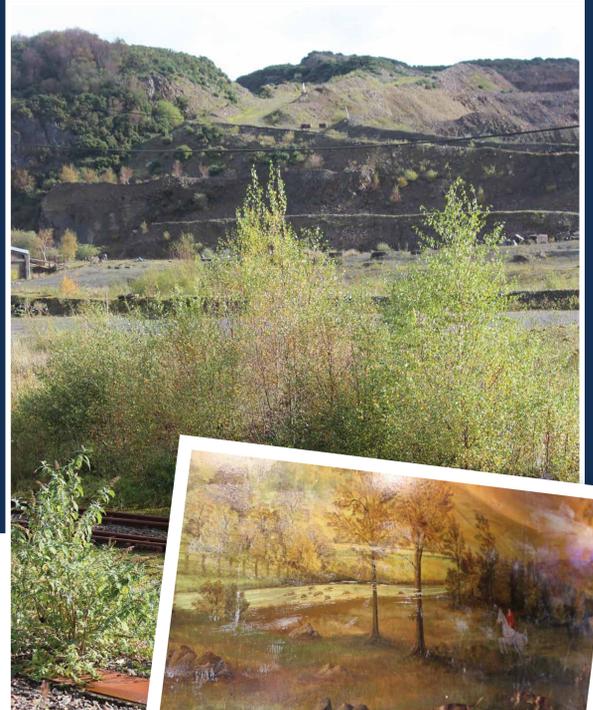


Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots: Okehampton



Head and Hands Stories of Work and Poverty

Many of those who have come to Okehampton from elsewhere have contributed skills and crafts to the area.

Napoleonic Prisoners of War subsidised a paltry living allowance by forming 'messes', where they combined resources and produced items to sell, such as cabinets, chairs, cribbage boards and models of houses and churches. Some taught French to local inhabitants.

A similar resourcefulness was also evident amongst WW1 Prisoners of War. Howard Barkell remembers how "Some of the prisoners spent their time making wooden toys. At Christmas each child at school was given one. I remember mine was a two-piece wheeled dachshund". POW's also produced a beautiful hunting mural for The Fox and Hounds pub, which can still be seen today.

Until the early 20th century the process of glassmaking was dominated by European manufacturers. When the Granulite Works Glass Company opened a quarry at Meldon on the edge of Dartmoor, they brought over a small number of skilled German and Dutch workers from the continent to train locals.

Victorian workers had few rights – and foreign workers even fewer. After losing his job due to redundancies at the factory, Dutch glassworker Engbert Warnder Roosien and his family ultimately ended being sent to the Okehampton Poor Law Institution (commonly known as the 'workhouse'). After his papers were found not to be in order, Roosien was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment and recommended for deportation: an early example of how difficult it can be for workers from different places to survive and make their way - even those with skills to share.

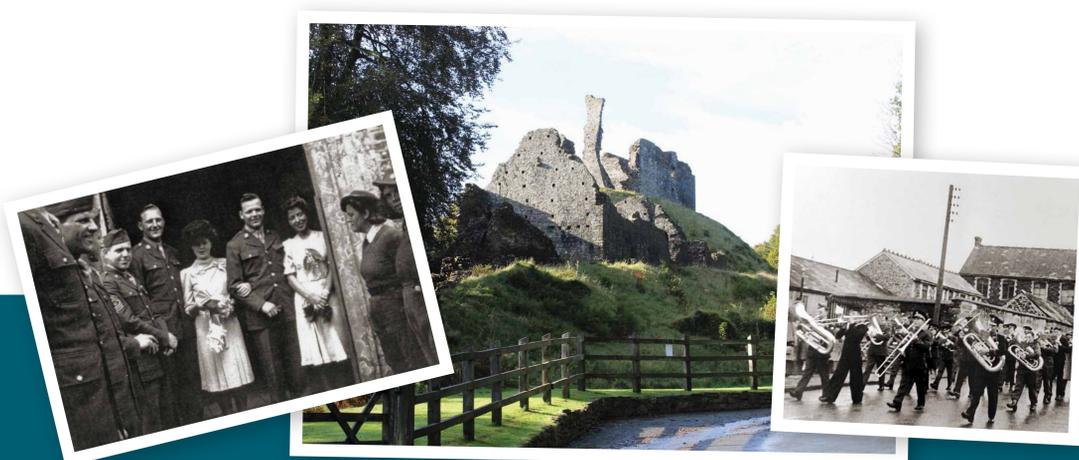
"Okay, so my name is very English, even my maiden names. So I remember applying for this job. I turned up and the shock on the interviewer's face when they realised! My very English name, and then seeing this five foot one Filipino girl walk through the door. It was, I could say, classic (laughs)."

Yvonne, Anglo-Filipino, Okehampton resident

Top photos: Left: The Workhouse. Right: Meldon Quarry. Right inset: Mural in the Fox and Hounds pub, painted by POWs.

Bottom photos, left to right: Marriage of a Land Girl to an American soldier (1944); Okehampton Castle; US troops on parade during WW2.

Exploring the rich multicultural history of Devon



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