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AUTUMN 2026

THE FREE AREA GUIDE ABOUT CREWKERNE AND THE HAMSTONE VILLAGES
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Our front cover photo shows the famous former chemists' shop in St James Street, South Petherton. Famous because this was White's Grocery Shop for decades, whilst the chemist's shop lay sealed away behind the scenes. Then in 1987 the contents of the shop came up for sale at Lawrences in Crewkerne. The successful bidders were Flambards in Cornwall, where the chemist's shop was displayed for many years, until Flambards closed in 2024.

This Autumn edition is packed full with local advertisers and articles of local interest.

On **Page 4** we have the index of our advertisers.

On **Page 10** we have news from Friends of Crewkerne Station. On **Pages 12 & 13** we bring you a little bit of Crewkerne's Industrial Heritage at Viney Bridge Mills. On **Pages 16 & 17** Crewkerne in Bloom describe their busy spring and summers seasons.

On **Page 20** South Petherton Parish Council describe the function of the Community Flood Group. On **Pages 28 & 29** we have our useful maps of Crewkerne and The Hamstone Villages Area.

We remember some of the sights at Crewkerne Carnival in the 1980's, on **Pages 32 and 33**. Crewkerne Museum and Heritage Centre tell us about their exhibitions this autumn, focussing on local heritage industries on **Pages 40 & 41**.

Nikki Copleston shares with us more photos of Old Crewkerne on **Page 50**.

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Please support our local advertisers, I am sure they will give you great service and excellent value!

With best wishes,

Anthony Buckle. EDITOR.

Email: crewkerne@theantiquetourist.com
Friday 24 July 2026.



An important moment for Crewkerne town centre as volunteers obliterate that dreadful shop façade "....SHAM BOOKS". I wonder what next?

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The Friends of CREWKERNE Station

Climate change?

The Friends of Crewkerne Station (FOCS) have never known a summer like we are having. Watering the planters is a daily task and making us realise even more how difficult it must be for plants and wildlife to cope with such weather extremes. We try to plant drought resistant plants and also this year have been trying for a blue and gold theme on the up platform. The down platform is full of colours. The courgettes, although being yellow and fitting the theme, were clearly a mistake as their broad leaves transpire water twice as fast as the others. They had to be pruned.

The judge for 'Its your Neighbourhood' visited recently and heard not only about plants, insects and wildlife but also the community events attended by the Friends. In one of the photos the judge is inspecting the restored Pumphouse window behind one of the planters. Some of the volunteers are seen in another photo at the Severalls tea party which was great fun and enabled us to meet many others in the community.

The Poppies are collecting in the Pumphouse and we will start joining them on to the netting soon which will enable them to be displayed on two



sites. The small section of rails next to the Pumphouse on the platform and the top of the car park bank next to the old steps have been approved by the railway companies.

If you are joining in this project the finished poppies can be brought to the station pumphouse, or Henhayes in Crewkerne.

Don't forget to ask in the station booking office to help you find the best and cheapest train ticket options and you can use the Blackmore Vale CRP line guide to help you find places to go.

The Blackmore Vale Community Rail Partnership has a new project to collect coasters at more than 90 places of interest along the line. There are prizes if you collect more than 8. See the details and the line guide on the Blackmore Vale site. The third photo shows the history book of our line written by volunteers at all the stations from Crewkerne to Tisbury. Its a good read and can be purchased at the station or at Crewkerne Museum.

www.blackmorevaletrains.com



The Friends of the Station are interested in all things railway and transport and welcome additional members and volunteers.

Find us on Facebook www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofcrewkerne or contact us at focscrewkerne@gmail.com





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Photo credit - Brian & Christine Frost

Crewkerne's Industrial Heritage - Viney Bridge Mills

There are numerous recorded histories of this iconic site in South Street, Crewkerne, now sadly derelict.

