



The Union Workhouse

During Victorian times some parishioners of St Mary's Church, and vulnerable residents of Higher Brixham were sent to live in the Workhouse in Totnes known as the Union Workhouse

During the Victorian period, from 1850 to 1900 some vulnerable residents of Higher Brixham were sent to live in the workhouse in Totnes known as The Union Workhouse. Situated on The Old Plymouth Road, it later became Broomborough Hospital. It is known that workhouses existed in Totnes as early as 1738, a parliamentary report in 1777 recorded parish workhouses in operation at Totnes for up to 40 inmates, the demeaning term used to describe their lowly status, other rural parishes nearby had similar arrangements, Berry Pomeroy had room for 40 and there were others who operated in Ughborough, Cornworthy and Staverton. Brixham had a parish workhouse for 60 inmates in what was then called Beggars Hill, now Bakers Hill. The building later became Bakers Hill School.

My brief, to establish who may have been removed from Brixham to Totnes during the period of our research, and then to identify their family and in so doing, to find out more about their family history. From the census record of 1881 it was possible to note any resident of the workhouse who had come from Brixham, their age and occupation.

Taking a name at random, I chose the name of George Gillard Upham, and set about researching whatever information I could find about his life and family. As with all research into families, it has revealed a most interesting story illustrating the hardships and struggles experienced by ordinary people in those days. Also how discriminating we would find some of the language they used in comparison to what we consider acceptable now,

George Gillard Upham was born in Brixham in 1825 to Matthew Upham born in 1785 and his wife Elizabeth born in 1783. Matthew's occupation was as licensed victualler of The Watermans Arms, he died in 1827 two years after George's birth.



The Watermans Arms

George was the youngest of six children born to the couple who married in 1805. Before marriage Elizabeth had been Elizabeth Farley from Berry Pomeroy and it would appear that her son was named George after her father. His second name, Gillard is more unusual and it is not clear why he should have been given it. It was normal in Victorian times to use the mother's maiden name for one of their children's given names, but it is not the case in this instance. It is possible that he was named after the Reverend Philip Gillard, the Vicar in charge at Saint Mary's Church and Curate of Kingswear at the time of George's birth and baptism. The Reverend Gillard was a benefactor committed to certain charitable donations, although his contribution was said to be at least six years in arrears..

I have followed the life of George and his family through the census records from 1841, until his death in 1901. In the census record of 1841 the family were living in Milton Street, Elizabeth was the head of the household and running a Grocery store, this was a very normal occupation for a widow, although, the census still described her status as married. Others in the household were William, born in 1822 and Martha Upham Burns, Elizabeth's grand daughter, being the daughter of George's eldest sister Susanna Upham born in 1806 who married William Burns in 1826.

In the 1851 census, the household consisted of Elizabeth, George and granddaughter Susanna, aged 6 years, she was the daughter of William Upham and his wife Sarah. Elizabeth and George were still running the grocery store, but from the record we learn that George had a disability, described as a cripple. Such a description would never be used today. Elizabeth died in 1858 aged 75 years, this would have left George in a very vulnerable situation due to his disability.

In 1861 George's address was Drew Street, in previous years the family lived in Milton Street and Town Square, which are all very close together, I wonder if it may have been the same property all along. Anyway, George's occupation had changed and he was a Sculptor, living with his nephew William. Unfortunately George's circumstances changed dramatically during the next ten years because in the 1871 census he was living alone in Beggars Hill, described as a pauper. We now know that Beggars Hill was part of the Brixham Parish Workhouse at the time, and by 1881 when the next census was taken he had been moved to the Union Workhouse in Totnes and described as an inmate while earning his keep. During his time in Totnes his occupation was given as School Master, this suggests that George was accomplished in his art and trained other inmates within the workhouse community. George Gillard Upham died in 1901, aged 77 years, he was buried in the churchyard of St. Mary's Church in Brixham.

I have traced the Upham family living in Brixham, back to about 1710 with the records of George's Great Grandfather, John Upham and his family. Because of the early date I have been unable to trace any more information, other than they were John and Ann Upham, The couple had three children, Matthew born in 1739, Mary born in 1741 and John in 1742, who died the same year.

