

## **Millbrook Heritage by Colyn Thomas.**

### **Introduction**

The village has existed from at least 1442, when the Lord of Millbrook was given to Sir John Cornwall by Henry V111. The earliest known description of Cornwall states that Millbrook, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth was a "Riche Fishing Town" Before then we know, it had it's corporation officials seal, but during the reign of Henry V111 the town lost its ancient priviledge of sending 2 members to the house of commons, because it could not afford to pay it's members 4 shillings per diem while engaged on their Parliamentary duties.

It was formerly a prosperous fishing village having a fleet of at least 40 boats, and many men sailed from Millbrook to the wars of Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> time.

In more recent times Millbrook's prosperity was dependent on industry which in turn was dependent to a large degree on water being its means of transport, and on the Naval Dockyard opposite as its principle customer with the industry mainly concentrated in the Southdown area which is on the north east side of Millbrook lake.

An extent of the industry is recorded by the Western Morning News of the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1889 which states visitors to Millbrook will note the alterations of the landscape between Cremyll and Millbrook after the Sylvan beauty of Mt Edgcumbe. The contrast is very striking of factory chimneys, busy quays, and grimy barges, mounds of clay and earth and all the unlovely surroundings and associations of a manufacturing district. The cause of this being the development of two important industries, the brick manufacturers and the terra cotta manufactory. These with the flourishing condition of the smelting works have caused a great influence of people into the place with the sudden increase in population barns and outhouses have been utilised as lodging houses.

The smelting works to extract copper appears to have ceased in about 1904, but brick production which started in approx 1885, continued with some breaks between 1942 and 1950, to 1956 when the old Southdown Brick Company was closed.

Millbrook was in the parish of Maker until 1869 when it became a separate parish.

The only place of worship until the Old Church was built in 1826 was the chapel at Insworke Manor.

### **The Mill**

The present building at Insworke Mill dates back to 1518 although the date stone on the building shows 1589, it was said to be rebuilt in 1801. Tithe records of 1841 show the building being occupied by a Mr. Lewis Parsons. The 1856 Kelly's directory records show a Mr. John Parsons son of Nicholas Parsons. The Parsons family extended their interests and were referred to as "Millers and Merchants) and by 1906 "Merchants and Steam Boat Owners" The mill is reputed to have been last used to grind corn in 1914, the miller being a Mr. Harris.

It was worked by the tidal water being trapped in the 25 acre millpond at high tide, leaving the water level in the pond at 12 to 15 feet depending on the tide. The millpond has since been land filled and covers the area of the football club, car park, football ground and park. The great wheels of the mill turned as the tide went out and the sluice gates were opened. The mill was commonly known as a grist mill, a term historically used to a local mill where farmers brought their own grain and received flower from it minus the "millers Toll". It could operate for a period of approx 8 hours in any 24 hour period. With a good head of water the water wheels used to rotate at 10 rpm and through the appropriate gearing the millstones rotated at approx 120 rpm.

The Mill was originally a three storey building built of random stone rubble and in the latter years the mill and quay was used by a local company of boat owners, The Millbrook Steam Boat Company, for the purpose of storage and repair of boats.

**MILLBROOK STEAMBOAT AND MOTOR BOAT Co.**

FINE FLEET OF EXCURSION STEAMERS,

"Hibernia." "Devonia." Motor Boat, "Queen."  
"Britannia." "Cornubia." Motor Cargo Boat, "Despatch."

Leave the **PROMENADE PIER**, Free of Tolls,  
FOR  
**RIVER AND SEA EXCURSIONS.**  
DAILY AT 11 a.m., and about 3 p.m. SEE DAILY PAPERS.  
*Tram Terminus at Pier Entrance.*

---

**STEAMERS to MILLBROOK for WHITSAND BAY, and from SALTASH  
to DEVONPORT & VICE-VERSA,**  
At the Hours and Half-Hours. FARES 1d.  
According to Time Tables,  
Obtainable on Board or of J. Clark & Son, Cumberland Street, Devonport.

**STEAMERS ON HIRE FOR SPECIAL PARTIES.**  
REFRESHMENTS ON BOARD AT REASONABLE RATES.

Offices, Millbrook, Plymouth. Telephone No. 2 Millbrook. [

It originally had 4 wheels which were about 14 ft across, but latterly 3, using 2 for grinding and 1 for hoisting the grain in sacks to the top floor where the grain was funneled through a hopper to the grinding wheels below. There are stories of a Mr. Hooper; Jim Hooper who was called The Mighty Miller He was a giant of a man who delivered flour to two Bakeries. The sacks of flour were 280lbs in weight and it needed a giant to carry them up and down stairs and steps.

The village gets its name from the Mill, Mill on the Brook (Millbrook) and is a part of the design of our ancient borough seal. They recall the time when towns and villages grew up around the economies of the mill.

#### **Last Miller**

Mr Harris

#### **The First Car in the Millbrook Area**

The first car in the Millbrook area was a 1903 Wosley bought by a Mrs L Parsons of Higher Tregantle Farm

#### **The First Man Killed in A Motoring Accident.**

The first man killed in a motoring accident was a Mr Alfred William Kingdon who died from injuries received in a motor bus accident at Cremyll on 8th February 1920



### **The Chapel at Insworke Manor**

This chapel was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and its licence of Devine Worship by Bishop Grandisson of Exeter (1327 – 1369) is still preserved. The chapel was in constant use until the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when it fell into dis-repair and only the shell of the building still remains to this day.

### **The Old Millbrook Church**

This was sited at the Millbrook Burial ground at Millpoolhead where the Chapel of Rest is now. It was built in 1826 to serve the parishioners of both Millbrook and Kingsand. But it was so badly constructed that in 1888 it became imperative to build a new place of worship and to erect a new building at a different site.

