1867 the vicar said cottagers no longer let rooms to married couples despite increased rents¹⁵ but houses were permanently divided so that by 1891 in the streets where multiple occupation was recorded earlier 138 houses had fewer than five habitable rooms, of which four had only one.¹⁶ In 1901 there were 219 including 78 with one or two rooms.¹⁷ Quaytown had some households of up to 13 often with lodgers in houses of no more than four rooms perhaps resulting in the three generation households with

⁹ SHC, DD/L P3/12

¹⁰ SHC, DD/L 1/51/23/3.

¹¹ SHC, DD/L 1/52/29.

¹² SHC, DD/L 1/51/24/1.

¹³ SHC, DD/X/HRG 9; DD/L 1/52/28; above, intro.

¹⁴ TNA, RG 9/1601.

¹⁵ Report of the Royal Commission on Children, Young Persons, and Women in Agriculture (Parl. Papers 1868—9 (4202), xiii), 449.

¹⁶ TNA, RG 12/1863.

¹⁷ TNA, RG 13/2360.

illegitimate grandchildren.¹⁸ However, by 1913 only three cottages in the higher town were without flush toilets, refuse was collected weekly, twice weekly in summer, and local authority houses were provided although as late as 1935 many Luttrell cottages were overcrowded, 33 families with six or more members were on the council waiting list, and tuberculosis was a problem.¹⁹

Minehead's growing attraction as a seaside resort and a place of retirement led to an increase in households with domestic servants from c.60 between 1861 and 1881 to 96 in 1891. Including daily servants there were c.200 domestic servants and c.300 in 1901, more than a tenth of the population, although many worked in hotels.²⁰

MIGRATION

Irish and Welsh people probably settled in Minehead in the 15th century as a result of maritime trade. Names like Tege and Shanaghan were recorded in the 1480s²¹ and merchant William Hoton of Tenby settled in Minehead before 1510.²² Leland found the town full of Irishmen c.1540.²³ Craftsmen and wandering traders from Ireland, Wales, Dorset and Devon came looking for work from the late 16th century and 'two dark men' received coal at Christmas in 1638.²⁴ Merchants from Plymouth, Cornwall and Ireland settled in Minehead in the later 17th century.²⁵

Irish immigration was resisted: vagrants landed secretly at Minehead and Porlock were deported in 1622²⁶ and in 1629 Somerset was charged £200 for deporting Irish people from Minehead, one of seven English ports designated for the

¹⁸ TNA, RG 9/1601; RG 11/2353; RG 12/1863; RG 13/2360.

¹⁹ SHC, A/AGC 35/6; *ibid.* D/U/m 2/2/6, 3/10/1.

²⁰ TNA, RG 9/1601; RG 10/2348; RG 11/2353; RG 12/1863; RG 13/2360.

²¹ SHC, DD/L P28/15/1.

²² SHC, DD/HCK 9/1/17.

²³ E. H. Bates, 'Leland in Somersetshire; 1540-1542', *Proc. SANHS*, XXXIII, 98.

²⁴ SHC, SHC, T/PH/stv 1; *ibid.* Q/SR 3/29; *ibid.* D/D/Cd 62; D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1, 13/3/1.

²⁵ SHC, DD/L P23/12; DD/CH 12; D/D/Cd 108, ff. 116—28.

²⁶ E.H. Bates (ed.), *Quarter Sessions Records, 1607—25* (Som. Rec. Soc. 23), 273, 318.

purpose. Sea captains were accused of taking all migrants' possessions for their passage and during the Civil War Irish immigration increased.²⁷ In the 1670s and 1680s large numbers were ordered to leave or appear before the magistrates, although those who were not poor may have been allowed to remain. In 1693 families from Ireland totalling 34 persons, including an apprentice, were deported after landing and the parish was paid to ship Irish soldiers and their families to Ireland in 1698.²⁸ Irish beggars were in Minehead as late as 1851.²⁹ In the 18th century inward migration decreased and in 1766 only six poor residents were strangers.³⁰ Poor craftsmen left; some were found begging in Bristol and others settled in London.³¹ However, Minehead was generous to strangers and in the 1670s c.280 people including servants gave money to redeem people from slavery and over 150 people gave money to London sufferers from fire.³²

By the early 17th century members of Minehead mercantile families were settled in Ireland.³³ The Atkin, Crockford and Hayman families had land in the Youghal area, intermarried and some served Youghal as Alderman, Mayors or in Parliament. They were later joined by Devonshires and probably Quirkes. At first they retained their links with Minehead and some returned but in 1911 there were 1,700 Quirkes in Ireland besides Devonshires in County Cork and Atkins and Haymans at

²⁷ E.H. Bates-Harbin (ed.), Quarter Sessions Records, 1625—39 (Som. Rec. Soc. 24), 104; J. S. Cockburn (ed.), Somerset Assize Orders (Som. Rec. Soc. 71). 1; SHC, Q/SR 45/39—40, 86/60, 90/72; *ibid.* D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1.

²⁸ Cal. Treas. Bks 1557—1696, 52; SHC, D/P/m.st.m 13/3/3; Q/SO 8, ff. 224, 377.

²⁹ TNA, HO 107/1920.

³⁰ SHC, DD/L 1/59/6/11.

³¹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 13/3/1—3; DD/L 1/24/6, 1/54/43/2.

³² SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/1, 10/1/1.

³³ Acts of PC 1639—40, 196—7.

Merchants Quay, Dublin.³⁴ Minehead residents in Ireland and Wales were said to oppose the harbour Bill in 1770.³⁵

Many mercantile families had links with both sides of Bristol Channel, Hugh Jones had land in Wales and Ireland in 1678,³⁶ Cardiff surgeon Richard Want had descendants in Minehead by the 1680s³⁷ and William Chilcott mariner became a freeman of Kidwelly in 1769.³⁸ In the 19th century there were many marriages between people from Minehead and Wales.³⁹ In 1851 there were 28 Minehead-born residents in Wales but 178 in 1901 and numbers in Bristol rose from 80 to 150 in the same period. A Penarth draper had 11 resident staff from Somerset in 1901 including a young woman from Minehead.⁴⁰

By the late 18th century Minehead attracted retirees like Admiralty surveyor Murdoch Mackenzie (d. 1797)⁴¹ but young people left like the men who went to Canada from the mid 19th century and later the writer Arthur C Clarke.⁴² Inward migration kept the population high in the 20th century despite the loss of industrial employment.

EDUCATION

Before 1866

³⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/51/23/3; D/P/m.st.m 13/3/1; J. G. Story 'John Atkin of Youghal' (1989), TS in VCH files; www.census.nationalarchives.ie: accessed 16 May 2012

³⁵ SHC, DD/L 1/54/43/2.

³⁶ TNA, PROB 4/12412.

³⁷ Below, rel. hist.; SHC, D/P/m.st.m 13/3/5; *ibid.* Q/RLa 22/1.

³⁸ SHC, DD/L 1/54/43/2.

³⁹ The Cambrian on-line index accessed 14 Nov 2006.

⁴⁰ TNA, cesus schedules 1851, 1901; RG 13/4989

⁴¹ SHC, DD/L 1/59/13/18; D/D/Cf (S/237).

⁴² TNA, WO 97/1185/34; SHC, DD/WSAS 22/14; Minehead Baptist Church, Ter Jubilee Souvenir (1967) [unpaginated].

