

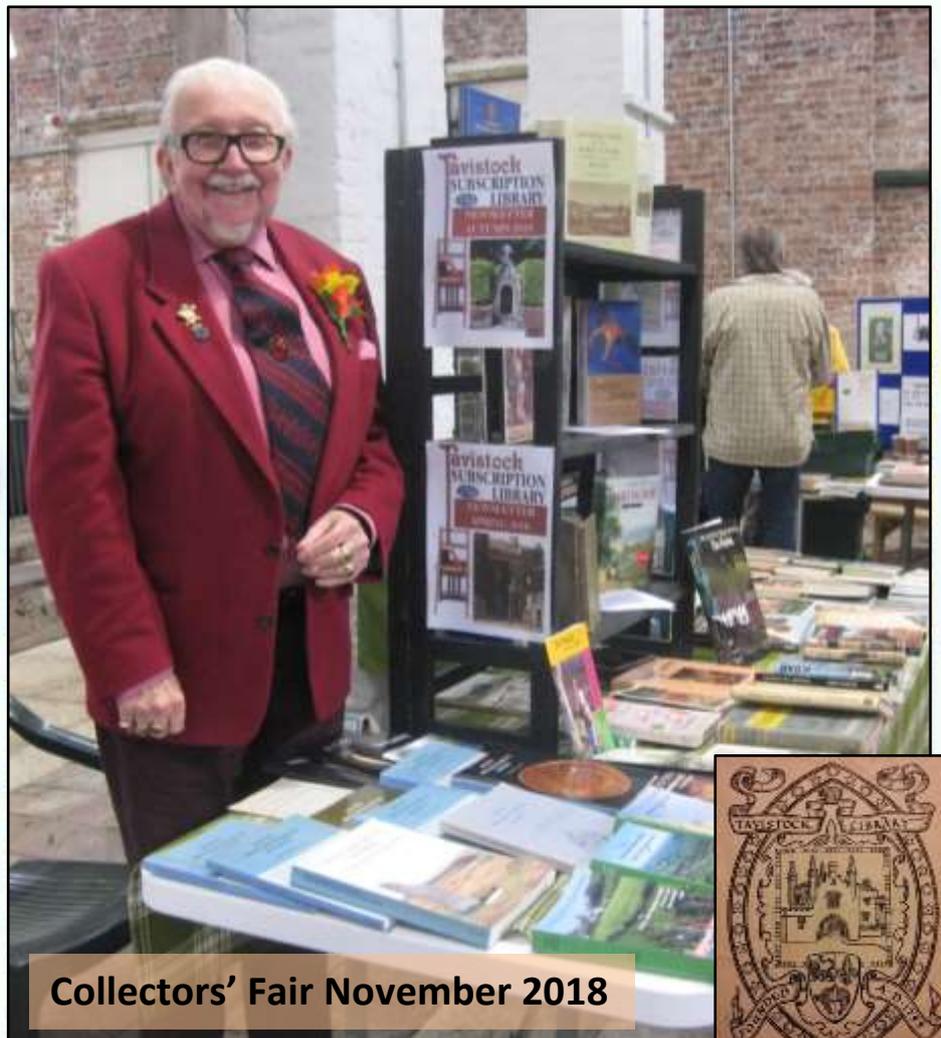
Tavistock SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARY

Established
1799

NEWSLETTER
WINTER 2018-2019



Photo by Vanni Cook



Collectors' Fair November 2018



New Acquisitions in the Library.

We have been generously donated new books recently

DEVON During the First World War



Produced by
the Devon Remembers Heritage Project

The Devon Remembers Heritage Project ran until 2018 and gave local people an opportunity to explore the county's First World War experience and tell new stories about life in Devon one hundred years ago. It was led by the South West Heritage Trust, a new charity that celebrated and protected our region's rich heritage, helping everyone to enjoy it now and in the future. The Devon Remembers Heritage Project aimed to tell the distinctive story of Devon during the First World War. The project team (Katherine Findlay and Dawn Roberts) had been based at the Devon Heritage Centre in Exeter and worked with communities and organisations across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. This book is a series of individual stories by various compilers detailing Devon's rich heritage of 1914-1918.

Lest We Forget



From Devon to Australia

A 19th Century Narrative

Through the unpublished letters of the Merrifield family

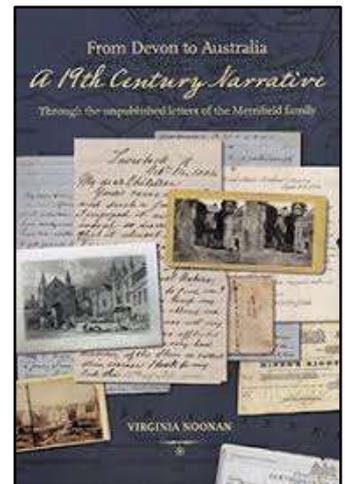
Virginia Noonan

176 pages (2017) ISBN: 978-0994612830 £25.00

Published by the author, printed by DartPrint of Tavistock.

Available from The Book Stop, Tavistock.

Review courtesy of 'The Devon Family History Society'



There's only one thing better than holding a new book in your hand – it's holding the book while talking to the author! Virginia travelled all the way from her home in Melbourne, Australia, to Tavistock, to launch her book in a local bookshop. The first thing I did was to turn to the back – where

I found, not only an index, but comprehensive notes and sources for every one of the twelve chapters.

The bibliography and notes about the photos and documents all show how much work has gone into this book. It's a treasure trove for anyone with interests in Tavistock and district, but more importantly, it provides an overview of the effects of the Industrial Revolution and social conditions on the lives of ordinary people. It explains the trials, tribulations and changes faced by working-class people during the 19th century, through reference to real people.