Below I have outlined the family for clarification:

John Upham Born 1710 married (about) 1738 to Ann Born 1710

Their children,

Matthew Mary John

Born 1739 Born 1741 Born 1742

Matthew Upham Born 1739 (A Yeoman) married 1776 Susanna Daws Born 1746

(Susanna had already given birth to a child named Martha before her marriage when she became Martha Daws Upham)

Their children:

Martha John Betsy Sarah **Matthew**

1776 1778 1779 1781 **1785**

Matthew Born 1785 married 1805 Elizabeth Farley (from Berry Pomeroy)

Their children:

Susanna Martha Sarah James William George Gillard

Born 1806 Born 1810 Born 1813 Born 1816 Born 1822 Born 1824

This Upham family lived their whole lives in Upper Brixham known as Cowtown, within the parish of St. Mary's Church. They were not well off and due to her husband's death at the age of 42 years, Elizabeth would have struggled to make ends meet. George, as we have learned, had a disability, and although he was able to help his mother, he was not able to contribute in any great way to the family income and when she died he was unable to support himself alone. Over the years his occupation was described as Sculptor, Stone Cutter and Stone Mason.

As explained earlier, it was my brief to identify someone from Higher Brixham who had experienced life in the Union Workhouse in Totnes and that I have done. However during my research I found other people in Brixham with the name Upham and because of the similar choice of christian names felt they must be related to Matthew Upham and Elizabeth Farley. Many were buried in Saint Mary's graveyard, indicating that they lived in Higher Brixham, therefore, although they were not part of my original task, they certainly fell into the wider picture. This has proved to be more difficult than I envisaged, two Matthews marrying two Susannas, both with sons named Matthew with only a couple of years apart, one married Ann Jarmond and the other Elizabeth Farley, even the well known ancestry websites were not

consistent in their records. My findings are slightly controversial but weighing up all the evidence I believe I have found the solution. I will explain from the beginning:

John and Matthew were certainly family names repeated throughout each generation of the Upham family, in fact the very first Upham names were John Upham born in 1710 and Matthew Upham born in 1715. I would like to say they were brothers but I have not been able to prove that in any way. However both of these young men with just a few years separating their ages, went on to create their own individual families in Brixham and at the same time leaving a trail of confusion in their wake.

Both young men had sons called Matthew and in the spirit of fact being stranger than fiction, each married a girl named Susanna. They were Susanna Daws born in 1748 and Susanna Sanders born in 1758. Over the years this has led to much confusion because entries in Parish registers refer to most of the births of their children as “born to Matthew and Susanna.”

Initial research indicated that Matthew Upham of my interest, and later married to Elizabeth Farley was the son of Susanna Sanders but further investigation points to him being the youngest son of Matthew Upham and Susanna Daws, I give my reasons why. I think this is so

Before marriage Susanna Daws gave birth to a daughter, named Martha Daws, taking her mother's maiden name. After the marriage of Matthew and Susanna she became Martha Daws Upham. The couple went on to have four more children, John was the eldest son born in 1778 and following the births of two daughters, they had another son Matthew born in 1785, and baptised in 1788, the register states he was the son of Matthew Upham and Susanna Daws, so there is no doubt there.

At the marriage of Matthew Upham and Elizabeth Farley in 1805, Martha Upham, already mentioned, was a witness at the marriage and her name appeared on the entry into the register. Martha was still using her maiden name as she did not marry until three years later in 1811. It is unlikely that a witness would be from another family which was not related in any way, however it is extremely likely that she would be a witness at the marriage of her youngest brother. I feel the bond was a strong one because Matthew and Elizabeth went on to name their first daughter Susanna and their second Martha, this surely indicates what a close family they were. This is illustrated still further in the next generation when their son William married Sarah Skelly and named their first daughter Martha and their second, Susanna. It is generally believed that Matthew and Elizabeth came from the Sanders family and I offer this information with caution.

This information would mean that Matthew Upham, husband of Elizabeth Farley was the younger brother of John Upham who later married Ann Gilbert Pitts. It also means that he was George's uncle.