Relying on personal records and with help from Christine and Brian Frost (former on-site caretakers) and former mill manager Jeremy Yuill, this is my account of the history of the mill.

The existence of the "Viney Brook", providing free water-power indicates that milling may have gone on at Viney Bridge from "time immemorial". Former mill manager Jeremy Yuill believes that flax milling started here in 1789. The stone carving "S&G 1793" on the gable end of the former caretakers' cottage probably marks the date the cottage was built by the original flax mill operators - Sparks & Gidley. Flax was a major local crop, and numerous flax mills sprung up in the late 18th century – Lopen, Greenham, West Chinnock, Tail Mill, North Street, South Street (Robert

Bird), etc. Much of the yarn weaving in the area was carried out "at home" with outworkers supplying the factories where the yarns were bleached, and later woven into webbing, sailcloth and garments.

By the 19th century Sparks and Gidley of Viney Bridge Mills were manufacturers of "sailcloth, webbing and woollens". To accommodate all this industry, the original mill buildings were converted, whilst more buildings were erected along the bank of Viney Brook in a northerly direction towards Viney Bridge itself, with a further range of buildings erected to the west, and parallel, creating a "village street" effect.

By the 1880's, Viney Bridge Mills was well established, steam power had been introduced and the mill was now owned and run by Arthur Hart. Records at the time suggested this was the first purpose-built textile mill in Crewkerne. Another "first" is that Arthur Hart



Photo credit - Brian & Christine Frost



and Son took the very first telephone number in Crewkerne – number "1"!

Steam now powered the weaving looms, and heated the offices and work areas. The impressive mill chimney still stands today, and is quite rightly "listed" as being of historic importance.

Around 100 were employed at Viney Bridge Mills. The women and men had interesting jobs such as weavers, warpers, quill winders and tenters (tenters set the loom up for the for the specific fabric to be woven). All these functions were necessary in the manufacture of webbing and sailcloth. The Boer War increased employee numbers to around 200, and numbers peaked again during the First & Second World Wars, due to increased demand for the products.

At the outset of World War Two in 1939, a new "west shed" was erected solely for sailcloth. This shed was further extended in 1964 when sailcloth production in North Street was moved to Viney Bridge, Crewkerne Textiles Ltd was formed. Less than 20 years later the sailcloth business was sold, and

the company was renamed Arthur Hart and Son Ltd.

To quote Jeremy Yuill manager of Arthur Hart from 1991 to 2005 -;

"The Arthur Hart Webbing business employed an estimated 100 women and men from 1889 until the 1950s with a gradual tail-off from then into the mid 1990's. When I went there to run it in the 1990's there were about 62. Sadly I had to make 9/10 redundant in order to restructure the business and save it from closure. When the business relocated to Bridport in 2005 there were about 55 employees.

Viney Bridge Mills were quite unusual because most of the weaving looms in use there in my time and for an unknown time before were actually designed & manufactured on site in the workshops. This tradition continued right up to about year 2000 when some looms were designed and built on-site specifically to weave Kevlar products for military end-uses."

Anthony Bucke. EDITOR.

Photo credit - Brian & Christine Frost



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CREWKERNE IN BLOOM

volunteers are in the midst of another busy year, helping to keep Crewkerne looking cared for and colourful.

Drought tolerance and sustainability are now priorities for as much of our planting as possible. After the exceptionally wet winter, we were thankful that our three **Wessex**

Water rainwater tanks were full to the brim. And after an exceptionally hot June we were also relieved that we had already applied to them for a grant for another!

By popular request, the **Potager** near Waitrose is being filled with veggies. Any flower seedlings we find are being moved to the big bed by the **Rotary Stone**.



On the Piazza



St. Margaret's Hospice Shop



Sheila's Restaurant

This is at the main gateway for visitors to town so the area is always a priority for our volunteer working parties. It is also where we have just planted a tree from Crewkerne and District Twinning Association to commemorate 50 years of partnership with Igny and 20 years with Bures-sur-Yvette in Northern France.