Schoolmasters were recorded throughout the 17th century⁴³ and between 1723 and 1740 the Market Place Quaker meeting house was a school.⁴⁴ The notorious George Knyfton, vicar of St Decuman's (1762—98) was said to have kept a school in Minehead throughout his incumbency.⁴⁵ In 1769 a free school opened for 20 children under 15. Henry Dugdale of Brixham, Devon, later assisted by his son, was paid £20 a year by the Luttrells to teach writing and arithmetic but also took paying pupils.⁴⁶ By 1777 five of the 29 pupils were girls. Fathers included mariners and craftsmen and navigation was taught.⁴⁷ Before 1787 Richard Elsworth gave £10 to teach the poor,⁴⁸ presumably at the free school, which eight boys and three girls attended at the Luttrells' expense in 1800 rising to 30 in 1833. William Lawry or Lewry kept it for 67 years from 1797 at his house below the church, assisted by his wife and daughter in 1861.⁴⁹

In 1818 the free school taught 20 children, other day schools 100 and the Sunday school 50 but the poor lacked education.⁵⁰ In 1825 80 boys and 71 girls attended school⁵¹ but in 1833 only 88 children attended four day schools.⁵² In 1840 the free school was divided between boys and girls under separate teachers.⁵³ In 1846 the poor state of education could not 'be a satisfaction to the landowner, if he knows of it'. Only half the 81 children attending Sunday school went to a day school,

⁴³ SHC, D/D/Ca 180; D/D/Bs 39; D/D/Vc 2; D/P/m.st.m 13/3/1.

⁴⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/6/19/3, 1/46/7/19; DD/SFRw 33.

⁴⁵ VCH Som., V, 166; SHC, DD/HC 5/1/54/40/23.

⁴⁶ SHC, DD/L 1/10/33, 1/53/34/4—5.

⁴⁷ SHC, DD/L 1/51/24/3, 1/51/27.

⁴⁸ Abstract of Charitable Donations, 1787—8, pp. 1050—1.

⁴⁹ SHC, DD/L 1/54/43/2; D/D/Cf (S/237); *ibid.* tithe award; Pigot & Co. Dir. Som. (1830); Educ. Enq. Abstract (1835), p. 815; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1861); TNA, RG 9/1601.

⁵⁰ Educ. of Poor Digest, HC 224 (1819), p. 790.

⁵¹ Ann. Rep. SPCK (1825—6), 81.

⁵² Educ. Enq. Abstract (1835), p. 815.

⁵³ Co. Gaz. Dir. Som. (1840)).

presumably the free school recorded as a National School in 1859.⁵⁴ The vicar, Alexander Luttrell, deplored 'over education' and considered boys should go to work at 10 in the 1860s.⁵⁵

Sunday schools

The Anglican Sunday school in Church Street, supported by subscription in 1818, provided the only education for 30 children in 1825 and had 133 pupils in 1833.⁵⁶ By 1840 it had moved to an unidentified building, extended by Richard Carver in 1842, but had only 74 pupils in 1851 and later moved to the parochial school.⁵⁷ The Baptist Sunday school, begun in 1826, had 29 pupils in 1833 supported by subscription and 38 in 1851.⁵⁸ The chapel schoolroom accommodated over 100 and was extended in 1912.⁵⁹ There were c.150 children in 1929 and despite losing seven teachers to the Milbridge mission in the 1930s the school had three sections, a young men's meeting and a girls' club. Poor children from Taunton and Bristol were invited to school outings.⁶⁰ The Methodists held a cottage Sunday school at Woodcombe c.1900. Their Avenue school opened in 1906 and was a Red Cross hospital during the First World War. With the Baptist Sunday school it housed evacuee schools during the Second

⁵⁴ Nat. Soc., Schs Inquiry, 1846—7, Som. 12—13; J.B.B. Clarke, An account of the church education among the poor in the diocese of Bath and Wells in the year 1846 (1847), 49; Harrison, Harrad, & Co. Dir. Som. (1859).

⁵⁵ Children and Women in Agric. 449

⁵⁶ SHC, DD/L 297/1—2; Educ. of Poor Digest, HC 224 (1819), p. 790; Educ. Enq. Abstract (1835), p. 815.

⁵⁷ TNA, HO 129/313/1/7/6; SHC, tithe award; *ibid.* DD/L 1/54/43/1; *ibid.* C/E 4/380/270—1.

⁵⁸ Educ. Enq. Abstract (1835), p. 815; TNA, HO 129/313/1/7/7—8.

⁵⁹ OS Map, 1:2500 Som. XXXV.5 (1904 edn); Minehead Baptist Church, Ter Jubilee Souvenir (1967) [unpaginated].

⁶⁰ SHC, D/N/b.min 4/2/2, 5/3/1.

World War.⁶¹ The Congregational Sunday school was flourishing by 1914 and had 95 pupils and 23 teachers in 1921 but numbers fell to 33 children in the 1940s.⁶²

Parochial and council schools

In 1866 Geoffrey Fownes Luttrell built a parochial school with teacher's house in Middle Street designed by J. P. St Aubyn.⁶³ It was soon overcrowded and in 1878 the 83 infants formed a separate school under a teacher with two monitresses who received evening lessons in the evening and were later described as pupil teachers. The infants were backward and struggled with reading and knitting, children were sometimes returned to the infant class and school reports were poor. Numbers rose to 104 in 1880 and despite 30 being moved up there were 90 infants in four classes by September. A galleried classroom for 100 infants built in 1890 was inadequate for the 125 registered early in 1899 and some lessons were held outside. In October 1899 175 infants settled into a new building across the street, designed by William Tamlyn, with two rooms and cloakrooms.⁶⁴ It formed a separate voluntary school with 160 infants in 1910, although average attendance was 112, four teachers and a babies' room. Children moved to the parochial, Catholic or private schools at 6 to 8 years old. Pupil numbers rose to 132 in 1930 but thereafter fluctuated between 95 and 115 with two teachers. In 1961 only 14 of 91 children received church teaching. In 1970 the school, called St Michael's, with 159 children aged 5 to 7, moved to the vacated

⁶¹ A. G. Pointon, Methodists in West Somerset: the story of the West Somerset Circuit 1790—1980 (Minehead, 1982), 17; SHC, A/AOE 1.

⁶² SHC, D/N/min.c 7/38.

⁶³ SHC, C/E 4/380/270—1; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1866).

⁶⁴ SHC, A/CNH 2/1; *ibid.* D/D/Ri 3; D/U/m 22/1/47.

Watery Lane school.⁶⁵ In 1971 it became a first school for children aged 4 to 9 with 58 pupils in 1980 and 152 in 1998 with a pre-school for 3 year-olds.⁶⁶

Even without the infants the parochial school could only accommodate 240 juniors in five classrooms but in 1903, when it was a council school, 437 children were registered although average attendance was only 302. The Ellsworth charity money paid for Oxford scholarships.⁶⁷ By 1914 the school was divided into boys' and girls' schools, the former in new premises in Watery Lane built c.1912⁶⁸ with a substantial school garden and the latter in the old building each with a head and four or five teachers. Average attendance was 129 boys and 124 girls rising to 180 and 167 respectively in 1930. After 1947 both schools were united on the Watery Lane site with 182 pupils in 1950 and 236 with nine teachers by 1960. In 1970 the school moved into and absorbed St Teresa's school in Townsend Road as a primary school for children aged 5 to 11 with 261 children and 11 teachers. Despite becoming a first school in 1971 pupil numbers rose to 266 in 1980 and 340 by 1998.⁶⁹ A playgroup for younger children was started in 1993.⁷⁰ The Middle Street buildings became a community learning centre.

In 1971 430 children aged 9 to 13 transferred to the new Minehead Middle School in the old grammar school building in Ponsford Road with 18 teachers. Pupil numbers rose to 588 pupils in 1980 and 694 in 1998 with 35 teachers and 33 other staff. The school was extended in 1985, 1993 and 2011 and used the Ellsworth charity for educational visits and music tuition.⁷¹

⁶⁵ SHC, A/CNH 2/1, 6/2/1; *ibid.* C/E 4/64.

⁶⁶ SHC, A/CNH cat.; C/E 409/119.

⁶⁷ SHC, C/E 4/380/270—1; *ibid.* DD/HCK 9/2/7; D/P/m.st.m 17/1/4.

⁶⁸ SHC, C/CA Minehead c.1912.

⁶⁹ SHC, A/CNH cat.; *ibid.* C/E 4/64, 9/79; *ibid.* |D/U|/m 22/1/760.

⁷⁰ Char. Com. Reg.

⁷¹ SHC, C/E 4/64, 409/118.