The Old Church was eventually demolished in 1904 and the Chapel of Rest built in its stead

### **All Saints Church**

It was designed by Messrs Hine and Odgers of Plymouth, The corner stone was laid with full Masonic Honours by the Earl of Mount Edgumbe on September 21<sup>st</sup> 1893, the site near Pottery was generously donated by Lord Clinton and W D Boz Esq.

It cost £4,500 to build and was consecrated on All Saints Day November 1<sup>st</sup> 1895 by Dr John Gott, the third Bishop of Truro.

On completion of build a sum of £490 was outstanding so a garden fete was held at Mt Edgumbe Park and the profits were donated towards defraying the outstanding debt.

The church has a Nave 81ft long and 24 ft wide with five bold arches supported by moulded pillars on each side. With a North and South aisle of similar length, the total length of the church including the Chancel is 115ft and is capable of seating 600 people.

The general build contractor was a Mr Blowey and the clerk of the works was a Mr S Collings The original design of the church included a bell tower but the money for this was not forth coming neither was an organ originally installed due to lack of funds.

It was not until 1907 that an organ was supplied at the cost of £300; a Mr W A Northcott was the Church organist at the time.

### **The Baptist Church**

This was situated in West Street immediately abutting what was Arthur Mathews Butchers Shop. It was dedicated to worship in 1821 and formed part of the Plymouth circuit being a branch of the senior Mutley Baptist Church. The church was demolished in the 1960's.

### **The Methodist Church**

The first property bought by the Wesleyan Methodist was in June 1796 when a house and garden was purchased. The first chapel deeds are dated 1836 which relates to the original Chapel in Fore Street which became the Wesleyan Sunday School and now the Scouts Hall.

The foundation stone for the present church was laid on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1873 by a George T Rolston which was reported as being of Italian Style of Architecture, would seat 400 persons and the estimated build cost was £1,320.

### **Millbrook C.E. Junior and Infant School**

The vicar of Millbrook, Reverend Harold Pettman decided in 1912 that the village needed a new school for the girls and infants of Millbrook. He made it a part of his mission to have one built at Blindwell Hill. The project was authorised and the project began in 1913 with the corner stone being laid by Lady Jane Trefusis on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1915.

Despite the war years of 1914-1918 the building continued using Scout Labour and the highest quality of bricks from the local brick yard at Pottery and Foss. Two separate schools were housed in the same building, the upper floor for older girls and the lower floor for infants with separate entrances for each school.

### **Key History Dates Remembered by the School.**

18/4/16 The vicar visited the new school and informed the children that the Lord Bishop of Truro was officially opening the School on 29/4/16.

29/10/16 No coal was available for the boiler, very cold conditions children sent home for the day until coal arrived.

29/1/17 The boiler was registering a max temperature but the classrooms only averaged 44 degrees. It was impossible to keep the school warm without adding another radiator to each classroom.

21/2/17 There is no water supply in any part of the building although the thaw set in 6 days ago.

18/7/17 Owing to a severe thunderstorm singing had to be taken by all classes at 11.20am.

23/2/20 Girl from class one given one stroke of the cane on the hand for eating another child's lunch.

20/11/32 A gramophone and ten folk dance and march records purchased from proceeds of jumble sale.

3/3/38 Mr Attlee and the chancellor visited the school with the vicar and Mr E Brown esq.

18/5/38 A holiday was given to enable the children to see the Queen Mary.

18/4/39 A practiced evacuation of the school was arranged for children to hide in lanes and hedges because there are no air raid shelters of any kind available.

4/7/40 Children hid in the cellar for half an hour this morning due to the presents of German raiding machines.

28/11/40 Owing to traffic bombing and gunfire during the night from 6.39pm – 2.30 am Only 40 children attended school.

22/4/41 There was a terrific bombardment lasting from 9.30pm – 4am. The children were awake all night due to hundreds of incendiary bombs dropping on the village very few children attended school.

9/5/41 Registers were not closed until 10.30am all the week. German raiders have been in the skies every night from 11pm and the all clear has not been sounded until 4 or 5 am. There was incessant gun fire all through the night.

26/6/45 One LCC evacuee returning to London today. The remaining two have no mothers or homes to return to.

23/3/48 The district clerk visited the school with a parcel containing sweets and food from the children in Australia.

8/2/54 All lessons stopped at 10.45 am so that children can listen to the radio to Queen Elizabeth being proclaimed sovereign.

20/2/67 The air raid shelter was demolished over half term.

15/10/68 A phone was installed at the school.

15/9/83 The first computer was delivered.

31/3/88 Mr Roy Boston retired after 25 years headmasters' service to the school.

### **Millpoolhead**

Apparently so named when a Millpool was found when they dug up a garden in the area, the largest dwelling being Venton House a site of many Fetes and Garden Parties in the past.

### **Dodbrook**

Dodbrook house was the home of the Blight Family. There were many houses around the area that was built in the 1600's (since demolished) having stable type front doors.

Charles the 1<sup>st</sup> stayed in Manor Farm while on the run from Cromwell.

### **The Chemists Shop**

This shop was one time owned by Mr Fred Knight as a wood shop and boot and shoe repairer business, then reverting to a dwelling for a while before becoming the village chemist shop.

### **The Fountain on the Quay.**

By public subscription a cast Iron Horse trough was installed on the quay to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne. On a pillar in the centre of the trough was mounted an oil lamp.

Before the arrival of electricity, there were 25/30 oil lamps in the streets of Millbrook and each day a man was required to clean and fill them with oil. He was then employed to light them at dusk and extinguish them at 11.30pm.