Having done my best to convince the reader that this branch of the family, previously believed to be from the Sanders family, actually belonged to the Susanna Daws family, I now offer my thoughts and findings relating to the Susanna Sanders family.

Originating from Matthew Upham born in 1715 and married to Ann Varrell, they had five children. The first named Matthew did not survive, but a child born in 1752 was given the same name, Matthew and he is the subject of our presentation to you.

In 1775 Matthew married Susanna Sanders, Susanna was a minor when they married and Matthew was a Mariner. Together the couple had ten children, their second daughter died whilst still an infant but miraculously the others all survived.

Matthew of this family was baptised on 1st November 1783 he had a sister Elizabeth born in 1788 who is relevant to our story and I will return to her later. In 1806 Matthew married Ann Jarmond. The Jarmond and Upham families were already familiar to one another because James, a younger brother of Matthew had married Elizabeth Gilmor the previous year, Elizabeth was a widow and Gilmor her married name, her maiden name was Jarmond, so now we have two brothers in the Upham family married to two sisters of the Jarmond family. This fact further endorses, that Matthew born in 1783 was the son of Matthew Upham and Susanna Sanders. In the next generation, of the family of James Upham and Elizabeth Gilmor nee Jarmond, the name Jarmond was well represented in the names of their children with three of the five becoming Jarmond Upham. (When Matthew died in 1837 aged 53 years the register states he lived in Lower Brixham).

I said I would return to Elizabeth Upham born in 1788 and sister of Matthew born in 1783, and this is that moment! In 1802 little Elizabeth created a sampler at school bearing all the names and birthdates of her brothers and sisters. We see these items frequently but none could have been more poignant to our story of the Upham family in Brixham than this one. Every thread so carefully embroidered 217 years ago has given the only true account of the Matthew and Susanna mystery, because she was certainly from the Sanders family. The discovery of the sampler is a story in itself and I feel so privileged to relate it.



An original sketch by Peter Archer depicting a young girl embroidering a victorian sampler

Elizabeth married in 1804 a fisherman named Prince Symes, and the couple had two children that I have traced, named Elizabeth Sanders Symes born in 1808 and a son named Prince Symes, after his father, born in 1813. I am reliably informed that the family moved with a group of other Brixham fishermen to Ringsend near Dublin in Ireland and set up an important fishing port there, I believe it still exists to this day

This most interesting fact was discovered by a gentleman from Brixham, now living near Exeter and a direct descendent of the Mathew Upham and Elizabeth Farley family, who informed me that whilst tracing his family history a researcher had put him in contact with a descendent of Prince Symes in Ireland, and it was at that time that the sampler came to light.

To summarise, Susanna Daws or Susanna Sanders? I believe the Susanna Sanders family were predominantly from Lower Brixham with the fishing community whilst Susanna Daws was from Higher Brixham and the Yeomen of that area, and if that was the case it would make John Upham, the shipbuilder, George's Uncle after all.



Brixham Harbour as it is today

There were few families in Brixham who were not connected in some way or other to the sea. The whole lifestyle of Brixham has always been centred around fishing, and that is how the large part of the community living in Lower Brixham, known as “Fishtown” earned their living. Rows of fishermen’s cottages filled the narrow streets on both sides of the harbour. So steep and narrow that they were in some cases reached by flights of steps. It was in one of the cottages on King’s Steps that George Gillard Uphams uncle, John Upham lived with his wife Ann Gilbert Pitts.

Ann came from Churston Ferrers and they married in 1796. John Upham born in 1778 was a Mariner, In later years it was his son, John Upham born in 1807 who started the Upham Ship Building Business, John married in 1829 to Mary Bird, her father was Samuel Bird, a Cordwainer, who also came from Brixham.



Brixham Harbour when the tide is out



*The Upham family gravestone in
St Mary’s churchyard*

Brixham Harbour when the tide is out

John and Mary had eight children and the whole family were buried in the Churchyard of St. Mary’s Church. Their burial site and headstones, along with the following two generations of the family, have been identified and plotted as part of the current St Mary’s Church Gravestones Heritage Project.