The visit in May by our French friends inspired the theme **Entente Cordiale** for our annual **Business Window Competition**. There were so many eye-

catching displays our independent judges awarded three joint 1st prizes! Congratulations to **On the Piazza, Sheila's Restaurant** and **St. Margaret's Hospice Shop**.

We're taking a break from our annual Garden Competition but knowing that Crewkerne has so many enthusiastic and creative plant lovers, we have a fun and simple to enter competition. In our **Planted Planter Photo** challenge, we're looking for unusual planted containers that make us smile!

Barrow, boot, bidet, pram, pail, pitcher, tub, tin or trunk are just a few ideas - it's up to you!

Look out for updates on posters, social media and **CREWKERNEINBLOOM.ORG**

Everyone can enter and the competition will be judged in September.

As always, many thanks for all your compliments on the hanging baskets – and to all who help with the watering.



For further information, to volunteer or to offer support in any way, please contact us on **07902 200212** or **hello@crewkerneinbloom.org**
No experience needed, only your enthusiasm for keeping Crewkerne looking colourful and cared for.

You can keep up to date with our activities on facebook and Instagram and via our website where you can also sign up for newsletters.
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SOUTH PETHERTON COMMUNITY FLOOD GROUP – A PARISH COUNCIL PARTNERSHIP

Days of relentless rain followed by a terrific storm on Sunday 26th January 2025 caused significant flood damage to the villages around Crewkerne. South Petherton was no exception. Many properties and businesses in South Petherton were impacted.

South Petherton Parish Council (SPPC) responded immediately by forming the Community Flood Group. A mix of residents, business owners and parish councillors. Together the group drafted a set of terms of reference to guide and govern the scope of the work and set out some clear responsibilities and activities.

A transparent and productive partnership

Progress by the group is reported monthly to the councillors and the wider community through the SPPC website. The partnership approach appears to be working well, the periodic communication and status of activities in general mean councillors are informed and can positively debate requests requiring full council approval, such as supporting a grant application to Somerset Prepared to purchase flood warden kit. Jointly developing a budget for the future planned activities means implementation of improvements are timelier.

Supporting residents and building community resilience

The support of the councillors adds weight to requests for support from the larger organisations responsible for most mitigation measures such as Somerset Council, National Highways and the Environment Agency. It means councillors share the same frustrations of the group when support is not forthcoming.

Councillors attending community meetings related to flooding provides a reassurance to residents who are anxious about the next



pending storm. It also promotes some community "self-help" through working parties and volunteer flood wardens developing a stronger community spirit. We are working together with a shared purpose. Reducing risk, improved preparedness and supporting each other.

The partnership, with the support of some of the outside agencies (SRA, EA, FWAG, EVAG, County Roads, etc) as had some successes making the community more resilient to future flooding and with some permitted maintenance of the watercourse the village is less likely to flood.

CLlr Richard Killen a member of the group said *"The Community Flood Group shows what can be achieved when residents, businesses and councillors work side by side. We all share the same determination to protect our village, and this partnership gives us a stronger voice when pushing for the support and action our community deserves."*

South Petherton's resilience depends on all of us. The Community Flood Group welcomes residents, businesses and volunteers who wish to contribute ideas, local knowledge or practical support. If you can help, whether by joining a working party, becoming a flood warden, or simply sharing information, your involvement will make a difference. Please get in touch via email at;

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You can find us on Facebook too at: **The South Petherton Community flood Group**