The fountain was removed during the 1939 – 1945 war and in its place was built a static water tank to be used if required should German bombers drop incendiary bombs on the village.

The tank was demolished at the cessation of hostilities but the fountain was never replaced.

### **The War Memorial**

The war memorial was at one time situated on the quay opposite the Masonic Hall but it was moved to the new site by the church in August 1986.

### **The Air Raid Shelter**

There was an air raid shelter situated on the quay at the rear of where Teddy Whites Petrol Station is now, for people in the area to take shelter during the bombing of the village and surrounding area. It has long since been demolished.

### **The Lane from the Quay to West Street**

At the entrance was the Coop Coal Store and in the lane itself was a slaughter house. In the 1930's the coop store was managed by Mr Alf Phillips ably assisted by Reg Newcombe.

### **Electricity in Millbrook**

Electricity first came to Millbrook in 1932 and it was advertised that 3 lights and one socket installed would cost £1 -0-0d.

### **The Culvert**

This was a wooden structure assembled in 1908 at the bottom of the quay. Prior to this the quay was tidal and formed part of the waterfront, with water coming half way up West Street at times. After the Culvert was erected this area was dry, used as a children's playground and Lady Mt Edgcombe even planted a tree there but it failed to grow due to the poor soil and salt.

### **Police**

At the latter end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century local people were concerned at the amount of disorderly conduct prevailing in the area. At that time the nearest "Lock Up" available to the Police at Millbrook was situated at Torpoint.

It was considered that this put the police at a disadvantage in maintaining Law and Order in the villages concerned. It was therefore agreed that a petition be presented to the chief constable of Cornwall asking him to arrange a "Lock Up" to be built at Millbrook.

Consequently in 1896 a Police House and Lock Up were built at the top of West Street and the foot of Hounster Hill in which the Senior Constable and his Family lived and from where local policing of the area was conducted.

During the early 1900's 3 policemen were stationed at Millbrook, a Senior Constable, a Constable, and a junior or Trainee Constable. They were housed at the top of West Street, on the Quay, and in Yule Cottage at Brocks Lane. In fact Brocks lane was named after P.C. Brock who once lived there.

### **Police Intelligence 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 1860**

A case was brought before the bench at the instigation of the Port Admiral, and in accordance with the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Victorian chapter 67, the 12<sup>th</sup> section of which enacts, that any person taking spirituous liquors on board any H.M.Ships, or hovering about any of the ships for that purpose without the permission of her commanding officer shall be punished by fine or imprisonment. In this instance a boatman named Hoyle living in the Millbrook area, who was engaged to supply the gunroom of the Royal Albert with fresh provisions, was charged with hovering about the ship for the purpose of smuggling spirits on board.

William Payne, ships corporal, Royal Albert stated on Tuesday the 27<sup>th</sup> December 1859 about 6-30 in the evening, he was on the middle deck and saw the defendant coming up the accommodation ladder carrying a large basket. Witnessed by order of the Master-At-Arms, he went on board the prisoner's boat, searched the boat, and found, underneath the stern sheets, 2 bladders-commonly called skins. He took them out of the boat and brought them onto the middle deck and gave them to the Master-At-Arms. The prisoner was taken charge of.

The standing orders of the ship were that no wines, spirits or beer was allowed to be brought on board the ship, unless by written order from the officer in command.

Edward Bray, Master-At-Arms, H.M.S.Royal Albert gave similar evidence.

Mr Brian, who appeared for the defendant, admitted the charge of hovering about, on being proven. But contented that the defendant was not sneaking about the ship for any dishonest purpose, but to fulfil his contract as gunroom ward man. If he had any intentions of carrying the spirits aboard, why would he not have taken them up in the large basket, which he took to the ship and in which there was plenty of room.

The chairman said, that the bench were chiefly of the opinion that the case came within the meaning of the act and therefore inflicted a penalty of 20 shillings and costs.

### **Arthur Ashley a boatman from Cawsand charged with taking spirits on a Men of War.**

Arthur Ashley a boatman from the Cawsand area was charged with taking spirits on board men of war at Southdown on 27 th October 1860. Mr Eastlake, who was prosecuting for the Admiralty, said in this case great mischief had ensued through some of the men who partook of spirits being thrown into a state of completely temporary insanity, and the Admiralty was determined to have such practices "put an end to".

John Frazer, able seaman, Royal Albert, stated that at about 2.0 in the day that the defendant came aboard the lower deck and went to the mess table and gave the witness a skin of grog, which he said he was to take care of for one of his mess mates. Hodge a seaman came on board after 10 minutes and took it away. 30 minutes later he was so drunk and excited it took 6 men to hold him down, Gray and another seaman were also noisy.

Each was fined 40 shillings and costs or 6 weeks imprisonment.

### **The first telephone in Millbrook**

The telephone came to Millbrook in 1908 -1910, with the first telephone exchange being at 101 West Street, a man named Mr Mitchell looked after it and our telephone number at Trehill Farm, Rame, was Millbrook 256, Millbrook Steamboat and Motorboat Company was Millbrook 2, Bill Staple was Millbrook 246, F.J Skinner was Millbrook 5, Fred Elworthy was Millbrook 25.

### **Tannery**

Which was allied to farming in the area was kept by John Blight in 1885 and is noted as belonging to Blight and Sons, Tanners in 1870. Kelly's directory of 1856 lists the tanneries in Millbrook as being owned by members of the blight family, Blight and Edwards, J.T. Blight and Blight and Sons. Charles Blight is given as a leather currier in 1885 and lived in Dodbrook House. Some of the hides were from local slaughter houses but the majority were brought by boat, scraped off, and then put in pits for about three months. The tan was prepared by grinding the bark of trees in a mill, put into drying lofts and rolled on big rollers, The company stored its bark in various places including what is now known as Pete's Garage formally owned by the Steamboat Company a site at Dodbrook and another at Millpoolhead formally Week's Store. The finished hides were then sent to factories as " butts" of leather.