However it was their eldest son, John William Upham born in 1832 along with their youngest son Andrew Upham born twenty years later in 1852,, who continued the business into the twentieth century. Andrew Upham’s grandson Stuart Upham was the last surviving member of the family, he died in Brixham in 1982. An outline of this Upham family is shown below.

John Upham Born 1710 married (no date) Ann Born 1710

Their children,

Matthew Mary John

Born 1739 Born 1741 Born 1742

Matthew Born 1739 (A Yeoman) married 1776 Susanna Daws Born 1746

Their children: (The first child so named as she was born out of wedlock)

Martha Upham Daws **John** Betsy Sarah **Matthew**

Born 1776 **Born 1778** Born 1779 Born 1781 **Born 1785**

John Born 1778 married 1796 Anne Gilbert Pitts (from Churston Ferrers)

Their children

John Upham Susanna Daws Upham Elizabeth Pitts Upham James Sarah

Born 1807 Born 1798 Born 1802 Born 1803 Born 1805

John Upham Born 1807 married 1829 Mary Bird Born 1810

Their children

John William Samuel Bird Nancy Henry Bird William William **Andrew**

B 1832 B 1835 B 1837 B 1839 B 1845 B 1849 **B 1852**

John William Upham Born 1832 married Catherine Euffam Born 1834

Their children

Elizabeth Jessy Warren Mabel

Born 1866 Born 1870 Born 1877 Born 1879

Andrew Born 1852 Brother of John William Upham married Ann

Their son Percy Upham Born 1877 married Susan

Their son Stuart Andrew Upham Born 1908 married 1935 Eva Peak

They lived in Wall Park Road Brixham

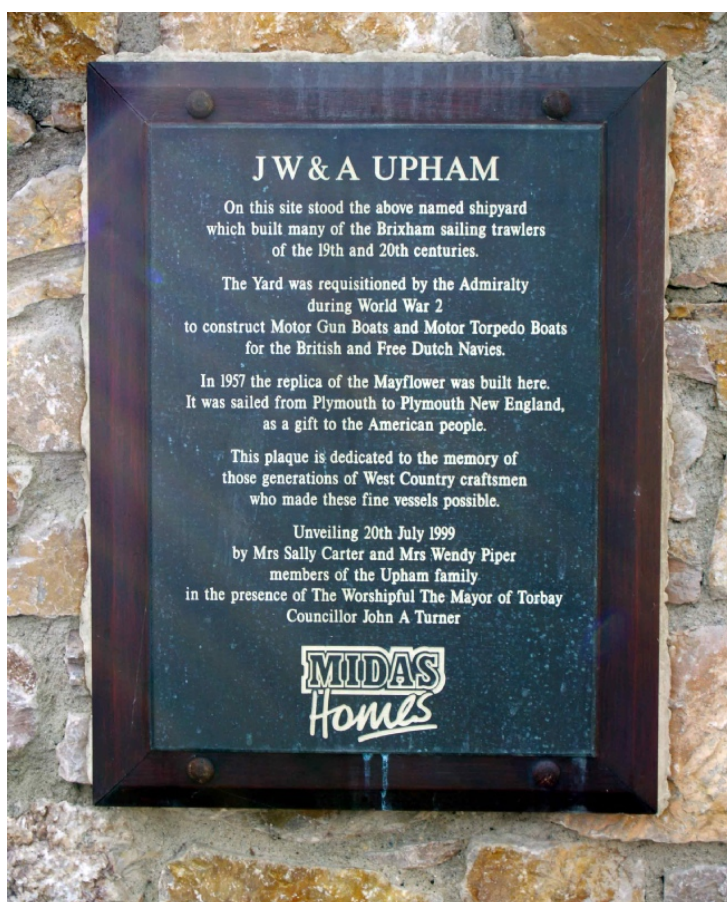
Stuart Andrew Upham Died in 1982 aged 74

All of the burials of the names shown in BOLD print above are contained in graves that have been identified by the ongoing St. Mary's Church Gravestones Heritage Project.