Convent School

The convent of St Louis opened a school c.1899 in a thatched building in Selbourne Place.⁷² It was rebuilt c.1901 by A. L. Cox of Minehead for 80 children with two classrooms, a recreation room, two playgrounds and cloakrooms.⁷³ It provided for orphans resident in the convent and day pupils aged 5 to 7. A new school opened at Townsend in 1926 as St Teresa's for boarders and day pupils from 5 to 11 for boys and 5 to 18 for girls. In the 1930s the school took over Blair Lodge and added a science block and gymnasium and had c.130 pupils.⁷⁴ It remained open as a primary school until it merged with Minehead Primary School in 1970.⁷⁵

Secondary Education

In 1905 a secondary school for 40 pupils at Townsend House was planned using the Ellsworth charity but the money was insufficient.⁷⁶ Minehead Grammar School opened in 1929 for boys and girls on a large site in Ponsford Road with science, domestic science and manual departments and was enlarged in the 1930s to provide a library, a gymnasium and more classrooms.⁷⁷ During the Second World War Regent Street Polytechnic Grammar School shared its classrooms.⁷⁸ There were 363 pupils in 1947 falling to 305 and 18 teachers in 1957.⁷⁹ Minehead Secondary Modern School opened in 1947 with 150 pupils rising to 251 with 12 teachers in 1957 in new premises at Bircham Road, Alcombe.⁸⁰

⁷² TNA, ED 33/69.

⁷³ SHC, D/U/m 22/1/115.

⁷⁴ SHC, D/U/m 2/2/5; TNA, ED 172/250/16; J. Astell, Around Minehead (1995), 29. www.stlouisconvent.co.uk: accessed 24 Feb 2012.

⁷⁵ SHC, A/COH 1; above, this section.

⁷⁶ SHC, DD/HCK 9/2/7.

⁷⁷ SHC, C/CA Minehead 1926; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1939).

⁷⁸ SHC, A/AOE 1; above, this section.

⁷⁹ SHC, D/U/m 22/1/760; *ibid.* C/E 4/64.

⁸⁰ SHC, D/U/m 22/1/846.

In 1965 Minehead School, a comprehensive, replaced the grammar and secondary modern schools using Bircham Road for the lower school and Ponsford Road for the upper until 1971. There were 738 children aged 11 to 18 in 1967 rising to 1,076 in 1973 when the entire school was housed at Bircham Road. It was renamed West Somerset School with 1,125 pupils from 13 to 18 by 1980. Now West Somerset Community College it had 1,174 pupils in 1998 but most left at 16 for further education. Courses were offered in catering, horticulture and agriculture. It served a catchment area of 600 square miles including much of Exmoor and had a leisure centre, farm unit and an annual horse show besides hosting adult education and community events.⁸¹

Private schools

John Radford kept a boarding school from c.1771 to 1821⁸² and Mary Radford ran a girls' boarding and day school in 1830, possibly one of the two with 39 pupils in 1833.⁸³ In the 1820s Baptist minister John Cocks started a school⁸⁴ continued by his successor Charles Elliott probably until he emigrated in 1850.⁸⁵ William Zelwood's school near Wellington Square had six boys aged 5—10 boarding in 1841⁸⁶ and in 1851 Whiston Bristow kept the school with 16 boarders but it closed c.1860.⁸⁷ A former clubroom off Holloway was a school in 1868.⁸⁸

Ann Ridler kept a day school in Bampton Street in the 1860s and 1870s and there were two boarding schools in the Parks by 1871. One had girls aged 8 to 21 and

⁸¹ SHC, C/E 4/64, 409/120.

⁸² SHC, D/D/Cf (S/237).

⁸³ Pigot & Co. Dir. Som. (1830); Educ. Enq. Abstract (1835), p. 815.

⁸⁴ D. Jackman, Baptists in the West Country (Dorchester, c.1953), 34.

⁸⁵ Minehead Baptist Church, Ter Jubilee Souvenir (1967) [unpaginated]; Pigot & Co, Dir. Som. (1842).

⁸⁶ SHC, DD/L 1/54/43/1; 2/35/2; *ibid.* tithe award; TNA, HO 107/936.

⁸⁷ TNA, HO 107/1920; *ibid.* RG 9/1601.

⁸⁸ TNA, RG 9/1601; RG 10/2348; RG 11/2353; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1861, 1866, 1875); SHC, 291/8.

older parlour boarders occupying two houses and the other taught girls and boys and had eight boarders aged 8 to 14.⁸⁹ Both continued with girls only but the second was replaced by Leighton House in Bampton Street,⁹⁰ which moved to the Parks under that name before 1897. From 1898 as Minehead School for Girls it provided tennis, croquet, violin and piano lessons but closed between 1914 and 1919.⁹¹ The other, known as the Parks High School and School of Music, closed before 1901.⁹² St Aldwyn's School for the daughters of gentlemen was on the Esplanade in 1901 but moved to St Michael's Road before 1923 when there were private girls' schools in Blenheim and Irnham Roads. The Blenheim Road and St Aldwyn's schools remained open until 1939 or later.⁹³

Warwick Grey's 1883 collegiate school was probably replaced by Thomas Williams' school in the Avenue in 1891 when there were ten boys aged 10 to 15 boarding.⁹⁴ Known as Minehead Preparatory school for the sons of gentlemen, it had a resident assistant master and nine boarders under 13 in 1901 who learnt carving, carpentering and 'manly exercises'.⁹⁵ It closed after 1906.⁹⁶ A high school for dayboys and boarders in the 1890s and 1900s in Selbourne Place⁹⁷ backed onto Townsend House and both premises were probably used by the boys' school kept by Bertram Miles in 1910 and William and Blodwyn Richards in the 1920s and 1930s, when it was called Red Cap or Minehead Modern School and had up to 60 boys. It closed before 1939, presumably when Mr Richards became head of the grammar

⁸⁹ TNA, RG 10/2348

⁹⁰ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1875—89); TNA, RG 11/2353, RG 12/1863.

⁹¹ SHC, D/U/m 38/1/1; A Guide to Minehead (c.1906); Kelly's Dir. Som. (1897—1919); TNA, RG 13/2260.

⁹² SHC, D/U/m 38/1/1; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1897—23); TNA, RG 13/2260.

⁹³ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1919—39).

⁹⁴ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1883); TNA, RG 12/1863.

⁹⁵ SHC, D/U/m 38/1/1; TNA, RG 13/2260.

⁹⁶ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1906).

⁹⁷ SHC, D/U/m 38/1/1; DD/IR 14/4.

school.⁹⁸ A Captain Cross opened a school in the 1920s⁹⁹ and Clanville Home Markers private technical school was recorded in 1937—40.¹⁰⁰

Miss Ackerman taught drawing, painting and basket-making in 1898 when Mrs Slade of Harmony House, Bampton Street offered singing and tuition in at least ten instruments. She was succeeded by her son Beethoven Slade in the 1920s and 1930s when there were several music teachers.¹⁰¹

Small short-lived private nursery and primary schools in the later 20th century included the Red Shoes recorded 1954—68. Michael Hall, the London Waldorf school, was evacuated to 27 Blenheim Road and Cleveland during the Second World War with c.156 children and 7 teachers.¹⁰²

Special and other schools

A residential school for disabled evacuees was held at Higher Woodcombe between 1941 and 1944.¹⁰³ Periton Mead ‘open-air’ boarding school for children aged 6 to 16 with special needs was run by Bristol City Council between 1945 and 1985.¹⁰⁴

Although pupils with special needs were absorbed into mainstream schools in the late 20th century¹⁰⁵ Periton Mead survived as an independent school to provide care and education for children aged 11—18 with special needs in 1998.¹⁰⁶ Foxes Academy, established in 1996 in a seafront hotel teaches young people with learning difficulties to live independently and work in catering and hospitality.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁸ TNA, IR 58/82380; S. Lloyd, Townsend House (Minehead, 2004), 9—10; Kelly’s Dir. Som. (1931).

⁹⁹ Kelly’s Dir. Som. (1906); SHC, D/CC/ta 7/44.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, ED 74/7.