The bark would sometimes be spread on the road to deaden the noise if a person was seriously ill.

The building was of random stone, about 20ft high to the eaves, having two floors on the side facing the road. The upper floor was open which was used for hoisting the butts out and the pitched roof was originally of slate or stone but in latter years it was of corrugated asbestos and used as a County Council store.

The tanyard closed in 1903.

### **The Old Forge**

The building situated on Millbrook Quay is built of random stone rubble, single story and is approx 30 ft by 30 ft and 20ft high in the centre, with slatted ventilation in the roof which is now of corrugated asbestos. In recent years it was used by George Buss as a motor body work repair centre. Records show many blacksmiths working in Millbrook over the years but it is not known which worked the forge prior to Mr Arnold.

### **Millbrook Fire Station**

The Millbrook Fire Station was situated next to Week's Store. It had a Land Rover and fire fighting equipment.

### **Lime Kilnes**

The lime kiln at Lower Anderton Road is one of the few remaining in the area. It is a single-well type, the two chambers being on the opposite side of the bowl. The lower portion of the kiln is still in good condition and both sides having in recent years been used for storage. In fact the chamber on the east side has been extended by a lean-to type of structure, for this purpose. The bowl has been filled in, and the whole kiln until recently was extensively overgrown with ivy and brambles.

The Lime Kiln in Insworke is similar to the one in Lower Anderton Road being of the single-well type and the same layout. The kiln appears to be in good condition and in its original state. In the tithe records of 1841 the occupiers name was given as William Every and the land owner was Lord Clinton so it could have possibly been used up to that time.

### **Brickworks**

**South Down Brickworks**, The first recorded use was when the brickworks was built around 1888 and continued to operate on this site firstly as a part of the South Down Metal, Chemical and Brick company, and then as a separate company, The Southdown Brick Company. Mr H Bird continued as the managing director until around 1914 when the company was amalgamated with others in the south-west to form the Western Counties Brick Company. In 1928 Westbrick Products took over and further brick kilns were added. The works closed in 1942 when it is understood ammunition was stored in the kilns. The works opened again briefly from 1946-1948. In 1954 after being closed for approx 5 ½ years the brickworks re-opened in June of that year. Lime appeared in the shale of the quarry in the hill behind the kilns and production of bricks finally ceased in 1956.

The buildings remained disused and were partially demolished in 1972 by a local company of builders due to the three chimney stacks being considered as a hazard. The partially demolished circular Hoffman kiln could until recently still be explored, it originally had a rectangular brick chimney, there was also the last traces of a rectangular intermittent kiln which had a circular chimney.

It baked 20 -22,000 bricks per day using 50 staff. Stack on the Hoffman Kiln was 120ft high. Bill Luxton was the security officer/site manager

**Pottery Brickworks**, the site of the Devonshire Brick Company, Baked 45,000 – 50,000 bricks per day with 125 staff. It had the tallest stack of three brickworks 164ft. It first started to produce bricks in the late 1980's and continued as an independent company until about 1913 when it was taken over by the Western Counties Brick Company Ltd. Records show the brickyard being in use up until 1935. The clay was obtained from the quarry which is behind the site of the works, it was carried from the quarry to the works, on a railway, which then continued along the north shore of the Tide Mill to the quay alongside the Tide Mill. Nothing now remains of the building, up until recently I had a pair of wheels and axle belonging to that railway.

**Foss Brickworks** (South West Brick Company) this was the first brickworks to open in Millbrook in 1872 and closed in 1935 before the war employed 62 men and 7 women the stack height was 130ft. It was taken over by the Western Counties Brick Company in 1914 and later by Westbrick Products Ltd. Clay was obtained from a Quarry adjacent to the works. The buildings were used as furniture stores, storing furniture and personal effects from Blitzed houses during 1939 -1945 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.



## **Southdown Industries**

**Explosive compound works.** The area was first used in 1650. During 1650 - 1731 it used remnants of the skins from the Millbrook Tanneries which were boiled down here and turned into an Explosive Nitro Glycerine compound. It was associated with the dockyard, being close enough to easily transport the finished product to the ships, but far enough away in case of an accident.

### **Southdown Gun Powder Works.**

This works was totally destroyed by a fire and an explosion which occurred on the morning of Wednesday 5th July 1865 but happily was unattended with no loss of life, which might have been expected from so serious a casualty, at the South Down works Davey's Patent Safety blasting powder has been manufactured in a block of strongly-built stone buildings covering a very large area of ground.

The smoke when perceived rapidly increased in volume and spread an effectual alarm, guns were fired from the flagship in the harbour and assistance speedily arrived from the ships of war. From an early period of the fire frequent small explosions took place, arising from the firing of cartridges and these warned bystanders of the danger. Vigorous efforts were notwithstanding made to check the flames, but before the appliances could be fully brought into play a tremendous explosion in the centre building shook the ground and flung into the air some 500square yards of slate roofing with the rafters and beams. It also threw to the ground the whole of the frontage wall of the centre building.

Half a dozen cottages adjacent were partially stripped of their roof coverings, most of their windows were blown in and the ceilings in all rooms thrown down. The managers house which was situated on rising ground just above the manufactory, was damaged to even a greater extent, burning timbers were thrown considerable distances into the land and water. Several persons were within a few feet of the building at the time of the explosion and showers of broken slates and debris fell around and among them, but in only one or two instances were injuries sustained and those were of a trivial character.