I am aware that as part of the project undertaken our research is intended to concentrate on the residents of Higher Brixham known as “Cowtown” however, researching the Upham family has taken me to Lower Brixham known as “Fishtown”. As my story of their lives unfolds I hope the reader will forgive my distraction in order to present a fuller picture of this family set within the historic fishing town of Brixham.

As I peruse the early census records it is striking to see the many occupations of the residents as a whole, and how far they differ from other rural districts. Gone are the Ag Labs and the labourers, and in their place the descriptive occupations of mariners, fishermen, sailmakers, rope makers and ship builders, reminiscent of a thriving fishing port. Before the modernisation of recent years Brixham harbour was lined, on the far side by warehouses, known as godowns (an Asian term for a warehouse) and used as ship building yards. This was the industry of generations of the Upham family. Now the area is occupied by modern blocks of upmarket flats, but set into the wall is a plaque, its inscription as important and revealing of the Upham family business as the gravestones we are discovering in St. Mary’s Churchyard.

I have written the transcription alongside the plaque below.



JW & A UPHAM

On this site stood the above named shipyard which built many of the Brixham sailing trawlers of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The yard was requisitioned by the Admiralty during World War 2 to construct Motor Gun Boats and Motor Torpedo Boats for the British and Free Dutch Navies.

In 1957 the replica of the Mayflower was built here. It was sailed from Plymouth to Plymouth New England, as a gift to the American people.

This plaque is dedicated to the memory of those generations of West Country craftsman who made these fine vessels possible.

Unveiling 20th July 1999 by Sally Carter and Mrs Wendy Piper members of the Upham family in the presence of The Worshipful Mayor of Torbay Councillor John A Turner.

The plaque erected on the site of the Upham Shipyard

It is in the spirit of the pedigree highlighted on the plaque that prompted a certain British Army officer named Warwick Charlton to approach Stuart Upham about the possibility of recreating a replica of the Mayflower, which had sailed, with the Pilgrim Fathers from Plymouth to New England in 1620. I have discovered a record of how this approach came about and the very genuine manner in which the decisions were taken at the time. The story is as follows...

Building Mayflower 11

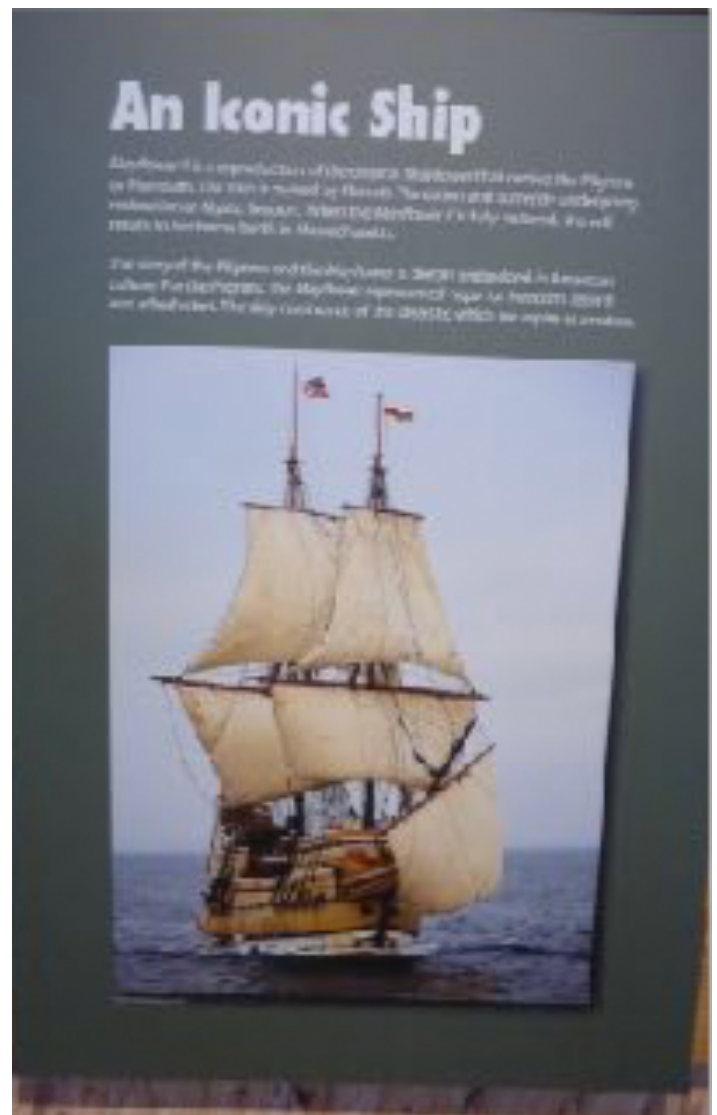
Charlton's first meeting with Stuart Upham of Brixham