¹⁰¹ SHC, D/U/m 38/1/1; Kelly’s Dir. Som. (1906—39).

¹⁰² SHC, A/CNH 3/3—5; *ibid.* D/U/m 2/2/9—10.

¹⁰³ TNA, ED 32/343.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, ED 32/2159—60.

¹⁰⁵ SHC, C/E 4/64.

¹⁰⁶ twenty4seven.co.uk/history-ethos: accessed 17 May 2012.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, D 12/61; foxesacademy.ac.uk: accessed 17 May 2012

CHARITIES FOR THE POOR

Almshouses

In 1630 merchant Robert Quirke built 11 dwellings for the poor on waste ground east of the market cross.¹⁰⁸ By his will of 1648 he endowed them with £200 to buy land and the rents of two storage cellars and left them in the care of his family or if they failed to the overseers of the poor. The £200 was never paid and in the 1780s the overseers used the almshouses as a parish poor house.¹⁰⁹ In the 1820s Mrs Needs gave the cellars, known as Gibraltar, to the parish, which collected rents and paid for repairs but apparently gave nothing to the inmates.¹¹⁰ Although intended for single people or couples the 11 houses contained 78 people in 13 households in 1861.¹¹¹

The income fell to £4 in 1882 yet almshouse repairs cost £30 in 1884 and were paid for by a donation.¹¹² In 1901 Thomas Ponsford gave the dividend on £2,070 stock to cover insurance, repairs, coal and food and by 1935 the charity received £20 rent and dividend on stock.¹¹³ The almshouse residents lived rent free¹¹⁴ and from 1960 the charity income was given to poor Minehead residents of good character but by 2009 the income was over £17,000 a year less than half of which was spent.¹¹⁵

The two-storey 1630 terrace in Market House Lane is constructed of rendered cob under a steep slate roof, formerly thatched, with mainly original doorways and windows. In 1980 only three houses were occupied, each one up one down with a toilet but no bath, but they were restored, modernised and reduced from 11 to eight in

¹⁰⁸ SHC, DD/L P30/66, 69; 1/43/1/4.

¹⁰⁹ SHC, A/AQP 8; Abstract of Charitable Donations, 1787—8, pp. 1050—1.

¹¹⁰ 15th Rep. Com. Char. 379—81; SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/3.

¹¹¹ TNA, RG 9/1601; RG 10/2348.

¹¹² Rep. Gen. Digest Endowed Chars (1869—71), pp. 44—5; SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/3.

¹¹³ SHC, DD/C 234; above, rel. hist.

¹¹⁴ SHC, A/CVZ 1/1 (4).

¹¹⁵ Char. Com. Reg.

1985.¹¹⁶ They bear a plaque with details of Quirke's charity under a ship and the lines 'Gods providence Is my inheritance RQ'.¹¹⁷

Other charities

Gifts by Thomas Wyndham of Kentsford before 1618 and John Hayman in 1625 were lost.¹¹⁸ Irish cattle imported illegally after 1668 were sold and half the proceeds given to the poor, known as the Cow Charity. In 1675 it invested the accumulated £500 in 20 a. in Ottery St Mary, Devon¹¹⁹ producing rents of £19 in the 1780s and £40 by 1816, which were never fully distributed and were invested in public funds. In 1820 the Lord Chancellor was petitioned that the charity be used to clothe 15 poor men and 15 poor women not receiving relief, to provide 10 poor residents with blankets, and to give 1s to 2s to other poor parishioners. The trustees, who held the land and £1,151 8s in stock, distributed the income as instructed.¹²⁰ In the 1850s 80 pairs of blankets and 13s. were distributed but income was increasingly re-invested,¹²¹ the land was sold and in 1913 £20 was given towards the new hospital.¹²² Only a quarter of the income was being spent by 1954, the assets were later disposed of and by 2000 the charity had ceased.¹²³

Gifts of £50 by Alexander Luttrell in 1711, £30 before 1721 from one Webber and £20 by Joan Moggridge for six poor widows were lost¹²⁴ but in 1752 maltster George Sullivan gave the income on £100 to two widows and after their deaths to 16 aged people. In 1760 annuities produced £4 a year but were cashed c.1820 and given

¹¹⁶ SHC, A/CVZ 1/1 (4).

¹¹⁷ SHC, A/AQP 8.

¹¹⁸ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 2/1/1.

¹¹⁹ SHC, A/AQP 8; *ibid.* D/P/m.st.m 4/1/2.

¹²⁰ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 17/1/1; Abstract of Charitable Donations, 1787—8, pp. 1050—1; 15th Rep. Com. Char. 379—8.

¹²¹ SHC, Q/RSc 3/6; Rep. Gen. Digest Endowed Chars (1869—71), pp. 44—5.

¹²² SHC, DD/C 234.

¹²³ Char. Com. Reg.; SHC, DD/C 234.

¹²⁴ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 4/1/2; DD/TB 19/2; *ibid.* A/AQP 8.

to Ann Blake who paid out the interest. She agreed to reinvest the £100 in public funds,¹²⁵ which produced £3 in the 1860s¹²⁶ increasing to c.£15 in the 20th century.¹²⁷ The last recorded distribution was to 43 elderly people in 1936. The capital was spent and the charity had ceased before 2000.¹²⁸

In 1857 Elizabeth Pearce left money for the poor and in 1874 John Frank Dugdale left over £430 used to provide flannel, coal, mutton and tea, From 1973 cash was given to a dozen recipients and in 1996 9 people received £15 each.¹²⁹ In 1998 the both funds were transferred to the Church Unity Emergency Fund set up in 1944. By 2007 it had an income of over £3,000. In 1886 Frances Jane Richardson left nearly £100 to poor parishioners over 70 who received coal in the early 20th century but the charity had ceased before 1999.¹³⁰

POOR

Minehead's port increased its burden of poor relief including responsibility for migrants, refugees, army families and castaways and there were four overseers.¹³¹ The 1611 plague probably reduced rate income and the parish tried unsuccessfully to avoid relieving vagrants and a prisoner's family c.1613.¹³² Neighbouring parishes were ordered to share the burden of relief during the Interregnum.¹³³ By the 1690s regular relief to 40 households cost over £114 and casual payments in cash and kind over £31 including paying 17 rents.¹³⁴ In 1699—1700 it cost £7 9s. 9d. to remove a

¹²⁵ SHC, A/AQP 8; Abstr. Char. Don., pp. 1050—1; 15th Rep. Com. Char. 381—3.

¹²⁶ Rep. Gen. Digest Endowed Chars (1869—71), pp. 44—5.

¹²⁷ SHC, DD/C 234.

¹²⁸ Char. Com. Reg.

¹²⁹ SHC, DD/C 234; D/P/m.st.m 17/3/4—6.

¹³⁰ Supplement (1891) to Return of the Digest of Endowed Charities in the County of Somerset (HMSO, 1892), pp. 24—5; SHC, DD/C 234Char. Com. Reg.

¹³¹ SHC, D/P/m/st.m 13/2/1.

¹³² SHC, Q/SR 16/30—1, 19/139.

¹³³ SHC, Q/Pet 1/75; *ibid.* D/P/m.st.m 13/10/2.

¹³⁴ SHC, D/P/m/st.m 13/2/1.

man to Bridgwater and later parishioners had to be returned from as far away as Kent. John Preddy and his family were brought back from Taunton in 1824 but he regularly absconded leaving his many children on the parish until 1830.¹³⁵

In 1766 c.688 people in 249 households were classed as poor, however, as the list was compiled for electoral purposes and included publicans, maltsters and two customs officers it cannot be a true guide to poverty.¹³⁶ Poor relief usually cost between £100 and £150 a year until the 1760s when it began rising to £232 in 1765 and £340 in 1770, after a drop to £290 in 1780 it rose to £367 in 1790 and £539 in 1797, £603 in 1800 and £962 in 1802.¹³⁷ Between 1772 and 1789 45 poor children were apprenticed¹³⁸ and 52 between 1803 and 1829.¹³⁹ In 1803 73 people were on permanent relief and 26 on casual including 40 aged over 60 and 24 under 14. In 1815 there were 77 on permanent and 12 on casual relief¹⁴⁰ costing £865. By 1820 relief cost £968 encouraging the building of a new workhouse where only c.£10 a year was allowed to maintain each pauper.¹⁴¹

A select vestry, established in 1824, dealt with parish pay, relief in kind and settlement, a doctor was appointed to attend the poor and a rota of carpenters was drawn up to supply coffins. One pauper's goods were sold to apprentice her six young children. In exceptional circumstances parishioners living elsewhere were relieved and the parish remained responsible for them after 1834.¹⁴²

Workhouses

¹³⁵ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 13/3/1—6.