Lieut Clarke of HMS Royal Adelaide, who was at once dispatched with a fire party, was at the instant of the explosion engaged in taking off the jolly boat a number of women and children who were in a dangerous position close to the fire. The lieutenant and two or three seamen, seeing the flying timbers jumped into the water but providentially the heavier beams passed over their heads. The men of HMS Cambridge worked their fire engine from the slope of the hill, where there was a large reservoir, directing water rite onto the burning pile.

Captain West RMLI and Lieut Kinsman, with a strong body of men, rolled some scores of barrels of gun powder from contiguity to the fire to a place of comparative safety assisted by the men of HMS Cambridge. The other engines and fire floats rendered much service, but after the explosion it was clear that most of the combustible material had been got rid of, and the fire for the most part was allowed to burn itself out.

Shortly after two o' clock the men with their engines and fire floats were removed as no further danger being apprehended and the task of extinguishing the large beams was left to the powerful fire-engine of the powder works which by then had got up steam. The main block of the building some 120 feet square, was left a complete wreck, it and the adjacent dwelling houses were uninsured, several fire officers having refused to work near the risk.

The origin of the fire as previously intimated is a complete mystery. The fact that within the last year there had been four fires at the establishment, the origins of only one which have been ascertained has lead the establishment to believe there has been foul play. The mystery hanging over the occurrences was believed the sole grounds for suspicion. There does not appear to have been any considerable quantity of manufactured powder destroyed. The five tons that had arrived

from Glasgow being nearly all rescued and the main stock. Some fifty tons, being in the magazine which was one hundred yards off and was uninjured.

In the central building were stored seventy tons of nitrate of soda and fifty tons of sulphur on an upper floor, and below the ground there was an immense quantity of tan. The manager of the works accountants for the explosion stated by the fact that when the soda and sulphur became fused and were precipitated by falling upon the tan – which in this patent powder takes the place of charcoal – a rough spec of gunpowder was instantly formed and as such instantly exploded. How far this theory is correct it is impossible to say. If the statements of those working on the premises are corrected, only a few pounds of manufactured powder were fired. In the gap caused by the explosion a pool of boiling nitre was left, which continued for some hours to bubble and hiss with a most formidable appearance.

The disaster caused a great loss to the shareholders, whose operations it put an effective and permanent stop, it was feared that it would be a long period before the premises, which had so often been partly destroyed, would ever again be rebuilt.

#### **Fire at Southdown Safety Blasting Company February 1864**

There was an alarming fire at Southdown powder works on the first Saturday in February 1864; the company was the manufactory of a patent safety blasting powder. The scene of the fire created considerable alarm in the minds of the persons who were unacquainted with the peculiar properties of the blasting material which the company manufactures. The building in which the manufacture is carried out consists of a series of sheds, each about 120ft long and 39 ft wide and which are dispersed in various blocks, covering several acres of ground.

In one of these sheds on the ground floor, there were on Saturday about 9 tons of powder ready for delivery and a thousand empty casks. In the shed adjoining this store of powder where the fire originated, 2 men were employed, one of whom was engaged in cleaning the powder out of the shallow iron trays in which it had been dried. To affect this iron scraper was used. The man using this implement, although cautioned not to do so, struck repeatedly the edges of the tray which ignited the powder. The frightened man threw down the tray and ran from the building. The other man who was working in the same apartment, a Thomas Macdonald, however, remained behind and endeavoured to extinguish the burning material by throwing water upon it. But the quantity of water at hand was too small. As the conflagration extended to the bulk of the powder, he had to rush through the flames to save his life, but in doing so he unfortunately received serious injuries.

The whole of the powder then ignited and vast volumes of flames and smoke gushed forth to every aperture, threatening the safety of the adjoining blocks and buildings. The flames then extended to 3 portions of other sheds used for drying the powder, in each of which were several hundred weight of material in different stages of manufacture. Fortunately each shed was divided off with a strong part wall and the fire was prevented from making rapid progress.

Mr Kellow the superintendent of the works employed the workmen present about 30 in number to pour water on the roofs and against the doors of the adjoining sheds to prevent extension of the fire.

A large number of men from H.M. Ships Royal Adelaide, Impregnable, Canopus, St George and Indus put off in boats to the scene of the fire with the hand fire engine belonging to the ships and under the command of Capt. Colville, Capt. May, Lieut Pyne, Lieut Herbert and other officers.

They worked in the most energetic manner in pouring water on the building, also in removing combustible materials from the reach of the fire. The amount of damage done including the value of the powder burnt, may be estimated at about £500, two of the sheds, namely, that in which the fire originated and that immediately adjoining, having their upper floors and roofs destroyed. The store in which the raw materials of manufacture were kept and which were removed on the first alarm, formed the next portion of the same block of the building. But the massive party wall prevented the fire from obtaining any hold upon the building.

The character of the powder evidently entitles it to the term of "Safety Powder" if the powder in the sheds had been of ordinary quality no man in the neighbourhood would have been left to tell the tale. It is stated that the powder has been proved to be quite efficient for blasting purposes and to perform its duty as efficiently as the ordinary powder.

### **Gun Powder Experiment before the Prince of Wales**

On the evening of Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July 1865, Mr Gale an electrician of Plymouth, who had recently discovered a process by which gunpowder can be rendered non-explosive and its combustible properties easily restored when required made an experiment illustrative of practicability of his invention on the lawn at Mount Edgcumbe. Those present were their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, The duke of St Albans, Lord Skelmerdale, Lady Skelmerdale, The Countess of Dalkeith, The Countess De Grey, Lord Geoff Hamilton, Lady Bertha Hamilton, and The Earl of Mt Edgcumbe, The dowry Countess Mount Edgcumbe Mr Cust, General Knoltye and Major Grey.