When Warwick Charleston met Stuart Upham for the first time he was immediately impressed and convinced that he had found the person to build the Mayflower 11.

They spoke about the difficulties in obtaining the timber and men with the right skills required to fulfil the task. Warwick Charlton was reassured by Stuart Upham that this was not a problem as he already had some men who possessed the skills required and that they in turn would train others in their craft.

Fundraising for the project was in its early stages and there would not be a lot of money available at the outset but even this did not deter Stuart Upham who explained to Warwick Charlton that his firm was small but that he was so enthusiastic about the undertaking he would pledge the resources he had to the task.

Warwick Charlton responded "Lay the keel, start building and my belief is this little ship will start talking for herself" The first contract was made with a handshake between Stuart Upham shipbuilder and the gentleman, Warwick Charlton and work on the Mayflower began on 4th July Independence Day 1965.



The story of the Pilgrims and the Mayflower is deeply embedded in American culture. For the Pilgrims, the Mayflower represented hope for freedom, rebirth and a fresh start. The ship reminds us of the ideals to which we aspire as a nation.

The traditional craftsmanship of the Brixham Shipyard

Warwick Charlton spoke of Stuart Upham's approach to shipbuilding as inspirational, keen to preserve the old arts and crafts of shipbuilding in the way his forefathers had and the pleasure it gave him. He also thought that it may be the very last ship of this size to be built without the aid of modern materials and methods.

Building the ship involved drawing on the long established building methods of wooden ship building and the experience gained over the years, but it also involved a lot of research and a revival of tools and techniques no longer employed in modern shipbuilding. Stuart Upham wanted the new Mayflower to resemble the original in every detail. It was this attention to detail which gave him the greatest satisfaction and pleasure. When asked if he may get the same results from modern equipment he replied that the tools used for constructing the large wooden ships would not have changed in three hundred years, and added that "except for sawing and drilling, modern machinery cannot be used if you want me to build Mayflower"

The Launch of Mayflower 11

Prior to the launch of the ship there were discussions about who should be invited to launch Mayflower. It was felt it should be someone from everyday life who, at the same time had contributed in some practical but significant way to Anglo American friendship.

Warwick Charlton, In discussion with a friend, Edmund Jessup, the rector of Babworth with Ranby, near Retford, a location associated with the original Pilgrims, he was told of a young American airman, Reis Leming, who, himself a non swimmer, had risked his own life to rescue thirty British men and women during floods on the East Coast in 1954. He had been decorated by the Queen for his bravery and heroism.

On the day of the launch, with the George Medal pinned to a rain-soaked coat he declared over the microphone that it was one of the greatest things that had happened to him and added "You British don't forget"

Stuart Upham handed the christening chalice to Reis and together they passed it round the shipwrights, each man took a sip of the wine until the chalice returned to Reis. Together Reis and Stuart then climbed up the ladders onto the ship and walked to the bows, where Reis drained the cup. According to the old custom it was then cast into the sea with the words "I name thee Mayflower."

Ten shipwrights lined each side of the ship and waited for the foreman shipwright to give his orders. Long handled maul hammers at the ready,

“Are you ready?” he shouted, they began to chant one blow, two blows, three blows, and twenty hammers rang a sharp explosive tattoo, driving the wedges to inch the Mayflower along onto the cradle of the slipway. The final command came from Stuart Upham who gave the order for two of the men to strike away the dog shores under the forefoot. The Mayflower swept down the greased slipway, gathering speed she launched herself for the first time on water.