¹³⁶ SHC, DD/L 1/59/6/11; below, local govt.

¹³⁷ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 13/2/1—4.

¹³⁸ TNA, E 190/1084/1.

¹³⁹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 13/6/3.

¹⁴⁰ Abstr. of Returns Relating to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor (1803), 428—9;
Abridgement of the Abstr. of the Answers and returns...so far as relates to the Poor (HC 1818), 382—3.

¹⁴¹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 13/2/4.

¹⁴² SHC, D/P/m.st.m 9/1/1; *ibid.* A/AGC 34/1.

In 1707 Alexander Luttrell leased a house east of New Street for a parish almshouse but by 1734 it was derelict.¹⁴³ In 1731 a workhouse was established west of the present Church Steps, apparently comprising the church house and a cottage. It was governed by a poor sailor's widow in 1766 and her successors were usually paupers, which reduced the salary from £20 in 1750 to £5 in the 1770s.¹⁴⁴ The buildings, including a workroom with spinning wheels and five chambers packed with beds, were extensively repaired in the 1790s¹⁴⁵ and housed 40 people in 1772, 34 people in 1803 and 17 in 1815.¹⁴⁶ The parish employed inmates to work on the roads.¹⁴⁷ A new workhouse was built on two plots in Middle Street c.1822 when a pauper was in charge of both workhouses¹⁴⁸ but in 1840 the old house was three cottages,¹⁴⁹ which it remains. The southern range may be the early 16th-century church house and the northern, now two cottages, may be 17th-century.

The three-storey Middle Street workhouse had five rooms on each floor, some heated and several interconnected.¹⁵⁰ Presumably there was a disturbance in 1825 when three people were evicted and another was refused relief until he repaired all the men's clothes. Private individuals could employ inmates and in 1835—6 they were farmed to Isaac Moore for 2s 6d a week for each adult and 2s for each child.¹⁵¹ By 1838 the paupers had left, presumably for Williton workhouse, and after first

¹⁴³ SHC, DD/L 1/47/8/35, 1/52/31/3. 1/53/32/13.

¹⁴⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/59/5/18, 1/59/6/11; D/P/m.st.m 9/1/1, 13/2/1—3; H. Binding, A New History of Minehead (1977), 136.

¹⁴⁵ SHC, DD/L 1/51/24/5.

¹⁴⁶ SHC, DD/L 1/51/24/5; Hancock, Hist. Minehead, 59; Abstr. of Returns Relating to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor (1803), 428—9; Abridgement of the Abstr. of the Answers and returns...so far as relates to the Poor (HC 1818), 382—3.

¹⁴⁷ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 15/5/1

¹⁴⁸ SHC, DD/L 297/1—2.

¹⁴⁹ SHC, tithe award.

¹⁵⁰ SHC, DD/L 1/54/43/1.

¹⁵¹ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 9/1/1.

proposing conversion to five cottages the workhouse was divided into three plain cottages, which survive, presumably because there were three chimneys.¹⁵²

HEALTH

The last great sweat in 1551 killed up to 70 Minehead people and the plague epidemic in 1610—11 killed 72. A pest house was built, Francis Pearse undertaking to provide for those infected.¹⁵³ Apart from drowning smallpox was the major killer in the early 18th century, 19 in 1725.¹⁵⁴

In 1613 two midwives were recorded¹⁵⁵ and in 1662 three surgeons were licensed¹⁵⁶ including William Paul who in 1681 was offered a £5 bonus by the parish he cure a woman but she died.¹⁵⁷ A wealthy surgeon in 1684 had books and instruments worth over £3.¹⁵⁸ There were three surgeons by the 1790s but only one was recorded from 1852 when most doctors lived at Dunster.¹⁵⁹ However by 1872 there was a dentist¹⁶⁰ and by 1891 two doctors, a midwife, a masseuse and five nurses.¹⁶¹ Dr Thomas Ollerhead practised in Minehead from 1874 until his death in 1950.¹⁶²

In 1929 a district nursing association took over management of the Minehead Maternity Home in Tregonwell Road, which opened alongside a nursing home before

¹⁵² SHC, DD/L 1/54/43/1; *ibid.* tithe award.

¹⁵³ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 2/1/1; E.H. Bates Quarter Sessions Records, 1607—25 (Som. Rec. Soc. 23), 66, 238, 258.

¹⁵⁴ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 2/1/3.

¹⁵⁵ SHC, D/D/Ca 180.

¹⁵⁶ SHC, D/D/Bs 39.

¹⁵⁷ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 13/10/3.

¹⁵⁸ SHC, DD/SP Inv 1684/173.

¹⁵⁹ Universal British Dir. (1793—8); Pigot & Co. Dir. Som (1830); Slater's Dir. Som. (1852—3); TNA, RG 9/1601; RG 10/2348; RG 11/2353; SHC, D/P/m.st.m 9/1/1; DD/WSAS 22/2.

¹⁶⁰ Morris & Co. Dir. Som. (1872).

¹⁶¹ TNA, RG 12/1863

¹⁶² SHC, A/CVZ 1/1 (4).

1928 and closed in 1935, and ran an infant welfare centre in Bancks Street in 1939.¹⁶³ Minehead had its own midwifery association between 1923 and 1945.¹⁶⁴ In 1939 there were six doctors, three dentists, two district nurses, two chiropodists, an osteopath, a nursing home and a TB dispensary.¹⁶⁵ In 2012 there were eleven doctors in two surgeries and three dental practices. There were also a number of large residential care homes.

Minehead Isolation Hospital

In the 1890s an isolation hospital was needed to keep infectious cases such as typhoid and scarlet fever out of Dunster hospital. After many objections Headon Cottages on the Porlock road were used from 1896 to 1901 with resident caretakers and at least three nurses. Patients were conveyed to hospital in a covered ambulance and were charged two guineas a week excluding nursing, reduced for labourers and tradesmen.¹⁶⁶ When the lease expired the hospital transferred temporarily to a building at Higher Moor in 1902 and then to Troyte's at Tivington in Selworthy parish, where it remained until 1948 serving most of West Somerset.¹⁶⁷

Minehead Hospital

From 1913 the Public Hall was used as a hospital, although it closed for a month in the summer for staff holidays. In 1919 it was decided to amalgamate it with the Dunster and Minehead Village Hospital in Minehead in memory of George Fownes Luttrell (d. 1910). In April 1920 staff and patients transferred from Dunster.¹⁶⁸ In

¹⁶³ SHC, C/DN/Misc 10; C/V 15; Kellys Dir. Som (1939).

¹⁶⁴ SHC, A/BQM 4/4.

¹⁶⁵ Kellys Dir. Som (1939).

¹⁶⁶ SHC, D/U/m 2/2/1, 2/5/5, 3/11/1, box 9; TNA, RG 13/2260.

¹⁶⁷ SHC, D/U/m 2/2/2, 3/11/1, 38/1/1, box 9; *ibid.* C/PHH 6, 25, 125.

¹⁶⁸ SHC, DD/NA 15; D/H/m 1/1/1—2; *ibid.* A/BQD 1.