The Prince on being made acquainted with the nature of the invention expressed his desire to witness the experiment in which Mr Gale assented. The trial was first made on about one pound of ordinary blasting powder which within a comparatively short space of time was rendered nonexplosive. A slow match which would have normally caused the grains of powder to ignite was placed under the explosive but it did not have any effect on the body of the powder. The inventor showing his confidence in the experiment held the vessel containing the materials in his hand.

The powder was subsequently made explosive without any diminution of its strength or loss of weight. The Prince at termination expressed himself satisfied with the experiment, and the value of the discovery, which he believed would greatly increase personal safety and prove invaluable for naval and military purposes. Mr Gale was asked to appear before the ordnance committee at Woolwich the following week.

### **The Kings Brewery.**

The building of the Kings Brewhouse was commenced in 1733 to replace the rented brewhouse in Plymouth which became too small for the needs This brewhouse could produce 20,000 galls per week and vessels could conveniently load at the nearby wharf at high tide. It was said that the water used was of excellent quality brought from a considerable distance through pipes which passed under the streets of Millbrook. It is understood that the site was used as a Brewhouse until the Royal William Victualing Yard at Devonport took over in approx 1835. There is also evidence that the Royal Navy had other general storage facilities on the site together with accommodation for naval personal.

From 1835 until 1852 it was converted into a soap manufactory and later a powder mill to which an explosion put an end.

### **Gills Fish Factory**

Records show that from 1856 – 1870 a Mr J.E. Gill occupied the site making fish fertilizer but it is not known if the old buildings were refurbished or new ones built. After 1870 the site was apparently unoccupied.

### **Lomas Gelatine works.**

Around 1902 – 1914 the site was occupied by the Lomas Gelatine Works Ltd manufacturing glue, resin and gelatine from animal bones. Apparently bones were used from butchers and slaughter houses in Plymouth and Devonport and many memories of the older generation have told me of the horrible smells that came from these works. The bones were also used to make knife handles and fertilizers after the fat was extracted, the fat was used in food manufacture, jollies and candles.

The company closed in 1914.

### **A copper smelting and chemical works**

On the west side of Southdown Quay a chemical and copper smelting works was erected by the South Down Metal and Chemical Co. Ltd. It was established from 1870 -1904. The manager was a Mr Henry Bird. Ore was imported to the site by large three masted schooners and about 3 – 4 % of the copper was extracted, with the average output of copper being 60 – 70 tons per month. The waste was put into great heaps on the quay. In addition to the copper the company produced Antipluvian Compositions which were used to water proof buildings. Up until 1970 a ruined rectangular stone building with a circular brick-topped stone chimney stood alongside the quarry track, north of the brick kilns, this was the smelting furnace but has long since been demolished.

### **Silver Extraction**

In 1902 a Frenchman called Chandeau said to be an assayer to the Bank of England visited South Down and seeing the waste on the quay invented a process whereby a small amount of silver could be extracted from the waste copper ore. This silver was then sold in Marlborough Street, Devonport. The acids used in the process were said to have produced a seething noise in the pits which were located about 100 yards to the east of the last cottage. They consisted of a number of tanks built on a long raised platform about 8 ft x 8ft x 4 ft high built of blue engineering brick on a concrete base which continued to the shore of the lake at one time

Small amounts of silver taken from the by products helped pay for Silver Terrace Southdown, hence its name.

### **Southdown Social Club**

For many years there was a social club at Southdown where bingo and social events used to take place on a weekly basis. With the clearing of the area at Southdown the building was knocked down and the site cleared.

### **Schools in Millbrook in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century:-**

Myrtle Cottage at Millpool Head

Young Mens Club in the church hall on the quay.

Old Girls & Infants School in the Unionist Hall on the quay.

The Dame School in West Street.

Millbrook School Blindwell Hill completed in 1916. Head Mistress Miss Jane Pearn, Teachers:- Mary Maddock, Ivy Lake and Margery Glass.

### **The Workhouse**

Knill Cross House was the poor house for the parish of Maker

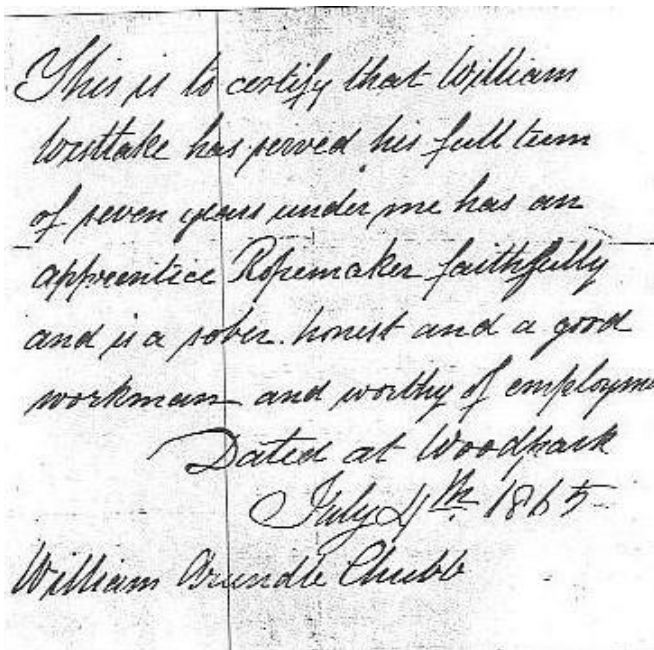
### **Anderton-**

**Woodpark Ropery** which lies a few yards south of the Oaks Road that runs between Cremyll and Millbrook. It can be approached along a track starting about 150 yards past the building in the direction of Millbrook.