My account was inspired by the words of Warwick Charlton.

Warwick Charlton died December 10th 2002 aged 84 years

So what happened to ‘The Mayflower II’ ?

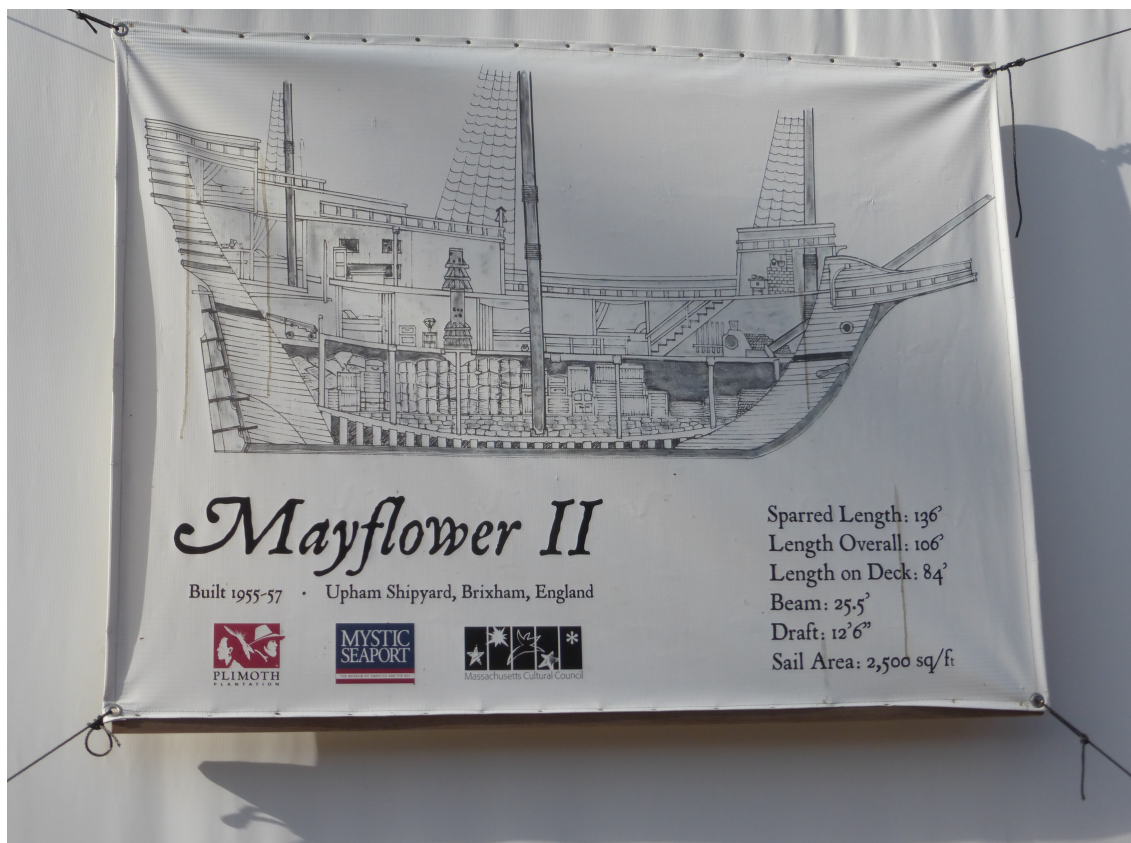
By complete coincidence I happened to be in New England on holiday in October 2017 when on an included excursion, visited the Historic Sea Museum in Mystic Connecticut. There, lo and behold, sitting in the dry dock, in a most fragile condition and undergoing extensive rebuilding and refurbishment after 60 years, was none other than The Mayflower II.



Mayflower II with details of the Upham Shipyard printed on the side of the protective canvas shelter.