1922 it was renamed the Minehead and West Somerset Hospital to avoid confusion with the isolation hospital and a four-storey nurses home was built behind. In 1926 an extra floor was inserted in the roof for an operating theatre. By 1930 there were over 800 admissions a year from as far as Bampton in Devon and a quarter were treated in a private wing. In the 1930s the old police station was added to the hospital and an outpatients' department was built in the angle between them.¹⁶⁹ In 1939 the 13 medical staff included dentists, a gynaecologist and a pathologist.¹⁷⁰ During the war admissions increased to over 1,000 and casualty cases rose from 755 in 1940 to 3,360 in 1945. In 1947 the hospital treated 1,168 inpatients and 9,519 outpatients. It had inherited Dunster's endowments but was heavily in debt when it transferred to the National Health Service in 1948.¹⁷¹ A new outpatients' department was built in 1949.¹⁷² A League of Friends was constituted in 1971.¹⁷³ In 2011 the hospital moved to new buildings off Seaward Way.

COMMUNITY LIFE

Friendly Societies

In 1768 a Minehead Benefit Society for those in good health aged 18 to 45 paid sick members, widows and funeral costs.¹⁷⁴ In 1803 there were two friendly societies with 164 members and three in 1815 with 173 members.¹⁷⁵ The Union Society, meeting at the Plume of Feathers from 1794 to 1816, and the Sociable Society, meeting at the Red Lion in 1800, had probably closed when the Minehead Benevolent Benefit

¹⁶⁹ SHC, D/H/m 1/2/3—4; D/U/m 22/1/642, 644, 658, 684, 706, 834; DD/C 234.

¹⁷⁰ Kellys Dir. Som (1939).

¹⁷¹ SHC, D/H/m 1/2/4—5.

¹⁷² SHC, D/U/m 22/1/834.

¹⁷³ Char. Com. reg.

¹⁷⁴ SHC, DD/L 1/54/43/1.

¹⁷⁵ Abstr. of Returns Relating to the Expense and Maintenance of the Poor (1803), 428—9; Abridgement of the Abstr. of the Answers and returns...so far as relates to the Poor (HC 1818), 382—3.

Society was established in April 1839 for males over 13.¹⁷⁶ It met at the schoolroom, forbade drinking and smoking at monthly meetings, although ale tokens were issued for the club walk and dinner on 29 May, and required a certificate of good health from members who paid 1s. 3d. monthly to receive 6s. a week when sick and £3 on death. Membership rose from 186 in 1856 to over 250 in the 1870s but fell gradually to 201 in 1887 and the society closed in the early 1890s.¹⁷⁷

Other Societies

The Exmoor Lodge of Freemasons, begun in 1889, was consecrated in 1891. The Masonic Hall in Bancks Street opened in 1893 and was extended in 1923. In 1902 the lodge had 46 members from a wide area including professional men and tradesmen but in 1905 most of the 53 members were local. By 1931 there were 129 members so the St Barnard Lodge was consecrated in 1932 to cater for summer visitors.¹⁷⁸ The hall was used by several Masonic societies by the 1960s.¹⁷⁹

There was a clubroom off Holloway in 1822 and 1840.¹⁸⁰ The Minehead and West Somerset men's club, established before 1906 at the Wellington Hotel, provided billiard, card and smoking rooms but the main attraction was the bar. It moved to the Avenue before 1929 and survived until the 1940s or later.¹⁸¹ The Minehead Brotherhood met between 1926 and 1932 and the Minehead Women's Institute, begun in 1923, had a hall with stage by 1926 and survives despite declining attendance.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ SHC, Q/RSf 1.

¹⁷⁷ SHC, DD/WSAS 22/1, 2, 8, 10, 12, 14; Women and Ch in Agric (1867), 449.

¹⁷⁸ SHC, Q/RSm 2; date on building; M. Yates, Freemasonry in the province of Somerset from 1733 (2010), 105—6, 330.

¹⁷⁹ SHC, A/CSG.

¹⁸⁰ SHC, DD/L 291/8, 297/1—2; *ibid.* tithe award.

¹⁸¹ SHC, DD/X/MBM 1; TNA, IR 58/82385; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1906—39); OS Map 1:2500, XXXV.5 (1929 edn).

¹⁸² SHC, D/U/m 22/1/686, 708, 731; DD/WI, box 36.

Hotel clubs provided bridge, dancing, table tennis and tennis and one promoted amateur theatricals and film production in the 1940s, but they never had more than a few members. The largest were the Beaconwood Hotel Club and the Carlton Hotel sports and travel club whose numbers rose to 123 and 110 respectively in 1961 when most others were in decline.¹⁸³

Newspapers and guides

The West Somerset Free Press, founded by printer Samuel Cox in 1860 and continued by his family company, remains in existence although no longer locally owned. The Minehead Advertiser and Visitors' List, also owned by the Cox family, was aimed at holidaymakers between 1880 and 1930. The Minehead Mercury, West Somerset Chronicle and Mid Devon Advertiser was published between 1898 and 1899.¹⁸⁴

Various publications have been aimed at holidaymakers but in 2008 the Minehead Community Times was launched.¹⁸⁵

Guidebooks were published from the mid 19th century when Reuben Dunn illustrated them with local views.¹⁸⁶ Clement Kille, a local newspaper reporter, produced guides in the 1900s.¹⁸⁷ Later the council issued them but private guides continued to be published like the 1946 guide to walks by photographer Alfred Vowles.¹⁸⁸

Reading rooms and libraries

¹⁸³ SHC, D/PS/du 3/5.

¹⁸⁴ BL, newspaper catalogue; Kelly's Dir. Som. (1883—1939); Mate's Illustrated Minehead (1904).

¹⁸⁵ Minehead Community Times (2008).

¹⁸⁶ SHC, Guide to Minehead and its environs (1857, 1879).

¹⁸⁷ TNA, RG 13/2260; Mate's Illustrated Minehead (1904).

¹⁸⁸ A. Vowles, Guide to 20 beautiful walks (1946).

In 1861 a free reading room on the quay provided daily papers, periodicals and books¹⁸⁹ and in 1896 the parish church opened the Institute in Bancks Street with a reading room for young men. Minehead reading rooms in Friday Street in 1897¹⁹⁰ were presumably replaced by the Victoria Memorial reading rooms in Bancks Street, open between 1901 and 1954 but mainly for cards and billiards¹⁹¹ and now a British Legion club. A sailors' reading room opened above St Peter's at the quay before 1914.¹⁹²

Reuben Dunn's lending library in Frog Street was taken over by Samuel Cox before 1872.¹⁹³ The 1920s and 1930s were the heyday of the lending library including the Cot at Alcombe, Lyddon's in Glenmore Road and Cox's in Park Street.¹⁹⁴ In October 1930 Minehead public library opened in a house in Bancks Street before moving in 1936 to the old council chamber above the market hall. In 1962 the library returned to Bancks Street to a purpose-built single-storey building where it remains.¹⁹⁵

Hobby Horse

The Minehead horse was first recorded in the 1790s on Mayday.¹⁹⁶ It was a sailors' horse in the 19th century and toured Minehead and Dunster for three days accompanied by an accordion, a drum and masked men called 'gullivers' who demanded money. The gullivers were given up by the early 20th century, apparently following a fatality.¹⁹⁷ In 1904 children were afraid of the horse and would not leave

¹⁸⁹ P.O. Dir. Som. (1861—6).

¹⁹⁰ Kelly's Dir. Som. (1897).

¹⁹¹ SHC, DD/C 234.

¹⁹² Mate's Illustrated Minehead (1904); Holmland Handbooks Guide to Minehead, Porlock and Dunster (c.1914).

¹⁹³ P.O. Dir. Som. (1861—6); Morris & Co. Dir. Som. (1872).

¹⁹⁴ SHC, DD/X/ENG 2

¹⁹⁵ SHC, A/CVZ 1/1 (4); Kelly's Dir. Som. (1939).

¹⁹⁶ SHC, DD/SAS C2721/6/21; DD/L 2/48/23—4.