The age of the building is not known but it appears on the Tithe Map of 1841 as belonging to a Mr W.A.Chubb – rope-maker.

(Mr Chubb) supplied ropes to boats built at Anderton Quay, local farmers and fishermen. The building is some 100ft long by 20 ft wide and reducing to about 15 ft for half its length and is built of undressed stone with a pitched roof and earth floor. The lower roof beams are 7ft 6 inches above ground level. On the long side that faces the lake it has piers every 10 ft with a space between them being filled with slatted timber, the other side is solid without windows or doors.

Mr Chubb was a rope maker from 1856 until 1873 but unfortunately experienced financial problems and hung himself in the nearby woods. My great grandfather was first an apprentice rope maker with Mr Chubb and later worked for him for a number of years.



This is to certify that William Westlake has served his full term of seven years under me has an apprentice Rope maker faithfully and is a sober, honest and a good workman and worthy of employment  
Dated at Woodpark  
July 4<sup>th</sup> 1865  
William Westlake Chubb

The indentures of my great grandfather William Westlake who worked for Mr. Chubb.

### **The Shipwrights Yard**

This boat yard was situated on the small peninsula between the ropewalk and Higher Anderton opposite Foss point. This yard used to support the fleet of fishing vessels operating from Millbrook in 1841.

There has been boat building at Anderton since Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> reign the tithe Map of 1841 shows the yard, and records it as being occupied by William Waterman and Others records also show at one time the yard was used by a Jas Waterman and John Waterman recorded as being two separate boat builders. These two joined forces in around 1860 and continued until 1873 with no record of the yard being used after that date. William Waterman then moved to Cremyll Boatyard in Franks Quarry in about 1870 to what is now known as Mashford brothers Boat Building Yard.

The whole area now consists of Anderton House, various other houses and storage buildings used for domestic purposes, some of which may well have been used by the shipwrights.

Mr Marks who was born on September the 10<sup>th</sup> 1865 spoke of as a boy just remembering that boats from Cawsand, many owned by publicans use to come to the yard at Anderton for repair and winter storage. He remembers many were moored in Millbrook Lake or Hancock's Creek during the great blizzard of 1891 eleven boats were sunk at their moorings but all but two were salvaged.

### **A Ship named "La Nicholas"**

In the early months of 1343 a ship called "La Nicholas" of Millbrook with John Palmer as Master which had already been used for a voyage to Gascony in the King's service returned with merchandise of fine goods when it was required to be at Portsmouth before the 1<sup>st</sup> March to take soldiers to Brittany. Three years later in 1346 one ship and 12 men from Millbrook were summoned for the royal expedition which resulted in the victory of Crecy and the capture of Calais. It is perhaps not surprising that in 1350 there was a raid by the French, though apparently without serious military effects.

One account says the defences around the estuary of the Tamar were good and therefore the enemy was only able to destroy some farms and fair places in the neighbourhood.

### **Dawes Lane**

The grounds of Dawes Cottages at one time contained a tea garden; Mr F Skinner started his first business here hiring out bicycles.

### **Farmyard on the Quay**

Highland house was once the home of Mr Richard Lines and his sister, one of his cows sheds was taken over as a garage by F J Skinner.

The house has since been used as a post office, assembly rooms and a doctor's surgery

### **Piers**

Millbrook being situated in a creek on the Cornish side of the river Tamer and for many years having a fleet of fishing boats and various boat yards, Industries etc, so it was natural to move goods and people to various destinations by barges and paddle steamers and screw type propelled boats. There were three main piers for this purpose as well as Quay Side berths.

At high tides, the ferries called at Higher or Stone Pier but a various state of tides, only intermediate stops at Lower Pier or Foss Point at Anderton and Southdown could be reached.

### **Stone Pier**

This was situated opposite the Lime Kiln in Lower Anderton Road, and was originally built by Walter Stephens for John Parsons. Until the late 1940's and early 1950's this pier was used by Millbrook Steamboat Company Ferry Passengers and by barges unloading cargoes of lime, coal and road stone. Over the years it fell into disrepair but was eventually restored to its present glory by the Manpower Services Commission.

### **Lower Pier**

This was of wooden construction and situated at what is now the south end of the South Western Water Boards water barrage. It was used mainly for passengers.

### **Worth's Pier**

This was situated at the bottom of Molesworth Terrace. In 1919 there were 2013 people that lived in Millbrook and all parcels etc were delivered by boat. There was a parcel house situated at the end of the pier for this purpose were Mr Pawley would collect and deliver parcels for residence with his horse and cart.

### **Barges**

These were used to transport bricks to as far away as Brittany, Ammunition and bring domestic coal to the village from Devonport.

On one such coal barge on a very stormy day coal was being brought across the Hamoaze by a local family man a Mr Wilf Worth with another crew member, the barge turned over in the rough seas and sunk with both men loosing their life.

Such craft with one mast was known as a barge, with two masts a Schooner and with three masts a Vessel.

### **Steamers**

John Parsons was the pioneer of the early ferry service to Millbrook when he started ferrying workers to the Dockyard in 1885. He also ran ferry services to Plymouth, Drakes Island, Cawsand, Looe, Whitsands and river trips. In those days' paddle steamers such as, Britannia, Brunel, Hibernia, Cornubia etc could be seen working on the lake.

### **Millbrook's First Scout Master**

Millbrooks first Scoutmaster was Harold Pitman in approx 1910.

### **Millbrook Young Men's Club**

This club was opened on December the 18<sup>th</sup> 1918.

### **The Liberal Hall**

This was originally in West Street and later became the local picture house.

### **The Masonic Hall**

This is the home of the Meridian Lodge No 893. The first Freemasons meeting was held in the Coopers Arms on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 1861 and later at the Commercial Inn.