My fellow travellers did not quite get the excitement that I felt at witnessing first hand the name of the Upham Shipyard referring to its original build, or the reference to Brixham Devon, just four miles from my home. Neither did I at that time appreciate the enormous coincidence because I had not yet started on my research into the Upham family, which ultimately led me to the discovery, of the very different fates of the members of the Upham family in Higher and Lower Brixham



Building the *Mayflower II*

The *Mayflower II* owes its existence to a collaboration of interest and a generous act of gratitude. In 1947, shortly after its founding, Plimoth Plantation embarked on a plan to build a reproduction of the ship and commissioned naval architect William Avery Baker to draw up the plans. At about the same time, British Army officer Warwick Charlton founded Project Mayflower to build a reproduction of the ship to be presented as a gift to the American people in appreciation for their help and cooperation during World War II. Charlton learned of Plimoth's plan to build the ship and the two organizations formed a partnership. Plimoth agreed to care for the vessel upon completion and the keel was laid in 1955 in Brixham, England. The *Mayflower II* sailed to America and arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts on June 13, 1957. A few weeks later, the ship visited New York City where the crew received a ticker tape parade.



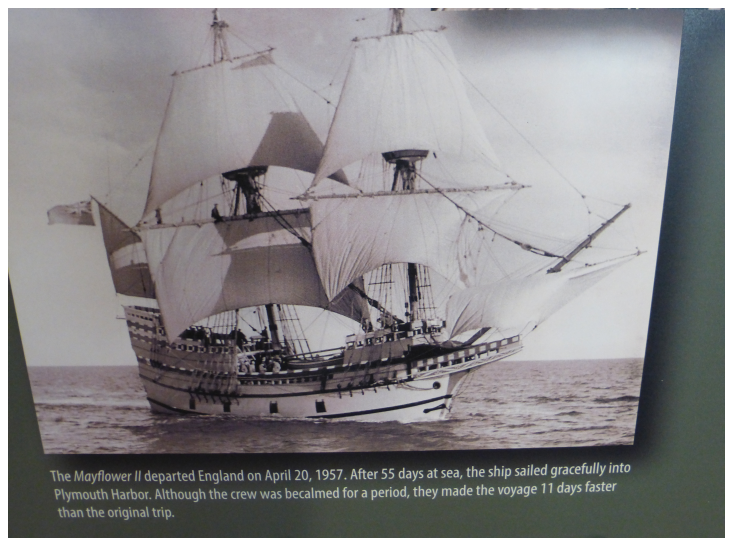
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The *Mayflower II* owes its existence to a collaboration of interest and a generous act of gratitude in 1947 shortly after its founding Plimoth Plantation embarked on a plan to build a reproduction of the ship and commissioned naval architect William Avery Baker to draw up the plans. At about the same time, British Army Officer Warwick Charlton founded Project Mayflower to build a reproduction of the ship to be presented as a gift to the American people in appreciation for their help and cooperation during World War II. Charlton learned of Plimoth's plan to build the ship and the two organisations formed a partnership. Plymouth agreed to care for the vessel on completion and

An exhibition highlighting the refurbishing project displayed old photographs of the historic event in 1957, it was a real step back in time for everyone, but for me it really held something special. I had remembered the time when local people lined the clifftops to see the momentous occasion of the *Mayflower II* sailing from our local shores to America, I was still at school but it was very much in the news. I could not believe the timing of my trip and to experience the enthusiasm for the project. In latter years I have become very involved in local and family history so this was all of great interest to me.



The *Mayflower II* departed England on April 20 1957. After 55 days at sea, the ship sailed gracefully into Plymouth Harbour. Although the crew was becalmed for a period, they made the voyage 11 days faster than the original trip.





When I set out on my trip to visit America for the very first time little did I know that it would yield so many surprises.

Mystic Seaport Museum, situated in a most attractive location just a few minutes from the small town of Mystic was an inspiration in itself. Examples of all the seafaring crafts relating to early times were set out in such an attractive way as if in a village setting. I feel I have diverted slightly but hope you will have enjoyed the story of the Upham family of Brixham on the coast of Devon, England.

Now having reached the conclusion of my story of the Upham family I would like to thank my friend Ann Jenkinson who contributed tirelessly to my research and also joined me on the trip to New England.

Jennie Crisp For the Friends of Brixham Library Lottery funded Saint Mary's Gravestone Project 2019