¹⁹⁷ SHC, A/AGC 38/3,

home to come to school when it was about.¹⁹⁸ At that period the Show or Town Horse was created to perform with Morris Men and other horses were made in the late 20th century.¹⁹⁹ The tradition continues although in the 1980s local people took little interest unless the Sailors' Horse met a rival such as the Alcombe Horse.²⁰⁰

Public Entertainment

An assembly room was opened in 1775.²⁰¹ The Luttrells paid the bills including 10s. 6d. for broken china in 1783.²⁰² It was presumably destroyed in the 1791 fire. In 1879 a company was established to build a public hall, which was erected in 1888—9 to the designs of J. P. St Aubyn at a cost of c.£4,000 to seat over 500 people. It was used for plays, concerts and religious services but was not very successful and in 1913 was converted to a hospital.²⁰³

The Queen's Hall, built on the seafront in 1920, belonged to Totty Russell proprietor of the neighbouring Arcadia tented concert hall and the Cozy Cinema who provided a six-piece orchestra to play on the Esplanade in 1926. The hall provided light entertainment during the summer but lost revenue after the Regal opened. It was requisitioned as a food store in 1942 and only reopened in 1946.²⁰⁴ It became an amusement arcade c.1970 but later re-opened as a public house with popular entertainment. The Arcadia was replaced before 1930 by the 260-seat Gaiety Theatre, which was run by the council between April and September. It was demolished in 1979 for an amusement arcade.²⁰⁵ In the 1930s the council invested in a piano, music

¹⁹⁸ SHC, A/CNH 2/1.

¹⁹⁹ SHC, A/CVZ 1/1 (4)

²⁰⁰ L. Lamplugh, Minehead and Dunster, (1987), 107—8.

²⁰¹ SHC, DD/L 1/10/33.

²⁰² SHC, DD/L 1/4/13/1.

²⁰³ SHC, PAM 530; *ibid.* D/U/m 3/11/1; above, this section, health.

²⁰⁴ SHC, C/V 15; *ibid.* DD/X/ENG 2; D/R/wil 12/4/4; D/U/m, box 11; OS Map 1:2500, XXXV.5 (1929 edn).

²⁰⁵ SHC, D/PS/w.som 3/1; *ibid.* A/CVZ 1/1 (4).

stands and 1,500 deckchairs and agreed to a kiosk for astrological consultations and in 1935 the jubilee was commemorated with a bandstand in Blenheim gardens later converted into a café.²⁰⁶

The Central Hall in Bancks Street, open by 1910,²⁰⁷ was converted into a cinema in 1913,²⁰⁸ known as the Cozy by 1928. It was replaced by the Regal and became a shop and later flats but in 1937 a miniature cinema 17ft by 9 ft was created behind premises in Bampton Street.²⁰⁹ The Regal was built in 1934 as a 1,600 seat theatre or cinema with a ballroom, which was sold before 1979 when the cinema was converted into a ground-floor shop and first-floor theatre. In 1994 the theatre was vested in the Minehead Amateur Theatrical Association and is home to a dance group, a film society and five dramatic societies.²¹⁰

A Minehead mummers play was performed until c. 1880 but revived in the early 1900s when the vicar encouraged the schoolchildren to study folk songs and morris dancing.²¹¹ In the 1920s Minehead had an operatic society²¹² and in 1963 the Minehead Concert Society was formed, later the Minehead and West Somerset Arts Society. Minehead also has a choral society and male voice choir.²¹³

The 18th-century elections were always occasions for drinking, music and gunfire.²¹⁴ Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 was celebrated with a picnic at Periton and a seafront fountain.²¹⁵ In 1945 the council gave children free cinema admission to celebrate the end of the war but refused to take part in the Festival of Britain in 1950. In 1953 it provided Coronation mugs to children under five, free

²⁰⁶ SHC, D/U/m 3/15/1; H. Binding, Old Minehead, 44.

²⁰⁷ SHC, DD/IR 14/4.

²⁰⁸ SHC, D/U/m 3/4/2.

²⁰⁹ SHC, D/U/m 22/1/718, 778; *ibid.* C/V 15.

²¹⁰ SHC, *ibid.* A/CVZ 1/1 (4); regaltheatre.co.uk/about: accessed 12 June 2012

²¹¹ SANHS, topog. colln; PSAS (1906), 38; (1931), xlv.

²¹² SHC, A/ABA 1/1.

²¹³ SHC, A/CPO 1/1.

²¹⁴ Below, parl. representation.

²¹⁵ Destroyed in 1930s for road widening. Photos in possession of H. Binding.

lollipops and ice cream to children attending games, television facilities to watch the coronation and a bonfire at the golf course.²¹⁶ A seafront clock tower was planned to mark Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

SPORT

Parkfurlong was given to residents for archery and recreation c.1437²¹⁷ and Butts Green, between Bampton and Friday Streets, recorded from the early 17th century, presumably refers to archery practice.²¹⁸ Bowling greens were established beyond the quay before 1701, on the site of a poorhouse before 1738 and probably within a circular enclosure in the Parks area probably before the mid 18th century.²¹⁹ One was used for election dinners²²⁰ and in 1770 a woman was paid a guinea to attend the green and boil the kettle during the season.²²¹ Bowls went out of fashion in the 19th century and the last green was destroyed in 1868.²²² The sport was revived and a club was formed in 1917.²²³

Until the mid 20th century tourist guides emphasised hunting opportunities. The Minehead, originally Hindon, Harriers were established before 1890 with kennels in Periton and hunted twice a week in the 1930s.²²⁴ Stag hunting was carried out in October and fox, otter and badger hunting occasionally in 1906.²²⁵ In the late 19th century and 1900s there was regular horseracing on the beach and in 1874 steamers

²¹⁶ SHC, D/U/m 2/2/15, 19, 22.

²¹⁷ SHC, DD/L P27/9.

²¹⁸ SHC, DD/L P30/47

²¹⁹ SHC, DD/L 1/10/35A; 1/47/8/35; 1/52/31/2; 1/59/10/3; 297/1; DD/TB 16/8.

²²⁰ SHC, DD/WY, box 36; DD/L 1/59/4/5/13.

²²¹ SHC, DD/L 1/10/33.

²²² SHC, DD/L 291/8; 297/1; *ibid.* tithe award.

²²³ *Kellys Dir. Som* (1906); *Minehead Community Times* (Aug-Sep 2008).

²²⁴ SHC, D/P/m.st.m 23/5; DD/X/ENG 2; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1906. 1939).

²²⁵ *Guide to Minehead* (c.1906).

came from Swansea for the races.²²⁶ Polo was played in the parish before moving to Dunster in 1910.²²⁷

The Minehead and West Somerset golf club, established in 1882, opened links on Dunster Warren before 1889 and created a clubhouse out of former industrial buildings. The club had 273 members by 1962 and remains in existence.²²⁸ Minehead Recreation Ground, opened in 1899 in Irnham Road, provided bowls, cricket and athletics, a football club was founded in 1889, a tennis club began before 1906 and was re-established in 1929, the King George's Playing Field opened c.1938 and there was a police rifle club in 1939. The Church Institute gym and the Victoria Memorial games rooms were for men only. In the early 20th century there were tennis courts in the Parks, Blenheim Road and Alcombe Road and at schools, hotels and private houses.²²⁹ A skating ring was built in Quay Lane in the 1900s but before 1910 had been converted to a drill hall and badminton court.²³⁰ A Minehead Regatta was held in the 1920s.²³¹ The rugby club, begun in the 1930s, folded but re-started and with bowls, cricket, football, tennis, sailing and other sports flourished in the early 21st century.²³²

Sea bathing was popular in the 19th century but even in the 1930s the council tried to enforce the use of bathing machines.²³³ By 1928 several hundred bathing huts stood east of the Esplanade, mostly privately owned but 116 belonged to the Luttrell's Dunster Trading Company that built the seafront lido in 1935. Its pool opened in 1936

²²⁶ The Cambrian on-line index: accessed 14 Nov 2006; OS Map 1:10560, XXXV. NW (1888 edn); G. Court, Minehead to Watchet (1996), 29.

²²⁷ Above, Dunster, soc. hist.

²²⁸ TNA, IR 58/82373; SHC, D/PS/du 3/5; Guide to Minehead (c.1906); Minehead and West Somerset Golf Club Centenary (1882—1982).