Genealogy in isolation can be just a list of names, dates and places. This book is a history of the Merrifield family in its time and place, both nationally and internationally, with an appreciation of how the education and aspirations of a local family resulted in descendants across the world.

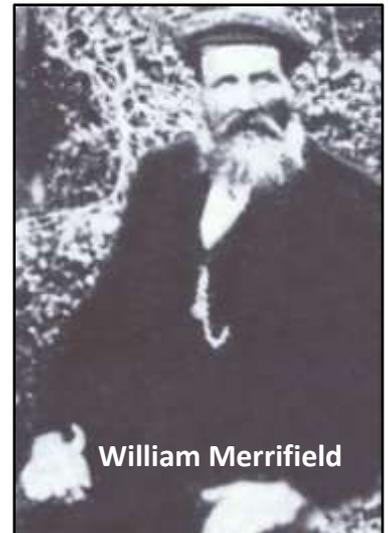
Virginia Noonan is the great-great-great-granddaughter of William Merrifield. For over a decade, she has meticulously and tirelessly tracked down many historical records and family memorabilia. Almost every page contains one or more illustrations. Family photographs, places in and around the Tavistock area, Clunes and Ballarat in Victoria, family letters, maps, posters, wills and a miscellany of items which all reflect the life and times of the Merrifield family. William Merrifield was the librarian at the Tavistock Subscription Library from 1841 to 1872 and one of the earliest Devon photographers. His son Samuel Merrifield left England in 1854 to search for gold in Australia.

Samuel's brother John Merrifield was the first Principal of the Plymouth Navigational School and received awards for the work he did to improve navigation processes for use at sea.

From life and times in Devon, the saga moves to Australia, where Virginia describes the life of the gold diggers, the harsh conditions they endured and brutality inflicted on them at the Eureka Rebellion. She has woven together her meticulous research in both Devon and Australia with the information gleaned from over 140 Merrifield family letters 1856-1911. Many other local names appear in the narrative. A "must read" for the family historian, the social historian, the budding author – in fact, everyone!

The 19th century context for this narrative, based on the content of family letters and other documentation, has provided the background for exploration of a range of historical topics. Beginning in Britain the narrative examines the effect the industrial revolution had on the agricultural labourer, the start of education for the working classes and the resulting opportunities. Those who seized the chance for an education, not only changed their own destiny but that of their descendants. Many of these educated people went on to university, participated in community affairs, politics, religion, and took greater interest in developments in technology.

In Australia, research was undertaken to explore the life of the gold diggers and the harsh conditions they endured, along with the brutality inflicted on them at the Eureka Rebellion, and life in Australia after the decline of the gold rush. The discovery of gold in Australia stirred the young Samuel Merrifield from Tavistock, Devon, to set sail in 1854 to make his fortune in Britain's far-off colony. This adventure resulted in over 140 unpublished personal letters being written by the family, giving readers a first-hand account of what life was like for them in 19th century England and Australia. Their words provide insight into the life of people, similar to the Merrifields, whose everyday activities have been more or less forgotten. The 19th century narrative provides the reader with a rare opportunity to examine the trials, tribulations and changes faced by working-class people during that period, and to consider the effect these changes have had on today's society.



Tavy Tales Writing Group

Our writing group, now known as Tavy Tales, began meeting in the late summer of 2016. Our membership is small, never more than 6 people, but has been consistent from the start. We take a theme for each session and come together to read aloud to each other with discussion following. The majority of our work has been short stories but occasionally we have ventured into poetry or life writing. Themes have been varied but have included everything from local tales on Dartmoor, fantasy lives, a murder mystery, a romantic theme and an imagined diary from a First World War soldier.

During our 2-hour session we also do some free writing, often using a game that has pictures to inspire. This allows for invention and amusement!

Whilst our group is informal we now number the joint winner of this year's Tavistock Library short story competition amongst us and an author of a non-fiction work published by Pen and Sword.

We started meeting at the Subscription Library early in 2018 and really appreciate a local and intimate venue. We would welcome new members. Please note that we don't regard ourselves as experts - simply people who enjoy writing and the conversation that is inspired by it.

To find out more, please contact Angela Pitt at tavytales@gmx.com



News from the Reading Room

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2019

The 2019 AGM will be held on Monday 18th March 2019 at the Library at 7.30pm and all members are warmly invited to attend.

Subscription Library Wharf Talk 18th March 2019



On the same day as the Library AGM - Monday 18th March 2019 - the Chairman is giving a talk on Tavistock Subscription Library, its founding and history, at the Wharf Arts Theatre in Tavistock at 2pm. Cost £5 or £4 for Wharf Members. Starts at 2pm until 3pm entry includes tea/coffee & cake!. Hopefully the talk might attract some new members. Do come along and help with talking to people about the Tavistock Subscription Library.

Subscriptions for 2019

Happy New Year to all members! A reminder that 2019 Subscriptions are now due. They remain at £12 for individual members and £18 for join members. These fees will be reviewed in December 2019 for the following year 2020. If you wish to pay your subscriptions by Standing Order do please contact the Treasurer Bill Lane or Simon Dell and this can be arranged for you. New membership application and renewal forms are available for 2019. If you are paying subscriptions then a cheque made out to Tavistock Subscription Library left for Juliet Hill the Membership Secretary, would be kind. We prefer a cheque rather than leaving cash in the Library for security reasons.

Simon would welcome any pictures, book reviews on recent acquisitions in the library, articles stories etc for the next Spring newsletter so do please get in touch with him if you would like to get involved at either simondell1958@yahoo.co.uk or mobile 07845 176870