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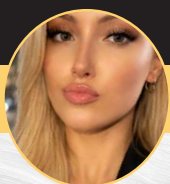
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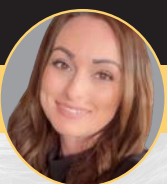
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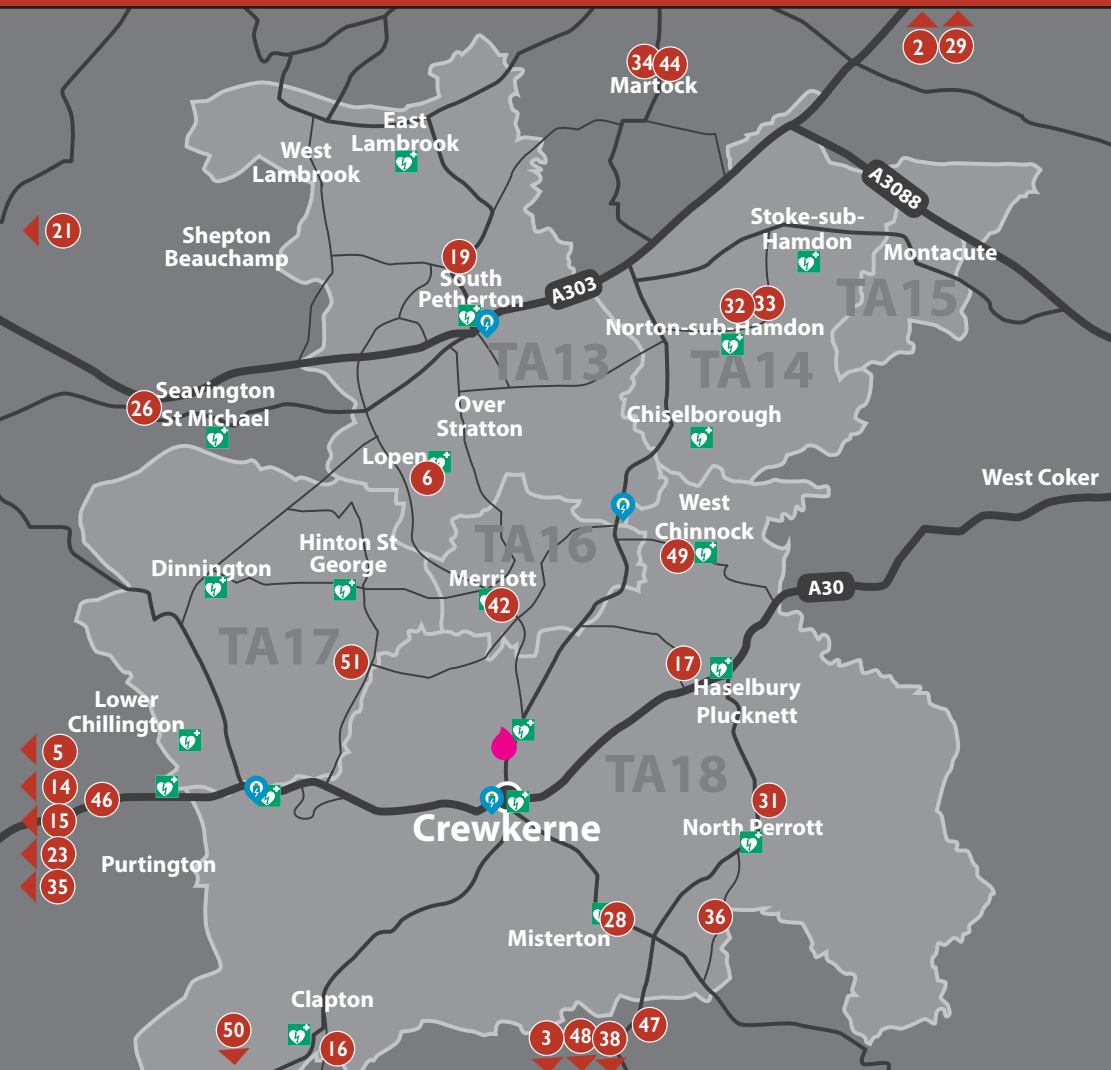