²²⁹ SHC, A/AGC 35.6; *ibid.* C/V 15; *ibid.* D/U/m 22/1/230, 371—2; Char. Com. reg; Kellys Dir. Som (1906, 1939).

²³⁰ TNA, IR 58/82386.

²³¹ SHC, DD/L 294/8—9, 12; Western Times, 24 Aug 1923.

²³² SHC, D/PS/du 3/5; Char. Com. reg.; info from club websites accessed 12 June 2012.

²³³ SHC, D/U/m 3/15/1.

with championship swimming and diving facilities and 2,000 seats. It used 50,000 gallons of sea water every hour. It closed in 1991 and a small replacement pool closed in 2007.²³⁴

THE MILITARY AND THE IMPACT OF WAR

As a port Minehead was only too familiar with war and its consequences. In 1569 it had to provide 32 guns compared with Bridgwater's 14²³⁵ and by 1584 there was a beacon on North Hill.²³⁶ As the port of embarkation for troops and passengers to and from Ireland it suffered a flow of Irish refugees during the Civil War. Most inhabitants apparently supported Parliament and in 1642 Royalist troops failed to commandeer ships due to 'malicious activity' in putting to sea leaving only two colliers. A skirmish and an inn siege ensued, Parliamentarians imprisoned a Royalist bishop travelling from Ireland and Catholics travelling to Ireland were said to have been murdered. In 1644 cavalry passed through to North Devon and in 1645 Goring's troops raided Minehead, took horses and fined the town £300.²³⁷ In 1647 and 1649 the port was required to transport troops and horses to Ireland and the soldiers 'lay sometimes very long upon the Country hereabouts before they were ship'd'.²³⁸ Five troop ships were lost in 1649 leaving 100 widows and orphans in Minehead.²³⁹ In the

²³⁴ Guide to Minehead (c.1938); SHC, C/V 15; *ibid.* D/U/m 22/1/746—7; D/DC/w.som 22/2/16; DD/X.WBB 23.

²³⁵ E. Green, Certificate of Musters, 1569 (Som. Rec. Soc. 20), 55.

²³⁶ SHC, DD/L P3/18; 291/8.

²³⁷ Bellum Civile 1642—4 [Ralph Hoptons narrative] (Som. Rec. Soc. 18), 17—18; D. Underdown, Somerset in the Civil War and Interregnum (1973), 28, 43, 77, 115; VCH Office, Taunton, draft history; SHC, DD/HCK 9/1/17; HL, PO/JO/10/1/127; accessed on-line 4 April 2012; Cal. SP Dom. 1644, 439; 1645—7, 14.

²³⁸ Cal. SP Dom. 1645—7, 539; 1649—50, 210, 219, 350, 394, 407, 528; SHC, DD/L P2/36/3.

²³⁹ SHC, Q/SPet 1/75.

1650s troops embarked for Ireland with ammunition and six guns from Taunton Castle²⁴⁰ and later officers, soldiers and families returned through Minehead.²⁴¹

The government feared dissenters and ‘suspicious persons’ frequenting the port especially Irish refugees in the 1680s and 1690s.²⁴² Five men, including two tailors, were implicated in the Monmouth rebellion and one was probably transported to Jamaica but the three men hanged in Minehead were not from the town.²⁴³ Many local men served their country in the navy,²⁴⁴ infantry and marines and in 1798 the Minehead recruiting officer demanded overdue expenses.²⁴⁵

From the 1890s North Hill was used for military training and a reservoir was built. In 1899 over 3,000 volunteers camped on North Hill for a week and the council agreed to light the street lamps till midnight during their stay. In 1902 the Imperial Yeomanry camped there, in 1910 1,650 Devon Yeomanry came for 15 days and in 1911 a dust storm damaged the Devon and Cornwall infantry camp.²⁴⁶ From 1910 the 5th battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry had a drill hall in Quay Lane.²⁴⁷ At North Hill camp Portuguese mules were trained for the front during the First World War and Portuguese timber workers camped at Middlecombe in 1917. The town could accommodate 1,500 soldiers but by 1915 had as many war refugees as it could cope

²⁴⁰ Cal. SP. Dom. 1651, 505—6; 1651—2, 85, 97, 212; 1653—4, 570. Possibly those at Minehead in 1685: D. Stevens, The Story of Minehead Harbour Guns (1988), 3.

²⁴¹ Cal. SP. Dom. 1655, 73, 571; 1656—7, 549; 1657, 493.

²⁴² Cal. SP. Dom. 1683, 349; SHC, Q/SO 8, f. 53; *ibid.* DD/SF 5/6/12; Cal. Treas. Bks 1557—1696, 230—1.

²⁴³ W. M. Wigfield, The Monmouth Rebels 1685 (Som. Rec. Soc. 79), 9, 15, 21, 32, 68, 79, 97, 163, 166, 181, 187.

²⁴⁴ Above, econ. hist., maritime trade.

²⁴⁵ TNA, T 1/815/75—6; *ibid.* WO 97/238/5; WO 97/756/78; WO 97/781/85; WO 97/1185/34; WO 121/42/341; WO 121/89/42; WO 121/145/757; SHC, Q/SR 365/1/26.

²⁴⁶ SHC, A/ATH 32/16/8; A/CVZ 1/1 (4); *ibid.* D/U/m 2/2/2, 3/11/1; britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk accessed 29 Nov 2011

²⁴⁷ Kelly’s Dir. Som. (1910, 1914); TNA, IR 58/82386.

with. Seats in the town were set aside for wounded soldiers.²⁴⁸ On Armistice Day 1921 a war memorial was unveiled at the top of Martlett Road.²⁴⁹

In 1933 the aircraft carrier Furious and the destroyer Vega visited Minehead during a week-long gala.²⁵⁰ In autumn 1939 over 800 evacuee children, 50 teachers and helpers and 214 mothers and pregnant women were billeted. In 1940 Christmas treats were given to children from London and Hastings and in 1941 there were two evacuated secondary schools in Minehead. Two nursing homes were opened for pregnant evacuees who were transferred to Dulverton in 1943.²⁵¹ Four public air raid shelters were built, a wartime blockhouse and pillboxes disguised as shelters were built along the seafront, anti-tank obstacles and other defences were constructed on the beach and a coastal battery was built to protect the harbour. Minehead's Home Guard battalion had a rifle range on the beach north of the quay and manned a pillbox south of Bratton guarding the road from Porlock. One man died during a gun demonstration and two were killed in the sea, probably by a mine. Some infrastructure survives from extensive military tank training on North Hill, which had a radar station built c.1942.²⁵² In 1944 601 evacuees remained and after flying bombs threatened London a further 660 arrived. When the war ended the military cleared the beach and the council demolished the air raid shelters to encourage holidaymakers to return but one pillbox survives as a viewpoint west of the harbour.²⁵³

A Territorial Army headquarters was established after the war in Alcombe Road.²⁵⁴ In the mid 1950s an RAF radar station with two antennae was built at West

²⁴⁸ SHC, D/U/m 2/2/5, 3/4/2; Exmoor Review (1984), 64.

²⁴⁹ SHC, DD/X/BYE 4; SCC, HER.

²⁵⁰ SHC, A/CVZ 1/1(4).

²⁵¹ SHC, D/U/m 2/2/10, 13, 14.

²⁵² SHC, A/AGC 38/4; *ibid.* C/CR/W 5/1—2; SCC, Som. HER; J. Wilson, The Somerset Home Guard (2004), 147—8, 151—2.

²⁵³ SHC, D/U/m 2/2/14—15.

²⁵⁴ OS Map 1:12500 SS 9745 (1964 edn).

Myne but it was abandoned in the 1960s, probably without being used.²⁵⁵ Minehead Civil Defence committee had 67 volunteers when it was stood down in 1968 and a Civil Emergency Association was formed to continue the work.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ C. Webster, 'RAF West Myne: A short-lived radar station of the 1950s in West Somerset', PSAS, 153 (2010), 151—155.

²⁵⁶ SHC, A/AGC 38/1.