On January 10<sup>th</sup> 1880 the present building was purchased from the Mt Edgcombe Estates for the sum of £500 to be used as a Masonic Temple.

### **Lime Kilns**

There was two lime kilns situated around Millbrook, one the road side between Greenland's and Molesworth Terrace, apposite the pier and the other is situated on the waters edge between Foss and Southdown. They are of the single well type.

In 1910 a cave was found behind the one at Greenland's which extended into the hill side, it is thought that it was to support the local smuggling trade of earlier times.

### **Shoe Making**

Before 1914 there was a more marked Producer-Retailers character to many businesses in the area. The Boot and Shoe Maker making the boots they sold, one of the famous ones in the area was the Mighty Millar who lived and worked at 98 West Street between Driscalls and the Cooperative Shop. His name was Billy Stimson, a midget or a dwarf; under 4 ft tall. He had a most luxuriant black moustache like a pair of bicycle handlebars. He was a first class shoemaker and boot repairer. He would measure your child's feet "Allow a bit for growing and make a boy a pair of hob-nailed boots that would most certainly be handed down to ones younger brother when he had outgrown them, and perhaps the next youngest too.

He was generous to a fault and loved children. You only had to ask him for a "Waxend" and he would beeswax some shoemakers thread attach to the end of a child's whip so that they could spin their spinning tops properly. He would repair harness too, but only when he was not busy with footwear. He was a character that will never be forgotten in the village.

### **Flood Alleviation**

This project was started in 1978 and inaugurated by Len Hill, chairman of the S.W.W.B (South West Water Board) on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1981. A barrier was built across the lake between Lower Pier and Tide Mill to prevent further serious flooding of the village as had happened in 1974

### **The Meadow**

Which is now the car Park, in the 1930's and 1940's the field was a venue for many good impromptu Football and Cricket matches by the children from West Street and Dodbrook. Mr Henwood also used to graze his horse there.

### **Black Prince**

Until 1900 Millbrook used to hold May Day/Garland Day Celebrations, when 6 village men would carry a 6 ft long model ship which was covered in flowers to all the public houses and on ward to Kingsand and Cawsand and in turn to Devonport and Plymouth.

Following the festivities the ship was placed in the sea on an out going tide. This ceremony has been revived over many years again since.

### **Clubs of the past in Millbrook**

Millbrook Unionist Club  
National Deposit Friendly Society  
Millbrook Liberal Club  
Millbrook Samaritan Institution  
Millbrook Independent Order of Rechabites  
Millbrook Ex Service Men's Club  
Millbrook Billiard Club  
Millbrook Conservative Club  
Millbrook Gymnasium Club

### **Millbrook in the 1920's**

Our Village to us natives was so fine  
Crowded with visitors in the summer time  
They came here by steaming paddle boat  
So full that they did just float  
Winding their way through streets and lanes  
A miles trek to Whitsand sands

Some went on foot and by wagonette too  
There was also a taxi for the wealthy few  
Down the long paths to the beaches below  
It was a day of joy for all to know  
There to sit, swim, lie or play  
With children building sandcastles most of the day  
There was swinging boats and donkey rides.  
And a wonderful big beach at very low tides

There was removable stalls there on the sands  
With plenty to sell and in great demand  
With buckets and spades and sweets and toys  
Enjoyment all around for the girls and boys  
With crab hooks, shrimp nets and ballons on strings  
But beware were you walk because weevil fish sting  
At Willcockes café there was plenty of tea and cakes galore  
Crab sandwiches to at the Whitsand Store.

At the head of the queue you could hear them say  
Two and sixpence deposit per tray if you take it away  
Now Mr Peach was extremely well known  
Selling cakes and buns that he made at his home  
He walked many miles on the beaches each day  
Carrying baskets, selling his wares for very small pay

At the tannery we had concert parties each year  
Where minstrels used burnt cork on their faces so fair  
A cattle market was held upon the Quay  
With animals in pens for all to see  
We had seven pubs for the thirsty folk  
And many drank there until they were broke  
Three butchers, shoe shops and dairies too  
And general shops quite a few  
Bread and cake were home made for sale  
Delivered to your door so they did not go stale



Now Miss Herbert's shop the children adored  
And when in the shop they really explored  
At Christmas time they would stand and stare  
At the Fairy Doll that was always there  
Mather's Sweet Shop was always a draw  
They sold sweets both big and small

Gerty Meat was a favourite dish  
That is if you did not want fish  
It was made in your home from pork, groats and spices too  
At sixpence a dish it fed quite a few  
At the special times it was for sale it went down well with a glass of ale

Horse drawn carts made their rounds  
Selling vegetables, salt etc by the pound  
Any Knives to sharpen you could heard the man cry  
Cut up your own pork straight from the sty  
As he pushed his stone wheel from door to door  
All knives were sharpened you may be sure

Our schools were very central for you to see  
For most were built on the Quay  
Our lake was said to be three miles long  
On which paddle steamers Hibernia, Cornubia and Brunel belong  
All painted gaily in red, white, and blue  
It was a wonderful site for me and you

They took us to Devonport, North Corner and the Dockyard too  
Returning to Southdown, Anderton, Little Points and Molesworth for me and you  
Not forgetting Stone Pier when the tide was high  
Six pence return was all that we paid, a very cheap price that you can't deny.

We passed the woods were the blue bells and rhododendrons grow  
And if you are lucky may spot a buck or a doe.  
There's plenty of blackberries, nuts and mushrooms, fine  
And dabs in the lake all covered in slime  
Now little of this still exists,  
With developers killing the wonderful bliss.

What will be of our village in 80 years time?