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CREWKERNE CARNIVAL

THROUGH THE 1980s

Crewkerne painter and decorator – George Burgess – has loaned The Crewkerne Flyer some photos of Crewkerne Carnival through the 1980's. Other photos come from our albums. The evening carnival procession grew from the annual fete and show in Henhayes, held every June. The fete hosted many displays, activities and competitions, with great

support from businesses, stalls and charities. George is the handsome fellow on the camel! Businesses, organisations and private individuals took part in the evening pageant, with many building carnival floats and dressing-up in costumes. The carnival procession generally assembled at Wadham School and then wound through the streets

of Crewkerne, ending up at Cropmead. June was a great month for this, as the days were usually warm and bright, and the procession did not need to rely on generators and lighting.

n.b. The Crewkerne Flyer have been given access to many of these photos by George Burgess, a few of which were taken from the top of the porch at The Swan Hotel.



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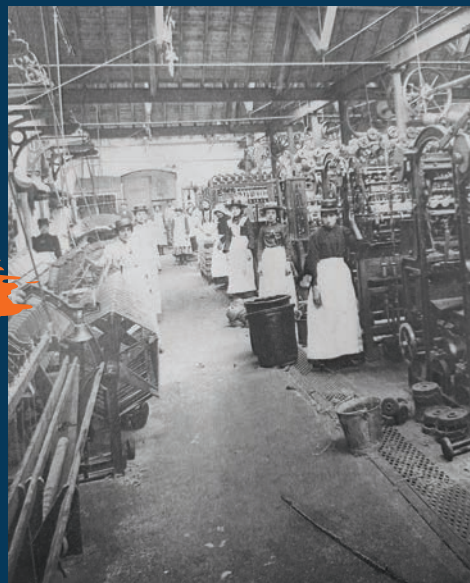
  

CREWKERNE MUSEUM & HERITAGE CENTRE

AUTUMN 2026 UPDATE

As the Crewkerne Flagship project promotes the heritage industries of Crewkerne we would like to remind local people that the museum contains a lot of information and exhibits relating to those industries.

Growing flax, the crop that proved to be the natural fibre that overtook wool for fabric production locally, became widespread throughout the south west. Crewkerne had been a small industrial town for many years, with a brewery, horse hair seating factory, shoe and boot maker, sailcloth and webbing, shirt manufacturer,



a tannery, brickyard, stone quarry to name some that brought wealth into the town. During the 1800s the industries flourished and the town would have been a busy place with different sounds and smells dominating. Imagine the clatter and chatter as people made their way to work.

Gallery 2 at the museum displays much of the story of sail cloth and webbing production. Ships such as the Victory depended on sail and we know that the top sails for the navy were using "Coker cloth" as it lasted longer due to the weaving method. This was the method employed by the factories in this area originating in the Coker villages, hence the name. The Hayward family ran factories at



Merriott, Crewkerne and Greenham for generations bringing work to many residents according to census returns during the 1800s.

Girth web weavers ran large factories in South Street initially making equipment for horses. As the world changed with the development of engineering manufacturers had to diversify and Arthur Hart Ltd obtained contracts to make webbing for the army and navy and eventually the air force. Brake lines for the space shuttle were made in Crewkerne, so the story goes from horses to space travel!

If you are interested in these aspects of Crewkerne's history a visit to the museum is worthwhile. We also have publications that will give in depth information and a guided walk you can take around the factory sites in town.

The current special exhibition telling the story of gloving in the area is well worth a visit. A new exhibition will replace it in early September when

the collection Team will exhibit their research on the medical history of the country with special exhibits recently donated to the museum. If you ever wondered how people coped with illnesses in the past come and find out, it will make you shudder!

Volunteers' Day in June brought in 4 new people to join our stewards and researchers.

If you have time to spare, why not come and have a chat about how we could work together? **Coffee mornings every first Saturday monthly** are a good time to meet people.



Sunday	Closed
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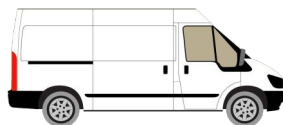
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